Social Media as a Recruitment tool-A study of the concept, practices and theoretical framework

Nikhil Chabbra

SCMS Pune, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune

nikhil.chhabra@associate.scmspune.ac.in

Rudri Mehta

SCMS Pune, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune

rudrimehta2000@gmail.com

Prof Nehajoan Panackal

Assistant Professor,

SCMS Pune, Symbiosis International (Deemed University), Pune

Nehajoan.panackal@scmspune.ac.in

Abstract

Millennials are predicted to make up three fourths of the global workforce in the future years. This generation is significant and different from the older generation due to their presence during the complete overhaul of our society and tectonic shifts taking place in the tech sector. Their expectations, needs and requirements are completely different from those of previous generations. In the past few years internet and social media has taken over every aspect of our lives. The millennial generation has been one of the biggest drivers of this rapid expansion. Social media is one of the most effective tools as it holds the power to generate awareness about causes and form relationships. An average millennial spends a significant portion of their day on a social networking site. In the paper, the researcher has tried to establish a study on how employers can effectively use social media to recruit employees that are the right fit for their vision, mission and culture. The researcher has tried to highlight practices of employers to attract prospective employees to apply for vacancies in the company. The research methodology used is secondary data collected via analytics reports, articles and research papers. The effective use of social media is also analyzed by the use of multiple case studies. The study is significant as it contributes to understanding social media and practices adopted by the human resource department to attract potential talent.

Keywords: Social Media, Recruitment, Strategies, Millennials, Talent.

Introduction-Talent Acquisition

Employees are an important aspect of an organization. For an organization to prosper and achieve effectiveness, it is important to have the right pool of talent. Employees who are competent, motivated are important. Talent is valuable, rare and hard to substitute. They have a major role in achieving goals and objectives of the company. For organizations to achieve their vision, self-driven, high potential staff is a must. (Boštjančič & Slana, 2018). Organizations that have realized this and have started focusing on hiring talent have a better competitive edge over the others. (Ployhart, 2012) The starting point to achieve this is the entry of high potential into the organization through a process of talent acquisition. Talent acquisition has gained a lot of importance; organizations are investing a lot of time and effort to get in the right fit to the organization. Broadly speaking, the process has two major aspects: attracting talent to apply for a vacancy and screening-shortlisting to arrive at the ideal candidate best suited for the job. (Turban & Greening, 1997). The early stages of attracting potential are crucial. There is a vast ocean of jobs and opportunities available for potential recruits today; it becomes important to have a strategic edge over competitors to attract talent. (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001).Researchers in the past have spoken about talent management as an area of concern, hence there is a need to improvise and focus on the talent acquisition strategy. (Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2008). To overcome this challenge, organizations have started adopting innovative recruitment strategies to acquire talent. (Gatewood, Gowan & Lautenschlager,1993).

Social Media, human resource management and its increasing importance

Technology has changed the manner in which people interact now days. The role of technology in our day to day lives is rapidly developing. A result of this is the birth of social media. Social media platforms such as blogs, microblogs or e networks have transformed the manner in which we interact with others and have also influenced the process of information sharing. (Picazo-Vela, Gutiérrez-Martínez, & Luna-Reyes, 2012). Social media has become an integral element for the 21st-century business to capitalize on. There are new avenues for sharing ideas, promoting discussion. (Eren & Vardarlıer,2013). From a business perspective, it has defined a new way to connect and engage with customers, employees, future prospective employees and other stakeholders (Chan and Guillet, 2011; Kumar, Bezawada, Rishika, Janakiraman & Kannan, 2016). Hence to be successful, it is important to understand this usage among the different key players. In order to sustain in the long run organizations have to align all their functions with social media and derive benefits.

The human resource department is a crucial part of an organization. Millennials are predicted to make up three fourths of the global workforce in the future years. This generation is significant and different from the older generation due to their presence during the complete overhaul of our society and tectonic shifts taking place in the tech sector. Their expectations, needs and requirements are completely different from those of previous generations. Social Media has gained importance across the globe so much so that it has become a lifeline for users drastically impacting the GEN Y or Millennial Generation (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). The growing

interaction this generation on social media sites has driven organizations to leverage these channels to their advantage. Actions around this include attracting applicants to apply for vacancies in the organization, employee engagement, employee communication and development. Organizations have started embracing social media so that employees perceive them as innovative and open to change. (Doherty, 2010). This perception helps to build the corporate character, culture and reputation. (McKinsey Quarterly, 2009). An aspect of the HR function is recruitment, wherein job seekers are encouraged to apply for vacancies. The potential recruits psychologically engage with the organization before considering joining. They look out for employer information through various social media platforms. Platforms such as LinkedIn, Pinterest, and Twitter are constantly being monitored to get an image about the employer. (Doherty, 2010; Singh & Sharma, 2014). Employers on the other hand have made the best use of social media which has become their corporate advocate and brand ambassador. (Agresta & Bonin, 2011).

Social impact theory as a supporting theory

Social impact theory proposed by Latane & Nida, 1980; Latane & Wolf, 1981 discusses interpersonal influence and group behavior. According to the theory, the influence depends on social status, psychological distance,the number of people in the group and social influence. The theory has links to persuasion and obedience. Social impact is the variety of changes in feelings, motives and emotions, cognitions and beliefs, values and behavior, that occur in an individual due to imagined presence of other individuals. (Latane, 1981). This theory is used to understand the underlying reasons why the millennials like to be associated with social media and are greatly influenced by it.

Research Question and Objectives of the study

The current research articles attempts to address the following two research questions
Research Question 1: How does Social Media impact HR practices such as Talent Acquisition?
Research Question 2: What are the practices adopted by the HR department to infuse social media and talent acquisition?
Based on the research questions, the following two objectives were derived for the study
- To understand the influence of social media in talent acquisition
- To understand the social media practices used by companies to attract talent

To address this, the paper begins with an introduction to social media and HR practices, followed by a section on theoretical background where employer branding and targeting competencies are discussed along with influencers. Based on the literature, a model is proposed and discussed. Company practices are explained and the paper concludes with limitations and scope for further research.

Theoretical Background- A deeper look at Social Media and HR concepts

Employer Branding and Social Media

Branding is defined as a person, group or an organization effectively associating itself with one or more core fundamental values with the intention of "cashing in" on the brand value established to drive some sort of action. Branding principles application to the field of human resource management is employer branding. (Backhaus & Tikoo,2004). Sullivan in 2004 discussed employer branding as a long-term strategy used to a firms benefit to create awareness, perceptions and impressions about the organization in the minds of prospective of employees. Traditional methods of recruitment involving job boards and employment fairs are less effective to attract talent. They are producing far more individuals who are far less qualified for positions, and can now be supplemented with channels that are largely free and reach a more targeted talent pool (Madia,2011). These developments point to the fact that these methods are becoming redundant by the day and the recruitment process is ripe for disruption. Organizations have started effectively branding itself as the "place to be" through Social media. One proven effective manner to do so is through employer branding. Under this approach the organization does not go out actively seeking talent, what it does is it uses the reach and the freedom in terms of the format of the content to comprehensively outline the vision of the Company and the impact it is having on the world. This approach is entirely dependent on the realization that people in general and millennials specifically are looking for meaning in their jobs, they'd like to leave behind a legacy for the generations to come. Chhabra & Sharma in 2014 studied employer branding strategies and channels for promoting employer attractiveness. Some of the practices of employer branding include creating content that is contextual to the platform. The core values of an organization will remain the same regardless of the platform they are presented on, but the style of communication needs to differ from platform to platform. Nuances like the formal nature of LinkedIn, the visual nature of Instagram and the conversational flow of twitter need to be taken into account. Following a long-term approach .Companies use social network in building a long-term online community for sourcing talent-one that is more targeted and serves both proactive and responsive recruiting purposes. (Madia, 2011). For companies' employer branding is a powerful tool to line up talented pool of candidates willing to add value to their organization.

Capability targeting
The concept of targeting capability, which studies platforms that can look at a segmented and talent specific market (Targeted Recruiting, Direct Employers Association), is a recent phenomenon that takes advantage of the specificity of social media websites and their ability to target consumers according to factors such as their interests, education, expectations, lifestyle, etc. (Andrews, 2012). One of the biggest advantages of targeting capability and social media recruitment is that it allows organisations access to low prevalence and hard to reach populations in isolated areas with potential candidates for jobs (King, DeLongis & O'Rourke, 2014).

Over 92% youth around the world use social media regularly and 63% of the millennial population use social media platforms to communicate with brands and companies regularly, including usage of these to search for job opportunities (Rai, 2012). Social media sites such as Facebook and Instagram offer innovative means to reach potential candidates such as directed advertisements based on online interest, increased visibility through brand campaigns and online data entry for interested candidates, saving recruitment costs for the company (King, DeLongis & O'Rourke, 2014).

Social media recruitment is relevant to organisations in this age due to its reach and effective cost saving techniques. Traditional sources of recruitment are uneconomic in terms of cost, can attract the wrong set of candidates and restrict organizations to only a particular band of consumers and potential recruits. Social media recruitment is therefore the most effective method of recruitment in this day and age for organizations. An extreme example is the Islamic State – with a base of around 20,000 recruits since 2011, 20% of this number consists of foreign nationals recruited through the use of social media and targeted advertisements of the organization and the attractions it offers (Gates & Podder, 2015).
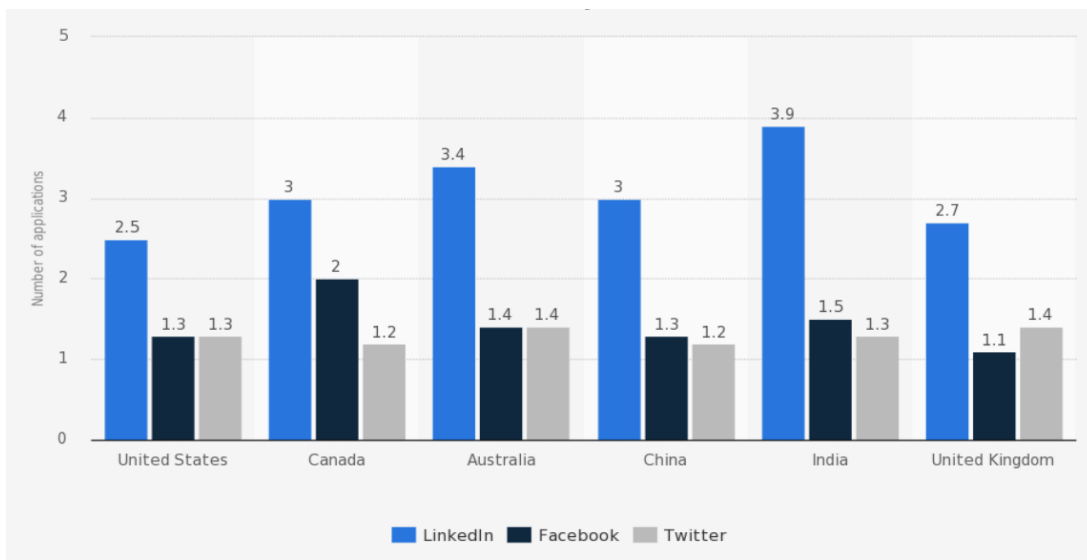

Figure 1: Average number of applications per job post on social media by country   Source: Bullhorn, Statista 2015

When it comes to social media recruitment, there are multiple platforms and multiple ways to do the same, the more popular ones being LinkedIn and Facebook. India in specific has large numbers on both, with the percentage of applications in response to social media posts more than the USA and China on all three platforms of social media – LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter – due to the large online presence of Indian youth and a growing emphasis on use of platforms to solve all problems identifiable. Visibility, reach and attraction are all increased through use of social media sites to advertise jobs and companies. Social media recruitment consists of a variety of methods, techniques and specifically targeted campaigns that also boost visibility and brand name of companies. These are strategies designed and used by companies on a regular basis to promote a variety of things, including new opportunities, boosting company reach and visibility to potential candidates.

Generally speaking, targeting capability in social media recruitment, although mainstream and often saturated in particular markets and types of jobs, is a complex and strategy based system of 'push' and 'pull'. Broadly, these are the two main divisions as under types of recruitment strategies. 'Pull' refers to the use of directed, specific and straightforward advertising of job opportunities in a market of users actively looking for jobs and other paid work. It is a simple and committed task of pulling in previously interested individuals – using sites such as Craigslist, which has an already existing wide base - and generally more cost effective as well. The 'Push' method on the other hand, uses tactics involving putting out recruitment offers to a

wide data base of potential candidates that do not have to be actively seeking jobs. This is a more expensive and slower process, albeit resulting is a diverse number and type of applicants. Push targeting also increases the organisation's familiarity and ability to stick in viewer's minds, using platforms such as Google AdWords (Antoun, Schober ,2016). These two wide strategies have their own set of benefits and limitations, fitting differently for different audience types and companies.

There are various sites and companies completely dedicated to social media recruitment or having efficient methods for the same. Facebook, with a usage base of around 1.49 billion people, is a social media platform often used by a variety of recruiters. The social media site uses a method known as Lookalike Audiences – the company offers to build companies a new database of interested customers and candidates on the basis of the customers already a part of the company's dedicated user base. Facebook creates a list of common characteristics and features of employed individuals and matches that with all the potential candidates aligning with the same on Facebook (Longamore, 2016). In 2014, Twitter released a similar service on its site for companies looking to market their products or market their company and the opportunities it offers to employees (Rajeck, 2014). Lookalike audiences are a set way to reach out to those similar to a company's employed personnel in a bid to effectively systemize recruitment. The strategy increases the targeting capability of companies using social media recruitment, logically connected those already in the organization to those who might perpetually or possibly want to take up the same opportunity.

Another method popularly used for publicizing research responses and questionnaires floated out by organisations is Snowball Sampling, also used as a prerequisite social media recruitment method. This method derives statistical inferences from the various aspects of relationships in a given population (Goodman, 1961). What this means is that snowball sampling effectively targets a few potential candidates and then encourages them to share the same with others of the same kind/known relations having similar qualifications or needs in terms of recruitment. Snowball sampling assumes that there is an existing database/network of qualified candidates who would want to benefit from the opportunities provided (Dusek, Ruppel &Yurova, 2015).

This is one of the most effective methods for recruitment because of its effectiveness in connecting to a hard-to-reach population, for example floating surveys and job applications to rural populations using a platform such as Facebook – which has a large Indian base, the highest number of youngsters in any country on the social media site – and providing incentives using the same to share it with other individuals having the same need for opportunities. Snowball sampling effectively takes advantage of social groups and communities to get maximum candidates for recruitment, hence increasing the targeting capability of companies, especially in untapped populations.

Ultimately, what is important is marketing the company well, reaching out to the right set of candidates, tapping into the right platforms best suited to the organization and, most importantly, deciding the company's objectives beforehand so as to streamline and make efficient the process of recruitment.

Influencers

Social media influencers (SMIs) represent a new type of independent third-party endorser who shape audience attitudes through blogs, tweets, and the use of other social media. Although some scholars appear to view SMIs as competing, possibly hostile voices (Gorry & Westbrook,

2009).Influencers can micro influencers, small influencers, big influencers, macro influencers or celebrity influencers depending on the number of followers that they have. (Chernev, 2015). The investment on influencer marketing has gone up from $500 million to an estimated to be $6.5 billion as of 2019. (Source: Influencer Marketing Hub)

Figure 2: Graph of Amount invested in influencer marketing over the period of years
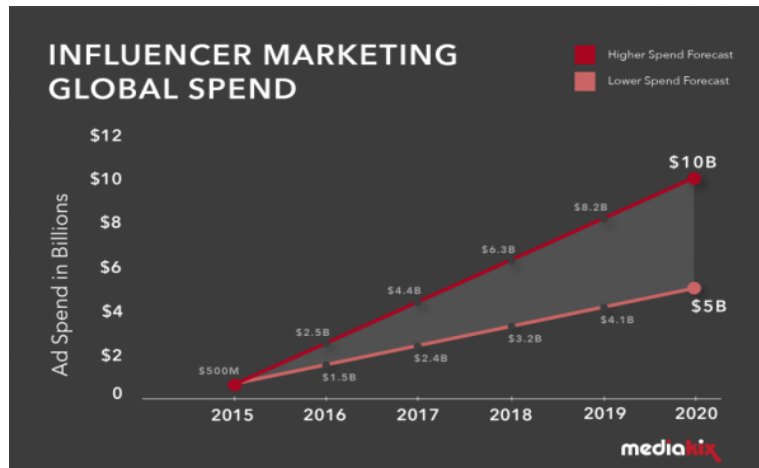
(Source- Mediakix)

A further study of the trend shows that an average influencer charges in the range of $1000 for every 100,000 followers they have the amount may vary depending on a variety of factors such as the number of deliverables, the allotted time frame and the agreed upon usage rights. The rise of micro-influencers as an effective marketing channel.Micro influencers are everyday people who through their unique communication style and niche content have managed create a substantial following for themselves (5000-25000 followers). Multiple companies have used strategies where they utilised multiple micro influencers instead of using one or two celebrity influencers. This was done because statistically influencers have a higher engagement rate and the average person finds their content more relatable. Employers have understood this and have targeted micro influencers for their branding strategies. Messages proclaimed by social media influencers are often perceived as more reliable and compelling to consumers, and have been substantiated by 82% of followers' polls, in which consumers are reported to be more likely to follow their favorite influences' recommendations (Talaverna 2015)

Proposed Model
Talent acquisition is a function that includes human resource planning, recruitment and selection. Through the paper, the researchers have tried to propose a model of the influence of social media on HR practices such as recruitment. Figure 1 illustrates the proposed model. A description of the same has been done in the section on results and discussions.
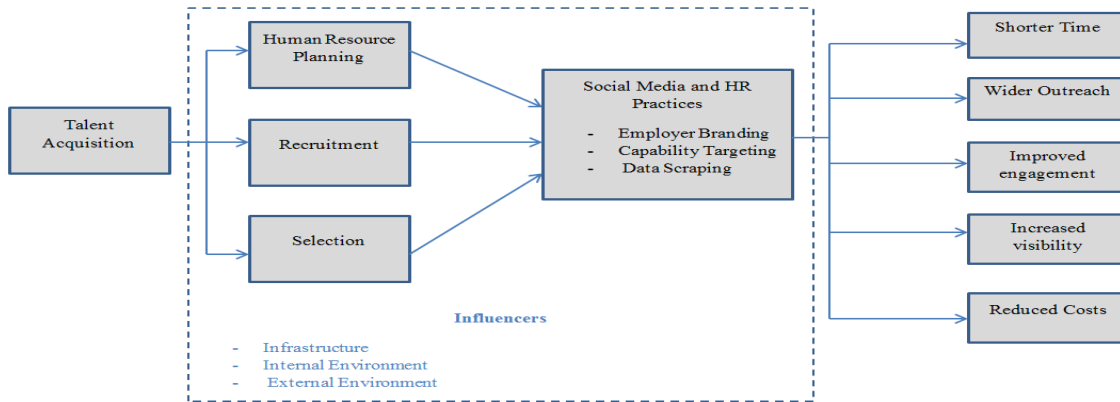
Figure 3: SMATA Model- Social Media and Talent Acquisition model (Authors contribution)

Discussions

Talent management is a concept that has found its way in a lot of HR related discussions, to be successful in talent management, it is important to first focus on talent acquisition. The people in an organization are its most central part. Human Resource Management is the process that helps create an environment where employees develop, thrive, and fulfil both personal and organizational goals. Technology has changed the expectation, perception and space in which work force today and the future workforce will work. There is need for HR to recognize this and adapt and modify practices accordingly. The new and evolved HRM process needs to a balance of extremes that is it should be rigid enough so that it withstands the rapid changes in the society. It should be flexible enough so that it does not become redundant with time. The model depicts that in order to achieve this, it is necessary to have an internal environment conducive for growth. Social recruiting is recruiting candidates by using social platforms as talent databases or for advertising jobs that are open in organisations. Usage of social media to recruit has been a much utilised method by pioneer companies for years, with the current state of social media recruitment being that 85% of companies prefer it to traditional forms (Society for Human Resource Management). Social media recruitment is different from other modern day methods of recruitment - such as online, global and mobile recruitment – in that there is effective targeting of both active and passive job seekers. Increased visibility of a company, its opportunities and the competitive advantages it offers to the potential and employed personnel increases the effectiveness of recruitment (Harver,2019). The policies should focus on adopting social media in various portfolios. The culture of organization should support technology intertwined linkages in talent acquisition. Appropriate infrastructure that supports processes such as data mining, data warehousing, data scraping is necessary. A study of the changes in the external environment such as changes in technology, socio cultural aspects is also necessary. Employer branding, targeting capabilities, data scraping have been identified as the strategies that companies use to identify talent and attract these talent to apply for the company. Keeping up with the changing times, the HR department has been using marketing strategies to sell their job offers (Price, 1996). The traditional recruitment process was lengthy, time consuming and dependent on a number of external parameters. Social media in recruitment will help to improve the quality of the applicants who apply for the vacancy; it will give a larger scope to reach out to future recruits.

For the first time job seekers social media would assist in brand building and would help to generate interest to apply for the job. The process is ongoing; hence it would also assist in creating a database with aspirant and prospective employee details.

Current Practices

A look at practices at Tesla

Tesla is a modern-day energy company founded in 2003. It has become a household name due to the being at the cutting edge of electric car, sustainable energy and battery technologies and its co-founder and CEO Elon Musk who commands a "cult-like" following on twitter. The company is expanding at a very rapid pace it has gone from employing 200 employees in 2010 to 48,817employees as of 2018 (Macrotrends.net). Last year, Tesla received nearly 500,000 applications for just 2,500 open positions. That means the chances of getting a job at Tesla is just 0.5 percent, making the sustainable car manufacturer more exclusive than any college in the world (CNBC-how to land a job at Tesla, Abigail Hess). In a world where experts are constantly predicting a shortage of sophisticated technical talent, Tesla can't hire fast enough (Monster.com, Mack Gelber). For a company that spends no Dollars on marketing this is nothing short of a miracle. This inflow of top tier talent into Tesla can be attributed to the following factors:

1. The company understands the social media behavior of its target audiences. It took a page out of Steve Jobs's playbook and started live streaming the unveil of its products where the products were showcased and "macro vision" of the company to accelerate humanity's shift to renewable and sustainable energy which not only made a tesla the car to own for very millennial that wanted to contribute to the environment but also the company to work for every millennial engineer that wanted to have a positive impact on the world.

2. The understanding of the amplification capability of social media by Elon Musk: Elon Musk currently has over 30 Million Twitter followers that is more than most A-list actors and athletes around the world. The reason he holds this level of influence is two pronged-he is genuinely a generational talent striving to provide the best consumer experience and he realizes that when he showcases these abilities online it brands him as somebody top tier talent wants to work with and for.

3. The Understanding of the Nuances of the Platform: Elon never runs out of content to put out is because he takes time to listen before commenting or tweeting, whether it is answering a technical question or a meme poking fun at himself his content is always relevant because he has a deep understanding of the conversational nature of twitter. (Gorry & Westbrook, 2009).

Limitations and Scope for Further Research

The study has been restricted to the study of secondary data that has been published in journals of repute, the study can be further extended to validate the model. It will help define the potential employee anticipations and would help organizations orient their staffing to meet the needs of the employable talent pool.

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