**Battling It out on the LinkedIn Field: A Comparison of the Employer Branding Efforts Between Established Organizations and Start-Ups**

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## Abstract

Employees constitute an important stakeholder group for organizations nowadays and companies devote a great deal of effort in employer branding, among which job advertisement is a means commonly used. In the present study, job advertisements from both start-ups and established companies posted on LinkedIn were examined and significant differences between the two types of companies were found. Start-ups, in comparison to their established counterparts, disclose more information about the organization including the history, mission and/or vision, non-physical work environment and attract job applicants with more decision-making opportunities, future career development, work-life balance and other additional incentives, while established companies only mention more about the diversity of countries they operate in. Limitations of the present study and implications for future research are mentioned in the end.

**Keywords**: Employer branding, job advertisement, startup, established company

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##

## Introduction

In today’s world, which is characterized by technological advances and global competition, high-quality employees are crucial for an organization’s effectiveness and success and thus they play a key role for gaining competitive advantage (Michael, Handflied-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). Moreover, these employees have a major influence on the organization’s reputation (Gotsl & Wilson, 2001). Subsequently, organizations no longer focus only on functional knowledge, but also consider the compatibility of future employees with the organization’s culture and values during the recruiting processes. However, as competition for talent is increasing, finding and attracting the desired employees is not an easy task. Many organizations are looking for the same skills in future employees which makes true talent scarce. Furthermore, in the current world of business, talented people demand for jobs that fit their individual personality (Albert, Ashforth, & Dutton, 2000). For that reason, it becomes imperative for organizations to develop recruitment communication strategies to attract eligible people and win the so-called war for talent (Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen, & Schoonderbeek, 2013).

In this context, employer branding plays a significant role. It provides current and future employees with a unique and attractive brand image of the employer (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). The origins of employer branding lay in the marketing principles of branding (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus, 2004; Cable & Turban, 2001). It represents „the firm’s efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer” (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 501), generally speaking: what makes an organization a great place to work (de Bussy, Ewing, Berthon, & Pitt, 2002, p. 12). This concept is closely related to organizational attractiveness – the more attractive an organization is, the stronger its employer brand is (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).

Job advertisements are the most common means for an organization to recruit future employees. In order to brand itself as a good employer, the organization has to incorporate aspects of attractiveness in the advertisement text that mirror the organization’s identity (Berthon et al., 2005). Berthon et al. (2005) created a scale for employer attractiveness that consists of 25 items of attractiveness that an organization can possess. Further literature suggests that the following factors can make an organization more attractive as an employer and contribute to the creation of a strong employer brand: opportunities for development and advancement (Berthon et al., 2005; Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998), corporate responsibility (Backhaus, 2004; Backhaus, Stone, & Heiner, 2002; Turban & Greening, 1997), a positive and supportive organizational climate (Backhaus, 2004; Berthon et al., 2005; Turban et al., 1998), an innovative and creative work environment and good compensation (Berthon et al., 2005; Cable & Judge, 1994).

However, all these studies mainly focus on employer branding efforts of established companies. Little attention has yet been paid to how start-up companies present themselves as employers through employer branding. Indeed, start‐ups and established firms play different roles in the economy and differ with respect to their organizational features.

In comparison to established companies, start-ups often struggle with lack of visibility, less or no reputation among the public, and limited resources to promote themselves as a brand, as well as an employer. In their branding efforts, start-ups have to focus not only on communicating their goals and values that differentiate them from the competitors, but also on gaining legitimacy among the public (Witt & Rode, 2005). The emergence of social networking sites, such as LinkedIn, and the increasing popularity of e-recruitment have reduced employer branding costs of small organizations which are in the first stages of development. Despite this, start-ups and established firms differ significantly in relation to the attractive job attributes they can offer to potential employees. These differences are visible with respect to the job security (Carnahan, Campbell, Agarwal, & Franco, 2011), formal structures, hierarchy, interpersonal relationships, responsibilities, desirable employee behaviors, as well as compensation (Tumasjan, Strobel, & Welpe, 2011).

Based on these differences, in the present study we aim at uncovering how the brand expressions in job advertisements differ across start-ups and established companies. Therefore, the guiding research question asks:

**RQ**: How does the brand expression in job advertisements differ between start-ups and established organizations?

To find answers, we conducted a content analysis of job advertisements of start-ups and established companies on LinkedIn. Specifically, we focused on job advertisements for entry level positions in the United States of America that were published during the month of October 2019.

The present study is structured as follows: It begins with presenting the theoretical framework underlying our investigation. Here, we define our key concepts and elaborate further on the research and sub-research questions. Next, the article describes the used methodology including the sample, the data gathering, code development and coding procedure. The article then presents the results and concludes with a discussion, limitations and implications for future research.

## Theoretical Framework

Thus far employer branding has been defined as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187), which is considered to be an integral part of a company’s overall external branding efforts (Kotler & Keller, 2009). Developing an employer brand can extend to how prospective and current employees perceive the organization’s reputation (Turban & Cable, 2003; Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010) and whether they identify with the organizational culture (Phillips, Gully & Castellano, 2014), therefore making the job recruitment process more efficient (Heilmann, Saarenketo & Liikkanen, 2013).

The current competitive job market has pushed organizations to present themselves as attractive employers in order to attract suitable and qualified talent (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Bali & Dixit, 2016; Berthon et al., 2005; Cable & Edwards, 2004; Elving et al., 2013; Wilden et al., 2010). This process can be explained through the perspective of signalling theory (Spence, Helmreich & Stapp, 1973) in which organizations send and job seekers receive brand- and organization-relevant signals. Thus, applicants rely on these cues for their future job-related decisions (Wilden et al., 2010).

This research will seek to understand the branding cues of two types of organizations - start-ups and established firms. Start-ups are often new, entrepreneurial companies that have existed for no more than 5 years (Sauermann, 2018) and are less known to job seekers. This unfamiliarity influences job seekers’ attitude on the job advertisements and organizations (Ganesan, Antony & George, 2018). Therefore, applicants for start-ups may be more concerned with the branding strategies of the organizations (Turban & Cable, 2003), such as the emphasis on innovation and learning as core values (Phillips et al., 2014). Larger companies, on the other hand, have a longer history of performances that results in the advantage of a more established reputation (Lange, Lee & Dai, 2011). Through this familiarity among job applicants, established firms may feel less pressure to develop employer branding unlike start-ups. Little prior literature except for the work of Sauermann (2018) has compared job advertisements between the two types of organizations that are at both ends of the temporal spectrum. Hereby the present study seeks to explore the way these two types of organizations express their identity in their online job ads.

Previous research has focused on various platforms for spreading job information such as newspapers (Kaplan, Aamodt, & Wilk, 1991; Pourfarhad, 2012), company’s recruitment webpages (Walker, Feild, Giles, & Bernerth, 2008) and social media platforms such as LinkedIn (Brouer, Stefanone, Badawy, Egnoto, & Seitz, 2015). Various elements of job ads and their effect on employee recruitment have been examined. Job advertisement content, such as the symbolic and instrumental attributes (Nolan, Gohlke, Gilmore, & Rosiello, 2013), measuring attributes such as flexibility, hierarchy and decision-making styles (Tumasjan, Strobel, & Welpe, 2011), organizational offerings including interest, social, economic, career development and application values (Berthon et al., 2005; see also Ahmad & Daud, 2016) are found to be relevant. The use of attractive and appealing language (Gao, Li & Scorpio, 2012), informal elements (Barcelos, Dantas & Senecal, 2018; Gao et al., 2012), superlatives (Rush, 1998), emotional appeals (Han & Ling, 2016) are also found to exert influence on recruitment. Based on the above findings and job advertisement measurements, the present study will further investigate how the employer branding on the social media platform LinkedIn differs between established and start-up organizations. The following sub-research questions are posited:

**Sub-RQ1:** How does the regular content (e.g. salary, logo, number of employees etc.) in job advertisements differ between start-ups and established organizations?

**Sub-RQ2:** How does the description of organizational attributes in job advertisements differ between start-ups and established organizations?

**Sub-RQ3:** How do the language techniques in job advertisements differ between start-ups and established organizations?

## Methodology

This work carried out a quantitative content analysis of job advertisements on LinkedIn to compare the ways start-ups and established companies express their brands. The networking platform LinkedIn was chosen due to the large number of registered members, reaching more than 645 million individuals from over 200 countries, and its wide popularity among recruiters and HR professionals (“About Us,” n.d.).

LinkedIn’s job search engine offers the possibility to use filters, thus search results were refined before the data collection. The filters that were applied were location, date the job advertisement was published, job type, industry and experience level. The position had to be located in the United States of America and uploaded in the time period between the 1st and the 31st of October 2019. *The US was selected due to the language requirement that the sampled job advertisements have to be written in English, so that all coders can understand them.* Furthermore, only full-time, entry positions from the Information Technology and Services industry were considered. The Information Technology and Services industry was selected due to the high concentration of start-ups.

Through a convenience sample 250 job advertisements were collected from the filtered results (n = 210,381) and coded. Of these, 127 were established companies and 123 were start-ups.

A codebook with 16 variables was developed to measure the brand expression in the dataset with collected LinkedIn job advertisements. Each question of the coding scheme was connected to a dichotomous variable discussing explicitly the textual content of the job advertisement. Content from the skills requirements section of the advertisement and from additional fields, containing company-related information such as “About us” section or promotional videos, were not taken into consideration.

The codebook (see Appendix A) consisted of three sections, linked to each sub-research question. Formal job advertisement elements such as salary and number of employees were included in the first section. The second section of the codebook was based on the proposed coding scheme by Elving et al. (2013) for investigating employer branding practices in job advertisements. It took into consideration the description of organizational attributes such as non-physical work environment, additional employee benefits, and participation in decision-making processes. The final section accounted for the used language techniques - informal language and presence of superlatives.

Agreement between the coders was measured by calculating Krippendorff’s Alpha for each variable. For this purpose a subsample of 10% of the dataset was double coded. Even though common reliability standards, as pointed out by Krippendorff (2004), agree on an α-value above 0.8, certain cases allow for values between 0.6 and 0.8. As the codebook employed in this study is rather exploratory and has not been used in its wholeness in previous research, variables with α-values higher than 0.6 were considered for statistical testing (see Appendix B). Two of the variables failed to meet the intercoder reliability requirements and were removed from the analysis.

An independent-samples *t*-test was conducted in SPSS to compare attributes of brand expression between start-ups and established companies. The means of fourteen variables were compared across the two groups.

## Results

*Descriptives*

All the 250 job advertisements collected on LinkedIn were included in the statistical analysis. Overall, the most prominent organizational characteristics disclosed in the job advertisements were: the logo (97%), the team the applicant will be a part of (48%) and the non-physical environment of the organization (57%). The least mentioned attributes were: the number of employees (8%), the salary (4%), and the physical work environment of the organization (12%).

*Independent Samples T-Tests*

The statistical analysis revealed significant differences between established companies and start-up companies in nine of the investigated variables. Only one attribute appeared more often in job advertisements posted by established companies (M=0.21; SD=0.411), as compared to start-ups (M=0.07; SD=0.261) – it was the number of countries in which the company operates, t(215)=3.212, p=.002. This result was not surprising considering that established companies are more likely to operate internationally, when compared to start-ups, due to the fact that they exist longer. The results of the analysis indicated that job advertisements posted by start-ups mentioned the opportunities to participate in decision-making (M=0.5; SD=0.502) more often that the job advertisements posted by established firms (M=0.35; SD=0.480), t(247)=-2.278, p=.024. Start-ups also tended to disclose information about the non-physical environment of the company (M=0.72; SD=0.453) more often than did established companies (M=0.43; SD=0.496), t(247)=-4.832, p=.000. A significant difference was found in terms of describing the vision and/or mission of the company, with start-ups (M=0.36; SD=0.481) including this information more often than established companies (M=0.2; SD=0.399), t(237)=-2.872, p=.004. Similarly, start-up companies offered more information about the possibility for career development (M=0.29; SD=0.457), than the established companies (M=0.16; SD=0.366), t(233)=-2.578, p=.011. Start-ups also mentioned work-life balance possibilities (M=0.34; SD=0.476) more often than the companies established on the market (M=0.14; SD=0.350), t(224)=-3.769, p=.000. Another attributes of the company disclosed more often by start-ups (M=0.37; SD=0.486) than established companies (M=0.23; SD=0.421) were additional incentives offered with the position, t(241)=-2.529. The use of informal language was also found more often in job advertisements offered by start-ups (M=0.48; SD=0.502), as compared to their established competitors (M=0.18; SD=0.387), t(229)=-5.259, p=.000. Lastly, start-up companies (M=0.24; SD=0.426) were reported to mention the history of the organization more prominently than the established companies (M=0.13; SD=0.342), t(234) = -2.082, p=.038. This result was unexpected, considering the longevity of the latter, as compared to the former. The following figure 1 gives an overview of the significant mean differences.



*Figure 1.* The diagram illustrates the significant mean differences in job advertisements published by start-ups and established companies. It presents the standard error for each variable.

## Discussion and Conclusion

The aim of this paper was to explore the way start-ups and established companies express their brand identity in online job advertisements by conducting a quantitative content analysis. The data analysis showed that start-ups shared more general details about the company. They attempted to familiarize the job applicant with the organization by disclosing more information about the history and the mission and vision of the start-up in comparison to established players on the market. Start-ups also differed from established organizations by clearly outlining and listing company benefits and perks that future employees can enjoy and policies actively supporting a better work-life balance. These results align with earlier work on recruiting effectiveness and differences in employer branding practices between start-ups and established companies (e.g Phillips et al., 2014; Sauermann, 2018).

Consistent with previous research (Phillips et al., 2014; Turban & Cable, 2003), this paper found that in order to attract qualified employees, young companies tend to more frequently mention participation in decision-making processes and opportunities for career growth within the company. When discussing the non-physical work environment in the organization, start-ups were more eager to share insights on topics such as hierarchical structures and the culture that awaits applicants within the firm. This finding is in accordance with prior research, arguing that start-ups need to invest more in their branding efforts in order to achieve legitimacy among stakeholders (Witt & Rode, 2005). Nevertheless, non-physical work environment was also the most prominently discussed topic for both types of organization. This finding implicates that recruiters and HR professionals of both companies are actively disclosing insights into their organizations’ culture and work atmosphere to attract potential talents.

In addition, the third sub-research question investigated the implemented language techniques in the job advertisements and results showed that start-ups choose to present themselves through more informal language than established companies. Possible explanation could be that informal language is used as a reflection of the company culture, attempting to present the start-up a more relaxed, open-minded and modern alternative to other established companies and thus gain a competitive advantage (Abratt & Kleyn, 2012).

The only job attribute mentioned more often by established companies was the number of countries the organization operates in. As start-ups are still in a developing phase and have not started international expansion, this is not a surprising finding. In addition, established companies would try to use their global presence as a stamp of approval and a sign of legitimacy and thus could potentially attract more applicants.

This study has its limitations, too. The variable non-physical work environment was defined too broadly and was used to code various constructs such as hierarchical structures within the organization, the working atmosphere, and the culture of the company. Future research may seek to further differentiate between these concepts include them in the codebook as separate variables. Moreover, a limitation of the instrument employed in this study was the intercoder reliability that was lower than the recommended values in the scientific community (Krippendorff, 2004). The reliability values calculated in this work suggest that more time should be invested in coder training and further specialization and narrowing down the problematic variables.

Since only very few job advertisements included concrete information on the salary, a possible avenue for future research would be to compare these results to practices on disclosing a specific compensation in other countries and working cultures such as Europe or Asia. Additional possibility for future research is investigating differences in brand expressions in job advertisements across industries and seniority levels of the offered position. In order to better understand the effects of the differences in brand expression across start-ups and established companies on job applicants, future research may combine the quantitative content analysis with qualitative survey.

By distinguishing between the two types of companies, this research contributes to academia by identifying the varying employer branding practices of established and start-up organizations. Moreover, corporate communication practitioners and employer branding professionals of these firms should be aware of each others’ employer branding efforts and accordingly adjust their strategies.

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## Appendix A: Codebook

*Introduction*

This codebook aims to address the brand expression practices in job advertisements published on a social networking site, LinkedIn, among start-ups and established companies. The procedure is divided into three sections. The first section focuses on regular content often found in job advertisements, such as salary and number of employees. The second section investigates the characteristics of the organizational culture and work environment, as presented in the job advertisements. The third part examines the language techniques used in the job advertisements.

Ultimately, the goal of this codebook is to provide an insight into the differences in brand expression in job advertisements between start-ups and established companies.

*Procedure and Job Advertisement Eligibility for Study*

The study investigates job advertisements published on website LinkedIn and meet the following requirements:

* the job advertisement was published during the month of October 2019
* the job advertisement offers employment in the United States of America
* the job advertisements is published by a company in Information Technology and Services industry
* the job advertisement offers an entry-level position
* the job advertisement offers a full-time position
* the job advertisement offers a long-term contract

Before coding the job advertisement, the coder ought to make sure that it meets all the above requirements. If at least one of the requirements is not met, the job advertisement should be excluded from the study.

*Unit of Analysis*

1. Information about the organization in general is included
2. Information about the job position is included
3. Job requirements and applicant’s qualifications are excluded

*The Codebook focuses on three categories:*

1. Regular job advertisements content (**Sub-RQ1**)
2. Organisational attributes (**Sub-RQ2**)
3. Language techniques (**Sub-RQ3**)

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Category** | **Code** | **Description** | **Explanation** | **Source** |
| 1. **Formal categories**
 |
|  V1. Item ID | [1-250] | Continuous  | Each code indicates one out of 250 analysed job advertisements.  |  |
|  V2. Coders | 12345 | AnnikaKatarzynaMelinaShuyingSulhie | Each code indicates a person who coded the job advertisement. |
| V3. Type of company | 01 | Established CompanyStart-up Company | Code 0 if the company publishing the job advertisement has been on the market for more than 5 years.Code 1 if the company publishing the job advertisement has been on the market for less than 5 years. |
| 1. **Regular job advertisement content**
 |
| V4. Does the job advertisement mention the number of employees? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement mentions the number of employees working for the company. Code 1 only if the number is mentioned in the job advertisement per se, not in the LinkedIn profile. |  |
| V5. Does the job advertisement mention the countries the company is operating in? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement mentions the number and /or names of countries in which the company is operating. Code 1 only if more than 1 country is mentioned. ‘Worldwide’ or ‘global’ also works. (We want to know where the employees are located.) |  |
| V6. Does the job advertisement mention salary? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the salary for the position is mentioned at any point in the article. Code 1 only if a specific number is mentioned. | W.J.L. Elving, J.J.C. Westhoff, K. Meeusen, J.W. Schoonderbeek, 2012 |
| 1. **Characteristics of the organizational attributes**
 |
| V7. Does the job advertisement discuss how the organization is posited with regard to other organizations?  | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if at any point in the job advertisement, the company compares itself to other organization(s). This includes rankings and rewards.  | Elving, W. J., Westhoff, J. J., Meeusen, K., & Schoonderbeek, J. W. (2013). The war for talent? The relevance of employer branding in job advertisements for becoming an employer of choice. *Journal of Brand Management*, *20*(5), 355-373. |
| **Examples**“In the Data Science sector, we’re the leading company…”“...was ranked the 13th Fastest Growing Company in North America on Deloitte’s 2018 Technology Fast 500™.” |
| V8. Does the job advertisement discuss the corporate history of the company?  | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the history of the company is described at any point in the job advertisement. This includes references to anything the corporation did in the past. E.g.* Founding year
* Development throughout the years
 |
| **Examples**“Founded in 1996, our company is a global leader in high performance.”“We started locally but developed into a global company.”“In the past years we accomplished...”“We merged with...” |
| V9. Does the job advertisement mention the team the applicant will be a part of? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement mentions the team the applicant will be joining. Code 1 only if the name or function of the team is specified - the company itself is not considered as a team in this case. |
| **Examples**“The successful candidate will join a product delivery team as the technical lead for data science.”“You will be joining our marketing team to carry out...” |
| V10. Does the job advertisement mention participation in decision-making? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the advertisement implies that the hired person will participate in any decision-making activities by explicitly using words such as “decision”, “independent”, “in charge”, “lead”, etc. |
| **Examples**“One of your responsibilities is to make decisions on…” “You will be independently conduct…”“You will be in charge of…”“You will lead the end-to-end lifecycle of model development.” |
|
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| V11. Does the job advertisement define products and/or services as innovative? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if words such as ‘innovative’, ‘inventive’, or ‘state-of-the-art’ are mentioned in relation to the product and/or services. Mostly about what the company is producing/offering and NOT the organizational work environment.  |
| **Example**“Our products provide innovative solutions…”“We deliver a broad range of innovative, next-generation IT solutions and professional services.” |
|
|
| V12. Does the job advertisement discuss the non-physical work environment? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement discusses any aspects of the internal work environment, culturend how work is done within the company, e.g. “international atmosphere”, “work in terms/groups”, “hierarchy”, “supportive”, “exciting”, “thrilling”, etc.  |
| **Examples**“You’ll be joining our international, fast-paced environment.”“We offer a warm and friendly environment and a chance to be part of a successful and growing company.”“This position is ideal for someone who enjoys small organizations, multi-tasking, and a highly flexible work environment.” |
| V13. Does the job advertisement discuss physical work environment? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement discusses physical work environment excluding additional incentives. |
| **Example**“This is an office with assigned desks in a conveniently located building with free parking.” |
| V14. Does the job advertisement discuss organizations vision and/or mission? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement discusses where it aims to be in the future and/or how it is working to achieve its goals. The words “mission” and/or “vision” have to be explicitly stated. Excludes statements relating to “goals”.  |
| **Example**“Our mission is to reflect the diversity of our clients and the communities in which we practice.” |
| V15. Does the job advertisement mention if there are opportunities for career development within the organization? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement confirms that you can grow and develop your career within the company.  |
| **Example**“Our personnel enjoy challenging roles in work environments and opportunity for career growth.” |
| V16. Does the job advertisement mention if the organization balances the work and private life? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement mentions balancing work and private life. E.g. Additional holiday, working from home.(This does not involve health benefits offered by a company.) |
| **Examples**“What we offer: Generous Vacation + Sick Time Off + Paid Holidays + Paid Birthday.”“You can always work from home.”“We are passionate about creating an environment where everyone is supported to perform while maintaining a healthy work-life balance.” |
| V17. Does the job advertisement discuss specific advantages of working in the organization? (Incentives) | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement mentions any advantages/incentives associated with working at the company. E.g. health benefits, retirement plans, drinks after work, etc. The advantages/incentives considered here do NOT relate to:* Organizational work environment in general term (such as ‘international’, ‘supportive’) - only specific advantage should be considered
* Salary
* Decision-making
* Career development
* Work-life balance
 |
| **Examples**“Enjoy an in-house gym, massage chair, and healthy-snack vending machine.”“Medical, dental, vision, paid time off, 401(k) w/ 4% match, disability pay, and life insurance.” |
| **3.** **Language of job advertisement** |  |
| V18. Does the job ad include any elements of informal language? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if the job advertisement includes any elements written in an informal, spoken manner. | Barcelos, R. H., Dantas, D. C., & Sénécal, S. (2018). Watch your tone: How a brand's tone of voice on social media influences consumer responses. *Journal of Interactive Marketing*, *41*, 60-80. |
| **Examples**“This isn’t your typical 9-5. It’s a way of life!”“Don't worry, we'll ramp you up but experience in any of these areas will help you hit the ground running.” |
|
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| V19. Are there any superlatives present in the job advertisement? | 01 | NoYes | Code 1 if there is any superlative present in the job advertisement in relation to the organization, products and/or services. Words like “top”, “extraordinary” are excluded. | Gao, Z., Li, N., & Scorpio, E. A. (2012). Perception of puffery in advertising: Investigating the China-US differences. *Asia Pacific Journal of Marketing and Logistics*, *24*(2), 179-198.Rush, S. (1998). The noun phrase in advertising English. *Journal of Pragmatics*, *29*(2), 155-171. |
| **Example**“Join us if you want to be one of the most innovative team and work in the most supportive environment!”Only words like “best” or “the most”  |

## Appendix B: Intercoder reliability

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| --- | --- |
|  Variable | Krippendorff's alpha (nominal) |
| number of employees | 1.000 |
| countries operating in | 0.698 |
| salary | 0.653 |
| position in comparison | 0.646 |
| company history | 0.71 |
| specific team | 0.743 |
| decision making | 0.691 |
| innovative product/service | 0.617 |
| non-physical work environment | 0.681 |
| physical work environment | 0.261 |
| vision/mission | 0.823 |
| career development | 0.63 |
| work-life balance | 0.608 |
| additional incentive | 1.000 |
| informal language | 0.268 |
| use of superlative | 0.292 |

## Appendix C: An Example of Sample Job Advertisements

