Bachelor Thesis

Berlin School of Economics and Law

International Business Administration Exchange

Recruiting University Graduates –

The Relevance of Active Sourcing in Modern Talent Acquisition

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Table of Contents

List of Figures

List of Appendices

List of Abbreviations

C   contingency coefficient

CHRIS   Centre of Human Resources Information Systems

IFO   Leibniz Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich

HR   Human Resources

P   approximate significance

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

"Without qualified and motivated personnel, no business can survive or be successful" (Rohrlack, 2012, p.1). In the past decades, the department of Human Resources (HR) has gained a significant importance for companies. Today, business economics generally agree on the importance of human capital for companies' achievements within their industry. Topics, such as leadership, staff development, personnel procurement and retention are being handled by businesses' HR departments to ensure continuously smooth labour and thus future success of the company.

In recent years, a shortage of skilled professionals has been dominating the labour market and thus has been highly influencing the HR department, especially the division of recruiting (cf. Knecht, 2016, p. 1). To act upon this trend, a modification of talent acquisition has been forming. Rather than companies choosing their best applicants, job seekers can often decide between multiple job opportunities and pick out the best for them (cf. Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 2). For many companies, it has therefore become important to perfect the process of recruiting, in order to gather the needed number of skilled professionals. For this purpose, a shift from a rather passive way of recruiting towards a more active approach has been recorded lately. Instead of waiting for applicants to find the employer through job postings, firms have been approaching possible job candidates through so-called active sourcing measures in hopes of generating a higher interest for the company among the prospected recruits (cf. Rath & Salmen, 2012, p. 23)

In this process, the newest and youngest group of probable applicants is specifically promising for firms to attract. For example, recent university graduates bring the needed collegiate know-how to the table, while also being equipped with modern soft skills to navigate through the working environment. "Understanding this group of professionals is key to anticipating the needs of the next professional workforce" (Department for Professional Employees, 2017, p.1). It is therefore the job of recruiters to shape a strategy to recruit those young talents and fill vacant positions. Nowadays, this group of people newly entering the labour market comes from the age group of *Generation Y* and will soon be accompanied by *Generation Z*. Being born into the age of Digitalization, the use of technology and mass media is incorporated into their private and professional life. Incorporating this aspect into the recruiting strategy for the target group would therefore be an obvious step to take (cf. Krüger, 2018, p. 95).

1.2 Problem Indication and Research Objectives

In present literature, the topics of modern recruiting, active sourcing, and the group of university graduates have been well analyzed. However, when viewed together, the themes of active sourcing and university graduates are often times only depicted through the eyes of consultants or employers. Additionally, while more and more companies start making use of active sourcing, still only a rather small percentage of jobs is filled through this technique (cf. Weitzel et al., 2018, p. 9).

This observation raises the question of success of active sourcing measures aimed to the mentioned group of prospective applicants. It also remains unclear which understanding the group of university graduates has of the former.

Therefore, the purpose of this thesis is to determine the relevance of active sourcing in the recruitment of university graduates. Multiple research questions arise from the initially stated problem, which will be analyzed in detail as part of this research:

To get an understanding of the theory as well as experts' and the employer's views on the topic, the following underlying research question will be discussed **RQ1:** *How can the incorporation of active sourcing into recruiting be beneficial for companies?*

Further, the research question **RQ2:** *How successful are the different channels of active sourcing?* will be examined. Answering this question will give an indication as to what works best for employers in the status quo of sourcing and what is more preferred by the target group.

The focus of this thesis is to find out about the targeted group's views on active sourcing measures directed at themselves. Hence, the main research question of this thesis shall be **RQ3:** *How do university graduates perceive active sourcing measures in the recruiting process?* Answering this question will be crucial to give recommendations to companies for actively sourcing the niche group of university graduates.

1.3 Approach and Structure

This paper is fundamentally divided into two parts: a literature review and a following empirical research. As a foundation of the work, the underlying topic of recruiting will first be discussed on the basis of existing literature. More specifically, its definition, as well as traditional recruiting methods will be explained. Afterwards, the current situation in the labour market will be highlighted with emphasis on economic structural

transformation as a cause for the shortage of skilled workers, and the role of Generation Y in the workforce. Thereupon, the method of active sourcing, its theory, commonly used channels, and their performance will be introduced. With the advantages and disadvantages of active sourcing known in literature, the topic will then be linked to the target group of this thesis - university graduates.

On the basis of this compiled knowledge, which is mostly given by experts of the topic, a study will be performed to also to better understand the target group's perception of the matter. Finally, with the results gathered in the research, the relevance of active sourcing for the group can be evaluated and recommendations for companies can be provided on how to successfully carry out this sourcing method.

2. Literature Review

To properly discuss the topics of this thesis and find substantiated answers to its research questions, it is critical to first acquire a broad understanding of the theoretical and literary foundations associated with the topics. For this purpose, a literature review will be performed in the following, to depict an overview of the subject and built a base of understanding for the following empirical study.

2.1 Recruiting as a Whole

2.1.1 Definition of Recruiting

In existing literature, the terms *recruiting,* and *recruitment* are often used synonymously. There are multiple definitions to be found, some of which have different common denominators. Dressler (2020) very shortly describes recruiting as "finding and/or attracting applicants for the employer's open positions" (Dressler, 2020, p. 175). Mondy and Martocchio's (2016) go more into detail by defining recruiting as "the process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers, and with appropriate qualifications to apply for jobs with an organization" (Mondy & Martocchio, 2016, p. 131). While Dressler's definition is similar to that of Mondy and Martocchio, as they share the aspect of people attraction, the latter definition adds other relevant components of timeliness of work and quality of applicants as important aspects. Mathis et al. (2017) on the other hand characterize recruitment as the "process of generating a pool of qualified applicants for organizational jobs (Mathis et al., 2017, p. 200). This definition

thus does not lay a focus on the action of attracting applicants, but instead shares the importance of finding individuals who are qualified with the definition of Mondy and Martocchio (2016). Dessain (2016) agrees with this aspect by defining recruiting as "hiring people […] who have the skills and behaviors needed to successfully perform their role" (Dessain, 2016, p. 5). As a takeaway from the above descriptions, there seem to be two important aspects when defining the term recruiting, which can be combined as *quality applicant attraction*. This outline shall be used for further analysis.

Furthermore, it is to be differentiated between the concepts of *recruiting* and *talent acquisition*. While those terms are sometimes used as synonyms for convenience, they are not technically the same. While recruiting is a rather short activity to find the best applicant for a specific open position, talent acquisition is more of a long-term strategic measure for planning personnel matters. Recruiting can be seen as one part of talent acquisition (cf. Rohrlack, 2012, p. 10).

2.1.2 Traditional Methods of Recruiting

There are different methods, through which recruiting can be conducted. According to Cascio (2019), they can best be divided into internal recruiting and external recruiting.

Internal recruiting focuses on sourcing applicants for a vacant position amongst individuals, who are already employed within the company. Commonly used channels of internal recruiting are employee referrals and internal job postings. For employee referrals, companies hope to benefit from employees knowing each other as colleagues and thus suggesting the best fit for the open position. For internal job postings, companies announce the vacant positions internally for their staff to be able to apply for the position by themselves (cf. Cascio, 2019, pp. 216-220). Due to the scope of this thesis, internal recruiting methods shall not be discussed further in this context.

External Recruiting on the other hand tries to draw applicants from the working environment outside of the company into it. Firms make use of this recruiting method to tackle business growth, fill positions that recently opened up, or to gain a fresh set of eyes (cf. Cascio, 2019, p. 221). Traditional channels of external recruiting follow the so-called *post and pray* method. Usually, firms *post* their job openings on a medium and then wait and then passively *pray* that people found the job ad and decide to apply (cf. Lorber & Kummer, 2020, p. 115; Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 5).

Over the past decades, the use of traditional methods of recruiting has vastly developed and many additional methods have been affiliated. In existing literature, listings of external recruiting channels vary drastically, depending on the age and focus of the literature. Therefore, a complete list of channels would be very lengthy and difficult to obtain. In the following, the most common recruiting channels will be introduced.

With the ongoing Digitalization, the media being used for job postings have changed much over the last decades. Before the widespread use of the Internet, job ads were normally being published in newspapers. Around the turn of the millennium, businesses started having their own websites, on which they would upload job openings besides still printing them in the papers. Later, external job boards, such as Indeed or StepStone, were created, on which various employers can post their open positions simultaneously. On those websites, job seekers can search for fitting job advertisements using personalized filters. These websites provide applicants with the big advantage of having access to multiple company's vacant positions at the same time and being able to directly compare the most attractive ones. In accordance with social media, digital career networks like Xing and LinkedIn have evolved. Here, people can create personal accounts to disclose and highlight their academic and occupational development, and network with peers. Besides profiles of individuals, companies can also create accounts and use the online career networks to publish job openings as well. The websites also have a digital job wall, which functions comparably to those of Indeed and StepStone. Private users can browse through the job advertisements, if they are interested in a new occupation (cf. Dannhäuser & Braehmer, 2020, pp. 532-533).

In 2020, companies most often posted their job vacancies on their own websites, and on external online job portals. In recent years, digital career networks also have been used more frequently by firms to publish their job ads (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, p.7). In those channels, the post and pray method is being utilized, as firms hope to target qualified personnel, which frequently use the websites to search for a new job and decide to apply.

With traditional recruiting methods, recruiters are reliant on candidates proactively applying for positions and have to passively wait for their actions. Why this approach of recruiting is becoming outdated on the current labour market is being discussed in the following.

2.2 Current Labour Market Situation

In today's vastly changing environment, the work force is continuously exposed to new changes. It is compelled to adapt in order to keep up with different trends and continue to function (cf. Fischerová & Pubalová, 2018, p. 31). In the past decades, the labour market and thus also the processes of recruiting have been highly influenced by two major trends: society's demographic change and economy's structural transformation. Those will be discussed in the following.

2.2.1 Demographic Change and Economic Structural Transformation

The term demographic change is generally defined as a modification of society's size and structure, which is influenced by the factors of birthrate, life expectancy, mortality rate and migration balance (cf. Preißling, 2014, p. 5; Bollessen, 2016, p. 4). In past centuries, before the demographic change took place, society's age distribution in Western industrial countries used to resemble the shape of a pyramid. The eldest generation would shape the tip of the pyramid, as a long life expectancy was rather rare and thus only a small amount of the population would be of older age. In contrast, birth rates used to be very high and therefore, children and young adults would build the foundation of society and be resembled by the wide bottom of the pyramid. Throughout the last century, a change in Western demographics took place, as life expectancy rose and birth rates declined, which resulted in a reshape of the pyramid, as can be seen in figure one. Today, mortality rates as well as birth rates are on historic lows, with the former exceeding the latter, which will essentially cause society to shrink in the future (cf. Preißling, 2014, p. 5; Salmen, 2012, p. 24).
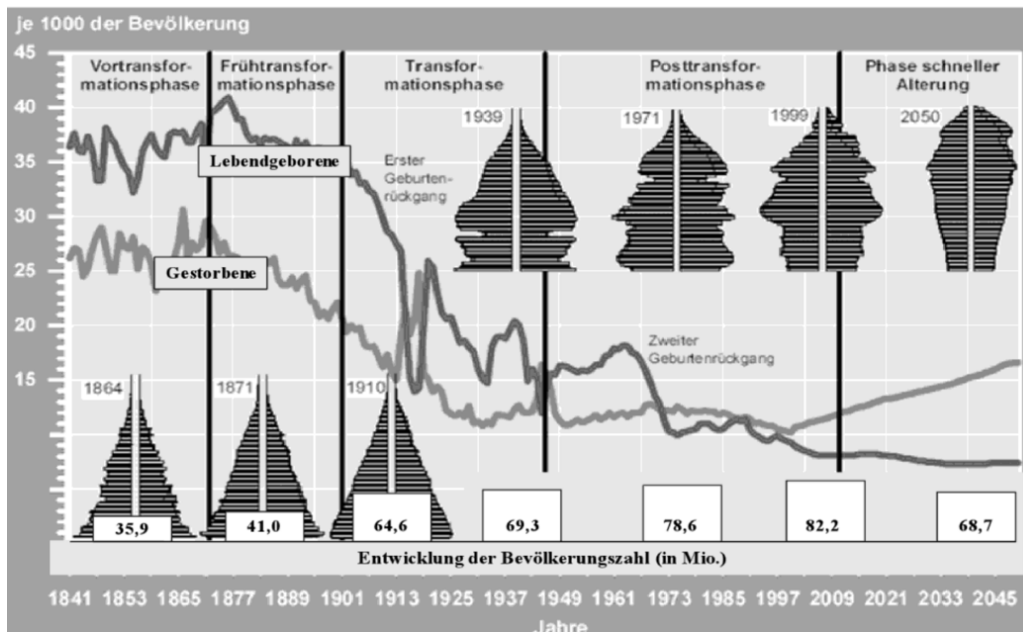
Figure 1: German birth rates vs. death rates and age structure of the population
from Preißling, 2014, p. 5

The economy's structural transformation has been caused by multiple separate trends. Technological progress and Digitalization have led to automatization and advanced globalization. All those phenomena combined have forced the economy to have to adapt to quickly changing environments by becoming more flexible and innovative. The tertiary sector of services has gained importance in contrast to manual labour. According to Preißling (2014) and Trost (2014), knowledge-based labour has increased while at the same time knowledge ages faster, as the mentioned trends continue to evolve (cf. Preißling, 2014, pp. 22, 23; Trost, 2014, pp. 7, 8). Achouri (2007) supports this argument, by stating that in today's *information society*, acquired information will be playing a lesser role than the ability to quickly acquire new knowledge as an employee (cf. Achouri, 2007, p. 17).

Both of these demonstrated changes in society and economy have caused big changes within the labour market and shaped it into today's form. Economic demands rise with ongoing trends, while the working population is aging and therefore declining. This not only instigates both, society and economy to lose workers in absolute numbers, but more importantly to lose young workers. By 2020, more than one third of working people in Germany was older than 50 years (cf. Preißling, 2014, pp. 26-27). According to projections, this development will only continue so that by 2060, the percentage of individuals over 65 years old in the population will be risen from 20% in 2008 up to 34% (cf. Bollessen, 2016, p. 5).

2.2.2 Shortage of Skilled Professionals

As a consequence of the discussed changes in society and economy, a so-called *shortage of skilled professionals* in the labour market was caused (cf. Vogler-Ludwig et al., 2016, p. 122). According to Obermeier (2014), skilled professionals are individuals who have earned an accredited academic education or vocational training of multiple years. Obermeier further describes that a shortage of skilled professionals occurs when the demand for qualified professionals in a line of business cannot be met over a longer period of time (cf. Obermeier, 2014). This definition is comparable to that of the German Federal Employment Agency, which states that a lack of qualified personnel appears, when a significant number of positions cannot be filled, due to a deficiency of workers with respective qualities (cf. Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2020, p. 6).

In their yearly analysis, the German Federal Employment Agency has developed multiple key performance indicators to determine shortages of skilled professionals in the different work fields, two of which are called time of vacancy and ratio of jobseekers to open positions. Time of vacancy measures the number of days it takes from publishing a vacant position to filling it. The ratio of jobseekers to job vacancies determines how many people who are currently looking for a new job would fit the criteria of one open position. The bigger the number of days to fill a vacant position and the smaller the amount of people potentially fitting the description of a position to fill, the higher is the indication of a skilled worker shortage. In Germany, from 2010 to 2019, the time of vacancy has increased steadily from 57 days up to 127 days, causing positions to be unfilled longer. The ratio of jobseekers to open positions on the other hand has been shrinking, meaning there are less possible candidates to be found for a position. While the analysis states that the German market is not yet entering an overall state of lack of qualified personnel, a continuous movement towards a shortage in more and more lines of work is being recorded (cf. Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2019, pp. 6-11). In fact, according to a study of Ernst & Young, 70% of midsized firms in Germany recently stated that it is difficult or very difficult to find new and sufficiently qualified personnel (cf. Ernst & Young, 2021). Compared to larger companies with known brand names, small and medium-sized firms especially struggle to hire additional employees, as they have a smaller budget and lower level of public awareness to face their bigger competition (cf. Bollessen, 2016, p. 17).

Marginally to these recordings, it is to be stated that starting in early 2020, the COVID-19 pandemic shortly initiated large changes in the labour market with unemployment rates rising and company's need for personnel declining. However, with economy now slowly

recovering from the pandemic and demography further developing like described before, it is to be expected that the shortage of skilled professionals will progress more in upcoming years (cf. Bundesagentur für Arbeit, 2020, p. 5). Compliant with Rath and Salmen (2012), in 2020 the number of missing skilled workers in the fields of law and economics was around 222.000 in Germany. By 2030, this number will have increased to 354.000 (cf. Rath & Salmen, 2012, p. 26)

With the lack of qualified personnel, businesses are forced into a competition to attract the few eligible job candidates, which the labour market offers. This action is often called *war for talent*. As demand for skilled personnel is higher than supply, experts agree that firms have to provide more attractive working conditions than their competitors to draw in people's attention or find other effective ways to recruit new talent (cf. Achouri, 2007, p. 12; Bollessen, 2016, pp. 28,29; Rath & Salmen, 2012, p. 27; Trost, 2014, p. 58).

2.2.3 Generation Y in the Labour Market

While qualified workers are already sparse to find, attracting possible candidates for open positions is even more difficult. For recruiting to function, the recruiting methods used should be tailored to the respective target group (cf. Trost, 2014, p. 13). As mentioned before, it often makes sense for businesses to recruit younger people for vacant positions, as they are used to the working environment of that time and bring in a fresh mindset. Additionally, as university students are only beginning to be incorporated into the working environment, they are not yet attached to a certain employer, but instead are more open to opportunities coming their way and finding a steppingstone into employability (cf. Dessain & Zeuch, 2016, p. 84).

In present times, the youngest people to enter the labour market after studying are part of the Generation Y, some may even stem from the following Generation Z already. Literature is often disunited about the exact termination of these age groups. However, Generation Y is most often defined as people in the Western World who were born approximately between the years of 1980 and 2000 (cf. Büning & Marchlewski, 2009, p. 1; Walzer, 2019, p. 85; Wang, 2010, p.18). Being born around the transition into the new millennium, this generation is also often described as *Millennials*. As per the above defined timeframe, the youngest people entering the labour market as university graduates today are still a part of Generation Y. Therefore, only this age group will be examined in

the following. To tailor recruiting measures to this target group, it first needs to be analyzed.

2.2.3.1 Definition

The term Generation Y was first used in 1993 by a US-American newspaper (cf. Purgal, 2015, p. 11). The letter Y resembles the word *why*, as this generation supposedly brings into question the circumstances of their life and work more than previous generations (Rodeck, 2015, p. 3). Being the first generation that has at least partially grown up around the topic of Digitalization, they are also often called *digital natives* (cf. Purgal, 2015, p. 11). In fact, Rath and Salmen's (2012), definition of Generation Y fully revolves around the topic of technology by stating that Millennials are people born after 1980, who have general access to digital technologies and the Internet and have the know-how to productively use those technologies (cf. Rath & Salmen, 2012, p. 37).

2.2.3.2 Characteristics

Following the child-rich generations of Babyboomers and Generation X, Generation Y differs immensely to its predecessors. In accordance with the discussed demographic change and economic development of the past decades, the generation of Millennials is not only smaller, but also initiated a big change of values. Experts agree on describing the group as self-confident, persistent, and sophisticated (cf. Büning & Marchlewski, 2000, p. 58; Dannhäuser, 2017, p. 27; Rath & Salmen, 2012, p. 38; Rodeck, 2015, p. 13). These character traits are established through their comfortable childhood in politically and financially stable times (cf. Walzer, 2019, p. 58). Respectively, people from this generation also show these features when starting their working life, placing new demands from their employers. Being born into the peak time of globalization, Generation Y is very internationally oriented, linguistically gifted, and interconnected. They therefore like to work in teams and are group oriented. Millennials are familiar with the daily use of technology, the Internet and thus are aware of the advantages of Digitalization (cf. Walzer, 2019, p. 56). They want to work to live and therefore are less career-oriented than the generations before. Generation Y strives for a meaningful life besides their work. Hence, they prioritize flexibility concerning time and place of their occupation as well as a pleasant working atmosphere (cf. Büning & Marchlewski, 2009, p. 59; Rath & Salmen, 2012, pp. 38- 40; Rodeck, 2015, pp. 12-15).

Because of their comfortable childhood, a comparably large percentage of this generation have pursued a path of higher education for their careers. The so-called *high potentials* of Generation Y have high educational levels, qualifications, development potential, and at best even first working experiences in their field. This group of people is especially sought after by businesses, as hopes are they would act as a catalyst for the company concerning digital work and work ethic (cf. Rath & Salmen, 2012, p. 38).

Given the established situation on the current labour market, Millennials have found to be able to ask these demands of their potential employers. As stated by Dannhäuser (2017), firms are struggling to adjust their internal processes, culture, and values to help win over important job candidates from Generation Y (cf. Dannhäuser, 2017, p. 27).

2.3 Active Sourcing as a Chance

Following the changes in society and the labour market, the recruiting department always had to adjust its processes in order to function in respective environments. Companies are always looking for new ideas on how to attract more talent into their business (cf. Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 1). Over the years, many new techniques of talent acquisition have been developed, most of which have maintained their spot in the practice of recruiting to the present day (cf. Fenner, 2020, p. 759; Rohrlack, 2012, p. 77). One recruiting trend which has established itself into the world of human resource management lately is the so-called technique of *active sourcing*. Experts in the fields of HR and recruiting are very much recommending the practice of active sourcing to companies. Dannhäuser (2020) states that modern talent acquisition should not forgo the practice of active sourcing, as it has recently boosted recruiting outcomes for many entities in the "fight for the best talents" (Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 5). It therefore could act as a competitive advantage in tackling the arisen issue of talent shortages.

2.3.1 Definition and Theory of Active Sourcing

Dannhäuser (2020) generally describes active sourcing as a kind of candidate search, which is being done complementary to regular recruiting measures, meaning recruiting and active sourcing are being performed simultaneously (cf. Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 6). Gutmann and Gatzke's (2015) more precise definition states that active sourcing includes "all measures taken to identify promising employees in the external labour market, to

proactively contact them and build a sustainable relationship with them" (Gutmann & Gatzke, 2015, p. 87).

There are fundamental differences between the practice of recruiting and active sourcing, which are well presented by Weitzel et al. (2020) as well as Lorber and Kummer (2020) and Trost (2014). To explain the contrast, a juxtaposition between the two practices is conducted in the following:

As mentioned before, in traditional recruiting, companies publish job ads via various channels to inform people interested in a new job about the open position. Recruiters have to wait passively for people to apply for the vacant position and only then they can interact with them. With active sourcing on the other hand, the process is reversed. People interested in a new position or networking share their profile in respective networks and recruiters take over the task of searching for fitting candidates. They then actively approach them to introduce themselves, their company, and an open position. The candidates can then decide if they are interested in the offer and want to interact with the recruiter (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, p. 3). This inversion of roles is the biggest difference between traditional recruiting and active sourcing and is depicted on the below illustration.
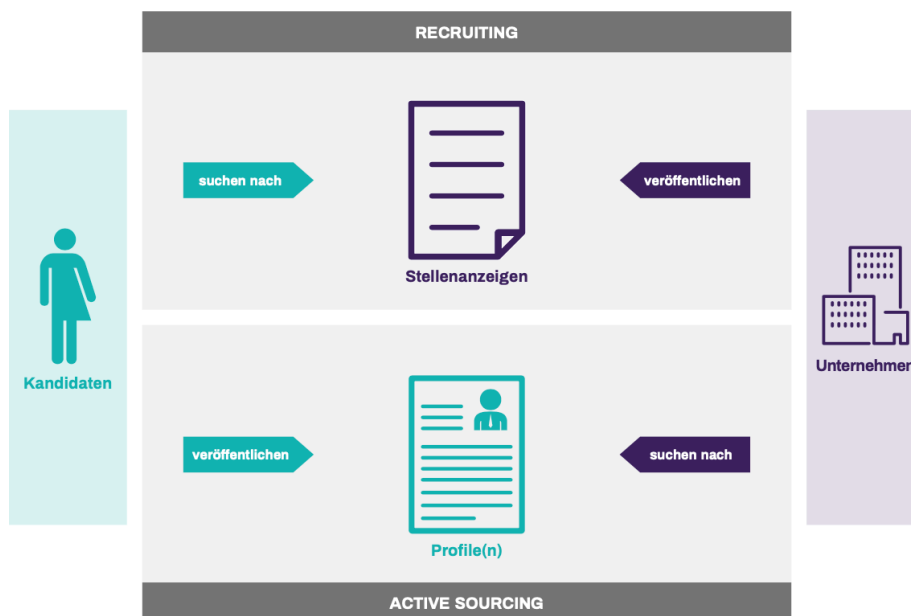

Figure 2: Recruiting vs. Active Sourcing
from Weitzel et al., 2020, p.3

From this difference follow more variances between the two practices. In recruiting, candidates have to be wanting a new job and therefore have to decide to take job searching measures. Meanwhile, active sourcing additionally reaches people who are not looking

for a new job, called passive candidates, to broaden the pool of possible applicants (cf. Braehmer, 2019, p. 26; Mondy & Martocchio, 2016, p. 147). Those not currently looking for a change of position, may still be interested in switching after getting to know the offer. The recruiter therefore has to sell the company and the job in order to make the candidate want to change positions (cf. Trost, 2014, pp. 13, 14).

There is also a difference concerning the timeliness of the two practices. Recruiting is set to process a specific position once it has opened up and find a candidate to fill the position as quickly as possible. A recruiter who practices active sourcing could be searching candidates to fill certain vacant positions as well, but is also supposed build a candidate pool by keeping contact with possible candidates over a longer period of time in order to be able to fill positions opening up in the future (cf. Lorber & Kummer, 2020, p. 124-125; Trost, 2014, p. 8).

Active sourcing therefore builds a network of promising future employees, rather than working with absolute numbers to track the progress, like recruiting does.

Overall, it can be said that while recruiting passively finds employees for a business in a short period of time, active sourcing is a proactive long-term measure of talent acquisition (cf. Lorber & Kummer, 2020, p. 124-125).

The practice of active sourcing follows the three phases of preparing, finding, and winning.

In order to find the best candidates fitting for a position, a thorough *preparation* is key, starting at the job profile creation already. To obtain the correct keywords for the candidate search, the job profile should be in tune with the active sourcer's practice. This way, fitting search keywords can be determined, and candidates can be found. Modern keyword tools can be additionally helpful in this work step.

When the preparation has been completed, the sourcer must *find* possible candidates for the position to be filled. In the finding phase, at first as many fitting talents as possible should be found with the keyword search to ensure a maximum large quantity. The pool of found individuals should be comprehensive and as few as possible candidates should be overlooked. After this step is done, more selective filters can be applied to narrow down the pool of found talent and create a shortlist of the best candidates. While finding talent, the level of preparation taken before directly influences the searching activity. "The better your picture of the matching talent and their online tracks from the preparation

phase, the more directly you will recognize their profile or other online data when you see it" (Dannhäuser & Braehmer, 2020, p. 538).

After great talents have been found, the sourcer's most important task is to *win* them over. Athanas and Wald (2014) state that "the relationship between the candidate and the company is the key to shaping a positive candidate experience" within the application process (cf. Athanas & Wald, 2014, p. 7). Arousing interest through the first contact is extremely crucial to rail in the candidates and make them want the proposed position. The key in this phase of active sourcing is correct communication (cf. Athanas & Wald, 2014, p. 33). In order for the candidate to feel appreciated and taken seriously, the sourcer must not use prewritten text blocks to send to all candidates, but instead they will have to address each candidate individually. As a minimum, messages should be specified according to the targeted job, include the individual's name, and go into detail about their work experience. After contact has been established, the sourcer must also continue the connection to the candidate by communicating quickly and with manners, up to the point of the candidate expressing their interest in the connection (cf. Dannhäuser & Braehmer, 2020, p. 539).

Phase 1 - Prepare	Phase 2 - Find	Phase 3 - Win
o collection of information about the position	o execution of the sourcing process	o individual conception of a first message to candidate according to their profile
o creation of a job profile for sourcing	o location of fitting candidates	o fast and appreciative communication
o derivation of search words	o screening of candidate profiles	o keeping of contact up to candidate's expression of interest
o decision on used tools and sourcing channels	o creation of a short list of best candidates	

Figure 3: Three Phases of Active Sourcing
          own illustration according to Dannhäuser & Braehmer, 2020, p. 537

2.3.2 Channels of Active Sourcing

Similar to traditional recruiting channels, in existing literature, listings of active sourcing channels also vary drastically, and a complete list of channels is difficult to attain. Therefore, the following list does not claim to be comprehensive.

Generally, active sourcing can be conducted both offline and online (cf. Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 11). While offline channels of active sourcing are still being used today,

electronic methods of active sourcing have quickly taken over in the past years, due to the fast advancement of Digitalization. Therefore, those will also be the focus of this research.

One of the first ways to actively approach individuals about a new job was through the work of *headhunters*. Headhunters are externally commissioned intermediaries who are employed by companies to find candidates for specifically hard to fill positions, mostly using their personal talent pools. Similar to the work of headhunters is that of *recruitment agencies*. While they are also externally contracted to find new hires, they are based broader to cover a larger variety of positions to fill. While headhunters and recruitment agencies are often very effective, their commission is also very costly. Hence, their service cannot usually be used for many vacant positions but only to find higher-level candidates (cf. Dannhäuser, 2020, p.8).

With active sourcing having become more popular over the past years, more and more companies shift their active sourcing inhouse and have the recruiters take over the job of a sourcer as well. *Recruiters* can either use their own *network* or the company's *talent pool* to source from. Candidates could then be contacted via phone call or e-mail. Compared to the work of headhunters, active sourcing from in-house saves costs and also broadens the range of positions that can be sourced.

A company's presence at *career fairs* cannot only be used to carry out personnel marketing, but also to approach interesting fair visitors in person and make use of the short response time. Some career fairs are tailored to specifically target young talent before they enter the labour market. Firms can participate in *university career events* to introduce and sell themselves to attendees. Sourcers can directly offer certain positions to fitting candidates and exchange contacts to start the application process. As mentioned before, students are considered to be a promising target group, as they are not yet situated in work life and therefore are open to opportunities coming their way. Through this sourcing channel, internship spots as well as permanent positions can be filled. If the fair or university event is held virtually, it would be accessible to even more potential hires, as people is various locations could attend (cf. Cascio, 2019, pp. 221-224; Dessain & Zeuch, 2016, p. 84).

A larger audience is also the advantage of all other online channels for active sourcing. Nowadays, individuals share substantial amounts of private information online, which the human resources department can turn into an advantage for themselves. From reviewing

people's profiles, sourcers can learn about their personality, general aptitude, academic level, job experiences, linguistic skills et cetera (cf. Purvis, 2016, p. 61). Recruiters can easily filter for certain buzzwords which fit the profile of the job having to be filled. People who use those words on their profiles stating their work experience will then appear in the recruiter's search (cf. Bärmann, 2012, p. 14).

However, while there are many ways for individuals to search for jobs online on their own, not all of those channels can be used for active sourcing, as sourcers can only build contact with candidates on some platforms. For example, the traditional recruiting channels of digital job boards, company websites and search engines have no option of interaction for the sourcers. It therefore is crucial to make the most use out of the platforms, on which interaction is possible for both, the talent, and the recruiter. Those are *social media networks*- such as Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter- on the one hand, and *digital career networks*- such as LinkedIn, and Xing- on the other hand. Some digital job boards and governmental labour agencies provide the option for individuals to sign up for an internal *resume database*, through which recruiters can also build contact.

One active sourcing channel, which is difficult to influence, but has been becoming more important recently, is *referrals through personal connections*. Individuals being recommended to an employer by acquaintances are often preferred by recruiters. However, there is little work for the recruiter to be done concerning sourcing (cf. Moll, 2016, p. 93).

2.3.3 Latest Performance of the Active Sourcing Channels

In the following, the latest performance of the above-mentioned active sourcing channels is stated. The displayed information is based on the findings of the yearly conducted case study named *Recruiting Trends*, carried out by the Centre of Human Resource Information Systems (CHRIS) on behalf of Monster Ltd. More specifically, the sub-category of *Social Recruiting and Active Sourcing* was used as a primary source for this research. The study performs a juxtaposition of active sourcing measures taken by Germany's 1000 biggest companies as well as 3.500 candidates' views and behaviors concerning active sourcing (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, p. 2). The latest study of this series was published in 2020, highlighting findings from 2019. It is therefore to point out that any and all impact which the Covid-19 pandemic may have had on labour and specifically the topic of active sourcing have not yet been considered in the following findings.

Above all, companies and candidates were asked which channels they use to carry out active sourcing measures or respectively to be seen by firms. In 2019, companies' top five active sourcing channels were university career events, career fairs, digital career networks, talent pools and recruiters' own networks in this order. Almost one quarter of open positions were looking to be filled actively through university events as well as career fairs. While career networks placed closely after, the usage of talent pools and recruiter networks was lower at only 18% and roughly 15%. Hence, it becomes quite clear, which channels are preferred by companies to carry out active sourcing measures. Accordingly to the effort put into the top five channels of active sourcing, the amount of actual new hires is allocated. While university events compile the most recruits and recruiters' own networks compile the least, all of the top five channels lay quite close to each other with almost identical results of hiring numbers (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, pp. 7, 10)

Meanwhile, the channels most often used by candidates to be seen by companies differ considerably from the companies' top five active sourcing channels. More than half of the candidates make use of personal referrals to be contacted by a firm. Having stated that Xing and LinkedIn have become considerably more important for their job search within the past five years, also half of the asked candidates hope to be seen by companies through their profiles in digital career networks. Candidates also often sign up for a resume database in the digital job boards in which they are looking for positions themselves. Less often, they sign up to be found through a resume database in the governmental labour agency or recruitment agencies (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, pp. 8, 26).
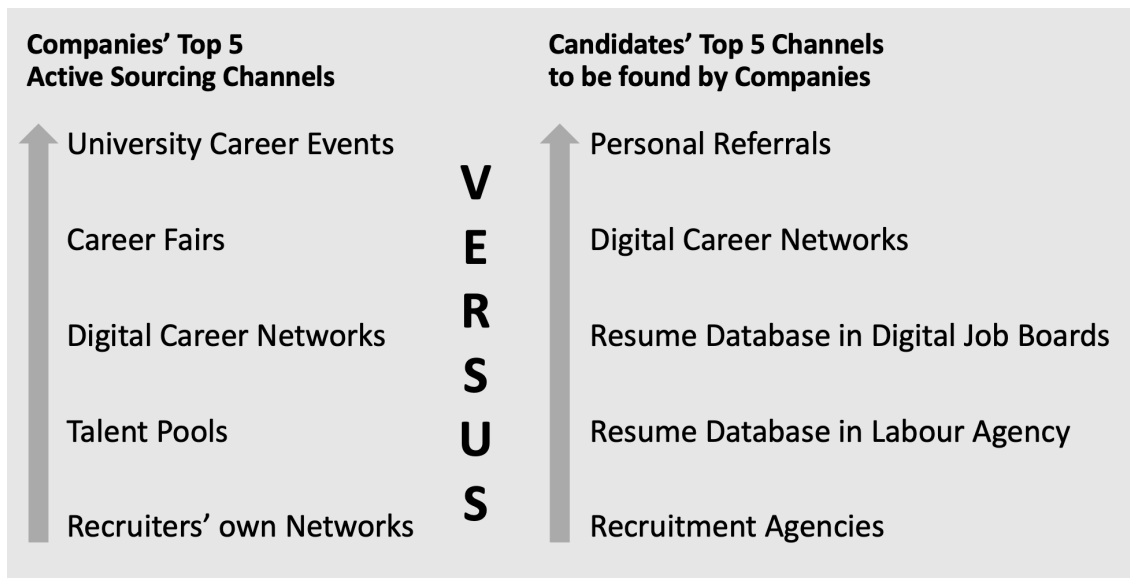
Companies' Top 5 Active Sourcing Channels		Candidates' Top 5 Channels to be found by Companies
University Career Events	**V**	Personal Referrals
Career Fairs	**E**	Digital Career Networks
Digital Career Networks	**R** **S**	Resume Database in Digital Job Boards
Talent Pools	**U**	Resume Database in Labour Agency
Recruiters' own Networks	**S**	Recruitment Agencies

Figure 4: Companies' Top 5 Active Sourcing Channels versus Candidates' most used
Channels
own illustration according to Weitzel et at., 2020, pp. 7-8

The consulted companies were further asked about the received rate of response after reaching out directly to candidates. Although around 28% of the candidates replied positively, a far greater quantity of 71% replied negatively (21%) or did not reply at all (51%). Two of the largest reasons for this response rate given by the candidates were that the inquiries did not match their academic profile or that the requests are standardized and contain no personal references (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, pp. 16, 20).

The CHRIS Study generally found out that in 2019, only one out of seven recent hires was generated through active sourcing measures, leaving 86% of new employees to still be generated through regular recruiting measures (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, p.10). This development is being confirmed by a more recent study from early 2022 performed by the Leibniz Institute for Economic Research at the University of Munich (IFO), according to which only 14% of the surveyed human resources managers see a high significance of active sourcing for staffing measures (cf. Freuding & Garnitz, 2022).

A brief analysis of the displayed data suggests that the main reasons for this rather low outcome are the non-conformity of the sourcing channels used by companies with the channels used by candidates as well as the insufficiently written and sent out direct approaches to the candidates.

Nevertheless, two out of ten queried candidates stated that they had changed their last job after having been contacted by a company even though they were not actively searching for a new position (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, p. 17).

This can lead to the assumption that if the active sourcing measures would be adjusted and improved by using the available knowledge about candidates, potentially more people could be drawn in and eventually be hired through the work of active sourcers.

It could be speculated that the push towards Digitalization in the work force during the pandemic has swapped over into the department of recruiting as well, as both companies and candidates may be more interested in searching for a job online instead of attending in-person events. For the future, it therefore would be recommendable for companies to shift the focus even more onto active sourcing channels which can be carried out digitally instead of personally, just like the preferred channels of candidates already indicated in 2019. The IFO study describes the beginning of such a shift in importance of sourcing channels. According to the interviewed managers, their focus moved away slightly from career fairs and university events and went more towards digital career networks as well as social media networks (cf. Freuding & Garnitz, 2022).

2.3.4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Active Sourcing

Advantages

HR experts have been predicting multiple advantages for companies making use of the active sourcing approach. The initial purpose and possibly the biggest chance of using active sourcing is an extended reach of the target group. With active sourcing, potential candidates expand from those who are actively searching for a new position themselves over to passive candidates who are not currently looking to switch employers but may become interested in a future change when hearing about a position from a company (cf. Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 80; Braehmer, 2019, p. 26). While in 2013, the practice of active sourcing was fairly new and small-ranged compared to present time, a study of the Institute of Competitive Recruiting even then concluded that almost 40% of the consulted companies reached a higher quantity of candidates by using active sourcing (cf. Dannhäuser, 2014, p. 15). Not only can active sourcing reach a larger amount of people in the direct environment of the company, but also the search radius can be widened immensely when online sourcing measures are being used. Globally operating companies

could make use of international talent, to fill the lack of skilled workers in the home market.

Besides the quantitative advantage that comes with active sourcing, there can also be qualitative benefits drawn, as recruiters do not have to rely solely on the people who actively apply for a position by themselves and hope for some of those to have the fitting experience. Instead, recruiters can independently pre-filter fitting candidates and therefore have control over the quality of candidates (cf. Braehmer, 2019, p. 233). The same 2013 study of the Institute of Competitive Recruiting also revealed that over 30% of the consulted companies recorded higher quality candidates through active sourcing (cf. Dannhäuser, 2014, p. 15).

Active sourcing also poses a great chance for small and medium-sized enterprises to gain job candidates. When a company's name is rather unknown, individuals looking for jobs may not come across their vacant positions or may quickly overlook them. Through building direct contact with candidates, recruiters can catch their attention better. A personal approach may make them feel valued and become interested in the company, even when they hadn't heard of it before. Active sourcing therefore gives smaller companies the opportunity to keep up with the competition concerning new recruits (cf. Gross, 2021).

Lastly, active sourcing also gives companies the ability to build a strategic long-term network for personnel recruitment. When candidates are not available at the moment, sourcers can keep contact with them through the online sourcing channels and build a network of possible future candidates. Over time, an inhouse talent pool is acquired and can help prevent a development of skilled worker shortage within the company. Ultimately, through the use of the talent pool, the company can also save time when contacting candidates again, as they have already been deemed qualified in the past. Additionally, expensive commissions of headhunters and recruiting agencies can be bypassed by making use of the internal talent pool, which can also reduce costs for the company (cf. Braehmer, 2019, p. 233).

Disadvantages

On the other hand, active sourcing can also pose some disadvantages under certain circumstances. While the use of a built-up talent pool can save a company time and cost, the preparation and setup of the pool is a very lengthy procedure consuming a lot of labour and therefore also money. The time needed to research, select and approach candidates in

the beginning stages of building the talent pool, as well as to maintain the built candidate pool should not be underestimated. It therefore takes commitment to the goal of building a network before it pays off. Companies should evaluate their resources before taking on this method of recruiting (cf. Trost, 2014, p. 13; Xing, n.d., p. 8).

It also takes a high level of knowledge in the field of active sourcing to run it successfully. Recruiters have to be trained and prepared to take on the task of a sourcer and be able to operate a search tool correctly. Filters must be set correctly to ensure an all-encompassing search and not circumvent some potential candidates (cf. Braehmer, 2019, p. 265.)

For active sourcing to be possible, sourcers also depend on candidates' profiles and information to be up to date and complete (cf. Rath & Salmen, 2012, p. 114). If individuals do not maintain their academic path online, there is no way the sourcer will find the profile or be interested in building contact.

Even when found and contacted, there is always a risk that individuals may dislike the sourcer's active approach. Therefore, sourcers must expect to receive a low response rate, like stated in the CHRIS study before. Those unsuccessful contact attempts will again use up time and money. The dislike of direct messages can be caused by companies sending out standardized unpersonal messages to candidates, or as a result of a wrongly filtered search inquiries, they can also be unfitting with candidates' academic profiles. With active sourcing recently becoming a more and more popular recruitment method, the amount of contact inquiries has also risen. In the CHRIS study, one out of ten surveyed candidates have stated that they are annoyed by being contacted by too many companies (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020, p. 16, 20).

While the disadvantages are to be taken seriously when conducting active sourcing measures, some of those risks can be minimized in order for the advantages to predominate. As stated before, thorough preparation is key for active sourcing. Sufficient training for sourcers and effort put into the first approach can significantly affect the candidates' perception of the active sourcing measures taken and final outcome.

2.3.5 Tailoring Active Sourcing to University Graduates

This particular thesis has the purpose of connecting the subject area of active sourcing as part of recruiting with the target group of university graduates. As learned before, an essential way to lower the risk of the active approach not working is tailoring it to the targeted audience by trying to understand them (cf. Rohrlack, 2012, p. 77). Investigating

their handling of job search, digital use, interpersonal connections and values may help the sourcer to see the process from their point of view and to develop a targeting strategy specialized to the group. (cf. Purvis, 2016, p. 68; Walzer, 2019, p. 92). Like said by Dannhäuser and Braehmer (2019), an appreciative communication is important for the candidates to feel valued. Purvis (2016) takes this one step further and says to treat the candidate like customers, as the sourcer is essentially trying to sell the position and their company to them. He proceeds by stating that "digital recruiting offers an overwhelming choice in opportunities. Which social media channel? What applicant tracking system? Job boards or referrals? Before embarking on any implementation of any one component, paint the big picture and agree on an overall strategy". (Purvis, 2016, p.68).

With the need for customization of active sourcing for university graduates in mind, the following study was carried out.

3. Empirical Study

3.1 Research Method

3.1.1 Research Design

As the purpose of this thesis is to determine the relevance of active sourcing in the recruitment of university graduates, the results of this research are supposed to provide an insight into the examined group's perceptions of the topic. To gather findings representative of the whole group of university graduates, the best fitting research approach for this study is of a quantitative nature.

For this specific research, the use of a quantitative approach posed multiple advantages. In quantitative research, a sample of a group is being researched, which depicts a reduced image of the group and therefore findings obtained in the research of the sample can represent the whole group. As the collection of findings about a specific group fits the purpose of this research exactly, this approach was chosen. Additionally, as the findings of a quantitative study are standardized, they can be compared nicely and conclusions about the target group can be drawn. Lastly, the use of quantitative sampling usually comes at a lower cost than other research methods and therefore fit the scope of this research well (cf. Döring & Bortz, 2016, p. 184).

The research was designed as a mono-method, with only one technique of data collection being used (cf. Döring & Bortz, 2016, p. 184). To study the group of university graduates,

a self-completed questionnaire was designed (cf. Saunders et al., 2019, pp. 505). As the target group is widely known to be tech-savvy, using the Internet as a channel of distribution seemed fitting.

3.1.2 Sampling

For the purpose of this thesis, the target group of university graduates was defined to consist of individuals who had obtained their degree within the last two years (often also referred to as young professionals) as well as individuals who are on their way to completing their degree, as both of these groups are being targeted by active sourcers.

While the research was based in Germany, the practice of active sourcing and the demand for new skilled professionals are international topics as well. The questionnaire was therefore written in the English language and open for participants of all countries.

Due to the target group comprising only a very specific educational status, the intended sample size was initially set rather small, reaching from around 50 to 70 participants. To reach as many participants as possible, the survey was distributed through various channels. These include e-mails, direct messages, social media, and private messages as well as groups in career networks. The survey was also posted on the website *SurveyCycle*, on which participants for surveys can be found. Some participants also further distributed the questionnaire. Thus, the sampling techniques of *non-probability convenience* sampling and *snowballing* were used for this research. Non-probability sampling is used when the sample selection is based on the researcher's perspective, which was the case for the researcher of this study, as well as for the participants further spreading the survey (cf. Saunders et al., 2019, p. 223; Wolf et al., 2016, p.106). Snowball sampling "is suitable for populations [...] whose members are well networked among themselves. Here, individual members of the population are asked to recruit further subjects via their personal social networks" (Döring & Bortz, 2016, p. 308). As both of these techniques lead to a larger reach of participants and university students indeed are well connected, non-probability sampling and snowball sampling were a viable option of distribution.

3.1.3 Analytical Strategy and Study Hypotheses

The study questionnaire was compiled via *Google Forms*. Data was collected over the span of three weeks in July and August of 2022. It was then analyzed with the help of the statistical software *IBM SPSS* concerning correlations between certain variables.

Before the analysis of the survey findings was performed, multiple hypotheses were established by combining derived literature findings with new aspects concerning the target group of university graduates specific for this research. Hence, the research followed an approach of deductive reasoning, as several hypotheses were developed and tested on the basis of existing literature (cf. Klassen et al., 2012. p. 378).

In accordance with chapter 2.1.2, it will be examined whether the hope of companies to be found online is being fulfilled by candidates on their job search. The following hypothesis was established and can analyzed in the subsequent study:

Hypothesis 1 (H1): Nowadays, university graduates commonly use digital websites for their job search.

Furthermore, it was determined in chapter 2.2.2 that the current shortage of skilled workers knowingly puts candidates in the fortunate position to be able to make claims and be selective for their job wishes and future employers. Also, from chapter 2.2.3, it can be suspected that due to being very familiar with technology in their everyday life, university graduates prefer to be approached online by recruiters than otherwise. From those occurrences, the following hypotheses can be tested for the target group:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): University graduates have specific expectations as to how recruiters can catch their interest.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): University graduates prefer digital sourcing approaches over other channels.

Like said in chapter 2.3.2, the intended target group is usually not set in their career and is often open to opportunities coming their way. This statement will be reviewed with the next hypothesis:

 Hypothesis 4 (H4): University graduates are open to new job opportunities.

To find out whether the whole group of university graduates is a good target for active sourcers, another analysis shall be conducted concerning potential candidates' field of study by using the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5 (H5): The respondent's professional online appearance is dependent on their field of study.

Lastly, a person's dissatisfaction in their current job suggests that they may be open towards finding a new position no matter through which channel. To test this statement associated for the practice of active sourcing, the following hypothesis shall be assessed:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): There is a correlation between the candidates' satisfaction in their current job and their attitude towards active sourcing.

On the basis of those hypotheses, a structured examination of the collected data was possible. For mathematical examination, approximate significance (P) and contingency coefficient (C) were calculated, when possible. For the purpose of showing significance in the calculations, P would have to be lower than 0.05. The contingency coefficient would show whether variables are dependent or independent of each other. If C is close to zero, the variables are independent of each other. If C is away from zero, is shows dependence of the two variables (cf. Tattao, 2007, p. 242).

3.1.4 Questionnaire

The construction of the questionnaire is largely inspired by the findings of the CHRIS study (cf. Weitzel et al., 2020). However, the CHRIS study generally compares company's actions concerning active sourcing with those of candidates of all ages and academic backgrounds. The questionnaire for this study on the other hand is specifically aimed at the candidate side and additionally solely for the target group of university graduates. The questions are therefore designed to go more into detail than the CHRIS study, in order to generate findings as accurate as possible about the target group and their actions and attitude concerning active sourcing.

In the beginning of the questionnaire, all participants had to answer three basic demographic questions about their age, gender identity, and country of residence. Afterwards, the questionnaire was divided into multiple sub-sections. Depending on their answers given in certain questions, participants were directed to different strains of questions following. On one hand, this ensured that only individuals of the target group would be represented in the sample. On the other hand, the path of questions could be specifically filtered to the participants' circumstances.

The next question then asked the participants, whether they already completed or are currently completing a university degree as part of their academic career. Participants, who stated, that they already completed their degree, were then asked in which field they obtained it as well as how long they have been working since finishing their studies. To match the research specifically to the target group, in this question, only individuals who stated they have been working for less than two years were invited to continue the questionnaire. Accordingly, participants who stated that they are currently on their way of completing their university degree, were also asked which field they are getting their degree in. Additionally, the students were asked whether they are working in their field of study besides studying. Both, the participants working after having obtained their degree, and students working while studying, were then asked how satisfied they are with their current occupation.

All remaining participants were next asked more specific questions about their professional life, like what channels they use when looking for a job, whether they are interested in working for another employer in the near future and whether they are actively searching for a new job at the moment. The following questions aimed to find out whether the participants have a well maintained and up to date profile in a digital career network, and whether they have ever been approached by a recruiter in a digital career network about a new position. If the latter had been the case, three subsequent additional questions about the interaction with the recruiter were asked to find out whether the suggested position(s) fit the participant's academic profile, whether the approach(es) seemed serious, and whether the participants interacted with the recruiter(s). In a following open question, participants could share more details about their experience(s) of being actively approached about a job.

After this section of the questionnaire, again all of the remaining participants were asked under what circumstances they would interact with recruiters actively approaching them and whether they would prefer a new position if approached directly. The following two questions first asked through which channel the participants would take an active approach seriously, and then asked which channel they would prefer being approached through. Lastly, the participants were requested to rank their overall attitude towards being approached actively about a job, before they could share any additional comments regarding the active candidate approach in a last open question.

A complete list of the survey questions can be found in appendix 1.

3.2 Study Results

Overall, a sample size of 96 questionnaires was reached, therefore exceeding the initially intended sample size by 26. To achieve complete data sets, all questions were to be filled out obligatorily. Hence, all 96 questionnaires could generally be utilized for analysis. However, three participants stated that they have been working for more than two years after finishing their studies. As they are not part of the target group, they were not evaluated in this research. This leaves a total of 93 questionnaires to be analyzed.

A complete list of the survey results from the 93 viable questionnaires can be found in appendix 2.

General characteristics of the sample concerning age, gender, and nationality are the following: out of the 93 viable respondents, a vast majority of 68% were part of the age group from 23 to 27 years. As no respondent was under 18 years, the respondent's age ranged from 18 to over 37 years. Out of the sampled individuals 66% were female, and the remaining 34% were male. With 68%, more than two thirds of the surveyed people came from Germany. The other 32% of the respondents come from the six countries of USA, Spain, Finland, UK, France, and Austria. With 23%, the US contributed the second largest nationality represented in the survey. Figure 5 depicts the above findings in absolute numbers of respondents. The respondent group further consisted around 70% of students on their way to obtaining their degree and 30% of graduates who are already working after having graduated.
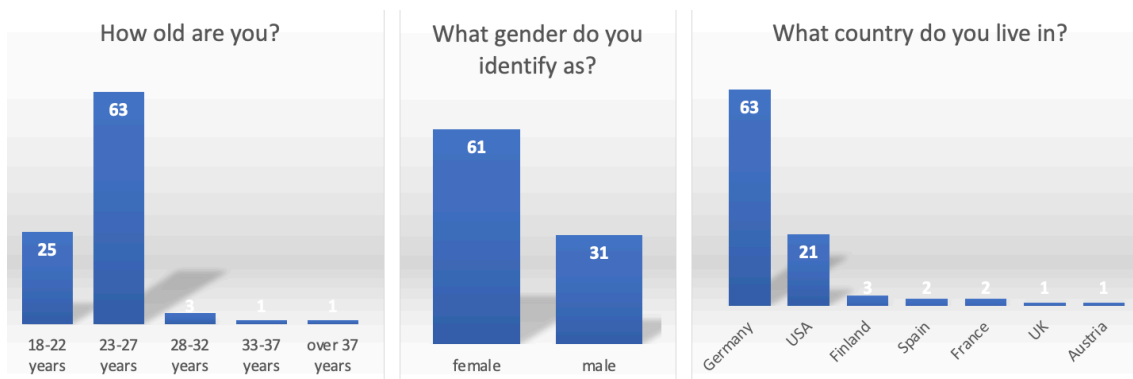

Figure 5: Sample characteristics concerning age, gender, and nationality
own illustration

Furthermore, the six hypotheses established at the beginning have been examined. It is to be pointed out that most of the questions in the questionnaire collected nominal data instead of ordinal variables. While some statistics could be recorded with nominal data, an empirical verification of the results was only partially possible. Most of the hypotheses

are therefore investigated by interpreting certain questions of the questionnaire and without descriptive calculations. The hypotheses reached the following outcomes.

3.2.1 Results for Hypothesis 1

Firstly, it was hypothesized that *nowadays, university graduates commonly use digital websites for their job search.* To comment on this hypothesis, the results for the question "When looking for a new job, which of these channels do you use" were viewed. As can be seen in figure 6, the respondees use multiple of the listed channel options. Out of the ten options listed, five stand out strongly from the rest. With 68.8%, the most used channel is company websites, closely followed by digital career networks (65.6%), search engines (62.4%), and digital job boards (58.1%). While the fifth most used channel is personal connections (with 54.8%), the first four channels are all digital platforms, which proves this first hypothesis about the target group to be true.
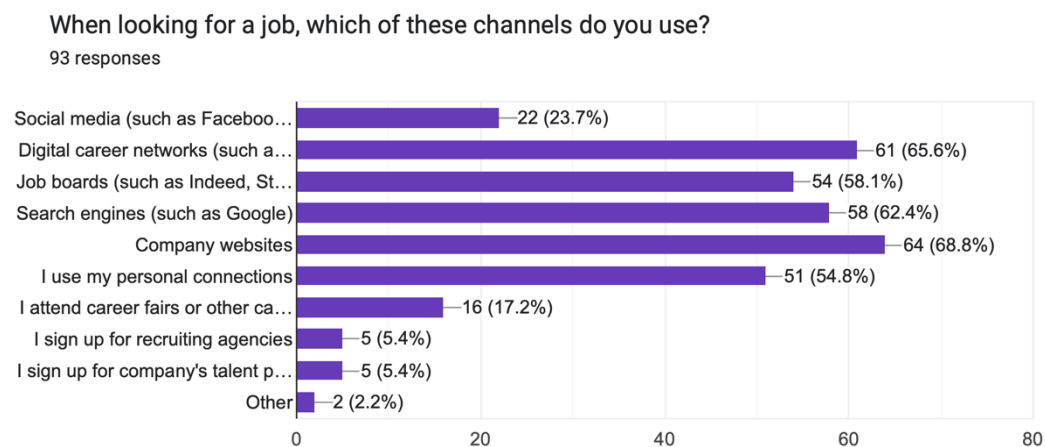
When looking for a job, which of these channels do you use?
93 responses

Figure 6: Respondents' preferred channels for job search
own illustration

3.2.2 Results for Hypothesis 2

The second hypothesis to be analyzed states that *university graduates have specific expectations as to how recruiters can catch their interest*. The questions "What would the recruiter's first approach to you have to include to catch your interest?" and "Under what circumstances would you interact with recruiters, who actively approach you?" can be referred to for the analysis of this hypothesis. The participants' answers to the first of the above questions show one response option to stand out from the others: university graduates are therefore most interested in getting a detailed description of the job they are

28

being approached about. 90.3% of the respondents want to be informed about prerequisites and tasks of the position. Meanwhile, other contents of the recruiter's first approach have a similar and less high importance to the respondents. Those range from 44.1% for the name and contact details of the recruiter being given, over 50.5% for a depiction of non-material job conditions such as working hours and atmosphere and 51.6% for a depiction of material job conditions such as salary and vacation days, up to 55.9% for a customized message including the candidate's personal experience and qualifications. Although those last four criteria are comparably less interesting to the respondents, they still hold a relatively high significance for the target group. Exact findings can be read in figure 7.
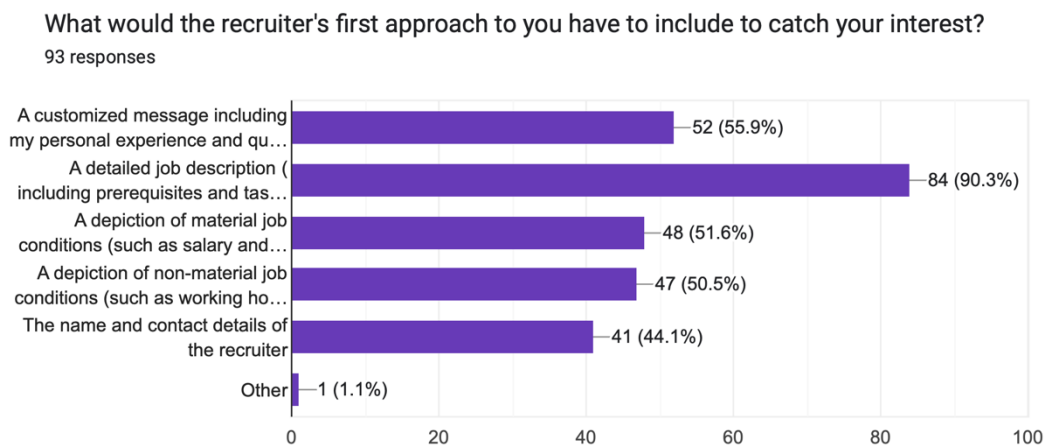
What would the recruiter's first approach to you have to include to catch your interest?
93 responses

A customized message including my personal experience and qu…	52 (55.9%)
A detailed job description (including prerequisites and tas…	84 (90.3%)
A depiction of material job conditions (such as salary and…	48 (51.6%)
A depiction of non-material job conditions (such as working ho…	47 (50.5%)
The name and contact details of the recruiter	41 (44.1%)
Other	1 (1.1%)

Figure 7: Respondents' preferred contents of first approach
own illustration

The other above referenced question gives additional insight into university graduates' expectations for recruiters' approaches. Results of the survey show that 78.5% of the respondents would only interact with recruiters if they liked the described position and also if the company and their product seemed interesting to them. 73.1% of the surveyed university graduates would additionally only interact if the contact request seemed serious. Further off are a good indicated salary with 49.5% and the recruiter's name and contact info with 34.4%. Only around four and three percent respectively of the respondees would not often or never interact with a recruiter's active approach, as shown in figure 8.
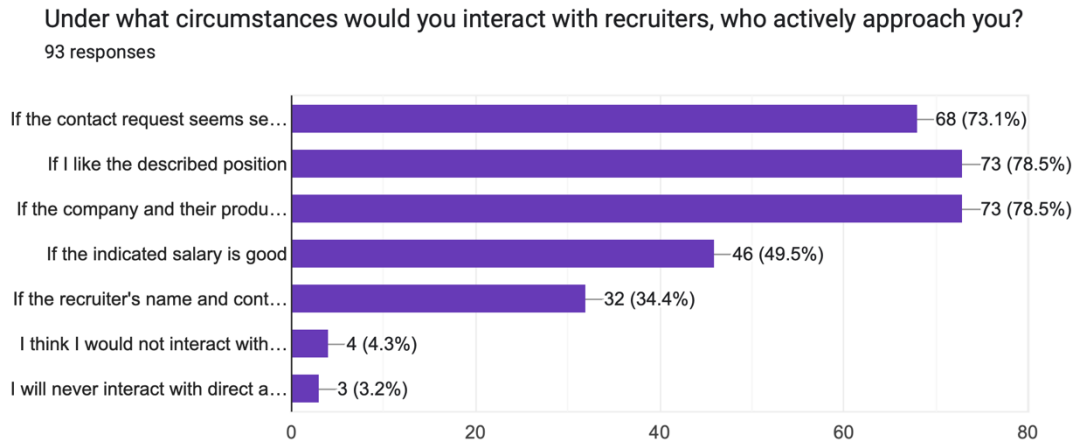
Under what circumstances would you interact with recruiters, who actively approach you?

93 responses

If the contact request seems se…	68 (73.1%)
If I like the described position	73 (78.5%)
If the company and their produ…	73 (78.5%)
If the indicated salary is good	46 (49.5%)
If the recruiter's name and cont…	32 (34.4%)
I think I would not interact with…	4 (4.3%)
I will never interact with direct a…	3 (3.2%)

Figure 8: Respondents' conditions for interaction with recruiters
own illustration

It should be noted that this hypothesis especially cannot be mathematically specified in this thesis. However, the survey results do show that university graduates prefer to be approached by recruiters with the approach containing specific features. Both questions together have shown the most important feature of the contact to be details about the position. The target group also is interested in learning more about the company, while being approached seriously.

3.2.3 Results for Hypothesis 3

The hypothesis *university graduates prefer digital sourcing approaches over other channels* can be answered by analyzing the results of the question "Through which of these channels would you prefer to be approached?". The eight answer possibilities in this question were e-mail, phone, LinkedIn, Xing, at a career fair, Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. By far the two most given answers are two digital channels of e-mail and LinkedIn both with 69.9%. Far less preferred channels are at a career fair, via phone, and Xing, ranging from 21.5% to 30.1%. The social media channels of Facebook, Instagram and Twitter are only preferred by two out of the 93 respondees each. The two non-digital approaching channels in the answer possibilities are situated in the fair middle of the target group's preferences, which means that other answer possibilities of digital approaching channels are being liked as well as disliked by the target group. Therefore, the hypothesis of university graduates preferring all digital sourcing channels over others cannot be generalized. However, it can still be seen clearly that the participants' two

favorite approaching channels of e-mail and LinkedIn are indeed digital, as shown in figure 9.

Through which of these channels would you prefer to be approached?
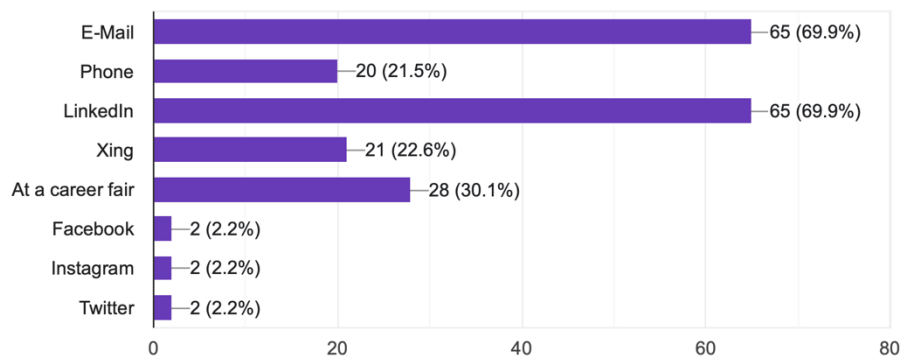93 responses

Figure 9: Respondents' preferred approaching channels
        own illustration

This can be supported by the results to the question "Through which of these channels would you take a direct approach from a recruiter seriously?". The below figure shows that the respondents take the same channels seriously as the ones they prefer. Yet, a comparison of the results to the two questions shows that while students would take approaches through the non-digital channels seriously, they do prefer them less much than the above stated digital channels.

Through which of these channels would you take a direct approach from a recruiter seriously?
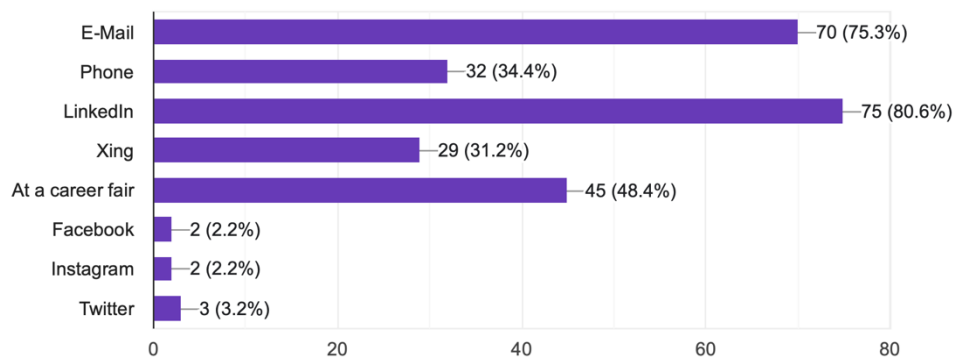93 responses

Figure 10: Approaching channels taken seriously by respondents
        own illustration

Thus, it can be concluded that the hypothesis cannot generally be proven to be true, as university graduates do not prefer all digital sourcing channels over others. However, the

two digital channels of e-mail and LinkedIn can be noted to be the group's favorite channels for active approaches.

3.2.4 Results for Hypothesis 4

Another established hypothesis says that *university graduates are open to new job opportunities*. The survey question "Are you interested in working for another employer in the near future?" can quickly answer this hypothesis.

Figure 12 shows clearly that over three quarters of the respondents would be interested in changing employers soon. The hypothesis can therefore clearly be confirmed.

Are you interested in working for another employer in the near future?
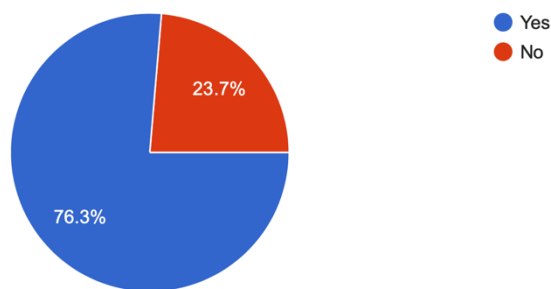93 responses

Figure 12: Respondents' interest in job change
                own illustration

A look at the results of the question "Would you prefer a new position, if you were approached directly by a recruiter rather than having to search for a job by yourself?", seen in figure 13, further supports the findings to the hypothesis by showing that almost 90% of the target group would be open to jobs they are being actively approached about.

Would you prefer a new position, if you were approached directly by a recruiter rather than having to search for a job by yourself?
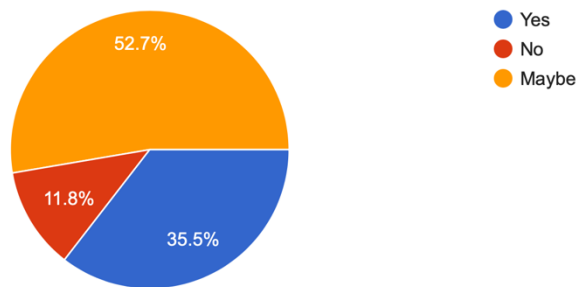
93 responses

Figure 13: Respondents' preference of the active approach
own illustration

3.2.5 Results for Hypothesis 5

It was also hypothesized that *the respondent's professional online appearance is dependent on their field of study*. For testing of this statement, the respondent's field of study and their answer to the question "Do you have a well maintained and up to date profile in a digital career network (such as LinkedIn or Xing)?" were cross examined, at first separately for participants who have already obtained their degree and participants who are still on the way to getting their degree. For the 28 respondents who are working after having obtained their degree already, C shows a value of 0.314. Therefore, a rather low dependence of the field of study and the professional online appearance can be seen for this group. However, as P = 0.254, there is not a high significance to be proven for the dependency. On the other hand, for the 65 respondents who are still studying, C = 0,447 and shows a moderate dependency of the variables with a very high significance of P = 0.006. It therefore can be concluded that while for working participants the hypothesis cannot be proven to be true, it can be for studying participants.

The dependency of the two variables was also viewed in a chart for both- working and studying participants combined. As seen in figure 11, the findings standing out the most were circled in red. It becomes obvious that with 72%, most respondees in the fields of economics, business administration and law commonly have a well-maintained profile in a digital career network. Individuals in computer science also predominantly have an updated profile, at 66%. In other fields, like education and medicine the target group has little to no presence in digital career networks. These findings substantiate the above

calculated dependency of field of study and digital professional presence for the target group as a whole.

Field of study	Number of candidates having a well-maintained profile in a digital career network	Number of candidates having NO well-maintained profile in a digital career network
Art/ Design/Fashion/ Music	0	1
Computer Science	6	3
Economics/ Business Administration/ Law	33	13
Education	0	8
Engineering	4	4
Language/ Cultural Studies	1	0
Medicine/ Health Sciences	0	6
Public Administration	0	1
Social Sciences/ Humanities	3	5
Other	3	2

Figure 11: Dependency of field of study and digital professional presence
own illustration

3.2.6 Results for Hypothesis 6

Lastly, a hypothesis stating that *there is a correlation between the participants' satisfaction in their current job and their attitude towards active sourcing* was made. The correlation was again reviewed separately for working candidates and studying candidates. For respondents who are working already, a medium high correlation of $C = 0.477$ was calculated with a low significance of $P = 0.512$. The hypothesis therefore could not be validated for this group. For the group of students, again a medium high correlation of the variables was determined with $C = 0.502$. Though the significance of the correlation was lower for this group, with $P = 0.155$ there is still no significance to be proven. It can therefore be concluded that this hypothesis is wrong.

3.2.7 Additional Findings

Besides the findings to the hypotheses, some additional data has been acquired about the target group as well.

For example, looking at the target group's current job satisfaction gives good implications for the practice of active sourcing. Overall, 55.2% of the respondents have stated that they are (very) satisfied with their current position, which leaves almost half of the respondents (44.8%) to feel neutral or dissatisfied in their job.

The high amount of people who are unhappy in their current job explains the overwhelmingly positive answers (76.3%) to the question whether the participants are interested in working for another employer in the near future. Contrary to this finding however, 74.2% of the target group are not currently searching actively for a new job.

Of the 93 respondents, 53.8% have a well-maintained and updated profile in a digital career network. Half of those (50.5%) have been actively approached by a recruiter in those networks before. Almost 30% of the approached candidates stated that the approaches did not fit their academic profile and an additional 21.3% of the candidates stated that only some of the approaches did fit their profile. This makes less than half of the approaches be placed to fitting candidates. Also, almost half of the candidates felt that the approaches did not seem serious. Therefore, numbers of candidates interacting with the recruiters are quite mixed (38.3% did interact, 36.2% did not interact, 25.5% only interacted sometimes).

Some of these findings have been supported by the statements gathered in the two open questions of the survey. The issue of approaches oftentimes not fitting the candidate's profile seems to be caused by the fact that the target group of university students do not yet have much working experience listed in their profiles. "With just of couple of jobs so far, it is not possible yet to see a path into the direction I want to go into. Often the advertised jobs are therefore not fitting my interests at the moment". One respondent was "approached by one company which suggested low-level-entry roles, which were not suitable for me". Another respondent mentioned that they were "texted about an internship or working student position but I search for a full-time job". It therefore can be said that "this approach might work well, if the people targeted want to stay within their field of work. However, recruiters only ever search for experience within the same field, so you don't get offered positions that would be interesting and new to you".

Another general issue with active approaches is caused by impersonal messages through "copy + paste", as "they just send you their default 'Your background fits this position so well' email without looking at your experience level after university".

Some of the respondents stated that they "don't have good experiences with recruiters in general". Here, keeping long-term contact with candidates for future hiring seems to be problematic, as "they just ghosted me".

Nevertheless, there have also been positive attitudes stated about active sourcing. According to the answers, the target group would prefer a new position if approached

directly by a recruiter, as "you directly feel valued from the recruiter, and therefore have a more positive approach to the person, the job description etc. since someone is showing interest in you". "Especially in the early stage of my career it is cool for my self-esteem to be approached by companies". One respondent even stated, "I have often been contacted by recruiters via Xing and have also accepted a new job as a result of that".

The open answers collected grant a small insight into positive as well as negative experiences of the target group with active sourcing measures. Though these cannot be generalized for the whole sample, multiple of these statements have been similar to each other and therefore are indicated to happen frequently.

4. Recommendations for Actively Sourcing University Graduates

As retrieved before, in order for the practice of active sourcing to be successful, it is crucial to fit the process to the individuals targeted (cf. Dannhäuser & Braehmer, 2020, p. 539). The performed study has revealed great insight into the target group of university graduates and their perception of active sourcing measures. A status quo of active sourcing within the group has been determined, on the basis of which recommendations can now be derived for companies' to further adjust their practices to the target group in the future.

There generally seem to be good preconditions of targeting university graduates through active sourcing measures. Out of the respondents who are currently still studying, 60 % are gaining professional experiences by working in their field besides studying already. Not being settled in their work life but still having relevant skills, this makes them a viable target for companies to introduce themselves to the candidates (cf. Cascio, 2019, pp. 221-224).

With almost half of the respondents not being satisfied in their jobs and over three quarters of the group being interested in a job change, there seems to be a large audience which may become interested in a new position advertised to them. As almost three quarters of the respondents are not currently actively searching for a new position, this portion of the group can clearly be recognized as passive candidates (cf. Braehmer, 2019, p. 29-36). Since targeting passive candidates and as a result broadening the talent pool is one of the biggest advantages of active sourcing, it would be very recommendable for companies to include university graduates in their active sourcing measures.

It was to be assumed that this group of young individuals generally frequently uses the Internet for their job search due to their upbringing in the digital era. Nevertheless, it could be found out that only around half of the respondents have a profile in a digital career network which is maintained enough to be usable for active sourcers. It was revealed that the candidates having or not having such profile differs depending on their field of work. On the one hand, it was found out that individuals working in the public service sector do not tend to be present digitally. Hence, it is not recommendable to actively source university graduates for positions in medicine and education. On the other hand, individuals working in the free economy seem to have a larger digital presence. Though, it must be specified that also not all respondents who work in this field are a good target for active sourcing. It was mostly candidates coming from an office environment who frequently use digital career networks. It therefore can be recommended to actively source university graduates in fields especially such as computer science, business, law, and engineering, as those can be best reached through online channels.

The analysis of the survey results also ends in a recommendation of channels through which university graduates should be sourced, as those should match the group's preferred channels for maximum success. By far, the two channels, which firms should use for sourcing activities the most, are e-mail and LinkedIn. It is to be highlighted that the continuously low results for the usage of Xing compared to LinkedIn can be explained by the participation of international respondents in the survey. Xing is only commonly used in the *DACH region* and therefore only gained answers from respondents in this area, while LinkedIn is internationally known and thus all participants could interact with this answer choice. It can consequently be concluded that if the recruiter is sourcing candidates for the DACH region, Xing is also a recommendable platform to be used. If the firm has enough resources for additional sourcing channels, it would also be recommendable to be present at a career fair or university career event to reach the target group in person.

As the survey also revealed that university graduates see several problems with how firms are currently approaching them, there can be derived numerus recommendations on how companies should better those practices to make them more yielding. The goal for the recruiter should be to work on increasing the currently low response rate of contacted candidates to generate a higher success rate after all. To reach this goal, adjustments of their practices must be made:

Firstly, the number of respondents not (only) receiving serious job inquiries, must drastically be decreased. This can be achieved in two ways. On one hand, the choice of appropriate channels is directly connected to this point as well. On the other hand, a suitable way of communication has to be chosen.

Secondly, the recruiter must place the approaches more specifically, in order to also increase the approach's fit to the candidate's academic profile, like said in the active sourcing *Phase 2 – Find*, by Dannhäuser & Braehmer (cf. 2020, p. 537). If this step is being rushed or generalized and the approach is wrongly placed, the candidate will again not feel taken seriously, which will circle back to the above explained issue of too many unserious approaches.

Thirdly, the research also leads to the strong recommendation of individualization, matching *Phase – 3 Win* by Dannhäuser & Braehmer (cf. 2020, p. 537). It was found out clearly through the survey, which content university graduates expect in a direct job approach. When reaching out to candidates, sourcers should follow the group's stated preferences of a serious and customized message including an interesting description of the prerequisites and tasks, as well as conditions of the position in question. Understanding the target group's inclinations will again increase the success rate of active sourcing for university graduates.

It is strongly suggested for companies and their recruiters who already perform active sourcing to follow the above compiled recommendations, in order for the target group to be interested and the process to be successful. If the recommendations are not followed, the potential of the proactive form of recruiting cannot be reached and the company's resources may be wasted.

Since the potential of actively sourcing university candidates has become clear, it can also be recommended for companies to generally increase their active sourcing measures. As experts and other studies have predicted active sourcing to continue becoming an important pillar of talent acquisition (cf. Dannhäuser, 2020, p. 2; Weitzel et al., 2020, p. 7), it would be advisable for companies with enough resources and a high demand for talent to adapt this tactic before all competitors do so as well.

5. Research Limitations and Future Research

Generally, this study faced limitations concerning financial and timely resources. From those constrictions follow some others.

To begin with, the data gathered in the research was only collected through the mono-method of a questionnaire. Because of this, the reasons behind the gathered data could only be speculated. For the elaboration of explanations for the data, an additional qualitative research method would have had to be used (cf. Saunders et al., 2019, pp. 176, 325).

There are also multiple limitations to the sample. As non-probability convenience sampling was used, the sample layout does not represent the entire examined group (cf. Saunders et al., 2019, p. 296; Wolf et al., 2016, p. 106). This can be seen in the rather homogeneous sample predominantly consisting of females, individuals from Germany, and business students. For a better representation of the target group, more male participants from diverse countries and fields of study would have been needed. Also, the sample size could have been larger with other resources for the study. Though it turned out to be bigger than first anticipated, an even larger sample would have been more representative of the researched group.

Another restriction of the research is its upbringing, as most questions were designed to collect nominal data only. This data could not be well-analyzed mathematically with the SPSS software. Instead, most results were studied through their empirical results. Therefore, the full potential of statistically inspecting the target group could not be reached.

With these limitations in mind, some suggestions for future research on the topic can be given.

To get a broader view of the investigated group, more than one research method can be used. It may be interesting to compare the gathered view of university graduates on active sourcing with experiences of recruiters working in the industry. Those could for example be collected through expert interviews.

If the study is being conducted again, a focus should be put on probability sampling, in order for the sample to be more representative of the whole group (cf. Wolf et al., 2016, p. 323). Additionally, it could be striven for a generally larger sample.

Certainly, the questionnaire would need adjustments concerning the type of questions. For an empirical analysis, it would be crucial to focus on ordinal findings. Then, correlations between variables could be examined, which may increase the learnings taken away from this study.

For future research, it would also be very insightful to make a distinction between respondents of Generation Y and soon-to-be entering Generation Z on the labour market. While these generations are similar in some typical generational characteristics, their use of media and work ethic will vary (cf. Nambiyar, 2014, p. 229). Hence, Generation Z's use and preference of recruiting channels and views on active sourcing may vary from the findings of this research. As recruiters then would again have to adapt their strategies to the new potential target group, new research on job candidates from this generation would be necessary.

6. Conclusion

The goal of this thesis was to examine the relevance of active sourcing for university graduates in modern talent acquisition. The research done as part of this thesis was meant to reflect the group's own views on the topic as a basis to form recommendations for successful sourcing from it. In short, results found that while university students are a suitable group to be targeted by active sourcing, companies must considerably improve their current practices to realize the method's full potential. With this outcome in mind, it can be concluded that there is a high relevance of active sourcing for university graduates in modern talent acquisition.

Future research should soon be targeted towards the next age group entering the labour market. It can then help to further eliminate current deficits in the direct approaching practices and therefore additionally increase the method's relevance.

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1: Questionnaire

Active Sourcing for University Graduates

Dear participant,

As part of my bachelor thesis, I am researching the recruitment of university graduates. More precisely, I want to find out more about the impact of Active Sourcing in modern talent acquisition.

Please take 3 to 5 minutes to complete the following survey and support me in my research.

For the success of the study, it is important that you fill out the questionnaire completely and do not leave out any of the questions. All data is collected anonymously, it cannot be assigned to your person and will be treated strictly confidential.

Thank you for participating!

*Required

1. How old are you? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ under 18 years
   ◯ 18 - 22 years
   ◯ 23 - 27 years
   ◯ 28 - 32 years
   ◯ 33 - 37 years
   ◯ over 37 years

2. What gender do you identify as? *

   Mark only one oval.

   ◯ female
   ◯ male
   ◯ diverse
   ◯ I prefer not to answer

3.   Which country do you live in? *

_____

4.   In your academic career, have you completed a university degree or are you currently completing one?

Mark only one oval.

( ) I have already completed my degree   *Skip to question 5*

( ) I am currently on my way to completing my degree   *Skip to question 8*

( ) I did not go to university and am not planning on going
      Skip to section 2 (Thank you for participating in this questionnaire!)

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire!

As you stated that you did not go to university and are not planning on going, you are not part of the intended target group for this study. Therefore, this is the end of the questionnaire for you.

47

5. In which field of study did you get your degree? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Agricultural and Forestry Science

    ◯ Art / Design / Fashion / Music

    ◯ Computer Science

    ◯ Economics / Business Administration / Law

    ◯ Education

    ◯ Engineering

    ◯ Language / Cultural Sciences

    ◯ Mathematics / Natural Sciences

    ◯ Medicine / Health Sciences

    ◯ Public Administration

    ◯ Social Sciences / Humanities

    ◯ Other

6. How long have you been working since you finished your studies? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ less than two years   *Skip to question 7*

    ◯ more than two years   *Skip to section 4 (Thank you for participating in this questionnaire!)*

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire!	As you stated that you have been working in your job for more than two years since you finished your studies, you are not part of the intended target group for this study. Therefore, this is the end of the questionnaire for you.

7. How satisfied are you with your current occupation? *

    Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
very unsatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	very satisfied

    Skip to question 11

8. Which field of study are you getting your degree in? *

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Agricultural and Forestry Science

    ◯ Art / Design / Fashion / Music

    ◯ Computer Science

    ◯ Economics / Business Administration / Law

    ◯ Education

    ◯ Engineering

    ◯ Language / Cultural Sciences

    ◯ Mathematics / Natural Sciences

    ◯ Medicine / Health Sciences

    ◯ Public Administration

    ◯ Social Sciences / Humanities

    ◯ Other

9. Besides studying, are you working in your field of study already? (e.g. when studying law, are you working part time in a law firm besides your studies to gain experience?)

    Mark only one oval.

    ◯ Yes   *Skip to question 10*

    ◯ No   *Skip to question 11*

49

10. How satisfied are you with your current occupation? *

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
very unsatisfied	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	very satisfied

Skip to question 11

11. When looking for a job, which of these channels do you use? *

Tick all that apply.

☐ Social media (such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)
☐ Digital career networks (such as LinkedIn, Xing)
☐ Job boards (such as Indeed, StepStone)
☐ Search engines (such as Google)
☐ Company websites
☐ I use my personal connections
☐ I attend career fairs or other career events (in person and online)
☐ I sign up for recruiting agencies
☐ I sign up for company's talent pools
☐ Other

12. Are you interested in working for another employer in the near future? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes
◯ No

50

13. At the moment, are you actively searching for a new job? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

14. Do you have a well maintained and up to date profile in a digital career network (such as LinkedIn or Xing)?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

15. Have you ever been actively approached by a recruiter in a digital career network (such as LinkedIn or Xing) about a position in another company?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No   *Skip to question 20*

16. Did the job(s) which the recruiter(s) suggested to you fit your academic profile well? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Some did

51

17.   Did the approach(es) seem serious to you? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Some did

18.   Did you interact with the recruiter(s)? *

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes

◯ No

◯ Sometimes

19.   If you would like to share more details about your personal experience(s) of being actively approached about a job, please use the following space to share them:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

52

20.   Under what circumstances would you interact with recruiters, who actively approach you?

Tick all that apply.

☐ If the contact request seems serious
☐ If I like the described position
☐ If the company and their product/service are interesting to me
☐ If the indicated salary is good
☐ If the recruiter's name and contact details are given
☐ I think I would not interact with an active approach often
☐ I will never interact with direct approaches

21.   Would you prefer a new position, if you were approached directly by a recruiter rather than having to search for a job by yourself?

Mark only one oval.

◯ Yes
◯ No
◯ Maybe

22.   Through which of these channels would you take a direct approach from a recruiter **seriously**?

Tick all that apply.

☐ E-Mail
☐ Phone
☐ LinkedIn
☐ Xing
☐ At a career fair
☐ Facebook
☐ Instagram
☐ Twitter

53

23.   Through which of these channels would you **prefer** to be approached? *

Tick all that apply.

☐ E-Mail
☐ Phone
☐ LinkedIn
☐ Xing
☐ At a career fair
☐ Facebook
☐ Instagram
☐ Twitter

24.   What would the recruiter's first approach to you have to include to catch your interest? *

Tick all that apply.

☐ A customized message including my personal experience and qualifications
☐ A detailed job description (including prerequisites and tasks of the position)
☐ A depiction of material job conditions (such as salary and vacation days)
☐ A depiction of non-material job conditions (such as working hours, working atmosphere)
☐ The name and contact details of the recruiter
☐ Other

25.   Overall, how would you rank your attitude towards being approached actively about a job?

Mark only one oval.

	1	2	3	4	5	
very negative	◯	◯	◯	◯	◯	very positive

54

26. If you have any additional comments regarding the active candidate approach, please use the following space to share them:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire!

This is the end of the survey.

For SurveyCircle users (www.surveycircle.com): The Survey Code is: MQ2R-8D8K-HYGS-6ZN7

This content is neither created nor endorsed by Google.

Google Forms

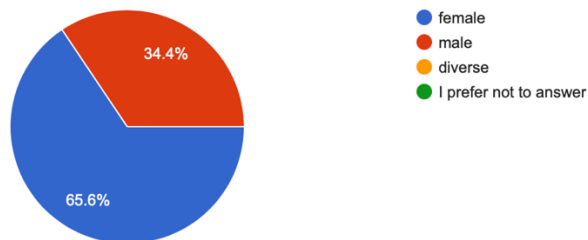## Appendix 2: Complete Survey Results

How old are you?

93 responses

- under 18 years
- 18 - 22 years
- 23 - 27 years
- 28 - 32 years
- 33 - 37 years
- over 37 years

67.7%
26.9%
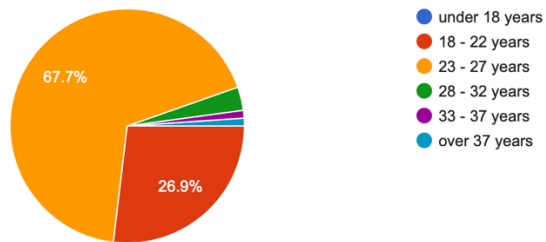
Copy

What gender do you identify as?

93 responses

- female
- male
- diverse
- I prefer not to answer

34.4%
65.6%

Copy

Which country do you live in?

93 responses
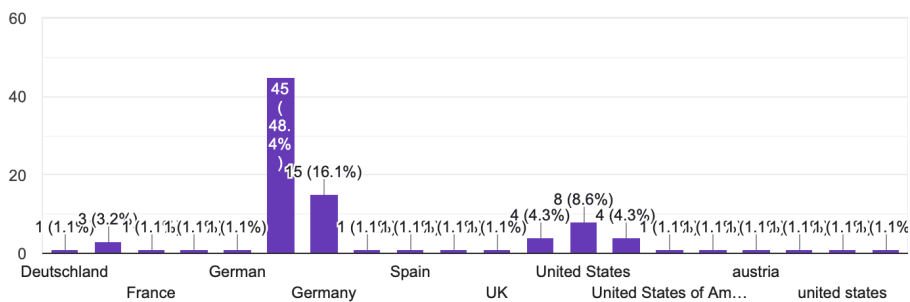
1 (1.1%) 3 (3.2%) 1 (1.1%)(1.1%)(1.1%) 45 (48.4%) 15 (16.1%) 1 (1.1%)(1.1%)(1.1%)(1.1%) 4 (4.3%) 8 (8.6%) 4 (4.3%) 1 (1.1%)(1.1%)(1.1%)(1.1%)(1.1%)(1.1%)

Deutschland   France   German   Germany   Spain   UK   United States   United States of Am…   austria   united states

Copy

In your academic career, have you completed a university degree or are you currently completing one?

93 responses
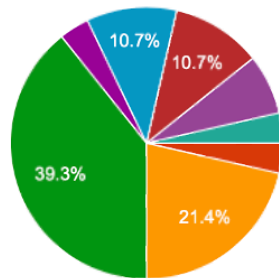
- I have already completed my degree
- I am currently on my way to completing my degree
- I did not go to university and am not planning on going

69.9%
30.1%

Copy

In which field of study did you get your degree?

28 responses

- Agricultural and Forestry Science
- Art / Design / Fashion / Music
- Computer Science
- Economics / Business Administration /…
- Education
- Engineering
- Language / Cultural Sciences
- Mathematics / Natural Sciences
- Medicine / Health Sciences
- Public Administration
- Social Sciences / Humanities
- Other

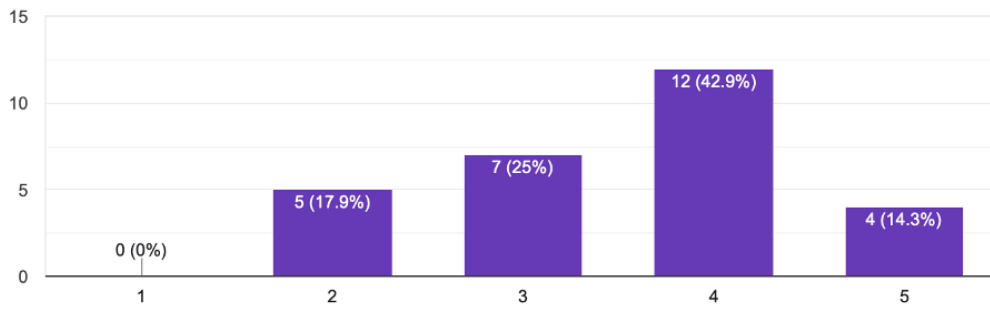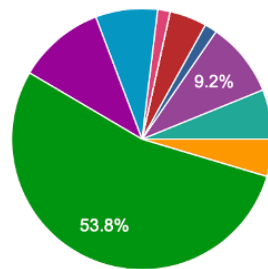## How long have you been working since you finished your studies?
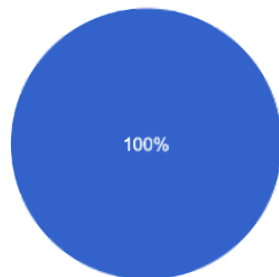
28 responses

- less than two years
- more than two years

How satisfied are you with your current occupation?

28 responses

Which field of study are you getting your degree in?

65 responses

- Agricultural and Forestry Science
- Art / Design / Fashion / Music
- Computer Science
- Economics / Business Administration /…
- Education
- Engineering
- Language / Cultural Sciences
- Mathematics / Natural Sciences
- Medicine / Health Sciences
- Public Administration
- Social Sciences / Humanities
- Other

Besides studying, are you working in your field of study already? (e.g. when studying law, are you working part time in a law firm besides your studies to gain experience?)
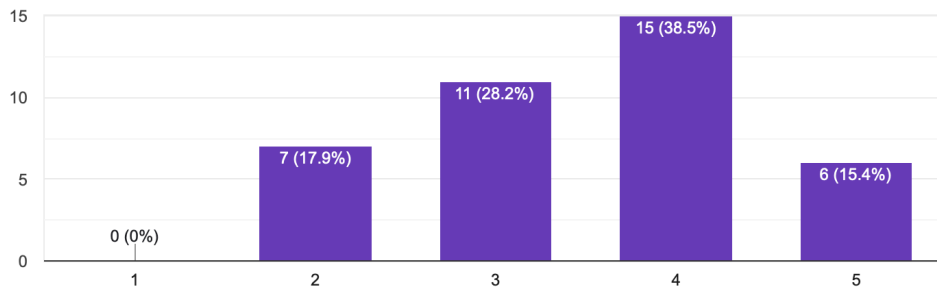
Copy

65 responses

- Yes
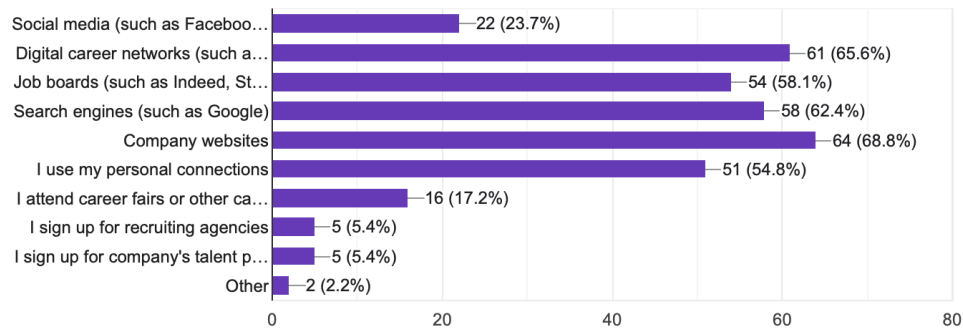- No

40%

60%
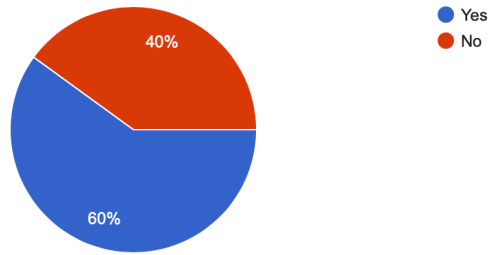
How satisfied are you with your current occupation?

Copy

39 responses

0 (0%)	7 (17.9%)	11 (28.2%)	15 (38.5%)	6 (15.4%)
1	2	3	4	5

When looking for a job, which of these channels do you use?

Copy

93 responses

Social media (such as Faceboo…— 22 (23.7%)
Digital career networks (such a…— 61 (65.6%)
Job boards (such as Indeed, St…— 54 (58.1%)
Search engines (such as Google)— 58 (62.4%)
Company websites— 64 (68.8%)
I use my personal connections— 51 (54.8%)
I attend career fairs or other ca…— 16 (17.2%)
I sign up for recruiting agencies— 5 (5.4%)
I sign up for company's talent p…— 5 (5.4%)
Other— 2 (2.2%)

Are you interested in working for another employer in the near future?

Copy

93 responses

- Yes
- No

23.7%

76.3%

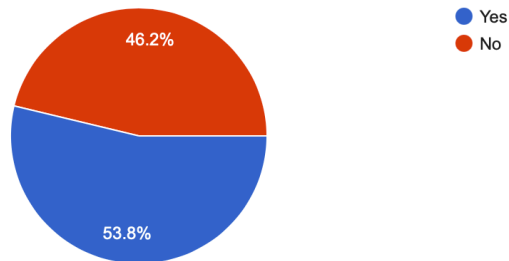At the moment, are you actively searching for a new job?

93 responses

- Yes
- No

74.2%

25.8%

Do you have a well maintained and up to date profile in a digital career network (such as LinkedIn or Xing)?
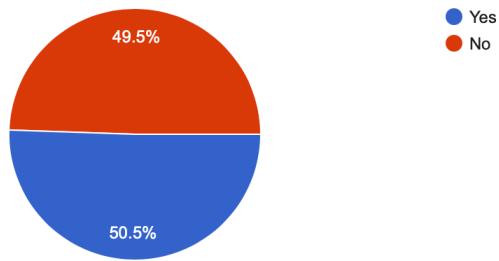
93 responses

- Yes
- No

46.2%

53.8%

Have you ever been actively approached by a recruiter in a digital career network (such as LinkedIn or Xing) about a position in another company?
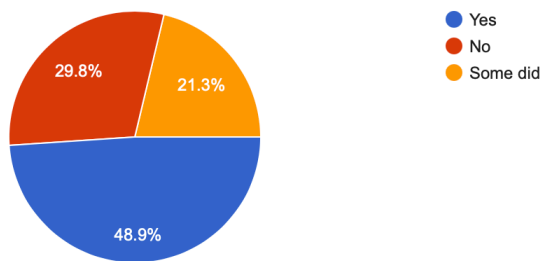
93 responses

- Yes
- No

49.5%

50.5%

Did the job(s) which the recruiter(s) suggested to you fit your academic profile well?

47 responses

- Yes
- No
- Some did

29.8%

21.3%

48.9%

Did the approach(es) seem serious to you?

47 responses

- Yes
- No
- Some did

17%
31.9%
51.1%

Did you interact with the recruiter(s)?

47 responses

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes

25.5%
36.2%
38.3%

If you would like to share more details about your personal experience(s) of being actively approached about a job, please use the following space to share them:

10 responses

Ich wurde über Xing bereits oft von Recruitern angeschrieben und habe dadurch auch einen neuen Job angenommen. Ich selbst bin auch im Active Sourcing tätig.

From past jobs, recruiters assumed that I would be interested in Sales, however I am trying to go into another direction.

I am texted to make an internship or working student position but I search for a full time job

Often copy + paste

Approached by one company they suggested "low-level-entry roles", which were not suitable for me.

Usually when I get contacted by recruiters I don't respond. While they get my major right they usually offer jobs as a senior developer or for developer roles with programming languages I have never used. I answered a couple of recruiters in the past and they either said that I am too unexperienced or they just ghosted me. I don't have good experiences with recruiters in general. I would much rather like to speak to the actual development team at the company. They just send you their default "Your background fits this position so well" email without looking at your experience level after university.

The jobs offered did fit my academic profile, as they were comparable to my position as a weorking student. However, I would like to get a broader view of my specialty in the future, so I am not interested in taking on one of the offered full time jobs

Please note that I just received my bachelor's degree and am working towards a masters' degree. I work as a graduate assistant.
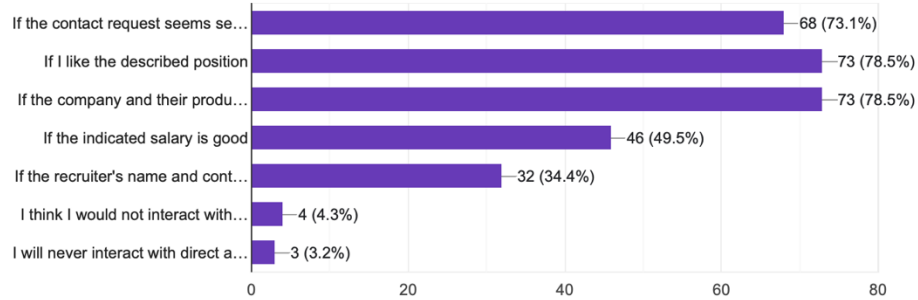
Someone gave me a offer paying way below the industry average. All the information the recruiter said seemed real, but the offer was so low, I rejected immediately.

I had 2 experiences in LinkedIn, I told the first that I couldn't because I was so busy at that time, and the second one did not respond me anymore and she was from a prestigious firm (deloitte)

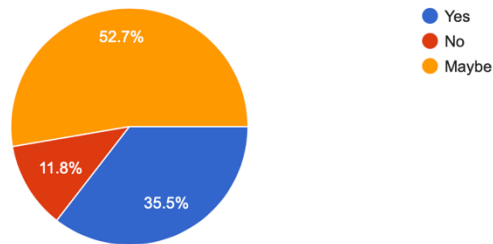**Under what circumstances would you interact with recruiters, who actively approach you?**

93 responses

Option	Count
If the contact request seems se…	68 (73.1%)
If I like the described position	73 (78.5%)
If the company and their produ…	73 (78.5%)
If the indicated salary is good	46 (49.5%)
If the recruiter's name and cont…	32 (34.4%)
I think I would not interact with…	4 (4.3%)
I will never interact with direct a…	3 (3.2%)

Would you prefer a new position, if you were approached directly by a recruiter rather than having to search for a job by yourself?
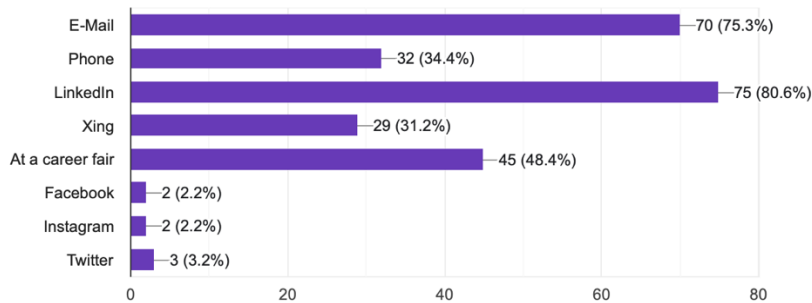
93 responses

- Yes — 35.5%
- No — 11.8%
- Maybe — 52.7%

Through which of these channels would you take a direct approach from a recruiter seriously?

93 responses

Channel	Count
E-Mail	70 (75.3%)
Phone	32 (34.4%)
LinkedIn	75 (80.6%)
Xing	29 (31.2%)
At a career fair	45 (48.4%)
Facebook	2 (2.2%)
Instagram	2 (2.2%)
Twitter	3 (3.2%)

Through which of these channels would you prefer to be approached?

93 responses

Channel	Count
E-Mail	65 (69.9%)
Phone	20 (21.5%)
LinkedIn	65 (69.9%)
Xing	21 (22.6%)
At a career fair	28 (30.1%)
Facebook	2 (2.2%)
Instagram	2 (2.2%)
Twitter	2 (2.2%)
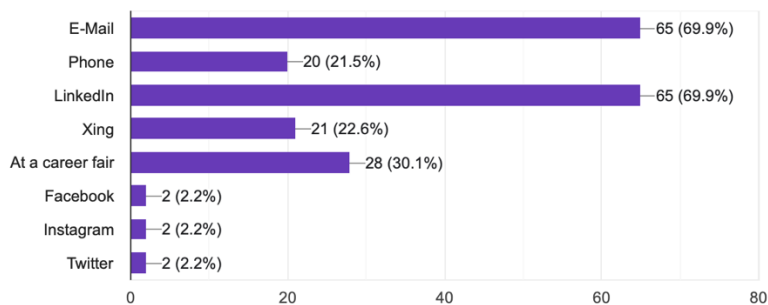
What would the recruiter's first approach to you have to include to catch your interest? ⬜ Copy

93 responses

A customized message including
my personal experience and qu… 52 (55.9%)

A detailed job description (
including prerequisites and tas… 84 (90.3%)

A depiction of material job
conditions (such as salary and… 48 (51.6%)

A depiction of non-material job
conditions (such as working ho… 47 (50.5%)

The name and contact details of
the recruiter 41 (44.1%)

Other 1 (1.1%)

0   20   40   60   80   100
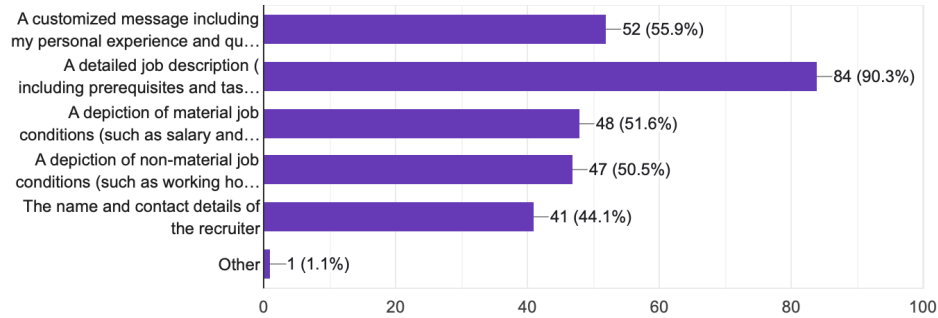
Overall, how would you rank your attitude towards being approached actively about a job? ⬜ Copy

93 responses
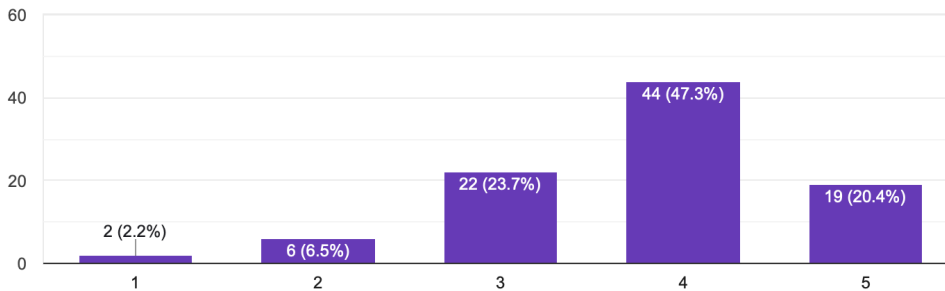
Value	Count
1	2 (2.2%)
2	6 (6.5%)
3	22 (23.7%)
4	44 (47.3%)
5	19 (20.4%)

If you have any additional comments regarding the active candidate approach, please use the following space to share them:

3 responses

Especially in the early stage of my career it is cool for my self-esteem to be approached by companies. But with just of couple of jobs so far, it is not possible yet to see a path into the direction I want to go into. Often the advertised jobs are therefore not fitting my interests at the moment.

I think that you directly feel valued from the recruiter, and therefore have a more positive approach to the person, the job description etc. since someone is showing interest in you.

I think this approach might work well, if the people targeted want to stay in their field of work. However, recruiters only ever search for experience wothin the same field, so you don't get offered positions that would be interesting and new to you

Thank you for participating in this questionnaire!

64

9. Affidavit

I hereby declare in lieu of an oath that I have written this thesis independently and without outside help and that I have not used any sources or aids other than those indicated. I have identified the passages taken verbatim or in terms of content from the sources used (direct or indirect quotations), indicating the author and the source. If I have submitted the work in whole or in part elsewhere for examination purposes, I have informed the examiners and the examination board accordingly.

Name: Nane Jacob

Date: 24.08.2022

Signature: