

An Organization's Utilization of Social Media as a Recruitment Tool and Its Attractiveness to Applicants

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Abstract

The era of social media is one that has significantly changed and affected the lives of many of the people who are entering or soon to be entering the job market. Generation Y (born between 1980-2000) are a demographic group that have a high level of social media usage in their everyday lives (Lin, & Lu. (2011). This demographic is also the group of people who are soon to be/have recently graduated from University/College and are seeking employment. The purpose of this study was to answer the question "How does an organization's utilization of social media as a recruitment tool affect its attractiveness to potential applicants?" The information found is beneficial to both companies and potential applicants in the job market because it aids companies to find fresh new talent and Generation Y to be better informed of current opportunities. This information was sought out by surveying a group of approximately 70 people in this demographic group and asking them to provide details on their feelings and opinions of social media. These questions were seeking to find out the participants' level of social media usage, likes/dislikes and their preferences of popular social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn. The questions regarding preferences were geared towards potential recruitment scenarios. Results showed that there was a positive relationship between the level of organizational attractiveness and the qualities of information sought in a recruitment post. They also showed that potential applicants wanted the same information communicated to them in a job post regardless of which social media platform was used. Interestingly enough, results also showed that there was no significant correlation between where an in-

dividuals preference to receiving information from was and their most utilized social media platform.

Introduction

Generation Y is a demographic that is heavily involved in the usage of various outlets of social media. Generation Y's have a plethora of different uses for social media. Its main utilization is for the purposes of socializing with friends, sharing thoughts and information, keeping informed about selected and personalized "likes", viewing and posting advertisements, publishing articles and more (Lin, & Lu, 2011). The Facebook era has really changed the way people are receiving information and updates about current events and personal interests. The fact that many of the people of Generation Y put such an emphasis on the importance of social media as part of their lives sparked the idea and question of "How does an organization's utilization of social media as a recruitment tool affect its attractiveness to potential applicants?"

The idea that social media could be used as an effective recruitment tool is a fairly new idea. There has not been a surplus of studies or information conducted on this topic as the idea of social media is still fairly junior. The purpose of this study is to correlate the findings between what social media users who are about to enter or have recently entered the job market find attractive in recruiting processes on social media. We want to know what is the best way for companies to reach out to potential new candidates and how these candidates want to be informed and communicated with about opportunities. Over the past decade the increase in popularity of social media has translated to a significant change in how people are receiving their information. (Lin, & Lu, 2011) It is logical to believe that it would be an effective method of recruitment for job postings and company advertisements to be present on social media to entice Generation Y to become applicants.

The found information has the power to change the way companies are advertising and recruiting for candidates. Analyzing the collected information could be beneficial for both potential applicants and companies looking to expand their recruitment practices. If companies are bet-

ter able to understand the wants and needs of the people they are trying to reach out to they are more likely to be successful in their recruitment process. These understandings will allow these companies to use their time, efforts and resources in a more efficient manner. This could mean less time would be spent searching for applicants, less money spent on job advertisements and a faster inflow of applications which would shorten the recruitment process. This could also help to decrease unemployment if potential candidates are being informed of opportunities in the most convenient way.

Literature Review

A few studies have begun to examine the ways in which recruitment information is communicated and how the communication process influences recruitment outcomes (Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004). The use of social networking websites such as Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, and Twitter for recruiting, hiring, or terminating individuals is relatively new, but their use for these purposes is clearly growing while research on these practices is lacking. Many questions about using these sites for human resources practice have yet to be addressed (Davidson & Mariast, 2011). Social Media is gaining prominence across the world at a rapid pace, such that now it has become a lifeline and daily necessity for some users specifically the young generation Internet users called the Gen Y (Rai, 2012)., This gives companies the opportunity to utilize their use of social media to reach out to potential applicants which is beneficial to both employers and potential employees. Technological characteristics influence organizational attractiveness and the use of social media has an influence on those who want to apply to a company/organization (Davidson & Mariast, 2011).

With social media being a fairly new concept in the world of recruiting, not much research has been done on this topic. However, there is said to be a relationship between the way recruitment messages are delivered and the perceptions people have on communication features such as amount of information, opportunities for two-way communication, personal focus, social presence, and symbolism. (Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004). This generation survives on being connected; hence it is imperative that organizations realize the potential of this medium and its efficacy thus utilizing its power for creating an actively engaged Gen Y workforce (Rai, 2012).

An Individual's Pre-Existing Social Media Habits

Extensive research has proved that Internet usage is at its maximum amongst Gen Y users (Rai, 2012). This generation is also at times referred to as the 'Wired Generation' that needs to be connected at all times and feels most comfortable in digital environments (Rai, 2012) Davidson and Mariast's research suggests that what individuals post on social media can positively or negatively affect them for employment purposes. Most organizations are able to gain access to employees' social networking sites and can monitor them for what the organization considers to be inappropriate postings (Davidson & Mariast, 2011). The pre-existing social media habits of employees' may need to be altered when looking for/sustaining a job. Since employers can gain access to a person's information via social media it is important to present oneself in an appropriate online manner. Peluchette and Karl's 2009 has suggested that ideas and/or pictures posted on these sites were to be associated with students' comfort with family, friends, and employers viewing the profiles. Sometimes what people put online such as posts (status', tweets, pictures, videos, etc.) can get them in trouble with their employer, managers, and co-workers (Peluchette and Karl 2009).

Attractiveness of the Social Media Recruitment Strategy

Another question is whether there are differences in applicants across different websites (e.g., LinkedIn, MySpace, Facebook, Twitter, etc.) given their potentially different clientele (Davidson & Mariast, 2011). An applicant's attraction to a company's use of social media for recruiting is important for employers to be effective in searching for talent.. In order to contribute to grooming the reputation and increasing the attractiveness of the company, employers seek to strengthen the company's name as a brand. This is labelled as employer branding (Lin & Lu, 2011). With social media on the rise, the use of it has increased in employer branding campaigns and in the recruiting processes (Lin & Lu, 2011). With Gen Y rapidly increasing numbers across the workforce, it is time for organizations to take a pause and reflect on their future course of action towards engaging a generation that is highly wired, connected and unconventional (Rai, 2012). Findings have shown that the attractiveness dimensions, innovation value, psychological value, and applications value have positive relations with corporate reputation (Lin & Lu, 2011). Dimensions of social and economic value however, did not have a significant relation with corporate reputation (Lin & Lu 2011).

Preferred Information Sought in a Social Media Recruitment Post

The effectiveness of social media recruitment depends on the content of information sought by Generation Y within the recruitment message. Evidence suggests that potential applicants respond favourably to richer media outlets intended to recruit potential applicants (Cable & Graham, 2000). A person is more likely to apply for a position when a job ad provides greater information about the specific job (Gatewood, Gowan, & Kautenschlager, 1993). Richer recruit-

ment media channels used in social media are capable of transmitting larger amount of factual information that allow the receiver to verify its accuracy and resolve ambiguities (Allen & Van Scotter 2004). Providing detailed information regarding pay, benefits, and opportunity for career advancement, all positively influenced the perceived attractiveness of potential employers (Roberson & Collins, 2005). In contrast, vague recruitment messages/job ads hindered the capability of potential applicants, to accurately assess person-organization fit. (Allen & Van Scotter 2004). Subsequently, this had a negative impact on an employer's ability to attract the best available talent. The inclusion of more factual and affective information incorporated in recruitment messages on social media ultimately leads to more favourable attitudes and increased credibility perceptions towards organization (Badger & Kaminsky, 2014)

Organizational Attractiveness Based on Their Social Media Recruitment Strategy

Employers that implement successful recruitment strategies have the ability to find a match between communication requirements and the media capacities a person possesses (Walker & Bernerth 2009). To increase organizational attractiveness through the utilization of social media recruitment, employers strategically attempt to exploit their strengths in order to attract applicants (Gomes & Nieves 2011). Utilizing organizational strengths within their recruitment message can be extremely beneficial especially when attracting job seekers who share the similar interests and values. Employers who implement recruitment strategies with the use of social media provide a cost-effective way of reaching passive job seekers who would not normally be exposed to recruitment ads (Roberson & Collins, 2005). Furthermore, social media is also an effective recruitment strategy for finding currently employed talent that are not in the market for new opportunities. This is because it exposes them to job ads even though they

are not intentionally searching for these. Marketing researchers long contended that employee testimonials positively influence the persuasive power of recruiting because job seekers prefer to 'consider the experiences of ordinary people' (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Employers who use social media recruitment have the advantage of controlling information presented to a high volume of job seekers with positive attributes that job seekers can relate too that can positively influence an individual's intention to apply

Hypotheses

H1: There is a positive relationship between levels of organizational attractiveness and the qualities of information sought in a recruitment posting.

H2: Individuals prefer to receive social media recruitment postings on the social media platform they use the most.

H3: Quality of information sought in a recruitment posting does not differ based on which social media platform an individual uses the most.

Methodology

Sample Internal Consistency of Organizational Attractiveness Scale

	Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
Interest Value	0.944	5
Social Value	0.958	5
Economic Value	0.914	5

Development Value	0.95	5
Application Value	0.916	5

Participants for this survey were collected via a convenience sample, having the questionnaire shared through social media platforms such as Facebook and Twitter, as well as being distributed via email. The survey conducted was only searching the correlation between social media users and individuals of young adulthood seeking an occupation, making the results biased for those individuals that do not use social media. Our sample consisted of 71 participants, with the target being undergraduate students in any year of study. We distributed our survey via numerous online resources, such as social media and mass distribution emails. The average age of respondents was 22, with 85% of respondents being between the ages of 21 and 23. We received 75 responses to the survey, with 95% of respondents agreeing to the terms of the survey.

Measures

Organizational Attractiveness

We measured attractiveness by using a 25-item Employer Attractiveness Scale developed by Bethon, Ewing & Hah (2005). The aim of the scale is to measure which attributes of an employer are most important to potential applicants. The responses were measured on a 7 point Likert scale, from 1="very unimportant" to 7="very important". Sample items included "The organization produces high-quality products and services" and "Feeling more self-confident as a

result of working for a particular organization.”.The measure contains five factors, Bethon, Ewing & Hah (2005), as follows:

Interest Value: The extent in which an individual is attracted to an exciting work environment, novel work practices, and a workplace that promotes worker creativity.

Social Value: The extent to which an individual is attracted to a workplace that is fun, happy, provides good collegial relationships and a team atmosphere.

Economic Value: The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides above average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunities.

Development Value: The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides recognition, self-worth and confidence, coupled with a career-enhancing experience and spring-board for future employment.

Application Value: The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides an opportunity for the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is both customer orientated and humanitarian.

Social Media Habits

In order to measure social media habits of the participants we used the Facebook Intensity Scale developed by Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe (2007). We adapted this measure to also account for Twitter, LinkedIn, as well as alternative social media platforms that participants are prompted to include if applicable. The scale seeks to build an understanding of an individual's level of use and attachment to each social media platform. Participants were asked an array of questions, such as how much time per day was spent on each platform, how many “friends” they

have on each site, as well as a list of questions to judge their personal attachment to each site. Such questions included “_____ is part of my ever day activity” and “I am proud to tell people I’m on _____”, with recorded on a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1=“strongly disagree” to 5=“strongly agree.” Measures such as time spent and number of friends corresponds strongly with the relevance of their opinion. For example, it would make sense that a person who hardly uses social media might say they would not like to hear about career opportunities on social media.

Social Media Recruitment Preferences

There was not a pre-existing measure that accounted for social media recruitment preferences, so one was crafted to meet our needs. The measure gauges which social media platform an individual prefers to receive recruitment messages on. The measure includes the social media platforms each individual uses and whether they prefer direct messages or posts that are seen by the general public. The survey asked respondents how likely they are to agree with various statements in regards to social media and recruitment attractiveness. An example of this would be: “An employer posting a job opportunity on Facebook”. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1=“strongly disagree” to 5=“strongly agree”.

Quality of Information Sought in a Recruitment Posting

For quality of information sought in a recruitment message, there was not a pre-existing measure that would fulfill our needs. In order to craft a suitable measure, we used a list of potential content a potential applicant would find valuable in a recruitment posting as outlined by Cober, Brown, and Levy (2004). We asked respondents the level of importance and value a various amount of statements regarding an occupations specific information had to them when evaluating a recruitment posting. Such statements included “Information about pay” and “Infor-

mation about training programs". The responses were measured on a 5-point Likert scale from 1="very unimportant" to 5="very important".

Results

	Information about pay	Information about benefits	Information about organizational culture	Information about employer's concern for the environment	Information about employer's reputation	Information about training programs	A realistic job preview	Information about opportunities for career development
	r value	r value	r value	r value	r value	r value	r value	r value
Interest Value	.310*	.316*	.414**	.637**	.438**	.417**	.262*	.386**
Social Value	.403**	.463**	.383**	.559**	.420**	.297*	0.197	.269*
Economic Value	.426**	.422**	.362**	.545**	.473**	0.194	0.11	.493**
Development Value	.425**	0.242	0.12	0.253	0.249	0.102	.334**	0.181
Application Value	.296*	.273*	.361**	.609**	.506**	.280*	0.232	.303*

H1: There is a positive relationship between the level of organizational attractiveness and the qualities of information sought in a recruitment posting.

H1 was proven true through testing the correlation of organizational attractiveness with the importance of various elements of organizational attractiveness. There is a weak to moderate positive relationship between the importance of various qualities of information sought on a recruitment posting and organizational attractiveness values. As shown in Table 1, four of the five organizational attractiveness values had an average correlation between values and social media above .350, signifying a weak positive correlation. Twenty of the forty correlations are significant at the 99% level, with ten being significant at the 95% level. Development value had the weakest correlation between the quality of information in regards to training programs with attractiveness values, and information about an employers concerns about the environment had the highest correlation with attractiveness values.

H2: Individuals prefer to receive social media recruitment postings on the social media platform they use the most.

H2 was proven false, as there is no significant correlation between an individuals' most used social media platform and the social media platform they prefer to receive recruitment postings on. There was no significant correlation between Facebook and LinkedIn users wanting to receive recruitment messages on their respective platform. Twitter users were the one stand out with wanting to receive job recruitment postings on twitter, with a weak positive correlation of .341 being significant at the 95% level. Furthermore, none of the respondents reported wanting to receive direct messages from potential employers about potential job opportunities.

H3: Quality of information sought in a recruitment posting does not differ based on which social media platform an individual uses the most.

	Facebook		Twitter		LinkedIn		Instagram	
	Average Response on 5-Point Likert Scale	Count	Average Response on 5-Point Likert Scale	Count	Average Response on 5-Point Likert Scale	Count	Average Response on 5-Point Likert Scale	Count
Information about pay	4.36	33	4.33	4	3.25	4	4.65	17
Information about benefits	4.21	33	4.33	4	3	4	4.41	17
Information about organizational culture	3.91	33	3.33	4	3.5	4	3.94	17
Information about employer's concern for the environment	3.24	33	2.67	4	3	4	3.24	17
Information about employer's reputation	3.94	33	3.33	4	3.75	4	4	17

Information about training programs	3.85	33	3.67	4	3.5	4	4.12	17
A realistic job preview	4.42	33	4.33	4	4.25	4	4.35	17
Information about opportunities for career development	4.18	33	4.33	4	4.25	4	4.47	17
Employee testimonials	3.55	33	2	4	3.25	4	3.47	17

H3 was proven true, as there was no meaning difference between social media platform most used and the quality of information they seek on a recruitment posting. The average ratings for each quality of information were 3.96, 3.59, 3.53, and 4.07 for Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and Instagram respectively. It is important to note only four individuals reported Twitter as their most reported social media platform, likewise with LinkedIn. With such a small sample size, the validity of their response values must be brought into question.

Discussion

Analysis of the results indicate the importance and usage of social media as a recruitment tool, although with the small sample size, it is challenging to identify the validity of the research in comparison to a mass population.

Through the research conducted, the research question at hand, “How does an organizations utilization of social media as a recruitment tool affect its attractiveness to potential applicants?” was analyzed and surveyed to early-adulthood individuals. Three hypotheses were created in attempt to discover results in regards to social media and recruitment to apply to recruitment styles that would be beneficial for both potential applicants and companies.

In regards to the results received from the surveys conducted, it is evident that the results are useful and can be applied to organizations utilizing, or considering utilizing, social media platforms as a recruitment tool. This is evident as the results highlight which hypothesis deemed positive results and which were negative – thus, indicating a recommendation from our sample of what type of social media recruitment style is successful, or is viewed positively in the mind of young adults applying for jobs. To begin, the hypothesis that the quality of information in a recruitment posting has a positive relationship with organizational attractiveness was proven true. Next through the results received it is evident that individuals want to receive recruitment postings on the social media platform they use the most. Thirdly, the social media platform that one uses most does not change the information they seek in a recruitment posting. Lastly, organizational attractiveness not being affected by gender was proven false, and as the results show, females responded more favourable to each of the 5 organizational attractiveness values.

Limitations/Directions

Although the conducted study had positive results and benefits for the future such as recommendations of which styles of recruitment via social media are deemed attractive, there were a few limitations to the study. The study was specifically for young-adulthood individuals, so our results were skewed accordingly and do not reflect other generations opinions on social media and recruitment. With that being said, another demographic group could have completely different results to the surveys conducted in comparison to the Generation Y niche that was surveyed, making the results irrelevant. Another limitation to the study is that Instagram is the second most popular social media platform used, but with its current format it is not easily utilized for recruitment postings. There are no advertisements on this specific social media platform, therefore organizations

cannot advertise new positions or their company in general. In addition, Instagram users have the personal decision if they want to follow an organization. With that being said, organizations are unable to advertise and find potentially interested individuals without previously being searched. In the future, if the social media platform Instagram further develops, it could be an opportunity for organizations to be utilized as a recruitment tool since it is one of the most popular platforms in the 18-29 year old demographic. In addition, our survey is biased as it was only searching the correlation between social media users and individuals of young adulthood seeking an occupation, making the results biased for those individuals that do not use social media. Therefore, another limitation would be that the study does not take into account those individuals that do not use social media. This could have negatively skewed the results as these individuals would find any job postings or recruitment styles via social media unattractive.

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