ISCTE Business School
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RECRUITMENT CONSULTANTS: A UNIQUE RESOURCE FOR JOB SEEKERS

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Abstract

The main purpose of this research is to highlight the value added by recruitment consultants to the recruitment process. The focus is oriented towards the relationship between recruitment consultants and job seekers, becoming candidates once they have applied to a job offer. After reviewing what the literature offers on this topic, we will conduct a qualitative research, including an exploratory study by interviewing two groups of six and seven people, representing both sides of the relationship. The findings of these interviews will show that several views are brought to this topic. It will mainly be understood that the relationship between a recruitment consultant and a candidate is quite different from the relationship a candidate and the potential employer would have. Interview responses will also examine the advantages job seekers have to use a recruitment agency in their job search.

Key words: Human Resources Management; Recruitment Process Outsourcing; Recruitment consultant; Job seeker; Recruitment agency; Candidate

O objetivo principal desta pesquisa é destacar o valor agregado dos consultores de recrutamento no processo de recrutamento. O foco é orientado na relação entre estes consultores e as pessoas à procura de um emprego, que se tornam candidatos quando respondem as propostas de trabalho. Depois de verificar o que a literatura especializada neste tema propõe, iremos conduzir uma pesquisa qualitativa, na qual será incluido um estudo sobre a relação entre consultores e candidatos a partir de entrevistas a dois grupos um constituido por seis pessoas e outro com sete pessoas. Os resultados destas entrevistas indicam que existem varios pontos de vistas neste assunto. A principal constactaçao é que a relação entre os consultores de recrutamento e o candidato é diferente da relação que existe entre o candidato e o potential empregador. As respostas das entrevistas também examinaram as vantagens que o candidato tem ao passar por uma agência de recrutamento na sua procura de emprego.

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List of Abbreviations

- CEO: Chief Executive Officer
- CFO: Chief Financial Officer
- CV: Curriculum Vitae
- HR: Human Resources
- HRM: Human Resources Management
- MD: Managing Director
- RPO: Recruitment Process Outsourcing

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1 Introduction

Human Resources Management (HRM) is a core activity in any business (Boxall & Purcell, 2011), and in order to simply define this term, “HRM refers to all those activities associated with the management of work and people in organisations” (p. 1). It is essential to understand that every business starts with the first employee, usually the founder and owner, and if the business wants to grow, it needs more people (Boxall & Purcell, 2011). Hiring new people into an organisation is therefore mandatory, but most importantly crucial to the success of the firm: “The only thing worth more than a bright new idea is a bright new hire” (Nakache, 1997, p. 1). Over the last few decades, recruitment has become more strategic, as more people are available, but the proportional talented workforce has decreased, bringing difficulties to Human Resources (HR) departments. “No longer can recruiting be viewed as a reactive, largely clerical function and buried in the HR department” (Kurian, 2016, p. 45). Indeed, recruitment has become a separate business for some companies, and the main purpose of this thesis is to understand what recruitment agencies can bring to the recruitment process.

The start of the problem occurs at the end of the studies, when students, at that time, look for job opportunities. We noticed that only a very few of these students look for employment through an intermediary, namely a recruitment agency. Usually, students use other ways, such as their current network, pursuing a previous internship into a contract, or simply looking on job boards and social media for opportunities.

Today, we observe a significant amount of recruitment agencies, and they are very different, depending on their size, location, industries, and the management level they target. Also, they do not all operate in the same manner: it goes from employment agencies to head-hunting or even executive search firms. Then, how come recruitment agencies are not so used? Or maybe they are, but who does it?

That leads us to a main question: what is the utility of recruitment agencies? This is a double problematic, where on the one hand, we try to explain what recruitment consultants bring in the process, and on the other hand, whether or not it is worth it for job seekers.

These two approaches will make the common thread through our argument in this thesis. The first approach will be consultant-oriented, and we will try to understand what they bring, and what makes them better (or worse) than in-house employers. The second approach, job seeker-oriented, will rather focus on who uses recruitment agencies (depending on the age, the industry, the management level, or even the country), and should make us understand what incentives they have to get help from a recruiter.

This thesis will start with a theoretical part, where we will observe what the literature says about each approach separately, but also about the relationship between a consultant and a candidate. The second part will be empirical, where we will explore through a qualitative research how consultants view their own utility in the recruitment process, but also what job seekers find attractive in this employment strategy.

2 Literature Review

2.1 Recruitment Agencies: Introduction and Fundamentals

In this first chapter, the objective is to introduce the context of recruitment, and to understand what it means to outsource the recruitment process. It is an essential first part that will help understand the following ones, more centred on the two parties for which this research focuses on: the recruitment consultant and the job seeker. This chapter will follow a simple path; we will start by briefly introducing what the general term of recruitment is, including important distinctions to make. Then, we will explain what the literature tells about Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO), and why it is so commonly used these days. Finally, we will discuss the role of recruitment agencies, with a more detailed part on executive search firms, as they represent an essential issue in this study.

2.1.1 Introduction to Recruitment

2.1.1.1 Definitions and Dimensions

Many authors (e.g., Barber, 1998; Lundby & Jolton, 2010) have done research on recruitment, and therefore given similar definitions and descriptions of what recruitment is: “Recruitment includes those practices and activities carried on by the organisation with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees” (Barber, 1998, p. 5). This author (1998) makes a clear distinction between recruitment and selection: two different phases, but she does not omit the fact that one may or may not influence the other. Recruitment would come first, and consists in finding and attracting potential candidates. The selection follows with picking the right fit among these potential candidates. However, Lundby and Jolton (2010) explains that recruitment would be more important as it comes first, and therefore a very successful selection process can be ruined by a poor recruitment in the first place. Depending on the phase, the leverage is not on the same side. Indeed, when trying to attract candidates, the organisation remains in a weaker position, having the obligation to find qualified individuals. On the other hand, the organisation gets leverage back when selecting its new hire, because they usually have more than one choice. Obviously, the candidate still has the possibility to reject the offer, but everyone acknowledges that once the candidate has been through all the recruitment process, the likelihood to refuse an offer is smaller than the likelihood of the firm to select another candidate.

According to Barber (1998), we can identify five dimensions of recruitment:

- The players: basically anyone involved in the process. The two main ones are always the organisation, trying to recruit a new employee, and the potential new hire. We can also find additional players, such as "organisational agents" (Barber, 1998, p. 8), which can be the HR Director, the internal recruiter, or the consultant of an intermediary), and outsiders, which represent anyone else who heard from or dealt with the organisation and will therefore influence public parties such as potential applicants, about the organisation's image.
- Activities: they are represented by anything done or accomplished, by the players, during the recruitment process. It includes posting an advertisement and defining what the job description is, sourcing potential candidates, interviewing them, but also managing all administrative tasks required the help the process, negotiating the offer, rejecting unsuccessful applicants, and so forth.
- Outcomes: it is basically the assessment of the two main objectives. The identification of applicants is assessed through the amount of potential candidates who have been sourced, and how close they are from the required fit. The selection is assessed later, after the hire, through the performance of the new employee. Research shows that especially among executive positions, several new employees do not last more a couple of years, and this is mainly due to a poor selection process. Consequently, the recruitment phase has its own part of responsibility as well (Barber, 1998; Lundby & Jolton, 2010).
- The context is essential, as the different players are not facing the same needs in the same time lapse.
- Finally, recruitment, as defined previously by Barber (1998).

2.1.1.2 Internal versus External Recruitment

In these coming paragraphs, we will try to explain an important difference, in terms of wording. As broad as it can be, literature offers many different views and approaches on recruitment. Therefore, it is necessary to establish a few clear distinctions.

For this matter, we will put ourselves in the position of a firm which needs to hire a new employee. From this very first point, the organisation (hence the employer) has two different choices regarding the source of its recruitment: internally or externally. We are basically looking at where the potential candidate comes from. Before any new hire, the employer must always consider internal sources. Simply, it means the candidate comes from the existing firm (De Varo & Morita, 2013). In other terms, we can describe it as internal promotion (Bayo-Moriones & Ortin-Angel, 2006). An internal promotion can be very formal, usually translated by an official advertisement, posted within the organization; it usually means every employee of the firm can apply to this position, and the recruiter in charge of the new hire works with a process very similar to any recruitment process. It can also be quite informal, a situation more common for smaller organization, where information flows from word of mouth. As we have already mentioned, the position may be open for several applicants, while sometimes, the employer already has someone they specifically wish to promote. This might happen because it is time for the current employee (whether it is in the contract or not), or because of a special achievement from this employee. As you may have understood, reasons are multiple. Then, what are the consequences of an internal hire? We notice several advantages, such as for time and effort: in some cases, there is no need to draft an advertisement and post it online. The process moves much faster, as the maximum amount of potential candidates is known and finite before even the search starts. The cost is an important criterion: it is quite interesting to hire internally as the firm faces no posting expenses, or any fee to a recruitment agency. For any organisation, it usually costs much more to hire externally than internally (Lundby & Jolton, 2010). The cost also increases significantly when recruiting top management executives. In terms of organization, it becomes much simpler, especially for interviews, which should take less time as the employer already knows the candidates. The same reason applies for quality (Chan, 1996), as the firm knows where the candidates are from, and that they have followed a proper training. Hiring internally is also an advantage regarding the fit: all candidates have knowledge of the firm's culture, values, and so forth. Hence, they need no time for adaptation. For the contract negotiation, it seems more comfortable for the employer to bargain with a current employee (the salary, for instance), as the informal talk allows more transparency. Finally, we believe that internal promotion has an indirect positive effect on the long-term. Indeed, by promoting one of their employees, the firm shows to all the other employees that it is possible and it may happen for them. Ultimately, it generates an additional motivation. The downside of this argument is a potential unhealthy competition, or even jealousy between co-workers, which will, instead of bringing motivation, will end up on some conflicts. Objectivity is also quite difficult to establish for the employer, when interviewing people working in the same firm. Anyone builds a certain relationship with each colleague, good or bad, and personal matters may take the lead during the interview. Finally, we notice that hiring internally does not solve the entire issue, as another position becomes vacant. This is most likely a secondary issue, but it definitely looks like postponing the problem. In the end, the firm will have to get someone from the outside (Bayo-Moriones & Ortin-Angel, 2006).

We will see later in this study that several ways to attract candidates exist, thus we will move directly to understanding what primary consequences external recruitment bring. The first conclusion we draw is the fact that hiring externally usually means the job must be done by someone competent, able to spend time on this project, and having certain credibility in terms of recruitment. It is risky to have a full time internal recruiter (someone from the firm hiring outside the firm) if the organization is rather small. Indeed, there will not be a need for a new employee every week, and it therefore becomes difficult to keep the recruiter busy. A manager from the HR department may do the job, but this role is quite diverse, inevitably leading to less pure recruitment skills in terms of sourcing or selection, for instance. Besides, for some top management positions, hiring the wrong individual might have heavy consequences, especially financially (Schulman & Chiang, 2007). However, we can establish several advantages to hire externally. The employer's maximum amount of candidates becomes infinite, and this often means more chances to find better quality. It is also a way to set up some 'new blood'. A new employee to the organisation will most likely bring new ideas, external experience, leading to innovation. Besides, hiring new employees is mandatory is the firm wishes to expand (which is always the case). Finally, it is more objective, which also avoid jealousy. All of these arguments occur when the firm, as we have said, hires someone from outside the organisation, but uses internal resources. Recruitment "can be coordinated in-house or by an external recruitment agency" (Dayang, Ong, & Ridhawati, 2013, p. 14). The term 'in-house' refers to internal recruiters (Pritchard, 2007), meaning they belong to the same organisation as the employer. The last possibility is therefore to use an intermediary, also known as Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO). It means some part of the recruitment process is not handled by the employer, but by a recruitment agency, or some other intermediary.

2.1.2 Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO)

Several authors (e.g., Wehner, Giardini, & Kabst, 2012; Wehner, Giardini, & Kabst, 2015; Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016; Mihelich, 2014) have done research on this topic, which means many different yet similar definitions have been established around this term. According to Wehner et al. (2015), "Recruitment Process Outsourcing (RPO) refers to the delegation of recruitment and selection activities to external service providers" (p. 851). Siew-Chen and Vinayan (2016) also go with their definition: "RPO involves handing over part or all of an organisation's recruitment functions to an outsourcing provider" (p. 1030). Finally, RPO can be defined as "an employer that outsources all or part of its recruiting function" (Mihelich, 2014, p. 1). Therefore, RPO is about using an intermediary, an external third party, in order to manage and handle some or all parts of the recruitment process.

2.1.2.1 RPO Utility

Every organisation, when looking for a new employee, must consider RPO by re-evaluating its recruitment needs and skills, in order to understand whether or not they should outsource their recruitment process, and if yes, which parts. According to Pritchard (2007), it is essential for firms to frequently conduct internal audit and assess their recruitment needs and structure. Is the current recruitment system working? A critical question is to find out whether or not they can manage the recruitment process themselves, namely having an internal recruiter. This usually depends on the firm's size, industry, and strategy in terms of where to allocate specific resources. Only then should an organisation start thinking about approaching an agency in order to outsource their recruitment needs.

Leggett (2007) offers five steps for firms to find out their RPO needs:

- "Putting in place a clear strategy" (p. 1): this crucial step is often neglected from organisations. Hiring new employees is essential for any firm, and establishing a wrong strategy from the start makes it harder to recover from.
- "Focusing on the value-adding tasks" (p. 1): for small businesses, it is often not necessary to outsource recruitment tasks, as a new hire may be needed only every three months or more, and the HR department can easily do that without losing quality and time for its main tasks, where they actuality add value to the firm. Otherwise, RPO might be needed, with experts handling some parts of the process.
- "Defining a formal recruitment process" (p. 1): any form must know how long the recruiter should spend on each step (job drafting, mapping, sourcing, interviewing, or selection through tests, etc.). Not establishing these few points from the start will result in time wasted.
- "Increasing agency commitment" (p. 1): it is essential to build a strong relationship with the agent, the consultant, in order to obtain full transparency from each side, so that they understand what the ideal fit means to the organisation.

- “Gathering feedback for improvement” (p. 1): Future recruitment must always be considered, and feedback is the key to improve what has not been done correctly the first time.

Once the organisation knows whether or not it is necessary to outsource the recruitment process, it must define which parts. According to Wehner et al. (2012), we can approach the recruitment process in four phases, namely easy to divide and identify when organisations outsource one or several of these parts. It starts with the job posting, where organisations may use a job board to accomplish this task for them, while LinkedIn remains an increasingly useful tool for job advertising. The second consists in mapping and sourcing profiles matching the job opportunity, so that they can become candidates. The next stage sees the recruiter pre-screen the selected candidates, usually through a phone call. This help determining their motivation, their preferences and requirements, but it is also the good moment to explain them what the job is really about, as well as an introduction of the company hiring, if not mentioned in the advertisement. Finally, the last stage is obviously the face-to-face interview, which is, depending how many of them there are, the last step before the selection process. Wehner et al. (2012) make us understand that organisations must decide how much of their recruitment process they intend to outsource. Research says that there is a greater likelihood to outsource the first stages, while the hiring company usually keeps the last steps for itself for better control.

2.1.2.2 Reasons of RPO Success

Research has shown that in the last decades, RPO is an increasing trend: “While some organisations try to achieve this purpose by developing and investing in their own personal recruitment, an increasing number of organisations delegate parts of their recruiting activities to external providers of HR services” (Wehner et al., 2012, p. 602). As a matter of fact, the United States of America is the country with the highest percentage of HR outsourcing, followed by Canada, and Western countries in general (Wehner et al., 2012).

It has been defined at the start of this research that even though recruitment as an intermediary involves two additional parties, we would strongly orient our focus on the candidate side. However, it seems important, while defining and describing RPO, to briefly explain the general reasons why some firms may decide to outsource their recruitment process. Several reasons which will surely help us understand some of the applicants’ behaviours. According to Siew-Chen and Vinayan (2016), the main reasons to outsource the recruitment process is that some organisations wish to give the control to more knowledgeable experts in recruitment, with access to a stronger network and therefore able to source many more potential candidates. “Most companies use recruiters for their expertise and knowledge of the candidate population” (Day, 2005, p. 17). Two other arguments that come up very often are time and efficiency (Siew-Chen & Vinayan, 2016). However, Siew-Chen and Vinayan (2016) also point out a few disadvantages or limitations to use RPO. Indeed, having an intermediary makes it much less personal for the candidate, and the employer may fear that. Switching costs is also a strong argument that firms must be careful with. Most of them engage a relationship with a recruitment agency in order to save costs. However, switching agents will inevitably result in a considerable loss. This argument is even stronger when dealing with retainers compared to contingent recruiters.

2.1.3 Recruitment Agencies: Characteristics and Specifications

As we have explained with RPO, recruitment agencies act as a third party, like an intermediary, between the two main players of the recruitment process: the employer and the job seeker. “The raison d'être of most recruitment agencies revolves around striving to supply a desirable product (the ‘good’ worker) to their clients” (Findlay, McCollum, Shubin, Apsite, & Krisjane, 2012, p. 1). Before going into more specifics of recruitment agencies, it is important, now that we have explained what it is, to look at the role that technology and social media play on recruitment in general, but also for agencies.

2.1.3.1 The Impact of Technology and Social Media

We cannot deny that in the last decades, technology and the use of social media have considerably expanded. It has a strong effect on recruitment, bringing big changes in the process. Firstly, technological improvements have made recruiters’ job much easier and faster (Mihelich, 2014), whether it is for job drafting, tracking applicants, sourcing them, or interviewing them; for instance, Skype has enabled recruiters to extend their search worldwide. It is today much easier to communicate, also bringing stronger competition for each role. Another example lies with the different sources to find new employees, and opinions differ regarding which one(s) are the most effective. Zottoli and Wanous (2000) explain that the most effective sources remain the use of current employees (through referrals), or simply rehire former employees. Anyone from the new generation would normally raise doubts regarding these statements, especially when Zottoli and Wanous (2000) also mention that the use of employment agencies does not work as well as the sources above-mentioned. The problem, or rather the answer to this concern, is that we are now seventeen years after this statement, and the last two decades have witnessed an extreme improvement regarding technology, and therefore sourcing methods. It is now much easier to advertise through a job board and the access or network a recruiter from an employment agency has is considerably significant. The use of an advertisement in a newspaper (Zottoli & Wanous, 2000) was already less effective in 2000, and is now almost (if not completely) revoked.

Secondly, the rise of social media has had an impact on the recruitment process. There are different ways to advertise a role, whether for companies or agencies (Dayang et al., 2013). The only advantage agencies have is that their whole business is about recruitment; therefore, one can be sure that they will have invested in some paying ways, such as job boards. They usually also have a premium LinkedIn account, enabling them to reach a wider target (Dayang et al., 2013). The most common way to advertise an open role twenty years ago and before was surely publishing an advertisement in the newspapers. The rise of technology has considerably opened access to digital information, and employers as well as recruiters use this as their only tool now. It can still be quite diverse, going from a Job board, such as Monster, Indeed, and so forth (Dayang et al., 2013), to the company's own Website. LinkedIn has probably become the most powerful way to advertise a role (Mihelich, 2014). "One of the biggest channels for candidate sourcing used by recruiters is LinkedIn […] 78 percent of respondents use LinkedIn as part of their talent-acquisition program for sourcing talent" (Mihelich, 2014, p. 1). Yet, LinkedIn is not only used for talent sourcing. Indeed, most recruiters, especially consultants, will post their open roles on their LinkedIn wall. It works on the other side, where job seekers definitely use this social media channel to find job opportunities. Obviously, LinkedIn is not the only channel to be used in the recruitment industry, although it is the most important one. Facebook and Twitter, for instance, also have their role to play. Presented such as, this new tool looks ideal. However, some limits can be found, and surely studied to be improved. For instance, what could be the danger with posting an open role through LinkedIn? Receiving hundreds of applications (Mihelich, 2014). This is also this issue on social media: everyone finds a way to be connected with everyone. Besides, the structure of a LinkedIn's profile varies a lot, and it quickly becomes complicated for recruiters to compare two profiles. The other danger is to start selecting through LinkedIn. We will mention this topic into deeper details later in this study, but basically, a LinkedIn profile cannot tell about one's personality and cultural fit. There is another consequence of the rise of technology and social that directly affects the recruitment industry (Mihelich, 2014). This sector (Information Technology, not recruitment) is rather new (Bologna, 2014), leading several start ups to launch their business. As a result, people are needed in this sector, and this directly benefits recruitment agencies.

Moreover, networking with people has always proven to be a trustworthy tool to attract applicants (Dayang et al., 2013). Today, we live in such a global and interconnected world that it becomes very easy to spread information such as a job opportunity.

2.1.3.2 Contingency versus Retained Recruitment

Although research shows that authors may differ on several points, debating on the exact meaning of some specific terms, the source of profit for recruitment agencies is unanimous. All agree that money comes from the client side (Dayang et al., 2013), as a fee, most of the time expressing a percentage of the new hire's first yearly income. Naturally, the percentage or even the terms regarding the exact nature of the fee clearly depends on what the client and the agency agreed on from the start. For some rare cases, literature tells us that some agencies may charge the candidate. However, this is a definite sign of weakness (Dayang et al., 2013), probably because the agency is having difficulties at that precise moment. In order to understand more specifically how the fee is structured, we need to look at the two main models used by recruitment agencies.

Pritchard (2007) helps us understand the difference between a retained search firm and contingency recruitment. We can explain the difference with one simple fact: contingency means the consultant will not get paid the fee agreed in the contract before the placement is completed, while a retainer charges the client with the recruitment process in several steps. This is usually more considered with executive search firms[1], for instance. The most common way would be to divide the fee in three thirds (Britton & Ball, 1999): as you can see in Figure 1, the first one is paid when the contract is signed, and therefore even before starting the search.

[1] This term will be explained in more details later.

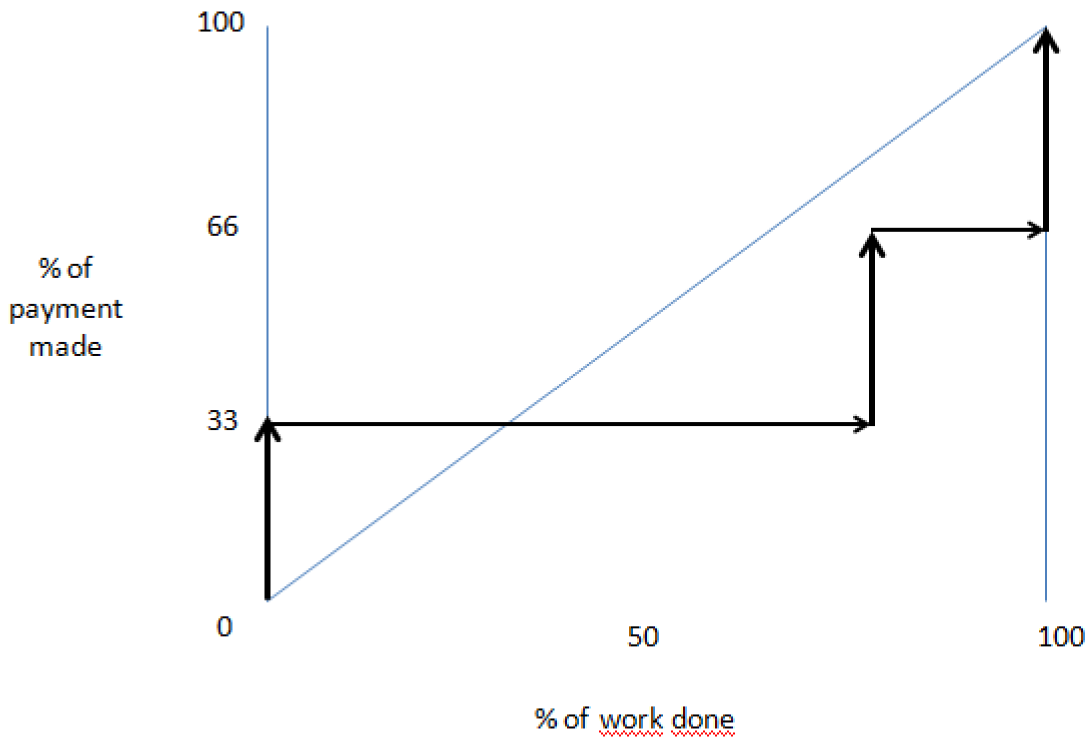

Figure 1 - The payment line for executive search (Adapted from Britton & Ball, 1999, p. 142)

The second one comes when the first short-list of candidates is presented; and the last one occurs after the placement is completed. Obviously, this specific separation of fees depends on the agency and the client, who usually find an arrangement meeting their expectations. They are indeed free to establish the rules they want, as long as both parties agree on them on a signed contract. Even the structure of the fee can differ: "per diem fees, percentage fees and fixed fees" (Britton & Ball, 1999, p. 140). Faulconbridge, Beaverstock, Hall, and Hewitson (2009) explain another fee structure, based on a fifty-fifty: the first half at the start of the assignment, and the second at the end. Most executive search firms also establish a minimum limit regarding the assignment they take: "These firms never work on projects where the minimum first year salary of a candidate is below £100,000" (Faulconbridge et al., 2009, p. 802).

Now, we can look at what these two strategies imply into further details. In addition to what we just explained, retained search firms have a few other characteristics (Pritchard, 2007), such as being more expensive (usually) regarding their fees, and more interesting regarding the confidentiality of the search. That implies that these firms are often devoted to top management search, and often we hear or read about executive search firms, which as the title mentions, focus exclusively on top executives.

2.1.3.3 A Successful Recruitment Agency

There are some characteristics that define a successful recruitment agency. According to Findlay et al. (2012), the relationship between an agency and its client is crucial. Indeed, in order to find and recruit the best fit for any organisation, the recruitment agency, through its consultants, must understand the client as much as possible. That means communicating with the employer, learning about their culture, their values, and so forth. It also means doing some external research (Findlay et al., 2012), so that several opinions are taken into consideration. Why is this phase so important? Simply because a good fit, namely going beyond classic skills and competencies, is on the one hand making sure to know everything about the candidate, but on the other hand, knowing everything about the client as well. The objective is to prevent mistakes in the casting, which would definitely result in time and financial waste (Findlay et al., 2012). Meeting the client in person, for the consultant, is then key in order to understand who this person is as an employer (a situation clearly different from being a client).

Even though this study focuses on how effective recruitment agencies are for job seekers, it is essential to understand the context, and what employers see in recruitment agencies is part of it. Without going into significant details, several researches have shown that some specific criteria are important for employers when deciding whether or not to outsource the recruitment process. As Meskanich (2009) explains, the objective is usually to gain time, money, to get a better network access, or even brand recognition. To simply explain this last argument, let us imagine a start up looking into expanding their workforce. As it is quite new, their brand image is neither good nor bad, but just unknown, and this is generally not what attracts candidates. One interesting way to get notoriety is to use a recruitment agency to advertise for you. However, an element that is usually not considered by firms when outsourcing is their long-term strategy (Meskanich, 2009). The first hire through an agency is often the most difficult, as both parties do not know each other very well, thus the candidate fit is not ideal. If we come back to our start up case, it is very likely interesting to invest in a recruitment agency as the firm wishes to expand, and therefore several hires are expected in the coming months. This is why a clear strategy needs to be studied before starting the recruitment process (Meskanich, 2009).

2.1.3.4 Types of Recruitment Agencies

There are different ways recruitment agencies are categorised. The objective of this study is not to list them all, but it is to introduce two major types, that are going to be referred to frequently along this study.

The first kind is named a temporary (or staffing) agency (Houseman, Kalleberg, & Erickcek, 2003). It has very common characteristics with a classic recruitment agency, except that the employment is usually for a shorter time period (Bosmans, Hardonk, De Cuyper & Vanroelen, 2016). Research shows that temporary agencies are used by some employers for probation (Houseman et al., 2003). Indeed, it is a mean for a phase of observation, where the organisation takes a lower risk. If there is a position that just became vacant, for instance, and the firm has no time to go through a classic recruitment process that would take too long, staffing agencies can be a solution (Houseman et al., 2003). Through a credible agency, the candidate has a strong likelihood to be performing, at least regarding skills and competencies. Regarding the personality fit and adaptation, the try out period is the perfect opportunity for the employer to get a better idea for a potential future hire (Houseman et al., 2003).

According to Dayang et al. (2013), two main types of recruitment agencies can be noticed, which refer more closely to the two types of models that we explained previously: top agencies, also known as executive search firms, where the recruiters are consultants and head-hunters: "top notch multinational agencies like Korn/Ferry, Boyden, Spencer Stuart and Russell Reynolds, which are called head-hunters, only work with some of the world's largest companies and hire top executives such as Chief Executive Officers (CEO), Chief Financial Officers (CFO), Managing Directors (MD) and so on" (Dayang et al., 2013, p. 14). Then we have broader recruitment agencies, such as Manpower or Adecco, for instance (Dayang et al., 2013), which usually handle any kind of management level, giving them a wider market. These agencies are also more focused on temporary assignments. Faulconbridge et al. (2009) make a clear distinction between these temporary agencies, more often associated with low-skilled roles, while executive search firms handle managerial roles.

To conclude this first chapter, we need to explain what executive search firms are, as recruiters working for these search firms will frequently be referred to along this thesis. Kenny (1978) offers a definition that seems very similar to a classic recruitment agency: "Today, an executive search firm is perceived as an extension of a client's internal resources and both work hand-in-hand to achieve specific manpower goals" (p. 80). A more formal and accurate definition comes from the United States Executive Search Services Industry Report (2017): "This industry comprises establishments primarily engaged in providing executive search, recruitment, and placement services for clients with specific executive and senior management position requirements" (p. 6). Mileham (2000) explains clearly that executive search firms' core business is to search for candidates, for profiles. Therefore, the objective is "to find people for jobs" (Mileham, 2000, p. 161), and not the opposite. As Dayang et al. (2013) mention, executive search firms are almost a different market, as their recruitment process is quite far from others, as well as the candidates they hunt.

There are a few tips that are known for companies in order to contact the right executive search firm. This is also what generally defines a successful search firm. Most of the time, the first thing clients ask is how successful were the candidates placed by this search firm. This means the client is focusing on results rather than how they achieve these results. It is quite a good indicator, as it would be a mistake to narrow the selection to the amount of placement completed by the search firm. Indeed, all of them do not have the same targets, meaning the recruitment time can vary. Besides, a completed placement does not always mean it is successful. Kenny (1978) notices three other main criteria defining a successful search firm. Most clients want to deal with a consultant having experience and expertise in the respective industry, but also strong recruitment experience. Finally, their network is usually a sign a success, as it remains their principal source for finding candidates.

2.2 Recruiters and Consultants

In this chapter, we will entirely focus on the players who directly make the recruitment sector work: the recruiters. Firstly, we will introduce what a recruiter is, in a broader term. Then, we will narrow the study to external recruiters, and through this study, we will use the term consultant. It is essential to make the difference between an in-house recruiter and a consultant, who acts as an intermediary and works for a recruitment agency. After understanding what a consultant does, we will have a more significant sub-chapter defining what a successful consultant is. Some characteristics will be assigned to both in-house recruiters and consultants, but the objective is to understand how they add value.

2.2.1 Recruiters: Definitions and Common Characteristics

Among all the definitions that literature offers, we chose to select two of them, very similar, which we believe illustrate at best what recruiters are. Most authors (e.g., Cole, Feild, Giles, & Harris, 2009; Pritchard, 2007) will agree on the fact that recruiters are the central actors of the employment market. “Recruiters act as an initial employment gatekeeper, deciding which applicants should remain active and which should be excluded from further consideration” (Cole et al., 2009, p. 5). This statement is shared by Pritchard (2007): “Recruiters are the organisation gatekeepers” (p. 6). Indeed, they will indirectly impact the organisation’s structure, results, and image. We all know that what makes a firm is its work force, so to say its employees. Recruiters are therefore the ones deciding who will directly impact the firm’s results. They are also the first people applicants and candidates meet, which implies they give the very first impression to these same applicants. This means any company needs to take good care of their recruiters, and invest time when selecting them.

When assessing recruiters, both from agencies as well as in-house, we notice that some characteristics are shared more commonly (Hyde, 2014). Recruiters are sales persons, excelling in communication, persuasion, but most importantly, they are result-oriented (Hyde, 2014). These are classic traits for sellers, who would do anything to reach their objective. However, lower scores were witnessed in skills more relationship-oriented: “customer focus and interpersonal sensitivity” (Hyde, 2014, p. 10). Is it crucial then, to manage both kinds of skills when working in the recruitment industry? Is it at least possible? Very likely, but the growing industry competition makes it harder, especially for contingency recruiters. They continuously compete on each and every role with several other agencies, and their rule is quite clear: the first one to find the right candidate wins. That definitely does not encourage spending time to build a relationship. Finding a balance is probably what makes a successful recruiter, because the result-oriented type will help recruiters make profit, and the relationship skills will help them to keep their business. Yet, the danger, as explain by Hyde (2014), is to have recruiters be good in both skills, but excelling in none. One solution would then be to create a team with two recruiters complementing each other (Hyde, 2014).

2.2.2 The Role of a Recruitment Consultant

As we have seen in the first chapter, we can identify several types of recruitment agencies. It is natural then to understand that we can identify several types of recruiters. It seems essential to explain in a small paragraph the few differences and similarities. We already notice the first difference, between in-house and external recruiters. Most of the time during this study, we will discuss their situation. Another term is often used to describe a similar role: the head-hunter. It seems important to understand what is really means, and in which category they play a role. As says the title they carry, these recruiters (because they are recruiters) search candidates. Therefore, in the process, the client comes first with an open role to fill, and then the head-hunter looks for profiles. Their job is to find a candidate (active or passive) who suits the role they work for, and not the opposite. Then, one of their uniqueness is that usually, they work for more senior positions (Dayang et al. 2013), which also involves looking for passive candidates. For example, a consultant from an executive search firm, is, among other titles, a head-hunter (Mileham, 2000), as one of the tasks is to find candidates who are already working somewhere. And these people, becoming potential candidates, often expect a strong discretion from the consultant (Lim & Chan, 2001), as they do not wish to show their current employer that they are potential interesting in a new opportunity: "'can you hold on a moment while I close the door please' – as a Recruitment Consultant involved in Executive Searches (head-hunting), one often hears this phrase, albeit in many different forms" (Mileham, 2000, p. 161).

We will see in the following part that head-hunters are indeed consultants from executive search firms. The last distinction that we could make is from the agency's model. As we have seen previously, recruitment can be contingent or retained. The role of the recruitment consultant is therefore different, depending on which side they stand. Because they specifically work on a high level market, retainers are usually known for having an extended network, and therefore better and faster access to talent candidates. This would explain, partly, higher fees. On the other side of the picture, we have seen that contingency recruitment means that the consultant is paid when the result comes. This usually implies, with veracity, a significant source of motivation (Pritchard, 2007). Besides, contingency recruitment often means that the recruiters work in a faster environment, because most searches are usually not exclusive. This is where one limitation for contingency can be spotted. When a company contacts several contingent recruiters, it generally means that the faster with the best candidate wins. The risk is that candidates be annoyed by being called repeatedly, which would ultimately impact negatively their willingness to accept a job offer. This is also where contingency gets tricky: the consultant needs to work quite rapidly, and will have a tendency, most of the time unconsciously, to focus on quantity rather than quality.

As we have said previously, the consultant is one type of recruiter. They work as intermediaries, working both for and with clients and candidate, whereas in-house recruiters hire for the company they work for. Basically, a consultant looks on one side for the perfect candidate, and on the other side for the client's needs and strategy (Mileham, 2000). We also understood that consultant is usually a term referring to executive search firm, where they recruit top management level executives. "Executive search consultants were defined as trained specialists who helped client organizations identify and evaluate the suitability of job candidates for top, senior, and middle-level management and executive positions" (Lim & Chan, 2001, p. 213).

Consultants have an essential role when hiring on behalf of one of their clients. Indeed, "they are the ambassadors of the company" (Dayang et al., 2013, p. 20), which means they will directly impact the image of a company to the candidates they talk to. The client must pick wisely, because the consultant will approach several candidates, who may, if the process does not work well, keep a negative image of the employer, even though the agency is responsible through its consultant (Dayang et al., 2013).

Finally, we can understand the role of a consultant through the search cycle. It shows the different steps that a recruitment agency follows, and what actors are involved in which parts. Before that, we should understand that search models apply more easily to executive positions, as fewer candidates are potential targets (Mileham, 2000). For lower roles, posting a job advertisement may a wiser solution.

First of all, it is important to mention that the consultant is generally not alone on the assignment. The team is set differently depending on the firm, the country, or even the strategy. A classic team is made of three main roles: the account manager, the recruiter, and the researcher. The account manager is a term mostly used in North America; it basically represents the business developer, who is the person doing commercial prospecting, namely attracting new clients to the firm. The main tasks are client focused, which goes from calling them to present them the firm's service, meeting with them for negotiations, defining the search strategy, and making sure that the relationship between the agency and the client's firm is solid. The recruiter is the one dealing with the candidates, either on the phone or face-to-face interviews. The recruiter is also introducing the different candidates to the client (sometimes), and managing the different updates and feedback to the candidates. Finally, the researcher is the one finding the potential candidates, using different methods. In this model with three main actors, the researcher has no (or very little) interaction with the different candidates. This model would usually be used for large recruitment agencies. However, it is also very common to have a model with two main actors, with one consultant and one researcher (Mileham, 2000). In this case, consultant is still doing what an account manager would do. The recruiter's role disappears, or at least is now shared between the two remaining actors. The researcher will not only look for profiles, but will also manage the first calls. Once the number of serious potential candidates has been established, the consultant takes over and meets these candidates before introducing them to the client (Mileham, 2000).

Now, let us look at the different steps of the search. As we said, this type of agency finds profiles for a specific job, and not the opposite. The process then starts with a briefing with the client. Kenny (1978) identifies this step as the pre-search survey. Two main elements are discussed (Mileham, 2000): the profile of the ideal candidate, and the strategy that the client's firm conducts.

> "It ensures that candidates who progress to the company interview possess the correct blend of technical skills and personal qualities, enabling them to fulfil their technical and managerial responsibilities and, more importantly, fit into their new environment with minimum disruption to themselves or their colleagues" (Mileham, 2000, p. 161).

It is essential for the researcher to be present during this meeting, or at least aware of all information, as the search starts with the person. This as a whole is the search strategy (Kenny, 1978), and it should be established as clearly as possible, as all the following steps will be influenced by this one. The second step is the search by research (Kenny, 1978). Once the search boundaries are set, the researcher will look for profiles, using the agency's database, the Internet, or social media, such as LinkedIn, proved to be very useful for recruiters. The objective is not only to find potential candidates, but also to contact people who will forward the message and advise to contact specific people. This pre-screening stage is essential as the consultant does not want to waste time by calling candidates who are too far from the position required (Kenny, 1978). On the other side, executives receiving a call from a researcher expect that the job they are going to discuss is adequate, so that none of them waste their time. A search always goes with a timeline, thus it is important to call the best candidates first (Mileham, 2000). People interested in the role send their resumes and become applicants. The third step is the evaluation and screening (Kenny, 1978): this is a classic step where the consultant calls and interviews candidates s/he feels would be a good fit. The next objective is to create a short-list of candidates to present to the client. The consultant's task is then to organise and manage the different interviews between the client and the candidates, as well as debriefing rejected ones, which is crucial to maintain a healthy relationship (Mileham, 2000). The fourth step, referencing and appraisal (Kenny, 1978) occurs after the client has started to interview the candidates selected by the consultant. Calling the previous employer to make sure the candidate is right seems like a fair task. The only trick consultants should be careful at is when interviewing passive candidates, whom current employers are not yet aware of these interviews. Kenny (1978) names the fifth step attraction and negotiation: the consultant has quite an important role during this step as both other parties rely on its expertise. Namely, the presence of a consultant during the negotiations makes sure that any insane offer is avoided. The last step, orientation and assimilation (Kenny, 1978), occurs after the placement is done. The consultant's job is to follow up on the employer and the new employee to check if everything is working as planned. It is essential to maintain a good relationship, so that further business can be accomplished in the future.

2.2.3 The Successful Consultant

There are several characteristics that define a good recruiter, especially for a recruitment agency. The first characteristic assigned to a consultant is the extended network. Chiles (2005), confirms that recruiters usually develop a larger network. This is one way of sourcing, but the agency's internal database, representing their own talent pool, helps them considerably to find ideal candidates. We have seen previously that employee referral was an option frequently used by recruiters. Indeed, they extensively create a large network, and use it as a recruitment source. As Han and Han (2009) suggests, this is an informal source that usually leads to better results in terms of adaptation and performance, because the position is more clearly explain to the candidate. As the recruiter belongs to the same network as the candidate, they usually discuss the role outside of the classic frame of interviews, leading to more transparency. The gap between expectations and reality when starting the new job is then very little, and the new employee has more chances to find a long-term career at this new employer (Han & Han, 2009). As Schulman and Chiang explains (2007), a successful consultant takes the lead and does not wait for business to happen: "In other words, they go find the candidates they need. They don't wait for the right person to answer an ad or send in a resume" (Schulman & Chiang, 2007, p. 14). This is generally doable thanks to their own network that they continuously build and expand. For soon-to-be candidates (so to say passive), it means that they can be contacted anytime, for opportunities they might not have seen or even heard of. That is why, as a candidate, being known by consultants is a good thing, or at least cannot hurt. As clients hope from consultants that they will not forget one candidate, a candidate hopes from consultants that they will not forget one opportunity.

Then, research shows that depending on the client, they will not look for the same qualities in a consultant, or at least they believe that some qualities more than some others (Dayang et al., 2013). For instance, a recruiter's expertise comes from the industry s/he works in. But is the expertise in this specific sector, or in recruitment? The skills will not be the same depending on the expertise, and sometimes a consultant handles several sectors of activity. On the one hand, an industry expert may have a strong knowledge about the job itself, and will easily tell if the candidate has the right skills. On the other hand, a recruitment expert will manage the process more easily, while building a stronger relationship with the candidate. Market knowledge, or industry expertise (Day, 2005) is another tool for recruiters, especially executive search firms' consultants, in order to find talent candidates. Not only that makes them understand the role better, but they also appear to job seekers as experts, bringing trust more easily (Mihelich, 2014).

Another essential characteristic for consultants (and recruiters in general) is the amount of commitment they put in their job, and namely their objectivity. Lim and Chan (2001) establish as a clear fact that executive search firms' consultants are generally more objective about the candidates compared to in-house recruiters, simply because they do not hire for their own firm. Schulman and Chiang (2007) bring a different view. The author believes that a good consultant also manages to bring an objective and subjective view on the candidates introduced (Schulman & Chiang, 2007). The objectivity usually comes from skills and competencies, which can hardly be discussed, although can be verified, while the subjectivity comes from the interaction the consultant had with the candidate during the several interviews, and the relationship they built. Besides, the consultant can reach some kind of subjectivity with strong social skills. According to Dayang et al. (2013), “they should have the communication and social skills to deal with people, especially to their clients and candidates” (p. 18). Some may be surprised, as this is not, according to the literature, their primary role. Recruiters’ basic first task is to match a resume, so to say qualifications, skills, and competencies, with a vacancy (Dayang et al., 2013). That involves remaining quite objective for the recruiter, and not getting personal with the candidate. That usually is the case for temporary agencies or staffing agencies, where the objective is to quickly cover a role that would hurt a company’s performance if not filled rapidly. For a temporary assignment, the culture share is not always needed, but the skills are, and they need to match on the first day. However, as soon as we look for higher management level role, with a long-term placement perspective, the goal is different, and employers need to know that the new hire will fit, and adapt to the company’s culture (Dayang et al., 2013). Martin (2014) agrees that when working in a recruitment agency, the consultant should be socially at ease, towards two kinds of people: the people s/he is working for, namely clients and candidates, but also colleagues, meaning being a competent team player.

The last significant characteristic expressed in their literature is the commercial aspect of the consultant. For this matter, it is an attribute much more witnessed with recruitment consultants, especially for contingency recruitment. According to Martin (2014), a good consultant is first of all a good sales person. Indeed, people tend to forget about it, but sales are the core business of recruitment, where the consultant must either sell a job to a candidate, or sell an applicant to a client. Obviously, we generally do not use this term of selling, as recruitment deals with human beings and not products. And even though the treatment is different, the process remains quite similar. The consultant is also customer service oriented (Martin, 2014). While keeping the comparison with selling a product, the person earning a compensation for the delivery of a product (in this case the placement of a candidate), must make sure that the client is satisfied, and that implies customer service. In addition, this relationship may also work between the consultant and the candidate, who must be provided with all information during the process, and treated as equally as another candidate. Mileham (2000) also explains the commercial perspective into further details. This defines the fact to contact companies and make them a sales speech, in the hope to do business with them in the future. This is a very delicate task, as the consultant needs a certain self-confidence to convince the client (Mileham, 2000). Besides, the choice of the person to call in this specific company is crucial. If the wrong person is called, there is a higher chance that the offer be rejected, and it is then much more complicated to reach someone else from this very same firm. This is why research must be done in order to contact the most appropriate person. It could be the CEO, the CFO, the HR Manager, and so forth.

A successful consultant is also expected to accomplish solid research before even picking up the phone. Otherwise, the questions asked remain standard, too theoretical, and not much is discovered about the candidate's personality. The cultural fit, which will be discussed later in this study, is an element that the consultant should highly take into consideration (Martin, 2014).

There is one reaction candidates may have that represents a challenge for consultants. Indeed, when being contacted by a recruiter, a job seeker might feel that s/he is a candidate like another, and question the reason why the client did not contact him or her directly. There is a whole task coming upfront to the recruiter, who must convince this job seeker to become a candidate (Wehner et al., 2012). If the recruiter cannot make this candidate that the employer wanted him or her personally, he can convince the candidate s/he is ideal for the position. The employer has an advantage in order to make the candidate feel 'special' (Wehner et al., 2012). Another challenge concerns ethics. For a consultant to be competent and successful, it also means managing an ethical process of recruitment. Lim and Chan (2001) suggest twelve main points on which a consultant could be tempted to act unethically[2]. We can notice that there are several ways a consultant can hide information or act unethically, either towards the client, the candidate, or other parties, with a hide of transparency. Regarding the client, it can mean presenting off-limit candidates, which would also hurt the client's competitor, which has seen one of its employees poached. Some organisations see executive search firms as a way for competition to attract and steal their current executives. Is it illegal? Unlikely. Is it unethical? That is another topic to discuss, but not on this study. The consultant can also act unethically by not giving all information to the candidate, such as hiding a negative aspect of the client. This can also happen through the assessment method, which may be unfair. These are several factors that the consultant must be careful with and respect (Lim & Chan, 2001).

Finally, a good recruiter should also be prepared to go beyond its main responsibilities (Hicks, 2016). Sometimes, extra efforts bring significant results. For instance, a recruiter and a coach have a different job, with different objectives. The recruiter's aim is to find

[2] See annexe 1.

candidates to make the agency’s business profitable, whereas a coach hopes to help the individual by understanding him or her and advising. However, the recruiter can play this role, and it is at some extent, and his interest, to make the candidate look good in front of the client. Coaching is of one the key for this to happen (Hicks, 2016).

2.3 Job Seekers

This third chapter will be divided into three sub-parts. Firstly, we will understand what job seekers are, and the different terms that are associated with this side of the recruitment process. In the second part, we will see how these job seekers react to different elements during the recruitment process. Finally, we will try to understand what kinds of advantages the job seeker has to do business with a recruitment consultant.

2.3.1 Job Seekers, Applicants, and Candidates

It seems essential to distinguish the different terms that will be used in this study, and more specifically in this chapter. Three words are frequently used to describe people in the employment market: job seekers, applicants, and candidates. Simply, a job seeker defines anyone looking for an employment opportunity (Joos, 2008). A job seeker becomes an applicant when acknowledging the interest to an opportunity by submitting a resume and a cover letter (in some cases). A candidate is a broader term that we usually use in the later stages of the recruitment process. However, it is also used to describe anyone who could be a potential fit for a role. According to Joos (2008), there are two types of candidates: active and passive candidates:

> "Active job candidates are those currently unemployed, who represent 10 percent or less of the total workforce at any given time. Passive job candidates are those who are currently employed and not putting a lot of energy into seeking a new position, but who would consider making a job change if the conditions were right" (Joos, 2008, p. 52).

Active candidates have always existed, and the author describes their techniques (as well used by in-house recruiters) as a waiting strategy: The "spray and pray" (Joos, 2008, p. 52) strategy, where on one side of the picture, recruiters put an advertisement online and wait for positive applications, and on the other side, job seekers spend time sending resumes around, in the hope that one will catch a recruiter's attention. Nowadays, there are more and more passive candidates (Lievens & Harris, 2003). Indeed, thanks to the Internet, technology and social media, it is easier, both for recruiters (especially consultants) and candidates to look at the market (Joos, 2008). That means all employees who could not afford to spend time looking at further opportunities can now, much faster, think of their career evolution. Even though these candidates are passive (and therefore not applicants), they act by making themselves available in the market, instead of waiting for being unemployed again. This strategy reduces their risks, namely regarding financial stability. In general, all job seekers are advantaged with the rise of technology, as they can access to more information in a shorter time (Lievens & Harris, 2003). The issue is then the quantity of the different sources offered online. There is a real challenge in understanding which sources are credible and useful, and which ones are fake sources.

It is a known fact that people make a firm's success, and in the last couple of decades, a term has risen regarding the search of good candidates: the war for talent (Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Executive search firms especially, in order to maintain their competitiveness in the market, must focus on finding talented executives. Besides, these firms have a clear influence on this market, as they define themselves what make a talent or not (Faulconbridge et al., 2009). According to these same authors (2009), there are some characteristics defining the ideal candidate. Although the author narrows his explanation on top management roles, it may also apply generally. A good candidate is the one able to build and expand his or her network. Indeed, efforts may not pay off the same day, but knowing people in strategic industries at strategic positions will make the individual's career much easier, especially with time. The ideal candidate should also usually possess a global awareness and mobility. This applies more for executive roles, as most big corporations now do business internationally, and frequently send their executives abroad on assignments. However, other factors are common for all positions. For instance, languages: speaking English is not any more an asset, but a necessity (Faulconbridge et al., 2009). Indeed, the global economy imposes for many companies a unique language, which means that in most of the developing countries, English is business language. Thus, a head-hunter may not even consider a candidate who only speaks his or her native language. Finally, the author explains that some consultants require high educational level, such as an MBA, most likely from a known university in the United States (Faulconbridge et al., 2009). This selection can be explained by the extensive amount of universities today, and the fact that having a Master degree is not enough to become a talent candidate.

Finally, looking at job seekers' characteristics is frequently linked to social media, which interfere in the way candidates' information is accessible. Social media represent a danger for candidates as it gives a way for employers to find candidates' profile information (El Ouirdi, Pais, Segers & El Ouirdi, 2016). It can actually lead to discrimination during the pre-screening stage. The most classic example is the case of a pregnant woman (Bologna, 2014). The employer uses social media to do some research, and finds out a photo or a comment telling the information about the pregnancy, or even the wish to become pregnant. The employer might then reject the application at the first selection stage, preventing from providing a detailed reason why not to select this candidate. The solution is then to go through a recruiter. The candidate can then share information, and the recruiter may find out more on social media. The difference is that they will improve these data when presenting to the client. For instance, people tend to share personal information on social media such as Facebook or Twitter, but most of them are irrelevant to the skills required in a potential opportunity, and the recruiter will notice that, while the employer might not, as the interest is personal. Social media should then be used for and not against job seekers.

2.3.2 Applicants' Reaction to the Recruitment Process

According to Wehner et al. (2015), RPO involves the use of an intermediary between the employer and the applicant, which directly results in a weaker or at least less direct relationship between these two parties. However, this same author provided through a study the fact that applicants' reactions are influenced by the employer's image and by the recruiter's image. As we see in Figure 2 (Wehner et al., 2015), several reactions are interrelated and to be considered.

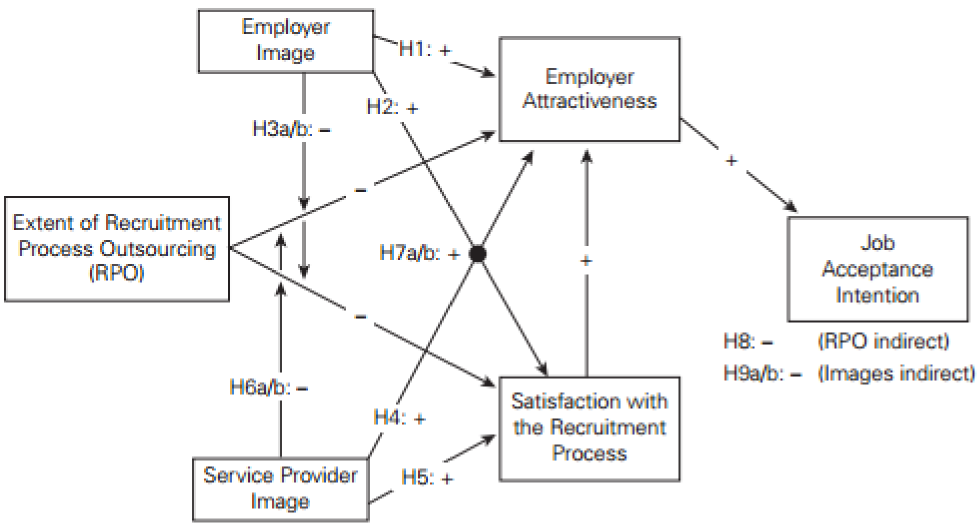

Figure 2 - Hypothesised Research Models (Wehner, Giardini & Kabst, 2015, p. 853)

Without going into too many details, we understand that two main actors influence the applicant to make the decision of taking a job offer. The employer is very likely the actor having the most influence at the start of the process, as long as this information is not confidential to the candidate. A strong brand name will automatically result in job attractiveness (if the brand's image is positive, of course) for the candidate. It will also influence the candidate in liking the recruitment process. Indeed, if this famous company trusts to work with this recruitment agency, why would not the candidate? This should balance the fact that even before starting the process, Wehner et al.'s study (2015) shows that applicants react negatively to RPO. This whole idea can also work in the other way. Let us imagine a situation where the client is unknown to the candidate. As we have said, the applicant tends to have a negative view on RPO. If the recruitment process goes extremely well, this will indirectly influence the employer's image to the candidate's view (Wehner et al., 2015). The system works backwards, where the employer can obtain a negative image through a poor recruitment process provided by the consultant. Therefore, we understand that the employer's image and the recruiter's image are strongly correlated in the candidate's mind, and have an important impact on the job acceptance (Wehner et al., 2015).

Most people have been once in their life in the candidate position, and therefore facing different ways to be selected. There is an unlimited number of selection methods used by recruiters, and Ababneh and Chhinzer (2014) mention ten of them: "interviews, resumes, work sample tests, biodata, written ability tests, personal references, personality tests, honesty tests, personal contacts, and graphology" (p. 33). Not all of them are constantly used by recruiters, and some are known as being more frequent. The top three would very likely consist in using resumes, interviews, and references (probably used in this order). Then, the candidate is very likely going to react differently depending on the selection method used. As the three main ones listed above are obvious and frequent, these methods are usually considered as fair (Ababneh & Chhinzer, 2014). Another method mentioned by the author, like graphology, for instance, will result in opposite reactions. The selection method must carefully be picked, and it often depends on the role. One thing remains sure: if the method used is fair, the applicant has more chances to accept the offer or recommend the opportunity to a friend.

Looking at applicants' reactions regarding the recruitment process itself, according to Ababneh and Chhinzer (2014), some factors clearly influence applicants' reactions. For instance, the way information is provided and the transparency of this information. Indeed, the candidate is already facing a serious challenge which is to find a job opportunity. It is natural to expect from them to wish to be kept aware of any information (Saks & Uggerslev, 2010). They expect recruiters to be completely honest with them, such as downsides the client may have that the recruiter is aware of but which is not public. Candidates also tend to have negative reactions when they are not kept informed regularly (Ababneh & Chhinzer, 2014). This is where the recruitment consultant can make a difference. Consultants are used to deal with candidates, and therefore understand what they need to be told to keep a certain attraction to the role. Recruitment consultants will describe the role, but more importantly the client, in a more objective way. Besides, they usually have more frequent conversations than when the employer handles the recruitment process. Applicants tend to react positively if they are regularly informed (Saks & Uggerslev, 2010).

It is always interesting to understand what influences candidates during the recruitment process. According to Taylor and Bergmann (1987), we need to separate this idea between the early stage and the later stage of the process. In the early stage, candidates are usually more influenced by recruitment activities, namely what recruiters do, say, or how they do it. In other terms, the behaviour of the recruiter will have a strong impact on the candidate's trust and job attraction. In the later stage, the relationship has been established, and the candidate will rather focus on job attributes, such as compensation or other benefits, for instance. Also, research has shown that experienced applicants (most likely at an executive level) are less easily influenced by recruitment activities (Taylor & Bergmann, 1987). This is why, at the start of the process, not so many attributes are told, because the applicant would be influenced.

Finally, job seekers do not always have the same interests when looking for a job. It is a real challenge for recruiters to put aside the classic criteria influencing job seekers, and treat each applicant as unique, while trying to understand what they really value. The different attributes that applicants value may depend on very varied conditions, such as their age, where they come from, the context, or their professional experience (Honeycutt & Thelen, 2016). This author's research gives an idea of which criteria are usually considered by applicants. The first thing to understand is that income is not always the first influential factor. Although most job seekers have this criterion in their main priorities, many of them will consider giving up a part of it to gain on a different topic. It can be the atmosphere, the location (often linked to the family situation), the firm's image and values, the cost of living, or other kinds of non-financial benefits (Honeycutt & Thelen, 2016), such as future co-workers.

Regardless the different job attributes job seekers are attracted to, they must be very careful with what jobs they are considering. This has serious consequences for their career (McDonald, 2012). Indeed, accepting an offer for a company which does not fit the candidate's profile will quickly result in a contract ending. It will then become harder to find another good job, as this experience will translate the lack of clear-sightedness (McDonald, 2012). This author gives an essential tip that executives and candidates in general should follow: "Meet with staff" (McDonald, 2012, p. 48). This will help understanding how they behave, and how the firm runs. Basically, it will tell whether or not adaptation and fit will go smoothly.

Finally, when looking for a job, people often hear some of their friends advising to go to a temporary agency. Although this is at first appearance a nice and friendly advice, this strategy needs to be thought through by the job seeker. Hippel, Mangum, Greenberger, Heneman, and Skoglind (1997) explain that temporary agencies are socially interesting, yet professionally dangerous. Indeed, the meaning of temporary agencies is that it finds a job for an individual, but for a short period of time (Hippel et al., 1997). Socially speaking, it means this person often changes jobs and therefore meet new people quite frequently, extending the personal network. The problem starts when this strategy repeats itself. Adapting to a company and a job can take a while, and it is tiring. In these agencies, recruiters and employers do not always care much about the cultural fit, as the assignment does not last long anyway. Finally, a resume that has several temporary jobs shows instability, often used by recruiters for rejection. Recruitment consultant (except temporary agencies' ones) usually try to find the best fit. It may take a longer time, but in the long-term, results will be better. Job seekers should be aware that working with a recruitment consultant also has several advantages.

2.3.3 Advantages for Job Seekers to Work with a Recruitment Consultant

A consultant who adds value to a candidate is a consultant who gives some advice (Mullen, 2011). It can be on very varied topics. Applicants firstly and then candidates play an essential part of their recruitment process with the resume and the different interviews, whether on the phone or face-to-face (Mullen, 2011). When applying for an opportunity, an applicant will often wonder whether or not the employer even looked at the resume. It is indeed very common for applicants to hear nothing from the firm they applied to. Mullen (2008) explains that applying through a recruitment agency gives the applicant more chances that the resume is read by the potential employer. The fact is that a firm that decides to hire through internal resources will often use an employee for whom the whole job is not to do pure recruitment. Whereas a consultant's job is to look at resume and select the appropriate ones. This is where their counselling role takes place. Consultants are experts on these tasks as it is their job to evaluate them. This is why a candidate should always hope and sometimes expect (all consultants do not do that) some piece of counselling in order to improve their resume (what to add, what to remove, what to change or explain differently, and so forth) but also how to handle an interview (namely what to say or not say, or even what questions to ask the client during the final interview in order to show clear motivation). As Mullen (2011) explains, resume tips simply consist in being clean, precise, and keep it to a maximum of two pages. This is a two ways street, because on the one hand, the candidate will be more prepared and has more chances to get the job, and on the other hand, it shows the client that the consultant selects motivated people.

We have seen previously that recruitment consultants usually have a strong expertise in the industry they work in. That has a direct positive consequence for candidates. Indeed, the consultant will be informed of the dynamic that each firm has in the market. As a result, the candidate will be advised not to go for a role in a firm because of this reason (Dayang et al., 2013). A firm that has no future or which is facing economic difficulties is quite hard to notice from the candidate's perspective. It does not even need to go that far. Simply, a good consultant knows the client, and that means s/he can give some advice to the candidate, about this specific firm (Mullen, 2011). Besides, a consultant expert in an industry has more chances to understand the candidate's needs regarding job requirements' specifications.

One other perk to use a consultant as a job seeker is access to additional job opportunities (Dayang et al., 2013). Indeed, several employers go through recruitment agencies to find new employees, which means the role is not always advertised. The job seeker would normally have no chance to even notice the opportunity exist, except through a recruiter. This argument mirrors the fact that companies use recruitment agencies to have access to more candidates. We then conclude that recruitment agencies expand market opportunities.

In general, job seekers must understand that there is not much to lose to get to know a recruitment consultant. As Pritchard (2007) mentions, consultants possess a database which is one of their first talent pool and therefore recruitment source. By knowing the consultant, the job seeker enters the database, and thus gets included in the first wave of candidates that the consultant will contact (Pritchard, 2007).

Naturally, there are some arguments convincing job seekers not to use recruitment consultants. For instance, we have expressed previously that a recruitment agency will very likely, on most cases, be able to source many more potential candidates than an in-house recruiter, due to its tools and the extensive network (Meskanich, 2009). What does that mean for candidates? It is actually negative, because it results in additional competition for these candidates. The tough competition among graduates can also be explained a bigger population (Dayang et al., 2013). There is indeed a greater amount of candidates available for entry-level positions, meaning more choice and chances to find the right one for consultants. That could lead job seekers to use consultants at the entry-level stage, but according to Mullen (2008), recruitment consultants are often more present in managerial positions. That can easily be understood with financial reasons. If the fee is structured with a percentage of the first year income of the new hire, it is then more profitable to work in this market. Besides, consultants will then meet with experienced workers in their respective industry, such as CEOs, Country Managers, HR Managers, and so forth. These candidates (at that time) may have enough influence to make their firm become a client. From the candidate's point of view, it then seems more interesting to contact a recruitment consultant when reaching these kinds of positions (Mullen, 2008). At an executive level, it is often more effective to approach executive search firms when the individual is currently not looking for any opportunity, and seem stable in the existing position (Lyons, 2000). Indeed, it gives more credibility. We should note that this strategy is mostly used for managerial roles, as recruitment agencies covering lower roles may not have the time to build a relationship. Yet, the individual loses nothing to be known by some recruiters. To make sure this happen, it is essential to never avoid calls. Some employees sometimes see a call from a consultant as a waste of time, or could even fear to be judged by colleagues. As Lyons (2000) mentions: "perhaps you can recommend someone else […] they will remember" (p. 63). Then, no one should ever fear to meet a consultant when the opportunity comes. At worst, the individual loses a couple of hours, but it is rare to leave a meeting with nothing positive or valuable. At best, the person is known from the consultant, who probably gave some career advice, avoiding the candidate to apply everywhere (Dayang et al., 2013), and helped the individual to grow personally (Lyons, 2000). Finally, it is essential that candidates should not underestimate junior recruiters (Lyons, 2000). They may not have a strong industry expertise, but they are often the ones starting the research, and presenting profiles to their consultant. Treating them like consultants will make them remember you, maybe in fifteen years when they will be managing partners of an executive search firm.

One significant advantage to use a consultant for job seekers is linked to the starting salary. Bessy (2012) explains that recruiters, as intermediaries, have a strong impact on the candidate's starting salary. Indeed, his article mentions that being referenced or being selected through a recruitment agency asserts a certain credibility of the candidate to the employer. The salary is therefore automatically evaluated higher than if this condition is not present (Bessy, 2012). It is said that consultants, in general (it is important that it does not happen systematically), participate in the income bargain. The most obvious reason is that they are experts in the industry, usually, and therefore are used to deal with comparable roles. That will tell them a more precise range that candidates or clients could have in mind. Besides, they also avoid one party to clearly lose the negotiation. It may happen that a candidate is underestimating his new position and accept a salary a lot under the norm. The situation could occur on the other extreme, where the candidate has too high expectations, maybe due to a change of location or industry, and would normally reject an offer that seems unfair at first sight. The consultant can then confirm to the candidate that the salary offered by the employer is a fair deal. The candidate has a clear interest to use an intermediary, as in most cases, the recruiter tends to negotiate the salary slightly in favour of the candidate, because it will directly increase the profit the agency will make. However, the recruiter must remain careful on this specific point. Abusing of this strategy might lead to see the client work with another agency, for cheaper fees. We have discussed in previous chapters the different fee structures with Britton & Ball (1999). What impact does this have on candidates? The fact that most agencies have a fee structure based on the percentage of the first year income is a positive sign for the candidate. Indeed, this will surely influence the consultant in negotiating a higher starting salary. However, the transaction is done before the new employee starts; hence, any raise will not affect the consultant.

Finally, one essential role that the recruiter (in-house or not) has is to convince the candidate to accept the job offer (Lievens & Harris, 2003). At the end of the recruitment process, it is often time for negotiations. The candidate, especially at the executive level, may have some leverage if engaged in other recruitment processes. On this point, the consultant has an advantage over the in-house recruiter, as there is less self-interest. Indeed, the candidate will always suspect the employer to oversell the offer, while the consultant will advise on a fair negotiation.

2.4 Candidates and Recruitment Consultants: a Unique Relationship

Research has been done about the different skills and characteristics that in-house recruiter seek in top candidates. We also saw previously in this study what job seekers evaluate as essential, or at least what major characteristics they look for in an opportunity. Chew and Teo (1993) raises a very interesting question: How much each of them is aware of the other's intentions? As a recruitment process between an in-house recruiter and an applicant has become quite formal, including a lot of strategies, all real motivations and requirements may not have been established clearly. The few research completed on this topic confirmed that there was a clear gap of perceptions, depending on which side the individual is standing (Chew & Teo, 1999). What does this mean? Information is not explicitly delivered. For job seekers, it seems that job ads probably do not relate or clearly enough what employers look for. For in-house recruiters, it means candidates are either not explicit or too timid during their interviews to express what they truly value. In any case, some clarifications need to be considered for more effective recruitment. One solution could be brought by an intermediary, namely a recruitment consultant. Both parties would discuss their needs more clearly to the consultant, who could relate the information. The potential nervousness of candidates facing their potential employer would significantly decrease if facing a consultant, who would not see any mistake as a rejection reason. This also means that when the consultant introduces both parties to each other, these concerns have been sent away. The relationship between the consultant and the candidate, and namely what happens before the candidate is introduced to the client, is what we want to explore in this fourth chapter.

Usually, job seekers are looking for a job which they can do well. Every individual has different motivation factors, but in general, work fit is essential. Therefore, they need the consultant to know them well, in order to orient them towards relevant opportunities. For this to happen, job seekers are then willing to build a relationship with the consultant (Dayang et al., 2013): it is in their best interest.

2.4.1 The Start of the Relationship

Clerkin and Lee (2010) centre their focus on executives and the consultant operating at that seniority level. The relationship between these two parties is very specific. We tend to believe that because consultants are head-hunters, they are the ones starting the relationship and therefore contacting the executive, in order to place them on a specific given role (Clerkin & Lee, 2010). However, the opposite situation occurs quite frequently as well, where the executive anticipates his employment and career needs, and decides to take the lead by contacting an executive consultant. The risk is relatively small, as the consultant will always look for new candidates, especially if this one has a solid background. If we think about it, this is often a win-win situation (Barnett, 2012), where both sides get benefits from the new relationship: “both executives and search firm professionals are interested in building a strong relationship between the two parties” (Clerkin & Lee, 2010, p. 209). Nevertheless, some executive search firms are more head-hunting-oriented, and this means the consultants are the ones starting the relationship. In this case, they find executives for open roles, and not the opposite. They play the role of an agent sponsoring the candidate (Clerkin & Lee, 2010), and therefore have a strong influence on the executive market. This is, according to Clerkin and Lee (2010), the “sponsored-mobility perspective” (p. 209). Other executive search firms will play the opposite role, waiting for executives to take the lead and contact them. Clerkin and Lee (2010) define it as the “contest-mobility perspective” (p. 210).

The most common way a relationship between a recruitment consultant and an executive (or other individual) starts is with a phone call (Kaplan, 2000). Consultants’ strategy is quite clear: they have done their research, and call the individual for a reason that is generally more than valid as long as the consultant is relatively good. The first minute or two will enable consultants to introduce themselves, and to clarify the situation (what kind of recruitment agency it is, for instance). At any moment, the individual may mention that s/he is not interested. In this case, consultants will “ask for a referral for an appropriate associate” (Kaplan, 2000, p. 50). However, if the candidate is interested, or at least accepts to further the conversation, business starts. The role is then shortly presented, with the company that is hiring (the client). The consultant will most likely give an elevated speech in order to attract the individual. The sourced individual should then take a day or two to review the opportunity profile and the company profile. The second call enables the consultant to clarify concerns, and to obtain the individual’s resume, who then becomes an applicant. The next step is usually a pre-screening of the applicant, who, if selected, will become a candidate. The process will continue with interviews, firstly with the consultants, then with the client. During the whole process, it is essential that the candidate keeps integrity, and be straightforward to the consultant (Kaplan, 2000). This latter is the intermediary and the driver of the negotiations. Besides, keeping a strong relationship with the consultant will be beneficial in the long-term (Kaplan, 2000).

Barnett (2012) expresses four main steps in order to build a relationship with a recruitment consultant.

- "Develop search relationships before you need them" (p. 1). First of all, the risk is minimal (Kaplan, 2000). The worse scenario is that the consultant does not have a matching opportunity at the moment. Therefore, it is crucial to never neglect any coming call.
- "Be selective" (p. 1). The point is not to make a friend, but to build a relationship with a consultant who is an expert in the industry.
- "If you're interested in a job, help the consultant help you" (p. 1). The objective is to be committed to the situation and fully play the game. Otherwise, the consultant will infer negative motivation and this impression will follow the candidate through time. This means the candidate should have a strong integrity and honesty towards the consultant.
- "If you're not interested in a job, add value" (p. 1). In other terms, the candidate should at least build himself a good image, and that goes by referencing and sharing his network with the consultant, who will surely remember this good will in the future (Barnett, 2012).

Trust is an element that is highly essential during the recruitment process, and where a considerable time should be spent, whether by in-house recruiters or recruitment consultants. The point here is to understand the difference of level of trust for two kinds of relationships: on the one hand, the relationship between a candidate and an in-house recruiter; and on the other hand, the relationship between a candidate and a recruitment consultant (Klotz, Motta Veiga, Buckley, & Gavin, 2013). One of the objectives when interviewing a candidate is to build trust, in order to enable the conversation to become more fluent, and the candidate to talk more honestly. Ultimately, the recruiter will be able to understand more precisely if the individual fits the role. We believe that the most important criteria when considering building trust in recruitment is to understand who the decision maker is. In the recruitment process, the employer (the client) is the one making the final decision. The consultant has a much different role, being an intermediary. Candidates know that, and when facing the consultant, they see an advisor, basically someone who is here to help them. Thus, we believe that trust should be established much more easily with a consultant. Indeed, after this interview, the candidate will be told what to say, or more precisely what not to say during the next interview with the client. Then, candidates will also arrive to the client interview with a higher level of confidence, knowing what worked and what did not. They will therefore build trust more rapidly than if this was the first interview. When facing the employer without going through a recruitment agency, candidates feel an additional pressure, knowing that any mistake will kick them out of the process. Consequently, they will neither take risks, nor open themselves. Now we understand better how the relationship starts and what the key component is, we can look at the main events that will shape the relationship.

2.4.2 The Resume: Purpose and Limits

After so much research on the role of the resume in the selection process, some authors agree on the fact that a resume indeed represents the first selection tool (e.g., Cole, Rubin, Fields, & Giles, 2007; Wright & Domagalski, 2011) and main task of a recruiter. This means it is the first thing the recruiter sees about the applicant (Burns, Christiansen, Morris, Periard, & Coaster, 2014). It is common knowledge that the first impression is essential. Even though the recruitment process allows for additional steps, this very first impression will impact the rest of the process.

> "The initial impression that a resume makes is crucial because it is generally the first communication between an applicant and a prospective employer. While a positive impression at this point might lead to a job interview, a negative impression will most likely result in the applicant being given no further consideration" (Burns et al., 2014, p. 574).

Besides, the use of the resume in the selection process remains today the tool the most used by recruiters (Wright & Domagalski, 2011).

It is important to mention that the size of a resume is a real concern for job seekers (Blackburn-Brockman & Belanger, 2001), even though several recruiters will answer that they do not actually care, as long as it is clean. According to Blackburn-Brockman and Belanger (2001), a standard resume should have a maximum of two pages. This fluctuates for small cases, depending on the role, the industry, or even the country. One thing is sure though, the one-page restriction is not used by everyone anymore (Blackburn-Brockman & Belanger, 2001), although it is strongly recommended for entry-level roles. The advantage of keeping it short is the rapidity with which the recruiter will find essential information. However, this also infers that several details are omitted.

Every aspect of the resume is important and thought through, and many different views are to notice. For instance, the content of a resume, although it seems obvious, is strongly discussed

(McNeilly & Barr, 1997). Most authors (e.g., Burns et al., 2014; McNeilly & Barr, 1997; Cole et al., 2009) will agree that the two main elements of a resume are the education (academic background) and previous work experiences. Burns et al. (2014) express more details: "suggesting resumes that provide more details about the jobs and skills they have as well as experiences saving money, working with others, and social activities is considered valuable" (p. 579). However, in order to remain concise on study, choices must be made. The challenge is then to pick which category to detail. Several recruiters pay strong attention to the last work experience (McNeilly & Barr, 1997), but for entry-level positions, it is difficult for applicants to enhance their small and sometimes irrelevant work experiences. Instead, it seems much more relevant to details the skills and competencies acquired during studies (McNeilly & Barr, 1997). Basically, it really depends on the job the applicant is going for. Indeed, it depends a lot on the industry and the management level (Cole et al., 2009). For instance, for an entry-level position, job experience is much less relevant than for a top executive role, thus academic characteristics will be much more looked at. Also, for a desk job with very little social interaction, skills and pure competencies will be highly valued, whereas a sales person or a manager will more likely be selected on his or her personality traits (Cole et al., 2009). Martin (2014), confirms that for such roles (a recruitment consultant, for instance), the personality may matter more.

Another important question remains: is there a specific order in which to allocate the different information? According to Penrose (1973), the most relevant information which put the applicant valuable should come first. This is namely why we are suggested to write our professional experiences from the most recent to the least. The first thing the recruiter will look at is the last job of the applicant; usually the most relevant regarding the job he applied for. Then, there are always some elements that will stay at the same place, whoever the applicant is and whatever the opportunity is. Personal information (name, address, phone number, email, and so forth) is located at the top of the resume, while references should be the last information (Penrose, 1973). This kind of information is relatively standard, but one would be surprised to see the difference of formatting when recruitment consultants receive resumes. This is where they can become valuable both for clients and candidates. They usually edit the candidate's resume, without changing the content obviously, but in a way so that the client will receive all resumes under the same format. For clients, it is a gain of time, as they can rapidly locate information. It is also beneficial for candidates, or at least some of them, as they will therefore not be judged on their artistic skills. Naturally, for an opportunity in a design sort of industry, this is an element that may matter, but the client would have previously advised the consultant.

Another new trend in the recruitment industry is represented by video resumes (Crush, 2008). Instead of sending a piece of paper, applicants will record themselves for a minute or two, explain their path and reasons why they would be a great fit for the respective opportunity. It is indeed a solution to get more out of the applicant. Besides, it saves time to the recruiter. However, is this relevant for every job? People with stronger communication will perform better on a video. If it is what the job requires, then the strategy is good; but if the job requires other important skills, the recruiter may be influenced by the way the applicant talks. Another characteristic is the element of surprise. During an interview, the recruiter chooses the questions to ask, and although applicants are used and trained to answer the classic ones, the recruiter can always find a find to put the applicant out of the comfort zone, in order to notice other types of skills, such as reactions under pressure. The use of video resumes is growing (Crush, 2008), and it has several advantages. Recruiters must be careful to compare this tool to paper resumes, and not to the face-to-face interviews.

The main point is that the resume, whichever the form it takes, is only the start of the process: "there is so much more to a person than a CV reveals" (Crush, 2008, p. 44).

2.4.3 Resumes and Interviews: The Importance of Personality

In terms of basic recruitment, every opportunity is divided into two main kinds of requirements: technical and behavioural (Hicks, 2016). Technical requirements refer to skills and pure competencies, such as graduation, the amount of experience in a managerial position, experience with a software, and so forth. Behavioural requirements, however, refer directly to the applicant's personality, such as leadership abilities, social and communication skills, integrity, team spirit, and so forth.

2.4.3.1 The Personality in the Resume

According to Wright and Domagalski (2011), the main topics to include in a resume are "a job objective, academic background, and work experience" (p. 274). However, most of them also insist in the fact that personality feature should not take a significant part of this piece of paper (Wright & Domagalski, 2011). The problem is that no one is able to control what job seekers include in their resume, as there is no real rule about it. What does that mean? Basically, even though it is advised to in-house recruiters to remain objective while looking at the applicant's resume, several of them often become subjective, depending on the information given by the applicant. Besides, the applicant is aware of that, and plays around it by including as many behavioural traits, in order to look better at the selection stage. Other applicants will then feel the need to include these characteristics, fearing to be rejected because of this reason. This cycle is quite hard to break. Recruitment consultants are usually trained to remain objective when looking at resumes. Indeed, they understand that many of the characteristics written by the applicant (such as 'calm', 'organised', 'motivated', and so forth, are extremely complicated to prove at this early stage. Interpreting this information often leads to bad placements (Wright & Domagalski, 2011).

> "Cole and his colleagues found that recruiters' inferences about job candidates' extraversion from resume content was moderately reliable and valid but that other personality characteristics were not reliably discernable and did not demonstrate validity when compared with actual personality scores for a sample of graduating college students" (Wright & Domagalski, 2011, p. 275).

Personality traits are therefore very complicated to interpret and verify, which means recruiters should rather figure them out and assess them in a later stage, over different interviews.

Weinstein (2012) explains that today's competition leads job seekers to submit "behaviourally-focused resumes" (Weinstein, 2012, p. 54). We can describe this trend as the fact that applicants will include several attitude (so to say behaviour) characteristics in their resumes, going beyond the skills required for the opportunity they applied for. This move is done simply because it "improve an applicant's chance of being invited for an interview and/ or receiving a job offer" (Weinstein, 2012, p. 54). The problem for recruiters to consider these characteristics is that they are not recruiting the best candidate, but the best sales person (Weinstein, 2012). Behavioural skills are difficult to prove on paper, and are usually tested in a later stage of the recruitment process. The danger is then to select applicants who overestimated their behavioural competencies, and to reject applicants who focused on making a standard resume. One of them could actually be a perfect fit.

It is clear that according to Crush (2008), qualifications on a resume are not always translating how the individual would actually work and perform. The risk is to base too much of the selection on the resume, namely inferring not only skills and competencies, but also drawing conclusions about the candidate's personality and behaviour (Wright & Domagalski, 2011), although research has shown that the correlation was rather weak (Cole et al., 2009). However, we believe some understandings must be considered in such situation. Indeed, it appears to say that any candidate should be considered as long as the competencies and qualifications match. However, it is only human to draw hasty conclusions when the resume is anything but clean and easy to understand. A recruiter should be able to reject an applicant who clearly did not put enough effort in making his or her case professional. A messy resume tells a lot about an applicant. S/he might be perfect skill-wise, but neglecting a step like the resume shows a lack of motivation, organisation, and so forth. Thus, applicants should know that drafting a good resume format is necessary, not to be hired, but to be read (Cole et al., 2009).

2.4.3.2 The Personality in the Interview

"An interview is a shared product of what two people – one the interviewer, the other the interviewee – talk about and how they talk together" (Josselson, 2013, p. 1). The interview is clearly one of the main tools used during the recruitment process, with the resume. It is a critical stage, which usually occurs after the resume pre-screening stage. An interview can be face-to-face, on the phone, or even through video, such as Skype, for instance.

We previously discussed the importance of trust between a recruitment consultant and an applicant; the interview is the moment of the recruitment process where trust can be established. According to Josselson (2013), the objective for recruiters to create trust is to get the candidates' stories. The goal is to understand the candidate as close as this person is in reality. In order to accomplish that, Josselson (2013) will advise to push the candidate out of the comfort zone, in order to make him face real challenges and work under pressure and time constraints. Josselson (2013), however, believes that the interview is a mean to create a conversation with the candidate. In order to do so, the consultant should actually not talk much. The objective is then to make this person very comfortable, until the point where the candidate does not calculate the words expressed, and ends up talking completely honestly. It is a tricky move, requiring some time, but very effective. It usually starts with a template question, prepared in advance and used for most interviews (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The consultant will then, at some point, ask a question which is much less related to the role (for instance, what did you do last weekend?). The candidate has no reason not to tell exactly the truth. The conversation will start, and it is through stories like these that the consultant will understand more about the candidate's personality. "Human life is composed of stories"

(Josselson, 2013, p. 3). Hicks (2016) confirms that establishing a normal conversation and discussing about stories is one of the key to assess a candidate's personality. The most honest answers often come from unprepared questions and unprepared answers: "The point is, pre-planned questions are okay, but the most reliable answers come from questions that are created from the candidate's spontaneous remarks" (Hicks, 2016, p. 64). And these stories are the essence of one's personality. The consultant may not understand everything about the topic, as it is chosen by the candidate, but it is also part of the job to be a good listener (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). The objective is not to trap the candidate, but to push them out of the standard corporation interview. A candidate's outside activities are also very important in the recruitment process (Miller, 1975). Although this topic is not to be mentioned in the early stages of the recruitment process, it holds an important part, as it relates what the individual really wants and likes.

One of the real challenges for recruitment consultant is the interpretation of candidates' motivations and personality. Every individual is unique, and therefore will have a single context around him or her (Hicks, 2016). For instance, recruiters often ask candidates to describe a challenging situation they had to face. The candidate usually answers in a couple of minutes, because it is required. However, knowing the context would considerably help the recruiter, who could understand if the result achieved by the candidate is actually impressive or not. The challenge for consultants is then to remove all kinds of stereotypes and judgments, in order to manage these interpretations (Hicks, 2016).

Josselson (2013) also sees the interview like a dance; the key lies in who leads the interview. Most research will probably show that the recruiter needs to be the leader during an interview. However, it is essential that the interviewee brings to the interviewer as much as the interviewer brings to the interviewee; it then becomes a co-constructed interview (Josselson, 2013). The key to build such an interview is to treat all candidates as partners (Rubin & Rubin, 2012), and not like the consultant is questioning them. This is what Rubin and Rubin (2012) establish with the 'responsive interviewing'.

The other interesting part during an interview is the way candidates are assessed. Crush (2008) mentions psychological or behavioural tests, where "there are no right or wrong answers" (p. 43). Applicants hear this sentence quite frequently; yet is this still relevant to show the personality? If applicants are aware that their answers are being evaluated, they will try to answer what they think the employer is waiting for. That means there is an existing bias, and the personality revealed is not completely true.

Silvester (1997) brings an interesting approach in order to assess graduates or entry-level candidates. Instead of questioning them about potential previous experiences which often are irrelevant, they follow a different direction. At this level, employers are not looking for experts, but rather motivated employees, with a high potential of improvement (Silvester, 1997). Thus, these graduates will be interviewed about what they have been doing in the last years: studies and exams. Through this particular event, a recruiter may find out which candidates are motivated and which are not, by asking a simple question: why did they fail their exam? This usually leads to two kinds of answers: “I failed the exam because I didn't spend enough time studying” (Silvester, 1997, p. 62). In this answer, the graduate acknowledges his or her own fault, but is also aware of the room for improvement. The other answer, “I failed the exam because I was not intelligent enough” (Silvester, 1997, p. 62) shows a whole other picture. The graduate rejects his own failure by invoking destiny. The student accepts his or her limits, and it will require a longer time and bigger effort to break them. This kind of bad faith is usually not well perceived in a company.

2.4.4 Personality and Cultural Fit

A good recruiter will always look at two major variables when doing recruitment and selection of candidates: their skills and competencies related to the job they applied for, and their corporate fit, which is the extent to which they match the firm’s values and will therefore be able to adapt to the culture. According to Martin (2014), cultural fit means going beyond the resume and assessing the individual’s personality. From these two variables, Ghoerghe (2013) classifies four types of employees mostly spotted in organisations, as you can see on Figure 3.

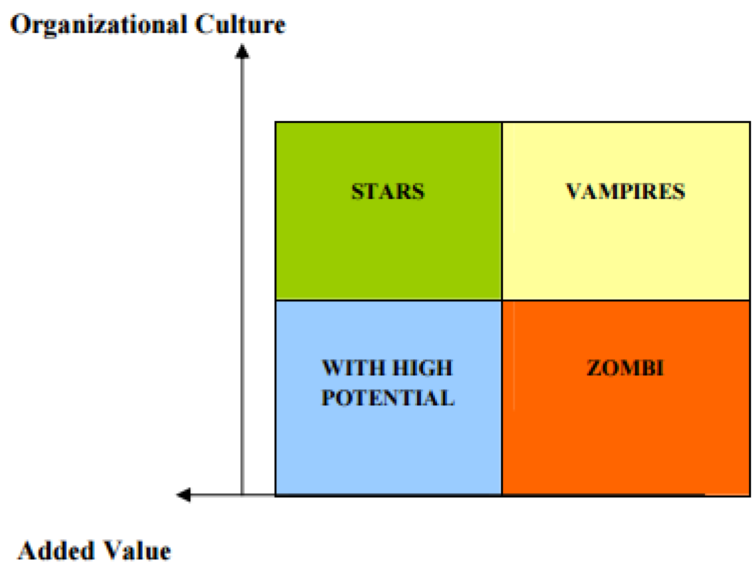

Figure 3 - Matrix of Types of Employees (Gheorghe, 2013, p. 163)

Stars represent employees who should be kept by their employer, almost at any price. They do their job well, with the right skills and competencies, meaning they add value (Gheorghe, 2013). Besides, they fit in the firm's culture and values. Thus, objectives are clear, and they really help the firm in the long-term. This also means they become hard to find by consultants and researchers, as their current employer makes sure to keep them. Yet, they represent the perfect candidate to introduce to clients with a similar vision, for a similar role of course. Employees with high potential (Gheorghe, 2013) are the ones who fit as much as stars in the company, but cannot perform as well, maybe due to a lack of skills or experience. Ultimately, they will become stars, it is only a matter of time, and they represent the best investment: they are relatively cheap at the moment as their results are not exceeding, but they fit easily in an organisation, meaning it will quickly improve. A consultant has usually better skills to notice these kinds of candidates. The type 'zombi' (Gheorghe, 2013) is the kind of employee which has neither the skills, nor the fit. Consequently, they generally leave the company rapidly, without being much of a threat. This is not the case for 'vampires' (Gheorghe, 2013). As opposed to employees with high potentials, they have great skills, but cannot adapt with the firm's vision and culture. This situation is hard to identify for employers, meaning these employees have a better chance to represent a threat to their company. They are performing, hence influencing others, and that damages the firm in the long-term. It is important for these employees to realise that and discuss it with recruitment consultants, who will surely work to find out if one of their existing clients could be a better fit for them.

The cultural fit is not a new concept, as demonstrated by Miller (1975). What the author interestingly points out is the fact that a company's performance often depends on the mix of skills and strengths of its employees (Miller, 1975). We infer here that a recruitment consultant has a good role to play in this situation, as the employer may tend to recruit individual sharing his values and skills rather than looking at the firm's entire benefit. There is a concept that we need to introduce in this study: the 'similar-to-me' effect. It basically consists in, at least regarding the sector that matters in this research, recruiting an individual who has similar attributes and characteristics as the recruiter (Bagues & Perez-Villadoniga, 2012). This situation occurs more often with employers because they hire for themselves, or the company they work for. The issue is that this 'similar-to-me' effect is usually not perceived for skills and competencies, but rather for other characteristics (Bagues & Perez-Villadoniga, 2012), which are often ethically or legally questionable. This kind of subjectivity has no place in recruitment, and recruitment consultants also bring a solution on this issue. Because of their intermediary position, they will act as mediators, without a natural bias. This argument must closely be looked at when discussing cultural fit. It is essential, indeed, to find candidates who match the corporate culture and values. In these terms, there are similar to the firm's current employees. The line not to cross may stand where the in-house recruiter finds personal exclusive common characteristics, and use them as a selection criterion. Miller (1975) also explains that having people with different skills makes them complementary. Resources (human, in this case) are allocated in a much better way (Miller, 1975): "One executive could be more creative than another and another executive more a person of balanced judgment. Between them they would do a great job. But if they're both the same, you're just duplicating what you already have" (p. 14).

As explained by Martin (2014), recruiting someone new is critical for the firm's culture and values. Good managers will acknowledge that every employee counts, and will bring a part of culture with him or her. People who build a company usually insist on creating a culture they belong to. If the firm grows and goes well, it is important to keep the values it grew with. This is why it is essential to pick a candidate with the right culture fit, in order to prevent a drastic change in this area (Martin, 2014). According to Odom (2013), "the 'fit' is where the true challenge lies" (p. 61). Besides, Gheorghe (2013) expresses the fact that neglecting cultural fit can result in heavy consequences. It reminds us the importance of the two main categories a candidate should fit with: the skills and competencies required for the role, and the company's culture, vision, and values.

Gheorghe (2013) states that the personality assessment has a significant importance in many firms: "The evaluation of personality of applicants in the recruitment and selection stage represents one of the most effective strategies and over 80% of successful organizations use such instruments" (p. 161). The hire is then successful if the employee is equally (or almost) aligned with the job and the firm's culture. The level of cultural fit also depends on the firm's strategy. For instance, a firm having high standards regarding personal development will place the candidate's skills and competencies in the third place as selection level, while the personality (here represented by 'identity' and 'belief') will be first and second (Gheorghe, 2013). "The best way of promoting the identity of your own organisational culture is done through the recruitment and selection process" (p. 162).

Honeycutt and Thelen (2016) express the importance of personality traits to succeed in a new role: "job fit refers to the motivation, drive, personality, passion, preference, interest, and habits that help determine the right match for a position that can outweigh other candidate qualifications" (p. 65).

Finally, the cultural fit is more important than ever for the most senior positions, such as CEOs, CFOs, and so forth. Indeed, these executives are the people who influence the firm's future, and who could change the values (McDonald, 2012). As we have seen previously in this study, executive search firm probably represent the most effective solutions for this kind of recruitment.

3 Empirical Study

Following the literature review, this part will be dedicated to an empirical study. It will be divided into three main chapters: firstly, we will establish the methodology by coming back on the research question, explaining where the research came from, and explain what kinds of research are available and why we chose one research strategy over another. This part will also include guidelines for the conducted field research. Secondly, we will present the results gathered through the different interviews, and present the relevant parts which help answering the research question. Finally, we will interpret and discuss these findings, in order to present a conclusion to this study.

3.1 Methodology

This first part will follow a precise path, establishing the nature of the research, then explaining and justifying what kind of research will be conducted. We will introduce the methods used for research and provide guidelines for those.

It is important to understand that every research starts with a research dilemma. This represents the factor in the environment which started the initial concern. In this case, and as explained in the introduction, the dilemma starts with fresh graduates. Personal experience has proven that an extremely small number of fresh graduates and entry-level job seekers find their first job through a recruitment agency. The obvious reaction would be to look for the reasons why this phenomenon occurs. We have seen in the literature review that recruitment agencies exist, and that this industry is well established. Thus, instead of looking at why these people do not use these intermediaries, we will try to understand what these intermediaries bring. In other terms, what do recruitment agencies add to the employment market? This thesis focuses on job seekers, which at some point become candidates. The relationship is interesting as there are two different approaches, and consequently two different views. This leads us to a research question that is divided into two different questions: on the one hand, what value is added by recruitment consultants? And on the other hand, what makes it worth for job seekers to go through recruitment agencies/consultants? This is why the literature has focused first on recruitment consultants, then on job seekers, and finally on the relationship the two players have.

Chronologically, the next part focuses on what questions will be asked to interviewees. However, to understand the questions, we need to explain the kind of research we are going to conduct.

3.1.1 Qualitative Research versus Quantitative Research

Every researcher must define at the beginning if the research will be quantitative or qualitative. The distinction is actually quite simple to understand (Barnham, 2015).

> "The distinctions between quantitative and qualitative market research are well rehearsed. The former measures phenomena such as brand awareness, brand penetration, product preferences, etc., and elicits numbers and percentages that, at least within the constraints of a given sample, have the status of 'facts' .Qualitative market research, in contrast, is used when more 'in depth' understanding of consumer attitudes, behaviour and motivations is required." (Barnham, 2015, p. 837)

Basically, a quantitative analysis looks at numerical data, such as percentages, proportions, and so forth, while qualitative analysis focuses on sentences which do not belong to a given set of potential answers (Park & Park, 2016). Quantitative analysis, measures the reality with objective and quantifiable facts (Barnham, 2015), whereas qualitative analysis looks at in-depth interviews (Bailey, 2014), most frequently with a more subjective interpretation of meanings (Park & Park, 2016). A qualitative research will work on smaller samples, and the structure is looser (Park & Park, 2016). Obviously, there are infinite pros and cons regarding this method; one disadvantage is that it is likely to miss some information. However, a less structured analysis will easily derivate from the main purpose and offer unexpected answers that will make the research richer. A qualitative research is also needed when less information is available for the specific topic. Basically, the aim is to understand, while a quantitative research aims at testing (Park & Park, 2016). All these differences are summarised in annexes 2 and 3, from Park and Park (2016). The tables namely mention additional characteristics of a qualitative research, such as the fact that the researcher is more involved in the process.

A qualitative study is also aligned with further criteria. First of all, the study is exploratory (Kothari, 2004), as opposed to descriptive, as several topics remain uncovered by previous research, even though some literature does exist. We explored through a literature review, giving us some material on which we can base the research. Then, it becomes analytical, as we are trying to explain how consultants add value to the recruitment process for job seekers. This will namely be achieved through an analysis of interviewees' answers.

Secondly, we are following a phenomenological approach. Indeed, we will see that what we will observe is difficult to generalise. Besides, we will be facing interviewees which will be more subjective in their answers. The research we conduct can be qualified as applied research (Kothari, 2004) (versus basic research). The title explains itself, as we can directly apply the findings.

Then, this research is rather intensive than extensive. As explained, results may be different, as we will look at specific cases. We will also deal with smaller sample (Barnham, 2015): this will be explained and detailed later in the methodology.

An interesting characteristic is the path of inferences during our research. We usually distinguish deductive to inductive research (Park & Park, 2016). In this case, it is difficult to say if it is neither nor or both. Firstly, we look at the theory, through the literature review. However, we do not try to purely prove it: we look at what real cases bring, and then we analyse, compare, but most importantly explore potential new conclusions (Kothari, 2004).

It is now much easier to understand that we chose to conduct a qualitative analysis. Indeed, we are not trying to list the amount of job seekers who found jobs through recruitment consultant, but rather how they perceived the relationship. Also, we are not trying to establish the number of consultants who have achieved more placements than in-house recruiters. Firstly, that would be very difficult to measure. Secondly, the aim is to understand how they add value to the recruitment process. We are searching for qualitative data. The literature gave some explanations, but the recruitment process is unique of every job seeker, meaning each case is singular. We will continue to justify this choice by explaining which kind of qualitative research method we chose to conduct.

3.1.2 Type of Qualitative Research: Semi-structured Interview

There are different approaches in qualitative research methods. In this study, we want to conduct in-depth interviews (Bailey, 2014), as opposed to other methods, such as action research, history research, focus groups, and so forth. The objective to conduct in-depths interviews is to understand every interviewee's view on each topic. It needs to be individual interviews in order to avoid any influence from other interviewees' answers. However, it cannot be action research, as the objective is not to help interviewees to improve on the topic mentioned.

Then, there are different types of interviews when doing qualitative research, and this is where the choice matters, because it will influence the kind of answers the researcher collects. We notice three main types of interviews: structured, semi-structured, and unstructured interviews (Park & Park, 2016). Other derivatives exist, such as informal interviews or grouped interviews (earlier mentioned as focus groups). We can explain and understand our choice to conduct semi-structured interviews by elimination. Firstly, it seems essential to conduct individual interviews, as opposed to focus groups, in order to avoid group influence. Indeed, we are not looking to generalise specific facts; we want to understand and explore some situations. The presence of a group would considerably reduce the variety of answers. Secondly, we expect unexpected answers. That follows on the previous comment, as we want to explore. In order to accomplish this, we need to avoid limiting the range of potential answers. Hence, it cannot be completely structured and fixed. The interviewer must have the liberty to follow up with some additional questions, depending on the answers provided. Thirdly, it still needs to contain some guidelines, namely prepared questions, as we want to narrow down the topic discussed. The interviewee will have certain freedom, but within a specific topic. These second and third points eliminate structured and unstructured interviews, and it leaves us with semi-structured interviews. We will therefore start each topic we want to discuss with the interviewee with a specific question, and follow up questions will depend on the answers provided.

3.1.3 A Small Sample

The first task is to establish the target sample for this research. In this case, it will clearly be aligned with the research questions offered in this thesis, meaning it will be divided into two categories. On the one hand, we will have recruitment consultants, in order to answer the first research question, regarding the value they add to the recruitment process. On the other hand, we will have job seekers and executives who have been confronted to recruitment agencies, in order to answer the second research question, regarding the interest these people have in looking for new opportunities through recruitment agencies. The combination of these two categories will help us understand how the relationship is structured, and which gaps exist between these two perspectives. As probably noticed, this second sample contains two different profiles: job seekers, who actually decided to contact recruitment agencies in order to find an opportunity, and executives who were directly contacted by recruitment agencies, as passive candidates. As mentioned previously, the aim is not to generalise specific facts, and the objective of this strategy is to understand different points of view from different kinds of candidates.

The sample selected will therefore be rather small, with thirteen people in total. Namely, we will have six recruitment consultants on one side, and three executives plus four former job seekers working at a lower management level on the other side. We decided to conduct a non-random selection, in order to meet specific deadlines and to lower the costs. Besides, we will use a convenient sample, easily accessible by the researcher, as there is no need to generalise the findings.

In order to give more specifics about the sample, we will first acknowledge the age range of the interviewees. The six consultants are aged mid-thirties to mid-forties. All of them currently work in an executive search firm: three of them in Canada (one Partner and two Search Associates), and the other three in France (one Managing Director and two Search Associates), working on the African and Middle East market.

Regarding the three executives, they all belong to the same age range as the six consultants. The first one is Country Commercial Director, based in Nigeria, in a building materials multinational corporation. The second one is Chief Financial Officer (CFO), based in Ivory Coast, in an Information Technology corporation. The third one is Managing Director in Agribusiness, and is currently based in Senegal.

Finally, the four last interviewees, acting as job seekers, have different backgrounds. They are aged mid-twenties to mid-thirties. The first two work in an executive search firm in Canada, one as an Office Manager, the other as an Editor and Search Assistant. The last two interviewees work in France. The first one is Sales Representative in a French company operating in the Fast Moving Consumer Goods (FMCG) industry, while the second one is Demand and Import Planner in a food and beverage multinational corporation.

3.1.4 Interview Process and Interview Guide

These interviews will represent the collection of primary data, as opposed to secondary data obtained during the literature review. The interview guide represents the main topics that are wished to be discussed. After a short introduction in order to introduce the interview, and to understand who the interviewee is, five main topics will be discussed: the first one is a question which aims to understand the difference of perspective between the two players (consultants and job seekers) regarding job attributes preferences, in order to notice whether or not there is a gap. The second topic concerns the relationship between consultants and job seekers or executives, and how it is built. The two following topics deal with the two main selection tools in recruitment: the resume and the interview. For each one, we will try to see how each player approach them, and the importance given, depending on if it is done by an in-house recruiter or a recruitment consultant. The last topic talks about the corporate culture fit. We want to understand what room this has in the recruitment selection, and what influence consultants have, even though they do not belong to the organisation hiring the candidate. Finally, a last dialogue will occur, covering a more generalised part of the research question. For further details about the interview guide, the prepared topics are available in Annexe 4. It is essential to remember that this is a semi-structured interview, meaning follow up questions will be added during each interview for most topics, if the researcher feels that the answer could be more detailed.

In terms of content analysis, we will use a prescriptive analysis. It is essential to understand that answers are expected to be significantly varied, and therefore the coding method needs to be aligned. For each topic, we will present a small table representing which words or ideas have been the most often mentioned. This will provide a general tendency for the coming analysis.

The interviews were conducted in two different formats, depending on the interviewee's location. Interviewees in Canada were interviewed face to face, and therefore recorded, while those who live in another country were interviewed through Skype. In the first case, a transcript has been validated; in the second case, precise notes have been taken during the Skype interview, then a transcript was drafted, and validated by each interviewee. Finally, each interviewee lasted between fifteen and thirty-five minutes, depending on the answers provided.

3.2 Results and Analyses

This study has led to qualitative research, where two groups of six and seven people have been interviewed: a group of six consultants, coming from two different executive search firms, and a group of seven people on the candidate side, which can be divided into two main categories: four job seekers at an entry-level or junior level, and three executives at a senior management level. Although acknowledged at the very start of the thesis, interviewees will remain anonymous during this part, as they have sometimes shared information which they prefer not to be associated with. Therefore, consultants will be named from the letter A to F, and job seekers and executives from the number 1 to 7.

As the interview guide shows in Annexe 4, several topics have been discussed during these interviews. The strategy to explain the results and explore some analyses will be as followed: as it is a qualitative research, as opposed to quantitative research, results can be very similar or very different. The objective is therefore not to collect the number of answers, but to understand which answers have been expressed, in comparison to the literature review, but also for additional exploration. This is why the results will be explained topic by topic (following the interview guide order), each time differentiating or comparing the views from consultants and job seekers. For each topic, results will be accompanied by the first analyses. The last question of the guide had a more general reach, and this is the reason it will be analysed in the discussion.

3.2.1 Job Attributes

The question asked to consultants was: Which job attributes do you think job seekers value the most when looking for a new opportunity?

Word/Idea expressed by consultants	**Amount of times the idea has been expressed**
Compensation (base salary + bonus)	4
Other benefits (e.g. vacation days, health coverage, accommodation, etc.)	4
Challenge and responsibilities	3
Career evolution	3
Cultural fit	2
Location	1

Figure 4 - Job attributes recruitment consultants think job seekers value the most when looking for a new opportunity

One of the first questions asked to all interviewees concerned the job attributes valued during the job search. The objective of this question (slightly different from the rest of the interview) was to understand the gap, if existing, between consultants and job seekers' perceptions of which job attributes are the most looked at when identifying an opportunity. For consultants, the compensation package, including other benefits, was systematically mentioned, most of the time as the most important job attribute. "Undoubtedly the compensation package", says interviewee E. Interviewee C separates this category, explaining that "individuals who are mid-stage, just starting to gain management experience, tend to be driven more by factors such as compensation and benefits", while top-level executive would rather look at the work/life balance. Besides, "salary is less of a driving factor here, but the pension piece is important, especially in the public sector" says interviewee C.

The "career evolution potential" (said interviewee D) and the "strategic influence" (said interviewee C) offered by the role are two attributes mentioned more than once, usually as an essential criterion. Other attributes were expressed, such as the proximity to work or the company's culture. It is important to understand that this represents what consultants believe job seekers value as most important job attributes.

The question asked to job seekers was: When looking for a job, or during the recruitment process, what are the job attributes that you value the most?

Word/Idea expressed by job seekers	**Amount of times the idea has been expressed**
Sector/role/company	10
Compensation	5
Location	3
Career evolution	2
Others (e.g. job ad transparency, internationalisation)	2

Figure 5 - Job attributes job seekers value the most when looking for a new opportunity

The results observed among job seekers were quite different, firstly in terms of criteria, but most importantly how valuable they position these attributes. Although the compensation package came first among consultants, we noticed that job seekers also mentioned it, but most of the time ranked quite low in their preferences. For instance, interviewee 7 ranked this criterion sixth and last, and interviewee 2 said: "I am personally not interested in seeking or trying to determine benefits/stock/bonus incentives during a job search as I consider those supplemental to the job itself and not a good indicator of how the company works". The attribute the most valued by job seekers was actually the company's image and values, and how well the sector the work in and the role they offer fit the job seeker. "First of all, the most important criterion was to work in supply chain for a big consumer goods company, because I really wanted to work in a experienced supply chain framework with processes already in place", said interviewee 4. According to interview 6, the company's image is the most important "because it guarantees the security". The location and proximity to work was often quoted, but usually in a low position.

These results show that a clear gap exists between the perception consultants have and what job seekers really see as valuable. It demonstrates that this issue is probably not discussed enough during the first recruitment stages, either because the consultants do not bring it to the discussion, or because job seekers are shy to express what they really value.

3.2.2 The relationship

The question asked to consultants was: For executive search firms, the recruitment process sometimes starts before the resume is sent. The way the relationship between the applicant (or passive candidate) and the consultant is created is crucial. How do you start it and build it?

Word/Idea expressed by consultants	**Amount of times the idea has been expressed**
Building trust (e.g. casual or relaxed talk, showing the candidate s/he is the expert, etc.)	15
The relationship only occurs with the top 5% of candidates	4
Understanding the role is crucial to start a relationship	2
There is no relationship between consultants and candidates	2

Figure 6 - How consultants start and build a relationship with a candidate

The first stage of the recruitment process is establishing a first contact, and the objective is to understand how consultants approach job seekers or executives. The results show that almost all of them try to build trust with similar strategies. This usually means doing more than a standard phone call or email and pre-screening the applicant. For interviewee A, it is important to establish "a very loose and casual relationship […] and being very upfront and open". Interviewee C agrees: "It is important to start the discussion in a relaxed, non-formal, friendly way". Most of them express the fact that understanding the role is crucial in order to build trust. "I want them to perceive me as an expert of the sectors they are interested in" said interviewee F. Interviewee A also mentions that "allowing them being the expert" brings confidence in the candidate, and therefore trust. No matter what the consultant says, interviewees B and D believe that a proactive way is crucial in order to start the relationship, namely calling rather than emailing: "if you can speak to someone and you can reduce a thousand words email to one sentence, you capture their attention" (interviewee B). Interviewee D would then make sure to maintain the relationship over the long-term, namely by keeping contact even when there is not a job opportunity. Results proved that although different strategies are used for building a relationship, most consultants would only consider and get involved with a small percentage of the people they call. “If it is not a 95% fit or better, we are probably not going to spend a lot of time getting to know them” said interviewee B; and according to interviewee E, “it’s more likely to resemble a transaction instead of a relationship between human beings”.

The question asked to job seekers was: If you have already used a recruitment agency, how did the consultant build the relationship? Please explain the context: what kind of agency, who contacted who, and the outcome of the experience.

Word/Idea expressed by job seekers	**Amount of times the idea has been expressed**
The experience was rather positive	9
The experience was rather negative	6
The consultant approached the job seeker directly	4
The job seeker approached the recruitment agency directly, or applied to an opportunity profile	3

Figure 7 - How job seekers perceived their previous experiences with recruitment consultants

On the job seekers side, results were rather mixed, whether it is in terms of who established the first contact, or in terms of success of the experience. Interviewees 2, 4, and 5 had negative experiences: “according to me they just wanted to place candidates rapidly without considering all of the criteria” (interviewee 4); “I was told during the first call (to confirm the interview) that they would be in touch and it was still planned to move forward, but never received another call, e-mail, or any correspondence, despite phoning and emailing multiple times to multiple levels of the organization” (interviewee 2); “They don’t have bother to return to job seeker if the profile is rejected which is very bad” (interviewee 5). As interviewee B explains, this fast-paced environment is often related to contingent recruiter: “For contingency agencies it is a bit of a race to the bottom in terms of quality”. Regarding successful experiences, results showed that consultants would give career advice, or redirect the applicant towards a more suitable role: “the recruiter told me that she did not see me for this job, but told me that she had another job offer that would suit me more” (interviewee 3). Interview 7 also mentions a positive experience leading in a long term relationship: “I meet approximately once every 3 years with the recruitment agency to review my current situation, my perspectives, the job market in my business area”. These mixed results simply prove that the great number of recruitment agencies, and the competition that lies in it, lead to varied experiences, where consultants rarely take time to provide feedback to applicants. The consequence is usually that the job seeker will no longer use their services.

3.2.3 The resume

The question asked to consultants was: It is common now that job seekers try to express their personality and behaviour through the resume (behaviourally-focused resumes). Do you think it is relevant, at this stage of the recruitment process?

Word/Idea expressed by consultants	Amount of times the idea has been expressed
The resume should be classic, clean, concise (the personality is not relevant on the resume)	7
The personality on a resume could work for some specific roles	4
The personality has more relevance on the cover letter	2

Figure 8 - How consultants perceive the relevance of personality on resumes

Regarding the resume, most consultants reacted in the same direction. All of them agreed that the resume needs to be clear, concise, and factual: “I think the resume should be chronological, it should be factual based” (interviewee A); “I expect it to be clear and precise, allowing a rapid and synthetic read” said interviewee D, adding that self-evaluation usually does not bring great results. Therefore, most of them agree that personality traits do not belong to a resume, but that the cover letter is much better to express these kinds of characteristics. “The cover letter is a better format to describe behavioural competencies” said interviewee C. Finally, most of them would also think that it can depend on the role and the industry in which the job seeker works. “But also must be said that it depends on the kind of position: communication and marketing positions may allow being more creative that other kinds of roles” said interviewee F, for instance. However, interviewee B will add that “the more senior you get, the more vanilla you want your CV to be”.

The question asked to job seekers was: Personality is difficult to show on a piece of paper. Do you think job applicants should reveal as much as possible on their resume?

Word/Idea expressed by job seekers	Amount of times the idea has been expressed
The resume should be classic, clean, concise (the personality is not relevant on the resume)	9
The personality has more relevance on the cover letter	4
It depends on the role/industry	3
The personality on a resume helps to differentiate yourself from the crowd	2

Figure 9 - How job seekers perceive the relevance of personality on resumes

Results are quite similar on the job seeker side, where most of them prefer to keep their resume clear and concise: "It is always better to keep the resume with academic and work experience" explains interviewee 5. This strategy can be understood as "it is very difficult to show your personality on a CV", says interviewee 4. They will also agree that the format of the resume depends on the concerned industry, and that sometimes, adding a personal touch "can sets a person apart from the crowd" (interviewee 1). However, none of them felt that they would send a different resume to a recruiter, compare to an employer.

Whether the results come from consultants or job seekers, personality traits do not belong to the resume, but rather to the interview. "I would rely on the interviews with the recruiter to reveal my personality and my behaviour", says interviewee 7.

3.2.4 The interview

The question asked to consultants was: Candidates prepare for their interviews, and probably anticipate some questions. What is your strategy to get them out of their comfort zone, in order to obtain the most real answers? Also, if the candidate is selected for the next step, the interview will be with the client. How different do you think your interview approach is, compared to a client interview?

Word/Idea expressed by consultants	Amount of times the idea has been expressed
The client deals more with the 'fit' questions, while the consultant remains more factual	8
Asking behaviourally-based questions help getting more honest answers	4
A relaxed atmosphere	3

Figure 10 - Consultants' interview approach

This topic was very likely the most difficult to measure, especially from job seekers, as the interview is the recruitment stage that allows the most independence, and therefore a greater variety of results. Consultants were rather aligned in their perspective on how to approach candidates so that they speak freely and honestly. Most of them would ask "situational behavioural based questions" (interviewee A), such as "what would you do if…"; "if I were to speak with your previous supervisor, what would he/she say about you?"; "on the personal side, how would your friends describe you?" (Interviewee C). Interviewee E explains that the objective is to relax the candidates by asking them job unrelated questions. The other major answer collected on this topic was the fact that consultants are intermediaries, and that means their role is to filter out great candidates, so that the client can interview the best ones and work on the culture fit, as explained by interviewee A: "I want to make sure that everyone that advances and goes forward to meet the client can actually do that job. And then I want the client to determine who's going to do the job in the right way that fits their organisation the best".

The question asked to job seekers was: The interview is the other major step during the recruitment process; in your experience, have you noticed a different approach between an employer and a consultant? Also, Do you behave differently in front of a consultant compared with a direct employer? In other terms, what does it change for you, in your interview preparation and discussion, to face an intermediary or a potential employer?

Word/Idea expressed by job seekers	**Amount of times the idea has been expressed**
The consultant gives advice	6
Job seekers behave differently (less stress) in front of a consultant	6
The employer cares more	3
Job seekers are more formal in front of an employer	2

Figure 11 - How job seekers differentiate consultant's interview from employer's interview

For job seekers, results show that they really distinguish a consultant interview from a potential employer interview. Several of them expressed the fact that consultants give advice and support for the next stage, with the potential employer. "A consultant will try to know who you really are and will give you some tips", explains interviewee 4. Job seekers also feel more at ease in front of consultant, as they do not face the potential employer. "Working with a recruiter feels like more of a partnership than going it alone", reported interviewee 1. They can therefore ask questions they would rather not ask too directly to a potential employer, such as salary expectations, for instance. Although most results collected during this study were positive, some of them were less, and that shows that it is very difficult to be certain to find the right consultant.

3.2.5 The cultural fit

The question asked to consultants was: The corporate culture fit is often the reason of bad hires, as employers sometimes think that because the candidate has the perfect skills, the role will fit perfectly. How importantly do you value corporate culture fit during the recruitment process?

Word/Idea expressed by consultants	Amount of times the idea has been expressed
The corporate culture fit is crucial	5
The consultant may have some light involvement in the decision	4
To evaluate the fit, the consultant must have a strong client knowledge	2
It is the most difficult stage of the recruitment process	2

Figure 12 - The corporate culture fit seen by consultants

On this topic, consultants and job seekers had similar answers regarding the fact that corporate culture fit is crucial. However, they do not always approach this matter in the same way, namely as it is the most difficult characteristic to measure in the recruitment process, according to interviewee D. Besides, "Company HRM often don't give the whole picture, and prefer to stick to the best face of the coin" explains interviewee F, meaning consultants must also be careful of this gap. Interviewees B, C, and E agree that it is crucial to get to know the client as much as possible, in order to help the candidate focusing on specific aspects during the client interview. However, most of them would accept the fact that their job is not to determine the fit, but to facilitate the process and only present skilled candidates to their client. Indeed, "we will never know the corporate culture fit as well as the client does" reported interviewee A. We therefore understand that even though the culture fit is essential, recruitment consultants have very little influence on this part.

The question asked to job seekers was: The corporate culture fit is often the reason of bad hires: What do you value most between fitting the role and fitting the company?

Word/Idea expressed by job seekers	Amount of times the idea has been expressed
Fitting the company is more important than fitting the role	7
A mix between fitting the role and the company is essential	2
It depends on the company size	1

Figure 13 - The corporate culture fit seen by job seekers

On the job seeker side, it was difficult to find a different answer than: “I think having a good fit with the company culture is critical”, as expressed by interviewee 1. Indeed, most of them understood that changing your skills is easier than changing your culture. In that sense, the logic is to find a good company before a good role. Interviewee 4 gives an example of a wrong fit with a good role: “I was not happy every day at my job because the company culture did not fit with my personality. Employees there were too serious, just working and the atmosphere was not really pleasant. Employees did not talk to each others; I spent some day without saying almost anything to them”. The problem lies in the fact that it becomes very difficult to predict the cultural fit, as the amount of companies by industry is constantly growing, and when stepping out from known multinational corporations, solid online references about the firm a job seeker has applied for become relatively scarce.

3.3 Discussion

The question asked was: Given all we have just discussed, what kind of value does a recruitment consultant add, first in the recruitment process, and second to job seekers; in other terms, what advantages do you think job seekers have to use a recruitment agency?

Word/Idea expressed by consultants	**Amount of times the idea has been expressed**
The consultant helps, prepares, and advises	12
Working with a recruitment consultant has only advantages for the job seeker	3
The consultant is unbiased	2
The consultant brings more confidentiality	2
The consultant offers a wider network access	2

Figure 14 - The value added by consultants to the recruitment process seen by consultants

Word/Idea expressed by job seekers	**Amount of times the idea has been expressed**
The consultant is a source of advice and help	7
The consultant offers market knowledge: more opportunities	6
The consultant brings better feedbacks	2
Others (faster process, confidentiality, objectivity, more time)	6

Figure 15 - The value added by consultants to the recruitment process seen by job seekers

The first result we can express looking at consultants' answers is that all of them look at the impact brought by recruitment consultants to job seekers as positive. This is rather normal, as all of them defend their position. The most popular answer to how consultants add value to the recruitment process for job seekers was the general help they provide as an intermediary. This entails preparing candidates for their interviews, giving advice and tips on how to approach the client, facilitating the process, or even dealing with complicated negotiations. "Before they interview with the client, we would call them and brief them about the client, and namely what was the client's feedback when we presented them the first time, so which points they might need to prepare to defend", explains interviewee B. Salary expectation is often a sensitive topic that candidates do not dare to start, and often regret that later. Most of the job seekers interviewed in this study acknowledge that consultants usually help for this matter. Other topics brought by consultants included the confidentiality, their unbiased judgement, and the access to additional opportunities that they provide. “Some agencies will act on the candidate’s behalf to proactively help them find a position, so an access to a larger pool of opportunities”, explained interviewee C. Job seekers generally agree with this particular statement, and expect from recruitment agencies that if the particular role they applied for does not go through, the consultant will find another opportunity. Job seekers also see recruitment consultants as people they can talk freely to, because they will make sure to introduce them under their best image, something an applicant is not always capable of. As interviewee 5 said, “They will highlight the relevant experience of the candidates to the companies”.

Although the topics discussed with the interviewees were quite diverse, and their answers sometimes even more, it is possible to draw some general analysis. The first thing we understood is that there is a clear gap in perceptions, between recruitment consultants and job seekers, especially in terms of what each expects from the other. Secondly, we noticed that a relationship does exist between the two players, but only with the top candidates. Recruitment consultants deal with hundreds of applicants every week; it would be interesting to measure how many they deeply spoke to. Then, we were able to show the strong intermediary effect consultants have, and this is very likely the major incentive for job seekers to work with them. They manage to open the discussion with applicants, which enables them to understand more about them and be more accurate during the hire. Ultimately, the placement is effective in the long-term, because employers did not rush into the process. The last major point developed during these interviews is the recruitment consultants’ influence. We realised how little impact they had in the final decision. Indeed, their role is really to search for skilled candidates, sort out the best ones and facilitate the process for their client. “As one of my colleagues says “we are the judge in a jury trial”. So if the jury makes a decision, we are looking to help, to facilitate their process” said interviewee B.

It is also essential to point out the differences between the results and what the literature offered us. Regarding the two major selection tools, which are the resume and the interview, very few differences have been noticed. Results show that resumes have the purpose of showing skills and competencies, while the personality assessment comes later in the interview stage. The only difference, pointed out previously, is in the impact brought by the consultant in this assessment. The way the literature explains the relationship is somehow slightly different from the reality expressed by these interviews. We understood through the literature that consultants were creating a strong relationship with their candidates, while the results proved that it is complicated to keep track on every single applicant. Only the best is taken care of. Finally, the major distinction would be regarding the cultural fit. Even though most interviewees agreed that this was an essential criterion, most consultants noted that they were not very involved in this part, and the client would be dealing with it. However, we found in the literature that consultants may have an impact on this category, avoiding the employer to hire the wrong candidate. The only influence consultants have is simply a counselling role, facilitating the client's role.

We observed several limitations throughout this study, and most of them are related to the pool of interviewees. Firstly, we noticed some differences between entry-level job seekers and top executives. Their objectives and employment issues are different, and the fact to conduct a qualitative study and therefore to have a small sample of interviewees made it difficult to tell if the differences were random or came from the management level. In order to enrich the study, it would have been interesting to question in-house recruiters, and to compare their answers with recruitment consultants. It was decided in this study to focus on a positive approach regarding recruitment consultants only, but the inclusion of in-house recruiters for further research is a serious option. We also noticed that most results significantly depended on personal experiences. Again, with a small sample, the proportions of positive versus negative experiences could not be generalised. Therefore, in such a study, it would be important to collect results from positive experiences only.

There is a significant topic that has been left out, or very briefly discussed. One of the interviewees pointed out the major difference between contingency and retained search firms, with the different consequences associated with each of them. The literature found did not offer a lot of material on this topic, but further research should definitely be oriented in that direction. Namely, it influenced entry-level interviewees' answers, as most of them have only ever dealt with contingency agencies, bringing a different approach to the recruitment sector.

4 Conclusion

This study began by questioning the value added by recruitment consultants, acting as intermediaries, with a strong focus on their relationship with job seekers. On the one hand, we tried to understand what recruitment consultants could bring to the recruitment process, and on the other hand, how job seekers and executives were measuring consultants' utility. The literature found on this topic showed several different aspects, mainly positive. Namely, a successful consultant was able to widen the network and include a job seeker to a search process that this individual would have never found alone. Job seekers would then see these consultants as a great source of advice, whether it is regarding their career options, or even within the recruitment process, bringing tips about how to approach the client and the role they applied for.

During the qualitative study completed through interviewing some consultants as well as job seekers and executives, we realised that the perspective each had on the other could differ on some points. The main one would concern expectations job seekers have while looking for new opportunities. Precisely, the importance of compensation and other benefits is not positioned at the same level, job seekers admitting that this attribute was not the first one they were looking at. The opinion would also be different depending on the management level and the industry, what the scope of the study did not allow general conclusions on this topic.

We did found out that consultants play a real intermediate role, breaking the recruitment into more steps, and therefore allowing more selection and more filtering, ensuring more accurate recruitment and a higher level of quality. Consultants find people that employers would not, which very likely the main reason why their business is successful. On a candidate perspective, having a strong profile gives us a certain assurance to be contacted for the right opportunity. Although several advantages have been found and explored during the theoretical and empirical part, the latter also revealed that the reality is much less relationship-oriented that it seems. Recruitment remains a business where the client pays, and therefore efforts are carried on top candidates. That results in a significant amount of job seekers being left out by recruiters only because they were not part of the top five percent for this particular role.

This industry is also considerably impacted by the rise of technology and social media. We only devoted a few paragraphs on this topic, because the objective was not to explore it more, but it definitely an aspect to consider for further research. The question would therefore be to understand how involved technology should be with recruitment. As Sleep (2015) notices, candidates sometimes can wait the very final stages before actually meeting someone face to face. We can therefore legitimately wonder if recruitment still belongs to HR; indeed, we have seen through this research that it has become its own industry. However, as Dayang et al. (2013) point out, recruitment is still about finding the workforce, meaning it is dealing with human beings.

The general limits that can be considered for this entire study is the infinite number of interpretations. As Josselson (2013) states: “we as researchers are the authors of our interpretations” (p. 2). This statement goes for everyone; it is extremely complicated to express a general theory, as every story, every application, every role is unique, and experiences in the recruitment sector will never be twice the same.

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6 Annexes

Annexe 1: 12 potential unethical actions from consultants (From Lim & Chan, 2001, 222).

Dependent variable (1 = Strongly disagree; 5 = Strongly agree)	Headhunters (N = 64)	Non-headhunters (N = 120)	ANCOVA F Statistic[a]
1. Not informing client about the off-limits areas/organizations	2.32[L]	2.69[L]	3.75***
2. Not offering the off-limits guarantee to the client	1.94[L]	3.02	8.27****
3. Not providing information to candidates about the client's finances, corporate culture etc.	1.72[L]	1.95[L]	1.52
4. Accepting a search assignment even when the chances of success are low	2.66[L]	3.44[H]	7.31****
5. Not judging the necessity of the client's vacant position	2.52[L]	3.67[H]	9.42****
6. Not informing candidates about the risks in the job offer	1.50[L]	2.03[L]	2.70*
7. Collecting more information than is required from job candidates	3.71[H]	3.24[H]	1.40
8. Using any method to evaluate job candidates as long as the client does not challenge	2.53[L]	3.34[H]	5.54****
9. Presenting unqualified candidates to the client where no better ones can be found	1.29[L]	1.87[L]	5.02****
10. Hard selling an unqualified candidate to the client	2.23[L]	2.38[L]	4.86****
11. Not informing the client and candidate when their information is used	2.02[L]	2.41[L]	3.37**
12. Not assessing the potential damage of the search on the candidate's present employer	3.28	3.56[H]	3.07**

Annexe 2: The basic characteristics of qualitative and quantitative (Park & Park, 2016).

The Basic Characteristics of Qualitative and Quantitative

Quantitative	Qualitative
Objective	Subjective
Researcher is independent of research	Researcher interacts with research
Value free and unbiased	Value laden and biased
Impersonal voice	Personal voice
Deductive process	Inductive process
Structured	Unstructured
Accurate and reliable through reliability and validity testing	Accurate and reliable through verification
Test a theory	Develop a theory

Figure 16 - Qualitative versus quantitative research methods: Discovery or justification? (Park, J. & Park, M., 2016, p. 3)

Annexe 3: The comparison of qualitative and quantitative methods (Park & Park, 2016).

The Comparison of Qualitative and Quantitative Methods

	Qualitative	Quantitative
Objective / purpose	To gain an understanding of underlying reasons and motivations; to provide insights into the setting of a problem, generating ideas and/or hypotheses for later quantitative research; to uncover prevalent trends in thought and opinion	To quantify data and generalize results from a sample to the population of interest; to measure the incidence of various views and opinions in a chosen sample; sometimes followed by qualitative research, which is used to explore some findings further
Sample	Usually a small number of non-representative cases Respondents selected to fulfill a given quota	Usually a large number of cases* representing the population of interest; randomly selected respondents
Data collection	Unstructured or semi-structured techniques, e.g., individual depth interviews or group discussions	Structured techniques* such as on-street or telephone interviews
Data analysis	Non-statistical	Statistical;* data is usually in the form of tabulations; findings are conclusive and usually descriptive* in nature.
Outcome	Exploratory and/or investigative; findings are not conclusive and cannot be used to make generalizations about the population of interest; develop an initial understanding and sound base for further decision making	Used to recommend a final course of action

Figure 17 - Qualitative versus quantitative research methods: Discovery or justification? (Park, J. & Park, M., 2016, p. 4)

Annexe 4: Interview Guide

For consultants:

1) Presentation: Please briefly present yourself, where you come from, your job and the structure of the organization you work in.

2) The relationship between consultants and job seekers: For executive search firms, the recruitment process sometimes starts before the resume is sent. The way the relationship between the applicant (or passive candidate) and the consultant is created is crucial. How do you start it and build it?

3) Job attributes: Which job attributes do you think job seekers value the most when looking for a new opportunity? (Some examples would be the compensation, the image of the employer, the size of the employer, the location, other benefits, etc.)

4) The resume: It is common now that job seekers try to express their personality and behaviour through the resume (behaviourally-focused resumes). Do you think it is relevant, at this stage of the recruitment process? Please explain your answer.

5) The interview: Candidates prepare for their interviews, and probably anticipate some questions. What is your strategy to get them out of their comfort zone, in order to obtain the most real answers?

6) The culture fit: The corporate culture fit is often the reason of bad hires, as employers sometimes think that because the candidate has the perfect skills, the role will fit perfectly. How importantly do you value corporate culture fit during the recruitment process?

7) Conclusion question: Given all we have just discussed, what kind of value does a recruitment consultant add, first in the recruitment process, and second to job seekers; in other terms, what advantages do you think job seekers have to use a recruitment agency?

For Job Seekers:

1) Presentation: Please briefly present yourself, where you come from, your job and the structure of the organization you work in.

2) Job attributes: When looking for a job, or during the recruitment process, what are the job attributes that you value the most? (Some examples would be the compensation, the image of the employer, the size of the employer, the location, other benefits, etc.)

3) The relationship between a consultant and a job seeker: Have you ever used a recruitment agency? (any kind of intermediary)
    a. If yes, how did they build the relationship? Please explain the context: what kind of agency, who contacted who, etc.
    b. If no, what is the image you have of recruitment agencies?

4) The resume: Personality is difficult to show on a piece of paper. Do you think job applicants should reveal as much as possible on their resume? (What we call behaviourally-focused resumes). Please explain your answer.

5) The interview: The interview is the other major step during the recruitment process; in your experience, have you noticed a different approach between an employer and a consultant? Please explain.

6) The culture fit: The corporate culture fit is often the reason of bad hires: What do you value most between fitting the role and fitting the company? Please explain.

7) Conclusion question: Given all we have just discussed, what kind of value does a recruitment consultant add, first in the recruitment process, and second to job seekers; in other terms, what advantages do you think job seekers have to use a recruitment agency?