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USING LINKEDIN AS A RECRUITING TOOL IN FINLAND

International Business
2021

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International Business

TIIVISTELMÄ

Tekijä	Mila Tammisuo
Opinnäytetyön nimi	LinkedIn rekrytoinnin työkaluna Suomessa
Vuosi	2022
Kieli	englanti
Sivumäärä	43 + 2 liitettä
Ohjaaja	Ossi Koskinen

Nykyään työnantajakuvalla on yhä suurempi rooli uusien työntekijöiden houkuttelemisessa ja monet yritykset käyttävät sosiaalisen median kanavia jakaakseen työhönsä liittyvää sisältöä ja ilmoituksia avoimista työpaikoista. Sosiaalisen median käyttö rekrytoinnin työkaluna on yleistynyt viime vuosina ja erityisesti LinkedInin käyttö on lisääntynyt työnhakijoiden ja rekrytoijien keskuudessa. LinkedIn on nopeasti kasvava sosiaalisen median alusta, joka keskittyy erityisesti verkostoitumiseen työelämässä sekä muuhun työ-aiheiseen sisältöön.

Tässä opinnäytetyössä perehdytään LinkedIniin ja siihen, miten rekrytoijat eri alojen henkilöstöpalveluyrityksistä käyttävät LinkedIniä rekrytoinnissa. Opinnäytetyön tavoitteena oli tutkia rekrytointiin liittyviä toimintoja ja sitä, koetaanko LinkedIn kannattavaksi rekrytoinnin työkaluksi ja millaisissa tilanteissa LinkedIniä kannattaa hyödyntää. Tutkimuksella pyrittiin myös selvittämään, mitkä LinkedInin ominaisuudet koetaan hyvinä ja hyödyllisinä, mikä LinkedInissä on haastavaa, ja mitä ominaisuuksia tulisi kehittää.

Tämän opinnäytetyön teoriaosuudessa tarkastellaan rekrytointi- ja valintaprosesseja sekä LinkedIniä ja sen ominaisuuksia rekrytoinnin näkökulmasta. Tutkimusosuus toteutettiin laadullisena tutkimuksena, jonka toteutustapa oli puolistrukturoitu teemahaastattelu ja kohderyhmänä rekrytoijat henkilöstöpalvelualan yrityksistä.

Tutkimustuloksista voidaan havaita, että LinkedInin käyttö rekrytoinnissa tuo lisää näkyvyyttä sekä mahdollisuuksia verkostoitua potentiaalisten kandidaattien kanssa. LinkedInin parhaiksi puoliksi haastateltavat kokivat laajat hakumahdollisuudet ja tehokkuuden. Haastavaksi LinkedInissä mainittiin muun muassa se, että kandidaatin sopivuutta rooliin on hankala arvioida, mikäli profiilissa ei ole tarpeeksi tietoa.

Avainsanat LinkedIn, sosiaalinen media, rekrytointi

ABSTRACT

Author	Mila Tammisuo
Title	Using LinkedIn as a Recruiting Tool in Finland
Year	2022
Language	English
Pages	43 + 2 Appendices
Name of Supervisor	Ossi Koskinen

Today, the image of the employer plays a bigger role in attracting employees and many companies use social media to share content related to their work and open job vacancies. The use of social media in recruitment has become more common in recent years and the use of LinkedIn in particular has increased among job seekers and recruiters. LinkedIn is a fast-growing social media platform focused on working life and making connections.

This thesis delves into LinkedIn and its utilization in recruitment. The aim of this thesis is to reflect functions related to recruitment and whether it is profitable to use LinkedIn to recruit new employees and in what kind of situations LinkedIn is a useful tool. The study also sought to find out which features of LinkedIn are perceived as good and useful, what is challenging about LinkedIn, and which features should be developed.

The theoretical part of this thesis examines the recruitment and selection processes as well as LinkedIn and its features as a recruiting tool. The research part was carried out as a qualitative study, the method of the study was a semi-structured theme interview, and the target group was recruiters from different recruitment and employment agencies.

It can be concluded from the research results that the use of LinkedIn in recruitment brings more visibility as well as opportunities to network with potential candidates. The best aspects of LinkedIn were among other things the wide filtering possibilities and the efficiency. One of the challenges mentioned on LinkedIn was that it might be difficult to assess a candidate's suitability for a role if there is not enough information in the profile.

Keywords LinkedIn, social media, recruitment of employees

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1 INTRODUCTION

Human resource management and recruitment are one of the company's most important functions. Today, the image of the employer plays a bigger role in attracting employees and many companies use social media to share content related to their work and open job vacancies. LinkedIn is a fast-growing social media platform, and this thesis delves into it and its utilization in recruitment.

Recruitment covers all actions and choices related to placing the right people into the right positions. Recruitment can be seen as a three-step process, the first step being attraction, the second step is selection, and the third step is supporting retention in the work. (Rissanen 2011, 249) The importance of the employer image is equally important in both the public and private sectors. There is a tough competition for the best skills, and the image of the employer has a significant impact on the interest of potential job seekers in applying for a position in a particular organization. (Kaijala & Tolvanen 2020, 10)

This thesis reflects the functions related to recruitment and whether it is profitable to use LinkedIn to recruit new employees and in what kind of situations LinkedIn is a useful tool. The study also aims to find out which features of LinkedIn are perceived as good and useful, what is challenging about LinkedIn, and which features should be developed.

1.1 Thesis background and objectives

The author of this thesis joined LinkedIn year ago and finds the platform very interesting, similar to Facebook, but it is all about working life and making connections. LinkedIn is a Microsoft-owned social media platform where you can make professional connections internationally, look for jobs or otherwise read interesting status updates. LinkedIn has more than 774 million users in more than 200 countries and territories. (LinkedIn 2021)

The objective of this thesis is to increase the knowledge about the use of LinkedIn as a tool in recruitment. The purpose is to find out how Employment agencies in Finland utilize LinkedIn and what kind of experiences they have of using it. Research is practical because it explores today's modern recruitment tool.

The literature on the subject is fairly new, as LinkedIn is a new phenomenon. The research is current and important to implement, since only a few studies have been published in recent years in Finland. Social media is constantly evolving, and the user base is growing rapidly, therefore there is a need for new research on the subject. The research is useful for the professionals in the field of recruiting as they can find new ideas and ways to leverage LinkedIn for job advertising and recruitment.

1.2 Research problem and research questions

The research problem is to find out what kind of experiences recruiters from different Employment agencies have of using LinkedIn in recruitment. The purpose of this study is to obtain information on the use and benefits of LinkedIn in recruiting new employees. The use of social media in recruitment has become more common in recent years and the use of LinkedIn in particular has increased among job seekers and recruiters.

The research section of the thesis is guided by pre-defined research questions. The research is qualitative, and the method of implementation is an interview in which professionals from Employment agencies are interviewed. The interview is a semi-structured theme interview, which is well suited for exploring and describing experiences. Qualitative research aims to represent a phenomenon or an event and to understand the activity as well as to interpret the phenomenon. Qualitative research is not intended to make statistical generalizations.

Research questions:

1. What are the benefits of LinkedIn in recruitment?

2. In what situations should LinkedIn be used for staff recruitment?
3. Which LinkedIn features have been functional and which features are in need of development?

1.3 Structure of the Thesis

The theoretical part of the thesis introduces the reader what is an employment agency and how a typical recruitment process and a selection process are carried out. Another topic covered in the theoretical part of this thesis is employment engagement and retention. For comparison, other social media channels that are commonly used in recruitment are also briefly introduced. In addition, the theoretical part of this thesis introduces LinkedIn and its features as a recruitment tool and how a recruitment process is carried out in LinkedIn.

The research part of this thesis was conducted as an interview with three recruiters from employment agencies in different fields. The method of interview in this thesis was carried out as a semi-structured theme interview with defined main and specifying questions. The main topics of the interview were utilization of LinkedIn in recruitment, thoughts and experiences related to LinkedIn, useful features, and features to be developed in LinkedIn and other social media channels used for recruitment.

The research results are concluded and discussed in a separate chapter after the research result analysis. In this chapter, suggestions for further research are presented. The final chapter also views the ethical questions related to the study and the reliability of the results.

2 RECRUITMENT

2.1 Recruitment process

All Human Resource (HR) functions are critical success factors that help the company to reach its goals. The good implementation of HR functions aims to ensure that the company has sufficient, competent, and motivated personnel. In the very beginning of Human Resource functions stands recruitment. (Laaksonen, Niskanen & Ollila 2012, 181)

Recruitment covers all actions and choices related to placing the right people into the right positions. Recruitment can be seen as a three-step process, the first step being attraction, the second step is selection, and the third step is supporting retention in the work. (Rissanen 2011, 249)



Figure 1. The three steps of recruitment (Rissanen 2011, 249).

Recruitment process begins with building a staffing plan which determines the elements that are necessary when staffing a company with right people at the right time. In the very beginning of a staffing plan stands the need of identifying job needs. You need to know where the company is aiming and what are the goals and objectives for reaching the goals set on organizational level. (Smart Recruiters, Accessed 6.3.2022)

When creating the recruitment plan, it is necessary to choose whether the search is external or internal. External search allows both the organization's own employees and others interested to apply for a position. (Laaksonen, Niskanen & Ollila 2012, 185) The organization should also provide information internally about open roles to keep existing employees updated of the opportunities and career paths offered by the company. According to LinkedIn Global Talent Trends 2020 survey internal recruitment is seen as useful since employees are already aware of the processes, culture and systems. (LinkedIn 2020)

Once the need has been determined and recruitment plan is assessed, a job posting will be prepared and published. The posting should include at least a description and responsibilities of the role as well as practical information such as starting date of the employment, working hours and salary related information. It is recommended that the posting includes the contact details of the person responsible for recruitment for any inquiries. (Gallant 2021)

After receiving and reviewing applications a certain number of applicants will be selected for a job interview. Preparing for interviews is important for both the applicant and the interviewer. The recruiter must take care of, for example, arranging space for job interviews, agreeing on interview times, reviewing applicants' applications, and preparing the body of the interview. (StaffMill, Accessed 6.3.2022)

2.2 Selection Process

After the initial interviews comes assessing and selection phase. Assessing the suitability of employees may include various tests, contacting references, or background checks. Tests can be used, for example, to determine the applicant's characteristics, problem-solving ability or any other skill needed in the role. Depending on the role and field, the background check may include reviewing the candidate's

criminal record or running a credit check. Some companies may also check applicant's social media pages to see if they would represent the company professionally. (Smart Recruiters, Accessed 6.3.2022)

According to the website of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration in Finland, if certain conditions are met, the employer has the right to process drug tests for a job seeker. The employer may only run the tests with the jobseeker's consent and jobseeker cannot be forced to undergo a drug test. However, in this case the employer may refuse to hire. (Occupational Safety and Health Administration 2022)

When the candidates are assessed and all needed selection procedures are executed, it is time to make a job offer for the selected candidate. The job offer can be made either via phone call or any other communication channel depending on the nature and complexity of the position. A typical job offer usually includes at least information of the role, starting date, salary and other benefits included on the job offer. (The balance careers 2020)

2.3 Headhunting

Headhunting is a form of recruitment that usually does not contain a traditional job posting. In practice, it means a recruiter is searching for a new employee by proactively approaching candidates without creating a posting about the open role. It is also possible to create a job posting and then headhunting works as an additional channel for finding the right talents.

Headhunting usually starts with creating a longer list of potential candidates and continues with contacting the candidates to find out more about their interests and career plans. After initial discussions, the candidates are assessed, and the most potential talents are invited to an interview. After the interview phase comes the selection process which can differ from role to role.

Headhunting is often used when a company is searching for an employee for more demanding expert roles or senior management. The job markets can be highly competitive on certain fields and headhunting can be seen as a way for attracting new talents even from competing businesses and finding candidates that are not actively seeking for a new job. (StaffMill, Accessed 8.5.2022)

2.4 Employee engagement and retention

During the recruitment process the company should also consider that the company's image is not important only for attracting new customers but attracting potential employees and applicants. Job markets are highly competitive, and it is important for a company to create a strategy for strengthening the employer image. One way of doing that is providing a realistic picture of what it would be like to work in the company and why it is a great place to work. (Pollitt 2007, 12)

Employee engagement with the company is important because it takes time and resources to have ongoing replacement recruitments. Employee retention can be promoted by emphasizing compatibility with the company culture in the recruitment process. The recruiting manager of Renoa Group Markus Jääskeläinen states that employees who fit the corporate culture share the company's values and are more committed to the company than average. However, agreeing on a corporate culture does not mean recruiting only similar people into the company since a diverse staff is seen as an advantage. (Monster, Accessed 5.3.2022) Recruitment is the first step in promoting diversity in the work community. (Duunitori 2022)

The company and employer image and employee experiences are crucial factors when there is a competition for finding the best talents. Usually, the companies with strong consumer brands are desired places to work. However, the consumer brand does not tell enough about the company as an employer and this is why companies should consider their employer image and how to strengthen it. (Kaijala 2016, 88)

2.5 Social media in recruitment

The Monster.fi website states that the biggest advantage of social media from the point of view of recruitment is easy targeting. Messages can be easily displayed to a defined target group. In addition to this, the so-called passive job seekers, people who are not actively looking for a new job. Job search services, on the other hand, reach people who are oriented towards job search. For example, the orientation of the people reached on Facebook and Instagram is in their free time, which is why reaching the right target group may not work. For this reason, social media should not be used as the only recruitment channel, but in addition to other channels and platforms. (Monster, Accessed 5.3.2022)

A fundamental factor in social media recruitment, is that it requires more than only a message and a channel. It requires a network that is interactive, and its social contacts are the key to social media recruitment. The communication takes place inside the network and outwards from it, not traditionally only inside out. (Kaijala 2016, 186)

According to a study conducted by Duunitori, young people often search for summer jobs on social media. Up to 95 per cent of young jobseekers look for summer jobs especially on job search sites. The next most common channel for finding summer jobs is Google, which is approached by every second applicant. The third most common place to look for summer jobs is on social media, where 43 percent of respondents are looking for jobs. Underage jobseekers in particular say they run into summer job postings on Instagram and Snapchat. According to the study, especially those who apply for summer jobs in their field and university students use LinkedIn in their job search. (Duunitori 2021)

Duunitori conducts an annual national recruitment survey that examines changing recruitment trends, and according to the results of recent years, the use of social media in recruitment has grown in popularity. 88 per cent of the respondents of 2021 survey agrees that social media is a very effective recruitment channel. (Kansallinen rekrytointitutkimus 2021)

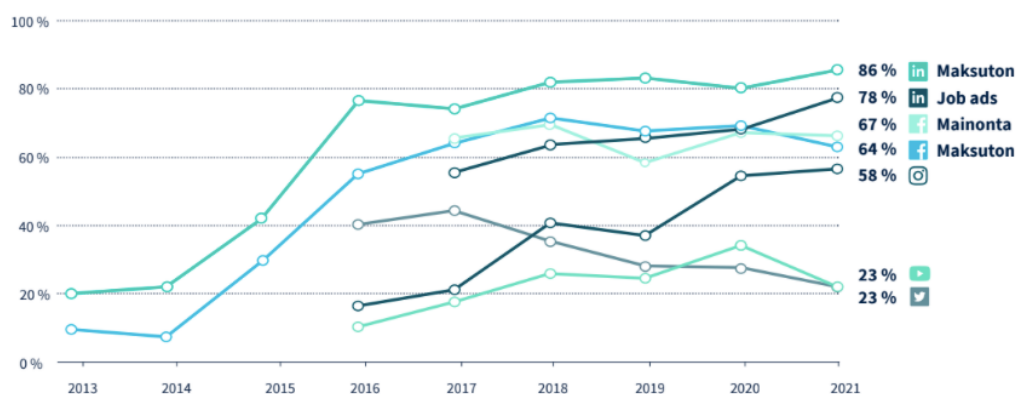


Figure 2. Importance of social media channels used in recruitment (Kansallinen rekrytointitutkimus 2021).

The chart above shows that free of charge LinkedIn job postings are seen as the most important and paid as the second most important recruitment channel on social media. After LinkedIn, Facebook's paid advertisements and free of charge versions are also seen as important. After year 2019, a significant change in the importance of Instagram in recruitment can also be seen.

2.6 Employment Agencies

According to employment agency Manpower, companies use employment agencies for staffing to gain more flexibility, agility and responsiveness in an ever-changing operating environment. The aim is to improve competitiveness and maintain it in all circumstances. (Manpower 2022) Employment agencies are experts in the labor market and recruitment, whose personnel services help client companies and organizations to focus on their own core competencies and business. Whatever the company's need for expertise is, it can be found with the help of a human resources professional. (Henkilöstöpalveluyritysten liitto 2022)

In practice, the employment agency is usually the employer, but the work is done for the client company. For the employee, this means that they enter into an employment contract with the employment agency, even if the place of employment is with the client company. The employment agency pays the employee's salary

and performs all other obligations as an employer, but the client company is responsible for guiding and instructing the employee. The client company also assesses the employee's work performance. Temporary employment via employment agency is subject to the same employment legislation as other employment relationships. The Employment Contracts Act also contains provisions specifically for temporary work. (Henkilöstöpalveluyritysten liitto 2022)

3 LINKEDIN


3.1 Introduction to LinkedIn

LinkedIn is a Microsoft owned social networking platform focused on professional networking. It was launched in May 2003 and has since grown to be the world's largest professional network with its over 810 million members in more than 200 countries worldwide. LinkedIn's mission is to "connect the world's professionals to make them more productive and successful." (LinkedIn 2022)



Figure 3. LinkedIn logo (LinkedIn 2022).

LinkedIn has almost 1.5 million users in Finland. The largest industry among Finnish LinkedIn users is the ICT industry with its 84 000 users. Government Administration takes the second place with 51 000 users and third place goes to Hospital and Healthcare with 41 000 users. The most common job descriptions within Finnish LinkedIn users are Business Development, Operations and Sales. (Tom Laine 2022)



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Figure 4. LinkedIn profile (LinkedIn 2022).

3.2 Recruiting tools of LinkedIn

LinkedIn offers different solutions especially for employment agencies. One tool is LinkedIn Recruiter which allows the recruiter to find prioritized candidates who

are already engaged with the brand, open to work and it also includes past applicants. With the paid LinkedIn Recruiter feature, you can access wider networks and connect with anyone outside your own network. LinkedIn offers a possibility to try LinkedIn Recruiter for free. (LinkedIn 2022) In LinkedIn Recruiter a recruiter can create a project for an ongoing recruit or an assignment. The Project is a workspace within LinkedIn Recruiter where the recruiters and managers can track and manage candidates and their activities. (LinkedIn 2021)

LinkedIn allows to post a job for free but according to studies conducted by LinkedIn and previous client experiences, recruiting becomes more efficient when you pay to promote the job advertisements. It is stated that companies with promoted job posts get 3 times more qualified applicants than the ones with free posts. According to LinkedIn the most significant difference between free and paid job posts is the visibility. Promoted posts appear at the top of the job search for the most relevant candidates when free posts appear on the search but not at the top and job seekers must actively search for the position or company to find the free posts. LinkedIn's algorithm actively targets the promoted posts to possible candidates with the right skills and features. (LinkedIn 2022)

LinkedIn's Career Pages solution provides businesses an opportunity to showcase their corporate culture and job opportunities to a wider audience. According to LinkedIn, candidates are 1.8 times more likely to apply for a job if they are familiar with the company's culture and brand. Career Pages allows a company to share their story with providing for example, employee-created content, videos and photos. (LinkedIn 2022)

3.3 Recruitment process in LinkedIn

LinkedIn as a recruiting and networking platform has grown its popularity in Finland, and many recruiters are using the service to find new employees. According to Duunitori's article, the recruiter pays attention to the working history, the network and how the jobseeker's own skills are introduced on LinkedIn. From job

seeker's point of view at its best, a good LinkedIn profile is like a CV, a cover letter, and a business card in one package. It is possible to apply for multiple jobs with a single click, and it is not necessary to customize your entire profile for every position you apply for, saving your time. (Duunitori 2021)

A job seeker can set alerts based on key words such as job titles or locations to stay updated on the newest job postings. It is possible to choose how often you would like to be notified and whether it happens via email or LinkedIn application or both. (LinkedIn 2021) Below is a screenshot of LinkedIn Job Alerts to illustrate the job seeker's point of view. In this case the Job Alerts are subscribed based on titles such as customer service specialist, recruitment specialist and customer service representative and location is set on worldwide.

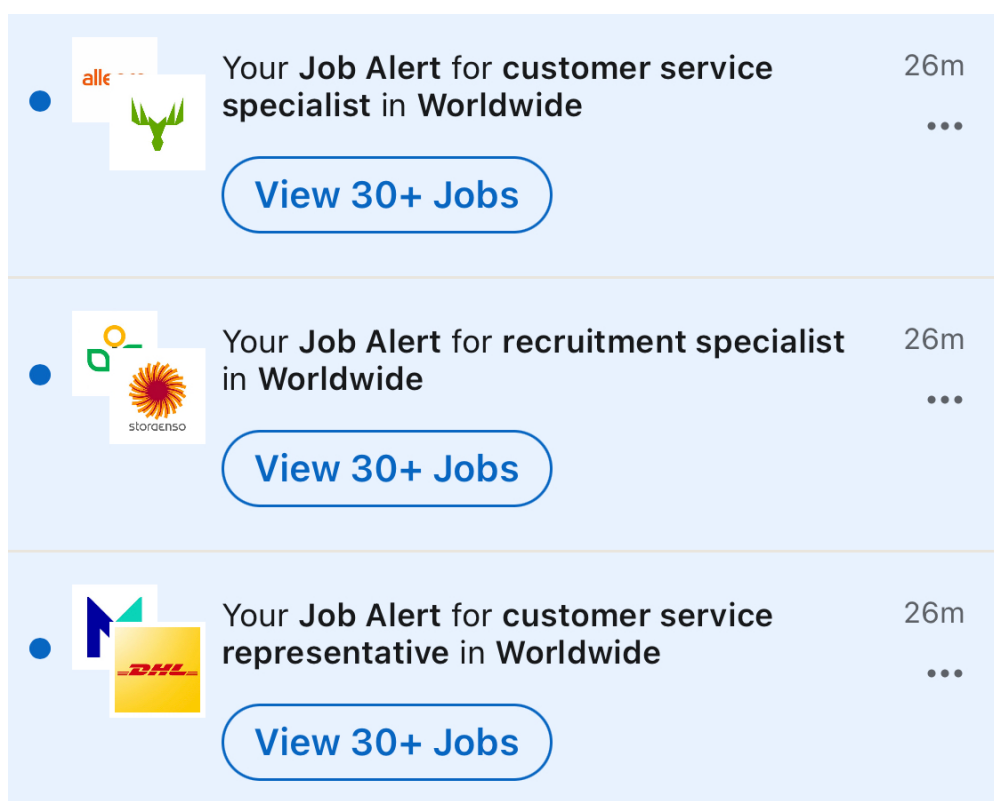


Figure 5. A screenshot of LinkedIn Job Alerts on LinkedIn application's notifications section.

A typical LinkedIn job posting includes the characteristics of a regular job posting, such as job title, employment type (full-time, part-time, etc.), company, location, job description, salary, or salary request, contact information, and instructions for

application. After writing the job posting you can choose whether to publish the advertisement for free or pay for promoting the post. LinkedIn provides an estimated budget you could use for advertising the listing and it also predicts the number of applications you would receive if you decide to pay for promotion. There is also a possibility to evaluate the daily budget by yourself. (Elad 2021, chapter 13)

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The research of the thesis is qualitative, and the material was collected through interviews. The target group of the study is Recruitment Agencies in Finland. Recruiters participating in the research were assured that they have experience in using LinkedIn and they were asked for consent for the interview. The interview is semi-structured theme interview, which is well suited for exploring and describing experiences.

Qualitative research aims to represent a phenomenon or event and to understand the activity as well as to interpret the phenomenon. Qualitative research is not intended to make statistical generalizations and it is used in various fields to study for example work communities, the development of expertise, recruitment and study-related experiences. In the production of information, there is an interest in the perceptions or experiences of individuals or communities about phenomena and their meanings. (Vilkka 2021, 18)

Result analysis method is content-based analysis to obtain answers to the research questions.

4.1 Target group and contacting the interviewees

The aim of the study was to find out how the interviewed recruiters utilize LinkedIn in their recruitment assignments, what kind of experiences they have had when using LinkedIn in recruitment, what is perceived to be functional and what needs to be developed in the application's functions in terms of recruitment, and whether LinkedIn is seen as the best option for social media in recruitment.

In order to find suitable interviewees, the interviewer's own network was utilized. The target group was narrowed down to recruiters working in employment agencies in different fields. A total of four potential interviewees were approached by a text message or an email and eventually three interviewees agreed to participate

in the interview. All three interviewees were from different fields: a company specialized in Engineering and Technology consulting, a recruitment agency specialized in legal professionals and a business consulting company specialized in recruitment and staffing. The job titles of the interviewees were: Talent Acquisition Partner, Consultant Trainee and HR Specialist.

4.2 Implementation of the interview and research results analysis

The study was conducted with a semi-structured interview, in which the main questions were the same for all interviewees. Most specifying questions were decided before-hand, but some of the specifying questions came spontaneously as the interview progressed and the interviewees responded differently. The questions were asked in the same order for all interviewees. The interview template is attached to the thesis both in Finnish and in English (Appendices 2 & 3).

In this study, a semi-structured theme interview was the most efficient option as the interviews followed the same format, thus made it easier to summarize and analyze the results. It also ensured that all interviewees were asked the same main questions.

The interviews were conducted by telephone at agreed times. At the beginning of the interview, interviewees were informed that the interview would be recorded for analysis of responses and that the recordings would be removed and discarded upon completion of the thesis. They were told that the completed thesis would be published for reading on theseus.fi and were also briefly informed about the structure of the interview.

The interviews were conducted in Finnish since the interviewees were Finnish speaking. The interviews were recorded with a spare phone and later transcribed for translation and results analysis. The quotes seen in the research results analysis part are as direct translations as possible.

The data can be analysed in multiple different ways. The methods of analysis can be roughly divided into two different methods, the explanatory approach, and approach for understanding. The explanatory approach is mostly used for analysing statistical research results and the approach for understanding is mostly used for a qualitative analysis and making observations. (Hirsjärvi, 2018, 224)

In this study, the approach for understanding was chosen since the study is qualitative and the aim of this thesis was to study LinkedIn as a phenomenon and the experiences regarding it. When analysing and concluding the research results, they were divided into different themes according to the interview questions. The author of this thesis sought to find out the repetitive and differing factors from each interview and analyse the results based on them.

5 RESEARCH RESULTS ANALYSIS

5.1 Utilization of LinkedIn in recruiting

The first topic of the interview was to find out how and in what kind of situations the companies have utilized LinkedIn. In this part a specifying question was asked to find out if the companies have used LinkedIn's paid features such as LinkedIn Recruiter.

All interviewees were to some extent using LinkedIn for recruitment. Two interviewees said they use LinkedIn Recruiter and one interviewee told that their company creates targeted ads such as job postings in LinkedIn. One interviewee told that their company uses LinkedIn also for strengthening the employer image and marketing purposes but primarily it is for recruiting new employees. All interviewees emphasized that you could get the most out of LinkedIn if the right target group can be found there and that LinkedIn is well suited for recruiting experts and highly educated people.

The study also sought to find out if LinkedIn is used for attracting and recruiting active or passive job seekers, or both. In this part, the answers varied for each respondent.

One interviewee responded that they utilize LinkedIn mainly for finding active job seekers and sharing the job postings and don't do headhunting actively.

"Most of the candidates have sent an application to our open positions. We don't do active headhunting but sometimes if a candidate has enrolled in our own recruiting system, we might contact them proactively. We don't use LinkedIn purely for finding and contacting new (passive) candidates."

HR Specialist, Recruitment and staffing

Then again one interviewee told that they use LinkedIn for finding both, active and passive job seekers. They always share open positions on LinkedIn but in addition,

also seek for passive job seekers and actively approach to them via LinkedIn messages.

“We do headhunting within certain criteria and send messages to interesting candidates. We publish job postings if we have open roles and always share them in LinkedIn and we employees also share them sometimes on our own social media channels.”

Consultant Trainee, Recruitment agency specialized in legal professionals

The third interviewee told that they use LinkedIn mainly for finding passive job seekers and do active headhunting to find potential candidates.

“They are not necessarily directly looking for a new job, but we just spot the profile and send a message asking if they are open for new challenges. Of course, there is the “open to work” mentioning that tells if a person is open for new challenges but it doesn’t tell if they are actively seeking.”

Talent Acquisition partner, Engineering and Technology consulting

The interviewees were asked if they take advantage of their own network on LinkedIn when recruiting. All the interviewees answered that it is possible to use their own social media networks in recruiting but are not doing that actively themselves. One interviewee told that they had reshared some posts on their personal social media pages but is not actively doing that because they don’t want their personal social media to be full of work-related content. Another interviewee had shared a job posting once on their personal LinkedIn page but has not done it again since the interviewee’s network is not the target group of the recruit.

The next topic of the interview was to find out if the use of LinkedIn has led to successful recruits. As a specifying question, interviewees were asked to describe shortly how the recruitment process goes if the recruitment starts from LinkedIn. Because the target group of the study is recruitment agencies, the main features of recruitment processes were described somewhat similar.

All of the interviewees told that use of LinkedIn has led to successful recruits in their companies. However, with varying results. A recurring feature in the recruitment process was that it starts with an assignment from a client company. The HR specialist from a business consulting company specialized in recruitment and staffing told that LinkedIn is not their main recruitment channel, but more for visibility. Their job postings on LinkedIn include a link to the company's own recruitment system where a candidate can submit their application and a CV. After a candidate has submitted the application, they arrange job interviews and if needed, screenings with the client company and character analysis for more challenging roles.

Another interviewee described their recruitment process, that after receiving an assignment from a client, they start searching for potential candidates and usually send a direct message to them to ask if they would be interested in a chat about career possibilities. The call is usually arranged through Microsoft Teams. Before the call the recruiter agrees with the candidate that they allow the recruiter to enroll them to a recruitment system. After the call the candidate submits their application and CV to be reviewed by the client or a hiring manager.

Two other interviewees responded that they use mainly LinkedIn Recruiter for finding suitable candidates to contact. In LinkedIn Recruiter recruiters can search different candidates with for example key words, location, and skills. The interviewee who does mainly headhunting told that only a minor percentage of job seekers are hired because most of the candidates are passive job seekers and thus have higher salary requests that cannot always be fulfilled. They told that it is easier to find and recruit younger professionals who have just graduated or have less work experience.

5.2 Experiences and thoughts related to LinkedIn

The next part of the study was to find out what kind of user experience and general feeling of LinkedIn the interviewed recruiters have.

Two interviewees told that they have principally positive experiences and feelings about LinkedIn. Both stated that LinkedIn is a great tool for recruitment if you know how to use it properly.

“I do like to use LinkedIn. Of course, there are things that I wish were differently, but generally I like it. It’s a great tool for networking and gaining visibility if it’s done correctly.”

Talent Acquisition partner, Engineering and Technology consulting

One interviewee felt that LinkedIn’s atmosphere is occasionally slightly artificial, and they felt that many people write posts only to polish their own image for the audience. Thus, their overall feelings of LinkedIn were slightly negative. However, they added that they still would recommend using LinkedIn in recruitment if the correct target group can be found in LinkedIn.

5.3 Useful features of LinkedIn

One of the main aims of this thesis was to find out what are the good and useful features of LinkedIn and which features are still in need of development. In this part of the interview, the interviewees were asked to name and describe the useful features of LinkedIn.

The easiness of filtering and searching for the candidates was mentioned in all of the interviews. It is possible to filter candidates for example with location, education, work experience, software knowledge, hard skills, or soft skills such as characteristics.

Two of the interviewees told that they are using LinkedIn Recruiter in their work. They said that it is possible to create a project for an open role. A project is a workspace inside LinkedIn Recruiter and there a recruiter can track the activities of the candidates.

“In Recruiter you can create a project and add people to it and do some screening on their activities and maybe kick someone out if you find a better option.”

Consultant Trainee, Recruitment agency specialized in legal professionals

“When we get an assignment from a client, we create a project in Recruiter if there is not one existing already. Through that we search for candidates with different key words such as education or skills. Recruiter is a very good tool for finding the right talents.”

Talent Acquisition partner, Engineering and Technology consulting

One interviewee stated that LinkedIn is an effective recruitment tool since it is possible to send the same message to multiple people at the same time. Another interviewee was asked as a spontaneous specifying question if they send the same message to multiple people at the same time. They said that they use a same template for most of the messages but try to make the messages more personal with for example greeting the candidate with their name.

LinkedIn was also described as a CV and an electronic business card. From a job seeker's point of view, it was said that LinkedIn is a good tool for comparing companies and their open roles. It is also possible to set alerts based on different key words such as job titles and LinkedIn will send an email or a push notification to the user's phone. A job seeker is also able to make lists of open positions.

“From a job seeker's point of view, it is good that you can set alerts from different roles and locations and your phone will notify you if a position opens. LinkedIn definitely increases the activity of applicants. It is like a CV or a business card and if you do it properly, you can easily approach recruiters and companies.”

HR Specialist, recruitment and staffing

As a conclusion, all of the interviewees stated that LinkedIn is a great tool for networking and making connections in working life. It was also seen as beneficial tool for improving the employer image and providing a picture to the candidates what would it be like to work in the company or in a certain role. In addition to recruiting, LinkedIn can be seen as a useful marketing tool.

Below is a summary of the main useful features that came up in the interviews.

Which features of LinkedIn do you find good or useful?

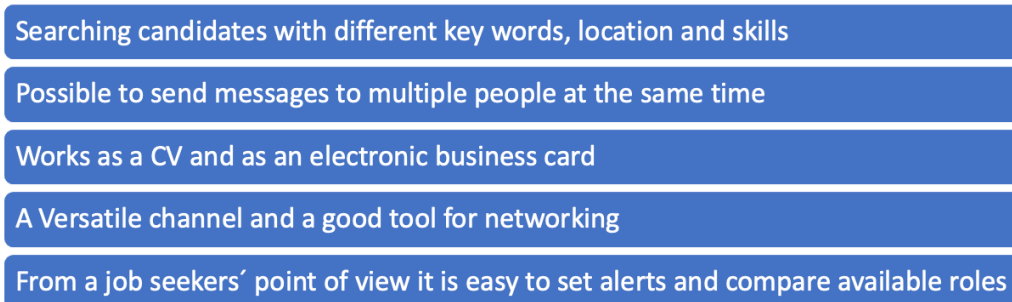


Figure 6. Compilation of the useful features of LinkedIn.

5.4 Challenges of LinkedIn and features to be developed

In addition to the useful features of LinkedIn, the aim of this study was to find out what recruiters find challenging in LinkedIn and which features should be developed. In this section of the interview, it was noticed that a few of the challenges were faced by multiple recruiters since some features were recurring in the interviews.

One of the main challenges of LinkedIn was that everybody is not in LinkedIn or might have an unfinished profile with too little information of themselves. If a

company is recruiting mostly or even exclusively in LinkedIn, they might miss some potential candidates if they cannot be reached in LinkedIn.

“One challenge is that if a candidate doesn’t have all needed information on their profile, they might not be so interesting and also you cannot reach everybody on LinkedIn, of course if you are recruiting also in some other channels, you will find more candidates.”

Consultant Trainee, recruitment agency specialized in legal professionals

“It is really challenging to evaluate if a person is a good candidate for a certain role if the only information provided is the title and the company but no description of the tasks or the softwares they have used.”

Talent Acquisition Partner, Engineering and Technology consulting

As the filtering of the candidates was mentioned as a useful feature in LinkedIn, it was also mentioned in this part of the interview as a tool that should be developed. One interviewee stated that you should be precise when choosing the key words because if you accidentally put a slightly wrong key word, the system will offer you irrelevant candidates. The same applies also in job seekers’ point of view since they might be offered irrelevant open positions and thus recruiters receive irrelevant applications. One interviewee told that it requires a lot of training to be able to use LinkedIn effectively in recruiting.

Another feature in need of development mentioned was that a job posting cannot be published to multiple locations at the same time.

“If you want to post an open role, you cannot post it to multiple locations at the same time. You must somehow type in all locations to the heading of the posting or post it many times to different locations.”

Talent Acquisition Partner, Engineering and Technology consulting

One interviewee who is doing active headhunting told that they have faced a challenge with the messaging tool of LinkedIn. When a recruiter sends a message for

a potential candidate, they don't receive any notification if the candidate has seen the message or not. They also told that many recruiters might send messages to same candidates, and it can irritate the candidates and weaken the employer image if the candidate is not interested or seeking for a new job.

One topic that came up in a few of the interviews, was that the LinkedIn application is a bit disorganized from the user's point of view.

"Personally, I use the app on my phone but at work I use LinkedIn Recruiter on computer. There is so much everything going on in LinkedIn so it might be a bit confusing for the job seekers and difficult to find the right jobs. The users receive a lot of notifications, and it can be challenging to find again something they were looking at earlier."

Consultant Trainee, Recruitment agency specialized in legal professionals

Below is a summary of the features that interviewees found challenging in LinkedIn and that are in the need of development.

What is challenging about LinkedIn? What features should be developed?

Recruiters can pass good candidates if a person does not have a finalized profile

A recruiter cannot see if a candidate has read their message or not

A job posting cannot be published to multiple locations at the same time

From a job seekers' point of view the application is slightly disorganized

Figure 7. Compilation of the challenges faced in LinkedIn.

5.5 Other social media channels in recruiting

For comparison the study wanted to find out if other social media channels are used for recruiting and what are the reasons for using them.

All interviewees told their companies are using at least Facebook and Instagram in addition to LinkedIn. Facebook was perceived as an easy tool to publish open roles and follow the success and statistics of the posts. Instagram was seen as a good tool for marketing and sharing stories from the workplace. Both Facebook and Instagram were also described to be more informal than LinkedIn and they could be effective for recruiting depending on the role and the target group.

“We are actively advertising in both Facebook and Instagram. LinkedIn is more formal and suitable for recruiting highly educated professionals when Facebook and Instagram are more everyday platforms and there, we can find candidates for example for production labor. When you post to Facebook it automatically posts to Instagram too and you can follow statistics and budget on Facebook.”

HR Specialist, Recruitment and Staffing

“We are not using other social media channels directly for recruiting. We use Facebook and Instagram more for like marketing purposes but sometimes also for advertising the open positions. Other social media channels and our company’s LinkedIn page are ran by our marketing team but we can give them suggestions for the content and ask them to highlight certain roles.”

Talent Acquisition Partner, Engineering and Technology consulting

“We are using Instagram and Facebook, but we don’t do paid ads in those channels. Those channels bring more visibility for our company and the open positions.”

Consultant Trainee, Recruitment agency specialized in legal professionals

In addition to Facebook and Instagram multiple recruitment focused websites such as Duunitori, Monster and TE-palvelut were mentioned. Some of the interviewees told that the job postings are automatically posted on those websites. The interviewee from Engineering and Technology consulting company said that they also publish open roles on trade union websites. One of the main recruitment channels the interviewees mentioned was their companies' own websites. On the company websites the job seekers can browse available open roles and send applications.

Below is a summary of the other social media channels and websites that the interviewees' companies are using for recruitment in addition to LinkedIn.

Other social media channels used

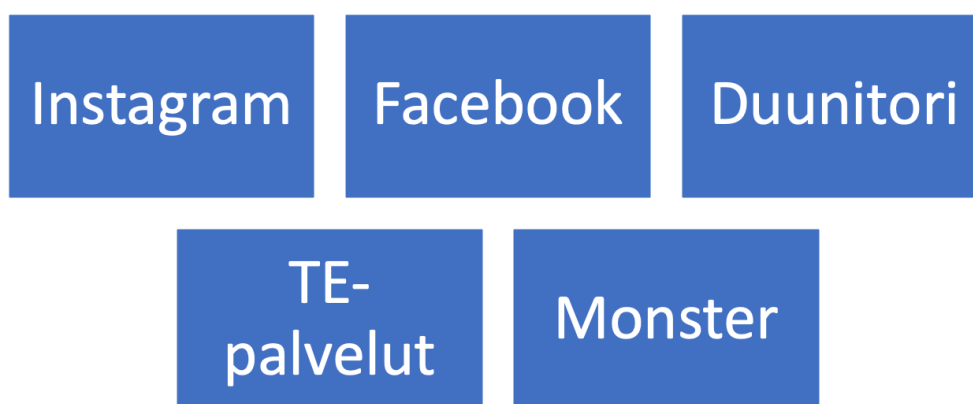


Figure 8. Conclusion of the most used social media channels in addition to LinkedIn.

In the last part of the interview, interviewees were asked to tell which social media channel is the best platform for recruiting in their opinion. As a specifying question they were asked to explain why.

One interviewee said directly that LinkedIn is the best platform for recruiting.

“Yeah, I would say that it is LinkedIn, it is the most professional platform. Even though everybody is not there, most of our target group is. Instagram and Facebook are more informal and free time oriented.”

Consultant Trainee, recruitment agency specialized in legal professionals

Two other interviewees explained that the best platform for recruiting depends on the open role and the target group of the recruit.

“The best social media platform depends totally on what is the target group. I would say Duunitori, our company’s own web site, Instagram and Facebook. Social media brings more visibility.”

HR Specialist, recruitment and staffing

“It depends on the open position. If you are not looking for a highly educated person, the channel can be any. I would say Instagram and TikTok could be effective if the target group is young people and recruiters should absolutely try them in addition to LinkedIn. Maybe those top experts are not on Instagram or TikTok and in this case you should try some more traditional ways.”

Talent Acquisition Partner, Engineering and Technology consulting

6 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Discussing the results

The aim of this research was to obtain knowledge based on the research problem which was to find out what kind of experiences recruiters from different Recruitment and employment agencies have of using LinkedIn in recruitment. The purpose was also to gain information on the use and benefits of LinkedIn in recruiting new employees and the features that recruiters find challenging in LinkedIn.

Based on the research results it can be concluded that LinkedIn is generally perceived as a good recruitment tool that also adds value to the company's marketing. LinkedIn is seen as a good channel for networking and making connections in working life. Based on the interviewees' experiences it was discovered that the most useful features of LinkedIn are among other things, broad filtering possibilities when searching candidates for open roles and that it is a diverse channel where recruiters and job seekers can build connections. The results also show that the recruiters interviewed would recommend the use of LinkedIn to other recruiters, specifically if their target group can be found on LinkedIn. It can be said that LinkedIn is particularly suitable for the recruitment of highly educated professionals.

In addition to useful features of LinkedIn, a few features that are in the need of development came up. The interviews revealed that, in particular, the recruiters who are doing headhunting in their work, have faced similar challenges such as difficulties when assessing the suitability of the candidate. This was justified by the fact that it is challenging to assess the profile of an applicant or a candidate if there is not enough information provided. Reaching and contacting the candidates was also seen as a challenge, as everyone is not active on LinkedIn and the recruiters are not notified if the candidate has read the message or not. It was also discussed that LinkedIn as a platform might be slightly disorganized from a user's point of view since there is considerably much information available and they might receive lots of notifications.

For comparison, the study sought to find out whether the interviewed recruiters are using other social media channels in recruitment. In this section, all interviewees reported that their companies use both Facebook and Instagram, some more actively than others, but all to some extent. Facebook and Instagram were perceived more informal channels than LinkedIn and more suitable for recruiting younger people or for less challenging positions that do not require high education level. The study found that various job search sites such as Duunitori, Monster and TE-palvelut are also actively used in recruiting. Job search sites were perceived as useful and were said to attract many applications for open roles.

At the end of the survey, interviewees were asked to indicate what they thought was the best social media channel as a recruitment tool. From the results, it can be concluded that LinkedIn is recommended for recruiting, but it was emphasized that the best social media channel for recruiting is the one where the target group is. Thus, it can be said that multi-channel recruitment would be effective, and the recruiter should evaluate according to the assignment, which social media channels are the best options in a certain situation.

6.2 Further research suggestions

As this thesis study was focused on recruitment agencies in Finland, it could be useful to conduct a study that studies LinkedIn as a recruiting tool in international recruitment process. It can be said that LinkedIn is a very international platform where recruiters and job seekers can connect from all around the globe, and it would be fascinating to see what kind of experiences people from different countries have from using LinkedIn as a tool of recruitment. If an international study is conducted it is also possible to compare if the experiences differ between certain areas or countries.

This study focuses only on recruitment agencies from different fields and it would also be interesting to compare if the experiences differ in case the recruiter is recruiting directly to an inhouse role. Another point of view that could be studied is

the user experience of a job seeker. The study would be beneficial for LinkedIn to improve or develop their standard user functions.

6.3 Ethical questions

Each interviewee was asked for consent to be interviewed and each was told that the interview would be recorded for analysis of responses. They were also told that the recordings would be deleted after the results were analyzed. Interviewees were informed that they or the companies they represented could not be identified from the results of the interview. Only the job title and the company's main industry were published in the final thesis. The interviewees were referred with a pronoun "they" to protect their privacy and since genders of the respondents are an irrelevant factor in this study.

In a qualitative study the researcher must consider what information is relevant and what should be left out from the results analysis as irrelevant information. There are two main concepts that the researcher should keep in mind when dealing with personal data. They are *confidentiality* and *anonymity*. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 56)

6.4 Reliability of the results

The starting point for qualitative research is the researcher's open subjectivity and the recognition that the researcher is the key research tool in his or her research. In a qualitative study, the main criterion for reliability is the researcher themselves, and thus the assessment of reliability applies to the entire research process. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 210) During the research process the author of this thesis has been conscious about the matters mentioned above.

Many different methods can be used for assessing the reliability of a study. The main criteria are *reliability* and *validity*. Reliability means the repeatability of the

research results and the research's ability to give non coincidental research results. Validity means that the chosen research method is able to research and measure the correct subjects of research. (Hirsjärvi, 2018, 233)

Another factor to examine the reliability of the results is the quantity of the content and the scope of research results analysis. There is no exact rule for how much content a qualitative study should have or how many interviews should be conducted for the study if the chosen research method is an interview. (Eskola & Suoranta, 1998, 215)

In this study, the number of interviewees could have increased the reliability of the research results. However, this study sought to explore the experiences of using LinkedIn as a recruiting tool, and the interviewees often pointed out similar things although the sampling was fairly small.

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APPENDIX 1 The interview structure in Finnish

Haastateltavan tiedot:

Nimi:

Positio:

Yritys:

Toimiala:

Taustatiedot

1. Miten olette käyttäneet LinkedIniä rekrytoinnissa?
 - Maksulliset toiminnot kuten LinkedIn-recruiter?
2. Miten sopiviin työnhakijakandidaatteihin kontaktoituminen tapahtuu?
 - Aktiivisia vai passiivisia työnhakijoita? Molempia?
 - Miten hyödynnät omaa verkostoasi LinkedInissä?
3. Millaisiin rekrytointituloksiin LinkedInin käyttö on johtanut?
 - Mitkä tekijät vaikuttivat tähän? Kerro hieman miten prosessi eteni?

LinkedInin ominaisuudet ja käyttäjäkokemus

4. Minkälainen käyttäjäkokemus / fiilis sinulle on jäänyt LinkedInin käytöstä?
5. Mitkä LinkedInin ominaisuudet koet hyvinä tai hyödyllisinä?
6. Mikä LinkedInissä on haastavaa? Missä ominaisuuksissa olisi kehitettävää?
7. Suositteletko LinkedInia rekrytointivälineeksi muille rekrytointia tekeville?
 - Miksi? Miksi et?

Muut sosiaaliset mediat

8. Käytättekö muita sosiaalisen median kanavia rekrytoinnissa?

- Mitä käytätte ja miksi?

9. Mikä on mielestäsi paras sosiaalisen median kanava rekrytoinnin välineenä (mukaan lukien LinkedIn)?

- Miksi?

Lopuksi

10. Onko vielä jotain mitä haluaisit lisätä?

11. Mikä fiilis jäi haastattelusta? Palautetta?

APPENDIX 2 The interview structure in English

Information of the interviewee:

Name:

Position:

Company:

Field:

Background

1. How have you used LinkedIn in recruiting?
 - Paid features such as LinkedIn-recruiter?
2. How are you contacting possible candidates?
 - Active or passive job seekers? Both?
 - How do you utilize your own LinkedIn network?
3. What kind of recruiting results has LinkedIn led to?
 - What factors contributed to this? Tell me a little bit about how the process went.

Features of LinkedIn and user experience

4. What kind of user experience / feeling do you have of using LinkedIn?
5. Which features of LinkedIn do you find good or useful?
6. What is challenging about LinkedIn? What features should be developed?
7. Would you recommend using LinkedIn to other recruiters?
 - Why? Why not?



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Other social media channels

8. Do you use other social media channels for recruiting?
 - Which channels and why?
9. What is the best social media channel for recruiting in your opinion? (Including LinkedIn)
 - Why?

In conclusion

10. Is there something you would like to add?
11. How do you feel about the interview? Feedback?

APPENDIX 3

