

The influence of social networks on the recruitment process in tourism and catering enterprises

Uticaj društvenih mreža na proces zapošljavanja u turističkim i ugostiteljskim preduzećima

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Abstract

The continuous striving to secure a competitive advantage in a dynamic and changing global space is increasingly shifting towards the labor market. To attract potential and retain qualified staff, tourism and hospitality organizations allocate significantly more funds and time to the task than previously. In this context, the use of social networks is viewed from two diametrically opposed platforms: ever more employers visit social networks to obtain additional information on candidates; while viewed from the perspective of potential candidates, their intention to get to know the employer, its image and reputation corresponds with their decision on whether or not they will be applying for a vacancy. The aim of the research is to determine the connection between the methods of the human resources recruitment process for managerial positions, technical/professional jobs and for interns, and the social networks where they advertise those vacancies. Five social networks were taken into account: Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. The research was conducted within the Republic of Serbia from May 1 to June 30, 2021, and the sample included 133 respondents.

Keywords: human resources, recruitment, social networks, tourism

Sažetak

Kontinuirana težnja da se obezbedi konkurentska prednost u dinamičnom i promenljivom globalnom prostoru, sve više se premešta na tržište rada. Za privlačenje potencijalnog i zadržavanje zaposlenog kvalifikovanog osoblja turističko-ugostiteljske organizacije izdvajaju znatno više sredstava i vremena nego u ranijem periodu. U tom kontekstu upotreba društvenih mreža sagledava se sa dve dijametralno suprotne platforme: ukazuje se na to da sve više poslodavaca posećuje društvene mreže kako bi pribavili dodatne informacije o kandidatima, a posmatrano iz ugla potencijalnih kandidata vidljiva je namera da se upozna poslodavac, njegov imidž i reputacija, na čemu će se bazirati odluka o apliciranju na upražnjeno radno mesto. Cilj istraživanja je utvrđivanje povezanosti između metoda procesa regrutacije ljudskih resursa za pozicije menadžera, tehničko/profesionalne poslove i za pripravnike sa društvenim mrežama na kojima se oglašavaju upražnjena radna mesta. U obzir je uzeto pet društvenih mreža: Fejzbuk, Tviter, LinkedIn, Jutjub i Instagram. Istraživanje je sprovedeno na području Republike Srbije od 1. maja do 30. juna 2021. godine, a uzorak je obuhvatio 133 ispitanika.

Ključne reči: ljudski resursi, regrutacija, društvene mreže, turizam


1. Introduction

In today's turbulent and changing business environment, the "war for talent" has become an imperative for achieving a competitive breakthrough. As this is a key element in achieving and maintaining high productivity, workforce capacity needs to adapt to constant change,

leading to more jobs and better offers (European Union, 2010, 16). Social networks have provided companies with the opportunity to obtain information on potential candidates, in an efficient manner and without a cost burden, while not requiring contact with them. On the other hand, unemployed candidates, as well as employees who intend to change jobs and/or employers, were given

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the opportunity to obtain the necessary information about companies, as well as to get in touch with already employed staff.

Recruitment is the process of identifying, attracting and securing qualified candidates in such numbers that will enable the organization to select the best ones for filling vacancies (Bogićević Milikić, 2006, Jovanović Božinov et al., 2008), so that it corresponds to the strategic and other plans of the company (Dessler, 2007). Recruitment can also be defined as the process of creating a set of candidates from which the appropriate person will be selected who will meet the conditions from the job advertisement. In this dynamic process, companies strive to attract and retain the interest of suitable candidates while at the same time striving to present a positive image to potential candidates (Heery & Noon, 2001). The future of the recruitment process should be viewed through the prism of an international perspective and observed trends, given that there are more and more foreign companies operating in Serbia, as well as ours operating in the international market. The global market requires continuous investment in new multidisciplinary knowledge and the development of multitasking skills, *i.e.*, the simultaneous efficient resolution of several tasks.

Numerous factors affect the success of recruitment while the dominant ones are the labor market, the image of the organization, the attractiveness of work, the internal policy of the organization, then the success of organizational socialization as a process by which new employees learn the norms and roles that are necessary to function in the organization (Ratković et al., 2017), and state influence and recruitment costs (Štangel Šušnjar & Zimanji, 2006). The multi-year depopulation trend is a major challenge for human resources managers. In 2020, the estimated number of inhabitants in Serbia is 6,899,126, which is an indicator of negative population growth of -6.7 ‰ compared to the previous year (RZS, 2021a). The total number of employees in 2020 was 2,215,475 (SBS, 2021b), and the number of unemployed in the same year was 509,179, among which 16,538 were those who have specialized occupations for work in tourism and catering (NES, 2022). When there are not enough candidates on the labor market with the appropriate type and level of education, and especially when there is a need to employ highly qualified staff, companies must offer additional benefits to attract candidates (Grujić, 2003).

The results of the International Research Project implemented in 2019 in six European countries showed that the lowest turnover rate is present in senior and middle managers (L = low turnover rate 0-5%), and the highest among blue-collar workers, *i.e.*, that the analyzed organizations face a medium level of employee turnover. Poór et al. (2021) indicate that the average time period required to fill a vacancy in the six countries analyzed is 9.3 weeks, while in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Romania and Slovakia the most difficult positions to fill are those of manual workers and engineers, in Austria the most difficult position to fill is that of a manager, and in Serbia the position of a salesperson.

It is indisputable that the reasons for the growth and development of companies are increasingly recognized in the knowledge, skills and satisfaction of employees, *i.e.*, that human resources are the most valuable asset of an organization. In this context, it is realistic that the efforts made to attract the best candidates during the recruitment process and adequate selection in the future will result in a better and more recognizable public image and reputation. In this way, not only are potential candidates encouraged to apply for a position in the organization but it is also a reason to reduce employee turnover.

There are claims that recruitment practices affect candidates' perceptions of the company and their intention to apply. The applicant's perception of organizational characteristics such as training, compensation and promotion, has been found to have positive effects on attracting potential candidates, just as some research has shown that recruitment practices affect the general sense of attractiveness of candidates for the organization or a belief in it (Roberson et al., 2005).

By investing in human potential, the desired competitive step is achieved in one of the fastest growing activities, whose reflections are visible on overall economic growth and development. Thanks to the multiplicative effect, tourism and catering are attributed the role of catalysts for numerous economic, technical-technological, cultural and social activities.

2. Literature review

The Internet has surpassed all previous media parameters: there are no temporal and spatial constraints, the decentralizing limiting factors regarding format, themes and reflections are significantly decentralized, and the hierarchical architecture is relaxed. Direct access to information is permitted, attractive, innovative and visual presentation of the content is offered and, of particular importance for tourism and catering, public interaction is enabled (forums, blogs, e-mail). The Internet has an informational, presentational, educational and entertainment role in real-time distribution.

During the process of recruiting via the Internet, Harris (2004) differentiates two approaches: *We-find-you* and *You-find-us*. In the first case, the methods by which human resources managers, *i.e.*, recruiters, search for the most adequate candidates are highlighted, while the second case refers to the methods utilized by potential candidates searching for a company.

Employment in tourism and hospitality has many specifics that include significant mobility. From a macroeconomic perspective, labor mobility in tourism is significant in relation to overall mobility as a social phenomenon. Namely, tourism implies doing business on the international market, and the relative ease of access to employment makes it important in the broader context of national employment. Understanding labor mobility and market dynamics in tourism and hospitality requires respect for three main characteristics of the sector: that

demand is variable within a brief period of time, that the structure of the entire sector, regardless of ownership, is fragmented into small units, and that skills are relatively easy to acquire (Riley, 2004: 136). However, the relative ease of access certainly does not mean that tourism and hospitality are areas that offer limitless opportunities, especially if the existence of concerns about internal and international labor migration to indigenous peoples is taken into account. At the forefront of these concerns are the unemployment of local workers and consequently their migration.

Krivokuća et al (2021) point out that digital technology has fundamentally changed all segments of society and the way of doing business in all industries, while Ivanović and Marić (2021) explain that digital technologies are a generator of digital business transformation and warn that companies, that insist on doing business in the same way, cannot respond to new challenges without an adequate transformation. The Internet and digital technologies are changing the world, in all fields, faster and more powerfully. Due to the fact that, due to objective network insufficiency, certain services and products are not available to everyone, companies that perform their activities through the global network face significant business difficulties because they are practically unable to use all the benefits of digital tools. Precisely due to the above are the reasons for the *European Commission* starting the process of adapting the single market of the *European Union* to a digital reality, *i.e.*, suspending regulatory barriers and moving from Member States' national markets to a single one. The goal is for the EU to be digitally sovereign in an open and interconnected world and to implement digital policies that will enable individuals and businesses to create a sustainable and prosperous future. Tracking the path that defines the governance framework until 2030, in order to transform digital ambitions into concrete results, is visible in the document *Europe's Digital Compass*. All future activities will be based on four points (European Commission, 2021):

- *Digitally qualified citizens and highly qualified digital professionals*. The ambition is for at least 80% of adults to acquire basic digital skills by 2030, while 20 million professionals should be employed in the ICT sector within the European Union;
- *Secure, efficient and sustainable digital infrastructure*. Within the given time frame, all households should have a gigabyte connection, and all settlements covered by the 5G network, *i.e.*, the fifth generation of mobile technology;
- *Digital transformation of enterprises*. An average of three out of four companies should use cloud computing services, big data and artificial intelligence. In addition, more than 90% of SMEs need to attain at least a basic level of digital intensity.
- *Digitization of public institutions*. All key public functions should be available online, and all citizens will have access to their e-medical records, while 80% of citizens should use electronic identification.

Although there are still significant differences in the use of technology in the United States, between those under 30 and over 65, the adoption of key technologies by those in the oldest age group has increased significantly. The survey showed that 99% of those aged 18 to 29 use the Internet, compared to 75% of those aged 65 and over, which shows that the intergenerational gap is decreasing: 56% in 2000 versus 24% in 2021. The presence on social networks of Americans over the age of 65 has quadrupled since 2010, so that now about 45% of users are in the category of the oldest, while those aged 18 to 29 are at 84% (Faverio, 2022).

In 2020, 4,110,000 citizens (78.4%) used the Internet in Serbia, which is 2% more than in 2019. Among Internet users, the majority have a secondary education - 55.1%, 30.2% have a higher education, while 14.6% have an education below that of a secondary education (SSO, 2020: 20-22). These indicators, after segmenting the target public, can be decisive in providing the necessary number of qualified candidates who are expected to contribute to strengthening the competitive advantage of an organization.

A survey conducted by the company Brisbane Digital in 2020 on the 50 most visited sites in Serbia showed that Google.com takes the first place, YouTube takes the second place, and Facebook takes the third place. Although it lost the leading position in relation to research during 2016, Facebook kept its first place among social networks. An important indicator for advertising vacancies in newspaper portals is their growing popularity: the latest research confirmed that it is among the 50 most visited Internet sites, 16 news portals, or three more than in 2016 (Brisbane Digital, 2020).

3. Social networks - recognizability on the labor market

Social networks are an Internet space that serves to connect users regardless of their age, social status, education or gender (Jovandić, 2014), and we can define them as groups of people who communicate in different way by using the phone, *e-mail*, comments and who exchange text, audio and video clips and photographs for social, educational and business purposes (Ćerović & Knežević, 2021).

Đoković and associates (2021) point out that changes in the structure of the labor force should be viewed through the prism of demographic trends, especially emphasizing those that occur under the influence of the digitalization of the business process. The authors recognize that the persistence and magnitude of this labor market imbalance stem from the nature and magnitude of these changes, on the one hand, and the market's ability to effectively absorb these changes, on the other.

While appreciating the numerous specifics of tourism and hospitality, as labor-intensive activities with pronounced seasonality, recruitment managers are expected to pay attention to all labor market trends such as the deficit of certain profiles, increased demand from competing

companies, the offered salary, in relation to the competition or unattractiveness of the position, which in turn can make it more difficult to attract qualified candidates and jeopardize the achievement of strategic goals.

Building a positive public image of the employer should be seen as a process of importance even in situations where the employment outcome is unfavorable, *i.e.*, when it is necessary to inform those candidates who have not been offered an employment contract. It is necessary to insist on a personal approach to each candidate, especially avoiding sending automated messages where relevant information is missing, which was crucial for the admission of specific candidates (Sančanin, 2021).

The uninterrupted presence of individuals and organizations on social networks enables efficient and easy access to numerous data that are the result of digital traces. Research shows that 80% of respondents in Serbia check their accounts on social networks several times a day, which generates numerous data on their habits and attitudes (Nikolić, 2021). Despite the fact that, as a rule, all social networks indicate to users that their data will be used to improve the experience or improve the application, and that data is retained exclusively within the company that owns the social network, the implication of exploiting digital traces remains unknown, as does information on how many individuals in the company have access to that data. Updating the topics of digital user profiling and data privacy on social networks, we emphasize that this continuous process does not only consider the content that each individual writes with their online activities, but also pays attention to metadata, which has added value in monitoring user activities.

Acquiring user immunity and protecting organizations in the digital world, from the many and varied threats posed by an epidemic of false, misleading and malicious information, must be built into the foundations of future technologies and practices. Since May 2018, the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) has been applied in countries of the European Union. Although the Regulation is directly applicable within all EU member states, individual states are left with the possibility to additionally regulate this area with national legislation (OSCE, 2019).

The Serbian Law on Personal Data Protection (2018) established a new obligation related to activities on the Internet, which expanded the responsibility of human resources managers, who are also in charge of the process of recruiting candidates. The Law on Personal Data Protection also applies to foreign human resources managers, provided that they target candidates within the territory of Serbia.

4. Research methodology

We find the initial research activities within the framework of the influence of social networks on the choice of methods of recruiting human resources in tourism and hospitality companies. The research was

conducted within the territory of the Republic of Serbia from May 1 to June 30, 2021, and the sample included 133 respondents. The *Google Forms* platform was used to distribute the questionnaire in electronic format. A total of 312 e-mails were sent, and 133 respondents completed the survey (response rate: 42.63%). The research was anonymous, and the respondents did not receive any compensation for participating in the research.

Table 1. Sample structure in relation to gender and education

	Frequency (N= 113)	
	N	%
Education		
High school	21	18.6
College	32	28.3
Bachelor's degree	37	32.7
Master's degree	20	17.7
PhD	3	2.7
Age		
18 – 25	4	3.5
26 – 35	42	37.2
36 – 45	43	38.1
46 – 55	19	16.8
56 – 65	5	4.4
Year of work experience		
0 – 2	10	8.8
3 – 5	24	21.2
5 – 10	33	29.2
10 – 15	31	27.4
15 – 20	8	7.1
Over 20	7	6.2
Activity		
Production	24	21.2
Services	74	65.5
Production & Services	15	13.3

Source: the authors

The characteristics of the companies in which the respondents are employed have been presented in Table 2. The largest number of respondents are employed in micro and small enterprises, with the most common categories being sole proprietors and limited liability companies. The most common registered offices are in the area of Vojvodina and the Belgrade region.

Table 2. Characteristics of the companies in which the respondents are employed

Variable	Category	F	%
Size of company	Micro	76	57.14
	Small	49	36.84
	Mid	2	1.50
	Large	6	4.51
Company category	Sole proprietor	62	46.62
	Limited liability	60	45.11
	Stock company	2	1.50
	Partnership	1	0.75
	Other	8	6.02
	Belgrade region	37	27.82
Company registered office	Region of Southern and Eastern Serbia	26	19.55
	Region of Vojvodina	44	33.08
	Region of Šumadija and Western Serbia	26	19.55

Source: the authors

The subject of research is the influence of social networks on the recruitment process in tourism and hospitality companies. In accordance with the defined research subject, the aim of the research is to determine the links between the process of recruiting human resources, for three different positions, and the type of social networks in which the vacancies have been advertised. Based on the review of domestic and foreign literature in the field of the subject matter, hypothesis was defined ("The choice of the type of social networks for advertising vacancies is significantly related to the methods and techniques of recruitment in tourism and hospitality companies").

By its nature, the research is non-experimental while, according to the methods and manner of data collection, it is quantitative. The methods of analysis and synthesis, statistical method and method of induction and deduction were used. In order to answer the set hypothesis, Spearman's correlation coefficient was applied. The results have been presented in Tables 3, 4 and 5.

5. Empirical analysis and results

The correlation between recruitment methods and social media advertising for the position of manager has been

presented in *Table 3*. Transfers from other companies, job rotation, colleges and universities, consultants for recruiting managers, direct application and advertising in traditional, digital and traditional, and digital media are statistically positive and significantly related to advertising on all social networks. The offered methods of attracting and recruiting candidates for the most responsible managerial positions can be significantly strengthened by respecting current indicators on the number and other characteristics of social network users.

The platform with the most users in Serbia is Facebook - 4,892,800 (56.8% of the total population), with slightly more male users. The most common age group of users is the one between 25 and 34 years old (28.6%) (NapoleonCat, 2022a). The method of recruitment through high schools is significantly and negatively related to advertising on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Advertising through job fairs is significantly and positively related to advertising on YouTube and Instagram, while advertising through the National Employment Service is significantly and negatively related to advertising via Twitter and LinkedIn.

Table 3. Relationship between recruitment methods and social advertising networks for the position of manager

MANAGERS	Facebook	Twitter	Linked In	You Tube	Instagram
Transfers from other companies	.477**	.547**	.607**	.391**	.297**
Job rotation	.482**	.387**	.333**	.502**	.445**
Employee recommendations (friends or relatives)	.091	.069	.133	.112	.105
Job fairs	.068	.046	-.036	.198*	.223**
Secondary school	-.308**	-.402**	-.450**	-.208*	-.117
Colleges and universities	.516**	.433**	.264**	.544**	.486**
Private employment agencies	.032	-.064	-.018	.077	.071
National employment service	-.087	-.201*	-.239**	-.026	.020
Recruitment consultants	-.080	-.107	.012	-.033	-.056
Manager recruitment consultants	.351**	.366**	.501**	.274**	.202*
Direct application	.708**	.654**	.546**	.606**	.538**
Advertising in traditional media	.480**	.326**	.365**	.372**	.333**
Advertising in digital media	.614**	.659**	.651**	.481**	.406**
Advertising in traditional and digital media	.669**	.636**	.688**	.544**	.476**

Source: the authors * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

The relationship between recruitment methods and social media advertising for the position at the technical/professional level has been presented in *Table 4*. Transfers from other companies, job rotation, employee recommendations, colleges and universities, direct application and advertising in traditional, digital and traditional and digital media, are methods that are positively and significantly related to advertising on all social networks. The method of recruitment through high schools is significantly and negatively related to advertising on Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn and YouTube. Recruitment through job fairs is significantly and positively related to advertising on Twitter, Facebook, YouTube and Instagram, while the implementation of these activities through private employment agencies is significantly and positively related to advertising through LinkedIn, YouTube and Instagram. LinkedIn advertising is significantly and positively associated with recruitment via recruitment consultants. Given that these are

recruitment methods for responsible positions at the technical/professional level, it should be expected that in the coming period the use of LinkedIn will be even more prevalent. It is a completely business-oriented website that is a unique meeting place for individuals and companies. In January 2022, there were 1,043,000 LinkedIn users in Serbia, and the most numerous group consists of people aged 25 to 34 (64.2%) (NapoleonCat, 2022b).

The relationship between recruitment methods for trainee positions and social media advertising has been presented in *Table 5*. Advertising on Facebook is significantly and positively related to recruitment methods through employee recommendations, self-initiative registration of candidates and advertising in digital media, while it is significantly and negatively related to recruitment methods through the National Employment Service and advertising in traditional media. Advertising on Twitter is significantly and positively related to the methods of

recruitment through self-initiative registration of candidates and advertising in digital media, while it is significantly and negatively related to the methods of recruitment through consultants for recruitment and advertising in traditional media. Advertising through LinkedIn is significantly and positively related to recruitment methods through employee recommendations, self-initiative of candidates and advertising in digital media, while it is significantly and negatively related to recruitment through the National Employment Service, recruitment consultants and advertising in traditional media. Advertising on YouTube is positively related to recruitment methods through self-initiative registration of candidates, affirmative recruitment for pre-defined target groups, advertising in

digital media and advertising in traditional and digital media. Advertising on Instagram is significantly and positively related to recruitment methods through affirmative recruitment for pre-defined target groups, advertising in digital media and advertising in traditional and digital media. This is a significant indicator, especially when viewed in the context of the number of Instagram users in Serbia, which number 3,252,300, among which the most numerous is the population between the ages of 25 and 34. As the participation of the female workforce is significant in the field of tourism, this social network can be a good choice in the recruitment process, estimating that women dominate in the total number of users - 53.5% (NapoleonCat, 2022c).

Table 4. Relationship between recruitment methods and social advertising networks for positions at the technical/professional level

PROFESSIONAL - TECHNICAL LEVEL	Facebook	Twitter	Linked In	You Tube	Instagram
Transfers from other companies	.646**	.655**	.714**	.502**	.437**
Job rotation	.546**	.520**	.410**	.484**	.469**
Employee recommendations (friends or relatives)	.243**	.244**	.227**	.260**	.282**
Job fairs	.169	.222*	.279**	.216*	.222*
Secondary school	-.385**	-.352**	-.297**	-.318**	-.266**
Colleges and universities	.424**	.500**	.465**	.410**	.355**
Private employment agencies	.145	.115	.177*	.187*	.177*
National employment service	-.058	-.090	-.063	-.009	.012
Recruitment consultants	.123	.100	.173*	.164	.169
Manager recruitment consultants	.645**	.694**	.633**	.579**	.519**
Direct application	.423**	.358**	.396**	.283**	.248**
Advertising in traditional media	.662**	.651**	.703**	.518**	.474**
Advertising in digital media	.646**	.603**	.659**	.479**	.438**
Advertising in traditional and digital media	.646**	.655**	.714**	.502**	.437**

Source: the authors * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Table 5. Relationship between recruitment methods and social advertising networks for intern positions

INTERN	Facebook	Twitter	Linked In	You Tube	Instagram
Transfers from other companies	.315**	.055	.224**	.032	-.008
Job rotation	.563**	.452**	.467**	.243**	.078
Employee recommendations (friends or relatives)	-.018	.030	-.100	.078	.131
Job fairs	-.056	-.060	-.128	.101	.167
Secondary school	-.210*	-.098	-.306**	-.017	.009
Colleges and universities	-.145	-.175*	-.262**	.050	.052
Private employment agencies	-.078	.174*	-.063	.305**	.277**
National employment service	-.306**	-.196*	-.376**	-.056	.025
Recruitment consultants	.576**	.544**	.684**	.299**	.173*
Manager recruitment consultants	.008	.135	-.054	.185*	.211*
Direct application	.315**	.055	.224**	.032	-.008
Advertising in traditional media	.563**	.452**	.467**	.243**	.078
Advertising in digital media	-.018	.030	-.100	.078	.131
Advertising in traditional and digital media	-.056	-.060	-.128	.101	.167

Source: the authors * $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$

Although not all correlations are significant, hypothesis "The choice of the type of social networks for advertising vacancies is significantly related to the methods and techniques of recruitment in tourism & hospitality companies" was confirmed.

6. Conclusion

The topic of the paper and the research results contribute to a different view of the process of recruiting human resources, with a focus on the growing importance of a more intensive use of social networks. Research results show that the decision of employers to advertise vacancies

on various social networks is conditioned, above all, by the future position in the hierarchical structure of the company.

The recruitment process is significantly determined by the choice of social networks in which vacancies in tourism and hospitality companies are advertised. Attracting the appropriate number of candidates whose qualifications are compatible with the required, is a prerequisite for successful selection and the attainment of company goals.

In the evolution of the global social network space, it is necessary to devote significantly more effort and time to

minimizing undesirable discourse, as a direct consequence of a wide range of differently motivated misinformation. In that context, the creation of a new media educational architecture suggests itself, which will enable security and privacy, especially of vulnerable social categories on the labor market, which certainly have their place in labor-intensive activities.

This paper is expected to contribute to increasing interest on this topic, recognizing enough space for further research in the scientific and professional community, as well as to be a good platform for application in everyday practice.

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