



National  
College *of*  
Ireland

**The impact of digital transformation in  
the recruiters' role**

**By:**

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**A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of MA in  
Human Resource Management**

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## **Abstract**

The recruitment field has been one of the most affected industries in the digital era. In recent years, recruitment professionals have faced monumental changes and challenges due to the implementation of technological tools in the recruitment process. It is well-established that today the most valuable asset for organisations is their workforce; hence, having a recruitment team capable of attracting, engaging and selecting highly talented candidates is critical to ensure high organisational performance. This study aims to determine how digital transformation has changed the role of recruiters. Specifically, it investigates how this transformation has been from recruiters' perspectives, outlining the most significant changes, opportunities, and challenges.

The research methodology is a qualitative methodology using semi-structured interviews with ten recruitment professionals based in Mexico and Ireland. Participants were randomly selected and interviewed about their role in relation to digital transformation. Results were analysed using a thematic analysis of the main themes and sub-themes. The results showed that digital transformation notably transformed the role of the recruiters, making them more strategic, proactive and analytical. Furthermore, the results suggest that as technology continues to develop, the role of the recruiters will continue to change.

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## **Abbreviations**

**SHRM** – Strategic Human Resource Management

**HR** – Human Resources

**HRM** – Human Resource Management

**KSAs** - Knowledge, Skills, and Abilities

**AI** - Artificial Intelligence



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# **Chapter 1 – Introduction**

## **1.1 Introduction**

Over the last two decades recruitment has become a major function within the strategic human resource management (SHRM) field. Recruitment involves identifying organisations' needs in terms of personnel and developing strategies to attract, screen, and hire potential candidates capable of driving the organisation to the achievement of its goals; thus, recruitment is also considered an essential contributor to organisational success. As a result of digital transformation, the recruitment process has notably been transformed. However, most of the research carried out in this regard has been focused on the implementation of digital tools and their outcomes in the recruitment process leaving aside the role of the recruiters.

This research aims to outline how digital transformation has transformed the recruiters' role while the recruitment process is being digitalised. The purpose of this chapter is to provide an introduction of the research by first discussing the background and context followed by the research problem, the research question and objectives, the significance of the research, and its structure.

## **1.2 Study Background**

Digital transformation is a disruptive process that has changed the way companies compete, interact, and create value (Hoberg et al., 2017). Therefore, the rapid technological advancement has encouraged the implementation of digital tools within the SHRM function. Research in this field has been focused on strategic outcomes such as organisational performance (Becker & Huselid, 1998), strategic alignment (Schuler & Jackson, 1987), and competitive advantage (Wright et al., 2001). In the course of becoming more strategic and digital, organisations have recognised the importance of their human capital and placed a greater emphasis on recruiting qualified employees. In other words, organisations are aware that their human resources (HR) are no longer a cost and have become an asset (Biesalski, 2003).

In the modern world, the adoption of technology has become critical to organisational success. A research study commissioned by SAP software and conducted by Forrester Consulting (2019) suggests that organisations capable of connecting people, processes and technology will go successfully through to digitalisation. Penn (2021) suggests that the interaction of people with processes allows organisations to scale and accelerate their growth. Likewise, when people interact with technology, they find new ways to carry out their processes and innovate by doing new things. Nevertheless, when technology interacts with the process, it enables

automation as well as freeing people up to innovate further. As it can be seen, even with the ongoing digitalisation, people remain critical to making processes efficient, effective, and innovative.

According to Green (2020) recruiting candidates with the right set of skills is critical for the achievement of organisational goals. Thus, recruitment is an essential process to build competitive advantage and to enrich organisations. In the last decade, the recruitment world has been notably impacted. The adoption of new technologies, such as artificial intelligence (AI), social networking, digital assessments, and video interviewing, has significantly reduced the time to hire, making the process more efficient and streamlined (Perna, 2021). From a technical perspective, the adoption of digital tools in the recruitment process enables a wider range of manners to recruit employees. However, from an organisational perspective, the digitalisation of the recruitment process has transformed and expanded the role of the recruiter (Pop, 2021).

The demand for recruiters has increased 63% since 2016, which means that firms are putting more attention on building a highly competitive recruitment team (LinkedIn, 2019). The constant connectivity of the world demands experienced recruiters since candidates have become more specialised on technology (Nawaz and Gomes, 2019). Likewise, the digitalisation of the recruitment process has been mainly focused on getting recruiters rid of repetitive and administrative functions; thus, the role of the recruiters has become more focused on performing activities ongoing at a personal level with potential candidates (Solascasas, 2020).

Moreover, as it mentioned earlier in this section, human capital is a critical element to successfully carry out organisational processes. Thereby, in the case of the recruitment field, recruiters play a central role. Qualitative studies by Boswell et al., and Rynes et al., (cited in Breugh, 2012) have proved that recruiters' behaviour can have significant consequences in the recruitment process. However, in recent years, due to the adoption of digital tools, the attention given to their role has considerably decreased (Breugh, 2012).

### **1.3 Research Problem**

Recruitment is critically important for organisational success since the acquisition of highly talented employees is essential to shape organisations' effectiveness and performance. Furthermore, organisations increasingly regard their human capital as a source of competitive advantage, hence recruiting also plays a key role in ensuring individual performance (French

and Rumbles, 2010). On the other hand, digital transformation is changing the way individuals work and communicate. That is to say, the adoption of digital tools is not just enabling individuals to work better and faster, but they are notably changing the way people work within organisations (Cascio and Montealegre, 2016).

The impact of digitalisation may be drastic in the role of professionals who use them in their daily work (Feffer, 2016). The complexity and competitiveness surrounding the recruitment field has considerably changed the role of the recruiters. Likewise, advances in recruitment technologies have moved the model of recruitment from attracting and selecting the best talent to attracting, engaging, and selecting individuals highly talented (Sahay, 2017). For instance, the results of the Korn Ferry Global survey (2018) suggest that even though the recruiter role is becoming impersonal, AI is giving them the opportunity to recruit higher quality candidates. Furthermore, 48% of the respondents said that big data and AI are making their role easier. Hence, this transformation in the recruitment process enables recruiters to be focused on activities that add the most value to the process.

Despite all the facts that technology can bring to the recruitment process, the truth is that technology itself does not enable organisations to achieve their talent goals. Thereby the role of the recruiters is critical to ensure the success of the recruitment process (Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson, 2018). Nevertheless, research in the recruitment field has been focused on the efficiency of technology to reach candidates and its outcomes (Gilch and Sieweke, 2020). Even though it has been assumed that technology makes the recruitment process easier and faster, the possible positive and negative effects on the role of the recruiter has not always been considered (Ryan and Derous, 2019).

#### **1.4 Research Question and Objectives**

This paper aims to study how digital transformation has changed the role that recruiters play in the recruitment process. It focuses on the identification of changes, opportunities and challenges that have been created through technological advancement in the recruitment industry. Furthermore, it explores the set of skills that recruiters require to adapt to their new role and how digital tools have enabled this transformation.

#### **1.5 Research Significance**

This study will contribute to the body of knowledge on the impact of digital transformation in the recruitment field by exploring and identifying the major changes that the role of the recruiters has undergone due to the paced technological advancement. This will help to address

the current shortage of research in this area and provide valuable insight from recruiters' perspective.

### **1.6 Structure Outline**

Chapter one introduced the context of the study, specified the research questions and objectives, and discussed the significance of this research. The limitations of the study have also been discussed.

Chapter two reviews the existing literature in the field identifying key concepts regarding the role of the recruiters and the digitalisation of the recruitment process.

Chapter three describes the theoretical framework justifying the adoption of a qualitative research approach. It will also discuss the broader research design including the limitations.

Chapter four summaries and analyse the collected data. A thematic analysis method was applied, and four themes were found.

Chapter five discusses the patterns and relationships found in the results against the literature reviewed

Chapter six outlines conclusions of the research project and provides practical recommendations based on the findings.

## **Chapter 2 – Literature Review**

### **2.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to critically discuss and assess relevant literature regarding the digitalisation of the recruitment practices and its impact on the role of the recruiters. Likewise, the literature review aims to demonstrate different perspectives on the implementation of digital tools in the recruitment process and its link with the transformation of the recruiters' role. Throughout the completion of the literature review, several topics in the field of recruitment were identified as relevant to the research question. These topics will be reviewed in closer detail in this chapter as follows: firstly, a brief explanation of strategic human resource management (SHRM) and its relation with recruitment. Secondly, the concept of recruitment and its strategic role within organisations. Thirdly, the concept of digital transformation and its drivers, and finally the impact of digital transformation in the recruitment space, and more specifically, in the recruiters' role.

### **2.2 Defining Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)**

Over the last two decades, researchers have increasingly become interested in investigating issues related to people management. Likewise, large and small organisations have become captivated by the concept of strategic management. As a result, although human resource management (HRM) is considered a major force in driving organisational performance; this field has also sought its integration into the strategic management process, adopting an approach known as 'Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)' (Wright and McMahan, 1992).

Early SHRM models assume that “when “appropriate” HRM practices fit with the firm's business strategy, firm performance is enhanced” (Soo - Hoon Lee, 2021, p. 237). In the same vein, Schuler (1992) suggests that SHRM is mainly about integration and adaptation. In other words, Human resources (HR) systems must be integrated across all areas and hierarchies in order to achieve strategic goals and strengthen business performance (Boon et al., 2018). Certainly, HRM has become a strategic area where the primary aim is to optimise the human capital of organisations to improve the strategic performance of the company and foresee the fulfilment of its future needs.

Armstrong (2009, p. 29) suggests that SHRM is “an approach that defines how the organization's goals will be achieved through people by means of HR strategies and integrated



HR policies and practices.” Significantly, this definition highlights the strategic role that SHRM plays in the achievement of organisational goals. In this regard, Porter (2008) concludes that HRM is critical for the development of competitive advantage in any firm since its strategies are critical for the attraction and retention of exceptional talent.

A feature that is heavily criticised in the field of SHRM is the lack of a strong theoretical foundation. Although, there is a significant variety of models, theories, and critiques (Colbert, 2004), much of the work carried out in this field has been documented with either practical advice or empirical data that does not fully explain why a relationship between strategy and HRM practices exist or should exist (Wright and McMahan, 1992). However, a framework that has been consistently used to explain SHRM is the resource – based view (RBV) (Barney, 1991). According to Bromiley and Rau (2016, p. 96) “the RBV attempts to explain firms’ sustainable competitive advantage as stemming from firm resources which are rare, valuable, hard or impossible to imitate or duplicate, and hard to substitute”. Researchers of this perspective argue that organisations are a bundle of resources. Therefore, the most valuable resources of competitive advantage are inside the firm. Hence, organisations should look inside to find these resources instead of looking at the competitive business environment.

Currently, leading organisations, such as Google, Apple and General Microsoft, recognise that their most valuable resource is their human capital. Therefore, it is vital to create a sturdy structure to hire, manage and develop employees in ways that support organisations’ long – term goals (Gifford, 2021). SHRM gives to HR departments the opportunity to drive organisations’ efforts to the achievement of organisational goals through the efficient and strategic personnel management. Likewise, SHRM assumes that even when the organisational strategy could be strong, human capital is vital for the achievement of long-term goals, since it is the workforce who are in charge to carry out this strategy.

### **2.2.1 Recruitment within SHRM**

Barber (1998, p. 5) defines recruitment as “those practices and activities carried out by the organisation with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees”. For many years, the recruitment process was considered a traditional function (Bagga and Srivastava, 2014) focused on assessing candidates against determined personal characteristics established to fit them into a specific job position (Millmore, 2003). However, this traditional

approach very often ignores characteristics that are irrelevant to the job position (Bowen et al., 1990) but that could be relevant for the organisational culture.

As the field of HRM, the recruitment field has also evolved significantly in the last two decades. Researchers have become more interested in the potential outcomes of recruiting employees seeking a person – organisation fit rather than a job – position fit (Sekiguchi and Huber, 2011). From this perspective, the recruitment process aims to recruit ‘whole individuals’, with their knowledge, skills, and abilities (KSAs) (Bowen *et al.*, 1990); even though some of them might not be relevant for the job position, candidates should be evaluated against organisational criteria. As a result, employees will be able to work in environments defined more broadly than just a job.

Taylor and Collins (2000, p. 4) states that recruitment is “the most critical human resource function for organisational success and survival”. Recruitment process is successful when it generates a profitable and proliferating workforce capable of generating a competitive advantage for the organisation. In 2001, the Watson Wyatt Human Capital Index (cited in Sangeetha, 2010) highlights how HR practices, such as recruitment, rewards or retention have a significant impact in the organisations’ performance. More recently, in 2021 Deloitte Global Human Capital Trends survey, 72% of the participants indicated that having a highly qualified workforce will be a critical element for future organisational success.

Recruiting highly qualified candidates enables organisations to gain a greater competitive advantage as well as improve organisational performance. Therefore, recruitment systems are a key source of competitive advantage (Sangeetha, 2010). Recruiting the right people for the right roles at the right time ensures that the workforce will be capable of meeting organisations’ current and future needs (Green, 2020). In this sense, it is significantly important to mention that for the first time in many years, today's workforce comprises four different generations: baby boomers, generation X, millennials, and generation Z. These generations have diversified the demands of the current business market and as a result, recruiters are facing a monumental challenge: developing effective strategies that allow talent to be managed globally (SHRM, 2017).

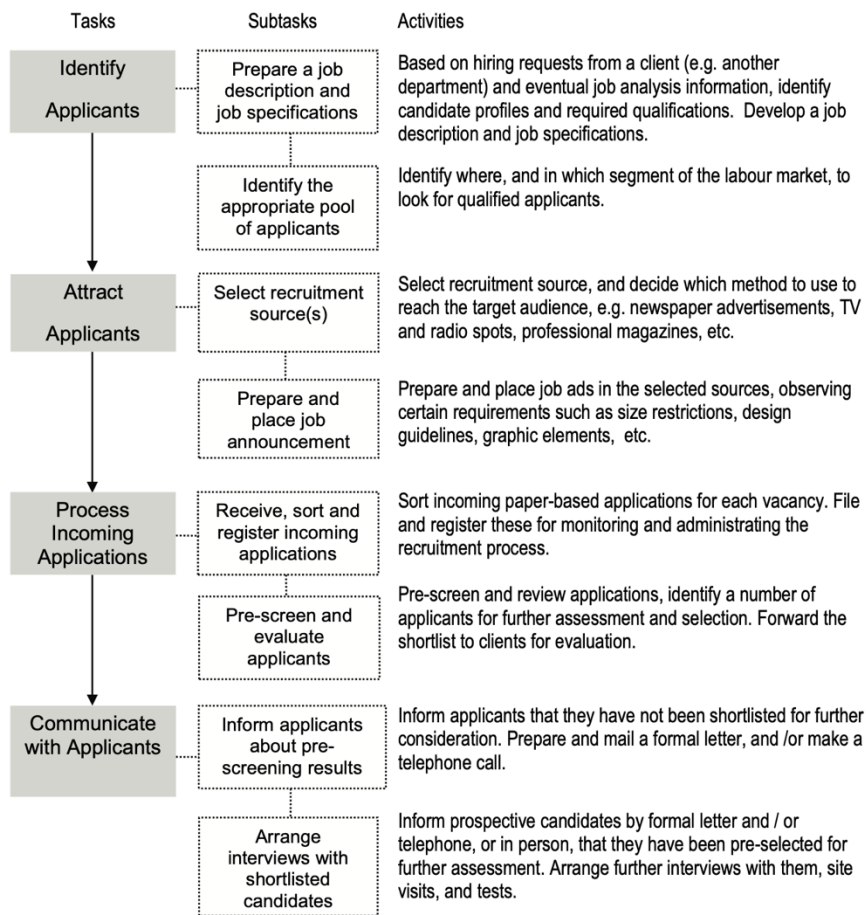
Today, recruitment is about understanding what skills are critical for organisational performance (Green, 2020). It is about giving employees the opportunity to choose how they can best help and what they can contribute to achieve organisational goals. Recruiters need a

vision for the future, they need to be able to plan strategically and measure the impact of their processes on long-term organisational success.

### **2.3 The recruitment process**

It is necessary to clarify that the recruitment process can involve either internal or external candidates. However, this research is uniquely focused on external recruitment. Scholars in the recruitment field agree that the recruitment process comprises multiple phases (Barber, 1998); however, there is not a unique model to delineate those stages. For instance, Barber (1998) suggests that the recruitment process involves three phases: generating applicants, maintaining applicant status, and influencing job decisions.

However, Breugh and Starke (2000) pointed out a model which involves two more phases: firstly, the establishment of the recruitment objectives is critical to start the process. Having clearly determined the recruitment objectives, the second phase of the process is the development of the recruitment strategy which means to set a plan of action that enables the achievement of the recruitment objectives (Breugh, 2009). Both Barber(1998) and Breugh and Starke (2000) conclude that recruitment activities should enable candidates to remain interested in the organisation and in the job position, hence recruiters must be capable of persuading candidates' job choice. Another similar model was proposed by Bartram (2000) who suggests that recruitment involves the attraction of a large pool of candidates, the staffing of those candidates who meet basic requirements and the selection of the candidates with the best potential. A more recent model is proposed by Holm, (2012 p. 243) who suggests that “the traditional, i.e., paper – based, recruitment of external candidates from a job advertising is a linear process with consecutive tasks”. Figure 1. Summarise the traditional recruitment process suggested by Holms (2012).



**Figure 1: Traditional paper-based recruitment process using job advertising (Holm, 2012)**

## 2.4 Digital transformation

Having discussed the strategic importance of the recruitment process in organisations, it is now essential to discuss digitalisation as a phenomenon that is impacting companies in different ways.

### 2.4.1 Definition of Digital Transformation

Digital transformation is a disruptive process that has changed the way companies compete, interact, and create value (Hoberg *et al.*, 2017). The increasing technological advances have revolutionised individuals' behaviour, organisations, and markets' structures (Henriette *et al.*, 2016). Today, the main concern that firms are facing is that the rapid technological advancement constantly requires the development of technological skills which allow the firm to leverage the business potential of a certain technological trend. (Hoberg *et al.*, 2017). In this regard, Dahlström *et al.*, (2017) suggest that talent must be a priority in the organisations' digital transformation. That is to say, the understanding of the skills needed is critical to develop a workforce capable of supporting the business strategy in the digital era.

According to Mohdzaini (2021), digital transformation is about the ability of an organisation and their people to adapt continuously to disruptive changes caused by the evolution of digital technologies. In the same vein, Tabrizi et al., (2019) suggest that to efficiently adopt digital tools organisations must be focused on changing the mindset of their employees and adapting their organisational culture and processes. In other words, ensuring the compatibility between technology, processes and talent is the most critical step to start the digital transformation journey (Davenport and Redman, 2020). Likewise, a four-year study conducted by a group of researchers in collaboration with MIT Sloan Management Review and Deloitte suggests that traditional organisations which seek to manage digital transformation effectively must address three issues that include navigating digital disruption, rethinking leadership and talent, and becoming a digital organisation. To navigate digital disruption, organisations need to become more agile, risk tolerant and experimental (Kane *et al.*, 2015). It is not difficult to adopt new technologies, surely most organisations are able to do it, indeed the major challenge is to change the way businesses are done and the way teams work (Kane, 2019).

### **2.5 The impact of digital transformation in recruitment.**

Recruitment is probably the area of SHRM that has been benefited the most from digital transformation (Nikolaou, 2021). The adoption of digital tools has positively impacted the recruitment process mainly in the efficiency of the process, the accuracy of candidates' assessment, the diversity of candidates and the development of wider (Braga, 2019) and heterogeneous talent pools (Braga, 2019). Nonetheless, the rapid technological advance is making organisations needs change rapidly, therefore recruitment is becoming a difficult task (LinkedIn, 2019). Lee (2005, p. 58) defines e-recruitment as “practices and activities carried on by the organization that utilizes a variety of electronic means to fill open positions effectively and efficiently”.

According to Holm (2012) the implementation of digital tools in the recruitment process has mainly impacted the sequence of tasks and subtasks; for instance, the process of receiving, sorting, and registering incoming applications have become irrelevant since e-recruitment systems have automated this part of the process. In the same vein, Mohammed (2019) suggests that since attracting applicants, sorting job applications, and communicating with candidates are fully automated, the traditional recruitment is no longer used by organisations. E-recruitment has had a powerful development in a short time (Boscai, 2015) and has disruptively changed the recruiting process (Dhamija, 2012). Unlike the traditional recruitment process

discussed earlier in this chapter, e-recruitment consists of three main stages: attracting, sorting, and contacting candidates (Cappelli, 2001).

Over the last two decades, researchers focussed on integrating a strategic perspective into the adoption of digital technologies to improve the efficiency of the process (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2014). However, Starke (1996) suggests that the use of digital tools in the recruitment process has other advantages such as cost and time efficiency, access to a large number of candidates, the possibility of easier reaching out the needed applicant population, and ease of use. This idea is also supported by Zusman & Landis (2002) who suggest that online recruitment provides the opportunity to access an extremely broad base of candidates, is less expensive, and has greatly facilitated the communication between recruiters and applicants.

### **2.5.1 Recruitment digital tools**

The adoption of the internet as a recruitment method has been revolutionary in the recruitment field due to the benefits that provides for both organisations and candidates (Slavic *et. al.*, 2017). Job sites were the first technological platforms implemented in recruiting, giving recruiters the opportunity to advertise job positions to a wide audience. (Nikolaou, 2014). However, digital tools have continuously evolved and the quality of the recruitment process has significantly increased due to the adoption of social networking websites as a recruitment tool (Dragusha, *et al.*, 2019).

According to Nikolaou (2014) social networking websites are additional resources that facilitate activities such as attracting, recruiting and background checking on candidates. Furthermore, Breugh (2009) suggests that the use of social media in the recruitment process can take different approaches: Firstly, recruiters can simply upload a job advertisement on a site. Secondly, recruiters can seek for a specific type of candidate through social networking sites with specific features, such as LinkedIn which is more focused on professional profiles. Finally, a third approach is when recruiters request other employees to share the job opportunity with their contacts. In this regard, Nikolaou (2014) concluded that the popularity of social networking websites has considerably increased within the recruitment industry since they provide the opportunity to advertise job positions and seek information about job seekers in an efficient and cost-effective way.

Social media has significantly impacted communication channels, making communication between recruiters and candidates convenient and effective. Websites such as Facebook,

LinkedIn, Twitter, or Instagram, have become a powerful tool since they provide information about potential candidates which give recruiters the potential to recruit effectively and efficiently the best candidate for the job (Dragusha, et al., 2019). Furthermore, it has also modified the traditional way to attract candidates; recruiters have started to perform a more proactive role engaging candidates across these platforms rather than wait for them to apply (Deshati, 2017).

Another powerful tool in recruiting has been AI. John McCarthy described AI as, “Artificial Intelligence is the science and engineering of making intelligent machines, especially intelligent computer programs” (Cited in Geetha and Reddy, 2018. P. 64). Sneha and Shekar (2020) suggest that even AI cannot undertake the whole recruitment process. Its use can improve the recruitment strategy attracting highly talented candidates. One of its most important benefits is the equal opportunities that give to candidates to be considered in the process without any bias (Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018). According to Geetha and Reddy (2018) using AI in the recruitment process has notable advantages as it enables the recruiter to process large amounts of data, construct profiles into uniformity, and identify and match skill sets required. In summary, the adoption of AI technologies leads to improved cost - time efficiency, and the accuracy of the recruitment process.

### **2.5.2 The role of the recruiter**

The digitalization of the recruitment process has considerably changed the role of the recruiters. The efficiency of the process gives recruiters the opportunity to perform more thoughtful hiring and to be focused on strategic issues as well as to develop innovative strategies (Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018). In this regard, Cappelli (2001) suggests that currently recruitment needs to be seen more as a marketing process. This idea is also supported by Boscai (2015) who also points out that recruiters need to focus on creating a digital recruiting environment using tools such as company websites, social networks and professional recruitment sites to source a workforce capable of developing competitive advantage.

Upadhyay and Khandelwal (2018) pointed out that even though technologies such as artificial intelligence are prominent as tools to identify exceptional talent, there are activities in the recruitment process such as rapport building, assessment of cultural fit, and negotiation needs that require human interaction. Recruiters still needed to assess aspects related to candidates' soft skills or emotions. Likewise a case study carried out by Holm (2012) found that the digitalisation of the recruitment process has transformed the traditional process into “a time

and space-independent, collaborative process” (Holm, 2012, p. 241); in which the main task for recruiters is to communicate with candidates.

Furthermore, Shapovalova and Pavlov (2021) pointed out that the emerging methods of online recruitment allow organisations the effective use and distribution of its resources as well as to make more well-balanced decisions. According to LinkedIn (2019) engaging passive candidates, analysing data, and advising leaders will be skills that recruiters will need to remain competitive in the recruitment field. Furthermore, recruiters need to be capable of bringing passive candidates into the funnel; likewise, as recruiting is becoming an analytical activity, recruiters also need to become analytical. Finally, as recruiters’ role is becoming more strategic, in this regard Parry and Tyson (2008) pointed out that the adoption of digital technologies in recruitment could lead to strategic benefits such as improving employer image.

Surely, the speed and size of technological advances suggest that in the future a machine could completely manage the hiring processes and make the work that recruiters do obsolete. Nonetheless, in 2011 Steve Jobs, CEO of Apple, one of the most valuable organisations in the world (Forbes, 2021), stated that the success of Apple's organisational strategy is that technology alone is not enough. The key to success has been the union of technology with the liberal arts and humanities. According to Ideal (2021), experts in the recruitment industry believe that the future of digital technologies for recruitment is augmented intelligence.

Augmented intelligence is the belief that technology will never replace human labour, on the contrary, technology is meant to further human capabilities (Yehiav, 2019). Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson (2018) argue that as technological advances make the labour market evolve, a new source of competitive advantage is centrality in candidates. That is to say, the adoption of digital technologies allows recruiters to put a greater emphasis on understanding candidates' needs and meeting them better than anyone else.

Boscai (2017) points out that digital transformation could change the role of recruiters in the following aspects: Firstly, recruiters need to adapt the hiring process to the current job market to cultivate their employer brand; secondly, they also must position themselves in the industry building a strong social network to attract optimal candidates. This is also supported by Ollington et al. (2013). Thirdly, recruiters must be able to create an optimal digital environment for the attraction of talented candidates that can be a source of long-term competitive advantage (Maurer and Liu, 2007).



According to Undercover Recruiter digital technologies are expected to replace 16% of HR administrative jobs within the next 10 years and allow HR professionals to manage HR processes in a more strategic way (Forbes, 2018). However, there is limited research about how this strategic approach can occur and how it will impact the business strategy (Eckhardt *et al.*, 2014). Despite the digitalisation of the recruitment process has been already carried out for several years; according to the Bain Survey (cited in Heric, 2018) 75% of the participants considered that their current technologies have not yet achieved optimal performance.

## **2.6 Summary**

Although most of the evidence provided in the review of relevant literature in this area confirms that digital transformation has generated disruptive changes in the HR space and more specifically in the recruitment process and the recruiter's role, the majority of research that were found are mainly focused on the impact of digital tools in the efficiency and streamlining of the recruitment process. Despite this it is clear that digital transformation has had a significant impact on the recruiter's role, there is limited research focused on how this has impacted directly on the role of the recruiter and how it will impact it in the future.

Although some studies have pointed out the relation between digital transformation and the recruiter's role, the transformation of the role itself is rarely mentioned in detail in the current literature. Thereby, to fill this gap in the current literature it is noteworthy to carry out an in-depth discussion of the new recruiters' role within organisations.

## **Chapter 3 Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to provide the rationale and methodological details for this research. Aiming to outline the research strategy, this chapter will discuss the research paradigm and philosophy, methodology approach, sampling strategy, and data collection method. Overall, this chapter seeks to support the beliefs, values, and the design process of this research. Furthermore, it points out the ethical considerations and limitations of the research.

### **3.2 Research Question and Objectives**

The objective of this research is to contribute meaningful insights towards the transformation of the recruiters' role due to digitalisation. Building on the assumption that organisations consider their workforce as an important source of competitive advantage; recruitment has become one of the most vital activities in HRM playing a fundamental role in the efficiency and performance of the organisation (Rees and Rumbles, 2010). Therefore, this study aims to answer how, and in what ways, digital transformation has changed the role recruiters play within organisations

To address the research question posed, it is sought to achieve the following specific research objectives:

1. To identify the main changes the recruiters' role has undergone due to digital transformation.
2. To explore the most disruptive challenges recruiters are facing within digital transformation.
3. To identify the skills recruiters have developed to adapt to the changes generated by digitalisation.
4. To explore how technology tools have supported the transformation of the recruiters' role.

### **3.3 Research Paradigm**

Johannesson and Perjons (2014, p.176) defined research paradigm as “a set of commonly held beliefs and assumptions within a research community about ontological, epistemological, and methodological concerns”. The research paradigm helps researchers shape their perception about the field of study including their assumptions about the social world. Without exception,

research methods include a range of ontological and epistemological assumptions (Bahari, 2010).

Crotty (1998, p.10) defines ontology as “the study of being”. This branch of knowledge seeks to explain the nature of existence and the structure of reality. In this regard, researchers must define their perception of how things are and how things work (Gupta and Awasthy, 2015). In this field of knowledge, two basic distinctions can be made. Firstly, objectivism, which affirms that reality exists in itself, independently of human behaviour (Mills et al., cited in Chipangura et al., p. 263). Secondly, constructivism which focuses on exploring how individuals interpret and make sense of their experiences and how their environment influences their interpretations (Crotty, 1998).

On the other hand, “epistemology is the branch of philosophy that deals with the nature of knowledge and truth, encompassing the study of the origin, nature and limits of human knowledge” (Seel, 2011, p. 1168). In other words, epistemology analyses the way individuals comprehend knowledge and their perception of what exists. Qualitative research conducted with epistemological assumptions means the researcher will try to get close enough to the participants to study them in depth. Thereby, the evidence of qualitative research is based on individual views and experiences (Creswell and Poth, 2017). In this regard, positivism and interpretivism take a dominant place.

According to Uduma and Sylva (2015) positivism requires the use of quantitative techniques to scientifically study the activities of organisations and to understand in depth its functioning. In other words, from a positivism perspective, the organisations’ reality exists regardless of the interaction among organisational factors. On the contrary, interpretivism suggests that in order to understand how organisations operate, it is necessary to evaluate and understand the interactions between the factors involved, such as organisations’ functions, individuals, context, and environment.

For the purpose of this study, from an ontological and epistemological perspective a constructivism and interpretivism approach, respectively, has been chosen. The main reason for this decision, as outlined in Chapter 2 Literature Review, is that the disruptive and rapid changes brought about by digital transformation continue changing significantly both recruitment practices and the recruiters’ role. In the belief that recruiters’ role has been significantly modified by implementing digital tools; it was critical for the achievement of the

research objectives to explore closely the recruiters' views and experiences and their interpretation regarding their interaction with digital tools and their performance in the digital era.

### **3.4 Research Strategy**

Research strategy can be defined as “a plan of how a researcher will go about answering her or his research question” (Saunders et al., 2019, p. 189). In other words, research strategy involves the competencies, values and beliefs that researchers use to bring their research paradigm to life (Denzin and Lincoln, 2017).

According to Wedawattasome (2011) for some researchers in the field of business and management, the common research strategies used are case study, action research, survey, and qualitative interviews. A case study aims to deeply describe the interaction between an individual, group or phenomenon and its context leading to the development of theories or empirical descriptions. (Saunders et al., 2019). Therefore, case study strategy is useful when there is little control over the case and the researcher seeks to identify essential elements, such as processes or relationships, within the event (Rashid et al., 2019).

On the contrary, action research assumes that a better strategy to study a social system is implementing changes into that system and observing its impact (Baskerville, 1997). In the organisational field, this strategy aims to resolve organisational issues and to help those individuals who are related with the system to develop the necessary skills to solve the issues and live with the implemented changes (Hossain, 2007). Another research strategy to consider is the use of a survey. According to Walle (2015) survey is a method that allows researchers to ask several people about what they think, feel, perceive, believe and so on. However, even though through this method it is possible to gather qualitative data, due to the use of scales and the statistical analysis required, the information obtained is subjective.

When considering a research strategy interviews are another option available. According to Turner (2010) through this strategy researchers obtain a meaningful knowledge of determinate social phenomena and qualitative interviews aim to provide an exhaustive understanding of individuals' experiences, beliefs, and perspectives about a specific topic. Interviews are a powerful research strategy when very little is known about the topic of interest or when the insights from participants are relevant to answer the research question (Gill et al., 2008). Owing to the fact that the research objectives do not seek to develop theories or empirical descriptions and neither to change the relationship between recruiters and digital transformation, case study

and action research were not considered as a possible strategy. To address the research question posed, interviews were chosen as the research strategy as this allows for the exploration of individuals' perspectives and interactions.

### **3.5 Research Methods**

Leedy and Ormrod (2010, p. 10) defined research as “a systematic process of collecting, analysing, and interpreting information (data) in order to increase our understanding of a phenomenon about which we are interested or concerned.” The most common approaches in research are qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. Researchers typically choose a method based on the type of data needed to answer their research question (Williams, 2007). For instance, quantitative if numerical data is needed, textual data for qualitative method or mixed method when both numerical and textual data are required.

Qualitative research aims to discover and to understand experiences, perspectives, and thoughts of individuals (Harwell, 2011). In other words, it emphasises non-quantifiable information. Furthermore, it has adopted practices and norms of constructivism and it considers that social reality is shaped by the individuals' interaction with their environment (Bell et al., 2018). By contrast, quantitative research focuses on quantifiable data that can be statistically treated (Williams, 2007). Moreover, as it was mentioned earlier in this section, quantitative methods require a positivist approach. According to Creswell and Piano-Clark (2007) mixed methods research is used to answer questions that require both quantitative and qualitative data to be answered. This method focuses on pragmatic philosophy; therefore, researchers must choose the best research paradigm or mixture to answer the research question (Johnson & Onwueghuzie, 2004).

For the purposes of this research a qualitative approach was chosen. This decision was made based on two important assumptions. Firstly, qualitative research is best suited to the research paradigm explained earlier in this section. Secondly, individuals' interactions, perspectives and experiences are critical to answer the research question.

### **3.6 Data Collection Method**

Primary data refers to the first-hand information gathered through any research method and specially collected to understand and solve the research question. Thereby, researchers must choose the procedure or procedures that suit their inquiry best (Hox and Boeije, 2005). Even though a considerable number of data collection methods are available to collect qualitative

data. Focus groups, observation and interviews are the methods mainly used. (Phillips and Stawarski, 2008).

Focus group is a well-known method which consists in conducting a type of in-depth interview group which has specific characteristics. The objective of this technique is to analyse the interaction of the participants and the influence that their responses have on each other (Freitas et al., 1998). Overall, focus groups allow researchers to obtain rich contextual data, to gain an in-depth understanding of group dynamics, and to examine the different perspectives of the participants (Brotherson, 1994). Hox and Boeije (2005) suggest that observation is another widely used method in qualitative research. This method requires the researcher to become involved in a researcher setting and observe the phenomenon or situation that is being studied (Walle, 2015).

Nevertheless, the most popular data collection method in qualitative research is qualitative interview. The purpose of this method is to understand human behaviour and to learn about individuals' worldviews (Donalek, 2005). Thereby, researchers who decide to implement this method need to develop a significant number of skills, such as active listening, planning, note-taking, and so on. Even though interviewing demands interviewers to develop as much knowledge as possible in their research field, this method can be a rich set of data (Qu and Dumay, 2008).

According to DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) contemporary academics have differentiated qualitative interviews as structured, semi-structured and unstructured. Structured interviews are usually used in quantitative research, as they are restricted to a predefined and rigorous set of questions. Contrastingly, with unstructured interviews researchers do not have an interview guide, in other words, this type of interview is more like an informal conversation (Roulston and Choi, 2017). Semi-structured interviews are widely used to collect primary data. This method is conducted based on a semi-structured interviewing guide, including those themes the researcher considers relevant to the inquiry. Furthermore, its flexibility and accessibility also allow the researcher to explore important aspects of human and organisational behaviour (Qu and Dumay, 2011).

Considering the importance of giving the participants the opportunity to bring up any important themes related to the research topic and aiming to make the interview process a collaborative work between the parties, semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable method for primary data collection for this research. Due to the nature of the research topic, it was

critical to inquire into individuals’ perceptions on how the role of recruiter had evolved and interactions with digital transformation within their organisation.

### 3.7 Sampling Strategy

According to Saunders et al. (2019) sampling strategies help to select a representative group of the research target population, allowing the researcher to reduce the amount of data to collect and analyse. Robinson (2014) proposes a four-point approach to sampling in qualitative interview – based research: to define the sample universe establishing the attributes that a subject must possess or not to qualify in the sample, to determine the sample size, to select a strategy and finally sourcing the participants.

Based on the approach described above, the target sample for this research were recruitment professionals. Participants were sourced through a publication on social media (Facebook and LinkedIn) and networking since the researcher had previously worked as a recruiter. Twelve recruitment professionals were contacted via email and ten responded and agreed to participate in the research. As the researcher is a native Spanish speaker, five interviews were conducted in Spanish and five in English. The table below specifies in detail participants’ role, work experience and the language each interview was conducted in.

<b>Interviewee</b>	<b>Job position</b>	<b>Work experience</b>	<b>Language</b>	<b>Sector</b>
Subject 1	Human Capital Manager	8 years	Spanish	In house recruitment
Subject 2	Human Capital Manager	2 years	Spanish	In house recruitment
Subject 3	Human Capital Assistant	4 years	Spanish	In house recruitment
Subject 4	Recruitment Manager	5 years	Spanish	Recruitment firm
Subject 5	Human Capital Manager	25 years	Spanish	In house recruitment
Subject 6	Recruitment Consultant	3 years	English	Recruitment firm
Subject 7	Temporary recruitment controller	2.5 years	English	Recruitment firm
Subject 8	Joint Managing Partner	24 years	English	Recruitment firm
Subject 9	Joint Managing Partner	30 years	English	Recruitment firm

Subject 10	Partner	20 years	English	Recruitment firm
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### **3.8 Data Analysis Method**

Data analysis is without doubt the most complex stage within the qualitative research process as it has a significant impact on the results of any inquiry conducted (Flick, 2013). Graue (2015, p.8) defines qualitative data analysis as “a process of the description, classification and interconnection of phenomena with the researcher’s concepts”. In the same vein, Saunders et al., (2019) states that this interconnection allows the researcher to build a picture of what the data is communicating about the phenomena of interest.

In order to generate findings that produce new knowledge, according to Flick (2013) qualitative data analysis should meet three main general aims: “The first aim is to describe a phenomenon in some or greater detail. The second aim is to identify the conditions on which the differences or similarities between the data are based. Finally, the third aim is to develop a theory of the phenomenon under study from the analysis of empirical material”. Thorne (2000) pointed out that most qualitative data analysis strategies are based on an approach called “constant comparative analysis”. This approach involves the constant comparison of data for the development of theoretical categories derived from the similarities, differences, or possible relationships across the data. This comparison process allows describing the most latent patterns expressed by the participants (Chapman et al., 2015).

Based on the approach described above, a thematic analysis method was selected for this research. This method is often considered a general strategy that depends on constant comparative analysis processes to improve the understanding of human phenomena from individuals’ perspectives and their context (Saunders et al., 2019). Furthermore, thematic analysis is considered the most useful tool to capture textually the complexity of both implicit and explicit ideas expressed by participants (Guest et al., 2011). In this regard, the importance of understanding in depth this complexity and extracting the essence of participants’ ideas can be measured. Therefore, it is considered that a thematic analysis enables highlighting of the latent themes found within the data analysis stage.

### **3.9 Reliability & Validity**

In qualitative research, validity and reliability are paramount concepts to ensure credible and trustworthy findings. In other words, these concepts are particularly important since the subjectivity of the researcher can easily influence the analysis and interpretation of the data.



Likewise, the degree of reliability and validity of a study depends largely on the ability of the researcher to design the study and choose the most appropriate methods (Brink, 1993).

LeCompte and Goetz (1982, p.35) define reliability in qualitative research as “the extent to which studies can be replicated”. To be specific, reliability refers to the degree to which other similar investigations conducted in the same field would produce similar results (Franklin et al., 2009). Validity, in a similar manner, according to Spiers et al (2018, p.1) “is related to data appropriateness, which makes it possible to provide an accurate account of the experiences of participants within and beyond the immediate context”. However, Walle (2015) suggests that since often a major concern of qualitative research is to understand the subjective feelings of the individuals; the “truth value” is a better concept to refer to viability in qualitative research.

The interviews were conducted through Microsoft Teams and to ensure the reliability of the data collected all interviews were recorded. Likewise, the interviews were transcribed using Microsoft Word. Hence, during the data analysis the recording and the subsequent transcript were consulted to guarantee the reliability of the results. Furthermore, as the researcher has previously worked in the recruitment space, bias had to be considered to ensure any previously or currently held opinions or beliefs have been left out of the information analysis and the results of the research. In terms of validity, it was critical to consider the participants’ work experience level as those who have been working in the field the longest have experienced a more significant transformation in their profession than those who have been working for less time.

### **3.10 Ethical Considerations**

According to Polonsky and Waller (2005) there are five main ethical aspects that must be considered in research projects when they involve human participation: voluntary participation, informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and the potential of harm.

Williams (2019) states that all participants must be aware that their participation in the research is completely voluntary. In this regard, the subjects were informed through the participant consent form and the information sheet provided in **Appendix 1 and Appendix 2**. Both formats were sent via email to all participants before the interview. Likewise, it was also communicated that as participants they were entitled to stop the interview at any time without unfavourable consequences.

A key component of ethical considerations in research is the “informed consent” through which researchers inform participants thoroughly the purpose, risks, benefits, and alternatives of

participating in the research. Furthermore, aims to obtain individuals' voluntary agreement to participate (Marshall and Loomis, 2007). In order to address this aspect, the information sheet was provided to all participants invited to take part in this research.

It is critical to highlight the difference between confidentiality and anonymity. While confidentiality attempts to remove any personal characteristics from the research records anonymity guarantees that all participants will remain nameless (Henn et al., 2005). Regarding these aspects, personal data was not required during the interviews as this information was not relevant to achieve the research objectives. Nonetheless, participants were clearly informed about how their information will be recorded, stored, and protected.

During the research process, it is critical to identify any potential chance of physical, psychological, or emotional harm (Polonsky and Waller, 2005). During the research conduct, no indicator of potential harm to the participants was identified. However, this aspect was constantly monitored and evaluated during the interviews to ensure the safety of the subjects.

### **3.11 Limitations**

The following limitations were found during the research process:

- The findings of this research are based on a small number of participants. Therefore, it is wise not to attempt to generalise across the recruitment field.
- Due to the fact that digital transformation is a global phenomenon, a broader international participation would give more accurate findings.
- The subjects had different levels of work experience, thereby their interaction with digital tools might also be at different levels and their perceptions about digital transformation might be influenced.
- A further limitation is that the speed of technological advances could bring the recruiters' role under a constant change. Thereby, the reliability of the research might be affected.

### **3.12 Summary**

Throughout this chapter, the research paradigm adopted for the purposes of this research were outlined and justified. Also based on the above, the research methodology was carefully designed to address the research objectives and ultimately the research question set. Other aspects of great importance, such as limitations and ethical considerations, were specified in order to be considered in future research. With the research methodology clearly established,

the next chapter will examine the research findings which emerged from the primary research conducted.

## **Chapter 4 Findings and Analysis**

### **4.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to outline and present the findings of the primary research conducted through semi-structured interviews. The research focuses on participants currently working in the recruitment industry, hence the information collected provides an insight into their experiences and interactions with digital transformation in their day-to-day work. With the aim of obtaining meaningful insights of the information that each participant contributed, a thematic analysis was carried out to identify and categorise patterns across the data collected.

Three main themes emerged from the analysis of the data collected. Likewise, some sub-themes also emerged from the findings. These themes are firstly, the role of digital transformation with the sub themes of the opportunities and challenges this brings. Secondly, themes emerged around the evolving skills of the recruiter and thirdly themes around the recruiters' new role which highlighted a sub theme around a focus on this role adding strategic value.

The interview guide used to conduct the primary research can be found in **Appendix 3** and the transcripts are available upon request.

### **4.2 The role of digital transformation**

The digital transformation has disrupted the way in which organisations operate and interact with their external environment. This digitalisation process has led to the adoption of new technologies and digital solutions that have represented both opportunities and challenges in recruitment practices.

#### **4.2.1 Opportunities**

##### *4.2.1.1 Recruitment process efficiency*

As discussed in the literature review, digital transformation within recruitment practise has been focused on the optimisation of the recruitment process. The results showed that time efficiency is definitely the most important opportunity that digital transformation has generated. This finding broadly supports the work of other studies in this area that suggest that the adoption of digital tools has significantly streamlined the recruitment process (Braga, 2019; Eckhardt *et al.*, 2014). In this regard, the data collected suggests that the adoption of digital tools has automated a significant part of the recruitment process, giving recruiters the opportunity to be more productive and efficient in time to hire. According to the primary

research conducted with regards to participants' narratives, in a highly competitive market, time has become the most valuable asset for them. Subject 4 commented:

*“The biggest opportunity is that it makes processes much easier, it makes things faster since as a recruiter you have certain time to achieve recruitment goals.”*

Subject 6 supports this stating:

*“We are finding it much easier to be productive with their time and to really be efficient with the time because time is the most valuable thing you have especially when you are up against other recruitment agencies.”*

Moreover, another relevant aspect that has emerged as a result of digital transformation is the easy access and the immediacy of the information. Digital tools such as social media, LinkedIn or job sites allow recruiters access to a massive database of candidates and the channels to contact candidates directly and immediately (Dragusha et al., 2019) As seen, this result showed that digital transformation has significantly impacted the way recruiters search for and attract candidates. Even though this was highlighted by most of the participants, those who have worked the longest in the recruitment industry, such as Subjects 8 and 10, could in this regard, give a broader perspective.

*“When I was started, I used to ring people in work ...the digital transformation and all digital changes have allowed us to contact the candidates much quicker” (Subject 8)*

*“One of the advantages of the digital transformation is that you can go into LinkedIn, and there's a massive database there already, and we can search that way [...]years ago, you might have heard about somebody, but you couldn't get in contact with them, because you have no mobile number for them, you have no email address but now we have it at our fingertips” (Subject 10).*

This finding clearly supports the view put forward by Dragusha, et al. (2019) and Nikolaou (2014) who suggests that social networking websites enable recruiters to advertise job positions and seek information about potential job seekers in an efficient and effective way.

#### *4.2.1.2 Access to a wider range of talent*

Across the interviews, participants expressed how digital transformation has given them the opportunity to access a wider range of talent. They evidenced from their own perspective how the adoption of digital tools allows their sourcing and talent attraction strategies to have a greater reach within the market. Likewise, specifically the implementation of AI gives to them

the possibility of carrying out sophisticated searches for specific skill sets and finding candidates that fit the best into the job position. This finding is an illustration of how digital transformation enables organisations to have a wide and heterogeneous talent pool, as it was discussed in Chapter 2 Literature Review.

Some participants reflected on how digital transformation has transformed the way to source candidates:

*“It is a greater access to talent as well like using artificial intelligence like you're finding keywords algorithms to find you know perfectly suited candidates to the job description so like speed time efficiency” (Subject 6)*

*“The opportunity is that you have much more than areas to you know much more avenues to actually source candidates [...] source for candidates as I said very specific skill sets much quicker than what we would have done before we had digital and technology” (Subject 8)*

*“It has definitely been the level of reach in the candidates, that is, if we would continue to use the same tools that we used before as I told you about flyers or peripherals and all that I do not think we had the reach that we have today” (Subject 3)*

This finding is consistent with that of Starke (1996) and Zusman and Landis (2002) who pointed out that online recruitment has significant advantages such as the opportunity to access an extremely broad base of candidates, cost and time efficiency and the possibility of easier reaching out the needed applicant population.

#### *4.2.1.3 the proactive role of recruiters*

This study set out with the aim of exploring how digital transformation has changed the role of recruiters. In this regard, one interesting finding is that participants agreed that, while they previously had a reactive role, digital transformation has led them to take a more proactive position. Technology gives recruiters the ability to go out and actively seek candidates even when they might not be looking for a job. A plausible explanation for this transformation is that as mentioned earlier in this section, the immediacy of the information and its ease of access has given recruiters the opportunity to find candidates and to contact them immediately rather than waiting for them as it used to be before.

Some participants illustrate how their role has become more proactive.

*“We have adopted a more proactive role and seek strategies, for example, what else can I do to find candidates, because in my case many times it happens that people do not apply” (Subject 3).*

*“You were actually coming hoping you had to wait till the candidate applies to you. Now we can go out and be much more proactive so that is allowed the digital transformation has allowed this to be highly proactive in sourcing candidates [...]” (Subject 8).*

*“We could just go onto LinkedIn and we can message them now. They may not always reply, but at least you know we can try [...]. So I think that's one of the biggest advantages actually is being able to contact people off the bat when you want to rather than waiting for somebody to come in” (Subject 10).*

This finding is consistent with that of Deshati (2017) who pointed out that the idea of waiting for candidates to apply is not effective anymore; thereby, recruiters need to become proactive and engage with candidates using technological tools that they have at their fingertips.

#### *4.2.1.4 Disruptive digital tools*

The continuous development of digital tools has characterised digital transformation to a great extent. The fourth objective of this research was to explore how digital tools have transformed the responsibilities of recruiters. In this regard, participants are clear and consistent about the assumption that digital tools have significantly transformed their responsibilities. What participants see from digital tools is the opportunity to streamline the recruitment processes, to carry out more specific searches and to spend less time on administrative activities and more time on activities that require human participation such as interviewing or dealing with clients in the case of those participants who work in recruitment firms.

Participants agreed that LinkedIn has been the most disruptive tool in recruitment in the digital era. This platform has enabled recruiters to find, connect and manage candidates in a more efficient way. Its features help them undertake specialised searches making the screening candidate stage more efficient. Thereby, the approaches to source candidates have considerably changed since LinkedIn provides access to a broader range of professional talent. Furthermore, it is concluded that LinkedIn is vital to build a stronger network to remain competitive in the market.

Subject 4 supports this view stating:

*“LinkedIn has changed the way of recruiting staff, it could even be said that candidates are beginning to build their personal brand, that is, companies also say today you know that I need people who have certain skills and competencies and through LinkedIn I can identify candidates who have those skills”*

*Subject 6 further supports this view by stating:*

*“LinkedIn is the number one networking and recruitments tool in the world at the moment [...] so at our recruitment company all of our consultants have recruiter licence which is expensive both certainly worth it in the long run because without it you are not going to compete with the other agencies”*

Along with LinkedIn, other digital tools that have changed the way of recruiting staff are social networking websites. In accordance with this result, previous studies have demonstrated that the quality of the recruitment process significantly increases when social networks are used as a recruitment tool (Dragusha, et al., 2019). Almost every participant mentions that these platforms let them to reach a massive number of qualified candidates in less time; this also means that candidates can be situated around the world, thus recruiters do not have to be focused only on the local market as it used to be before. However, unlike LinkedIn, these platforms are more focused on junior and operational job positions.

*“For us, social networks is what helps us, first of all Facebook. In our recruitment, 97.5% is Facebook for operational positions” (Subject 1).*

*“For example, on Facebook, you have to talk about promoting, for example, the publications that we have, paying for it to appear in candidates’ stories when they are on Facebook, I mean that it appears to you as advertising and that has an even greater reach of people, actually people do not have to be in the city”(Subject 3).*

*“I say social media is a huge thing, because you can reach people all over the world then”(Subject 8).*

Besides, participants agreed that AI and Boolean searches allow them to fulfil sophisticated searches. Likewise, the participants explained how AI and Boolean searches allow them to optimise the search for candidates and obtain candidates with specific skills, abilities and knowledge. This result seems to be consistent with other research which found that the use of AI in the recruitment process improves the recruitment strategy attracting highly talented candidates (Sneha and Shekar, 2020).



Furthermore, they stated that these tools let them have more precise searches, avoid biases and be more productive. This finding corroborates the ideas of Upadhyay and Khandelwal (2018), who suggested that one of the most important benefits of AI is that candidates have equal opportunities to be considered in the process, that is to say AI is unbiased.

*“Different artificial intelligence software that helps at the time of recruitment process to detect keywords and give certain results that are usually quite useful information for the person who is carrying out the selection process and I think that it can help us to reduce the bias in the process” (Subject 2).*

*“Boolean searches and you can search much quicker then and so Boolean searchers are string searches so it could be you know financial controller AND fintech sector AND IPO so you can do all these very sophisticated AI searches and actually really find the candidate that you want” (Subject 8).*

It is interesting to find that some of the participants agree that if we go back in time the most disruptive tool was the phone, however, today’s technological advances are about to make the phone an obsolete tool. For instance, softphone software allows them to make phone calls without the use of an actual physical telephone.

*“We move now even on the phone that we have gone for software called Mitel so like even the old fashioned way of like picking up the phone and calling people is gone it's now all so our calls can be recorded we can go back and listen make notes everything like that so yeah it's been you know heavily digital digitalised.” (Subject 6)*

*“Exactly to pick up the phone. So a lot of the new digital thing is meant that they use the phone is gone down, the phone is the single most powerful tool a recruiter can use, right? So if you look at disrupting and come from a different angle, it maybe means that it's taken away from the traditional source.” (Subject 9)*

## **4.2.2 Challenges**

### *4.2.2.1 To get people aboard digital transformation*

As mentioned in the literature review, the different generations that comprise today's workforce have represented a significant challenge for recruiters, as they have had to adopt strategies that allow them to manage talent globally. In this regard, most participants from Mexico express that it has been challenging to implement technologies in the recruitment process, especially for operative job positions, as sometimes candidates do not have access to digital tools or do

not have the abilities to use them. Furthermore, they also agreed that it has been challenging to adopt digital tools when people from older generations, such as baby boomers take part in the recruitment process. The main reason these generations usually have a strong resistance to change.

*“Young people come already with an inertia towards technology; However, I believe that there are people who do not, due to the fact that they have been working in the same way for many years, and now that the process has been digitalised, they have had to face a rapid update and the rapid development of technological competencies that often they just do not want to. For me that is the main challenge” (Subject 5)*

*“[...] At least in recent years with generations, let's say a little older, because for example, if you focus only on millennials, they solve everything since they were born with technology but with older is complicated there a lot of resistance to change, for example in the pandemic they asked - but why are we going to meet in a video call, I can't connect or why can't we meet in groups of 5 with social distance - as I said, I have a lot of resistance to learning to use technologies”(Subject 1).*

Contrastingly, participants from Ireland agreed that indeed it has been challenging leading their teams towards digitalisation. Nonetheless, the challenge for them is slightly different. They did not mention anything related to generational difficulties, however they did consider that due to the speed of digital transformation, ‘user adaptation’ has been the major challenge for them. In other words, participants are of the same opinion that as a consequence of the speed of technological growth, to ensure their teams take full advantage of digital tools and use them efficiently has been a monumental challenge.

*“User adoption is the biggest single issue I think. [...]. You need to make sure that the people who were given the current technology to actually use and use efficiently” (Subject 9).*

*I know that if we don't bring everyone on the journey will have half the company able to use it in half the company not able to use it let's say so and so that's been a big focus of our business is actually training people to use their technology [...] We have had to put nearly a hold on bringing in new technology until everyone comes up to speed and then we get the value that we want from technology” (Subject 8).*

These findings further support the idea that the difference in behaviour and outlook between groups of people who belong to different generations have diversified the demands of the

current business market and as a result, recruiters are facing a monumental challenge: developing effective strategies that allow talent to be managed globally (SHRM, 2017).

#### *4.2.2.2 The way we communicate – less human interaction*

A common view amongst interviewees was that technology has changed the way human beings communicate with each other. Participants expressed that even though technology provides new avenues to be communicated, the truth is that probably the quality of that communication has also been impacted. Concerns were expressed about the importance of human interaction within the recruitment process as most participants considered that the best way to get to know a candidate well is in person.

*“The whole disruptive piece has been around how we communicate” (Subject 9).*

*“Sometimes we focus a lot on meeting certain profile requirements and the human interaction, which is what allows us to really get to know people is lost” (Subject 3).*

*“It does make it a lot harder doing it over you know video call or whatever so I definitely think you will always get better to know someone in person” (Subject 7).*

#### *4.2.2.3 Recruitment industry – a highly competitive market*

Participants from recruitment firms suggest that digital transformation has made the recruitment market highly competitive. They expressed that the immediacy of the information has allowed organisations to recruit directly and has made the war for talent harder amongst recruitment firms. Likewise, these participants also state that clients will expect a great range of candidates in less time.

*“ It is very competitive market out there at the moment and like clients will expect all says recruiters to produce very good CVs of candidates within two to three days” (Subject 6).*

*“It is a highly competitive market that I mean that's really the challenge that we face now so we are competing not only we used to compete with other recruiters and now due to digital transformation we are competing to numbers of competitors of you know have increased significantly because clients can now hire directly” (Subject 8).*

### **4.3 Evolving skills of the recruiter**

There was a total agreement amongst participants that the most important skills of the recruiters are technological skills. That is to say, recruiters need to be able to efficiently use those technology tools that streamline the recruitment processes. Another skill that participants

considered critical is the ability to analyse data. In this regard, interviewees considered it essential to be able to analyse information generated in the digital tools. Furthermore, due to the speed of digital transformation, they also consider it vital to be adaptable. Participants suggest that the market is constantly changing therefore it is crucial to be capable of adapting to this change. Some participants also considered that listening and communication skills are critical to identify candidates and clients' needs.

*“Data analysis ability and obviously technological skills that is inevitable. Up-to-date people who are immersed in technology. Also, that makes a lot of sense of adaptation” (Subject 5).*

*“I find listening skills are very underrated [...] because you have to listen to candidates their needs and requirements because if you're going to be representing that candidate to your clients and you have missed a key piece of information and that can fall down at final stage interview and it can you know even put you in a very bad” (Subject 6)*

*“You know, so the skills are going to need is just to be very adaptable to be technology savvy. I guess you know to be open to trying new technologies. [...] But I think just being open to try new technologies and being adaptable is really important” (Subject 10)*

#### **4.4 Recruiters' new role – Time to focus on adding strategic value**

One concern expressed regarding the role of the recruiters was the potential replacement of recruiters by digital technologies. However, participants agreed that the role of the recruiter will remain important across organisations as human interaction is critical in the recruitment process. They reflected their own perspective, highlighting the importance to add value to the process from a human perspective. Furthermore, they also concluded that even though technologies can easily screen hard skills, the best way to evaluate soft skills is meeting people. Recruitment, according to some of the participants, is a people driven business. Thus, even though technology has streamlined a significant part of the process, the process will always need human judgement. Interviewees coincided that even though the demand of recruiters in the market will decrease, organisations will always need someone to manage the process and to add value to it. Therefore, it is time for recruiters to add value through their personal brand, networking and innovative strategies.

*“Recruiters have a big future in the soft skills that part and parcel what we need to assess. And you only assessed that by getting to know the people” (Subject 9).*

*“I feel like no matter how automated the rest of the process gets recruiters will always be needed to get that kind of human interaction between the candidates to actually get a feel for who they actually are and so I do not think any hyper technology will ever replace that” (subject 7).*

*“While technology is a really good tool you are not going to be a really successful recruiter by just using technology only you need to be able to use technology plus at network face to face with clients and candidates” (Subject 8).*

#### **4.5 Summary**

Together, these results provide important insights into how digital transformation has transformed the role and functions of recruiters. A total of ten participants took part in the primary research conducted to express their experiences related to implementing digital tools in the recruitment process. Overall, the results suggest that the adoption of technological tools has given recruiters the opportunity to be more efficient and proactive during the recruitment process. However, as a result of the digital transformation, they have also faced significant challenges for which they have had to develop new skills, abilities and knowledge. Likewise, recruiters have had to adopt approaches that allow them to add strategic value to the recruiting process and remain competitive in today's market.

The following chapter will now broadly discuss these findings in relation to the literature review and the recruitment field. Furthermore, its relevance and implications will also be considered.

## **Chapter 5 – Discussion**

### **5.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to interpret and analyse the significance of the findings outlined in the previous chapter within the context of the literature review. Furthermore, it also aims to highlight the contributions of this study to the recruitment field.

This chapter also attempts to discuss the implications and limitations encountered when conducting this research. Additionally, recommendations for future studies will also be outlined in this chapter.

### **5.2 An Overview of Findings**

The purpose of this study was to contribute meaningful insights about how, and in what ways, digital transformation has changed the role of recruiters. The findings suggest that digital transformation has automated a significant part of the recruitment process and, as a result, recruiters have faced challenges in familiarising themselves with new recruitment technology platforms. However, digital transformation has also brought opportunities that have positively impacted the role of recruiter. Furthermore, the comparison between the countries involved in this research suggest that digital transformation in recruiting in Ireland is notably more advanced than in recruiting in Mexico.

To answer the research question posed, four objectives were established, which will be critically evaluated and related to the findings and the literature review in the following sections.

### **5.3 Discussion**

#### **5.3.1 Obj. 1 - To identify the main changes the recruiters' role has undergone due to digital transformation.**

An initial objective of this research was to identify in which ways digital transformation has changed the role of recruiters. The results showed that digital transformation has given recruiters the opportunity to become more proactive. The adoption of technological tools and platforms such as LinkedIn has put a wide range of talent within the grasp of recruiters; thus, they can proactively look for candidates whether they have an open role to fill or whether they are building a talent database for future potential open roles. This result might be explained by the fact that digital transformation has enabled immediate access to specific data of candidates, such as telephone, email, or even personal profiles on social networks and other platforms. As Dragusha et al. (2019) state that social media and social networking provide information about

potential candidates. Furthermore, this finding is consistent with that of Deshati (2017) who pointed out that the idea of waiting for candidates to apply is not effective anymore; thereby, recruiters need to become proactive and engage with candidates using technological tools that they have at their fingertips. As seen, this result showed that digital transformation has significantly impacted the way recruiters search for and attract candidates.

On the other hand, digitalisation has greatly streamlined the recruitment process. In this regard, the results suggest that there is a concern among recruiters about the fact that digital technologies can potentially replace them. Therefore, recruiters have found the need of developing strategies that allow them to innovate and to add strategic value to the recruitment process. In other words, recruiters are also performing a more strategic role. These results are in agreement with Kibble's (2021) and Braga's (2019) findings, which showed that technological advances have evolved the role of recruiters into a highly strategic role. It can be assumed that due to digital transformation recruiters are performing less administrative and repetitive functions as these are now being conducted by technology which allows recruiters to be more strategic and proactive in their roles.

### **5.3.2 Obj. 2 - To explore the most disruptive challenges recruiters are facing within digital transformation.**

The second objective of this research was to outline the challenges that digitalisation of the recruitment process has implied from recruiters' perspective. As all changes in life, digital transformation has also brought about significant challenges for recruiters. One of the key challenges has been to get people onboard with digital transformation. In other words, due to fast paced technological advancement of the recruiting industry, recruiters and employers have noticed that employees are finding it difficult to adapt to new technologies and to use them efficiently. Hence, organisations have had to choose technologies that fit best into their processes and talent.

In accordance with present results, previous research has demonstrated that digital transformation is about talent. For instance, Hoberg et al. (2017) suggest that the rapid technological advance demands to keep employees at the top of technological skills. Furthermore, Frankiewicz and Chamorro-Premuzic (2020) concluded that implementing digital tools will not be worth it if the workforce is not skilled enough. That is to say, the balance between digital tools and people skills is critical for the achievement of organisational goals (Snyder, 2019). This finding has important implications for digitalising the recruitment process, organisations and recruitment firms need to be aware that the success of digital

transformation depends largely on the development of specialised skills that allow employees to understand digital transformation and support the changes it causes in organisational culture and strategy. In other words, consideration needs to be given to the human capital as much as it needs to be given to the technology itself.

The results also illustrated that digital transformation has disruptively changed the way recruiters communicate with candidates. In contrast to Holm (2012) who suggests that communication with candidates has become the primary task for recruiters, the results of this research did not find evidence that recruiters agree with this idea. Nonetheless, the findings of this research showed that despite digitalisation giving recruiters the opportunity to stay in closer communication with candidates, it has also had an impact on the human interaction element of the recruitment process. In this regard, recruiters consider human interaction as critical to know candidates in depth and to ensure the fit between candidate profiles and organisational needs. This finding corroborates the idea of Upadhyay and Khandelwal (2018), who suggested that even though technologies are prominent to identify exceptional talent; recruiters still need to assess aspects such as rapport building, assessment of cultural fit, and negotiation which still require human interaction. It can therefore be assumed that, although technological advancement will continue automatising the recruitment process, recruiters will remain performing a critical role within this process.

### **5.3.3 Obj. 3 - To identify the skills that recruiters must develop to adapt to the changes generated by digitalisation.**

Another objective of this research was to ascertain the skills that recruiters have developed to overcome the challenges and take advantage of the opportunities that digital transformation has generated. The results showed that digital skills and the ability to analyse data are the most important competencies for recruiters since the digitalisation of the process has made it essential to be capable of using technology tools efficiently and to analyse data gathered from them. Prior studies have also noted the importance of developing multiple analytical and technological skills; however, they also highlight the importance of other skills such as mobile technologies, internet of things, cloud computing, and business networks (Kibble, 2021; LinkedIn, 2019; Hoberg et al., 2017). This result raises the possibility that digital transformation is driving recruiters to a more strategic position but also towards a more analytic role.

On the other hand, the results suggest that recruiters also considered some soft skills critical, such as adaptability, listening and communication skills. Since technology advancement is



constantly changing the recruitment market, recruiters consider it vital to be adaptable. According to Hoberg et al. (2017) digital transformation is disruptively changing the way companies compete, interact, and create value. Thus, the ability of employees to adapt is vital to organisational success (Shapovalova and Pavlov 2021). Furthermore, the findings indicated that recruiters perform a bridge between organisations and candidates. Thereby, recruiters are considered essential to be capable of listening, understanding, and communicating the needs of the candidate to the company and vice versa, ensuring that the needs of both can be satisfied once the employment relationship begins.

There are similarities between the attitudes expressed by recruiters in this study and those described by Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson (2018) who argue that the adoption of digital technologies allows recruiters to put a greater emphasis on understanding candidates' needs and meeting them better than anyone else. Likewise, as part of their strategic role, recruiters need to be able to communicate and bring their own point of view in the process (LinkedIn, 2019). This finding has important implications for adding strategic value to the process. That is to say, recruiters firstly need to listen and understand people's needs to develop and communicate strategies that allow them to add a significant value to the process.

#### **5.3.4 Obj. 4 - To explore how technology tools have supported the transformation of the recruiters' role.**

The last objective of this research was to study how technology tools have been part of the transformation of the recruiters' role. Consistent with the literature, this research has found that adoption of technological tools such as job sites, AI, or social networks have significantly made the recruitment process more efficient. The impactful relationship between the adoption of digital tools and the efficiency of the process can be explained by the fact that digital technologies give recruiters the access to a greater number of candidates, often with sophisticated skill sets in less time. This result corroborates the idea of Sneha and Shekar (2020) who suggest that digital tools can improve the recruitment strategy attracting highly skilled candidates.

Moreover, the results suggest that technology has automated repetitive and administrative tasks which allows recruiters to spend more time in activities that require human interaction, such as interviewing. These results corroborate the findings of Upadhyay and Khandelwal (2018) who suggest that the automation of certain repetitive tasks gives recruiters the opportunity to perform a more thoughtful hiring and to be focused on strategic issues. Overall, this finding broadly supports the work of Braga (2019) who suggest that the adoption of digital tools

positively impacts the recruitment process mainly in the efficiency of the process, the accuracy of candidates' assessment, the diversity of recruits and the development of wider talent pools.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for further research**

As qualitative methods were used for this research in future research, a quantitative method could be useful to establish more specifically the aspects of digital transformation that are modifying the role of the recruiters and to understand in depth the research topic.

Future research implementing a bigger sample size could help to add more in-depth insights in this area.

Future studies on the current topic including a wider range of cultures and industries are recommended to provide a deeper knowledge of the impact of digital transformation in the recruiters' role across a wider variety of sectors.

To develop a full picture of the recruiters' role, it might be useful to include the impact that digital transformation is having on the psychological well-being of recruiters.

#### **5.5 Summary**

The discussion of the results provide a broader perspective of how digital transformation has transformed the role of recruiters. Overall, the contrast of the results with the literature suggest that the role of the recruiters will continue to evolve as new technologies continue to evolve. Furthermore, even though it is clear that technological advancement is significantly automatising the recruitment process, human interaction remains an important aspect for some tasks, thus, the role of the recruiter remains important in conducting an efficient, engaging and successful recruitment process. The following chapter will summarise the results highlighting their importance and significance.

## **Chapter 6 Conclusions**

### **6.1 Introduction**

The purpose of this chapter is to summarise and reflect on the results of this research and to state the answer to the research question. Furthermore, practical recommendations based on the findings will be made in this chapter.

### **6.2 Overall Conclusions**

This study described how digital transformation has changed the role of recruiters. Building on the assumption that recruiting is a vital activity for organisational success and within the SHRM field, this study aimed to contribute meaningful insights related to this transformation. This study has found that digital transformation has turned the recruiters' role into a strategic, proactive and analytic function.

The first objective of this study was to identify the major changes that the role of the recruiters has gone through in the digital era. This research has found that even though digitalisation has transformed recruitment in different ways the strategies to attract and screen candidates have been transformed the most. Supporting Holm (2012) who states that techniques related to technology are used to a large extent for attracting candidates and processing incoming applications. In this digital era, the way individuals communicate has been disrupted and technological advancement has given exponential access to a significant amount of information. Therefore, recruiters have had the opportunity to proactively expand their recruitment strategies to a broader market. Furthermore, since digital tools have automated time-consuming activities, recruiters find it critical to innovate, to add strategic value and a human perspective to the process. In this regard, recruitment professionals will be expected to become a business advisor to help leaders to achieve organisational goals (LinkedIn, 2019).

This study also explored the main challenges recruiters have faced during this digital transformation. This study confirmed that the speed and extent of technological development have given rise to the main challenges recruiters are currently facing. On the one hand, the constant changes provoked by digital transformation demand the continuous development of technological skills that lead employees to use digital tools efficiently. The above has been challenging due to generational diversity in the workplace and the speed of technological advancement. On the other hand, despite digital transformation enabling recruiters to be constantly communicating with candidates, there is a decrease in human interaction which recruiters consider critical in the recruitment process. The current data highlight the importance

of investing in both technology and talent to successfully conduct the recruitment process. Supporting Penn (2021) who points out that the connection between people, processes and technology is critical to go successfully through to digitalisation.

Likewise, this research identified the skills that recruiters have had to develop due to the transformation of their role. The results showed that both hard and soft skills are essential for the success of the recruitment process. To be specific, today recruiters must be focused on the development of specialised skills that allow them to take advantage of the technological tools available to them. Furthermore, they also must be capable of analysing data to find exceptional talent, to ensure a cultural fit and to manage human capital efficiently. On the other hand, the human side of the recruitment process demands professionals capable of bringing a human perspective to the process through skills such as listening, understanding and communication. In this regard, Half (2017) suggests that even though technical skills are vital, digital strategy also requires people with greater analytical, communication and problem-solving skills. As seen, despite the role of the recruiters having taken a digital and analytical approach, it is also critical to be able to use other skills to recruit and retain highly skilled candidates. As it was discussed early in the literature review, recruiters need to be capable of asset aspects such as assessment of cultural fit and aspects related to candidates' soft skills or emotions (Upadhyay and Khandelwal, 2018).

The study further explored how technology tools have supported the transformation of the recruiters' role. This research concluded that the main impact of the adoption of digital tools has been the efficiency of the process. Supporting Braga (2019) and Nikolaou (2021) who suggest that the recruitment process has been positively impacted mainly in the efficiency of recruitment timing. Due to the automation of the process, recruiters can spend more time in other stages of the process that require human participation. In this regard Walford-Wright and Scott-Jackson (2018) suggest that the adoption of digital technologies allows recruiters to put a greater emphasis on understanding candidates' needs and meeting them better than anyone else. Furthermore, the adoption of digital tools led recruiters to improve the accuracy of the recruitment process.

Overall, this work concludes that recruiters are currently performing a proactive, analytic and strategic role. Likewise, digital transformation has allowed recruiters to focus on building relationships with both candidates and organisations, enhancing the experience of both during the process. Furthermore, it is clear that as new technologies develop, the role of recruiters will continue to evolve, perhaps towards more specialised functions. This evolution will require the

continuous development of skills and a high adaptation. Since the technological tools are only support, the recruiting professionals will have to adapt to their new responsibilities and continue adding strategic value and human perspective to the stages of the process that require it.

### **6.3 CIPD requirements**

#### **6.3.1 Practical recommendations**

Based on the finding of this research the recommendations made in this section are considered critical to successfully drive the digitalisation of the recruitment process.

##### *6.3.1.1 Recommendation 1*

As discussed in this research, recruitment is one of the most important functions in the SHRM field, and the role of the recruiters is critical to hire a workforce capable of achieving organisational goals in the digital era. Therefore, digital transformation demands recruitment professionals capable of maximising their digital sources and recruiting exceptional talent. Hence, as technology continuously evolves, the establishment of training programs that enable recruiters to develop digital skills and abilities is critical. Likewise, it is essential to consider that even though time is an essential element in the recruitment industry, organisations must give recruiters considerable time to undertake the training.

In terms of timeline, recruiters must be given training one month of a new technology has been efficiently introduced. This month will enable recruiters to develop the abilities to make the most of the available tools. However, it is important to consider that along with the use of these technologies it might be necessary to update those skills and abilities. In terms of costing, as it mentioned in the research, time is one of the most valuable assets for recruiters, therefore the implementation of technology must be carefully planned to avoid any affectations in the efficiency of the process which could be costly for the firm. Likewise, the costing of training will mainly depend on the length and intensity of the training, however a budget between 200€ and 2000€ might be considered.

##### *6.3.1.2 Recommendation 2*

The digital transformation of the recruiting team should be carefully planned. Therefore, it is recommended to determine specific people to be the head of the digital transformation journey. On the one hand, a leader who is in charge of the implementation of new technologies. This leader must ensure that the technology adopted is compatible with the recruitment strategies and its objectives. On the other hand, a person in charge of leading the training of employees

in the technologies adopted who must ensure that all team members are aimed at developing skills and abilities as well as acquiring knowledge that allows them to use these technologies efficiently. Furthermore, it is critical to mention that communication and teamwork between leaders is critical to the digitalisation of the recruitment department. In other words, both leaders must ensure that their teams are ready to move on before they implement a new technology that requires a new training.

In terms of timing, according to the results of this research, digital transformation is a lengthy process, therefore the time needed to adopt new technologies will depend mainly on the organisations' needs and their ability to adapt. Nonetheless, it is essential to mention that in the current labour market, the digitalisation of organisational processes is critical to remain competitive in the industry, therefore digital transformation must be an organisational priority. In terms of costing, the major investment will be time since digitalisation requires time for planification and analysis. Likewise, the investing in technology would be up to the organisation on an individual basis and it should build into their annual budget.

#### *6.3.1.3 Recommendation 3*

Digital transformation is a journey in which every member of the team must be onboard. Likewise, digital transformation means technological changes, however, it also means changes at an organizational, cultural and operational level. For this, it is necessary to redefine individuals' roles and responsibilities. In other words, the success of digital transformation largely depends on the ability of leaders to communicate changes internally and ensure that employees understand what their role is and why it matters, where the organisation is heading, and the reason and importance of these changes. Reinforcing new ways of working and ensuring that employees are part of the digital transformation journey is essential for the empowerment of organizations..

#### **6.3.2 Personal learning statement**

Conducting this research and writing this dissertation has been a monumental challenging piece of work from start to finish. However, having worked as a recruitment professional for nearly five years in my own country, I started this process with excitement and confidence. When I chose my research topic I did it with the belief that it had to be something that allowed me to expand my perspective as a professional but also share the experiences and the knowledge that I have from my background. Researching this topic made my perspective on the importance of the role of the recruiters broader and confirmed my belief that more than ever organisations should consider this role as critical for their organisational success.

The pandemic COVID – 19 has changed the nature of work in every industry, recruiters have had to suddenly adapt to recruit people remotely which have made them busier. Therefore, accessing people to collect data for this research was one of the most challenging aspects of this process. However, I had the opportunity to talk to very experienced and passionate recruitment professionals which enriched my research process. As an international student, I also think that writing a dissertation in my second language has been one of the biggest challenges. Furthermore, it has also been to take care of my psychological well-being as it has been a tough year, especially being away from my family during the pandemic. However, both aspects have helped to prove to myself how determined I can be to achieve my goals.

From my experience, conducting this research helped me to develop analytical, methodological and interpretative skills which I consider critical for my professional development. I have also improved my writing skills presenting my research in a simple, logical and critical manner. I strongly believe that having the opportunity to conclude a Master's degree in Ireland has been one of the most enriching experiences in my professional learning.

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## **Appendixes**

### **Appendix 1 – Participant information sheet**

**Title of the study:** *The impact of digital transformation in recruitment practices*

I would like to invite you to take part in a research study. Before you decide you need to understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully. Ask questions if anything you read is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether or not to take part.

#### **WHO I AM AND WHAT THIS STUDY IS ABOUT?**

My name is Linda Contreras and I am currently enrolled in a MA in Human Resource Management at National College of Ireland. To conclude my studying I must conduct a research and submit a dissertation related to this field. Based on my studying and experience I have chosen to research the impact of digital transformation in recruitment practices aiming to explore how digital transformation has transformed recruitment within organisations.

#### **WHAT WILL TAKING PART INVOLVE?**

Taking part in the research will involve an interview where you will be asked 10 - 12 questions. This interview will take part online through MS teams and will take 45 min – 1 hour. The interview questions will be quite open ended, so that you can bring up any topics that you find important, making it more of a collaborative process. This will be arranged for a time and date of your convenience prior to the end of June 2021.

#### **WHY HAVE YOU BEEN INVITED TO TAKE PART?**

You have been invited to participate in this research as it is believed that your knowledge and experience in this field will provide the research with meaningful and valuable insights and information.

#### **DO YOU HAVE TO TAKE PART?**

It is entirely up to you to decide whether you want to take part or not. If you decide to take part, you may choose not to answer any of the pre-planned questions and you are still free to stop the interview at any time without giving a reason.

### **WHAT ARE THE POSSIBLE RISKS AND BENEFITS OF TAKING PART?**

The aim is that this research will be a valuable resource for understanding further how digital transformation has transformed the nature of recruitment.

### **WILL TAKING PART BE CONFIDENTIAL?**

For the purposes of enhancing the accuracy of the qualitative analysis of the data from our interview session, with your consent the interview will be recorded. Also, with your permission, selective quotes from the transcription may be included in the final written

dissertation to support main points or themes that arise from the interview. Your responses will not be discussed with any fellow interviewees in the study and your identity will not be discussed with either of the researcher's dissertation supervisors.

### **HOW WILL INFORMATION WHICH YOU PROVIDE BE RECORDED, STORED AND PROTECTED?**

Signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a secure location on a personal laptop until after my degree has been conferred. A transcript of interviews in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for a further two years after this. Under freedom of information legislation, you are entitled to access the information you have provided at any time.

### **WHAT WILL HAPPEN TO THE RESULTS OF THE STUDY?**

The results of this study will form a dissertation, which will be submitted to the National College of Ireland as part of the MA Human Resource Management program.

As a reminder, if you have questions, please do not hesitate to contact:

**Researcher:**



Linda Contreras X20102968@student.ncirl.ie

Thank you for reading this information sheet and I hope to speak with you soon. Your sincerely.  
Linda Contreras.

## **Appendix 2 – Consent Form**

### *The impact of digital transformation in recruitment practices*

#### Consent to take part in research

- I..... voluntarily agree to participate in this research study.
- I understand that even if I agree to participate now, I can withdraw at any time or refuse to answer any question without any consequences of any kind.
- I understand that I can withdraw permission to use data from my interview within two weeks after the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.
- I have had the purpose and nature of the study explained to me in writing and I have had the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
- I understand that participation involves an interview where I will be asked 10 - 12 questions and it will take 45 min – 1 hour.
- I understand that I will not benefit directly from participating in this research.
- I agree to my interview being audio-recorded.
- I understand that all information I provide for this study will be treated confidentially.
- I understand that in any report on the results of this research my identity will remain anonymous. This will be done by changing my name and disguising any details of my interview which may reveal my identity or the identity of people I speak about.
- I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in a dissertation submitted to National College of Ireland.
- I understand that if I inform the researcher that myself or someone else is at risk of harm they may have to report this to the relevant authorities - they will discuss this with me first but may be required to report with or without my permission.
- I understand that signed consent forms and original audio recordings will be retained in a secure location on a personal laptop until the exam board confirms the results of their dissertation.

- I understand that a transcript of my interview in which all identifying information has been removed will be retained for two years from the date of the exam board.
- I understand that under freedom of information legalisation I am entitled to access the information I have provided at any time while it is in storage as specified above.
- I understand that I am free to contact any of the people involved in the research to seek further clarification and information.

**Researcher: Linda Contreras Carrillo - Email: x20102968@student.ncirl.ie**

*Signature of research participant*

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Signature of participant

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Date

*Signature of researcher*

I believe the participant is giving informed consent to participate in this study

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Signature of participant

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Date

## **Appendix 3 – Interview guide**

### **Preliminary Questions**

1. How long have you been working in recruitment?
2. What is your role? What are your main/primary responsibilities?

### **Recruitment digital transformation**

3. What does the term ‘digital transformation’ mean to you?
4. What impact do you think digital transformation is having on recruitment practises within organisations?
5. What impact have you seen on recruitment practises in your organisation resulting from digital transformation?
6. What do you think are the most disruptive digital tools used in recruitment today?

### **Recruiters’ role**

7. What are the main digital transformation challenges faced by recruiters today?
8. What are the opportunities digital transformation offer to recruiters and recruitment processes overall?
9. What are the new approaches recruiters have adopted to provide organisations with a competitive workforce and in what way have digital tools supported them?

### **Future of recruitment**

10. As technologies and online platforms continue to evolve in the recruitment space what do you see as the future role of a recruiter? How will these online tools support the role of recruiter?
11. What do you think are the skills that recruiters will need in the future to adapt to digitalization?