

AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT

THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN RECRUITMENT AMONG
LEBANESE COMPANIES

by
GINA CORDAHI EID

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by

GINA CORDAHI EID

Approved by:



Dr. Fida Alfiouni, Assistant Professor
Suliman S. Olayan School of Business

First Reader



Ms. Leila Khauli Hanna, Instructor
Suliman S. Olayan School Of Business

Second Reader

Date of project presentation: May 8th, 2014

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Student Name: Eid Gina Cordahi
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AN ABSTRACT OF THE PROJECT OF

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Title: The use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies.

The purpose of this study is to respond to the increasing calls in the literature to better understand how the HR function can leverage social media, namely in the recruitment process. More specifically, this study aims to survey a sample of Lebanese companies who have a social media presence to better understand the rationale behind the use of social media in recruitment, the variety of platforms used as well as the benefits from using such tools as compared to regular recruitment channels. The young generation in Lebanon is a heavy user of social media and organizations have to catch the wave of the burgeoning social media channels to win the war for talent.

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To
My Beloved Family

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In an age in which people claim prompt feedback, social media has gained popularity and has thus become part and parcel of people's life, affecting and influencing daily interactions. It is a phenomenon that might still have a long way to go but it will not surely slow down anytime soon (Sapataro, 2008). People are now able to communicate with each other, consuming and distributing information effortlessly (Hensel & Keiss, 2010). Currently, many businesses are still debating how to effectively introduce social media into the organization (Lauby, 2013), while some have already recognized the importance of social media and have started using it to promote their organizations and to recruit employees (Hunt, 2010). Human resources professionals, in particular, need to become familiar with the main uses of social media within the workplace in order to cater for the needs of both the business and employees and be able to develop a cohesive strategy that would align the function with social media best practices and outcomes (Lauby, 2013).

Many forward-thinking companies and pioneers have caught this global trend and a good number of them are now resorting to the social media area that has become more than just a fringe service, moving from the periphery right to the center (Sapataro, 2008). Smart organizations are hence studying ways to leverage social media tools in order to create valid results (Lauby, 2013). According to a survey conducted by CareerBuilder in 2010, out of the 2,500 surveyed employers, 35 percent are using social media to promote their brand, 21 percent are using it for recruitment purposes and 18 percent for brand awareness (Hunt, 2010).

The recruitment and selection process has mostly been about identifying and interviewing candidates with the skills and education needed to do the job. Companies had negatively viewed social recruiting since they had to manage their online image and had to make sure that the content was constantly updated (Doherty, 2010). However, the selection and recruitment process has now evolved into a more complex process whereby social media has been driving recruiters and employers to find new ways to connect with candidates (Greenberg, 2013).

Of particular interest to this study is the use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies. The Middle East is a heavy user of social media, namely among the young generations and in fact the number of social media users in the region is higher than those who resort to traditional channels. In Lebanon for instance, the Internet penetration has reached the mass and now far exceeds newspaper print (online vs. print 40 percent) (Recruiting Online: A Guide for Decision Makers, 2009).

Nevertheless, little is known about the use of social media in recruitment in the region. Given the heavy use of social media in the region, leveraging the Internet for recruitment purposes could yield interesting results. This project is thus useful and timely as it will provide Lebanese organizations with a better understanding of current practices and potential uses of social media. From a theoretical standpoint, this project contributes to the current debate on the benefits of social media in recruitment by providing insights from a novel context: Lebanon.

Research Objective

The aim of this study is to respond to the increasing calls in the literature to better understand how the HR function can leverage social media, namely in the recruitment process. More specifically, this study aims at surveying a sample of

Lebanese companies who have a social media presence to better understand the rationale behind the use of social media in recruitment, the variety of platforms used as well as the benefits from using such tools as compared to regular recruitment channels. The young generation in Lebanon is a heavy user of social media and organizations have to catch the wave of the burgeoning social media channels to win the war for talent.

The study aims at answering the following research questions:

- To what extent do companies in Lebanon use social media within their recruitment strategies?
- What type of online platforms do companies in Lebanon leverage as part of their recruitment strategies?
- What type of candidates do companies seek to attract through social media?
- What benefits do companies in Lebanon reap from the use of social media in recruitment?

CHAPTER II

PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

The emergence of Web 2.0 and the outbreak of social media and social networking sites raised questions about how this technology affects and relates to the workplace. From a macro point-of-view, the use of consumer-based social networking tools (Facebook, Twitter, etc.) is connecting organizations with the world, mainly by establishing new routes to market and enhancing customer intimacy and brand awareness (Johnson, 2010). From a micro perspective, employers are using social media platforms in order to increase communication with employees, frequently engaging them and fostering productivity (Johnson, 2010).

According to a KPMG report good leaders are the ones who empower key employees to become ambassadors for the firm on social media platforms that could assist customers, build the company's brand, attract talent, and give a personal aspect to the company (Isaacson & Peacey, 2012). Moreover, employees involved in social media become even more dedicated, engaged and attached to the company. In 2011, a Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) survey on the use of social media in the workplace showed that 68 percent of the respondents said that their organizations were using social media for either marketing, external communications, or recruiting purposes. The survey reported that among the functions that use social media in a company in order to reach various stakeholders including current and potential employees and customers are the human resources (SHRM, 2011).

The Internet has been used for recruitment since the mid-1990s. Researchers and practitioners have since then been predicting that online recruitment will eventually

prevail. However, despite the fact that the use of online recruitment by both recruiters and job seekers has considerably increased during the past ten years, it has still a long way to go (Parry & Wilson, 2009). Some companies are now fine tuning online recruitment with new technologies to be included in their recruitment process, both internal and external (Pollitt, 2008).

Definition of Social Media

About 169,000,000 records resulted in a span of 0.24 seconds during the search for an adequate definition of social media. Definitions might differ in the choice of words and descriptions, but they all basically refer to the same thing. According to Kaplan & Haenlein (2010) social media is “a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0 and that allow the creation and exchange of user-generated content” (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). Jackson, Schuler & Werner (2011), for instance, defined social media as the “set of technologies and communication channels targeted at forming and enabling a potentially massive community of participants to productively collaborate” (Jackson, Schuler, & Werner, 2011). Social media offers the tools and means for people, communities and organizations to exchange information, share thoughts and ideas, interact, conduct research, fetch information and data, etc. through virtual networks and shared platforms. It is an opportunity to help companies be ready to cope with Internet and mobile applications (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2012). Social media technologies and Web 2.0 mix take various forms and involve the use of different tools such as blogs, wikis, social networking, tweets, Microsoft SharePoint, Google documents and spreadsheets that facilitate any sort of big-scale interaction. In their Business Horizons article, Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) identified six types of social media: “collaborative projects” such

as Wikipedia, “blogs and microblogs” such as Twitter, “content communities” such as YouTube, “social networking sites” such as Facebook, as well as virtual game and social worlds (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010).

Web 2.0 can be seen not solely as a technological phenomenon but as a paradigm shift enabling a new culture of participation based on users interacting and collectively sharing and creating knowledge over the internet (Ahlqvist, Back, Heinonen, & Halonen, 2010).

HR Caught Up In the Game

According to Meister & Willyerd (2010), by the year 2020, the workplace will be a highly communal and personalized place. They believe that employers will face new challenges and will have to deal with new dynamics whilst trying to manage a diverse population of employees; each coming from different generations and backgrounds with different experiences and expectations. Hence, the success of any organization will highly depend on the function and positioning of one very principal and critical department, that of the human resources (HR) department; namely on the role and value of the HR department in each firm. Apart from the policies and procedures, compensation and benefits, services, work schedules, training and development and all other aspects of HR practices, the human resources department will have to be prepared to accommodate and cater for adapted substantial surges in terms of HR practices and employees’ expectations and demands. Statistics indicate that the increase of social media usage is related to the changing Human Resource (HR) practices firm (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

The growth in social media has impacted the use of social media within HR practices, especially in the recruitment and selection process (Kaplan & Haenlein,

2009). A growing number of HR professionals are using social media to screen and select job applicants (Brown & Vaughn, 2011). Organizations use recruitment websites as important channels and tools to attract new hires (Lievens & Harris, 2003; Capelli, 2001). These recruitment websites offer advantages over traditional recruitment channels (newspapers, career fairs or headhunters) (Williamson, King, Lepak, & Sarma, 2010) as depicted in the research later on.

Social media has become a priority for many business executives and HR professionals who are trying to evaluate the functions and applications that could be of benefit to their business in order to align and integrate them with the companies' activities and strategies (Scott & Jacka, 2011).

According to Laurano (2013), the shortage in the critical skills during the past decade led the selection and recruitment of talent to become a significant business objective. However, and despite that critical need in recruitment, most organizations still rely on the same obsolete processes and technology solutions. Hence, talent acquisition is still not in tune with today's workforce that has changed dramatically and therefore organizations might eventually lose qualified applicants and risk organizational performance and growth (Laurano, 2013). Organizations must therefore engage in new recruitment approaches in order to gain competitive advantage and align with the business. Organizations will have to challenge the traditional role of the recruiter and focus on how talent acquisitions efforts can influence business results (Laurano, 2013).

The increase usage of social media is related to the changing HR practices. While most organizations still rely on old processes and technologies, an increasing

number of HR professionals are using social networking services (SNSs¹) to assist in screening and selecting candidates (Brown & Vaughn, 2011). In the United States about 80 percent of the organizations uses SNSs to recruit (Jobvite, 2011). While recruiting, 45 percent of the organizations searches for online applicant profiles, 29 percent occasionally searches, 12 percent only reviews the candidate's profile if provided and 13 percent does not check the profile at all (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2009)

Moreover, global business competition has also increased over the years making organizational growth very difficult. This when for the first time organizations have realized the importance of hiring the right person for the right job. The Internet has thus become a promising tool for recruiters and employers to use in their recruitment process. Therefore, as competition is increasing HR and recruitment professionals have to resort to new and varied methods to recruit candidates (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011).

For an organization to remain competitive in today's market, recruitment becomes a very important tool in the company's HR kit. Since social media connects various groups of people and allows having a better picture of a prospect, it thus becomes a powerful tool for job hunting (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011).

In recruitment terminologies, candidates are usually differentiated as active and passive job seekers. Recruiters and organizations both look for the passive job seekers on sites such as LinkedIn and Facebook. According to recruiters, although it takes a long time, the quality of talent is quite satisfactory.

Hence, while traditional recruitment techniques are useful and remain important mechanisms today, the evolution of the Internet and online tools has added an entire new dimension to recruitment. Today's technological advances result in

¹ Social Networking Sites.

accessibility and convenience of communication and information than ever before, unlike the conventional methods that are mostly comprised of non-interactive tactics, a one-way communication from the recruiter to the potential candidate (Andrews, 2012).

Value of Social Media for an Organization

The major benefits of recruitment through social media are many: Social media is cost effective (Andrews, 2012); “estimates suggest that it costs only about one-twentieth as much to hire someone on-line as to hire that same person through want ads and other traditional means” (Capelli, 2001). Moreover, access to potential pool of candidates is massive whereby sites are accessible round the clock and even during holiday periods for any computer user; hence speed and efficiency are prime at this accelerated pace (Andrews, 2012) as compared to the traditional recruitment methods. Since access to candidates is faster, such advantage also helps a company attract talent against competitors (Kaistha, 2012). Social media thus offers a convenient form of communication which is direct and that leads to timesaving (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007; Cober, Brown, Keeping, & Levy, 2004; Dineen, Ling, Ash, & DelVecchio, 2007).

Social media recruitment also offers a better search for qualified applicants as it expands the ability to reach out to both a larger and more targeted audience in terms of geographic reach and particular niche segments. Moreover, social media sites allow HR professionals to specifically target certain types of applicants for particular positions (Grensing-Pophal, 2012)

Within the framework of social media advantages, a big number of social media users are students; hence social media serves as a good platform for companies to attract fresh talent (Kaistha, 2012). Another benefit social media offers is its ability to

increase the organization's brand visibility online (Kaistha, 2012) social recruiting enables the organization to share public information and highlights about the company thus allowing people to have a good understanding of the company's culture and brand (Hunt, 2010). Positions and vacancies can be viewed by a bigger number of qualified candidates (Kaistha, 2012) and hence employers could also receive higher response rates.

In the Aberdeen's (2012) talent acquisition report, the collected data showed that the second most effective source of recruitment available today, after employee referrals, is social media (Laurano, 2013). Eventually, passive candidates and "candidates with specific niche skill sets and in specific areas" could be easily reached since such category of candidates might not access job boards frequently and, therefore, social media might be the only channel to reach them (Nagy, 2013; Greenberg, 2013). Hence, in light of the above advantages, social media is therefore classified as an important tool and an attractive channel for recruitment (Van Den Hoogen, 2012).

Levels of awareness and adoption continue to develop; however, in a nutshell, organizations are considering introducing social media to their recruitment strategy to be cost-effective, targeted, strategic, competitive, and to be sourcing top talent (Madia, 2011). Moreover, social-media can supplement a pipeline of talent as well as showcase the organization; hence, giving HR the opportunity to develop its recruitment strategy in tune with marketing, internal communications, customer and public relations. So, to attract the best talent, companies must start by having their own strong online presence (Madia, 2011).

According to a Jobvite survey on social media use by corporate recruiters, 83 percent of respondents indicated they currently are or planning to use social media in their recruitment process (Jobvite, 2010).

Social Media Most Used Sites

The most commonly used social media sites to search for new hires of quality are twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook. A Jobvite survey conducted on 800 human resources professionals indicated that two-thirds of the interviewees are using social recruiting to hire employees and 64 percent deemed to have success from the hires (Brotherton, 2012)

Although Facebook is mainly used for social networking and connections, it is considered the largest social media site (Brotherton, 2012). Companies are using Facebook to promote their brands and companies. The more connections a recruiter creates, the larger the pool of applicants (Hunt, 2010).

LinkedIn is also a highly site similar to Facebook, but it is more of a professional platform (Davison, Maraist, & Bing, 2011) that connects recruiters with a large pool of potential leads for recruitment. It also offers recruiters the possibility of posting job openings and sending messages to potential prospects (Sheehan, 2010). It allows registered users to maintain a list of contact details of people they know and trust in business. According to company officials LinkedIn is becoming a hot spot for companies looking out to hire people. Recruitment through LinkedIn is accompanied by references that are for free (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011).

As for twitter, it is another social media site that allows recruiters to post a “tweet” or a message of different kinds, including job postings. Twitter allows contacting people directly, searching for talent, monitoring people’s feedbacks and inputs about their company and responding when deemed fit (Doherty, 2010).

Social Media Antagonists and Pitfalls

A 2009 study by Russell Herder and Ethos Business Law indicated that 51

percent of executives do not use social media because they do not know enough about it. Moreover, 81 percent believe that social media can be a security risk to the organization and fear it could not only be detrimental to employee productivity but also damage the organization's reputation.

There are many reasons for the opposing points of view. Some believe that social media strategies are not strategic and are rather focused on tools and tactics rather than on the relationships and business objectives. To build the business case for social media, only a comprehensive strategy aligned to business objectives combined with policies and procedures that mitigate risk will be able to properly demonstrate value while calming fears. Building deeper relationships with stakeholders should be part of an overall organizational strategy with social media helping achieve its success. It is through the effective use of social media that an organization can build the right relationships with the right people to realize value (Scott & Jacka, 2011).

One of the opposing points of view stems from a question of compliance; social media at the workplace is a compliance issue, making sure employees are not spending hours playing games. In this case, social media strategies are about compliance and enforcement, not engagement. This approach effectively ignores how the organization can use social media to drive business performance (Scott & Jacka, 2011). These perceptions in seeing social media as compliance issue or driver of business performance often leaves executives and staff confused in trying to develop the right balance (Scott & Jacka, 2011).

Wright (2011) notes in his research that social media is not for everyone. He believes that there are many limitations to social media, namely when it is used within the context of recruitment. Although employers do gain certain quick gains; however, using social media as an exclusive method for recruitment might undermine the entire

process, especially if used at the executive level. Social media might jeopardize the relationship building process and the vigorous assessment and selection of candidates (Wright, 2011). That is why Doherty (2010) believes that social recruiting should serve as a supplement to traditional recruiting methods (Doherty, 2010).

Opponents do acknowledge that social media has rendered the recruitment process more democratic and open and has increased visibility of the pool of talent which should be engaged with and recruited (Wright, 2011). However, antagonists believe that it is only through the personal knowledge of an individual that a person's skills and capabilities could be identified. So, identifying the best candidate for a particular position while only relying on online information might be erroneous or misleading (Wright, 2011). According to such stream of thought, it is highly unlikely that social media would replace the traditional recruitment processes any time in the near future (Wright, 2011).

The method of gathering information about a job applicant also showed some downsides; the hiring decision is impacted by the way HR professionals judge a candidate before the interview as well as by the way a candidate's information on social media sites is deemed valuable. The impression an HR professional gets could be hence biased due to the preference the latter might have (Van Den Hoogen, 2012) and the accuracy of the information could be also questioned. The Social identity theory states that identity plays a phenomenal role in the process of interpretation (Smith & Kidder, 2010); whereby people are attracted to those who are similar to them.

Furthermore, if a hired candidate later discovers that the recruiter has based the recruitment decision on information from social media platforms, this could jeopardize the relation of trust between the employer and the candidate since the latter could consider it invasion of their privacy. This could also affect the organization's image in

the long run in case the employer becomes known for checking social media platforms during the selection process (Van Den Hoogen, 2012).

Another consideration to take into account would be the case of job applicants who might not have any social media presence as compared to others who actually have. In that case, some profiles would reveal information about their skills or backgrounds thus making them more interesting to an employer while others would not have such option.

Another pitfall is related to the legality of using social media for screening purposes. Many HR professionals believe it is acceptable as long as they are not breaching specific laws. However, even if an HR professional does not violate any civil right law, there are still other issues to be considered such as the right of an employee for privacy with respect to their social networking profiles, possible defamation of character by third parties' web postings, etc. (Davison, Maraist, & Bing, 2011).

In light of these arguments, it would be advisable for these organizations to actively recruit via social media platforms, but refrain from using such channels to check out an applicant during the selection process (Van Den Hoogen, 2012).

HR's View of Social Media and Mode of Use

In most companies and organizations, the human resource departments face huge challenges in positioning themselves as crucial strategic partners. HR professionals have to constantly prepare companies to face current and future challenges and hence must be aware of the global trends, requirements and concerns, and should be willing to develop and improve by seeking recourse to new methods and techniques (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). HR personnel should be, therefore, informed of and knowledgeable about all kinds of social technologies (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

Although social media can be used in every part of the HR strategy, from employee engagement to recruitment to organizational development to labor relations to total rewards, yet there are those HR professionals who might still view this new technology as supplementary to their strategy rather than relevant (Sambhi, 2009). This is particularly evident when organizations expect to see tangible business results when HR professionals ask for a higher budget for social recruiting (Zielinski, 2012)

Unlike those organizations, however, there are many HR professionals who focus on the effort and time invested into social media as key elements instead of the budget spent (Brotherton, 2012). They are, indeed, challenged by the way to effectively manage social media's rewards and risks (Miranda, 2013) they need to maintain accuracy of the content and use the social media sites in their search for quality candidates, in promoting their organization and in monitoring its image (Gort, 2012). But this category of professionals has seen the changes social media has introduced in HR and which have forced them to consider technology in everything they do. HR professionals and senior executives can no longer afford to ignore online social platforms (Miller-Merrell, 2012). Social media is omnipresent and is not likely to go anywhere; therefore, HR departments and organizations that don't adopt the technology will be left behind (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

It's important to learn how to use the tools and begin to formulate a social HR strategy for the day when the company is ready. In their book, Meister & Willyerd (2010) predicted that by the year 2020 mobile devices will become peoples' offices and classrooms since these are tools that let people work anywhere and that recruiting will be initiated through social networking sites whereby people will be required to post their profiles on networking-designed sites (Meister & Willyerd, 2010). Web commuters will change the notion of corporate offices whereby workers will want to

work from any location. Meister & Willyerd (2010) added that CEOs would be required to have blogging as part of their job requirements whereby they will be forced to master the latest communication tools to be able to communicate with their employees and by 2020, social media and networks will be main methods through which employees will “communicate, connect and collaborate” in a networked world customers since social media literacy will become a major requirement, as basic as reading (Meister & Willyerd, 2010).

Despite the advantages social media offers, such professionals are also aware that, if managed improperly, without the adequate and necessary policies those advantages could turn into significant organizational drawbacks, especially since there is no longer control over the employees’ access to all forms of outbound communication channels due to the unlimited number of ways to post company information (Miranda, 2013).

Social HR Trends in 2014

An article in Forbes magazine described the year 2012 as the year for workforce innovation, with more companies using social media to brand and market their organizations (Meister, 2013). The same magazine then described 2013 as the year of social HR with organizations integrating social technologies into their recruitment, development and employee engagement strategies (Meister, 2013). In 2014, the same author stated that this social integration would actually be the prevailing trend. More forward-thinking HR leaders will make the link between having a solid social media strategy and finding top talent (Meister, 2014).

Prevalence of Social Media in the Middle East

It is very crucial and relevant to know about the use of social media in the Middle East as people are heavily using on such tool namely among individuals.

During the 2011 Arab Spring rebellions, social media was perceived and used as a tool for political speeches and democracy building in the Middle East (Dewey, 2012). Almost two years later, a new report was issued by the Pew Research Center stating that social media users in Lebanon, Tunisia, Egypt and Jordan still refer to social media to debate political issues and discuss politics at almost twice the rate of their Western counterparts (Dewey, 2012).

The report also indicated that people in the Middle East debate about religion and community-related issues far more frequently than the rest of the world. According to the report, “six of every 10 Egyptian, Tunisian and Jordanian social media-users post about religion” as compared to barely one in 10 in Western Europe (Dewey, 2012).

The Pew survey does, however, refer to some differences in the way the world in general and the Middle East in particular uses social media. “While Facebook and Twitter feeds may seem clogged with cat pictures -- and, according to the report, music, movies and sports -- Middle Eastern users also see the sites as places to engage on critical issues, like politics and community” (Dewey, 2012). The findings back up a report issued by Dubai's School of Government in July 2012 that found “between a third and a half of Middle Eastern social networkers felt the sites influenced community change, and roughly half believed that social media had made them more tolerant to opposing views” (Dewey, 2012).

In recent years, particularly after the Arab Spring, the Middle East has seen a surge in the number of people using social media to communicate, relate and break news (BBC Monitoring, 2012). "It is not journalists who are now delivering the content.

The masses have started to come up with their own narratives of reality. This is increasingly becoming an integral part of media, according to the former director-general of the Al Jazeera Network and co-founder of Sharq Forum in Qatar (BBC Monitoring, 2012).

Middle East Individuals' Online Usage

There are common myths and misconceptions about Middle East online candidates whereby it is believed that “*fewer people go online, compared to those who read newspapers*”, “*job ads on a recruitment website do not get as much exposure as print ads in national newspapers*”, “*online candidates are mostly students and young people*”, “*only technical candidates can be found online*”, “*Arabic speakers, especially Gulf nationals, do not look for jobs online*”, etc. (Recruiting Online: A Guide for Decision Makers, 2009).

However, reality² has it that the number of Internet users in the region is much higher than the total newspaper print circulation. An online job ad typically receives over 400 applications, compared with around 200 for a print ad in a popular newspaper. Half of the online candidates are aged over 30, and 37 percent hold managerial positions, including 8 percent who are in top management (Recruiting Online: A Guide for Decision Makers, 2009).

Online candidates span all industries and functions, with only 31 percent coming from IT and engineering roles. Over 35 percent of online candidates are fluent Arabic speakers, including 8 percent who are Gulf nationals (Recruiting Online: A Guide for Decision Makers, 2009).

Finding (1) – Internet penetration has reached critical mass and now far

² Based on GulfTalent.com's database and analysis of publicly available data.

exceeds newspaper print circulation across the region. Finding (2) – Candidates found online have a higher level of education and better language skills than the general population. Finding (3) – Online candidates include a significant proportion of mid-level and senior professionals. Finding (4) – Online candidates include a diverse talent pool from different locations. Finding (5) – Candidates from all major industries and job categories can be found online.

Table 1

Online Vs. Print

Online vs. Print		
Country	Internet Penetration	Newspaper Circulation
UAE	49%	18%
Qatar	43%	15%
Lebanon	40%	10%
Bahrain	35%	17%
Kuwait	35%	27%
KSA	23%	8%
Jordan	18%	5%
Egypt	13%	6%
Oman	10%	9%

Internet Penetration³ – Newspaper Circulation⁴

Sources: ITU, The World Factbook, Internet World Stats, Middle East Media Guide, Economist Intelligence Unit, GulfTalent.com Analysis

Middle East Firms' Online Usage

According to Bayt.com's latest poll on "Corporate Usage of Social Media in the Middle East", the majority of respondents (46.8 percent) believe that Middle Eastern

³ Number of Internet users as a percentage of total population. Based on 2007, the most recent year for which data is available.

⁴ Sum of print circulation of all daily newspapers as a percentage of total population based on claimed (unaudited) circulation figures for 2008.

companies are not effectively using social media (McClatchy, 2012). There are various perceived challenges to social media and hence adequate culture and proper education in the medium is highly needed for a successful propagation of the use of social media among the region's firms. The major challenges perceived are the (1) risk of reputation damage whereby 81.6 per cent of the respondents claim that social media could damage a company's reputation. Other perceived challenges to social media are the (2) difficulty to monetize online presence (11.3 per cent), (3) transmit the right tone of the message (11.3 per cent), and (4) keep up with feedback (10.5 per cent). Other challenges included (5) the complexity of measuring return on investment and (6) problems with keeping up-to-date with the ever-changing tools and technologies (McClatchy, 2012).

However, despite reservations, 42.8 percent of the polltakers consider the usage of social media "common" in the Middle East and 51.1 per cent say that their organization does use the medium. When probing the desired features of a social media page, respondents believed that the content should be educational and informative, interesting, provides feedback and customer service, answers all inquiries and comments and should portray updated information (McClatchy, 2012).

Social media is viewed as a way to increase brand awareness, interact with customers, promote new initiatives, and recruit staff. According to 47.5 per cent of polltakers, social media activity has been largely successful in driving traffic to their company's website (McClatchy, 2012).

CHAPTER III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Introduction

This chapter highlights the research methodology used to achieve the objectives of this study. It will describe and explain the research method and the data collection instruments, as it will cover the limitations encountered during the implementation process.

Research Approach

Research methodology is the means by which we collect data to answer research questions or to test hypotheses (Munro, 2006). A research design "expresses both the structure of the research problem and the plan of investigation used to obtain empirical evidence on the relations of the problem" (Kerlinger, 2011).

Hence, quantitative research method is an appropriate method to gather data for the purpose of this study, namely due to the following reasons: (1) It covered a small sample of the population and provided accurate information that facilitated drawing conclusions (2) the online survey was inexpensive and relatively easy to administer (3) provided respondents with anonymity. Consequently, data was collected through self-administered online questionnaire that was addressed to HR managers working in Lebanese companies that are already using some sort of social media tool.

Research was also conducted by means of a literature review. Literature was reviewed to analyze the necessary information to define social media and the way it is being used in the recruitment and selection processes.

Apart from the qualitative and mixed strategies, the quantitative method was used to conduct primary research as it served the purpose of this study, which relied on empirical observations and data. Hence, the use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies was the basic construct for the development of the survey questions and therefore relevant quantifiable data was collected and statistical results were analyzed. The questionnaire consisted of a 5-point Likert type scale that was used to measure the respondents' level of importance, of agreement and of influence. It also included more categorical scales that were used to gather basic information about the respondents' companies in terms of size, year of establishment, number of employees working in HR, in general, and in recruitment, in particular, etc. The survey was sent to HR managers and professionals who had some degree of exposure to social media. The quantitative method was highly adequate and led to drawing conclusions that are supported by objective evidence.

Data Collection Instruments

Data collection instruments are selected in accordance with the research objectives and approach (Bryman & Bell, 2007). Since this research is more of a descriptive and exploratory nature, and since a deductive approach and quantitative strategy were used, data collecting instruments must therefore be in tune with the goals of the study. Hence, primary data and secondary data were collected.

Primary Data

Primary analysis is the initial analysis of data in a research. It is the application of statistical methods. Secondary data analysis is the "reanalysis of data for the purpose of answering the original research question with better statistical techniques, or is the data collected firsthand by the researcher for processing to accomplish research

objectives” (Glass, 1976).

The primary data collection instrument used for this study is an online survey. As per Darcy & Wheaton (2004), online data collection, through web-based and e-mail surveys, is becoming a popular research methodology. Online data collection provides researchers with many benefits such as the ease of data entry, the flexibility of the format, the accessibility to access different populations, advances in technology, the ability to obtain additional response-set information and reduced cost. Hence, such advantages make this form of data collection extremely appealing (Darcy & Wheaton, 2004). Yet, and similar to any other survey method, there are various concerns a researcher must take into consideration before meaningful data can be obtained. Some of the listed drawbacks are measurement errors, technical difficulties, low response rates, and possible non-representative sample. The benefits of accuracy, low cost, speed, and data entry become futile if the limitations are not addressed (Darcy & Wheaton, 2004).

Secondary Data

Secondary data was collected from peer-reviewed books, articles, and publications available at the AUB Libraries databases such as ProQuest and others and which were accessed online.

Sampling Strategy

The sampling strategy for this research was done within the framework of the Institutional Review Board (IRB) guidelines at the American University of Beirut. Ethical concerns were taken into consideration while formulating the questionnaire and choosing the sample audience. The main concern was to ensure anonymity of the survey and that the kept records of the survey responses do not contain any identifying

information about the polltakers. Candidates were equally guaranteed anonymity, as there was no way of matching identification tokens with survey responses in this survey. Results were only used for project purposes.

As per the objectives of the study, the goal was to recruit HR managers and/or other senior managers in charge of the development of their organization's social media strategy and/or implementation and who already had some degree of exposure to social media. Hence, those candidates were recruited via email messages sent to their professional addresses placed on publicly available LinkedIn platform. The survey was initiated at the beginning of February 2014 and was extended for a period of one month, with three scheduled reminders with a span of five days each.

The email explained the objective of this study including disclosure of risks, benefits of this research, the privacy/confidentiality clause, who will access the data, who has access to the identity of the participants, their rights to withdraw at any point, and the consequences of withdrawal. As previously stated, all participants were not identified in the study but coded.

Out of the 1,152 companies that were approached, only 76 organizations; that is, 6.6 percent, filled complete applications. The low response rate emanates from the fact that it is quite challenging to conduct research in the Middle East and collect data. Gaining access for academic study is challenging; response rates to surveys are low, data useful in academic research is also rare, and some of the data is even questionable in terms of quality (Zahra, 2011).

There could be various reasons related to such challenging data collection process; (1) political instability that renders researchers uncertain about the fate of their studies, continuity of access to data sources, and how to best interpret the data they collect. (2) Companies in the Middle East also have their cultures and organizational

systems, different from those in the world. (3) The presence of autocratic leaders heading these organizations and molding their organizations' decision-making processes in ways that would maintain their control (Zahra, 2011).

In quantitative research, the research sample is usually small and, therefore, the option of conducting a survey is limited (Cohen & Arieli, 2011).

However, despite of the low response rate, information and data obtained from the polltakers did give an idea on the status of the use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies.

Data Analysis

Once the data was collected from the publicly available sources and through the online survey, the findings were analyzed using descriptive statistics to gain an understanding of the use of social media. Hence, the outcomes of the online surveys constituted the core elements of the actual use of social media among Lebanese organizations as intended by this study. However, the purpose of this study should not be only perceived as explanatory. Social media recruitment is a relatively newly tapped field, namely in Lebanon, and therefore this study is also considered as exploratory. The scientific significance of this study is that the results will add new literature to the relatively untapped field of social media and recruitment.

The data analysis method is not confirmatory since no hypothesis was determined at the onset and therefore a theory is not tested in this case with the data but rather a series of focused questions were asked. Responses to the questionnaire offered statistical information that was eventually analyzed thus yielding unbiased results that could not, unfortunately, be generalized in this case due to the low number of polltakers that do not constitute a sufficient representative sample. These results; however, give

some insight on the status of social media in recruitment and the extent of usage among Lebanese companies.

Descriptive data was generated, coupled with exploratory data analysis that showed the effect of certain variables over others. Hence, a clear description, explanation and prediction of the use of social media among Lebanese companies are offered at the end of this survey due to the comparisons of means and the statistical significance of the findings.

Ethical Considerations

There were various ethical considerations that had to be contemplated during this study. The researcher was vigilant to abide by the IRB standards and requirements and hence provided all the needed assurances to the participants in terms of survey anonymity and confidentiality of the results. The participants' rights to withdraw at any point and the consequences of withdrawal were also clearly stated.

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the research after implementing the methodology selected for data collection. The general findings of the online survey are presented and discussed below in the subsequent paragraphs, whereby the most interesting results were displayed and analyzed.

Sample Characteristics

The majority of the companies (85 percent) are for profit with 26.7 percent established between 10 and 20 years ago and 23.3 percent more than 40 years ago and no particular business sector was identified. Companies with employees totaling (between 51 and 200) constituted 28.8 percent, followed by 22 percent of companies having (between 1 and 10) employees. 67.8 percent of the surveyed organizations have been using social media for the past (1 to 5 years). 71.2 percent of those companies have less than 5 employees working in the HR department and 81 percent of those companies have less than 5 employees working in recruitment.

Social Media Usage in Lebanon

Similar to the findings in the literature review, the most commonly used social media platforms are Facebook used by 52.7 percent of the polltakers and LinkedIn by 46.1 percent. However, the difference lies in the usage of the company intranet versus twitter, whereby 48.6 percent of the respondents resort to their intranet rather than

Twitter; 56.6 percent of the polltakers stated that they have very low usage on Twitter.

Social media is used in external recruitment strategies more than for internal recruitment as per 50 percent and 21.2 percent of the polltakers, respectively. Digging deeper into the organizations' external recruitment strategies, LinkedIn is observed to be the most used platform mostly by 47.4 percent of the respondents and is then equally followed by Facebook and company intranet (35.5 percent). However, the most commonly used social media platform in internal recruitment strategies remains the company intranet (44.7 percent).

The breakout of the results by company size shows that most organizations, except for the small-sized ones use LinkedIn as their main social media platform. The smaller companies resort to Facebook.

Table 2

Extent of social media usage

Extent of social media usage for		
Rating	Internal Recruitment	External Recruitment
Low	52.7%	22.4%
Med	26.3%	26.3%
High	21.1%	50.0%
No answer	-	1.3%
Mean	2.36	3.33

Survey results showed that respondents mainly used social media to recruit candidates for junior positions (47.4 percent) more than for managerial (34.2 percent) and executive positions (23.7 percent). Moreover, social media channels are mostly used to recruit candidates for communication-related positions as answered by 46

percent of the polltakers, followed by technical (39.5 percent) and Human resources positions (35.6 percent).

The Value of Social Media

Probing the benefits of social media channels in recruitment, and similar to the literature review findings, 40.8 percent of polltakers also believed that the channels helped improve the (cost-per-hire), 38.1 percent believed that social media offered an advantage in the (targeted search for talent), 36.8 percent believed that social media improved the number of (qualified applicants), and 35.5 percent noted that they got better (response rates) from job applicants. Moreover, 34.3 percent of the respondents believed that social media platforms helped improve the (time) to fill a position, and 34.2 percent stated that they improved the (quality-of-hire).

However, only 13.1 percent believed that such platforms improved their orientation and on-boarding processes as compared to 44.8 percent who believed they did not. 10.5 percent believe that those channels contributed to the retention of their new hires as compared to 48.7 percent who do not believe so and 35.5 percent do not see any effect on employee referrals either.

As for the added value social media has over the traditional recruitment channels, 38 and 39.4 percent of the polltakers respectively believe social media to be 75 percent cheaper and 50 percent faster to fill a position than the traditional recruitment channels. Social media also yields higher employee referrals with 30.5 percent of respondents believing so as compared to 25.4 percent who deemed both channels to be of the same proportion.

Nevertheless, both channels are estimated to have the same proportion of employee retention and of qualified applicants with 62.7 percent and 41.4 percent of

respondents noting so.

The breakout of the results by year of establishment show that companies that have been using social media tools for a period ranging between 1 and 5 years believe social media channels to reduce their cost of recruitment and increase their company's efficiency in terms of the recruitment time. Nonetheless, these companies observed that social media channels in recruitment do not affect retention nor do they impact the quality of qualified applicants.

Downsides of Social Media

Social media was observed to result into two major drawbacks: (1) 36.9 percent believe that social media feeds competition, a downside that does not figure much through traditional recruitment. (2) 32.9 percent of the polltakers believe that it results in an overwhelming number of job applicants, again a disadvantage that does not figure through traditional recruitment channels. Quite the opposite since 31.6 percent believe traditional channels to result in low response rates of job applicants rather than an overwhelming number.

Table 3

Downsides of social media recruitment

Downsides of social media recruitment					
Rating	Poor candidate quality	Overwhelming # of job applicants	Political interference	Competition	Employee abuse
Low	43.5%	19.7%	60.5%	18.4%	38.2%
Med	28.9%	26.3%	14.4%	23.7%	15.8%
High	6.6%	32.9%	3.9%	36.9%	25.0%
No answer	21.1%	21.1%	21.1%	21.1%	21.1%
Mean	2.27	3.23	1.92	3.00	2.68

When assessing other shortcomings, social media figured low on political interferences, poor candidate quality, and employee abuse of its features. Similarly, traditional recruitment channels figured low on the first two downsides.

The Choice between Traditional and Non-Traditional Recruitment Channels

Respondents are more satisfied with non-traditional recruitment channels as compared to the traditional ones; 42.1 percent of the respondents are highly satisfied from social media tools.

However, and despite such observation, organizations are still resorting to some non-traditional recruitment channels, namely in their attempt to recruit junior positions. For instance, job fairs are found to be highly effective (60.5 percent), followed by Facebook (48.7 percent) and LinkedIn (39.5 percent).

Table 4

Extent to which organization is satisfied from recruitment sources

Extent to which organization is satisfied from recruitment sources		
Rating	Traditional recruitment	Non-traditional recruitment
Low	30.2%	14.5%
Med	40.8%	35.5%
High	21.1%	42.1%
No answer	7.9%	7.9%
Mean	2.77	3.26

However, unlike junior positions, the best channel to recruit managers is found through non-traditional channels, namely through LinkedIn (71.1 percent). It is then followed by the traditional recruitment platforms such as headhunters that are equally

highly selected by 63.2 percent of polltakers. The same goes for executive-level positions whereby headhunters are also found to be the best traditional channel with 67.1 percent followed by LinkedIn as the non-traditional source with 64.5 percent. Hence, the higher the position the more the reliance on both recruitment channels becomes imminent.

Social Media Impact

Social media is effective in terms of improving employer brand image (38.1 percent) as it helps attract and recruit talent with 36.9 of the polltakers rating it as such.

However, the impact of social media was found to be low by 44.8 percent of respondents in terms of internal communication with employees, by 46.1 percent in terms of managing centralized HR operations, and by 36.9 percent in terms of managing talent through real-time training and development initiatives.

Current and Future Trends

41.7 percent of polltakers believe their organizations are not putting much effort in social media as compared to 35 percent who believe they are, on the contrary, investing in social media. However, when assessing future trends, 58.3 percent of the candidates expect their organizations to rely more on social media channels in their recruitment strategies as compared to 33.3 percent who had average expectations.

Little importance was given to Human Resources and Recruitment during previous years or at least HR was rarely considered to be a strategic partner in an organization. Hence, the need for a better HR and better quality of staff is very essential nowadays due to the increasing competition. Therefore, companies now have a greater incentive to using social media channels for recruitment and adapt their strategies

accordingly.

Table 5

Effectiveness of the organization's current social media efforts

Effectiveness of the Organization's current social media efforts	
Rating	Estimated effectiveness
No response	21.1%
Low	23.3%
Medium	41.7%
High	35.0%

Table 6

Future reliance of social media in recruitment

My company is planning to rely more on social media in recruitment in the future	
Rating	Estimated willingness
No response	21.1%
Low	8.3%
Medium	33.3%
High	58.3%

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the key findings and assess them in tune with the research objectives and questions. In this part, the use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies will be further clarified and the findings will be also discussed in light of the literature review.

Key Findings in Tune with the Aim of the Study and Literature Review

Based on the survey findings and the literature review, it is evident that social media is a phenomenon that is here to stay though it still has a long way to go as indicated by Spataro (2008). It is indeed perceived as an important channel that serves business needs, namely in recruitment as indicated in the below key findings that also come in answer to the main research questions.

Extent of Social Media Usage within Lebanese Companies' Recruitment Strategies

As per the literature review in the year 2012 companies were using social media to mainly brand and market their organizations. In 2013 organizations started integrating social technologies into their recruitment, development and employee engagement strategies (Meister, 2013). In 2014, social integration has become the prevailing trend. However, unlike the finding of the literature review, social media is used in Lebanese companies' recruitment strategies; however, it is not very much used for internal recruitment purposes nor for employee engagement. Only 21.2 percent of the polltakers indicate using it for internal recruitment strategies; it is rather used by 50

percent of the organizations for external recruitment purposes. Still, when used internally, company intranet is the first option (44.7 percent) followed by LinkedIn (25 percent) and Facebook (18.4 percent). As for the external recruitment, LinkedIn serves as the first choice with 47.4 percent and is equally followed by Facebook and Intranet each with 35.5 percent.

Assessing the extent of using social media to communicate with employees internally, 44.8 percent of the respondents find it to be low while 35 percent rate increasing employee engagement as average. As for the extent of using social media to improve employer brand image, 38.1 percent of the respondents deemed the extent of usage to be high. In terms of using social media to attract and recruit talent, 36.9 percent rated it high while 36.9 percent of polltakers rated low the extent of usage to manage talent. As for using social media to manage centralized HR operations, 46.1 percent rated it as low usage.

Companies with employees ranging between 1 and 10 employees and between 51 and 200 mostly use social media in the aim of improving their brand image. The former also use social media for talent recruitment and for internal communicate with employees. Hence, based on the gathered data, the main platform used by companies of that size is Facebook (92 percent).

Type of Online Platforms Companies Leverage Upon in their Recruitment

Strategies

Similar to the literature review, organizations in Lebanon are mostly active on Facebook (52.7 percent). Brotherton (2012) indicated that Facebook is the largest social media site and as per Hunt (2010), it is used by companies to promote brands and companies. LinkedIn is also another social media platform that is identified by 46.1 percent of polltakers as another social platform used by mostly large companies in their

recruitment strategies as was also indicated in the literature review. As per Davison, Maraist & Bing (2011), LinkedIn is more of a professional platform. The difference; however, between the survey findings and the literature review lies in the use of the company intranet as compared to the use of twitter. Lebanese companies do not leverage on twitter in their recruitment strategies but rather heavily rely on their intranet as indicated by 48.6 percent of the survey respondents. Doherty (2010) stated that twitter is another social media platform that allows companies to post a job opening, something that is not yet used among companies in Lebanon. Rather, most of the organizations that were identified in the survey were for-profit, and were in general using Facebook (33 percent), company intranet (29 percent) and LinkedIn (27 percent).

Probing usage by company size, again the distribution is spread; however, it is observed that most organizations with a large number of employees resort to LinkedIn as their main social media platform. Smaller companies use Facebook. On another note, and when assessing the number of years the companies have been using social media tools versus the effect such tools had on retention, cost, time of hire, quality and referral, the majority of companies were observed to be using non-traditional channels between the past 1 to 5 years only. Those companies found that social media did have a positive effect on recruitment cost, on the time to fill a position, on the quality of hire and on the number of employee referrals. However, they believe that social media has no impact on the employee retention rate nor on the proportion of qualified applicants.

As for the number of employees working in recruitment versus the use of social media tools, most of the respondents work in companies with less than five employees in their recruitment teams. Employees in those companies highly use LinkedIn and Facebook (51 and 49 percent respectively) followed by company intranet (42 percent). Half of them use social media in their external recruitment strategies more

than for internal recruitment. Moreover, 51 percent use non-traditional channels to recruit junior-level positions and mainly promote communication-related positions.

Type of Candidates and Positions Companies Seek To Attract

As per the literature review and according to Rutledge (2008), social networking is not just for young people; it has rather reached a large audience. Many popular sites indicate that more than half of their users are over thirty-five years old (Rutledge, 2008). Social media sites enable business organizations to expand their connections with potential talent workers, enabling the business organization to find the right person for the job openings (Campbell, 2008). Tech firms realize that middle-to senior level managers and leaders are best recruited from LinkedIn. It's not just millennial who are benefiting from the networking benefits that social media offers to both recruiters and candidates. Rather, senior-level candidates are also using social media to network and search for jobs (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011).

LinkedIn is an ideal site used to seek candidates for middle and senior levels. For hiring young candidates, Orkut & Facebook are among the platforms that are highly used for recruitment (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011). Hence, social media is exponentially growing and is not only being used by individuals but more and more by businesses for different functions ranging from advertising to brand building to marketing (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011).

Hence, in line with the literature review, survey results indicated that social media in Lebanon is still mostly used to recruit junior-level candidates (47.7 percent), followed by managerial-level candidates with 34.2 percent and executive-level positions with 23.7 percent. Similarly; however, it is used to primarily promote jobs in communication (46 percent), technical jobs (39.5 percent) and HR positions (35.6 percent).

Within that framework, junior candidates are recruited via Facebook (48.7 percent) although traditional recruitment channels are still highly simultaneously used such as job fairs in that case (60.5 percent). Managerial and executive level candidates are recruited through LinkedIn (71 and 64.5 percent) and similarly through traditional channels such as headhunters (63.2 and 67.1 percent respectively) in that case.

Observing the positions mostly recruited through social media, construction companies, information technology companies, financial services organizations and organizations in the hospitality sector mainly recruit junior positions through social media. They rely on their companies' intranet, LinkedIn and Facebook at varying degrees.

Social Media Benefits

Similar to the findings of the literature review, social media is found to be cost effective whereby the benefits it offers are primarily in terms of cost-per-hire (40.8 percent). It is also found to be effective in terms of the targeted search for talent (38.1) similar to Greenberg's findings, which note that social media results in "candidates with specific niche skill" (Greenberg, 2013) and to Gensing-Pophal (2012) who believes that social media recruitment offers a more targeted audience (Gensing-Pophal, 2012). According to Andrews (2012), social media gives access to a massive pool of candidates and hence the survey results show that 36.8 of polltakers also agree that social media leads to a number of qualified applicants along with better response rates (35.5 percent). Speed and efficiency were also identified since 34.3 percent and 34.2 percent of polltakers believe that social media is effective in terms of the time to fill positions and quality of hire.

Moreover, social media is found to be 75 percent cheaper than traditional recruitment channels by 36.5 percent of the candidates and 50 percent faster by 36.8

percent of the polltakers. As for the quality of hire, social media is found to be of better quality than the traditional recruitment channels. The proportion of retention and of qualified applicants is; however, deemed similar through both channels. 23.7 percent also found that social media offers higher employee referrals.

Like in everything and similar to the traditional recruitment channels, there are downsides to social media; 32.9 percent of polltakers believe that it could result in overwhelming number of job applicants and 36.9 percent agree that it increases competitive awareness of organizations. Unlike the literature review; however, respondents did not find social media to create an issue of compliance at the workplace nor did they mention any issue related to biased impressions and selection preferences of HR professionals and recruiters. The legality of use and invasion of privacy were also not questioned by polltakers.

Level of Satisfaction and Future Use of Social Media

When comparing the levels of satisfaction from traditional and non-traditional recruitment channels, 40.8 percent of respondents are moderately satisfied from traditional recruitment as compared to 42.1 percent who are highly satisfied with social media.

When asked about their organization's expected reliance on social media in the future, 46.1 percent of the respondents had high expectations. 32.9 percent of the candidates responded that their companies have invested medium efforts when it came to the effectiveness of their current social media efforts while 27.7 percent rated high efforts.

Digging deeper, 45 percent of companies established less than five years ago expect to highly rely on social media channels in the future so do the companies that were established more than 40 years ago. Only half of the companies established for the

past 10 to 20 years did not expect much usage. Current social media efforts are rated average by all surveyed respondents, unlike the results of the Jobvite survey (2010), which indicated that 83 percent of respondents are currently using social media in their recruitment process (Jobvite, 2010).

CHAPTER VI

PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

As perceived all along the research, social media has indeed evolved during a short period of time but is still considered in its booming stages; increasingly growing in the professional medium where it has itself become a medium for work and not only for play (Dougherty, 2013). Social media can no longer be considered marginal and should be taken more seriously since it has become a channel that is highly used by both individuals and companies. If well used and targeted, non-traditional tools could impact business, namely in organizations related to communication (Dougherty, 2013) as equally observed in the survey results. For job seekers and recruiters, social media has equally opened a new world for recruitment; recent surveys have shown that a significant number of senior managers give credit to social media for its current role and many recruiters recommend candidates to create and maintain a professional social media presence (Dougherty, 2013).

As the survey results indicate, moving towards social networking for recruitment does not mean the elimination of the existing traditional recruitment channels. On the contrary, traditional recruitment channels are still very widely used to recruit all job levels, from junior to managerial and executive levels. Hence, the best network found to recruit junior candidates was found to be job fairs, and managerial and executive-level candidates are both recruited through headhunters.

As observed, traditional methods still take precedence over social media and hence are still more extensively used among Lebanese recruiters and employers despite the fact that survey has shown that polltakers are also quite satisfied from the non-

traditional recruitment channels as indicated by 42 percent of the respondents, almost the same level of satisfaction from traditional channels with 40 percent of the respondents.

Social media should, therefore, be used, at least for the time being, as a supplementary channel that would add value to the existing recruitment strategy and guide more candidates to the right direction through more targeted search for talent (Madia, 2011).

A worldwide IBM social media analytics showed that more than 50 percent of British job seekers use social media sites in their job search. 52 percent of them used Facebook to find a job in 2012 and 38 percent used LinkedIn. More figures showed that 65 percent of the users are 35 or older, two new members sign up to LinkedIn every second, and 11 accounts are created on Twitter every second (Dougherty, 2013).

Compared to the IBM social media analytics, research results have shown that social media users are mainly companies that have been established in recent years, between the past one to five years. Those companies mostly have small HR departments with few staff not exceeding five employees. Similar to the IBM social media findings, around 50 percent of companies use Facebook and 46 percent LinkedIn. The difference lies in the usage of the company intranet (48.6 percent) and Twitter. Namely, organizations with a large number of employees use LinkedIn as their main social media and smaller companies use Facebook

Social media in Lebanon is therefore still limited to certain organizational size and type that are mostly not-for-profit organizations. It is mainly used to recruit junior-level positions and is not very much used for internal recruitment purposes. Rather, it is used by half of the polltakers for external recruitment strategies. Still, when used internally, it is mostly used to increase employee engagement and improve employer

brand image and attract and recruit talent.

Like all other things, using new channels for recruitment takes time and effort. Following the survey results, social media is currently perceived as a tool to cutting cost and saving time rather than a strategic channel since the majority of the polltakers have agreed that social media offers prime benefits in terms of cost-per-hire and time to fill a position. However, companies must adopt this new approach towards social media as a long-term online medium for sourcing talent; a strategy that is more focused and targeted and that would lead to a responsive and proactive recruitment of talent (Madia, 2011).

Although current efforts invested in social media platforms are still mostly average, Lebanese companies have the willingness to rely more on social media in the future. 42.1 percent of the polltakers are already highly satisfied with social media and 46.1 percent of the respondents had high expectations in terms of future reliance on social media platforms in recruitment. Moreover, 45 percent of polltakers working in companies established less than five years ago believe their companies are heading in that direction. The same applies for companies that were established more than 40 years ago.

CHAPTER VII

RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings of this study and of the literature assessment, certain recommendations could be issued in order further enhance the use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies.

Hence, as also shown in the findings, the key to the social media success in recruitment is to create a sound plan that would be coupled with rigorous selection tools. Those tools will help optimize the online recruitment strategy and counter the disadvantages social media offers, namely in terms of yielding an overwhelming number of job applicants and giving way to competition. HR professionals must identify and understand the risks involved so that they can be avoided and managed. By knowing which social sites to target, developing a plan to keep social networking contents engaged, and creating a communication strategy that fosters deep relationships are among the initial steps to success (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011).

HR has therefore to use social media's full power and have companies measure the positive impact from such usage. Social media have the power to deliver top talents without posting any job vacancy online (Creative HRM, 2014).

Without a social media strategy, organizations, in general, and HR, in particular, cannot be successful on the market. Moving to particular objectives in terms of what Human Resources professionals should undertake to establish a sound action plan on any social media platform, in general, and on LinkedIn, the original HR network in particular, the following goals should be also adopted:

- Communicate the company's added value for better market positioning.

- Position the company as a leader in its field for more credibility.
- Expand the company's contact base of friends, business associates and prospects. If the company does not influence the candidate's friend, then the organization will not get a high quality hire (Creative HRM, 2014).
- Expand the company's network; the more the team members are present on LinkedIn, the greater the company exposure is. It has to push other managers in the organization to be visible online. The entire management team has to influence social media positively.
- Increase the company use of social media platforms, namely LinkedIn, in order to expand potential sources for new employees. The importance of such goal lies in the fact that increased usage results in a large amount of useful data that companies could use and analyze in order to gain more insight and make better long-term decisions. Hence, HR has to monitor all social media trends and tools.

Consequently, companies should introduce a clear strategy along with various Key Performance Indicators and analytical tools in order to achieve the above-mentioned goals. HR has to identify the right social media metrics and has to measure its presence in social media (Creative HRM, 2014). The following checklist of recommendations could be thus used to measure and track the implementation of a sound and valid social media action plan (Gray, 2013) and (Microsoft® SharePoint® Foundation 2010 Step by Step).

- *Conduct Research and Development*
 - Conduct research to identify the needs and requirements of all concerned stakeholders, including potential prospects.
- *Set Goals and Objectives*
 - Link social media goals to business goals

- Secure the executive team’s buy-in
- *Set actions*
 - Define goals and means of implementation
 - Define specific needs
 - Specify concrete steps
 - Set up accounts
 - Develop web page presence
 - Define the type of updates
 - Identify the platforms to be used
 - Draft content to be published on various platforms
 - Set an internal timescale to have the social media plan materialize

- *Build a social media team*

Create an internal team to guide social media’s adoption and implementation process within the company. Its role would be to:

- Create and update social media policies and guidelines for employees
- Provide clear direction on how employees should integrate and accommodate between their personal social media activities into their professional life
- Approve the creation of new channels and prevent duplication of effort
- Ensure consistent branding and messaging across all channels
- Share internally social media best practices and successes
- Coordinate social media tools with other internal systems within the company

- Coordinate with internal departments such as Legal, HR and IT to integrate social media policies with existing company policies

- *Train the company*

Build a social media-training program for employees. Employees need to understand the overall vision of a social business, how to execute and implement social media activities, and absorb social media policies. Training activities could cover help answer the following questions:

- What is social media?
- Why does social media matter?
- How is social media used?
- What is the company's social media policy?
- How could HR use social media in recruitment?
- What is the company's overall social media strategy?
- How to deal with a social media crisis?

- *Draft a social media policy and ethical guidelines*

- *Understand risks and challenges*

- *Track and follow up social media plans and implementation*

- Look at the plan
- Compare it to actual results
- Discuss reasons for the difference between plan and actual
- Revise the plan

- *Measure success*

- Monitor competition
- Monitor people feedback
- Assess social media activities and efforts

- Evaluate the company's social media development
- Measure the financial benefit of the social media efforts

Despite the challenges, social media offers various benefits and has an advantage over traditional recruitment whereby companies could take advantage of those benefits namely in terms of having a more targeted search of talent and be able to reach passive candidates, things that could not be highly achieved through traditional recruitment channels. However, companies that prefer to maintain traditional methods of recruiting should also be exploring social media, at least to familiarize themselves with these networks and what they can possibly do (Madia, 2011). Hence, organizations that are still skeptical about the use and effectiveness of the non-traditional tools might begin by monitoring their competition in terms of what they are doing in the online space and the drawbacks and level of the risk involved if the company chooses not to engage in the social media world. Moreover, in terms of tight recruiting budgets, it would be wise for such companies to explore social networking as a way to bring down some of their recruiting costs (Madia, 2011).

Over and above, more research could be conducted; to further gain a more rounded perspective on the use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies. For instance, research could be conducted on the Lebanese employers and recruiters' attitudes and use of social networking websites as a screening tool, another research could be done to assess the ethical implications of Lebanese employers using social media networking websites as a tool of discrimination. Further research could also focus on the evaluation of the social media tools offered to organizations in order for them to successfully recruit, or on the factors that affect individuals when they select a tool to find a job, or on the level of trust that influence job seekers' behavior in social media sites.

CHAPTER VIII

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to explore and identify the use of social media in recruitment among Lebanese companies, indirectly trying to distinguish a future trend. A quantitative methodology based on an online survey sent to 1,152 HR managers and professionals was used to collect data and cross tabulations were done to reflect the variations in the answers and the breakout of the results between different variables.

According to the key findings of the study, there seems to be a growing understanding of the benefits of social media and an interest to further use such platforms in recruitment. However and also based on the findings, social media is not yet perceived as a strategic tool, but rather as a medium to cutting cost and despite all the benefits perceived and the high level of satisfaction observed in the survey results, social media is still not widely used as recruitment tool. Traditional methods still take precedence over social media and are still more commonly resorted to in recruitment strategies.

When probed, future reliance on social media is; however, promising since a good proportion of polltakers had high expectations in terms of future reliance on social media platforms in recruitment. Social networking has taken over the world; HR professionals must ride the wave and seize the opportunities brought on by this social media trend as a way to redefine recruitment methods in the aim of finding the right future talent (Sambhi, 2009). In a nutshell, social media is gaining popularity among both, recruiters and job seekers. While the various recruitment channels will co-exist, the importance of social media will increase in the near future (Financial Express, 2011)

Recruitment is a high-stakes game and improving recruiting efficiency has lead business organizations to incorporate social networking into their existing recruiting strategies. Thus, social media has become and will continue to be an integral screening tool for employers and recruiters to use during the hiring process. There can be only one successful result to a hire; recruiting the right talent that will add long-term value to the business organization (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011).

APPENDIX I

SURVEY QUESTIONS

1. To what extent is your organization active on the following social media sites (1 is low, 5 is high)

a. LinkedIn	1	2	3	4	5
b. Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
c. Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
d. Google+	1	2	3	4	5
e. Company intranet	1	2	3	4	5
f. YouTube	1	2	3	4	5
g. Pinterest	1	2	3	4	5
h. Jobvite	1	2	3	4	5
i. Other (specify):					
	1	2	3	4	5

2. To what extent does your organization use social media while recruiting internally? (1 is low, 5 is high)

1 2 3 4 5

3. To what extent does your organization use social media while recruiting externally? (1 is low, 5 is high)

1 2 3 4 5

4. To what extent does your organization use social media to recruit candidates for: (1 is low, 5 is high)

Junior positions?	1	2	3	4	5
Managerial positions?	1	2	3	4	5
Executive positions?	1	2	3	4	5

5. To what extent does your organization use social media to recruit candidates for: (1 is low, 5 is high)

Technical positions?	1	2	3	4	5
HR positions?	1	2	3	4	5
Communication positions?	1	2	3	4	5

6. To what extent does your organization leverage the following online platforms as part of its internal recruitment strategy? (1 is low, 5 is high)

a. Company intranet	1	2	3	4	5
b. LinkedIn	1	2	3	4	5
c. Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
d. Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
e. Google+	1	2	3	4	5
f. YouTube	1	2	3	4	5
g. Pinterest	1	2	3	4	5

- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---|---|---|---|
| h. Jobvite | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. Other (specify): | <hr/> | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- 7. To what extent does your organization leverage the following online platforms as part of its external recruitment strategy? (1 is low, 5 is high)**
- | | | | | | |
|---------------------|-------|---|---|---|---|
| a. Company intranet | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. LinkedIn | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Twitter | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Facebook | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. Google+ | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. YouTube | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. Pinterest | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. Jobvite | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. Other (specify): | <hr/> | | | | |
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- 8. To what extent has the use of social media in recruitment helped improve the following performance indicators? (1 is low, 5 is high)**
- | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Time to fill a position | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. Cost-per-hire | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Quality of hire | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Orientation and on-boarding | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| e. New hire retention | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| f. Number of qualified applicants | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| g. Employee referral | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| h. Higher response rates | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| i. Targeted search for talent | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
- 9. To what extent have you been successful in reaching out passive candidates through social media networks? (1 is low, 5 is high)**
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- 10. Overall, to what extent is your organization satisfied from traditional recruitment sources (newspaper ads, headhunters, job fairs...)? (1 is low, 5 is high)**
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- 11. Overall, to what extent is your organization satisfied from non-traditional recruitment sources (LinkedIn, Facebook, other social media tools)? (1 is low, 5 is high)**
- | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
- 12. To what extent do you agree with the below (1 is low, 5 is high)**
The best network to identify junior-level candidates is:
- | | | | | | |
|---------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| a. Newspapers | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| b. LinkedIn | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| c. Facebook | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| d. Job fairs | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

e. Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
f. Head hunters	1	2	3	4	5
g. Google+	1	2	3	4	5
h. YouTube	1	2	3	4	5
i. Pinterest	1	2	3	4	5
j. Jobvite	1	2	3	4	5
k. Other (specify):	<hr/>				
	1	2	3	4	5

13. To what extent do you agree with the below (1 is low, 5 is high)

The best network to identify managerial-level candidates is:

a. Newspapers	1	2	3	4	5
b. LinkedIn	1	2	3	4	5
c. Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
d. Job fairs	1	2	3	4	5
e. Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
f. Head hunters	1	2	3	4	5
g. Google+	1	2	3	4	5
h. YouTube	1	2	3	4	5
i. Pinterest	1	2	3	4	5
j. Jobvite	1	2	3	4	5
k. Other (specify):	<hr/>				
	1	2	3	4	5

14. To what extent do you agree with the below (1 is low, 5 is high)

The best network to identify executive-level candidates is:

a. Newspapers	1	2	3	4	5
b. LinkedIn	1	2	3	4	5
c. Facebook	1	2	3	4	5
d. Job fairs	1	2	3	4	5
e. Twitter	1	2	3	4	5
f. Head hunters	1	2	3	4	5
g. Google+	1	2	3	4	5
h. YouTube	1	2	3	4	5
i. Pinterest	1	2	3	4	5
j. Jobvite	1	2	3	4	5
k. Other (specify):	<hr/>				
	1	2	3	4	5

15. For the same position, what is the estimated cost of social media recruitment compared to traditional recruitment?

- Same cost
- 100% cheaper
- 75% cheaper
- 50% cheaper
- 25% cheaper

- 16. For the same position, what is the estimated time to fill a position through social media recruitment compared to traditional recruitment?**
- Same time
 - 100% faster
 - 75% faster
 - 50% faster
 - 25% faster
- 17. For the same position, what is the estimated quality of hire through social media recruitment compared to traditional recruitment?**
- Same quality
 - Slightly better quality
 - Better quality
 - Much better quality
 - Slightly worse quality
 - Worse quality
 - Much worse quality
- 18. For the same position, what is the estimated proportion of retention through social media recruitment compared to traditional recruitment?**
- Same proportion of retention
 - Slightly better retention
 - Better retention
 - Much better retention
- 19. For the same position, what is the estimated proportion of qualified applicants obtained through social media recruitment compared to traditional recruitment?**
- Same proportion
 - Slightly better qualified applicants
 - Better qualified applicants
 - Much better qualified applicants
- 20. For the same position, what is the estimated proportion of employee referral obtained through social media recruitment compared to traditional recruitment?**
- Same proportion
 - Slightly higher employee referral
 - Higher employee referral
 - Much higher employee referral
 - Slightly lower employee referral
 - Lower employee referral
 - Much lower employee referral
- 21. To what extent do you agree with the following statement: My company is planning to rely more on social media in recruitment in the future. (1 is low, 5 is high)**

1 2 3 4 5

22. Give your organization a grade on the effectiveness of its current social media efforts (Scale of one to ten): (1 is low, 5 is high)

1 2 3 4 5

23. To what extent are the below some of the downsides of recruitment through social media? (1 is low, 5 is high)

a. Poor candidate quality

1 2 3 4 5

b. Overwhelming number of job applicants

1 2 3 4 5

c. Political interferences

1 2 3 4 5

d. Competitors will be aware of organization's moves

1 2 3 4 5

e. It might cause employee abuse of social media features and services, including games

1 2 3 4 5

24. To what extent are the below some of the downsides of recruitment through traditional platforms? (1 is low, 5 is high)

a. Poor candidate quality

1 2 3 4 5

b. Low response rate of job applicants

1 2 3 4 5

c. Political interferences

1 2 3 4 5

d. Competitors will be aware of organization's moves

1 2 3 4 5

e. Less targeted search of candidates

1 2 3 4 5

f. Passive candidates will not be reached

1 2 3 4 5

25. To what extent does your organization use social media for each of the below: (1 is low, 5 is high)

a. To communicate with employees internally

1 2 3 4 5

b. To increase employee engagement

1 2 3 4 5

c. To improve employer brand image

1 2 3 4 5

d. To attract and recruit talent

1 2 3 4 5

e. To manage talent through real-time training and development initiatives

1 2 3 4 5

f. To manage centralized HR operations

1 2 3 4 5

g. Other (specify):

1 2 3 4 5

26. Your organization was established:

- a. More than 40 years
- b. Between 30 and 40 years
- c. Between 20 and 30 years
- d. Between 10 and 20 years
- e. Between 5 and 10 years
- f. Less than 5 years
- g. Other (specify): _____

27. What best describes the type of organization you work for?

- a. For profit
- b. Not-for-profit
- c. Government
- d. Health Care
- e. Education
- f. Other (specify): _____

28. What is your organization's primary business activity?

- a. Utilities
- b. Construction
- c. Information and Technology
- d. Computer software
- e. Wholesale
- f. Transportation and Warehousing
- g. Retail
- h. Publishing
- i. Marketing and Advertising
- j. Management consulting
- k. Broadcasting
- l. Design
- m. Real Estate
- n. Financial services
- o. Insurance
- p. Human resources, staffing and recruiting
- q. Professional training and coaching
- r. Health Care and Social Assistance
- s. Hospitality
- t. Legal Services
- u. Events services
- v. Higher Education
- w. Telecommunications
- x. Government and Public Administration
- y. Other (specify): _____

29. What is the size of your organization?

- a. 1-10 employees
- b. 11-50 employees
- c. 51-200 employees
- d. 201-500 employees

- e. 501-1000 employees
- f. 1001-5000 employees
- g. 5001-10,000 employees
- h. 10,000+ employees

30. When did your organization start using social media?

- a. Between 10 and 15 years
- b. Between 5 and 10 years
- c. Between 1 and 5 years
- d. Less than 1 year
- e. Other (specify): _____

31. How many people work in the HR department in your organization?

- a. More than 30 employees
- b. Between 20 and 30 employees
- c. Between 10 and 20 employees
- d. Between 5 and 10 employees
- e. Less than 5 employees
- f. Other (specify): _____

32. How many people work in recruitment in your organization?

- a. More than 10 employees
- b. Between 5 and 10 employees
- c. Less than 5 employees
- d. Other (specify): _____

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