

Chapter 12

Employer Branding Through Social Media and Websites

Introduction

The previous chapters emphasised that attracting and retaining team members in the hospitality and tourism industry is a critical aspect for success. A strong corporate and consumer brand reputation is no longer enough to attract and retain these team members. The labour market's competition has accelerated as a result of the influence social media and other online brand presence has created and the war for talent is at the top of HR challenges. Workforce turnover is massive and this reality makes it crucial for team members to be valued by their employers (TPD, 2014). Employer branding applied to grow the 'image of the employer' as perceived by current employees, outside talent and other stakeholders helps to differentiate a company from its competitors as an employer (Sehgal & Malati, 2013). The use of social media by companies has a significant influence on corporate reputation, which is positively linked to intentions of job candidates to apply with a company (Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013). For potential employees it is often difficult to get an idea of what it is like to work at a specific organisation. Social media offer organisations the opportunity to give an insight into their organisational culture. In order to attract the right employees it is therefore important for organisations to position themselves well on social media and to build up a relationship with potential employees (Gillissen, 2018a). A growing number of companies in the hospitality and tourism industry have started to recognise the importance of employer branding and the need to communicate through social media and websites. The days are over in terms of using digital media as a kind of 'posting and praying', meaning that companies need to be working proactively for finding and attracting the best candidates even those who are not actively searching for a new position (LinkedIn, 2012). If an employer brand image is well-differentiating, it will enable job seekers to understand a company's values and to find if there can be a fit with themselves (Backhaus, 2016). This final chapter provides an interesting insight into the influence and effectiveness of social media and online presence looking at a sample of prominent hotel companies.

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A competitive set of hotel companies was examined and benchmarked. The names of the hotels will be mentioned but the results of the benchmarking exercise are largely anonymised.

Communicating the Employer Profile Online

A company's public profile on social media should be the medium for a company to convince the best and most talented candidates to apply by sharing a transparent insight of the company's culture and daily employee activities. The company's website is an important channel to communicate with potentially interested candidates (Ten Broek, 2015; Tran, 2015). For communicating with the most prominent generation currently in the hospitality and tourism industry, Millennials, social media is most important because it provides interactive platforms to share, discuss and modify user-generated content (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy, & Silvestre, 2011) and they massively help in building an employer brand beneficial for attracting the right talent (Davison, Maraist, & Bing, 2011). Every month approximately two million jobs are posted on social media, mostly on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn and Google+ (Kaur, Sharma, Kaur, & Sharma, 2015). Social networking sites (SNS) serve as an inexpensive and easily accessible source for collecting background information on job applicants and current team members for a company (Clark & Roberts, 2010). The most effective employer branding tools are social media (Facebook and Twitter), online professional networks (LinkedIn) and company websites (LinkedIn, 2015). The reason why LinkedIn is a perfect tool to build the employer brand is its number one position as a professional network in the world and its business value that is still driven by its ability to grow. The world workforce for the hospitality and tourism industry is getting younger and more than half will be under 35 within three years (Bersin, 2012). The Millennial generation grows up on Facebook, and LinkedIn is not seen as a very useful tool by this generation. LinkedIn is still in the process of attracting more Millennials members. The use and appreciation of social media is constantly on the move and the generations following the Millennials rely already dramatically less on Facebook and more on Instagram, WhatsApp and Snapchat type of platforms (Guynn, 2017; The Guardian, 2015a). Twitter is a tool that is used by companies for recruitment and to share company information but it is a more limited tool, due to the fact there are only 140 characters to share values and information. Facebook is seen as more engaging because it makes more use of visuals and familiar language (Parker, 2013). When it comes to using Twitter for recruiting, many companies do not seem to have the success they want. Twitter has over 330 million active users, but only 14% of recruiters of Fortune Top 500 companies say they have actually made a hire through the platform (Westfall, 2015). Facebook is still seen as an important recruitment tool due to the fact it has 2.23 billion users each month (Zephoria Digital Marketing, 2018), whereas LinkedIn has 546 million users (Smith, 2018). SNS are seen as important when it comes to recruitment activities and the many users of SNS increase the importance of actively promoting the employer brand on these channels. It should be remembered, however, that there is no 'perfect' employer brand. When employer

brand messages are clear, realistic and honest, the best fitting employees will feel attracted to the company (Backhaus, 2016).

Nevertheless, candidates are using companies' own career websites as the main channel during job search, with a frequent user percentage of 42%. Professional networking sites (LinkedIn) count for 38% and SNS (Facebook) for 35% (CEB, 2014a). Next to SNS, the employer review sites have become popular in recent years. These online tools can drastically affect an employer brand since job seekers get an inside look into a business, which helps companies to boost their brand recognition. The 'other side of the coin' is that new employees at a company will feel no sense of loyalty for the employer if it advertises one reality and delivers another. Just as these employees are used to commenting on restaurants and hotels through Tripadvisor, Yelp and Booking.com they will, when disappointed by unrealistic promises by an employer, post their comments through employee review sites (Backhaus, 2016). The most well-known employee review sites are (Fairrygodboss, 2018): (1) *Glassdoor*, the best known website for employees to leave reviews of employers. (2) *Indeed*, best known for aggregating millions of jobs across the internet by scraping websites that list open positions and users ranking their employers on a 5-star scale. (3) *Vault* publishes industry rankings and employee reviews with 'uppers' and 'downers'. (4) *CareerBliss* contains employee reviews and a 5-star rating system, as well as scores for things like company culture, colleagues and working setting. (5) *Kununu* is a job review and listings site that allows employees to rate their employer on a 1–5 scale overall, and on many other factors such as job-security or leadership support. (6) *JobAdvisor* is an Australian job listings site featuring employee reviews on a scale of 1–5, pros and cons and things such as 'vision & strategy' and 'work environment'. (7) *Rate-myemployer* focusses on Canadian companies and employees. Employees may leave detailed 5-star ratings on metrics like 'stress' and 'business model, vision and strategy' and 'feedback'. (8). *TheJobCrowd* is a UK-based employee review site focussed on recent graduates with employee reviews to rate the company on a 5-star scale. (9) *LookBeforeYouLeap* allows employees to 'grade' their employer (A–F) and provide comments. (10) *Comparably* has recently launched employee reviews that allow employees to rate their employers. (11) *Yelp* is normally considered a restaurant or consumer business review site but employees are increasingly leaving reviews about their workplaces on the site.

Social Media Recruitment

Social media recruitment is an increasingly used tool although critical comments can be found. LinkedIn has the drawback that it facilitates companies' access to thousands of uninterested and unqualified potential candidates. Some sources, however, assume that working with head hunter companies is more efficient and effective because they supply companies with right-fit candidates (Hanigan, 2015). From a different angle, LinkedIn and other SNS are most productive for employers for both networking and recruiting purposes because LinkedIn and other SNS play a major role in a company's employee recruiting strategy as potential employees increasingly post their profiles on these sites each year

(Heathfield, 2018). Next to Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, YouTube, Google+ and Instagram are gaining momentum in recruiting (Davis, 2017). With its video-only format YouTube allows a company to distinguish itself to recruit with life images especially when knowing that social video generates 1,200% more social shares than text and images combined. Google+ is one of the more under-utilised recruiting social sites, where jobs are shared 182% of the time, Google+ can have advantages over competing platforms because it offers a built-in talent pool feature, Circles allows recruiters to create private groups filled with candidates in relevant sectors, and to target specific content. Another strength of Google+ is it being integrated in the world's strongest search engine (Google). Instagram is an engaging way to promote a brand and jobs using pictures, videos and text captions and this is particularly appealing to the youngest generations of applicants.

To attract the Millennials, social media are the most important recruitment tools, since 73% of them found their last position through a social media site (LinkedIn, 2015; Profiles, 2016). Millennials spend half of the time on learning about an organisation before they apply for a job compared to other generations. Next to that, applying for a job must for them be fast and easy (CEB, 2014c). Information valued by Millennials are pictures and posts about people in the company, participating in unique company festivities, meetings and similar activities (White, 2015). Competitor benchmarking in recruitment is an important tool for companies today. It is a custom-made (recruitment) solution to compare an organisation with key competitors in the same industry. Furthermore, competitor benchmarking is used to understand competitors' direction, and their goals and improvements. Furthermore, competitor benchmarking in recruitment is used to get insight in improvement points for the internal and external employer brand (Kramar, 2014). To really stand out as an employer, recruiting trends need to be monitored. Long-term recruitment trends are (LinkedIn, 2015): *utilisation of social and professional networks, focus on employer branding, find ways to source passive candidates and set up employee referral programmes*. Since almost all job seekers use online tools and the impact of these channels is enormous, companies must focus on their online tools to present themselves as a good employer brand. It is, however, paramount for companies to realise that job seekers look for consistency across all branding messages through the internet as well as with referrals from employees (Backhaus, 2016).

How to Use Social Media

When using social media for recruiting staff it is crucial to approach the process strategically because the impact is significant (HR Academy, 2018a). Communication through social media is always on, which provides challenges (Sparrow & Otaye, 2015). The starting point is to know the target group at which the message is targeted. Demographic data need to be collected about the target audience and to understand what moves the members of that audience. Other questions to be answered are: 'what do the members like?', or 'what do they detest?', 'which specific medium does the target audience use the most?' and 'how do they do that?'. Then next, the right social media need to be chosen. It is not good to just use all social media. If young people (under 25) are targeted for internships, traineeships

or a first job, then Instagram and Snapchat are appropriate platforms. If women in the 30–40 age category at middle-educational level are targeted for an position, Facebook and Instagram are the right channels. If for example higher educated professionals are needed then LinkedIn would be the focus. Furthermore, people who influence the desired target group can assist such as teachers, deans, or freelancers who meet people from many companies. Vacancies can be shared with these influencers by approaching them personally and to ask them to share a vacancy through their social media or professional networks. Also the current company's own employees can be influencers and therefore it is useful if they share corporate information such as vacancies on their own social media. For this purpose ready-to-use posts in the form of images, text and links can be quite helpful. Messages about vacancies do not have to be original all the time. It can be a worthwhile approach to copy good ideas and bring them into a personal style. Competitors or peers' strategy, posts, resources, language and image can be used to find inspiration. Also it can help to look at what other sectors/industries have adopted as style to target social media and then to translate good ideas into the own company's practice. Another characteristic of using social media is the dominant place images have. Vacancies, if possible, can best be captured in images such as a video or slideshow of the workplace and the customers that frequent the company.

Connected to thinking strategically when using social media is to think campaign-wise when posting vacancies. Campaigns can be organised as a 'message planning' or 'content calendar'. This content calendar starts with a core message supported by the various resources that are available. Social media are a good driver and should be connected to the company website, intranet or a newsletter where the message is spread. Obviously, offline events such as fairs and network meetings can strongly endorse the campaign. To monitor the impact of the employment message, it needs to be measured what works and also to experiment with the different channels. Most social media offer an analytics tool which quickly shows which posts score well and which less. In order to provide a consistent employer branding message, a company has to commit to stay constantly visible on social media also when there are no vacancies. Recruiting is not just about posting vacancies, but also about the character and the appearance of a company. Social media can be used for continuous branding. A common misunderstanding currently is that the term 'social' just means 'online'. This is, however, not the case because the oldest social activities are performed through live networks. Face-to-face contact between people has the strongest social power. Certainly with a smaller company or with one in an industry that is less familiar or popular there is the universal 'word of mouth' which works into people granting favours. Employees who have a positive perception of their companies' employer brand will spontaneously speak of a pleasant workplace to their friends and acquaintances, and even encourage them to apply (Charbonnier-Voirin, Poujol, & Vignolles, 2016). Looking people straight in the eye has enormous convincing power. Important is also to understand that promoting vacancies or a company in general is not for free. Compared to traditional media, social media are relatively inexpensive and offer high returns, whilst they are effective to recruit right in the target group. Even though social media and various supporting tools seem to be without additional costs, they do take time of the people who use them. Furthermore, it is crucial

to follow up on job candidates applications quickly and not at a ‘snail’s pace’ (Hennig, 2017). Most candidates expect a binding response to their application within 14 days, whilst research indicates it is currently around 25 days. A potentially risk of losing qualified candidates is apparent. Then finally it is important to monitor the messages and keep up-to-date blogs. Several organisations carry out research into the use of social media, which can be used to stay informed about the reach and scope of the media involved such as the annual surveys of the Social Media Monitor or Newcom. Through websites like Frankwatching and Emerce it is possible to read current blogs about developments in the social media landscape.

Benchmarking Exercise

For the benchmarking exercise in this chapter, the social media and other online employer branding presence of the following hotels were looked at: Park Plaza Hotels & Resorts, Hilton Hotels, Doubletree, Radisson Blu, Marriott, NH Hotels, Crowne Plaza, Holiday Inn and Novotel. The benchmarking focussed on the online company profiles in terms of EVP. The online media presence of these competing hotel brands in terms of employer branding profile was compared. Facebook, LinkedIn and each company’s own career site were analysed by examining their content. Although Twitter is also a popular online channel, for this benchmarking the content of Twitter was found too limited with only 140 characters to share information (Parker, 2013). Company web pages are seen as useful because generally all company information can be found there. All competitors are brands belonging to a hotel chain and all hotel chains in the benchmarking exercise only had a career website for their corporate brand. For Facebook and LinkedIn, the focus was on the direct specific brand page not on the corporate page. A process of coding was used to assess the online presence with variables derived from the literature and related to the companies’ EVP. The EVP can be defined as the identity of the organisation, plus four elements beginning with a ‘P’ (PWnet, 2018b). *Product* is about the offer an employer makes on the labour market and consists primarily of the job itself, which attractiveness is not only determined by the job description and the responsibilities but also by the type of company and the industry or sector the company operates in. *People* that a new recruit is going to work with are a second important factor to attract new employees. Are they professional and enthusiastic? Are they willing to share their knowledge and experience? Which norms and values are central to the organisation? Is it customary to guide and coach new employees? Is the atmosphere on the work floor open and relaxed? *Place* influences the attractiveness of an employer and refers to more secondary aspects such as the company building, the location in its specific country-region-city, accessibility, layout of the workplaces, the canteen and all other facilities. *Price* refers to all aspects of the employment conditions package. What are the primary, secondary and tertiary conditions? It is about the attractiveness of the exchange ratio: what does the organisation offer and what is asked of the employee? The data for this benchmarking exercise were collected in December 2015. Using a coding diagram (CEB, 2015b) scores were given from 1 to 5 (1 being the most negative and 5 the most positive score). In Table 12.1 the coding diagram used for the benchmarking exercise is shown.

Table 12.1: Coding Diagram Used to Score the Items in the Benchmarking Exercise.

Structure of Coding Diagram	1	2	3	4	5
<i>Facebook Analysis</i>					
Number of page likes					
Average number of likes of last five posts					
Update frequency of last month					
Content of information in last two months regarding employee achievements					
Description of the organisation, the specific brand and its values					
Career/network events information					
Job vacancies available and possibility to apply for a job					
<i>LinkedIn Analysis</i>					
Number of followers					
Average number of likes of last five posts					
Update frequency of last month					
Content of information in last two months regarding employee achievements					
Description of the organisation and its values					
Career/network events information					
Job vacancies available and possibility to apply for a job					
<i>Career Site Analysis</i>					
Description of the organisation and its values					
Career/network events information					
Description of Learning and development, career opportunities and company benefits					
Job search functionality (demographic/brand/role preferences/)					
Job application functionality					
<i>Consistency of Online Presence (Three Channels)</i>					
Channel consistency					
Language functionality					
Corporate/non personal versus personal/appealing feeling					
Employer brand message					

All brands involved in the benchmarking exercise only had a corporate career page where vacancies of all their different brands can be found. Since Hilton Hotels & Resorts and Doubletree are part of the same corporate brand, the Hilton worldwide career page was researched for both. The same goes for Holiday Inn and Crowne Plaza, which are both part of IHG. On LinkedIn, except for NH, all of the brands have a brand page but none of these pages have a career page section. All brands, except for NH, have career pages on their corporate LinkedIn page. Facebook is used by all chains whilst all brands have corporate brand pages and individual hotel pages on it. All hotels have a corporate Facebook page and Hilton Worldwide, Marriott, IHG and Accor additionally have a corporate career page. Regional specific brand pages can be found for NH, Holiday Inn, Novotel, Marriott and Hilton. On both LinkedIn and Facebook specific hotel pages can be found for all brands. Not every hotel makes use of a LinkedIn hotel page, and most LinkedIn hotel pages are not actively used. The hotels were scored on four different subcategories on their Facebook, LinkedIn, career sites and the consistency between the different channels.

Overview of Results

Facebook employer profile analysis (Fig. 12.1): all the hotels score 1 (the lowest score) on information regarding career and network events, whilst no information is provided on job vacancies and possibilities to apply for a job. A wide range can be seen in the number of pages likes, and likes of the last five posts. Number of page likes vary from 146,000 to 2.2 million, whereas the average likes per post vary from 2 to 742. None of the brands scores well on content regarding employee achievements, whilst the highest scoring brand only uploaded up to four posts regarding employee achievements in the past two months. Next to that all brands provide limited information on the organisation, the (employer) brand and its values.

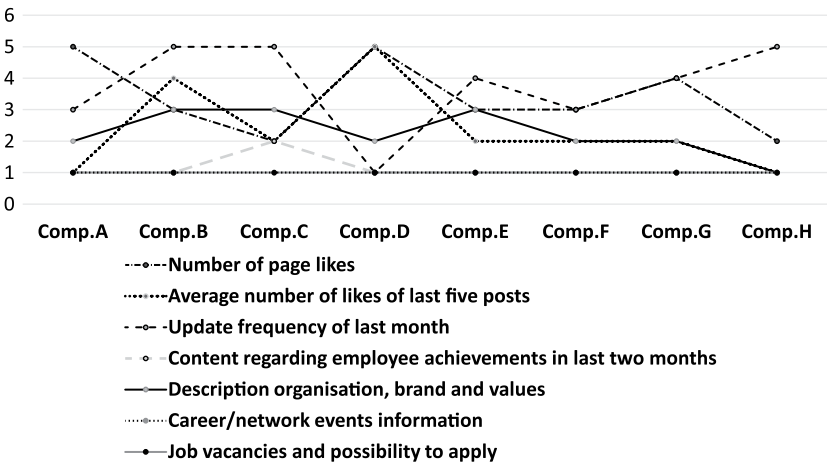
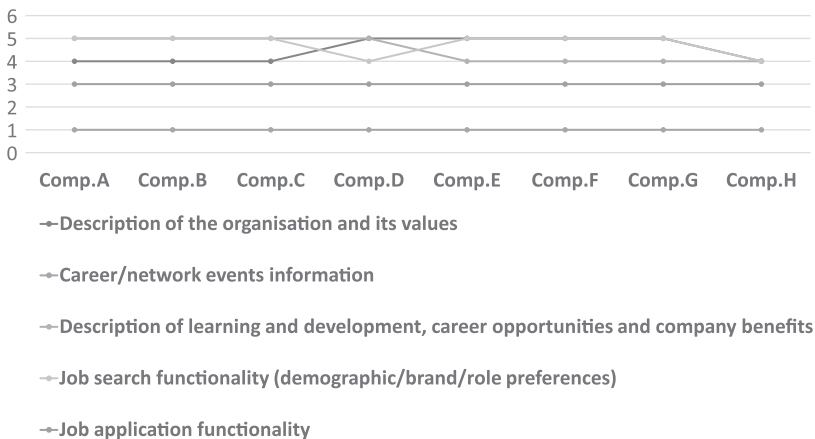
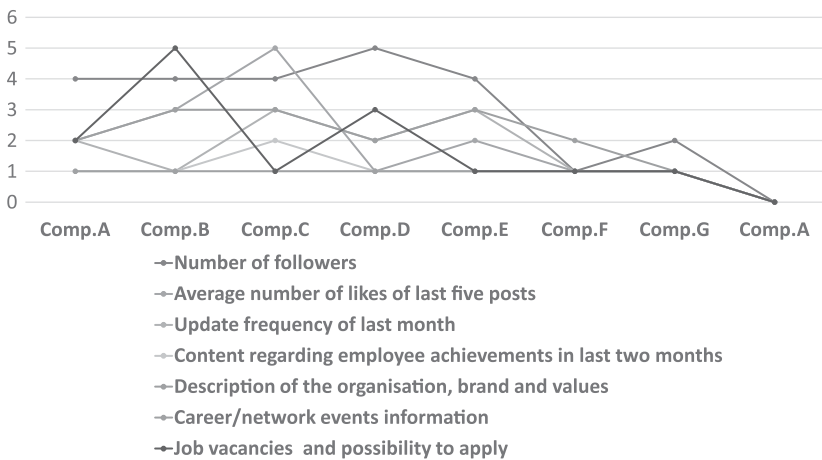


Fig. 12.1: Facebook Employer Profile Analysis.

LinkedIn employer profile analysis (Fig. 12.2): brands are not posting frequently and only two brands share up to 10 messages in the last month. Only one brand posted more than one message regarding employee achievements in the past two months and the other brands shared no information on employee achievements. Job vacancies on LinkedIn were only shown on two brand pages but most of these jobs had expired already which made it impossible to apply. Three brands had no likes on their last posts, whilst the posts were about expired job vacancies. Three brands give a corporate and brand specific description, with the other brands only providing a corporate description or no description at all. One brand had no brand LinkedIn page and was left from the results figure.

Career website analysis (Fig. 12.3): because some brands share a corporate career page, these scores are the same in the diagram. What stands out is that all



brands lack information on career/network events. One of the brands did show a career/network events tab on its career site, but no events were mentioned. On the job application functionality all brands score a three, which means that it is possible to apply, but it takes at least 10 minutes. For every brand an account needs to be created first before it is possible to apply, which leaves the applicant in uncertainty about what is done with the required personal login data. An unpleasant feeling about privacy of data can be the result for applicants if they are unaware about what happens with their data. Description of learning and development, company benefits, job search functionality, and description of the organisation and its values score high for all brands. The only difference in the job search functionality score is that some brands have an extra possibility to search for brand specific vacancies in addition to the role and demographic preferences.

Online profile consistency (Fig. 12.4) shows relatively similar results for the online presence of all brands on the channels that were looked at. Some brands have the same scores, whilst only one brand offers three appealing and personal channels and therefore scores five. For most of the brands only Facebook has an appealing feel. LinkedIn pages lack information and posts for most brands and are therefore not appealing nor personal. The career sites of the corporate brands are not appealing nor personal for most brands with only a few exceptions. The employer brand message is only shared on the career page by all brands, whilst two brands have no brand specific employer brand message. The rest of the brands have an employer brand message for all different brands. None of the brands exceeds a language functionality score over three, and on only one of the channels the language can be adapted to regional languages. A high score on language functionality could have been achieved when a page consists of regional language options on all channels. Some brands provide an option on Facebook where the region can be chosen and the language is subsequently adapted to this region.

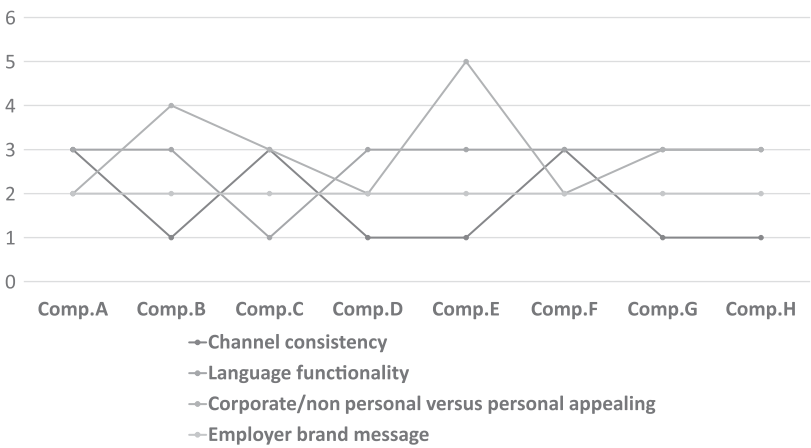


Fig. 12.4: Online Presence Consistency of the Competitive Set.

Conclusions

Fig. 12.5 shows that out from a maximum score of 115, NH Hotels has the weakest total online profile score (37), followed by Park Plaza with a score of 46, whilst Doubletree scores the highest (64).

Since the employer brand message can be shared via different online channels it is important to score high on channel consistency (CEB, 2014c), because candidates check at least three out of 11 channels where the employer brand can be communicated when they investigate potential employers. In this benchmarking exercise it became clear that there is no online presence consistency between Facebook, LinkedIn and career sites for any of the brands. If companies' channels are not consistent, potential employees are backed off, since they lose trust. Millennials are attracted to social media and the information that is shared on social media is important to them. They value pictures, posts about people who work for the company, meetings and similar type of posts (White, 2015), which makes it crucial to offer appealing social media or website. Millennials need to connect with colleagues and managers in order to become loyal, and engagement is key for this generation. Therefore the appealing feel of the online channels is really important (Rosethorn, 2012). The current channels are, unfortunately, not appealing enough with only two channels scoring higher than two out of five. Brands do not actively post about employee achievements on their Facebook and LinkedIn pages, they only score one or two on content regarding employee achievements. Only one brand posts relatively active on its Facebook channel and scores a three as only brand. The lack of sharing employee achievements messages causes loss of interest of the Millennials. Companies need to select a differentiated and attractive EVP message fitting with the four Ps as was outlined earlier in this chapter before it is communicated (CEB, 2015a). That is not so much done by the brands in this benchmarking exercise. All of them only share a

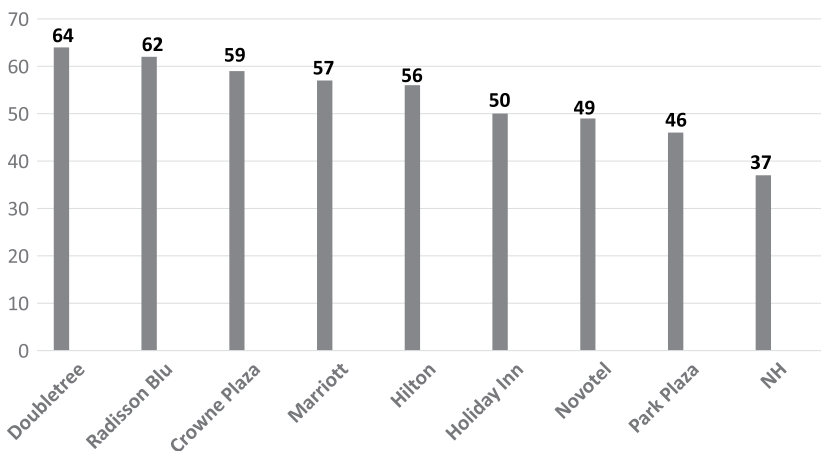


Fig. 12.5: Total Online Employer Profile Scores.

general employer brand message on the corporate career site and for some brands a brand specific EVP is communicated. One of the brands does not have a brand specific EVP at all on its online channels. The brands currently communicate their employer brand message only through the (corporate) career site, which makes it difficult to attract talents as an employer. The employer brand message must be communicated for each specific brand on all (online) channels because each brand is significantly different to work for. A clear and attractive employer brand message and specific EVP on all channels will convince and encourage talents to apply for a job. LinkedIn is at the number one position as professional network in the world but the hotel brands do not use LinkedIn and Facebook as effectively as they could. None of the brands provides job vacancy information on Facebook and on LinkedIn only one of them features the possibility to apply. Facebook varies from 135,000 brand page likes to 2.2 million and LinkedIn from 15 followers to 58,000 followers. Therefore it is fair to say that Facebook has more influence in terms of followers than LinkedIn. It is ironic to see that LinkedIn is the number one professional networking site, whilst most of the companies are not actually using LinkedIn as a recruitment tool. Even though LinkedIn is the number one professional networking tool, Facebook should be considered as least as important to use as recruitment channel. Although Facebook reaches more people than LinkedIn, no employer brand messages or job vacancies are shared there by the brands.

At the career site, all brands show their learning and development, career opportunities and company benefits, which can be seen as a positive factor since Millennials value future career opportunities, growth and development (CEB, 2014b). Especially for companies within the hospitality and tourism industry it is important to show these developments through all their channels, since the hospitality and tourism industry has a rather negative image as employment provider (Baum, 2018; Gehrels & De Looij, 2011). Developments, opportunities and benefits are only shared on the career site, which is a missed opportunity. Facebook and LinkedIn should share more on these topics, since Millennials check more channels than only the career site. Additionally Millennials are not really attracted by the application functionality of the career sites. The career sites of all brands are very much time consuming. None of the brands is actively publishing conference, network and/or career events of the company on the channels, which is not good knowing that 86% of the Millennials prefer events with career networking and job opportunities (Schawbel, 2015). All companies really need to improve their brand LinkedIn page and need to be up to date, interactive and informative. Since none of the brands have a consistent online presence on the different channels, they should make sure to share consistent brand and employer specific information on their channels. Furthermore, since all brands only share the employer brand message on their career site, they can improve by also sharing the employer brand message on all channels. Therefore the channels should be updated consistently after a clear brand specific message and EVPs are created. Time and effort should be invested in organising conference, network and career events and communicating them. Millennials see social media as important tool to gather information and to apply for a job (LinkedIn, 2015) whilst they

spend less time on gathering company information and applying for a role (CEB, 2015a, 2015b). Facebook and LinkedIn provide no job application functionality at all. Hotel companies should increase their job career site apply functionality and make it easier and less time consuming to apply. Next to that, the application function should be added to LinkedIn and Facebook in order to attract the Millennials. Hotels can differentiate themselves from their competitors, but even more important from businesses in other industries, by really focussing on the benefits of working for the company. Company benefits should be attractive and highly visible on all channels, since currently learning and development opportunities and other company benefits are only mentioned on the companies' career sites.