

Jerry Lindström

# ATS in supporting positive Employer Brand

How can Applicant Tracking System support in building Employer Brand?

Helsinki Metropolia University of Applied Sciences

Metropolia Business School

European Management

Research Methods LX00AD54-3009

EM14

1403042

Author(s) Title	Jerry Lindström Title of the Thesis
Number of Pages Date	42 pages + 1 appendices 18 April 2018
Degree	Bachelor of Business Administration
Degree Programme	European Management
Specialisation option	Sales&Marketing
Instructor(s)	Daryl Chapman, Lecturer Louise Stansfield, Lecturer

This bachelor thesis will concentrate on utilization of recruitment tool in applicant communication and how effective communication impacts employer brand. This topic will be discussed in theory and how it has been displayed in literature. Author will also discuss how recruiting has been affected by E-recruitment and ATS recruitment tools. Also, one of the main ideas to find out how ATS system can be seen from an employer branding point of view.

The approach to the chosen topic was done by reviewing books and academic journals from the area of human resources, marketing, organisational behaviour and business management. The review shows that research and theory from a range of fields can help add to one's knowledge on employer branding; these include areas of research that investigate recruiting methods and processes, organisational attractiveness to potential new recruits, as well as work that examines organisational identity and organisational identification. Author will conduct a qualitative research in form of interviews. The interviews will be held for 2-3 different company representatives whom are responsible for their recruitment processes and employer brand.

Keywords	

Table of contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Literature review</b>	<b>2</b>
2.1	<i>SME</i>	2
2.2	<i>SWOT</i>	2
2.3	<i>Human Resources</i>	2
2.4	<i>Applicant Tracking System</i>	3
2.5	<i>Active job seeker</i>	4
2.6	<i>Passive job seeker</i>	5
2.7	<i>Recruitment</i>	5
2.8	<i>Hiring Process</i>	7

2.9	<i>Recruitment communication</i>	10
2.10	<i>E-recruitment system in recruitment processes</i>	12
2.11	<i>Employer branding</i>	13
2.12	<i>Digitalisation</i>	14
2.13	<i>Social media in employer branding</i>	15
2.14	<i>Financial outcome of good employer brand</i>	16
<b>3</b>	<b>Methodology</b>	<b>17</b>
3.1	<i>Target group and sampling</i>	18
3.2	<i>Interview</i>	20
3.3	<i>Theme interview</i>	21
<b>4</b>	<b>Material handling and analysis</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Thesis study results</b>	<b>24</b>
5.1	<i>Employer Branding Plans</i>	25
5.2	<i>External communication</i>	26
5.3	<i>ATS in employer branding and communication</i>	29
<b>6</b>	<b>Conclusion</b>	<b>32</b>
6.1	<i>Development suggestions</i>	34
6.2	<i>Reliability of the survey</i>	35
6.3	<i>Further research suggestions</i>	36
<b>7</b>	<b>Appendixes</b>	<b>36</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>References</b>	<b>37</b>

### **Table of figures**

Figure 1: Companies using ATS's in Finland.....	3
Figure 2: difference between active vs passive job seeker .....	5
Figure 3: Hiring process.....	8
Figure 4: Employer branding & budgetin activities.....	14
Figure 5: Social media channels in external communication .....	16

## 1 Introduction

This bachelor thesis will concentrate on utilization of recruitment tool in applicant communication and how effective communication impacts employer brand. This topic will be discussed in theory and how it has been displayed in literature. Author will also discuss how recruiting has been affected by E-recruitment and ATS recruitment tools. Also, one of the main ideas to find out how ATS system can be seen from an employer branding point of view.

The approach to the chosen topic was done by reviewing books and academic journals from the area of human resources, marketing, organisational behaviour and business management. The review shows that research and theory from a range of fields can help add to one's knowledge on employer branding; these include areas of research that investigate recruiting methods and processes, organisational attractiveness to potential new recruits, as well as work that examines organisational identity and organisational identification. Author will conduct a qualitative research in form of interviews. The interviews will be held for 2-3 different company representatives whom are responsible for their recruitment processes and employer brand.

These companies are small to medium sized organisations which employ 55 to 170 employees. The purpose is to understand what employer communication as a whole is and to investigate the relationship between recruitment communication and employer brand more. This thesis also aims to analyze how Applicant Tracking System can be helpful tool in communication and what are the ways to use one.

The first part will define and explain some vocabulary and phenomena discussed in this thesis. Second chapter will discuss how recruitment processes are seen in theory. The main purpose is to provide the reader sufficient amount of information about recruitment as a whole. Chapter will provide insights on what is the framework for recruitment processes and what are the steps taken in the recruitment processes.

Third chapter will go more in depth to the phenomena of Employer Branding and the author will explain his findings about this topic, how it is demonstrated in theory and what can be the consequences of concentrating on reforming employer brand.

## 2 Literature review

### 2.1 SME

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are defined in the [EU recommendation 2003/361](#).

The main factors determining whether an enterprise is an SME are:

1. Staff headcount
2. Either turnover or balance sheet total

Company category	Staff headcount	Turnover	or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ € 50 m		≤ € 43 m
Small	< 50	≤ € 10 m		≤ € 10 m
Micro	< 10	≤ € 2 m		≤ € 2 m

*Graph 1: Representing formation of SME's (ec.europa.eu, 2018)*

### 2.2 SWOT

A tool that is used in originations to identify the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats of an organization (Investopedia, 2018)

### 2.3 Human Resources

*"HRM involves the application of policies and practices in the fields of organization design and development, employee resourcing, learning and development, performance and reward and the provision of services that enhance the well-being of employees. These are based on human resource (HR) strategies that are integrated with one another and aligned to the business strategy. "* (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014)

Definition of human resource activities are not specified particularly in depth for the reason that in multiple SME companies there is no implementation of human resource activities in their business processes. For example, in some companies the CEO might be the one responsible for recruitments and employer branding activities.

## 2.4 Applicant Tracking System

ATS is basically created for attracting and hiring right talent. It is a cloud based electronical (System as a Software) system which enables the efficient sorting of applicants and their applications. With applicant tracking system companies can tie their recruitment activities together, making their average recruitment lead time shorter and at the same time ensuring efficient communication with applicants. In ATS system there is a possibility to integrate multiple helpful add-ons from external service providers, which can reduce the risk of miss recruitment (ReachMee, 2018). Examples of integrations are video interview's (RecRight), aptitude tests (Cut-e, Cubix, Assessio) or Structured interviews by the CEB-interview bank (ReachMee, 2018).

Applicant tracking implementation is often "sunk" in organisations web page. Another possibility is to create a separate career portal where the applicants and potential talent is directed from different job advertising channels. In career pages or career portal, the company can open up their working environment more, talk about the benefits and tell career stories. Applying through modern ATS requires fewer sections to be filled because every recruitment can be handled separately from the tool, including defining recruitment process, creating questionnaire, choosing helpful integrations, etc.

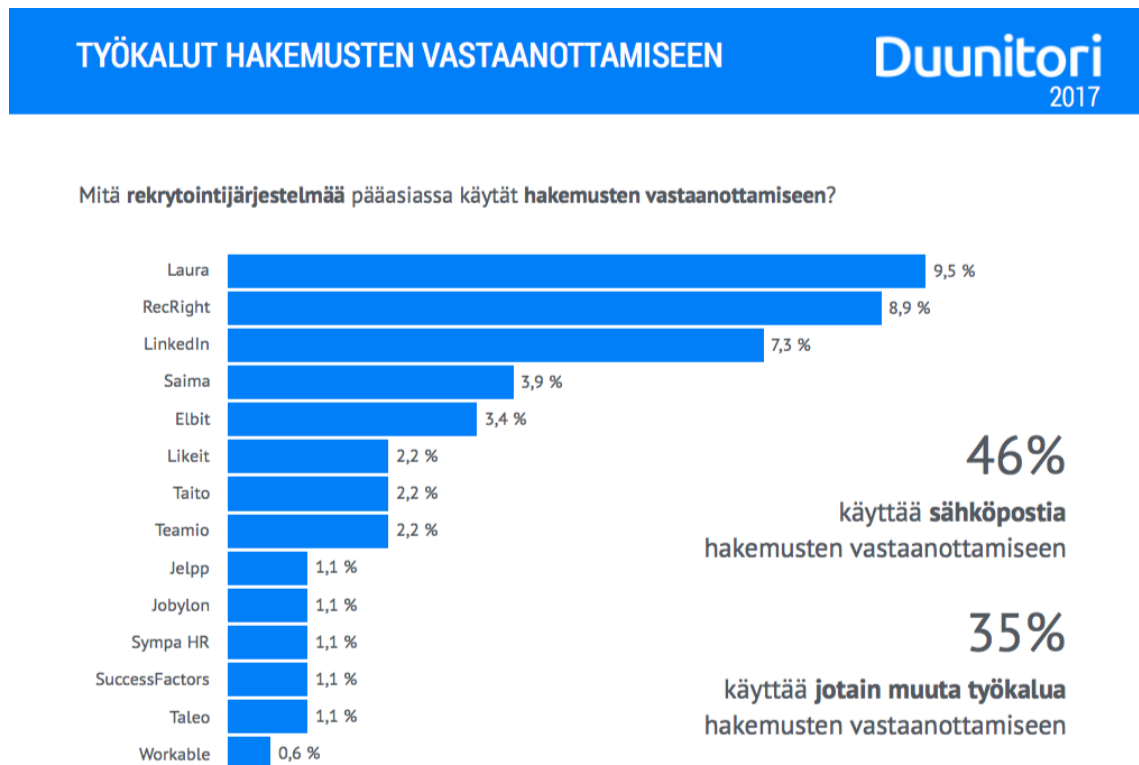


Figure 1: Companies using ATS's in Finland

Duunitori's National recruitment survey is directed to different company representatives in Finland. 35% of the respondents are using some kind of ATS in help of their recruitment processes. 46% of the respondents are using E-mail in processing of their applications and applicants.

Duunitori has accomplished a national recruitment study from the year 2013. Research material and graphs used for this thesis work had 188 respondents, so the author sees that the material can be considered quite relevant and actual. Concurrently author understands and wants to bring in attention of the reader, that the data gathered is implicating the experiences of the group of individual units with the commonality of Duunitori recruitment portal. This can give biased information compared to a survey that would have been conducted through random sampling of recruitment professionals.

## 2.5 Active job seeker

Active job seeker means a person whom is proactively looking for a new employer. They are not necessarily unemployed but might be in a situation where they are unsatisfied in their working environment. These reasons can be for example future of the company where they are working being unsure, or that they have the understanding that the same position in a different organisation provides much better benefits and possibilities, or if their job is going to be outsourced in the near future. Amount of active job seekers varies depending on the year and the economic situation but roughly around 25% of the fully-employed workforce falls into this category (LinkedIn, 2018).

LinkedIn is one of the noteworthy job related social-media portals. LinkedIn as a source of information can be seen reliable when defining and categorizing certain attributes, for example job seekers. Author would not construct his theory on top of LinkedIn, because if not being careful when looking for information author might bring fourth proposes, opinions and experiences of an individual, instead of actual research results.



## 2.6 Passive job seeker

Definition of a passive job seeker could be described in a following way: an individual whom is not actively looking for a new employer or opportunities, but is possibly still interested to hear about job placement attractive enough. When passive job seekers' interest is awakened they are a very good candidates from an organisational point of view, because it is not likely that they are a part of an ongoing recruiting process in another organization at the same time (LinkedIn, 2018).



*Figure 2: difference between active vs passive job seeker*

## 2.7 Recruitment

This section concentrates on recruiting from both employee and employer perspective. It represents recruiting and aspects affecting recruiting from the organisational point of view. After defining a recruitment, the chapter talks about different stages of recruiting processes.

Recruiting today means activities to be done in order to find right fit for the organisation. Usually it includes attracting, searching and evaluating candidates.

Recruitment as a phenomenon is normal and everyone employed has gone through some kind of a recruitment process. According to professor Alison E. Barber's theory in his book "Recruiting Employees: Individual and Organizational Perspectives" recruitment consists all of those activities and tricks which company uses when looking for potential candidates (Puustinen, 2013). During the recruitment process, job requirements are analyzed and the jobseeker's abilities according to the requirements are assessed. The process can be long-lasting having multiple process stages or quick and straightforward, depending on the position where person is recruited and organization's choice of approaches. However, the end result is always the same: a new employee starts working with a job provider (Markkanen, 1999).

There are two players in recruiting: first, organization providing jobs and second individuals, who are looking for jobs. For this reason we can talk about a reciprocal process, where the aim is to find a best compatible outcome. The end result of recruitment process is meaningful for both parties. The organization strives to find an employee who would bring added value to its daily activities. On the other hand, meaningful work is seen as a starting point for the good life for the individual, so its significance is deniable (Barber, 1998)

Recruitment is also influenced by the values, attitudes, trends and cycles of the organization's operating environment. During the economic recession, the most desirable jobs are the ones which are safe and stable, while during the boom people are more willing to take risks (Gomez-Meija, et al., 2016). With globalization, organizations are looking talents from all around the world. The best employees are competing their positions globally, but at the same time, it is even more difficult for organizations to find the most suitable workers from the mass of international applicants. The development of globalization and technology has affected recruitment and guided the field of recruitment to a multi-channel and more interactive direction, where importance of talent-banking and developing a long term relationship with potential candidate is becoming more important in the fight for talent (Brown & Swain, 2009). Multiculturalism and the structural change of aging workforce and retirements are developing challenges. In addition, many laws and regulations are affecting organization recruitments. On the other hand, the criteria set for candidates has also changed. Education and experience may not be enough, employees are also seeking talents with social skills, intelligence and networking skills. The demand for talent and their versatility of skillset poses a challenge, not only to job seekers but also to recruiters and tools that they have in use (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

Barber's book of *Recruiting Employees: Individual and Organizational Perspectives* is used as a source of information in multiple thesis studies and recruitment related literature. It can be seen as a trustworthy source of information for this thesis study also, even though author understands that this piece of work is twenty years old and there have definitely been changes in recruitment advertisement and processes during these years. Digitalization has changed in practice the methods of recruitment and employer branding activities even though the stone foundation of theory has remained the same. Author also recognizes that Barber has used a lot of older theories for basis of her writings.

## 2.8 Hiring Process

The recruitment process refers to all the actions which are made by the organization to fulfill successful employee selection (Barber, 1998). The need for the recruitment can be triggered by for example retirement, termination of an employee's employment relationship, or if there are operational changes in the organization, which can lead to recruitment need. Recruitment decision for a new employee requires an exceptionally accurate needs assessment, as recruiting a new worker is very expensive for the employer (Brown & Swain, 2009).



*Figure 3: Hiring process*

This chapter describes the steps and activities of the recruitment selection process and how it is described in Armstrong's Handbook of human resource management practice (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). These ten steps of recruitment process are presented in chronological order and these steps define the solution for company's staffing need.

### 1. Defining recruitment

Definition for certain recruitment starts from profiling the job. Here the job type is defined including terms and conditions (pay, benefits and hours of work), career opportunities and special requirements like mobility and unsocial hours. Also person specification is done. This defines the skill set needed for a superior hire example, for example knowledge, skills, qualification, experience and behavior (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 2. Attracting candidates

Attracting candidates is the stage of recruiting where organization needs to analyze the strengths and weaknesses of the organization as an employer (applicant is the buyer, employer is the seller). Identifying different ways to attract potential candidates and the most relevant sources is important (online, social media, print, events, recruitment consultant, etc.) (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 3. Sifting applications

Examining the information supplied by applicants, processing applications and replying to every applicant, shortlisting candidates (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 4. Interviewing

Drawing up an interviewing programme, creating a schedule for interviews, creating a template for interview, reviewing the “possibles” and “marginal” and sending them a holding letter and sending the others a rejection letter (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 5. Testing

Selection tests are used to provide valid and reliable evidence of levels of abilities, intelligence, personality characteristics, aptitudes and attainments (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014)

## 6. Assessing candidates

Assessing candidates can be done in assessment centers or group interviews. There are multiple assessment methods in use, for example group exercises and simulations. Assessments obtains more information about the candidate than traditional interview (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 7. Obtaining references

Candidate is asked to provide different references, which in this part of process are contacted to make sure of the prospects validity for given opportunity (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 8. Checking applications

Ensure that all the candidates have given valid information about their history and competences (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 9. Offering employment

When everything is done according to the planned recruitment process it's time to confirm the willingness of the applicant and sign prepared contract (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

## 10. Following up

Newly engaged employees are checked to see how they are doing and if any problems have occurred. This is important because if there has been a "mistake" recruitment company needs to find out the possible reasons for this and what needs to be taken into consideration in the next recruitment (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

By cross examining different information sources author realized that Armstrong's Handbook of human resource management practices is relevant reference for describing recruitment methods. Recruitment and hiring process steps are described more or less in a similar way, for example in Armstrong's Handbook of human resource management practice, Barbers Recruiting Employees: Individual and Organizational Perspectives and Dessler's Fundamentals of Human Resource Management different organizations are working more or less in a similar way when it comes to planning and executing hiring process.

## 2.9 Recruitment communication

Recruitment communication is a part of both internal and external communication. Its main task is to create an attractive image of the employer, so that as many talents as possible are interested and aware about the organization (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Broadly speaking, all communications in the company internal and external are recruitment communications. It creates an image of the organization and of their industry, which then either interests or does not interest jobseekers. Candidate is in theory buying and selling at the same time, buying what organization has to offer as an employer and selling their own skillsets and talent to the organization. Basically one could state that labor market is buyer's market (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). Another task of recruitment communication is to help find the most suitable people from a large number of jobseekers. This bachelor thesis is mainly focusing on external communication, on its problems and how ATS can be seen as a helpful tool.

Studies made by Lautensclager, Gowan and Gatewood found out that exposure to large amount of information about the organization and the position available will have positive affect on employer brand and are essential to a talents view of the organization (Gatewood, et al., 1993). Hence, it can be stated that recruitment communications influence the applicants image of the organization and employer brand, thus it plays a major role in the applicant's decision-making. Also it can be mentioned that organization brand and employer brand are not tantamount. Efficient employer branding activities such as communication towards applicants throughout different medias will increase the chance of getting relevant talent pool for open position (Gatewood, et al., 1993). The applicant submitting the application always has or have formatted some kind of image of the organization and the position, but the real understanding is formatted during the recruitment process. When the applicant's information and knowledge about the organization is reinforced during the process, the previous images are either strengthened or disappeared (Gatewood, et al., 1993). Thus, communicating with applicants throughout the recruitment process is essential for achieving a good recruitment result and enforcing the employer brand. Calls, job interviews, interim announcements and post-communication will determine what kind of an image the unlisted jobseekers are going to form about the organization.

First part of recruitment process which is also strong correlation to employer communication is doing SWOT analysis of the organization as an employer Here organization decides what are the features that company should communicate and utilize to attract best possible candidate pool. Based on the analyze done organization

decides the right channels to use for recruitment communication. (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014)

For an organization with strong employer brand, just a company name or logo can be enough to attract relevant candidate pool. Good organization reputation also attracts qualitatively better candidates. Important part of external communication is the content; style and publishing channel for the job advertisement are important first-stage choices to be done. In the second phase of communication, after receiving the applications, all the applicants should be informed when they can expect answer and are the applicants expected to be active towards the recruiter (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). In addition, it should be determined whom in the organization are responsible for applicant communication and at which stages of the process are pinpointed in ensuring efficient communication throughout the process. The third step, informing about candidate selection, is an important step in recruiting communications. Internal and external information should be given as soon as possible after the decision making, because the rumours circulate in the organization throughout the whole recruitment process. The last important step in recruitment communication is to communicate with the candidates whom are not chosen to proceed in the process, towards the new position. Modern candidates expect both information about the choice in the position and the assessment of their own performance in the recruitment process. (Kozan, 2017)

## 2.10 E-recruitment system in recruitment processes

A digital or electronic recruitment system is an information system to assist the recruitment process and data processing (ReachMee, 2018). The recruitment system enables the creation of job advertisements electronically as well as their publication on the company's own web site, internal intranet, and some job-advertising channels. The recruitment system assists in the reception, processing and grading of applications and having log information about applicants and their profiles throughout the recruitment process. The information received on the system can be filtered by different filtering criteria's and the information is retained in external servers for future recruitments. The recruitment system also enables efficient recruitment communication, since most systems automatically sends an "thank you for the application" email to the applicant and for example delays in the recruitment process can be communicated efficiently through the system via e-mail or SMS. Most systems also have a wide range of different ready-made templates, which can be used to quickly communicate to larger



groups of applicants, for example, if there are set backs or other important information that applicant might want to know (ReachMee, 2018).

Applicant information into electronic recruitment systems is usually directed through the application form on the company's own website linking to job advertisements. In this way, people seeking employment get an easy access to an E-form and information given about certain position (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014).

Reachmee ATS provider website as a source of information needs to be assessed critically hence their website is partly describing different recruitment related features, with their intrinsic goal to raise awareness of recruitment and employer branding professionals towards their ATS tool, and to affect their buying decision and need analysis from the selling point of view. Author realizes that even though reachmee-website and blog texts are done from marketing point of view it still provides insights and understanding on which kind of features and possibilities modern ATS tool can provide for recruitment and employer branding.

## 2.11 Employer branding

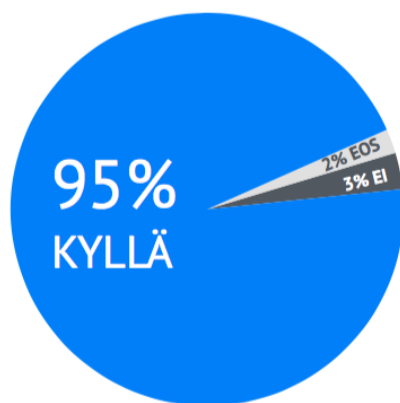
Employer branding is a part of organizational activities which takes actions to enhance the employer image among current and potential employees. There should be a “project owner” who is responsible for employer branding activities bringing together all the leaders in HR, Talent acquisition, Marketing, internal communication etc. This is the most effective way to ensure development of organisations common goals considering employer brand (Hudson, 2014).

Employer branding “project owner” is the person responsible of recruitment and communication. This individual is encouraged to think employer branding from a marketing, and especially, from a branding point of view. Employer branding considers how organisation is represented to variety of external audiences. To understand more about employer branding, it is reasonable to reflect upon the definition of branding. Brand is a non-material commodity and mix of attributes which is defined by the customer and it symbolises company and its values. Customer doesn't necessarily have a relationship with a company or company's products or services, but rather has a strong image, idea or experience what brand is and what it stands for. To a customer, the brand is a promise and it means trust, consistency and expectations that the

customer has set. The brand is a name, concept, symbol, or a combination of these and a way to differentiate themselves from competitors' similar products and/or services (Linberg-Repo, 2005). When talking about employer branding this concept is integrated in HR activities where the branded product changes places with personal and unique employment experience. The idea is that when potential employee has a unique treatment and employer experience it helps company to create value and differentiate itself from the competitors. (Yalcin Acikgoz, 2016)

## TYÖNANTAJAMIELIKUVAN MERKITYS JA RAHA Duunitori 2017

Hyvä työnantajamielikuva on **ratkaisevaa** rekrytoinnin onnistumisen kannalta



**Työnantajamielikuvan kampanjointiin** käytettävä summa keskimäärin vuosittain

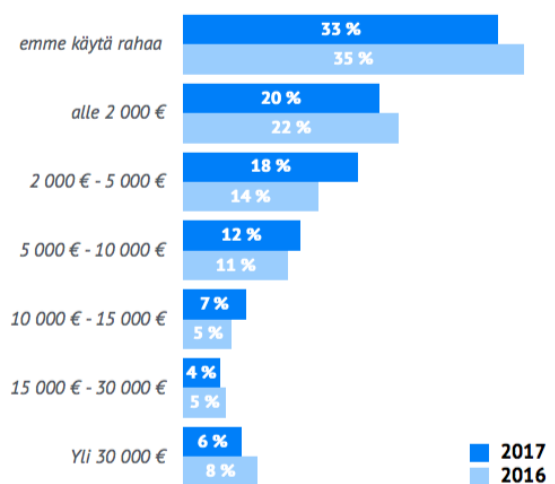


Figure 4: Employer branding & budgetin activities

### 2.12 Digitalisation

Digitalisation is happening everywhere in the world and it will affect also recruitment. According to a publication of the World Bank in January 2016, even the most unprivileged citizens from third world countries are more likely having a mobile phone rather than toilet paper (World Bank, 2016). This as a whole has led to a situation where the HR leaders start to understand that they just cannot count on a strong consumer brand but instead they need to understand employee market and how to attract the most relevant applicant pool (Randstas, 2017). Treating an applicant with respect and keeping them acknowledged throughout the whole recruiting process is

one part of employer branding which can be done efficiently with ATS tool. Even though recruitment process can be automatized with an ATS, the significance of human encounters cannot be put aside – whether it's done through face-to-face, Skype or video interview.

The Finnish recruitment market has changed with digitalisation. The right channels to reach job seekers, with the use of imagination when creating job advertisements and attracting potential prospects, are among the things that every recruiting professional ponders today (Duunitori, 2017). Traditional newspaper job-advertising can be seen only as a supporting element for recruitment and it is also expensive it is expensive and inefficient compared to online recruitment. In terms of visibility and speed, all the possibilities that internet is providing in today's world is supreme to any other media before. The fact still is, that it doesn't matter where the work placement is published, it needs to differentiate from other employer's job ads to attract both active and passive job seekers (Sandström, 2013).

### 2.13 Social media in employer branding

The most used social media channels that are in use in the Finnish recruitment market today are Facebook, LinkedIn and Instagram. For the younger target groups, the channels mentioned above are no longer enough, as so-called millennials and younger jobseekers are more likely to be found from more "niche" social media platforms, such as Snapchat and Periscope. In addition, market and trends for the most popular social media channels amongst the millennials are evolving and changing rapidly

According to the National Recruitment Survey 2017, the use of social media channels as a recruitment marketing channel has risen since 2015 rapidly. For example, 55% of the respondents think that LinkedIn advertising is either important or extremely important (Duunitori, 2017). Also, the study shows that Facebook as a recruiting channel is getting more popular amongst recruiters. There is +11% increase to 2016 when recruiters are asked what they think about Facebook and its importance as a recruitment channel (Duunitori, 2017). Even though the popularity in usage of different "online" channels in recruiting is increasing, the Nordics are still behind in the use of electronic channels and data compared to European countries such as Germany and the United States (LinkedIn, 2018).

## KUINKA TÄRKEITÄ SEURAAVAT SOME-KANAVAT OVAT REKRYTOINNISSANNE?

Duunitori  
2017

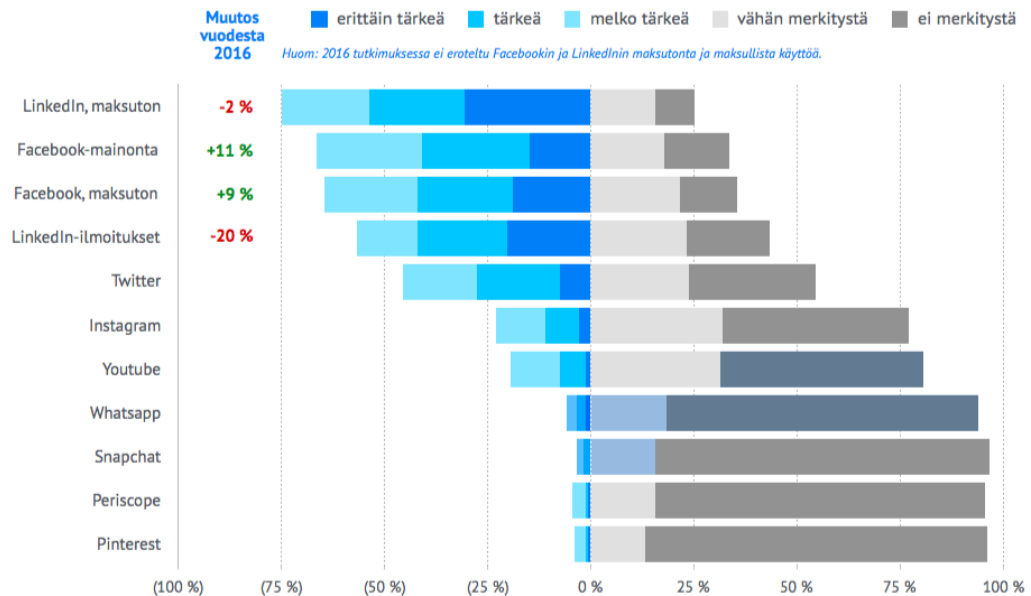


Figure 5: Social media channels in external communication

Potential talent can be directed to electronic application forms on company's websites from different social medias, which means that these forms needs to be mobile responsive, and easy to be filled via a smartphone or tablet. Everything related to recruitment from career pages to automated pre-selection of candidates or an automatically handled communicating with candidates can be done with modern efficient ATS.

### 2.14 Financial outcome of good employer brand

Studies show that attractive employer image increases the possibilities to find above average talent pool. When applicant has realistic expectations about the job possibility and what the organisation has to offer it is more likely that they will stay longer than an applicant whom does not have sufficient information. Results of efficient communication can be seen in decreasing employer turnover (Armstrong & Taylor, 2014). This has straightforward effects on the productivity and financial stability of the

organization because every poor hiring decision does harm to the company. Gomez-Meija, Balkin and Cardy categorizes the turnover costs following;

- *Separation cost; Exit interviews, paperwork processing*
- *Recruitment advertising, recruiter fees*
- *Selection; pre-employment testing, interviewing*
- *Hiring orientation, training*
- *Productivity vacancy cost, disruption*

The actual euro amount depends on the position; the level and the and salary of worker goes up as does the turnover cost.

Studies also shows that above average employees create 40% more value compared to their salary. Let's assume that project managers salary is 50k€/year. It means that they create 20k€ more in value to the company compared to an average worker (Gomez-Meija, et al., 2016). One can clearly see the long-term results caused by attracting above average talent pool in the company to be positive.

If all the applicants are treated as customers with having efficient communication throughout the process ensuring positive and pleasant experience, it is more likely to have the candidate to become a customer for products and services which the company has to offer. At the same time candidates are more willing to talk positively about their experiences as an applicant.

### 3 Methodology

Research is conducted in form of a qualitative research and the interview style is semi-structured theme interview. The semi-structured theme interview progresses so, that none of the participants will get a possibility to get familiar with the interview questions (Puustinen, 2013). All the questions are presented the same or nearly the same order. A completely uniform definition of semi-structured interviews does not exist. The semi-structured and semi-open interview can be placed somewhere between a fully structured interview and a theme interview (Puustinen, 2013). The interview resembles a semi-structured interview: the themes have been considered for the interview, but in addition, precise questions have been prepared, all of which are presented to the interviewees in the interview situation. The semi-structured interview was chosen to

gather interviewees personal knowledge, experiences and information about communication and employer branding.

The aim of this thesis is to find out how recruitment personnel see the potential benefits of recruiting tools in applicant communications and how it can be seen as improving element of the employer brand. The aim is to identify which factors strengthen and which mitigate the effective applicant communication and employer brand. The aim is also to identify how recruitment personnel has exploited ATS as a part of their recruitment process, external communication plan and the creation of employer brand.

The research task of the bachelor's thesis is to answer the question: if ATS can be used in effective communication and employer branding then how it is used? Information about the key results and findings of this thesis work can be used to improve and develop the employer branding and recruitment processes of those working with recruiting. Answers to the research question is researched with targeted interviews to personnel whom are working with applicant communication and employer branding.

### 3.1 Target group and sampling

The target group of the bachelor's thesis was the recruitment and employer branding professionals. The interviewees were selected from the pool of recruiting and employer branding professionals. Requirements were previous experiences from ATS and recruitment, to ensure that the person had the ability to compare and reflect on how it is to work with ATS, and without ATS. The author has a large sample of companies and people working in different companies with different recruitment and employer branding habits. The contact information of the interviewees was known in advance. Based on previous interaction with the pool of possible candidates, the author was able to choose the right candidates who are perhaps more willing to share their insights on recruitment, employer branding and applicant tracking systems.

The interviewees were selected using a discretionary method of sampling, because instead of statistical synopsis, the aim was to get detailed information and to perceive the understanding of the recruiter's experiences and knowledge more in depth. Therefore, it was important that the interviewees had a personal experience in the matter and that they knew about the phenomenon as much as possible. Even though the N-size of interview samplings were relatively small and insignificant, the detailed

information was still available and author had better chance to study details with the comparison to theory. (Given, 2008)

The purpose of the interviews was to redeem the interviewees to open up and talk about the recruiters' experiences and challenges in relation to the communication and employer branding and therefore the ability of the interviewees to share their knowledge and background was more important than the sampling size itself. The uniqueness of the interviewees is emphasized by the fact that they all were interviewed as individuals, not just as test subjects (Given, 2008).

The thesis interviewed two talent and culture professionals. The purpose of the thesis was not to look for statistical regularities or average connections, so the sample size was not determined on base of size. Even though there were small number of interviews done, there was a large amount of information to be analysed. (Given, 2008)

The method of collecting the thesis material was theme interview executed to Talent and culture professionals. Writer had familiarized himself with the literature and research done related to recruitment, recruitment communication and employer branding. Knowledge of the basic theory enabled focusing and guiding the interviews and formatting relevant questions. (Given, 2008)

The interviewees were contacted before interviews via telephone. Discussing the interview and interview questions in advance made it easier to launch the actual interview.

Since the interviewer had already given some information to the interviewees in advance, the interviewees had knowledge on the importance of the interview and the uniqueness of the interview. The interviewees were interested in the thesis topic and acknowledged its importance. Everyone gave their consent for the interview and for recording the discussions.

Interviewing requires good connection with the interviewer, so the interview should be located in a calm and safe place for the interviewee. In this case the situation was positively influenced by the prior contact between the interviewer and the interviewee. Interviews were conducted via Skype, partly because the interviewer and interviewees live in different locations.

### 3.2 Interview

The qualitative research, is based on description of real life experiences of people and how they see things as individuals. The purpose is not to verify already existing truths or claims, but to find out existing truths and reveal facts. (Given, 2008)

In qualitative research, information is acquired comprehensively and the material is gathered from natural and unique situations. As an information gathering source, qualitative research often prefers people. The researcher relies on the information obtained from the conversations and findings of his / her own observations, rather than the data obtained from example quantitative tests (Given, 2008). The thesis work used also self-collected material, which included theoretical information on recruitment and branding. The voice and perspective of the Talent & Culture professional was brought into awareness in this thesis.

The idea for an interview is simple. When you want to know the thoughts of another person and find out why they work as they do, and how he / she sees things, it makes sense to directly ask from them in person. The research method was decided to be phenomena interview, because author wanted to find out detailed information about the recruitment funnel and the experiences of the recruitment and employer branding professionals. Also, author wanted to find out recruitment professionals ideas, experiences and beliefs. For these questions interviews gave fairly good answers (Given, 2008).

Author wanted to give the interviewee the opportunity to bring facts and working operation modes from their processes as freely as possible. The interviewee was a very meaningful party in the thesis process. When the interviewees felt they were able to discuss about relevant matters to them, it improved co-operation and the experience of the interviewed person. (Given, 2008)

When the thesis was started, it was already known beforehand that the subject would likely produce some complex answers. The information gathered was clarified and deepened by the semi-structured theme interview. Interaction via Skype enabled additional and more defining questions when needed. The interview also enabled interviewee to talk more broadly about themselves and the subject covered.



Interviewees were also amenable for more defining questions later, if something important was not asked in the actual interview. (Given, 2008). The collection of the data went well and smooth as required by the situation. Questions could be repeated, misunderstandings clarified and above everything else, conversation with the interviewees went with a natural flow. This enabled better interpretation of the answers and misunderstandings to be specified as soon as possible. (Given, 2008)

Interviewing was a better option than the questionnaire because sometimes filling in questionnaires can be difficult and challenging. Even though the author thinks he or she has put together extremely comprehensive answers, they may not necessarily reach the interviewee's thought. The responder may also have barriers to writing and understanding the questions, such as impaired vision or other disabling reason. There is also a greater chance to motivate the interviewees in "face to face" interviews, when comparing to questionnaire sampling (Given, 2008)

### 3.3 Theme interview

The thesis was based on semi-structured theme interviews, in which the answers were not tied to given answer possibilities, but rather the interviewees were able to answer with their own words. The interview emphasized the interviewees' own experiences and definitions of their situation (Given, 2008)

In a theme interview, it is known that the interviewees have experienced some particular situation (Given, 2008). In this thesis it is applicant communication, recruitment, employer branding and development of those three. The author had previously studied theory of recruiting, employer branding and ATS. Based on the interviewers' understanding of the topic, interview was directed to the interviewees' knowledge and experiences. The theme interview was focused on certain topics to be discussed consisting of recruitment, applicant communication, and factors that weaken or strengthen the employer brand. Interviewees interpretations and experiences of things were the key. (Given, 2008)

The questionnaire for the interview was designed in order to guide the theme interview and to get specific information from certain issues. The questions were meant to be a checklist and to guide the interview towards the areas from where the interviewer wanted to gather specific information. In the interview situation, the themes were discussed with the help of in-deepening questions to clarify the interviewer and the

interviewee. The theme areas were kept in mind so that the information provided by the interviewees would be relevant, authentic and rich as possible (Given, 2008). The themes had two tasks. They were meant to guide the interview towards the main topics and enhance positive frictionless interaction between interviewer and interviewee. The questions were made open-ended, short and easy to understand, trying to avoid the jargon. Open-ended questions in the interview helped the interviewee to explain his views more widely. The questions sparked the discussion and motivated the interviewee to speak about their experiences and their views. (Given, 2008)

The interview started with easy and extensive questions, and from general questions we went towards more specified questions. After the easy questions, the purpose was to evoke the discussion and provide an opportunity for the interviewee to address topics from their own, interesting point of views. (Given, 2008)

Semi-structured theme interview enabled changing the order and wording of the questions, while still ensuring the same content of the question to be same for both whom were interviewed. The interview situation was flexible and the questions were asked in non-precise order, which enabled the most natural question order for the situation. (Given, 2008)

The interview situation was relaxed and trustworthy. The calm interview situation gave the interviewees some time for expressing their own feelings. An interactive conversation encouraged the interviewee to open up and discuss their own situation in their company and what are their policies and processes. During the interview, the author repeated some of the interviewee's questions and asked for additional more specifying questions to clarify and deepen the information. (Given, 2008)

Prior to the actual interviews for the bachelor's thesis, author conducted a test interview about the research questions, to control the functionality of the interviewing ideas and to find out how the practical implementation of interviews could/should be done, and how the interviews, discussion and dialogue could possibly proceed in the actual interview. (Given, 2008)

A test interview provided information on for example word choices. The purpose of the experimental interview was to investigate the ready-made supporting questionnaire and if needed, to change the formulation of the questions. Also, the average length of the

interview was now more reliably assessed. Important preliminary information about interview structure was obtained. (Given, 2008)

The duration of the interviews ranged from 40 minutes to one and a half hours. Recorded interviews were slightly shorter. In both cases, after the actual interview was done, something important was raised in mind of the interviewer. To get the answer to these questions, the author wrote the important questions on paper and sent specifying questions to interviewees through E-mail. This information gathered afterwards was also included in the analysis in addition to the recorded interviews.

#### **4 Material handling and analysis**

In a theme interview, the proximity and specific information gathered makes the analysis step not only laborious and problematic, but also challenging and interesting. (Given, 2008)

Since the thesis approach aimed to understanding specific topic, qualitative analysis and conclusions were used in the analysis phase. The collected material was organized for storing the data and it was partly done by writing interviews in plain words to ensure nothing essential could be lost. The amount of texts transmitted from the interviews were 5 and 7 pages per interview. Of the two interviews conducted a total of 15 pages were generated.

Prior to the actual analysis of the data gathered, it was verified and checked in case of any missing information. If there was some missing information or missing links to be found, it would have been easier for the interviewer to complete the missing data later in the future. Of course, the final analysis was not done before all the interviews were carried out. This was done to ensure that the author could form the whole picture. (Given, 2008)

When analysing the content collected, author created a clear description of the subject investigated; how can Applicant Tracking System support in building Employer Brand. The material was structured in a tight and clear form without losing its crucial information. This was done to ensure reasonable analysis of the data (Given, 2008).

The interview material was written and saved into the computer. After condensing each interview, material was disaggregated separately according to theme areas covering the research question; how can applicant tracking system support in building employer brand.

After formatting the theme areas, author started combining the interview data. The theme areas of all interviews were cut and glued together forming a material, where identity of the interviewees still retained. Similarities and abnormalities were sought in the texts. Observations were made on the basis of incidence factors, recurrence and special cases. The material from the interviews was shredded into pieces, conceptualized and rebuilt into a logical entity. (Given, 2008)

## 5 Thesis study results

Responses to the research work for the Bachelors' thesis was done by arranging interviews with the talent & culture professional.

Two talent & culture professionals were interviewed for the work. Both of the interviewees had been working with communication, recruitment processes and Employer Branding. The interviews were conducted via skype.

The interviewed talent & culture specialists had been working in the field of recruitment & employer branding for 6- to 12years. Both had experiences in working in recruitment field, with and without applicant tracking system. Both were working in a SME company which employ 55 to 170 persons, and have an ongoing recruitment need.

Both interviewees acknowledged that modern recruitment is very much bound with relevant information and branding activities.

*“Modern applicant is looking for an organisation and community, rather than just a employment or a position. To communicate our ways of working and what kind of people we have working for us is important, and the information needs to be genuine to attract the most talented people”*

## 5.1 Employer Branding Plans

Both organisations have an active and ongoing recruitment processes. Study revealed that both of the talent and culture professionals have a strong belief that employer branding activities are the main driver in hunt for a talented work force. As Gomez-Meja, Balkin and Cardy talked in their book “employer needs to think their employer/employee relationship in traditional sales point of view”, both of the interviewees mentioned similar things in the interview (Gomez-Meija, et al., 2016).

*“Its little bit like buying and selling. Today it is more” applicants market” so to speak, so it’s important to be able to build up a company reputation and acknowledgement to evoke talents interest towards our company.”*

Both of the interviewees had either fully described plan for employer brand activities or certain framework and described a plan for this. Both of the professionals also mentioned, that there needs to be a plan for either one; internal and external branding activities. These activities will affect in the end result of how the potential talent sees the work place. Both of the interviewees had a budget for their employee marketing activities, which they saw important part of the successfully executed employer branding. About the actual material to be posted in different medias, both of the interviewees recognized the importance of honest and genuine material and how this is the only long-term plan to execute employer branding.

*“In my opinion, whatever the information is, it needs to be honest and genuine. I encourage everyone of our employees to post information about our open vacancies in the different medias that they are using, but the way they do it, is upon them.”*

The crucial factor to the planning phase of the employer brand, is the company's reputation in the employer market. Employer Brand is a broad concept that consists of number of different factors. The company needs to first identify its own identity in order to build their brand. Important to mention is that reputation is not only a result of planned work, but the reputation of the company is also influenced by the company's stakeholder experience.

Both of the interviewees opened up how important they see Employer Branding activities today and in the future. They unanimously stated that the main goal for

branding activities is to increase the likelihood of attracting and hiring the best organizational fit for their working environment. They saw that the long-term effects will be fruitful and increase the conspicuousness of the organizations. It was also important for the interviewees to ensure contented applicant, whom would willingly share the positive experiences about company's recruitment processes. Both also described that it is important to them, that applicant would enthusiastically be ready to apply for opening position again.

*“I wish that they had an impression, that we are nice people who take care of each other, and loves our work. We have had situations where I needed to get back to certain applicants, that we haven't hired in certain reasons previously, but they would be a good fit for certain position now. So, all around positive experience about us is important to me”*

## 5.2 External communication

A good brand is a great benefit for the company. Reputation brings customers, attracts workers and partners, inspires investors, and interests the media. On the other hand, work must be done to achieve certain level of reputation, which then can be lost quickly. However, great amount of work for employer branding is useless if the organization does not know how to communicate their activities. Therefore, it is important that the employer branding building blocks are linked to strategic planning of communications.

In terms of communication success, interviewees looked at their reputation from outsiders point of view, for example how things seem, sound and feel from the eyes of outsiders. Also, interviewee considered that success of their employer branding activities can be measured from the amount of successful recruitments done according predetermined recruitment budget, and comparing that to the last year.

*“I feel that it has been much easier to achieve our recruitment goals, when comparing to last year. Definitely there has been more interest towards us as an employee”*

It would be useful for a company to implement integrated communication plan, whereby all the different messaging to the talent pool within chosen channels forms a coherent

big picture.

One key theme that was risen in the interviews was the content of the communication. According to interviewees, content production should be active and that pre planned campaigns are important. When building an employer brand, company should tell honestly about the workplace's everyday life without embellishing appearance, so that the appearance in social media corresponds to the reality of the organization. Company and the people within it can make mistakes and be open about them.

According to interviewees, external communication must be up-to-date and the information appearing in the advertisement should be as comprehensive as possible, so that the potential candidate would not form any ambiguous ideas.

*“It is important to answer all the questions already in the job-ad. I try to think the possible questions which could be raised by the applicant, when reading the job-ad. It should be informative without being exhausted by the facts”*

ATS provides possibilities, for example a message or job-ad templates to be used for different job-posting channels. This decreases the possibility of errors in external communication. Interviewee B uses “sanity check” feature of ATS to make sure that recruiting managers don’t publish any hazardous job-ads in different portals.

The context of the communication should be designed for each channel separately and the content and features of the different channels should be taken into account when planning the material. Text should be sufficiently informative and it can be supported with images and videos. According to the interviewees, the videos are better remembered and also provide more information, whereas pictures attract talent interest.

According to the interviewees, content should also be built around stories in social media. Through stories, jobseekers find it easier to identify with employees of the organization and their everyday lives. This is particularly important when attracting passive job seekers. In stories, it is important not to introduce only the top executives but instead variety of different workers from different fields. Another theme highlighted in the interviews was content production. According to the interviewees, the construction of the employer brand is efficiently supported by the by the ordinary

employees and their content production. It is important that the material is easy to approach.

“When posting messages in different channels I try to remove my “corporate mask” and figure out how I would personally say this, without the needless corporation jargon. I feel that it is more effective way to get my readers attention.”

At the beginning, however, employees should be instructed and advised to ensure the required quality and to make sure everyone knows the rules of the game. According to interviewees, employees can be committed to make employer branding (in social media posts) work together and that it could become common issue for the entire organization.

Apart from the fact that the involvement of employees in the content production and its effects on a collective spirit within the organization, regular employee updates can also affect external applicants perceptions of the organization, as it can also enable the content to reach desired target audiences.

Regarding job-posting and advertising, the ATS allows to override a lot of manual work. For example messages about different vacancies can easily be passed to multiple channels with just a few clicks. Both of the interviewees used ATS to create and maintain separate career portals, where they provide contemporary topics, images and videos to talent-pool, whom are interested about them as an employee. Everything can be easily done without any middle-man because the feature doesn't require any coding or ICT skills.

*“ If I think about our current recruitment tool, compared to the previous one, this makes it easier to work with our career pages; nowadays it is possible to update contemporary information there, or to indicate our groove in”*

According to the interviewees, promotional campaigns should be used deliberately and the message should be well targeted. For example, if a company promotes salesmen work for a programmer advertising money is lost and the employer reputation can experience a hiccup. Both of the interviewees used social media marketing tools to get more attention to their own messages in people's social media feed.

Both of interviewees think that the most efficient social media channels for informal



communication are Instagram, Facebook and LinkedIn. Facebook has the most users, Instagram reaches younger professionals and LinkedIn is a channel for recruitment and more formal job-related messaging.

### 5.3 ATS in employer branding and communication

According to interviewee A, e-recruitment and recruitment tools have transformed the recruitment world in a way that employees and businesses can engage in more open discussions with each other, possibly even without middlemen. Candidates, especially young people, require less formal dialogue, which is partly influenced by social media and technologies (need for a rapid communication). Recruitment and applicant communication has changed to be more two-way communication and modern candidates are often interviewing and asking specific information about their processes, wanting to know exactly where they are going to work. In this case, more attention needs to be paid to enhancing employer's brand.

Integrations form a Modern Applicant Tracking System to a variety of different media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, MOL, Duunitori etc. This is a helpful feature in today's ATS's. It's easy to choose and publish in different channels which also enables the possibility to get information and data about the channels company is using and which of these channels work in certain recruitments when looking for certain profiles.

It is likely that there will be job-possibilities which attract a large pool of applicants for certain recruitments. In this case it would be a lot of manual work and time-consuming to be, for example, personally in contact with each applicant. In which case the ATS would be a helpful tool enabling effective communication with all applicants.

*“Some people forget how important it is to treat everyone in the process equally. With applicant tracking system you are able to treat everyone according to a pre planned structure”*

ATS and E-recruitment have a great impact on the job of the recruiter. Nowadays information is far more accessible and the network is no longer as important as it was before. The job description has changed a lot. All applications are sent and received electronically and paper has been forgotten completely. Majority of the communication during the recruitment process is done through ATS email feature. This enables the

information log to be kept about the applicant whom is expecting to receive a quick response and knowledge about their recruitment process.

ATS has made it easier to do the work and routine time-consuming work has decreased. By using ATS, companies are able to reach out to people more easily and do the recruitment more efficiently. Challenge according to A, is that job seekers have a wider picture of the job-market and what other employees have to offer, so it is important that information about the company is genuine, and that there is a possibility to find information from different channels.

*“We want to be in a situation where the applicant wishes to know more about our company. In order to tell what is happening in our business we use blogs, Instagram and Facebook, just to mention a few. We need to decide the most powerful communication mechanism for certain recruitment where we are providing effective and relevant information about our company and our atmosphere”*

The employer needs to think its employer brand and to ensure that its employees enjoy their work and working environment. This will generate more efficient un-planned material in different channels.

E-recruitment and ATS provides applicants better opportunities to bring their skills forward, for example video applications. In videos applicants can raise their personality and communication skills more than in a traditional a job application.

As a threat, the interviewees felt that it was difficult to keep a personal touch in urgent mass recruitments. On the other hand, recruiters felt that it was still easier to maintain minimum level of applicant communication with the help of a tool, rather than without a tool.

Both interviewees agreed that the recruitment process needs a face to face interview situation, done by a human being. Assessing the personality of the candidate or what kind of interaction skills he/she possesses is difficult with the help of a ATS. Both of the Interviewees believe that, even though those things could be partially done with integrated aptitude tests and other automatization, assessment of candidates requires always an interview. Personal interpretation cannot be fully automated. If it were to be automated, the nature of the service would change and the lack of personal touch would be harmful for the employer brand.

Interviewees also stated that they would not return into a situation where ATS would not be part of their recruitment and employer branding activities. Company can process its recruitments without ATS but there is a great advance when using it. The biggest benefit was automated email features, ready-made job-ad templates and information log gathered from applicants. This was decreasing the possibility for broken information and inefficient communication with applicants. There were multiple helpful features which can be used for Employer Branding, but interviewee A mentioned that those were minimum requirements and features that ATS should provide.

*"I couldn't imagine working without ATS. With some simple tool I could, but I need at least some feedback templates, automated communication features and information log about applicants, but without a tool I would not see myself working. "*

## 6 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to find out how can ATS support a positive Employer Brand. The objective was examined through the research question: How can Applicant Tracking System support in building Employer Brand? This question was then divided into a three smaller subgroups 1) Employer branding plans 2) External communication 3) ATS in employer branding and communication

Study results show that the recruitment tool can be utilized in multiple ways in employer branding but the two most helpful factors are; it reduces workload and decreases the possibility for inaccurate messaging. The factors which are the most affective in the formation of the employer brand are the overall reputation of the company and the picture of how it is to be working in the company. The employer image of the company is enhanced through effective communication. Big part of an effective employer branding is the ability to capture and deliver the company atmosphere in the variety of external channels. With the help of an ATS the message can be put out efficiently and decrease the risk of inaccurate information

Based on the results of the research; companies that are using certain kind of strategy towards employer branding are benefitting from ATS tool in execution of their branding strategy. These themes author researched emerged from both, the material produced by the company's communication today and from the successfully carried out interviews.

Some of the ATS benefits were so obvious to the interviewees, such as the automatic answer to the sent application or replying with a decline message to the applicant when the recruitment was complete, that these features were not so strongly underlined in the interviews when talking about the employer branding and ATS.

It can be seen from a company's attitude towards communication, that the need to develop an employer's brand has been noticed not only in recruiter level but also in the company management. Efficient branding activities have made it easier to achieve the recruitment goals in terms of finding potential candidates for different positions. Modern company clearly invests in its external communications. Businesses have taken in use different social media channels where they can communicate tales of their employees. Desire is to go more in to the direction where company employees can be the actual source of the stories.

The research found out few ways of how modern companies developed their employer image. The creation of the employer image is a widespread phenomenon, so larger material sampling would have most likely enabled the author to find more thorough factors affecting the formation of an employer image and how to successfully exploit ATS. However, the study revealed that the ATS is useful for both; external communication and handling internal processes efficiently, hence it provides a more positive candidate experience.

When analyzing the interview material, the challenge was that the purpose of research was to examine how ATS can support the construction of an employer brand. The examination revealed that the employer brand is built by multiple different components so it was difficult to specify certain issues. Employer branding consists from multiple variables, where all the variables are connected and affecting each other.

From the interview material and its analysis it can be seen, that eventually author was able to obtain the information about the interviewer's knowledge on employer branding and questions related to construction of it. The interview sampling is relatively small, two interviews. However, this was found to be sufficient because the author had experience in working with recruitment & communication specialists, and some of the topics related interviews had been informally discussed with several professionals. More interviews would have yielded more reliable results and more research data. The number of interviews was affected by the last minute cancellation from one of the interviewees and the lack of resources of the researcher.

A broader study provides information on the use of ATS and the factors affecting the formation of an employer brand. Based on these foundations, organizations can develop their own employer image and carefully assess which tools to take in use. The research also provides information on the factors that can be utilized in creating an employer image. Respondents feel that the factors which should be communicated externally consists of a responsible employee, a free atmosphere, authenticity of external communication, a well-functioning working community, appreciation towards staff and investing in development of employees and their learning. It is also important to effectively communicate all these factors in chosen channels. As it can be found from different studies, there can be numerous aspects increasing the organization's attractiveness.

The attractiveness factors that were found from these research results, can vary widely and are completely dependent on the research material, and from where in the world and to whom the research is conducted. Thus the factors of employer branding variables that have emerged in this study, tell about the interviewees and their organizations. On the other hand, companies that are operating in the same field, are located in the same geographical area and are also utilizing ATS, may have similar variables to further enhance their employer brand.

ATS, however, could allow more accurate information log about the applicants and what has been done with them during the process. Other of the interviewees said that she had spent relatively little time on using their new ATS and that she was not fully aware of the opportunities offered by a “modern” ATS.

The author visited career pages of different organizations and familiarized himself with external communication channels and ways used by multiple different SME organizations in Finland. According to this empirical study employer branding activities done by the interviewees and their organizations, author can state that their employer branding activities can be considered above average. However, it needs to be understood that a company that has a budget for acquisition of a recruitment tool is also more likely to have an interest towards developing their employer brand further than streamlining their recruitment processes.

Although the interviewees felt that advertising in paid job search portals is not the priority, it is important to remember that the broader visibility of the organization is important for the employer brand. Therefore, well-designed advertising with a proper execution has an important role to play in creating an employer brand.

## 6.1 Development suggestions

Here are a few development suggestions that could be utilized by the interviewees using an ATS.

The study showed that recruitment processes could be further developed by utilizing ATS. For example, group interviews in recruitments where interaction skills have a significant role to play, video interviews could be one part of screening appropriate

candidates. Also interview templates and instructions could be implemented straight to the ATS. This could enhance standardized recruitment procedures even more.

CV Bank feature could be considered to be used more effectively. Interviewee B stated that she was not yet accustomed to use the CV bank effectively. The CV Bank could help to speed up recruitment and find the right people from already existing pool of talent.

## 6.2 Reliability of the survey

Based on the research it can be stated that the objectives of the research were achieved. This led to the understanding of ATS utilization as part of the efficient creation of an employer brand. Also, some suggestions for development emerged from the interviews.

Describing the acquisition of the research material in detail aimed to improve the reliability of the research and the research report. The reliability of the research has been highlighted by using direct quotations to ensure that the researcher's interpretations has links to the material.

The reliability of the study could have been improved if the interviewees would have had the theme interview questions in advance, which would have given the interviewees time to process their answers in peace. Reliability could also be undermined by the fact that no direct answers to the interview questions were possessed. Socially desirable answers could also be attained in the interview. The survey could also have been completed by a questionnaire which would have involved more respondents in the study. Interviewing more than two talent and culture specialists for the study could have possibly increased the reliability of the research material and could have added value to the research. (Pankl, et al., 2010)

### 6.3 Further research suggestions

In the future, it would be interesting to explore how procurement and requirements for recruitment tools should be taken into consideration in relation to the organisation industry, and whether the recruitment tools have different value-adding features for different organisations.

It would also be interesting to study what the applicants think about the effective and smooth recruitment process and what kind of influencer is well handled recruitment process to the employer's brand

Interesting aspect to review in future would be issues related to the employer branding in a few years, and to find out whether the accelerating digitalisation has changed the ways of for example recruiting marketing or has it brought talent closer to the employer.

## 7 Appendixes

Interview questions?

1. How important you perceive employer branding activities?
2. How do you believe that external communication (online, advertisement, communication during the process) can affect employer brand?
3. How would you describe efficient applicant communication?
4. How digitalisation has affected on communication?
5. How do you perceive ATS in supporting employer brand?
6. How wide experience do you have from different ATS's
7. What kind of ATS features do you think are important from communication & employer branding point of view?
8. What kind of ATS features would be needed to enhance the employer brand even more?
9. Does the company have a strategy toward efficient communication & employer branding? Yes/no? - if yes which kind of?
10. What would be ideal situation considering employee branding & communication
11. What would be the ideal description of your company discussed among applicants? (you could list words, characteristics etc.)



## 8 References

- Armstrong, M. & Taylor, S., 2014. *Armstrong's Handbook of human resource management practice..* 13th ed. London: KoganPage.
- Barber, A. E., 1998. *Recruiting Employees: Individual and Organizational Perspectives.* California: SAGE Publications.
- Brown, J. N. & Swain, A., 2009. *Recruiter's Handbook.* London: Kogan Page.
- Duunitori, 2017. *Kansallinen Rekrytointitutkimus 2017*, Helsinki: Duunitori.
- ec.europa.eu, 2018. *ec.europa.eu.* [Online]  
Available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition\\_fi](http://ec.europa.eu/growth/smes/business-friendly-environment/sme-definition_fi)
- Edwards, M. R., 2010. *An integrative review of employer branding and OB theory*, s.l.: Kings College London.
- Falcone, P., 2009. *Great Interview Questions to Ask Before You Hire.* second ed. USA: Amacom.

- Gatewood, R. D., Gowan, M. A. & Lautenschlager, G. J., 1993. *Corporate Image, Recruitment Image, and Initial Job Choice Decisions*. s.l.:Academy of Management.
- Given, L. m., 2008. *The SAGE Encyclopedia of QUALITATIVE RESEARCH METHODS*. USA: SAGE.
- Gomez-Meija, L. R., Balkin, D. D. & Cardy, R. L., 2016. *Managing Human Resources*. eight ed. England: Pearson.
- Hudson Pro, 2014. *Building on the practices of top employer brands*, s.l.: Hudson Pro.
- Hudson, 2014. *How to launch a succesful employer brand*, USA: Hudson Pro.
- Investopedia, 2018. *investopedia.com*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.investopedia.com/terms/s/swot.asp>
- Kozan, K., 2017. *ideal.com*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://ideal.com/speed-communication-recruitment-process/>  
[Accessed 19 03 2018].
- Landers, R. N. & Schmidt, G. B., 2016. *Social Media in Employee Selection and Recruitment*. Swizerland: Springer.
- Linberg-Repo, K., 2005. *Asiakkaan ja brändin vuorovaikutus – Miten johtaa brändin arvoprosesseja*. Helsinki: WSOYpro.
- LinkedIn, 2018. *linkedin.com*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/talent-solutions/resources/pdfs/linkedin-global-recruiting-trends-2018-en-us.pdf>  
[Accessed 2018].
- Mark, B., 2017. *grayce.co.uk*. [Online]  
[Accessed 2018].
- Markkanen, M., 1999. *ETSI, ARVIOI, VALITSE - ONNISTUNUT REKRYTOINTI*. 1 ed. Suomi: Sanoma Pro Oy.
- Nikolauou, I. & Oostrom, J. K., 2015. *EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT, SELECTION, AND ASSESSMENT*. New York: Psychology Press.
- Pankl, E., Theiss-White, D. & Bushing, M. C., 2010. *Recruitment, developement, and Retention of Information Professionals*. New York: Business Science Reference.
- Picard, J., 2013. *linkedin.com*. [Online]  
Available at: <https://business.linkedin.com/talent-solutions/blog/2013/12/recruiting-active-vs-passive-candidates>  
[Accessed 2018].
- Puustinen, S., 2013. *Qualitative research and theme interview as a method of collecting data*, Helsinki: Aalto University.

- Randstad, 2017. <https://www.randstad.com/workforce-insights/employer-brand-research/research-reports/>. [Online]  
Available at: <https://www.randstad.com/workforce-insights/employer-brand-research/research-reports/>  
[Accessed 26 02 2018].
- ReachMee, 2018. *reachmee.com*. [Online]  
Available at: [www.reachmee.com](http://www.reachmee.com)
- Sandström, T., 2013. Työhaun tulevaisuus on sähköinen. *Työhaun tulevaisuus on sähköinen*.
- Schweyer, A., 2004. *Talent Management Systems*. s.l.:Wiley.
- Selectone, 2017. *selectonellc.com*. [Online]  
Available at: <http://www.selectonellc.com/blog/communication-key-to-the-hiring-process>  
[Accessed 2018].
- World Bank, 2016. *worldbank.org*. [Online]  
Available at:  
<http://documents.worldbank.org/curated/en/896971468194972881/pdf/102725-PUB-Replacement-PUBLIC.pdf>
- Yalcin Acikgoz, B. M. S., 2016. *Social Media in Employee Selection and Recruitment*. Swizerland: Springer.