A Comparison of Perceptions of Recruiters and Job Seekers of Social Media Recruitment in India

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Abstract

With the growing popularity of social media among Gen-Y, organisations must fully leverage their power to attract and employ quality talent in a targeted and strategic manner. Social media recruitment is a fast-emerging trend in the contemporary HR scenario. Millennials are increasingly being identified as a tech savvy generation. With their growing presence on various social media networks, recruiters are now using the social media sites as a recruitment tool to source both active and passive candidates.

This study examines how organizations are using social media to attract top talent and make hiring decisions, and compares the perceptions of recruiters and job seekers towards social media recruitment. The primary focus of the study is to analyse in detail about the aspects that a recruiter specifically looks for while examining the social media profiles of the job applicants. Also, an attempt has been made to understand how the viewing of the social media profiles affects the behaviour of the job applicants online.

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Introduction

The unprecedented and exponential development of the social media has forced organisations to adapt their usual organisational processes. One such process is recruitment; the social media is now widely used by companies across the globe to attract the best of talent. Companies are beginning to sidestep traditional conduits with new alleyways to influence prospective employees. Social media is one such channel which is currently being used extensively by organisations to market and project themselves as a brand to prospective employees to garner their attention and rope in the right talent and right cultural fit for their organisations. With the mushrooming of social media sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn recruitment procedures have been radically transformed. Reputed organizations not only cast a wide net through these sites but also narrow down their search to what they want exactly with great ease.

Social media is now such an integral part of our lives that we can hardly do away with it. Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Instagram, Google+, and other social media websites are part and parcel of our personal and professional space. As a matter of fact, on umpteen occasions it is difficult to demarcate the line that divides our workplace from home as we constantly shift digitally

between the two. Smart phones, tablets make our online engagement even easier as we tend to link and get connected, anytime and anywhere.

Methods related to attracting and selecting the finest existing talents are woven around networking, relationship building with people who have the necessary attributes to prove as value addition to the organization. Social media is intended to build upon these capabilities therefore is in a win- win locus to set the trend for innovative talent management practices. It is clear that organizations that are able to use these platforms effectively have much to gain. Smith and Rupp (2004) opine that, "The Internet has drastically changed the face of recruitment. Employers must now actively market themselves by instituting a well-implemented e-recruitment program to find better quality candidates and improve hiring decisions, all in less time and at a lower cost." Precisely, social networking sites allow its users to make web-based profiles wherein individuals can interact using two-way communication. Organizations which embrace upon this conduit are destined to be perceived as innovative, open to technological change and fast-evolving. With the increasing interactions of the Gen-Y on social media platforms sites, organizations are willing to seize up the opportunity and cash on employer branding initiatives so as to enhance their visibility in this large arena to attract and entice suitable applicants to their organizations.

Literature Review

Organizations can significantly perk up their value propositions and activities by social media (Yang & Mason, 1998). Human resource management has been unknowingly using marketing strategies to sell the 'employment product and job offer' (Price, 1996). On one hand, while an organization's human resources are perfectly inimitable (Lippman & Rumelt, 1982), organizations that succeed in winning the war for talent are able to attract larger pools of quality applicants and achieve a huge competitive advantage over their rivals (Michaels et al, 2001). The capability to attract, recruit, develop, and retain talent is the single-most important determinant of organizational effectiveness and a source of competitive advantage (Borstorff, Marker, & Bennett, 2007). The mounting admiration and acceptance of social networking websites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter are compelling organizations worldwide to recognize the potential it provides in attracting today's Gen Y workforce. With over millions of users on LinkedIn and Twitter, and over a whopping 800 million users on Facebook (Hunt, 2010), unquestionably the huge segment available for talent acquisition is too attractive for any HR function to ignore. The wide and boundless expanse of the internet, of which social media is a significant part, is progressively being leveraged by HR functions for the purposes of recruitment and meaningfully engaging with the current and potential employees (Florkowski et al 2006). Research suggests HR 2.0 as a new term for the collective

human resource management processes enabled and facilitated by Web 2.0 based applications (McAdams, 2010) and particularly used in talent acquisition through employer branding, and relationship building during pre and post recruitment efforts to entice the right talent. Winning the war for talent is critical for an organization's success (Chambers et al 1998). Therefore, initial phases of applicant pull become vital in a booming economy with a robust job market, as the potential recruits have a number of choices about where to employ their human capital (Bauer, & Cable, 2001). The recruitment function of an organization sets the tone and tenor towards provision of this distinctive unimitable source of competitive advantage. The whole purpose of an organization's communication before and during the process of recruitment is to attract potential job applicants to the organization (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Thus, recruitment communication can be defined as any recruitment information which is personally relevant to an applicant and messages received during interactive communication (Breaugh & Starke, 2000) to attract applicants. Since recruitment can help organizations achieve competitive advantage through its ability to accumulate new resources more efficiently and effectively relative to competitors (Prahalad &Hamel, 1990), a convergence of the organization's strategy with the recruitment strategy and implementation becomes critical for recruitment to deliver strategic value. Those organizations that leverage social media strategically have brighter prospect to scoop out connections with their target users, building affinity, and loyalty (Powers et al, 2012). Social networking as a recruitment tool is gaining popularity (Dorothy, 2010).

This study examines how organizations are using social media to entice best of talent and make hiring decisions, and compares the perceptions of recruiters and job seekers towards social media recruitment. The primary focus of the study is to analyse in depth the various aspects that a recruiter specifically looks for while examining the social media profiles of the job applicants.

Methodology

The study was conducted considering the perspectives of social media recruitment of the two groups of respondents, i.e., recruiters and the Gen Y job seekers. Two questionnaires, one for recruiters and another for job seekers were designed in a similar fashion. The survey for recruiters was conducted to understand the different aspects of a social media profile that they scrutinize as well as how they enhance their employer brand using social media. Similar data was collected from job seekers with respect to their perceptions of social media recruitment and how this knowledge affects the behaviour of Gen Y online. The sample sizes for the social media recruiters and the job seekers were 24 and 40, respectively. The survey responses were analysed to understand if there exists a mismatch in perceptions between the two groups.

This research study focussed on eight variables of social

media recruitment. The first variable compares the usage of social media by both groups of respondents and their frequency of usage of different social media sites. The second variable studies the various objectives of using social media sites by the recruiters and the phases during the recruitment process that they're used. The third variable compares the perceptions of the two groups of respondents with respect to the importance of profile picture and job descriptions on their profiles. The next two variables depicts the percentage of recruiters who've hired or rejected candidates based on different factors they observed on their social media profiles respectively. The sixth variable shows how organizations are using social media to enhance their employer brand. As social media recruitment is the latest trend, the next variable explores the behaviour of Gen Y job seekers on social media sites. Finally, the last variable is about the perceptions of job seekers with respect to organizations using social media sites for employer branding.

Findings

1. Usage of Social Media

The first finding from the study was regarding the usage of social media by both the groups. All of the recruiters were found to use social media as a means of recruitment, while only 85% of the job seekers were found to use social media to search for jobs. 15% of the job seekers were found not use social media, preferring to rely on traditional methods of searching for jobs.

The social media sites focussed in this study are LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+. The usage of each of these sites by both the groups is as given below.


usage of social media sites for recruitment
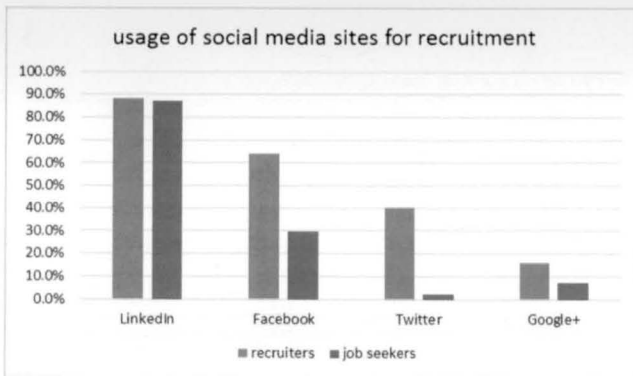
There is no significant difference between the percentages of recruiters and job seekers using LinkedIn. However, the percentage of recruiters using Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ is significantly higher than the percentage of job seekers using these sites. This indicates that there's a significant gap between the two groups using these sites, especially Twitter.

2. Objectives of using Social Media

The main objectives of recruiters for using social media sites varies from posting jobs (76%), searching talent (72%), contacting candidates (56%), screening the employees before

making offer (36%), and to enrich & showcase employer brand (48%). The major objective is to post jobs and search for potential candidates.

Objectives of usage of Social Media
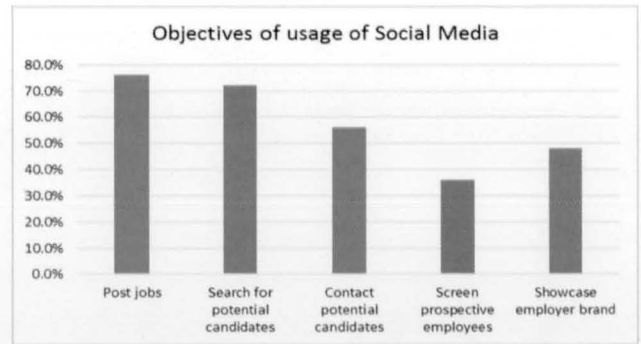
Recruiters use social media during various phases of the recruitment process: 52% of the recruiters review the social media profiles after receiving an application; 36% after the initial conversation with the candidate; 32% after a detailed discussion with the candidate; and 20% right before making an offer. Thus, at each stage social media is used as a screening device.

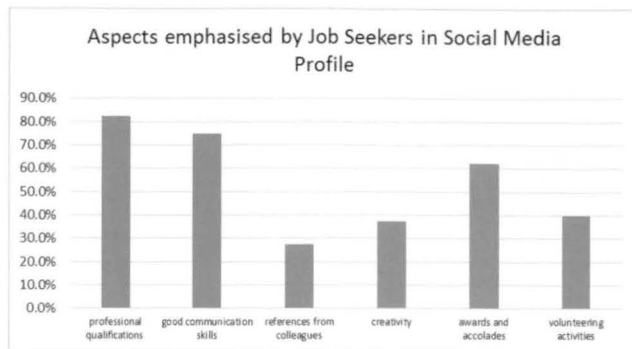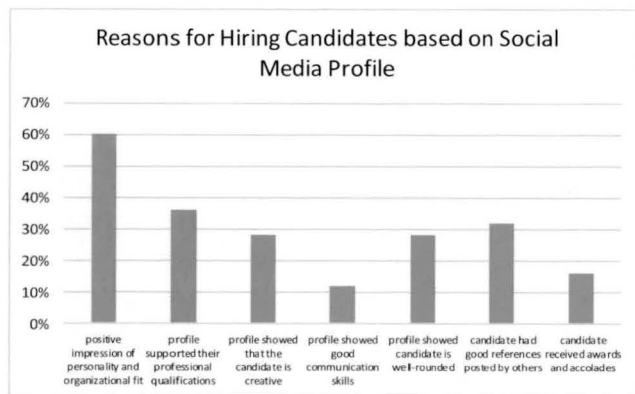Usage of Social Media in different phases of Recruitment
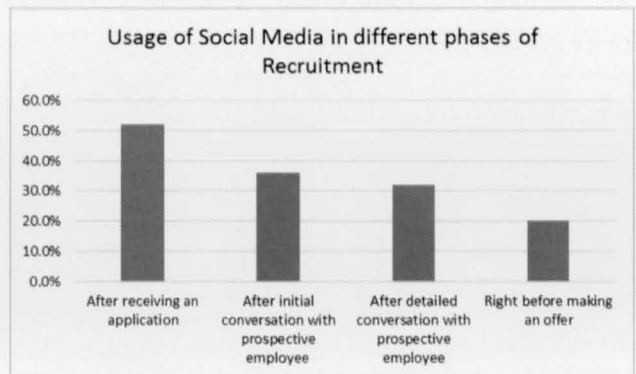
3. Importance of Profile Picture and Job Description

The perceptions of recruiters and job seekers regarding profile picture differs, with 60% of the recruiters saying that the absence of a profile picture will not impact their decision to review the profile of the candidate, while 80% of the job seekers feel that the visibility of their profile increases with the profile picture. The perceptions of recruiters and job seekers regarding detailed job descriptions also differs, with 68% of the recruiters saying that they will be more inclined towards profiles with detailed job descriptions of current and previous employment as it will be extremely helpful to map the prospective candidates to business requirements based on their skills and previous experience, while 82.5% of the job seekers felt that it is important to provide detailed job descriptions in their profiles.

4. Hiring Candidates

40% of the recruiters have hired a candidate based on what they saw about them on social media sites. The reasons attributed to the hire were as shown below. The most prevalent reasons were

positive impression of personality & organisational fit (60%), profile supported professional qualifications (36%), and good references posted by others (32%).

Reasons for Hiring Candidates based on Social Media Profile

5. Rejecting Candidates

48% of the recruiters have rejected candidates based on what they saw about them on social media sites. The reasons attributed to the rejection are as shown below. The main reasons for rejecting candidates based on their social media profiles are derogatory comments about previous employer (36%), posting inappropriate comments (28%), demonstrating poor communication skills (24%), and lying about their qualifications (24%).

Reasons for Rejecting Candidates based on Social Media Profile
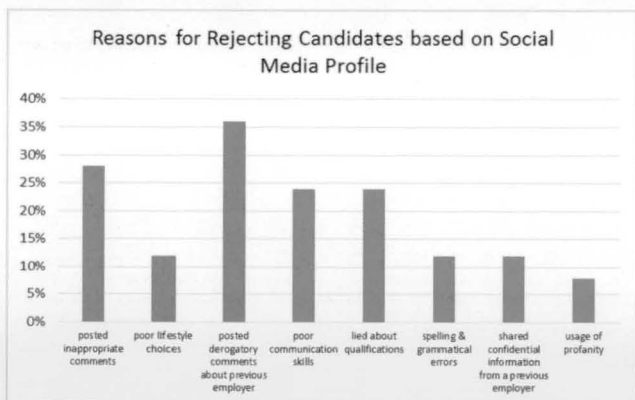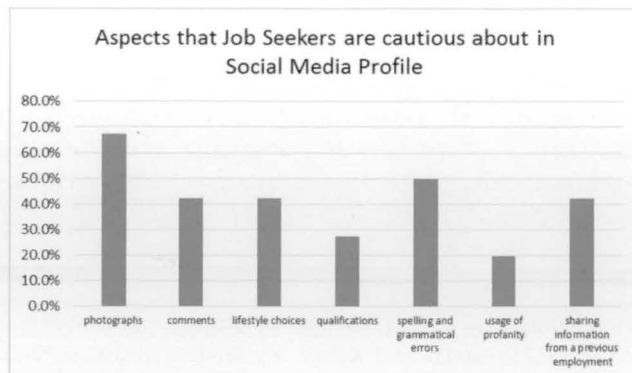
6. Behaviour of Job Seekers on Social Media

The top three aspects that job seekers emphasize on their social media profiles are: professional qualifications (82.5%), good communication skills (75%), and awards and accolades (62.5%). The least emphasis is on references & recommendations, which is divergent from the recruiters, who look for more references from colleagues and previous employers on their profiles.

Aspects emphasised by Job Seekers in Social Media Profile

Job seekers are highly cautious of photographs (67.5%), spelling & grammatical errors (50%), comments (42.5%), posts regarding lifestyle choices (42.5%), and sharing information from previous employment (42.5%) on their social media profiles, as they feel it could convey an unprofessional impression about them.

Aspects that Job Seekers are cautious about in Social Media Profile

Recommendations

From the results, it is evident that there are certain gaps between the recruiter's expectations and perceptions of the job seekers. Following are some recommendations based on the results obtained.

•	As observed, many recruiters use sites like Facebook, Twitter and Google+ to search for potential candidates. However, the percentage of job seekers using these sites to search for jobs is significantly lower. There's an excessive dependence on LinkedIn alone. Hence, job seekers must also be active on these sites to better their chances of finding the right job.

•	Majority of the recruiters admitted to making hiring decisions based on the perceived organization fit of the candidate. Therefore, the job seekers must showcase their social media profiles in a way that conveys the person-organization fit.

•	77.27% of the recruiters use social media to search for potential candidates. However, only 31.81% of them use it for screening candidates. To make the recruitment process more cost and time effective, recruiters should invest more time in screening candidates via social media. This will also ensure that the right person gets placed in the right job in the right organization.

•	The percentage of organizations using social media sites for employer branding is fairly low, i.e., 40.9%. Therefore,

more organizations should invest more time in strengthening their brand via social media. However, they must ensure that this is done in a professional and tasteful manner. Else, excessive advertising will be perceived negatively by the job seekers.

Conclusion

The growth in the use of social media sites is phenomenal. Organizations and recruiters, therefore, need to be where candidates are in order to engage them in the recruitment process. This study looks at how recruiters are leveraging the power of social media and changing the face of the recruitment industry. Organizations are now taking advantage of the social media landscape to enhance their employer brands effectively and solve talent issues. In particular, it considers the role social media sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter, and Google+ are playing within this context. Social Media has become an imperative for Gen Y as they are the future job seekers. From this study it has been found that there are certain gaps between the recruiter's expectation and perceptions of the job seekers. These gaps must be bridged in order to leverage the social media for recruitment effectively.

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