

The Role of Social Media in Recruitment and Selection Processes

BSc thesis

Management Studies & Education and Competence Studies

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Abstract

The growing availability of high-speed internet access added the popularity of the concept of social media, which led to the creation of social networking sites (SNSs) such as mySpace and Facebook. The growth in social media has impact on the use of social media within HR practices, especially in the recruitment and selection process. It can be very tempting for HR professionals to check job applicant's social networking profile. On the one hand SNSs provide a wealth of information beyond, or even possibly contradicting, an applicant's submitted documents. On the other hand, the reliability, validity and the fairness of using SNSs can and should be discussed. Hence, this thesis focused on the relation between SNSs and the recruitment and selection process, from a business HR perspective. An advice was given to organizations if en to what extent they should use SNSs in the recruitment and selection process.

Literature was reviewed in order to explore and outweigh the advantages and disadvantages of using SNSs in the recruitment and selection process. These advantages and disadvantages are based upon a compilation of different sources of literature.

The most important advantage of using social networking sites (SNSs) in the recruitment process, is the relatively easy way to reach a specific target group. However, this includes also a disadvantage: if a company searches for a diverse workforce, recruiting via SNSs is more difficult (Price, 2011). The most important advantages of using SNSs in the selection process were the speed and low costs, in order to gather more detailed information about a job applicant.

The gathering of information about a job applicant also indicated some pitfalls. First, checking applicant's SNSs can influence his/hers career opportunities. The way job applicants are judged by HR professionals before the job interview, and the way HR professionals perceive information on these sites as being additional valuable have impact on the hiring decision. Second, SNSs shape impressions and judgements about job applicants which influence the HR professional's selection decision. These impressions can be biased due to preference of the HR professional for similar others.

Furthermore, recruitment and selection is the start of a potential labour agreement. If an employee finds out that the HR professional based his/hers decision on information from a SNS, this can mean a 'false start' and have a negative impact on the trust formation between the employer and the future employee.

At least, checking job applicants' profiles also indicates ethical aspects: employees perceive the checking of their social networking profile as less fair and an invasion on their privacy. If an employer is known for checking SNSs during the selection process this can have negative consequences for an organization's image in the long term.

Considering these arguments, organizations were advised to actively recruit via SNSs, but not to use SNSs for checking a job applicant during the selection process.

1. Introduction: The problem in its context

1.1. Social media

The growing availability of high-speed internet access added the popularity of the concept of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). This led to the creation of social networking sites such as mySpace (in 2003) and Facebook (in 2004). Social networking sites (SNSs) allow users to create web-based profiles where individuals can interact (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). In the Netherlands, the usage of internet has grown from 12 minutes per day in 2008 till 104 minutes per individual per day in 2010 (Doelgroepanalyse Nederland, 2010). Of all internet users worldwide, 46 percent uses social media daily (TNS NIPO, 2010). Figure 1 shows that the biggest group of users in the Netherlands are the people between 16-25 years old with 91 percent having a social networking site (CBS, 2011).

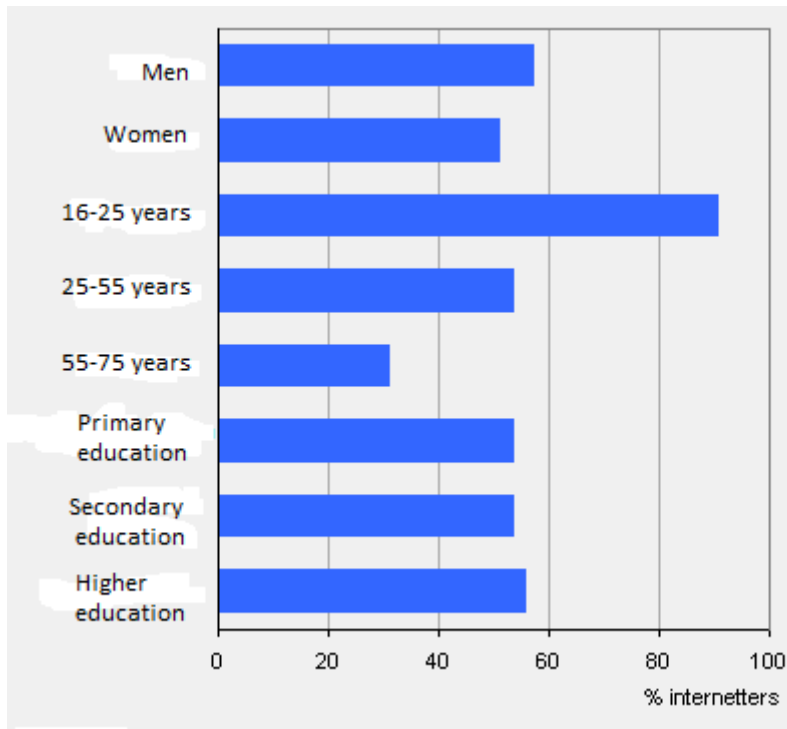


Figure 1 Usage of social networking sites based on background characteristics (CBS,2011)

The statistics about the increase of social media usage relate to changing Human Resource (HR) practices. The growth in social media has impact on the use of social media within HR practices, especially in the recruitment and selection process. The concept of social media is top of the agenda for many business executives today (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). An increasing number of HR professionals is utilizing SNSs to aide in screening and selecting job applicants (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). In the United states almost 80 percent of the organizations uses SNSs for recruiting (Social recruiting survey, 2011). 45 percent of the organizations always searches for online applicant profiles while recruiting, 29 percent occasionally searches, 12 percent only reviews the profile of an applicant if he/she provides that and 13 percent doesn't review at all. In the Netherlands this is only 6 percent (LinkedIn,

2010). This difference is very large, which makes it questionable how valid this percentage obtained from Dutch and U.S. organizations actually is? Nonetheless, social media should be classified as an important trend. Firstly, because of the large and growing group of users between the age of 16-25. This makes it more attractive for organizations to use social media, because this new generation on the labour market uses this channel to search for jobs. Second, because information about the use of SNSs in the United States can be useful for Dutch and other European organizations to learn from it. The relation between HRM and social media is discussed in the next paragraph.

1.2 The relation between social media and recruitment & selection

Human Resource Management (HRM) can be defined as a philosophy of people management based on beliefs that human resources are uniquely important to sustainable business success (Price, 2011). An organization gains competitive advantage by using its people effectively, drawing on their expertise and ingenuity to meet clearly defined objectives (Price, 2011). This definition contains elements of recruiting, managing, rewarding performance and development of key competences. The core functions of HRM are recruitment and selection, learning and development and assessment and rewarding. Recruitment and selection are elements of resourcing. Resourcing is the continuous process by which people are identified and allocated to perform necessary tasks (Price, 2011). Figure 2 gives an overview of the resourcing process.

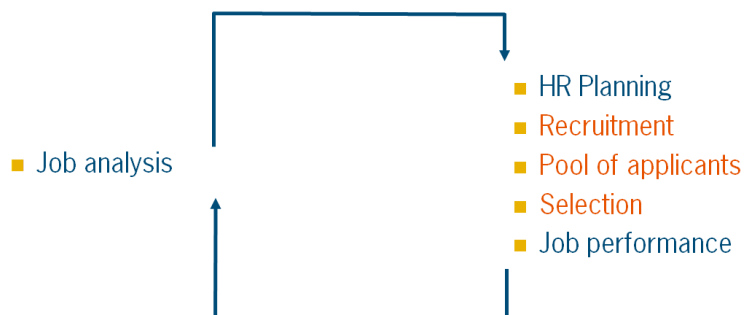


Figure 2 Resourcing (Runhaar, 2012).

This report will focus on the job analysis and especially on the recruitment and selection part. The impact of using social media is the largest in this process and the growth of organizations using social media for recruitment and selection is increasing (as mentioned in paragraph 1.1). The selection process is described in figure 3. Recruitment of potential job candidates precedes the application step and will be distinguished from selection in this report, because the use and role of social media in recruitment differs from that in selection. The aim of the recruitment process is to make potential job applicants aware of a vacancy (Price, 2011). Three basic recruitment strategies can be distinguished: Suitability, Malleability and Flexibility. The objective of the first mentioned strategy ‘Suitability’, is to get the job done. Therefore, HR professionals need to approach the right person for the job. This strategy leads to positions being to people who match traditional criteria – the kind of

people the company has always had. In essence it is a cloning process: resourcing a firm with more of the same people (Price, 2011). The second strategy is called ‘Malleability’, which focuses on fitting the person to the organization’s culture. This approach has been justified in terms of attracting creative and innovative employees (Price, 2011). The last strategy ‘Flexibility’, can provide a competitive advantage for organizations: recruiting ‘flexible employees’, prepared for future change. The emphasis is on diversity. Organizations can use SNSs to identify (passive) job-seekers, who use the websites to indicate that they are interested in and available for certain job positions and occupations (SHRM Staffin Research, 2008). Job-seekers are called passive if the person is currently employed and not seeking for a career change (DeKay, 2009). In addition, a social networking site of an organization can be useful for attracting qualified (as well as unqualified) applicants.

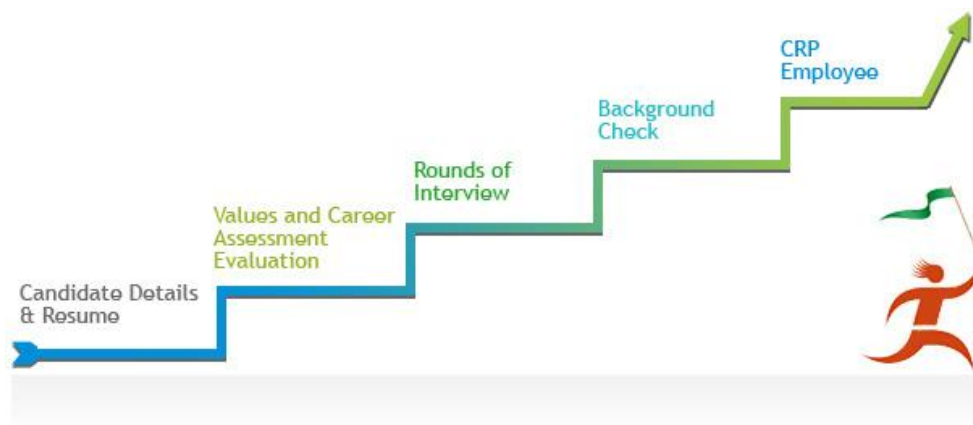


Figure 3 Selection process (CRP, 2012).

The application step, which covers résumés (figure 3), presents a problem: applicants may not provide all the relevant information and what there is will be presented in different ways (Price, 2011). Therefore, as an employer, checking out an applicant’s social networking page before the job interview can be very tempting. Social networking pages can provide an employer a wealth of information beyond, or even possibly contradicting, an applicant’s submitted documents. This screening process affords several benefits to organizations. SNSs provide a readily available public forum to research candidates while incurring minimal costs. In addition, potential employees may have access to detailed information that would allow them to draw conclusions or make inferences about the applicant’s character or personality that might not be as easily obtained through traditional methods (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2011). In the 2009 CareerBuilder survey, conducted in the United States, 35% of employers reported not hiring an applicant due to harmful information found on SNSs (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). Reasons for screening out ranged from applicants postings inappropriate pictures or information till conveying information gathering via SNSs. The survey also revealed that applicants’ profiles may enhance their chances of being hired or selected for consideration by providing supportive evidence of their listed qualifications.

On the other hand, the reliability with which information can be obtained from websites and the validity of such information can and should be issued. Here, the dilemma about how ethical it is to use information from SNSs for HR purposes and the issue about how job applicants perceive the monitoring of their SNSs should be considered. A study in the United States (Deloitte, 2009) on social networking and reputational risks in the workplace, found that 53 percent of employees considered it none of the company's business what was on their SNS. 40 percent of business executives respondents disagreed and 30 percent admit to informally monitoring SNSs. 61 percent of employees said that even if employers are monitoring their social networking profiles or activities, they won't change what they're doing online – they know it's not private and have already made significant adjustments to their online profiles. Another recent study in the United States (Baglion, Arnold and Zimmerer, 2009) supports the before mentioned result. They found that students were somewhat neutral about employers' reviewing of their SNSs.

So, several issues related to using social media in the recruitment and selection process can be addressed. On the one hand, social media provides a wealth of information about job applicants, influencing recruitment and selection processes. On the other hand, there are ethical issues concerning the usage of information from social networking pages and the privacy of users.

This report will focus on these issues by outweighing the advantages and disadvantages of SNSs in the recruitment and selection process.

2. Problem statement and research questions

This chapter addresses several studies on the relationship between social media and recruitment and selection. After reviewing literature, some questions remained unanswered. These questions form the basis for the problem as stated in this chapter and the formulated research question.

2.1 Using social media in recruitment and selection

In the introduction chapter, several developments and issues regarding the usage of social media in recruitment and selection processes were addressed. Other uses of the Internet in HR (e.g., job postings, on-line testing) are subject to quite a few studies, while the use of SNSs in the process of recruiting and selecting individuals is relatively new (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2011). Not much scientific research is available to serve a guidance for organizations about using SNSs (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2011). In fact, many researchers are even unaware that these sites are being used widely in HR.

Moreover, the ethical issues are slightly under exposed (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). 'Ethical' refers to accepted principles, judgments or notions of what is right or wrong, moral or immoral (Larimer, 2004). Despite the promising potential that reviewing SNSs may have for employers, unfettered use of this screening method presents several ethical considerations that must be addressed (Brown and Vaughn, 2011). For example, the risks associated with misuse of SNSs by employers, including the perceptions of invasions of an applicant's privacy. Or, the reliability of the information that may be used in the selection decision. While the practice of checking job applicants' social networking profiles seems to be taken for granted as acceptable, particularly in the USA, few employers have explored whether the practice is ethical (Clark and Roberts, 2010). Therefore, research is needed on whether applicants and employees consider the use of information obtained from SNSs as fair in making HR decisions (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2011).

The authors, in their survey of US Human resource managers, found that 43 percent of the respondents reported using SNSs to gain information about job applicants, but only 21 percent had received any training to do so, and 5 percent of the respondents had a policy. Guidelines of information gathering of job applicants are composed, but guidelines concerning the use of SNSs as recruiting and screening devices aren't established yet (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2009). In the Netherlands, recruitment guidelines take care for discrimination of candidates based on irrelevant characteristics. Selection guidelines include an honest, transparent and accurate selection process (Werving & Selectie Gids, 2009).

This thesis is also interesting for me as a student, because it provides insight in the way HR professionals use information from my SNS profile. Since I am becoming a new potential candidate at the labour market it is interesting for me if and how social media is used. Questions as "Should I make a SNS profile?" and "What information is relevant for organizations in the recruitment and selection procedure?" arise. I think this report can advice me in how to use my profile to become hired by organizations and it can make me aware of the information I should publish and the one I have to keep private.

2.2 Research goal and questions

The above mentioned issues elicit a demand for exploring the advantages and disadvantages of using SNSs for organizations to prevent them from making mistakes in the decision-making process, when using information from job applicants' profiles. To be able to make the consideration of using or not using social media in the recruitment and selection process, the advantages and disadvantages of using SNSs are discussed. One of the pitfalls of using social media is formed by the ethical dilemma. Therefore, a framework for discussing this dilemma is also provided.

This thesis aims at giving organizations advice on the usage of social media in both the recruitment and selection process and make them aware of the promises and pitfalls social media incorporates. Therefore a theoretical framework will be provided for organizations, to discuss the usage of SNSs in the recruitment and selection process and make them act in an ethically responsible way when processing the conducted information of job applicants.

The report will focus on the recruitment and selection process. Checking SNSs of current employees will be disregarded. This, because awareness of organizations regarding the use of social media by current employees is already becoming bigger. Large organizations like Coca-Cola set up a so-called social media policy in which guidelines remind employees on the engagement with their employer and are therefore limited in their postings on SNSs (Marketing blog, 2011). So, a next step would be to create awareness of organizations regarding *their* use of social media in the selection and recruitment process.

The research will be theoretical, deepening the understanding of using information from SNSs in the recruitment and selection process of organizations. Literature showed that there exists a conflict between the promises and pitfalls of using SNSs. On the one hand, social media offers a wealth of information for employers. But on the other hand, evokes this opportunity also pitfalls, since the information is used in the decision-making of the organization and no clear consideration is made to what extent HR professionals should use this information.

Therefore, the following research question is formulated:

To what extent do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of using job applicants' information from social networking sites in the recruitment and selection process?

The following sub questions will be used to cover this main research question:

1. *What are the promises of using social networking sites in recruitment and selection processes?*
2. *What are the pitfalls of using social networking sites in recruitment and selection processes?*

3. Methods

This research was conducted by means of a literature review. The literature review is structured according to the framework in figure 4. Two chapters – Promises and Pitfalls – lead to answer the main question of this thesis: To what extent do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of using job applicants’ information from SNSs in the recruitment and selection process?

The two sub-questions are answered in each of these chapters respectively. The results of the chapters Promises (4), Pitfalls (5) come together in the conclusion (6). Throughout the report, the viewpoint of the HR professional of an organization is adopted, not the viewpoint of the job applicant.

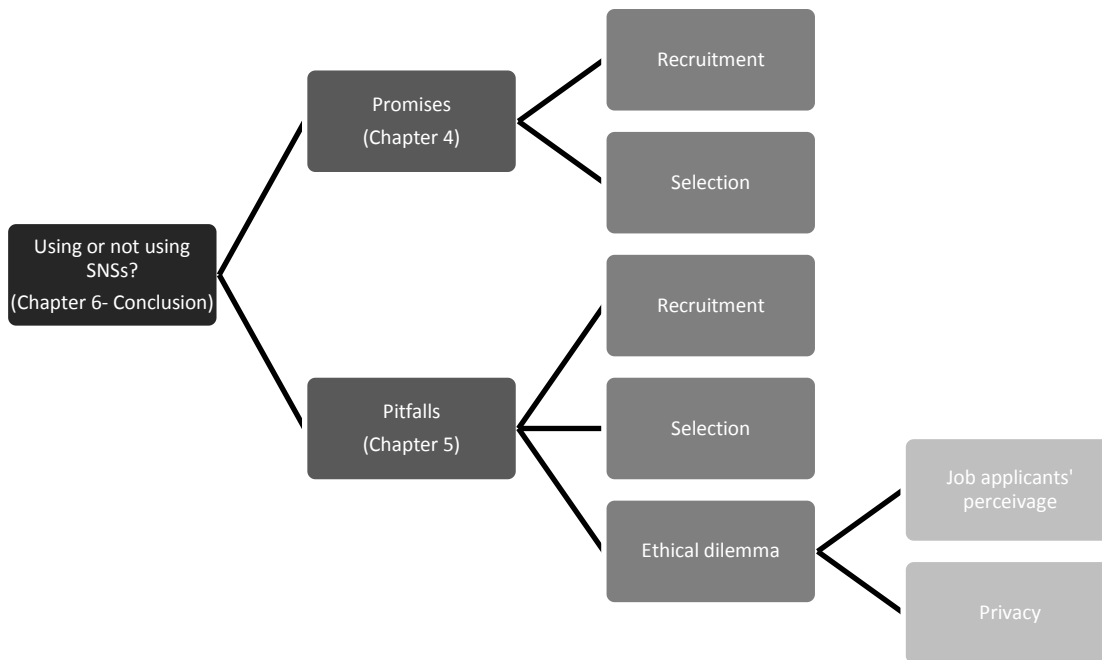


Figure 4 Research framework

The first chapter, promises, explores to what extent HR professionals use SNSs in the recruitment and selection process of job applicants and what the advantages are. Why do HR professionals use SNS anyway? Using SNSs provides a large amount of information about job applicants, which can influence the HR decision. This chapter tries to elaborate the advantages.

The second chapter, pitfalls, explores the disadvantages of checking job applicants' social networking profiles. In this chapter, one of the main pitfalls, the ethical dilemma is explicitly discussed, by exploring the viewpoint of the job applicant.

In both chapters, the usage of SNSs is placed in the context of different theories from a social/psychological perspective, to try to understand the rationale behind HR professionals' behaviour in this process.

The literature from the chapters 'Promises' and 'Pitfalls' serves as a framework for organizations to discuss their usage of SNSs in the recruitment and selection process. In the conclusion the information gained from the literature review is composed and weighted to advice organizations in the extent of using SNSs.

4. Promises

This chapter explores the concept of social media and SNSs. The rationale of HR professionals behind using SNS, is explored on the basis of different social/psychological theories. Then, the advantages of using SNSs in both the recruitment and the selection process are discussed.

4.1 Introduction: A closer look at social media

In this chapter, literature is reviewed to analyse what information is necessary to define social media and what the promises are of using social media in recruitment and selection processes.

There seems to be confusion among managers and academic researchers about what exactly should be included under the term social media, and how social media differ from seemingly-interchangeable related concepts of web 2.0 and User Generated Content (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009). It therefore makes sense to provide insight regarding the concept and its characteristics.

The concept social media is related to two other concepts that are frequently named in conjunction with it: Web 2.0 and User Generated Content. Web 2.0 is a term used to describe a new way to utilize the World Wide Web: that is, a platform whereby content and applications are no longer created and published by individuals, but instead are continuously modified by all users of the World Wide Web (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009).

The concept User Generated Content (USG) can be seen as the sum of all ways in which people make use of social media. The term is usually applied to describe the various forms of media content that are publicly available and created by end-users.

Based on these clarification of Web 2.0 and UCG, a more detailed definition of social media can be given. 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 and Haenlein, 2009).

With this general definition, there are various types of social media that needs to be distinguished further. Table 1 visualizes the classification of social media based on two dimensions: Self-presentation/Self-disclosure and Social presence/Media Richness.

		Social presence/ Media richness		
		Low	Medium	High
Self-presentation/ Self-disclosure	High	Blogs	Social networking sites (e.g., Facebook)	Virtual social worlds (e.g., Second Life)
	Low	Collaborative projects (e.g., Wikipedia)	Content communities (e.g., YouTube)	Virtual game worlds (e.g., World of Warcraft)

Table 1 Classification of social media (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009)

These dimensions rely on two theories in the field of media research and social processes: the social presence theory (Short, Williams and Christie, 1976) and the media richness theory (Daft and Lengel, 1986). The theory of social presence states that media differ in the degree of social presence they allow to emerge between communication partners. For example, a telephone conversation differs in social presence from a face-to-face discussion. The higher the social presence, the larger the social influence that the communication partners have on each other's behaviour. This theory is relevant in this report since the greater degree of social presence on SNSs gives job applicants the opportunity to present more of themselves and gives recruiters the opportunity to collect background information of job applicants.

Closely related to the idea of social presence is the concept of media richness. Media richness theory is based on the assumption that the goal of any communication is the solution for ambiguity and the reduction of uncertainty (Daft and Lengel, 1986). It states that media differ in the degree of richness they possess and that therefore some media are more effective than others in resolving ambiguity and uncertainty.

This report focuses on SNSs. At this level social presence is high and therefore largely influences behaviour. SNSs, in addition to text-based communication (e.g. blogs, Wikipedia), enable the sharing of pictures, videos and other forms of media. SNSs succeed better in reducing ambiguity and uncertainty than blogs and collaborative projects (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2009).

The next paragraphs discuss the definition and categories of SNSs and the promises of using SNSs in both the recruitment and the selection process.

4.2 Social networking sites

Social networking sites (SNSs) clearly influence HR professionals' activity. SNSs are different comparing to other websites. It are applications that enable users to connect by creating personal information profiles, inviting friends and colleagues to have access to those profiles and sending e-mails and instant messages between each other.

SNSs are unique in the way that they enable members to articulate and visualize their social networks. Users of these sites are often communicating with people they already know and who are part of their social networks. Meeting new people is, for most users, not the goal (Subrahmanyam et al., 2008). SNSs share a couple of technical features. They consist of visible profiles from users who express themselves at their own profile page. Users fill in their demographic data, like their name, age, location and give answers to series of questions, for example, 'what are your interests' and 'which brands do you like'. Most users upload a picture from themselves. Some sites provide the possibility to add other pictures or multimedia content, like short movies (Boyd and Ellison, 2006). After completing the profile page, users are prompted to discover users with whom they have a relationship and invite them to join their network. The related user can accept the invitation and becomes a so-called 'friend' of the profile owner. The label friend can be misleading in the sense that such connection not always include a 'real' friendship. The reasons people connect are varied (Boyd and Ellison, 2006). The list of friends contains links to each friends profile, enabling users to traverse the network by clicking on the various profiles.

Another component of SNSs is the possibility for 'friends' to leave messages on their friends' profiles. These could be 'comments' which are visible for all friends of the profile owner, but it is also possible to write a private message.

Existing SNSs can be roughly distinguished into two groups: the first consists of SNSs that have a personal aim. These sites, such as Facebook and Hyves, are used privately by members and can be called friend networks. Members add friends because they like to communicate with these people and have a personal online network of friends. The second group consists of SNSs with professional characteristics. The aim is to connect business professionals and enable them to share information, get answers and promote themselves and their business (Butow and Taylor, 2009). LinkedIn is an example of this group of SNSs.

The promises HR professionals encounter when using SNSs in both the recruitment as the selection process are discussed in the following paragraph. The pitfalls are discussed in the chapter 5.

4.3 Promises of social networking sites

Social networking sites (SNSs) can be seen as tools to screen job applicants in the selection phase. This can have positive or negative outcomes for job applicants depending on the content of a SNS profile. Brandenburg (2007) puts it this way: *'Online social networks provide you a screening tool for job applicants. It's unlikely that a job applicant would ever attach provocative photos, detailed descriptions of sexual escapades, or a list of hobbies that includes funnelling beer and recreational drug use on his/her resume. But with just a few clicks of the mouse, you can find out all sorts of revealing information about potential candidates'* (p. 600).

From a management perspective, using SNSs in recruitment and selection processes entails promises and pitfalls for HR professionals. The promises in the recruitment phase are discussed first (paragraph 4.3.1), because it is also the first phase in the resourcing process. The promises in the selection phase are discussed in paragraph 4.3.2. The literature used in both chapter 4 and chapter 5 is conducted from different, mostly American sources and placed in the context of my frame of reference.

4.3.1 Recruitment

The use of SNSs for recruiting seems to be widely accepted because of its close relation to the act of posting a job advertisement on the Internet. More and more organizations are turning to SNSs for recruiting. Just as individual SNS users can **share their identity** with others, so too can organizations develop and effectively utilize their own organizational identity through SNSs. SNSs enables employers to display themselves as attractive, which is a form of brand management. Some research on Internet recruiting in general has indicated that employers not only get **more qualified applicants**, but also more unqualified applicants (Mathis and Jackson, 2008). However, because using these sites can allow for more targeted recruiting (i.e., applicants may be identified by certain characteristics), it is possible that using some sites may produce more qualified applicants.

Also, many organizations use SNSs to **identify passive job-seekers**, who use the websites to indicate that they are interested in and available for certain job positions and occupations. HR professionals often maintain that business-oriented SNSs offer a fertile source of information concerning passive jobseekers (Wolk, 2004). These individuals are persons who are especially desirable because they represent an untapped pool of potential candidates who are not already associated with placement agencies or other recruiting professionals. Also, many passive candidates are considered to be especially stable employees (DeKay, 2009). DeKay (2009) pointed out that a majority of LinkedIn members are having a profile to be contacted by employers for reasons concerning new career opportunities. Several of these individuals include on their profile detailed descriptions of present and past work experiences, summaries of their areas of expertise and links to references made available by former supervisors and co-workers.

Another reason for HR professionals to use SNSs in recruitment and selection processes can be explained from a more psychological/social perspective. Chiu et. al (2008) researched the

rationale of using Facebook. The motivation to use Facebook is based on the so-called we-intention. This concept includes a shared group intention whether or not to make use of SNSs. Before people experienced using SNSs, information of references is most important. Also the social presence theory plays a role, because the higher the social presence, the bigger the influence of social partners on each other's behaviour. Chiu et. al (2008) pointed out that the rationale that leads to the we-intention can be different for individuals. A possibility can be that the person wants to **stay in contact with a target group**, like a HR professional with potential job candidates. Another rational can be that the person doesn't want to stay behind, like recruiters being active on SNSs because colleagues are also active on SNSs.

However, different organizations don't use SNSs in the recruitment process. A research of LinkedIn (2010) resulted that only 6 percent of the organizations are using SNSs, which would mean that 94 percent of Dutch organizations is not using it. A reason for not using it can be explained by the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The model holds that performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions are direct determinants of usage intention and behavior of the individual. When one or more determinants are low, people will not use the technology. For example, when HR professionals lack time and knowledge (facilitating conditions), their behaviour will be influenced negative and they will not use SNSs in the recruitment process.

4.3.2 Selection

Once HR professionals have established a pool of qualified applicants, the challenge of weeding through this group takes over. It is usually a straightforward process to determine those applicants that possess the minimum qualifications necessary to do the job. Most of the time, selection goes beyond determining who possesses minimum qualifications to which candidate among the many represents the best fit (Smith and Kidder, 2010).

Owing to the increasing prevalence of SNSs in conjunction with the large volume of information available to the viewer, HR professionals have begun using SNSs to assist in the selection process for new employees (Kluemper and Rosen, 2009). This determination requires information and judgment of job applicants. There are several ways that employers can access job applicants' SNS profile, even when these pages are set to 'private' security status. HR professionals can request to be 'friended' by the job applicant. Using the 'friends' feature allows employers to find shared connections for a particular candidate. The connections can be used to initiate reference and background checks (Berkshire, 2005). Organizations can also ask current employees to report on friends or hire students who are from the same university in order to gain access to the job applicant's page (Brandenburg, 2007). SNSs can provide a **more comprehensive overview of candidates** that is often available via traditional screening methods such as resume or reference checks. Oftentimes, organizations seek employees with a broad range of interests or unique backgrounds (Murphy, 2007). Such interests may be revealed through social network topic areas including

pastimes, travel and cultural interests (e.g., music, literature). There can be a benign and even desirable intent on the part of HR professionals to find information that can be used to build a **connection during the interview**.

Another benefit of this screening method is the **speed and minimum of costs** to gather information. SNSs provide a readily available public forum to research candidates while incurring minimal costs, allowing even small organizations to engage in such practices.

Potential employers may have access to **detailed information** that would allow them to draw conclusions or make inferences about the applicant's character or personality that might not be as easily or economically obtained through traditional means. Such information might increase or decrease the likelihood that a candidate is considered for further review.

5. Pitfalls

Using SNSs poses also some pitfalls and risks for recruiting and selecting job applicants. Questions as “How accurate is this extra information from SNSs” and “How can this source of information lead to a different decision” are discussed in this chapter. Paragraph 5.1 focuses on the recruitment phase, paragraph 5.2 on the selection. One of the pitfalls concerns the ethical dilemma, as discussed in paragraph 5.3.

5.1 Recruitment

One of the promises of recruiting via SNSs is the possibility to reach their target group. This promise entails also a pitfall depending on the recruiting strategy of the organization. The different recruitment strategies: suitability, malleability and flexibility were already explained in paragraph 1.2. There are differences in applicants across websites. For example, LinkedIn is a professional network, whereas Facebook, Hyves and MySpace are largely used for making social connections. There are some indications that Facebook and MySpace differ in their clientele, with Facebook attracting individuals of a higher socioeconomic status (Atal, 2007). SNSs are a type of an informal network, which brings several benefits for the organization, like lower quit rates and higher job performance, because the organization has good information about the employee. However, the diversity becomes less (Price, 2011). This means for an organization when they recruit via, for example Facebook, they **connect with just one type of clientele**. If the recruiting strategy of the organization focuses on the same type of people as their current employees, (Suitability) there is no problem. But when the organization wants for example a more diverse workforce (Malleability), recruiting via one SNS will not give the desired outcome.

Another pitfall in recruitment concerns the **privacy issue**. Specifically, do applicants consider the postings on SNSs favorably and fair, particularly in comparison to more traditional recruiting means? Because SNSs are not publicly accessible (even though most individuals can get an account on the major sites), prospective applicants may view **the fairness of using these sites for job postings** differently than they view postings on organization websites, public job board etc. This ethical dilemma is further discussed in paragraph 5.3. It is also possible that there will be generational and racial differences in the acceptance and use of these sites for job seeking and recruiting. Some research has suggested that younger individuals (e.g., Generation Y) may be less concerned about privacy than prior generations (Peluchette and Karl, 2009). Thus, members of younger generations might be more accepting of the use of these sites to recruit. Further, if older generations are less technological or have more limited access to the technology, they may consider recruiting through these sites to be less acceptable.

5.2 Selection

When using SNSs during the application process, there is a chance HR professionals' impressions of job applicants change because of this new information. Walther et. al (2001) showed that the presence of a photograph during computer conferencing had positive

effects on the level of affection and social attractiveness of someone in the short-term. Moreover, three studies conducted by Tanis and Postmes (2003) showed that online social cues, for example photos or demographical details, appeared to have a strong influence on the quality of impressions formed by one another. These cues reduce ambiguity and encourage more positive impressions of people. This means photos and other information on SNSs have **impact on the impressions** formed by other people, like HR professionals. This entails also a pitfall, since this view might **not be the real view of the person**, but the view we believe to see. This can influence the decision to hire someone or not. In the 2009 CareerBuilder survey, conducted in the United States, 35% of employers reported not hiring an applicant due to detrimental information found on SNSs (Grasz, 2009). Reasons for screening out ranged from applicants posting provocative or inappropriate photographs or information, displaying poor communication skills, conveying information associated with alcohol or illegal drug use, revealing information that falsifies qualifications listed in a résumé, and posting content disparaging previous work associates. The survey revealed that applicants' profiles may enhance their chances of being hired or selected for consideration by providing supportive evidence of their listed qualifications and displaying creativity and positive communication skills (Brown and Vaughn, 2011).

Another pitfall in the selection process is based on Self-fulfilling Prophecies. This theory can be described as a 'false definition of the situation evoking a behavior which makes the originally false conception come true' (Merton, 1957). Consistent with this description, HR professionals' initial **impressions may influence the way in which they conduct the interview** and, in turn, their conduct of the interview may lead to interviewee behaviors that actually confirms these first impressions. Dipboye (1982) states that the more favorably an interviewer evaluates an applicant before the interview (pre-interview), the more favorably the interviewer evaluates the applicants' qualifications after the interview and the more favorable the final decisions reached regarding the applicant (post interview). Although, this study has been done before the development of social media, it can be applied to the current situation. Checking a job applicants' profile on SNSs can be compared with a pre-interview, since the HR professional forms its **initial impression partly on the information from SNSs**. This influence his behaviour and therefore the final decision. While research indicates that SNS profiles may be an accurate reflection of the owner (Back et al. 2010), **negative information or impressions conveyed through the applicant's personal profile may not be considered in the proper context**, and could therefore result in a hasty rejection decision.

Another question is what happens if some job applicants have a SNS and others do not? As previously noted, some applicant's profiles will disclose information about skills or backgrounds that will make them more attractive to an employer. Perhaps there is information regarding fluency in a particular language, technical proficiencies, creative outlets or social activities that suggest teamwork skills. The employer may favorably interpret this information, but what about applicants who do not have a SNS? Additionally, what information is appropriate for review and how is it to be interpreted? Consider the

following scenario: There are 10 recent college graduates applying for the same sales job. Successful sales representatives are typically outgoing and initiate new relationships easily. All the applicants have Facebook pages; nine have extensive friendship networks, ranging from 150 to 500 friends. One applicant has six friends in his/her network. What are we to infer from this difference? That one applicant is less outgoing and less likely to be successful in sales? There are several explanations for the more limited friendship network of that applicant.

Social Identity Theory suggests that identity plays a significant part in this interpretation process (Smith and Kidder, 2010). People are naturally attracted to other who are similar to themselves, as it aids in maintaining a consistent and positive self-image (Goldberg, 2005). It is easier to relate to other who have had similar experiences and who share common interests, because it helps to validate one's attitudes and beliefs (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998). Unlike most standard application processes, the amount and type of information available through SNSs will not be consistent, which suggests that **bias due to preference** for similar others may arise.

Now, the question arises how valid and reliable these presentations on SNS profiles are. Little is also known about the accuracy of the information provided within SNS profiles or about the prevalence of faking on web pages.

When individuals check out someone's profile page, they get lots of information because of the amount of cues on SNSs. Information on SNSs consists of information that is provided by a profile owner self like descriptions, photo's, movies and of information that cannot be influenced by the owner, like comments placed on the digital 'wall'. Employers often assume that information posted on SNSs will be more accurate than what candidates provide in a cover letter, resume or interview, because they do not expect the website to be viewed by employers. In fact, it has been suggested that information might be more accurate on a website such as LinkedIn because one's connections can view and presumably verify or contradict information (Narisi, 2009). Nonetheless, an individual who creates a webpage may be trying to impress friends, family, potential mates or employers, and the type of 'faking' may differ depending on the intended viewer (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2011). For example, individuals may 'fake good' if they think their parents or employers will see their page, or 'fake bad' if they think friends will view the profile.

Walther and Parks (2002) pointed out that the connection between who we are and who we claim to be on Internet has to be by no means the same.

When users of SNSs create a profile of themselves, they may engage in **selective self-presentation**. Users do not have to react immediately because it is an asynchronous medium whereas users have the opportunity to modify, edit and revise messages or texts before they are sent (Walther et al., 2001). Another advantage is that users are not visible. It is possible to make oneself more attractive than one would be in a face-to-face setting (Tidwell and Walther, 2002). Because it costs less effort to invent advantageous self-descriptions online, many Internet users have concerns about the reliability of online self-presentations (Walther and Parks, 2002). In many cases, it is not so hard to make reality

prettier than it really is. Therefore, there is a general **suspiciousness about the truthfulness of online self-presentation** among Internet users (Walther et al., 2009) which is not unfound in various cases.

Walther and Parks (2002) pointed out that people prefer information with a great warranting value. They describe warrant as 'the capacity to draw a reliable connection between a presented persona online and a corporeally anchored person in the physical world' (Walther et al., 2009). In the physical world the connection between the self and the self-presentation is often equally. In cyberspace however, it is relative easy to become somebody else. It is easier to present yourself differently when it is possible to control your behavior than when there is no possibility to hide, like in face-to-face settings. Warranting is therefore limited to settings in which individuals do not meet each other off-line (Walther and Parks, 2002).

The warranting value of information is 'derived from the receivers' perception about the extent to which the content of that information is immune to manipulation by the person to whom it refers' (Walther and Parks, 2002). This means that several forms of information have greater or less warranting value. For example, a photo provided by a profile owner has less warranting value than a photo derived from a webpage of the organization where the owner works. After all, an individual has more influence on a photo of his/her own website than on a photo on the organization website. However, the degree of warrant is not only determined by the communication system, Walther and Parks (2002) proposed that warrant is also influenced by the social structures in which relationships exist and the symbolic effort partners undertake. When an individual has access to another individuals' social network the degree of warrant should rise. One will not give false or manipulated information about themselves that can be traced. Also, information that can be corroborated or used for corroboration provide greater warranting value. For example, a description of the appearance of the profile owner from someone who knows the profile owner provides greater warranting value than a self-description from the profile owner himself. Therefore, Walther et al. (2009) predict that **externally generated information have greater warranting value than self-generated information**. After all, information derived from others is more immune to manipulation by the person to whom it refers. Studies have demonstrated that friends' comments on SNSs override the self-description of a profile owner: the participants attached more credence to information derived from others (Walther et al., 2009). Profile owners have control over the content they disclose on their social network site profile, but their friends can post detrimental and discrediting comments on their profile. Information on a social network site profile is not entirely self-presented but also presented by others and, therefore, less controllable by the profile owner. Thus, information generated by others might be more warrant and compelling than information provided by the profile owner self (Walther et al., 2009).

The last pitfall involves the legality of using SNSs for screening. Many HR professionals assume that it is acceptable as long as specific laws are not violated (Genova, 2009). However, even if an HR professionals does not violate civil rights laws by engaging in

disparate treatment, there are other **legal issues** that need to be considered, including employee **privacy rights** with respect to their social networking profiles, **potential defamation of character** by third parties' web postings and even adverse impact based on using SNS for gather job-relevant information (Davison, Maraist and Bing, 2011).

5.3 Ethical dilemma

The previous paragraphs explained 'why' HR professionals use SNSs in the recruitment and selection process and the promises and pitfalls of using SNSs. One of the pitfalls for HR professionals of using SNSs concerns the ethical dilemma. "Is checking an applicant's profile ethical?" This paragraph explores to what extent it is ethically responsible for HR professionals to use SNS in recruitment and selection processes: Where is the boundary between ethical and unethical? I aim at elaborating the line between what is ethical in using SNSs in both the recruitment and selection process and when is it unethical.

In literature, no clear definition of 'ethically responsible' is available. Questions as 'what is ethical' and 'how business should demonstrate corporate social responsibility' are also raised by practitioners and professional bodies (Simmons, 2008). 'Ethical' refers to accepted principles, judgments or notions of what is right or wrong, moral or immoral (Larimer, 2004). Furthermore, business ethics are standards of conduct expected of members of a particular profession, in this report: HR professionals. So, ethical behavior is the outward manifestation of an organization's moral values. 'Acting responsible' infers incorporating **fairness** in organizational decision making by recognizing the rights of others and the possible consequences of organization decisions for them. In this report, the focus will be on the perception of fairness. Gets every job applicant a fair chance?

From the employer's position, there are many reasons why conducting an online background check is in the interest of shareholders. Employers argue that they have a right and need to protect themselves (i.e., shareholders) from negligent hiring (Blackwell, 2004). Negligent hiring may occur if an organization fails to uncover an applicants' incompetence or unfitness by a diligent search of references, criminal background or even general background (Edwards and Kleiner, 2002). Employers also state that using SNSs gives them a sense of the type of decisions job applicants will make (Brandenburg, 2008). So, many employers believe that checking an applicant's SNS is an acceptable practice. Therefore, this also means that employers think that they act ethically responsible.

However, the literature in chapter 1 resulted that 53 percent of job applicants considered in none of the company's business what is on their SNSs. So, on the one hand employers think they act ethically responsible. On the other hand job applicants perceive the checking of their profile as unethical, since they accept this principle as wrong. To make HR professionals aware of this dilemma, this paragraph is focusing on the viewpoint of job applicants. "How do they perceive the checking of their social networking profile by HR professionals?"

Privacy is an important dimension that is relevant to selection techniques that are internet-based (Harris et al., 2003). That is, in the context of using SNSs as a selection tool, privacy is a relevant concern for applicant's perceived fairness. Research has shown that privacy

concerns are significantly to the perceived fairness of selection tools, such that perceptions of fairness were higher when invasion of privacy was perceived as low (Madera, 2012). Since privacy is a very important concept in the perception of fairness and therefore in the perception of a company acting ethically responsible, the next paragraph examines whether privacy is a right.

5.3.1 Privacy

There is no universal definition of what privacy is or what constitutes workplace privacy (Miller and Weckert, 2000). The Van Dale dictionary defines privacy as “the possibility to be completely him/herself in their own environment”. In this report privacy is discussed in terms of a natural or fundamental right to privacy and as a legal right. In literature, many definitions of privacy are discussed. Although, there is a lack of consensus about how privacy should be defined (Clark and Roberts, 2010), there is a general belief that there is a natural right to have some information about oneself kept from others. In the Netherlands a right to privacy is created related to human dignity as a fundamental right in the constitutions of law (paragraph 5.2). Both phases of the resourcing process incorporate pitfalls regarding privacy, as explained in the previous chapter. The concept of privacy can be applied to both phases. Therefore, in this paragraph, no distinction is made between privacy in recruitment and privacy in selection.

It is unclear how privacy laws will be interpreted when it comes to information of an individual post on a SNS. Key legal questions are whether the individual consented to the information being made available to everyone, whether the information is relevant to the employment decision, and whether the information falls within a protected realm of personal privacy even if a person makes the information available to many people or doesn't use privacy settings. Even if the information that an individual places on SNSs is personal or protected, many argue that an applicant waives an expectation of privacy to that information when he or she places it on SNS (Introna and Pouloudi, 1999). Legally, the critical issue is whether a person 'publishes' information about oneself when placing it on SNSs. As the options of using SNSs are broad, it needs to be ensured that this new technology does not strip away people's privacy. Edwards and Kleiner (2002) who wrote an article about conducting traditional reference checks, cautioned employers to realize a social responsibility not to invade the privacy of an applicant more than necessary. They argued that employers have access to so much information, that job applicants do not know how much information is being considered and that employers need to limit their consideration to only job-related information. Miller and Weckert (2000) agree, stating that an employer is buying labor not things outside work and privacy is a moral right. Allowing employers access to applicant's personal information may forever impact a person's ability to get a job. Manning (1997) argues that an employee has a right to liberty and flowing from liberty is a right to lead one's life separate from work. This freedom is required for private thoughts and development from one's self apart from his or her work identity (Manning, 1997). Others

strongly counter that work is not a right but a privilege and argue that an employer has the right to know whatever it can about a person to protect its property.

To ensure complete privacy, some SNS users create a public page using their real name and a pseudo site for friends that contains the pictures and dialogue intended for them (Clark and Roberts, 2010). Simms (1994) suggests that there is a difference between self-presentation and self-disclosure. Self-presentation is the communication of self-data an individual might reveal to most any person. Self-disclosure is the explicit communication of self-data another would not have access to. Self-disclosure strengthens a relational bond and includes sharing of emotional experiences (Simms, 1994). Given this difference, perhaps HR professionals should have access only to self-presentation information and not to self-disclosure information. Young people may also see their profiles as self-presentation tools rather than self-identity tools (Livingstone, 2008). HR professionals may be **basing decisions on information that shows poor judgment** in what a person to present to others but may not represent whether the individual is of good character or not.

5.3.2 Where should HR professionals draw the line from an ethical point of view?

This paragraph provides a framework for the discussion about where should be drawn the line between using SNSs in the recruitment and selection processes and ethically irresponsible to use it in the process.

From the previous chapter we know that job applicant's perception of fairness is important when drawing the line from an ethical viewpoint between using or not using SNSs? This perception will now be further explored. Most job applicants are not notified by the employer that an adverse decision was made for this reason (Clark and Roberts, 2010). Rather, an applicant receives a standard "the position has been filled" letter or the person hears nothing more about the position. An applicant could also have an offer rescinded, as experienced by a law student in the USA. The law firm found that the student was affiliated with a website that contained negative statements about female law students, even though the student had not posted any offensive remarks (Samborn, 2007).

Employers have always been able to request background information and reference information on job applicants, but have been self-restrained in doing so because of the costs and legal requirements. Typically, background checks were reserved for serious candidates and for jobs which had a business necessity for the background information. Now, employers are routinely conducting informal online background checks on people and without applicants' knowledge. In a study of students and current HR professionals about their attitudes toward online background checks, Clarks and Roberts (2010) found that **future employees expect employers to check online for information** available about them. Other studies support this conclusion that employers are carrying out these checks and that applicants understand that they are doing so (Brandenburg, 2007). Though, Madera (2012) states that **an organization that used SNSs as a selection tool is perceived as less fair** by job applicants than an organization that did not. Similarly, job pursuit intentions were lower for an organization that used SNSs as a selection tool than an organization that did not. This

findings suggests that SNSs might be perceived as **not having any information that is relevant for work for either new or current employees**. The results are shown in figure 5 and can be explained by two reasons: the validity and privacy.

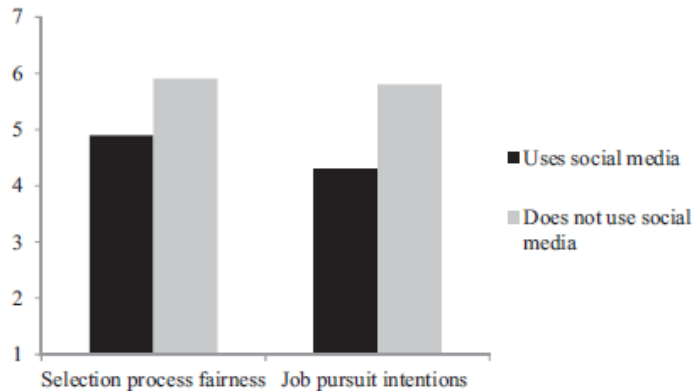


Figure 5 The main effect of SNSs use as a selection tool on the dependent variables (Madera, 2012)

First, the perceived validity of a selection tool is particularly important for applicants' reactions, because **applicants have favorable responses to selection tools that are perceived job-related** (Ryan and Ployhart, 2000). Although job related information, such as current and past employers, can be posted on SNSs, the majority of the content are not job related, such as pictures, favorite music, movies and books. Second, **privacy of personal information** is an important concern for applicants (Harris et al. 2003). This is particularly relevant for using SNSs for selection purposes because these sites might contain information that was not intended for employers to access.

Another research (Thielsch, Traumer and Pytlik, 2012) supports these results. They state that while most participants of their research have no negative experiences former online applications or negative expectations of procedural justice and fairness in future ones, they tend to **rate offline application procedures as a little fairer than online procedures**.

From this paragraph can be concluded that organizations should become aware of the fact that job applicant perceive using SNSs as a selection tool as less fair. Therefore, using SNSs can have negative consequences for, for example, the productivity of an organization since the job pursuit intention of employees decreases. Or, it can damage the reputation of the organization, because acting unfair and therefore unethical can be perceived as negative by society.

6. Conclusion

This thesis explored the topic of using SNSs in the recruitment and selection process by means of a literature study. Based on the literature, the promises and pitfalls from the chapters lead to a theoretical framework about the usage of SNSs by HR professionals. The goal of this framework was to make organizations aware of the influence of using SNSs on the decision-making process of hiring job applicants, give them an advice, if and to what extent organizations should use information from SNSs. In other words: 'To what extent do the advantages outweigh the disadvantages of using job applicants' information from SNSs in the recruitment and selection process?'

Literature study showed HR professionals use SNSs frequently in the United States during the recruitment and selection process. SNSs were especially used after receiving a résumé and before the job interview. Using SNSs was not dependent on the degree in which SNSs can be used to judge job applicants, but rather on the way information on SNSs was perceived as additional reliable and valuable. The gathering of information from the social networking profiles of job applicants has both advantages and disadvantages.

The most important advantage of SNSs in the recruitment process is the more targeted way of recruiting, which can identify more qualified applicants and passive job seekers. However, this advantage also includes a disadvantage, since targeted recruiting can lead to connecting with just one type of clientele, which doesn't match with the recruitment strategy of an organization. Three recruitment strategies can be distinguished: suitability, malleability and flexibility. If an organization chooses suitability, SNSs offers an easy way to reach a specific target group, since the target group on SNSs can be specified. In this strategy it is really clear what type of clientele the organization wants to recruit, since it has to fit with the current organizational culture. However, when using SNSs the diversity becomes less. If an organization uses the recruitment strategy malleability or flexibility, it requires some more effort to reach the target group, since the organization is looking for a diverse clientele. A possible solution for this problem for a HR professional is to recruit on different SNSs, since these differ sometimes in the type of clientele.

So, when outweighing the advantages and disadvantages of using SNSs in the recruitment process, it can be concluded that SNSs can offer a relatively easy way to reach a target group that fits with the recruitment strategy of the organization. Therefore, I would advice organizations to actively use SNSs in the recruitment process.

The most important advantage in the selection process is the speed and low costs to gather more detailed information about an applicant. On the other hand, this amount of available information about a job applicant also indicates some pitfalls. First, checking applicant's SNSs can influence his/hers career opportunities. The way job applicants are judged by HR professionals before the job interview, and the way HR professionals perceive information on these sites as being additional valuable have impact on the hiring decision. When a job applicant is negatively judged based on one's social networking profile, the less chance to be hired in comparison with job applicants having a positive profile. Second, SNSs shape impressions and judgements about job applicants which influence the HR professional's

selection decision. These impressions can be biased due to preference of the HR professional for similar others. Information from SNSs is often unreliable and using it, often results in a hasty, biased decision.

Furthermore, recruitment and selection is the start of a potential labour agreement. If an employee finds out that the HR professional based his/hers decision on information from a SNS, this can mean a 'false start' and have a negative impact on the trust formation between the employer and the future employee. Therefore, employers should weigh the benefits gained against the potential negative consequences from further erosion of the boundary between a person's private and work life.

Checking job applicants' profiles also indicates ethical aspects: Employees perceive the checking of their social networking profile as less fair and an invasion of privacy. HR professionals are allowed to check social networking profiles, but may only use work-related information in their hiring decision. On the long term, checking SNSs can induce negative consequences for the reputation of an organization.

So, SNSs offer a wealth of information, but this information is unreliable and using it in the selection process often results in a hasty, biased decision making process with negative consequences for the trust formation between employer and employee and the reputation of an organization. Therefore, I would advice organizations not to use information from SNSs in the selection process.

7. Discussion

7.1 Validity and reliability

In this thesis, I tried to explore the usage of SNSs in recruitment and selection.

Whilst a few studies study the advantages and disadvantages of using social media, these studies are conducted in the United States, which differs from the European organizational culture. The difference should be taken into account when reading this report. Most of the literature used is conducted in the United States. The difference in organizational culture can be explained by two political models: the Continental European model ('Rijnland model') and the Anglo-Saxon model (Delsen, 2001). The Netherlands adheres the first-mentioned model, which is characterized by the major role of the government. Collaboration between employer and employee is stimulated by the government. The Anglo-Saxon model is used in the United States and focuses on the free market. The government plays a minor role and one believes that welfare is the greatest when organizations are left free.

Another remark with regard to a difference between the United States and the Netherlands is the percentage of organizations using SNSs for recruiting and selection. From the Social recruiting survey (2011), conducted in the U.S. resulted that 80 percent of organizations used SNSs for recruiting, against only 6 percent in the Netherlands (LinkedIn, 2010). The first remark I want to mention is that both percentages are obtained by two different surveys, from two different countries. Therefore, it is possible that the questions and aspects of this survey differ, which can result in a different percentage. Of course, even when the survey was conducted by just one researcher, the great difference in percentage will still exist. We all know that many Dutch HR professionals are using SNSs in the recruitment and selection process, so my opinion is that they'd better be open in how they use it. It should be taken into account that the percentage might have been influenced by the respondents not being honest about their activities. Another possibility that would explain the 6 percent is, that guidelines concerning the use of SNSs in the recruitment and selection process are not established, which might withhold managers to use information from SNSs in the recruitment and selection process or might withhold respondents of the survey to be honest about their activities.

Furthermore, the possibility exists that HR professionals are more likely to check an applicant's SNS, when the demand for jobs exceeds the supply. In other words, employers have a wider selection of employees. Checking applicant's SNSs offers an easy, cheap and time saving opportunity to weed out this group.

Another remark I want to make concerns the ethical dilemma. The concept of ethical is a very complex one. In this thesis, I tried to explore the ethical dilemma with regard to the use of SNSs and define where HR professionals should draw the line. Literature offers no clear view of the line between ethical and unethical, which made it very difficult to do this for a relatively new subject. Therefore, to give some framework for discussion, I made a compilation of different sources about the opinion of job applicants with regard to the checking of their social networking profile. Of course, this just covers one aspect of the

ethical dilemma. To explore this dilemma further, more research is needed on the opinion and behaviour of employers. A continuum should be developed between ethical and unethical and the importance and weighting of the different aspects.

At least, I want to comment on my own expectations of this thesis. In the introduction chapter I stated that this thesis is interesting for me as a student to get to know if I should make a SNS profile and what information I should make public and keep private. First, I want to mention that I would create one or more social networking profiles. This, because it provides the opportunity to stay in contact with friends and get in contact with new people, including organizations. This outweighs for me more than the potential misuse of available information by organizations. The information I would make public depends on the type of SNS. On a professional SNS, like LinkedIn, I would publish information about my work experience and expectations, because this is the aim of these type of websites. On a Facebook profile I would keep my information private. This, because I don't think organizations have anything to do with my private life and information about me from these websites is irrelevant since it is not work related.

7.2 Recommendations for further research

When further research in this topic will be carried out, I recommend to study the SNSs literature more extensively. The ethical dilemma and 'how' SNSs in recruitment and selection processes are used, is not sufficient looked into yet in this thesis. Moreover, studying this process can be very valuable.

Needless to say, I finally recommend future researchers in this topic to expand empirical research so as to increase the reliability and validity. Increasing the reliability and validity is very difficult because it is questionable to what extent people are and can be honest about their activities? To increase the validity, interviews should be conducted in which the interviewer should specifically ask for a certain situation and continue asking the respondent in order to avoid fakers.

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