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## **“Cut your hair and get a job”**

**A study of how Swedish employers see business graduates from an  
ambidexterity perspective**

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**Abstract**

Employability is a field of research and a concept that has developed considerably over the past century. Today, employability contributes to discussions in higher education, psychology and even labour market politics. What influences employability is thus of great importance to a number of stakeholders. Since employability consists of assets that make an individual employable, the employer's perception of employability is essential. An area within organisational strategy called ambidexterity discusses the competitive advantage that can be obtained by hiring staff with certain characteristics, indicating that there could be a relation between ambidexterity and employability.

The purpose of this study is to explain how organisational ambidexterity influences employers' preference in regards of employability. To do so, a conceptual model was developed from theoretical research. The model included: education, experience and personal characteristics. A questionnaire was used to collect data in order to explain the relation between ambidexterity and employability.

The findings of the study did not show that organisational ambidexterity influences employer preferences regarding employability considerably even though indications that a relation exists were found. Moreover, the study findings indicated that other factors such as gender and age of recruiter might have an influence on employer preferences instead.

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**Keywords: Employability, organisational ambidexterity, medium-sized businesses, Business graduates, business administration, employer, Sweden**

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# 1. Introduction

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*The first chapter presents the background of this thesis followed by problem statement which present the two concept of this research; employability and ambidexterity. After that, the purpose and research question will be presented and finally the disposition of the research will be presented.*

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## 1.1 Background

“We are looking for a business graduate with commercial awareness, ambition and result-focus” Have you ever applied for a job with such requirements? One might think that these are randomly selected abilities that may or may not be helpful in doing any job. But what if it actually goes beyond that? What if they are well suited to finding the one person who will fit the company? This sounds almost like a conspiracy theory, but in fact researchers have studied this type of issue for some time. This field of study is known as ‘employability’.

Employability is a concept that has proven to be a vital factor in today’s society. A number of societal stakeholders have a relation with employability (Knight & Yorke, 2006; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2004; Harvey, Locke & Morey, 2002; Berntson, 2008). Politicians wish to decrease unemployment rates, which requires that the supply of employable work force meets the demand of employers (McQuaid & Lindsay, 2004). Employers wish to hire competent personnel and take a number of things into account in the hiring process, to make sure a candidate’s ambitions, values and characteristics is in line with the organisation’s (Harvey, Locke & Morey, 2002). Meanwhile, higher education has taken measures to make their students more employable by reforming the curriculum (Knight & Yorke, 2006).

Central to this is the individual him-/herself. What makes an individual employable is skills, attributes and competencies that can be used to gain, maintain and obtain new employment (Hillage & Tamkin, 1999). It also consists of personal qualities like willingness to learn and reliability. These assets can be developed through life experiences, education and work experience, but some are simply due to personality. This is why even psychologists have an interest in the field of employability (Berntson, 2008). Berntson (2008) discusses how stress and flexibility affects employability while Knight and Yorke (2003) developed an entire model regarding individuals’ way of seeing themselves, seeing the world and how this affects their employability.

## 1.2 Problem Statement

The definition of employability has changed and become increasingly complex throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, employability was separated into two categories; employable and non-employable (Gazier, 1998 in McQuaid & Lindsay, 2004). It was later defined as a set of skills needed to obtain and keep satisfying work (Knight & Yorke, 2006). However, today the concept is even more complex. Due to the lack of a universal framework when researching employability, researchers have tried to categorise assets in order to clarify what influences employability and what pieces are more vital than others. This has resulted in a number of definitions and categorisations, but to summarise, employability is a combination of education, experience and individual characteristics (Knight & Yorke, 2006; Hillage & Tamkin, 1999; Harvey, 2003; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005; Van der Heijden, 2006).

Research within the field of employability often has the purpose to improve higher education to make graduates more desirable on the labour market (Knight & Yorke, 2006; Andrews & Higson, 2008; Fallows & Steven, 2000a; Fallows & Steven 2000b). This educational focus is often referred to as graduate employability, and often researches general employer requirements without considering influencing factors from organisations such as organisational strategies. However, one area within organisational theory have dealt with how a particular organisational strategy can benefit from a certain set of skills (Costea, Amidiris & Crump, 2013; Derla & Weibler, 2014).

An organisation's strategy to allocate resources can be compared to a human being able to use both hands with equal skill (Smith & Umans, 2015). The term for this is organisational ambidexterity and works like a scale. On the one side of the scale is exploit which is a short term focus. On the opposite side is explore which is a long term focus. When a balance between the two is obtained, the organisation is ambidextrous, meaning it puts as much effort into maintaining current business as it does developing future business (Simsek, 2009; Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Jansen, Van der Bosch & Volbreda, 2006).

Research within ambidexterity mention what assets are preferred in employees and how it can affect organisations. However, they do not make a definite connection to employability. There is thus a gap in the research regarding how ambidexterity might affect organisations' preferences in regards of employability.

### **1.3 Research Question**

How does organisational ambidexterity influence employers' preference in regards of graduate employability?

### **1.4 Purpose**

The purpose is to explain how organisational ambidexterity influence employers' preference in regards of graduate employability.

## **1.5 Disposition**

This research consists six different chapters. In the first chapter background, problem statement, research question and the purpose with this research are presented. The second chapter contains the methodology, which includes the research philosophy, design and strategy. In the third chapter the theoretical framework will be presented. Firstly the concept of employability will be described, followed by an explanation on the term of ambidexterity. After that we continue with a presentation of how ambidexterity might influence the preference on employability. Finally, hypothesis are created to later on be analysed. In the fourth chapter we present the empirical method. This chapter discuss the research strategy, data collection method, sample selection and the operationalization of the research. Finally, in chapter four validity and reliability is presented. The fifth chapter contains the empirical analysis. Which includes different statistics tests including; Cronbach's alpha, Correlation, Mean value, Mann-Whitney and lastly regression test. The last chapter is thesis conclusions, where we present the summary, theoretical contribution and ethical and social contribution, critical review and finally some alternatives on future research.

## 2. Methodology

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*The second chapter presents the chosen methodology. Firstly, a presentation of the choice connected to research philosophy, research approach and research design will be presented. Lastly, a review in the choice of methodology is presented.*

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### 2.1 Research philosophy, strategy and method

In the process of writing a research study there are a number of choices to be made connected to methodology. These choices are related to philosophy, strategy and design (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2012). Two main concepts within methodology is ontology and epistemology; both strive to explain reality. Ontology observes what things are while epistemology explains why (Patel & Davidson, 2011; Saunders et al., 2012). Since this study aims to explain the connection between ambidexterity and employability it uses a positivistic research philosophy. Positivism uses theory to explain reality (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This study is built around a theoretical framework that is used to explain a causal relationship.

The approach of a study is determined by the way the researcher uses theory. Deduction tests theory, meaning it uses theory to generate hypotheses that are tested in order to generate an explanation. An inductive approach has the purpose of building a theory by using research data. The deductive approach is suitable for our research since the purpose is to explain how organisational ambidexterity influences employers' preferences in regards of employability by using research to build hypotheses (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Both ambidexterity and employability are well researched fields, which makes deduction the natural choice of approach. Using theory increases objectiveness.

A deductive approach is closely related to quantitative research (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The quantitative method measures data and has the ability to generalise in a way that a qualitative method cannot. Also, using a quantitative method allows for discovery of fine differences that are hard to detect using a qualitative method. A qualitative method is appropriate when exploring new fields of research, where data is used to create theory (ibid). The fields of ambidexterity and employability are both well-researched, which is one of the reasons why it would have been inappropriate to use a qualitative method. A quantitative method, on the other hand, will provide the tools to make assumptions about the research population as well as provide a detailed understanding of the relationship between ambidexterity and employability (ibid).

## 3. Theoretical Framework

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*This chapter will review the different theories regarding the two different fields relevant to this study: Employability and ambidexterity. First the concept of employability is presented. Secondly, the concept of ambidexterity will be presented. Thirdly, the model of how ambidexterity might influence the preferences on employability will be described. Finally, hypothesis are created that will be compare with the outcome of the test that is done in section five.*

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### 3.1 Employability

#### 3.1.1 History of employability: Three generations

The concept of employability has gone from a simple, two dimensional concept to a complex one that incorporates many aspects. The development of the concept can be divided into three generations. The first generation consisted of one dichotomous view of employability (Wilton, 2011). The dichotomous view divided the market into two groups; employable and unemployable. Whether an individual was employable or not was determined by age, ability and family responsibilities (Gazier, 1999 in Wilton, 2011).

By the 1960's, the dichotomous view had developed into three perspectives, thus starting the second generation. The three perspectives were: socio-medical, manpower policy and flow employability. The socio-medical and manpower policy were alike with one exception, manpower policy took skills and medical condition into account while socio-medical employability only put emphasis on the medical condition (Gazier, 1999 in Wilton, 2011). Flow employability focused on the unemployment rate in society and the speed at which certain groups were employed; it was a more political perspective (ibid).

The third generation, of the 1980's and 1990's also incorporated three perspectives: labour market performance, initiative and interactive. Labour market performance measured the influence of employability programmes and training interventions, while initiative employability focused on an individual's own responsibility and actions taken to acquire, keep or switch work. Interactive employability emphasised the importance of flexibility and adaptability by exploring the interaction between changes in the labour market and personal characteristics (Gazier, 1999 in Wilton, 2011; McQuaid & Lindsay, 2004). While Wilton (2011) explains the development of employability as growing increasingly political, McQuaid and Lindsay (2004) point out that the perspectives actually deal more with the individual. To conclude, the third generation attempted to

solve the political issue of unemployment by measuring and taking measures on an individual level. Today the discussion about employability has evolved further.

### *3.1.2 Employability today*

Employability is used in a variety of contexts, but can lack clarity and precision in an operational context (Hillage and Tamkin, 1999). Some researchers within the field of employability describe employability as the competence, skills, attributes and ability to obtain and stay within employment (Berntsson, 2012; Knight & Yorke, 2006; Van Der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2006; Hillage & Pollard, 1999; De Grid, Van Loo and Slanders, 1999). However, others argue that employability is not simply about acquiring abilities and attributes in order to obtain a job, but about developing and learning these abilities and skills for the rest of ones working life (Harvey 2003; Bhaerman & Spill, 1988). Researchers have tried to understand what abilities, skills and attributes make an individual employable. Many have realised that a combination of education, experience and personal characteristics is what employers want and thus influence individual employability (Knights & Yorke 2006; Hillage and Tamkin 1999; Van Der Heijde & Van Der Heijden 2005; Harvey 2003). In order to explain the different views on employability, the perspectives of different researchers are presented below.

Hillage and Tamkin (1999) define employability as the ability to gain a job, maintain that job, obtain new work and produce quality work. They categorise the knowledge, skills and attributes into four categories; assets, deployment, presentation and ‘in the context of personal circumstances and the labour market’.

The assets are presented in three categories; baseline assets, basic skills and personal attributes. Baseline assets that are basic skills and personal attributes, intermediate assets that are occupational specific skills, generic and key skills and key personal attributes. High level assets help contribute to organisational performance and include skills like team work, self-management and commercial awareness. Hillage and Tamkin (1999) also make the distinction between ‘skills and knowledge’ and ‘personal attributes and attitudes toward work’ (Hillage & Tamkin, 1999).

Deployment and presentation are important in gaining a job and obtaining new work (Hillage & Tamkin, 1999). Deployment is also called marketing, and defines the individual’s way to manage its career, search for jobs and adjust to requirements. Presentation is the ability to demonstrate assets. Lastly, ‘in the context of personal circumstances and the labour market’ deals with

influencing factors that affect employability (Hillage & Tamkin, 1999). For a more detailed description, see appendix 1.

Knight and Yorke (2006) claim personal qualities, core skills and process skills can be obtained from higher education in combination with individual learning and development. Personal qualities incorporate stress tolerance and self-awareness, while core skills are connected to language, self-management and creativity. Process skills include decision making, negotiating and team work (Knight & Yorke 2006). For a list of personal qualities, core skills and process skills, see appendix 2.

Andrews and Higson also divide employability into three categories, but their focus is on business graduates in particular (Andrews & Higson, 2008). They divide the skills into business specific issues, interpersonal competencies and work experience or work-based learning. Business specific issues are hard business knowledge and skills. Interpersonal competencies refer to soft skills such as communication and teamwork. Work experience helps graduates implement hard and soft skills into a working environment (Andrew & Higson, 2008).

Harvey (2003) is one researcher who does not agree that employability is about developing skills in order to obtain a job, but argues that it is about constantly developing attributes and abilities. Harvey emphasises the importance of flexible employees that whenever needed have the ability to add value and help develop the organisation in a changing world.

“Employers want recruits who are going to be effective in a changing world. They want people who can deal with change – indeed who thrive in it. They want intelligent, flexible and adaptable employees who are quick to learn” (Harvey, 2003, p.9).

Evidently, researchers address personal qualities when discussing employability, thereby approaching a psychological aspect (Knight & Yorke, 2006; Hillage & Tamkin, 1999). Berntson (2008) who argues that health and well-being highly connected to being employable is one of these researchers. The perception of being employable normally tend to help individuals feel less stress in a flexible working environment since it induces confidence to be able to handle a variation of work tasks. It also tends to influence the individual to be less afraid of changing in the organisation since they have greater confidence to find something else if he/she will be affected (Berntson, 2008).

The psychological approach was also adopted by Knight and Yorke (2003), who developed a model they call USEM. USEM stands for understanding, skills, efficacy beliefs and metacognition. Understanding is simply knowledge, or traits that can be acquired from higher education or work experience while skills are general abilities applied in certain contexts or situations. They also address metacognition and self-efficacy. Metacognition is the individual's perception of itself and its surroundings (ibid). A high self-efficacy means knowing and believing in one's own ability. Metacognition deals with an individual's perception of its surroundings and what it believes causes success and failure. Knight and Yorke (2003) relates self-efficacy and metacognition to employability by explaining the effects these aspects have on other abilities. For instance, they claim that individuals who believe in 'entity theories' are "more likely to be quitters" (Yorke and Knight, 2003 p.7-8). These psychological aspects are all incorporated into the category personal qualities (see appendix two).

The evidence suggests that employability can be a difficult to define concept but researchers tend to categorise skills, attributes, qualities and knowledge in various ways (Hillage & Pollard, 1998; Yorke & Knight, 2006; Andrews & Higson, 2008). They separate personal qualities from knowledge and skills gained from higher education (Andrew & Higson, 2008; Yorke & Knight, 2006) and even work experience (Andrew & Higson, 2008). It is stressed that employability is not only skills, attributes and knowledge but also the competence to demonstrate as well as implement these (Andrews & Higson, 2008; Hillage & Pollard, 1998). Some argue that attributes like flexibility are more important than others since they help individuals learn and develop employability (Harvey, 2003). However, it is important to note that other researchers also take flexibility and adaptability into account (See appendix 1 for Hillage & Tamkin, 1998; see appendix 2 for Yorke & Knight, 2006), even though they do not put as much emphasis on it.

### *3.1.3 Employability's place in society*

Employability can be seen from a societal point of view, where the concept is mainly focused on matching labour work force with labour market demands (Thijsen, Van der Heijden, & Rocco, 2008). The labour market, like any market, is influenced by external forces to which individuals and organisations have to adapt to survive. Five factors have been recognised to influence the labour market and thereby employability since the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. They all address changes in society such as societal development in terms of technology and globalisation (Brown and Hesketh, 2004 in Cerna and Dalin, 2012).

The five factors involve two global factors; internationalisation and increasing access to knowledge. The internationalisation refers to increased mobility in the world and the increasing access to knowledge and information refers to the IT-revolution. There are also factors on organisational and individual levels. Organisations today are growing more informal and traditional organisational structures are changing into “flat” organisations that are less office based and more work is done online. The final two factors are both influenced by the increased availability of information. One is the change in desired lifestyle, where individuals seek a balance between work and private life. They want work to be an experience and not just a way to make money. The other individual factor is the increased self-determination, where people are becoming more independent and their decisions do not depend on others as much (Brown and Hesketh, 2004 in Cerna and Dalin, 2012).

#### *3.1.4 Graduate employability*

Research that has been performed on graduates often puts much emphasis on higher education, and the assets that can be obtained from education. It is evident that research regarding graduate employability value details about education such as grades in a way that other employability research does not (Wilton, 2011; Andrews & Higson, 2008; Knight & Yorke, 2006; Hillage and Tamkin, 1999). Graduate employability is influenced by things such as grades, subject studied and prior qualifications (Andrews & Higson, 2008).

Wilton investigated what types of characteristics that undergraduates within business and management believe they have developed during their education (Wilton, 2011). Students point out that the abilities they developed through higher education were mainly; communication, teamwork and problem solving (Ibid). However, they believe that abilities like creativity and using advanced software programs are less developed and that they need to obtain these elsewhere, for instance work experience (Ibid). The lack of these types of abilities can make the transition from school to work harder to adjust (Ryan, 2000). In order for graduates to consider themselves employable, they need to obtain a balance between personal characteristics, experience and education (Wilton, 2011; Ryan, 2000; Andrews & Higson, 2008).

#### *3.1.5 Education and experience*

Harvey (2003) discusses the importance of grades and reputation of institution in the UK. He claims that recruiters specifically look for graduates with high grades, and even specify which grade classification they look for due to an increased amount of graduates and job seekers. The

reputation of the institution is another important factor for recruiters and they often look for graduates from “top universities” (Harvey, 2003).

An example of how governments of European countries has tried to improve higher education’s impact of employability is the Bologna reform (European Commission, 1999). Part of the reform deals with how to make European citizens more employable and also how to make it easier for individual citizens to be employable in every European country (European Commission, 1999).

[...] the institution is but one among many factors that influence the employability of graduates. While the institution might contribute to a graduate’s knowledge, skills and experience, graduates also draw on other life experiences, including paid and voluntary work (Harvey, Locke & Morey, 2002 p. 16).

Evidently, employers do not only look for educated candidates but also candidates with paid work experience or voluntary work experience (Harvey et al., 2002). According to Harvey et al (2002), relevant or meaningful work experience tends to be more useful than just general work experience. Employers prefer graduates with placement experience compared to other graduates because they have greater knowledge of the working place (Knight& Yorke, 2006). Additionally, higher education has received criticism about how students lack experience which makes the school-to-work transition more difficult (Ryan, 2000). This claim is supported in a study performed by McMurray, Dutton, McQuaid and Richard (2016). The study found that the reason employers’ value work experience is that it improves soft skills such as confidence and connections to the labour market. In Andrews’ and Higson’s (2008) study graduates and employers alike claimed that work based experience such as internships or paid work made graduates more employable. The graduates said it helped them to apply their knowledge from education into a work situation. Employers said the same thing, but added that graduates with experience could demonstrate analytical thinking and had less need for supervision.

### *3.1.6 Employer*

It was previously mentioned that employability is a combination of individual qualities, experience and education. While higher education can provide certain skills it is up to the individual itself to pursue others; employers tend to prefer individuals with a degree as well as work experience (Harvey, 2003).

According to Andrews and Higson (2008) employers expect graduates to have the skill and knowledge to be able to work, but they also expect that they can work with minimum supervision. Employers also consider work-based learning beneficial since it enables graduates to gain work-related skills. It also gives the impression that graduates are willing to work hard to reach their goals (Andrews & Higson, 2008). McMurray et al. (2016) agree that work experience is an important part when recruiting graduates. Their study also found that employers value personal attitude, relevant work experience, high grades and relevant degree subject.

There has been research presented on what employers look for in graduates. However, these do not take into account how different types of employers might value different assets. For instance, an organisation's strategy might affect what type of employee would fit into that organisation.

### *3.1.7 Employability model*

Researchers describe assets as process skills, core skills (Knight & Yorke, 2006) and soft skills (Andrew & Higson, 2008). Harvey (2003) uses the term skills and abilities interchangeably, and therefore this thesis will from now on refer to skills where the term abilities could have been used. What researchers commonly define as skills are things such as communication, interpersonal skills and teamwork. Knight and Yorke (2006) include skills that other researchers refer to as competencies or attributes rather than skills. This model will distinguish between skills, attributes and competencies within the individual characteristics. Another dimension of individual characteristics is personal qualities, which was explained in section 3.1.4. A list of personal characteristics have been developed based on the research by Knight and Yorke (2006; see appendix two) and Hillage and Tamkin (1999; see appendix one). This list is presented in appendix three.

Education includes grades, reputation and level of degree. This is based on research from Harvey et al. (2002) and Andrews and Higson (2008). Experience includes general work experience, business related work experience, voluntary commitments, voluntary work and other interests or hobbies. When developing the experience factor, Andrews and Higson (2008) as well as Harvey et al (2002) who mention paid and voluntary work was taken into consideration. Dividing these is meant to provide more dimension in the experience factor.

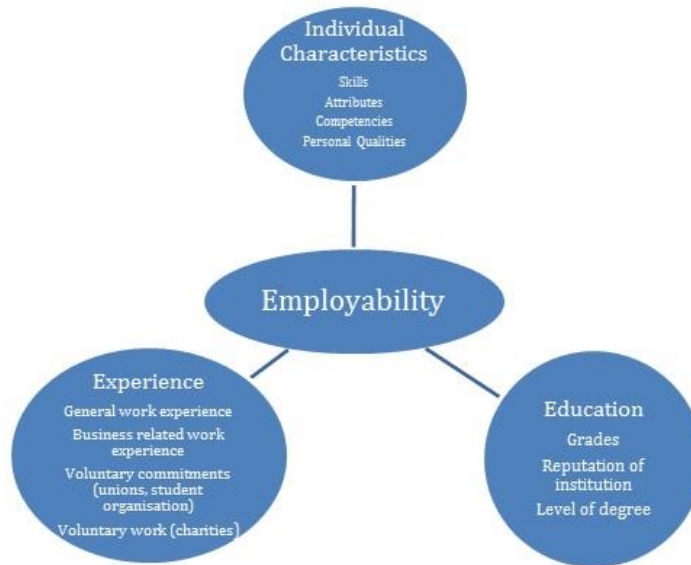


Figure 3.1 Employability model

### 3.2 Organisational ambidexterity

Within organisational theory a metaphor has been developed from the human trait ambidexterity, which refer to people with the ability to use both hands with equal skill (Smith & Umans, 2015). Organisational ambidexterity means having the ability to balance between exploiting and exploring when allocating resources (Simsek, 2009). Thusman & O'Reilly (1996) claims that obtaining ambidexterity within an organisation increases the likelihood of achieving superior performance compared to firms with only one focus.

Exploiting means learning through local investigations, experiential refinement and existing knowledge (Simsek 2009). Jansen, Van den Bosch and Volbreda (2006) describe exploiting as the utilisation of existing information, products, services, clients and market. The advantage of an exploitative focus is that the organisation will have a greater short-term performance. On the other hand, a purely exploitative focus tends to lead to inertia, dynamic conservatism and causes vulnerability to environmental change (Benner and Thusman, 2003).

Exploring according to Simsek (2009) means learning through process of concerted variation, planned experimentation and play, while Jansen, et al. (2006) describe exploring as activities related to creation of knowledge, products, services, clients and markets. Focusing only on exploration causes organisations to build tomorrow's business at the expense of the business today (Gibson & Birkinshaw, 2004).

Simsek (2009) describes three distinct sets of antecedents of organisational ambidexterity that have to date been developed: dual structure, organisational context and top management team (TMT) characteristic. Dual structure is achieved when one or more of the business units focus on exploiting and one or more focus on exploring. Organisational context entails managers being responsible for creating a high performance context where the individuals are embedded. This is also referred to as behavioural viewpoints (Birkinshaw and Gibson, 2004). According to Tushman (2005) TMTs achieve organisational ambidexterity through establishing cognitive frames and processes among senior executives which helps them balance between the strategic condition of exploration and exploitation. One solution of how to balance between explorative and exploitative has been to externalise either one of them through outsourcing or by establishing alliance (Holmqvist, 2004). Another solution has been to just focus during temporary periods of exploration and other temporary periods of exploitation (Nickerson & Zenger, 2002).

### **3.3 The influence of ambidexterity on employability**

Holmqvist and Spicer (2012) point out that while research within the field of ambidexterity deals with resource allocation, it lacks research about arguably the most important resource; human resources. They further discuss how human resources can be used to achieve competitive advantage through ambidexterity and specifically discuss the ideal ambidextrous employee. The ideal ambidextrous employee should be able to work in an explorative and exploitative way simultaneously. Costea et al (2013) emphasise specific abilities that an ambidextrous employee should possess, such as flexibility and ability to prioritise. These are all factors that are included in the personal characteristics (see appendix 3). Research within ambidexterity mention what assets are preferred in employees and how it can affect organisations. However, they do not make a definite connection to employability. There is thus a lack of research regarding how ambidexterity might affect organisations' preferences in regards of employability.

To summarise, researchers within the field of ambidexterity has identified human resources as a central part of managing ambidextrous organisations (Holmqvist & Spicer, 2012; Costea et al, 2013; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008). They claim that certain personal characteristics such as flexibility work better in ambidextrous organisations and can even help develop the organisation to gain competitive advantage. This suggests that human resource managers within ambidextrous organisations should prefer certain characteristics when hiring new staff and thus have preferences regarding employability.

The model below demonstrates what this thesis investigates; the influence an organisation's ambidexterity has on preferences regarding employability. Rather than only investigating ambidextrous organisations, this model includes organisations that are more exploitative as well as more explorative. Previous research within ambidexterity has only dealt with personal characteristics, but this model includes education and experience as well.

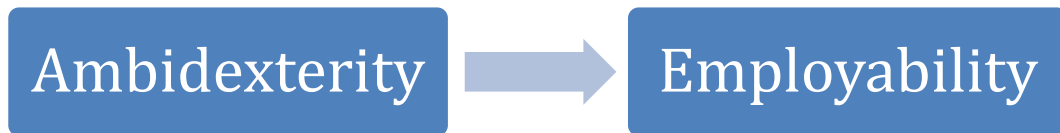


Figure 3.2 Ambidexterity influence on employability

### **3.4. Hypotheses**

The tables below are a summary of hypotheses regarding the connection between ambidexterity and employability. Tables are used as summaries of the extensive amount of hypotheses. The hypotheses concern correlations and are thus either positive (Pos), negative (Neg) or not identified (not id). A positive relation means that the more exploitative, explorative or ambidextrous an organisation is, the higher it will value the employability asset. A negative correlation indicates that the more exploitative, explorative or ambidextrous an organisation is the lower it will value the employability asset. Not identified means that the ambidexterity focuses has no relation with the employability asset. The hypotheses are based upon previous research as much as possible. Where theory is not enough, hypotheses are based upon assumptions that are made from studying both ambidexterity and employability. The hypotheses concern business graduates.

Because ambidexterity is a balance between explore and exploit, an asset that is required by either an explorative or exploitative focus will automatically be required by an ambidextrous focus. For instance, a positive relation between explore and creativity will result in a positive relation between ambidexterity and creativity as well, since ambidextrous organisations also perform explorative tasks. This is not necessarily true for negative or not identified relation between explore or exploit and employability assets.

#### *3.4.1 Education*

Harvey (2003) claim that both high grades and good reputation of institution is valued highly by employers in general, which is why it is expected that explore, exploit or ambidexterity will have a positive relation with high grades as well as reputation of educational institution.

The level of degree has not been discussed in the literature, but enough theory is based on higher education that it can be assumed a degree is of importance to employers. This thesis includes two levels of higher degree; bachelor and master. Because a bachelor is the lowest level degree from university studies, it is believed to be of more importance to employers than postgraduate degrees. While a master degree might increase merit it is not believed to be as essential as a bachelor degree. It is thus likely that all ambidexterity focuses will have a positive relation with a bachelor degree, but will be not identified with a master degree.

Table 3.1 Hypotheses education

		<b>EXPLORE</b>	<b>EXPLOIT</b>	<b>AMBIDEXTERITY</b>
<b>EDUCATION</b>	Grade	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Reputation of educational institution	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Bachelor Degree	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Master Degree in business	Not id	Not id	Not id

### 3.4.2 Experience

As mentioned in section 3.1.6 employers in general value work experience (McMurray et al., 2016), partly because work experience can help make school-to-work transition easier (Ryan, 2000). These claims come from research on employers in general, which is why *a positive relation is expected between all ambidexterity focuses and general work experience as well as business related work experience*. An ambidextrous employee needs to be able to switch focus quickly (Holmqvist & Spicer, 2013). A person who is involved with organisations, charities or other interests outside of work or studies is likely more able to handle several different tasks in a day. It is thus believed that *ambidexterity will have a positive relation with voluntary commitment, voluntary work and other interests/hobbies*.

Organisations that are either explorative or exploitative do not have the same demand for personnel switching focus as often, which suggests that *explore and exploit will have a not identified relation to voluntary commitments, voluntary work and other interests/hobbies*.

Table 3.2 Hypotheses experience

<b>EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>GENERAL WORK EXPERIENCE</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>POS</b>	<b>POS</b>
	Business related experience	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Voluntary Commitments (ex: unions)	Not id	Not id	Pos
	Voluntary work (ex. charities)	Not id	Not id	Pos
	Other interests/hobbies	Not id	Not id	Pos

### 3.4.3 Personal Characteristics

#### *Personal Qualities*

Because explorative organisations develop new knowledge and create new products, services, clients and markets (Jansen et al., 2006), likely need personnel that is creative, willing to learn new things and take initiative. There will thus be a *positive relation between explore and creativity, willingness to learn as well as initiative*. Since explore is about long term focus and future development (Jansen et al., 2006) it is unlikely to see immediate results. Thus, knowing and believing in one's own capacity to handle new challenges is crucial. This enables a person to set reasonably high goals and be confident enough to achieve them. Knowing and believing in one's own capacity is part of self-efficacy, hence *explore will have a positive relation to self-efficacy*. Inherent personal qualities such as reliability and integrity are qualities that are basic human traits that should be expected in a working environment. Reliability can include behaviour like being on time, meeting deadlines and keeping promises. Integrity means having strong moral principles and following ethic code (Oxford University Press, 2016). Assuming that these are qualities needed within any organisation, *explore will have a positive relation to reliability and integrity*. To reflect upon situations and oneself are important abilities in order to grow and develop within any organisation. Thus, *exploit will have a positive relation with reflectiveness and meta-cognition*. A working environment that has only one focus is not likely to be particularly stressful or require an extensive amount of flexibility. *Explore will thus have a not identified relation to stress tolerance and flexibility*.

Creativity and initiative is needed to develop current products, services, clients and markets which is why *exploit will have a positive relation to creativity and initiative*. To obtain any objective, it is important to know and believe in one's own abilities is important. Knowing and believing in one's own capacity is part of self-efficacy, hence *exploit will have a positive relation to self-efficacy*. Inherent personal qualities such as reliability and integrity are qualities that are basic human traits that should be expected in a working environment. *Exploit will have a positive relation to reliability and integrity*. To reflect upon situations and oneself are important abilities in order to develop within any organisation. Hence, *exploit will have a positive relation with reflectiveness and meta-cognition*. For graduates who are new to a working environment willingness to learn should always be important. *Exploit will have a positive relation to willingness to learn*. A working environment that has only one focus is not likely to be particularly stressful or require an extensive amount of flexibility. *Exploit will thus have a neutral relation to stress tolerance and flexibility*.

Since ambidextrous organisations perform both explorative and exploitative tasks, positive relations in both of these will result in a positive relation for ambidexterity as well. *Ambidexterity will thus have a positive relation to creativity, reflectiveness, initiative, self-efficacy, meta-cognition, reliability and integrity.* Ambidexterity includes explorative tasks, meaning it requires a willingness to continuously learn new things. Thus, *ambidexterity will have a positive relation to willingness to learn.* Because ambidexterity also requires employees to be flexible between an explorative and exploitative focus it is likely that an ambidextrous working environment is more stressful. *Ambidexterity will thus have a positive relation to flexibility and stress tolerance.*

Table 3.3 Hypotheses personal qualities

		Explore	Exploit	Ambidexterity
<b>Personal qualities</b>	Creativity	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Initiative	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Willingness to learn	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Self-efficacy	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Reliability	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Integrity	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Reflectiveness	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Meta-cognition	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Stress tolerance	Not id	Not id	Pos
	Flexibility	Not id	Not id	Pos

### *Attributes*

In order to be successful in creating new markets as well as up and coming global markets knowledge about existing markets is essential (Kim & Mauborgne, 1998). Due to external factors such as internationalisation and the IT-revolution, borders are more open and information and knowledge is more accessible (Brown & Hesketh, 2004 in Cerna & Dalin, 2012). Since explore is about creating new markets, it is likely that explorative organisations find global awareness important. *Thus, explore will have a positive relation to global awareness.* Explore develops future business through experimentation and play (Simsek, 2009) which suggests work will occasionally have little structure, rules or guidelines and which means ability to independently plan one's own work as well as the objectives of the organisation is important. *Explore will thus have a positive relation to planning and independence.* Business specific knowledge is obtained through both experience and education. Because employers prefer individuals with experience, and because this research regards graduates it is assumed that employers are looking for business specific knowledge. *Explore will thus have a positive relation to business specific knowledge.* Azevedo et al., (2012) identified teamwork and relationship building among other competencies as relevant

and valuable to employers in general. Thus, *explore will have a positive relation to team player*. A working environment that has only one focus will not require employees to prioritise between explore and exploit, but might need the ability to prioritise between other working tasks. *Explore will have a not identified relation to prioritising*.

Planning can include planning day to day work, short-term projects as well as long-term goals, which is why this asset is likely to be important for both explore and exploit. *Exploit will have a positive relation to planning*. Azevedo et al., (2012) identified teamwork and relationship building among other competencies as relevant and valuable to employers in general. Thus, *exploit will have a positive relation to team player*. Business specific knowledge is obtained through both experience and education. Because employers prefer individuals with experience, and because this study regards graduates it is assumed that employers are looking for business specific knowledge. *Exploit will thus have a positive relation to business specific knowledge*. Because exploit means working with existing products and markets, managers can easily develop rules and guidelines for optimal work performance. *Exploit will have a not identified relation with independence*.

The definition of exploit is that the organisation works in familiar markets, and with existing knowledge (Jansen et al., 2006), so global awareness will not be important to exploitative organisations. *Exploit will thus have a negative relation to global awareness*. A working environment that has only one focus will not require employees to prioritise between explore and exploit, but might need the ability to prioritise between other working tasks. *Exploit will have a not identified relation to prioritising*.

Holmqvist and Spicer (2013) put emphasis on the importance of self-management in the ideal ambidextrous employee. The Cambridge University Press defines self-management as: "Making your own decisions about how to organize your work, rather than being led or controlled by a manager" (Cambridge University Press, 2016). To do this prioritising, planning and independency is needed. *Ambidexterity will have a positive relation with prioritising, planning as well as independence*. Because employers prefer individuals with experience, and because this study regards graduates it is assumed that employers are looking for business specific knowledge. *Ambidexterity will thus have a positive relation to business specific knowledge*. Azevedo et al., (2012) identified teamwork and relationship building as relevant and valuable to employers in general. *Ambidexterity will have a positive relation to team player*. Since ambidextrous organisations include explorative tasks like developing new markets and products, employees

should be aware of existing global markets and products. *Ambidexterity will have a positive relation to global awareness.*

Table 3.4 Hypotheses attributes

		<b>Explore</b>	<b>Exploit</b>	<b>Ambidexterity</b>
<b>Attributes</b>	Global awareness	Pos	Neg	Pos
	Prioritising	Not id	Not id	Pos
	Planning	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Team player	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Independence	Pos	Not id	Pos
	Specific business knowledge	Pos	Pos	Pos

### *Competencies*

Commercial awareness according to the Cambridge University Press means: “Knowledge of how businesses make money, know what customers want, and what problems there are in particular areas of business” (Cambridge University Press, 2016). When developing new products, and being successful in creating new markets, this type of awareness is important (Kim & Mauborgne, 1998). *Explore will have a positive relation to commercial awareness.* However, exploitative organisations risk being vulnerable to environmental change (Benner and Thusman, 2003), which means employees should be aware of how the business works and what problems might occur. *Exploit will have a positive relation with commercial awareness.* Because both explore and exploit will have a positive relation to commercial awareness, *ambidexterity will have a positive relation to commercial awareness.* Critical analysis should be important when planning long-term goals as well as short-term goals because new products, product refinement and markets need to be properly analysed before developing or entering. *Explore and exploit will have a positive relation to critical analysis.*

The definition of exploit is that the organisation works in familiar markets, and with existing knowledge (Jansen et al., 2006). Arguing for a cause, resolving conflict as well as negotiating are important whether an employee is managing a team, doing business development or working in auditing. Hence, exploitative organisations should find these competencies crucial in employees. *All ambidexterity focuses will have a positive relation with negotiation, resolving conflict and arguing.*

Problem solving and coping with complexity are characteristics that should be developed during time at university. In fact, one of the reasons employers hire graduates are because of these

characteristics (Azevedo et al., 2012), and some employers even test problem solving of complex situations during a hiring process (McKinsey and Company, 2016; Deloitte, 2016; Bain and Company, 2016). *All ambidexterity focuses will have a positive relation to problem solving and coping with complexity.*

According to a study performed by Andrews and Higson (2008) employers value work experience because it helps graduates apply business knowledge. *All ambidexterity focuses will have a positive relation to applying subject understanding.* An entry level position is unlikely to include tasks that requires an individual to make decisions or reflect upon social responsibility, but organisations should have guidelines regarding these issues. Hence, for a graduate social responsibility intuition might not be unimportant, but would not be highly important either. *All ambidexterity focuses will have a not identified relation with decision making and social responsibility intuition.*

Table 3.5 Hypotheses competencies

		<b>Explore</b>	<b>Exploit</b>	<b>Ambidexterity</b>
<b>Competencies</b>	Critical analysis	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Decision making	Not id	Not id	Pos
	Negotiation	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Problem solving	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Arguing	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Resolving conflict	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Commercial awareness	Pos	Not id	Pos
	Social responsibility intuition	Not id	Not id	Not id
	Applying subject understanding	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Coping with complexity	Pos	Pos	Pos

### *Skills*

Azevedo et al. (2012) defined communication and knowledge about information and communication technology (ICT) as important to employers, so *all ambidexterity focuses are expected to have a positive relation to communication, information retrieval and computer literacy.*

Because this study is performed in Sweden, where English is demanded by higher education as well as lower levels of education, it is assumed that employers expect employees to be proficient in both Swedish and English. *All ambidexterity focuses thus have a positive relation to language.*

Table 3.6 Hypotheses skills

		<b>Explore</b>	<b>Exploit</b>	<b>Ambidexterity</b>
<b>Skills</b>	Information retrieval	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Communication	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Computer literacy	Pos	Pos	Pos
	Language (more than one)	Pos	Pos	Pos

## 4. Empirical method

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*This chapter describes how the empirical data was collected. First, the data collection method is presented. This will be followed by time horizon, sample collection and operationalization. Finally, in the end of this chapter, reliability and validity will be presented.*

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### 4.1 Data Collection method

According to Saunders et al (2012), there are two types of data; primary and secondary. Primary data is new data while secondary is data that has been collected for some others purpose. There are several ways of collecting this data. Primary data can be collected by using observations, interviews and questionnaires. Secondary data can be collected by using documentaries, multiple source and survey based (Ibid).

In this thesis the data collection was be done via survey. Internet-mediated and postal surveys are the most convenient ways of conducting questionnaires, since it reaches out to a larger volume of people in a wide geographical direction (Ibid). In this study an internet-mediated questionnaire was used since it could reach a large selection over a short period of time (Saunders et al., 2012). This questionnaire was sent out in an e-mail including a link, leading the respondents to respond directly online.

#### 4.1.1 Time Horizon

Research can have either a longitudinal or cross-sectional time horizon. The longitudinal time horizon is useful in research that studies a phenomenon over a long periods of time. In contrast, the cross sectional time horizon studies a phenomenon at a single moment (Saunders et al., 2012). For this study, a cross-sectional time horizon was used because the aim was to look at the phenomenon at a specific time rather than during a period of time. For other types of research regarding the same subject, it would be possible to follow a longitudinal time horizon in order to see if companies' perception would change over time.

### 4.2 Sample selection

Bryman and Bell (2011) claims that one can use two different types of samples: a probability sample and non-probability sample. A probability sample is a randomly chosen part of the population where each unit has equal chance of being selected. A non-probability sample on the other hand deals with population that is not chosen randomly (Ibid). For this survey, a probability sample was used.

#### *4.2.1 Research strategy for sample collection*

After choosing the sample, a research strategy must be chosen to collect empirical data. There are seven types of research strategies: experiment, survey, case study, action research, grounded theory, ethnography and archival research (Saunders et al., 2012). All these types of research strategies could be used together with any of the three different designs mentioned in section 2.1. Choice of strategy depends on what is being investigated. The purpose with this thesis is of explanatory character, implying that it is important to collect data that can be quantified.

#### *4.2.2 Population*

A questionnaire was sent out to the sample of this thesis. The sample consisted of Swedish companies with 50 to 249 employees and a revenue of a maximum of 500 000 000 SEK. Choosing middle sized was the best option due to availability. Furthermore, small companies with under 50 employees are not as likely to recruit as often. The connections with the targeted group were established by contacting 500 Swedish companies by e-mail. The 500 companies were randomly selected from a list of 6000. The list was obtained from a database available at Kristianstad University. While human resource managers, head of recruitment, CEOs or people responsible for recruitment were the primary choice to establish first contact with, contact information was not always available. This is why recipients were asked to forward the e-mail to the person responsible for recruitment. When e-mail are used to reach out to companies, respondents rate tend to be lower than other collecting technics (Denscombe, 2009).

### **4.3 Operationalisation**

The operationalisation is the process of developing a way of measuring the intended variables. The questionnaire was categorized into three variable groups; control, independent and dependent. Nine questions first sort out information about the respondent and its organisation. These are the control variables. The independent variable is ambidexterity. It is measured by asking how organisations allocate their resources between explore and exploit. This variable consists of twelve statements. Six of them are related to exploit and six of them related to explore. The last section is employability which is divided in three parts; education, experiences and personal characteristics. In the survey, different scales were used for different question groups. For employability, that ranged from not important at all to very important a standard five point scale was used. However, to measure ambidexterity a seven point Likert scale was used. This is partly because the creators, Jansen et al (2006), used this scale and partly because companies are expected to be less inclined

to reveal their innovation strategy, so a seven point scale is meant to capture smaller differences between respondents.

#### *4.3.1 Control and Background Variables*

The background variables gather information about the average respondent and the average organisation that this research is based upon. The control variables will be used to see if preferences on employability is affected by the respondents and the corporation where he/she works. The first two questions are about gender and age which are interesting in order to see the division between male and female and the range in age. The following five question is about the organisation where the respondent work, which bring information about; year it was founded, number of employees, two questions about the company's location and industry. The industries in the questionnaire were defined by Svenska Statistiska Centralbyrån (2012). This are interesting to ask since it facilitate to differ organisation from each other by knowing this information. The last two control question are related to the respondent and point out which position the respondent has and for how long he/she has been working at the company. This is interesting to know since experience might affect the respondent's preferences. For questionnaire, see appendix 4.

#### *4.3.2 Independent variables*

To investigate an organisation's attitude to ambidexterity six statements each for exploratory innovation and exploitative innovation were included. These 12 statements were adopted from Jansen et al (2006). The respondents chose an alternative on a seven point Likert scale, depending on how much they agree with the statements. A seven meant the respondents completely agreed with the statement while a one meant that they did not agree at all. A seven point Likert scale was used to create a more specific figure of how an organisation allocates is resources. For all statements, see question 10 in appendix 4.

To analyse the material an index was created that demonstrated the degree of exploit and degree of explore. The indexes are means of the answers. The explore index was calculated as such:

$$\frac{\text{Explore 1} + \text{Explore 2} + \text{Explore 3} + \text{Explore 4} + \text{Explore 5} + \text{Explore 6}}{6}$$

The exploit index was calculated in the same manner, but included the six questions regarding exploit. Ambidexterity was then calculated by subtracting the exploit index from the explore index, which according to Aloini, Dulmin, Martini, Mininno and Neirotti (2012) calculates the balance between explore and exploit. The ambidexterity scale thus varied between -6 which would indicate a fully exploitative focus and a maximum of 6 that indicated a fully explorative focus. However,

if the mean score for a respondent would be the same for both exploit and explore, thus resulting in a zero on the ambidexterity scale the organisation would be completely balanced, or rather completely ambidextrous.

$$\text{Explore index} - \text{Exploit index} = \text{Degree of Ambidexterity}$$

To use the ambidexterity variable in tests, a new variable was created that recoded negative variables into positive ones, thus creating a scale from 0-6 where 0 was most ambidextrous.

To measure differences between explore and exploit, the ambidexterity scale ranging from -6-6 was recoded into two categories; explore and exploit. The exploit category included all negative values, while the explore category included all positive values.

#### *4.3.3 Dependent Variable*

The dependant variable was employability, which consisted of three categories; education, experience and personal characteristics. To measure employability a five point scale ranging from not at all important to very important was used. This explained employer preferences in regards of employability.

Education included variables such as good grades, bachelor degree, master degree and reputation of the educational institution. Experience includes variables such as general work experience, business work experience, voluntary work, voluntary commitment and other hobbies/interests. The personal characteristics consist of skills, attributes and personal qualities. These are the categories developed from theory by Knight and Yorke (2006) and Hillage and Tamkin (1999). For the full list of personal characteristics, see appendix 3.

## **4.4 Reliability and validity**

### *4.4.1 Reliability*

Reliability can be described as freedom from random error and repeatability (Alreck & Settle, 1985). Bryman and Bell (2011) state that reliability consists of three qualities: stability, internal reliability and inter-observe consistency. Stability refers to a reliability over time, where the survey obtains the same result from the same respondent, should it be tested more than once (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Alreck & Settle, 1985). Internal reliability is obtained when all questions measure the same thing. Internal reliability can be measured by Cronbach's alpha, a coefficient that tests if the

measurements are consistent (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Inter-observe consistency refers to the possibility that a subjective observer might affect the result when categorising data.

A Cronbach's alpha test has been conducted to determine the internal reliability. This test will show how closely related items are in a group, which could be used as evidence of their internal reliability. If a group of questions score under the acceptable limit, questions can be removed in order to increase the reliability that the questions measure the same thing. Since the questionnaire is an internet-mediated questionnaire, there will be no risk of observer error/inter-observer consistency or observer bias.

#### *4.4.2 Validity*

Validity means the survey measures what it intends to measure. The risks when measuring any data is that respondents as well as the researcher can be biased, which will pull or push respondents in one direction (Alreck & Settle, 1985). Bryman and Bell (2011) identify several types of validity. This thesis however, uses face validity and construct validity. Face validity was obtained by reviewing the questions in the questionnaire with a supervisor who has experience in the area. Since the majority of the questions were translated from English to Swedish a linguistic supervisor also gave feedback to increase the probability that it still measures the same thing even though it is in Swedish. After discussion and renewing the questions in several steps, the questionnaire was sent out. Furthermore, construct validity was obtained by developing the employability model from existing theory and using statements adopted from Jansen et al. (2006) to measure ambidexterity.

## 5 Analysis

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*This chapter will analyse the collected data from the survey made on the responsible for recruitment question within Swedish middle sized enterprises. First, descriptive data are presented followed by a reliability test of the combined statements. Thereafter, correlation tests between the independent variable and dependent variables are made to test presented hypotheses. This is followed by a presentation of mean test and after that Mann-Whitney. Regression test will be presented to finally bring a summary of the test that was presented in this chapter.*

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### 5.1 Introduction

This analysis presents the findings from the survey. It begins by presenting descriptive data about the respondent. This concerns gender, age, number of employees, age of company, industry, and two questions connected to the geographic location, position at the company and number of years within the company. A Cronbach's alpha test will show whether question groups measured the same thing. The mean value for employability will then be presented in order to compare perceived importance of characteristics between exploit and explore. Moreover, a Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was conducted to decide whether the variables were normally distributed or not. The assets that showed a significant relation were then be compared with the hypotheses. A regression test was conducted with all the control variables except the two connected to geographic location.

#### 5.1.1 Response rate

As previously mentioned the survey of this research was sent out to 500 middle sized limited companies. According to Saunders et al. (2012) internet-mediated questionnaires commonly have a response rate lower than 11 %. The response rate for this questionnaire was 9,2 % (46 respondents).

### 5.2 Reliability

Cronbach's alpha test has been conducted in order to test the internal reliability. This tests whether question groups measure the same thing. These question groups include; explore, exploit, education, experience and personal characteristics. A high Cronbach's Alpha indicates that the items in the group are closely related while a low Cronbach's Alpha indicates the opposite and that the internal reliability is low. The lowest acceptable Cronbach's Alpha is 0.7 (Pallant, 2005).

The employability variables will be tested separately when testing the hypotheses. However, when the general mean rating is presented they will be presented in groups. This is why they are part of the reliability test.

As illustrated in table 5.1, all question groups except for education had a Cronbach's Alpha above 0,7. The low alpha for experience can be increased by removing the question regarding business work experience, giving an alpha of 0,748. This question will thus be measured separately when tests are carried out in categories.

Table 5.1 Cronbach's alpha

<b>Measurement</b>	<b>Cronbach's Alpha</b>	<b>N of Items</b>
<b>Explore</b>	0,850	6
<b>Exploit</b>	0,854	6
<b>Education</b>	0,718	4
<b>Experience</b>	0,675	5
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>	0,914	30

### 5.3 Control, independent and dependent variable

#### 5.3.1 Control variable

Table 5.2 Descriptive statistics for control variables

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Std. Deviation</b>
Number of employees	118,43	76,959
Number of years in the company	9,45	7,906
Age of respondent	45,78	9,383
Age of company	44,7826	43,93223

Table 5.2 illustrates that the respondents' age had a mean of 46 years, with an average of 9 years of experience within the current company. The average organisation is 45 years old and has 118 employees.

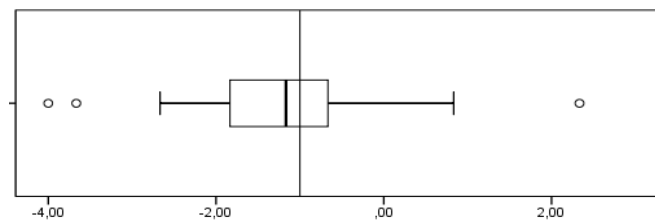
The respondent's gender was almost equally divided with a slight majority of males; 54 % of the respondents were male and 46 % were female. 13 respondents work in the manufacturing industry, 8 respondents work in the information and communication industry, 6 work in the transportation and storage industry and 19 work in other industries. 40 of the respondent worked in an

organisation with headquarters in an urban area, while 6 respondent had headquarters on the countryside.

To sum up, the average respondent is 46 years old with 9 years of experience within their current organisation. The organisation is on average 45 years old, has 100 employees and work within the manufacturing industry. It is located in an urban area in Götaland.

### 5.3.2 Independent variable

The box plot below illustrates how the sample is skewed towards exploit. A value of zero is the point of balance, or ambidexterity. Values above zero indicate a more explorative focus (explore index-exploit index > 0), while values below zero indicate a more exploitative focus (explore index-exploit index < 0). Since the mean value is -1,38, which is below zero it is concluded that the respondents on average have a more exploitative focus.



In fact, when recoding the ambidexterity variable into two categories a frequency analysis showed that 38 companies had a more exploitative focus while 8 companies had a more explorative focus.

### 5.3.3 Dependent variable

Table 5.3 Descriptive statistics for employability groups

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Personal Characteristics	4,1	0,4
Education	3,0	0,7
Experience	2,8	0,7
Business work experience	3,6	0,9

Table 5.3 illustrates the mean and standard deviation for the employability categories after being recoded into indexes. It shows that respondents on average found personal characteristics of most importance and experience of least importance. As mentioned in section 5.2 business work experience was excluded from the category experience due to a low Cronbach's Alpha when included. However, business work experience was measured separately to see how important respondents found it. Evidently, business work experience was in fact found to be more important than both education and other experience. However, one should note that low means for variables

within the experience index could contribute to a lower mean for the whole category. This will be investigated further in the next section, where the mean for each variable is presented separately.

#### 5.4 Mean of total respondents

The highest mean within education was a bachelor degree, which suggests it is of most importance. Of least importance was reputation of educational institution. This is illustrated in table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Mean value education

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bachelor degree in business and economics	3,48	,809
Good grades (more than a pass)	3,04	,942
Master degree in business	2,89	,924
Reputation of Educational Institution	2,76	,923

When it comes to experience, general work experience was on average found most important, followed by business work experience, as illustrated in table 5.5. In regards of extracurricular activities voluntary work was found least important while other interests/hobbies almost had an average of three. It should be noted that removing business work experience from the group increased Cronbach's Alpha to an acceptable level. Thus, business related experience does not measure the same thing as the other experience variables. However, it was included in this comparison because removing it would not have changed the result considerably.

Tabell 5.5 Mean work experience

	Mean	Std. Deviation
General work experience	3,61	,856
Business work experience	3,41	,858
Other interests/hobbies	2,91	1,007
Voluntary commitment (student org, sport org)	2,54	1,069
Voluntary work (charity)	2,15	,894

In order to find what employability assets were deemed more important by all the respondents, the mean for all employability assets was calculated, as illustrated in table 5.6. The five highest values for personal characteristics are presented in the table. These are: reliability, willingness to learn, team player, prioritising and planning. It is also worth noting that no employability assets were

found less than somewhat important, since there are no means below three on this scale that reaches from one to five.

The means for education and experience are slightly lower than the ones for personal characteristics. This could suggest that respondents on average find education and experience of less importance than personal characteristics.

Table 5.6 Top five mean values for personal characteristics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliability	4,9	0,4
Willingness to learn	4,7	0,5
Team player	4,6	0,6
Planning	4,4	0,7
Prioritising	4,4	0,6

The distribution between explore and exploit is important to consider when analysing this material, because 38 respondents answered more exploitative while only 8 respondents answered more explorative. This should cause the material to be strongly influenced by respondents from more exploitative organisations. Thus, the next two sections will discuss the means for explore and exploit separately.

#### 5.4.1 Mean of explore

In regards of education a bachelor degree was still considered most important, but rather than grades, a master degree in business had the second highest mean score. Reputation of educational institution had the lowest mean score. This is illustrated in table 5.7.

Table 5.7 Mean value education for explore

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bachelor degree in business and economics	3,9	0,6
Master degree in business	3,4	1,1
Good grades (more than a pass)	2,9	1,5
Reputation of Educational Institution	2,8	1,2

Respondents from explorative organisations on average found general work experience most important, but business work experience was valued second most important. Once again, other interests/hobbies scored close to an average of 3. While the two experience connected to voluntary was in the bottom close to 2,5, as illustrated in table 5.8.

Table 5.8 Mean value experience for exploit

	Mean	Std. Deviation
General work experience	3,38	,744
Business work experience	3,13	,641
Other interests/hobbies	2,75	1,165
Voluntary commitment (student org, sport org)	2,63	1,061
Voluntary work (charity)	2,00	,535

a. AmbCategories = Explore

The similarity between the average of all respondents and respondents from explorative organisations is that both seem to find reliability and team player to be among the most important personal characteristics, as illustrated in table 5.9. The reason why seven characteristics are included is that the mean of the lower ones are all 4,5.

Table 5.9 Top 7 mean values for personal characteristics for explore

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliability	4,88	,354
Team player	4,63	,744
Communication	4,50	,535
Information retrieval	4,50	,756
Apply subject knowledge	4,50	,535
Stress tolerance	4,50	,535
Computer literacy	4,50	,756

### 5.4.2 Mean of exploit

For education, exploit also has the highest mean for a bachelor degree in business. Again, reputation for educational institution is valued least important. This is illustrated in table 5.10.

Table 5.10 Mean value education for exploit

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Bachelor degree in business and economics	3,39	,823
Good grades (more than a pass)	3,08	,818
Master degree in business	2,79	,875
Reputation of Educational Institution	2,76	,883

General work experience and business work experience once again scored highest among experience, followed by other interests/hobbies. Voluntary commitment and voluntary work scored lowest, as illustrated in table 5.11.

Table 5.11 Mean value between experience for exploit

	Mean	Std. Deviation
General work experience	3,66	,878
Business work experience	3,47	,893
Other interests/hobbies	2,95	,985
Voluntary commitment (student org, sport org)	2,53	1,084
Voluntary work (charity)	2,18	,955

The means for exploit is as expected very similar to the ones for all respondents. However, after testing the means for explore as well it is concluded that reliability is the personal characteristic that respondents find most important on average, as illustrated in table 5.12.

Table 5.12 Mean value between exploit and personal characteristics

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliability	4,84	,437
Willingness to learn	4,76	,431
Team player	4,55	,504
Planning	4,50	,604
Prioritising	4,50	,558

## **5.5 Mann-Whitney**

In order to compare medians for employability assets between explore and exploit a Mann-Whitney test was conducted. The independent variable was ambidexterity divided into two categories; explore and exploit.

When analysing the result of this test, only two variables showed a significant difference between the categories; language and willingness to learn. Language was rated more important for explore and willingness to learn more important for exploit. For the result of the Mann-Whitney test, see appendix 5, table 4.

## **5.6 Correlation test**

A Kolmogorov-Smirnov test has been done to determine if the dependent variables are normally distributed or not, this can be found in appendix 5, table 7. The result from test decides which type of correlation that is to be performed. If the test is below a significance level of 0,05, the material is not considered normally distributed. The p-values for the dependent variables were all below 0,05 (see appendix 5). This means a Spearman correlation test is suitable to measure correlation. The correlation test indicates how strong the relationship between variables are and can be both positive and negative. When doing the Spearman correlation test a 10 % significant level was used, because in this case making a type I error is considered preferable to making a type II error. This means that the risk of mistakenly including false cases is in this case preferable to mistakenly excluding otherwise significant cases (Saunders et al, 2012).

In the section below employability assets that have a significant correlation will be presented and compared with the assumptions that has based our hypothesis. For a full table that includes non-significant correlations, see appendix 5, table 5, 6 and 7.

### *5.6.1 Correlations regarding education*

Table 5.13 illustrates correlations regarding education. Exploit showed a positive correlation with good grades. Since the hypotheses claimed that there would be a positive relation between exploitative organisations and good grades, the survey findings confirm the hypotheses regarding these variables. This was also the case between ambidexterity and reputation of educational institution. This indicates that when an organisation is focused on short term goals it will value good grades. Because of the way ambidexterity is calculated, a smaller number represents a more ambidextrous resource allocation strategy. This means that the positive correlation with reputation

of educational institution actually indicates that the less ambidextrous an organisation is, the higher it values reputation of educational institution.

Table 5.13 Correlations regarding education

	Correlation Coefficient	
	Exploit	Ambidexterity
Good grades	0,276†	
Reputation of educational institution		0,257†

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; †  $p < 0.10$

### 5.6.2 Correlations regarding experience

Business work experience was the only variable related to experience that had significant correlations with the independent variables, namely explore and exploit. The correlations were both positive and almost equally strong but exploit and business work experience had a higher correlation coefficient and a higher significance, as illustrated in table 5.14. The result indicates that both explorative and exploitative organisations find business work experience important.

Table 5.14 Correlations regarding experience

	Correlations Coefficients	
	Explore	Exploit
Business work experience	0,269†	0,290*

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; †  $p < 0.10$

### 5.6.3 Correlations regarding personal characteristics

The significant correlations for explore were all positive, as illustrated in table 5.15. This suggests that stress tolerance, initiative, global awareness, critical analysis, resolving conflict, communication, language and computer literacy all become increasingly important the more explorative the respondent's organisation is. Since these personal characteristics, except for stress tolerance were hypothesised to have a positive relation to explore the survey findings support the hypotheses regarding all these personal characteristics except for stress tolerance, which was hypothesised to not have a relation to explore.

Table 5.15 Correlations between explore and personal characteristics

	Correlation Coefficient
Stress tolerance	0,300**
Initiative	0,295**
Global awareness	0,272†
Critical Analysis	0,353**
Resolving conflict	0,339**
Communication	0,265†
Language	0,245†
Computer literacy	0,352**

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

Table 5.16 illustrates the significant correlations for exploit and personal characteristics. The correlations are all positive. The hypotheses for exploit predicted a positive relation between exploit and all of these personal characteristics. This suggests that the hypotheses were correct.

Table 5.16 Correlations between exploit and personal characteristics

	Correlation Coefficient
Creativity	0,323*
Initiative	0,269†
Self-efficacy	0,286†
Resolving conflict	0,316*
Critical analysis	0,336*
Coping with complexity	0,247†
Computer literacy	0,280†

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

Since full ambidexterity is reached when the value between the explore index and exploit index is zero, when the value for the ambidexterity variable increases, the actual ambidexterity measurement decreases. This was explained in section 5.3.2. Thus, when a correlation is negative, as illustrated in table 5.17 it should actually be interpreted as positive. Because the hypotheses for

ambidexterity and stress tolerance and planning were positive, these hypotheses were supported by the survey findings.

Table 5.17 Correlations between ambidexterity and personal characteristics

	Correlation Coefficient
Stress tolerance	-0,269†
Planning	-0,255†

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

## 5.7 Multiple regression analysis

The last section illustrated correlations between the independent and dependent variables. This chapter will investigate how control variables and independent variables can explain the dependent variable; employability. A multiple regression test was thus conducted to test the variables that had significant correlations. From 22 multiple regressions control variables and ambidexterity variables only significantly influenced five employability variables; resolving conflict, computer literacy, creativity, good grades and reputation of educational institution.

In order to include industry in the regression, the industry variable needed to be recoded from a variable with four categories; manufacturing, transport and storage, information and communication and others. It was recoded into three separate variables, each with two categories: manufacturing and other; information/communication and other; transportation/storage and other. Every regression analysis was conducted with all three industry variables, hence the tables below include different industries depending of the significance level of the complete model and significance level of the industry.

None of the tests suggested multicollinearity. A significance level of 10 % was used, as explained in section.

### 5.7.1 Regression for resolving conflict

The model with a significant influence on resolving conflict consisted of explore and control variables. The R-square demonstrated the whole model's ability to explain resolving conflict. The R-square for the entire model was 0,153 which means the model explained resolving conflict with 15,3 %. The variable that proved to have the highest beta value, and thereby have the biggest

influence on preferences regarding employees ability to resolve conflict was explore. In fact, explore was the only variable that had a significant beta value. This is illustrated in table 5.18.

Table 5.18 Regression for resolving conflicts

		<b>Resolving Conflict</b>	
<b>Variables</b>		<b>Std. B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Independent</b>	Explore	,379*	,081
	Exploit		
	Ambidexterity		
<b>Control</b>	Number of employees	,062	,002
	Years in the company	,023	,017
	Age of respondent	,023	,014
	Age of company	,119	,003
	Gender	-,226	,232
	Transport and storage	-,294*	,349
	Constant	4,163	1,079
	F-value	2,159†	
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0,153	
	VIF value, highest	1,331	

This means that despite any correlations found between resolving conflict and either control variables or ambidexterity variables, the regression only shows that an explorative business strategy influences employers' preferences regarding employees ability to resolve conflict.

### 5.7.2 Regression for computer literacy

Models that had a significant R-square value and thereby contributing to explaining preferences regarding computer literacy included both explore and exploit, hence the two columns. The explore model has an adjusted R-square of 0,271 which means the entire model explains computer literacy by 27,1 %. The highest unique contributions comes from years in the company. For exploit the model contributes to explaining computer literacy by 24,9 %. The variable with the highest unique contribution is years in the company with a beta value of -0,397. This is illustrated in table 5.19.

Table 5.19 Regression for computer literacy

	Computer literacy		Computer Literacy		
	Variables	Std. B	Std. Error	Std. B	Std. Error
Independent	Explore	,148	,066		
	Exploit			,021	,085
	Ambidexterity				
Control	Number of employees	0,098	0,001	0,096	,001
	Years in the company	-0,380*	0,013	-0,397*	,015
	Age of respondent	-0,067	0,011	-0,092	,011
	Age of company	-0,154	0,002	-0,179	,002
	Gender	-0,216	0,189	-0,228	,204
	Manufacturing	0,231†	0,213	0,247†	,215
	Constant	4,429	0,805	4,770	,001
	F-value	3,385**		3,129**	
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0,271		0,249	
	VIF value, highest	1,287		1,410	

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

Ambidexterity has thus not been proved to have a significant influence on preferences regarding computer literacy, but the regression analysis indicates that years in the company does. The model does not suggest multicollinearity.

### 5.7.3 Regression for creativity

As table 5.20 illustrates, the regression model for creativity had a significant contribution of 15,3 %, and the highest uniquely contributing factor proved to be information and communication, which suggests that employers within this industry prefer creative individuals.

Table 5.20 Regression for creativity

Independent	Variables	Creativity	
		Std. B	Std. Error
	Explore		
	Exploit	0,091	0,120
	Ambidexterity		
<b>Control</b>	Number of employees	0,021	0,002
	Years in the company	0,027	0,020
	Age of respondent	0,040	0,016
	Age of company	-0,104	0,003
	Gender	-0,153	0,282
	Information and communication	0,496**	0,376
	Constant	1,423	1,369
	F-value	2,147†	
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0,153	
	VIF value, highest	1,469	

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

Despite the correlation between exploit and creativity, the regression analysis indicated that organisational ambidexterity does not influence preferences regarding creativity. The VIF-value did not suggest multicollinearity.

### 5.7.4 Regression for good grades

The model for good grades had an adjusted R-square of 0,297 which means it explained good grades by 29,7 %. The variable that made the highest unique contribution proved to be transport and storage with a beta value of 0,390. However, transportation and storage did not have a high enough significance level. This is illustrated in table 5.20. In fact, the regression test suggested gender of the respondent has the most influence on preferences regarding good grades.

Table 5.21 Regression for good grades

		<b>Good grades</b>	
		<b>Std. B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
<b>Independent</b>	<b>Variables</b>		
	Explore		
	Exploit	0,115*	0,344
	Ambidexterity		
	Number of employees	0,002	0,040
<b>Control</b>	Years in the company	0,020	0,265
	Age of respondent	0,015	0,092
	Age of company	0,003	0,145
	Gender	0,277†	-0,269
	Transport and storage	0,390	0,180
	Constant	0,665	1,427
	F-value	2,296*	
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0,297	
	VIF value, highest	1,553	
	*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; † p < 0.10		

### 5.7.5 Regression for reputation of educational institution

The regression that included exploit also had a very significant coefficient determination for the model, with an adjusted R-square of 34,4 %. The most uniquely contributing factor to explaining preferences regarding reputation for educational institution was gender of the respondent, which contribution was significant on a 0,1% significance level, as illustrated in table 5.21.

Table 5.22 Regression reputation

		<b>Reputation</b>	
	<b>Variables</b>	<b>Std. B</b>	<b>Std. Error</b>
Independent	Explore		
	Exploit	-0,020	0,100
	Ambidexterity		
Control	Number of employees	-0,092	0,002
	Years in the company	-0,216	0,017
	Age of respondent	0,226	0,013
	Age of company	0,231†	0,003
	Gender	-0,583***	0,240
	Manufacturing	-0,137	0,253
	Constant	3,999	1,141
	F-value	-4,368***	
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0,344	
	VIF value, highest	1,471	
		*** p < 0.001; ** p < 0.01; * p < 0.05; † p < 0.10	

## 5.8 Summary analysis

The purpose of this analysis was to investigate how ambidexterity affected employer preferences in regards of employability. A comparison of means was made to see if respondents from explore and exploit found different employability assets important. To find correlations between ambidexterity and employability, a Spearman bivariate correlation test was performed. This was followed by a regression analysis on the significant correlations that investigated to what degree the model influenced employability assets.

To see how respondents rated employability assets differently depending on ambidexterity focus, highest rated mean for each category was derived from a simple frequency analysis. This showed that the highest rated assets were different depending on explore and exploit, while some assets occurred in both lists. It suggested that reliability and team player was important regardless of ambidexterity focus.

To find statistically significant differences between what explore and exploit rated most important a Mann Whitney test was conducted. This showed that only language and willingness to learn had a significant difference in average rating between explore and exploit, and that it was more important to explorative organisations.

The Spearman correlation test showed that ambidexterity, explore or exploit only correlated with few employability assets. However, as table 5.22 illustrates, significant correlations were found.

Table 5.22 Summary of correlations

	Correlation Coefficient		
	Explore	Exploit	Ambidexterity
<b>Personal Characteristics</b>			
Creativity		0,323*	
Stress tolerance	0,300**		-0,269†
Initiative	0,295**	0,269†	
Self-efficacy		0,286†	
Critical analysis	0,353**	0,336*	
Global Awareness	0,272†		
Planning			-0,255†
Coping with complexity		0,247†	
Resolving conflict	0,339**	0,316*	
Communication	0,265†		
Language	0,245†		
Computer literacy	0,352**	0,280†	
<b>Education</b>			
Good grades		0,276†	
Reputation of edu. institution			0,257†
<b>Experience</b>			
Business work experience	0,269†	0,290*	

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; † p < 0.10

A multiple regression was then conducted to find other variables that could explain the dependent variables; the employability assets. The regression analysis found that preferences for five employability characteristics could be explained by our model. However, unique contributions from organisational ambidexterity was only found for resolving conflict and good grades, where explore had a significant influence on resolving conflict and exploit had a significant influence on good grades. Computer literacy, creativity, and reputation of educational institution could be explained by control variables.

## 6. Conclusion

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*This last chapter will discuss the findings from the previous chapter. Moreover, the practical relevance of this thesis and a critical review are presented. Finally, there will be suggestions to future research within the fields of this thesis.*

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### 6.1 Summary

This summary will conclude the findings of the thesis. The purpose of this thesis was to explain the research question, *how does organisational ambidexterity influence employers' preference in regards of employability?*

The theory explains the concepts of employability and ambidexterity as well the connection between the two. Employability is a concept and research area that has been approached in many ways (Knight & Yorke, 2006; Hillage & Tamkin, 1999; Harvey, 2003; Van der Heijde & Van der Heijden, 2005; Van der Heijden, 2006). For this thesis a conceptual model of employability was developed. The model included three parts; education, experience and personal characteristics. Organisational ambidexterity is a balance between exploit and explore, in other words short term resource allocation and long term resource allocation. Exploit focuses on current products, markets and processes while a focus on explore focuses on developing future products, markets and processes (Simsek, 2009; Birkinshaw & Gibson, 2004; Jansen, Van der Bosch & Volbreda, 2006).

To our knowledge, which was obtained through theoretical research, researchers within the field of employability has not yet approached the possibility that a business strategy could influence employer preferences. However, researchers within the field of organisational ambidexterity have discussed the ideal ambidextrous employee and the competitive advantages of aligning human resources with organisational strategy (Costea, Amidiris & Crump, 2013; Derla & Weibler, 2014). Thus, we decided to research whether organisational ambidexterity could be used to explain employers' preferences regarding employability.

The average mean rating for education and experience considerable differences were not found. When analysing the mean rating of personal characteristics, it was found that both respondents from explorative organisations and exploitative organisations valued reliability and team player as important. This could suggest that these characteristics are important for all organisations or that explore and exploit simply do not differ considerably when it comes to employability preferences.

However, while explore rated apply subject knowledge, information retrieval, communication, stress tolerance and computer literacy among their top characteristics, exploit rated willingness to learn, planning and prioritising among their most important characteristics. The Mann-Whitney test showed a significant difference in language and willingness to learn. Respondents from explorative organisations found language of more importance, and respondents from exploitative organisations found willingness to learn of more importance. The difference in willingness to learn supports the result comparing the top rated characteristics. Language was not rated among the top important characteristics for explore but there does seem to be a theme of communication being important for explorative organisations since language and information retrieval are closely related to communication.

The result from the survey did not show many significant correlations between ambidexterity and employability. However, there were a few interesting findings. 21 correlations were found in total; nine between explore and employability variables; nine between exploit and employability variables; three between ambidexterity and employability variables.

The result from the regression test showed that we cannot draw the conclusion that ambidexterity influences preferences regarding employability. The test rather suggests that a mix of individual factors of the respondent and organisational ambidexterity influence preferences regarding employability, since reputation of educational institution and computer literacy of the significant regression models could be explained by personal factors of the respondent, and resolving conflict and good grades could be explained by organisational ambidexterity. Creativity could be explained by industry.

One interesting observation is the difference between the characteristics that explore and exploit influenced. Exploit proved to have a significant influence on good grades. From the mean analysis we know that exploitative organisations rated factors such as planning, prioritising and willingness to learn highly. These factors are crucial in obtaining a degree and high grades. This could suggest that exploit might actually value high grades because it indicates that the individual is willing to learn as well as good at planning and prioritising. Explore was found to influence resolving conflict, which is connected to communication. Thus, the result from the regression analysis supports the results from comparing top rated mean values.

To conclude, while this thesis cannot prove that organisational ambidexterity influences employers' preferences regarding employability, we see slight indications that there might be some difference between explore and exploit. There is a pattern between the results from the different tests that indicates that the few significant relations found are not just random, but could be explained by a relation between ambidexterity and employability. We believe that a bigger selection and other methods might show small differences that our findings did not capture. Furthermore, the findings indicated influences from the personal characteristics of the recruiter, such as gender and experience which could open up for other research areas within employability.

## **6.2 Research contribution**

### *6.2.1 Theoretical relevance*

During periods of time where people educate themselves to a greater extent employers are likely to expect employees to have a degree. This means that the competition on the labour market increases. Higher competition increases the importance of employability, making graduate employability a central part of higher education. This study contributes to a discussion about one possible way of reflecting upon graduate employability and takes the perspective of the employer into account.

### *6.2.2 Ethical and social contribution*

Although this study did not contribute to relevant findings on its own, we hope that it can trigger discussions about new areas of research regarding employability. The more knowledge higher education has about employers' preferences regarding employability the better it can match labour market requirements which will minimise the school-to-work transition and employers will have a more positive attitude towards hiring graduates.

## **6.3 Critical review**

The main critique to this thesis is the small number of respondents to the survey. There were only 46 respondents, which could not represent all the middle sized limited companies in Sweden. Thus, a generalisation cannot be done. However, even though the questionnaire had a low response rate, the respondents were mainly people placed in much influence in recruitment decisions.

Another problem is how the employability variable was measured. Some personal characteristics were very similar and could have been categorised. When measuring factors regarding an

organisation's strategy, the unwillingness of companies to reveal their strategies could be taken into account and preventative measures could have been taken.

## **6.4 Future research**

There are a number of areas within these two concepts that can be explored. For instance, it could be interesting to research differences between preferences on graduates and professionals with five years of experience. Through that type of research it would be possible to see which characteristic that is most central for a graduate and what that can be developed over time.

Since this study indicated that personal characteristics of a recruiter influences preferences regarding employability, it would be interesting to see how for example personality, age, gender and experience influences recruiter preferences in regards of employability. It would also be interesting to see if employers' preferences are different in large or small sized companies, since large companies often conduct business on an international level.

There are a number of areas within these two concepts that can be explored. For instance, it could be interesting to research differences between preferences on graduates and professionals with five years of experience. Through that type of research it would be possible to see which characteristic that is most central for a graduate and what that can be developed over time.

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# Appendices

## Appendix 1. Hillage and Tamkin Model

Assets	Marketing & deployment	Presentation	Personal and labour market context (influencing factors)
<b>Baseline Assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Numeracy</li> <li>• Literacy</li> <li>• Reliability</li> <li>• Common sense</li> <li>• Attitude to work</li> <li>• Integrity</li> </ul>	<b>Career Management</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Self-awareness</li> <li>• Opportunity awareness</li> <li>• Decision making</li> </ul>	<b>Demonstrating assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• CV</li> <li>• Interview techniques</li> <li>• References and testimonies</li> <li>• Interview technique</li> <li>• Work experience /Track record</li> </ul>	<b>External factors</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job availability</li> </ul>
<b>Intermediate Assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupational specific knowledge and skill</li> <li>• Communication</li> <li>• Problem solving</li> <li>• Motivation</li> <li>• Initiative</li> </ul>	<b>Job Search</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Finding job</li> <li>• Access networks (informal and formal)</li> </ul>		<b>Personal Circumstances</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Age</li> <li>• Disabilities</li> <li>• Caring responsibilities</li> <li>• etc.</li> </ul>
<b>High level assets</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Team working</li> <li>• Self-management</li> <li>• Commercial awareness</li> </ul>	<b>Approach</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Adaptable to labour market developments</li> <li>• Occupational and locational mobility</li> </ul>		

## Appendix 2. Knight and Yorke Model

### A. PERSONAL QUALITIES

- 1 Malleable self-theory: belief that attributes [eg intelligence] are not fixed and can be developed.
- 2 Self-awareness: awareness of own strengths and weaknesses, aims and values.
- 3 Self-confidence: confidence in dealing with the challenges that employment and life throw up.
- 4 Independence: ability to work without supervision.
- 5 Emotional intelligence: sensitivity to others' emotions and the effects that they can have.
- 6 Adaptability: ability to respond positively to changing circumstances and new challenges.
- 7 Stress tolerance: ability to retain effectiveness under pressure.
- 8 Initiative: ability to take action unprompted.
- 9 Willingness to learn: commitment to ongoing learning to meet the needs of employment and life.
- 10 Reflectiveness: the disposition to reflect evaluatively on the performance of oneself and others.

### B. CORE SKILLS

- 11 Reading effectiveness: the recognition and retention of key points.
- 12 Numeracy: ability to use numbers at an appropriate level of accuracy.
- 13 Information retrieval: ability to access different sources.
- 14 Language skills: possession of more than a single language.
- 15 Self-management: ability to work in an efficient and structured manner.
- 16 Critical analysis: ability to 'deconstruct' a problem or situation.
- 17 Creativity: ability to be original or inventive and to apply lateral thinking.
- 18 Listening: focused attention in which key points are recognised.
- 19 Written communication: clear reports, letters etc written specifically for the reader.
- 20 Oral presentations: clear and confident presentation of information to a group [also 21, 35].
- 21 Explaining: orally and in writing [see also 20, 35].
- 22 Global awareness: in terms of both cultures and economics.

### C. PROCESS SKILLS

- 23 Computer literacy: ability to use a range of software.
- 24 Commercial awareness: operating with an understanding of business issues and priorities.
- 25 Political sensitivity: appreciates how organisations actually work and acts accordingly.
- 26 Ability to work cross-culturally: both within and beyond the UK.
- 27 Ethical sensitivity: appreciates ethical aspects of employment and acts accordingly.
- 28 Prioritising: ability to rank tasks according to importance.
- 29 Planning: setting of achievable goals and structuring action.
- 30 Applying subject understanding: use of disciplinary understanding from the HE programme.
- 31 Acting morally: has a moral code and acts accordingly.
- 32 Coping with complexity: ability to handle ambiguous and complex situations.
- 33 Problem solving: selection and use of appropriate methods to find solutions.
- 34 Influencing: convincing others of the validity of one's point of view
- 35 Arguing for and/or justifying a point of view or a course of action [see also 20, 21, 34].
- 36 Resolving conflict: both intra-personally and in relationships with others.
- 37 Decision making: choice of the best option from a range of alternatives.
- 38 Negotiating: discussion to achieve mutually satisfactory resolution of contentious issues.
- 39 Team work: can work constructively with others on a common task.

## Appendix 3. List of individual characteristics

### Personal qualities

- Creativity
- Willingness to learn
- Reflectiveness
- Stress tolerance
- Initiative
- Self-efficacy
- Meta-cognition
- Reliability
- Integrity
- Flexibility

### Attributes

- Self-management
- Global awareness
- Prioritising
- Planning
- Team player
- Independent
- Specific knowledge (Business)

### Competencies

- Critical analysis
- Decision making
- Negotiation
- Problem solving
- Arguing
- Resolving conflict
- Commercial awareness
- Social responsibility intuition
- Applying subject understanding
- Coping with complexity

### Skills

- Information retrieval
- Communication
- Language (more than one)
- Computer literacy

## **Appendix 4. Questionnaire**

Vad roligt att du är här! Denna enkät kommer börja med att Ni får svara på några inledande frågor om Er själv och Ert företag. Sedan vill vi se hur ert företag fördelar sina resurser och sist kommer vi fråga om vad Ni anser är viktigt när ni anställer nytexaminerade ekonomer.

Tack för att du deltar; dina svar är viktiga!

### **1. Vänligen ange kön?**

- Man
- Kvinna
- Annan

### **2. Vilket år är du född?**

Svar:

### **3. Hur många anställda har du?**

Svar:

### **4. Inom vilken bransch verkar företaget?**

Svar:

### **5. När grundades företaget?**

Svar:

### **6. Vart befinner sig huvudkontoret?**

- Norrland
- Svealand
- Götaland

### **7. Vart befinner sig huvudkontoret?**

- Tätort
- Landsbygd

### **8. Vilken position har du i företaget?**

Svar:

9. **Hur länge har du befunnit dig i företaget?**

Svar:

10. **Ta ställning till följande påstående angående företagets resursfördelning gällande de senaste tre åren.**

**Instämmer inte alls (1)**

→

**Instämmer helt (7)**

Vi lägger resurser på att uppfinna nya produkter/tjänster:

Vi fokuserar på att experimentera med nya produkter/tjänster på våra lokala marknader:

Vi lägger resurser på att kommersialisera produkter/tjänster som är nya för vår organisation

Vi lägger resurser på att utnyttja möjligheter i nya marknader

Vi använder ofta nya distributionskanaler

Vi accepterar kundförfrågningar som går utanför de produkter och tjänster vi vanligtvis erbjuder

Vi gör regelbundet små justeringar på våra nuvarande produkter/tjänster

Vi introducerar förbättrade produkter/tjänster på vår lokala marknad.

Vi förbättra effektiviteten på våra resurser.

Vi ökar stordriftsfördelar i våra nuvarande marknader.

Vi utökar tjänster för nuvarande kunder/klienter.

Att sänka kostnaderna för verksamhet och produktion är viktigt för oss.

11. **I vilken utsträckning anser du att följande faktorer är viktiga vid anställning av en nytexaminerad ekonom? Att personen har.**

**Inte viktigt alls (1), Inte viktigt (2), Ganska viktigt (3), Viktigt (4), Mycket viktigt (5)**

Bra betyg, dvs, mer än godkänt:

En kandidatexamen i ekonomi:

En magisterexamen i ekonomi:

En examen från ett lärosäte med gott rykte:

**12. I vilken utsträckning anser du att följande faktorer är viktiga vid anställning av en nyutexaminerad ekonom? Att personen har.**

**Inte viktigt alls (1), Inte viktigt (2), Ganska viktigt (3), Viktigt (4), Mycket viktigt (5)**

Generell arbetserfarenhet:

Arbetserfarenhet inom ekonomiyrket:

Frivilligt engagerat sig i föreningar (studentföreningar, sportföreningar, etc):

Volontärarbete (hjälporganisationer):

Fritidsintresse:

**13. I vilken utsträckning anser du att följande faktorer är viktiga vid anställning av en nyutexaminerad ekonom? Att personen besitter.**

**Inte viktigt alls (1), Inte viktigt (2), Ganska viktigt (3), Viktigt (4), Mycket viktigt (5)**

Kreativitet:

Vilja att lära sig nya saker:

Förmåga att reflektera över situationer:

Förmåga att reflektera över egna tankeprocessen:

Stresstolerans:

Pålitlighet:

Integritet:

Flexibilitet:

Kunskap om vad som händer i världen:

Förmåga att prioritera:

Förmåga att planera:

Förmåga att samarbeta:

Förmåga att samarbeta:

Självständighet:

God kunskap inom ämnet ekonomi:

Kritiskt tänkande:

Förmåga att fatta beslut:

Förmåga att förhandla:

Förmåga att lösa problem:

Förmåga att argumentera:

Förmåga att lösa konflikter:

Förmåga att se affärsmöjligheter och utnyttja dem:

Förståelse för socialt ansvar (CSR):

Förmåga att tillämpa kunskap:

Förmåga att hantera komplexitet:

Förmåga att ta del av information och bearbeta den:

God kommunikationsförmåga verbalt och i skrift:

Förmåga att tala och förstå mer än ett språk:

Datorkunskap:

God självuppfattning:

Tack för din medverkan!

## Appendix 5. Tables

Table 1: Mean for employability all respondents

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliability	4,85	,420
Willingness to learn	4,70	,511
Team player	4,57	,544
Planning	4,43	,655
Prioritising	4,43	,620
Reflectiveness	4,37	,610
Computer literacy	4,33	,732
Information retrieval	4,30	,695
Problem solving	4,30	,628
Apply subject knowledge	4,28	,655
Independence	4,24	,603
Stress tolerance	4,22	,814
Flexibility	4,22	,728
Communication	4,17	,677
Initiative	4,17	,677
Integrity	4,13	,718
Meta-cognition	4,11	,674
Decision making	4,09	,755
Self-efficacy	4,07	,827
Critical analysis	4,04	,729
Business specific knowledge	4,04	,759
Coping with complexity	3,96	,788
Creativity	3,74	,953
Commercial awareness	3,72	,911
Arguing	3,50	,723
Global awareness	3,50	,810
Language	3,48	1,049
Social responsibility intuition	3,43	,935
Resolving conflict	3,41	,832
Negotiation	3,39	,774

Table 2: Mean for employability personal characteristics - explore

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliability	4,88	,354
Team player	4,63	,744
Communication	4,50	,535
Information retrieval	4,50	,756
Apply subject knowledge	4,50	,535
Stress tolerance	4,50	,535
Computer literacy	4,50	,756
Reflectiveness	4,38	,744
Willingness to learn	4,38	,744
Problem solving	4,25	,707
Independence	4,25	,707
Initiative	4,25	,707
Language	4,25	1,035
Coping with complexity	4,13	,991
Decision making	4,13	,641
Critical analysis	4,13	,641
Planning	4,13	,835
Prioritising	4,13	,835
Meta-cognition	4,13	,641
Commercial awareness	4,00	,926
Business specific knowledge	4,00	,756
Integrity	4,00	,926
Flexibility	3,88	,835
Global awareness	3,75	1,165
Self-efficacy	3,75	1,282
Negotiation	3,50	,756
Resolving conflict	3,38	,518
Arguing	3,38	,744
Creativity	3,25	1,389
Social responsibility intuition	3,13	,991

Table 3: Mean values for employability personal characteristics - exploit

	Mean	Std. Deviation
Reliability	4,84	,437
Willingness to learn	4,76	,431
Team player	4,55	,504
Planning	4,50	,604
Prioritising	4,50	,558
Reflectiveness	4,37	,589
Problem solving	4,32	,620
Computer literacy	4,29	,732
Flexibility	4,29	,694
Information retrieval	4,26	,685
Independence	4,24	,590
Apply subject knowledge	4,24	,675
Integrity	4,16	,679
Initiative	4,16	,679
Stress tolerance	4,16	,855
Self-efficacy	4,13	,704
Meta-cognition	4,11	,689
Communication	4,11	,689
Decision making	4,08	,784
Business specific knowledge	4,05	,769
Critical analysis	4,03	,753
Coping with complexity	3,92	,749
Creativity	3,84	,823
Commercial awareness	3,66	,909
Arguing	3,53	,725
Social responsibility intuition	3,50	,923
Global awareness	3,45	,724
Resolving conflict	3,42	,889
Negotiation	3,37	,786
Language	3,32	,989

Table 4: Mann-Whitney

	Mann-Whitney U	Z	Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)
Good grades (more than a pass)	141,500	-,325	,745
Bachelor degree in business and economics	100,000	-1,640	,101
Master degree in business	103,500	-1,486	,137
Reputation of Educational Institution	151,000	-,030	,976
General work experience	127,500	-,754	,451
Business work experience	115,000	-1,139	,255
Voluntary commitment (student org, sport org)	142,000	-,304	,761
Voluntary work (charity)	143,000	-,290	,772
Other interests/hobbies	133,000	-,577	,564
Creativity	111,000	-1,255	,210
Willingness to learn	107,500	-1,647	,100
Reflectiveness	147,000	-,163	,871
Meta-cognition	150,500	-,048	,962
Stress tolerance	120,000	-1,018	,309
Reliability	150,500	-,074	,941
Initiative	141,000	-,352	,725
Integrity	137,000	-,472	,637
Flexibility	108,000	-1,381	,167
Global awareness	129,000	-,716	,474
Prioritising	113,500	-1,253	,210
Planning	113,000	-1,265	,206
Team player	130,500	-,725	,468
Independence	148,500	-,116	,908
Business specific knowledge	144,000	-,252	,801
Critical analysis	143,500	-,273	,785
Decision making	148,500	-,109	,913
Negotiation	142,000	-,318	,750
Problem solving	145,000	-,227	,820
Arguing	140,500	-,365	,715
Resolving conflict	146,000	-,186	,853
Commercial awareness	123,500	-,869	,385
Social responsibility intuition	115,000	-1,125	,261
Apply subject knowledge	122,000	-,991	,322
Coping with complexity	121,500	-,966	,334
Information retrieval	121,000	-,984	,325
Communication	106,000	-1,520	,129
Language	74,000*	-2,356	,018
Computer literacy	126,500	-,808	,419
Self-efficacy	133,500	-,584	,559

Table 5: Correlation personal qualities

	Explore	Exploit	Ambidexterity
Creativity	,162	,323*	-,047
Willingness to learn	,012	,185	,102
Reflectiveness	,148	,107	-,016
Meta-cognition	,184	,213	-,059
Stress tolerance	,300†	,174	-,265†
Reliability	,075	,147	,215
Initiative	,295†	,269†	-,188
Integrity	,014	,065	,011
Flexibility	,005	,165	,023
Global awareness	,272†	,080	-,050
Prioritising	,041	,066	-,106
Planning	,160	,089	-,241
Team player	,194	,075	-,130
Independence	,121	,047	-,180
Business specific knowledge	,010	-,009	,077
Critical analysis	,353*	,336*	-,136
Decision making	,113	,167	,020
Negotiation	,059	,014	-,073
Problem solving	,125	,150	-,158
Arguing	,035	,089	,109
Resolving conflict	,339*	,316*	-,231
Commercial awareness	,226	,235	-,016
Social responsibility intuition	,004	,106	,168
Apply subject knowledge	,173	,122	,116
Coping with complexity	,260†	,247†	,051
Information retrieval	,176	,117	-,073
Communication	,265†	,188	,045
Language	,245†	,098	-,022
Computer literacy	,352*	,280†	-,025
Self-efficacy	,164	,286†	,105

\*\*\* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \* p < 0.05; † p < 0.10e76cd

Table 6: Correlation Education

	Explore	Exploit	Ambidexterity
Good grades (more than a pass)	,154	,276†	,077
Bachelor degree in business and economics	,178	,140	,045
Master degree in business	,190	,156	,167
Reputation of Educational Institution	,019	,136	,257†

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; †  $p < 0.10$

Table 7: Correlation experience

	Explore	Exploit	Ambidexterity
General work experience	,240	,101	-,192
Business work experience	,269 †	,290 †	-,186
Voluntary commitment (student org, sport org)	,034	-,002	-,120
Voluntary work (charity)	,153	,080	-,209
Other interests/hobbies	,105	,137	-,114

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; †  $p < 0.10$

Table 8: Correlation control variable

	Mean	Std.D	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.Number of employees	118,43	76,959	1,000	-,205	,197	,080	-,122	-,193	-,088	,056
2. Age of respondent	45,78	9,383	-,205	1,000	-,002	,431"	-,077	,115	-,078	-,132
3. Age of company	44,78	43,932	,197	-,002	1,000	,268†	,025	-,182	-,088	,408"
4. Years in the company	9,45	7,906	,080	,431"	,268†	1,000	-,193	,142	-,278	,028†
5. Gender	1,46	,504	-,122	-,077	,025	-,193	1,000	-,006	,096	-,040
6. Manufacturing	1,7174	,45524	-,193	,115	-,182	,142	-,006	1,000	-,243	-,288†
7. Transport & Storage	1,8696	,34050	-,088	-,078	-,088	-,278†	,096	-,243	1,000	-,178
8. Information & Communication	1,8261	,38322	,056	-,132	,408"	,028	-,040	-,288†	-,178	1,000

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*  $p < 0.05$ ; †  $p < 0.10$

Table 7: Kolmogorov -Smirnov Education and personal characteristics

	Kolmogorov- Smirnov Z	Sig.
Good grades (more than a pass)	1,792	,003
Bachelor degree in business and economics	1,658	,008
Master degree in business	1,452	,030
Reputation of Educational Institution	1,559	,016
General work experience	1,490	,024
Business work experience	1,568	,015
Voluntary commitment (student org, sport org)	1,761	,004
Voluntary work (charity)	2,228	,000
Other interests/hobbies	1,389	,042
Creativity	1,616	,011
Willingness to learn	2,996	,000
Reflectiveness	1,988	,001
Meta-cognition	1,909	,001
Stress tolerance	1,793	,003
Reliability	3,466	,000
Initiative	1,867	,002
Integrity	1,668	,008
Flexibility	1,697	,006
Global awareness	1,718	,005
Prioritising	2,163	,000
Planning	2,222	,000
Team player	2,543	,000
Independence	2,225	,000
Business specific knowledge	1,762	,004
Critical analysis	1,903	,001
Decision making	1,490	,024
Negotiation	2,049	,000
Problem solving	1,999	,001
Arguing	1,733	,005
Resolving conflict	1,585	,013
Commercial awareness	1,416	,036
Social responsibility intuition	1,394	,041
Apply subject knowledge	2,016	,001
Coping with complexity	1,919	,001
Information retrieval	1,874	,002
Communication	2,015	,001
Language	1,588	,013
Computer literacy	2,032	,001
Self-efficacy	1,851	,002