

RECRUITMENT AND SELECTION OF ARTISTS IN THE MEDIA DISCOURSE

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Purpose: The paper is devoted to an analysis of the Polish media discourse in terms of the recruitment and selection of artists. It indicates dominant phenomena in the perception of artist recruitment processes in cultural organizations, both positive and negative. The aim of the article is to present the approach to the recruitment and selection of artists in a discourse narrated by the artists themselves.

Design/methodology/approach: This article focuses on the discourse on recruitment and selection processes in cultural organizations. Literature research of the subject was carried out. Furthermore, the discourse of the media was analyzed.

Findings: Discourse research shows that the key attributes of the recruitment and selection processes are the determination to work in the expected profession by artists and the need for candidates to demonstrate that they are ready for uncomfortable working conditions. This qualitative study helps to understand HR practice in the field of performing arts.

Research limitations/implications: The limitations of the conducted research result from the adopted qualitative methodological orientation.

Originality/value: The presented analysis of the media discourse may be interesting for the management of artistic institutions and the artists themselves who take part in the castings. Reading the text can also be a source of tips and inspiration for designing recruitment and selection processes.

Keywords: recruitment, selection, artists' job market, media discourse, discourse analysis.

Category of the paper: Conceptual paper.

1. Introduction

Recruitment and selection are one of the basic subprocesses of human resource management, described in both scientific publications and in popular science texts. Recruitment is the main function of the Human Resources Department, and the recruitment process is the first step toward creating competitive quality and recruitment strategic advantage for the association (Pocztowski, 1998, p. 71; Hamza, Othman, Gardi, Sorguli, Aziz, Ahmed, Anwar,

2021). The recruitment aims primarily to increase the number of qualified applicants for the available positions and to select those candidates who should be offered positions (Noe, Hollenbeck, Gerhart, Wright, 1997, p. 53; French, Rumbles, 2010, p. 169; Løkke, 2021, p. 77). The importance of recruitment and selection should not be underestimated. All subsequent activities in the field of human resources management can only be done with the 'raw material' available through these processes (Brown, McManusb, Davisonc, Gilla, Lilford, 2019, p. 128). Researchers have stressed the importance of quality processes during selection, recruitment, and hiring, as it is difficult to find suitable candidates for the job (Dale, 2001, pp. 50-51). It stated that recruitment is the most important sector in attracting and maintaining experienced and qualified workers (Abbasi, Tahir, Abbas, Shabbir, 2020, p. 3). In other words, the hiring of competent persons is of utmost importance and depends on an effective recruitment and selection process aimed at selecting the right person and rejecting the wrong ones (Newell, 2005, p. 115).

The recruitment and selection process begins with very clear specifications. Roberts argues that selecting is like looking for the adverbial needle in the haystack. Specifications include the characteristics of the roles and the ideal people to fill the roles. Good recruiters understand that one of the best judges of the candidate's suitability for the role is the candidate, helping candidates to understand their roles will bring significant benefits (Makin, 1991, pp. 530-531; Roberts, 1997, p. 7). The process of selecting candidates for a job is particularly important in the field of performing arts (Ingram, 2016, p. 47), when the selector is looking for an artist to create an immaterial work of art (Mizera-Pęczek, 2020). Research on recruitment and selection processes shows that this is a problem full of contradictions and antinomies (Plebańczyk, 2020, p. 104). On the one hand, it is quite obvious that the condition for the success of an artistic undertaking is a reliably conducted casting (Gregorczyk, Kopeć, 2013, pp. 19-21), but on the other hand, there are many misconceptions about the professional situation of artists applying for a job (Mizera-Pęczek, 2018, pp. 108). In more recent works, Opara and Stanton argue that HRM in the field of performing arts companies has a strong industry effect, focusing on the financial survival of precarious funding sources, short-term project-based work, and highly casualized workers (Opara, Stanton, 2021, p. 1). 'Unfortunately, this individual passion and commitment can also undermine their individual and collective bargaining power and contribute to poorer wages and conditions' (Opara, Stanton, Wahed, 2019). Although it is well established that artists are forced to do other jobs for various reasons, in particular the need to earn an adequate income, there is little reliable information about the nature of these works and the characteristics of the artists who take them out of choice or necessity (Throsby, Zednik 2011, pp. 20-21). It can be assumed that one of such reasons is the numerous failures in the casting process, and thus the inability to work in the expected profession. According to Wagner (2005), such an attitude toward performing work influences high commitment in professional activities and leads inevitably to the interpenetration of professional and private life (Wagner, 2005, p. 24). Moreover, this commitment is visible in the artists' struggle for the role of life".

Therefore, it is important to conduct research that will create an understanding of the dynamics of recruitment and selection processes from the point of view of artists. As a result, this paper focuses on this issue.

2. Analysis of media discourse - characteristics of the method and the concept of own research

Discourse research not only describes and explains selected fragments of reality, but also changes reality. This change is most often possible by demonstrating practices of dominance in discourse and formulating postulates and recommendations to avoid such practices in the future. The purpose of discourse analysis is to show the direct relations between discourse and organizational practices, and a thorough discourse analysis has the value of a value-based critique. In the field of management and quality research, learning about discourses is so important that it allows us to recognize how social expectations and perception of reality affect the practices of performing managerial functions. "Discourse analysis is an important qualitative research approach across social science disciplines for analyzing (and challenging) how reality in a variety of organizational and institutional arenas is constructed" (Greckhamer, Cilesiz, 2019, p. 422).

Media messages can attract the attention of the public, attenuate opinion and belief, define reality by assigning it a specific status, inform the society selectively or distribute information fussily. The media are an inseparable element of contemporary culture. By their nature, they are involved in the production and distribution of knowledge in the broadest sense of the word. This knowledge makes sense of experiencing the world social by people. The media is influencing what most people consider real. The mass media plays the role of a gatekeeper by selecting and disseminating information to raise public awareness of specific issues, and can thus shape opinions and understanding related to an artistic career. However, there is a risk that the media may shape false ideas about the professional life of artists, including beliefs about high earnings in the cultural sector, the ease of achieving success, and celebrity recognition profits.

There are different approaches to analyzing discourses. Descriptive approaches to discourse analysis used by linguists examine the use of language without examining its links with social structures. On the other hand, critical approaches to discourse analysis used by social scientists assume that ideologies shape the representation of information, knowledge, and facts about reality from the perspective of a specific interest to gain acceptance as nonideological and common sense, hiding them behind masks of naturalness or science. Building on this assumption, critical approaches aim to analyze discourse to show how taken for granted, naturalized ideas are unnatural and how they are related to social structures (Greckhamer,

Cilesiz, 2019, p. 424). In other words, it can be said that discourse analysis serves to recognize the essence of a text from the perspective of the social context in which the text was created, because each author of a text, that is, the subject of discourse analysis, functions in certain social dimensions.

As part of my own research, I selected 13 interviews with artists published in magazines and on-line portals, targeted to large audiences. The texts for the study were randomly selected. They were highly available and easy to search on popular search engines. The study was conducted in April 2022 and covered texts published between 2014 and 2021. The results were presented as descriptions including quotes from the source publications. Originally, the source texts were published in Polish.

3. Media coverage of recruitment and selection processes in cultural organizations

In the media discourse, the terms applicable in the area of human resource management, such as recruitment, selection, hiring, or acquisition of candidates, are not used. However, artists define the recruitment and selection processes in their own language. The artists write about: "participating in castings", building casts for performances, and casting roles. It is worth noting that the media discourse mentions the search for talents or the search for pearls, but these phrases are not clearly understood in accordance with the concept of talent management. In the media discourse, the concept of talent is equated with having the artistic abilities necessary to create an artistic role. An employee-talent, on the other hand, is not equated with a person with above-average commitment to work, or having a high level of ideational fluency or the ability to generate original ideas.

Publications dealing with recruitment and selection procedures usually present the 'dark side' of the application process for a theater or film. The artists' statements presented in the media aimed at a wide audience are intended to amaze and shock the audience. Therefore, published interviews highlight these threads when artists confide in their failures in their professional lives.

I immediately felt like I had to play it. Casting started almost two months later. At first I thought I was ahead, because the director met me and introduced me to this project. And when I came to the casting, I was on the 81-strong list, and it turned out that the director had met all the candidates for this role over the past months. He also told them about the film, about the character [5]

After graduating from drama school, I had a soft landing, because I participated in several performances that allowed me to develop professionally and ensure my livelihood [12].

Discourses show messages that perform information functions. They contain data and tips on how to prepare for the audition, how to deal with stage fright, and how to behave during the audition.

Casting requires preparation and time, but not so much learning the text as showing that you understand the character. It happens that an actor does not have to play at the casting of the stage, a small acting task is enough that fits into the functioning of our hero. And at the very end, when we compare the candidates, we look for the nuance that makes up the assumptions previously made. It may seem surprising, but in auditions, actors rarely perform badly. However, they often do not fit into the hero [11].

There is one key point: we do not cast a person to see if he or she is a great actor in general but to see if he or she will be a great actor in that particular role. This difference is subtle, but crucial [7].

However, no logical recommendations can be made from these guidelines. In some cases, the main characters of the narrative speak of spontaneity and the display of a range of emotions necessary during the casting. At other times, it becomes crucial to thoroughly prepare the scenario by heart and to present the documented achievements so far.

I have been attending castings for some time, because I must admit that there came a moment in my life that I wanted to try something more. At one of these auditions, I did my best to express my emotions [2].

I did some online auditions, but it has nothing to do with live theater. Theater is communion! In the most sacred sense of the word. It is a community, a shared experience, a kind of alchemy [1].

No, because schools do not explain to their students how to prepare for castings or how to deal with them, and the choice of an agent or communication with the casting director is taboo. I am surprised because today, i.e., an actor's career depends on such skills [13].

In the media discourse on recruitment and selection processes, the issue of roles other than casting is also discussed.

This role was simply offered to me. It is actually a short episode, but I am glad I could play it, because it is a very juicy and grateful role. This is the only time I was offered the role without an audition, which is rare [3].

However, it is still the casting stories that dominate the message of the artists themselves. Interestingly, they assessed the changes that take place in the environment of artistic organizations in different ways. The most important changes that affect the recruitment and selection processes include analyzing the potential of artists through their social media profiles, and opening new art schools and artistic faculties for adepts of film and theater arts.

We are racing for the number of lures, the number of followers. This now translates into castings. (...) Recently, one of my actresses went to an audition. You went out, called up their name and said, "Ma'am, but you don't have followers at all!" She did not, so they thanked her. Casting is now not about looking for skills, but about likes [9].

Nowadays, more and more people think that being an actor is not particularly difficult. Private schools, which promise access to the profession for money, and the media, contributed to this. There are many programs that employ people from the streets to act, which greatly devalues this profession. People think it is very simple: just stand in front of the camera and smile nicely. Unfortunately, this can also be seen in the tests for the theater school. Many young people think that this is like appearing on a television show [9].

The common thread that connected all the texts analyzed was the determination needed to apply for a role. The determination attitude should manifest itself in consistent participation in the recruitment and selection processes despite failures. In texts devoted to professional artists, diligence, systematicity, and humility toward authorities in the art world are presented as the values and strengths of successful artists.

I waited in line for castings, I heard "no" a million times, but it drove me so much that I managed to take the third place in the program [6].

How did you manage to complete such a select cast? I think they appreciate my artistic achievements, despite financial limitations... [4].

It was quite interesting to include in the texts published from 2020 descriptions of the artists' approach to participation in casting in pandemic conditions. On the one hand, the advantages of virtual audition are presented, for example, the possibility of participating in castings without physical mobility. On the other hand, it was emphasized how important physical presence is for artists, especially those representing theatrical arts.

I went to the audition to express my willingness to participate in the performance. We are all hungry to play [after lockdown] [8].

Research shows that the socially constructed two dichotomous myths of the artist looking for a job, the dominant media discourse. These myths, socially constructed and perpetuated, are not verified, but contribute to the stereotyping of this activity. The first myth concerns the artist who, most often thanks to participation in a television program, achieves quick and easy recognition and benefits resulting from it. However, this myth does not demonstrate a determination to pursue a dream job or an analysis of the financial and emotional costs that an artist usually incurs in order to be ready to participate in a talent show. Those artists who achieved high recognition are assessed as less valuable despite the fact that they have a thorough artistic education and accumulate professional experience, often already in their childhood. The second myth concerns an artist who sacrificed his personal life for the sake of art and, in return, did not even receive basic compensation for his involvement. It is a myth of an unfulfilled and underestimated artist despite his predispositions. Stories of artists presented in the media in this way consolidate social beliefs about injustice and omnipresent dysfunctions in the processes of employing artists.

4. Discussion and Conclusions

Writing in the media has the potential to influence our position and thereby our actions. Research revealed several tendencies. First, the Polish media is generally not interested in providing reliable information on both the good and bad sides of artistic work. Most of the professional stories presented in the media are marked by negative emotions. Even when the texts refer to objectively achieved professional successes, the thread of recruitment and selection is presented as a limitation of artistic work. Discourse is dominated by the narrative of the difficult and exhausting path to artistic success. The artists' statements are set in the context of the need to be above average determined to work in the cultural sector. In addition, the discourse also includes criticism of taking shortcuts through the artistic path, for example by participating in a talent show.

Furthermore, the current literature and the results of the discourse analysis on the vocation to an artistic career, participation in castings, and the importance of participation in recruitment and selection processes for objectively and subjectively perceived professional success in the cultural sector are still unclear. It is still difficult to build a consensus between the visions of the artists themselves and the managers of cultural institutions. It turns out that the passion for practicing art can lead to professional success and meeting expectations regarding one's own professional fate, as well as to self-destructive behavior of the artists themselves.

Well-conducted recruitment and selection process is extremely important not only for the organization, but also for workers. Discourse analysis has shown that artists shape and disseminate their opinions on recruitment and selection processes in the context of their own, often unpleasant, experiences. Their statements are negative. One may be tempted to say that the media discourse on recruitment and selection in culture is a consequence of artists' prejudices against the directors and producers responsible for the cast and the result of justifying their own failures in casting. At the other end of the continuum are the so-called success stories of the few artists who get coveted roles in performances.

Interestingly, the presented media discourse does not mention trends in recruitment and selection processes, which are widely described in the context of business organizations. Although researchers have been writing about the importance of modern technologies for years and the fact is that modern technology in recruitment and selection is not only another trend in the changing environment, but will continue to exist in the human resources sector (Sołek-Borowska, Wilczewska, 2018, p. 32) the artists did not comment on this. Therefore, it seems that the opinions of researchers confirm that research conducted among artists and based on the analysis of artists' narratives focuses on the sphere of emotions, feelings, experiences, premonitions and intuition. The media discourse presented in this article includes these elements.

Discourse analysis has significant limitations. The most important of them is the random selection of texts for analysis and the fact that the analysis does not take into account the discourse conducted in the media, in which two-way communication is possible, e.g., in social media associating fandoms. Thus, this research should continue in the future.

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