

INTERNAL PERSONNEL MARKETING: A MEANS OF ATTRACTING AND STABILIZING EXPATRIATES IN AN INTERNATIONAL COMPANY

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Abstract: It is not only the coronavirus crisis that has caused shortages on the labour market. The lack of workers has affected the Czech market across industries. Companies in the Czech Republic were already struggling with labour shortages before Covid-19. Companies are looking abroad for the employees they need, and are forced to use innovative approaches to attract them. The paper presents the results of quantitative research among expatriates conducted at one of the SKODA AUTO's plants that is a pillar of the Czech automotive industry. The aim of the research was to identify the degree of application of internal personnel marketing through a questionnaire survey. It further investigated why expatriate employees chose SKODA AUTO as their employer, what the source of information about a particular job there is, whether they perceive cultural differences in the workplace that may influence them, and other. Based on the research findings, the paper formulates recommendations, in the form of the 4Ps in personnel marketing, leading to the attraction and stabilization of foreign employees.

Keywords: Personnel marketing/HR Marketing, Quantitative research, Expatriates, Human capital, Employees

JEL Classification: M31, M51

INTRODUCTION

Human capital has not always been at the forefront of interest as it is currently. The reason for this interest is the lack of labour in the Czech Republic across industries and regions. There is a shortage of work force not only in manufacturing and IT, but also in agriculture, healthcare, tourism and other services. There is a lack of skilled and unskilled labour (ČTK, 2021). In August, employers offered 363,114 job vacancies. According to Eurostat (2021), unemployment was at a low level of 2.8 % this month. Another important fact is that there are on average 0.7 job seeker per vacancy in the Czech Republic (MPSV, 2021).

Although experts emphasize that anti-covid measures and government programs that kept unemployment low caused this situation, it must be stated that in the Czech Republic, there was a shortage of employees even before the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic. It has caused a lack of foreign employees on the Czech labour market, who in large amounts left our country because of it (Lidovky.cz, 2021).

The process of acquiring and retaining qualified, experienced and motivated employees is a significant problem not only for Czech companies but also around the world. Therefore, it is necessary to pay special attention to their existing employees and use innovative methods and tools in human resource management (Alniaçık et al., 2014; Bejtkovský & Copca, 2020, Ungerman & Dědková, 2019). These are for example personnel marketing which many Czech companies perceive as an important concept of recruiting and stabilizing employees (Strenitzerová, 2016). Personnel marketing (the equivalent of human resource marketing - HRM is also used in the professional literature) recommends to focus on recruiting and stabilizing employees in various areas, such as the structure of the company, its work culture and its disposition to work (Aprofes 2016; Van Dierendonck et al., 2016; Van Esch et al., 2019). It is important to pay attention to both components of personnel marketing, external personnel marketing,

which focuses on recruiting employees and internal personnel marketing, which concentrates on existing employees, on their stabilization, and their satisfaction (Urbancová & Hudáková, 2017).

The introductory part of this paper will address the following key topics. First, theoretical background of personnel marketing/ internal personnel marketing and the Czech labour market from the perspective of employing foreigners is discussed. Subsequently, there will be presented a description of the quantitative research carried out at SKODA AUTO focusing on the application of internal personnel marketing towards to the expatriates.

1. INTERNAL PERSONNEL MARKETING

In the foreign literature, the concept of HR marketing is often explained as an application of marketing rules and principles in the field of human capital management. It is therefore a tool by which relations of employees (current and potential employees) are managed, built and influenced towards the employer. The focus is on employees, who need to be effectively stimulated and motivated. In other words, to ensure their satisfaction so that they stay in the company for as long as possible (Bejtkovský & Copca, 2020; Ng et al., 2010; Saini et al., 2014).

Well-established HR marketing is a current trend that has a significant influence on the management of the internal environment of the company and affects the external environment. It is a concept that focuses on two groups of employees. On the one hand, it takes care of the satisfaction of existing employees, the task is to stabilize them, create suitable and good working conditions. In the professional literature, this part of personnel marketing is called internal personnel marketing (d'Ambrosová et al., 2014; Hitka et al., 2015; Love & Sing, 2011). On the other hand, it focuses on potential employees and tries to attract their attention. This part of personnel marketing is called external personnel marketing in the professional literature (Archana et al., 2014; d'Ambrosová et al., 2014; Woźniak, 2015).

External and internal personnel marketing are interconnected; they interact with each other (Poláková & Häuser, 2003). The interconnection of external and internal personnel marketing is also confirmed by Thom (2008) who claims that internal personnel marketing can be a good reputation in the external labour market because information on employee satisfaction is disseminated without the active help of external personnel marketing. On the contrary, unless external personnel marketing is supported by internal personnel marketing, it has almost no significance for the company in the long run. The authors Urbancová and Hudáková (2017) point out, that despite the growing importance of human capital in the company, there are a large number of companies that do not attach sufficient weight to the internal PM, but primarily focus only on external PM. They also add that in the case of the application of personnel marketing, human resources officers in the company become marketing workers, who strive to keep the organization in the minds of stakeholders as a quality employer.

2. CZECH LABOR MARKET FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF EMPLOYING FOREIGNERS

With regard to the scope, this part will focus only on a partial economic view of the issue.

According to data from the Czech Statistical Office (hereinafter CZSO) it is possible to observe a growing trend in the number of employed foreigners. In 2019, people with foreign citizenship accounted for more than a tenth of the workforce in the Czech Republic, but in 2020 they accounted for almost a twelfth. Most foreign employees are concentrated in the industrial sector (29.5 %) and are hired mainly through employment agencies. This is followed by administrative and support service activities with a share of 17.6 %. There are 10 % of employed foreigners registered in retail and wholesale and in the field of construction, it is 9 % (CZSO, 2019a; CZSO, 2020).

According to nationalities, workers from Ukraine are the most represented on the Czech labour market (145.5 thousand), followed by workers from Slovakia (121.3 thousand). Furthermore, according to the number of workers in the labour market in the Czech Republic, there are nationals of countries such as Vietnam (61.9 thousand), Russia (38.2 thousand), Poland (21.8 thousand) and Germany (21.5 thousand). (CZSO, 2019b).

The most frequently mentioned reason for placing foreigners in vacancies is the *lack of domestic labour force* (mentioned in 76 %). This fact was stated by representatives of 89 economic entities of various sizes, which were interviewed in 2019 by TREXIMA. The second most common reason is the *low willingness of Czech workers to perform certain professions* (mentioned in 36 %). Another reason is the *greater willingness of foreigners to pursue certain professions* (mentioned in 27 %), *language skills of foreigners and cultural enrichment* (mentioned in 13 %), *the performance of multicultural work teams and the professional knowledge and skills of foreigners* (both mentioned in 11 %); (Svaz průmyslu a dopravy České republiky, 2019).

3. PROBLEM FORMULATION

SKODA AUTO (hereinafter referred to as SA) can be perceived as a pillar or backbone of the Czech economy, which employs 39,964 people worldwide (2020a).

The year 2018 brought the company an increase in the number of foreigners by 16.3 % compared to 2017. Of the total workforce in SA, foreigners accounted for 13.6 % in 2018, which corresponds to an increase of 1.2 % compared to 2017. A total of 4,443 foreign nationals from 48 countries were part of the company's core staff in 2018. Regarding the ethnic composition of the core staff, the largest group in 2018 were employees from Poland (45.3 %), then workers from Slovakia (35.2 %), from Ukraine (8.9 %), from Germany (3.1 %). The remaining 7.5 % are employees from the United Kingdom, Spain, Portugal, Turkey, France, Russia, India, China, USA, Canada, South Korea, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Syria and Algeria (SKODA AUTO, 2019).

In 2019, the total number of tribal foreigners increased by 297 to 4,740 foreign employees from 50 countries. Of this number, 3,984 foreign workers come from the EU countries and 756 workers are nationals of non-EU countries (SKODA AUTO, 2020a).

As part of the application of internal personnel marketing, SKODA AUTO annually makes a survey of the satisfaction of its employees. The condition for participation in the survey is that the respondent must be a regular employee of the company, either in the Czech Republic or abroad. On the contrary, agency workers, trainees, employees with a Work Performance Agreement cannot participate in the survey. They all represent about 13 % of the company's workforce. The results of the research show that the satisfaction index has an increasing tendency. Since 2018, employee satisfaction has been maintained above 85 % (SKODA AUTO, 2019; SKODA AUTO, 2020b).

Independently of the employer, employees can express their satisfaction on the Atmoscope platform. Here, the level of satisfaction, which was calculated as an average from the sub-evaluated areas, reaches the value of 69 % (ATMOSKOP, 2020).

The reason for the implementation of the research presented in the paper is the fact, that so far, no research has been carried out focusing only on expatriates, and which would be carried out independently of SKODA AUTO.

4. METHODOLOGY

The main goal of the quantitative research was to find out whether and how personnel marketing at SKODA AUTO is applied in the process from recruitment, adaptation and subsequent care for foreign employees. In order to achieve the main goal of the research, the following five sub-objectives were set (SO) (Tab. 1):

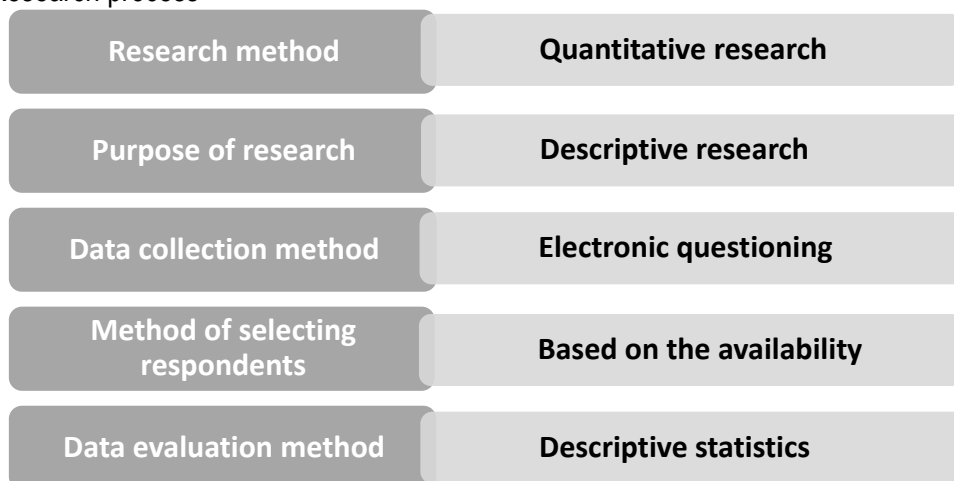
Tab. 1: Su-objectives

SO1:	To identify the reason why foreigners most often choose SA as their employer and what means of external personnel marketing are usually the first source of information about a particular job position.
SO2:	To find out whether there are cultural differences in the employee's workplace, affecting the work environment and its atmosphere. If so, what differences there are.
SO3:	To determine which benefits are most often used among foreign employees, whether they are satisfied with the offer of benefits or whether it is necessary to modify or expand these benefits to increase employee satisfaction.
SO4:	Find out whether SA communicates effectively and sufficiently with its foreign employees and by what means it provides them with up-to-date information about what is happening in the company.
SO5:	Identify the degree of satisfaction of foreign workers with the course of their current employment.

Source: Own processing, 2021

Figure 1 illustrates the research process.

Figure 1: Research process



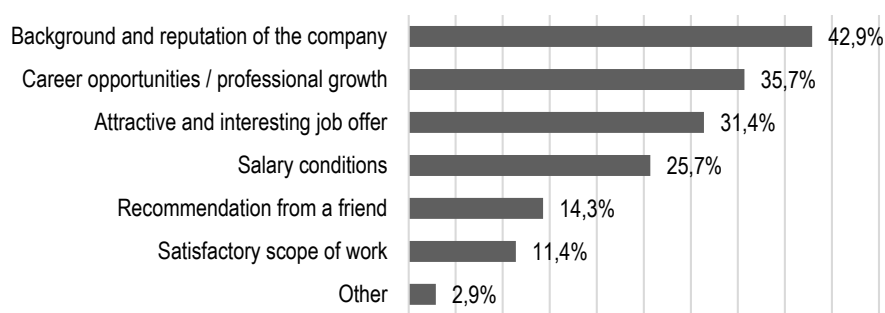
Source: own processing, 2021

The quantitative method was used in the research. Quantitative research asks the basic question "How many?" In general, this means that the purpose of the research is to obtain frequency data of the occurrence of something that is currently underway or what has already taken place at a particular time. Primary data were obtained using a structured questionnaire. The advantage of this method of data collection is low time consuming and the ability to obtain data from a large set of respondents. Due to its addressability and also due to its financial and time-saving nature, a research method of data collection in the form of online electronic surveys was used (Kozel, 2011). An email by means of which an internet address was sent with a link to a questionnaire located on the web platform was used as a distribution tool. The respondents were regular employees-foreigners of SA who have their own e-mail address. Owing the email address of foreign workers significantly reduced the number of respondents that could be addressed. A total of 164 foreign employees were contacted at the plant in Mladá Boleslav.

5. RESULTS

As mentioned above, the ownership of the e-mail address and the complex communication in the pandemic era did not make it possible to reach more expatriates. The questionnaire was filled in by 70 regular foreign employees, 57.1 % men and 42.9 % women. The return rate was 42.7 %. In the research, there were represented 20 % of workers from Ukraine, followed by workers from Slovakia (18.6 %), then from Russia (12.9 %) and Germany (11.4 %). Members of Indian, American, Spanish, Kazakh, Chinese, Bosnian, Portuguese, Turkish, British and Australian nationality also took part in the survey. The research showed that the largest proportion of respondents, with a share of 62.9 %, were expatriates with a university degree, 38.6 % expatriates with a high school graduation. It can, therefore, be stated that the interviewed foreign employees at SKODA AUTO are highly educated. Regarding the job position, respondents most often hold professional positions (44.3 %). In addition, 27.1 % of expatriates who are on professional internships at SKODA AUTO, 15.7 % of expatriates who hold a workers' position and 12.9 % of expatriates who are in Trainee programs took part in the research. At first sight, it is clear that foreign workers have always had at least one reason why they chose the SKODA AUTO as their employer (Fig. 2).

Figure 2: Reasons for choosing SKODA AUTO as the employer

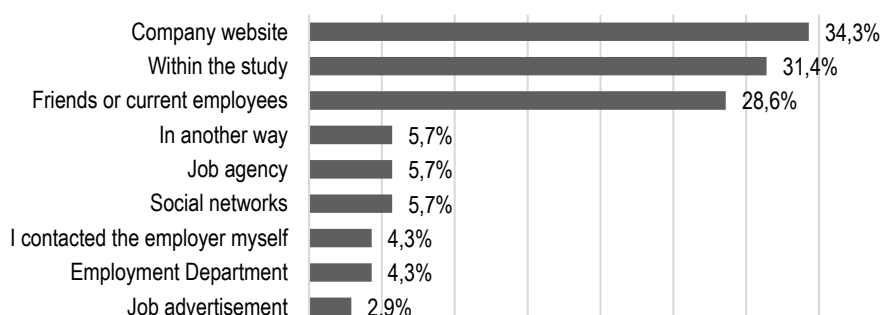


Source: own processing, 2021

The research shows that *the background and reputation of the company* are the most important reason why the current expatriates of SA chose this company as their employer. *The opportunity for career growth and attractive and meaningful job positions* are also important for expatriates.

In terms of sources of information, the most commonly used tool is *the company's website* (Fig. 3).

Figure 3: Sources of obtaining initial information about SA.

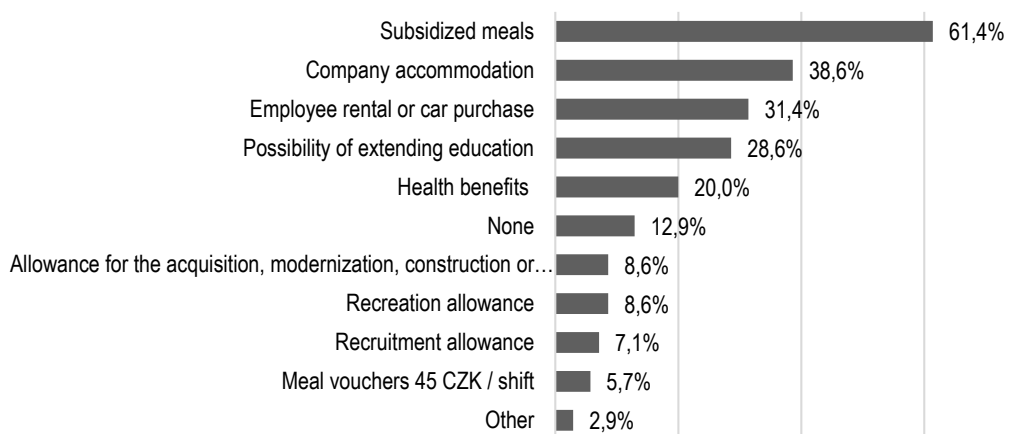


Source: own processing, 2021

A large percentage of expatriates also learned about the job offer *during their studies* (31.4 %). These are, therefore, mainly current or former foreign trainees. In addition, the research confirmed the existence of interactive marketing, because the third most common means by which expatriates learned about their current job position are *friends or current employees* (28.6 %). They knowingly and unknowingly ventilate information in public and are thus popularisers of their employer.

A part of the questionnaire was also to examine whether foreign employees observed any cultural differences in the workplace. The respondents' task was to answer Yes or No. If they answered Yes, they were asked for a specific example. A larger share of foreign workers (55.7 %) does not observe any cultural differences in the workplace. However, a surprisingly large proportion of respondents (44.3 %) notice certain differences. According to the results of the survey, the observed cultural differences are: *straightforwardness and so-called power distance in other words distance of power in the organization, different eating habits, different traditions, customs and religions, different hygienic habits, differences in communication (methods of communication, human contact), persistent problems in open communication and etiquette due to language and cultural differences, different style of humour - its understanding and limits, difficult overcoming of language barriers by certain nationalities, different approach to work, frequent urgency of the required information, association into their communities - low willingness to social interaction with other nationalities, different mentality of nationalities, different rate of respect for colleagues and superiors, different work style and work morale, which is often a source of conflict, work-life balance (some nationalities prefer more private life than others), different behaviour in and out of the office, low openness and tolerance of Czech employees towards their foreign co-workers (low willingness of Czechs to speak other than Czech), different approach to problem solving, different priorities and tolerances, greater conservatism of Czechs than other nationalities in the workplace.* Another task was to identify, which benefits foreign workers most often use (Fig. 4).

Figure 4: The most used benefits by foreign workers at SKODA AUTO

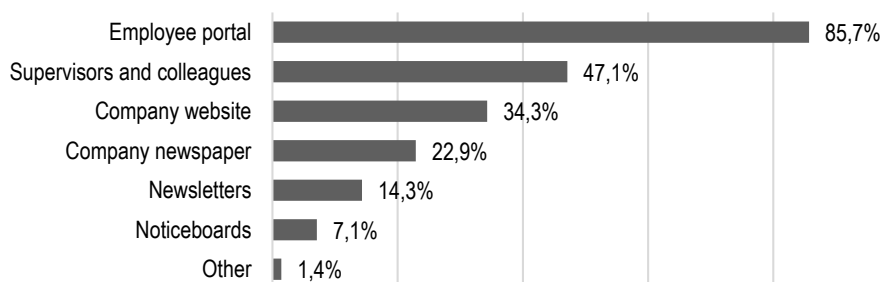


Source: own processing, 2021

The research shows that the most used benefits among the expatriates of SKODA AUTO are *subsidized meals, company accommodation, employee rental or car purchase and the possibility of extending education.*

The following Figure 5 shows the answers to the question of which sources are used by expatriates in SKODA AUTO to obtain information about current events in the organization.

Figure 5: Internal communication means of SKODA AUTO



Source: own processing, 2021

Figure 5 shows that the majority of respondents obtain up-to-date information mainly from *the employee portal* (85.7 %). The second most common source of information is *colleagues and superiors*. This way of obtaining information also means a certain risk associated with communication noise, because when receiving information, its original meaning may change. 34.3 % of expatriate respondents obtain information from the company's official website, which are regularly updated.

The last task was to identify how satisfied foreign workers are with the course of their current employment, see Table 2 (respondents expressed a degree of satisfaction; 1 = very satisfied, 2 = satisfied, 3 = dissatisfied, 4 = very dissatisfied) and Table 3 (respondents expressed the degree of agreement with the submitted statements; 1 = strongly agree, 2 = agree, 3 = disagree, 4 = strongly disagree).

The following was used for the assessment:

- an attribute whose median lies in the interval <1;2>.... respondents are *satisfied, or rather agree with the submitted statement*
- attribute whose median lies in the interval <3;4>... respondents are *dissatisfied, or rather do not agree with the submitted statement*

Table 2: Evaluation of respondents' satisfaction with selected attributes of personnel marketing

Attribute	Mean	Mode	Median
<i>Employee Care Department</i>	1,60	1	2
<i>Communication towards employees</i>	1,70	2	2
<i>Work Environment</i>	1,66	2	2
<i>Relationships with colleagues and other employees</i>	1,64	1	2
<i>Job duties</i>	1,84	2	2
<i>Offer of employee benefits</i>	1,84	2	2
<i>Amount of earnings</i>	1,97	2	2
<i>Possibility of personal development</i>	1,93	2	2

Source: own processing, 2021

From the results (Tab. 2), it is evident that the level of satisfaction of expatriates with all the above attributes is quite high.

Table 3: Evaluation of the course of employment

Attribute	Mean	Mode	Median
<i>My co-workers get along with me</i>	1,47	1	1
<i>I had no problem integrating within the company</i>	1,73	2	2
<i>There is no discrimination in the company</i>	1,90	1	2

Source: own processing, 2021

Table 3, in which expatriates expressed the degree of agreement with the submitted statements, also confirms the fact that they are satisfied with the course of employment.

6. DISCUSSION

It is precisely *the background and reputation of the company* that are the most frequently mentioned reasons why expatriates chose SA as their employer. The company's reputation is the result of building an employer's brand. Barrow and Mosley (2011) describe the employer's brand as a concept whose benefit is a positive perception of the company, its values, and its behaviour towards employees. The importance of building a good reputation is also confirmed by the fact that respondents included *friends or current employees* among the three most used sources of initial information about SA. These facts correspond with the statement from Lippold (2014) or Kubátová (2013) who claim that internal and external personnel marketing are closely interconnected and interact with each other. Properly applied internal personnel marketing, which leads to the satisfaction and stabilization of existing employees, has a positive effect on external personnel marketing, which aims at potential employees.

Other important reasons why expatriates chose SKODA AUTO as their employer are *career opportunities/professional growth, an attractive and interesting job offer and salary conditions*. The most used source of obtaining information about SKODA AUTO is, in addition to *friends and current employees*, also the *company's website* and the information provided to them *within the study*.

As for the most used benefits, it can be stated that the expatriates mentioned the most used means of stabilization differ from the means that were identified by Hays (2018) through research as the most important tools for stabilizing existing employees (here we proceed from the assumption that when benefits are evaluated as the most used, they are important for expatriates and lead to their stabilization). In Hays' research, *the amount of financial reward*, followed by the *job position and job flexibility / possibility to adjust working hours* were identified as the most important tools for stabilization. In our research, the following were pointed out as effective tools for stabilizing expatriates: *subsidized meals, company accommodation, employee rental and car purchase, and the possibility of extending education*.

The most used sources of information within the company include the *employee portal* and it is the *superiors and colleagues themselves* who pass on information to the expatriates, followed by the *company's website and the company newspaper*.

The subject of the research was also to identify satisfaction with selected aspects of internal personnel marketing. Based on the results, it can be stated that the expatriates at SA are satisfied with all the submitted and applied means of the marketing mix in personnel marketing.

The results of the research are taken into account by the marketing mix in personnel marketing below (Fig. 6), which is compiled based on theoretical background according to Bednář (2013), Pratoommas (2015), Spielmann (2015) and Wickham & O'Donohue (2009).

Figure 6: Marketing mix in personnel marketing.

Product	Price	Communication	Distribution
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job position (correctly defined, with attributes that will attract potential employees) • Job description • Working environment • Employer brand 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Career advancement • Subsidized meals • Company accommodation • Employee rental or car purchase • Possibility of extending education • The amount of earnings 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Company website • Recruitment at schools • Building a good reputation • Employee portal • Corporate newspaper 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate Culture • Communication flow • Workplace relationships

Source: own processing, 2021

In conclusion, it can be stated that the results of the research identified effective means of marketing mix in personnel marketing. They pointed out the satisfaction of the existing employees / expatriates in SA. The results further confirm that personnel marketing is closely connected to the employer's brand; a responsibly built employer brand influences the perception of the situation in the workplace. It further shows that it leads to the acquisition and stabilization of qualified and motivated employees, and that internal personnel marketing significantly affects external personnel marketing (Dooley et al., 2007; Sullivan, 2004).

A certain limitation of the research is (with regard to the time when it was carried out - during a coronavirus pandemic) the number of respondents. Therefore, the sample of responses obtained cannot be considered representative and the results cannot be generalized. Nevertheless, the data presented in this paper provide a valuable insight into the issue of human resource management and demonstrate the need to apply personnel marketing in practice.

CONCLUSIONS

The paper dealt with the degree of application of personnel marketing to a specific group of employees. The data within the implementation of quantitative research fulfilled the defined main goal as well as the defined sub-objectives. The data answered the question of whether internal personnel marketing is applied in SA and identified effective means of personnel marketing, which were subsequently used to compile a marketing mix in personnel marketing.

The research clearly shows that the main reason why expatriates choose SA as their employer is, above all, the good name of the company. The primary source of information about the job position for expatriates is the company's website. The company's current employees are also a significant source. In addition, the research reveals a positive fact that more than half of the expatriates do not perceive cultural differences in their workplace.

One of the sub-objectives was also to identify the most commonly used benefit by expatriates. Research has shown that these are, with a large predominance, subsidized meals. Furthermore, it can be stated on the basis of the research that the company SA communicates effectively with the interest group of the research. The main source of information for expatriates is the employee portal.

The last sub-objective of the research was to identify the degree of satisfaction of expatriates with the course of their current employment. Based on the responses, we can say that the SA expatriates are satisfied with the presented aspects, which are the Employee Care Department, communication towards employees, the work environment, relations at the workplace, job duties, the offer of employee benefits, the amount of earnings and possibilities for personal development.

The obtained data led to the identification of reasons why expatriates choose SA as their employer. It also helped to identify the benefits that are most often used by expatriates. With regard to the fact that the respondents did not state almost any suggestions for the extension of benefits, it can be stated that the current offer of benefits is sufficient and leads to the satisfaction of foreign employees. The research also pointed to the fact that the list of popular benefits from the perspective of expatriates differs from the standard benefits, which lead to the stabilization of employees (Myslivcová, 2019). Furthermore, research has shown that expatriates in the workplace are satisfied not only with the working atmosphere, but also with the means of communication, and with the fact that they do not perceive cultural differences. The results confirmed the importance of building an employer brand, and in addition, the fact that the activities resulting from the application of internal personnel marketing have an impact on employee satisfaction, loyalty and also on the perception of the company as a quality employer. At the same time, the research verified the interconnection of external and internal personnel marketing (Myslivcová, 2019).

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