

## PERSONNEL MARKETING STRATEGY: A SOURCE OF COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE IN THE LABOUR MARKET

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**Abstract:** This paper covers topics closely related to human resource management, personnel marketing, employer branding, the selection of a future employer and Generation Z. It describes pilot quantitative research designed to identify means of personnel marketing that should provide a competitive advantage when recruiting employees for one of the important employers in the Liberec Region. The study included a survey to determine how the selected company is perceived by potential employees.

The primary research identified aspects that particular potential Generation Z employees consider important when choosing an employer. It also identified communication channels used by particular potential employees when searching for information about their future employer. In connection with the selection of the future employer, the survey also determined who influences decisions made by potential employees when choosing an employer. The results of the research were used to draw up a specific strategy for personnel marketing and employer branding.

**Keywords:** personnel marketing, employee, competitive advantage, employer brand, research

**JEL Classification:** M31, M51

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### INTRODUCTION

This paper focuses on personnel marketing. It provides an insight into the use of personnel marketing principles as a means of gaining a competitive advantage in the current rapidly changing world and amidst strong competition in the labour market. The paper points out that personnel marketing is an essential tool for companies that want to be competitive. A similar argument for the need to use personnel marketing in practice is presented by Krejčová and Eger (2023), Egerová at al. (2015) and Kashive and Khanna (2017). In their contributions, these authors talk about personnel marketing as a source of competitive advantage that will help to find capable and qualified workers in an unfavourable labour market.

As stated on the Europe in Data (2023) website, the Czech Republic still has the lowest unemployment rate in Europe in the long term and this has not been affected by the energy crisis or the economic recession. According to Eurostat, the unemployment rate in the Czech Republic reached 2.9% in July 2023, which is still one of the lowest in the entire European Union in an international comparison. Low unemployment and the realization that the key factor for success is not only quality products, but also a team of qualified and loyal employees, are leading more and more employers to use personnel marketing (Myslivcová, 2017). According to Saini at al. (2014) or Bejtkovsky and Copca (2020), companies are aware that a skilled workforce is a source of potential growth for the company, that skilled, satisfied and loyal employees do a better job and help to achieve the company's goals.

The paper deals with the issue of recruiting qualified employees for one of the major employers in the Liberec Region, which operates in the glass industry, which operates in what was originally a traditional sector in this region - the glass industry. The company is one of the world's leading glass manufacturers. It exports its products to 148 countries, with offices not only in Europe, but also in North America and Asia (Preciosa,

2017). This major employer in the Liberec region is also struggling with a shortage of employees on the labour market, finding it difficult to fill vacancies - especially blue-collar positions (Dlabola, 2023).

The tool used to modify the company's existing personnel marketing strategy was a questionnaire survey, the aim of which was to identify key attributes that are important in a very specific segment of potential employees deciding on their choice of future employer. These are students in their final years of technical secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec region, which are partners of the enterprise and from which it recruits employees for blue-collar positions (Dlabola, 2023).

The survey also identified the communication channels used by this segment of potential employees to obtain information about their future employer. The survey was also designed to determine who influences these potential employees when choosing a future employer.

## 1. PERSONNEL MARKETING

According to Bejtkovsky and Copka (2020), Saini et al (2014) and Ng et al. (2010), personnel marketing can be defined as a tool that focuses on the use of marketing techniques, practices and principles in human resource management. Rinaldi and Putra (2022) add to this idea by stating that companies that can use marketing in human resource management to gain a better competitive edge in the market.

Jančíková and Milichovský (2019), Fetting et. al. (2018) and Van Dierendonck et al. (2016) see personnel marketing as an effective means of reaching out to potential employees. Archana et al. (2014) also describe personnel marketing as a means related to the selection and recruitment of new employees. Kanning (2017) points out that personnel marketing is derived from the classic marketing concept and defines personnel marketing as a set of strategies used by an employer to attract suitable candidates from the labour market and then encourage them to accept the offer of a job with the employer. Wunderer and Kuhn (1993) also link the use of personnel marketing to the acquisition of employees. This perception of personnel marketing is a return to its origins. According to Meier (1991), the term personnel marketing started to appear in the German literature in the 1960s and was related to recruitment.

Gradually, personnel marketing also began to be seen as an effective means of stabilizing existing employees (Georg, 2015). Berry (1981) and Nadanyi et al. (2019) describe personnel marketing as a means of taking a proactive approach to finding, attracting, stabilizing, and motivating the workforce for the benefit of the employer. They also see personnel marketing as a means of targeting not only potential employees, but also existing ones. In this case, the aim of personnel marketing is to motivate and engage existing employees, promote their development and increase their loyalty to the firm (Hitka et al, 2015; Love & Singh, 2011).

Personnel marketing should be carefully thought out with a clear message. It should serve to deepen relationships with the company culture and take account of the needs of current and potential employees (Nazemetz & Ruch, 2012). Kanning (2017) links the concept of personnel marketing to employer branding. It states that while personnel marketing is tasked with filling those positions where there is a current staffing need, employer branding seeks to build a consistently positive image of the employer. In a review of Kanning's book, Resch (2017) states that the author sees employer branding as part of personnel marketing and also as a link between personnel marketing and employee loyalty. Based on their research, Salameh et al (2022) argue that employer branding is a suitable means of retaining existing employees as their research identified a strong relationship between employer branding and the ability to retain existing employees.

## 2. GENERATION Z

The quantitative research focused on those who are deciding about their future - those who are deciding whether to continue their studies, such as at university, or enter the labour market - students of secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region - representatives of Generation Z. Egerová et. al states that young people born between 1995 and 2010 are considered members of Generation Z. As Van der Berg

(2020) argues, the varying attitudes and opinions of different generations are shaped by the impact of different social and economic events during their lifetimes. The author considers technology to be a key element influencing each generation.

Cilliers (2017) argues that Generation Z is the first generation to be born and raised in an era of widely available internet connectivity, making them able to quickly find, process and communicate the information they need. Dolot (2018) adds that this generation is good at using other technologies in addition to using the internet. Thanks to their ability to be proficient in information technology, this generation has quick access to information. Which, according to Depoo et. al. (2020), develops creativity and the ability to innovate. The author also says that this generation is brought up to be independent and individualistic, but on the other hand they are also able to work in a team. Furthermore, members of this generation, in relation to the labour market, state that they prefer a stable and reliable employer for a long-lasting job. This fact is confirmed by a survey conducted by Deloitte (2023), which focused on respondents aged 18-30 from 19 European countries, including the Czech Republic. This survey shows, among other things, that respondents prefer flexible working hours and that they mainly use social networks, specifically LinkedIn and Facebook, to search for information about job offers. They consider career development opportunities and salary to be the most important factors in choosing a new job.

Strauss (2016) says that the strongest motivators for Generation Z in the labour market are money and the opportunity to help others. The author further states that work-life balance and employer stability are most valued in employment. This is supported by research by Kirchmayer and Fratričová (2017), who showed that work-life balance is an essential attribute for Generation Z when choosing an employer, along with job performance. Schawbel (2014) and Kubatova (2016) also speak in the same context. Both authors agree that more money, meaningful work, and career growth opportunities are among the three most important attributes when choosing an employer.

### **3. PROBLEM FORMULATION**

The Czech labour market is still struggling to recruit qualified employees and retain existing ones. As Ginterová (2022) points out in her paper, businesses are still short of employees. The lowest unemployment rate among EU countries is unhealthy for the economy and analysts do not expect any major changes in the coming months. The Czech labour market is in a situation where there are more job vacancies than job applicants, despite the complications caused by the coronavirus pandemic in recent years (ČSOB, 2022). The above facts are also confirmed by an analysis conducted by the Czech Statistical Office (2023), which states that the Czech labour market has long been unbalanced. This translates into high demand for labour and low unemployment. Although as of 30 September 2023 the Labour Office of the Czech Republic (2023) registered a total of 263,020 jobseekers (2,217 more than in the previous month) and the proportion of the unemployed rose slightly year-on-year (by 0.1 percent), unemployment in the Czech Republic is still among the lowest in the EU as a whole in an international comparison.

The problem of the labour shortage also affects Preciosa (2017), which operates in the Liberec Region. Preciosa was founded in 1948 by the merger of 25 smaller entities from the surroundings of Turnov, Jablonec nad Nisou and Liberec. It thus continued the long tradition of the glass industry in the Crystal Valley. Today, Preciosa is one of the world's leading glass manufacturers. Its products, from large pendant lights to small accessories and jewellery, are exported to 148 countries. The company has long been struggling with the fact that the demand for graduates from technical secondary schools and vocational training schools exceeds supply, meaning it is unable to fill some of its vacancies.

In order for Preciosa to make effective use of personnel marketing, quantitative research was conducted on the desired target group (those who will potentially enter the labour market - members of Generation Z) in order to identify the attributes that are important to them when choosing an employer. To determine

who influences this group in their decision-making. Furthermore, to identify the communication channels via which the target group seeks information about their future employer.

#### 4. METHODOLOGY

A search of Czech and foreign literature, academic articles, and the Internet on personnel marketing, human resource management, the labour market, Generation Z, employer selection decisions, and company materials preceded the primary research.

The research adopted a positivist methodological approach, including deduction: it is based on concrete theoretical knowledge and an investigation of objective reality (Molnár, 2021; Sebera, 2012). The purpose of the primary quantitative research was to determine the frequency that the variables acquire. According to Molnár (2012), quantitative research requires strong standardisation, which ensures a high degree of reliability.

The main objective of the primary quantitative research was to identify how students of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region decide on the choice of future employer. Based on the main objective, three research questions (RQ) were formulated (Tab. 1).

Table 1: Research questions

RQ1:	Which attributes are important for students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region when choosing an employer?
RQ2:	Who influences students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region in choosing their future employer?
RQ3:	Where do students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region obtain information about their future employer?

*Source: compiled by author, 2023*

A standardised structured electronic questionnaire was used as the means of collecting primary data as it was not expensive or time consuming due (Kozel, 2011) and also with regard to the target group of respondents. The questionnaire was distributed via email, which was used to send out a web address with a link to the questionnaire hosted on a web platform.

The initial part of the questionnaire included questions that identified gender, school studied, and type of field of study. Identification questions were followed by matrix questions that contained an even scale to eliminate leakage to a neutral response and with a view to subsequent evaluation. Through the matrix questions, respondents rated the level of importance, influence, and use.

The respondents were students in the final years of technical secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec region, with which Preciosa has long cooperated and which are potential sources of employees for its blue-collar positions. A total of 4 educational institutions (secondary schools and vocational schools) participated in the research.

#### 5. RESULTS

The primary quantitative research was conducted in April 2023. Responses were received from 110 respondents during this period. A total of 94 men (85.5%) and 16 women (14.5%) participated in the research. Given the focus of the educational institutions, this distribution of respondents by gender is rational.

In order to obtain a response to RQ1, the primary research question asked respondents to identify the attributes that are important to them when choosing an employer. Respondents expressed the level of importance on a scale of 1 to 6, where 1 = not at all important and 6 = completely important. The rated attributes for the questionnaire were obtained through the secondary research.

The evaluation considered attributes whose median lies in the interval <5;6> as important, attributes whose median lies in the interval <3;4> as neutral, and attributes whose median lies in the interval <1;2>

as unimportant (see Tab. 2). To provide more precise information about the level of importance, the mean and mode were calculated for all attributes.

Table 2: Importance of attributes in selecting an employer

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Modus</i>
<i>Salary</i>	5.29	6	6
<i>Job security</i>	5.16	6	6
<i>Friendly atmosphere in the workplace</i>	5.11	6	6
<i>Job description</i>	5.09	6	6
<i>Job stability</i>	5.05	5	6
<i>Working hours</i>	4.85	5	6
<i>Career growth opportunities</i>	4.66	5	6
<i>Extra holiday leave</i>	4.49	5	6
<i>Commuting distance</i>	4.41	5	6
<i>Modern facilities</i>	4.37	4.5	6
<i>Supplementary pension insurance</i>	4.1	5	5
<i>Own experience with the employer</i>	4.07	4	4
<i>Company image</i>	3.68	4	5
<i>Recreation and holiday allowances</i>	3.45	4	4
<i>Meal allowances, meal vouchers</i>	3.36	3	3
<i>Corporate Social Responsibility</i>	3.28	3	4
<i>Company events</i>	2.23	2	1

Source: compiled by author, 2023

Table 2 clearly shows that a large majority of the above attributes are important to the respondents. Based on the analysis, it may be concluded that the important attributes that influence the decision-making of our target group in choosing an employer are: *salary, job security, a friendly atmosphere in the workplace, job description, job stability, working hours, career growth opportunities, extra holiday leave, commuting distance, modern facilities in the workplace, supplementary pension insurance*. On the contrary, the attribute related to the organisation of corporate events is unimportant for our target group.

In order to obtain a response to RQ2, respondents were asked a question that explored the extent to which the attributes presented influenced their decision about their future employer. Respondents expressed the degree of influence on a scale of 1-6, where 1 = not at all influential and 6 = very influential.

Attributes whose median lies in the interval <5;6> were viewed as influencing the respondents. Attributes whose median lies in the interval <3;4> were viewed as neutral. Attributes whose median lies in the interval <1;2> were viewed as not influencing the respondents (see Tab. 3).

Table 3: Degree of influence of attributes that influence the target group when making decisions

<i>Attribute</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Modus</i>
<i>Own work experience</i>	4.35	5	6
<i>Family</i>	3.61	4	4
<i>Friends</i>	3.46	4	4
<i>Recommendations from current employees</i>	3.31	3	1
<i>Online presentation of the company</i>	2.93	3	1
<i>Open days</i>	2.59	2	1
<i>Job fairs</i>	2.16	2	1
<i>Company presentations at schools</i>	2.15	2	1

*School counsellors*

1.5	1	1
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Source: compiled by author, 2023

The research shows (see Table 3) that the most important attributes influencing respondents' decisions about their future employer include: *their own work experience, family, and friends*. The attributes that have the least influence on respondents' decision-making include: *open days, job fairs, company presentations at schools, and school counsellors*.

RQ3 was answered through a question that determined the extent to which respondents used the resources provided to obtain information about their future employer. The extent to which they were used was measured on a scale of 1-6, where 1 = not used at all and 6 = used very much.

Attributes whose median lies in the interval <5;6> were viewed as those used by the respondents. Attributes whose median lies in the interval <3;4> were viewed as neutral and attributes whose median lies in the interval <1;2> were viewed as those that were not used (see Tab. 4).

Table 4: Extent to which sources were used to obtain information about the employer

<i>Attribute/resource</i>	<i>Average</i>	<i>Median</i>	<i>Modus</i>
<i>Instagram</i>	4.08	4.5	6
<i>Own experience</i>	3.85	4	6
<i>YouTube</i>	3.43	4	1
<i>Facebook</i>	2.56	2	1
<i>TikTok</i>	2.55	2	1
<i>Career webpages of the company</i>	2.22	1	1
<i>Presentations at the school</i>	1.85	1	1
<i>Job fairs</i>	1.84	1	1
<i>Information leaflets</i>	1.82	1	1
<i>Outdoor advertising</i>	1.79	1	1
<i>Twitter</i>	1.47	1	1
<i>School counsellors</i>	1.29	1	1
<i>LinkedIn</i>	1.22	1	1

Source: compiled by author, 2023

On the basis of an evaluation of the data, it may be concluded that respondents make very little use of the submitted resources. Sources used by respondents to find out information about a future employer include: *Instagram. Own experience and YouTube* can be considered as neutral sources according to the results.

## 6. DISCUSSION

The topic of this paper is personnel marketing, which can be characterised as an innovative field that links human resource management with marketing and, according to Armstrong et al. (2014), views employees as a customer. The marketing practices and principles were used by the author to formulate a strategy according to Rinaldi and Putra (2022) to help a particular entity in attracting employees. Marketing research was used as an analytical tool.

The research aimed to identify which attributes are important to the target group when choosing an employer, who influences them when deciding on their future employer, and where they get their information about their future employer. The target group of the research - respondents - were students in the final years of selected technical secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region, which are partners of Preciosa. To meet the main objective of the research, 3 research questions were set: *Which attributes are important for students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region*

*when choosing an employer? Who influences students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region in choosing their future employer? Where do students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region obtain information about their future employer?*

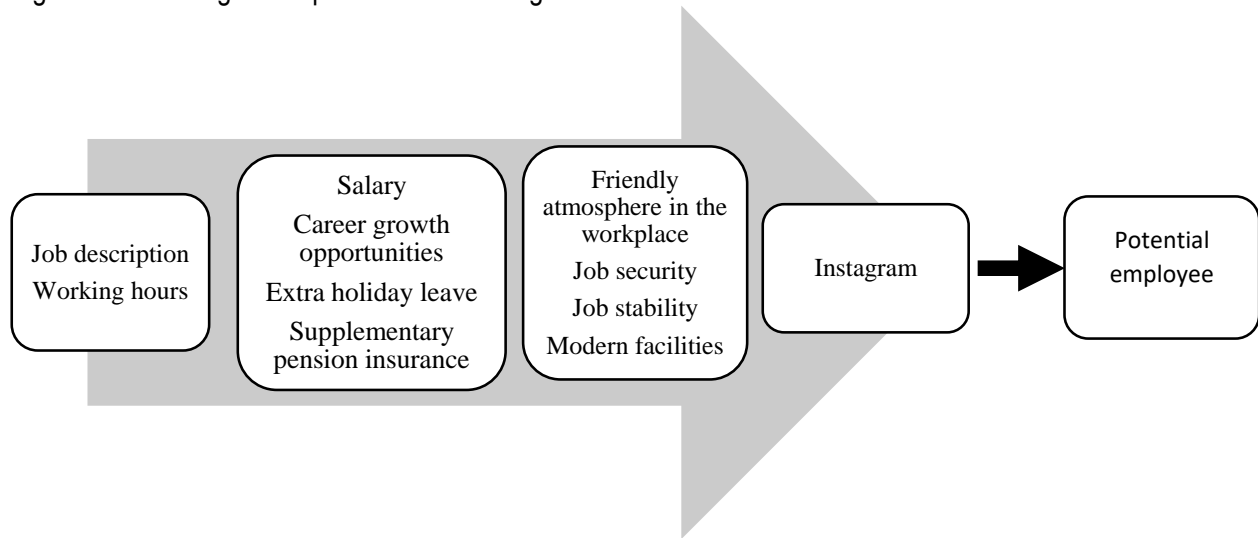
The data shows that *important attributes that influence our target group of respondents include: salary, job security, friendly atmosphere in the workplace, job description, job stability, working hours, career growth opportunities, extra holiday leave, commuting distance, modern facilities and supplementary pension insurance*. From the list of attributes, it is evident that all marketing mix tools in personnel marketing are represented in the results according to Bednář (2013), Pratoommas (20115), Spielmann (2015) or Wickham and O'Donahue (2009). The attributes identified as *most important* in our research - *salary and a friendly atmosphere* - are the same as those identified in Motivate's research as the most important factors that influence jobseekers' choice of employer (Šmída, 2019). The attribute ranked last in the Motivate research was, as in our research, generally employee benefits. *Salary and a friendly atmosphere* as the most important attributes when choosing an employer are also confirmed by research conducted by Randstad (2023). The results of the research carried out by Randstad (2023), a company that has long conducted independent research in more than 30 countries (including the Czech Republic) and provides an insight into what is important to employees when choosing an employer, agree as regards the list of attributes (with the exception of job description and modern facilities) that are important to potential employees. However, this does not necessarily mean that job description and modern facilities were not perceived as unimportant by the Randstad survey respondents; these attributes may not have been included in the evaluation. Randstad also looked at the location of the employer in its research. Its research shows that location is important to potential employees. This also confirms the results of our research.

The results of the analysis of responses to the second research question - *who influences the students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region when choosing a future employer* - show that the target group of the research is not overly influenced, that it relies on its own experience. This research result corresponds with Randstad's characterisation of Generation Z as an employee (2023). In this context, it says that members of the relevant Generation Z are confident and desire self-fulfilment. Tapscott (2010) agrees with this general characterisation of Generation Z. At the same time, the author adds that the members of Generation Z are natural collaborators who like to make new contacts and who care about integrity.

When analysing the data in response to the third research question - *where do students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region obtain information about their future employer* - it was found that most of the attributes/resources presented were not used by the target group of respondents. They are: *Facebook, TikTok, company career pages, presentations at schools, job fairs, information leaflets, outdoor advertising, Twitter, school counsellors and LinkedIn*. The data further suggests that respondents rely more on their own experience and that although social networking and online communication are important characteristics for Generation Z, this generation considers social networking as complementary when choosing an employer (Ferincz et al., 2010). These results are confirmed by d'Academos (2019), which found that up to 45 % of Generation Z respondents prefer face-to-face contact when choosing an employer.

In the use of marketing principles in human resource management (Rinaldi & Putra, 2022; Bejtkovský & Copka, 2020; Saini et al., 2014; Ng et al., 2010), it is possible to propose a marketing strategy in the form of a marketing mix in personnel marketing based on the results of the quantitative research (see Fig. 1). According to Kotler and Keller (2013), the marketing mix in personnel marketing gives a competitive advantage.

Figure 1: Marketing mix in personnel marketing



*Source: compiled by author, 2023*

The figure above shows that the attributes in the individual marketing mix tools in personnel marketing are a prerequisite - with the right tactics - for effective targeting of the target group.

The attributes we have identified in the Price in HR Marketing tool correspond with the results of research by ManpowerGroup (2020), Randstad (2023), Schawbel (2014), and Kubátová (2016), which show that salary and growth opportunity are the most critical aspects of work for Generation Z. Randstad (2023) also reports that 62% of Generation Z representatives consider intangible benefits necessary. Our results confirm this. The attributes we identified in the Place and Product tool are broadly consistent with the results of research by Kirchmayer and Fričová (2017) and Meret et al. (2018), which point to the fact that the job itself, workplace atmosphere, job security, and job stability are essential to Generation Z when choosing an employer. According to our research and authors Döme (2018) and Randstad (2023), the most effective channel to reach potential employees appears to be Instagram.

When formulating the tactics, it is also necessary to take into account another finding - namely the fact that members of the target group are not overly influenced in their choice of a future employer, that they rely on their own practical experience. This should be the direction taken by the proposed marketing strategy.

The number of respondents could be perceived as a certain limitation in the research. This handicap can be eliminated by reaching out to more Preciosa partners from secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region. Timing the research so that data is not collected when students are preparing for their final exams. This would make representatives of secondary school and vocational school management more willing to participate in the research.

## CONCLUSION

This paper presents the results of quantitative research whose main objective was to identify how students of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region decide on their choice of employer, what is important for them when choosing an employer, whether they are influenced by someone when choosing an employer, and where they obtain information about their future employer. The research was part of long-term cooperation between the Faculty of Economics of the Technical University in Liberec (EF TUL) and Preciosa. The purpose of the research was to help Preciosa with a problem it has long been facing - the difficulty in recruiting qualified employees for specific positions.



The data collected in the research fulfilled the defined objective, providing answers to the research questions that were defined in the initial phase. The research provided answers to the question: Which attributes are important for students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region when choosing an employer? The results of our research correspond with the results of Motivate (Šmída, 2019) and Randstad (2023), which have been conducting research into similar topics for a long time. The research shows that the most important factors for our target group of respondents include salary, job security and atmosphere in the workplace.

The research also provided answers to two other research questions that were identified in the research. The first of these was: Who influences students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region in choosing their future employer? Analysis of the data shows that members of our target group of respondents rely most on their own experience when choosing a future employer. This finding also matches the findings of research conducted on a similar topic (see Randstad, 2023; Tapscott, 2010). The answer to the last research question: Where do students in the final years of selected secondary schools and vocational schools in the Liberec Region obtain information about their future employer? was slightly surprising. However, it confirmed the findings already published (see Ferincz et al., 2010) that social networks are only a supplementary means for our research target group (representatives of Generation Z) when searching for information about a future employer. However, the answer did not correspond with Deloitte's (2013) research, which states that our age group mainly uses social networks to search for information about future employers.

Based on the results of the analysis, the paper proposes a specific marketing strategy in the field of personnel marketing. If this strategy is to be an effective means of increasing the company's competitive advantage in the labour market, it is up to Preciosa to implement all the findings of the research into its product, pricing, distribution and communication strategies.

The author aims to conduct further research in the future, geographically focused on the Liberec Region and demographically on Generation Z, where the respondents would not only be partner schools of the selected company, but secondary schools and vocational schools in general. One of the circumstances of the research under consideration should also be to investigate how this group of respondents perceives traditional employers in the region. For example: which employers are attractive to them and why?

### **Acknowledgment**

**The paper was supported with the Internal Grant Contest of the Faculty of Economics, Technical University of Liberec.**

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