Transformation of the HR function in Moroccan companies: the case of e-recruitment

Mouna EL MOUSADIK, *(PhD, Professor)*

Laboratory of Studies and Research in Economics and Management (LERSEG)
Superior school of technology of Khénifra (EST)
Sultan Moulay Slimane University of Béni Mellal, Morocco

Soukaina BOUTAKY, *(PhD, student)*

Laboratory of Studies and Research in Sciences and Management (LERSEM)
Chouaib DOUKALI University EL JADIDA, Morocco

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Abstract

The digitalization of human resources function of companies is a current topic that has been arised with the emergence of NICTs and the health crisis that has disrupted the mode of management of organizations. Because of this disruption, these organizations have been forced to introduce new modes of human resources management to cope with the economic and social changes that companies have experienced.

Indeed, employment issues are at the heart of the debates and the search for the best talents has become one of the biggest challenges for the HRD as well as for the managers who would like to face the new expectations and the globalization. At the level of the human resources mission, the arrival of the Internet has profoundly changed the recruitment process. The changing context requires organizations to define new recruitment standards and methods in order to meet the current challenges with the appropriate norms.

This research falls under the field work of Human Resource Management and that analyzes the degree of transformation of the recruitment function in the digital era and the perception of recruiters of this shift towards e-recruitment. Therefore, we have chosen to study the perception of e-recruitment among recruiters in Moroccan companies. To do this, we adopted a hypothetical-deductive approach. The quantitative study through a survey distributed among 100 Moroccan human resources managers allows us to conclude that e-recruitment is employed by the majority of the respondents, but the crisis of covid-19 has propelled its expansion. This method, finally, remains a strategic choice for them and its use is increasingly important given the facilities that it offers during the recruitment process.

Keywords: HRM, digitalization, E-recruitment, Moroccan companies.
JEL Classification: O15
Paper type: Empirical Research

1. Introduction

In a world characterized by constant change, organizations are constantly experiencing the consequences of environmental turbulence. Digitalization represents one of the unavoidable challenges that companies must face to develop. They are, thus, led to be dynamic and anticipatory in order to seize the potential opportunities of this new digital context while focusing on organizational change and digital transformation as battle horses. New managerial equations have been created and have had an impact on the organizational structure of the company, especially in the HR function. The company must now face the paradox of attracting and retaining increasingly volatile employees, satisfying the needs of a more demanding clientele, and maintaining and honoring its commitments to other stakeholders.

Globalization and the development of new administrative and technical technologies represent a new challenge for companies. The evolution of the Internet and in particular the appearance of ICTs is changing the landscape of HRM functions and meeting the new expectations of companies.

Numerous observations on the impacts of digitalization in companies and on management show that the human element is at the heart of this transformation with new customer and internal relationships. Digital technology challenges the skills of each individual and the organization of all, modernizing HR practices and tools and introducing a new posture and a total paradigm shift to which organizations respond in different ways, particularly the appearance of NICTs on the job market, which have the effect of modifying the recruitment landscape and meeting the new expectations of recruiters. The role of the manager and the management team is, therefore, essential to accompany this evolution.

E-recruitment is a major strategic project that involves the company over the long term and whose stakes are very ambitious. Indeed, Ruël & al, (2004), Laval and Diallo, (2007), and Castillo (2012) highlight the use of technologies to improve diversity management and migrate towards a more strategic and flexible HRM by simplifying and automating its daily procedures. Nevertheless, the employment of these technologies does not take away the traditional issues of cost reduction, productivity improvement and data security (Grenier, 1998; Tamnine, 2016). In the Moroccan context, the level of introduction of ICT to HRM is very disparate and depends on several variables, the most important of which are the size of the company and its HRD, as well as its financial capacities. We are interested in this article on the study of e-recruitment practices in Morocco by recruiters within large Moroccan companies and their satisfaction with the e-recruitment process.

Our main objective is to answer the following question: To what extent does the digitalization of the HR function influence the e-recruitment process? To do so, we adopted a hypothetical-deductive approach and a quantitative study conducted with 100 Moroccan companies in order to study the impact of new technological means on the quality and success of the e-recruitment process.

The first part will be devoted to highlighting the conceptual framework of our subject, namely the digitization of the HR function in the Moroccan context. We will try to clarify the concept of digitization in the HR field while focusing on the transition between traditional recruitment and e-recruitment. As for the second part, it will introduce the context, the adopted methodology as well as the results of the exploratory study conducted with HR managers in order to analyze the main conclusions.

2. Digitization and the HR Function: Towards Improved Business Performance

Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was introduced into mainstream HRM practices from the 1960s onwards but only for payroll-related tasks. With the advancement of

science, the 1980s witnessed the advent of the HR portal, which was considered a little more complicated and developed than the tools used previously (Heikkilä, 2010). However, we can only speak of the real use of e-HR from the 1990s and, especially, in the 2000s, following a greater sophistication of the technologies applied to management. This led to a clear improvement in confidence in the use of e-HR (Bondarouk, 2014).

In Morocco, we can say that the level of introduction of ICT to HRM is very disparate and depends on several variables, the most important of which remain the size of the company and its HRD as well as its financial capabilities. In this article, we focus on the study of e-Recruitment practices in Morocco and evaluate the scope and effects identified by recruitment managers in Morocco.

1.1 Digitization of the HR function in Morocco: current status and future prospects

Dudezert.A (2016) defines digital transformation as "a voluntary transformation led by companies to exploit the new opportunities offered by these digital technologies".
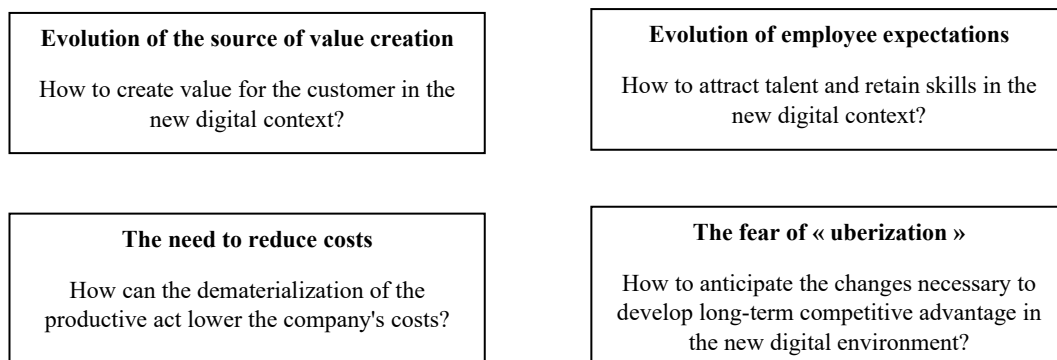
She also explains that two elements characterize digital transformation: digital technologies are accessible to all and they also drive information flows that until now were not used.

To define this operation, we can say that it is a process that aims to transform traditional processes, objects, tools, or professions through digital technologies in order to make them more efficient.

Digital transformation applies more to systemic organizations such as companies, countries, or societies where the transformation is profound; we move towards a new paradigm, and we challenge the beliefs, the organization, and the practices established until then.

In the figure below, Dudezert (2018) points out that digital transformation refers to the virtualization of a variety of management practices within the company and the generalization of the use of digital hardware (smartphones, tablets, and touch screens) in the daily lives of employees.

Figure 1: Digital transformation by Dudezert

Evolution of the source of value creation How to create value for the customer in the new digital context?	**Evolution of employee expectations** How to attract talent and retain skills in the new digital context?
The need to reduce costs How can the dematerialization of the productive act lower the company's costs?	**The fear of « uberization »** How to anticipate the changes necessary to develop long-term competitive advantage in the new digital environment?

Source: (Dudezert, 2018, p.59)

This digitalization of the HR function is achieved through:

Dematerialization: replacing physical files (papers, registers...) with virtual files (documents on PC, disks...)

Automation: automating repetitive tasks that were done by humans

Disintermediation: relieving employees of administrative tasks, free them from hierarchical relationships.

Digitalization is a powerful tool that can be used internally to improve performance, reduce costs, and facilitate work tasks. It is also used externally to interact and communicate with the ompany's stakeholders. The challenge is to understand which technologies are most appropriate for each type of organization and its digital transformation goals so that the appropriate technology can be identified.

According to Albessart & al (2017), digitalization is "the implementation of a series of computerized technical devices based on a codification of various information and the algorithmic execution of a series of commands and controls." It would, therefore, include both digitization operations, but also the phenomena of computerization and automation of tasks performed by machines, computers, or robots (Albessart & al., 2017). Nevertheless, Parviainen & al. (2017) insist that digitalization is not mere digitization, in the sense that it involves "rethinking current operations from a new perspective made possible by digital technology" (p.74). Unlike digitization, digitalization is not an end in itself, but a state of mind.

The digital transformation of the HR function has broadened its scope of intervention and its vocation within the company. Through their study that aims to identify new HR practices associated with digitalization, Audrin and Davoine (2017) mention new tasks for the HR function, namely employer brand management (Pezet, Poujol and Pignault, 2013), talent management (Dejoux & Thévenet, 2015), skills management 2.0, regulation and diagnosis of the impacts of digitalization (Dudezert, 2018).

1.2 From Recruitment to E-Recruitment: A Rather Difficult Transition

Recruitment is one of the most important activities in human resources, contributing directly to the performance of the company. It consists of identifying the company's needs and finding the talents that will be able to fill them.

(SEKIOU Lakhdar, 2004) defines recruitment as "a set of actions undertaken by organizations to attract candidates who possess the necessary skills to fill a vacant position in the immediate future". The use of competent and motivated staff contributes to the social and economic success of the company, work teams, management staff, HR department, and the individual himself within the organization.

According to Nicolas (Arnaud, 2013), poor recruitment explains a high turnover rate among employee populations with less than 18 years of seniority in a company (Guerrero, 2008). Such a phenomenon illustrates the importance of respecting a certain number of good practices often ordered in eight steps (Guerrero, 2010).

According to Nicolas Arnaud (nouveaux enjeux de la GRH, ellipses, 2013, p.60 and 61): the different tools used do not ensure the success of recruitment with certainty. Indeed, the reliability of the tools and the recruiter's psychological bias interfere as much as the quality of the definition of the need and the integration of the candidate. Over the past few decades, numerous studies have focused on the scientific validity of tools. The latter must be understood as the capacity of a tool to predict the actual quality of the future new recruit. The results show that the methods used are not always the most valid, and vice versa. In fact, the most effective tools are work situations, assessment centers, previous evaluations and aptitude tests (Cadin and all, 2002). Conversely, interviews, personality tests, references, and other biographical data have low validity, even though they are among the most widely used tools.

1.3 E-Recruitment: Between Evolution and Advantages

E-recruitment is a recruitment process that takes place via the Internet with the goal of finding candidates online who meet specific criteria and are likely to be hired by a company or an organization. It is the term used by academics and HR professionals to define online recruitment processes. It covers both the process of publishing job offers on Internet classifieds platforms as well as the IT and software management of the recruitment process. Online recruitment, therefore, consists of dematerializing recruitment, from sending an application by e-mail to the management by the employer of the recruitment process using software from a human resources management information system (HRIS).

According to (Perretti,2010), before the web, job communication was essentially done on paper supports, which the candidates sent by mail. The recruitment process underwent a first phase

of evolution with the Internet and Web 1.0. With the start of recruitment sites (Monster.fr was created in 1999), the collection of applications via the Internet developed as follows:

- Recruitment 2.0, the social era, until the middle of the 2000s, the Internet had relatively little change in the modes of recruitment. For the most part, it had simply transformed paper ads into web ads and resume cabinets into shareable electronic documents. The arrival of what is called "Web 2.0", including social networks, has revolutionized the hiring process. Companies and candidates alike now manage their digital identity through their presence on blogs, professional social networks (LinkedIn, viadeo, etc.) or generalist ones (Facebook, Twitter, etc.), career sites or interactive resume sites, including videos and contact forms.

- Recruitment 3.0, Inbound Recruiting, goes further by introducing more techniques from digital marketing, such as conversion rate optimization, the notion of a persona, automated emailing, while emphasizing the notion of candidate experience, digital or not. These processes have been brought together in a highly effective methodology: Inbound Recruiting, also sometimes called Inbound Recruitment, is a global approach that gives coherence to the different tools used by recruiters. It's not really a radical change, but rather a consolidation of the existing process, i.e. the integration of talent acquisition, application processing and sourcing approaches within the same process.

- Recruiting 4.0: Hire qualified people through sourcing. Recruiting today has nothing to do with what it was decades ago, we are now entering the era of recruitment 4.0. Indeed, it is now up to companies to convince and seduce their future employees, especially in specific sectors such as IT development and Data Sciences. As a consequence of this phenomenon, recruiters have to highlight their lack of employers and take care of their image. This is achieved through the e-reputation of companies on digital media and more specifically on professional social networks (LinkedIn, Viadeo...).

E-recruitment is a real advantage for both candidates and recruiters:

- The web represents a real opportunity; it is a potential database not negligible. The use of e-recruitment or sourcing allows the recruiter to expand their circle of research and have access to information and profiles of people or employees who are not necessarily active job seekers, then talk about passive candidates, and recruiters are able to recruit, potential candidates abroad and those from their computers or cell phones.

- Transparency of information. Moreover, professional social networks allow recruiters to access more complete and reliable information than that presented in traditional CVs, so via these platforms recruiters can learn more about the life, tastes and interests of candidates. This transparency is important for both the recruiter and the candidates.

- Cost reduction E-recruitment via social media represents a real advantage in terms of cost. Sourcing can have a saving of time and storage, indeed via these platforms recruiters target themselves, their research, which reduces the irrelevant candidates and therefore the margin of error.

- Developing the employer brand, which is the set of issues related to the brand image and the reputation of the company towards its employees or potential employees. The aim is to make the brand attractive as an employer.

Progressively, companies have been led to consider that the evolution of human resources is a real key factor of success. General management knows that people can give a competitive advantage to their organization if they succeed in facing the deep transformations and turbulence that affect today's global economy. The world is now swept by winds of layoffs, Offshoring, outsourcing, restructuring, downsizing and bankruptcy. All of this is the product of ICT, which has led to changes in social norms and values and a shift to a knowledge-based economic system. The labor market has also been significantly affected by the increasing complexity of jobs and the expectations of new generations (Jacmin, C., & Gobert,P.) (Mensah, J. K. (2020) concludes in his work that e-recruitment is the essential method for companies to

attract young talent entering the labor market in a society where professional competition is increasingly tough.

3. E-recruitment in the Moroccan context: an exploratory study among recruiters in Moroccan companies.

3.1. Search Context

As technology accelerates, the supply of skilled workers has shrunk and the profit motive has increased, driving HR managers to attract the best candidates with the best skills. The hunt for talent is more open than ever, and all weapons are contributing to it. It is in this context that recruitment and human resources have really started to take on the important role they can have today within the Moroccan organization to address the need to improve and optimize talent management practices. Indeed, considerable changes have been observed with a real development of organizations and, therefore, of their tools and their involvement. (Abid-Dupont, M. A., Escoubes, F., Giraud, L., & Ruspil, T. (2020)). It is in this perspective that Moroccan companies are in the process of optimizing their methods by equipping themselves with effective means enabling them to hire, retain and develop the loyalty of talents with the aim of bringing additional value and anticipating their management methods and future needs. On the other hand, the role of the HR function has always been important, but the sudden arrival of the Covid-19 pandemic has underscored the importance of redefining it. According to Lumen (2020), the weight of the changes brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic falls more heavily on HR managers and leaders. During this period, HR teams had to play a dual role. On the one hand, they had to accompany employees in the transformation of old forms of work by providing training, the necessary infrastructure and a healthy climate, and on the other hand, they were supporting organizations to continue their operations. These radical changes that occurred worldwide due to this health crisis pushed organizations to adapt to this critical context and ensure the management of their human capital (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020).

The literature review presented in this article revolves around the digitalization of the HR function in general and online recruitment in particular. This theoretical framework has allowed us to raise two major assumptions regarding the work of (Dudezert.A, 2018), PERETTI, 2015) and (Mensah, J. K. (2020) on the digitalization of the HR function that we will try to affirm or deny in the empirical part. These hypotheses are as the following:

Hypothesis 1: E-recruitment is an effective means that impacts the quality of selected candidates and leads to a successful process.

Hypothesis 2: E-recruitment depends on the culture of the company and the training of its HR managers.

3.2. Research Methodology

To conduct this research, we favored a hypothetical-deductive approach (from the general to the particular) within the framework of a positivist paradigm. A review of the literature allowed us to formulate hypotheses that we will test using a quantitative approach in order to invalidate or confirm them.

It is worth to bear in mind that the central problem is the following: To what extent does the digitalization of the HR function influence the e-recruitment process? Other sub-questions can be derived from it such as:

We considered that the research question meets a real need of Moroccan companies in terms of HRM. In this study, we have chosen the survey which seems to us the most appropriate to our research question. It is the most used mode of data collection in the field of Human Resources Management. A survey is a tool that "allows direct questioning of individuals by defining

beforehand, through a qualitative approach, the modalities of responses through so-called closed questions" (Baumard & al., 2003).

The survey is mainly composed of closed questions. We justify our choice of closed-ended questions by the greater ease of administering the answers and processing the data on the one hand; and on the other hand, the answers are directly comparable from one respondent to the next since the response methods are interpreted in the same way by the respondents.

The main characteristic of a sample is that it must reflect the characteristics of the population as much as possible. Therefore, it is important to attach great importance to the sample because it determines the accuracy of the results obtained.

However, it is worth mentioning that this study does not claim to reflect the situation of e-recruitment in Morocco as a whole, it simply aims to shed light on its practice. Our sample is composed of large companies established in Morocco. This choice is favored by the fact that these companies already have the financial potential to invest and acquire the technological and communication means to develop the HR function within their entity. Our study will then evaluate the impact of these measures on the success of the e-recruitment process.

In order to diversify and adapt the modes of administration, we used three modes to collect the responses to the survey (100 HR responsible): 56% of the responses were collected via the Internet (e-mail) and 20% face to face. The online survey mode collected 24%.

Now we will proceed to the analysis of the data collected from the HR personnel to whom we distributed the whole survey. In order to interpret the results of this study in the best possible way, we have used SPSS software, which allows us to better understand the results.

4. Results and discussions

4.1. Descriptive results

Concerning the respondents, 22% are HRDs, followed by 58% of HR managers and 7% of training managers, which indicates that the majority of the respondents work in the HR function, which will allow us to have reliable results from specialists in the field.

Tableau 1: Distribution of respondents to our survey according to the position held within the company.

		size	Pourcentage	Valid pourcentage	Cumulative percentage
Valid	HR manager	58	58,0	58,0	58,0
	HRD	22	22,0	22,0	80,0
	Training Manager	7	7,0	7,0	87,0
	General manager	5	5,0	5,0	92,0
	Project manager	3	3,0	3,0	95,0
	Recruitment officer	5	5,0	5,0	100,0
	Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Source: Our results

Tableau 2: Knowledge of e-recrutment by the HR.

		Size	Pourcentage	Valid Pourcentage	Cumulative pourcentage
Valid	Yes	100	100,0	100,0	100,0

Source : Our results

Tableau 3: Use of e- recruitment.

		Size	Pourcentage	Valid Pourcentage	Cumulative pourcentage
	No	30	30,0	30,0	30,0
Valid	Yes	70	70,0	70,0	100,0
	Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Source: Our results

Recruiters who use e-recruitment explain their motivation in the advantage that this tool provides in terms of saving time, as confirmed by 74% of the surveys.
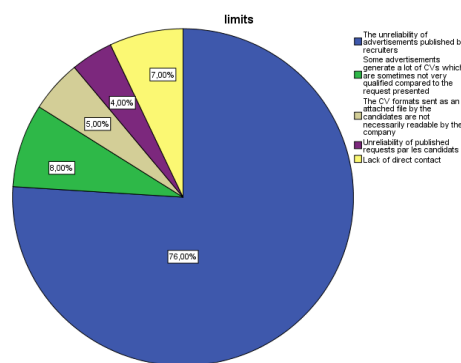
Figure 2: Avantages du l'utilisation du e-recrutement selon les répondants.
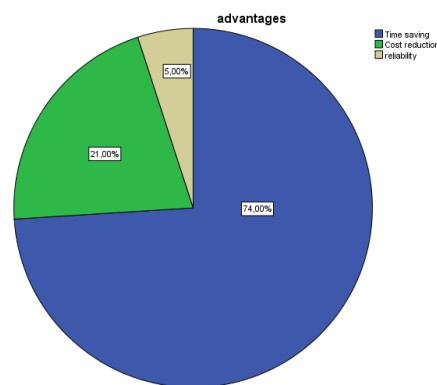
Source: Our results

As for the limitations of e-recruitment, the respondents perceive that the lack of reliability of candidate applications is the main reason why they do not use this method.

Figure 3: Limites de l'utilisation du e-recrutement selon les répondants.

Source: Our results

As for the relationship between the use of e-recruitment and the improvement of the recruitment process, we can say that there is a dependency between these two variables with a Pearson chi-square of 0.001 less than 0.05, which affirms that recruiters believe that the digitization of the recruitment process will improve it and positively impact the selection of candidates.

Tableau 4: Chi-square test between e-recruitment use and recruitment process improvement.

	Value	ddl	Asymptotic significance (bilateral)
Pearson's Chi-square	23,033[a]	6	,001
Likelihood ratio	16,104	6	,013
Linear by linear association	8,993	1	,003
Number of valid observations	100		

8 cells (66.7%) have a theoretical number of cells less than 5. The minimum theoretical size is .10

Source: Our results

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Tableau 5: Calculation of Cramer's V for the variables: use of e-recruitment and improvement of the recruitment process.

		Value	Approximate meaning
Nominal by Nominal	Phi	,478	,001
	V of Cramer	,338	,001
Number of valid observations		100	

Source: Our results

Regarding the emergence of e-recruitment with the Covid 19 health crisis, the results confirm that this crisis situation was among the factors of the digital transformation of the HR function and in recruitment is part of it. The majority of respondents agree and strongly agree with this finding.

Tableau 6: the emergence of e-recruitment with the Covid 19 health crisis.

		Size	Pourcentage	Valid Pourcentage	Cumulative pourcentage
Valid	Totally agree	49	49,0	49,0	49,0
	Agree	43	43,0	43,0	92,0
	Neither disagree nor agree	8	8,0	8,0	100,0
	Total	100	100,0	100,0	

Source: Our results

By looking at the relationship between the use of e-recruitment and the corporate culture and training of these HR managers, we can deduce that there is not a significant relationship between these two variables for the case of our sample.

Tableau 7: Correlation between variables: e-recruitment use and company culture.

			Culture of the company	Use of recrutment	Level of studies
Rho de Spearman	Culture of the company	Correlation coefficient	1,000	,041	-,009
		Sig. (bilateral)	.	,689	,929
		N	100	100	100
	useofrecrutment	Correlation coefficient	,041	1,000	-,020
		Sig. (bilateral)	,689	.	,846
		N	100	100	100
	Levelofstudies	Correlation coefficient	-,009	-,020	1,000
		Sig. (bilateral)	,929	,846	.
		N	100	100	100

Source: Our results

4.2. Discussion

Overall, this article examines the perception of a sample of human resources managers from companies based in Morocco with regard to e-recruitment. It was surprising to find out that these managers rely rigorously on this tool during the recruitment process. This strong use can be linked to two main advantages: First, the saving of time; and second, the reduction of the recruitment process costs. Indeed, these findings go hand in hand with El Ouizgani's results and confirm that recruiters use tools to improve the reliability and the quality of recruitment (El Ouizgani, 2020). The results also confirm the work of Lumen (2020) and (Carnevale & Hatak, 2020), who concluded that the pandemic has influenced the tools and methods used in human resources management. Moreover, the respondents state that e-recruitment has become unavoidable for companies looking for new talent. Eventually, recruiters and HR departments have had to adapt in order to optimize these new channels and succeed in the recruitment process as stated in the works of Ruël & al, (2004), Laval and Diallo, (2007), and Castillo (2012).

Regardless of the benefits, the use of e-recruitment still has some disadvantages. The majority of respondents stated that limitations associated with the use of this tool do exist. It appears that the lack of reliability is one of the aspects that arouses the most mistrust among recruiters, which leads us to wonder about the elements that drive them to doubt the authenticity of applications. This being the case, a qualitative study is necessary to shed light on this issue.

This work, focusing on the practice of e-recruitment, is of an exploratory nature, and to this end, we would like to emphasize that we do not claim to generalize the results achieved. The representation of recruiters is insufficient and must be combined with that of candidates to give more objectivity to the results obtained.

5. Conclusion

Human resources is a field where recruitment is of undeniable importance. Candidates have now gone beyond the once "utilitarian" consumption and are looking for new sensations and experiences.

Through our exploratory study, we were able to confirm the integration of this new mode of operation within Moroccan companies. Saving time through recruitment is considered an advantage that allows HR managers to gain in financial terms as well, for example, the costs related to the processing of applications are also reduced since many tasks can be automated.

The respondents confirm the positive link between the use of e-recruitment and the success of the recruitment process, which confirms our first hypothesis.

As for the second hypothesis, we could not confirm it since no correlation exists between the use of e-recruitment and the culture and training of these HR managers.

With the COVID 19 crisis, recruiters also confirm the increase in the use of online recruitment. Indeed, it has become a must for companies looking for new talent to use this medium. This being the case, recruiters and HR departments have had to adapt in order to optimize these new channels and make the most of them.

New times, new rules. In the digital age, companies must constantly adapt to remain successful. HR departments and recruiters have to be innovative in order to cope with the variable flow of applications, but also with the global health crisis that has considerably impacted the traditional work execution conditions.

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