

# When an SME's Website Hospitality Helps to Attract Candidates

Soffien Bataoui, Jessica Gérard and Christelle Martin-Lacroux

Univ. Grenoble Alpes – Grenoble INP – CERAG (EA 7521) (38000 Grenoble, France)

## Abstract

- **Objective**

Recruitment is a difficult management act for organizations, and in particular for SMEs. In this context, an SME's professional website constitutes a first point of contact between candidates and their potential employer, and is therefore an essential source of information. It is also a pull-factor for SMEs. Thus, we propose to draw on the literature relating to the environments displayed on merchant websites and apply it to the context of SME corporate websites. More specifically, within a recruitment context, we use the concept of virtual hospitality on an SME website to measure its effects on the application intentions of potential candidates.

- **Methodology**

A corporate website for a fictitious company was created. It was then deployed in three versions, each with a different level of virtual hospitality (high, medium and low). The experiment was conducted on 1095 respondents.

- **Results**

The results show that the level of virtual hospitality of a corporate website has an effect on the perceived dimensions of 'warmth' and 'competence' of the organization, the latter then mediating the relationship between level of virtual hospitality and intention to apply.

- **Managerial and societal implications**

It is in the interest of SMEs wishing to attract candidates to design a hospitable website as this significantly contributes to improving candidates' intention to apply. This study offers managers several easy-to-use recommendations for creating a more hospitable website (such as the insertion of social photos or employee testimonials).

- **Originality**

This work highlights the potential of virtual hospitality as an integrating framework for building a humanized relationship between an employer and a candidate via a website.

- **Keywords:** virtual hospitality, recruitment, website, warmth, competence, SME.

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To contact the authors: [soffien.batatoui@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:soffien.batatoui@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr) ; [jessica.gerard@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:jessica.gerard@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr) ; [christelle.martin-lacroux@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr](mailto:christelle.martin-lacroux@univ-grenoble-alpes.fr)

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