Comparative Analysis for LinkedIn

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Introduction

The system that I am evaluating is LinkedIn, which is one of the world's largest professional networking sites. The company focuses on connecting people for professional development and increasing people's career opportunities. Users of LinkedIn are mainly people who want to build a professional online presence and a professional network and to find internship and job postings. In this study, the key question being answered is who are the competitors of LinkedIn and in what aspects does LinkedIn excel in and in what areas could there be improvement relative to its competitors. Understanding where LinkedIn stands within the market for professional development sites could help LinkedIn evaluate the user experience for their platform and decide how they could improve their product and features based on seeing how competitors' products perform better than theirs (Sauro, 2016).

Methods

When choosing competitors, I chose Twitter as a tier 1 competitor, Meetup.com as a tier 2 competitor, and Handshake and Indeed as niche competitors. Twitter is a major news and social networking site. I considered Twitter as a tier 1 competitor because like LinkedIn, they have a large network of users and have accounts from companies that update on their current news and projects (Craft.co, 2020). Meetup.com is a tier 2 competitor because it is within the same category as LinkedIn in trying to help people build professional networks through connecting them with groups and events based on shared goals or interests (Bishop, 2019). However, they have a smaller user base, which makes them a less competitive competitor to LinkedIn than Twitter, placing them in tier 2 rather than tier 1. Lastly, Handshake and Indeed are niche competitors, because they only compete with the job listing and application capability of LinkedIn's platform (Goodman, Kuniavsky, & Moed, 2012). Handshake is mainly catered to students to help them find an internship and explore career options, and Indeed is a search engine that helps the general public find internships and jobs.

When selecting dimensions and attributes, I considered the most relevant aspects of the platform that would help people find jobs and build a professional network (Goodman, Kuniavsky, & Moed, 2012). I also thought about features that would make the experience of networking and job searching easier or more enjoyable, such as an easily navigable interface and job alerts through mobile application notifications or email notifications.

Findings and Recommendations

Summary Results

Generally, LinkedIn's user interface is easily navigable and incorporates lots of personalization to recommend people to connect with and jobs to apply to based on companies that users follow and search history on the site. LinkedIn also has an

exceptionally large network and high reputation for professionalism that surpasses most of its competitors. Users value that LinkedIn incorporates many functionalities, such as building a professional presence, networking, job postings, and company news and profiles, because it makes it a convenient platform for all career-related needs. The main area of potential expansion is listing company reviews and experiences interviewing with a certain company.

Key Findings

Competitive/ Comparative Analysis	LinkedIn	Twitter	Meetup.com	Handshake	Indeed
Type of Competitor	Product	Tier 1	Tier 2	Niche	Niche
Product Description	A service mainly used for professional networking, employers posting jobs and job candidates posting their profiles/ resumes	Social Networking site, and keep up with latest news	A service to help organize groups and for people to find events to attend	A service to help students find internships and explore career options	A search engine to help people find jobs
Audience Profile	Users who are looking to build a professional network and find internship/job listings	Users who want to build a social network and follow news sites, public figures, large corporations, etc.	Users who are looking for local events and groups to join to develop or grow an interest	Mainly for students looking for internships, but also for recruiters, and career center professionals	Users who are looking for internship/job listings
Access					
Requires account/login	Without logging in, you can view all job postings but can't see people's full profiles	You need to create an account to post but public users' posts are visible to people without an account	Without an account, you can see all posts, groups, events, and profiles on the site. To join a group or event, you need to create an account.	You need to create an account to use Handshake. You can create an account as a student, employer, or a career center professional.	You don't need an account to view job listings, but you need an account to apply for jobs through the site

Cost	There are some limitations with a free account. Their payment options are: Premium Career ($29.99/month), Premium Business ($59.99/month), Sales Navigator Professional ($79.99/month), Recruiter Lite ($119.99/month)	No cost	To schedule an event on Meetup.com, you can pay $16.49/month for 6-month subscription or $23.00/month for monthly subscription. To join a group or have an account to view groups/events, there's no cost.	No cost for students. For employers, they can pay for a premium version to enhance branding, track analytics, etc.	No cost for job seekers. Employers pay when users click on their sponsored jobs up to a certain budget that they set.
Connect with employers/recruiters	Yes, you can connect with and message employers and recruiters directly	Hypothetically, you could interact with employers and recruiters on the site but it's not usually used for forming professional connections	Recruiters can find potential candidates and schedule a meeting	Recruiters can contact up to 100 students per recruiting season, but students can't initiate connections with recruiters	An employer can reach out to candidates to learn more about them, but candidates cannot initiate conversations with employers
Content					
Company reviews	None	No official reviews but you could find other people's tweets about the company	None	Yes, students can read reviews about a company/internship program and it's pretty reliable because it's written by other students and you can access their profiles	Yes, there are often thousands of reviews from past and current employees
Information about interviews	No	No	No	Yes	Yes
Event postings	No designated tab to post about events	No designated tab to post about events	Yes, groups have a section where they can post about their upcoming events, which depending on the group, could be a professional or social event	Yes, there's a tab to view upcoming events, which include case challenges, networking events, career fairs, interviews, etc.	No designated tab to post about events

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Sponsored Company/Job Posts	Employers can create posts promoting their company or a job opening and the post will appear in people's home page with the label "promoted"	Companies/ advertisers can pay to promote their tweet to reach a wider audience and appear at the top of people's home page	None	None	Yes, sponsored posts cost the employer money but they appear at the top of the search results for candidates to see
Navigation/Interface					
Home page	3 column layout, left column for personal profile and hashtags, middle column for posts from companies you follow or people that your connections have liked/commented on, right column with recent news and ads for companies/jobs	3 column layout, right and left panel are frozen, the right panel has different tabs (i.e. messages, notifications, etc), the middle panel has sponsored tweets and tweets from people you follow, the left panel has trending hashtags and recommends people to follow	1 column layout, displays events & groups near you, grid of categories to discover groups/events	1 column layout, displays favorited jobs, job recommendations based on roles that you recently applied to, upcoming events, jobs popular within your major, on-campus jobs, etc.	Displays search bar for job title/company/keyword and location and recent searches
Aesthetics	Boxy layout, main colors are dark gray, white, black, dark royal blue	Modern, minimalist, fun font style, main colors are white, black, light blue	Modern with comical and colorful icons, main colors are white and coral	Modern, block letters, fun colors	Minimalist, main colors are royal blue, orange, white, black
Usage of Hashtags	Yes, hashtags available for people to follow and discover topics/opportunities	Yes, uses hashtags to track what's trending	No	No	No
Networking Opportunities					
Messaging Abilities	Yes, but you can only message your 1st-degree connections	Yes, you can message anyone who is following you	No	Yes, but only if a recruiter contacts you first	No
Size of network	660+ million accounts created	1.3 billion	35 million	N/A	N/A

Number of monthly users	260 million	330 million	N/A	N/A	250 million
Ability to see who accessed your profile	Yes, with the free version, you can only see a small subset, but with premium, you can see everyone	No	No	Yes, but only the company that they are affiliated with, not names of people	No
Personalization					
Profile creation	You can create a detailed professional resume-like profile and include current status, past experiences/ background, skills, etc.	Yes, you have a twitter handle but not much personal information	Yes, displays location, join date, other social network links	Yes, not super structured sections, but you can write about your background and current status, and saves resume, cover letters, transcript	Yes, saves your resume
Personalized content	You can personalize what shows up on your feed based on the people and companies you follow and you get personalized job recommendatio ns	Twitter personalizes content based on past interactions on the site	Yes, based on interests you choose	Yes, lots of personalization based on roles you're interested in, location, skills, and recommendatio ns based on past applications or people with the same major	No
Filter job search options	Yes, based on location and title	No	Yes, provides lots of options to narrow search for groups/events	Yes, based on titles, employers, keywords, location, internship/full-ti me	Yes, based on titles, employers, keywords, location, relevance, job type, experience level, company
Capabilities					
Follow Companies	Yes	Yes	No	No	No
Join Groups	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Save jobs, events, etc. for later reference	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes

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Job alerts	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Mobile Application					
Job Notifications	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes
Number of Ratings	54K	2.1 million	40K	23K	1.2 million
Rating in App Store	4.4/5	4.7	4.7	4.8	4.7
Reliability					
Professionalism	High reputation for being a professional networking site	Semi-professional for some professors/ public figures	Semi-professional based on the group/event	High reputation for connecting students with legitimate job postings	High reputation for legitimate job postings
Promoted on Resume	Yes, people have a higher chance of getting hired when including their LinkedIn profile on their resume	Occasionally	No	No	No
Chance of landing a job through the site	Relatively high chance compared to competitors	Nearly impossible	Low	Relatively high	Mid-level

There were four key findings on LinkedIn's strengths relative to its competitors. The first key finding was that only on LinkedIn is it acceptable for a job candidate to initiate a conversation with recruiters, which is important, because providing direct access to recruiters encourages more users to join. The second finding was that LinkedIn is the only platform that allows users to see who clicked on your profile. Thus, it is a powerful source of revenue for LinkedIn to charge users to get unlimited access to see who has accessed their profile to potentially connect with an interested employer. The third finding was that LinkedIn has an exceptionally well-formatted template for users to build their profile and establish an online presence. Some key features that distinguish them from their competitors are having connections endorse skills and featuring recommendations from past employers. The fourth finding was that LinkedIn has a unique edge over its competitors because it has become an established norm for job candidates to share their LinkedIn profile on their resume and job applications to gain interest from employers. As this has become the norm, more people are creating LinkedIn profiles to increase their chances of getting hired, so LinkedIn's user base is increasing.

There were a couple key findings, however, on areas that LinkedIn is lacking

in compared to its competitors. While other career-related sites, such as Handshake and Indeed, provide access to company reviews and information about a company's interview process from past employees and interns, LinkedIn does not provide this information. These are key features that are helpful to job candidates when they are searching for jobs to apply for and preparing for interviews, so it would be beneficial if LinkedIn added these features.
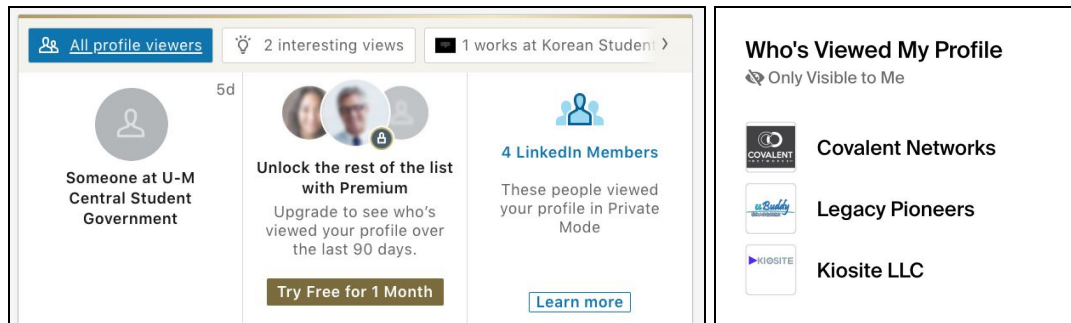

Figure 1. On the left is a screenshot of LinkedIn displaying the option to pay for premium to be able to see names and profiles of people who have visited your profile. On the right is a screenshot of Handshake displaying just the companies of people who have visited your profile.
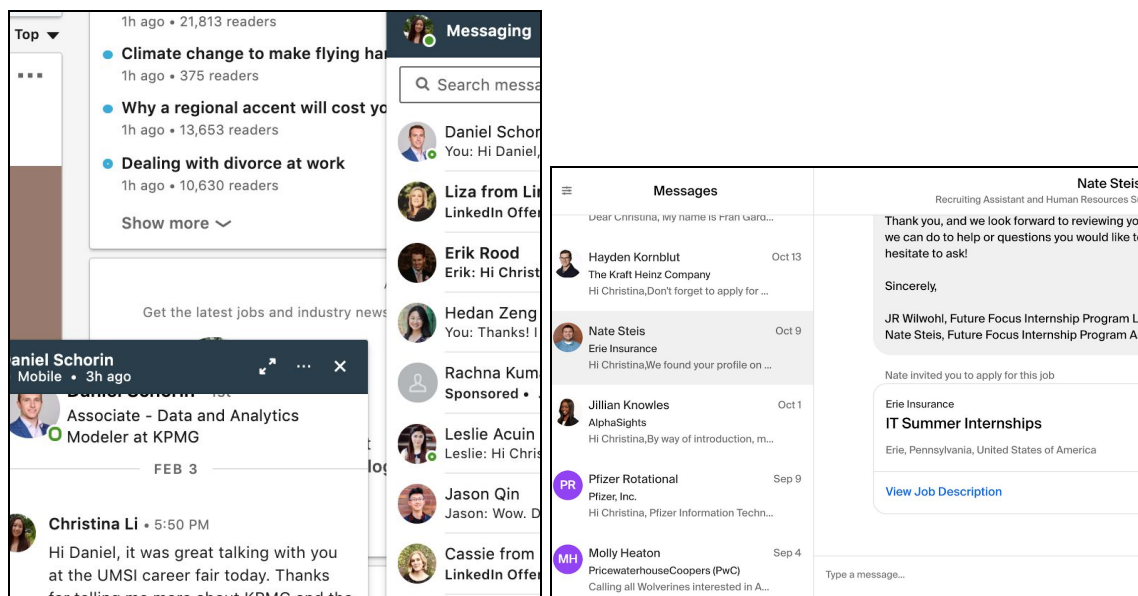
Figure 2. On the left is a screenshot of LinkedIn's messaging feature that allows users to reach out to recruiters directly. There is a search bar to allow users to message any of their first connections. On the left is a screenshot of Handshake's messaging feature, which only allows recruiters to initiate conversation for promoting their open positions.
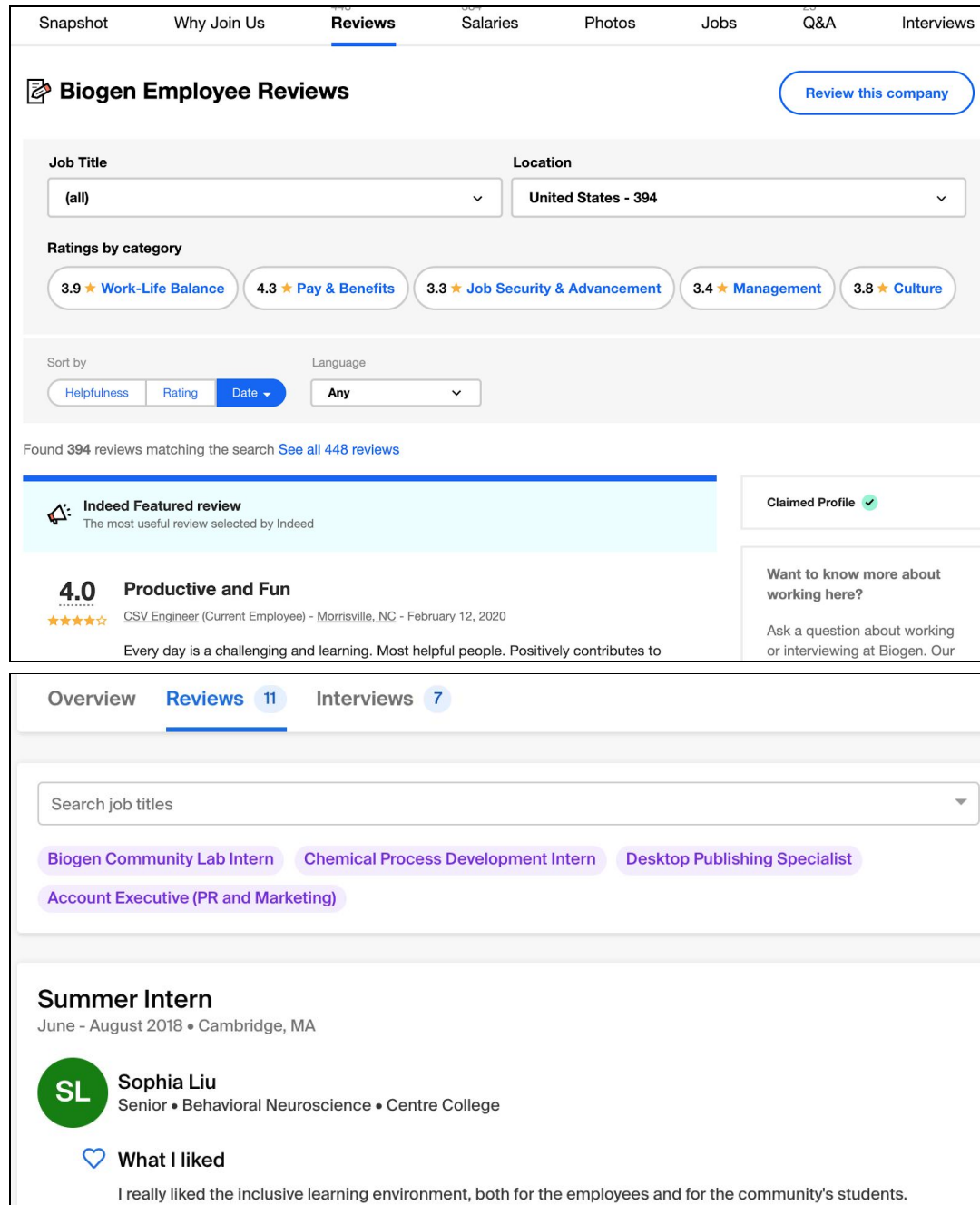
Figure 3. The top picture is Indeed's page for displaying company reviews and information about interviews from past job candidates and employees. The bottom picture is Handshake's page for reviews and interviews from past student interns. These features are something LinkedIn could add to their platform to improve the convenience of an all-inclusive platform for networking and gathering information about companies and what they should expect working there.

Conclusion

Overall, LinkedIn is unique in combining professionalism with social networking, so it does not have many direct competitors. It has a well-established

user base and is one of the most reliable professional networking sites on the market. It also has many unique features and a comprehensive set of features that makes it hard for other platforms to compete for users. Some recommendations for LinkedIn would be to leverage its large network of users and ask people to review companies and provide information about their interview process. While this would require LinkedIn to more closely monitor what is posted on their site, it would further increase the value of its service to users.

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[1] Others' work should be properly cited in the body of the report and the full references should appear here. Any reference in this section should have at least one corresponding citation within the text (and, or course, all citations should have a corresponding reference entry). All citations and references should comply with the APA guidelines (Wagner, et al. 2010). Please note that we are only following the APA guidelines for citations and references. You do not need to worry about all the other formatting guidelines.