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**Role of social media in Finnish international
SMEs recruitment**

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ABSTRACT:

Previous research and literature show that the role of social media in e-recruiting has been growing significantly in the last decade. Previous research has focused on applicant perspective. However, little is known about the role of social media in the context of organization. To attract and to guarantee top employees in the future we must recognize how social media and social media development are influencing recruitment practices.

This research investigates especially how social media foster and limits companies recruiting processes and gives answer for following research question *“How does the use of social media influence Finnish International SME recruitment?”*. This research reviews different social media platforms and their attractiveness in recruiting. It investigates the role of social media in recruiting, especially in small- and medium sized-enterprises. This study aims to get better knowledge of which factors are affecting companies’ recruitment processes. This research is concluded as qualitative research. Nine small- and medium sized enterprises, operating internationally were selected for the target group of this study. Research was executed using semi-structured interviews.

First the results of the thesis highlight that social media recruiting influences companies’ ability to promote themselves internationally, increases social interaction and makes achieving growth easier. Second, this research shows that social media recruiting fosters companies recruiting as it will expand the candidate pool, but also it helps companies to source, contact and find talents. On the other hand, social recruiting was seen as cost-effective way to influence to the employer image and brand. Finally, this research finds out that the challenges Finnish international SMEs were facing were associated with privacy concerns, quality of the information available and difficulties with work life balance.

KEYWORDS: Recruiting, E-recruiting, Social recruiting, Social media, Small- and medium-sized enterprise

VAASAN YLIOPISTO**Johtamisen akateeminen yksikkö**

Tekijä:	Elina Talvisto
Tutkielman nimi:	Sosiaalisen median rooli suomalaisten kansainvälisten PK-yritysten rekrytoinnissa
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TIIVISTELMÄ:

Aikaisemmat tutkimukset osoittavat, että sosiaalisen median rooli e-rekrytoinnissa on ollut merkittävässä kasvussa viimeisen vuosikymmenen aikana. Aikaisempi tutkimus on keskittynyt erityisesti hakija näkökulmaan. Kuitenkin on vähän tietoa siitä miten sosiaalinen media vaikuttaa rekrytointeihin organisaatio kontekstissa. Jotta tavoitamme ja takaamme huippu työntekijät myös tulevaisuudessa, on meidän ymmärrettävä miten sosiaalisen median kasvu tulee vaikuttamaan yritysten rekrytointi prosesseihin.

Tämä tutkimus tutkii erityisesti miten sosiaalinen media edistää tai rajoittaa yritysten rekrytointi prosesseja ja vastaa tutkimus kysymykseen ”*Miten sosiaalisen median käyttö vaikuttaa Suomalaisten kansainvälisten pienten- ja keskisuurten yritysten rekrytointiin?*”. Tämä tutkimus tutkii sosiaalisen median roolia erityisesti pienten- ja keskisuurten yritysten rekrytoinnissa. Tutkimuksen tavoitteena on saada tietoa siitä mitkä tekijät vaikuttavat yritysten rekrytointi prosesseihin. Tutkimus on toteutettu laadullisena tutkimuksena. Tutkimuksen kohderyhmäksi valikoitui 9 pientä- tai keskisuurta suomalaista yritystä, jotka operoivat kansainvälisesti. Tutkimus toteutettiin puolistrukturoituina haastatteluina.

Ensimmäisenä tutkimuksen tulokset osoittavat, että rekrytointi sosiaalisessa mediassa vaikuttaa yritysten kykyyn mainostaa itseään kansainvälisesti, lisää sosiaalista kanssakäymistä hakijoiden kanssa ja mahdollistaa kasvun tavoittelun. Toisena, tämä tutkimus osoitti, että rekrytointi sosiaalisessa mediassa edistää pienten- ja keskisuurten yritysten rekrytointia, koska se mahdollistaa kandidaatti poolin kasvattamisen, sekä auttaa yrityksiä etsimään, tavoittamaan ja löytämään oikeat kandidaatit. Toisaalta rekrytointi sosiaalisessa mediassa nähtiin kustannus tehokkaampana tapana vaikuttaa työnantaja mielikuvaan ja brändiin. Viimeisenä, tämä tutkimus osoittaa, että haasteet, joita erityisesti suomalaiset pienet- ja keskisuuret yritykset kohtaavat rekrytoidessaan kandidaatteja sosiaalisesta mediasta olivat yhdistetty muun muassa yksityisyydensuojaan, tiedon tarkkuuteen ja ajantasaisuuteen, mutta myös haasteina koettiin työelämän ja vapaa-ajan tasapainottelu.

AVAINSANAT: Rekrytointi, E-rekrytointi, Sosiaalinen rekrytointi, Sosiaalinen media, Pieni- ja keskisuuri yritys

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Abbreviations

SME	Small- and medium sized enterprise
TM	Talent management
GTM	Global talent management

1 Introduction

This section will provide the overlook of the thesis. First, background of the research is covered, and research gap is defined. Then, research objectives and research questions are introduced. Finally, key concepts and structure of this thesis is presented.

1.1 Background of the study

Throughout the years, many researchers have sought to examine the factors that have associated with attracting right talents (Acikgoz, 2019, p. 1). Even though e-recruiting have been one of the most successful e-business applications, still it continues to be one of the most under-researched areas in e-business research (Lee, 2010, p.230). Acikgoz (2019, p. 1) described talent recruiting as activities that are influencing to the number of the active applicant, the number of the applicants that stay in the applicant pool and finally, the amount of the applicants that accept a job offer. Additionally, Lee (2011, p. 231) has stated that e-recruiting uses electronic tools to identify, attract and select potential employees. To support this, Ouiridi, Segers and Pais (2016, p. 241) have stated that social recruiting means the use of social media in recruitment process.

During the years as social media has come bigger and bigger trend it has changed the way how consumers behave, communicate, and connect (Bohmova & Pavlicek, 2015, p. 24). Social networks like LinkedIn and Facebook have become more and more popular within recruitment process as they give the opportunity to attract the most suitable candidates (Bohmova & Pavlicek, 2015, p. 24). Therefore, social media is playing essential part of the recruitment process (Nila & Marin, 2021, p. 2). Online recruitment tools have given the opportunity for recruiters to find employees from virtual environment, evaluate candidates and choose candidates with best talent (Bohmova & Pavlicek, 2015, p.24). Using web technologies as a part of the recruitment processes has become a growing trend among companies (Ouiridi et al. 2015, p. 240). Therefore Ouiridi et al. (2015, p. 240) stated that adapting technologies have become necessity for companies that wish to have competitive advantage in labor market and attract professionals with needed skills

set. According to Ruparel, Bhardwaj, Seth and Choubisa (2023) the use of online recruitment platforms have increased from 6% (2002) to 96% (2023). This also states that we must have more research of the drivers and challenges of the use of social media in recruiting.

Social Network Websites including LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram and TikTok have increased their popularity among companies and human resource (HR) experts in terms of attracting, identifying, and recruiting new talents (Kashi, Zheng & Molineux, 2016, p. 1). Previous literature and research in talent management and recruiting have mainly concentrated on larger organizations which means that SMEs have had little attention (Krishnan & Scullion, 2016, p. 435). Even though, e-recruiting is a relatively young research area, there has been some approaches published especially during last decade (Wolfswinkel, Furtmueller & Wilderom, 2010, p. 2).

Since global economy has expanded, business leaders and human resource managers have been extremely concerned how to attract right talents (Beechler & Woodward, 2009, p. 273). Companies have faced challenge in retaining good employees which is caused by talent competition and talent scarcity, and this is also forcing leaders and HR specialists to improve their human resource strategies (Kaliannan, Darmalinggam & Dorasamy, 2023, p. 1). According to Meyers & Van Woerkom (2014, p. 192) examining different talent philosophies is necessary for the future research as the research field is marked by tensions regarding the nature of the talents. Talent management has gained popularity as human resources have now been seen as strategic partners towards successful strategies (Kaliannan, Darmalinggam & Dorasamy, 2023, p. 1).

Even though SMEs lacks important resources including access to finance, lack of technological resources and lack of human resource practices compared to larger companies, they are still vital source for growth of global economy (Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011, p. 4). SMEs are central part of the economy, and they are important for technological advancement and employment (Lancker, Knockaert, Audenaert & Cardon, 2021, p. 1). Sullivan-Taylor and Branicki (2011, p. 4) stated that even though larger organizations are

dominating the literature, small businesses are still vital for the economy and therefore research is needed.

1.2 Research gap

There are still many research gaps in literature. Ouiridi et al. (2015, p. 240) proposed that research on use of social media in organizational context should be one of the main research areas in the future as previous research in e-recruiting tend to focus on applicants' perspective and more specifically to US context. According to Ouiridi et al. (2015, p. 241) there is also a small number of studies conducted empirically and therefore, there is a research gap between research and practice.

Social media use in recruitment is important research area especially now as talent markets are increasingly competitive and global markets are growing fast (Ouiridi et al, 2015, p. 240). Also, Delecraz et al. (2022) stated that poor job matching can lead to mental health issues and bad job performance and therefore this can also lead to increased costs.

There have been studies addressing talent management and talent recruiting in larger companies. Still, there is limited amount of studies researching SMEs. Studies about recruiting in social media have been formed in some extent but most importantly, this research studies how social media influences small- and medium sized enterprises recruiting processes. There is a gap in the research to understand how use of social media limits and fosters recruiting in Finnish international SMEs. Moreover, this research studies how different talents are possible to attract through social media. By providing theoretical framework and empirical findings from the case study, this study aims to give insight for the companies of the current recruiting practices and how social media can be utilized for recruiting purposes. Therefore, it will fill topical and methodological research gap.

1.3 Research objectives and research questions

This research aims to provide answers how social media influences Finnish small- and medium sized enterprises and their recruiting processes. Following research objectives are provided to guide this research to find answers to given research questions.

The main research question is following:

How does the use of social media influence Finnish international SME recruitment?

And the main research question is supported and addressed by following sub questions:

- How does use of social media foster Finnish international SME recruitment?
- How does use of social media limit Finnish international SME recruitment?

The objectives of the research are following:

- To understand better social media recruitment platforms
- To analyze challenges and drivers of different social media channels
- Investigate the gap in social media recruiting in Finnish international SMEs
- Understand the international SME recruiting processes

1.4 Key concepts of the research

Next, the most common terms related to this research are introduced. These terms are provided to give better understanding of the topic of the research. Terms are recruiting, e-recruiting, social media, social recruiting, small- and medium sized enterprises (SME) and international enterprise.

Recruiting

According to Nilsen & Olafsen (2013, p. 474) recruiting is defined as organizational activities which are affecting to the attractiveness of applying for open position. Overall, recruiting process can be seen in three steps: sourcing applicants, maintaining applicant status, and influencing job decision (Land, Maier, Laumer, & Eckhardt, 2011, p. 27).

E-recruiting

E-recruiting is a process which uses electronic tools and technologies to identify, attract and select potential employees (Lee, 2011, p. 231). According to Lee (2011, p. 231) these tools are helping recruiters and job applicants to finish their parts smoothly by automating processes and providing the information which helps decision-making process. These technologies are for example social media, talent management systems and applicant tracking systems (Lee, 2011, p. 231).

Social media

Social media is defined as an internet-based services which are helping their users to exchange information online, produce online content or communicate through online communities (Dewing, 2010, p. 1).

Social recruiting

Ouiridi, Ouiridi, Segers & Pais (2016, p. 241) stated that the use of social media as a part of the recruitment process is defined as a "*social recruiting*". Recruiters are using social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, TikTok and Twitter to attract possible candidates, post job advertisements and pre-screening applicants (Ouiridi, Ouiridi, Segers & Pais, 2016, p. 241).

Small and medium enterprises (SME)

According to European commission SME's are businesses that employ less than 250, annual turnover is not exceeding million euro and annual balance sheet total is not exceeding 43 million euro (Eu commission, 2003).

International enterprise

International enterprises have at least one of the following criteria: direct export, licensing or franchise, salary, or contract manufacturing or/and foreign joint venture or subsidiary company (Työ- ja elinkeinoministeriö, 2016, p. 6).

1.5 Structure of the study

The structure of this research paper will be following. First, introduction will be presented. Introduction will give an understanding of the key concepts. It will present research questions and gap existing in the recent literature. In introduction, reader will get an overlook of the main concepts and objectives. Second section is a theoretical background, and it will introduce the reader to the existing theories about talent management, small- and medium sized enterprises and social media recruiting. Third section is research design. Research design will help the reader to understand how research was made and which methods were used. First, philosophical assumptions are presented, and research strategy is described. This part of the research paper will give overlook of the collected data and analyze possible limitations and the trustworthiness of this research.

Fourth section is findings. In this part, findings are presented and analyzed. Findings of this research concludes the factors that foster recruiting in Finnish international SME and the factors that limits recruiting in Finnish international SME. Fifth section is discussion. In this section, findings are analyzed and compared with the existing literature. This part will discuss about the use of global talent management in SME, the importance of TM philosophies in international SME, the influence of using social media in Finnish international SME recruitment and limiting factors. Finally, conclusion is presented. This part of the research is made to present main findings for the reader and to do so, theoretical contribution, practical contribution and limitations discussed. Also, suggestions for future research are given in this part.

Introduction	Theoretical background	Research design	Findings	Discussion	Conclusions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background • Research gap • Research objectives • Research questions • Structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Global talent Management • International SME recruitment • Theoretical framework 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Philosophical assumptions and approach • Research strategy • Methods of data collection • Case selection • Data analysis • Limitations, reliability and validity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Factors that foster recruiting in Finnish International SME • Factors that limit recruiting in Finnish International SME 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The use of global talent management in SME • Importance of TM philosophies in International SME recruitment • Influence of using social media in Finnish International SME recruitment • Limiting factors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Summary • Theoretical contribution • Practical contribution • Limitations • Suggestions for the future research

Figure 1. Structure of the research

2 Theoretical background

Theoretical background will introduce the main relevant theories behind the research. It examines the global talent management theory as well as research on social media and social media recruitment. This part defines the concept of small and medium sized enterprises. Furthermore, it will give reader better understanding of the key concepts and theories around the research. It will also draw a framework which will be used when analyzing the findings.

2.1 Talent management

This part will introduce the definition of talent management, its components, and principles. Also, recruiting processes is presented. Finally, social media is defined and research behind e-recruitment is introduced.

2.1.1 Defining talent management and its components and principles

Talent management (TM) has become more important during the last couple decades, but previous research lacks theoretical perspective (Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014, p. 173). Therefore, Kaliannan, Darmalinggman, Doramamy and Abraham (2020, p. 2) suggested that TM could be defined as *“a practice of developing skills of employees considered as a “talent””*. The term talent management has been associated with various meanings related to HR development (Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014, p. 174).

TM is one of the strategic management tools and its purpose is to combine right talents with right employers (Iles, Chuai & Preece, 2009, p. 181). Iles, Chuai and Preece (2009, p. 181) suggested that rather than focusing on the competitive business environment, organizations should focus on internal resources and talents (Kaliannan, Darmalinggman, Doramamy & Abraham, 2020, p. 2). Still, one of the most used definitions for TM is defined by Collings and Mellahi (2009, p. 304). Collings and Mellahi (2009, p. 304) defined TM as a *“activities and processes that involve the systematic identification of key*

positions that differentially contribute to the organization's sustainable competitive advantage, the development of a talent pool of high-potential and high performing incumbents to fill these roles, and the development of a differentiated human resource architecture to facilitate filling these positions with competent incumbents, and to ensure their continued commitment to the organization". In early stages of TM research, the focus has been on talent recruitment and especially for top-management positions.

Due to the internationalization of businesses, global dimension of TM has become more important and therefore the term global talent management (GTM) has emerged (Aris, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014, p. 174). Vaiman, Scullion and Colling (2012) defined GTM as organizational activities that effects of attracting, selecting, developing, and ensuring best employees worldwide. Stahl et al. (2012) studied GTM, and they identified two understandings. First, differentiated approach (limited to high-potential employees) and second inclusive approach (available for all employees) (Stahl et al., 2012). Stahl et al. (2012) stated that, to successfully utilize GTM, organizations must follow following principles: alignment with strategy, internal consistency, cultural embeddedness, management involvement, a balance of a global and local needs, and employer branding through differentiation.



Figure 2. Global talent management principles (Stahl et al., 2012)

Utilizing GTM theory for the companies' daily work it will also bring challenges. Schuler, Jackson, and Tarique (2010, p. 508) named that the main challenges are location and human resource planning, training and development and sourcing and attracting the right talents. Due to the research area of this research, this part will concentrate to the challenges that GTM will bring when attracting and sourcing new talents globally.

Previous literature also emphasizes that GTM will occur challenges for staffing related to attracting, selecting, retention, reduction, and removal (Schuler, Jackson, and Tarique, 2010, p. 508). According to Schuler, Jackson, and Tarique (2010, p. 508) companies are also struggling of finding talents who are equipped with needed competencies and perform variety of job tasks at the wage rates offered, but they are also willing to work regardless of the location. According to this study, this leads to the point where companies must make themselves more attractive in the eyes of the applicants.

Ariss, Cascio and Paauwee (2004, p. 178) estimated that the landscape of TM will change in recent years due to the availability and increased use of social media platforms. Ariss, Cascio and Paauwee (2004, p. 178) mentioned that the social media platforms such as LinkedIn, have significantly improved companies' ability to find and attract talents. According to Ariss, Cascio and Paauwee (2004, p. 178) social media platforms have made finding talents throughout world easier and therefore, companies are more able to match talent supply with demand.

During the years TM theories have been seen as a source of sustained competitive advantage and therefore it has been associated with human resource management practices (HRM) (Ariss, Cascio & Paauwe, 2014, p. 174). Even though, Ariss, Cascio and Paauwe (2014, p. 174) stated that international companies have used TM and GTM practices and strategies. However, SMEs haven't used TM and GTM practices as much.

The topic of talent recruitment has been studied throughout the years by researchers. It's a critical part of the organizational success (Acikgoz, 2019, p. 1). This part will introduce the definition of talent recruitment and introduce the reader for prior research on talent recruitment. Acikgoz (2019, p. 1) stated that employee recruitment is an important part of the organization's survival because organization's success is confined within the limits of its human resources. The reason companies are facing challenges with GTM have been associated with rapidly moving, uncertain and highly competitive working environment (Schuler, Jackson & Tarique, 2010, p. 508). In addition to this, especially companies that are seeking potential talents are utilizing multiple channels and approaches for recruiting (Tsai, Kao & Kuo, 2023, p. 3). Talent recruitment is a critical part of TM (Krishnan & Scullion, 2016, p. 435).

During the years there have been multiple approaches and theories explaining TM. One of the most adapted is TM philosophy theory. McKinsey's consultants in 1998, coined the term "*war of talent*" which means that talent is in a key part of organizational success and excellence (Guerra, Danvilla-del-Valle & Mendez-Suarez, 2023, p. 2). Guerra, Danvilla-del-Valle and Mendez-Suarez (2023, p. 2) said that since finding this, attracting correct talents have been necessary for the success and sustainability of the organization. In recent years, multiple studies have been dealing with issues relating to attracting and finding right talents (Guerra, Danvilla-del-Valle, Mendez-Suarez, 2023, p. 2)

According to Acikgoz (2019, p. 1) talent recruitment is activities that will affect to the number of applicants, how many applicants stay in the applicant pool, and who are willing to accept a job offer. Talent recruitment can be divided into two categories: traditional recruitment and online recruitment (Acikgoz, 2019, p. 2). According to Acikgoz (2019, p. 2) traditional recruitment sources include advertisements, employment agencies, internal job posting, walk-ins and campus visits where on the other hand online recruitment sources can be company websites, online job boards and social networking sites.

Also, Guerra, Danvila-del-Valle and Mendez-Suarez (2023, p. 3) added that TM refers to key concepts such as attracting, retaining, developing and deploying employees. Guerra, Danvila-del-Valle and Mendez-Suarez (2023, p. 3) stated that TM is able to add value to strategic human resource management. Based on Meyers and Van Workom (2014, p. 193) and their TM philosophy approach, HR philosophies are clearly connected with the overall success of the business and how their human recourses are treated and managed.

TM philosophies can be dived into four categories: exclusive/stable, inclusive/stable, inclusive/developable, and exclusive/developable (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014, p. 194). According to exclusive/stable talent philosophy, the main idea is to identify, attract and retain talented individuals. Stable and exclusive talent philosophy creates multiple different opportunities and benefits (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014, p. 195). According to scholars and practitioners who support exclusive/ stable talent philosophy, companies can establish a leading market position when they are attracting, sourcing, and selecting the best, most motivated and intelligent employees. According to Meyers and Van Woerkom (2014, p. 195) companies are also able to maximize their profits and it will also enhance employee's motivation and commitment. Moreover, organizations can minimize replacement costs (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014, p. 195)

Based on exclusive/developable talent philosophy, the main strategy is to develop people with potential (Meyer & Woerkom, 2014, p. 195). According to Meyer and Woerkom (2014, p. 195) when companies are following exclusive/developable TM theory they tend to offer developing opportunities only for talented individuals. According to the study made by Meyer and Woerkom, (2014, p.195) this may occur challenges in the future with learning, orientation, learning agility and feedback seeking. These factors are crucial for the success of the company.

According to Peterson and Park (2006, p. 1150) inclusive/stable talent philosophy, employee and company are in their best when they are focusing on the positive qualities of all the individuals. Meyer and Woerkom (2014, p. 197) criticized that this philosophy only

considers strengths, and, in the end, this can turn them into weaknesses. According to Meyer and Woerkom (2014, p. 1978), inclusive/ stable talent philosophy fosters the employee retention and therefore, companies might have less difficulties what comes to attract applicants. According to study made by (Meyer and Woerkom, 2014, p. 197), those companies trying to attract rare working force may have challenges when utilizing inclusive/stable talent philosophy. Workers might be more tempted to choose the company who is using exclusive talent philosophies as according to these theories, they are treating them as someone special.

Inclusive/developable talent philosophy attempts to develop those ordinary employees into talents with extraordinary skills (Meyers & Woerkom, 2014, p. 198). This talent philosophy refers to “*experts are always made, not born*”. Figure 3 presents the TM philosophy theory by Meyers and Woerkom (2014, p. 198).



Figure 3. Talent management philosophies (Meyers & Woerkom, 2014, p. 198)

2.1.2 Recruitment process

To understand how TM theory works in practice, in this part recruitment process is described and presented. Recruitment starts with identifying key positions and then employees who would have the potential talent to fill those positions (Guerra, Danvilla-del-Valle & Mendez-Suarez, 2023, p. 3). Recruiting process is complex and it requires analysis

of current employment state, resume screening, talent interviews and preparations for recruitment. The key purpose for talent recruitment is to be able to match the quantitative and qualitative need of companies' human resources. This will contribute to overall performance of the company (Guerra, Danvilla-del-Valle & Mendez-Suarez, 2023, p. 3).

According to Alzoubi (2020) e-recruitment process can be divided into four steps: initial interview, employment application, tests, and interviews. The ability tests can be psychological and personal tests, mental ability tests, performance tests, response speed tests and tests for values trends (Alzoubi, 2020). Also, interviews can be divided into two different categories: individual interviews and group interviews. On the other hand, Breaugh (2008, p. 104) stated that recruitment process has five steps: recruitment objectives, strategy development, recruitment activities, interviewing job applicants' variables and recruitment results. This is presented in Figure 4.

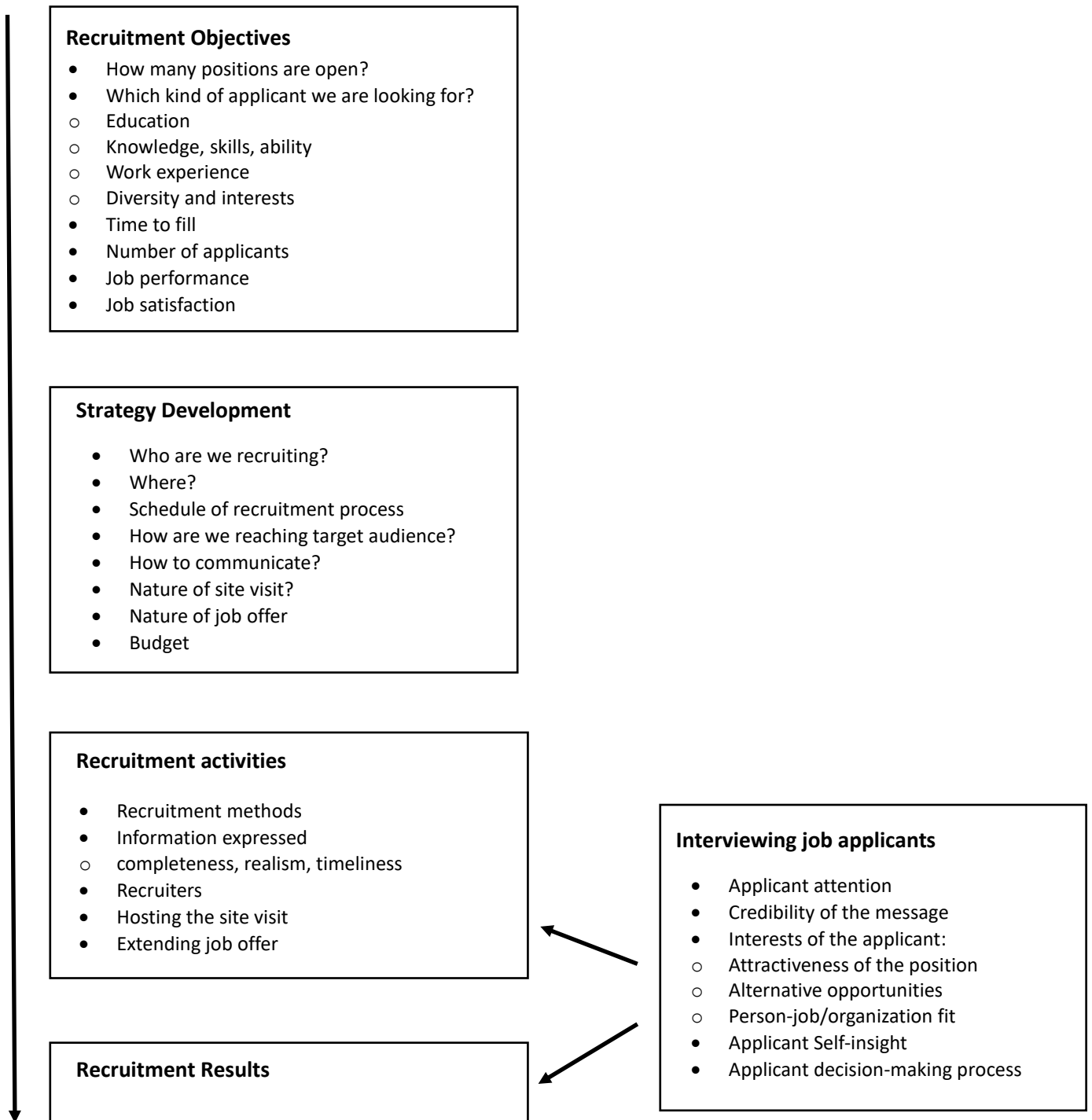


Figure 4. Recruitment process (Breaugh, 2008, p. 104)

2.1.3 What is social media?

Through human history, people have been curious to develop technologies that would make communication easier (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011, p. 2). We can say that first social media technologies have developed during 1970s (Edosomwan, Prakasan, Kouame, Watson & Seymour, 2011, p. 2).

Sedalo, Boateng and Kosiba (2022, p. 1) defined social media as internet-based programs that are allowing for users the ability to create and share content. Different social media platforms are used for different purposes for example for marketing, research, product testing or recruiting (Hanafizadeh, Shafia & Bohlin, 2022, p. 2). Social media consists of several types of platforms such as social networking sites (Whatsapp, Line, Telegram and WeChat), content communities (YouTube, TikTok, Vimeo), blogs and online forums and discussions (TripAdvisor, Yelp and FourSquare) (Sedalo, Boateng & Kosiba, 2022, p. 1).

Social media has changed how companies are dealing with their daily activities (Hanafizadeh, Shafia & Bohlin, 2021, p. 2). To build business capabilities and improve customer relationships, businesses are applying social media applications and platforms into their business strategies (Agnihotri, Bakeshloo & Mani, 2023, p. 1). Social media gives opportunity for businesses to interact with customers, increase trust with customers, build relationships and find business partners (Sedalo, Boateng & Kosiba, 2022, p. 1). By using social media, businesses can achieve business objectives such as create brand affinity, increase sales prospects, improve customer service, and affect customer attitudes (Sedalo, Boateng & Kosiba, 2022, p. 1).

According to Dwivedi et al. (2020, p. 1), in 2019 2.95 billion people have been active in social media platforms. Social media helps organizations to connect with their customers, improve awareness of their brand, influence customer attitudes, receive feedback, help to improve products and services and lastly, increase sales (Dwivedi, 2021, p. 1).

As the internet age has brought along social media, companies are utilizing social media to increase their network, visibility, and profit (Tsironis, Daglis & Tsagarakis, 2022, p. 802). Social media is a foundation for communication between companies both nationally and internationally (Fraccastoro, Gabrielsson & Chetty, 2021, p. 1). According to this study, social media will help companies to promote themselves internationally, target diverse stakeholders, increase social interaction, and achieve growth. Social media will help to strengthen brand identity, brand experience and brand building and this increases attractiveness between customers (Tsironis, Daglis & Tsagarakis, 2022, p. 802).

2.1.4 E-recruiting

In this part, the focus is on the literature behind e-recruiting. It will also give better understanding of the concept and theories behind it. This chapter will provide understanding of why e-recruiting has been significant trend in recent years, as Lee (2010, p.230) stated, e-recruiting as one of the most effective e-business tools. Still, in late/mid 1990s, traditional recruitment practices have been the most popular recruiting method which means that human recourse agents were using their time for sourcing and attracting potential employees (Horodyski, 2023, p.2). According to (Horodyski, 2023, p.2) until the first decade of 2000s these practices came more popular in this industry.

Social recruiting uses social networks and social communities to find employees for short-, middle-, and long-term positions (Sulaj, 2017, p.241). According to (Sulai, 2017, p.241) this process utilizes social media tools such as LinkedIn, Instagram, TikTok or Facebook to find and source new employees. There are multiple different recruiting platforms available and new platforms appears constantly due to technological development (Sulai, 2017, p. 239). Sulai (2017, p. 241) mentioned that research made in US context found out that 93% of recruiters plans to use social media to support their recruiting process.

Most businesses are using e-recruiting as their primary method of job-searching (Hordyski, 2023, p. 2). E-recruiting technologies and practices have made job application process simple and easy. On the other hand, according to Hordyski (2023, p. 2) the possibility to have easy access for recruiting information has increased connectivity and workforce mobility. Therefore, candidates have more power over the hiring processes.

Morse & Popovich (2009, p. 1) defined traditional recruiting as *“the practice of selling the organization to outsiders”*. Traditional recruiting process can still fit for some industries. However, companies have adapted e-recruiting tools because traditional recruitment will increase a long hiring cycle, it has high costs, it has low advertisement coverage and it makes managing candidates ineffective (Lee, 2011, p. 231). Also, Lee (2011, p. 231) noted that e-recruiting would also improve recruiter’s possibility to manage job applications and postings with minimize paperwork and this would also lead to automatization of key recruiting activities. Comparing traditional and e-recruiting, according to Lee (2011, p.231), e-recruiting enables opportunity for recruiters to provide more info about job as Internet provides interactive place for both sides.

Malik, Camp and Schulz (2022, p. 5) divided factors that affect to social media usage into two categories, individual antecedents, and organizational antecedents. Malik, Camp and Schulz (2022, p. 5) explained that individual factors can be demographical such as gender, age, or ethnicity. Organizational factors can be active/passive jobseekers, familiarity/openness to social media and type of social media use. These influence the way companies can use social media to source and attract new talents. On the other hand, organizational factors such as industry affiliation, firm size and firm reputation are also factors that are influencing to the way companies are dealing with recruiting through social media (Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz, 2022, p. 5).

Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz (2022, p. 10) SMEs are more likely to rely on informal staffing protocols and therefore they tend to have less training for hiring managers. Moreover, Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz (2022, p. 10) were also concerned that

SMEs may lack the budget or resources to dedicate someone to manage social media platforms. When comparing SME recruitment and larger companies' recruitment, larger firms tend to have more formalized staffing techniques and they have more frequent selection decisions (Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz, 2022, p. 10).

Overall, the process of digital transformation is creating new business models and therefore, creates the ability to explore different market opportunities (Guerra, Danvila-del-Valle & Mendez-Suarez, 2023, p. 3). As the social media grows every day, selecting right channel for attracting right people have become a critical part of organizations success (Hanafizadeh, Shafia & Bohlin, 2021, p. 1). Social media gives opportunity for businesses to source different candidates from a large data base, upload job ads and assess applicants among other uses (Ouiridi, Pais, Segers & Ouiridi, 2016, p. 415). Using digital platforms have increased applicants' proactivity to seek opportunities that match their skills, and they efficiently apply these open positions from digital platforms (Horodyski, 2023, p. 3).

2.2 Recruitment in international SMEs

This part will introduce the definition of small and medium size enterprises (SME). Also, criteria's behind SMEs are introduced. Finally, recruiting processes in SMEs is discussed.

2.2.1 What are SMEs?

Definition for SME differs in different countries as it can be measured by quality or quantity (Krishnan & Scullion, 2016, p. 431). According to European commission (2020) 99% of all business are small and medium-sized enterprises (SME). According to Krishnan and Scullion (2016, p. 431) SME's take account for 50-60% of national employment on average.

In general, SMEs are seen autonomous, as they usually are completely independent, or they have one minor partner (European commission, 2020). Still, it is important to define

whether the enterprise is autonomous or not. According to European commission (2020) either the company is totally independent, so it does not have any other enterprise participating or other enterprises do not hold more than 25% of the capital or voting rights. Pangarkar (2008, p. 477) states that SMEs are not smaller versions of traditional firms as they are different in ownership, resources, organizational structures and management systems.

Before identifying SME criteria's, we must identify if the company is an enterprise or not. According to European commission (2020) enterprise is *"any entity engaged in an economic activity, irrespective of its legal form"*. SME's have three criteria: staff headcount, annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet (European commission, 2020). According to European commission (2020) staff headcount includes all the full-time, part-time, and seasonal staff and it covers employees, owner-managers, and partners. Annual turnover is calculated by the income received during the year from sales and service when all rebates have been paid out. It shouldn't include value added taxes or indirect taxes and balance sheet total on the other hand refers to the value of your company's main assets (European commission, 2020).

European commission's (2020) definition states that medium-sized enterprises should have less than 250 employees, turnover should be 50 million or under and/or balance sheet total should be 43 million euros or under. Small-sized enterprises should have under 50 employees, turnover 10 million euros or under and/or balance sheet total 10 million or under. And lastly micro enterprises. Micro enterprises should have under 10 employees, turnover under 2 million euros and/or balance sheet total 2 million or under. All these categories, medium, small, and micro sized enterprises together form SME (European commission, 2020). Table 1 presents all the SME criteria.

Company type	Employees	Turnover or	Balance sheet total
Medium-sized	< 250	≤ 50 million (€)	≤ 43 million (€)
Small	< 50	≤ 10 million (€)	≤ 10 million (€)
Micro	< 10	≤ 2 million (€)	≤ 2 million (€)

Table 1. SME criteria (European commission, 2020)

2.2.2 International SMEs

Previous literature has made clear that companies will benefit if they operate globally (Pangarkar, 2008, p. 477). Still, according to Pangarkar (2008, p. 477) operating internationally hasn't been simple for SMEs due to concerns about the competition in global markets and their internal constraints. When SMEs start to work internationally, they may face more challenges than bigger companies. Typically, SMEs do not perform global scanning and therefore might lack the information necessary for exploring the international opportunities (Pangarkar, 2008, p. 477). Due to the constraints of managing time, SMEs are more likely to take short-cuts in decision-making process and information gathering and according to Pangarkar (2008, p. 477) this can lead to bad choices.

Working globally can also increase the need of coordination and communication and moreover, this can stretch resources (Pangarkar, 2008, p. 477). On the other hand, according to Pangarkar (2008, p. 477) compared to bigger enterprises SMEs may be more tend to suffer resource and scale disadvantages which will affect to the success of internationalization process.

2.2.3 Recruiting in SME

In small- and medium size enterprises, recruiting and selection process are the most important but also challenging part of HR practices (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, p. 299). Three main advantages recognized in SME recruitment are better job quality, less bureaucracy, better job satisfaction and a better working atmosphere (Krishnan & Scullion, 2016, p. 434). Usually in recruiting in SME will include interview, training experience, education requirements, reference, and background check and lastly selection is made with hiring supervisors (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, p. 303).

Barber et al (1999) told that when we compare recruitment process in smaller and bigger size enterprises, they are greatly different. Barber et al. (1999) have recognized that applicants usually tend to prefer bigger firms when applying and therefore, the size of organization is one of the selection criteria. Recruiting in SMEs might also be challenging and problematic due to financial and material limitations, lack of legitimacy and high number of jobs that have performing multiple roles without clear boundaries and responsibilities (Cardon & Stevens, 2004, p. 299). On the other hand, also Cardon and Stevens (2004, p. 303) noted that attracting and selecting right talents is one major problem. Sullivan-Taylor and Branicki (2011, p. 5) described that SME's are having several advantages compared to larger firms such as little bureaucracy, rapid decision-making, effective internal communication, shorter decision-making processes, capacity for fast learning and the quick adaption of new strategies and routines.

To target and reach talents, SMEs should utilize more leveraging internet technologies, brand marketing and institutional linkages (Krishnan & Scullion, 2016, p. 431). Also, Krishnan and Scullion (2016, p. 434) suggested that SMEs could use innovative approaches to attract talents. Baker and Aldrich (1994) found out on their research that SMEs tend to have hiring process that lack of erratic and processes are loosely planned.

2.2.4 Factors that foster and limits recruiting in social media for SME

Social media marketing and recruiting has been seen as a very useful and powerful tool to reach possible candidates especially for SMEs (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, p. 96). Still, Rugova and Prenaj (2016, p. 96) states that many SMEs lack the information of how to use it properly. According to Crane and Hartwell (2019, p. 89) social media platforms such as LinkedIn can provide insight of the strengths of the applicant. However, Chatterjee and Kar (2020 p. 5) also noted that the size, expertise of IT, support from management and infrastructure of the SME are influencing factors that may affect to the way companies feel about using social media for marketing purposes.

Chatterjee and Kar (2020, p. 5) research highlighted that the most used reasons for using social media in SMEs are usefulness, compatibility, perceived ease of use, cost and facilitating conditions. On the other hand, Rugova and Prenaj (2016, p. 93) states that the main purposes of SMEs to use social media for marketing and therefore, also for recruiting marketing are the ability for idea generation, new product development, customer service, public relations, employee communication and reputation management. Marketing through social media and social networks in general will give companies such as SMEs ability to increase product and brand awareness, web traffic, customer loyalty and also increase success of product launches (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, p. 92).

According to Rugova and Prenaj (2016, p. 92), SMEs have used social media for recruiting and marketing purposes because it offers effective marketing tool for companies. When compared to other marketing tools, social media offers easy and free way for marketing (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, p. 92). One factor that drives SMEs to use social media for recruiting purposes is money. Moreover, SMEs are able to achieve the same goals but with less money by using creativity, community and relationships for marketing objectives (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, p. 92). Rugova and Prenaj (2016, p. 93) states that things that foster SMEs recruiting through social media would be increased brand

exposure, increased targeted audience, it leads to generation, market insights, customer interaction and marketing effectiveness. As social recruiting and use of social media goes in hand to hand, research made by Chatterjee and Kas (2020, p. 5) noted that using social media in SME will also increase amount of customers, increase employees creativity, increase sales, increase enquiries, increase positive feedback and therefore, it will influence to make better customer relationships.

Using social media for marketing and recruiting marketing purposes requires a lot of work and knowledge and therefore, factors that will be challenge should be taken into consideration (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, p. 95). According to Rugova and Prenaj (2016, p. 95) social media marketing is not always cost efficient or easy. Rugova and Prenaj (2016, p. 95) states that there have to be people behind the social media and therefore human resources and time recourses are needed. Social media marketing should be active and new content should be produced regularly to find and attract people and irrelevant content may banish possible candidates (Rugova & Prenaj, 2016, p. 95).

On the other hand, the strategy should be measured. Moreover, strategy should be controlled to understand how efficient the social media recruiting is (Rugove & Prenja, 2016, p. 97). Rugova and Prenja (2016, p. 95) states that some of the social media platforms may be more efficient for SMEs than others. This can be caused by the type of the business or the target group. Moreover, some of the platforms may be seen more time-consuming and expensive than others. Social media recruiting and marketing overall are also difficult to measure and therefore, the return of the investment is also hard to calculate (Rugova & Prenja, 2016, p. 96).

According to Rugova and Prenaj (2016, p. 95) the main limiting factor of using social media in SME is the potential risk of reputation. On the other hand, also using social media for recruiting purposes has increased the risk of privacy, security, intellectual property, and other legal risks. Other risks and factors that may limit the recruiting in SME are risks such as legal and operational risks (Rugova & Prenja, 2016, p. 96)

2.3 Theoretical framework

Theoretical framework presents the main theories behind the research area. Theoretical framework presents the goal of this research which was to study how social media influences recruitment in international SME. To summarize the theoretical background, the theoretical framework is presented. The main goal of this research is to provide suitable proposals for Finnish small- and medium sized international companies on how they can use social media for building better recruitment processes.

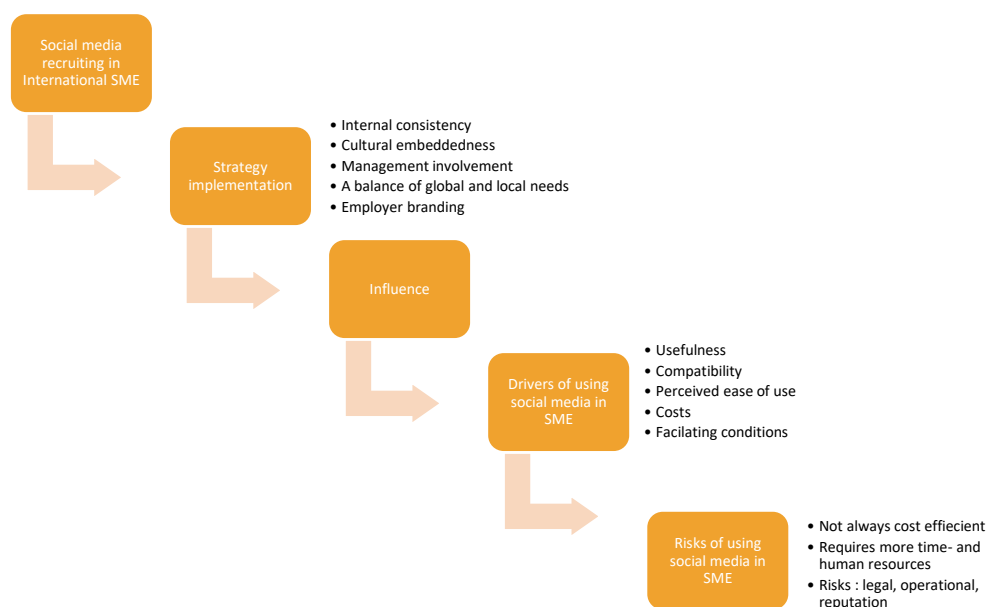


Figure 5. Foundation for the empirical study

The figure 5 explains the theoretical framework of the thesis and moreover, it shows the main elements that this research consists of and clarifies the main purpose. Theoretical framework of this thesis is presented based on the previous research about international SMEs, social media recruiting and moreover the influence of using social media for recruiting in SME. First chapter of the theoretical background discusses talent

management, recruitment process, social media, and e-recruitment. Second chapter of theoretical background consists of the definition of SME, research about international SMEs and recruitment in SME.



Figure 6. Conceptual model

Figure 6 presents the conceptual model of this thesis. This research offers a conceptual model of the role of social media in international SMEs recruiting process. Conceptual model suggests that there is an interconnection between social media recruiting, success of SMEs, and finding and attracting right talents.

3 Research design

This part of the research will provide methodology and research design. Reader will understand how research data was collected and analyzed. This part will also explain case company selection process. Finally, trustworthiness of this research is discussed.

3.1 Philosophical assumption and approach

Without clear plan, research will come unfocused and aimless empirical wandering (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010, p. 42). Research design is a plan which is made to direct research for logical and systematic results (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, 2010, p. 40). Philosophical approach will describe researcher's own values and choose of data collection techniques (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, p. 124). Research philosophy will tell reader about researchers' way to view the world and it helps to understand the researcher's strategy and methods behind choose of research strategy (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad, p.108). Research philosophies can be divided into four categories positivism, realism, interpretivism and pragmatism (Krishnaswami & Satyaprasad p.108).

Two main research approaches are deduction and induction (Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill, 2009, p. 129). This study is conducted by using deduction which according to Saunders, Lewis and Thronhill (2009, p. 129) means that existing literature has been used while formulating interview questions. To follow deduction, first we must create a hypothesis and then express the hypothesis in operational terms. After this hypothesis is tested and outcomes of this research are examined. Finally, if needed theory will be modified according to the findings.

3.2 Research strategy

This research is conducted by using single case studies. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 145) case study is a research strategy which includes empirical investigation of contemporary phenomenon in its real-life context by using different sources of evidence. This research method is supported by Klenke, Martin and Wallace (2016, p. 10) who states that this strategy is preferred when research aims to give answers to research questions starting with “why” or “how”. This research aims to find the answer for the following research question: *“How does the use of social media influence Finnish international SME recruitment?”*. Research question is using an explanatory approach. Due to the research question, case study was selected. As the research question is formed utilizing explanatory approach, also research strategy should be flexible (Klenke, Martin & Wallace, 2016, p. 10).

Research can be qualitative or quantitative by the nature or mix of these two methods (Aspers & Corte, 2019, p. 142). This research is qualitative by the nature. Aspers and Corte (2019, p. 142) defined qualitative research as a research method which studies things in their natural settings. According to Aspers and Corte (2019, p. 142) qualitative studies usually involves collection of different empirical methods such as case study, interviews, life story, personal experience and so on. Qualitative research is based on the meanings expressed by words (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 482).

According to Klenke, Martin and Wallace (2016, p. 10, the selected qualitative research method enables flexibility and therefore design is changeable during the research processes. Klenke, Martin and Wallace (2016, p. 10) also noted that case study strategy needs flexibility and therefore, qualitative research method was selected to support case study method. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2009, p. 484 research strategy between quantitative and qualitative research should be chosen based on the nature of research questions. Klenke, Martin and Wallace (2016, p. 11) states that qualitative research method also provides extensive and thick description of the research problem and is most used when studying leadership related topics. This was also one of the influencing factors why this research strategy was selected.

According to Klenke, Martin and Wallace (2016, p. 10) in a qualitative research, researcher selects the participants who can generate in-depth answers and extensive understanding of the given research problem. As the research question was formed to give answer for “how”, also more in-depth answers were needed and therefore, qualitative method was used. Also, Klenke, Martin and Wallace (2016, p. 10) states that qualitative research is better to study people’s opinions and perspectives.

As it was stated before in the theoretical background, previous research has concentrated mainly on examine the factors that have been associated with attracting right talents, but a small number of studies have been conducted empirically. This research aims to gain better understanding of the use of social media in recruitment practices. Therefore, qualitative research strategy is selected over the quantitative method.

3.3 Methods of data collection

Saunders, Lewis and Thronhill (2009, p. 320) divided interview types into three categories; structured, semi-structured and unstructured interview. This research is using non-standardized semi-structured interviews. In semi-structured research, interviewer will have themes and questions prepared beforehand, but questions and the order of the questions may vary during the conversation (Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill, 2009, p. 320). Interviews were held in Teams or face-to-face, according to the wishes of the company. Interviews were held in Finnish or in English. According to Ariss, Cascio and Paauwe (2014, p. 177) in-depth interviews and qualitative research are planned to find results that enables the evolution of solid theory. Therefore, selected interview method was chosen.

Interview will consist of 11 interview questions. Questions and the order of questions varied based on the interviewee and the flow of the conversation. Interview questions were open questions and started with how, what, or why. The use of open question will give the interviewee the opportunity to describe the situation by his or herself own

words (Cascio & Paauwe, 2014, p. 337). First, interview will start with background questions of interviewee and case company. Finally, interview was closed with closing question.

3.4 Case selection process

Case firm selection was made to answer the aim of this thesis. Selection was following next criteria:

- 1) The company must be small or medium enterprise (SME). According to European commission (2020) SME criteria are following:
 - Number of personnel is 250 or under
 - Turnover is 50 million or under or
 - Balance sheet total is 43 million or under
- 2) The company must be founded in Finland
- 3) The company must be operating internationally
- 4) Has recruited new professional(s) during the last two years

More specific information about case companies is presented in the table 2.

Company	Number of employees	Core business	Interviewee	Date	Duration
Company 1	66	Cloud services	Brand Specialist	5.12.2023	39 min
Company 2	64	Food industry products	HR Manager	21.12.2023	35 min
Company 3	250	Technology	Director of HR	13.12.2023	39 min
Company 4	99	Management consulting	People Partner	29.12.2023	37 min
Company 5	116	Plastic manufacturing	Sales Director	04.01.2024	40 min
Company 6	160	Information security services (main industry), IT services and telecommunications services and equipments	Talent Acquisition and Employer Branding Specialist	05.01.2024	38 min
Company 7	94	Bakery	HR and occupational health and safety manager	05.01.2024	32min
Company 8	63	Measuring equipments, research equipments	HR Manager	08.01.2024	38min
Company 9	50	Food production	Chief Marketing Officer	15.1.2024	40min

Table 2. Information of the case companies

3.5 Data analysis

Data was collected through semi-structured interviews. Qualitative research data analysis process is divided into three steps (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009, p. 490). First, interview data was gathered, transcribed and meanings were summarized. Also, key points based on the data gathered were summarized. After this, data was categorized. First, categories were made and then data was collected to support each of the category. Finally, data was structured using narratives. According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, (2009, p. 491) this process is following: comprehend data, integrate related data drawn from different transcripts and notes, identifying key themes or patterns from them for further exploration, develop and/or test theories based on these apparent patterns of relationships and finally, draw and verify conclusions.

3.6 The trustworthiness of data analysis

Qualitative research aims to give truthful answers and perspective to the researched topic (Ahmed, 2024, p. 1). This research aims to provide new perspective on existing talent recruitment literature. To ensure trustworthiness, researcher needs to investigate the credibility and reliability of qualitative findings (Ahmed, 2024, p. 1). According to Ahmed (2024, p. 1) trustworthiness in qualitative research investigates the credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. It evaluates how well internal threats of validity are controlled (Ahmed, 2024, p. 1).

Credibility in qualitative research talks more about the internal validity of the research (Ahmed, 2024, p. 1). Therefore, credibility establishes if the findings represent reliable information drawn from the original data and that the findings are in line with the participants original views (Anney, 2014, p. 272). Confirmability concerns about impartiality and objectivity of the findings, and therefore it aims to investigate if the findings are influenced by the researchers' own biases or preferences (Ahmed, 2024, p. 1). One issue related to credibility is selected interview method. Semi-structured interviews may have

two different reliability issues: interviewer bias and interviewee bias (Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill, 2009, p. 326). Therefore, selected interview method may affect to the credibility and confirmability of the results.

Transferability tells how research findings fits to different context (Ahmed, 2024, p. 1). Moreover, Nowel, Norris, White and Moules (2017, p. 3) have stated that transferability refers strongly how generalizable the results are. As the research was made as a case study using qualitative research methods, also transferability is something that has to be considered when trustworthiness of this research is investigated. One concern related to transferability is research method. According to (Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill, 2009, p. 326) qualitative research results may vary, and other researchers may have different results. Also, based on qualitative data research, the results are not able to be considered to reflect whole population as it will also cover a small and unrepresentative sample (Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill, 2009, p. 326).

Dependability is previously referred as *“the stability of the findings over time”* (Anney, 2014, p. 272). To achieve dependability, research process has to be logical and clearly documented (Nowel, Norris, White & Moules, 2017, p. 3). One of the dependability issues was that eight of the interviews were held in Finnish and one was held in English. However, all the questions were translated carefully to avoid translation mistakes. Moreover, the logicity of the research process can be seen as one of the issues related to trustworthiness.

4 Findings

In this section, factors that foster and limit recruiting in international SME are presented. This case study is formed based on the interviews, but some additional information has been taken or confirmed from companies' public internet sites. This part of the result is divided into two categories, factors that foster recruiting in international SME and factors that limit recruiting in international SME.

4.1 Factors that foster recruiting in international SME

In this part, interviewees were asked about factors that are fostering recruitment in international SME. This was made as this research aims to find how companies recruiting processes are affected by social media. Most of these case companies are recruiting talents globally or attracting global talents. It must be considered first that there is variation between case companies international recruiting processes. For example, Company 1 is offering remote and hybrid positions to find the best candidate possible on the markets. On the other hand, Company 9 needs talent that is not that rare and is not hard to find or attract. Even though, talents the case companies are looking are different, findings shows that all these case companies are facing similar challenges when attracting and finding talents globally.

According to the interviews, social media will enhance visibility and employer brand enhancement through LinkedIn and Instagram, it is enhancing younger talents' reach through Instagram and TikTok, it makes it easy to reach passive applicants through Facebook and Instagram and it offers efficient recruitment communication in all these platforms.

In figure 7 the use of different social media platforms for recruiting is presented. From the chart we can see that X (previously known as Twitter) and TikTok had the lowest score. LinkedIn was clearly the most used platform, but Facebook and Instagram came after it.

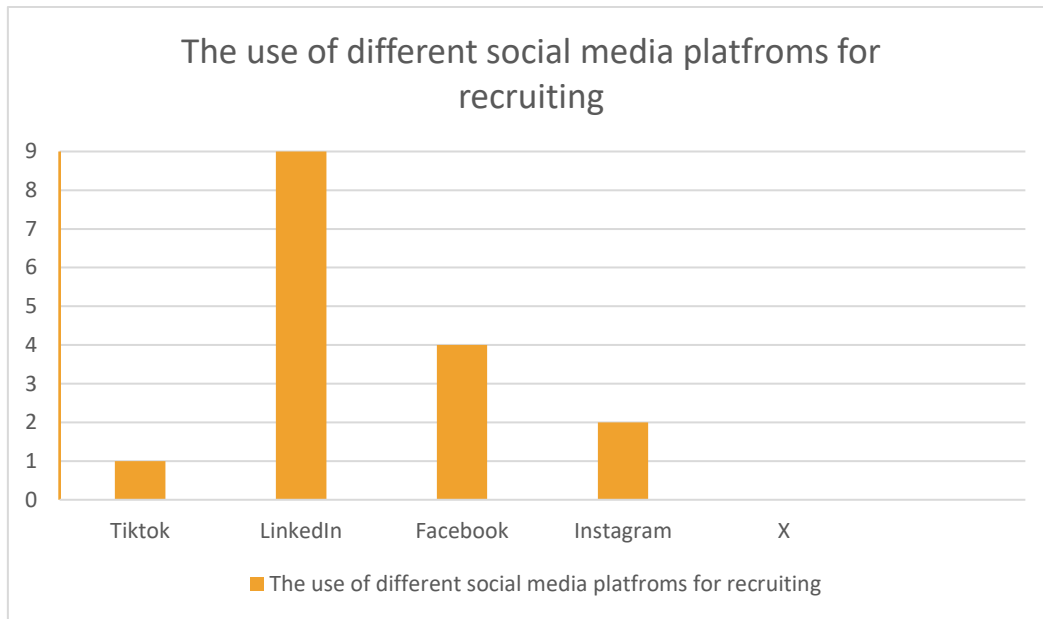


Figure 7. The use of different social media platforms for recruiting

4.1.1 Visibility and employer brand enhancement via LinkedIn and Instagram

First, visibility and employer brand enhancement, was emerged as a factor that fosters SMEs recruitment when using social media for recruitment. From the answers, we can see that SMEs saw the visibility the most valuable outcome. Based on the given answers in the interviews, we can see that all these platforms were offering a place for companies to increase visibility, but LinkedIn was seen as a platform that was offering the visibility that these case companies were looking for. Visibility was seen as significant factor influencing to SME recruitment because through the visibility companies were not only contacting suitable talents but also increasing sales and marketing and moreover, overall

success of the company. According to the interviewees this was leading to the brand enhancement which was seen challenging between SMEs.

We are using paid recruiting advertisements in LinkedIn, but we also have own LinkedIn page. I feel that LinkedIn is the platform where we get most visibility and we also think that the experts that we want to reach are the most active in this platform. (Company 3)

LinkedIn was also seen more work oriented and mainly B2B platform and therefore visibility there was seen important. Also, targeting in LinkedIn was seen easier than in other platforms. This also helped companies to increase visibility among those applicants they were most interested. When discussing with interviewees, interviewees mentioned that they were using LinkedIn to strengthen their brand image. Brand recognition and employer brand enhancement through social media was seen especially important between case companies. Companies agreed that recruiting through LinkedIn improved their brand image and visibility.

I think recruiting through LinkedIn will support our brand and get us more visible. (Company 7)

We can build familiarity and brand image through LinkedIn. (Company 9)

For employer brand enhancement, Instagram was clearly the most used platform between these case companies. Based on the interviews, we can see that employer branding was seen important influencing factor for success.

Especially for a company like us who are not very well known, branding is one of the key things for success. We are not yet so well known that we would have queues of people, wanting to come to use. To do this, we must be active also in social media platforms. (Company 6)

According to the interviewees, through Instagram, they were able to concretely show for the future job seeker, what it is like to be working with them. Moreover, this was seen influencing positively to employer image.

This platform gives the opportunity to learn more about what it is like to be working with the company. For example, what kind of office you have, what kind of people you have working there and what are the values of the company. Especially younger generation coming to work for us have seen this as a benefit. This way we can contact and attract more possible talents. (Company 6)

Also, from the interviews it was noted that the brand enhancement and increased visibility was concerned cost-effective through LinkedIn and Instagram compared to other job searching sites. Interviewees thought that LinkedIn made their recruiting processes easier and more cost-efficient. Interviewee 3 mentioned that recruiting through all these platforms is more cost effective than having an add on a separate job search site. However, there was variation between interviewees. Some of them thought that staying in one platform will have own advantages as learning to use new platform takes time. Also, one of the interviewees mentioned that if they move to new platform they also want to be able to take care of the content they produce there.

4.1.2 Enhancing younger talents' reach via Instagram and TikTok

Based on the answers, we can see that Instagram and TikTok were used to reach especially applicants from younger generation. From the answer we can see that, recruiting through this platform increased SMEs ability to reach younger talents. Especially among younger generation these platforms have been used to strengthen the employer brand. Based on the answers, we can see that something that drives companies to use Instagram is clearly the easy way to effect to the employer image.

Young experts must be contacted somehow, and it is possible through Instagram or TikTok. Through these platforms we can get into their everyday life. Through these platforms we are also able to reach those applicants that are not actively seeking for a new job. In the future the challenge may be how to stand out. (Company 7)

Also, case company 2 said that they have used these platforms mainly to connect with young professionals. These platforms were seen significant for reaching younger talents

as they gave the opportunity for SMEs to have efficient recruitment communication with applicants. From the answers we can also see that most of the companies assumed that higher level candidates are most active in LinkedIn.

Even though, not many of these companies used TikTok for recruiting, they still saw potentiality over it. For example, case company 2 thought that one of the benefits recruiting through TikTok would be that there they would have possibility to contact much younger audience than in other platforms. Overall, TikTok was seen more as content-based platform.

Interviewees noted that in the future companies must be even more efficient and interesting. In the future, standing out will be also more challenging. Interviewees stated that workforce will be even more global. Future challenges will be also how to attract and commit employees in the future. Additionally, it will be important to recognize new platforms quickly, try and to come along. Knowing the target group will help to find correct platforms and act quickly. Therefore, the ability to be active on those platforms where younger generation is, was seen important factor for the success of the SME.

Conclusion from these answers was that these platforms were used for more with lighter content such as sharing information and strengthening employer brand and image. Through Instagram and TikTok, SMEs were able to enhance younger talents more cost effectively.

4.1.3 Easy reach to passive applicants via Facebook and Instagram

Where other interviewees thought that LinkedIn is platform where they reach the passive applicants, other interviewees thought that LinkedIn wasn't the best platform to contact passive applicants. From the results, it is also seen that this also depends on the talent company is reaching. Based on the results, we can see that those companies that were attracting more rare talent were able to contact passive applicants through

LinkedIn. Those companies that were attracting talent that is easily available thought that passive applicants were easier to find through other platforms such as Facebook or Instagram.

Through Facebook and Instagram, we can reach candidates that are not actively looking for a new opportunity. (Company 4)

Overall, interviewees saw Instagram as a more informal recruiting platform but still effective platform to reach and attract especially passive applicants. By targeting right talents, they are more able to reach the right talents and those that are not actively looking.

One factor that foster the recruiting through social media was targeting features. Moreover, through social media SMEs were able to target their audience and possible candidates. Interviewee 4 brought up that targeting through Facebook is easier than through other platforms. Also, Interviewee 9 raised up that targeting possibilities in Facebook are wider.

4.1.4 Efficient recruitment communication via LinkedIn

Overall, LinkedIn was helping companies to have more efficient recruitment communication with applicants. Interviewees tend to think that recruiting through LinkedIn is natural and convenient. Interviewees also thought that the candidate's activity was the best in LinkedIn. Interviewee 9 also mentioned that LinkedIn is not that content sensitive and information there is based on facts. Interviewees also explained that something that drives them to use LinkedIn was the expectations over this platform as they felt that LinkedIn was known as a *"professional networking platform"*.

Efficient recruitment communication was seen as an important factor fostering recruitment in SME because it offers companies opportunity to influence decision making, employer image and corporate brand. Efficient recruitment communication also increases the pool of candidates. Interviewees raised up that though LinkedIn they can build strong

and large connection pool. This also makes it easier and quicker to find right talents. Other platforms do not have this kind of ability to build connections.

In long term, it is creating this pool of candidates, who know your company and wants to work for you. In the future there are even more people that are interested about your company and filling the position gets easier and faster. (Company 6)

We use LinkedIn to publish job ads, but also to expand candidate pool. (Company 4)

We use platforms that will reach the talents globally. Then we can choose the talents we want quite freely which makes recruiting easier. (Company 9)

Through LinkedIn, we have been able to expand candidate pool significantly. LinkedIn offers opportunity to reach talents also globally as it is seen as a “professional network” (Company 1)

With the help of LinkedIn, we have been able to expand pool of candidates. (Company 3)

Company 6 continued that LinkedIn is also considered better networking site for companies that are operating in business-to-business sector.

I think LinkedIn is a great platform for recruiting because it is treated more like professional network where you put your CV and you have a picture of you in more professional setting and you communicate that side of your life, your professional life. (Company 6)

Additionally, interviewees expressed that they felt that it is necessary to interact with candidates. In addition to previous, also building connections was seen as driving factor for the recruitment in SME. Interviewee 1 brought up that LinkedIn is offering the easiest way for interaction between candidates and future employees. Also, Company 4 said that LinkedIn is platform where it is easier to reach higher-level experts. Interviews also revealed that LinkedIn is offering a platform where long-term connecting is possible.

LinkedIn is a great platform when we are trying to connect with the person who is actively looking for new position. We have same agenda with applicant, they give information about themselves, and we give information about the position and our company as a potential employer. It is the natural platform to find new talents. LinkedIn is quite easy to use as communication and marketing are made simple and quick through this platform. (Company 1).

The benefits as I mentioned, is that we can build the connection. We can have a conversation and get to know the applicants even before the candidate applies for a job. (Company 6)

LinkedIn also offers the ability for sourcing and finding right talents. In addition to the other factors, also sourcing side of LinkedIn was raised to be one the reasons why companies have decided to concentrate their recruiting marketing heavily on the social media as we can see from the answers.

It also plays very important role in sourcing phase, as we don't use any other social networks. LinkedIn is world's biggest professional network and because we are business to business company, it's difficult for us to communicate on other platforms for instance business to consumer company that might be on Instagram, and they can be talking about their market. We choose to use LinkedIn for recruiting because it is a meeting place for experts. (Company 8)

According to the interviewees, because of the lack of talents, talents are being pursued constantly, daily, and weekly. Creating attractive and personalized posts has become a challenge for companies. Fast communication of the employer promise is important. Based on the interviews, knowing your target group is extremely important. Communication must be fast to understand, effective and suitable for the target group. Therefore, fast, and effective communication was seen as a factor that foster the recruitment in SMEs.

However, interviewees also stated that the importance of the word-of-mouth has not decreased. Interviewee 3 mentioned during the interview that word-of-mouth has had quite big influence. Also, Interviewee 2 highlighted the importance of word-of-mouth, especially when recruiting lower positions. When people like the product and the concept, they are more willing to consider the employee as a future workplace. This also

works in social platforms. Also, Interviewees highlighted that the role of employer branding is relatively big, especially in the high-end industries.

4.2 Factors that limit recruiting in international SME

In this chapter, Interviewees were asked about the factors that limit the recruiting in SMEs when using social media for recruiting. In other words, what is the role of social media in SMEs recruiting. Based on the answers we can see that un-beneficial visibility, finding senior level candidates through Instagram and TikTok, targeting right candidates through Facebook and Instagram, global competition and diversity and privacy concerns were themes that were emerged when discussing with interviewees. Brand recognition and visibility seems to be one of the key things that interviewees were concerned about. Interviews also revealed that companies were dealing with global competition over talented individuals especially now as the social media has expanded the opportunities for candidates.

4.2.1 Un-beneficial visibility via all platforms

Increased visibility creates other challenges as well. Based on the answers, we can see that especially SMEs experienced increasing visibility also as a treat in recruiting. Interviewees felt that increased visibility in recruiting spends resources and still the number of suitable applicants for the open position may not rise.

With the increasing visibility, one of the main concerns is the increased amount of non-suitable applicants. Going through these applications takes a lot of resources from a small company. (Company 5)

Interviewees also mentioned that even though the visibility is usually driving them to use some platforms it also brings along a variety of different challenges, such as resource allocation and time management. This was also considered as a limiting factor of using social recruiting.

Through the visibility we get a lot of applications and all of them may not be relevant which will slower the process. Not even nearly all applicants are meeting the requirements. (Company 3)

4.2.2 Difficulty in finding senior level talents via Instagram and TikTok

When discussing about the challenges of using TikTok and Instagram in recruiting, interviewees noted that finding senior level candidates is challenging. Overall, recruiters saw that the platform is relatively new and used by younger generation. According to the interviewees, this limits their recruitment process. Additionally, based on the results, we can see that Facebook, Instagram and TikTok was used to reach talents for lower positions while LinkedIn was to attract senior level experts.

There is a challenge of finding senior level candidates' trough this platform. (Company 1).

However, interviewees also noted that attracting senior level candidates is not the only challenge TikTok will occur in the future. Also, the material for the recruiting must be very specific and designed exactly to suit the platform. Interviewees noted that normal recruiting adds do not tend to reach as much of candidates than other platforms. However, results shows that if the recruiting marketing is directly made for this platform, it is expected to attract and reach applicants very well. TikTok was also criticized because the content there was hard to generalized and therefore same content is hard to use in different platforms.

Through TikTok, we could reach more potential applicants if advertising would be directed to fit the platform. For example, having own account and suitable content for this platform. We noticed that a recruiting advertisement, produced through advertising agency, which would work on other platforms, did not generate as much attention in TikTok. (Company 4)

Interviewee 9 described that the limiting factors of using TikTok and Instagram are that those are both content critical platforms. Based on the answer of Interviewee 9, these

platforms are user interest central. These platforms easily reach talents that recruiter is not interested of. Overall, interviewees noted that challenging in recruiting in different social media platforms is to create stable corporate image.

4.2.3 Targeting can exclude potential talents via Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn

Also, Company 6 raised up the challenge of targeting. Too narrow targeting may also influence the talents interest to apply. Targeting was seen easier in social media than in other recruiting platforms.

We at some point recognized that our career site was very heavily targeted. For instance, we would have our benefits listed there that are quite narrow to Finland and this created the sense of exclusion when someone from different country goes to our career sites to investigate us. We tried to change that to give it a more global sense. At least from our colleagues in different locations, we heard that this was much preferable. (Company 6)

We can see that one limiting factor of using social media was that companies have to be quite familiar of their local target group and which platforms individuals locally are active. Based on the interviews we can see that there is variation between different countries and their talents activity on different networking platforms.

I would say that the challenge was to investigate first where people in different locations are looking for jobs. For instance, I would say in Germany the challenge we faced was that they are not so heavy users of LinkedIn. (Company 6)

Next, main challenges of using Instagram as a recruiting platform emerged from the interviews are presented. The main challenges appeared from interviews were that targeting is harder and keeping the work life balance gets difficult when SMEs are using Instagram for the recruiting.

Company 4 mentioned that Instagram and Facebook offer different targeting options, but they are not that effective or usefully when they were targeting potential talents. Recruiting adds should be inclusive and this is reason why it is harder to use these targets. Therefore, SMEs may exclude some candidates. Company 4 mentioned that the most

challenging part of recruiting through social media is the targeting and finding right targets.

According to Company 4 it may be hard to target higher position employees through Facebook. Company 4 gave an example: *“If we are looking for accountants it might be hard to find something common between these applicants and therefore targeting gets harder. While, if we are looking for candidates for lower positions, it might be much easier to find the common interests and this way reach potential candidates”*. This answer highlights the results that the drivers and limiting factors are very closely related to which kind of talent company is searching for.

From the interviews, we can see that LinkedIn was mainly used regardless of the target group while Facebook and Instagram were highly used because they contacted widely talents with similar interests. On the other hand, quality of the information available in LinkedIn was also concern. The possibility to lose those qualified talents due to the lack of important information has increased.

There is concern or maybe a challenge of quality of the information that is on in LinkedIn. A lot of people who might be a perfect fit, they haven't updated LinkedIn and then you just miss out on this information, and you just approach other people. (Company 6)

However, it is important to see that also the ability to guarantee the diversity among applicants is something that limits companies recruiting. Another feature that limits the social recruiting through LinkedIn was quality of the information. This makes the recruiting in SMEs more difficult and challenging.

I would say that there is also a concern of diversity because certain social networks can be mainly targeting for certain group of people. For instance, also with LinkedIn, if we talk about immigrants and refugees, they might not know to go on LinkedIn and create profile. Then we might miss out suitable talent. So that would be concern of challenge of it. (Company 6)

Interviewee also continued that privacy issues are also limiting recruiting through LinkedIn:

I would say that privacy concern is also seen as a challenge, and it limits the recruiting through LinkedIn. Because also what happens is that some people do not use LinkedIn to network. They throw their CV for recruiters and due to GDPR we are not able to process data like this. (Company 6)

4.2.4 Increased competition over talented individuals via all platforms

Due to the increased use of social media for recruitment purposes, also competition has increased during the years. Therefore, also competition over talented individuals between companies has increase. This was also affecting to the SME recruitment processes. Also, size differences between global companies have opened a new challenge. Based on the interviews, smaller- and medium sized companies may not have resources to have same volumes in training and inductions than bigger companies. Interviewees were concerned if this would affect to the talent's decisions.

One of the key challenges have been how to be visible and to be able to present yourself as a stable employer in global markets where potential candidates may not yet know your company. Also finding correct person in global markets has been difficult. The most wanted experts are difficult to reach. (Company 1)

Difficulty to stand out and attract talents. (Company 3)

As a small company it is hard to have similar training programs and induction than bigger companies. This also limits the potential applicants. (Company 1)

One of the challenges of recruiting in social media was the lack of face-to-face meetings. When recruiting talent for local function, sometimes it may not be possible to organize face-to-face meetings before making contract. Also, tight competition and timelines have influenced to this. As companies were attracting global talents through social media platforms, also this was seen as a influencing factor for SME recruitment.

A common challenge when recruiting global talents is that we are not able to meet the candidates face to face during the recruiting process. And this is why it might

be hard to verify the professional competence. Therefore, so far, we have found possible candidates through our customers. (Company 4)

From the answers above, we can conclude that recruiting global talents is not always easy. Companies must think carefully, who they want to attract and how. Global competition over talented individuals increases the challenges that companies are facing.

5 Discussion

In this section, theoretical premises provided in section 2 will be reflected into findings from the case studies and it will give the answer for the research questions. In this section, the results are discussed in the light of previous research and literature. This section will discuss the use of GTM in SME, the importance of TM philosophies in international SME recruitment, influence of using social media in Finnish international SME recruitment and limiting factors.

5.1 The use of global talent management in SME

As it was presented in the theoretical background, Vaiman, Scullion and Colling (2012) defined GTM as organizational activities that effects of attracting, selecting, developing, and ensuring best employees worldwide. Case companies were attracting talents abroad because the job required talented individuals. Finding and attracting talents from global markets have become natural part of their businesses due to internationalization. According to the GTM theory by Stahl et al. (2012) in order to successfully utilize GTM, organizations must follow GTM principles. Based on the results presented in the findings, we can see that companies were following these GTM principles. Stahl et al. (2012) suggested that organizations must follow these principles alignment with strategy, internal consistency, cultural embeddedness, management involvement, a balance of a global and local needs, and employer branding through differentiation.

Especially, employer branding was seen as an extremely important factor of utilizing GTM successfully. The use of social media as a part of the recruitment process, helped companies to build better employer image. Moreover, social media gave the opportunity for companies to influence candidates but also gave opportunity to have efficient communication. We can also see that to successfully use social media for recruitment in international SME, companies should utilize GTM principles. These principles, presented earlier, will help companies to adapt new strategies and new platforms.

It was highlighted by all case companies that visibility, competition between larger companies and brand recognition were influencing factors when recruiting in international SME. Another aspect that was acknowledged from these case studies and supported by the theoretical background above was the challenge of visibility and brand recognition (Schuler, Jackson, and Tarique, 2010, p. 508). It was suggested in the theoretical background that international SMEs are usually more likely to face challenges such as having informal staffing protocols, unable to apply different selection techniques, lack of budget and lack of resources (Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz, 2022, p. 10). All the case companies were global in terms of having subsidiaries in other countries or producing products for international markets, however not all the case companies had employees working in other countries and therefore challenges associated on recruiting in international SME slightly varied.

On the other hand, supported by the theoretical background, findings showed that companies attracting talents from global markets may have more challenges in reduction, removal, attracting and selecting, but also with human resource planning, training, and talent development (Schuler, Jackson and Tarique, 2010, p. 508). This was also acknowledged in case studies, as companies were concerned that they may not have the possibility to ensure similar training programs than other international companies.

Based on the findings, we can see that the case companies looking for rare and more talented individual, were also more global and international in terms of attracting and selecting the right talents from the global markets. As mentioned in the theoretical background, Acikgoz (2019, p. 1) presented that TM has been seen as a critical factor for the organizational success and moreover, the findings from the case study showed that finding the right talent were seen as an important factor by all the case companies.

5.2 The importance of talent management philosophies in international SME recruitment

From the answers concluded from the interviews, we can see that the way companies are attracting, and sourcing talents is based on which TM philosophy they are applying. Meyers and Woerkom (2014, p. 198) suggested that talent the companies are looking for can be divided following exclusive/stable, exclusive/developable, inclusive/stable, or inclusive developable theory. This is why, the results of this research are compared to the TM philosophies. We can also see from the answers, that the drivers and limits of social media were associated with different TM philosophies.

The need to expand the candidate pool was raised in the interviews. As stated in theoretical part above, stable, and exclusive TM philosophy attempts to identify, attract, and retain talented individuals (Meyers & Van Woerkom, 2014, p. 194). When analyzing the data from the findings in the light of the previous theoretical background, many of the companies were utilizing this TM philosophy when recruiting talents for upper positions. They appreciated previous work experience, specific skills, and evidence of the competences. The companies such as case company 1, 4, 5, 6 and 8 were especially utilizing this TM theory. However, these companies saw potential in attracting candidates through LinkedIn. As this TM theory aims to find the talent who are already equipped with needed skills, these companies saw that through more advanced networking sites they can enhance the interaction. In addition to this, from the case studies we can see that these case companies thought that the talents they are looking for are most active in this platform and therefore thought that this way they are able to expand the candidate pool. Based on the findings, LinkedIn was clearly most used platform when company was using exclusive/developable or inclusive/stable theory.

The need to source, contact, communicate and find right talent was also one factor that has emerged from the interviews. Based on the findings and theoretical background, we can see that if the company is utilizing the stable and exclusive theory, there are limited

number of suitable applicants available and therefore, it was concluded by the case studies that LinkedIn is offering the best platform to actively source, contact and find right talents. We can conclude from the findings, that these companies who were applying the stable and exclusive management theory were all tech or digital companies working in a niche field where finding right talent may be hard. Also, the talent they are needing may be hard to teach and therefore the company is looking for the candidate who is already equipped with this talent. Therefore, we can see from the answers that these companies were more likely to allocate their resources for LinkedIn.

Another aspect, that is supported by the theoretical background and the findings from these case studies, was that social media and especially LinkedIn was seen as a cost saving option which will also increase efficiency (Stone and Leadrick, 2015, p. 142). On the other hand, all case companies underlined that, the main drivers of using LinkedIn for recruiting matters was the increased amount of visibility, improved brand image and possibility to impact employer image. Previous literature presented stated that stable and inclusive TM philosophy thinks that the organization is in its best when it is concentrating to the positive qualities of all employees (Meyer & Woerkm, 2014, p. 195). Findings showed that TikTok and Instagram was used when company was looking for individuals with potential to develop them. Moreover, these companies were applying exclusive/developable or inclusive/developable TM theory.

The need to enhance employer brand and employer image was one factor emerged in the interviews. In the theoretical background it was stated that developable and exclusive TM philosophy attempts to develop people with potential (Meyer & Woerkm, 2014, p. 195). Especially the case companies 2, 3 and 4 were using the developable and exclusive TM theory. When we are analyzing the result of this research and the previous literature, we can see that many of the case companies were utilizing this theory for finding employees for junior positions. Moreover, we can see from the findings that these case companies were trying to attract younger generation and therefore saw more potential over the social media platforms such as TikTok and Instagram as they are more popular

among younger generation. Based on the findings, we can see that among these case companies the main drivers of using Instagram were the ability to strengthen the employer brand and employer image.

The need to be able to target right candidates was raised by the interviewees. In theoretical background developable and inclusive TM was refer to the management theory which attempts to develop those ordinary employees to become individuals with extraordinary talent (Meyer & Woerkom, 2014, p. 195). One another factor that was seen as a driving factor between case companies was the ability to use different targeting features. Some interviewees also thought that especially Facebook gave the ability to use targeting for recruiting as well.

5.3 Influence of using social media in Finnish international SME recruitment

As the theoretical background suggested, it was found from the case studies that social media has had a significant influence for recruiting. In addition to this, we can see that there is clear correlation between the use of social media and talent recruitment. This finding supports the research objectives and responses to the main research question which this research aimed to answer. However, from the answers concluded from the interviews, we can see that the way companies are attracting and sourcing talents is based on the which TM philosophy they are applying. This is why, the results of this research are compared to the management philosophies. We can also see from the answers, that the drivers and limits of social media were associated with different TM philosophies.

The data presented in the findings supports the theory introduced by (Spence, 1974). Spence (1974) emphasize that applicants may have limited understanding of the company and therefore decisions about where the company is visible and why will become more important. This was seen from the case studies as companies were actively

thinking what the best places are to be active, what if there is a new platform and most importantly, how the company can allocate their resources. All the case companies agreed that social media gave the opportunity for businesses to source different candidates from large data base and upload job ads as also previous research suggested in the theoretical background (Ouiridi, Pais, Segers, Ouiridi, 2016, p. 415).

On theoretical background Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz's (2022, p. 5) research suggested that industry affiliation, firm size and firm reputation can affect to the way company is using social media for recruiting. Through the findings, we can see that these were the key factors that directed the use of social media for recruiting purposes.

As presented in theoretical background, social media enhance companies' ability to promote themselves internationally, increases social interaction and achieve growth (Fraccastoro, Gabrielsson & Chetty, 2021, p. 1). We can see from the findings that these were the biggest influencing factors of using social media for recruiting among the case companies. Theoretical background also suggested that as the internet age has brought along the social media, companies would utilize social media to increase their network, visibility, and profit (Tsironis, Daglis & Tsagarakis, 2022, p. 802). Findings supports this previous research, and these were seen as a key influencing factors of using social media and social media platforms for recruiting.

5.4 Limiting factors

Based on the given answers from the interviews and the theoretical background, we can conclude that limiting factors of using different platforms depends on which kind of talent the company is looking for. Therefore, this research suggests that there is connection between the chosen TM theory and the role of social media in recruiting.

Challenge of limited resources were emerged from the interviews. Both the findings and the theoretical background showed that when SMEs are recruiting new talents, they are more likely to have a challenge with the budget and this can affect to the recruiting

processes (Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz, 2022, p. 10). As company 1 stated, they have allocated their resources and therefore were only using the platform they thought they will benefit the most. Likewise, to case company 1, also case company 4, 5, 6 and 8 were concerned that the lack of resources may affect to the choice of the platform and therefore, how effective the companies are seeing the recruiting through social media. On the other hand, findings also showed that applying social media for the recruiting was seen challenging as they didn't had enough employees and resources to give the responsibility for one person. This was also seen as a possible challenge by Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz (2022, p. 10) raised previously in the theoretical background.

Theoretical background suggested that one limiting factor could be that SMEs are more likely to have informal staffing protocols than bigger companies (Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz, 2022, p. 10). However, based on the findings from this research, we can see that these all the case companies selected for this research had established recruiting processes. Most of the companies had 2-3 interview rounds and some of them applied psychological tests to show the competences. Manroop, Malik, Camp and Schulz, (2022, p. 10) also suggested that SMEs usually have less trainings for hiring managers and therefore, they are not able to different selection techniques, and this can affect the ability to use social media. Based on the findings, we can still see that at least among these case companies this wasn't seen as a limiting factor. We can conclude from this that at least these selected companies didn't have problems with recruiting processes or selection techniques. This may be caused by the selected firms were relatively big in the category of SMEs by having 50-250 employees.

Challenges of finding and attracting the talent through social media was affecting to the effectivity of the overall recruitment process. It was suggested in the theoretical background that stable and exclusive TM theory tries to attract talented individuals. Thus, we can conclude from the findings that these companies were more likely to have challenges of finding and attracting the talent. Due to this, we can see that these companies

saw more limiting factors in recruiting through LinkedIn such as quality of the information and privacy of the applicants.

Challenge of assuring the privacy of the applicants and work life balance were raised during the interviews. One new perspective emerged from the findings was the **quality of the information**. Some of the case companies were concerned that they would pass some potential talents due to the lack of information in LinkedIn as LinkedIn was seen as the most attractive platform to find candidate. When analyzing the data from the findings, we can see that some of the interviewees were also concerned about the privacy of the applicants. On the other hand, also diversity was one element that was raised up during the interviews. Also, interviewees raised that something that limits their recruiting through social media is the ability to use different targeting features.

We can conclude that based on the findings, case companies were more likely to face challenges when finding senior level candidates from these platforms. As it was stated before, stable, and inclusive TM theory tries to find something positive over all candidates. Therefore, based on the findings we can see that the companies utilizing this theory was more likely to use more than one platform to find the right candidates. However, these companies were concerned about work life balance and privacy. As stable and inclusive TM theory suggested, the companies applying this method were trying to find and attract ordinary employees to become extraordinary. Facebook was seen as the most using platform between these companies. As company 9 stated before, Facebook is the most content critical platform from these. Therefore, this was seen as the most limiting factor over this platform.

6 Conclusion

In this section, author will conclude the results of this research. Then, theoretical contribution, practical contribution and managerial implications are presented. Finally, limitations of the study and suggestions for future research are highlighted.

6.1 Summary

The aim of this study was to study social media recruiting in Finnish international SMEs by conducting nine case studies of Finnish international SMEs and analyzing these in the light of previous literature. The aim of this research was to gain better understanding of different social media recruitment platforms and study more about recruiting processes of international SMEs. It also aimed to provide information for other SMEs which have considered to use these platforms to reach and attract new talents in the future.

This research aimed to give the answer for this research question: *“How does the use of social media influence Finnish international SME recruitment?”*. In order to find the answer for this question, there was two sub questions defined: First, *“How does use of social media foster Finnish international SME recruitment?”* and second *“How does use of social media limit Finnish international SME recruitment?”*. To conclude the discussion, findings for these research questions occurred from the case studies supported by the theoretical background are presented. In conclusion this research offered results on how social media is affecting to Finnish international SMEs recruitment processes.

This research suggests that the role of social media in Finnish international SME recruitment processes depends on the talent the company is trying to attract and therefore TM theories were applied (Meyer & Woerkom, 2014, p. 195).

6.2 Theoretical contribution

This study makes three important contributions to the literature on international SMEs' social media recruitment. First, the findings support the GTM principles by providing insight of the talent recruiting in international SME. Research findings showed that the social media recruiting influences companies' ability to promote themselves internationally, increases social interaction and makes achieving growth easier. On the other hand, this study also shows that recruiting through social media increases their networks, visibility and profit.

Second, theoretical background suggested that finding high-quality individuals is strongly connected with the success of the SME. This research showed that use of social media in recruiting fosters companies recruitment processes as it expands the candidate pool, helps companies to source, contact and find right talents. This study also showed that social media fosters recruiting in these companies as it's more cost saving than original recruiting, it gives ability to strengthen the employer brand and employer image but also makes communication between both parties much easier.

Finally, this study showed that using social media for recruitment in SME also increased un-beneficial visibility. On the other hand, finding senior level talents through Instagram and TikTok was seen challenging. Also, global competition was seen as a limiting factor as possible talents were more aware of the other companies. Moreover, privacy of the applicants, quality of the information and work life balance was also emerged when recruiting in social media. Another key feature was that some of these social media platforms were seen as content critical which means that the popularity of the recruitment adds depends on the form of the content. To conclude, this study provided results in what is the role of social media in recruiting in Finnish international SME

6.3 Practical implications

This research found four important implications for companies. First, the findings suggest that social media recruiting applies to the international growth in Finnish SMEs. Moreover, the findings show that Finnish companies were using social media for recruiting to increase growth in international markets. According to the findings, companies increased visibility and therefore, were more likely to achieve international growth. Also, the conceptual model of this study suggested that by using social media for recruiting will increase Finnish companies' stage of international growth and moreover, success of SME.

Second, the findings suggest that recruitment through social media is a source of high-quality talents. Moreover, social media gives large and cost-efficient pool of talents. Therefore, companies were able to attract and source high-quality talents. Findings also showed that finding high-quality talents is strongly connected with the success of the SME.

Third, the findings suggest that the social media recruiting will affect to the corporate branding and therefore for positive employer image. Findings show that by utilizing social media SMEs are more capable to influence to their own employer image and moreover, influence on brand image. By examining the influence of social media in Finnish SMEs, the risks of using social media for recruiting can be estimated and therefore failures can be avoided.

Finally, we can also see that to successfully use social media for recruitment in international SME, companies should utilize GTM principles. These principles, as presented earlier, will help companies to adapt new strategies and new platforms.

6.4 Limitations of the study

Every research has its own limitations but it's more important to be able to identify these limitations (Saunders, Lewis & Thronhill, 2009, p. 538). Three most important limitation in this study will be discussed next. First, the size of the sample is brought up. In this research, 9 case company were selected. Second limitation on this research is the nature of the research. As this research was made as qualitative research, which is using semi-structured interviews, it's important to understand that interviewees have different ways to understand the questions and may not be able to answer some questions if answer will cover confidential material. And third limitation was that this research was investigating only Finnish international SME's. This research was made to describe only one geographical area. Also, this research will only investigate organization which are meeting the requires of SME such as the size of the organization, turnover and balance sheet total.

One of the limitations of this research was the lack of information towards recruiting through TikTok. It was decided before interviews that this research is focusing on these platforms and therefore the amount of the data and the quality was not known. On the other hand, this study shows that TikTok is not much used for recruiting purposes especially in SMEs. This research gives still perspective how this platform could be used in the future and why especially SMEs should have courage to use this platform more.

Interviewees background variated and this may also influence to their answers. Such as age, educational background, gender, position in the company, experience working with case company and overall feelings and attitudes towards social media may have influenced the way they answered. Interviewees had 1- 30 years of experience working with HR, most of the interviewees had higher education related to Human Resources. Three of the case companies are represented by their marketing division as their HR and marketing functions were closely working with each other due to the size of the company. It must be noted that recruiters' own beliefs, status in the company and background can also influence their answers.

Lastly, this research only studied nine companies from different industries so these findings may not be generalized for a larger population and may not represent all Finnish international SMEs. This study has a geographical limitation as well as it only concentrated to study international SMEs founded in Finland and therefore, the results may not be used in other countries.

6.5 Suggestions for future research

As it was stated previously in this study, the interests towards social media and especially towards recruiting through social media platforms have increased and there is some literature and studies available. Still, there is not much attention towards social recruiting in SMEs. By considering outlined theoretical contributions and limitations of this study, we can see that this research gives the direction for the future studies. Still, this study focuses only on SME recruiting in social media platforms.

Future research could compare the role of social media between SMEs and large companies. In this research, the sample is relatively small as it only covers companies founded in Finland and that are operating in international markets. However, this was made to give more specific understanding how Finnish SME's are utilizing social media for their recruiting. To have generalized results, a bigger sample is needed. Future research could compare how these results differs in different countries. This would require quantitative analysis and survey.

Also, social media use in organizational context should be investigated more as now the research is concentrating to applicants' perspective (Ouiridi et al., 2015, p. 240). Also, as (Meier & Peters, 2023, p. 14) states, cross industry, cross firm sizes or cross firm life cycle stage analysis in SMEs is needed in the future. In terms of topics of future research, more attention could be given for the targeted recruitment. This would help companies to build

realistic job expectations, find more skilled and more diverse applicants who are more likely to accept the job offer.

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Appendices

Appendix 1. Interview questions

Theme	Question
Introduction (1-2min)	Introducing research area and the subject of the interview for the interviewee
Background (5-10min)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Background of the company 2) Background of the interviewee, current position and educational background 3) The current stage of internationalization. Which countries your company is operating and when you have started internationally?
Recruitment (5min)	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Recruiting process of your company 2) How many applicants your recruiting adds have contacted approximately? Is there some variation between different channels? 3) How do you measure the success of your recruitment processes?
Recruiting in international SME (5min)	1) Have you or your company recruit new talents in different locations or only in Finland? If so, how these recruiting processes have been different from recruiting in Finland? Have you faced any challenges?

<p>Social media (5min)</p>	<p>1) Which social media platforms your company use?</p> <p>2) What social media channels your company use the most?</p> <p>3) For what use your company use these channels?</p>
<p>Social media recruitment (10-15min)</p>	<p>1) Which social media platforms have you used when recruiting new talents? And why you or your company chose to use these?</p> <p>2) What you think about recruiting through,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - LinkedIn, - Facebook, - TikTok or - Instagram? <p>3) Is there other channels (social media platforms) that are of interest either now or in the future but are not included here?</p> <p>4) On your point of view, what are the benefits of recruiting on social media though these different channels, LinkedIn, Facebook, TikTok or Instagram?</p> <p>5) On your point of view, what are the challenges of recruiting on social media through these different channels, LinkedIn, Facebook, TikTok or Instagram?</p> <p>6) Describe me the reasons why you have chosen different recruitment</p>

	<p>channels? (Is there some influencing factors such as age, time or money for example?)</p> <p>7) Have you been satisfied of attracting right candidates through these channels? Any surprises or regrets?</p> <p>8) Overall, what you think about social media recruiting now and in the future?</p>
Closing questions (5min)	1) Is there something you would like to add or clarify?