

Research shows role of pre-hire and post-hire outcomes in effectiveness of social media recruitment

A new study from India has shown the effectiveness of social media recruitment (SMR) is strongly related to both pre-hire and post-hire recruitment outcomes (ROs). The researchers also revealed the mediating effect of both credibility and satisfaction (CS). The data for the study was taken from recruiters in the manufacturing and service sector in the state of Gujarat, in India.

“Social media recruitment: the role of credibility and satisfaction”, was written by Ashutosh Muduli, from the Faculty of Management, Pandit Deendayal Petroleum University, and Jeegnesh J. Trivedi, Khyati School of Business Administration, Gujarat University. The authors were motivated to carry out their study by the increasing popularity of social media as a recruitment tool. They focused on the recruitment managers as previous studies have concentrated on the experiences of the candidates.

Internet recruitment on sites like Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn has become commonplace. A survey by Jobvite in 2010 on the use of social media by corporate recruiters suggested that 83% of respondents use social media, or plan to do so. Microsoft has developed a specific website for recruitment and Deloitte places employee testimonials on social media sites. The core activity of SMR is communicating information about jobs and working conditions to tempt prospective employees to apply.

India is a very relevant place for such a study. It has the world's largest youth population and they are everywhere on social media. There are 200 million Indian WhatsApp users and 240 million Indians on Facebook. A survey also revealed that 79% of Indian job seekers use social media to find jobs and 43% of Indian companies use social media to source talent.

The authors wanted to test two hypotheses. The first one was split into two parts – Hypothesis 1A was that: “Recruiters intentions to adopt SMR are significantly related to pre-hire ROs.” And Hypothesis 1B was that: “Recruiters intentions to adopt SMR are significantly related to post-hire ROs.” The authors said pre-hire ROs include easy accessibility, genuineness of resources, active processing, helping to generate more favorable responses, meeting timeframes and cost savings. Meanwhile, post-hire ROs include efficiency and cost-effectiveness for recruiters, and recruits' performance.

Their second hypothesis was that: “CS (credibility and satisfaction) will mediate the relationship between SMR intention and ROs”. Their contention here was that the effectiveness of SMR was dependent on the richness of the media source. Tools such as Google analytics and Facebook analytics are used to produce and post relevant content to the target audience. By doing this, recruiters can satisfy the need of the applicant regarding

content and volume of information. Speed of communication and wide reach are other advantages.

The target population for the survey was recruiters from the manufacturing and service sector in the state of Gujarat, which is rated as industrially advanced and where SMR is commonplace. The recruiters all used SMR, especially LinkedIn. The two researchers sent out 400 questionnaires and received 282 in return. Of these, 240 were usable.

The survey used five factors to assess pre-and post-hire outcomes (ROs):

1. Relative advantage compared to other approaches. One item was: "It helps to get better candidates than other methods."
2. Compatibility with existing values and experiences: Sample items included: "It is compatible with company culture."
3. Complexity: Sample items included: "Even complicated issues can be handled through SM."
4. Trialability on a limited basis; and
5. Observability: Whether results of SM in recruitment are visible to others. Sample items included: "It helps assess intelligence."

SMR intention was assessed using three items, including, "social media should have a central role in the hiring process". Meanwhile, credibility and satisfaction (CS) were measured using five items, such as: "It can help me to communicate trustworthy information to applicants."

The results confirmed both of the hypotheses. Firstly, the responses showed that recruiters intended to use social media as it provides pre-hire benefits such as "easy accessibility to quality applicants, genuineness of resources, active processing, generation of more favorable responses, helps to meet timeframes and cost savings". Similarly, results showed SMR is more compatible, less complex and ensures better trialability and observability. It provides ample scope to experiment without causing more risk and financial liability, the authors say. Secondly, the research also showed SMR intentions are significantly related to post-hire ROs. The study proved that SMR was "cost-effective, attracts better talents and retains them".

Finally, the study confirmed the significant mediating effect of information CS between SMR intention and ROs. The authors said: "The result proved that SMR is capable of generating significant ROs, but only when recruiters focus on disseminating credible, sufficient and relevant information." The friendly nature of social media interaction increased information credibility. SMR "creates a positive socialization environment through frequent interaction", they said.

There were a number of significant implications of the study for management practices. First, it suggested that social media sites like Facebook could be used to maximize the number of applicants. It could also be more effective than traditional advertising in targeting passive job seekers not actively looking. Second, it showed managers could optimize their SM post-hire outcomes to improve talent retention. One idea could be to use social media channels to share successful stories about the company. Managers could also formulate policies to reward employees who acted as brand ambassadors.

Thirdly, the results suggested that unlike traditional recruitment methods, such as advertising, SMR could attract dream candidates by providing credible information. This required them to engage directly with candidates, they said. Managers should ensure the conversation is supported with useful information, such as videos, blog post and images. Managers could also encourage existing employees to post their comments about the company on sites like Glassdoor and Rate My Employer, which helped establish credibility.

Finally, HR departments needed to understand that social media complements rather than replaces traditional recruitment methods. HR departments should make sure the corporate website is up to date, and able to deal with high volumes of applicants from SMR strategies. Producing videos for YouTube could be a good way to project the desired image of company culture.

The author felt their study was of great value, but they acknowledged some limitations. The same size was restricted to one geographical area, and 86% of the respondents cited LinkedIn as the main recruitment channel. Future research could compare the usefulness of Facebook and Twitter with LinkedIn, for example. Finally, the study only considered the views of recruiters. A future study could adopt a hybrid approach and also consider the views of recruitees.

Keywords:

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