


# Chapter 12

## Digital Corporate Identity in the Healthcare Sector: Cross–National Analysis of the HR Marketing of Hospitals

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### ABSTRACT

*German, Austrian and Swiss hospitals operate in a highly competitive labor market. Therefore, companies have to present themselves in a highly professional manner in the digital environment and shape their digital corporate identity. Therefore, the aim of this study is to analyze the digital corporate identity of international hospitals in order to uncover differences and to generate implications. To achieve this goal, the largest 20 hospitals of each country were analyzed by using unobtrusive measures. Accordingly, publicly available data has been generated without informing the participants, so as not to influence the sample. The findings show that none of the 60 hospitals analyzed achieved very good results. In contrast, for most of the hospitals there is room for improvement in relation to their digital corporate identities, which is surprising as the War for Talent is still ongoing. This is the first analysis of its kind, underlining the originality of our work.*

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## INTRODUCTION

The shortage of skilled workers and the War for Talent have affected the healthcare sector which raises concerns around the globe (Haryanto, 2019; Weidinger et al., 2022). In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic revealed that many healthcare institutions are already at the limit of their workload capacity (Schneiders & Schönauer, 2022; Roland Berger Krankenhausstudie, 2022). Thus, it is important for hospitals to employ personnel with appropriate qualifications (Matzke, 2018). However, the recent development in the employment market is contradictory as it is estimated that between 2018 and 2030 there will be a shortage of approximately eleven million healthcare employees in Europe (Boskovic, 2021). This is accompanied by a decrease in the working population, i.e., demographic change, while professionals are needed in the healthcare sector (Augurzky et al., 2018; Weidinger et al., 2022). Particularly affected are the professional groups of nursing, medical service, medical doctors and the administrative departments (Endemann, 2021; Matzke, 2018).

As a consequence, organizations have to have a professional digital corporate identity, i.e., unique representation of their attributes, especially related to the work conditions, corporate values and insights into everyday working life, in the digital environment (Tirrel & Winnen, 2024). This is beneficial for companies as it affects the digital employer brand(ing) and thus supports digital recruitment (Gruel & Tirrel, 2024) by sending positive signals to potential applicants, according to Spence's (1973) signaling theory.

The digital perspective is of paramount importance for companies since the internet is used by approximately 4.4 billion people worldwide, of which 4.2 billion of the users interact in social networks (Voigt, 2022). The relevance is also underlined by the statement from Coiné and Babbitt (2014, p. 22) that "companies that fail to adapt to the Social Age are losing control with yet another group coming into power: employees". Current studies underline that communication takes place digitally on a daily basis to people of all age groups (ARD/ZDF, 2023; Bitkom, 2023). Moreover, social networks stimulate the interest of potential employees and can enhance the number of applications (Panday et al., 2022) since organizational values as well as the possibility to interact with organizations in social media are related to the employer brand and the intention to apply (Bahri-Ammari et al., 2022). This, again, is in line with the signaling theory (Spence, 1973). Jeyaraman et al. (2022), highlight that social media recruiting is also of utmost importance for the healthcare sector. Thus, the healthcare sector is the focus of this analysis on the corporate digital identity.

Germany, Austria and Switzerland are neighboring countries. Moreover, German is an officially recognized language in all these countries. In Switzerland, French is also an official language, along with Italian and Romansh, although they did not affect our analysis. Thus, the labor market is not bound to a specific country, but

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