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Candidates' reaction on the modern methods of personnel selection processes and the influence of word-of-mouth on employer branding

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Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MSc in Management programme at the International Hellenic University.

The focus of this dissertation is to examine and present how candidates react to the modern recruitment and selection methods/tools and if and to what extend the terms of *candidate experience* and *word-of-mouth* affect the process itself and the final image of an employer. The final purpose is to answer to the research questions, regarding these matters. Firstly, the literature review is analyzed, indicating the various methods that are used internally and externally in the recruitment and selection process, with particular reference to the *e-recruiting practice* and the use of social media, which are newly introduced in the field of HR. Continuing, the terms of candidate experience and word-of-mouth are presented, on regards to their use and significance. Thereinafter, the study is referring to the *research approach* that is applied, mentioning the steps and tools. Finally, the quantitative results are demonstrated and the conclusions are explained to identify if the research questions were indeed answered.

Key words

recruitment, selection, candidate experience, word-of-mouth, employer branding

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List of abbreviations

HR	Human Resources
WOM	Word-of-Mouth
HRM	Human Resources Management
HRD	Human Resources Department(s)
CV	Curriculum Vitae
SMEs	Small & Medium-sized Enterprises
ATS	Applicant Tracking System
AI	Artificial Intelligence

Chapter 1

Introduction

The continuous change in technology and global market have forced businesses to search out more sufficient ways to establish their presence. Technology is affecting the daily working and personal life and its rapid evolution reforms the basis of business operations. Therefore, the need for competitiveness, urged businesses to activate the effective management of their human resources, having acknowledged that employees are the driving force behind all operations. An organization's personnel is considered to be its most important asset and it should be treated more as an opportunity for profit and success than as a cost. Hence, the goal of the HRD in every organization is to staff the company with the most capable and efficient employees. It also seeks to enhance loyalty, facilitate communication, strengthen teamwork through its functions and attracting, selecting, developing, educating, and evaluating human resources. The more enjoyable and interesting the work that employees undertake and the more they are involved in shaping decisions and profits, this leads to their effective contribution to the company's growth.

While technology is picking up, it is also important for the HRD to digitize their practices regarding, among others, the recruitment and selection processes for acquiring talented personnel, with skills adapted to the digital age as well. Particularly, technology offers new tools that contribute significantly to the effectiveness of the process, introducing HR professionals to the e-recruitment techniques. One common feature is that they provide the ability to use fewer resources to evaluate a large number of candidates in a short period of time, allowing participants to be located anywhere, with the main condition of having access to the Internet. Thus, modern recruitment, selection and evaluation methods, tools and techniques have entered the field and tend to reform the existing trends and norms within the HR territory.

One significant example is the modern way of using Social Media to find and attract new talent. Social networking sites, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, are used quite often by recruiters, both to reach out to candidates and to evaluate or confirm some information. In an overwhelming percentage of 80% and 90% of employers and recruiters respectively mention that they make use of such platforms quite often, if

not all the time, to identify talent and evaluate candidates, reporting in addition that the content in applicants' accounts matters (MRInetwork, 2017 survey).

At the same time, the HRD more and more focus as well on candidates' experience, which is similar and as of a great importance as customers' experience. The reason for this comparison is that just as customers make a judgement about a company by purchasing a product or service, candidates make judgements about a future employer, which could affect a brand, and likewise as marketers try to promote and enhance a brand, so do the recruiters through an enjoyable candidate experience. Research has shown that their reactions are directly related to their intention to introduce a company to others. Individuals very often share their perceptions and reactions of organizations with their social media network through word-of-mouth (or word-of-mouse), which may designate a powerful impact on organizational attraction (Collins & Stevens, 2002, Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007) and their employer image. This means that a "bad reputation" could mark out an organization, even affecting potential applicants (Lagou, 2018).

In the upcoming dissertation, the research will deal mainly with the topic of candidates' reactions to the modern – digital – methods of staff attraction and selection, for it can provide valuable conclusions, as to which of these methods are higher and more reliable in their preferences. Also, the way candidates tend to proceed, by giving privately or publicly positive or negative feedback, regarding their experience on the recruitment process (through word-of-mouth) is about to be examined and to what extent this attitude affects the employer brand of an organization.

For these reasons, the following research questions should be examined, analyzed and then present their results:

RQ1: Is the usage of modern recruitment and selection methods affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively)

RQ2: Is candidate experience affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively)

RQ3: Is Word-of mouth affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively) and application decision of a job seeker (despite the position)

Chapter 2

Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

Proper staffing is of primary importance and is an essential parameter of HRM. As Froschheiser (2008) states, «*putting the wrong person into the wrong position just to fill it, it can have consequences to your organization, cause poor employee morale, low productivity and lost opportunities*». There are various recruitment and selection methods and tools, traditional and new, and every business has the convenience to use the ones that fit better, depending on its operations and its content and must agree with the company's culture, strategies and activities. In addition, and while living in a digital and advanced technological world and of knowledge economy, other HR and business operational modern functions and terms have been introduced, such as *e-recruitment*, *candidate experience*, *word-of-mouth* (alteration word-of-mouse for the digital communication) and *employer branding*. These terms and their meaning are evolving and gaining ground in the business world, affecting in turn the corporate and organizational image and they are the focal point of this dissertation and all relevant efforts will be carried out to develop and analyze them, by using any published research and bibliography.

2.2 Staffing

By staffing is meant the functions that ensure that each organization has the required, skilled and appropriate personnel (Parry & Tyson, 2008, Saitis, 2002, Bush & Middlewood, 2006). Staffing is a complex process and alongside with the technological developments and changes, in the nature and content of work and social media, the demographic and economic factors (Lievens, 2002), the globalization of business, the difficulty in finding competent and efficient personnel (Ployhart, 2006, Easton, 2007), the positive or negative acceptance of the methods of recruitment and selection by the candidates (Smither, 1993, Ployhart & Ryan, 2000) and the corporate profile of an organization (Saks, 2005, Cable & Turban, 2003, Collins & Stevens, 2002) have all influenced businesses operations and decision-making. Employees are the key factor in the success of an organization's strategy and goals (Bush & Middlewood, 2006),

since in addition to delivering talent, they also bring knowledge, potential, network and experience (O'Meara & Petzall, 2013). That is why a proper and adequate staffing process is a critical parameter of HRM and one of the most essential strategic mechanisms for the survival of businesses and the acquisition of a competitive advantage (Taylor & Collins, 2000, Ployhart, 2006).

2.2.1 Recruitment process

Recruitment and selection are the activities which every organization, regardless the industry, sector and region, is involved with at some stage. More and more companies realize the importance of HRM and what an impact can bring on its successful operations. Even though a company has a valuable strategy and sustainable funds, it will not reach success without loyal and well-trained employees (Bogatova, 2017). According to Rao (2009), «*HRM is managing the functions of planning, organizing, employing, developing, compensating and utilizing human resources*» and recruitment can be defined as the practices and activities performed by an organization specifically for the primary aim of identifying, attracting and influencing new talent (Barber, 1998, McKeena & Beech, 2008, Ployhart, 2006) and as a business process (Reynolds, 1995) is a set of logically related tasks, carried out to achieve a specified business outcome (Davenport & Short, 1990).

Through recruitment process, a pool of applicants is generated and they are those who have the urge and the desire to be employed by the organization (Lewis, 1985). From that pool the most suitable ones could be selected in turn to get on board and join the team. Before starting a recruitment campaign, four main factors should be considered: the available budget, how quickly the openings must be filled, the description of the positions' characteristics (requirements, objectives, what the company offers), so to avoid any misunderstanding by the candidates and whether a wide audience must be reached out (Arthur, 2005). A great outcome is possible only with a careful planning. Furthermore, there are two concepts of compatibility between employees and organizations: a) the person–organization fit is usually described in terms of how well a person's values coincide with the values of a company (Cable and Judge, 1996) and b) the person–job fit typically refers to the

match between a person's abilities and personality and a job's requirements (Edwards, 1991).

With the intensification of global competition, you need to have the best of the best around you, completing your team. Recruiting and onboarding new employees are costly processes and any failure might result in high expenditures (McLean et al., 2015). So, in order to hire the most suitable and talented employees, it is important not only to identify the best soft and hard skills and specifications needed, but also to choose firstly and wisely the most suitable sources, where the candidates can be reached out.

2.2.2 Internal & External recruitment

The recruitment process can be perceived as a project (with set timeframe, set activities and characteristics, estimated costs), which begins to run when there is a need to fill a position immediately or even in the long run and ends when the right person for this position is selected (Breaugh, 2008, Markkanen, 2002). Depending on the hiring plan, organizations can head for different directions to find the suitable employee, either by searching internally or externally, or even by using both techniques and tools (Granovetter, 1974).

In internal promotion, as in other words referring to internal recruitment, the already existing personnel is the first choice to search out for resources, with the aim of filling a vacancy. Moreover, defined as internal resources, the employee referrals as well (recommendations), even provided by people prior employed by a company or by previous applicants, which are more cost-effective ways (Sarma, 2008). Personal connection matters and companies may exploit personal network of current employees as a talent pool for recruiting. Mostly tech companies and finance businesses rely in this method, plus it is the most effective job interview channel since both sides are informed adequately (Chamberlain, 2015). Many organizations create and run referral programmes, along with bonuses to enhance this method, since it is a more cost-effective approach (Morehart, 2001). Hence, investing in your own employees' network could also bring positive and direct financial returns (Fernandez et al., 2000) and higher job satisfaction on post-hire (Breaugh, 1981). Burks et al (2013) cites that although referred applicants have common skillset to non-referred ones, the

former are more likely to be hired and in due course be more productive, earn higher salary and be less likely to leave. In this case, the organization is already aware of the candidate's skills, style of work, behavior, reliability and ambitions and that makes the match-up a lot easier (Rao, 2009). Promotion is usually perceived as a motivational tool and a reward for excellent work performance within the organization. So, it is a safer approach when hiring personnel, handling the issue in-house and not with an outsourced assistance, such as employment agencies. (Cholopoulos, 2014). According to CIPD in late 2009, «*56% of organizations were focusing more on retaining than recruiting talent, while four out of ten said that they would recruit fewer people in the forthcoming year*».

On the other hand, external recruitment is related with detecting and bringing new talent into the business, a very common action adopted by organizations (Anyim, Ekowaba & Anthony, 2012), even though seemingly a more complex approach than internal. External recruitment processes might be more expensive and time-consuming, but they offer a more extensive pool of applicants (Patel & Rana, 2007). Various sources listed, such as job advertisements (through journals or Internet), which is the most formal and common method, campus recruitment, recruiting agencies (outsourcing), corporate websites, job portals and job fairs and the headhunting technique are some standard and notable ways to attract talent (Rao 2009, Rashmi 2010, Patel & Rana, 2007). More on the concept of headhunting specifically, it is a technique where the approach is towards to those who are satisfied and well-established in their current role and they are not considering of switching that, seeking for new challenges.

In respect of the more modern methods of recruitment, there is the recruiting technique via Internet, which is considerably less costly than traditional advertising. Additionally, posting a job advertisement online is easier and quicker, which consequently facilitates the process in the way of receiving applications and CVs faster and in greater numbers, which means in turn that a larger range of applicants can be generated (Clark & Roberts, 2010). As Clark & Roberts (2010) mention «*online processes can also screen applications and administer some selection tests, thereby significantly reducing the time required to generate a pool of qualified candidates*» and «*the online format is very popular with job seekers as well, because the ease of*

submission enables them to send out several CVs in just seconds». So, it remains to be seen what the future holds regarding the effectiveness of the Internet in introducing better-quality candidates, in comparison with other more traditional methods (Clark & Roberts, 2010).

The second one is the more thorough use of social media for recruitment purposes. In some cases, the use of social media (e.g. Facebook, Instagram, Twitter) may not necessarily be about the user's professional profile and usually these accounts contain more personal information beyond the work environment (information about the user's interests and lifestyle). Very often personal data displayed by these websites are being checked by the organizations and recruiters, provoking applicants' reaction, in terms of issues of privacy and transparency. As noted, «*48% of individuals are worried about companies checking their action*» (Annenberg, 2011, Clark & Roberts, 2010), whereas in another survey «*is showed that the majority of working individuals indicated that what was on an individual's website was none of the company's business*» (Davison, 2011). Thus, it is a highly debatable issue and to a certain degree unexplored, so organizations and recruiters should take it seriously into consideration.

This mentioned tactic has different means and sources to complete the process. For this reason, each organization, in order to create and run the appropriate plan, must take into account various parameters to choose the direction that suits it best, depending on how much time there is to fill out the position, how much is the company willing to spend on the process and which are the needed requirements.

2.2.3 E-recruitment

E-recruitment or digital recruitment can be understood as recruitment carried out by the use of various electronic means online, via Internet (Parry & Wilson, 2009), e.g. advertising a vacancy and attracting applicants through corporate websites and Internet job boards (Borstoff et. al., 2007). An e-recruitment process allows applicants to submit their data electronically and it is a modern two-way communication process, web-enabled, time and space independent. The most often reported benefits include wider applicant outreach (Kay, 2000), faster information exchange between potential employees and employers (Singh & Finn, 2003), lower costs of advertising and

communication (Lin & Stansinskaya, 2002, Zall, 2000), data accessibility and availability (Sylva & Mol, 2009) and improved organizational attraction (Ployhart et. al., 2006).

This technique is common for SMEs, as well as for big corporations and enables to create a large pool of qualified applicants quite promptly. The most popular used recruitment sources are career websites (87%) and the Internet job sites (82%). On corporate career websites candidates can be informed and read about open vacancies, submit applications and come to know about a company's values, mission, vision, corporate philosophy (DeCenzo & Robbins, 2009, Gusdorf, 2008). Regarding job boards, these can be categorized as of general-purposed job boards (Monster, HotJobs, and Careerbuilder), where job seekers can search for jobs by filters such as category, experience, location or any combination of these job attributes and recruiters can search the job boards' database, based on any combination of keywords, to find qualified candidates and niche job bords (JournalismJobs.com, MarketingJobs.com, AllRetailJobs.com, JobsInLogistics.com), which are specialized in a particular industry, location and so on (Torres-Coronas & Arias-Oliva, 2005).

Other techniques and tools included in e-recruiting are the use of an ATS, which assists in the management, categorization and screening of overload incoming CVs and promotes indirectly the employer branding. Processing a large volume of incoming CVs can be a pressing and stressful process for a company and for this reason many organizations have created pre-screening software systems that sort out applications, for example based on keywords (Viitala, 2007), and reject applicants automatically (Gusdorf, 2008). Furthermore, there is the online assessment testing (Personality, General aptitude, Cognitive ability, Abstract reasoning, Verbal reasoning, Numerical reasoning, Technical Job knowledge Work sample/simulation, Language), video screening applicants and videoconferencing (Skype), for interview purposes and last but not least the use of social media to attract and evaluate candidates (Zeuch, 2016). This new aspect in the HR world, on regards to e-recruiting that is social recruiting, is more like of an outbound recruiting technique. The term refers to the fact of headhunting and attracting talent through social media platforms (Facebook, LinkedIn) and job searching websites (blogs, forums, job boards, like Glassdoor). Employers can digitally reach out to potential applicants but there is the matter of

transparency in social media and the ease to share something publicly and quickly (CIPD research, 2015) and employees are more concerned about the invasion of their privacy, which can affect the perception about procedural fairness (Tolchinsky et al., 1981).

According to DeCenzo & Robbins (2009), «*online recruiting is going to replace most of the traditional sources of recruitment such as newspaper advertisements and employment agencies in the nearest future*». Unfortunately, the academic point of view on this subject is still shorter because it is constantly and rapidly changing and evolving (Holm, 2008), but digital recruitment in general brings a new set of challenges and a new set of opportunities. So for these issues, organizations should be prepared by monitoring latest trends, understanding their targeted audience and design an adequate strategy (Zeuch, 2016).

2.2.4 Selection practices

Recruitment and selection, although frequently getting mixed up, are two separate functions. According to Alrichs (2000), «*recruitment is the process of identifying and attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers, with appropriate qualifications, to apply for jobs within a business, both from within and outside of it*». Once candidates are identified then the selection process is initiated, which is the process of deciding from that group the one or more that will be offered the job (Cholopoulos, 2014), using different techniques or methods to assess the applicants and decide who is best suited to the available position. This occurs given the management goals and legal requirements and the complexity of the process depends on the enterprise needs (Taylor 2008, Rees & French, 2010).

Traditionally, most organizations used a certain process. The classic trio is a term which referred to one of the most favored forms of recruitment and selection – an application form/CV combined with at least one interview and additional references (Cook, 2004). During the last decades, alongside with the «old», new and modern selection methods and tools, enhance the process and contribute to choose the best fit:

In-person and video interviews
The most preferable mean by applicants is still the interview and specifically all generations (75%) prefer an in–person interview over a video interview (Talentegy

report, 2019). Interviews are defined «*a social encounter between an applicant and a representative of an employer and personalizes the recruitment and selection process*» (Pilbeam and Corbridge, 2006). As on that matter, there are two forms of interviews, a structured form, which focusses on clearly defined questions and an unstructured form, which is effectively a chat or discussion that could lead anywhere (Roberts, 2005). Structured interviews have a higher level of success as the process is more focused and job specific. Also, the information gathered can be compared against other applicants as all applicants are being assessed the same way (Barclay, 1999, Taylor, 2008). The reliability of interviews is still questioned though, as applicants can pre-rehearse interviews and perform the correct answers and of course each interviewer may interpret the obtained information differently (Fletcher, 1996). So, just a reminder «*to help avoid instinctive or hasty judgements, begin to re-frame the job interview as a data-gathering exercise, rather than a decision-making session. Insights from the interview should be fed into the decision along with data from other selection methods*» (CIPD survey, 2015).

Assessment centers

Assessment centers are described as an event where candidates can be evaluated based on their skills and capabilities and they may differ depending on the country, industry and organization. This type of selection method can also be regarded as the most accurate way of selecting prospective employees and measuring their potential (Winter, 1995) and they might be more successful than other methods, as they focus on the candidate's actual behaviour (Lievens, 2009).

Online assessment tests

Online assessment, as part of the digital recruiting process, allows the probing of specific skills or competencies relevant to the position. There are various examples such as personality, general aptitude, cognitive ability, abstract reasoning, verbal and numerical tests, as well as technical job knowledge tests, case studies and tests related to language evaluation. Online assessment tools are not fool proof and cheating might occur. Estimates are that around 10% of online assessments are completed with some form of aid. Techniques are becoming more and more sophisticated to detect and deter «cheating» but the safest approach is to retest what was tested in the final interview (Zeuch, 2016). Also, depending the audience that an

organization desires to attract, in case of millennials, which compose a big part of the workforce today, Gamification is the newest and best way to identify such candidates. As a generation, they have grown up living on smartphones, playing virtual reality games, and constantly staying active on social media. Plus, this method shows that an organization's brand and culture believe in innovation and creativity (White, 2015).

Short call screening

Another useful tactic is the screening interview. Usually, recruiters choose some of the applicants that appear qualified based on the CV and application information acquired before they proceed to the next step in the process. Screening interviews are mainly conducted by telephone. Candidates are evaluated on regards to their job qualifications and suitability for the open position. If the applicant is not a perfect fit for the position, the interviewer may refer him/her to another open one within the organization or if there is nothing else available and the candidate is obviously unqualified, the process ends there (Gursdorf, 2008).

References check

Before making the final selection decision, a verification about the information provided by the candidate should be conducted. It is mentioned that 40% of applicants lie about their work histories and educational backgrounds, making material misrepresentations on their resumes. Difficult as it may be to check references, accurate information on a prospective new hire should be gained by former employers, although sometimes they are increasingly reluctant to give references (Gusdorf, 2008).

AI technology and software applications

In situations that the amount of submitted CVs and job applications is increased, automated ATS (for online applications*)* can speed-up the recruitment process. Also, AI has entered the selection field, especially for the part of the first screening of candidates and communication with applicants, like MAYA. These new technology-based recruitment methods may facilitate the processes, so that recruiters can focus on the qualified candidates (Oksanen, 2018).

Work samples & Trial period

Lastly, potential employees can interact with a set of tasks or exercises related to those performed on the job (Ployhart, 2006). This can be achieved through two directions, work samples (before hiring) and trial period. Work samples allow the prospective employer to assess the applicants on an area relevant to the position they are applying for. This is one of the best and fairest selection methods to predict future job performance, as each person has an equal opportunity to impress (Callinan & Robertson, 2000). The trial period is another approach and the most common mean of testing whether or not a new employee is eventually a company-fit or job-fit. It includes lower hiring risks and lets employees to see if they are a «good match» as well for the role and culture in the same way.

The more successful the human resource planning and organizing of your recruitment and selection process is, the greater competitive advantage an organization can have. As «*we do live in a world in which knowledge, rather than physical capital, is increasingly important, we need smart people who can do great things—increase productivity, build new products and services—and do so even more quickly*» (O' Reilly & Pfeffer, 2000). Grant (1991) agrees with this when he cites that «*the firm's most important resources and capabilities are those which are durable, difficult to identify and understand, imperfectly transferable, not easily replicated and in which the firm possesses clear ownership and control*». It is for this reason why organizations should invest in the time assessing their recruitment and selection policies and procedures, to ensure they are always attracting and acquiring the most talented individuals available.

2.3 Candidates experience & Applicants' reactions

According to Gusdorf (2008) recruitment is a two-way process and «*organizations are evaluating candidates for a vacancy, but the latter also evaluate the prospective employer*». With the development and the usage of new technological means and social media entering the recruitment process, a fresh trend has gained more attention and needs to be considered more professionally and thoroughly by the organizations. That is the *Candidate Experience*, which though there is not an «official» industry-wide definition, most would define it simply as how a job seeker perceives and reacts during an employers' recruitment process. It is based on candidates'

feelings and attitudes that they experience, starting from the job search step, application, recruitment and even until onboarding processes. These perceptions may apply as well not only to current applicants, but also to past and future ones and they can be an indicator of how a company values its people and the potential newcomers. (Talentegy report, 2019, Reucroft & Scott, 2015). For example, the candidate experience is the first impression that a potential hire has of the organization's culture. This will set expectations about how colleagues interact and it is an important opportunity to share key company values at an early stage (Talentegy report, 2019).

2.3.1 Candidate-driven world

To enhance this topic, a survey which was conducted by MRINetwork in 2017 attempted to clarify, among other questions, if today's global market is more candidate-driven or employer-driven. By the results, it appears that a heavy 90% of the recruiters consider the market as candidate-driven, mainly due to the fact that nowadays they have many options in labor market (new job openings or created positions, mainly from resignations and terminations) and more rare and specific skill set, that allows candidates to be in the driver's seat. Accordingly, employers and candidates with 53% and 54% respectively, have in common the belief that the market is employer-driven. The former count on the fact that «*businesses are growing in an expanded economy so it's the company that dictates when hiring will take place. There will always be talent available*", whereas the latter speculate that "*there is still a lot of competition and employers can take their pick*» (MRINetwork survey, 2017).

2.3.2 Communication – Feedback

Moreover, in another research conducted by CIPD in 2015, with the aim to analyze the behavioural science of recruitment and selection, is stated that recruiters and HR Managers should not underestimate the power of personalization. Remember that clear communication is the key in the recruitment process and starts from the minute the job seeker search information about the company. Almost 63% of candidates mention that they were dissatisfied with the communication after applying for a job opening (Talentegy report, 2019). In another case, if a potential candidate has been contacted in the past or if you can find their contact information through social media,

a personalized message can be highly valued, especially when it comes from an identifiable person, instead of a generic company contact address (Carless & Imber, 2007). Another study demonstrated too that the personal characteristics of job interviewers – such as friendliness, job knowledge and general competence – had significant impacts on how attracted candidates were to the organization and their job choice intentions, because people make up their minds about an organization based on the people who come in contact with and who they directly or indirectly represent the company (Carless & Imber, 2007).

Another important aspect of shaping the candidates' experience is giving back feedback and the ability to follow-up on their application status. Ratings and feedback on employer review sites (e.g. Glassdoor, Indeed) affect decision and consideration – 84% (Talentegy, 2019) – before applying for employment and 75% of them say that they rarely were asked for feedback after they applied. Also, 95% of job seekers rate the ability to follow-up on an application as the most important feature on a career website. Provided feedback of acceptance or rejection and receive back as well is useful for both ways (63% were dissatisfied with the communication after applying). Good topics to consider are (a) their impression of the company throughout the process, (b) their expectations versus the reality of what was assessed and (c) their perspective on fairness and utility of each task (CIPD survey, 2015).

2.3.3 Social Media

With the burst of social media and blogs, people with common interests connect more easily and this allows candidates to communicate their experiences. More than 13.5 million people monthly now use Glassdoor.com (FindTheBest.com, 2013), a website providing for free «*company reviews, CEO approval ratings, salary reports, interview reviews and questions, office photos and more*». Also, 69% of job seekers mention that they would likely or very likely share a poor candidate experience and 82% would share it, if it was positive (Talentegy report, 2019), meaning that people have the tendency to talk and share online. Thus, a poor experience can have a negative impact on an employer's brand, something that is linked to future recruitment prospects. On the other hand, since more companies use social media for screening purposes, job seekers are now more aware (Nikolaou, 2015). Although, pre-employment screening

of applicants' social media has two impacts (it increases their perceptions of invasion of privacy and decreases perceptions of organizational justice and attraction), it is quite likely that they will actively seek to boost or even modify their profiles accordingly, so as to achieve increasing the chance of attracting recruiters' interest (Stoughton et al., 2013).

Generally, it is noted that if applicants or candidates feel mistreated at any point during the selection process, they may be less likely to accept an offer from a company (Macan, Avedon, Paese, & Smith, 1994), since 95% said their experiences during the interview process somewhat or strongly influence whether they will accept a position (Talentegy report, 2019). Moreover, they might dissuade other potential applicants from seeking employment with the organization (Smither et al., 1993) and it is possible that they may be less likely to reapply (69%) or even purchase (54%) the company's products. Finally, if some aspects of the selection system were viewed as invasive or inappropriate they may be more likely to bring a law suit from applicants who perceive the process as unfair (Smither et al., 1993). As for other procedural characteristics, providing applicants with an adequate explanation for the use of selection tools and decisions may also foster positive perceptions (Ryan and Ployhart, 2000). If necessary, it is better to reevaluate some concepts, than force remarkable candidates to fit in an updated space and at the same time keep it interesting and introduce them into the culture of the company very quickly, so that they know who you are.

2.4 Word-of-mouth

Cable & Turban (2001) differentiate the company-dependent and the company-independent recruitment sources. Company-dependent sources, such as advertising, can be managed in a direct way to promote a positive message and image of the company to potential applicants. Conversely, company-independent sources, such as word-of-mouth, can be controlled as well but only indirectly and might contain positive or even negative information (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007).

Over the years, several studies have proved that WOM can have an influential role on organizational attractiveness and image and application decision (Collins & Stevens, 2002, Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). It is specified as «*an interpersonal communication,*

independent of the organization's recruitment activities, about an organization as an employer or about specific jobs» (Bone, 1995, Cable et al., 2000, Collins & Stevens, 2002, Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). In addition, according to Van Hoye, (2005) WOM can be recognized as a social phenomenon and as an informal social influence, transferring information. To help us understand this concept, since recruitment research on this topic is still scarce, the marketing literature has already pointed out the importance of social relationships and influences on people's consuming and purchasing preferences (Dichter, 1966). So, due to its marketing origins, communication and persuasion are essential elements. Hence, potential applicants and application decisions can be compared to consumers and buying decisions (Maurer, Howe, & Lee, 1992) and in a similar way, WOM works in the job search process and application choices.

2.4.1 Credibility framework

The source credibility framework explains in theory the impact of WOM and suggests that «*more credible sources of information are more persuasive in both changing attitudes and gaining behavioral compliance*» (Eisend, 2004, Pornpitakpan, 2004). It also predicts that WOM, especially information regarding the employment environment, might shape the organization's image and its attraction (Van Hoye 2014) and since it is a company-independent source, it might be perceived as more credible since it does not intend to promote the organization (Fisher et al., 1979, Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005).

2.4.2 Word-of-mouse

The communication of WOM is associated with face-to-face communication but it can be provided also through other directions such as the Internet, which is more efficient and less costly (Dellarocas, 2003, Herr et al., 1991, Smith & Vogt, 1995). In fact, there is a notable increase on the significance of web-based word-of-mouth (i.e., «word-of-mouse») and this is demonstrated by the emergence of e-mails, weblogs, chatrooms, electronic bulletin boards and independent websites allowing the public to all company information that is being shared (Dellarocas, 2003).

2.4.3 Personal acquaintances

As for employees and friends, Fisher (1979) found that «*as sources of employment information, are both more credible and influential than recruiters*». This also suggests that tie strength, meaning «*the closeness of the social relationship between the source and recipient*» (Brown & Konrad, 2001), might moderate the effects of WOM. In an experiment, Kanar, Collins, and Bell (2010) found that negative WOM affected more the employer's image. In another research, it was found that potential applicants had a more positive perspective of a company, when information was provided through word-of-mouse than through a web-based employee testimonial. This implies that the credibility and influence of employee testimonials might be increased by letting the employees present themselves instead of the organization (Laczniak, DeCarlo, & Ramaswami, 2001). To this extent, previous marketing research has shown that brand equity can adjust negative WOM, because it has a greater impact on customers' evaluations of unfamiliar or unfavorable brands, than of well-known and trusted ones (Laczniak, DeCarlo, & Ramaswami, 2001). When applied to a recruitment frame, it is possible that companies with an established employer brand are less affected by negative WOM (Van Hoye, 2014). Another marketing factor to take into consideration is recipient-source framework, given that this is a concept of a dyadic communication between a source (i.e., sender) and a recipient (i.e., receiver) (Gilly et al., 1998). With respect to this term, findings so far propose that job seekers higher in extraversion, conscientiousness and networking comfort (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007, Wanberg et al., 2000), with higher self-evaluations and networking motives (Ellis & Taylor, 1983, Saks & Ashforth, 2000, Van Hoye & Saks, 2008) and with larger social networks, which contain more strong ties, are more likely to receive employment information through WOM. To this end, organizations need to gain a better understanding of the potential applicants they wish to attract.

2.4.4 Employee referrals & testimonials

Other subtypes of the broader concept of WOM can be employee referrals (networking) and employee testimonials. Especially for the latter, marketing research suggests that they can increase the credibility and persuasive power of advertising (Feick & Higie, 1992, Kotler & Keller, 2005, Mittelstaedt, Riesz, & Burns, 2000) and they are a company-controlled imitation of WOM. Hence, organizations more and more

tend to ask employees to communicate their work experiences, so to advise and attract personnel (Geisheker, 2001). Still, on the other hand, the greater organizational control of employee testimonials might lead to a loss in credibility and influence compared with independent sources, so organizations should consider how to use this concept carefully and moderately (Pornpitakpan, 2004, Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005).

Even though WOM is «*a company-independent recruitment source*», organizations can influence indirectly the process through other actions, such as image management, campus recruitment, building relationships with leading influential and opinion executives (e.g. career counselor, class president), employee referral programmes (e.g. providing referral bonuses) or internships (Van Hoye, 2014).

2.4.5 Employer Branding

Employer branding is about all the relevant tools and practices used and managed by an organization to promote and communicate its brand and reputation, among certain audience groups. In other words, it refers to its policies, recruitment processes, advertising methods and other means, that influence on how the organization is perceived by those involved with it: employees, customers and more (Holm, 2008). As this term is derived by the marketing field, where it is already a commonplace to apply marketing ideas for the attraction and retention of customers and clients, employer branding applied in the recruitment territory was a primary action in realizing if such techniques could be successfully repeated, when trying to attract, engage, and retain candidates and employees afterwards (Holm, 2008).

The employer image should reflect all the operations of an organization run internally and externally, a link between a potential job-seeker and an employer (Kauhanen 2009, Markkanen, 2002), in order to develop a preferable brand image (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The employer brand is associated with the performance and attractiveness of a company, so if enhanced could bring higher-quality candidates and greater employee retention. It is known that «w*hen employees are happy that means that the quality of their productivity is higher, as well as their creativity and proudness*», thus it could affect in turn the total external company's image (Kada, 2011).

It is worth mentioning that «*an organization's reputation and culture are influencing job applicants even to a greater extent than salaries*» (Kada, 2011). According to Cable & Turban (2003) the organization's good reputation is essential, for the reason that individuals want to impress others with their association with a respected business and it is also connected with positive job attributes. Though, the reputation can be heavily affected but completely controlled (Holm, 2008). For example, 55% of employers do not monitor what candidates mention about their experience through the recruitment process and 54% of hiring authorities said their company does not leverage employer branding in their recruitment strategy (MRInetwork, 2019). However, it is influenced by everything someone says about your company and by everything that you do as an organization (Holm, 2008). For this, HR Managers play a huge role in designing an interesting and attractive employer brand. After all, recruiters are the first contact points of an organization and there are certainly some main elements that any recruiter must pay attention to (Hilaire & Kosinski, 2015). Firstly, what recruiters communicate and state clearly to applicants and candidates could shape an initial picture of the employer in their mind and they can also receive a clear message about the organization and the workplace. In addition, HR professionals should treat job candidates properly during the recruitment and selection process, in order to «*make a positive impression, avoiding taking too long time to get in touch with a candidate, not following up, ignoring requests for more information or trying too hard to "sell" an employer to an applicant*» (Bogatova, 2017).

In the end, it is useful to remember that CEOs primarily understand of business and revenue impacts, but a positive candidate experience can result in strengthening of the employer brand and improving recruitment and business outcomes.

Chapter 3

Research process

In a dissertation, a theoretical framework is not enough to interpret certain processes and statements, that is why research is an essential part of it as well. According to Krishnaswami and Satyaprasad (2010), «*research simply means a search for facts – answers to questions and solutions to problems*». The following chapter consists of the research approach, design and methods, the research objective and questions, the data gathering process and its analysis.

3.1 Research objective and research questions

The main objective of this dissertation is to study and identify the candidates' reactions to the modern existed recruitment and selection methods and if and to what extent the whole candidate experience and the WOM technique affect an employer's brand. In order to achieve the research objective, the following research questions should be answered:

RQ1: Is the usage of modern recruitment and selection methods affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively)

RQ2: Is candidate experience affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively)

RQ3: Is Word-of mouth affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively) and application decision of a job seeker (despite the position)

The desired outcome of the research is to analyze and present the perceptions of the candidates on these matters, as best as possible and to be a sufficient, informative and useful document for the HR executives.

3.2 Research design, approach and tool

3.2.1 Design

According to Kumar (2011), «*research design is a special strategy, structure and plan of an investigation which help to answer the research questions and problems*». It includes all the useful and relevant information from the research questions, the actions that will be followed at every step, up to the data analysis and it is influenced by the available knowledge in the specific area being researched. Hence, it is essential as it assists the process by presenting the general picture of the research in advance. For the purposes of this dissertation the research type used is the descriptive research design, so to understand and analyze the characteristics of the surveyed audience, based on the literature review (Dulock, 1993).

3.2.2 Approach

As for the research approach, the researcher has adopted the deductive research approach and the quantitative methodology. As Saunders (2009) mentions, «*if your research starts with existing theory and statements, often developed from your reading of the academic literature, then you use a deductive approach and design a relevant research strategy to test the theory*». Regarding the objective of this dissertation, the deductive research approach is considered to be as the most appropriate approach, since this will first provide an efficient platform to understand the existing ideas and observations and then to enable them to be tested.

In addition, quantitative and qualitative research methodologies are the main research strategies to collect and analyze data. Quantitative research deals with numbers and statistics, while qualitative is more about words and meanings (Streefkerk, 2020). Quantitative research is expressed in numbers and graphs, it is used to test or confirm predefined theories and assumptions and to demonstrate generalizable facts about a topic in larger populations and examine possible relations among variables (Burns, 1997, Cassel & Symon, 1994). For these reasons, the quantitative methodology is adopted and used in this research study by performing a survey with the distribution of a questionnaire, to gather all the data needed in a timely manner.

3.3 The research method and research tool

3.3.1 The Questionnaire

Saunders et al. (2009) define questionnaires as «*one of the most popular quantitative research methods*». Usually, questionnaires contain various questions either open-ended for respondents to express their opinions or with prepared answers to choose from and they can also be filled in anonymously, allowing to gain more honest and relevant data.

The enclosed questionnaire (research tool) consists of 36 questions, mainly close-ended (yes/no or predefined) and of Likert scale's type. The first 5 questions include demographic/personal characteristics of the respondents. The rest of the questions are divided as such: 12 regarding the recruitment and selection methods, 11 regarding the candidate experience and 8 regarding the WOM. Also, the questionnaire design (full presentation in Appendix1) followed an anonymous approach, ensuring that no personal details of the respondents were collected.

3.3.2 Checking and reviewing a questionnaire

So as to check if the questionnaire is understood and to avoid any imperfections, it was firstly distributed among 10 people, as a trial distribution of the survey. This technique helped the researcher to identify ambiguities in some questions, with the result that some were removed indefinitely and some were formulated differently. After concluding that the questionnaire is well-prepared, it was provided to the whole sample. The pre-check of the questionnaire and the feedback provided by these people helped significantly in the final appearance of the questionnaire.

3.3.3 Research trustworthiness

When conducting a research it is useful to determine if the questionnaire design is adequate to measure the theoretical construct that it was designed for. In this case, the researcher tested its validity (internal consistency) by using the Cronbach's alpha. The results were a=0,734 which were sufficient, as according to a rule of thumb for interpreting alpha, giving that scores more than 0,7 are acceptable.

3.4 Data collection

For the identification of this research sample size, the survey adopted the random sampling method, according to which «*every member of a predefined population has the same probability of being selected for a sample as every other member*» (Babbie, 1990). The questionnaire of this survey was provided to and completed by 281 participants. The distribution was achieved via LinkedIn, Facebook and sending it by email to student email groups of the International Hellenic University and it run from 15/05/20 to 31/05/20.

The most appropriate method for this dissertation was considered the sampling research. This method is suitable for studies focusing on the human factor, by collecting data for the purpose of either investigating, describing, or interpreting various issues and can evaluate the behaviour of larger populations, which increases the objectivity of the results (Chalikias, Manolessou & Lalou, 2015). The tools used for such surveys are either the personal interviews or the individual completion of a questionnaire, which will be used here as well. In addition, the way the questionnaire is designed can be based on previous successful questionnaire structures, increasing its success.

3.5 Data analysis

All data needed is acquired by using the accounting sheets available from Google (Google Excel), so the researcher can draw any relevant conclusions. Data were analyzed with the use of the statistical package SPSS Statistics 26. After being collected and registered, they are presented in Chapter 4 and in the Appendix with the use of descriptive statistical methods (mean, standard deviation, frequencies & tables).

Chapter 4

Results

Starting with the analysis of the results from the research survey, the percentages of the personal/demographic characteristics of the respondents will be presented in the first phase and then, the rest of the questions and answers will be explored on regards to the three research questions (a graph for each question is presented in Appendix B).

4.1 Demographic results

To begin with, 281 people filled in the questionnaire, 55,2% were women and 44,8% were men. Regarding the age groups, the educational level, the employment status and the specific department of employment, these are presented with more detail in the table 2 below:

Table 1: Respondents' personal profile

PERSONAL PROFILE		N	%
Gender	Female	153	54,4
	Male	128	45,6
Age	18-25	34	12,1
	26-35	182	64,8
	36-45	54	19,2
	46-55	8	2,8
	56+	3	1,1
Education level	High school	3	1,1
	Certification of attendance	6	2,1
	Bachelor	59	21
	Master	204	72,6
	PhD	9	3,2
Employment status	Unemployed	25	8,9

	Self-employed	29	10,3
	Student	16	5,7
	Retired	0	0
	Employee in a private company	201	71,5
	Employee in the public sector	10	3,6
Department	Sales/Business development	49	17,4
	Accounting/Finance	27	9,6
	HR	74	26,3
	Marketing	11	3,9
	IT	31	11
	Administration	23	8,2
	Legal	15	5,3
	Operations	22	7,8
	R & D	8	2,8
	Other	21	7,5

4.2 Research questions results

After presenting the demographic characteristics of the respondents, the rest of the questions attempt to answer the research questions, as fully as possible.

4.2.1 Recruitment and selection process

As seen on table 3, the top 3 choices of the respondents, in the recruitment process, were the personal interview, the online application and the short call, with the least common to be the communication with a virtual assistant and the gamification technique and with the 67,6% (M=1,67, SD= 0,46) believing that the personal interview is still enough and the fairest of the methods in the process. Also, 79,4% (M=1,39, SD=0,78) agrees that communicating directly with the recruiter is preferable than with a virtual one. In addition, the 77,9% (M=1,22, SD=0,41) have taken part in a

pre-employment assessment process, with the 50,5% and 28,5% (M=3,81, SD=0,86) to be neutral and almost agree accordingly, regarding the validation of such tests. Moreover, the responses regarding if senior and junior candidates should be assessed under the same conditions is near neutral (yes=59,8%, no=40,2, M=1,4, SD=0,49) and mostly the respondents agree that such techniques would enhance the employer branding of a company (64,4% favoring positively, M=3,81, SD=0,89) and indicate that organizations are open to change (72,6% favoring positively, M=3,84, SD=0,92), with the 63,3% (M=1,75, SD=0,55) stating that they would not withdraw if the pre-employment assessment process was time-consuming. Concerning the e-recruiting, especially through their personal social media, the respondents are somehow neutral on this, as indicated as well through the wide but similar percentages of the values (Figure 8, M=,08, SD=1,29) but they mostly agree that recruiters should not evaluate a candidate based on gathered information from his personal social accounts (60,9% favoring negatively, M=2,25, SD=1,22) and they perceive this technique as invasive (59,5% favoring positively, M=3,72, SD=1,17).

- Q: Which of the following steps/methods have you come across in a selection process?

Table 2: Most common recruitment methods

METHODS	N	%
Online application	248	88,3
Virtual Assistant	24	8,5
Personal interview	264	94
Video interview	170	60,5
Short call	174	61,9
Online pre-employment tests	136	48,4
Gamification	44	15,7
Assessment centers	89	31,7

Referral	67	23,8
Work samples	85	30,2
Trial period	66	23,5

- Q: Is the personal interview alone the most fair method to draw a conclusion about a candidate? (without participating in any other step) (Figure 1)

- Q: Would you prefer to communicate directly with the recruiter than a virtual HR assistant? (Figure 2)

- Q: Have you ever taken part in a pre-employment assessment process (e.g. personality/aptitude tests, physical tests, case studies etc.) (Figure 3)

- Q: In your opinion, are pre-employment assessment tests valid? (Figure 4)

- Q: Do you believe that both senior and junior candidates should proceed with the same pre-employment assessment tests? (Figure 5)

- Q: In your opinion, if a company applied modern methods in its recruitment and selection process, would it enhance its employer branding more positively? (Figure 6)

- Q: In your opinion, does this approach reflect an image of an innovative and open-to-change company? (Figure 7)

- Q: Should recruiters approach candidates via their personal social media, if necessary? (Figure 8)

- Q: Should recruiters gather additional information for your application based on your personal social media platforms (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.)? (Figure 9)

- Q: Do you find this technique invasive? (Figure 10)

- Q: Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if the pre-employment assessment process was time-consuming to complete? (Figure 11)

4.2.2 Candidate experience

Regarding the candidate experience, respondents fully agree on the fact that candidates should be informed properly in advance, about the followed process from the company (74,7%, M=4,68, SD=0,59) and they should also receive relevant feedback after a job interview (74,4%M=4,69, SD=0,57), despite the outcome, and after every completed step in the process in general (60,9%, M=4,5, SD=0,72). As for the effect of a negative candidate experience, the respondents mostly agree that it would affect a company's image (61,3& favoring positively, M=3,7, SD=1,01) and they would not recommend it further (62,7% favoring positively, M=2,16, SD=0,99). Additionally, they would not reapply (82,2%, M=1,82, SD=0,38) or purchase from that company (62,3%, M=1,62, SD=0,48) and they are willing to share it with their network (74,4%, M=1,25, SD=0,43). Lastly, the respondents mention that they are most likely to reject a job offer, if the process is too long (65,5%, M1,65, SD=0,47) but they might not withdraw their application (Figure 21, M=2,6, SD=1,09). On the other hand, they will surely leave the process, if they were being treated unprofessionally (90,4%, M=1,11, SD=0,35).

- Q: Is it important for candidates to be clearly and completely informed about the recruitment process/steps in advance? (Figure 12)
- Q: Is it important to receive feedback, after completing any step required in a recruitment process? (Figure 13)
- Q: Is it important to you to receive feedback, after attending a job interview, regardless the result? (Figure 14)
- Q: Would a negative candidate experience affect your opinion for this company accordingly? (Figure 15)
- Q: Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if you felt you were not being treated professionally? (Figure 16)
- Q: Would you recommend to a potential applicant, to apply to vacancy in a company that you previously had a «bad experience»? (Figure 17)
- Q: If you had a negative candidate experience, would you reapply in this company? (Figure 18)
- Q: If you had a negative candidate experience would you still purchase from this company? (Figure 19)

- Q: If you had a negative candidate experience would you share it with your network? (Figure 20)

- Q: Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if there were too many steps included? (Figure 21)

- Q: Would it be a reason, a long recruitment process, to reject a job offer? (Figure 22)

4.2.3 Word-of-mouth

Regarding the WOM technique, the respondents mostly agree that information acquired from a friend/colleague can affect the image of a company (57,6% favoring positively, M=3,64, SD=0,85) and it is something to consider before applying for a position (61,2% favoring positively, M=3,69, SD=0,88). However, their answers are more neutral to positive, as regards to the credibility of this source. Also, over the 2/3 of the respondents agree (Figure 27, M=4,18, SD=0,79) that a company's reputation is an important factor for their decision making and almost half of them will not apply in a company with "bad reputation" (Figure 28, M=2,5, SD=1,03). Finally, nearly 84% (M=4,3, SD=0,9) conducts any relevant research on a company before applying, with company's website and online brand mentions being the main sources of information (Table 3) and the core values/culture and the working environment/conditions being the top reasons to do so (Table 4).

- Q: Would you take into consideration any opinion (word-of-mouth) of others (friends/family) before applying for a job position? (Figure 23)

- Q: Would information from a friend/colleague affect your opinion about an employer's image in advance? (Figure 24)

- Q: Are such sources/information (e.g. word-of-mouth) more credible, due to its independence form? (Figure 25)

- Q: Is a company's reputation a crucial factor in applying for a job position? (Figure 27)

- Q: Would you still apply for a job position that you desire, even if the company did not have a «good reputation»? (Figure 28)

- Q: Do you conduct any personal research on a company before applying for any of its opening positions? (Figure 26)

- Q: Where do you usually derive all the information?

Table 3: Source of information about a company

SOURCE OF INFORMATION	N	%
Social media	132	47
Company's website	241	85,8
Blogs & forums	136	48,4
Referrals	135	48
Brand mentions through internet	199	70,8

- Q: Why is it essential for you?

Table 4: Essentiality of searching for a company's information

REASONS	N	%
Company's operations	104	37
Vision & Mission	103	36,7
Core values & Culture	152	54,1
Financial figures & Benefits	127	45,2
History & Achievements	59	21
Working environment/conditions	236	84

Chapter 5

Limitations

In this section two (2) identifiable limitations of this research study, that the researcher has faced, are going to be presented, indicating the possibility of a biased sample. These limitations could presumably be addressed in future research attempts.

1. The first limitation concerns the fact that the largest range of responses was derived through a certain age group (age 26-35 – aka the Millennials – 64,8% of respondents). Although the specific scope was hopefully to examine the entire age range of the candidates, this specific result of the research may alter the final conclusion. For that reason, a future research could focus probably on Baby Boomers and Generation X, so to understand how they are being treated as candidates, in this advanced technological era and their level of comprehension of these processes and tools, or even focus on young alumni for the same reasons.

2. The second limitation concerns the professional background. As mentioned, 26,3% of the respondents are coming from the Human Resources sector, that is over a quarter of the total. It would be beneficial for future research to narrow down the research in the different types of professions (e.g. Salespeople, Marketing executives etc.), in terms of the candidate experience. The results might assist the HR leaders to specify areas that need additional improvement and apply them to a general rule.

Chapter 6

Conclusions

As noted, attracting new talent is a great challenge that the HR professionals have to deal with constantly (Ployhart, 2006). They need to formulate such strategies, by identifying and evaluating current and existing needs, in alignment with the company's goals.

RQ1: Is the usage of modern recruitment and selection methods affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively)?

The research results showed that the recruitment and selection processes and the candidate experience as a whole, can affect the process itself and the overall image of the company. Applicants and candidates still prefer a more personalized communication with the HR professionals. Also, organization that use more modern recruitment methods, such as the pre-employment evaluation tests, seem to have a more attractive image among applicants. Of course, each business should adopt the practices that work best for its purposes and they should be customized as such, according to the age group and the seniority that is targeting, so that to gain in turn the best possible results and to build stronger foundations on regards to working relationships. Additionally, e-recruiting, specifically through social media, is a modern yet sensitive subject. Privacy and discretion are considered to be discarded, especially when the medium is more personal and not professional. Therefore, it would be wise from the recruiters' part to be more careful and conscious, since not everyone is familiar, receptive and comfortable with this practice and this is something that can affect the company's image as well.

RQ2: Is candidate experience affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively)?

A well-established process and treatment can elevate the image of the company and gain in reputation and personnel. Candidate experience is no longer just a catchphrase but a term which is included in talent acquisition process. Some important steps in it, that candidates consider more important, are the full, overall information and timely feedback. The correct preparation, coordination and honest communication matter

extremely, since if the treatment is inappropriate, the candidates will leave the process without a second thought, they will not reapply or recommend the company to others, they will willingly share with their network and even not buy the company's product/service. All this may affect the business in the long run, losing potential applicants and customers.

RQ3: Is Word-of mouth affecting the organizational attraction (either positively or negatively) and application decision of a job seeker (despite the position)?

As proved, applicants make a little research of their own about a company prior to applying in a vacancy, regarding mainly its working conditions and they are doing so by consulting information through the Internet and company's website, as well as by discussing it with friends/colleagues. Even though WOM is not considered to be an absolute credible source, relevant information about an organization needs careful management, since it is opened and shared with the public. Once again, the image of the company is affected and it needs proper handling. This might start from the inside of the organization, with the procedures that are applied and followed. Employers should have in mind that every company has an employer brand – from the two-person start-up to the multinational corporation.

Nowadays, in an era of new technologies, the Internet plays a significant role in people's life. Therefore, it is not a surprise that the internet made a change in recruitment practices and processes as well. Applicants, candidates and HR professionals should all be well-prepared, informed and act and react accordingly, because in the end human assets are still an irreplaceable and valuable add for running every organization more smoothly and efficiently.

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Appendix

Appendix A: Survey questionnaire

Employees' perspective on modern recruitment processes

This questionnaire has been created for the research needs of my dissertation assignment for the MSc in Management programme of the International Hellenic University.

The purpose of the research is to study the reactions of the candidates to the modern methods of recruitment and selection and to what extent the candidate experience is related to the word-of-mouth technique and employer branding.

The time required for the completion of the questionnaire will be 10 minutes.

For any further information, clarification or feedback, please contact me at anastasiazafeiriadou@hotmail.com

Thank you for your time and contribution!

Part 1 – Personal status

Age group: 18-25, 26-35, 36-45, 46-55, 56+

Gender: female, male

Level of education: High school, Certification of attendance, Bachelor, Master, PhD

What is your employment status?: Unemployed, Self-employed, Student, Retired, Employee in a private company, Employee in the public sector

If yes, in which department?: Sales / Business Development, Accounting / Finance, HR, Marketing, IT, Administration, Legal, Operations, R & D, Other

Part 2 – Application and recruitment process

1. Do you conduct any personal research on a company before applying for any of its opening positions?
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

2. Where do you usually derive all the information?: (Please select your top 3 choices) Social Media, Company's website, Reviews on the company (blogs/forums), Referrals from current or previous employees, Internet searching in general (brand mentions)

3. Why is it essential for you? (please select at least 2 answers)
To learn how well the company operates in comparison to the competitors (status)
To learn about its vision and mission statements
To learn about its core values and culture
To learn about its financial figures and benefits
To learn about its history and achievements
To learn about the working environment/conditions

4. Have you ever taken part in a pre-employment assessment process (e.g. personality/aptitude tests, physical tests, case studies etc.): yes/no

5. Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if the pre-employment assessment process was time consuming to complete?: yes/no/other

6. In your opinion, are pre-employment assessment tests valid?
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

7. Do you believe that both senior and junior candidates should proceed with the same pre-employment assessment tests? (If so, any tests should be tailor-made according to seniority):
Yes, all candidates should be treated equally regardless the seniority
No, senior candidates have proven their capabilities already from their experience

8. Which of the following steps/methods have you come across in a selection process? (Please select as many as you have come across with): online application, communication with virtual assistant (e.g. MAYA), personal interview, video

interview, short call (first screening), online pre-employment tests, gamification, assessment centers, referral checking, work samples (case studies), trial period

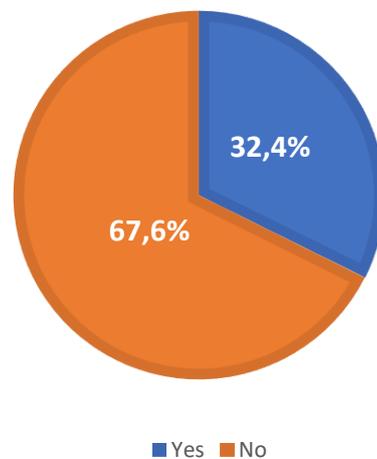9. Is the personal interview alone the most fair method to draw a conclusion about a candidate? (without participating in any other step): yes/no

10. Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if there were too many steps included?:

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

11. Is it important for candidates to be clearly and completely informed about the recruitment process/steps in advance?

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

12. Should recruiters approach candidates via their personal social media, if necessary?:

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

13. Should recruiters gather additional information for your application based on your personal social media platforms? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.):

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

14. Do you find this technique invasive?:

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

15. Is it important to receive feedback, after completing any step required in a recruitment process?:

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

16. Is it important to you to recieve feedback, after attending a job interview, regardless the result?:

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

17. Would you prefer to communicate directly with the recruiter than a virtual HR assistant?: Recruiter/ Virtual HR assistant/ It does not matter
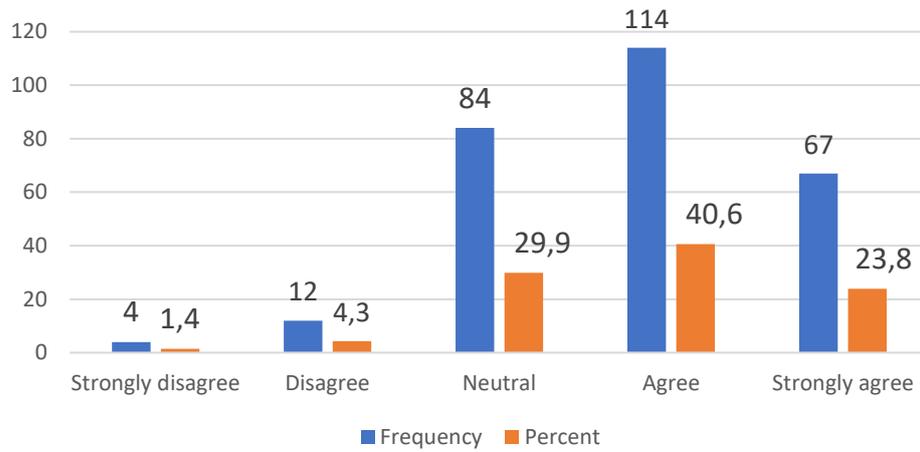
18. In your opinion, if a company applied modern methods in its recruitment and selection process, would it enhance its employer branding more positively?
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

19. In your opinion, does this approach reflect an image of an innovative and open-to-change company?:
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

20. Would a negative candidate experience affect your opinion for this company accordingly?:
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

21. Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if you felt you were not being treated professionally? (e.g. not responding back, not giving feedback, more casual communication): Yes/No/Other

22. Would you take into consideration any opinion (word-of-mouth) of others (friends/family) before applying for a job position?:
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

23. Would information from a friend/colleague affect your opinion about an employer's image in advance?:
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

24. Are such sources/information (e.g. word-of-mouth) more credible, due to its independence form?:
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

25. Is a company's reputation a crucial factor in applying for a job position?:
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

26. Would you still apply for a job position that you desire, even if the company did not have a "good reputation"?:
strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

27. Would you recommend to a potential applicant, to apply to vacancy in a company that you previously had a "bad experience"? (either by working there or

just after participating in the recruitment process)

strongly disagree/ disagree/ neutral/ agree/ strongly agree

28. If you had a negative candidate experience, would you reapply in this company?: Yes/No

29. If you had a negative candidate experience would you still purchase from this company?: Yes/No

30. If you had a negative candidate experience would you share it with your network? (e.g. with friends, on social media, on review sites (Glassdoor, Indeed): Yes/No

31. Would it be a reason, a long recruitment process, to reject a job offer?: Yes/No

Appendix B: Graphs

PERSONAL INTERVIEW AS THE FAIREST METHOD

Figure 1: Is the personal interview alone the most fair method to draw a conclusion about a candidate? (without participating in any other step)

PREFERABLE COMMUNICATION

- Recruiter
- Virtual assistant
- Does not matter

18,9%

1,8%

79,4%
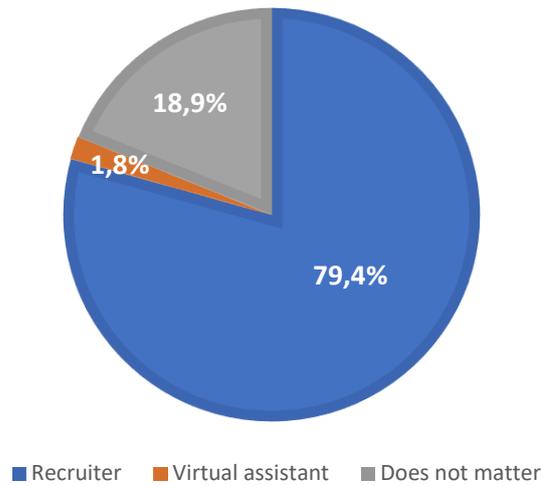
Figure 2: Q: Would you prefer to communicate directly with the recruiter than a virtual HR assistant?

PARTICIPATION IN PRE-EMPLOYMENT ASSESSMENT PROCESS

22,1%

77,9%

- YES
- NO
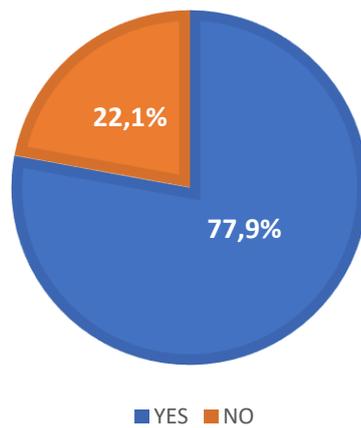
Figure 3: Have you ever taken part in a pre-employment assessment process (e.g. personality/aptitude tests, physical tests, case studies etc.)

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TESTS ARE VALID

40,2%

59,8%

■ Yes ■ No
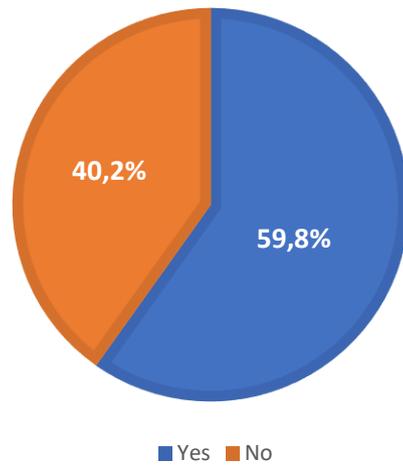
Figure 4: In your opinion, are pre-employment assessment tests valid?

SENIOR & JUNIOR CANDIDATES UNDER THE SAME ASSESSMENT PROCESS

	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree
Frequency	13	32	142	80	14
Percent	4,6	11,4	50,5	28,5	5

■ Frequency ■ Percent
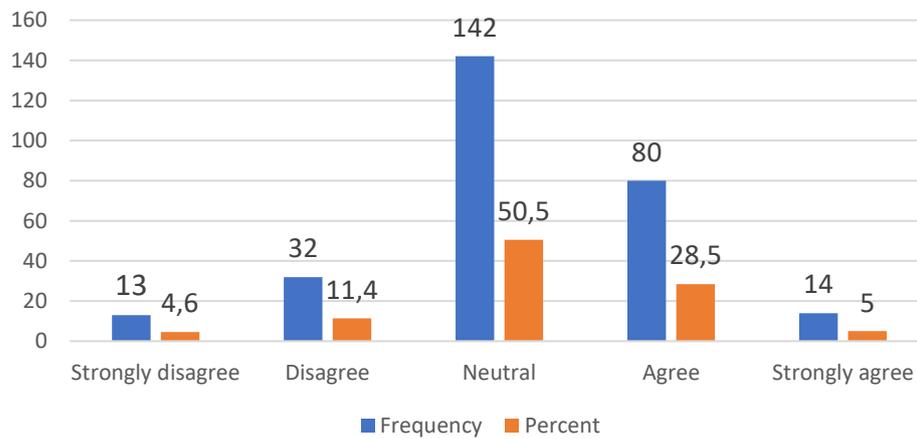
Figure 5: Do you believe that both senior and junior candidates should proceed with the same pre-employment assessment tests?

MODERN RECRUITMENT METHODS ENHANCE EMPLOYER BRANDING

Figure 6: In your opinion, if a company applied modern methods in its recruitment and selection process, would it enhance its employer branding more positively?

INNOVATIVENESS
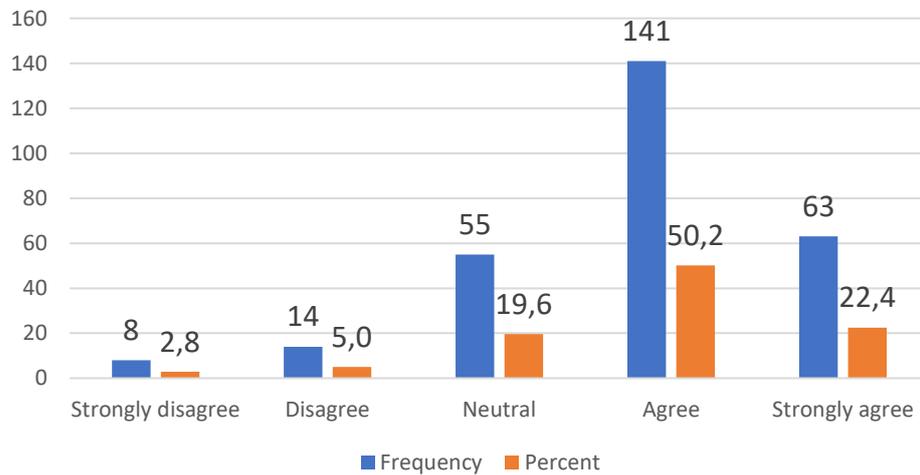
Figure 7: In your opinion, does this approach reflect an image of an innovative and open-to-change company?

APPROACH THROUGH PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA
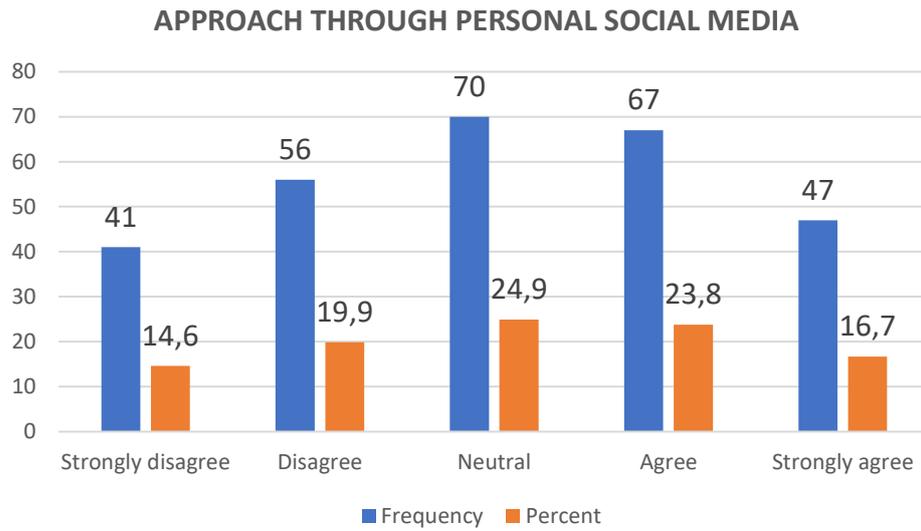
Figure 8: Should recruiters approach candidates via their personal social media, if necessary?

RECRUITERS GATHER INFORMATION THROUGH PERSONAL SOCIAL MEDIA
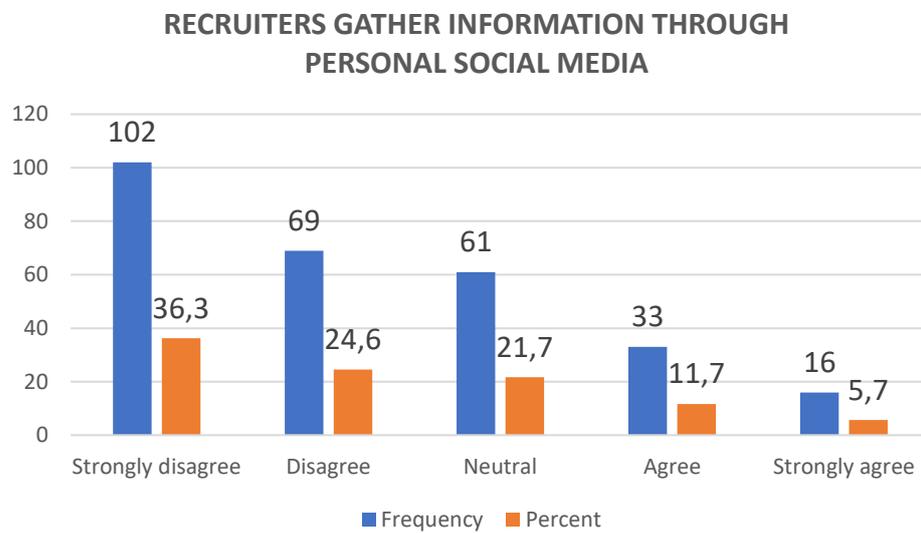
Figure 9: Should recruiters gather additional information for your application based on your personal social media platforms? (Facebook, Instagram, Twitter etc.)
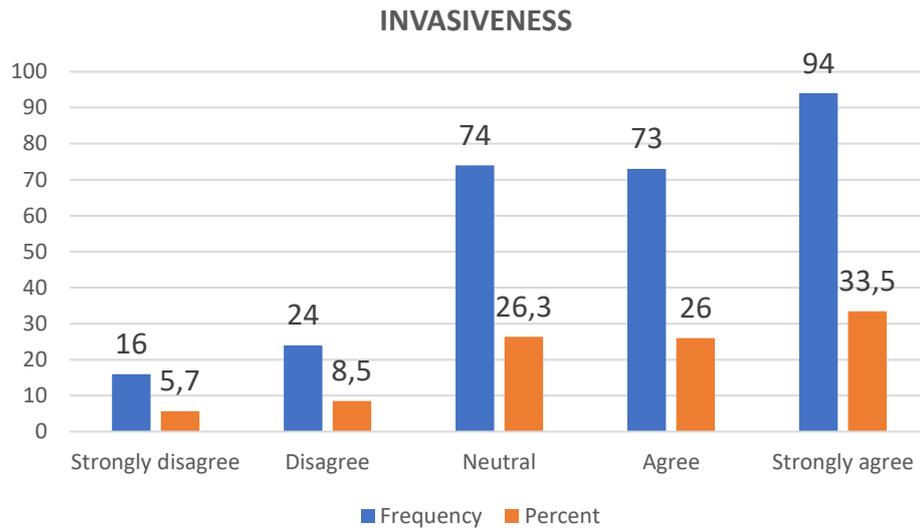
Figure 10: Do you find this technique invasive?
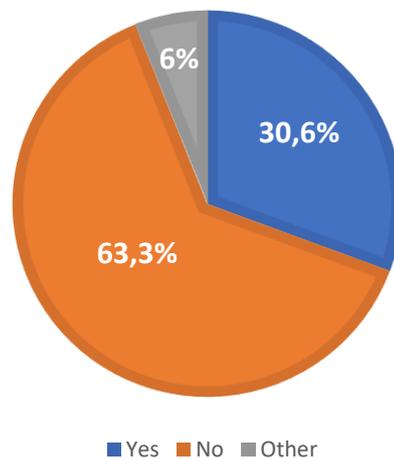
Figure 11: Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if the pre-employment assessment process was time-consuming to complete?

CANDIDATES TO BE FULLY INFORMED
ABOUT THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS
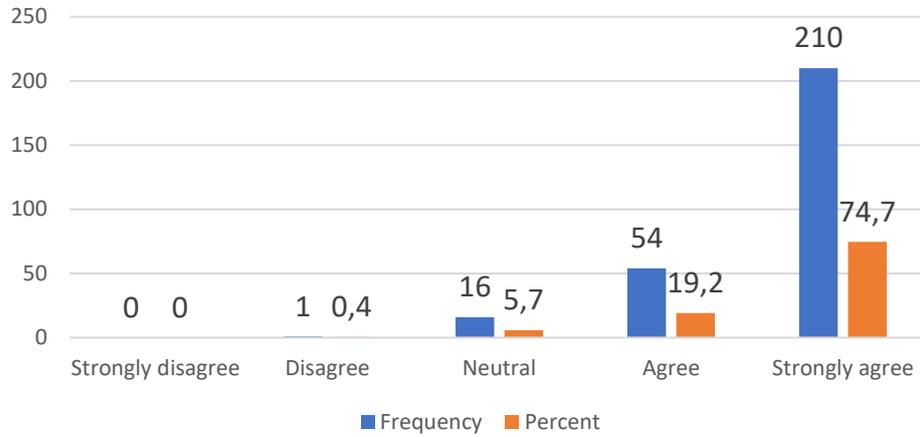
Figure 12: Is it important for candidates to be clearly and completely informed about the recruitment process/steps in advance?

RECEIVE FEEDBACK AFTER
EVERY COMPLETED STEP
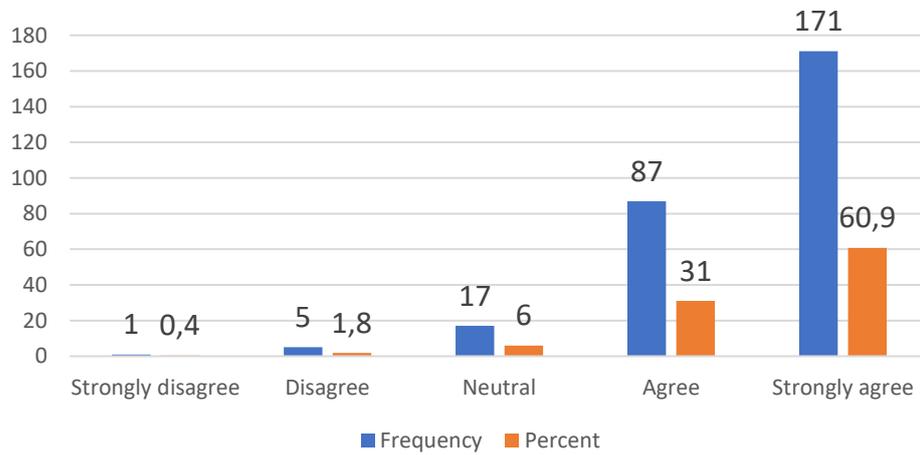
Figure 13: Is it important to receive feedback, after completing any step required in a recruitment process?

RECEIVE FEEDBACK AFTER INTERVIEW
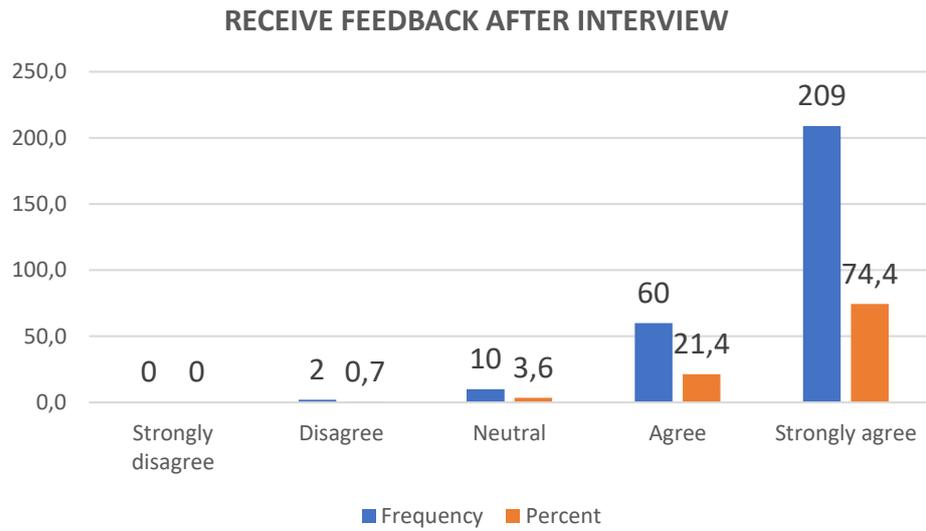
Figure 14: Is it important to you to receive feedback, after attending a job interview, regardless the result?

CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE
AFFECTING ORGANIZATIONAL IMAGE
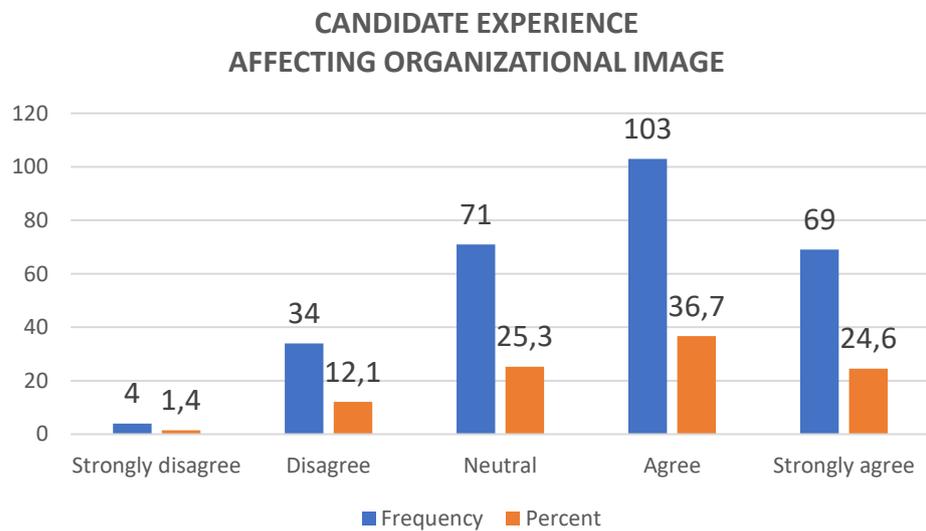
Figure 15: Would a negative candidate experience affect your opinion for this company accordingly?

WITHDRAW IF NOT TREATED PROFESSIONALLY
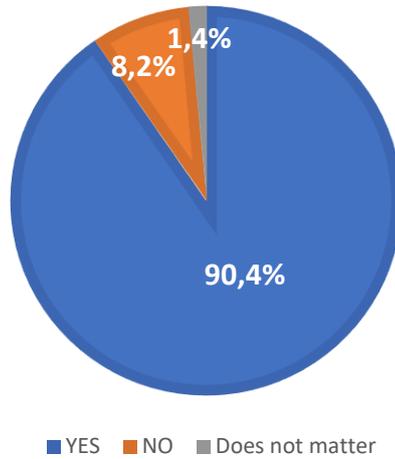
Figure 16: Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if you felt you were not being treated professionally?

RECOMMEND A COMPANY - PREVIOUS "BAD EXPERIENCE"
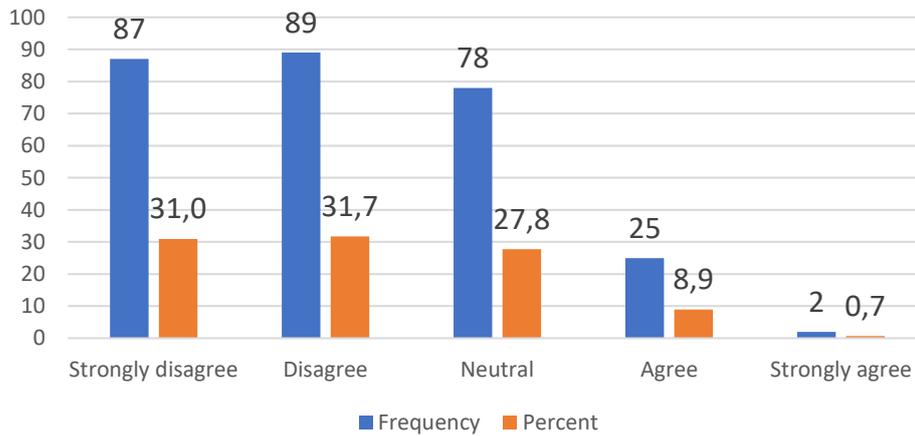
Figure 17: Would you recommend to a potential applicant, to apply to vacancy in a company that you previously had a "bad experience"?

REAPPLY - NEGATIVE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

17,8%

82,2%

■YES ■NO
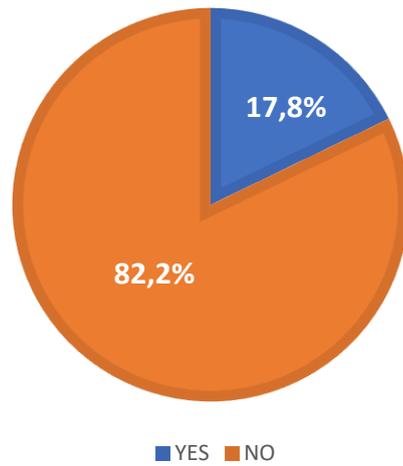
Figure 18: If you had a negative candidate experience, would you reapply in this company?

PURCHASE - NEGATIVE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE

37,7%

62,3%

■Yes ■No
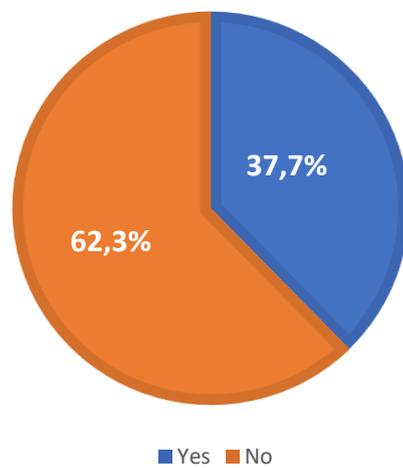
Figure 19: If you had a negative candidate experience would you still purchase from this company?

SHARE WITH NETWORK -
NEGATIVE CANDIDATE EXPERIENCE
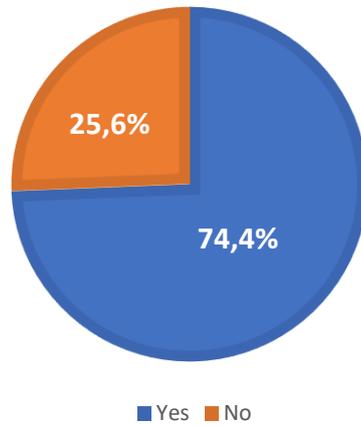
Figure 20: If you had a negative candidate experience would you share it with your network?

WITHDRAW IF TOO MANY STEPS
IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS
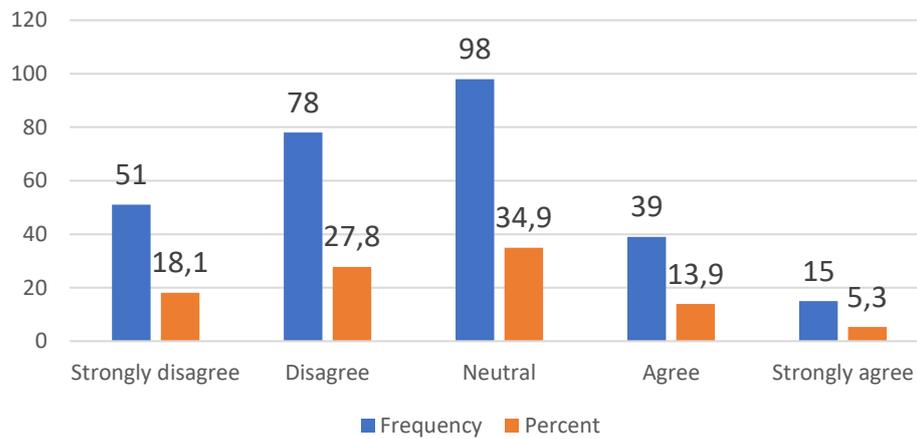
Figure 21: Would you withdraw from a recruitment process, if there were too many steps included?

REJECT JOB OFFER IF LONG RECRUITMENT PROCESS
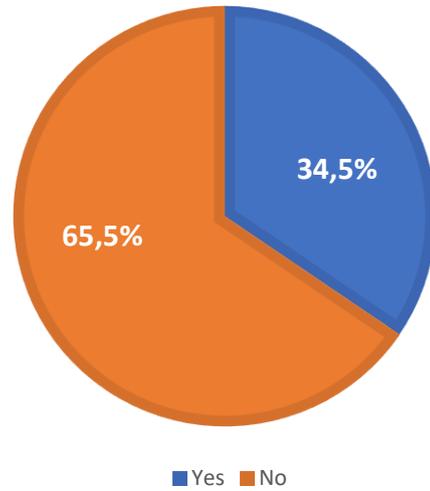
Figure 22: Would it be a reason, a long recruitment process, to reject a job offer?

CONSIDER WOM BEFORE APPLYING
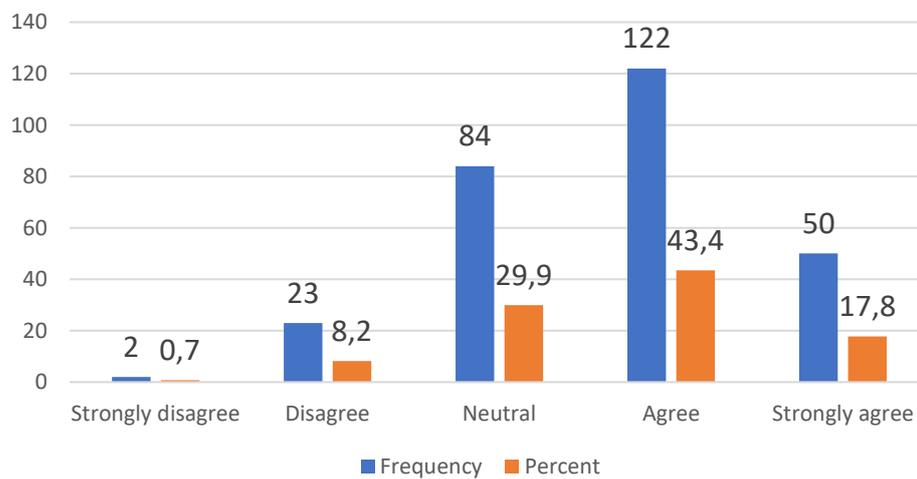
Figure 23: Would you take into consideration any opinion (word-of-mouth) of others (friends/family) before applying for a job position?

WOM AFFECTING EMPLOYER'S IMAGE
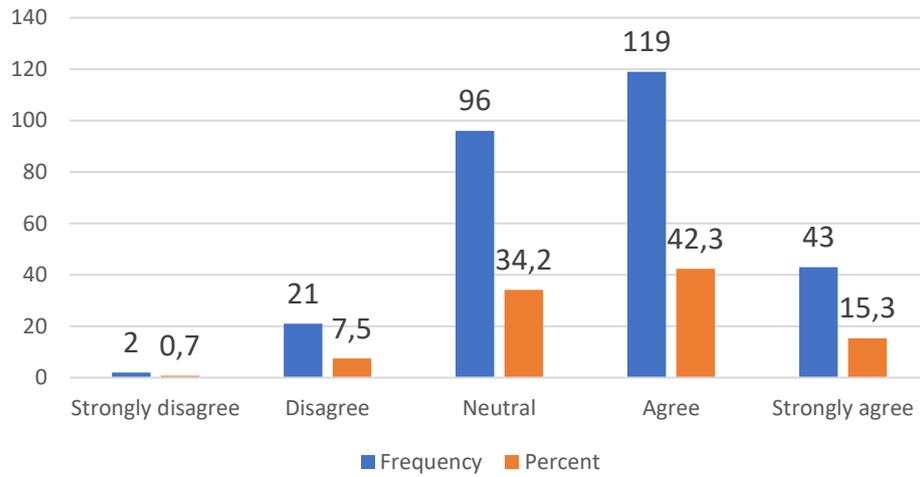
Figure 24: Would information from a friend/colleague affect your opinion about an employer's image in advance?
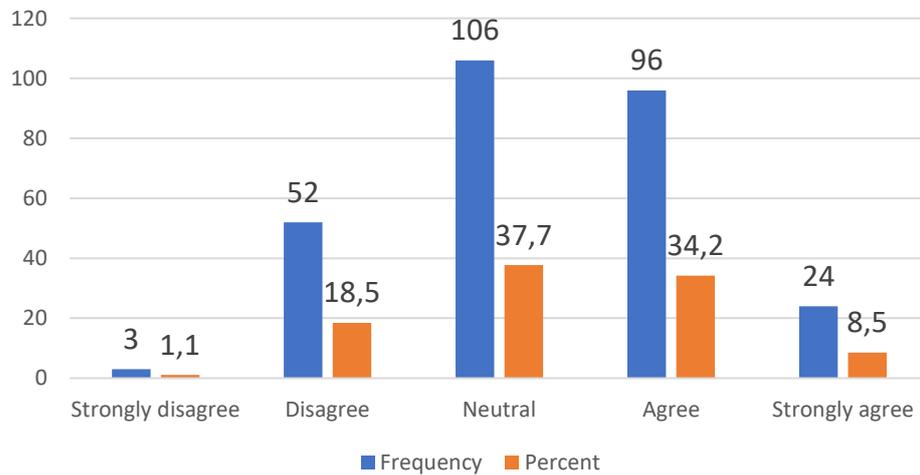
WOM CREDIBLE SOURCE

Figure 25: Are such sources/information (e.g. word-of-mouth) more credible, due to its independence form?

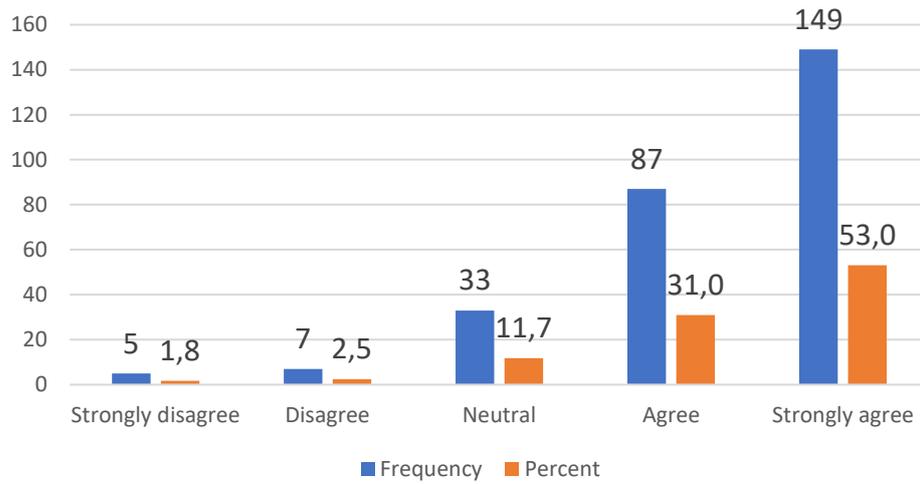## PERSONAL RESEARCH BEFORE APPLYING

Figure 26: Do you conduct any personal research on a company before applying for any of its opening positions?

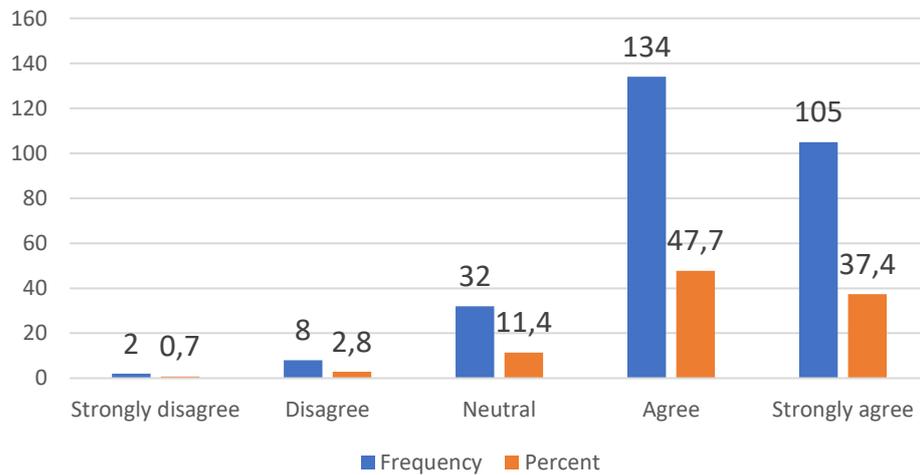## CONSIDER COMPANY'S REPUTATION BEFORE APPLYING

Figure 27: Is a company's reputation a crucial factor in applying for a job position?

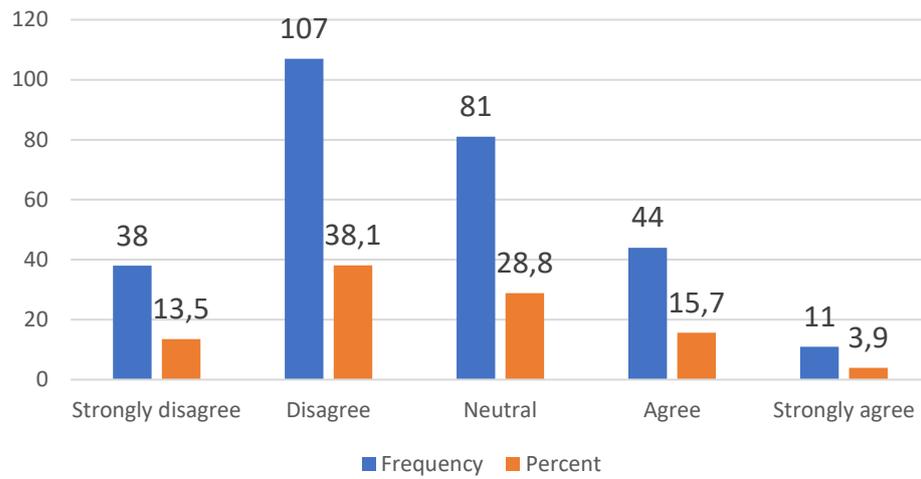**STILL APPLY IF COMPANY HAS NEGATIVE REPUTATION**

Figure 28: Would you still apply for a job position that you desire, even if the company did not have a "good reputation"?