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**EMPLOYER BRANDING IN EUROPEAN ONLINE JOB DAYS VIRTUAL
RECRUITMENT EVENTS – A CASE STUDY**

Master's Thesis

Marketing

May 2022

Unit Department of Marketing			
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Title Employer branding in European Online Job Days virtual recruitment events – A case study			
Subject Marketing	Type of the degree Master's	Time of publication May 2022	Number of pages 54
<p>Abstract</p> <p>As Finland suffers from a lack of work force, new ways to conduct international recruitment are implemented. The Finnish government's plan includes drastically increasing the amount international talent recruited to Finnish companies. Companies themselves also increasingly conduct international recruitment. There are projects and services available to help the process. One such service is EURES.</p> <p>EURES organizes online recruitment events called European Online Job Days to help companies access the European labor market as well as enable the free movement of European workers. As more and more companies start attracting foreign talent, the competition for the attention of these professionals increases. Through employer branding companies can differentiate and create attractive opportunities.</p> <p>The thesis introduces employer branding based on previous research and theories and applies that to investigate how Finnish companies attending the European Online Job Days events conduct employer branding and how effectively they are able to utilize the platform. Some important topics recognized were online brand communities that are formed, for example, on social media platforms. The recruitment event platform could be considered a social media platform as it includes a social aspect. Another important topic is eWOM or electronic word of mouth. Organizational culture and employee ambassadors were found to be effective in employer branding and some companies observed utilized these theories in their recruitment efforts.</p> <p>The thesis examines four Finnish companies attending three different online events. Another type of event attendance introduced is an info point which is a local municipality or regional development organization, with the purpose of attracting jobseekers. The thesis discovered four different engagement levels of attendance. This was based on the many of the available tools the companies used during the event day and assessing how invested the company was. There could be seen a lack of understanding how to efficiently maximize the effectiveness of the tools and how to utilize the platform effectively to conduct international recruitment.</p> <p>As international recruitment will become increasingly important, hiring managers, HR professionals and CEOs should utilize all available tools to maximize the reach of their recruitment efforts. Tools such as the European Online Job Days are good at reaching thousands of jobseekers and a clear trend towards increasing interest from the jobseekers' side shows that the now is the time start using the platform. The events are free and thus they are a low-bar first step in international recruitment.</p>			
Keywords EURES, employer branding, eWOM, international recruitment, European online job days			
Additional information			

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1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter of the thesis will introduce the research aim and the theme of the topic as well as the research background, research methodology, and the context of the study. The general structure of the thesis is also introduced and described briefly.

1.1 Background and purpose of study

The Finnish Government's plan (also known as Marin's Government) includes section "3.5. Finland built on trust and labor market equality". The plan states that work-based immigration and foreign specialists are needed: "Finland needs active work-based immigration. The Government aims to increase work-based immigration of experts. The assigned priorities of work-based immigration concern sectors suffering from labour shortages, and the specialists, students and researchers who are essential for leading and growing fields of research, development and innovation. A wide-ranging action programme will be compiled to attain this target." (Finnish Government, 2019). Definite action needs to be taken and studies need to be conducted to ascertain what attracts foreign talent and which channels are most effective. For example, Lapland has multiple projects to increase attractiveness and there are reports coming that investigate the attractiveness of a certain region or country. However, there are already tools and programs that can be quickly adapted to increase the labor force. It seems that the government's plan is heavily invested in third country nationals and expanding international recruitment to third countries. However, the European union also has its programs and one of them is EURES, where the aim is to enable the free movement of workers. This thesis will examine EURES and its European Online Job Days events and investigate how Finnish employers utilize the platform and employer branding actions. The EURES services as well as the European Online Job Days events are introduced and explained in the next chapter.

Moreover, the ongoing global COVID-19 pandemic, pushed the world into a more digital era than ever before. Job interviews are increasingly conducted over the internet and job fairs have moved to online versions as international travel was banned and companies and jobseekers had to discover new ways to connect and meet. It is likely

that the trend will continue as emissions from international travel can be cut and there are other huge positive environmental effects of hosting these events and fairs online. Additionally, there are considerably more jobseekers who can now attend such events because they are not restricted to local events only. There is, however, little research done on the matter. In fact, there currently exists no research directly relating to the European Online Job Days events. Furthermore, the effectiveness and results of the EURES services have also not been studied extensively.

As mentioned, there are various programs for job mobility and this thesis will examine one of them. *EURES* or *EUROpean Employment Services*. According to the EU commissions rules and regulations, EU member countries must allow and enable the free movement of workers (European Commission, 2000). To accomplish this, EURES was formed in 1994. EURES will be introduced in more detail in the next chapter.

This thesis will examine employer branding and Finnish companies participating in the online recruitment events called European Online Job Days, organized by EURES members in different EU and ETA countries. *The thesis will attempt to identify how employer branding can be seen and if it even is visible. It will also examine what ways and tools employers utilize to create or communicate their employer brand in the context of recruitment events.* The theoretical background of the thesis will be based on employer branding, branding, brand online communication, and electronic word of mouth. *The purpose is to investigate what the company profiles and the job vacancy postings offer and how the tools available on the platform are used.* This will be contrasted to the theory introduced in the theory section. The data was gathered by examining previous events and the created company profiles, job postings, as well as feedback during the events.

1.2 Research methodology and research aim

As the method of research, the thesis utilizes instrumental or collective case studies and a qualitative research method. The cases studied are two Finland Works events organized October 5th, 2021, and February 16th, 2022, as well as Work in Lapland organized September 1st, 2020.

The case study was chosen as the method as a single phenomenon can be chosen to be closely observed and investigated. Choosing qualitative research allows the formation of new theories and generalizations as well as expanding on the understanding of less studied phenomena. The thesis's results will provide insight into how the platform can be used efficiently. (Daymon & Holloway, 2011; Stake 1995)

The thesis's content analysis part will comprise of and examine four different companies and their employer profiles as well as introduce two info points while analyzing and comparing them to the employer profiles. The theoretical concepts will be introduced in the third chapter. Additionally, job vacancy postings will also be examined. The aim is to compare the level of commitment and effectiveness of the organizations in utilizing the tools presented by the European online job days platform and discover if European Online Job days events can be used effectively to the purposes of employer branding and employer marketing.

1.3 Structure

The thesis is divided into clear structures and chapters. The introduction and justification formed the first chapter that also briefly introduced the research methodology and purpose and this structure. The latter two are explained in more detail in chapter four.

The second chapter introduces the EURES services as well as the events being studied. The third chapter explains and introduces the theoretical background. The theory is focused on themes such as employer marketing, employer branding and online brand communication, and it is based on previous literature and theories.

As mentioned, the fourth chapter explains the research methodology. The fifth chapter presents and analyzes the data. The sixth chapter analyzes the data more thoroughly while providing answers to the research questions. The seventh and eight chapters discuss the limitations of the research and provide ideas for further research. The tenth chapter offers managerial implications of the research for both employers and EURES advisors. And, lastly, a bibliography is included.

2 EURES

Before examining *what* the virtual recruitment events are, the *EURES services* must be introduced as one of the services offered within EURES are recruitment events as well as virtual recruitment events. EURES is an acronym for EUROpean Employment Services, which is a European cooperation network that is a form of cooperation between the European Commission, The European Labor Authority and national public employment services, as well as private admitted employment services called partners or members. (European Labour Authority, 2022)

As discussed in the introduction, the Government plans to increase the number of third country—or outside the EU—recruitment. However, with current legislation, jobseekers looking to enter Finland from outside the EU must obtain a work permit before they are allowed to work in Finland. (Finnish Immigration Service, 2022) The process can be time-consuming, and there are months of paperwork and bureaucracy needed before a new employee can come to Finland and work. There are even cases where the process takes so long that the recruiting company has decided not to pursue the employee as they cannot get the work permit quickly enough. Compared to jobseekers from outside of Europe, EU citizens have the right to move and work in any member country. The only requirement in Finland is that EU citizens register themselves with the Finnish Immigration service three months after arriving in Finland. (Finnish Immigration Service) However, no work permit is needed, therefore, employers have much more flexibility in recruiting from within the EU.

EURES services are available in all European Union member countries as well as Iceland, Lichtenstein, Norway, and Switzerland through mutual agreements. The goal of EURES is to allow for the free movement of workers by enabling access to information for example on labor markets, working conditions, living conditions and local laws. EURES also offers support services and financial aid to both jobseekers as well as employers through different projects. A large part of the service is also a mutual exchange of information. (European Commission, 2022)

As different parts of Europe struggle with high unemployment, other parts struggle with a lack of workforce. EURES attempts to solve this problem by enabling the free

movement of labor across European Union member states. There is still little research done on EURES and how free movement of workers reduces the unemployment rate, for example. (Pauzaite, Baryniene & Suke, 2014)

In addition to comprising of local public employment services, EURES also accepts private employment services or, for example, relocation services. (European Commission, 2022; European Labour Authority, 2022) There are two different levels of membership, EURES partner and EURES member. The levels have different requirements that the organization must offer. Other members and partners could be, for example, trade unions, employer organizations and other labor market actors. The members and partners must provide services and information to employers and jobseekers. (Pauzaite et al., 2014) However, this thesis will examine EURES services from the public employment services' perspective as the services offered in the public employment service are free to employers. Additionally, most of the European online job days events are organized by public employment services while the private sector provides either information or job opportunities. The services are also free of charge to jobseekers.

Since 2021, the EU wide coordination of the EURES network has been under the European Labor Authority. The aim, according to ELA, is to ensure that jobseekers' and workers' rights are upheld and recognized and that employers can hire candidates, or EU citizens, without issues. According to the European Labor authority, a long-term goal is to develop the digital services, and this also includes development of online recruitment events. (European Labour Authority, 2022)

The main part of the EURES network is the one thousand EURES advisers who work across Europe and advise jobseekers and employers. (European Commission, 2022) Finland has over 40 EURES advisers. The advisers are situated locally in different cities or municipalities and are responsible for the jobseekers and employers of their own area. (TE-palvelut, 2021, Työmarkkinatori, 2022)

EURES services include, for example, matching job vacancies and CVs on the EURES portal. The EURES portal is the main channel of EURES work where employers can post job vacancies that are visible in the whole of Europe. This is the one opportunity

of employer branding as companies can include their visual identity or other media. Employer branding will be discussed further in the thesis. In Finland, all vacancies reported to the TE Services are automatically transferred also to the EURES portal. However, employers also have a choice to *flag* their vacancy so that it appears on the EURES portal indicating that the employer interested to hire from other EU countries.

Figure 1. Showcases the EURES portal and depicts the impressive numbers of registered jobseekers and how many open job vacancies there are. Interpreting the numbers, while there are three million open vacancies, there are only 900 000 resumes. And only 4,000 registered employers. Finnish employers who register on the platform would immediately increase their potential jobseeker pool significantly. The EURES service is still rather unknown, and efforts must be made to increase the awareness of the service among jobseekers as well as employers. (Pauzaite et al., 2014)

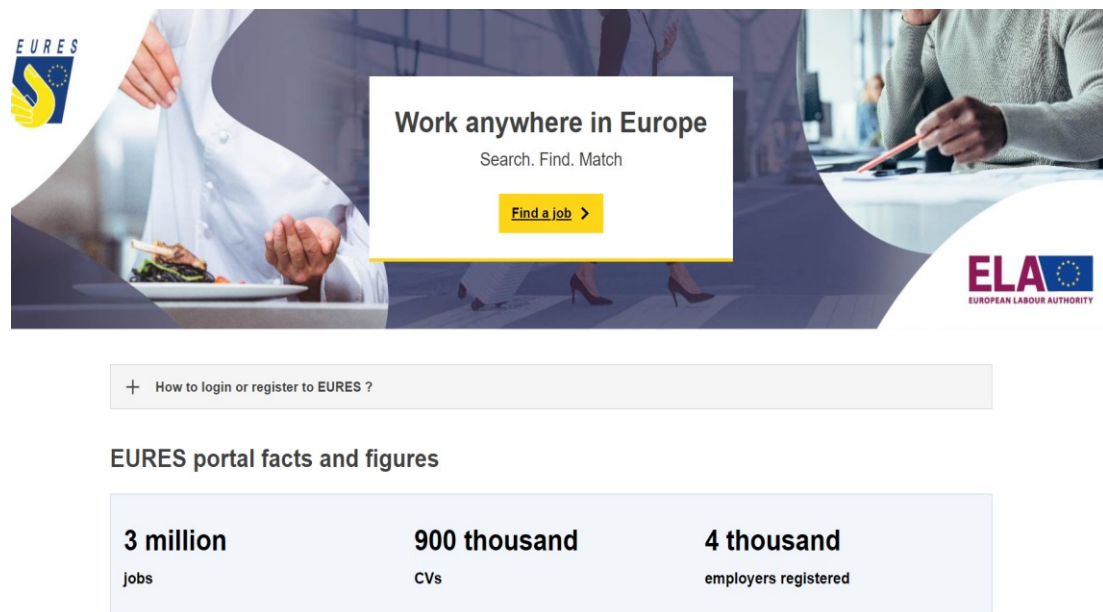


Figure 1: A screenshot of the EURES portal (Source: European Commission 2022)

Other services, EURES advisers offer, are information and guidance to jobseekers and employers, access to information on job markets, access to information on the living and working conditions of member states as well as general guidance on social security and taxation, for example. There are also information and guidance services to cross-border workers and employers. EURES advisers also give guidance on how to apply for financial aid called EURES Targeted Mobility Schemes. In addition, to the previously mentioned, EURES also offers support after employment for example on language training and integration to the new country. The most important service in regard to this thesis, is the organization of virtual and live recruitment events called European Online Job Days and European Job Days, respectively. (European Commission, 2022)

2.1 European online job days - EOJD

As discussed above, one of the EURES services offered is the organization of recruitment events called European Job days. These are job or recruitment fairs organized in an EU member state, and they allow for the matching of employers interested in hiring from abroad as well as jobseekers looking to move and work in another EU or ETA country.

During the events, jobseekers can also get information on living and working conditions of the country in which they are interested. Job interviews are also possible in addition to applying for jobs. The job fairs or recruitment events are organized either onsite or online. The events are free of charge to jobseekers as well as employers. This is a clear difference as most other recruitment events require employers to purchase a place for their stands, be it a desk or a virtual profile. European Job Days are advertised across Europe by EURES advisers.

Beginning in 2019, mostly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, most if not all onsite events were canceled, or they were taken online. It should, however, be noted, that online events have been organized since 2013 in addition to the live events. European Online Job days are virtual versions of the events organized on the website platform www.europeanjobdays.eu. Figure 2. highlights the online platform and the start page of the European Online Job Days portal. On display are upcoming events with the most

recent ones on a carousel. The figure 2 also shows how statistics are shown on the platform (e.g., number of jobseekers, employers, and organized events).

Home Events Exhibitors Jobs Log in Register

INTERESTED IN FINDING A JOB IN EUROPE?

WITH EURES TO EUROPE!

12 MAY 2022
Online event

Are you looking for a new job, a new start abroad or simply just a change? Would you like to get in touch with employers from another country or to take information about living and working conditions in another country? You can get everything in one place. EURES. Start here.

VISIT THE EVENT PAGE

Work in Lapland
04 September 2022
Online event
Your next great adventure is waiting! Among the soft of the fjords, explore the magical nature and experience the warmth of Northern Lapland. Here you will find a many unique offers. [View event](#)

Tourism and Hospitality jobs in Norway
07 September 2022
Online event
The Online Job Day event will take place ONLINE on 7 September from 13.00 to 4.00 (CET). Are you a jobseeker looking for new job opportunities in hospitality in Norway? [View event](#)

Work@PL2022
30 October 2022
Online event
Are you looking for a job in Poland? Are you a Polish employer who is looking for qualified employees from EUREA countries? Take part in the European Job Day, Work@PL2022 event! [View event](#)

WORKING ALL EVENTS

European Job Days in numbers since 2013

269 Events in total	6 841 Participating exhibitors	68 418 Registered jobseekers	29 378 Published job offers	143 768 Total job applications
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What are European Job Days all about?

Are you interested in recruiting or finding a job in Europe?

The European Job Days are events where you need. European Job Days are dynamic recruitment events that bring jobseekers and employers together. Jobseekers can find the best recruitment opportunities but also practical information and advice from EURES Advisors and other employment professionals. Employers will enjoy free and direct access to a huge pool of European jobseekers interested in working in different places. [View event](#)

Are you a **jobseeker**? Are you an **employer**?

Have a chat with exhibitors, inform potential employers about events you are taking part in, or arrange a job interview. Become an exhibitor at one of the European Job Days events.

CREATE ACCOUNT NOW

Figure 2: A screenshot of the European Online Job Days portal (Source: European Job Days, 2022)

Organizing the event online allows for an even greater number of participants to join the event and increases the number of potential jobseekers the employers can reach. According to the European online jobs website, hundreds of fairs are organized each year by at least by 32 different countries.

During the events, employers can access applications and CVs of jobseekers who have either applied for jobs or shown interest in the company. There are many different varieties of job fairs from industry specific to general events where employers from vastly different industries are present, for example, from tourism to healthcare or ICT. Additionally, the events are always free of charge and participants can attend the events from anywhere in the world as long as they have an internet connection and a computer or a smartphone.

The events allow jobseekers to apply to open vacancies, learn about the company via a company profile, watch a live stream of the day as well as chat with employers directly either through text chats or video calls. The live stream of the day usually offers insight into living and working conditions, area and country presentations, general information about financial aid as well as company presentations and info. The live stream of the event is visible on the main page, or the starting page, of the event and is streamed continuously throughout the day. This is one venue that a company can brand itself and highlight the open positions. Jobseekers can also browse all available vacancies as well as all participating employers and their profiles or stands.

For employers, the events are free of charge and employers are encouraged to take part. Marketing efforts are made by the public employment services as well as private members. Employers can register and build their profile that includes pictures, text description, logos, videos, as well as the job vacancies. The vacancies also allow for text, video, and images to be added. The company stands or profiles are the main representation of the company in the event and the profile is saved so it can be used in other future events as well. Thus, it is worth for the employers and companies to create a good profile and add the company essence to the profile. For many jobseekers, this might be the first impression they get of the company, and this is the way employers can attract jobseekers.

The events also allow for live chatting during the event. This requires the companies or organizations to designate at least one representative of the company who is available during the event for live questions and answers. The chats mean that jobseekers can ask questions directly from the company representative using the software *Jitsi*. It is not necessary to register to Jitsi or download any software, thus, it is a low-threshold way for contacting the company. Companies should utilize this opportunity to reach jobseekers. Additionally, during the events, there is also a public general chat where employers can go and announce they are available for one-on-one chatting. Employers can also go on the public chat to remind jobseekers to apply for positions and visit the company profile to learn more. The company profiles can also include a link, for example, to the company's websites. The public chat is also a place where jobseekers can talk to each other so word of mouth spreads quickly, for example, if a company is not reachable through the chat. The significance of word of mouth is detailed further on.

Another venue for companies to present themselves is the day's *agenda* or live stream that is on the agenda page, as discussed earlier. In this video, companies have the opportunity to showcase their organization and open positions either through marketing videos, live interviews, recorded interviews, live workplace streams or a combination of them. Figure 3 depicts the agenda page of an upcoming event *With EURES to Europe!* The particular event is an example of a general European event where multiple EU member states take part to highlight job opportunities within their countries. Companies can be highlighted for example under the *Living and Working* themes. They also typically include general information in working and living conditions. One of the questions this thesis will investigate is how companies have utilized this opportunity. It should also be noted that, while the live stream is only available during the event, a recording of the entire day's agenda is posted a short while after the event. For example, if jobseekers want to rewatch the video. The public chat, however, is not recorded. Thus, the video companies present during the day in the live agenda, will remain on the internet perpetually.

WITH EURES TO EUROPE!

🕒 12 MAY 2022
📍 Online event

[REGISTER FOR THIS EVENT](#)

🕒 ABOUT THIS EVENT | ☰ VIEW AGENDA | 🔍 BROWSE EVENT JOBS | 👤 BROWSE EXHIBITORS

Agenda

📅 12 May 2022, Thursday

ⓘ The agenda displayed below is based on the local time of the device viewing this page and may differ from the actual time of the event (especially important for onsite events). For more information please refer to the section 'About this event'.

Time	Presentation name
11:00 - 11:10	WELCOMING WORDS AND INTRODUCTION OF EURES SLOVAKIA
11:10 - 11:15	LIVING AND WORKING IN DENMARK
11:15 - 11:20	LIVING AND WORKING IN IRELAND
11:20 - 11:25	LIVING AND WORKING IN NETHERLANDS
11:30 - 11:40	SEASONAL WORK WITH EURES
11:40 - 11:45	EUROPASS – „CREATE A CONCISE, CLEAR AND FACTUAL CV ONLINE“
11:45 - 11:55	LIVING AND WORKING IN BULGARIA
11:55 - 12:00	LIVING AND WORKING IN SLOVAKIA
12:00 - 12:15	LIVING AND WORKING IN SWEDEN
12:15 - 12:20	IN AXTION - SUCCESS STORY - CLIENT & DUTCH EMPLOYER
12:20 - 12:25	EURES TARGETED MOBILITY SCHEME
12:25 - 12:30	WHAT NOT TO FORGET BEFORE GOING ABROAD
12:30 - 12:35	LIVING AND WORKING IN CZECH REPUBLIC
12:35 - 12:45	LIVING AND WORKING IN GERMANY
12:45 - 12:50	LIVING AND WORKING IN ITALY
12:50 - 13:00	BACKUPJOBS – RIVER AND OCEAN CRUISE SHIP OPPORTUNITIES
13:00 - 13:05	EURES SLOVAKIA WORKS WITH SOCIAL MEDIA & YOUNG PEOPLE
13:05 - 13:10	THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING

Figure 3: A screenshot of an upcoming event With EURES to Europe (Source: European Job Days, 2022)

Additionally, for other originations the European online Jobs days events offer the opportunity to provide information for example on living and working conditions to jobseeker from across Europe. This means that, for example, municipalities, cities, or regional development organizations can register their own stand and include information for jobseekers looking at certain areas of Finland. These types of participants are called *Info Points*, and there is no requirement for them to add job vacancies. Info points can also include video and have the same opportunity to chat with interested parties one-on-one. The thesis will observe two info points and compare the media added to those of the companies' profiles.

EURES advisers from other countries may also attend the event and give guidance and provide information to jobseekers from their countries. Active EURES advisers from other countries who have attended Finnish events are, for example, Bulgarian, Greek, and Portuguese advisers.

Next, the three Finnish events are introduced. Four companies who attended either one or all the events are chosen for this thesis for comparison.

2.1.1 Finland Works

As this thesis investigates how companies can attract talent to the North, or Finland, three particular European online job days events are chosen for observations. Two *Finland Works* events and one *Work in Lapland* event. The reason for including both types is that *Work in Lapland* was not organized in 2021 due to the pandemic. This will be addressed in more detail below.

Finland Works is an online job days event that represents a more general event meaning that is not industry specific, and employers from all industries are able to participate. Additionally, it is not location specific in a sense that all employers from Finland are welcomed. It should be noted that there is a limitation however, the physical location of the job must be within Finland (or Åland). There have been a total of seven Finland Works events of which one is a localized event called *Finland Works West Coast Finland*. The event was focused on the west coast of Finland and employers had to be physically located in one of the locations bordering the western coast

of the Gulf of Finland. Typically, Finland Works is organized twice a year, one in the Spring and one during the Fall season.

The following table includes Finland Works events and the number of exhibitors in each. Unfortunately, as job vacancies are closed, they disappear from the event. However, the TE Services collects participant data, and it has been added to the organization's website from 2021. The below table 1 reflects the number of reported vacancies and attended jobseekers.

Name of event	Date	Exhibitors	Vacancies	Jobseekers
Finland Works	4.4.2019	32		
Finland Works	9.10.2019	30		
Finland Works	18.11.2020	35		
Finland Works	11.2.2021	52	502	2173
Finland Works	5.10.2021	68	912	1746
Finland Works	16.2.2022	77		
Finland Works – West Coast Finland	3.3.2022	27		

Table 1: Data gathered from the old TE Services website (Source: TE-palvelut, 2021)

All the event videos are available on the individual event agenda page and can be viewed without a need to register to the website.

2.1.2 Work In Lapland

Work in Lapland is another European online job day event organized by Finland, however, this time the event is organized by EURES advisers in three regions of the North of Finland: Lapland, Northern Ostrobothnia, and Kainuu. The event is focused mainly on the tourism industry to answer the lack of seasonal workers. There is also a strong presence of industry as Lapland has a few massive factories and mines. Work in Lapland has been organized four times since 2017 as online recruitment events or fairs. The event was not organized in the year 2021, as the ongoing pandemic heavily

affected the tourism industry as borders were closed and the tourism industry all but shut down.

The pandemic's effect was already felt in 2020 as employers had to cancel their participation as major layoffs occurred. According to Lapland's Trade Barometer (Ammattibarometri, 2022), however, the tourism industry has been steadily recovering and there is again a massive lack of workforce in the HORECA, or hotels, restaurant and catering, industry. The event attempts to answer the need for work-based immigration by enabling local employers to easily reach the wider European labor markets easily and with little investment. The event also offers an excellent way for local cities and municipalities to attract immigration. Work in Lapland seems to be the only international recruitment event aimed specifically towards the tourism industry suffering from a lack of workforce in the north. The event also seems unique when compared to similar events from neighboring Sweden and Norway.

The table 2 below reflects the organized Work in Lapland events and the number of exhibitors in each.

Name	Date	Exhibitors
Work in Lapland – Welcome to Finland	27.9.2017	19
Work in Lapland II – Welcome to Finland	6.9.2018	29
Work in Lapland	3.9.2019	25
Work in Lapland	1.9.2020	28

Table 2: Data Data gathered from the old TE Services website (Source: TE-palvelut, 2021)

2.1.3 Others

Other events that should also be mentioned, are joint events organized in cooperation with other EU countries. Finland has been a part in Nordic collaboration events such as FiNoSe or Finland Norway Sweden Day, Digit'all jobs, and Crossing Nordic Borders.

These types of collaboration events have employers and exhibitors from all organizing countries and jobseekers from across Europe. The principles of all European online job events are the same and employers can use the same profiles in all of them. The events allow employers from Finland to directly compete with employers from other countries to get the best foreign talent.

Finally, it should be mentioned that, although, the events are organized by EURES and are to help with the free movement of workers, the events are not closed from jobseekers from non-EU/ETA countries or third countries. In this case, however, it is the jobseekers' responsibility to discover what types of permits they might need to be able to work in an EU country. Usually, this means a work permit is required. It should also be noted that a work permit in one EU country does not grant the right to work in another EU country. (TE-palvelut, 2021) The registration process requires the jobseeker to disclose to which EU country they have a permit to work in and if they do not have a permit, the registration is declined automatically.

The next chapter of the thesis will introduce branding and employer branding while also examining word of mouth and online brand communication. The next chapter will thus provide a framework for analyzing the companies that are selected and how they are utilizing the event platform European online job days.

3 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

3.1 Employer Branding

This chapter of the thesis will introduce branding and examine branding from two perspectives, employer branding and online brand communication. Branding was chosen as the theoretical framework for the topic of the thesis as companies only have a short amount of time to influence and attract jobseekers during the event day. There is also limited exposure to company brand communications as jobseekers might not have any previous experience or knowledge of the companies and as such a strong brand will help in being seen more favorably, as the theory will show.

According to Davies (2008) a brand has four features, the ability to distinguish itself, create loyalty, satisfy, and develop an emotional connection. A brand could be considered the identity of a product or a company. A brand is not very easily defined, in fact, Merriam-Webster's Learner's Dictionary define a brand as "a category of products that are all made by a particular company, and all have a particular name". (Merriam-Webster 2022) Thus, the scope of branding is very wide and, therefore, the topic is narrowed to employer branding.

Branding is important in distinguishing the product or the company from competitors. This helps the company stand out and be considered more favorable by the consumers, or in this case potential new employees or jobseekers. Branding can be considered an important competitive advantage that helps create separation from competitors. The particular aspect of branding this thesis will now investigate, is employer branding. A company brand or the company's image refers to attitudes and perceptions that stakeholders have of the company. (Bilgin, 2018) All the actions that are taken to improve or build said perception are called branding. In contrast to branding products to attract consumers, employer branding means that actions are taken to create a brand that attracts talent. Additionally, it also creates tools that can be used to market the company to potential talent. (Biswas & Suar, 2016) Although, there is no one clear definition of an employer brand, it is something that makes an organization unique and gives it identity. (Sokro, 2012)

In addition to Finland suffering from a lack of work force, there is also fierce competition to attracting talent within companies. In fact, employees are one of the best competitive advantages a company can have. (Vnouckova, Urbancova & Smolova, 2018) Finnish companies that attempt to enter the global labor markets and attract foreign talent are still rather few and they are mostly the large multinational companies, but increasingly even smaller companies and recruitment agencies are starting to look for new ways to find talent. As companies must compete against each other to attract the best talent, one way to achieve this is through employer branding. Additionally, through differentiation, companies or employers can position themselves in a way that either limit competition or have other attributes or factors that help the employer stand out favorably in the eyes of jobseekers. One strategy that helps with differentiation is choosing the right channels where to market or convey the employer brand. (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman & Hansen, 2012)

One of the first definitions of employer branding introduced the idea that branding actions are connected to human resource management. (Ambler and Barrow, 1996) This means that the same way a product can be branded and marketed to consumers, so can a company or an employer be branded and communicated to jobseekers. (Keller, 2009; Moroko & Uncles, 2008) This allowed a theory to form that combines marketing and human resource management. Employer branding can be described as the actions that mold and form the employer image in a way that allows attracting the right employees or talent that in turn increase the effectiveness and productivity of the company. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010)

Another aspect of employer branding to consider is employer image, which could be defined as the beliefs that jobseekers have towards the employer as well as their thoughts regarding the organization. (Cable and Turuban, 2001) Adapting from this idea, if jobseekers do not have a pre-conceived image or idea of the employer, the host country could be seen as supplementing the image in the jobseekers' minds. The same principles of employer image could be drawn to also reflect how job seekers think about countries.

One element of employer image could be considered the country of origin of the organization. The reason for this is that foreign jobseekers are likely not

knowledgeable of the recruiting companies and as such they project thoughts that they have towards the host country to the companies. Thus, registered info points attending the events play an important role in attracting talent by either enforcing the employer's brand messages or providing additional information and influence.

Branding and marketing must be done outside the events to increase passive exposure to messaging that molds the opinions and perceptions jobseekers have. As employer branding includes the actions that an organization can do to attract jobseekers, also countries can use the same actions to attract more workforce. The actions in this regard include all available tools during the events. It is not only important to attract more work force or talent but is also immensely important to retain that workforce. A company's capabilities are improved as talent is attracted and retained and employer branding and actions to improve the brand are important also during recruitment events. (Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010)

Additionally, to be able to create an effective employer brand, it is important for companies to know what their target audience is, companies also need to know what exactly attracts talent and what retains them. This information can be obtained from chatting with jobseekers and learning from attending recruitment events, for example. Employer branding also attempts to affect the view that stakeholders have of the organization as well as discover what separates it from competitors. Through employer branding, organizations attempt to create an identity that will attract and retain new talent. As discussed, when the jobseekers' knowledge of the company is little to none, the perceived brand image of the company's country, will affect and influence the thoughts jobseekers have of the companies attending events. Companies can use this secondary branding to utilize the country's brand image to be seen favorably and positively by jobseekers. (Kotler et al., 2012) Thus, it is important for the events to also include info points that highlight areas and locations. It could be seen that info points in this regard would not compete with companies, but instead enhance the employer branding.

For example, recruitment videos can highlight known Finnish traits such as cleanliness, purity, trustworthiness, and happiness, and connect these to the company. A clear connection drawn to the company profile and Finnish nature, as one example,

evoke thoughts and feelings. It could also be thought that much like with consumers, with jobseekers as well, culture affects the decision-making process and connecting with jobseekers' culture helps in building an employer brand that showcases diversity. (Solomon, 2013) Thus, employers looking to hire foreign talent, could for example, highlight that the company already employs foreign talent. These could be considered ambassadors that jobseekers see as peers who encourage jobseekers to work for the particular employer and directly affect the employer attractiveness. (Alniaçik, Alniaçik, Erat & Akçin, 2014)

It is also important to understand what employer attractiveness (or organizational attractiveness) is. Organizational attractiveness is how the organization is perceived by jobseekers and how much they want to work for the company. It also affects how well the employer brand is received or how much attention is given to it. It also affects the current employees' willingness to stay at the company. (Alniaçik et al., 2014)

All organizations have an employer brand. It does not matter if the company has actively attempted to build or not, it is simply there. (Sokro, 2012) When attending an online recruitment event where there is no physical presence, there is a huge difference how a company is perceived if it only has a few lines of text describing it versus if it has picture, videos, and text. It could be thought that a company's product at the event is the job vacancy. (Alniaçik et al., 2014) Thus, communication is extremely important as the company has to be able to sell the vacancy to the jobseekers who are the consumers in this case.

Finally, it should also be mentioned that employer branding is important when considering jobseekers' willingness to apply to a position. For example, research has shown that a positive brand image in multinational service organizations, increase the chances of jobseekers applying to open vacancies. (Knox & Freeman, 2006) Thus, organizations should use all tools available to create a positive and strong employer brand. This can be challenging during a brief event, but work done earlier to build a brand can be utilized in these recruitment fairs and existing material can be submitted to the platforms. The ultimate aim should be to increase the recognition and reputation of the company, as the better the reputation is, the more willing jobseekers are in applying. (Cable & Turban, 2003)

There is a framework for employer branding that showcases the aspects of employer branding that include brand associations, employer image and employer attraction. In this case, Finland is a strong employer brand association, and the European Online Job Days events use this to promote and highlight companies that might be unknown to foreign jobseekers. Other factors such as organizational culture affect brand loyalty and employee productivity. Organizational culture also affects employer brand image and organizational brand image. (Rode & Vallaster, 2005) These are all aspects that companies can highlight and display during online recruitment events. Adapting the idea of employee ambassadors as peers, high employee productivity resulting from good organizational culture will affect employer attraction and a parallel could be drawn from employee productivity to employer attraction as shown in Figure 4.

Additionally, the organization's visual identity and organizational communication all affect the employer brand identity. (Rode & Vallaster, 2005) The European online job days events allow for an extent of an organization's own visual identity to be showcased. (Fig. 5.) Figure 5 shows one example where the company can include their own visual identity via the inclusion of a logo and a picture or video. The platform thus allows participating companies to include their own visual identity to help differentiate employers from each other as well as control what their employer profile depicts. As we can see from the screenshot below (Fig. 5), the European Online Job Days platform has its own distinct branding and color scheme that cannot be changed, and the only way employers can identify themselves is to add a logo and pictures. It could be said that companies should add some imagery that reflects the company and their own visual elements. Perhaps, even create specific imagery to incorporate with the events to create a consistent presence.

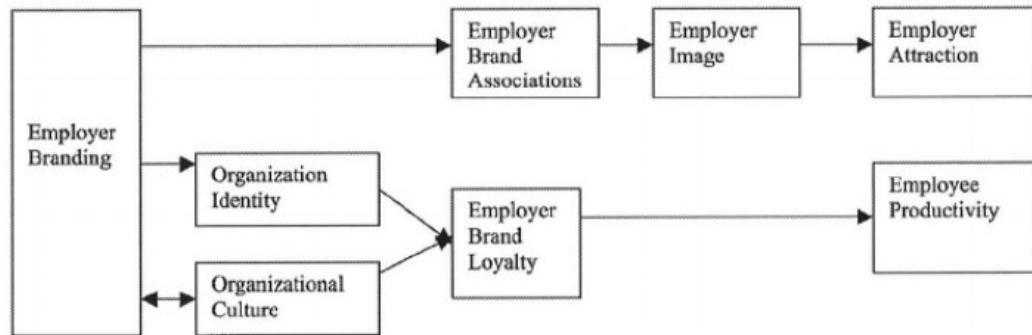


Figure 4: The Employer Branding framework from Backhaus & Tikoo shows the connection between various aspects or elements that affect employer branding, (Source: Backhaus & Tikoo, 2005, pp. 505)

Flickorna Lundgren
from: Sweden

Organisation details

Website(s):
[Flickorna Lundgren](#)

Organisation type:
Company

Sector:
[Food and beverage service activities](#)

Contact details:
gunilla.t@flickornalundgren.se

The organisation is registered to participate in the following event(s):

This exhibitor has no upcoming events

[SHOW PAST EVENTS \(1\)](#)

Hot jobs:

Chef, full time, seasonal with minimum 4 year working experience From 14 juni - 14 augusti

Please look at our jobs

Figure 5: A screenshot of one employer profile attending a Swedish European Online Job Day (Source: European Job Days, 2022)

3.2 Online brand communication

As with marketing, online brand communication can be seen as a way to strengthen the message stakeholders receive of the organization. Conversely, the message can also weaken the perception. (Kotler & Keller, 2006) One could also adapt the idea that marketing communications, or promotion, influence the decision-making process, in a way that job seekers are affected to either apply or not apply to certain positions or companies depending on the perception they have. (Vuokko, 2003) As jobseekers, much like consumers, utilize all received marketing messages consciously or subconsciously all information that a company publishes helps jobseekers decide whether or not to apply. (Vuokko, 2003)

Promotion and choosing the correct channels for marketing is an important part of marketing and employer branding and it can be a powerful competitive advantage. (Kotler et al., 2012) Thus, attending and joining online recruitment events grant the organization a competitive advantage they can utilize to differentiate from the competition and influence jobseekers.

Another aspect of marketing and promotion is online brand communication. One strong tool for online brand communication is social media and as discussed briefly earlier, the events are built on a platform that is inherently social with its own profiles and communication channels. One example of online brand communication can be found within the video game industry, where online brand communities are embraced, and most games companies have active community managers who moderate the discussion forums. The online brand communities allow for fans of brands to exchange ideas and offer and get help. Social media creates online communities where individuals have the possibility to share experiences and interests. (Moore & Pareek, 2006)

While the European online job days are a form of social platforms, they are not persistent in a way that users can return to interact with each other. The experiences shared are limited and timed, and only available for the duration of the event, usually a day. Nevertheless, as there are social tools available, it can be considered a social network. As introduced, the platform offers the possibility of peer-to-peer

communication via the public chat where users can exchange experiences. Users cannot, however, see each other's profiles and it is in a way an anonymous messaging platform as users can choose a display name under which they communicate.

Brand communities or online brand communities are collections of people who share an interest or an attribute who interact via a social platform. (Kotler et al., 2012) Additionally, online brand communities happen in a virtual place where interaction occurs via the internet. (Brogi, 2014) In this case there are two or three attributes or interests that can be thought to define the community; either an interest towards Finland, The Nordic countries, or the desire to find a job. If considering an interest, for example Finland, then imagery showcasing inherently Finnish attributes may help a company to be seen favorably by jobseekers. Indeed, many companies conducting international recruitment evoke Finnish imagery such as clean nature and safety in their recruitment videos. The same can be seen, for example with Business Finland marketing videos.

These videos are also used during the Finnish European online job days events. If we consider job vacancies as products, then this could be considered non-product related imagery that allude to social benefits when accepting a job offer or applying for jobs. (Anderson, Narus & Narayandas, 2009) In addition to this, companies can learn from online brand communities for example what the needs of jobseekers are. (Brogi, 2014) This could encourage organizations to keep attending new events as they will be able to learn from previous experiences and prepare better, for example, to answer questions more effectively, and easily see which candidates might be the most appropriate for the vacancy.

3.3 Brand eWOM

Related to the idea of online brand communication, online marketing and promotion is eWOM or electronic word of mouth. (Chaffrey & Smith, 2008) Electronic word of mouth includes the positive as well as negative opinions and thoughts about a company or product, and it exists online where it is accessible to all. (Hennig-Thurau, Gwinner, Walsh & Gremler, 2004) However, as the European online job day events include a public chat that is erased after an event, in this case electronic word of mouth does not

last, but it could be argued that it becomes regular word of mouth as jobseekers discuss experiences later with friends and family or other jobseekers outside the events. Additionally, they could also return for another EOJD event and continue spreading the word of mouth there.

Word of mouth is an important aspect as consumers, or jobseekers, trust the opinions of peers, family, influencers, or others, and these opinions can greatly affect the opinions and the decision making of jobseekers. (Chaffery & Ellis-Chardwick, 2012) Electronic word of mouth exists online for example in social media or forums where jobseekers actively engage. The public chat and experiences jobseekers gain during one-to-one chats during the event day can create positive or negative eWOM. For example, a failed connection to a chat room, or for example, a missed interview time by the employer, can be broadcasted to every jobseeker on the platform. Thus, it could be argued that organizations should actively be present during the events to influence positive eWOM, and also quickly react to negative eWOM.

As mentioned, word of mouth is considered more reliable by the jobseekers than any other form of communications by the organization. Jobseekers value and trust marketing communication coming directly from peers. (Brown, Broderick & Lee, 2007) This means that companies could use a form of peer marketing for example by choosing an immigrant talent or foreign talent to showcase the company and discuss the vacancies. Jobseekers might also have questions that a peer who has experienced similar situations might be able to answer in a way that satisfies the jobseeker. Additionally, having representatives with different backgrounds signifies that the organization is diverse which could be seen as helping attract more diverse talent. To simplify, similar backgrounds attract individuals more strongly than dissimilarity. (Brown at al., 2007)

4 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research methods

The research method for this thesis is case study. A case study allows a single event to be investigated and explored. The event in this context may be an organization, groups of people, or a particular event at a specific time or place. (Daymon & Holloway, 2011) The events studied are two Finland Works events organized October 5th, 2021, and February 16th, 2022, as well as Work in Lapland organized September 1st, 2020. There are different types of case studies, and they could be categorized as intrinsic and instrumental studies. (Stake, 1995)

An instrumental case study was chosen for this thesis's methodology as it allows using the studied event to make a generalization or build a theory from it. (Stake, 1995) The reason for the idea of making a generalization is that the European Online Jobs Days events each follow a certain pattern and a framework, introduced in the earlier sections. Thus, a generalization can be made that affects all other events as the platform allows for the same elements to be used in all other events. However, the case study also has elements of an intrinsic study as the purpose is to understand the phenomenon which is the online recruitment events. Moreover, as the thesis considers three separate events, it could also be classed as a collective case study. (Stake, 1995) And as such, the thesis's methodology includes a custom blend of the different case study categories.

As mentioned, the thesis examines the online European Job days platform and three separate events organized between 2020 and 2022. The first European Online Job days event was organized in 2013 and since then there have been 269 events with a total of over 68,000 jobseekers who have submitted a total of 143,902 applications. Currently, there are 6,842 registered exhibitors; these include employers, info points, and EURES advisers. (European Online Job Days, 2022)

The events were chosen for study as they represent a wide phenomenon. The events are also free for attendance, publicly accessible, and global. The events tackle a problem which is labor shortages and the free movement of European workers.

Furthermore, the researcher works as a EURES adviser with the Lapland TE Services and as such the thesis provides valuable feedback and guidance on how to market and explain the events to companies. It should be noted that the TE Services does not make a profit or gain anything from the events so the analysis is unbiased, and the researcher can observe the events objectively.

4.2 Qualitative research

Additionally, it could be explained that this thesis utilizes a qualitative empirical research method. The particular method is useful when attempting to explain a phenomenon and gain an understanding on it. Qualitative methods attempt to understand and explain. (Daymon & Holloway, 2011). The method is useful when the phenomena is less studied, and an understanding needs to be developed. Furthermore, this thesis will consider content analysis and empirical analysis.

Qualitative research is not quantitative, i.e., focus is given on, for example words and patterns and not on numbers or quantities. (Horn, 2009) The thesis's topic is narrow and the data set is small in order to provide detailed analysis and observation to understand the phenomenon. In qualitative research, the methods for study are, for example, interviews and observations. (Horn, 2009) For this thesis, the chosen method was observations and the researcher worked in a non-disruptive way, so the data was not influenced by the observer.

4.3 Data collection

Data collection was completed during the events as well as post-events via saved profiles and available job vacancies. Observing the public chat was conducted during the events as no transcript is available afterwards.

This thesis's content analysis part will comprise of and examine four different companies and their employer profiles. An info point profile is also chosen for comparison purposes and to discover if place branding has occurred. The aim is to also compare the level of commitment and effectiveness of the organizations in utilizing the tools presented by the European online job days platform. Using qualitative

research in this context helps discover new insights and objective research helps explain the phenomenon. (Hirsijärvi, Remes & Sajavaara, 2009; Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2009; Stake, 1995)

Thus, the case studies for this thesis took place as the researcher observed the virtual recruitment events as they unfolded. The research is topical, current, and relevant as new events are being organized in the year 2022 and beyond. Additionally, it should be mentioned that the purpose is not to compare the companies directly and, for example, examine how many applications they received and draw conclusion from that, rather the purpose is to investigate and study how the platform and event is used, and what can be learned from that usage. Therefore, the companies are kept anonymous. This is also done so that the companies would not receive any marketing via this paper. The info points are named, and their profiles shown, but that is a conscious decision the researcher made. The info points represent the public sector and do not compete the same way the employer companies do. Additionally, by displaying screenshots of the profiles, the readers can better understand what the company profiles could appear as.

5 DATA ANALYSIS

This section of the thesis will introduce the three companies examined. The companies chosen, have all participated in one or more European online job days events. The companies are kept anonymous because the purpose of the study is not to highlight any particular company or comment on how *well* it performed, but *rather to study the phenomenon and investigate the possibilities and how they can be utilized*. The companies each represent a different level of commitment. This will be demonstrated in the analysis section, and it is supported by the data. The analysis will investigate how the company appears to a possible candidate and if employer branding is visible. That is to say, does the company attempt to portray a brand attractive to jobseekers to:

1. Differentiate from the competitors;
2. Attempt to create an immigrant positive image to attract foreign talent;
3. Enable true interaction between jobseeker and employer by dedicating personnel and channels for direct communication.

5.1 Company A

The first case company is a large multinational corporation with operations all over the world. The company's industry is IT and multilingual customer service. For example, their customers include games, communications, and media. Company A has taken part in several European online job day events including events organized by other countries. The company has taken part in both Finland Works events. The company has created an exhibitor profile, and they have updated it with new information and a video. Additionally, the company has opened several available job positions. Unfortunately, the positions are closed after each event, so they are not available online anymore. However, the company profile is persistent and there is a link to view all open positions beyond the events on the company's career pages.

The company seems to have understood the possibilities of the platform as well as the best practices of the event and in addition to their more generic recruitment video, they have opted to also supply a live company presentation. Additionally, regarding the company's live video, the chosen presenter is an immigrant to Finland who also talked about working at the company as a foreigner. This helps connect with the jobseekers

who are likely to listen favorably to the views of a peer, as discussed in the theory section.

The company is also used the live one on one chats with the jobseekers during the day to answer any potential questions and guide jobseekers. It should also be noted that the company actively participated in the general chat discussions promoting their availability to chat one on one.

During the company's live video presentation, other members of the company actively commented on questions arising in the public chat while also suggesting jobseekers apply to the available jobs and go chat with the company directly. The company also actively promoted the open positions by inviting interested jobseekers to apply, for example, when a jobseeker came to the public chat to ask generally if there are any positions for, e.g., persons with language skills and translations.

The company's profile page includes a brief overview of the company explaining their operations, and operational areas. It should also be noted that the company presents their company culture through phrases such as "agile thinking" and spirited teamwork" and even mentions a "caring culture". These could be considered buzzwords to create a positive employer branding and display positive organizational culture. The company heavily links to their official website and they also include a link to any open positions outside the event.

Finally, the company profile also includes a video welcoming jobseekers to work at the company. The video is almost five minutes long, and it includes different people from various ethnicities. The tone of the video is supportive and excited. The video introduces the basic business operations, how many locations they have, how many employees, and then continues to highlight positive company culture. It seems the company video's target audience is younger professionals and the video's locations show the offices that mimic very facebook or google themed relaxed offices where people smile and work together, for example, by playing video games. The company highlights team members as members of a family. Multiple touchpoints to diversity are shown and mentioned. This is a good tactic to attract a varied audience such as the

jobseekers of the European online job days that has jobseekers all over Europe and the world. The video is very bright, light, and positive.

5.2 Company B

The second company is a smaller Finnish game development company that has not yet participated in many European online job days events. However, they have multiple open positions for example for a game developer and business developer. It should be noted that the positions are left open on the platform, i.e., jobseekers could still apply to them.

Unfortunately, the company did not include a video in their company profile, neither did they supply a video for the live event agenda. Interestingly, they also do not include a link to their official website and the company description is rather brief. Their introduction includes a list of rather high-profile clients, but the introduction does not attempt to attract jobseekers beyond the client names and mentioning that the team members are “awesome”. The company did not have representatives available to chat during the day. It could be said that the company attended the event as a “cold station”, meaning that they only created a profile, added the open positions, and rerouted the applications to their email.

As the positions are still open and available, it can be seen that they attempt to attract jobseekers by mentioning some organizational culture aspects such as “healthy work-life balance” and “laid-back” supportive team”. A rather big advantage that they offer is the possibility to work entirely remotely from anywhere in the world.

5.3 Company C

The third company for comparison in this thesis is a large and well-known Finnish recruitment agency. The company has taken part in at least ten European online job days, and they have publicly given feedback that they are satisfied with the events.

The company has created an employer profile and they have included a video. However, they have not taken part in one-to-one chats during the event day. The

company's job postings are not available after the events. The company usually has vacancies for seasonal work and the postings include different employers.

From the company profile, it can be seen that the company is experienced in hiring foreigners and their company video is an interview with two immigrants. The video is two minutes long, and it includes an interview with two professionals who have moved to Finland. The company uses the interviewees as ambassadors to highlight the positive aspects of the company, of the work, and of Finland. The interviewees speak at length about how flexible the work is and how they can experience nature and winter activities, in this case. It seems the jobs are marketed as experiences rather than long-term commitments. Thus, no attention is given to retention, rather the video seems to encourage experiencing the north for a brief moment and then enjoying other activities. The interviewees also explain that the company provides accommodation so moving to Finland to work was not difficult because of that.

The company was not available to chat during the day, and they did not provide any additional videos to add to the daily agenda. The company does, however, provide a direct phone number and an email address for further questions.

5.4 Company D

The fourth and final company examined in this thesis is a well-known Finnish multinational corporation. However, the company's attendance to the European Online job days is coordinated by a project organized by the local center for economic development, transport, and the environment. Additionally, the cooperation project includes other high-profile employers.

The branding for the project is its own and companies represented are only mentioned via simple text; no company logos or descriptions are available. Furthermore, the attendance is limited to the project employee, and as such, there is no live company representative present to chat with jobseekers one to one. Online interviews are also not conducted by the companies but rather by the project and suitable candidates are then sent forward to the company for assessment.

There is no official video from the company, instead there is a more general video presenting the operational area of the multiple companies the project represents. The “cluster” as the project self-defines, has included a 3-minute 45-second video presenting all employers, but more attention is given to the location the employers are present. The video highly emphasizes the municipality and no one employer is marketed separately. Thus, employer branding cannot be clearly seen as all companies in the cluster must receive the same amount of attention.

The project has several links to the employer websites where potential jobseekers are exposed to company branding and marketing. The links lead directly to career pages where one expects employer branding. Indeed, the company’s career page attempts to emphasize how the company “values” their “people”. The career page includes several interviews with current employees acting as brand ambassadors highlighting the positives of the company. Unfortunately, these videos are off-site on the career page of the company and not directly on the virtual event platform.

The job offers the company has, are posted by the project, and must fight for the attention of the jobseekers from a sea of other job offers by the project. The company is only mentioned in text and no clearly identifiable logos stand out. The job vacancy offers do briefly mention benefits such as “good team spirit”, “opportunity to travel and see the world” and “possibility to grow and develop in career”. Also, the project includes other similar employers in the same industry as the company and the job postings are similar titles. It is hard for the jobseeker to discover which company is hiring.

5.5 Info Points

The final examples of profiles chosen for this thesis are the info points. As explained in the earlier sections, info points can be organizations whose aim is regional development, they can be municipalities, cities, or regional development agencies. Other such points are, for example, called country flags, where general country specific information is given. Figure 6 depicts an info point designated as a *country flag*, the structure is slightly different as the purpose is to provide neutral information

and a collection of resources. Country flags also afford the possibility of one-to-one chats and the EURES advisers are usually the ones operating the chats.

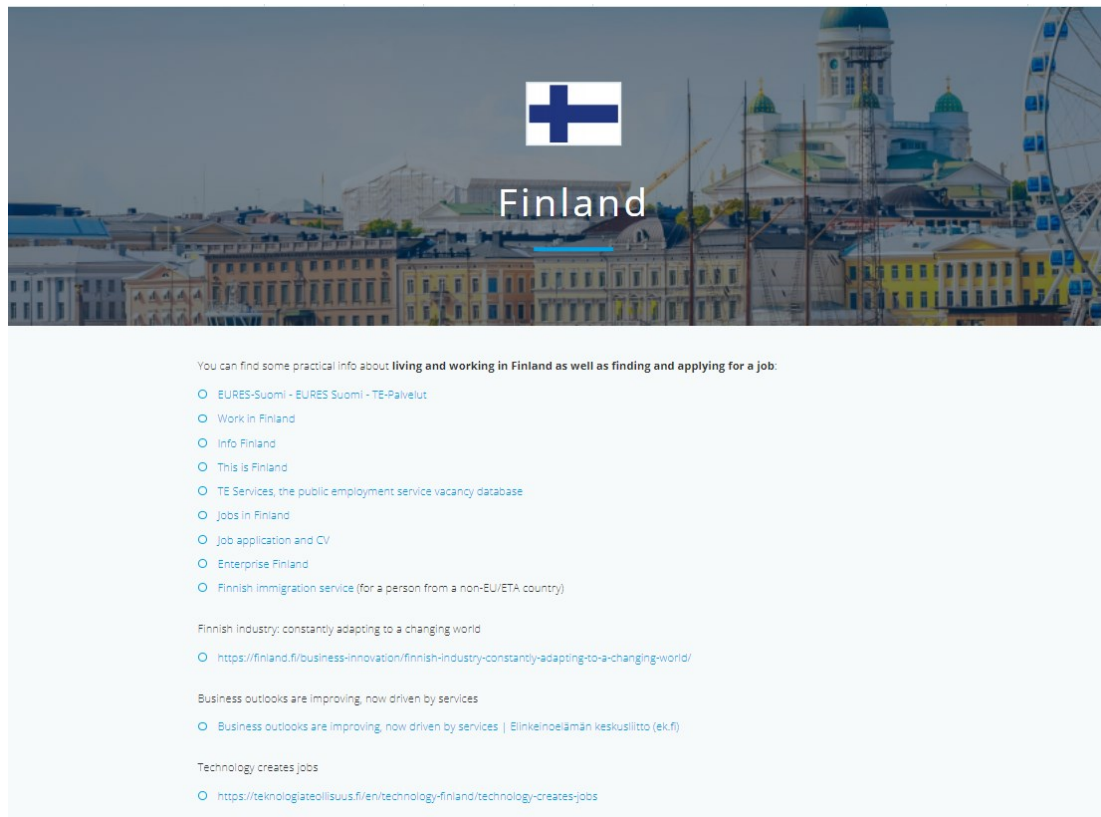


Figure 6: A screenshot of the Finnish country flag profile. These profiles help inform jobseekers of the organizing countries and provide neutral information on living and working conditions. (Source: European Online Job Days, 2022)

The info points have the same tools at their disposal as the employer profiles but there is no requirement for them to have open job vacancies. Info points are important as municipalities, for example, attempt to draw more migration and immigration to replenish an ever-aging population and a lack of workforce. Info points can, for example, tackle issues that employers might not have to consider, such as what day care possibilities there are available and what past time activities are available. Of course, if thinking about employee retention, these are all factors that a company must also consider. However, in the European online job days context, these are usually left to info points.

The info points can also utilize the one-on-one chats with jobseekers and many info points have dedicated a portion of the day to answer any questions. The main event

agenda stream is also available for info points. For this thesis, two info points were chosen, one attending a Finland Works event on Feb. 2022 and the second attending the Work in Lapland event from 2020.

Regardless of their status as info points, it can be seen that the two utilize the platform similarly to the observed employer companies. One of the info points had used all available tools such as video, picture, and chat availability, while the other only created a profile, dedicated a time for chatting with jobseekers, but did not include any video or other imagery. Both did, however, include logos. Figure 7 depicts the current state of one of the info points.

INARI
Mighty by nature

Inari municipality
from: Finland

Organisation details

Website(s):
[Make Inari your home](#)

Organisation type:
Info Point

Sector:
[Administrative and support service activities](#)

Contact details:
elisa.saukkonen@inari.fi
+358 40 652 6576

The organisation is registered to participate in the following event(s):

This exhibitor has no upcoming events

[SHOW PAST EVENTS \(1\)](#)

Note: there are no job opportunities in the project, the project is registered for the event to provide information about living and working in Inari.

Smoothly into Arctic Life -project helps you in making Inari your home.

Inari is the largest municipality in Finland and one of the most international tourism destinations. Inari is located in the northernmost corner of the European Union, in the middle of the Northern Polar Cap.

We are developing settling-in services in Inari municipality to make life easier for international newcomers and residents. We offer help and guidance in immigration process and in understanding the local service system and work life. During the winter season, we will be organizing meetings and events for international workers and jobseekers.

Ask anything about living and working in Inari!

Available for chat: 13:00-15:00

Figure 7: A screenshot of one info point, in this case the municipality of Inari. (Source: European Job Days, 2022)

The municipality in question provides a link to follow with more information on living and working there. It can also be discerned that the profile or stand is similar, or in fact the exact same template as the company profiles. However, the content is aimed at settling in the municipality and less focus is given on working conditions. It could be said that the info points concern themselves more with life beyond work.

The second info point chosen for analysis displays a more invested approach into the platform as there are efforts made to depict the town. Figure XX shows that the info point includes text, logo, and a picture highlighting Finnish nature and a prominent location from the area.

IMATRA

City of Imatra

from: Finland

Organisation details

Websites(s):
[Move to Imatra](#)
[City of Imatra](#)
[National wonder, Imatra](#)

Organisation type:
 Info Point

Sector:
 Office administrative, office support and other business support activities

Contact details:
[City of Imatra website](#)

The organisation is registered to participate in the following event(s):

This exhibitor has no upcoming events

[SHOW PAST EVENTS \(1\)](#)

Imatra is a lively city with 26 000 inhabitants in joyful South East Finland with quality of life to offer. We are close to nature with the River Vuoksi flowing through town. Imatra also has versatile sports activities and active hobbies to offer.

In addition, Imatra is a cultural town. It is a sign of what Imatra is like: full of life and faith in the future. We have currently renewed our schools. We are making sure that children have safe and inspiring learning environments.

Imatra is the National Wonder of Finland. In the middle of it all, the rapids chum. This oldest tourist attraction in Finland runs through the city, forming a rugged canyon in the middle of a populated area.

Imatra is a city with modern forest industry, developing tourism and growing welfare sector.

[Move to Imatra](#)

Introduction of Imatra - A national wonder

IMATRA
National Wonder

Watch on YouTube

Figure 8: A screenshot of the second info point, the city of Imatra, (Source: European Online Job Days, 2022)

The second info point observed has includes a video which is very focused on the nature and area. The video describes and shows activities beyond work such as hobbies

and events. The tone is very reminiscent of travel videos and travel marketing. The town includes place branding as it highlights historical facts such as the “only art nouveau castle in Finland” and “dating more than 6,000 years, the rapids have been one of the key sights of Europe since the 18th century”.

The info points highlight key facts about the areas, and employers from that area could benefit from collaboration with the municipalities, for example, by enticing jobseekers to ask questions regarding past time from the info points. However, this could not be observed as the one-on-one chats are private.

6 ANALYSIS AND FINDINGS

This section of the thesis will present analysis of the findings described in the data section above. The thesis investigated a few European online job days events and examined four companies or employers who registered to the event as exhibitors and one info point. One can assume that the purpose of the companies to join the event was to gain new employees and expose the company to the international labor markets. As explained in the theory section of the thesis, the virtual European online job days events are organized by EURES or European employment services to enable the fundamental European right of labor movement. The companies chosen, represent a range of industries and thus the data base is varied and representative.

The aim was to first introduce branding and employer branding as well as online brand communication and theories related to it such as electronic word of mouth and brand communities. The European online job days platform offers an impressive array of tools employers can use to attract jobseekers. The tools are available instantly, free of charge and they are easy to use. Furthermore, employers can adapt the given tools to highlight their own brand. The constraints of the platform only limit employers to each have a distinct *stand*, but employers are free to add their own combination of text, images, videos, and links. This is very similar to conventional job fairs where employers are given or they rent a stand that has some size constraints, but employers are allowed to *decorate* and brand it to their own liking.

Additionally, the physical, or conventional, fairs, require employers to dedicate staff or personnel to interact with attendees. The presence of the online chat tool and availability of one-to-one chats mimics this. Interestingly, it was found that only one of the four companies examined chose to dedicate staff for this reason. Using online chatting and being available, increases the ability of the employer to influence jobseekers and instantly react to feedback on the public chat platform. Furthermore, the employer's ability to react to follow-up questions from jobseekers could be seen as creating an idea of the jobseeker being valued. The way the European online job days events are organized, employers could indicate what times they are available for chatting and thus the employers could dedicate only part of the day for online chats. This would also inform jobseekers when they might have an opportunity to ask

questions. It should also be noted that providing information via chats could lead to the jobseeker spreading the information received to other potential jobseekers in their locales. This could also create actual word of mouth and not just electronic word of mouth.

Another tool the platform offers is the possibility to add video content promoting the company. Indeed, brand ambassadors or employee ambassadors are oft-used tools to recruit new employees. Thus, it is surprising that only two of the four companies had included such videos. It was discovered that the platform allows for two venues for the videos: the main event agenda page and the company profile page, or “stand”. Employers can include the same video to both but there is also the option of adding additional videos to the agenda of the event or companies can have a live presentation during the day. Only one of the companies (company A) chose to create a live presentation of the company. In this case it was also an employee ambassador who gave the company presentation. As discussed earlier, jobseekers or customers react positively to messaging coming directly from peers. (Henning-Thurau et al., 2004) In this case, Company A also chose a foreign talent to present. This captured the attention of the jobseekers, and the public chat was filled with questions towards the company. Interestingly, jobseekers who identified the origin of the presenter as similar to theirs, made vocal comments congratulating the choice in the public chat. Additionally, the company representatives actively used the public chat to draw job seekers to apply to jobs as well as go ask any questions in the chat room. Company A provided a very positive employer brand and used the available tools very effectively to gauge interest and attract jobseekers.

The video can be considered a powerful tool for employer branding as it gives a face to the company and actively promotes the working conditions and atmosphere of the company. It could be argued that for a virtual event where the jobseekers cannot see the company representatives or their logo and other material without actively searching a video is the only way to create a lasting impression and influence jobseekers. It could be that the video the jobseeker sees during the day’s agenda, is the only pictorial touchpoint they have until a potential video interview. Additionally, thinking about how to attract jobseekers from other countries, the video is a way to show the physical location of the, for example, office or workplace. Additionally, if thinking about

seasonal work, the video can show the actual work being carried out by another employee. Influencing jobseekers' perceptions is also something the municipalities, towns or countries could do together with the employers to attract international and domestic jobseekers. Thus, it is surprising that only company A and company C had included a video. In fact, Company C went a bit further when their video involved two international employees who also discussed life beyond work.

Considering the increasing numbers of attendees to the virtual recruitment events over the years (Tables 1 & 2) and the push to digitalization caused by the Corona virus pandemic, there is still a lot of potential employers have not discovered. The findings show that currently three levels of commitment to the event were identified, possibly even four.

The first level of commitment shows that a company has fully understood the potential of the events and they utilize the provided tools fully. This means that they actively build their company profile or stand, supply videos, dedicate people to online chats, take an active part in the day's agenda, organize interviews during the day and have adapted to attending the online recruitment event. This is clear in the fact that the company also returns to each event. Company A exhibits this level of commitment.

The second level of commitment shows that the company understands the purpose of the event, are satisfied with the results, as shown by their continued participation to new events, but do not yet fully commit to the event. In other words, they do not dedicate staff to take part in online chats or create live presentations. Company C exhibits this level of commitment.

The third level of commitment shows that the company is unsure of the event and its purpose or are perhaps experimenting with attendance. They do not fully commit to the event beyond creating a profile and adding a few job postings. They do not dedicate people to attend the chats, interviews, or live presentations. Additionally, they do not supply any video material and their effort is minimal in creating a profile. Company B showed this level of commitment. However, it must be noted that company B has attended two events. This could be either due to the ease of a persistent profile or satisfaction with the results of the time investment. This type could be considered a

cold station meaning the company is present in name only, but any attempts by jobseekers to contact the company must be made via other channels than the event platform.

Finally, a fourth level could be the case where a company outsources the event presence to a project or some other agent who might represent multiple employers. Company D is an example of this. It seems there is much wasted potential as the company cannot compete with the attention of jobseekers against active employers. Perhaps, employer brand value or name recognition attract some job seekers but without an active push, it is very hard to discover that the company is present at all. Indeed, with the low effort and low-cost of participation to at least create a “cold station”, one wonders if the company under this level has understood the concept of the event.

These levels could also be adapted to info points attending the events as the same tools are available to them. The two examined info points also displayed similar levels of commitment as the companies. There is synergy however, between companies and info points, and they could be seen as benefitting each other if cooperation was made. Additionally, the events appear richer in content if there is also general information available. This is very similar to physical recruitment events where info points do exist. Regarding human resource management and marketing, highlighting life beyond work and providing different options, could help foreign jobseekers in their decision-making as they are more informed of the opportunities available.

The findings could also help organizers of the events focus marketing efforts to companies who are not very committed by either highlighting the possibilities more, training to use the platform more efficiently and giving more attention and feedback to these companies. In contrast, companies, that are very committed already, could serve as ambassadors and references for attracting new companies to join the events.

The analysis shows that companies do understand employer branding and use their existing media and visuals, as well as other material to promote the company. However, it seems that companies do not create any material specifically for these events, rather, they use generic marketing materials. This could be a missed

opportunity as effective employer branding can be done after understanding what attracts jobseekers. Companies could learn from past participation and develop marketing material specifically for these events. Additionally, companies could do A/B testing with the events, for example, when two Finland Works events are organized each year.

7 CONCLUSION AND LIMITATIONS

The thesis investigated a virtual recruitment event European Online Job Days by examining four companies and one info point and their participation to the events. The investigation was based on marketing and employer branding and how that can be achieved through the virtual events.

The conclusion was that three to four levels of commitment can be found, and a *free* event has the potential to differentiate and market companies to foreign labor markets. Additionally, the high userbase of jobseeker provides a unique platform where Finnish employers can very easily reach the European labor markets.

The case companies each displayed a different level of commitment thus adequately portraying the capabilities of the platform. The multiple ways employers can reach and influence as well as contact employees show the adaptability of the platform as well as the event. The main agenda video that is clearly visible to attendees is an important tool to pique the interest of jobseekers and get job applications.

The thesis is not without limitations and one such limitation is the lack of direct employer input and feedback. Had there been employers' feedback, the findings could be compared to the feedback to discover the *why* behind the decisions to only commit to a certain extent. Another aspect could have been to interview jobseekers who either had attended to event or were planning to attend to discover what they might need and want from the event. Thus, employers could reflect that in their offering.

The thesis examined only three events organized by EURES Finland and as such there is much data that could still be utilized. However, the design of the platform and most notably the creation of one employer profile to be carried over to all other events, means that only the most current iteration of the profile can be examined. There is no historical archive for examining changes and updates the employers do.

8 FUTURE RESEARCH

The results of this thesis warrant new research into the events as well as online recruitment events in general. The results could help employers better utilize the platform and events as well as provide EURES advisers tools and data to market the event to new employers. In general, there is a lack of research focusing on online recruitment events.

There is no research done on the European online job days and their effectiveness, thus it is important to investigate how well the events provide results in the form of successful recruitments and if employer needs are met. Future research should and could investigate opinions and attitudes of jobseekers as well as gauge results and feedback from employers.

A research idea entertained for this thesis was also to create a template of what the most effective tools used during the events are by interviewing attended jobseekers via a questionnaire and later via interviews.

9 MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

There is no doubt that the managerial implications are huge as it was discussed that there is fierce competition to recruit the best foreign talent. As mentioned in the introduction, Finland needs more foreign talent due to a lack of workforce. The European union provides the all-important free movement of labor and the European online job days provide a free platform where employers can reach jobseekers wanting to move to another European country and exercise their rights. The events are free to join and provide a low-bar opportunity to try international recruitment. Hiring managers should seize this opportunity to attempt international recruitment.

Additionally, HR managers and marketing should work together to identify what the strong points of the employers are and how best to communicate them to stakeholders such as jobseekers. The online events provide a low-cost opportunity to attempt international recruitment and attract more labor. HR and marketing managers should seek invested and dedicated employees and utilize them in communications towards jobseekers.

Word of mouth, especially in an international context, is very relevant and all opportunities to influence good word of mouth will help companies attract foreign talent. The analysis showed that employers had not fully understood the platform, and thus, EURES advisers could benefit from understanding how to showcase the perceived advantages more efficiently.

10 BIBLIOGRAPHY

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