



Social Media Recruitment: Getting Generation Y's Attention

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ABSTRACT

Online social media has recently become one of the more widely used methods for organizations to attract some of the best employees. This study examines 136 participants in Generation Y, those born in 1980-1996, on their perceptions (organizational attractiveness) and reactions (job pursuit intentions) towards being contacted about a job posting through social mediums. Specifically, Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. The findings from a questionnaire sent out show that 81.75% of Gen Y would apply to an organization which reached out via social media. Using a two-tailed Pearson Correlation, participants perceptions were found to be positively related to their reactions (significant at the 0.01 level). The findings conclude that social media recruiting is something organizations should tailor specifically to Generation Y's values, and it is widely accepted by Gen Y applicants.

INTRODUCTION

Generation Y are those born between 1980 and 1995 (Schweitzer, Ng, Lyons, 2010) with the advancement of technology during this generation it is key for companies to have wide access to this technologically savvy generation when recruiting. The recent influx of social media platforms offers new opportunities for those seeking employment to access those making hiring decisions (Madera, 2002). According to *Jobvite Social Recruiting Survey, 2012*, 92% of job recruiters currently use or plan to use social media in order to recruit employees. More specifically, 92% use LinkedIn, 66% recruit on Facebook and 54% search for employees through Twitter. Using the social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Twitter, and Facebook, this study aims to discover what Gen YⓈ reactions are to being recruited via social media and what their perceptions are of how corporations are employing social media as a recruiting tool.

The foundation for this study was based on literature related to social media, traditional recruitment, legal implications (justice) and job pursuit intentions on the use of networking websites for recruiting. The perceptions and reactions of students are organizational attractiveness and job intentions, respectively. When organizations use social media to recruit Gen Y employees, it is essential that it is done properly and effectively using best practices. Conducting research on social media recruitment involving Generation Y is important because Generation Y applicants must know how recruiters see their personal online presence and on the other hand, recruiters should understand the outcomes and implications of this recruitment tool. In recruiting through social media, the personal information obtained through the Internet must be properly regulated and safeguarded (Galanaki, 2002). This being said, findings from this study may assist companies in establishing a social media recruitment platform. Having practices in place should be a main focus in organizations reaching out to potential candidates through Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn or any other platforms.

The goal of this study is to measure Generation YⓈ perceptions and reactions to organizations using social media as a recruitment method. Specifically this study will focus on different types of recruitment methods through the use of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn. Since these sites are free to join and often attract Generation Y members, organizations are increasingly using these sites for recruitment purposes (Doherty, 2010).

This study will assess the usage of Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn by Generation Y. Furthermore, this study will assess Generation YⓈ perceptions of recruitment through social media by determining what they find to be attractive or unattractive about the medium and message used. This study will also assess Generation YⓈ reactions towards the recruitment methods by determining their intent to apply to an organization which uses such methods.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is an extensive body of research done on reactions to social media being used as a selection tool, however, little research has been conducted in regards to attitudes towards social media use for recruiting. Consequently, this study will provide the following contributions to existing research:

- 1) Demonstrate Generation Y's use of social media and their attitudes towards it.
- 2) Assess Generation Y's perceptions and reactions towards the use of social media as a recruitment method.
- 3) Provide information on what Generation Y finds attractive and/or unattractive about social media recruitment.
- 4) Allow organizations to review data and results to develop specific methods they should use in their own social media recruitment strategies.

Generation Y's perceptions of organizations using social media as a recruitment tool will depend on six constructs. The six constructs that will influence generations Y's perceptions as they enter the workforce, or as employers try to recruit through social media are: User Categories, job pursuit intentions, organizational attractiveness, concern for privacy, informational justice and qualities of communication (includes qualities of message).

We defined the mediums through which employers are using to attract Generation Y's as user categories. User categories (**Table 1**), deal with the frequency and intensity of social media use for Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn. Frequency tells us how many hours a user spends on average on each one of the social mediums per week. For both Twitter and LinkedIn we used a similar Intensity Scale based on the one from Facebook (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007).

Table 1: User Categories

Type of User	Frequency	Intensity
Professional	11+ hours	High
Casual	6-10 hours	Medium
Limited	0-5 hours	Low

What a company offers and how it's viewed by its current employees and others will have an impact on a potential employee. Generation Y's intent to apply is captured in job pursuit intentions. This construct demonstrates how likely an

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individual is to pursue a position with an organization. Potential applicants will be attracted by the way an organization will provide information about a job vacancy (Bartram, 2000).

Applicant attraction to the organization and person-organization fit help determine the type of applicants who can be effectively reached through social media recruitment. This is defined as %organizational attractiveness.+ The application of the person-organisation fit theory to recruitment is derived from the attraction-selection-attrition model which describes how individuals seek organisations which they perceive to have characteristics similar to their own (Schneider, 1987). Organizational attractiveness is lower when the selection process is negatively perceived (Medera, 2012).

Applicants have a certain concern for their personal information especially when used online. They are worried that their data is stored by different social networking services and then used for other purposes. We called this construct the applicants %concern for privacy.+Some might deter from using social media, thinking that the social networks might spread their information and that may affect them in a negative way (Vicknair, 2000).

Informational justice %focuses on explanations provided to people that convey information about why procedures were used in a certain way or why outcomes were distributed in a certain fashion+(Colquitt, 2001).

The content of a social media message may be assessed in different ways, it may be viewed as clear and specific; vague; honest; legitimate; actionable (may contain a link for more information or further steps to be taken) or may be individually targeted. The content of the message is measured by generations Y's %perceived qualities of the message.+This is the quality of the content within the message.

As illustrated in the theoretical model; the way Generation Y perceives the quality of the communication, the type of social media recruitment, and the quality of the message will influence their perceptions of organizational attractiveness. Generation Y's perceptions of the social media recruitment method used will dictate their reactions, job pursuit intentions & intent to apply. User attitudes (UA) and User Categories (UC) will both moderate Generation Y's perceptions of social media recruiting, as UA and UC will affect the participants evaluation of the qualities of communication. Different types of users and users with different attitudes towards social media will perceive qualities differently.

Research Question: *What are Generation Y's reactions to being recruited through social media, and what are their perceptions of how organizations use social media as a recruiting tool?*

Generation Y's perceptions of organizations using social media platforms as a recruitment tool will be measured through our survey. Based on past research and published literature we have developed five hypotheses:

H1: The more attractive Generation Y finds the qualities of communication and message the higher their perception of organizational attractiveness will be.

H2: The more attractive Generation Y finds the qualities of communication and message the more likely there will be a positive relationship with Generation Y's reactions (higher job pursuit intentions & intent to apply).

H3: Gen Y'ers with a high concern for privacy will have a negative relationship with their perception of organizational attractiveness. This will result in a negative relationship with Gen Y's reactions; job pursuit intentions and intent to apply.

H4: Gen Y'ers with a strong desire for informational justice will have a negative relationship with their perception of organizational attractiveness. This will also result in a negative relationship with Gen Y's reactions; job pursuit intentions and intent to apply.

H5: User categories is a moderating variable affecting perceptions in the following ways:

- a) Professionals will have a positive relationship with both perceptions and reactions.
- b) Casual users will have positive relationships with both perceptions and reactions,
- c) Limited users will have no correlation with perceptions or reactions,

METHODOLOGY

Sample

We studied a sample size of 136 men and women within Generation Y; born between 1980 and 1994. Women contributed to 52.55% of the sample, men 45.26%, and 1.46% did not provide their gender. It is also important to note that the sample consisted of mostly undergraduate university and college students at 75.91%. For the purposes of the study those who do not have an account with Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn were removed from the sample, this accounted for 1.46%. Out of the remaining sample every respondent had an account with Facebook, 67.15% had an account with Twitter, and 35.77% of the sample had a LinkedIn account. Due to the nature of our study we decided to recruit participants using convenience sampling through social media sites including Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, as well as direct emails.

Measures

We designed a survey, which was distributed online through Lime Survey, using a combination of established measures and questions we developed based on specific aspects of our theoretical model. The established measures we used include; the Facebook Intensity

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Scale (Ellison, Steinfield and Lampe, 2007), which we also adapted for Twitter and LinkedIn. The Intensity Scale has a Cronbach's alpha of .83 and uses a Likert-scale to demonstrate a participant's attitude and emotional connection towards the social media in question. To measure the participants' concern for privacy we selected five items from Buchanan, Paine, Joinson, and Ulf-Dietrich's (2007) questionnaire on Privacy concerns. The questions used a five point Likert-scale ranging from "Not Concerned at All" to "Very Concerned". To measure informational justice we adapted questions used by Colquitt (2001) which measures how important fairness is when companies use social media to recruit. These questions also used a five point scale ranging from "Not Important" to "Very Important". We also measured participants perceptions of organizational attractiveness; we used Judge and Cable's (1997) measures on organizational attractiveness and adapted the questions to better suit our study. The questions were rated on a five point Likert-scale from "Not Attractive" to "Very Attractive".

Finally, we also developed our own questions to measure the quality of the communication and the quality of the message. To measure the quality of communication we asked participants to rate how attractive certain communication methods were in regards to social recruitment. Questions included how attractive it is for a company to "tweet" a job, for a company to send a personal message through Facebook, see **Table 2**. Once again the questions used a five point scale from "Very Unattractive" to "Very Attractive" to measure respondents' perceptions. To measure the quality of the message we asked participants to rate how important it is to include certain information within the recruitment message. Questions include how important it is to include the wage rate, works hours, job description, see **Table 3**, and again the answers were measure on a five point scale from "Not Important" to "Very Important". Finally to measure job pursuit intentions we asked participants to state whether or not they would apply to a job if the organization used social media as a recruitment method.

Table 2: Quality of Communication Items

How attractive do you find the following factors of social media recruitment methods?
Employer Tweeting a job posting
Employer sending a personal message
Employer creating a Facebook page which you can "like"
Employer creating a twitter account which you can "follow"
Employer creating a LinkedIn account
Employer using Facebook advertisements or Twitter sponsored posts.
Employer sending you a personal message via LinkedIn
Employer adding you as a connection on LinkedIn

Table 3: Quality of the Message Items

Please rate the importance of including the following information in the communication used to reach you through social media.
Wage/Salary
Approximate work hours per week
Full Job description
Link to company website
Individually directed message
Opportunity for movement within organization
Organization Culture
Organization's community involvement
A statistic on employee satisfaction within the organization
Employee retention rate

RESULTS

Qualities of Communication (include message) -> Organizational Attractiveness

H1 was proven true (see Table 3); both Perceived Qualities of Communication were positively correlated with Generation Y reactions and perceptions. When the Qualities of Communication were split up to be analyzed, all means of communication employers use (Tweets, Personal Messages, FB pages, TW accounts, FB ads/sponsored posts, LinkedIn connections) were positively significant at the 0.01 level with organizational attractiveness, except for LinkedIn Personal Messages, which were only significant at the 0.05. An employer having a LinkedIn page had no correlation with organizational attractiveness.

Table 3: Perceived Qualities of Communication

	Organizational Attractiveness		Job Pursuit Intentions	
	<i>r</i>	n	<i>r</i>	n
Qualities of the Communication	.485**	133	.481**	133
Qualities of the Message	.293**	132	N/A	N/A

User Categories (Intensity and Hours) -> Organizational Attractiveness & Job Pursuit Intentions

Table 4 shows that the users that spent more time on Facebook along with the more intense Facebook Users had a positive relationship with both Organizational Attractiveness and Job Pursuit Intentions. Higher intensity LinkedIn users also correlated positively with Organizational Attractiveness. Twitter hours and intensity, however, was not correlated with Organizational Attractiveness or Job Pursuit intentions. However, The higher Twitter Intensity the more attractive the qualities of communication were ($r=.448, p<0.05$). As seen previously Qualities of Communication are positively related to Organizational Attractiveness. With respect to H5, it was proven true for Facebook and LinkedIn - but not for Twitter ó that the closer one comes to being a professional, organizations become more attractive and job pursuit intentions increase.

	Organizational Attractiveness		Job Pursuit Intentions	
	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>
Facebook Hours	.251**	133	.260**	133
Facebook Intensity	.308**	130	.271**	130
LI Intensity	.323*	49	N/A	N/A

Table 4: User Categories

User Attitudes (Concern for Justice and Concern for Privacy) -> Organizational attractiveness

As Table 5 shows, concern for informational justice increases org attractiveness, running counter to what we hypothesized (H4). However, if one looks at the items that measure Concern for Informational Justice (see Colquitt, 2001) and an organization has procedures that satisfy a high concern for justice, then a positive relationship should exist with organizational attractiveness. Surprisingly, Concern for Privacy not correlated with organizational attractiveness, it only correlated with following less Twitter profiles ($r=-.238, p < 0.05$). Somewhat interestingly, the User Attitudes were connected with each other. A higher Concern for Privacy results in a higher concern for justice ($r=.278 p < 0.01$). In a closely related finding, informational justice had a positive relationship with Qualities of Communication and Message ($r= .389, p<0.01, r= .194, p<0.05$, respectively). As seen in Table 3, Qualities of Communication and Qualities of Message are positively linked to Organizational Attractiveness and Job Pursuit Intentions.

	Organizational Attractiveness	
	<i>r</i>	<i>n</i>
Concern for Informational Justice	.308**	130

Table 5: User Attitudes

Demographics

Gender

Overall, we found women to be more interested in organizations using social media recruiting and more active with social media. Our results showed that women use social media as a whole ($r = .186, p < 0.05$) and FB more intensely than men (positive relationship exists between gender and FB intensity ($r = .292, p < 0.01$)). Furthermore, women are more likely to follow companies on Twitter they wish to work for than men ($r = -.277, p < 0.01$). Women also liked employers having LinkedIn ($r = .298$) and Twitter accounts ($r = .271$) more than men ($p < 0.01$). Finally, women liked employers adding them as LI connections more than men ($r = .269, p < 0.01$).

Age

Our analysis revealed that the older members of Gen Y liked employers sending LinkedIn personal messages more than their younger counterparts ($r = .310, p < 0.01$) as well as liking employers adding them as LI connections ($r = .27, p < 0.01$). Also, the older Generation Y is the, more LI connections they have ($r = .444, p < 0.01$).

Student Status & Academic Program

We found no significant differences between Gen Yers in different academic programs. The only difference in student status was that non-student employed participants had significantly more LI Connections than undergraduates (significantly different means, $p < 0.05$), a finding not very important to this study.

Social media use as a whole -> Organizational Attractiveness & Job Pursuit Intentions

Illustrated in Table 6, when Social media use was averaged as a total between all three websites, Number of Hours spent showed a weak positive correlation with both organizational attractiveness and Job Pursuit Intentions. The level of confidence was 99% for both relationships. When Intensity of all three websites was averaged, it produced a weak positive correlation with Organizational Attractiveness, also significant at a 99% level of confidence.

	Organizational Attractiveness		Job Pursuit Intentions	
	<i>r</i>	n	<i>r</i>	n
# of Hours averaged	.268**	133	.231**	133
Intensity averaged	.279**	133	N/A	N/A

Table 6: Social Media use as a whole

Perceptions (Organizational attractiveness) -> Reactions (job pursuit intentions)

Table 7 shows our strongest correlation, the relationship between Generation Y Perceptions and Reactions. A positive relationship was found, significant at the 99% level of confidence, proving H6.

	Job Pursuit Intentions	
	<i>r</i>	n
Organizational Attractiveness	.571**	131

Table 7: Perceptions & Reactions

DISCUSSION

If more social media use as whole increases organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions, that means that instead of poisoning Gen Y with all of this information and exposure, it actually endears Gen Y to organizations. This is most likely due to the concern for informational justice, as the more information one knows about a company, the more attractive that organization may become. The more hours spent on social media sites, the more information Gen Y is exposed to, and can digest, which allows them to form their own opinions and perceptions about organizations. Gen Y as a whole can make more informed decisions about organizational attractiveness through an increased use of social media. Obviously, social media has done a good job of being a vehicle for recruiting and with these guidelines, recruiters can be confident their social media recruitment strategies will be effective.

Also, as the Qualities of the Communication (Table 1) and Qualities of Message (Table 2) were both positively linked to Generation Y Perceptions (Organizational Attractiveness), this means that recruiters now have specific details as to how to structure a social media recruitment platform. By using all possible means of reaching out to Generation Y, along with including specific job-related details in their messages, recruiters will be able to attract applicants effectively.

LIMITATIONS

Overall, this study on the perceptions and reactions of generation Y towards social media proved to conclude relevant findings. The purpose of this study was to determine whether Generation Y, who is currently graduating and entering in the workforce would apply to a company which posted a job opportunity through either Facebook, LinkedIn or Twitter. Although the study was successful, there proved to be some limitations within the scope. Our sample consisted of 136 respondents in total, all within the ages of Generation Y, but mostly between the ages 21-24 (62.7%). This is a

limitation because we are extrapolating for an entire generation and 136 participants from Ontario does not effectively encompass all of generation Y. Also, seeing that over 60% of our respondents were 21-24 and Generation Y includes ages 18-32, the strength of the correlations might not have been as statistically significant due to the smaller *n*. This being said, generalizability in this study is low as the larger the sample population, the more one can generalize and apply the findings. Time was another constraint which limited the amount of respondents due to the extended period it was open for. If the survey were to be open for longer, the sample size would increase.

Further, using social media was the main strategy in attracting participants to conduct our survey. This was beneficial as we were only interested in those active with Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn. Recruiting participants only through social media methods, however proves to have its limitations because of each individual's specific intensity and usage. This implies that a participant may or may not have even come across the survey link on their own profiles because they do not frequently engage in social media. Those more frequent users would have a greater chance to see and respond to our survey, skewing the data towards more active users. If this study were to be done again, handing out the survey as a hard copy would attract all levels of social media users from casual to professionals.

It should also be noted that the "professional" user category described above is not totally representative of what one might believe to be actual professionals online, but that the more time and greater intensity on social media allows for users to have more exposure to organizations recruiting. This definition implies that the more time and intensity, the more of a "professional" one would be considered., although what people actually do online was not measured. This being said, it's the greater chance for exposure to organizations reaching out that identifies a "professional" user, can be a way around the fact that people weren't asked what they use these sites for.

A limitation with the theoretical model was that due to lack of previous literature, we created *original* definitions for the constructs including "qualities of communication" and "user categories" along with measures to capture these. Another limitation is that although these definitions were related and applicable to our study, they were not verified or backed up through previous research. On the other hand, these newly defined constructs can be a point where researchers in the future can further validate the definitions and implications through other studies involving said constructs.

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