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Digital Recruitment through Social Networks

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Abstract

OBJECTIVE: Social networks have become a phenomenon of modern times, and their popularity is still growing. Platforms of these media provide space for various marketing strategies, including human resources management. The paper submitted focuses on the role of social networks, namely Facebook and LinkedIn, in the job search process from the perspective of a jobseeker. The objective of the paper is to describe the ways users use these networks for this purpose, to analyse their trend, and compare the results obtained with the results presented in the Scottish study "Using social media during job search" by John A. Mowbray and Hazel Hall (2021). METHODS: The basic data source is responses obtained through an online questionnaire and interviews showing the personal experience of four respondents with the networks under review. Based on the response, a comparison with the relevant findings published in the study by Mowbray and Hall (2021) was carried out. RESULTS: The results show the growing popularity of using Facebook and LinkedIn in job seeking from the side of jobseekers and point to the fact that the type of job searched influences user behaviour. These networks enable both active and passive search, represent a comfortable environment for jobseekers, and are used for building thematic groups.CONCLUSION: The contribution of this paper is the recommended implementation of Facebook and LinkedIn in the job search and recruitment process in order to maximize the efficiency of these processes. The authors also point out the lack of adequate studies concerning users of these networks in the Czech Republic.

Keywords: employment, networking, social network, social media, Facebook, LinkedIn

1. Introduction

Social media platforms differ from each other in their functionality. The common feature is that they enable users to communicate and share content within the community. Social networks are widely used for various recruitment purposes, and their active and considered involvement enables reaching excellent results since through social networks, it is possible to address a large number of prospective job jobseekers (Stokes et al., 2019) or conduct various opinion polls and questionnaire surveys (Hardfield et al., 2021). An effective campaign and targeted implementation of Facebook advertising for recruitment of a large number of samples from a narrowly targeted population enable addressing even users who would probably not search for given information (Akers & Gordon, 2018; Guthrie et al., 2019).

Thanks to their capabilities, Facebook and LinkedIn have become useful tools also for human resources management, because their implementation in the recruitment process is easy and almost inexpensive. If a company does not use this option as one of its recruitment methods, it would risk losing quality jobseekers in favour of its competitors. When presenting on social networks, companies should not rely on organic search results, i.e., unpaid ones. Sufficient funds need to be allocated for the promotion of the profile. The prices of advertising on social networks are relatively low (Tikno, 2017) and due to the subsequent availability of statistical metrics, it can be soon seen whether given advertisements are efficient or not. However, for example on Facebook, this creates a lot of competition, and users are thus overexposed (Broeck et al., 2017) and sometimes even threatened (Arrate et al., 2020) by abundant advertising.

At present, there is still a lack of information on the ways how jobseekers use social media to find a job. A research study by John A. Mowbray and Hazel Hall entitled "*Using social media during job search*" focuses on jobseekers aged 16 – 24 living in Scotland and how they use e.g., Facebook and LinkedIn as sources of information when looking for a job (Mowbray & Hall, 2020). This paper aims to compare the results of quantitative and qualitative research conducted for the purposes of this paper with the findings and conclusions drawn by Mowbray and Hall. The subject of this research is social networks Facebook and LinkedIn. Their selection was given by the possibility of their use in the recruitment process. These networks are very well known, have a strong user base, and are a kind of the opposite of each other.

2. Literary Research

There have been many studies examining how companies use social networks for brand building, how they include networks in the recruitment process, and further examined their overall dynamics in human resources management. There are still companies that do not fully use the potential of social media. Zeler (2021) analysed the communicative approach, information resources, and the level and degree of interaction of Chilean companies on Facebook. Through a comparative study with Latin American companies, the author concludes that the spread of information is mostly one-way, with a low level of interaction. The analysed companies prefer self-presentation over active communication with clients on social networks. Beltrán & Neira (2021) surveyed a sample of 365 micro and small enterprises operating in advertising in Bogotá in order to identify online tools used in their digital marketing strategies. The results of the survey indicate that companies in this size category still do not use digital resources efficiently and strategically for their promotion. In the field of human resources management, Ruparel et al. (2020) state that professional platforms of social media create better opportunities for the users´ career growth but on the other hand, there is often a problem with deceptive self-presentation tactics of individuals. The use of social networks is also significantly reflected in workplace relationships, which has been confirmed by OllierMaraterre & Foucreault (2021) in their research including a sample of 202 employees in Canada. According to the research, friendship acts (e.g. liking, comments) contribute significantly to building a positive relationship between given employees and vice versa – for example, disparaging comments negatively affected their relationship.

The effects of using social networks in corporate practice include eliminating the probability of jobseekers´ favouritism due to personal preferences and optimization of the recruitment process effectiveness. Through interviews with recruiters, a recent study by Hedenus et al. (2021) showed that online networks are used by recruiters, who look for potential jobseekers that use these networks, but also serve as a useful source of information about the candidates. The authors acknowledge that recruiters assess the credibility of job seekers based on their connection and interaction with other users of the network. Similar results were also achieved by research conducted in Kosovo companies. Through interviews with business managers, it was found that this form of recruitment saves time and money, and it also enables obtaining information that could be intentionally withheld during the interviews (Dragusha & Prenaj, 2021). Roulin & Levashin (2019) found that LinkedIn profiles can

provide valid and reliable conclusions on planning or communication skills or cognitive skills. Although this research direction is key to the development of the field, it provides little information about the actual recruitment practice.

Suen (2018) focused on how candidates react when they are screened by a potential employer by means of their profiles on social networks. By applying social network screening and analysis using partial modelling, the author found that a candidate is much more likely to withdraw from the selection process if screened this way. However, this negative perception improves if candidates can control their privacy on their network and decide which information shall be visible to other users. Mishra (2019) states that Facebook presents the details of the social activities of a given candidate, while LinkedIn provides an overview of his/her professional relationships and work experience. Henderson (2019) surveyed 195 recruitment specialists in the USA in order to examine the indicators by means of which the activities on social networks are evaluated and those that lead to excluding a candidate from the selection procedure. Most respondents stated that what they consider important is professionalism; a smaller number mentioned work experience, communication skills, and potential inconsistency between CV and personal information on social networks. The most commonly mentioned "red flag" that leads recruiters to drop a candidate from the selection procedure was inappropriate behaviour (e.g., unprofessional photos or inappropriate posts), and to a much lower extent, information indicating that the candidate is not qualified for the given position (lack of experience, poor communication skills, etc.).

Melão & Reis (2020) used a research sample of 10,000 recruitment professionals in Portugal. Using a cross-sectional survey, they found that the most commonly used networks are LinkedIn (89 %) and Facebook (58 %), and the screening of candidates´ profiles usually takes place before the first interview. The most commonly inferred constructs from profiles are work experience, education and training, writing and communication skills, maturity, and professionalism. In the other study, Melão points to the fact that HR managers often analyse profile information that is not directly related to the given position (Melão & Reis, 2021). The results of research conducted among managers of 122 enterprises operating in the sector of services and manufacturing in Turkey by Vardarlier & Ozsahin (2021) showed that HR managers prefer LinkedIn in most recruitment processes. On the contrary, a study in Pakistan showed that in the case of e-recruitment, Facebook turned out to be the most effective tool (Waheed et al., 2019). However, gaining career benefits does depend on the number of contacts but on the frequency of using the given network, as confirmed by Davis et al. (2020) in the case of using Facebook.

There can be a slight difference between users who use Facebook to find a job and those that use LinkedIn. According to Utz & Breuer (2019), the users of social networks intended for professional purposes, such as LinkedIn, show higher professional informational benefits than those who do not use such networks. Based on a survey conducted in Scotland, Mowbray et al. (2021) concluded that those who look for jobs with lower status tend to prefer Facebook, while those who seek jobs of higher status prefer LinkedIn. This trend was previously documented by Baird (2019) in a study focused on the medical environment. The results showed that more than 50 % of otolaryngologists in Australia and New Zealand (51.6 %) used mostly LinkedIn.

Rapanta & Cantoni (2017) state that unlike other social media platforms, such as Twitter, Instagram, or Facebook, which focus on the aspects of social networks as such, LinkedIn is the most influential web-based tool for professional use. According to Banerji & Reimer (2019), unlike profiles on other social media platforms, LinkedIn profiles are perceived rather as professional online CVs, which form an actively communicating group of human resources by connecting with other professionals. Most research projects or research and studies conducted on social media networks focus on Facebook, but there are only a few dealing with LinkedIn as a tool for the recruitment process. According to Stokes et al. (2019), the strengths and advantages of recruitment using LinkedIn include cost-efficiency, speed of recruitment, and snowballing effect. Silva et al. (2017) argued that HR managers and recruiters used the professional social network LinkedIn only as a complement to the recruitment process. However, this statement is no longer relevant, since

according to Kwok & Muñiz (2021), LinkedIn is currently the most preferred social media tool used in recruitment processes, and is playing an increasingly important role in advertising a vacancy or a new job position, as well as in the selection procedure.

Based on the literary research, two research questions were formulated in order to achieve the objective set. (1) What is the role of social networks in job seeking? (2) How are the social networks under review used?

3. Methodology

The qualitative part of the research includes semi-structured interviews with four respondents. The research sample includes individuals from three different age groups (20–29 years, 30–39 years, and 40–49 years), at three different types of job positions (employee, self-employed person, parental leave) and from four different sectors (manufacturing and industry, IT and communications, HR and HR specialists, health and social care). These respondents will be asked two identical sets of questions, the first set of questions concerning Facebook, while the second set concerned LinkedIn. The interview aims to determine how the users use or (used) these networks in job seeking. Direct probing questions will be used that will focus on the contextual factors (e.g. "How do you use discussion groups on LinkedIn?" and "How do you use Facebook groups in relation to your job?"), as well as multiple-choice questions (e.g. rating certain statements on a scale from 1 to 5). The collected data will be further analysed in order to get a more detailed insight into the issue. Afterward, the findings will be compared with the equivalent data from the research by John A. Mowbray and Hazel Hall (2021).

The quantitative part will include data collection using the method of a questionnaire survey conducted online between 14 October 2021 and 14 November 2021. The questionnaire survey enables determining the current situation and potential of these social networks in terms of the issue under review. The survey will be conducted using the online tool Survio. The survey is in the Czech language and will be distributed mainly using the social network Facebook by means of posting in thematic groups and direct addressing randomly selected respondents through private messages. The questionnaire will also be posted in the discussion group HR forum CZ on LinkedIn. Its completion is only possible by joining via a direct link. The addressed users will also be asked to share the link through their contacts. The structure of the questionnaire is simple, which enables the respondents to get through it quickly and simply. The questionnaire consists of 16 closed questions and the respondents can choose from prepared questions. Potential feedback will be used for improvements. The introductory part of the questionnaire is focused on the basic statistical characteristics of respondents, such as gender, age, or employment. In the second part, the respondents answer the formulated questions so that it is possible to determine how they use the given social networks in searching for a vacancy. The questions are designed to enable each respondent to choose one or more options and are clearly and simply formulated.

All data from the questionnaires will be processed using Excel. The first cell of each column contains the questions from the questionnaire survey. An answer from a respondent is entered into the next row below the given question, which means that each row represents one completed questionnaire. The resulting document will contain 17 columns. The number of rows in each column is determined by the number of responses. Subsequently, a table will be created for recording the absolute and relative frequency of each of the questions in the questionnaire survey. The first column of the table will contain the responses (options) the respondents were choosing from. The second column will contain the absolute frequency of the responses and the third column the calculated relative frequency of responses in percentage. The results will be presented in the form of pie charts or tables including the description and comments. Finally, the results will be compared with the findings from the research by John A. Mowbray and Hazel Hall (2021).

4. Results

Qualitative and quantitative findings are jointly presented below. The joint presentation was chosen in order to maintain the complexity of the information found. The respondents did not consent to the publication of their names and are referred to by numbers (Respondent 1 – Respondent 4). Their descriptive characteristics are presented in Table 1. By posting the questionnaire in thematically relevant Facebook groups and using the snowballing effect, about 123 visitors were recorded in the given period, with 56.1 % successfully completing the questionnaire (n = 69).

4.1 General use

The results show that in terms of its general use, Facebook is more popular with the respondents than LinkedIn. At the time of the data collection, nearly half of the respondents (n = 34) had a profile on Facebook, and nearly 40 % (n = 26) had profiles on both social networks (see Graph 1).
For comparison, only 10 % (n = 7) of the respondents stated that they have a profile on LinkedIn only.

Table 1: Statistical characteristics of respondents

	Gender	Age group	Sector	Employment
Respondent 1	female	20–29	Health and social care	Parental leave
Respondent 2	female	30–39	Manufacturing and industry	employee
Respondent 3	male	40–49	IT and communications	Self-employed person
Respondent 4	male	20–29	Services	employee

Source: Author
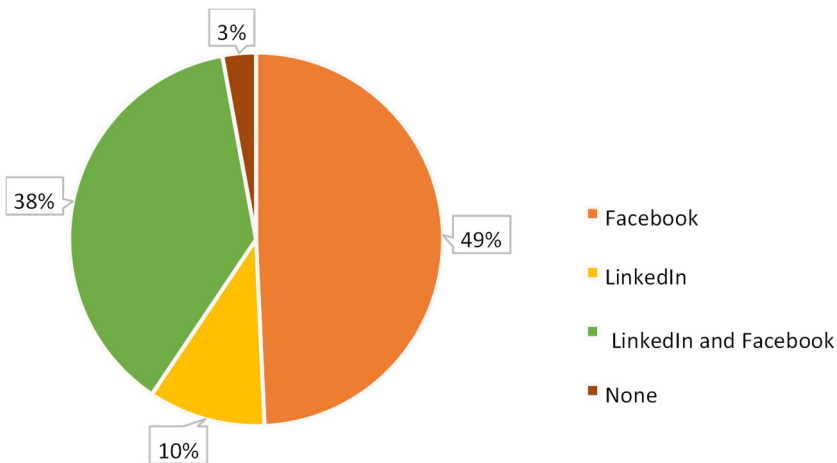
Graph 1: User profiles
Source: Author

A similar trend was recorded in the frequency of using individual social networks (see Table 2) when 91.3 % (n = 63) of the respondents confirmed that they use Facebook on daily basis.
In contrast, only 5.8 % (n = 4) of the respondents visited LinkedIn on daily basis.

Table 2: Frequency of logging into the networks

Platform	Rarely (Several times per 6 months or less)	Sometimes (Several times per month)	Often(Several times per week)	Daily
Facebook	4.3%	2.9%	1.4%	91.3%
LinkedIn	18.8%	18.8%	8.7%	5.8%

Source: Author

It follows from the interviews with the four selected respondents that in the past, only one of them used the profile on LinkedIn as a tool for finding a job. None of the respondents used Facebook as a direct tool to find a job.

4.2   Social networks in job seeking

These social media are not considered by the respondents to be the main source of information concerning job opportunities but they facilitate the passive acquisition of information even if jobseekers are not active. All respondents state that on social networks, they follow posts or are members of groups through which they acquire information on job positions. One of the respondents confirmed having been addressed by a head-hunter through the user profile on LinkedIn. These findings highlight the potential of obtaining information from these networks, even without actively searching for resources. The responses provided by the respondents (interviewees) included (1) following groups focused on career counselling (e.g. HR forum CZ on LinkedIn and LMC on Facebook) and (2) membership in common interest groups founded by people in their work field. Contact through private message was recorded in the case of Respondent 2 (see the citation below):

> *"My mum knew I was looking for a job. Every other day she sent me two or more job offers when some of the local companies published information on a vacancy published on Facebook. I found this very useful."*

Respondent 2 also stated that she likes following the Facebook and LinkedIn profiles of selected companies in order to have information about the current activities and projects of individual companies. She also pointed to the advantages she may have before potential job interviews:

> *"Following these profiles is useful because you know what is going on in the company".*

Based on the responses, the assumed preference for LinkedIn as a platform for professional use has not been confirmed in the case of active job seeking. In terms of using Facebook and LinkedIn in job seeking, the responses were almost identical, indicating that the majority of the respondents did not directly use either of the networks to find a job (see Table 2).

Table 3: Active job seeking

Platform	Using network for job seeking – YES	Using network for job seeking – NO	Using network for preparation for interview – YES	Using network for preparation for interview – NO
Facebook	34.8%	65.2%	13%	87%
LinkedIn	31.9%	68.1%	13%	87%

Source: Author

The respondents provided information on how they actively use Facebook a LinkedIn in relation to their professional life. The question of "How do you use your Facebook groups in terms of your employment" was answered by Respondent 3 as follows:

> *"I use Facebook on daily basis. In my groups related to my professional field, I focus mostly on solving work-related problems and networking. I like to network with people and many times, I have found solutions to a problem I had at work".*

All four interviewees had experience with the social networks under review in terms of active job seeking. Respondent 1 mentions following Facebook groups where employers post vacancies (e.g. the Facebook group *Volná pracovní místa Jižní Čechy*). He also pointed to the fact that he felt less stressed when contacting the employer through a private message than contacting them by phone or in person. The comfort of this means of communication was also mentioned by Respondent 4, who used this form mainly on Facebook.

The question concerning the use of Facebook and LinkedIn in relation to employment was included in the questionnaire survey. The results presented in Table 3 and Table 4 indicate that most respondents actively use Facebook and LinkedIn mainly for reading posts and following current information. The share expressed in percentage is 48.6 % for Facebook and 22.9 % for LinkedIn. About 40 % of the respondents stated that they do not use Facebook in connection with their work. In the case of LinkedIn, it is 75.7 %. Another important finding is the information about the share of respondents that use their groups for discussion and finding solutions to their work-related problems. In this respect, the respondents mentioned Facebook as a more preferred environment, with 14.3 % discussing, and 10 % solving work-related problems, which, of course, may be combined in practice.

Table 4: "How do you use Facebook groups in connection with your employment?"

Response	Number of responses	Percentage share
Reading posts	34	48.6 %
Discussing	10	14.3 %
Job seeking	8	11.4 %
Solving work-related problems	7	10 %
Looking for employees	3	4.3 %
Looking for business contacts	3	4.3 %
I don´t use them	28	40 %

Source: Author

Table 5: "How do you use discussion groups on LinkedIn in connection with your employment?"

Response	Number of responses	Percentage share
Reading posts	16	22.9 %
Discussing	1	1.4 %
Job seeking	6	8.6 %
Solving work-related problems	0	0 %
Looking for employees	1	1.4 %
Looking for business contacts	4	5.7 %
I don´t use them	53	75.7 %

Source: Author

Both qualitative and quantitative parts of the research focused on examining to what extent the respondents have experience with selected general activities on the given networks. Specifically, these were (1) discovering new information resources, (2) seeking interesting job opportunities, (3) the relevance of job offers generated by an algorithm, and (4) posting links to their profile when sending CVs. In the first case, 75.4 % (n = 52) of the respondents more often found new resources of information on Facebook. Just for comparison, in the case of LinkedIn, it was 33.3 % (n = 23) of the respondents. A similar trend could be seen in the case of seeking interesting job opportunities, with a ratio of 40.5 % (n = 28) for Facebook to 23.2 % (n = 16) for LinkedIn. The suggested job offers were relevant in more than 50 % of the cases, specifically, in the case of Facebook, it was 54 % (n = 37); in the case of LinkedIn, it was 58 % (n = 40) of the respondents. Only 19 % (n = 13) of the respondents would send a link to their LinkedIn profile with their CV; in the case of Facebook, it is only 7 % (n = 5) of the respondents. In the part of the interview focused on these questions, respondent 3 answered as follows:

> *"For me, as a self-employed person, an appropriate and professional self-presentation is very important. If a customer is interested in the services I provide, they decide based on the information they are able to look up about me. My Facebook and LinkedIn profiles are highly professional and when a customer contacts me, I send them links to my profiles along with my portfolio."*

Respondent 4 also expressed concern about recruiters looking at candidates´ personal profiles when searching for potential employees, which once caused his application to be rejected due to inappropriate comments below a controversial Facebook post in his case. This corresponds with the findings obtained from the questionnaire survey, where 94 % of the respondents (n = 65) confirmed that they do not use Facebook for presenting their CV and work experience, and 95 % of the respondents would never send a link to their Facebook profile to a potential employer. 52 % (n = 36) of them do not use this social network even for contacting their colleagues or other professionals from their field. Just for comparison, about 17.3 % (n = 12) respondents present their profile on LinkedIn; 8.6 % (n = 6) out of them used this network for communication with colleagues.

5. Discussion of Results

The study presented aims to compare the results obtained by means of a questionnaire survey and interviews with the findings obtained by Mowbray and Hall (2021) in their study dealing with a similar issue. Their study conducted in Scotland shows a high level of professionality and some of the statistical methods used for the analysis of the results obtained could not be used for the purposes of this study due to the insufficient number of respondents. The number of respondents in the study by John A. Mowbray was more than fourteen times higher than in the case of this study, and the number of interviewees was more than three times higher. Mowbray´s study is based on Wilson´s model of information behaviour, which was an inspiration for this study. The concept of Wilson´s model was not fully followed here, but it provided an insight into the structure of Mowbray´s research. The respondents in the Scottish study were aged 16 – 24. The age range of the respondents in the study submitted is wider, with most respondents falling into the category of 20 – 39 years. Consistency was achieved by the fact that all respondents were active users of the social networks under review.

5.1 General use

The Scottish respondents in the study by Mowbray and Hall (2021) are not significantly different from the respondents in this study in terms of the general use of the social networks under review. Digital platforms are a common part of the lives of all respondents and are used on daily basis. The respondents perceived Facebook and LinkedIn the same in general – Facebook as a means to share private information and personal experience, while LinkedIn as a professionally oriented network. As

in the case of the Scottish study, there was identified preference for Facebook in terms of everyday use. These findings confirm that the use of these media is ubiquitous and is becoming a frequently used resource of social capital.

5.2 Social networks in job seeking

The study by Mowbray and Hall confirmed the generally assumed pattern of popularity in using social networks for job seeking. It has been found that of the two platforms reviewed, LinkedIn is more often used for job seeking. At this point, the results of the study did not correspond to the findings of the study submitted. An important construct inferred from the questionnaire survey is the surprising fact that the respondents used Facebook for job seeking to a greater extent compared to LinkedIn. This fact can be given by the majority type of the respondents, which were people who already had a job, i.e. the passive job seekers. Facebook turned out to be more popular with the respondents for both personal and professional use, which is in contradiction with the results of the Scottish study, where Facebook rated second, less popular than LinkedIn. The results of this survey are not in line with Mowbray´s findings in that about half of the respondents in Scotland used Facebook for job seeking. In the case of the survey conducted for the purposes of the study submitted, the findings were the opposite. More than half of the respondents do not and did not use Facebook for job seeking. In both studies, in terms of directly addressing the employers offering a vacancy, both networks reported balanced results, as both Facebook and LinkedIn were used for this purpose almost to the same extent.

As already mentioned, Facebook and LinkedIn enable obtaining information about various job opportunities with various levels of relevance. In the context of job seeking, the users might either actively seek this information or receive them passively. In this respect, the findings of the study submitted are in line with Mowbray´s study. Members of relevant groups passively receive the submitted content, which may then be used in job seeking. Information can also be obtained by being contacted directly via private message by someone from the personal network, which points to the effectiveness of the networks under review as communication channels. An important thing is also to get an overview of active information searching by means of these media. This includes surveys of companies by following their company profiles, membership in thematical groups, and subsequent active searching for job advertisements or contacting potential employers through private messages.

Qualitative findings of Mowbray and Hall suggest that the sector respondents work in can be an important factor for preferring one network over the other one. This trend was not ambiguously confirmed by the study; however, it shall be noted that during the interviews, a certain inclination to LinkedIn was noted in the case that the respondent was looking for a job of higher status. This is indirectly by the Scottish study, according to which *"... using social networks for job seeking is related to a higher level of education attained."*

User trends are slightly different for Facebook, both in the survey conducted for the purposes of this study and in the Scottish study. Facebook tends to be used more by younger jobseekers willing to accept a lower-status job if the subjective perception of the salary offered is positive. This study did not prove the existence of gender differences in terms of using or preference for one of the social networks under review. There was no significant difference between men and women in choosing a particular social network for job seeking. This study pointed to a tendency to use private chat when contacting a potential employer. Thanks to the possibility to react to jobs offered via private messages sent to employers, the respondents showed a lower level of stress compared to personal contact or phone call. This trend is confirmed also by the study by Mowbray, who adds that also thanks to this informal and convenient means of communication, the popularity of using the networks under review is growing rapidly.

6. Conclusion

The possibility of networking and gathering information in an online environment provides a real advantage not only in terms of competition. Despite the common use of social networks in everyday and working life, there are very few professional studies dealing with this issue, with a focus on the user base in the Czech Republic. A key finding of this study is the potential of using Facebook and LinkedIn in recruitment processes. Users are increasingly more interested in this way of informal communication with a potential employer and the networks are used as a main and additional source of information in the process of job seeking. They provide an ideal environment for both active and passive jobseekers and represent an effective information channel by means of which users can find information on interesting job offers from people in their personal network of contacts. The use of social networks in the process of selecting and hiring new employees is becoming common practice and it shall be noted that this way is becoming increasingly more popular. HR managers and companies are well aware of the importance of presenting the company this way and jobseekers expect to find the desired information using these media. The professionals and specialists who work with jobseekers must be aware of the usefulness of social media. It could thus be suggested that the use of social media platforms in job seeking should be one of the basic recommendations provided by career counselling services.

Interviews conducted for the purposes of this study provided the desired information from specific users of both social networks, while the questionnaire survey enabled obtaining an insight into the general trend. Nevertheless, in the context of this issue, more detailed and deeper research is needed to obtain more relevant and detailed results, which would form a solid basis of knowledge about this very complex phenomenon.

7. Acknownledgments

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