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# The Importance of Candidate Experience as a Part of the Recruitment Process

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## Abstract

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The purpose of this thesis is to examine the importance of candidate experience as part of the recruitment process. The candidate experience starts to form before the applicant has submitted their application and lasts throughout the recruitment process until the first months of employment. There are various factors identified that can help companies to achieve more successful candidate experience, and examples provided to what extent companies can benefit from providing a positive candidate experience.

Qualitative research was chosen as the primary data collection method and semi-structured thematic interviews for three people were conducted about their most recent candidate experience. The interviews were conducted in order to learn more about how applicants perceive candidate experience as part of the recruitment process. Based on the literature review and the answers of the interviews, an analysis was compiled using references to support the data obtained from the interviews.

The results show that a good candidate experience is a significant part of the recruitment process, and different factors in candidate experience affect more to some people than others. It can be concluded that even if some part of the recruitment process does not go as desired, it can be remedied by executing some other part of the process more successfully. Overall, a good candidate experience is an essential part for companies to attract and employ the desired workforce.

Keywords: Candidate experience, recruitment process, recruitment, employer branding, talent attractiveness

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## **Glossary**

AI            Artificial Intelligence

CV            Curriculum Vitae

HR            Human Resources

HRM          Human Resources Management

# 1 Introduction

This thesis focuses on the impact of candidate experience as part of the recruitment process. It explores how candidate experience impacts the different stages of the recruitment process and presents an overview on how it can be measured as well as enhanced.

The topic was chosen due to the worlds of technology and social media constantly changing and developing, making it extremely important for companies to stay up to date and follow those trends. Candidate experience has emerged to be one of the key elements in today's recruitment trends and it has significant implications, not only on the company's reputation and employer brand, but also, for example, on financial matters.

Candidate experience is a contemporary issue for businesses across a wide range of industries. The competition in the labour market is accelerating and new generations are entering into work life. Their expectations towards the employers are growing higher, resulting in the companies having to invest in their employer branding, and thereby also to candidate experience. (Childs, 2019) This thesis aims to point out different factors in the recruitment process that impact on candidate experience and find out how these factors can be exploited in order to achieve a better candidate experience.

While candidate experience is still a rather new topic for companies, there are relevant literature and studies available, yet there remains a lot of room for more specific research on how different areas of business can leverage candidate experience and how they can benefit from it.

Research questions chosen for this thesis are: *What are the consequences of a candidate experience?* and *How candidate experience affects the outcome of the recruitment process.* Further analysis is presented on what methods can be used to achieve a successful candidate experience.

## 2 Candidate Experience

Candidate experience is a rather new term, emerging in recent years, sparking discussions and debates regarding its importance as part of the recruitment process and the possible consequences for companies that neglect it. While the term “candidate experience” lacks an industry-wide recognized definition, it is often referred to as an applicant’s reactions and overall opinion regarding a company’s recruitment process. It measures the recruiting performance of the company and has become one of the number one discussed recruitment topics of today. (Talentegy, 2019)

Candidate experience starts before the applicant sends in their application, and in the best-case scenario, ends when the applicant is hired (Laaksonen, 2017). Candidate experience begins to form when the applicant first searches information about the company they are either going to apply for or to which they have already applied (Miles & McCamey, 2018). In addition to becoming selected for the available role, there are two other outcomes where the applicant’s recruitment process may end. The applicant may end up being either the disappointed non-selected or an equally satisfied non-selected. Which of these two outcomes is reached depends on the candidate experience and whether it has been a positive experience for the applicant. (Laaksonen, 2017)

The Covid-19 pandemic has left its mark on the labour markets. The effects of the pandemic are reflected in increased unemployment. (Moran, 2021) Due to worldwide lockdowns, businesses have been forced to close resulting in increased number of people to leave unemployed (ILO, 2020). While some businesses were able to open again, some of the employees choose not to return to the workplaces anymore if they are, for example, not granted the possibility of remote work, as some of them are simply in fear of catching the Coronavirus. (Frost, 2021)

Companies’ recruitment efforts must change rapidly, and companies must closely monitor the possible further changes in the labour markets. The competition in

the talent acquisition field to attract and employ skilled and qualified workforce has been fierce long before the Covid-19 pandemic, and it is constantly growing, hence, companies must adjust and respond to the changing environment accordingly. To meet the market, one of the key factors in acquiring the desired talent is to provide a positive candidate experience. (Moran, 2021)

## 2.1 Improving Candidate Experience

Developing a good candidate experience as part of the recruitment process begins with establishing a plan and integrating it to the company's recruiting programme. It should include clear objectives for each step in the recruitment process, for example about communication, messages, as well as other activities to engage and build the candidate relationship. The communication should reflect the company's brand, organizational vision, mission, and culture. Different methods of communication can be used. Recruiters should strive to be transparent with the applicant, in terms of where the applicant is situated in the recruitment process and providing them with thorough and accurate information at each stage of the process. (Miles & McCamey, 2018)

One of the key factors in a successful candidate experience is communication and overall transparency between the applicant and the hiring company (Moran, 2021). Notifying the applicants when a vacancy they applied for has been filled and providing feedback on why the applicant was not chosen, is one of the practices that has been found to have a very positive impact on the candidate experience, despite the fact that the applicant's job search process has ended (Miles & McCamey, 2018; Crispin, 2016; Gale, 2016). To make applicants feel valued and appreciated, asking for feedback is a way for companies to assure applicants that their opinions and views matter and they are valued (Sharma, 2019).

According to a Candidate Experience Report 2021 by CareerPlug (2021) 84% of the respondents found communication later in the hiring process as "important" or "very important" and 85% found the responsiveness after sending in an

application to be “important” or “very important”. Transparency during the recruitment process was also important for 84% of the respondents. (CareerPlug, 2021)

## 2.2 Measuring Candidate Experience

There is a number of Artificial Intelligence powered systems to use in order to measure and monitor candidate experience. These software systems gather feedback from applicants throughout the recruitment process, starting from the application step until the completion of the first year of employment. (Keleher, 2019)

When observing more closely the different stages of the recruitment process, it is possible to measure its individual parts and find out whether each specific step has either a negative or a positive impact on the candidate experience. For instance, the abandonment rate (see Figure 1) is calculated by measuring the number of people who start filling in the application form but end up leaving it unfinished. (Bika, 2020)

$$\text{Application Abandonment Rate \%} = \frac{\text{Number of candidates that quit the application process}}{\text{Number of candidates that began filling out an application}} \times 100$$

**Figure 1. Application Abandonment Rate Calculation Formula (Bika, 2020)**

If the application abandonment rate is high, it indicates that the application form is too long, thus it should be reviewed and changed (Bika, 2020). Miles and McCamey (2018) have listed the application abandonment rate as well as other important metrics to follow and measure in order to ensure a positive candidate experience. This is measured, according to the International Organization for Standardization, as “application abandonment rate, number of unsolicited applicants, candidate reactions at all points of interaction, time to fill a position, recruiter response time, job offer to acceptance ratio, percent qualified applicants, recruitment yield ratio, and quality/impact of hire.” (ISO, 2016, cited in Miles &

McCamey, 2018) These metrics help recruiters to identify possible defects and problems in the different steps of the recruitment process that can impact on the candidate experience (Miles & McCamey, 2018; Crispin, 2016; Gale, 2016).

Asking for feedback regarding the recruitment process from the applicants increases the candidate experience by 72%, according to research by Talent Board (2019). A candidate experience survey is an excellent way for companies to measure how their company succeeds in candidate experience, as it gives the recruiters an overall idea of what needs to be improved. Asking for feedback from candidates who are successful in the recruitment process as well as those who have been rejected will help the recruiters to understand in more detail, what can be changed to provide better candidate experience. (Talent Board, 2019) It is important for companies to monitor the surveys periodically to review possible grievances in them and in case of discovering some, take action and make changes. Maintaining a critical and rigorous approach when going through the surveys is also very important to remember, as the results are not always as accurate as hoped. (Gibbons, 2019)

Another good option for companies looking to measure candidate experience is to take part in the Candidate Experience Awards organised by the Talent Board. To highlight the importance of candidate experience in a recruitment process, in 2010, a group of CEOs gathered together and founded a non-profit entity called the Talent Board, which organizes yearly Candidate Experience Awards. The purpose of the awards is not only to, as the name already suggests, give recognition to the companies that manage to deliver the best candidate experience to applicants, but to enable companies to benchmark their candidate experience and identify possible areas of improvement. A report is gathered with information about the candidate experience of each participating companies and at the end, is shared with all the participants. The idea behind this is to encourage companies to develop and improve their candidate experience. (Carpenter, 2013)

## 2.3 Advantages of a Positive Candidate Experience

To succeed in delivering a successful candidate experience for an applicant, the recruitment process should include clear and efficient communication towards the applicant and transparency regarding the progress of the recruitment process (Laaksonen, 2017).

It is essential for the recruiter to be able to put themselves into the applicant's position. When all applicants have an equal chance to succeed in the recruitment process, the candidate experience increases the quality of hire. (Sánchez, 2016) Quality of hire refers to the value that a new employee brings to the company. If the quality of hire is successful, it indicates in less turnover within the workforce, a good performance from the new hire and a long-term commitment to the company. (Sullivan, 2007)

When an applicant experiences that they have been treated fairly from the very beginning of the recruitment process, and the communication from the company's side has been handled openly and clearly, even though the applicant's journey to work for the particular company would come to an end during the early steps of the recruitment process, they are still likely to leave the process with a positive candidate experience (Ideal, n.d.). If the candidate experience is successfully delivered, it can determine whether the applicant would be willing to re-engage with the company and perhaps apply again. They can recommend the company to others, leave positive reviews of the company on social media as well as other online platforms, and continue to engage in a customer or stakeholder relationship with the company. (Miles & McCamey, 2018)

Companies that invest in their candidate experience by concentrating on delivering quality are more likely to connect with the desired talent as well as draw attention to their brand. When people feel connected to the company, their experience is all in all positive, which affects their behaviour and actions. (McCarthy et.al. 2018)

## 2.4 The Effects of a Negative Candidate Experience

A bad candidate experience can go as far as for the company to suffer loss of revenue. As an example, in 2016 it was reported that a British telecommunications company, Virgin Media, was losing revenue of nearly \$6 million due to the bad candidate experience of people applying to work for them. (Adams, 2016) The calculation was reached once the now former Human Resources (HR) Manager of Virgin Media decided to investigate how the applicants who were rejected during the recruitment process felt towards the brand. After reviewing the post-interview surveys, they uncovered that a large number of the applicants had left negative comments regarding their recruitment process. It was then discovered that 18% of these applicants were actual customers, and according to their Net Promoter Scores, a measurement of how likely the customer would be to recommend the company, over 65% had reported they would not recommend Virgin Media to others. The HR Manager further researched how many of these applicants had cancelled their subscriptions, discovering that 6%, approximately 7,500 of the 123,000 rejected applicants, had cancelled their monthly subscription of \$60, resulting in a revenue loss of \$5.4 million. (Coker, 2018)

In addition to financial loss, a bad candidate experience can cost companies to lose their top talent to competitors, applicants to abdicate as stakeholders and clients, or simply by applicants sharing their bad candidate experience with the company online, which adds to the negative perception of the company (Miles and McCamey, 2018).

According to research by Deloitte (2017), the applicants who have had a negative candidate experience are more likely to leave bad reviews about the company on websites such as Glassdoor, a popular platform for people to leave reviews about companies and where candidates often do their research regarding the company they are applying for. This is damaging for the company's employer brand and can result in losing desired talent from applying. In addition, candidates who had

a bad candidate experience are likely to warn others not to apply for the company. (Childs, 2019)

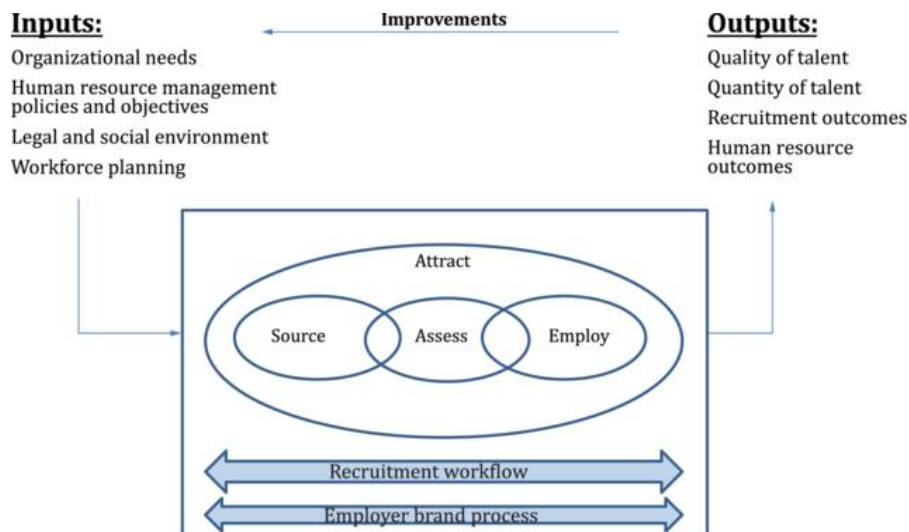
McCarthy et al. conducted a study in 2017 regarding applicants' reactions and discovered that an applicant with a negative experience during the selection process has a lower intention to accept a job offer and, for example, refer the company to others. In addition, they are likely to perceive the company as unattractive, leading to further issues within the company, such as a bad employer brand image. (McCarthy et al. 2018)

### **3 Recruitment Process**

The history of employee recruitment goes back to the Industrial Revolution in the late 18th century and the early 19th century, when the need to recruit employees grew rapidly especially in Great Britain, where the machine manufacturing was starting to replace manual labour, increasing workforce demand in those sectors. This spread to Western Europe and North America over the next 70 years. (Brown and Swain, 2009) Until the mid-1990s, applicants would find new job opportunities from newspapers, state and private sector employment agencies, or they would have to physically go to where there might be work. If they would find a position that interested them, they would have to go to where the company was located, and manually fill out a job application. Through digitalization in the late 1990s, both job searching as well as the applicant CVs started to take electronic form. The internet enabled employers to reach applicants more easily and vice versa. (Black & van Esch, 2020)

Recruitment is an essential part of Human Resources Management (HRM) (Amodeo, 2021). Recruitment consists of actions where a company hires the people it needs for it to function. A recruitment decision is made when a company notices a defect in its operations for it to deliver their products or services or development on its own is not possible or does not happen fast enough. (Viitala, 2021)

The International Organization of Standardization defines the four main steps in the process of recruitment as follows: to attract, source, assess and employ. The course of the recruitment process varies from company to company, therefore there is not only one recruitment process that can be considered as the standard process. There are numerous matters that affect the process, how it is implemented and executed. (Daniels, 2021)



**Figure 2. Recruitment Process According to the International Organization of Standardization. (ISO, 2016)**

The first step in the recruitment process is defined as an input, also referred to as a requisition, where the company identifies the hiring needs and the required skills for the open vacancy. During the sourcing step, the number of potential applicants is identified, after which the assessment step follows, where skills, knowledge, and other critical characteristics of either an individual applicant or a group of applicants are being ascertained. Lastly, employing the identified applicant to either on a new or existing position within the company. The recruitment process is considered as finished once the chosen applicant accepts the offer and is successfully onboarded. The output is defined as the quality and quantity of talent. (Miles & McCamey, 2018)

Most companies tend to follow a recruitment strategy, which is often either formed by accident or it is specifically intentionally planned. Recruitment strategies vary

depending on a number of reasons. Some examples can be the size of the company, whether the company is international, and what kind of expertise the company is looking to hire. The idea of the recruitment strategy is also to align how to approach the recruitment process, where to publish the job advertisement, should an external provider be included (for example, an AI tool), and who is responsible for the hire within the company. However, the strategy cannot be inflexible and immovable, as every recruitment scenario is unique and thus should be addressed on a case by case basis. (Viitala, 2021)

### 3.1 Employee Referral Program

Employee referral is an old source of recruitment used across industries, where the employees are often rewarded financially for using their social network to recruit new talent by referring them. Existing employees are likely to go through with a referral if they are satisfied with the company culture, and they have an overall positive experience in working for the said company. Referring a friend or an acquaintance can be seen as an employee's way of demonstrating trust in the company and its brand. (Rashmi, 2010) Companies that take advantage of employee referral programs can create a candidate pool in advance with a fairly large number of potential future employees (Shivarudrappa et.al. 2010).

Companies aim for quality hires and to reduce the cost involved in the recruitment process. Employee referral is regarded as one of the most cost-effective methods of recruitment, and it is essential for companies to focus on it to achieve the maximum advantage. When discussing the effectiveness of employee referral, a study of Vijaya Mani (2012) concludes that the employee referral as a method of recruitment has the highest conversion rate, offer rate, and offer acceptance rate. The study also implicates the need for companies to develop their recruitment strategies and raise the employees' awareness about the employee referral program to properly benefit from it. (Mani, 2012)

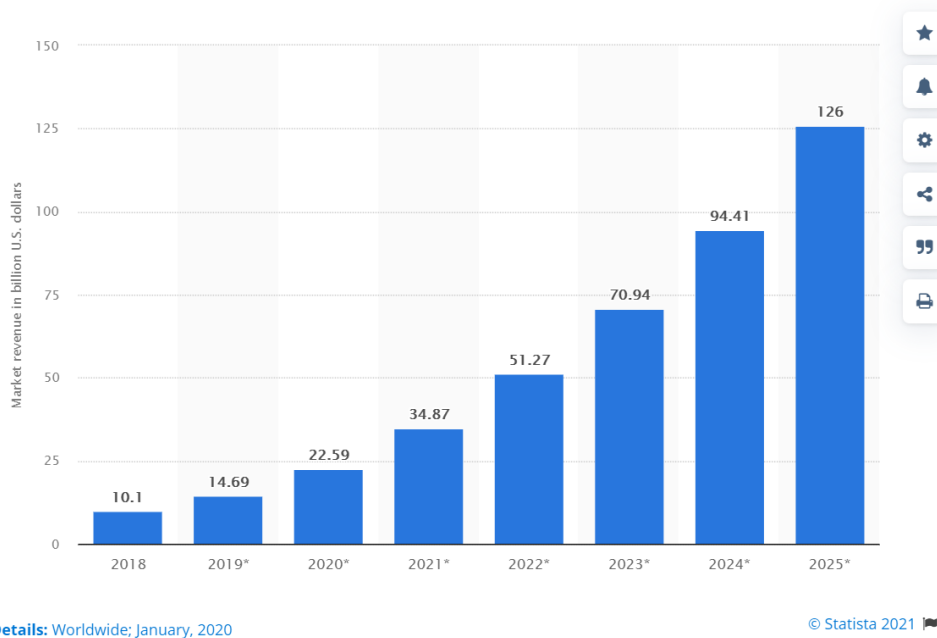
Candidates that have been referred to the company by a friend are often already familiar with the recruitment and onboarding process of the company, thus hiring

them is much faster. Recruitment processes that work fast and efficiently, influence positively on candidate experience. In addition, fast hires result in decreasing the cost of hiring. (Zojceska, 2018)

## 4 Artificial Intelligence in Recruitment Process

The term Artificial Intelligence (AI) is not unknown to many today. It refers to a machine that is capable of imitating and copying the behaviour of human intelligence. AI aims to analyse and perform human-like actions, such as making decisions and exercising judgements. (Statista, 2021)

The global Artificial Intelligence software market is projected to grow rapidly in the next years, and by 2025 reach up to 126 billion U.S. dollars (see Figure 3) according to a survey conducted by Omdia (2020). The AI market consists of a number of applications, such as machine learning, and robotic process automation. (Statista, 2021)



**Figure 3. Revenue Growth of the Worldwide AI Software Market from 2018 to 2025 in Billion U.S. Dollars. (Statista, 2021)**

AI tools are believed to improve efficiency, for example, in sourcing and screening stages in the recruitment process, and to save the recruiters time. Recruiters can leverage the data provided by AI tools and use it when creating new recruitment strategies. (Ore & Sposato, 2021) It is yet unclear to what extent companies can benefit from Artificial Intelligence tools as part of the recruitment process (Pihlajamaa, 2019).

#### 4.1 AI-tools in Recruitment

The use of Artificial Intelligence tools in recruitment has become extremely common, and it is slowly taking over different areas of recruitment processes, reducing the workload of traditional recruiters. AI does not only make the processes run faster, but it keeps the communication between the hiring company and the applicant transparent and effective, providing feedback for the recruiters about the candidate experience. (Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018)

Kulkarni and Che (2019) have identified and allocated the three most useful capabilities of AI in recruitment and selection. These findings are based on Sennaar's (2019) study on the most useful AI tools for recruiters. The three identified capabilities are "candidate identification, candidate engagement, and candidate selection". The first identified attribute, candidate identification, refers to using an AI-based software tool in Curriculum Vitae (CV) screening from the company's CV database and select the most matching profiles for the recruiters to go through. In the more advanced candidate identification tools, the AI-tool can go through different social media platforms using the programmed keywords and identify matching profiles adding those to the candidate pool. In the candidate engagement category, the AI-tool strives to communicate and engage with the candidates during the job application submission phase as well as follow up with them after they have submitted their application. An example of this type of candidate engagement AI-tool is a Chatbot. (Kulkarni & Che, 2019) Chatbots can be considered as assistants to the recruiters as the applicants can interact with them and often receive an answer in much less time than from the recruiters, as the Chatbots are available to assist the candidates regardless of the time of day

(Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018). Advanced Chatbots are even able to schedule interviews for the recruiters and the applicants, reducing the workload of the recruiters (Kulkarni & Che, 2019), and they can collect feedback of the candidate experience from the applicants and pass it on to the recruiters (Upadhyay & Khandelwal, 2018).

The candidate selection tools are used in video interviews, where the AI-tool can produce an analysis of the candidate based on for example, their facial expressions, answers, and voice tones during the interview. The tool can compare these measures with other videos that are considered as successful performances and based on the results can provide the recruiters data that indicates which of the applicants is most suitable for the vacancy. (Kulkarni & Che, 2019) The AI-tool can even recognize some of the applicants to be a better fit to another open position within the company and recommend them to the recruiter (Deloitte, 2018). Video interview tools have become one of the most popular AI tools to use in recruitment due to COVID-19 pandemic forcing companies to transition to remote hiring (Sereda, 2020).

AI-based recruitment tools have an undetermined number of capabilities, and as the technology keeps developing more possibilities will emerge. Companies that are not integrating AI-tools to their recruitment processes and utilizing them to their full potential, may suffer from losing desired talent. While the advantages of using AI-based tools in recruitment are notable, according to a survey by Deloitte (2018), still only approximately 38% of companies use AI-based tools in their recruitment processes. (Black & van Esch, 2020)

## 4.2 Advantages of AI-based Recruitment

Artificial Intelligence can be employed in up to 11 different steps during a recruitment process. This however, does not mean that companies are using AI tools in all of the steps. Companies rather apply only a small fraction of these steps, mostly chatbots, software to assist CV screening, and tools to help with simpler administrative tasks. (Albert, 2019)

AI tools are helping the recruiters by making the recruitment processes more time efficient. They can communicate faster with the applicants, especially if the number of applicants is large, and answer the most frequently asked questions. By using AI tools in the selection phase of the process, the tools can help pick the most suitable profiles from the large amount of job applications received, sort out the applicants and recommend suitable aptitude tests for each applicant. In many cases, once the right person has been found and hired for the role, the rest of the applicants in the final steps of the recruitment process are forgotten and they are left without a decent feedback or comment of any kind. Applying the AI tool for writing the candidate feedback is extremely helpful and important as it saves the company from the unwanted reputation of having a bad candidate experience. (Pihlajamaa, 2019)

One of the biggest advantages for implementing AI-tools in a recruitment process is the financial benefits for the companies, as they can save a lot in costs. Additionally, automating the repetitive, yet necessary, administration tasks to AI-tools and introducing Chatbots that are available for the applicants whenever needed, reduces the workload of the recruiters notably and can for example, help prevent burn-outs and work stress. (Kulkarni & Che, 2019)

### 4.3 Downsides of AI-Based Recruitment

According to a study conducted by Beattie and Johnson (2012), a large number of big organizations are practicing an unconscious bias and stereotyping behaviour in their recruitment processes (Beattie and Johnson, 2012). To avoid this sort of unconscious behaviour, many companies try to solve the problem by applying AI tools to their recruitment process. However, this is completely dependent on how the AI is being programmed and applied. (Kulp, 2021) The AI tool does not know what a bias pattern is and therefore how to avoid using it (Black and van Esch, 2020).

The bias behaviour in an AI application can be seen already at the point where an applicant is starting to search for a job. Different social media platforms are

constantly following the users' actions on internet. While one has been searching for a job for several months and another just started, the platform's algorithm is more likely to show the job ads to the person who has been searching for the job longer, as they would be more likely to click and open the job ad. (Kulp, 2021)

When an AI is performing a CV screening, naturally the thought is that the machine would be fair and unbiased, and it would overlook all the factors that a human performing the screening could do. In reality, the AI acts as according to the patterns programmed by humans and is therefore likely to make biased decisions too. (Miller, 2018)

Large companies that employ AI tools such as image recognition need to pay attention when programming the algorithm. If the AI is given data of the qualities that the selected employees have had from a period of 30 years can turn out to be very problematic. If the company has hired mostly men over the past 30 years, the AI tool will automatically favour men. Removing gender traits from the algorithm does not help as gender can manifest in other aspects, such as height and hobbies. However, if all these traits would be removed, a lot of important information that could be relevant to the position could be lost. (Palmgren, 2021)

AI tools cannot base their decisions on thinking but calculating, which is directly based on the data it has been given. Hence, AI cannot justify its decisions or explain why it led to a specific result. While using AI tools has various advantages, a human should always be involved at some point during the recruitment process so that the outcome of the process reflects of a human deliberation rather than a calculation performed by a machine. (Palmgren, 2021)

#### 4.3.1 The Amazon Case

In 2018, Reuters reported about a bias Artificial Intelligence recruitment tool the online retailer giant Amazon Inc. had been using for several years. It was discovered that their recruitment tool was biased against women; in other words, the tool rejected candidates that had included in their resumes the words "women's" and a name of two different colleges that have only women as

students. Amazon had taught the tool to look for the same details as in the resumes the company had received within the past 10 years, most of them being from men as the technology industry is very much male dominated. Although the tool was eventually discarded, it was still said that the recruiters in Amazon had used the recommendations provided by the tool when recruiting new talent. (Dastin, 2018)

Amazon's lack of both gender and racial diversity is not the only such example in the industry, but it is probably the best known. In May 2021, Amazon was sued for allegedly biased behaviour when hiring Black and female workers. (Larson, 2021) The company keeps reaching the news headlines in a negative light, resulting in a bad reputation and weakening its employer brand. Amazon has been reported as treating their warehouse workers poorly and the company has been accused of practicing a short-term-employment model, where employees have little chance of advancing in their careers, and of using technology to hire, track and manage employees. (Kantor, Weise & Ashford, 2021)

## 5 Employer Branding

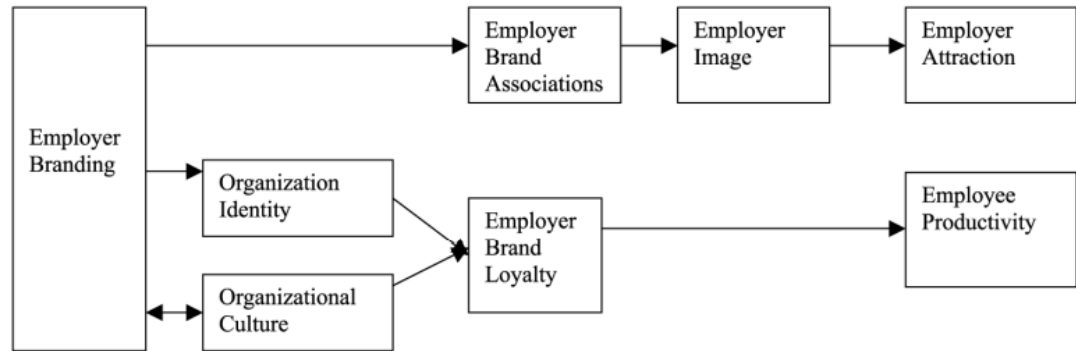
“Employer branding is about knowing what you want your candidates to think and feel about working at your organisation” (McVeigh, 2020).

Another way of describing the concept of employer brand and how companies should strive to use it is to affect people’s opinions and attitudes positively towards the company. A brand is an important tool in creating consumer engagement with the company’s identity. Over time, companies have become more aware of the importance of employer brand, and how it correlates with different areas in the organization. (Aldousari et.al. 2017) Some of these areas can be, but are not limited to, different recruiting activities, employee performance, and customer loyalty (Monteiro et.al. 2020).

A good candidate experience is almost directly linked with employer branding. To maintain a good employer brand, it is essential for companies to keep up with respect to the trends of what employees are looking for in their future employers. These matters tend to change; different age groups value different things, different countries can emphasize different trends. These can be for example, the work–life balance, diversity and equality in workplace, or even simpler, smaller things such as free breakfast. (Conway, 2021)

### 5.1 Why Employer Branding Is Important

There is no shortage of evidence that today job applicants spend a notable amount of time in doing research on the companies they are applying to, and go through web pages such as Glassdoor, where current and old employees, as well as applicants who have gone through or are going through the recruitment process, can discuss how the work environment of the company is, how they were treated during the recruitment process, and share other information about the companies. From these web pages, the applicants form a preconception towards the company they plan on applying to. (CareerPlug, 2021)



**Figure 4: Employer Branding Frame from the Perspective of a Potential Employee (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)**

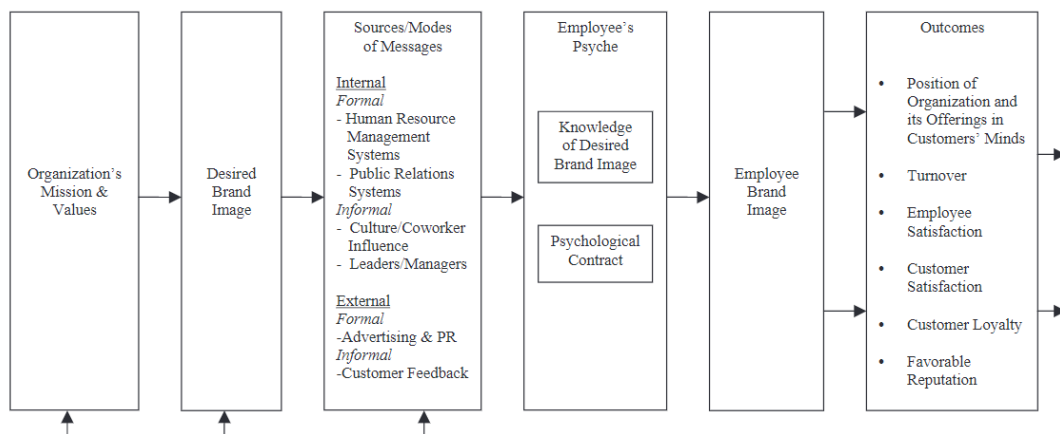
Figure 4 demonstrates the flow of employer branding from the perspective of a potential employee. When potential employees are in contact with a company's brand that is an outcome of the company's employer branding, they start to develop an employer brand image which then, in a desired case, leads to employer attraction. Potential employees are constantly being influenced by different information sources regarding the company's brand, which are not controlled by the company itself. Hence, competent employer branding is actively identifying these information sources and strives to develop them accordingly. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)

Employer branding can be used to influence organizational identity and culture, which in turn affects positively on employer brand loyalty (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Organizational identity is referred to as a collection of features that are essential for the company and permanent in time. These features distinguish the company from others. Some scholars argue that organizational identity is an ongoing process where the company redefines itself over time. (Paalumäki, 2020) Organizational culture stands for behaviour, values, operating methods, and other factors that form the company's norms (Emergy, 2020). Once the employer brand loyalty has been reached it contributes to higher employee productivity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

## 5.2 Employee Branding

Employee branding is a process where the employees of a company absorb the desired brand image and are motivated to advocate and share about the image to customers as well as other people. The purpose of employee branding is for companies to have their employees to both consciously and unconsciously advocate their brand image. (Miles & Mangold, 2005)

Miles and Mangold (2005) suggest the employee branding process flows as presented in Figure 5. The employee branding process begins with analysing the company's values, culture, competition, the brand's present image, and mission. (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014) These matters compile a foundation which defines the desired brand image (Miles & Mangold, 2005).



**Figure 5. Employee Branding Process. (Miles & Mangold, 2005)**

Messages are divided into internal and external as well as informal and formal. They should be clear and communicate the behaviour and attitude the company wants their employees to see. The messages should be carefully planned and delivered through all message channels to make sure the employee branding process operates effectively. (Miles & Mangold, 2005)

According to Miles and Mangold (2005), if the employee branding is successful, companies can benefit from it through improved employee satisfaction and

loyalty, decreased employee turnover, good reputation among stakeholders, and overall higher customer satisfaction (Miles & Mangold, 2005).

Employee brand also relates to employee happiness at workplace. A study conducted by Social Market Foundation (2015) found out that happy employees are 20% more productive, resulting in sales raising by 37%. (SMF, 2015)

## **6 Social Recruitment**

### **6.1 Utilizing Social Media in Recruitment**

Social recruitment refers to a company's ability to exploit social media channels and websites in recruiting and attracting talent. It also enables companies to engage and build connections with candidates whilst strengthening the employer brand and candidate experience. (Roland, 2020)

Using social media platforms to find talent enables recruiters to contact people who might not have heard about the open vacancy or have not considered changing their job; these candidates are often referred to as passive candidates. If the companies wish to target and attract passive candidates, it is necessary to stay up to date with the newest social recruitment trends as well as be willing to develop and modify the recruitment strategy as necessary. (Doherty, 2010)

Creating accounts on social media platforms is free for people as well as for businesses. There are advanced users, for example in LinkedIn, for both applicants and recruiters. To access an advanced profile, the user must pay a small fee. (Slovensky & Ross, 2012)

However, LinkedIn, which was originally meant to be a platform for people and businesses to connect, has gone through changes in the recent years. Recruiters struggle to find good candidates on LinkedIn due to the change of content in the user postings. LinkedIn is gradually changing to become more like Facebook or

Twitter, where people share more personal content and stories, instead of focusing solely on work and business related content. (Jacobs, 2021)

Using social media for recruiting activities is very cost-effective for companies and it decreases the amount of time spent in the overall recruitment process. Recruiters can, for example, tweet a job advertisement via Twitter and it can be retweeted as many times as needed; it can reach thousands of people in only few minutes. By contrast, using job-boards the applicant must find the job ad themselves and apply. (Madia, 2011)

The social media platforms enable the possible candidate's personal information and data to be available for the recruiters, making it easier for them to reach out to the talent that best reflects to the role they are hiring for (Doherty, 2010). Reading the candidates social media profiles gives the recruiters access to information which provides a more detailed and perhaps realistic picture of the candidate (Slovensky & Ross, 2012).

Using social recruitment can also have an effect on the candidate experience that has most likely been planned to carry out through the traditional recruitment process where the applicant approaches the company rather than the company approaching the candidate. Hence, it is crucial for the company to make sure that the candidate experience remains the same no matter how the candidates apply. (Doherty, 2010)

78% of the candidates who took part in a survey by Career Builder (2017) believe that candidate experience is a direct indicator of how the company is treating its employees. Companies can use their social media presence to gather more information on how their applicants feel and use it to evaluate whether they need to make changes in their recruitment processes to achieve better candidate experience. (Oswal, 2018)

## 6.2 Social Recruitment Methods

In today's world, the internet is the main channel for sourcing and acquiring new talent. Companies advertise open vacancies on their company website as well as in other job advertisement web sites and social media channels, such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. The importance of social media as a channel of recruiting new talent is increasing notably. (Viitala, 2021)

Social media presence is an essential part of businesses' image and reputation (Doherty, 2010), it directly portrays the company's relevance and adaptability to change. Companies that prefer to exclude social media from their recruitment strategy should at least familiarize themselves with some of the platforms to gain understanding how their competitors are utilizing them and what they are doing in social media (Madia, 2011). The key outcome from being active on social media is a positive candidate experience, which all companies should strive for (Miles & McCamey, 2018).

To attract the best talent, companies must be willing to be present online (Madia, 2011). This enables companies to interact with candidates and customers, making it easier for them to access information and other news regarding the company. Using social media as a channel to network with customers and candidates can help companies to attract new talent if the company invests in their social media platforms and succeeds in standing out. (Doherty, 2010) Additionally, being active in social media allows companies to respond to comments and questions fast and address any complaints or criticism they might receive (Belton, 2014). However, it is important for companies to understand how to utilize social media the best way for their business, in order to avoid wasting time and resources for unsuitable practices that do not benefit their business (Doherty, 2010).

A study conducted by Alden and Harris (2013) suggests that businesses who are looking to commence or develop their social recruitment activities, should focus on learning how to deliver a positive candidate experience and build their social

recruitment strategy around it. This enables the companies to obtain competitive advantage as regards both the quantity and quality of potential candidates. (Allden & Harris, 2013)

### 6.3 Traditional Recruitment Methods

In traditional recruitment, job ads are placed in newspapers, job-boards, job fairs, as well as in public and private employment agencies. When recruiting by using newspapers or magazines, employers can reach the candidates who are already familiar with the local area and the community, most likely with the company as well. Magazines would be used to reach candidates that are specialized in a certain field. (Noe et.al. 2014, cited in Villeda & McCamey, 2019)

Private employment agencies, also referred to as “head-hunters”, focus mainly on recruiting white-collar employees who are already working in another company (Noe et.al. 2014, cited in Villeda & McCamey, 2019). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) describes public employment services as follows: “They plan and execute many of the active, and sometimes passive, labour market policies used to help workers enter the labour market, to facilitate labour market adjustments, and to cushion the impact of economic transitions. To do this, public employment services typically provide labour market information, offer job-search assistance and placement services, administer unemployment insurance benefits, and manage various labour market programmes (worker displacement assistance, retraining, public service employment, etc.). Public employment services must provide these services to both jobseekers and enterprises.” (ILO, 2009)

Job fairs, also referred to as career fairs, are events organized for job seekers to meet with recruiters from different companies at one event (Doyle, 2021). Job fairs often target university students and fresh graduates and are low cost for companies. However, job fairs do not always attract the desired amount of participants and there is no guarantee that the candidates that attend represent

the talent companies seek to hire. (Fleischmann, 1993, cited in Villeda & McCamey, 2019)

When comparing social recruitment and traditional recruitment, both include advantages as well as disadvantages (Shalini, 2020). However, whether a company decides to follow traditional recruitment methods or not, it should strive to deliver a positive candidate experience (Doherty, 2010). For the majority of companies, saving time and money is essential when recruiting new talent, and in social recruitment both of these targets are usually met. In addition, companies are able to reach a wider variety of candidates than by using traditional recruitment methods. While social recruitment seems to be more efficient, not all businesses benefit from it. For example, small companies or companies that are hiring in small cities or towns can reach their target talent by using traditional recruitment methods only. (Shalini, 2020)

## 7 Interviews

The following section focuses on the interviews regarding candidate experience, conducted for three people who work for different companies. All of the interviewees applied for open roles in their now current company, thereby they were not sourced by recruiters. The interviewees agreed to represent their companies, but the names and other information which may refer to their identification, were agreed to keep anonymous. The interviewees are as follows:

Interviewee A: Deloitte

Interviewee B: Accenture

Interviewee C: ABB

The interviews were conducted via phone and video calls with the interviewees, and they were done in English. All of the interviewees described and explained more in detail their candidate experience.

### 7.1 Research Method

This thesis is conducted using a qualitative research method. Qualitative research seeks to understand the phenomenon what is being researched from the point of view of the people who are, as in this thesis, being interviewed.

Secondary sources, such as articles, textbooks, and existing studies are used. (Juuti & Puusa, 2020)

The interviews were conducted as semi-structured and thematic interviews. In semi-structured interviews, the questions have been determined beforehand and are same for all interviewees, and there are no ready-made answers given. In thematic interviews, the topics are predefined, but the interview flow is more flexible and is applied according to the situation. There is not a strict order defined in which the interviewer asks the questions. Thematic interviews require a sufficiently deep knowledge of the topic. (Näpärä, 2017) Three interviews were planned and executed based on the theory gathered for this thesis.

## 7.2 Overview of the Interviews

The interviewees were asked all the same basic questions. In addition, each interviewee was asked more individualised questions. Due to the anonymity of the interviewees, the interviews were not recorded.

	Company	Interview method	Duration of the interview	Date	Work experience (years)
<b>Interviewee A</b>	Deloitte	Video call	45 minutes	Week 43	1 year as full-time, 5 years as part-time
<b>Interviewee B</b>	Accenture	Phone call	1 hour 15 minutes	Week 43	4 years
<b>Interviewee C</b>	ABB	Phone call	1 hour	Week 43	27 years

Table 1. Interview Information.

In Table 1 are listed the company, the interview method, time, and duration of the interviews and how many years of experience the interviewee has in work life. Each interview was conducted in week 43 during the year 2021 and they took approximately 1 hour. The transcribed interviews can be found in Appendix 1.

The number of interviewees is extremely small. Therefore, they results should be viewed only as slightly indicative.

## 7.3 Summary of Interviews

### 7.3.1 Interviewee A

Interviewee A works for Deloitte, which is one of the world's largest accountancy and audit firms, providing services also in tax and legal, consulting, and risk advisory, being the leading in their industry. In 2019 Brand Finance ranked Deloitte as the third strongest brand. (Deloitte, n.d.)

Interviewee A has been a full-time employee at Deloitte for one year and has 5 years of part-time work experience in addition to that. She applied for the position before doing any further research about the company, as she found the position interesting and wanted to apply right away. However, after applying she investigated more generally about the company. The interviewee also stated that usually she does her research before applying for jobs and if she sees very negative reviews or hears only negative comments from her acquaintances, she is most likely not to apply at all.

The recruitment process for Deloitte was very efficient and fast-moving. The process from applying to hiring the interviewee took place over two weeks. This was due to the fact that the position needed to be filled urgently. At times, she felt the process was rushed, but on the other hand, she was happy that the hiring happened as fast as it did. The communication was very efficient, and the recruiter was very helpful during the whole process, checking in on her and actively informing her about any changes.

The interviewee was hired for a specific project, thereby the recruiters could not tell very detailed information about the work tasks, which she later on saw as a negative thing as according to her, she would have thought twice before accepting the offer. In the end, the job description did not match the actual tasks as expected.

Overall, interviewee A had a good candidate experience with Deloitte. She found the effectiveness of the overall recruitment process to be very positive. According

to her, the fact that she was eager to work for one of the Big 4, which is a nickname used as to refer the world's leading accounting firms Deloitte, KPMG, EY, and PwC, had a big impact on her decision to accept the job offer. She believes that she would have most likely, under any situation, accepted the offer as she really wanted to work for Deloitte.

The interviewee stated that candidate experience is very important to her and that she would drop out from the recruitment process if the recruiter were very unprofessional and the process would seem very unclear, as she believes it tells a lot about the company and its culture how they assemble a recruitment process.

The recruiter at Deloitte would ask the interviewee for feedback after every interview and also share her feedback or the feedback from the managers with her. She was also asked for feedback about the overall recruitment process via a survey once she had started the job. She felt the method of collecting the feedback was good, but she would have rather given feedback via a survey, for example, at the end of the recruitment process, as she felt that she could not be necessarily completely honest when asked for feedback during a phone call with the recruiter, as she was afraid it would somehow impact on her chances on being chosen for the job.

The interviewee believes that Deloitte has invested in their candidate experience, and they had a clear process that was followed, which made her feel she can trust the company.

### 7.3.2 Interviewee B

Interviewee B has been working for Accenture for 2 years, and has four years of work experience altogether. Accenture is involved in across more than 40 industries in five industry groups, providing services and solutions. Accenture is the largest independent technology services provider. (Accenture, n.d.) The world's leading independent brand valuation consultancy, Brand Finance, ranked Accenture as the world's most valuable and strongest IT services brand for third year in a row in 2021 (BrandFinance, 2021).

The interviewee applied for Accenture after doing her own research about the company. She googled Accenture and also discussed the company with her friend who had been employed by Accenture before. The comments from her friend were very negative and he did not recommend the company at all. However, she was going to apply to another country and based on the reviews she read online, most of them being positive, she decided to apply. She thinks reading reviews and doing research on the company is very important, even though not all the comments should be taken seriously and those should always be read with certain critical objectivity. Nevertheless, if she sees a lot of people agreeing on something, she believes there is some truth behind it.

The recruitment process at Accenture took longer than she would have expected. From the last interview until the job offer it took about a month. The recruiter was extremely helpful and answered all of her questions and tried explaining her that due to it being a summer vacation period, the interviewee was still not happy for the process to take such a long time. In the beginning of the recruitment process, she was explained how the process would move forward, but in her case, it did not work as planned. Communication was good from the recruiter's side. The interviewee did have to contact the recruiter a few times to ask about updates on the recruitment process. Overall, she had a good candidate experience, although she recognizes points requiring improvement in the process.

According to the interviewee, the interviewers were acting professionally, and she had very positive interview experiences. The recruiter was skilled and gave a very good image of the company.

The job description did not match the tasks that eventually formed her duties. The interviewee states that it was fully due to the project being delayed multiple times and it did not bother her, as she was able to concentrate on a selection of trainings provided by Accenture. Her opinion towards Accenture changed little bit once she started in her new role. She experienced a lot of onboarding issues and the project seemed very unorganized. She got the idea that the company did not have anything under control at that time. She was also told that she could help

out in other projects, but once she started, the interviewee was told that it was not possible.

The interviewee sees candidate experience as a very important part of a recruitment process. She has previously turned down an offer due to the candidate experience being extremely negative. For her, a bad candidate experience means unprofessional behaviour from the recruiter as well as from the people she is in contact with during the recruitment process. She also appreciates accuracy and punctuality: for example, when she is given a time for an interview, she expects all the participants to show up on time. She states that if she had known how unorganized the project was when she started, she would not have necessarily accepted the offer.

She was very happy to learn that at Accenture, feedback is very valued. She received a survey about the recruitment process after she had started in her new role.

### 7.3.3 Interviewee C

Interviewee C is employed at ABB, which is a leading global technology company. The company operates in 19 different industries around the world (ABB, n.d.). According to Universum research for Professional Most Attractive Employers in Finland, ABB ranked 2<sup>nd</sup> in 2020 as most attractive employer for technology professionals in Finland. (Universum, 2020)

The interviewee C has 27 years of work experience since their college graduation. He has worked for ABB Marine Services for approximately 2 years.

Interviewee C started the application process by doing research about the company. Before sending in his application, he googled the company for reviews using multiple different websites and looked through ABB's website. He does not recall finding any at least extremely negative reviews of ABB. He also reviewed other open vacancies ABB had at that time, to learn more about the departments in the company. After his research, he felt more positive and more strongly

towards the company and its brand, which resulted in the decision to continue by applying for the position.

The job description was not completely detailed, and the interviewee was informed during the interview that the position was completely new and therefore the exact job tasks would be defined according to the chosen candidates' skills and knowledge. The interviewee was content that the recruiters had explained thoroughly how the role would be assembled once the right candidate is found. While it was important for the interviewee to know the main features the role required, and that ABB would not later on expect him to have skills and knowledge he does not possess, the interviewee did not see the lack of information in the job description as a problem.

Interviewee C was extremely happy about the recruitment process and how it was managed in ABB. The communication was handled clearly and very effectively, and the interviewee was kept updated during all the steps in the recruitment process. He was given exact dates to when he can expect to hear back from the company and what will the next step in the process be. The recruitment process was fast, and the company kept the interviewee updated by sending emails and information if not every day, then every other day. This communication method was kept until the job contract was signed. The interviewee found this to be a very positive experience and does not feel the recruitment process was lacking anything specific.

At all times, the recruiters as well as other people involved in the interview stages behaved well and extremely professionally. The interviewee also pointed out that he was informed before every interview, how many people would be taking part to the interviews and who these interviewers are. This made the interviewee feel more calm and able to prepare for the interviews better, as he knew what and who to expect. The interviews were conducted face to face.

According to interviewee C, the overall candidate experience with ABB was extremely positive. His opinion towards the company and the company brand

grew more and more the further they would go in the recruitment process. By the job offer stage, he had no doubts or concerns whether to accept the offer and join the company. The interviewee thinks that candidate experience is very important and that even though he would most likely accept a job offer even if the candidate experience would have been negative, he would very likely be searching and applying for other positions at the same time. The interviewee stated that due to financial reasons, he would accept a job offer despite having a negative candidate experience.

For interviewee C, a good candidate experience is clear and effective communication, fast-moving recruitment process, where the recruiters know what they are doing and act professionally. He does not regard bad comments and reviews on the internet as an obstacle for applying to a vacancy.

When discussing about the feedback for ABB about the company's overall recruitment process, the interviewee disclosed that he was never asked feedback during or after the recruitment process, which he finds very important and valuable for the companies to ask from candidates.

#### 7.4 Interview Analysis

As Laaksonen (2017) mentions, the ideal outcome of recruitment process is to hire a candidate. For all of the three interviewees, the ideal situation has realized, and their recruitment processes have ended as they have been hired to the company. Hence, it is worth taking into consideration that this has an impact on the outcome of this research.

All of the interviewees agree on the importance of candidate experience and point out that effective communication and a fast-moving recruitment process are the key elements in a successful candidate experience. Based on their answers, it can be concluded that one may see some factors as more important than someone else, and that even the small details can make a relevant difference in a candidate's experience. Interviewee C pointed out that he found knowing the interviewers beforehand, even by their first name and title, to be very helpful for

him to prepare for the interviews. This point supports Miles & McCamey's (2018) claim that a recruiter should always strive to be transparent and communicative.

The participants were asked whether the comments and reviews they read online or hear from their acquaintances effect on their decision to accept a job offer from a company. Both A and B stated that they would see it as a negative thing and would most likely not apply to the company at all, whereas for C reading or hearing negative comments about the company would not make any difference and they would still apply for the company. The interviewee C has the most job experience, and it can be concluded that he is the oldest of the three.

Despite the low number of interviewees, it is important to consider that the participants' work experience, thus their age, can affect the overall opinion regarding the importance of candidate experience when it comes to accepting a job offer. Interviewee C does not see comments and reviews as so significant when researching the company, while interviewees A and B do. C also states that he would most likely accept a job offer despite having a negative candidate experience due to financial reasons, while A and B seem to weigh more on declining the offer, if their experience was bad. It can be considered whether this is a generational difference, as A and B grew up during the era of digitalization, thereby trusting more on comments displayed on the internet. Interviewee C would have started his career during the 1990's recession years, when Finland was affected by extensive unemployment, and especially the young people struggled to find employment (Pyöriä et.al. 2017).

The interviewee B brought up that she heard negative things about Accenture from her friend before she had applied to the company, but in the end, this did not stop her from applying. This statement indicates that even though candidates are exposed to negative comments from their friends or acquaintances regarding the company, this does not mean that the comments effect on the candidate in a way that they do not apply for the position at all.

C is also working in a different industry compared to the interviewees A and B, who work in the same industry. C is working for ABB, which belongs to the

technology sector, which is known to be a more male-dominated industry. This raises the question, whether some industries are more concentrated on matters such as candidate experience, and whether gender affects that. One of the key issues here can be the lack of female candidates in certain industries, such as in the technology industry (Lucas et.al. 2021).

For all three interviewees, giving and receiving feedback was a very significant part of their experience, and they see it as a great method for both parties to learn. This supports Sharma's (2019) claim that asking for feedback makes the candidates feel more valuable and appreciated by the company. The interviewee A also stated that she was asked for feedback during phone calls with the recruiter, and she would have preferred another feedback method, for example, a survey. Here it can be noted how using AI to survey could be beneficial, for example, by using Chatbots, as Upadhyay & Khandelwal (2018) suggest.

From all three interviews it can be concluded that candidate experience is an important part of the recruitment process and companies should consider it when planning recruitment strategies. The interviews support Miles & McCamey's claim that candidate experience starts to form before the candidate has submitted their job application.

A recommendation for further research regarding the topic would be to explore how gender and age effect on candidate experience, and do candidates find AI tools to be a positive addition in the recruitment process.

## 8 Conclusion

The recruitment process is one of the most important parts of Human Resources Management, as it enables organizations to acquire talent they need in order to be successful in their industry. Companies are aware of the importance of how their brand is seen and have only in the recent years discovered the importance of candidate experience in the recruitment process.

Candidate experience occurs between a person looking for employment and an organization that is looking to fill a vacancy. There are various points and stages in the recruitment process where the applicant and the company engage with and encounter each other. Both of the parties can either impact negatively or positively to the relationship with each encounter. At the end of the recruitment process, often only one applicant is offered a position within the company, and this relationship is expected to turn into an employment relationship. For the other applicants, their experience and opinion about the company during the recruitment process determine whether they will continue in any type of engagement or relationship with the company. (Miles & McCamey, 2018)

Companies can benefit from different methods when striving to boost their candidate experience. Some of these methods are, for example, exploiting AI-tools in the recruitment process, in order to ensure an efficient process flow. Chatbots can be employed in the recruitment process to help recruiters to communicate with the applicants and for instance, answer their questions. Recruiters can also benefit from AI-based software by moving the most repetitive administrative tasks to the AI-tools and thereby save time.

Exploiting AI-tools can also expose disadvantages. Different research claims that AI cannot be unbiased as it is programmed by humans and the data fed to it cannot be purely unbiased. Therefore, they suggest that it is necessary to involve human judgement in the recruitment process and it should not be left for entirely depending on Artificial Intelligence.

Based on the interviews conducted with three employees at three different companies, it can be concluded that good candidate experience is a significant part of the recruitment process, although it may vary depending on the person, who considers which factors are most important. Companies that do not invest in candidate experience fail to take into consideration how people who have experienced negative candidate experience, and would still accept the offer, are carrying their negative experience with them once starting their employment. This can lead to the employee to be still on the lookout for another role in another company and if granted the opportunity, to change their jobs. This leads to the company having to start the recruitment process from the beginning, thus affecting negatively for example, the company's finances. In case the employee decides to stay, they will still most likely be less productive in their work and have less brand loyalty and trust towards the company. If the candidate experience is bad, companies can go as far as to lose great talent and end up obtaining the wrong people to the vacancies.

Key findings show that the more companies focus on their candidate experience, the more successful they will be, not only in attracting and acquiring the right talent, but benefitting financially as well. The results also indicate that despite companies not being able to succeed in all parts of the recruitment process, it does not necessarily result in the candidate having negative feelings towards the company and the overall recruitment process, thereby would affect their decision to accept a job offer and join the company. If some part of the recruitment process is executed more successfully, this can even out the part of the process that did not work out as planned.

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## Appendix 1. Transcribed interviews

### **Interviewee A – Deloitte**

#### **How many years of work experience do you have?**

Full time employed 1 year. During my studies 5 years.

#### **How long have you been employed for at Deloitte?**

1 year.

#### **Did you research (e.g., googled) the company before or after applying for the available role? If you yes, please clarify how did you do your research and did your opinion towards the company change after you had done your research?**

I recognized the company and I applied before further research, as the position seemed interesting. After applying I further researched the company to prepare for possible interview and to learn more about the company itself.

In general, if I am looking for a job and see very negative reviews and comments about the company or hear very bad comments from my friends, I quite certainly will not apply at all but with Deloitte I had heard about the company and as it is part of the Big 4, I skipped the research part and applied anyway.

#### **Did the job description differ from the actual work tasks?**

I was hired to a specific project, of which they could only tell me more once I started my job. The job description did tell for example the software tools I would be using, but daily-day tasks that the project requires from me to do were not something I was completely aware of before starting. In the end the job description did not match the actual tasks, and I would have most likely thought longer if I had known all the tasks in advance.

**Did your opinion and expectations towards Deloitte change after you started your job? How did it change?**

Deloitte is well recognized and there was a lot of information available. My opinion towards the company did not really change at that point, later on yes when I had worked there for a longer period of time. I thought it would be great to work for one of the Big 4 and in the beginning, everything was very well organized and met my expectations. I was excited to go to the office and meet my new co-workers as I relocated to a whole new country with my new position. Unfortunately, due to Covid-19 pandemic this was not possible, and everything was done online so I could not experience the company culture.

**What is your overall opinion regarding the recruitment process in Deloitte?**

It was very efficient and fast. The decision was made in 2 weeks.

**Are you content with the progress of the recruitment process or do you find that some part of the recruitment process could have been done better? Please elaborate.**

Overall, the interviews during the process were very well handled, as the role I was hired for was in need to be fulfilled urgently. I felt it might have been a bit rushed but on the other hand it is better that everything moved fast.

**Did your opinion towards the company change to negative/positive at any point during the recruitment process?**

Overall, it was very good. I did have certain expectations as the company is so well known and those expectations were met. I would say my expectations did not move to either more negative or more positive.

**Were you being communicated clearly about where you are in the recruitment process and what can you expect to happen next?**

Yes, the recruiter was very active. She was checking on me in a regular basis and informing me if something changed. She also asked me about any doubts I might have and encouraged me to contact in case I have any questions or doubts.

**Can you think of something that could have gone wrong in the recruitment process that would have influenced your decision to not accept the job offer?**

For me it is important to meet the team lead and the manager. If they would have had a bad attitude or disrespectful attitude, I would have thought twice before accepting.

**Were you asked for feedback during / after the recruitment process? If yes, please clarify which method the company used to collect feedback?**

Yes. After every interview, the recruiter called and asked for my feedback. I had 3 interviews altogether. She also shared her feedback about me before inviting me to a next interview. Once I started my job, I was asked to provide final feedback via survey. I would have preferred to just give the feedback once at the end of the recruitment process as I felt like I could not give an honest feedback in the middle of the process as I was afraid that it might have some sort of influence for their decision making.

**How important do you find candidate experience as part of the recruitment process?**

I find it very important. I would not want to work in a company where the process is very unclear, and the recruiter is for example very rude and unskilled. I feel like this will tell you a lot about the company and its culture and I do not want to be a part of that.

**Could a bad candidate experience influence your decision to accept a job offer?**

Yes definitely. Good candidate experience is very important.

**What was your overall candidate experience at Deloitte?**

It was good. I do not really have anything bad to say about it. I feel like the company had put a lot of thought in their recruitment process and candidate experience. This made me feel like I can trust the company.

**How were the interviews conducted?**

First one was a phone call, and the two others were via skype.

**Interviewee B – Accenture**

**How many years of work experience do you have?**

4 years.

**How long have you been employed for at Accenture?**

2 year.

**Did you research (e.g., googled) the company before or after applying for the available role? If you yes, please clarify how did you do your research and did your opinion towards the company change after you had done your research?**

Yes. I also heard a lot of bad things about Accenture from a friend of mine. Although he had worked for Accenture in another country than where I was going to apply, therefore I did not give his comments much weigh. On internet the comments were mainly good, and I got a positive picture of Accenture, therefore I decided to apply and give it a chance. It is very important to me what I read about the company and what I hear about it from others. I understand that not every comment should be taken seriously, as the fault is not always in the employer, but I still consider reviews important because often if a lot of people agree on something, for example about the atmosphere being off, there is some truth in them too.

**Did the job description differ from the actual work tasks?**

Tasks I was supposed to do were not what I ended up doing. But partly because the project start date moved further than in the beginning it was supposed to. In the end the job description tasks corresponded the actual tasks very vaguely. It was about 50/50.

**Did it bother you that the job tasks were not the same as in the job description?**

It was fine. I was able to make my time up for it, the company offers great trainings, so I did have my time well spent in the end.

**Did your opinion and expectations towards Accenture change after you started your job? How did it change?**

A little bit. Project start date was late, and I had a lot of onboarding issues for me, and I felt they didn't have anything under control at that time. My expectation was that at least some things would be organized and under control, but it was not so. Later on, it got better.

I was also promised that I would get to work and help on other projects, but once I asked about it, it was not possible. They promised me more than what I ended up getting.

**What is your overall opinion regarding the recruitment process in Accenture?**

Biggest issue was the time it took from the last interview to the actual offer. It took one month for them to give me an offer. The recruiter was amazing and very nice and explained that it is simply due to it being a summer season, but the wait was way too long for me, and it definitely made me think about accepting the offer.

**Are you content with the progress of the recruitment process or do you find that some part of the recruitment process could have been done better? Please elaborate.**

Final decision part, it took way too long. They told me it was a summertime, but it took too long. The recruiter was really nice, and communicative. I felt like she knew what she was doing, and it reassured me. The interviewers, my future managers, were also very professional and nice. I had a positive experience.

**Did your opinion towards the company change to negative/positive at any point during the recruitment process?**

Not really.

**Were you being communicated clearly about where you are in the recruitment process and what can you expect to happen next?**

I had to ask myself a few times. It could have been a bit better; it was a bit confusing to me. In the beginning they did explain me how the process would usually go but in my case, it did not work like that.

**Can you think of something that could have gone wrong in the recruitment process that would have influenced your decision to not accept the job offer?**

If the interviewers would have been very unprofessional and would not have been prepared for the interviews. If they would not have shown up on time or if they would have been negative towards other people or companies. If they would have told me in the beginning how unorganized the project is, I would not have been sure to accept.

**Were you asked for feedback during / after the recruitment process? If yes, please clarify which method the company used to collect feedback?**

After the recruitment process, survey.

**How important do you find candidate experience as part of the recruitment process?**

It is really important. If the candidate has really bad experience the candidates will not accept the offers. I have personally turned down an offer because the candidate experience was so bad. I would say it is a huge part of it.

**Could a bad candidate experience influence your decision to accept a job offer?**

Yes definitely.

**What was your overall candidate experience at Accenture?**

I think overall it was good.

**Interviewee C – ABB**

**How many years of work experience do you have?**

After graduating college 27 years.

**How long have you been employed for at ABB?**

Almost 2 years.

**Did you research (e.g., googled) the company before or after applying for the available role? If you yes, please clarify how did you do your research and did your opinion towards the company change after you had done your research?**

Absolutely. I always google and do my research on the company I am applying for, before actually sending in my application. I try to read some comments and reviews about the company to see how the company is as an employer. I also go through the company's websites and for example search the open vacancies to get an idea what kind of positions the company is currently hiring for.

**Did your opinion and expectations towards ABB change after you started your job? How did it change?**

Not negatively at all. If they changed it was only towards more positive. They had been clear with me the whole time about my role, how it will be structured and what are my main tasks in the new role. I believe that the bigger the company the clearer it is what you are hired to do.

**Did the job description differ from your actual tasks?**

The job description was not really detailed, it had the main features mentioned and it stated that the other tasks with the role would be defined according to the candidates skills and knowledge. In the interview, I was told the same and given a little bit more details about the main tasks and what skills I need to have in order to be successful in the role. This was completely okay with me. What was important to me, was to know the main tasks and that I would not be expected to know something that I don't.

**What is your overall opinion regarding the recruitment process in ABB?**

The recruitment process moved very fast. I was given exact dates when I could expect to hear back from them, whether it would be negative or positive feedback, and they kept their word. I also received emails during the whole recruitment process from the recruiters and my future manager, and this communication flow was kept during until I signed the job contract. Very positive experience for me. The interviewers were very polite and professional at all times, and I was always left with a stronger feeling wanting to be part of the company.

**Are you content with the progress of the recruitment process or do you find that some part of the recruitment process could have been done better? Please elaborate.**

I was very happy with the recruitment process and do not really have any complaints about it. They did not ask me any feedback, which I would have liked to give as I find it is important. But that did not affect my candidate experience in any way.

**Did your opinion towards the company change to negative/positive at any point during the recruitment process?**

Only to more positive.

**Were you being communicated clearly about where you are in the recruitment process and what can you expect to happen next?**

Yes, at all times. Communication was kept clear and efficient throughout the recruitment process. I was also informed before every interview, who would be part of the interview and they were sort of introduced to me beforehand which I found very helpful. I was able to prepare myself better for the interview and it made me feel less stressed and nervous as I knew who were going to be there.

**Can you think of something that could have gone wrong in the recruitment process that would have influenced your decision to not accept the job offer?**

As I was interviewed by my future manager, if they would have been rude or somehow our chemistries would not have collided, or they would have had some sort of unrealistic expectations towards me that were not informed in the job description when I applied, I would maybe have turned down the offer.

**Were you asked for feedback during / after the recruitment process? If yes, please clarify which method the company used to collect feedback?**

No. This was one of the things I was missing during the recruitment process or at the end of it. I believe it is important to always ask for feedback and when asked, to give it. It is valuable and the company only benefits from it.

**How important do you find candidate experience as part of the recruitment process?**

Very important. If the recruitment process is really messy and unorganized, and I am left with the feeling that the recruiters for example do not know what they are doing or are not behaving professionally, I would consider it really bad candidate experience.

**Could a bad candidate experience influence your decision to accept a job offer?**

Yes, it could. But I would most likely still accept the job offer due to financial reasons but keep looking for another position even though getting an offer from the company with bad candidate experience.

**What was your overall candidate experience at ABB?**

Very good and positive. I cannot think of anything bad to say.

**How were your interviews conducted?**

Face to face.