

EMPLOYER BRANDING OF WINE COMPANIES IN THE CZECH REPUBLIC: USING SOCIAL NETWORKS WHEN RECRUITING NEW EMPLOYEES

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Abstract

The idea of employer branding has been around for ages, however, in the twentieth century the concept of employer branding has evolved to become a more strategic tool to attract and retain talent. Companies have begun to focus on building a strong employer brand founded on an engaging company culture, a favorable work environment, and socially responsible behavior. Effective employer branding is also very important for wine companies if they want to succeed in today's competitive labor markets and attract and retain the right people. One of the trendy ways to present the employer brand and reach potential job seekers is the use of social networks. The article presents the findings of the research of selected wine companies in the Czech Republic conducted by authors to find out whether and how the wine companies use social networks when attracting potential job seekers. The research was based on an analysis of the use of social networks by selected wine companies and two questionnaire surveys, the first among employees of selected wine companies and the second among potential job seekers in wine companies from among the general public. The findings revealed that newer social networks such as TikTok or Twitter are hardly used by wine companies, on the contrary, classic Facebook and Instagram are still the most popular. The surveyed wine companies have considerable room to improve the promotion of the employer brand through social networks. Wine companies have a significant challenge to improve the promotion of their employer brand through social networks.

Keywords: *employer branding, corporate social responsibility, human resource management, vine industry, Czech Republic*

1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, many companies have faced many challenging political, economic, social, technological, and environmental challenges in the surrounding world. All these challenges fundamentally affect the prosperity and competitiveness of companies, and each company must find its way to cope with them (Spoljaric & Dosen 2023). What gives companies the ability to overcome difficult times and achieve defined goals are the people that companies employ and whose knowledge and experience they use (Dabirian, Kietzmann & Diba 2017). This is also the reason why most companies strive to attract and retain the best people in the labor market.

There are many different strategies to attract and retain the best people in the labor market. One of the proven options is the employer branding strategy, consisting in building a strong employer brand (Rampl & Kenning 2014). Today's highly competitive labor markets force companies to look for ever more original ways to differentiate themselves from competing employers and to offer potential and existing employees ever more attractive job opportunities and working conditions (Dabirian, Paschen & Kietzmann 2019). This effort to distinguish the company from competing employers and present it as the best employer in the industry is the essence of employer branding and building a strong employer brand (Chhabra & Sharma 2014).

A strong employer brand is based on a company's unique identity and culture, which attracts both potential and existing employees of the company. The key are attractive job opportunities and working conditions that meet the needs of potential and existing employees (Kacprzak, Kacprzak & Wielewska 2021). Their positive experience creates a positive image of the company as a good employer in their minds. They are willing to share their positive experience with others and are more loyal and engaged to contribute to the development of the company and the achievement of its goals (Karkhanis, Chandnani & Chakraborti 2022).

One of the trendy environments where potential and existing employees can share their positive as well as negative experiences with a certain company as an employer are social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, etc. (Banerji & Reimer 2019) Through social networks, potential and existing employees can significantly influence the employer brand of a certain company. At the same time, social networks represent a powerful employer branding tool, as they allow companies to be in contact with potential and existing employees and promote their employer brand (Alonso, Parsons & Pirani 2022).

Employer branding, not only with the use of social networks, is an important part of any successful business, and this should also apply to wine companies. Wine production is one of the traditional agricultural industries in the Czech Republic, while Czech and Moravian wines are known almost all over the world (Kostovcik, Sredl & Hommerova 2019). When comparing wine companies in the Czech Republic and in other European countries, such as Italy, Austria, France, or Spain, it is possible to find many differences. The general differences lie in the area and production of the winery. Other specific differences lie in the production technology itself, in the processing speed of individual wines, in prices and margins on wines, and in the number of employees and their working conditions, including working hours and rewards for work done (Ragasova et al. 2020).

In the Czech Republic, there are mainly small family wineries, followed by medium and large wineries, which, however, in comparison with foreign wineries, belong to smaller wineries. In general, the business of wine companies in the Czech Republic is mainly based on tradition, and many wineries are passed down from generation to generation (Nemcova & Stankova 2019). Such a business requires loyal and engaged people who are able and willing to do more than what is asked of them. For them, working with wine must be a passion rather than a duty, which applies to everyone involved, from managers to laborers. However, finding such people in today's labor markets is not easy. Therefore, wine companies must pay attention to attracting and retaining the right people. Effective employer branding with the use of social networks can be a possible path to success.

The article presents the findings of the authors' research of selected wine companies in the Czech Republic to find out whether and how the wine companies use social networks when attracting potential job seekers. Three research questions were established within the research:

RQ1: What social networks do wine companies use?

RQ2: Do employees of wine companies follow the social networks of their employers?

RQ3: Do job seekers in wine companies follow the social networks of potential employers?

2. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The article deals with the employer branding of selected wine companies in the Czech Republic to find out whether and how wine companies use social networks when attracting potential job seekers. The research was based on an analysis of the use of social networks by selected wine companies and two questionnaire surveys, the first among employees of selected wine companies and the second among potential job seekers in wine companies from among the general public.

The results of the prestigious wine competition Winery of the Year 2022 (VINOZOOM, 2022), which is announced by the Czech Wine Association and the National Wine Center, were used to select wine companies running business in the Czech Republic. Within the competition, a comprehensive evaluation of the wine companies takes place, not only according to the quality of the wines but also according to the development of the wine companies. Three categories of wine companies are evaluated in the competition: small with a production of up to 50,000 liters of wine per year, medium-sized with a production of 50,000 to 250,000 liters of wine per year, and large with a production of over 250,000 liters of wine per year. Ten wine companies from traditional wine regions were selected for the research: Velke Pavlovice, Znojensko, Slovacko, and Melnicko. The set includes a variety of wine companies, from family-owned to large wine companies (see Table 1).

Winery	Vineyard Acreage (acres)	Region	Full-Time Employees
Baraque	19.8	Velke Pavlovice	7
Skoupil	56.8	Velke Pavlovice	7
Lobkowicz	158.1	Melnicko	17
Verysek	3.7	Velke Pavlovice	1
Spalek	29.7	Znojensko	6
Smrcka	4.9	Znojensko	2
THAYA	259.5	Znojensko	15
ArteVini	49.4	Velke Pavlovice/Znojensko	7
New Winery	296.5	Slovacko	20
Znovín Znojmo	1235.5	Znojensko	100

Table 1. Selected wine companies

Source: authors based on data from selected wine companies.

In the first stage, an analysis of the use of social networks was carried out for selected wine companies: Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube.

In the second stage, a questionnaire survey among employees of selected wine companies was conducted. An online questionnaire distributed by sending a link and a QR code to the contact e-mails of selected wine companies was used. A total of 42 responses were obtained. Respondents were divided by age (generation): 5.1% of respondents aged 59 and older (Baby Boomers born 1946-1964), 43.6% of respondents aged 37-58 (Generation X born 1965-1982), and 51.3% of respondents aged 24 -36 years (Generation Y born 1981-1996). Respondents were asked five questions regarding (1) the success of the wine companies in recruiting new employees; (2) the need to change the process of recruiting new employees in wine companies, (3) the demands of work in wine companies, (4) the tendency of respondents to follow social networks of their employer, and (5) social networks of employers that respondents follow.

In the second stage, a questionnaire survey among potential job seekers in wine companies from among the general public was conducted. An online questionnaire distributed by posting a link and a QR code on Facebook and Instagram was used. A total of 101 responses were obtained. Respondents were divided by age (generation): 18.8% of respondents aged 37-58 (Generation X born 1965-1982), 69.3% of respondents aged 24-36 (Generation Y born 1981-1996), and 11.9% of respondents aged 18-23 years (Generation Z born 1997-2012). Respondents were asked five questions regarding (1) motivation of respondents when deciding on employment and employer, attributes characterizing the culture of the companies in which the respondents are employed, (3) how respondents search for potential employers or find out about an existing employer; (4) the emphasis that the companies in which the respondents are employed place on the recruitment of new employees, and (5) the existence of an HR department that deals with the recruitment of new employees in the companies in which the respondents are employed.

3. RESULTS

3.1 The use of social networks by selected wine companies

The first stage of the research on the use of social networks to attract potential job seekers by selected wine companies in the Czech Republic was an analysis of the use of social networks by selected wine companies. The analysis covered the social networks Twitter, LinkedIn, Facebook, TikTok, Instagram, and YouTube. Table 2 summarizes the results of this analysis.

Winery	Twitter	LinkedIn	Facebook	TikTok	Instagram	YouTube
Baraque	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Skoupil	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
Lobkowicz	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
Verysek	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
Spalek	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
Smrcka	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
THAYA	N	Y	Y	N	Y	N
ArteVini	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
New Winery	N	N	Y	N	Y	N
Znovín Znojmo	N	N	Y	N	Y	Y

Table 2. The use of social networks by selected wine companies

Source: authors based on data from selected wine companies.

Twitter can be seen as a social network of intellectuals, which is suitable for recruiting people for management or administration, not for production. This also corresponds to the result of the analysis, when none of the selected wine companies use this social network.

LinkedIn is considered mainly a professional social network, which is suitable for recruiting people in most managerial, administrative, or technical professions. Its advantage is that it enables the direct publication of job offers. The analysis revealed that three wine companies use this social network: Baraque Winery, Skoupil Winery, and THAYA Winery.

Facebook is among the most widespread social networks, which is suitable for recruiting people of most professions, including workers. Young people and people over sixty have a weaker representation on this social network. The advantage of this social network is that it provides targeted advertisements, direct publication of job offers, and the publication of short recruitment videos. The analysis revealed that all selected wine companies use this social network.

TikTok is one of the new social networks that was originally intended for teenagers, but gradually older users began to use it as well. This social network is mainly suitable for recruiting people for junior positions. The analysis revealed that none of the selected wine companies use this social network.

Instagram is a very powerful social network that allows users to publish short stories or videos. This social network is suitable for recruiting people of most professions and age groups. The analysis revealed that all selected wine companies use this social network.

YouTube is one of the most widespread social networks attracting almost all age groups. It is suitable for publishing recruitment videos and implementing active recruitment campaigns. The analysis revealed that only one wine company uses this social network: Znovín Znojmo.

The analysis of the use of social networks by the selected wine companies showed that there is an opportunity for a wider use of social networks by the selected wine companies, both in the presentation of the employer brand and in the recruitment of employees.

3.2 The questionnaire survey among employees of selected wine companies

The second stage of the research on the use of social networks to attract potential job seekers by selected wine companies in the Czech Republic was a questionnaire survey among employees of selected wine companies. Respondents were asked five questions.

The first question asked whether the wine companies in which the respondents are employed manage to recruit new employees, to which 10.5% of respondents answered "yes, there is no problem with recruiting new employees", 36.8% of respondents answered "yes, but recruiting new employees is not easy", 34.2% of respondents answered "yes, potential employees apply themselves, but few meet the requirements or it is hard to choose", 15.8% of respondents answered "no, we have a shortage of people and cannot get new ones", and 2.7% of respondents answered otherwise.

The second question asked whether the wine companies where the respondents are employed should change their recruitment process to attract more new employees, to which 53.8% of respondents answered "don't know", and 46.2% of respondents answered "no, not need". The problem with the lack of new employees is often not in the process of recruiting new employees but in the attractiveness of job opportunities and working conditions that need to be improved or better promoted.

The third question asked how demanding the work is in the wine companies in which the respondents are employed, to which 30.8% of respondents answered "the work is demanding, but it depends on the season and the harvest", 28.2% of respondents answered "the work is demanding, regardless of the season or the harvest", 23.1% of the respondents answered "the work is not that demanding", and 17.9% of the respondents answered "the work is demanding, more people are needed". It follows that the subjective perception of the difficulty of working in wine companies depends on objective circumstances. The larger the harvest, the more demanding the work, but it also depends on the number of people involved in the work. Larger wine companies with more people can handle the work better overall than smaller wine companies with fewer people.

The fourth question asked whether respondents follow the employer's social networks, to which 87.2% of respondents answered "yes" and 12.8% of respondents answered "no". This confirms the trend of using social networks and the importance of using social networks in building an employer brand.

The fifth question targeted respondents who follow the employer's social networks and found out what social networks the respondents follow. Responses included Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and YouTube, which correspond to the social networks most used by the selected wine companies. This finding is important for targeting wine companies' employer branding to the right social networks that potential and current employees routinely use.

3.3 The questionnaire survey among potential job seekers in wine companies

The third stage of the research was a questionnaire survey among potential job seekers in wine companies from among the general public. Respondents were asked five questions.

The first question targeted the respondents' motivation when making decisions about employment and employers. Of the options offered, the first financial rewards (21.4%) were followed by working environment (18.1%), working hours (12.9%), good reputation of the company (11.3%), career growth (10.1%), easy transport accessibility (9.5%), training programs (6.7%), work relations (6.4%), and company brand (3.6%). It follows that the company brand itself, including the employer brand, is not the main factor for the majority of respondents when deciding on employment and an employer. From the point of view of effective employer branding, it is important to know what attracts potential job seekers and to focus on this when presenting the employer brand and recruiting new employees.

The second question asked what attributes characterize the culture of the companies in which the respondents are employed. The attributes most often mentioned by respondents included a family and friendly environment, a loyal and empathetic approach, professional and modern management, or open and honest communication. These are exactly the attributes of an attractive company culture that attracts both potential and existing company employees. Building and promoting such a company culture is the basis of effective employer branding.

The third question asked how respondents search for potential employers or found out about an existing employer. Most respondents rely on recommendations from friends or acquaintances (31.7%) or use job boards and portals (26.7%). Other respondents were already interested in the employer's company in earlier years (18.5%), and other respondents were directly approached by the employer's company (11.9%) or learned about the employer's company in another way (5.9%). Only 5.3% of respondents

learned about the employer's company on social networks. It follows that many potential job seekers still prefer more classic ways of searching for potential employers than social networks, which should be taken as one of the ways to present the employer brand and recruit new employees. Specific methods must always be adapted to the needs and requirements of the company.

The fourth question asked whether the companies in which the respondents are employed emphasize recruiting new employees, to which 51.5% of respondents stated "yes", 30.7% of respondents stated "no", and 17.8% of respondents stated "I don't know". Recruiting new employees should be considered a priority for the HR management of every company, as it determines the quality of the company's human resources.

The fifth question asked whether the companies in which the respondents are employed have an HR department that deals with the recruitment of new employees, to which 47.5% of respondents stated "yes, we do" and 39.6% of respondents stated "no, we don't and are not considering about its establishment". Another 8.9% of respondents said that their company cooperates with external HR agencies when recruiting new employees, and 4% of respondents stated that their company does not have its own HR department, but plans to establish one in the future.

4. DISCUSSION

The research on the use of social networks to attract potential job seekers by selected wine companies in the Czech Republic aimed at finding out whether and how the wine companies use social networks when attracting potential job seekers. Within the research, answers to three research questions were sought.

In response to the first research question "What social networks do wine companies use?" (RQ1), it is possible to state that all selected wine companies use only two more or less traditional social networks, namely Facebook and Instagram. Some selected wine companies also use LinkedIn and YouTube. The remaining social networks (Twitter and TikTok) are not used by the selected wine companies at all. This finding is quite understandable, as Facebook and Instagram or LinkedIn and YouTube are very widespread and popular among people, and therefore are suitable for recruiting people of most professions and age groups. From the point of view of effective employer branding and employee recruitment, it is not about the quantity of social networks used, but about the quality of use of selected social networks (Carpentier, Van Hove & Weijters 2019). Each company must choose a social network that will suit its goals and needs concerning the costs. The selected social network must enable an attractive presentation of the employer brand and active recruitment of employees (Etter, Ravasi & Colleoni 2019).

In response to the second research question "Do employees of wine companies follow the social networks of their employers?" (RQ2), it is possible to state that mostly yes, and these are the mentioned mainly traditional social networks Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn and YouTube. These social networks are part of the everyday life of most people and are a good option for employers to present the employer brand to the general public (Belinda, Westerman & Bergman 2018).

In response to the third research question "Do job seekers in wine companies follow the social networks of potential employers?" (RQ3), it is again possible to state that mostly yes. Job seekers also choose a potential employer and therefore need relevant information about what the employer is (Banks et al. 2016). An easy source of information about potential employers is information shared on social networks. It is therefore very important for employers to what information they present on social networks if they want to attract the right people (Xu 2022).

Research findings have shown that employer branding through social networks is also important for wine companies looking for loyal and engaged people. However, there are differences between individual wine companies both in the approach to employer branding and in the use of social networks (Coskun et al. 2016). Small wine companies with limited production usually do not have the need or funds to invest too much time, money, and effort in employer branding and social media use. They mostly make do with established practices, and recruit new employees on an ad-hoc basis according to

the current need (Galati et al. 2019). On the contrary, larger wine companies with extensive production naturally need more people, and therefore it pays to invest time, money, and effort in building an employer brand and using social networks. This brings them an effective way to attract new employees as well as to promote their products (Chitu 2020). In other words, building an employer brand and using social networks within wine companies can be seen as a necessary innovation reflecting the requirements of the current business environment, when more and more business activities take place in an online environment (Gao & Feng 2016).

5. CONCLUSIONS

The research presented in this article tried to find out whether and how selected wine companies in the Czech Republic use employer branding and social networks when attracting potential job seekers. The research was conducted using an analysis of the use of social networks by selected wine companies and two questionnaire surveys, the first among employees of selected wine companies and the second among potential job seekers in wine companies from among the general public.

The findings of the research revealed that the selected wine companies do not have a developed employer branding system and that most of their recruitment activities are carried out ad-hoc as needed using established practices. The findings further revealed that all selected wine companies use Facebook and Instagram, which are among the most widespread and popular social networks enabling the recruitment of people of most professions and age groups. At the same time, the findings confirmed that employees of wine companies follow the social networks of their employers and that job seekers in wine companies follow the social networks of potential employers. This proves that sharing information through social networks is a common part of the modern world and that social networks can be an effective tool for employer branding as well as overall company marketing.

The research findings can serve as inspiration for wine and other companies to innovate in building an employer brand and the use of social networks. Potential limits to the generalization of the findings result from the focus of the research on the wine industry in the Czech Republic and from the limited number of surveyed wine companies. Future research within wine companies could focus on innovative practices, including the use of modern technologies for the production of final products as well as for the management of entire companies.

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