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Applicants' Job Pursuit Intentions and Social Networking Sites: An Exploratory Study among Vietnamese Students

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Abstract:

Research purpose: A growing trend of using social networking or social media in employment market for professional purposes has received much attention from academic scholars. It then became a topical subject that motivated human resource (HR) professionals to do research on. Many studies have been published to demonstrate social networking sites (SNS) as an emergent recruiter tool in the last few years. However, most of them focused on the recruiters or employers' point of view and ignored the important role of job seekers in this practice. In other words, there has been very few research probing applicants' reactions or behaviors towards the employer use of SNS in recruitment and selection procedures. In attempt to fill this gap, the purpose of the present paper is to find out how applicants perceive this emerging HR trend, revealing new theoretical and empirical insights. In particular, the study is about to obtain a better understanding on the influence of the main elements of social recruitment practice including perceived process fairness, corporate reputation, information qualities and qualities of SNS on students' job pursuit intentions.

Design/methodology/approach: To achieve research objectives, quantitative approach with electronic questionnaires is used as the main data collection tool. This approach is expected to provide reliable and valid results in order to test hypotheses deriving from the theoretical background. Out of 500 questionnaires have been sent, 232 were completed and returned but only 180 were used because 52 invalid ones were removed. Then, SPSS software was adopted to obtain the descriptive analysis and PLS estimation software was applied to examine relationships among constructs.

Findings: An empirical study using Partial Least Squares path modeling has revealed that perceived process fairness, information qualities and qualities of social networking sites have positive effects on job pursuit intentions towards the employer’s use of SNS for recruitment and selection procedures. Meanwhile, corporate reputation has no significant relationship with intentions to apply and accept job offer among applicants

Originality/value: This is the first paper providing a conceptual framework to test whether the use of SNS by employers will positively or adversely influence students' job pursuit intentions in the context of Vietnam. It also contributes to the academic field by developing new insights into the applicants' perceptions of a particular web-based recruitment and selection setting.
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Nguyen Vu Minh An

22nd Apr, 2014
Declaration by candidate

I hereby declare that this research project is of my own effort except for the information that has been used from various authors that have been cited accordingly and ethically.

Nguyen Vu Minh An

22\textsuperscript{nd} Apr, 2014
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List of abbreviations

AVE = Average Variance Extracted
CR = Corporate Reputation
GSO = General Statistics Office
HR = Human Resource
HRM = Human Resource Management
IQ = Information Qualities
IS = Information System
LV = Latent Variable
PLS = Partial Least Squares
PPF = Perceived Process Fairness
SEM = Structural Equation Modeling
SNS = Social Networking Site(s)
SNSQ = Qualities of Social Networking Sites
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Chapter summary
This opening chapter is to present an overview of the entire research. It begins by providing the background of the study and discussing the main issues of importance appeared among existing literature. By then the research gaps can be identified in the problem statement section that leads to the objectives of the current paper. Additionally, the first chapter further represents itself as a research direction in which a clearer scope as well as limitations and several specific definitions pertaining to the research are provided. Then, it ends by making claims of the prospective significance of the paper to academy, industry and government.

1.2 Background information

1.2.1 The emergence of social recruitment
Amidst the contemporary business, human capital plays a fundamental role in generating success for a company. Adding to this statement, Mondy et al (2012) has said employees are important but right employees are the most valuable asset. Therefore, companies nowadays must have an ability to recruit and select applicants with qualifications most closely fit with the job, team and organization as well. The authors also stated that a recruiting program in proper function and appropriate way will create a good impact on overall health and longevity of an organization.

However, it is not easy to get the right people. Todays, many companies have struggled with many human resource challenges. These challenges derive from the increased knowledge work, greater demands on employee competencies and global shortfalls of qualified and competent applicants (Robbins & Coutler, 2010). The search for the best and brightest employees can be described as the war over talent between companies. Moreover, related expenses of search process, interviewing, agency fees, scanning process and so on are quite significant to organizations in the aftermath of economic crisis in 2008. As such, in the context of the 21st century, human resource (HR) practitioners have to put more focuses on factors such as cost, speed and accuracy to
ensure the quality of the workforce input meanwhile organizational profit is still safeguarded (Mondy et al, 2012).

According to Hunt (2010), to overcome HR challenges and meet requirement as stated above, a powerful technology, namely social media has been embraced by employers as a tool to support their recruitment purposes. Companies have increasingly realized the huge benefits of the interactive platforms and advanced functions of social networking sites (SNS) in attracting and selecting viable candidate. One simple fact is that the integration of social media into the fabric of everyday life has offered an open gate to organizations to see and collect information about individual people (Ollington et al, 2013). Then they can find someone good or fit enough to the organization in the broad array of candidates.

As mentioned in the work of Ollington et al (2013), the use of social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter combined with search engines can help recruiters to connect and view profiles of numerous job candidates quickly and accurately. Furthermore, the auto-matching function and a huge database available of personal information provided in this channel also enable them to obtain big pictures of potential employees and make better hiring decisions.

Another reason for this emerging HR practice is that costs of recruitment and selection through social networking channel are seen low. Recruiters are now expected to leverage the increased speed and streamlining of processes associated with these networks and then deliver results more quickly from wider and deeper search populations (Vick & Walsh, 2010). Referred to a work by Jacobs (2010), the practice of harnessing the evolution of Web 2.0 technologies along with social networking tools to communicate, recruit, engage, inform and select future talent is called “social recruiting/recruitment”. That term has spread out the online labor market in recent years and received much attention. In addition, using SNS to attract and screen applicants is an acceptable and increasingly important practice in the age of knowledge and technology-based economies, said by Clark and Roberts (2010).
In the annual survey conducted by Jobvite (2014), 94% of a thousand responding companies worldwide have indicated that they are using or going to use SNS to support their recruitment efforts. In their feedback, social recruiting method is seen as inexpensive, time-efficient way to reach niche communities of capable applicants. Apart from that, SNS can increase the interaction between hiring organizations and job candidates. This further helps strengthen the employer’s brand. As the candidates like to express themselves through social media, they would expect organizations to do the same thing. If companies do not present themselves on such channels, job seeker cannot find them and will not apply for them. As a consequence, they may risk losing large number of applicant audiences and top talents to the competitors (Hunt, 2010).

1.2.2 Employment context in Vietnam

According to Collins (2009), Vietnam is experiencing the fastest economic growth in Southeast Asia region since 1996 as the open-door policy was established. Todays, Vietnam has become a promising market for business investment projects and attracted many attentions from foreigner companies. However, the number of jobs or career opportunities offered by these companies cannot meet the demand of all 53 million Vietnamese people in the working age. Furthermore, the growth of economy is much faster than the development of society and education. This has raised the unbalance between the demand and supply of high skilled and educated employees (Zhu et al, 2008).

As in the report released by Vietnam General Statistics Office (GSO) in 2013, out of 53 million people in working age, only 8.3% (4.4 million) having high technical skills and qualifications at university/college level or above. This statistic has indicated that Vietnam’s labor force is very high in quantify but low in terms of quality. Furthermore, sadly to say that among more than 400,000 fresh graduates every year in Vietnam, 101,000 cannot get jobs after graduation (GSO, 2013). 25% unemployment rate among this group from 21 to 29 years old has created many questions and concerns about the national educational system and the awareness of young people about the real “world” of working. Various organizations, especially the multinational, reported that Vietnamese students lack of independence, work discipline and practical knowledge.
(Zhu et al, 2008). As such, although the supply of educated people is increasing, companies are still struggling to fish the talents and right employees from the ocean.

In this situation, the trend of recruitment via social networking has been captured as a solution for recruitment agencies. According to the report by GSO (2013), internet penetration rate is 39% (36 million users) meanwhile the number of social networking users in Vietnam is growing at the lighting speed of more than 22% in 2014, particularly among the young age from 15 to 35. Most of them are coming to SNS such as LinkedIn, Facebook for social interaction and self-promotion. This is seen as the facilitator for the social recruitment practice. In recent, there are more and more organizations in Vietnam embracing SNS as a tool to recruit potential employees and also as a source of background information about them. They also use it to achieve the wider pool of professional expatriates, talent people and passive job seekers. To be more effective in this particular labor market, HR practitioners also take advantage of Vietnam’s online networks like Kiemviec.com, Vietnamworks.com or HRVietnam.com. The amount of Vietnam’s SNS is currently more than 100 and this number is still on the significant upward trend. According to the report by Vietnamworks.com (2014), the most well-known career networking website in the country, every year since 2007, more 5000 companies have joined its network to look for applicants and promote their employment brand.

In terms of the job seekers, many evidences show the increasing popularity of using SNS to look for jobs and branding personal image. For instance, Vietnamworks.com has just stated that there are more than 80,000 job seekers using this website to do job search every day and above 1,250,000 visits during a month. In addition, the website also receives 140,000 online resumes or curriculum vitae every two weeks. Among that, 84% people have successfully got the job through the channel. This figure demonstrates a quite high success rate about job search within social media channel. However, a question is raised about the reasons why the other 16% did not get a job. There may be a lot of reasons which come from applicants, or from employers or from both sides.

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To be summarized, using online social networks for professional purposes has been accepted by both employers and job seekers in Vietnam. However, according to Clark and Roberts (2010), there appears to be a disconnection between how job applicants view the purpose and utility of SNS and how employers view the sites. Often for the earlier group, they would like to use SNS for enhancing social interactions, promoting personal image and expanding professional networks to gain more job opportunities. Meanwhile, the later mentioned group use SNS to recruit capable candidates and gather characteristic information as much as possible about individuals. Evidences show that 70% of recruiters reject candidates based on the social profiles which may not be job-relevant and true. This has raised ethical and legal issues of using SNS to support HR practices (Jovite, 2014). As such, studying applicants’ reactions to organization using social recruitment method is important to have an insightful research from different angles. This forms a platform for the research problem which will be discussed in the later chapters.

1.3 Problem statement

Given the increased popularity in using social networking sites by employers, a large number of research and investigations have been published for a better understanding of ways that they utilize this channel. The implication and the use of information by employers have also been discussed. Nevertheless, there are always two sides of everything and social recruitment is not an exception. In existing literature, the authors have demonstrated both bright and dark sides of using SNS for attracting and screening candidates. Through a wide availability of such researches, human resource professionals and practitioners would be more aware of the conflict role of SNS. Then they can practice the new method in the more responsible and effective way. Also, they are able to find ways to avoid potential mistakes in terms of legal and ethical issues such as privacy invasion, bias, discriminations and so forth. However, it is noticeable that job seekers are limitedly mentioned in most studies although they play an equally important role as recruiters during the social recruitment process.

A survey by research firm Potential Park (2011) has found that nearly 99% of 30,000 students and graduates in Europe would like to interact with employers through SNS.
The main reason is that they find it easier to express themselves and get closer to the prospective organizations in this environment. Professional networking websites like LinkedIn, Jobstreet.com work as a bridge to connect those seeking for job and those making hiring decisions in the more interactive and effective manner. Such sites also open a gateway for job seekers to obtain useful information about the company and the future job. That can help them become strong applicants in the competitive job market (Joos, 2008). The days when people had to spend a lot of time on printed job advertisements, newspapers or career fairs searching for a suitable job are nearly obsolete. Today's people are more active during the process of job search and application. Firstly they can look for new job opportunities from multiple sources available, then they can check which is the most suitable for them or they can have open options by applying for several companies, finally, they can evaluate prospective employer.

According to the report by Careerbuilder.com in 2014, “the digital landscape has made the job search process similar to the “always on” consumer buying behavior”. Apart from searching job, social media is considered as an evolving landscape in which candidates can use all available means to evaluate employers. For instance, when a company posts a job vacancy to recruit people within social channels, it also offers an opportunity for candidates to learn about the company itself in terms of culture, working conditions, leaders and justice setting as well. As shown in the report (Career builder, 2014), 62% of respondent job seekers have checked out information about the company through social media to make sure what they read in online job posting is true.

Due to the above reasons, the use of SNS by hiring organizations should be investigated in relations to applicants’ perceptions during application process which can be interpreted through "job pursuit intentions". According to Madera (2012), job pursuit intentions are defined as the applicants’ intentions to apply for a job, attend interviews and then accept a job offer. Such intentions can demonstrate how likely an individual pursue a position offered by a particular organization. The author further suggested that the effectiveness of social recruitment method can be measured by the extent to which it can enhance job pursuit intentions among applicants. In the similar context, Clark and