



BI Norwegian Business School - campus Oslo

GRA 19502

Master Thesis

Component of continuous assessment: Forprosjekt, Thesis
MSc

Recruitment in social media

Self-presentation on LinkedIn

Navn: Trude Solberg Kvarekvål, Karoline
Skogstad

Start: 01.01.2018 09.00

Finish: 15.01.2018 12.00

Recruitment in social media

Self-presentation on LinkedIn

MSc in Leadership and Organizational Psychology

Supervisor: Ole I. Iversen

Table of content

SUMMARY	2
INTRODUCTION	3
LITERATURE REVIEW	4
RECRUITMENT IN SOCIAL MEDIA	4
SELF-PRESENTATION	6
ASSESSMENT OF VISUAL FEATURES	7
THE ROLE OF GENDER	8
ASSESSMENT OF CVS	9
REVIEW SUMMARY	9
RESEARCH QUESTION, HYPOTHESES, METHOD AND SAMPLE	10
RESEARCH QUESTION	10
METHOD	10
SAMPLE	11
TENTATIVE PLAN FOR COMPLETION.....	12
REFERENCES	13

Summary

This thesis will examine the use of LinkedIn as a recruitment channel and how this can affect pool of candidates. Existing research has established that many factors can affect the assessment of social media profiles, and the available information can differ significantly from more traditional sources of candidate information. There is still a lack of knowledge about what characterizes these assessments and the possible consequences of recruiting people in this manner. We plan to conduct an experiment/quasi experiment where approximately 150 respondents evaluate fictitious LinkedIn profiles that vary amongst 4 specific profile elements (profile pictures, personal summary, recommendations and listed skills). In this report we present our provisional methodological choices in regards to research design and sample, and we also outline a tentative plan for completion of the thesis.

Introduction

The participation in social networking sites (SNS) online has grown rapidly, and an increasingly bigger part of our social lives unfolds online (Burkell, Fortier, Wong, & Simpson, 2014). In general, an online community can be defined as computer system in which members share common interests and purposes through specific guidelines and policies (Preece, 2000). One example of such a system is LinkedIn, which has gone from having 90 million users in 2011 (LinkedIn, as cited in Davison, Maraist, Hamilton, & Bing, 2012, p. 3) to over 530 million users today (LinkedIn, 2018). Similarly, there is an increase in the use of these sites as an HR tool to search for and screen job applicants. In fact, the development is striking. Levinson as cited in Davison et al. (2012, p. 3) found that 80 % of HR managers either used or planned to use such sites during the recruitment process, while a SHRM survey in 2006 reported that 79 % of employers never used social media sites for this purpose (SHRM, as cited in Davison et al., 2012, p. 3). The objectives behind this approach to recruitment are often related to speed and costs (Karl, Peluchette, & Schlaegel, 2010), since the information that the candidates provide are easily accessible online. In addition, the information found on social media sites can differ significantly from the information obtained through more traditional recruitment methods, as it can be broader in scope and less filtered (Davison et al., 2012, p. 4). Websites such as LinkedIn is definitely an area of opportunities for employers when hiring new staff.

However, existing research states that we know very little about the effects of recruitment in social media and the potential consequences this can have for the candidate pool. It is a relatively new and very popular method, and according to Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning (2014, p. 601), severely under-researched. They also predict that the use will continue to increase, and it is therefore vital to gain more knowledge about the practical implications for both employees and employers. Others emphasize the importance of more insight into the gender aspect and how this can affect social media-based selection assessments (Ouiridi, Pais, Segers, & Ouiridi, 2016, p. 412). There are several potential negative consequences arising from the level of personal information provided on networks such as LinkedIn and Facebook. Some claim that recruitment in social media entails a higher risk for discrimination based on age, gender, ethnicity and background and that the implications can vary between industries (Jeske & Shultz, 2016; Zide et al., 2014). There appears to be a

lack of knowledge about how the information provided on LinkedIn and similar sites affect the evaluation of appeal of potential job candidates. Based on these remarks, we believe it is crucial to consider the possible risks of overlooking great talents and/or suitable candidates when focusing the recruitment process on social media arenas. We therefore argue that our thesis can make an important and necessary contribution to this field of research. This paper seeks to critically address the increasing use of social media platforms in recruitment processes through respondent's evaluations of fictitious LinkedIn profiles, and thus examine some potential consequences of applying this recruitment strategy.

Literature review

Recruitment in social media

Increasingly many articles are examining the topic of recruitment through SNS such as LinkedIn, and in the following section we will go through some of these findings. Ouiridi et al. (2016) presents a study that examines how the personal characteristics of recruiters may affect applicant assessments. They collected data from 256 Italian and Dutch recruiters and found that the assessment of candidate's non-professional content on social media varied between the recruiter's culture, while the assessment of the professional content differed by recruiter's gender. This article is of interest to us because of the provided directions for future research, especially linked to the significance of gender in the assessment of professional content (which one can argue is very relevant on LinkedIn). It also offers empirical evidence that the evaluation of different social media profiles can be biased, and further suggests that we need to obtain more knowledge about how the information on social media platforms is perceived and evaluated relative to other more traditional forms of information in the recruitment and selection process (e.g. résumé).

Others have investigated how job applicants perceive the use of social media as a selection tool, focusing on selection process fairness and job pursuit intentions (Madera, 2012). An experiment was conducted, and it involved asking participants on a career fair for hospitality jobs to complete a questionnaire after reading about a hospitality company that does or does not use SNS as a selection tool. Madera (2012, p. 1276) found that the participants considered the company that uses such platforms to be less fair, and they reported a lower level of job pursuit intention towards this

company. A reason for these findings could be that people fear an invasion of their privacy when companies assess Facebook and LinkedIn-profiles and base their recruitment process on the information obtained from such sites. This could again affect to which extent people intend to apply for a position at the company (Madera, 2012, p. 1277-1278). This study raises an important question related to recruitment in social media: is it fair? Even though perceived fairness does not investigate actual level of fairness and whether recruitment in social media is discriminatory, it is an indicator of some potential negative implications that companies should take into account.

Jeske and Shultz (2016) discuss several arguments both in favor of and against social media screening. The authors consider possible ethical, legal and practical issues that might arise, and how the use of social networking content in selection processes can potentially be in violation of legislation in the UK and the USA. In general, the discussion is rooted in the potential low degrees of validity and reliability. Multiple concerns are presented, specifically regarding the impact of impression management, biases and different types of discrimination in addition to the issues of data protection, privacy and security. Also, the article stresses the risk of managers making inaccurate assumptions of causality between an applicant's social media profile and actual personality traits and how the person will behave in the workplace (Jeske & Shultz, 2016, p. 542). Others have found that information provided on SNS actually correlate with certain personality traits (Karl et al., 2010). Among arguments that support social media screening, the article refers to how it can be faster and more cost efficient. Some employers also insist that information obtained on social media sites provides them with valid knowledge about candidates that they otherwise would not have acquired. The question that still remains to be answered is whether the presented upsides are real, and whether the use of social media in employment situations actually is useful and fair.

In addition to potential pros and cons, there has been conducted research on how LinkedIn profiles differ across occupations. Zide et al., (2014) examine which aspects of a LinkedIn profile that recruiters and employers concentrate on through interviews, and then use these findings to investigate specific profiles across different industries. Through the implementation of ANOVA tests they found significant differences in people's self presentation in the HR, sales/marketing and

industrial/organizational psychology industry. Results showed that HR and sales/marketing LinkedIn users were most likely to present their professional interests on their profile, and a bigger proportion of the same people had 500 + connections compared to industrial-organizational psychologists (Zide et al., 2014, p. 594). This study also took into consideration the gender aspect, and found that males are more likely to give others recommendations and also have more recommendations written by others. Furthermore, women tend to not provide information about personal and professional interests to the same extent as men, and by applying the theoretical assumptions of the inferred information model, it is likely that profiles with more information are viewed better than those with less (Johnson, 1989). In sum, type of industry and gender appear to be important aspects to consider in social media recruitment.

Some studies have looked at how social media can be used to improve recruitment effectiveness. Carrillat, d'Astous, and Grégoire (2014) investigated how firms can use Facebook to recruit top job applicants. Through SNS such as Facebook, organizations and individuals can create a public profile and create a list of relations that can be developed. They found that event sponsorships could be beneficial in the promotion of an employer's brand towards possible candidates through SNS (Carrillat et al., 2014, p. 475). In other words, employer branding through social media can yield positive organizational outcomes if the suitable presence on the right sites. This result provides another argument for the usefulness of this kind of recruitment strategy.

Self-presentation

The idea of self-presentation on social media has been discussed thoroughly in the literature (e.g. Hogan, 2010; Krämer & Winter, 2008; Seidman, 2013). In general, the rationale behind self-presentation is for a person to attain the acceptance of others on his/her personal image (Goffman, 1959). In recruitment and selection situations, self-presentation involves that candidates must present themselves in accordance with contextual norms of which impressions to convey (Leary, 1995), in order to secure a positive evaluation from recruiters (Jansen, König, Stadelmann, & Kleinmann, 2012; Lievens & Peeters, 2008).

An example of research on the role of self-presentation on SNS is a study of Chiang and Suen (2015). They investigated how job seekers' self-presentation on LinkedIn profiles (argument quality and source credibility) affects how recruiters evaluate applicants' attractiveness, and they also identify some specific categories of self-presentation that contribute to this evaluation process. The participants were asked to rate their overall perception of quality on several LinkedIn profiles, and make hiring recommendations based on that evaluation. The study find that recruiters draw conclusions about people's person-job fit and person-organization fit based on argument quality in self-presentation categories such as portrait, profile summary, experience, recommendations and discussion posts and comments. Furthermore, this predicts whether the recruiter recommend people for hiring. The results involved a non-significant relationship between person-person fit perception and hiring recommendations (Chiang & Suen, 2015, p. 56).

Assessment of visual features

Regarding the assessment of job candidates' appeal on LinkedIn it is relevant to include research on facial attractiveness and face perception, since many LinkedIn users have a publicly visible profile picture. Saegusa and Watanabe (2016) tested how different facial parts (eyes, nose and mouth) influence the judgment of whole-face attractiveness, and how this would change over time. The results showed that the eyes contributed highly to the evaluation of whole-face attractiveness over time, and even when the respondents only observed the face for 20 milliseconds. Especially direct gaze has a huge impact on perception of facial attractiveness. In general the findings suggest that eye contact significantly affects the process of evaluating a person's attractiveness (Saegusa & Watanabe, 2016, p. 177). This research sheds light on how small and seemingly insignificant details can affect the evaluation of LinkedIn profiles with a profile picture. If two otherwise similar profiles of two equally qualified candidates differ in regards to whether the person gazes directly to the viewer or not on his/her picture, this could potentially be a determining factor in the evaluation of the people's attractiveness. These results can also indicate the importance of having a profile picture at all.

On behalf of TheLadders, Evans (2012) presented some interesting findings in regards to recruiters' assessment and decision-making using "eye tracking" technology. By evaluating the eye movements of the recruiters while they performed

normal work tasks such as reading résumés and candidate profile reviews, the researcher found that the participants were easily distracted by visual elements (pictures, ads, etc.) and that the recruiters consequently overlooked more relevant candidate information such as experience and skills. This was especially the case with the LinkedIn profiles due to their high levels of complexity. The study also revealed that recruiters only spend 6 seconds assessing a résumé and making an initial decision of fit/no fit, which is in contrast to research based on self-report measures (e.g. McNeilly, & Barr, 1997, p. 363; Ross & Young, 2005, p. 162). Returning to the profile pictures, the eye tracking-based heat maps showed that recruiters, when processing an online candidate profile, spent an average of 19 % of the total time looking at the pictures. Although such conclusions may be a cause for concern, others have found that LinkedIn profiles are less deceptive about vital candidate information such as work experience and previous work responsibilities than the traditional forms of candidate assessment (Guillory & Hancock, 2012). So there are potential pros to consider, although one can question whether the upsides balance out the downsides.

The role of gender

In a post on Stanford Graduate School of Business website, Frank Flynn is telling about the time he invited entrepreneur Heidi Roizen to his class in Organizational Behavior. He builds a study around Heidi Roizen and her position as female entrepreneur at Silicon Valley, where he changed Heidi's name with Howard and had his students at Harvard rate their impression of both Heidi and Howard Roizen. This study is known as "Heidi vs. Howard". The results showed that the students were harsher on Howard than Heidi, because they did not like her aggressive personality (Martin, 2007).

The "Heidi vs. Howard" experiment has also been carried out in Norway. The students were introduced to Hanna or Hans and then asked to share their impressions of the two otherwise identical leader profiles. Also in Norway the students tended to like Hans better than Hanna, they simply did not think Hanna could be a good leader (Gaustad & Raknes, 2015).

These studies demonstrate a tendency to evaluate women as less qualified and suitable for different job positions, and that people are more likely to attribute more

negative characteristics to women than men in evaluation of CVs and similar written descriptions. Gender is therefore a factor to consider in work related assessments.

Assessment of CVs

A selection method that has proven to be very popular and commonly used is the assessment of CVs (Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999). Since LinkedIn can be considered as an extensive, online résumé (Chiang & Suen, 2015, p. 522), it can be relevant to include some empirical evidence on CV assessment. Hakel, Dobmeyer, and Dunnette (1970, p. 70) found that “...the relative importance (weight) of various categories of content moderates the favorability of information to produce an overall evaluation”. Also, interactions between the categories depend partially on the specific combinations of information. Similar results were found by Cole, Rubin, Feild, and Giles (2007), where the combination of academic qualification, work experience and extracurricular activities predicted recruiters’ perception of the candidates. High academic qualifications and extensive extracurricular activities received nearly the same identical and positive employability ratings to those with more work experience. Applicant with high academic qualifications would be rated high, despite being rated low in the other résumé areas, while candidates being rated high in all three areas would undoubtedly enhance chance for positive résumé screening.

Transferring these findings to LinkedIn, we can argue that the information provided on the different profile elements may have different value to the recruiters, and that certain combinations of elements (e.g. profile picture and personal summary or profile picture, recommendations and listed skills) can make one candidate appear more hireable than other candidates whose profiles have other, less appealing combinations of information.

Review summary

To sum up, existing research has established that assessment of information provided on SNS can be biased and depend upon several external factors such as culture, gender (Ouiridi et al., 2016) and the argument quality of the information provided (Chiang & Suen, 2015). Other elements of interest regarding assessment of candidates on SNS are evaluation of facial attractiveness (Saegusa & Watanabe, 2016) and how much time recruiters spend processing different elements of candidate information (Evans, 2012). Additionally, it can be a problematic practice due to

potential ethical, practical and even legal matters. The risk of inaccurate evaluations is also present (Jeske & Schultz, 2016). On a positive note, there are arguments that support the development because it can be more efficient both in regards to time and costs (Jeske & Schultz, 2016), and the profile information can in fact correlate with specific personality traits (Karl, Peluchette, & Schlaegel, 2010). Focusing on candidate perception, empirical evidence suggests that job applicants consider the use of social media in recruitment as less fair. This can ultimately have negative effects on job pursuit intention (Madera, 2012). Also, what kind of information people present on their online profiles can differ between industries and genders (Zide et al., 2014). This is of relevance when one can argue that profiles containing more information can be evaluated more positively than profiles with less information (Johnson, 1989).

In conclusion, we already know that recruiting candidates via LinkedIn or similar sites can be problematic due the impact of external factors and how we process the different types of information that is presented. Does it provide us with an accurate and fair impression of the different candidates, or is the margin of error too large for us to rely on this as the new approach to recruitment? There are still gaps in our knowledge about the consequences this form of recruitment can have for what kind of candidates you end up with, and what exact features makes a profile stand out in a positive sense. These issues form the basis for our thesis and the purpose of this study.

Research question, hypotheses, method and sample

Research question

How does self-presentation on social networking sites (LinkedIn) affect the pool of candidates and selection? What characterizes the profiles that are more likely to be recommended for hiring?

Method

We will perform a type of experiment/quasi experiment with participant groups of approximately 50 people in each group. We will design a limited number of LinkedIn profiles (less than 10) and send them out to the participants for them to assess online. The participants will be asked to individually evaluate the quality of the profiles, and

decide which 4 candidates they would recommend for hiring. The different groups will be given profiles that vary among specific variables/elements; 1) profile picture, 2) personal summary, 3) recommendations and 4) listed skills. Variations of these elements will be covered by the different LinkedIn profiles provided.

The choice of profile elements is rooted in existing research and empirical evidence. The relevance of including profile picture as an element has been demonstrated by Saegusa and Watanabe (2016) and their facial attractiveness study in addition to Evan's report on eye tracking (2012), which includes a conclusion on how much time recruiters spend looking at pictures on SNS. The other three elements have been examined by Chiang and Suen (2015), and they have also been discussed in the media as the best ways to get the most out of your LinkedIn-profile (Andersen, 2017). The result of Chiang and Suen's pilot study concluded that self-presentation categories such as number of connections and joined groups should be excluded because they were rarely noticed by recruiters and not often used by job seekers (2015, p. 519). Thus, we also choose to omit these categories in order to focus on the above-mentioned elements.

We will include gender as a control variable because several studies have pointed out significant gender differences in contexts of candidate assessment (Martin, 2007; Gaustad & Raknes, 2015).

Sample

Our sample will consist of people who are not certified recruiters. The main reason for this is that even though more and more people who are working with recruitment have specific training and education, there are still many managers, line managers and HR employees in different businesses that are responsible for making hiring decisions (Patterson, 2014; Raghavan, 2014). As previously discussed, these decisions can be prone to biases (Jeske & Shultz, 2016; Ouiridi et al., 2016), and extensive recruiting experience can even lead to more biases (Insync Surveys, 2014, p. 8). However, there is also a high possibility that educated and experienced recruiters easier will be able to identify the objectives and underlying features of our study. Taking all these factors into consideration, a sample of exclusively certified recruiters will not be representative for recruitment processes on a general level.

Thus, we are interested in investigating how regular people assess LinkedIn profiles and the different profile elements.

Tentative plan for completion

Task	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	June	July	Aug
Create research design	■	■						
Recruit participants		■						
Design LinkedIn-profiles		■	■					
Send out questionnaires and profiles for completion			■					
Gather data				■				
Categorize and analyze data					■	■		
Write analysis (thesis)						■	■	■
Improvements based on feedback							■	■

References

- Andersen, R., E. (2017, 7th of November). Tre grep som gjør deg attraktiv på LinkedIn. *Bergens Tidende*. Retrieved from <https://www.bt.no/karriere/Tre-grep-som-gjor-deg-attraktiv-pa-LinkedIn-10728b.html>
- Burkell, J., Fortier, A., Wong, L. L. Y. C., & Simpson, J. L. (2014). Facebook: Public space, or private space?. *Information, Communication & Society*, *17*(8), 974-985.
- Carrillat, F. A., d'Astous A., & Grégoire, E. M. (2014). Leveraging social media to enhance recruitment effectiveness: A Facebook experiment. *Internet Research*, *24*, (4), p. 474-495, doi: 10.1108/IntR-07-2013-0142.
- Chiang J. K. H., & Suen H. Y., (2015). Self-presentation and hiring recommendations in online communities: lessons from LinkedIn. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *48*, p. 516–524.
- Cole, M. S., Rubin, R. S., Feild, H. S., & Giles, W. F. (2007). Recruiters' perceptions and use of applicant résumé information: Screening the recent graduate. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *56*(2), 319-343. doi: 10.1111/j.1464-0597.2007.00288.x
- Davison, H. K., Maraist, C. C., Hamilton, R. H., & Bing, M. N. (2012). To screen or not to screen? Using the Internet for selection decisions. *Employee Responsibilities and Rights Journal*, *24*(1), 1-21.
- Evans, W. (2012). Eye-tracking Online Metacognition: Cognitive Complexity and Recruiter Decision Making. Retrieved from: <https://cdn.theladders.net/static/images/basicSite/pdfs/TheLadders-EyeTracking-StudyC2.pdf>
- Gaustad, T., & Raknes, K. (2015). Menn som ikke liker karrierkvinner: Hovedresultater fra en eksperimentell undersøkelse. Tankesmien Agenda.

- Goffman, E. (1959). *The presentation of self in everyday life*. New York, NY: Anchor.
- Guillory, J., & Hancock, J. T. (2012). The effect of LinkedIn on deception in resumes. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *15*(3), 135-140.
- Hakel, M. D., Dobmeyer, T. W., & Dunnette, M. D. (1970). Relative importance of three content dimensions in overall suitability ratings of job applicants' resumes. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *54*(1), 65-71.
- Hogan, B. (2010). The presentation of self in the age of social media: Distinguishing performances and exhibitions online. *Bulletin of Science, Technology & Society*, *30*(6), 377-386.
- Insync Surveys (2014). Gender diversity. Why aren't we getting it right? Retrieved from: http://www.insyncsurveys.com.au/media/128377/2014-10-1_hays_insync_gender_diversity_white_paper_web__1_.pdf
- Jansen, A., König, C. J., Stadelmann, E. H., & Kleinmann, M. (2012). Applicants' self-presentational behavior: What do recruiters expect and what do they get? *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, *11*(2), 77-85.
- Jeske, D. & Shultz, K. S. (2016). Using social media content for screening in recruitment and selection: pros and cons. *Work, employment and society*, *30*(3), p. 535-546, doi: 10.1177/0950017015613746.
- Johnson, R. D. (1989). Making decisions with incomplete information: the first complete test of the inference model, *Advances in Consumer Research*, *16*(1), 522-528.
- Karl, K., Peluchette, J., & Schlaegel, C. (2010). Who's posting Facebook faux pas? A cross-cultural examination of personality differences. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, *18*(2), 174-186. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2389.2010.00499.x
- Krämer, N. C., & Winter, S. (2008). Impression management 2.0: The relationship

of self-esteem, extraversion, self-efficacy, and self-presentation within social networking sites. *Journal of media psychology*, 20(3), 106-116.

Leary, M. R. (1995). *Self-presentation: Impression management and interpersonal behavior*. Boulder, CO: Westview.

Lievens, F., & Peeters, H. (2008). Interviewers' sensitivity to impression management tactics in structured interviews. *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 24(3), 174–180.

LinkedIn. (2018, 04.01.2018). About us. Retrieved from <https://press.linkedin.com/about-linkedin?trk=uno-reg-guest-home-about>

Madera, J. M., (2012). Using social networking websites as a selection tool: The role of selection process fairness and job pursuit intentions. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 31, p. 1276-1282.

Martin, J. (2007, January 1st). Gender-Related Material in the New Core Curriculum. Retrieved from <https://www.gsb.stanford.edu/stanford-gsb-experience/news-history/gender-related-material-new-core-curriculum>

McNeilly, K. M., & Barr, T. F. (1997). Convincing the recruiter: A comparison of resume formats. *Journal of Education for Business*, 72(6), 359-363.

Ouiridi, M. E., Pais, I., Segers, J. & Ouiridi, A. E., (2016). The relationship between recruiter characteristics and applicant assessment on social media. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 62, p. 415-422.

Patterson, K. (2014, 9th of September) Yes, Most Recruiters Are Usually NOT HR Professionals. *Talent Management and HR*. Retrieved from <https://www.tlnt.com/yes-recruiters-are-usually-not-hr-professionals/>

Preece, J. (2000). *Online communities: Designing usability and supporting sociabilty*. John Wiley & Sons, Inc.

Raghavan, N. (2014, 25th of August). HR doesn't hire, Managers do. Retrieved

from: <https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/20140825140844-43424919-hr-doesn-t-hire-managers-do>

- Ross, C. M., & Young, S. J. (2005). Resume preferences: Is it really “business as usual”? *Journal of Career Development, 32*(2), 153-164.
- Saegusa, C., & Watanabe, K. (2016). Judgments of facial attractiveness as a combination of facial parts information over time: Social and aesthetic factors. *Journal of Experimental Psychology: Human Perception and Performance, 42*(2), 173.
- Scholarios, D., & Lockyer, C. (1999). Recruiting and selecting professionals: Context, qualities and methods. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 7*(3), 142-156.
- Seidman, G. (2013). Self-presentation and belonging on Facebook: How personality influences social media use and motivations. *Personality and Individual Differences, 54*(3), 402-407.
- Zide, J., Elman, B., & Shahani-Denning, C. (2014). LinkedIn and recruitment: how profiles differ across occupations. *Employee Relations, 36* (5), p. 583-604. doi: 10.1108/ER-07-2013-0086.