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Abstract

My doctoral dissertation explores the novel phenomenon of recruiting new workers on social media platforms such as Instagram. In particular, I focus on analyzing those personal narratives that recruiters share on social media in order to attract potential workers and build communities. Being interested in 'life writing' practices, I study self-presentation and authoring of one's own story from a new angle - as a social recruiting practice in the direct selling and network marketing industry. Social media offer recruiters the chance to tap into the passive candidates market to approach new talents and those who are not actively seeking new job opportunities. To recruit new people, direct selling professionals build long-term relationships with the audiences that function as affectively engaging communities. My theoretical starting point for approaching social media recruiting is the affect theory. The theory offers an alternative understanding of the 'life writing' practices that focus on a moment of recognition of the need for change in one's work-life relationship. I explore how affects and emotions are evoked, triggered, and build up in social media practices and what insights the theory of affect brings on hiring in the digital age and recruiting passive candidates. I examine a contemporary form of the direct selling industry as a form of the gig economy and female direct selling professionals as independent contractors. The gig economy is a part of a larger transformation of the economy, where all kinds of online platforms take center stage. My research widens the understanding of the gig economy and brings a more gendered perspective to the debates by focusing on a women-centered industry and its practices. In my empirical study, I develop the concept of gendered social recruiting. The methodological approach of this research combines data from digital ethnography and qualitative semi-structured interviews with direct sellers from three EMEA region countries (Finland, the United Kingdom, and South Africa). I focus on countries that belong to the same region inside the company and according to my observations share similar social recruiting practices while also open up tensions when get into comparison. It allows studying the international societal phenomenon that is important both in a global and national context.