St. Petersburg University

Graduate School of Management

Master in Management Program

Employer brand attractiveness in on-campus activities: employer brand personality effect

Master's Thesis by the 2nd year student — Maksim Patshin

Research advisor: Dmitry G. Kucherov, Associate Professor

St. Petersburg

2020

АННОТАЦИЯ

Автор	Патшин Максим
Название ВКР	Привлекательность бренда работодателя в работе с вузами: влияние индивидуальности бренда работодателя
Образовательная программа	Master in Management
Направление подготовки	Management
Год	2020
Научный руководитель	Кучеров Дмитрий Геннадьевич
Описание цели, задач и основных результатов	Целью диссертационной работы является разработка рекомендаций для организаций по использованию мероприятий в вузах в рамках своей стратегии привлечения кадров для улучшения привлекательности бренда работодателя. Задачи включают в себя: анализ релевантной теории в рамах концепции бренда работодателя применительно к привлечению персонала, идентификация и оценка влияния индивидуальности влияния бренда работодателя на привлекательность бренда работодателя посредством проведения мероприятий в вузах. Результаты исследования показывают наличие связи между участием потенциальных кадров в мероприятиях вузов и связью с индивидуальностью бренда работодателя, которая, в свою очередь, влияет на привлекательность бренда работодателя.
Ключевые слова	бренд работодателя, привлечение персонала, привлекательность бренда работодателя, привлечение персонала в вузах

ABSTRACT

Master Student's Name	Maksim Patshin
Master Thesis Title	Employer brand attractiveness in on-campus activities: employer brand personality effect
Educational Program	Master in Management
Main field of study	Management
Year	2020
Academic Advisor's Name	Dmitry G. Kucherov
Description of the goal, tasks and main results	The goal of this thesis is to develop recommendations for organizations on use of on-campus activities in recruitment strategy to increase employer brand attractiveness. The tasks include analysis of relevant theoretical concepts of employer branding in application to recruitment, identification of relationship between perception of employer brand personality and participation of young specialists in on-campus activities, analysis of their effect on employer brand personality, identification of characteristics of successful on-campus activities that allow organizations to increase employer brand attractiveness. The results confirm relationship between participation in on-campus activities, employer brand personality, and consequently, on employer brand attractiveness.
Keywords	employer brand, recruitment, employer brand attractiveness, campus recruitment

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION

Increasingly large number of organizations face challenges in their recruitment of needed workforce. Even though innovative processes like digitization and automation have become common in most of the industries, companies are in dire need for talent with new skills that would further develop these areas. Finding new talent becomes harder with each year – reports indicate that global talent shortage has risen 80% for last 10 years (ManpowerGroup 2019). Requirements for talent with advanced skills and knowledge-based economy have increased competition in recruitment practices as well (Ployhart, Schmitt and Tippins 2017). Many companies have turned to internet as a source for development of their recruitment practices. These practices take form of posting their recruitment ads on career-focused websites, creating their own website focused on providing additional positive information about the organization and collection of applications, or using social media in order to increase positive recruitment outcomes. Cable & Turban (2001) have integrated brand equity concept from marketing theory and linked it to recruitment activities. One of the main strategy companies use to respond to recruitment challenges is employer branding (Martindale 2010, Ambler and Barrow 1996). Employer branding allows organization to promote its differentiation points and make it desirable for potential employee (Lievens, Van Hoye and Anseel 2007). Sourcing from marketing research, brand is usually targeted at selected target audience (Kotler 1972). Fresh business graduates from prestigious universities represents desirable target audience for many organizations, as these job seekers have modern and relevant skills in many industries, they are eager to learn new ones, and have lower demands from the standpoint of wages. Additionally, business students represent the largest share of students among other subjects – which might indicate their demand in the job market[1]. Examples of employer branding activities targeted at this pool include graduate's leadership programs (which only graduates are eligible to enter in), internship opportunities, as well as activities on-campus of university – either in form of guest lectures, seminars, or practice sessions with organization representatives. However, research on effectiveness of these activities in relation to employer brand, its attractiveness and other factors is limited. Avery and McKay (2006) assessed option of recruitment targeting in order to attract talent from minorities groups on-campus. Turban (2001) have noticed indirect impact on organizational attractiveness of on-campus activities on engineering students. He also suggested that additional research on mediators is needed to understand the underlying mechanisms of on-campus activities on organizational attractiveness. The only research to date includes two studies: study on impact of campus activities on employer familiarity (Chen 2012), and

---

[1] https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/Tertiary_education_statistics#Fields_of_education

another study on employer brand attractiveness of small and medium-sized German organizations (Baum and Kabst 2011). Hence, this indicates a clear **research gap** on lack of research of on-campus activities and their mediators in relation to effect on employer brand attractiveness. Two main theories that were used as framework for analysis of relation between employer brand attractiveness perception and on-campus activities are signaling theory and theory of symbolic attraction (Connelly, et al. 2011, Highhouse, Thornbury and Little 2007).

Research goal, questions, objectives of the study

The goal of this thesis is to develop recommendations for organizations on use of on-campus activities in recruitment strategy to increase employer brand attractiveness.

Thus, based on current research analysis and identified research gap, the research questions are following:

- What is the role of employer brand in recruitment of young specialists?
- What role participation in on-campus activities has in employer branding?
- What is the relationship between participation in on-campus activities, employer brand personality and employer brand attractiveness?

In order to answer these research questions, following research objectives were set:

- to analyze relevant theoretical concepts of employer branding in application to recruitment;
- to find out the relationship between perception of employer brand personality and participation of young specialists in on-campus activities;
- to analyze effect of participation of young specialists in on-campus activities on employer brand personality;
- to identify characteristics of successful on-campus activities that allow organizations to increase employer brand attractiveness.

Thesis has the following structure. In the beginning, analysis of relevant research is presented, with link to formulated hypotheses and research questions. Following that, the study methodology is described, analysis of the study is done, with subsequent parts on discussion of results and consequent possible managerial outcomes, and conclusion.

Chapter 1. THEORETICAL GROUNDS OF EMPLOYER BRAND IN RECRUITMENT

1.1. Recruitment of competent talent through employer brand

Organizations have a need of hiring competent talent, which they realize by aiming to be attractive to potential employees through process of recruitment. Recruitment is defined as organizational activities that affect the number and type of applicants who apply for an open position (Gatewood, et al. 2016). Original and more holistic definition characterizes recruitment as "process of searching for prospective employees and stimulating and encouraging them to apply for jobs in an organization" (Flippo 1980). In other words, recruitment and selection are concurrent processes and cannot exist without each other. They significantly differ from each other and are essential constituents of the organization. It helps in discovering the potential and capabilities of applicants for expected or actual organizational vacancies. It is a link between the jobs and those seeking jobs. Job seekers usually have multiple organizations in their consideration list when they are applying for a job. One of the information sources on employer advantages over job seekers could use is employer brand, which is formed through different activities and mediums, e.g. company ratings (Cable and Turban 2003)

In the goal of increasing the attractiveness of the organization, employers apply principles of consumer brand to organization name, which is known as process of employer branding. One of the two objectives employer branding has is to attract potential employees by creating a brand image of company in the minds of potential employees (Backhaus and Tikoo 2004). It is "war for talent," where companies "battle" to recruit skilled employees. This war is aggravated by the increased intention of employees to switch jobs regularly in their career track (Verma and Ahmad 2016). Organizations note positive impact of effective employer branding on their differentiation in employer market, which makes them more competitive and improves effectiveness of employee attraction – a key component of recruitment.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) highlight two differences in the use of branding, depending on whether it is directed at employees or at promoting organizations and products. First, employer branding is focused solely on employment and characterizes identity of an organization as an employer. Secondly, employer branding is directed towards both an internal and external audience, where corporate and product branding are mainly directed towards an external audience. However, some companies join company brand to promote its product and employer advantages over other organizations. From the standpoint of internal branding and employer branding towards an external

audience, the corporate brand could be stronger and more consistent (Foster, Punjaisri and Cheng 2010).

Another important area to discuss in context of recruitment is targeting of potential applicants. There has been limited number of studies that investigate the targeting of certain types of individuals. One of the founding works is by Rynes, Orlitzky, and Bretz (1997) who examined what factors might underlie whether an employer targeted new college graduates for recruitment or more experienced college graduates. Researchers found that organizations perceived more experienced graduates as having more realistic job expectations, better technical skills, a greater chance of success, but as being less willing to learn (Breaugh 2008).

Highhouse and Lievens (2003) have created one of founding frameworks in a field of employer branding, which uses ideas from consumer brand marketing. Consumer brand definition has been presented in research field by Kotler (1972), which revolutionized marketing, and since then applied to many other fields of research. Brands in any field are something which consumers of that brand field decide in a process of purchase decision based on knowledge about brand (Kotler 1972). Keller (1993) conceptualized brand equity using an associative memory model focused on brand knowledge and involving two components − brand awareness and brand image, defined as a set of brand associations in a context of the subject. Using this conceptualization of brand equity, the organization goal is to create and enhance brand awareness, then build on this founding stage and craft an image which would be a group of positive associations about the brand. The concepts of branding and brand equity have been areas of interest for marketers for decades because of their effective approaches and evident results. Lievens et al. (2005) have adapted these concepts to the employment context using construct of employer brand equity to measure the success of employer branding programs from the perspectives of employer. Potential development of the concept is based on underlying knowledge of brand equity (Martin, Beaumont, et al. 2005). Efforts to apply the brand equity concept to the employer brand have suffered from limitations. For example, one of the limitations is difference between inner and outer view of brand equity, which represents a set of resources, management and performance for current employees. Outer view perception might vary a lot depending on potential employee level of familiarity with organization and its inner workings. Most of existing research has focused on a single audience, potential employees, indicating that the majority of research has more focus on the effect of employer branding on recruitment and employee attraction (Martin, Gollan and Grigg 2011). Most common marketing tools used to create brand image include the choice of advertising budgets, messages and media, as well as packaging, pricing and distribution channels.

Proper management of these elements helps to create a level of awareness in the target audience, and careful creative activities can form a brand's identity in the consumer's mind – its brand image. One of typical examples is products from different producers (e.g. soft drinks) – they have almost the same functional benefits but are still perceived differently in terms of their expression of consumer character and personality. Classic definition of employer brand presents it as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (Ambler and Barrow 1996, 187). Other authors focus on practical aspects of the process and define it as "the sum of a company's effort to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work" (Lloyd 2002, 64). Nevertheless, definitions relate to the subjective individual perception of an organization, which is built through different information sources and communication activities: media, events, or discussion with organization employees.

The process of managing employer brand – employer branding – has been proposed as a framework in career development programs, or an integration into organizations' talent management strategy, or a tool for impression management in communicating company values (Avery and McKay 2006). Since the foundation of this concept, a number of employment branding books (Schumann and Sartain 2009) have been published. This caused a surge in efforts of organizations to brand themselves – for example, survey from 2017 tells that 59% of companies invested more in their employer brand compared to previous year, with 80% of the companies having a belief their brand has a significant impact on their ability to hire top talent (LinkedIn 2017). Similar to this growing practical interest, research on employment branding has begun to proliferate. For example, Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpe, and Lievens (2018) in their review share their finding on number of peer-reviewed publications related to employment branding – it has doubled in the last five years. There has been a significant progress in research on understanding of the image that job seekers have about employers (Cable and Turban 2001, Van Hoye and Saks 2010). Most of employer image research have focused on the antecedents of employer image (e.g., websites, recruitment ads, reviews) and its dimensions (employer image attributes). Other researchers tried to integrate employer brand and consumer brand research in order to investigate the chain effect of brand personality traits as antecedents of employer brand affect and trust, and their relation to employer brand attractiveness of potential applicants (Rampl and Kenning 2014). Their results found a significant relationship between multiple brand personality traits and employer brand affect and employer brand trust. This is another supporting example of research that adapts consumer brand concepts to employer branding field, which results in increased employer brand attractiveness.
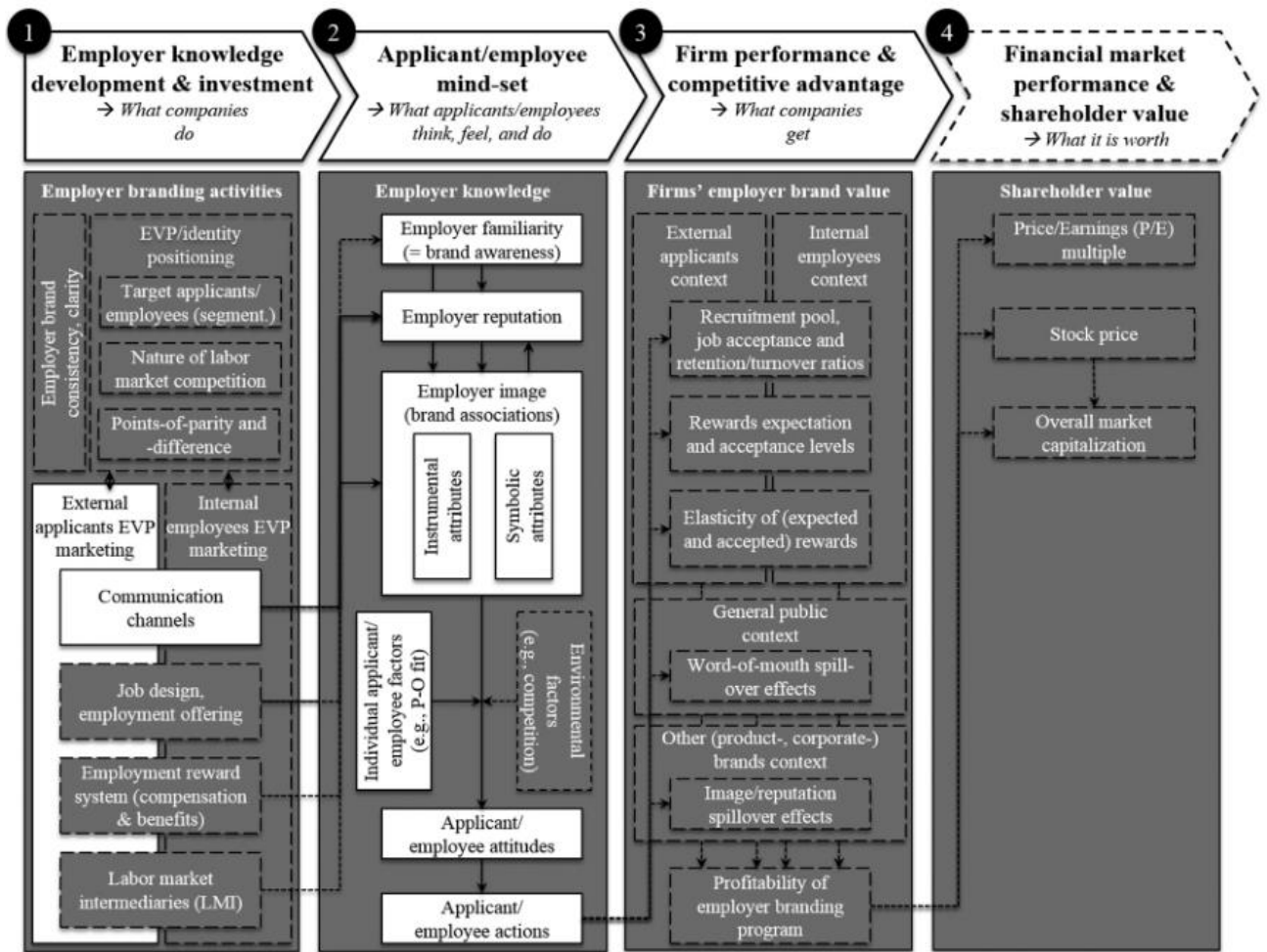
Note. Well-researched areas are highlighted in white, under-researched areas in grey

Figure 1 Employer branding value chain model *(Theurer, et al. 2018)*

Theurer et al. (2018) have proposed a framework inspired by the systems model of brand antecedents and consequences, broken down into four stages of employer branding value chain. Framework stages (Figure 1) are focused on enhancing job seeker's knowledge about the organization in order to raise their awareness on employer brand, marketing activities of employer brand to impact potential employee mindset (perceived employer knowledge), organizational perspective on employer brand competitive advantage and its performance, and link of employer brand outcomes to shareholder value. It is argued that 2nd stage, which relates to multiple constructs of employer knowledge such as employer familiarity, employer image, applicant attitudes and action, is the most researched to date. However, one of the recent research have not found a relation between recruitment efficiency and business performance of organization, as well as any indirect effect of employer branding orientation on business performance of organization by increased recruitment efficiency (Tumasjan, et al. 2020). The only positive outcome on the business results have been caused by the effect of employee

branding on current employees, which might suggest that stages 3 and 4 of value chain are arguable. Nevertheless, there is still lack of research on different mediators of 2nd stage recruitment outcomes, including the use of different marketing activities expected to positively affect recruitment outcomes.

To that end, employer branding helps companies to manage their recruitment more effectively, through marketing activities. Current research on them varies by type of activity.

1.2. Management of employer brand attractiveness through recruitment activities

One of important goals of employer branding management is improvement of employer attractiveness (Ambler and Barrow 1996). Founding employer branding framework created by Highhouse and Lievens (2003) uses ideas from consumer brand marketing, and conceptualizes employer brands as having instrumental (such as salary, career promotion, job security, benefits) and symbolic (e.g. sincerity, innovativeness, competence, prestige) employer brand attributes. Other studies (Berthon, Ewing and Hah 2005, Edwards and Edwards 2013) expanded attributes based on this framework, including attributes of employer brand and their impact on potential applicants' reactions, such as perceived employer brand attractiveness and job choice intentions (Baum and Kabst, Conjoint implications onjob preferences: the moderating role of involvement 2013). Outcome of brand equity created by employer brand is employer attractiveness - "envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in a working for a specific organization" (Berthon, Ewing and Hah 2005, 156). Given subjective nature of the construct, it has also received definition of "subjective evaluations of the attractiveness of a brand expressed through surface brand associations" (Collins and Kanar 2013, 287). Employer brand familiarity of an applicant is directly related to perceived employer brand attractiveness, where more familiar organizations are being perceived as more attractive (Cable, Aiman-Smith, et al. 2000). Employer brand familiarity has been defined as "the level of awareness that a job seeker has of an organization" (Cable and Turban 2001, 124). It is proposed that employer brand is associated with perceived characteristics and attitudes to that brand (Collins and Stevens 2002). Attitudes represent level of positivity potential applicants have towards an organization and perceived attributes represent potential applicants' beliefs about specific aspects of the job and work environment of the organization. Students are most likely to accept job offers when exposed to positive information about the organization (Fisher, Ilgen and Hoyer 1979).

Recruitment activities from credible sources are suggested to have positive impact on employer brand attractiveness. Credibility in recruitment context is a result of two variables – expertise, which is the level of informativeness of activity for the purposes of job search, and trustworthiness, which is accuracy of information presented about working experience in organization

(Cable and Turban 2001). A good example of activity that provides both good level of expertise and trustworthiness are on-campus activities conducted by organizations in partnership with hosting universities. On-campus activities are specific kind of reverse site visits with focus on talent pool of current students and soon-to-be graduates. Site visits have not received a lot of research attention even though compared to other recruitment activities (e.g., an interaction with a recruiter at a job fair), the site visit provides a "longer and more intense applicant–company interaction" (Taylor and Bergmann 1987, 273) and therefore has the potential to have a great influence on a potential applicant. Rynes et al. (1991) conducted a study of college graduates who were on the job market. It has been found that after site visits around 30% of the applicants in their sample turned down job offers from employers to which they had an attraction before the site visit. Two of the factors that influenced potential applicant reactions to a site visit were being treated professionally and meeting high-status people. In different study, Boswell et al. (2003) focused on opportunities to meet people and arrangements of site visits. It reported that meeting current employees in the job applied for, meeting high-level executives, and meeting individuals with similar backgrounds were important to job applicants. Hence, on-campus activities act as a vital stage in building employee brand familiarity, as they allow potential applicants to verify whether their perception of employee brand matches the employee brand image potential applicants experience of on the campus activity, as well as meet individuals with same background and high-status employees of an organization. It also happens at comfortable location – talent main presence, where they spend significant amount of time. One thing to watch out for is a number of activities. Mix of uncertainty about the employer, different messages from competing employers, and finite resources with which to search for and evaluate information, the effects from a single marketing activity are usually limited (Aaker, 1996). Marketing research indicates that multiple activities which provide additional exposure to the information about the brand will strengthen the associations among nodes in individual's memory (Wyer & Srull, 1989). Furthermore, sourcing from consumer marketing, job seekers view multiple marketing activities as a positive signal of the presence of brand attributes, because they might assume that organizations only invest significant amount of effort (resources, money, etc.) on superior products (Keller, 1993). Thus, it is important to understand how employer attractiveness of organizations with multiple on-campus activities are affected by them. Consequently, on-campus activities are expected to positively influence beliefs of potential applicants on employer brand, which improves perceptive employer brand image (Slaughter, Cable and Turban 2014).

On-campus activities represent specific kind of employee branding activity similar to site visit. Based on site visit research, they are expected to positively affect employer brand outcomes.

1.3.   Signaling theory in explaining job seekers perception

Signaling theory has been used multiple times in recruitment research, including studies on communication (Cable and Turban 2001), recruitment strategies (Wilden, Gudergan and Lings 2010), word of mouth (Stockman, Hoye and Veiga 2020). Key principle in signaling theory is information incompleteness – or information asymmetry (Spence 1973). Potential applicants and organizations do not possess full information about each other, causing information asymmetries (Clark 1993, Stiglitz 2002). These asymmetries cause problems for both sides, as potential applicants need additional information to make efficient decision on pursuing job in context of recruitment (Bangerter, Roulin and König 2012). Job seeker sends signals in order to reduce this asymmetry in form of education degrees, certificates, etc. to rise its value in eyes of other side - employer. Employer does the same through sending signals using its employer brand through job advertisements, social media, site visits – on-campus events, and other means. It is important for job seeker to send such signal that is easy for the employer to understand, while at the same time not easily imitable by other senders – making it a competitive advantage (Spence, 1973). Signals that satisfy both requirements are called "costly" and usually positively correlate with the effort they are produced with. On a base of signaling theory it is suggested that on-campus activities will communicate signals to prospective potential applicants about its employer brand equity, which consequently will impact their attitudes and intentions towards the organization (Slaughter, et al. 2004). Employer branding framework by Lievens and Highouse (2003) presents two dimension of attributes – instrumental and symbolic. This framework presents as a way to categorize employer image dimensions and have been applied in multiple contexts. Both dimensions of attributes positively impact employer attractiveness (Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar 2003, Van Hoye and Saks 2010). Related findings apply across varied groups of individuals (i.e. potential and actual applicants, incumbent employees), where instrumental attributes explain the highest variance in perceived attractiveness among actual applicants, attributing it to their specific information gathering.

Symbolic attributes are almost equally important across all groups, but are particularly relevant in an internal context, e.g. competence as a perceived symbolic identity dimension in predicting employees' organizational identification (Lievens, Van Hoye and Anseel 2007). Both dimensions are moderated by contextual factors (e.g. individual factors, culture or industry). Nevertheless, framework suggests that organizations would have larger impact on their employer attractiveness through

improvement of symbolic characteristics, not instrumental ones, as many organizations already have a good focus on instrumental characteristics (Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar 2003). On-campus employer events are naturally more open to communication than any other types of recruitment, which possibly eases inference of symbolic organizational attributes. Potential applicants have a chance to communicate with organization employee and experience organization work from the angle it suits for the applicant. This thesis concentrates on symbolic attributes. Thus, it is proposed that applicants participated in employee on-campus activities use it to assess its employer brand personality.

In summary, signaling theory is often used for analysis of recruitment activities impact on its employer branding attributes (symbolic and instrumental).

1.4. Theory of symbolic attraction

Employer brand personality is a set of symbolic attributes which are associated with employer brand (Slaughter, et al. 2004). In a review by Lievens and Slaughter (2016) authors propose that employer brand personality signals of what it is like to work for an organization. They also suggested that perceptions of organizational warmth and competence can act as meta-dimensions for inference of employer brand personality. Other researchers found that warmth and competence dimensions play an important role in different domains, including leadership styles, stereotyping, and consumer behavior (Cuddy, Glick and Beninger 2011). Consumers make inferences about how warm and competent the brand at the moment of consumer judgement. This leads to multiple behavioral reactions, such as brand loyalty or purchase intentions (Aaker, Vohs and Mogilner 2010). Similar to how consumers develop perceptions of brands' warmth and competence, potential applicants are suggested to develop perceptions of employers' warmth and competence. Existing recruitment research has successfully used marketing concepts and theories to understand recruitment (Lievens and Slaughter 2016). For example, it has been found that applicants' inferences of recruiter warmth and competence during a recruitment interview influence their perceptions of the hiring organization (Uggerslev, Fassina and Kraichy 2012). Moreover, some dimensions used in previous recruitment research to capture perceptions of employer brand personality are conceptually similar to warmth (such as sincerity and cheerfulness) or to competence (Cable and Yu 2006). Highhouse et al. (2007) proposed that attitudes towards a potential employer may serve two social identity needs: social adjustment and value expression. Social adjustment concerns link to the need for approval of significant others through influence on self-esteem; Value expression concerns link to the need to express one's self-concept. Theory of symbolic attraction builds on the social identity theory according to which affiliation to groups is a vital part of individual identity and may help them to improve their

self-esteem (Tajfel and Turner 1986). Therefore, working experience for a competent or warm organization could present attractive opportunity to potential applicants because they believe that this will help them gain approval of others or because it helps them to express certain values. Nonetheless, potential applicants may distance themselves from an organization that is perceived as incompetent and/or cold because they might fear it could negatively reflect on their self-concepts (Banks, et al. 2016). Consequently, it is proposed to look into perceived organization warmth and competence, as dimensions that applicants get their signals on. Perceived organization warmth touches subject of positive intentions and goals of employer brand. Perceived organizational competence relates to ability to act on these intentions and to reach these goals. Further research has shown positive correlation of these two dimensions with employer attractiveness in social media of employer (Carpentier and Van Hoye 2019).

Theory of symbolic attraction explains choice of employer by job seeker based on the perceived symbolic values they want to be associated with in society. Research suggests that it might help in understanding mediating effect of recruitment activities on employer attractiveness.

1.5. Theoretical model and hypotheses

Due to increasing focus of organizations on development of employer brand in order to boost their employer attractiveness, it is proposed to use construct of *employer brand attractiveness*, which defines attractiveness of employer as result of employer branding actions and associated activities and constructs, such as employer brand equity and employer brand personality. Contrary to employer attractiveness definition, which covers benefits both for potential and existing employees, construct of employer brand attractiveness focuses only on the job seekers attraction of the brand. In proposed model of research (Figure 2) employer brand personality act as mediator on employer brand attractiveness, in similar manner as in study by Carpentier and Van Hoye (2019). Argument is that participation in on-campus activities act as a signaling source based on signaling theory, which impacts employer brand personality, and consequently, employer brand attractiveness.

Figure 2. Theoretical model of research.

Organizational warmth and competence act as meta-dimensions of employer brand personality inferences, based on study by Lievens and Slaughter (2016). On this basis two following hypotheses are proposed:

- Participation in on-campus activities relates to perceived organizational competence.
- Participation in on-campus activities relates to perceived organizational warmth.

Employer attractiveness has been positively affected by employer brand personality signaling in other studies, thus it is proposed to validate additional hypotheses on employer brand attractiveness, construct defined earlier in thesis (Rampl and Kenning 2014, Carpentier and Van Hoye 2019). Employer brand attractiveness is characterized by two dimensions – employer consideration and application intent, which have used in other studies with similar potential employee sample (Turban 2001). Thus, following additional hypothesis is proposed:

- Employer brand personality will mediate the relationship of participation in on-campus activities with employer brand attractiveness.

Summary: in order to achieve their recruitment outcomes, and effectively manage their recruitment strategy, organizations revert to employer branding processes, which are linked to the business goals by employee branding value chain framework. Organizations are using different marketing activities to promote their employer brand, with objectives of increasing their employer brand attractiveness. There are different kind of activities, some of them are more researched than the others. On-campus activities are example of under researched activities, based on research analysis

done in this thesis. Based on symbolic-instrumental framework developed by other scholars, it is proposed to use theory of symbolic attraction and signaling theory to find out mediator of impact of participation in on-campus activities in relation to employer brand attractiveness.

Chapter 2.   STUDY METHODOLOGY

2.1.   Young specialists labor market

In order to describe the research design and sample, it is vital to introduce context of current young specialists' labor market, who represent the main audience of university students on-campus activities are focused at – object of the thesis study.

Young specialists represent specific group in labor market, aged 15-24 with following qualities: limited job experience and good motivation to develop themselves and the organization they work for. Recent report by International Labour Organization (2020) indicates that young specialists are at higher risk of losing jobs to automation, making the labor market more competitive than it has been several years and generations ago. However, this risk is managed by higher education jobs – which tend to be less automatable than jobs that only require vocational training. Another risk that youth people with tertiary education face is increased shortage of available jobs versus those that require only vocational education. This demands job seekers to receive competitive advantages to secure a job early. Generally, according to human capital theory founded by Schultz and Becker, tertiary education leads to improvement of economic capabilities of people (Schultz 1971). Additionally, young specialists have much higher unemployment rates globally versus adults (25 years and older). Youth labor participation force, a measure which describes what share of the group is employed at the time, has fallen significantly from 1999 to 2019 – by 11.9% globally, and by 9.7% in Eastern Europe. As this study discusses employer branding activities on the Russian market, it is valid to discuss the Russian youth labor market as well.

Russian labor market has a 48th position in Global Talent Competitiveness Index 2020, a ranking which assesses different dimensions of country's labor policies, market and employer environment, as well as talent development and its competitiveness. Russia has an outstanding (in relation to its overall position) ranking in high skills, especially due to one of the highest shares of population with tertiary education. According to OECD report, in 2019 Russia has ranked 2nd with 62.7% of 25-34 age group having any form of higher education[2]. However, the country fails to enable that talent due to weak regulation (ranked 103rd), cluster development (ranked 90th), as well as high unemployment of people with tertiary education (ranked 50th). Research by largest Russian job posting website (2019) has highlighted drastic competition between young specialists in career posting of all industries, having up to 13 candidates for a single job posting[3]. Russian young specialists are also

---

[2] https://data.oecd.org/eduatt/population-with-tertiary-education.htm

[3] https://hh.ru/article/26045

more digitally-ready than their more senior counterparts. Generally, people of that age group tend to use Internet resources, digital devices statistically more than older age groups (Radaev 2018). They more actively engage into online commerce, thus making them more ready for digital marketing jobs connected with online commerce.

Young specialists tend to pay attention to employer brand when choosing their employer, favoring organizations with the stronger employer brand (Kucherov, Zamulin and Tsybova 2019). A study suggests that 70% of companies in US hire college graduates (Aptitude Research Partners 2018). All of this explains the interest of companies with strong employer brand in campus recruitment – a strategy for recruiting young specialists through their engagement in on-campus activities.

2.2.   Research design

As a starting point, an exploratory expert interview has been conducted. Exploratory expert interviews are used to help structure investigated area of research and as complementary sources of information on the target group – actors of contextual knowledge (Bogner, Littig and Menz 2009). The interview has been a starting point for identifying target companies, audience and dependent variable in hypotheses. Interview have been conducted through method of in-depth unstructured interviewing, with a number of open-ended questions on recruitment challenges in the Russian labor market, employee branding, target audience, and active companies with strong employer brand. Experts represented 2 HR managers responsible for recruitment and employer branding processes on Russian market in P&G. The company has been chosen due to high rankings in employer branding surveys in Russian market, as well as fit for potential employees in recruitment pipeline, who have been a target sample of following survey. Vast majority of positions and internships in the company are aimed at fresh graduates from top Russian universities in a field of business, management and finance. List of universities of interest has been based on rating list by RAEX (2019) and corrected based on feedback received from the experts. Corrections shifted focus from general ranking of university among all subjects, to top ranked ones with strong educational programs on business, management and finance. Additionally, number of well-known organizations with strong employer brand have been chosen with same target audience of their recruitment pipeline as described above. Final pool of companies included seven organizations from industries of consumer goods, business consulting, IT, listed here in alphabetical order: Deloitte, EY, L'Oréal, Mars, P&G, Unilever, Yandex. Apart from having strong brand, all companies regularly organize on-campus activities, have similar target audience of young specialists, and have had open entry-level positions at the time of conducting study.

In order to test hypotheses on the effects of participation in on-campus activities on employer brand personality, and consequently, on employer brand attractiveness, a quantitative method of survey was used. Survey enables to collect representative sample of target audience in a reasonable time, provide sufficient approach in data collection and enable control of different biases. Questionnaire for the survey was created using QualtricsXM platform.

The resulting questionnaire have been structured in a following way. First, a block of sociodemographic closed questions has been presented in order to control for sex and age of the respondents. Second, respondent have filled in information about their current university, education level and educational major of interest. After that, respondent answered questions on employer brand awareness (questions from Stockman et al., 2020). Questions on employer brand awareness control for employer familiarity – first step of employee value chain model. In case respondent has shown some level of awareness with organization, they have been presented with a list of questions on participation in on-campus activities (verified with HR experts mentioned above), employer brand personality (items from Highhouse et al., 2003), and employer brand attractiveness (items from Carpentier, 2019; Lievens and Highhouse, 2003) questions. All items had randomization of choices, including order of companies presented in each questions and sequence in which questions on each company were asked. Questions have been presented in Russian. Detailed list of variables and associated question items is listed in Table 1.

Variable	Question item	
Employer Awareness	I know this company	
	Choose companies you are familiar with as potential employer	
On-campus activities	I have participated in on-campus activities where this company was represented	
	I have heard about on-campus activities organized by this company	
	I participated in on-campus activities organized by this company	
	I have participated in external activities organized by this company	
Employer brand personality		
Organizational Competence	Which of following adjectives better describes this company?	
	Cheerful	Sociable
	Warm	Transparent
	Sincere	Has integrity
Organizational Warmth	Which of following adjectives better describes this company?	
	Successful	Renowned
	Capable	Prominent
	Professional	Highly regarded
Employer Brand Attractiveness		
Employer Consideration	This company would be a good place to work for me.	
	This company is an attractive employer.	
	A job at this company is very appealing to me.	
	I would make this company one of my first choices as an employer.	
Application Intent	I would accept a job offer from this company.	
	I would recommend this company to a friend looking for a job.	

Table 1 List of study variables and associated survey questions

Measures associated with employer awareness and on-campus activities were closed yes/no questions as they have been used as controlling measures. Questions on employer brand attractiveness

have been presented as 7-item Likert scale. Multiple studies suggest that using 7-item Likert scale is superior to 5-item scale due to increased reliability, better suitability for digital format (Finstad 2010), and stronger correlation results on t-tests (Lewis 1993).

Regression analysis

In order to test the hypotheses, regression analysis was conducted. This statistical approach allows to identify the relationship between variables, which were parts of the proposed hypotheses. Regression analysis have been conducted using statsmodels package in Python 3.7. The model of linear regression included measures presented in description of theoretical model of the thesis. Each measure was calculated as average of its related questions values. Each question had an equal weight among other questions of the measure it has referred to. R-squared has been a measure of explanatory power in process of modelling. Measures which have used yes/no options for answering (such as participations in on-campus activities) have acted as control variables and enabled division of responses by different groups. Example of group split is presented in chapter 3.

Regression analysis has also been used for testing hypotheses on mediating role of employer brand personality on employer brand attractiveness through participation in on-campus activities. The current research frequently uses structural equation modelling to analyze mediation. In order to test the validity of gathered data for that method as well, measurement model was validated through conducting confirmatory factor analysis. The actual mediation hypothesis have been tested by the strategy suggested by Baron and Kenny (1986). They have suggested two different variants of mediation based on results of hypothesis testing – complete mediation or partial. Complete mediation occurs when independent variable does not affect dependent variable (employer brand attractiveness) after control of mediator variable (employer brand personality). Partial mediation occurs only when the first hypothesis test (without the mediating variable) shows relationship between independent and dependent variable, the independent variable has a relationship with mediating variable (without dependent variable in the model), and mediating variable has a relationship with the dependent variable (with exclusion of independent variable). An example of these three models is presented in figure X. However, initial independent variable relationship with dependent variable is not required to test mediation effect through employer brand personality, as independent variable might not have significant explanatory power over dependent variable, which is employer brand attractiveness in our case (Shrout and Bolger 2002).
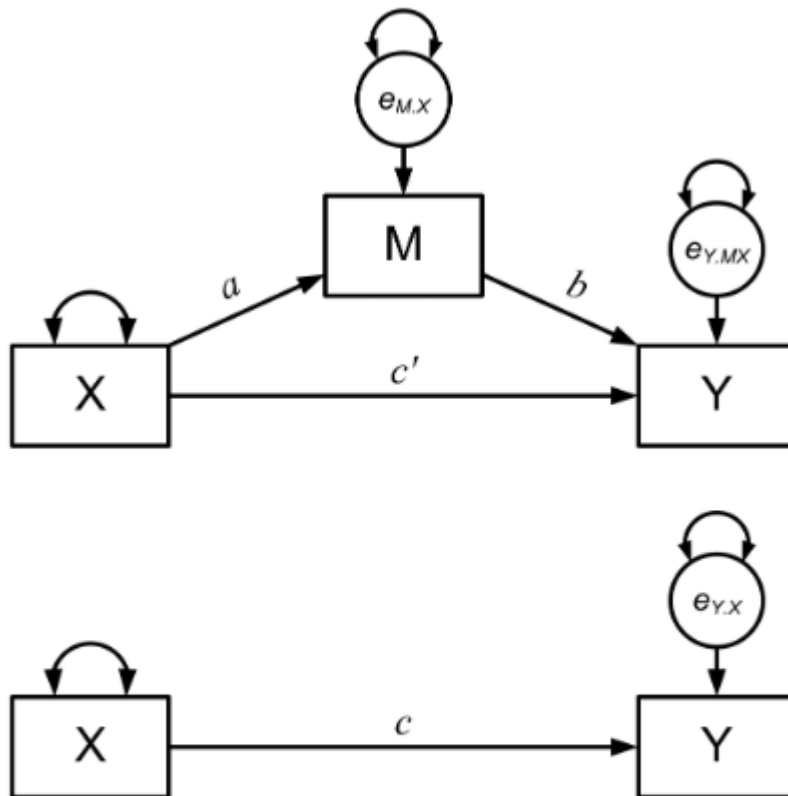
Figure 1. Diagram of models in which the effect of *X* on *Y* is (upper) versus is not (lower) mediated by *M*. Circles represent residuals, single-headed arrows represent regression weights, and double-headed arrows represent variance parameters.

Figure 3 Example of mediation model, where c' is relationship mediated by variable M *(Preacher and Kelley 2011)*

Survey sample

Survey has been taken by 141 respondents, including 19 cases where the answers were incomplete, the respondent has not graduated this year, belonged to a major other than business, finance, or management, or was in lower 5th percentile of time spent on the survey page (2 minutes and 27 seconds). Data was gathered through April 2020 by posting surveys in relevant student groups on social media, as advertisement through digital targeting platforms, with additional motivation of participating in digital gifts raffle. Sample statistics and hypotheses testing are going to be presented further below and in chapter on empirical findings of the study.

2.3. Sample description

The resulting sample (Figure 3) of 122 respondents had an average age of 22.4 years (SD = 1.8), 73% was female, 81% of respondents have been from Moscow and St. Petersburg universities, and 73% have been graduating from Master's program same year. Majority (62%) have participated in some form of on-campus activities from one of the organizations. As respondents were asked on employer brand variables only in case they have been aware of them, the resulting sample came to 446 measures of companies on individual employer brand personality and employer brand attractiveness (with exclusion of 174 responses that were excluded either due to missed questions, or being in the lower 5th percentile of the time spent on the company block). Additionally, 5% of the sample have participated in external activities from any of the employers, but have not participated in on-campus ones (6% of sample have participated in both, independent t-test is not significant).
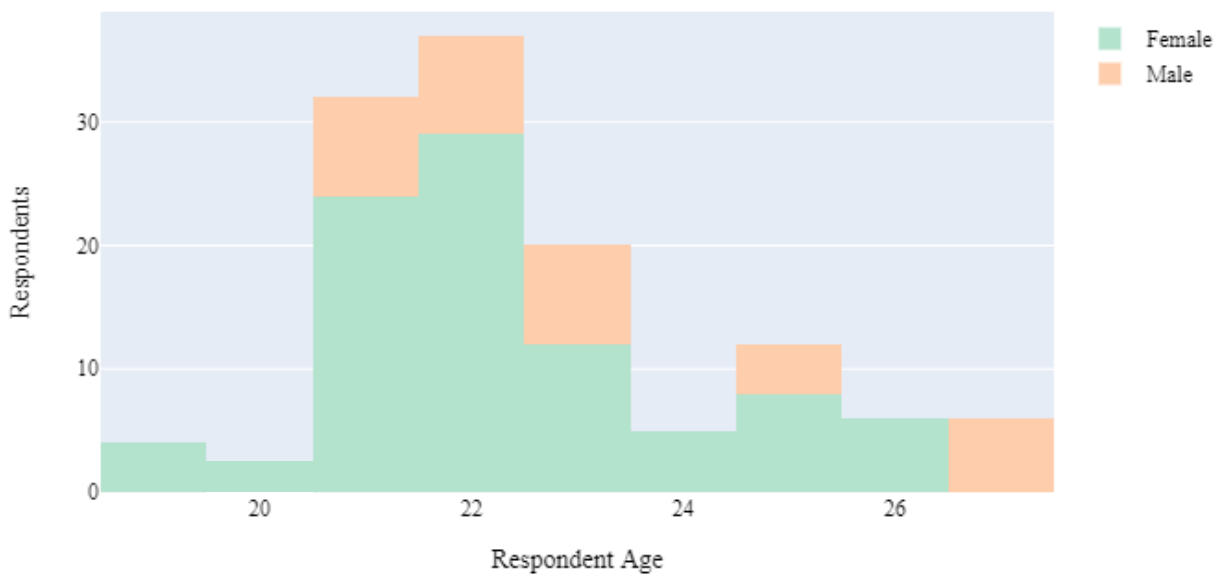
Figure 4 Distribution of responses by age and sex

Level of awareness, or familiarity with the organization (employer brand) is quite high in gained responses (Figure 4). Companies with highest familiarity among Bachelor students include EY, Mars, P&G, Unilever (88% of respondents who graduate with Bachelor diploma this year have indicated they are familiar with the organization), while P&G and Unilever clearly share 1st rank among Master students with 96% being familiar with the employer brand of the companies. Interestingly, L'Oréal and Yandex clearly have much better employer brand awareness for Master

students, which might be explained by their focus on more senior graduates. However, analysis of corporate websites, social media and positions list does not show any discrimination against bachelor students in junior management positions.
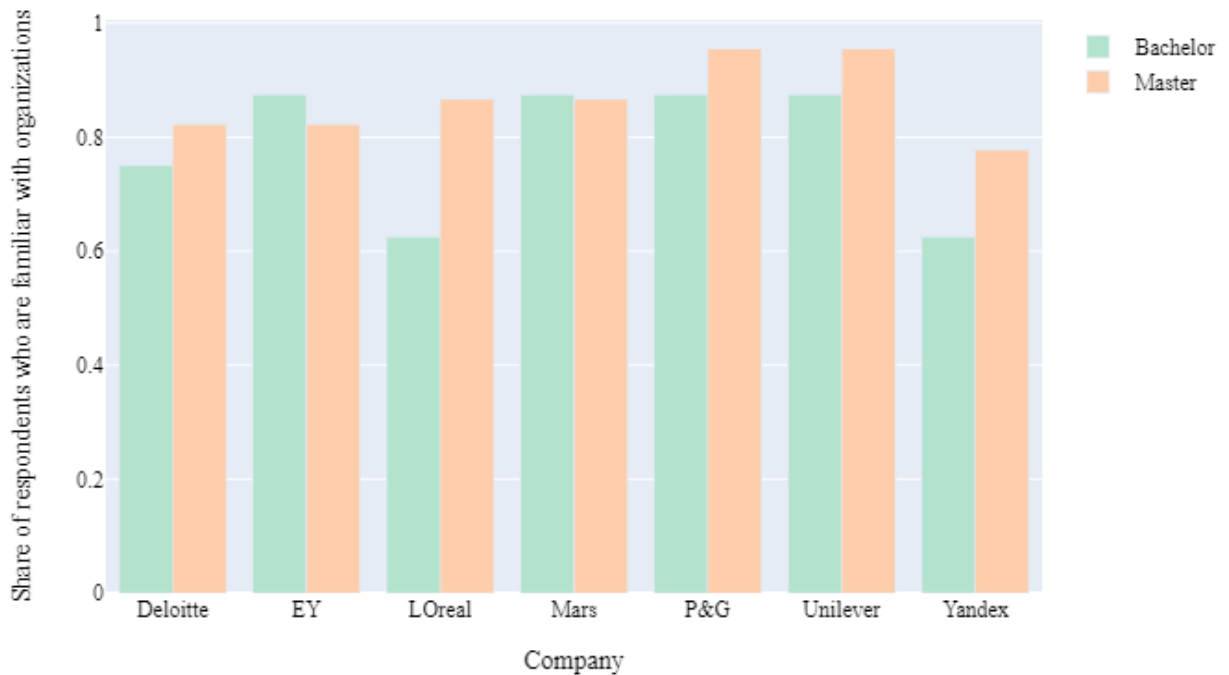
Figure 5 Share of respondents' employer brand awareness per company and level of education

Responses seem to have different minimums in relation to employer brand attractiveness measures. For example, boxplot in Figure 5 shows that bachelor students have not answered a minimum of 1 to a statement 'This company would be a good place to work for me'. Nevertheless, their median is 1 point lower versus the master's students.
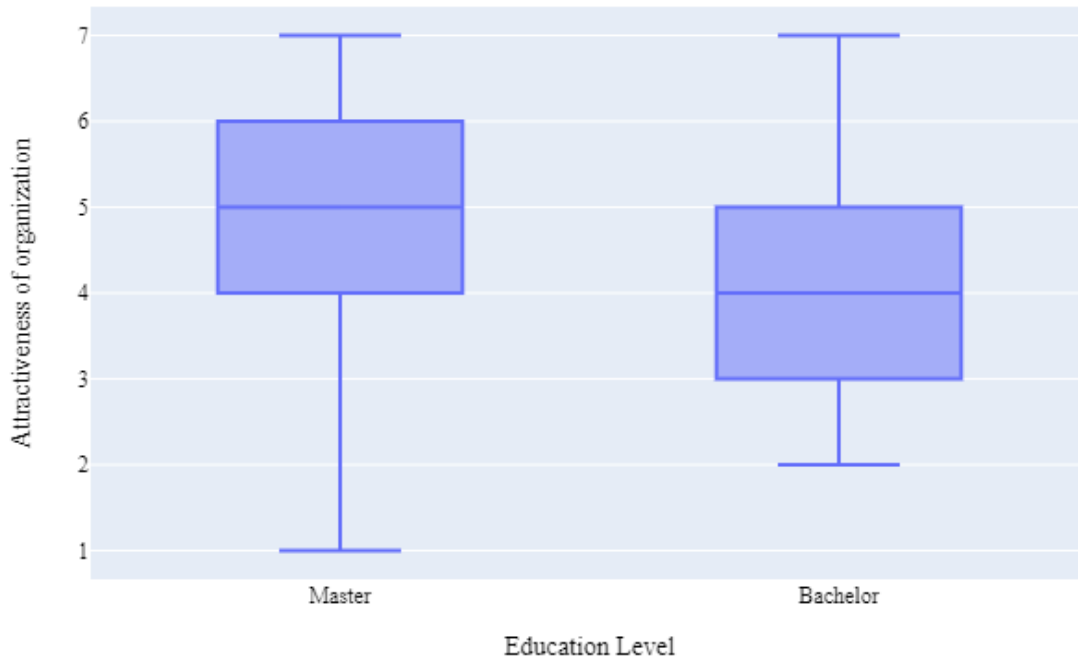
Figure 6 Boxplot of responses to one of statements based on respondent education

Collected responses included respondents from following Russian universities: Moscow State University (MSU), Higher School of Economics (HSE), Financial University (FU), Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA), St Petersburg University (SPbU), Peter the Great St.Petersburg Polytechnic University (SPbPU), Novosibirsk State University (NSU), Plekhanov Russian University of Economics (REA).

Chapter 3.   EMPIRICAL FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

3.1.   Interview results

Interview with the first expert represented opportunity to structure current business challenges that research to date has not been able to give answer to. A number of themes have been discussed, starting from general approach to recruitment, employer branding place in the talent management strategy, as well as its goals and future development. First expert represented senior HR manager with more than 7 years of experience in managing different aspects of human resource management in multinational corporations, with 2 last years dedicated to management of recruitment strategy, practices across CIS countries, with stronger focus on Russian labor market. Expert have received human management higher education in a business school.

First theme to discuss was usage of marketing principles in management of employer brand, which were attributed to employer branding. The expert has noted that the company heavily uses principles of employer brand in its recruitments practices and sees benefit it, especially *"in recent years, as we adopt more and more practices from marketing research and department"*. In order to continue further discussion in that field, a question on the marketing value chain and marketing funnel (sequential steps of talent attraction and application) in recruitment has been raised. Sourcing on the current research from the employer branding and recruitment, the expert noted that recruitment funnel *"shares similar approach from marketing, with stages of awareness, consideration, application, and successful employment"*.

With the goal of finding current challenges, the expert has been asked with the questions on recruitment activities the company has been conducting in the past months and years, with focus on what activities have positive affected recruitment outcomes (such as increasing percent of target audience familiar with the employer brand, or share of target audience having the employer in their short consideration list). The expert has shared picture of activities, with a common problem – most of the activities effect is not clear on recruitment outcomes. For instance, analysis of Russian labor employer brands conducted by independent agency has shown clear relationship between employer brand activities and portfolio of instruments company have used for the past year. However, more precise granularity has been missing, including non-existing link of number of activities with recruitment outcomes. The focus then have been shifted to amount of work that each type of activity required – some activities that company have been doing require limited resources and conducted by external agencies, thus requiring only limited project management (e.g. email marketing with selected target audience), but some are hard to outsource due to nature of the activities and needed engagement

of employees, such as on-campus activities, external seminars, or practical educational courses which are prepared by the company. Such activities usually require involvement and engagement of employees whose main working responsibility are not communication to external audience, which raises the need for additional training, as well as content preparation.

As the challenge of finding the relationship between recruitment outcomes (that would be connected to employer brand attractiveness) has been identified, the expert has been asked additional questions on nature of on-campus activities, their involvement, target audience, methods of tracking recruitment outcomes. The expert has voiced one interesting doubt on effectiveness of on-campus activities and their relationship with recruitment outcomes – *"...we have noticed that many of our recent successful candidates come from the universities which we pay little attention to in terms of on-campus activities – we have not done any interventions in these universities in terms of on-campus activities, while other universities we organize our on-campus activities in have not significantly improved their recruitment outcomes, specifically number of successful candidates".* Under successful candidates the expert has meant job applicants who have passed multiple stages of assessment and has been offered either an internship or job in the company. This insight have provided additional research value, as it allowed to find managerial challenge that the thesis could help an answer to.

Interview with the second expert have been conducted in similar manner, with additional focus on competitive landscape and target audience of recruitment activities, along with nature of on-campus activities have organized in recent months. Second expert represented junior HR manager with 2 years of experience in managing recruitment and employer branding processes. The expert have led organizations of multiple on-campus on their own, which provided additional knowledge on competitive practices and types of on-campus activities. One of the contributions to current thesis has been a list of potential companies with strong employer brand and similar target audience provided by the HR expert. The list focused on multinational companies which main revenue comes from consumer goods with presence on Russian labor market. Furthermore, the expert has shared their vision on recruitment funnel challenges – *"...it is clear which activities impact positively on awareness of our employer brand, but it is not clear which provide benefits in terms of winning at mind of job seekers when they are compiling their consideration set...".* Most of the activities conducted on-campus represented participation of the company on career fairs, as expert have noticed. This mostly impacted employer brand awareness, as people who have gone to such activities are of *"junior years, usually far from graduates, with few exceptions".* This raised the following question

on types of activities the company have tried and received positive feedback from the audience. One of the activities the expert has voiced their feedback on was a practice of "career consultation" which provides benefits to potential applicant, as they get personal attention from the employee leading the consultation, feedback customized for the individual that takes the consultation, and overall verifies the competence of employer brand by demonstrating competence of their employees.

In summary, insights gained from the interview with two experts allowed to identify a challenge of unexplained relationship between on-campus activities and their impact on employer brand measures (besides recruitment outcomes), including companies with strong employer brand and target audience of these employer brands.

3.2. Descriptive statistics

Descriptive statistics have been analyzed using Python 3.7 with pandas, NumPy, plotly libraries. The resulting sample was split into two groups based on participation in on-campus activities of any format. Test group is a group with participation in on-campus activities. Control group have not participated in on-campus activities of corresponding employer. Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and sample sizes of groups. Further analysis of sample with participants in on-campus activities with type of activity (either organized by employer or other party with employer present at the activity) as controlling measure have not shown significant results due to small sample.

An independent-means t-test has been used as groups of measures were unrelated to each other, making them independent. Data used for analysis is normally distributed with medium level of variance in skewness depending on the measure analyzed.

Item	Mean	SD	N
Test group			
Competence	5.05	0.78	197
Warmth	4.83	0.62	197
Employer Consideration	6.12	1.01	197
Application Intent	3.71	1.72	197
Control group			
Competence	4.13	0.43	249
Warmth	4.27	0.40	249
Employer Consideration	5.99	0.98	249
Application Intent	4.06	0.88	249

Table 2 Means, standard deviations and sample group sizes of the survey

An independent-means t-test showed a significant increase in perceptions of organizational competence between control group (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.43) and test group (mean = 5.05, SD = 0.78; p < .001), based on participation of the former in on-campus activities. Likewise, there was a significant increase in warmth between control group (mean = 4.27, SD = 0.40) to test group (mean = 4.83, SD = 0.62; p < .001). An independent-means t-test showed a significant increase in employer consideration in responses that indicated participation in on-campus activities associated with employer (mean = 6.12, SD = 1.01; p = 0.04). Interestingly, significant decrease is noticed in application intent between control group (mean = 4.06, SD = 0.88) and test group (mean = 3.71, SD = 1.72; p = .016). In summary, perceptions of organizational competence and warmth improved after upon participation in on-campus activities. Employer brand attractiveness, inferred from employer consideration and application intent, have, in opposite, decreased.

3.3.   Hypotheses testing

Before hypotheses testing it is important to check variables for multicollinearity. In order to check that statsmodels module with Python 3.7 was used to calculate VIF – variable inflation factors. Generally, recommended cutoff values of VIF are 5 and 10 (the lower it is – the lower multicollinearity is) (Craney and Surles 2002). A method of centering was applied to measures' values. Centering is done through subtracting the measure's mean from each value, which produces a centered value for the measure. Rescaling is not fit here as it changes the means, consequently changing the predictor covariance, yielding different regression weights for the predictors in the function. Therefore, centering is an important step of analysis when testing interaction effects through regression to obtain meaningful interpretation of results (Aiken and West 1991). Centering is consistent with the computed variance inflation factor. It is also suggested that VIF needs to be computed only after centering variables (Freund, Littell and Creighton 2003). Centered variables have low intercorrelation, while uncentered variables have higher intercorrelation, thus higher collinearity. The variance inflation factor is therefore an important part of examining interaction effects in multiple regression.

As presented in Table 3, none of the centered measures show VIF higher than 5, which proves that variables are fit for the purposes of regression modelling.

Measure (centered)	VIF
Competence	2.78
Warmth	2.99
Employer Consideration	1.72
Application Intent	1.45

Table 3 Variable inflation factors of centered measures

Additionally, sourcing from structural equation modelling techniques, measurement model was validated through semopy package in Python 3.7 environment of Anaconda 2020.02. One of the techniques applied was confirmatory factor analysis on following variables: organizational competence, organizational warmth, employer consideration, application intent. Items from competence and warmth were combined into parcels, as this required fewer parameter estimates and has been validated in previous research (Little, et al. 2013, Carpentier and Van Hoye 2019). Confirmatory factor analysis has demonstrated a good fit ($\chi2$ = 322.082, p < .001, RMSEA = 0.048, CFI = 0.958; TLI = 0.953; SRMR = 0.09). Discriminant validity have been measured and demonstrated squared correlations of the variables were smaller than the average variance extracted of the measured items, making the concepts sufficient from distinction perspective (Bagozzi, Youjae and Phillips 1991).

As the data and measures have been proved to be valid using VIF computation analysis and confirmatory factor analysis, it is proposed to test the hypotheses through regression modelling of hypothesized measures: organizational competence, warmth, and employer consideration and application intent. R-squared is used as a measure of model fit, standardized coefficients are provided for each tested relationship. Results are presented in table 4.

Tested relationship	R-square	Std. coeff. (p < 0.001)
Participation in on-campus activities → Competence	0.474	0.491
Participation in on-campus activities → Warmth	0.452	0.610

Table 4 Regression analysis results

To test hypothesis on employer brand personality dimensions (warmth and competence) relationship mediation between participation in on-campus activities and employer brand attractiveness, additional regressions need to be tested as suggested by Baron & Kenny (1986). In order to verify mediation of warmth and competence, relationship between participation in on-campus

activities and employer brand attractiveness has been tested, as well as joined relationship of participation in on-campus activities and employer personality dimensions with employer brand attractiveness measures.

Tested relationship	R-square	Std. coeff. (p < 0.001)
Participation in on-campus activities → Employer Consideration	0.217	0.391
Participation in on-campus activities → Application Intent	0.309	0.502
Participation in on-campus activities plus competence → Employer Consideration	0.646	0.694
Participation in on-campus activities plus warmth → Employer Consideration	0.692	0.711
Participation in on-campus activities plus competence → Application Intent	0.530	0.731
Participation in on-campus activities plus warmth → Application Intent	0.512	0.685

Table 5 Mediation regression results

As presented in Table 5, there is little explanatory power of participation in on-campus activities in relationship to employer brand attractiveness measures. However, this is not required to test mediation effect through employer brand personality, as independent variable might not have significant explanatory power over dependent variable, which is employer brand attractiveness in our case (Shrout and Bolger 2002). In order to test the hypothesis on mediation it is important to look at results of joined effect of participation in on-campus activities and employer brand personality on dependent variable – employer brand attractiveness measures. Tested hypotheses on relationship of those variables show significant results on full mediation of employer brand attractiveness through employer brand personality, which confirms the suggested hypotheses.

3.4. Employer brand view

In an effort to get a detailed look into effects and performance of campus activities a multivariate analysis of variance has been conducted for all companies represented in the survey. This allowed to get additional data points that have been used in recommendations for organizations later in the thesis. Same control and test group split depending on respondent participation in on-campus

activities of organizations would be used, with control group have been not participating in any activities on-campus of presented organizations, and test group participating in them. As dependent variables two items from employer brand attractiveness measure have been used. Multiple companies would be presented to identify differences in relationship of their employer brand variables and participation in on-campus activities.

Results (Table 6) relating to Deloitte show positive impact on application intent, but not significant on employer consideration. Employer brand personality dimensions, especially competence, are increasing significantly as well.

Item	Mean	SD	N
Test group			
Competence	5.43	0.43	54
Warmth	4.09	0.35	54
Employer Consideration	5.98	0.67	54
Application Intent	3.42	1.21	54
Control group			
Competence	4.87	0.63	43
Warmth	3.72	0.49	43
Employer Consideration	5.88	1.13	43
Application Intent	3.01	0.76	43

Table 6 Means, standard deviations and sample group sizes of the responses on Deloitte

A multivariate analysis of variance showed a statistically significant increase in perceptions of organizational competence between control group (mean = 4.87, SD = 0.63) and test group (mean = 5.43, SD = 0.43; $p < .001$), based on participation of the former in on-campus activities. Likewise, there was a significant increase in warmth between control group (mean = 3.72, SD = 0.49) to test group (mean = 4.09, SD = 0.49; $p < .001$). A multivariate analysis of variance showed insignificant results in employer consideration in responses that indicated participation in on-campus activities associated with employer (mean = 5.98, SD = 0.67; $p = 0.05$). In contrast with general results, statistically significant increase is noticed in application intent between control group (mean = 3.01, SD = 0.76) and test group (mean = 3.42, SD = 1.21; $p < 0.001$).

Next company is EY. Results (Table 7) show similar to Deloitte insignificant impact on application intent and employer consideration. Employer brand personality dimensions are increasing significantly.

Item	Mean	SD	N
Test group			
Competence	5.93	0.55	48
Warmth	4.54	0.59	48
Employer Consideration	5.53	0.81	48
Application Intent	3.78	1.01	48
Control group			
Competence	5.12	0.81	64
Warmth	4.13	0.63	64
Employer Consideration	5.50	1.02	64
Application Intent	3.77	0.89	64

Table 7 Means, standard deviations and sample group sizes of the responses on EY

A multivariate analysis of variance showed a statistically significant increase in perceptions of organizational competence between control group (mean = 5.12, SD = 0.81) and test group (mean = 5.93, SD = 0.55; $p < .001$), based on participation of the former in on-campus activities. Likewise, there was a significant increase in warmth between control group (mean = 4.13, SD = 0.63) to test group (mean = 4.54, SD = 0.59; $p < .001$). A multivariate analysis of variance showed insignificant results in employer consideration in responses that indicated participation in on-campus activities associated with employer (mean = 5.53, SD = 0.81; $p = 0.08$). In line with general results, statistically insignificant change is noted in application intent between control group (mean = 3.01, SD = 0.76) and test group (mean = 3.42, SD = 1.21; $p < 0.001$).

L'Oréal shows mostly negative results on recruitment outcomes, with positive impact on one of employer brand personality measures. Results (Table 8) demonstrate significant negative impact on application intent and employer consideration. Employer brand personality dimension – warmth - is increasing significantly. Employer brand competence difference is insignificant. Yandex shows similar results, so it is not cited here.

Item	Mean	SD	N
Test group			
Competence	4.86	0.72	42
Warmth	5.22	0.69	42
Employer Consideration	4.89	0.67	42
Application Intent	3.94	1.34	42
Control group			
Competence	4.82	0.54	52
Warmth	4.53	0.88	52
Employer Consideration	5.12	0.79	52
Application Intent	4.20	0.72	52

Table 8 Means, standard deviations and sample group sizes of the responses on L'Oréal

A multivariate analysis of variance showed a statistically significant increase in perceptions of organizational warmth between control group (mean = 4.53, SD = 0.88) and test group (mean = 5.22, SD = 0.69; $p < .001$), based on participation of the former in on-campus activities. In opposite, there was no significant change in competence between control group (mean = 4.82, SD = 0.54) to test group (mean = 4.86, SD = 0.72; $p < .001$). A multivariate analysis of variance showed significant decrease in employer consideration in responses that indicated participation in on-campus activities associated with employer (mean = 4.89, SD = 0.68; $p < .001$). Contrary to general results, statistically significant change is noted in application intent between control group (mean = 4.20, SD = 0.72) and test group (mean = 3.94, SD = 1.34; $p < 0.001$).

P&G shows positive outcome on employer consideration, as well as positive impact on both employer brand personality measures. Results (Table 9) demonstrate insignificant impact on employer consideration. Unilever shows similar results.

Item	Mean	SD	N
Test group			
Competence	5.23	0.69	54
Warmth	5.02	0.75	54
Employer Consideration	6.34	1.22	54
Application Intent	4.12	1.90	54
Control group			
Competence	4.39	0.91	50
Warmth	4.57	0.86	50
Employer Consideration	5.66	1.19	50
Application Intent	4.21	1.33	50

Table 9 Means, standard deviations and sample group sizes of the responses on P&G

A multivariate analysis of variance showed a statistically significant increase in perceptions of organizational warmth between control group (mean = 4.57, SD = 0.86) and test group (mean = 5.02, SD = 0.75; p < .001), based on participation of the former in on-campus activities. Continuing that, there was positive significant change in competence between control group (mean = 4.39, SD = 0.91) to test group (mean = 5.23, SD = 0.69; p < .001). A multivariate analysis of variance showed significant increase in employer consideration in responses that indicated participation in on-campus activities associated with employer (mean = 6.34, SD = 1.22; p < .001). As in company-agnostic results, statistically insignificant results attributed to application intent between control group (mean = 4.21, SD = 1.33) and test group (mean = 4.12, SD = 1.90; p = 0.03).

3.5. Recommendations for organizations on use of on-campus activities

As tested hypotheses show importance of on-campus activities and their relationship to employer brand attractiveness, it is recommended to include such activities as part of recruitment strategy of organization. However, due to mixed overall effect on employer brand attractiveness, it is especially important to understand what organizations need to take into account when treating on-campus activities in their recruitment portfolio. A review of public corporate sources for activities ranging from September 2019 and April 2020 has been conducted to gain additional insights and find competitive advantages, which would correlate with measured employer brand attractiveness of the companies. Activities highlights from top performers in survey results include: custom crafted on-campus programs with employer speakers of top and middle management level, case studies, business

challenges, and other forms of gamified interactions. However, lack of customization to audience of targeted university, lack of functional diversity in employer speakers have been attributed to underperformers in employer brand personality and attractiveness measures by the results of the survey. All companies with neutral or positive impact on application intent have conducted activities with focus on business experience of typical

Based on the review, below is the list of actions HR managers are recommended to consider when planning and managing their on-campus activities:

1. On-campus activities attract audience with a good level of awareness in organization. This instrument should not be used as a tool for raising awareness about the employer brand, but rather as a way to communicate additional information and reduce information asymmetry between potential job seeker and employer, increasing employer brand perceived warmth and competence.

2. Activities with unique proposition and fit to target audience (exclusive program for university, employer representatives who have studied in that university) generally provide positive impact on employer brand personality and attractiveness. It is recommended to analyze what are unique traits of different groups of target audience, and create programs or series of on-campus activities suited for that audience.

3. Opportunity to communicate with current employees of employer brand creates positive image of the company, allowing to attract additional applicants, leading to placement of employer in consideration list. However, negative experience received during on-campus activity might be a stronger signal than a signal on social media page – this is why it is critical to have synchronized employer brand activities communicated for the audience.

4. Companies generally use common type of on-campus activities, which most of the students are familiar with, making their activities less competitive and beneficial to students, which expect to find additional information and connection with the organization employees. Most of the on-campus activities information on which have been found in public corporate sources represent seminars or lectures on details of application process, as well as specifics of organizational businesses.

5. Companies need to understand what is the optimal number of interventions in form of on-campus activities. Companies that have shown negative relationship of participation in on-campus activities (L'Oréal, Yandex) either have high level of activities in selected universities, or have too little activities of topic that might be interesting for target audience

of their recruitment strategy. As an example, most of Yandex on-campus activities are attributed to jobs of technical audience, while activities connected with graduates of business, finance and economics programs are poorly promoted and are usually held online or as part of their practical courses in partnership with universities.

6. Intent to apply to company might be negatively impacted by participation of target audience in on-campus activities. However, this might be attributed to better conversion into successful candidates at end of recruitment, as candidates who have not had right expectations about employer brand would get precise and trusted information from the employees of the organizations. Organizations need to focus on the recruitment message and their competitiveness when communicating with potential job seekers in such activities. Furthermore, promotion of on-campus activities should be synchronized with communication of target audience of on-campus activity.

3.6. Practical implications, limitation and further research

On-campus activities are prominent way for organizations to manage their applications perception toward the employer brand, but the data on actual impact of those activities on employee brand is short. Estimating effects from on-campus activities on employer brand attractiveness provides additional expertise to recruitment research and management of this process in context of human resources management. Thesis findings confirm that potential employees infer employer brand personality through participating in on-campus activities where employer brand is present through application of signaling theory and the theory of symbolic attraction (Spence 1973, Highhouse, Thornbury and Little 2007). However, this has caused mixed effect on employee brand attractiveness measures. Study presented in thesis helps to understand the way potential applicants interpret on-campus activities perceived as signals about that organization. Potential applicants infer signals from their experience of on-campus activity to create a mental picture of what the organization is like as an employer. Respondents that participated in on-campus activities have increased perceptions of organizational competence and warmth compared to respondents with existing employee awareness but lack of participation in such activities. Consequently, that indicates that personal contact with existing employees of that organization creates warmer and more competent brand personality of that organization. This could be explained by readiness of potential applicant to connect with the organization, as well as controlled point of touch from employer standpoint – usually existing employees prepare competitive organization image in order to increase organization recruitment outcomes. As potential employers provide relevant information, they could be considered as more

competent overall, as discovered in previous research with different medium (Williamson, Lepak and King 2003). Hence, this study contributes to existing research by demonstrating that potential applicants derive characteristics about organization through on-campus activities it has been presented in to infer general employer brand personality, which consequently relates positively to potential applicants' employer consideration, but relates negatively to applicants' application intent. One of the hypotheses, which future research could investigate, is relation of existing brand equity before participation in on-campus activities and its change upon participation in these activities. For instance, organization might have had high employer attractiveness for potential applicant, which was created using other mediums. However, additional signals received during on-campus activity might lower information asymmetry and turn away potential applicant, based on unmet expectations of employer brand equity which potential applicant have. This could be mitigated by synchronized management of recruitment activities, which would convey integral employer brand for potential applicant in multiple mediums of applicant's presence. Employer brand personality was operationalized as organizational competence and warmth, two meta-dimensions that appeared in previous research of different areas of employer branding (Cuddy, Glick and Beninger 2011, Carpentier and Van Hoye 2019). Results of thesis study show that organizations can use on-campus activities as a practical tool to manage their perception on these dimensions. Findings suggest that competence and warmth can help to understand reactions of potential applicants towards employers.

From the standpoint of practical implications, this thesis has identified mixed effect of participation in on-campus activities of employer on employer brand attractiveness. Hence, it is vital for organization to look into their current recruitment activities portfolio to understand whether this approach is effective for the employer brand outcomes compared to others. Furthermore it might be beneficial to compare on-campus activities with mediums of similar trustworthiness as potential applicant might make different inferences on employer brand using less trustworthy sources of information (Keeling, McGoldrick and Sadhu 2013). Moreover, to boost potential applicants' perceptions of the organization as a competent employer, employers might carefully select speakers and organizational representative for on-campus activities to lower the communication barriers and simplify competence signaling, which opens room for additional research on the subject. Expanding on the topic, it would be beneficial for human resource managers to treat on-campus activities as non-traditional source of talent, as they could create specific strategy for on-campus activities which would differentiate based on type of target audience, level of education (PwC 2020). In addition, it is possible to introduce mixed employment options or practical projects co-led with employees of the company

to increase engagement and employer brand characteristics through early introduction of employee brand into student's life.

One of limitations includes limited sample of 122 fresh graduates, which could be expanded. There is also disbalance favoring students who graduate from Master's programs, so study focused on that and other level of educations could be worth looking into. Furthermore, the impact of participation in on-campus activities might be different for other industries, employer brands, and students with major in other areas (e.g. social work, arts, etc.) Memory effect could be investigated as well with changing the target sample to graduates after several years of work. Current study has not looked into measurable effect of different on-campus activities, which would help organizations to understand how they can change their current on-campus activities in order to achieve better recruitment outcomes impact.

CONCLUSION

On-campus activities have been part of many medium and large companies in young specialists' labor market. They enable companies to communicate with soon-to-be graduates in their comfortable environment. Analysis of impact of these activities has been limited in research to date. This thesis analyzed employer brand attractiveness in context of on-campus activities organizations use in their recruitment strategy, exploring the relationship between the activities, employer brand personality and its attractiveness to job seekers. Findings of the study in this thesis, based on quantitative interviews, suggest that on-campus activities are important part of recruitment of young specialists for multinational corporations in Russian labor market. Survey results of potential job seekers has proved that participation in those activities positively relates to employer brand personality of that organization. On-campus activities allow to infer employer brand personality characteristics from signals received from participation in these activities. This causes mixed effect on employer brand attractiveness. Mainly, application intent is going down due to lower information asymmetry between job seeker and organization, while employer consideration goes up.

At a practical level, these findings indicate that organizations can use on-campus activities by signaling their employer brand personality in order to manage one of the recruitment outcomes – employer consideration, but need to have a unique proposal to win in application intent of their target audience in the labor market.

List of references

Aaker, J., K. D. Vohs, and C. Mogilner. 2010. "Nonprofits are seen as warm and for-profits as competent: Firm stereotypes matter." *Journal of Consumer Research* 224–237.

Aiken, L. S., and S. G. West. 1991. *Multiple regression: Testing and interpreting interactions.* Sage Publications, Inc. .

Ambler, Tim, and Simon Barrow. 1996. "The employer brand." *Journal of Brand Management* 185–206. doi:10.1057/bm.1996.42.

Aptitude Research Partners. 2018. "A NEW ERA IN CAMPUS RECRUITING: LEVERAGING TECHNOLOGY TO RECRUIT TOP STUDENTS." June. Accessed May 16, 2020. https://yello.co/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Yello-FINAL.pdf.

Avery, D. R., and P. F McKay. 2006. "Target practice: An organizational impression management approach to attracting minority and female job applicants." *Personnel Psychology* 157–187.

Backhaus, K., and S. Tikoo. 2004. "Conceptualizing and researching employer branding." *Career Development International* 501-517.

Bagozzi, Richard, Yi Youjae, and Lynn Phillips. 1991. "Assessing Construct Validity in Organization Research." *Administrative Science Quarterly* 421-458.

Bangerter, A., N. Roulin, and C. J. König. 2012. "Personnel selection as a signaling game." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 719–738.

Banks, G. C., S. Kepes, M. Joshi, and A. Seers. 2016. "Social identity and applicant attraction: Exploring the role of multiple levels of self." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 326-345.

Baron, R. M., and D. A. Kenny. 1986. "The moderator–mediator variable distinction in social psychological research: Conceptual, strategic, and statistical considerations." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 1173–1182.

Baum, M., and R. Kabst. 2011. "Arbeitgebermarkenaufbau durch informelle Hochschul-Personalmarketingmaßnahmen: Eine empirische Analyse im deutschen Mittelstand." *Z Betriebswirtsch* 327–349.

Baum, M., and R. Kabst. 2013. "Conjoint implications onjob preferences: the moderating role of involvement." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 24: 1393–1417.

Berthon, P., M. Ewing, and L.L. Hah. 2005. "Captivating company: dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding." *International Journal of Advertising* 24 (2): 151-172.

Bogner, A., B. Littig, and W. Menz. 2009. *Interviewing Experts.* Palgrave Macmillan.

Boswell, W. R., M. V. Roehling, M. A. LePine, and L. M. Moynihan. 2003. "Individual job-choice decisions and the impact of job attributes and recruitment practices: A longitudinal field study." *Human Resource Management* 23−37.

Breaugh, James A. 2008. "Employee recruitment: Current knowledge and important areas for future research." *Human Resource Management Review* 103-118.

Cable, D. M., and K. Y. T. Yu. 2006. "Managing job seekers' organizational image beliefs: The role of media richness and media credibility." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 828–840.

Cable, D.M., and D.B. Turban. 2001. "Establishing the dimensions, sources and value of job seekers' employer knowledge during recruitment." *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management* 115–163.

Cable, D.M., and D.B. Turban. 2003. "The value of organizational reputation in the recruitment context: a brand-equity perspective." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2244-2266.

Cable, D.M., L. Aiman-Smith, P.W. Mulvey, and J.R Edwards. 2000. "The sources and accuracy of job applicants' beliefs about organizational culture." *Academy of Management Journal* 43: 1076–1085.

Carpentier, Marieke, and Greet Van Hoye. 2019. "Attracting applicants through the organization's social media page: Signaling employer brand personality." *Journal of Vocational Behavior.*

Chen, Jiatian. 2012. *Comparing the Relative Effectiveness of Campus Recruitment Practices Electronic Thesis or Dissertation.* https://etd.ohiolink.edu/.

Clark, T. 1993. "The market provision of management services, information asymmetries and service quality - some market solutions: An empirical example." *British Journal of Management* 235–251.

Collins, C.J., and A.M Kanar. 2013. "Employer brand equity and recruitment research." In *The Oxford Handbook of Recruitment*, by D.M., Yu, K.Y.T Cable, 284–297. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Collins, C.J., and C.K. Stevens. 2002. "The relationship between early recruitment-related activities and the applica-tion decisions of new labor-market entrants: a brand equity approach to recruitment." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 1121–1133.

Connelly, B. L., S. T. Certo, R. D. Ireland, and C. R. Reutzel. 2011. "Signaling Theory: A Review and Assessment." *Journal of Management* 37 (1): 39-67.

Craney, T. A., and J. G. Surles. 2002. "Model-Dependent Variance Inflation Factor Cutoff Values." *Quality Engineering* 391–403.

Cuddy, Amy J.C., Peter Glick, and Anna Beninger. 2011. "The dynamics of warmth and competence judgments, and their outcomes in organizations." *Research in Organizational Behavior* 73-98.

de Chernatony, L. 2001. "A model for strategically building brands." *J Brand Manag* 32–44.

Edwards, M.R., and T. Edwards. 2013. "Employee re-sponses to changing aspects of the employer brand fol-lowing a multinational acquisition: a longitudinal study." *Human Resource Management* 52: 27–54.

Finstad, Kraig. 2010. "The Usability Metric for User Experience." *Interacting with Computers* 323–327.

Fisher, Cynthia D., Daniel R. Ilgen, and Wayne D. Hoyer. 1979. "Source Credibility, Information Favorability, and Job Offer Acceptance." *The Academy of Management Journal* 94-103.

Flippo, Edwin B. 1980. *Personnel management.* Auckland: McGraw-Hill International.

Foster, C., K. Punjaisri, and R. Cheng. 2010. "Exploring the relationship between corporate, internal and employer branding." *Journal of Product & Brand Management* 401-409.

Freund, Rudolf J., Ramon C. Littell, and Lee Creighton. 2003. *Regression Using JMP.* J. Wiley.

Gatewood, R. D., Feild, H. S., and Barrick. 2016. *Human resource selection.* Boston: Cengage Learning.

Highhouse, S., E. E. Thornbury, and I. S Little. 2007. "Social-identity functions of attraction to organizations." *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes* 103 (1): 134–146.

Highhouse, S., F. Lievens, and E. F. Sinar. 2003. "Measuring attraction to organizations." *Educational and Psychological Measurement* 63: 986-1001.

International Labour Organization. 2020. "Global Employment Trends for Youth 2020."

Keeling, Kathy, Peter McGoldrick, and Henna Sadhu. 2013. "Staff Word-of-Mouth (SWOM) and retail employee recruitment." *Journal of Retailing* 88-104.

Keller, Kevin Lane. 1993. "Conceptualizing, Measuring, and Managing Customer-Based Brand Equity." *Journal of Marketing* 1-22.

Kotler, Philip. 1972. *Marketing management; analysis, planning, and control.* Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall.

Kucherov, Dmitry, Andrey Zamulin, and Victoria Tsybova. 2019. "How young professionals choose companies: employer brand and salary expectations." *Russian Management Journal* 29-46.

Lewis, James. 1993. "Multipoint Scales: Mean and Median Differences and Observed Significance Levels." *Int. J. Hum. Comput. Interaction* 383-392.

Lievens, F., and J. E. Slaughter. 2016. "Employer Image and Employer Branding: What We Know and What We Need to Know." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 3: 407-440.

Lievens, Filip, Greet Van Hoye, and Frederik Anseel. 2007. "Organizational Identity and Employer Image: Towards a Unifying Framework." *British Journal of Management* S45-S59. doi:doi:10.1111/j.1467-8551.2007.00525.x.

LinkedIn. 2017. *Global Recruiting Trends 2017.* Corporate Report, Sunnyvale: LinkedIn. Accessed May 3, 2020. https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/me/business/en-us/talent-solutions/resources/pdfs/linkedin-global-recruiting-trends-report.pdf.

Little, Todd D., Mijke Rhemtulla, Kimberly Gibson, and Alexander M. Schoemann. 2013. "Why the items versus parcels controversy needn't be one." *Psychological Methods* 285–300.

Lloyd, S. 2002. "Branding from the Inside Out." *Business Review Weekly* 24: 64-66.

Mandhanya, Y., and M. Shah. 2010. "Employer branding – a tool for talent management." *Global Management Review* 43–48.

ManpowerGroup. 2019. "Closing the Skills Gap: What Workers Want." Accessed April 2, 2020. https://go.manpowergroup.com/hubfs/MPG_WhatWorkersWant_2020.pdf.

Martin, G., P. Beaumont, R. Doig, and J. Pate. 2005. "Branding: a new performance discourse for hr?" *European Management Journal* 76-88.

Martin, G., P.J. Gollan, and K. Grigg. 2011. "Is there a bigger and better future for employer branding? Facing up to innovation, corporate reputations and wicked problems in HRM." *The International Journal of Human Resource Management* 3618-3637.

Martindale, Nick. 2010. "Think before you leap." *Personnel Today* 18–46.

Ployhart, Robert E., Neal Schmitt, and Nancy T. Tippins. 2017. "Solving the Supreme Problem: 100 Years of Selection and Recruitment at the Journal of Applied Psychology." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 291–304.

Preacher, K. J., and K. Kelley. 2011. "Effect size measures for mediation models: Quantitative strategies for communicating indirect effects." *Psychological Methods* 93–115.

PwC. 2020. *The power to perform: Human capital 2020 and beyond.* PwC.

Radaev, V.V. 2018. "Миллениалы на фоне предшествующих поколений: эмпирический анализ." *Социологические исследования* 15-33.

RAEX. 2019. *RAEX: Russian university ranking (RAEX: Рейтинг вузов России).* June 4. Accessed April 2, 2020. https://raex-rr.com/education/universities/rating_of_universities_of_russia.

Rampl, L.V., and P. Kenning. 2014. "Employer brand trust and affect: linking brand personality to employer brand attractiveness." *European Journal of Marketing* 218–236.

Rynes, S. L., M. O. Orlitzky, and R. D., Jr. Bretz. 1997. "Experienced hiring versus college recruiting: Practices and emerging trends." *Personnel Psychology* 309–339.

Rynes, S. L., R. D. Jr. Bretz, and B. Gerhart. 1991. "The importance of recruitment in job choice: A different way of looking." *Personnel Psychology* 487−521.

Schultz, T.W. 1971. *Investment in human capital: The role of education and research.* New York: The Free Press.

Schumann, Mark, and Libby Sartain. 2009. *Brand for Talent: Eight Essentials to Make Your Talent as Famous as Your Brand.* San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.

Shrout, P. E., and N. Bolger. 2002. "Mediation in experimental and nonexperimental studies: New procedures and recommendations." *Psychological Methods* 422–445.

Slaughter, J. E., M. J. Zickar, S. Highhouse, and D. C Mohr. 2004. "Personality trait inferences about organizations: development of a measure and assessment of construct validity." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 89 (1): 85-103.

Slaughter, J.E., D.M. Cable, and D.B. Turban. 2014. "Changing job seekers' image perceptions during recruitment visits: the moderating role of belief confidence." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 99: 1146–1158.

Spence, Michael. 1973. "Job Market Signaling." *The Quarterly Journal of Economics* 87 (3): 355–374.

Stiglitz, J. E. 2002. "Information and the change in the paradigm in economics." *The American Economic Review* 460–501.

Stockman, Sara, Greet Van Hoye, and Serge da Motta Veiga. 2020. "Negative Word-of-Mouth and Applicant Attraction : The Role of Employer Brand Equity." *JOURNAL OF VOCATIONAL BEHAVIOR.*

Stockman, Sara, Greet Van Hoye, and Serge da Motta Veiga. 2020. "Negative word-of-mouth and applicant attraction: The role of employer brand equity." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 118.

Tajfel, H., and J.C. Turner. 1986. "The Social Identity Theory of Intergroup Behavior." *Psychology of Intergroup Relation* 7-24.

Taylor, M. S., and T. J. Bergmann. 1987. "Organizational recruitment activities and applicants' reactions at different stages of the recruitment process." *Personnel Psychology* 261-285.

Theurer, C.P., A. Tumasjan, I.M. Welpe, and F. Lievens. 2018. "Employer Branding: A Brand Equity-based Literature Review and Research Agenda." *International Journal of Management Reviews* 155-179.

Tumasjan, A, F Kunze, H Bruch, and IM Welpe. 2020. "Linking employer branding orientation and firm performance: Testing a dual mediation route of recruitment efficiency and positive affective climate." *Human Resource Management* 83– 99.

Turban, D. B. 2001. "Organizational attractiveness as an employer on college campuses." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 293–312.

Uggerslev, K. L., N. E. Fassina, and D. Kraichy. 2012. "Recruiting through the stages: A meta-analytic test of predictors of applicant attraction at different stages of the recruiting process." *Personnel Psychology* 597–660.

Van Hoye, Greet, and Alan M. Saks. 2010. "The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework: Organisational Image and Attractiveness of Potential Applicants and their Companions at a Job Fair." *Applied Psychology: An International Review* 311-335.

Verma, Deepti, and Anees Ahmad. 2016. "Employer Branding: The Solution to Create Talented Workforce." *The IUP Journal of Brand Management* 42-56.

Wilden, Ralf, Siegfried Gudergan, and Ian Lings. 2010. "Employer branding: strategic implications for staff recruitment." *Journal of Marketing Management* 56-73.

Williamson, Ian O., David P. Lepak, and James King. 2003. "The effect of company recruitment web site orientation on individuals' perceptions of organizational attractiveness." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 242-263.