# THE USE OF SOCIAL NETWORKS SITES IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS

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**Abstract**

The diversity of jobs and lack of candidates force the employers to find creative ways to recruit new employees. The purpose of this study is to identify the relation between social network and social network sites in the recruitment process, and its consequences upon both employees and employers. Also I will focus on how social networks sites have enriched the recruitment management system in organization and in human recourse management. This research aims to explore the nature of the changes that the online environment involves in the recruitment and selection process and the way in which these changes are integrated into the organizational environment. By means of the theoretical framework, this article describes tendencies in job recruitment and selection process. The study analyses and reviews the literature, to provide additional knowledge and improved understanding of an ever evolving phenomenon.
**Keywords**: social network, social network sites, employees, recruitment, management, human resource.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

When we think of the contemporary society, we realize that part of the time we live is online, social life has begun to happen in social networking. Undoubtedly, the online environment has strong channels of social communication. Nica and Potcovaru (2014, 58) argue that social constructionism is consistent with realism, but also with social construction of the subject, and this shapes of reality.

Users among social networks are at the highest level in 2019 (current year), and the trend is to increase. The current statistics doesn't show any decline or decrease of users in social networks. In the second quarter of 2019, there were 2.41 billion active Facebook users in the world, this number being the largest of the Facebook era. Comparing with the year before, at the same quarter, the number of users increase with almost 0.1 billion. The data was calculated based on people that have logged in to Facebook in the last 30 days (Clement, 2019).

Looking at network that are specific for labour market and organization, Linkedin is the biggest social network with active users, 645 million members, in over 200 countries in the world. In Romania there are 2 million Linkedin users (Linkedin, online).

The exposure that these channels guarantee and the viral nature of the information transmitted have a strong impact on the social life in general, one of its peculiarities being reflected on the labour market (Marsden and Gorman, 2001). The recruitment process is a need for each organization, at the same time that recruitment is also an important step in the career of any adult. The study integrates evidence that reflects both ways, how organizations react and adapt to the challenges of global trends in online communication, and the impact they have on the target audience, through the theoretical explorations of the topic.

## 2. FROM SOCIAL NETWORKS TO SOCIAL NETWORK SITES

*Networking* is a concept that is used in many fields, in social sciences being referred to as *social networks* (Freeman, 2004; Hâncean, 2014), while in social media as *social network sites* (Boyd and Ellison 2007). The general definition of networking implies a connection between units that are in relation one with the other, there way the social network perspective "encompasses theories, models, and applications that are expressed in terms of relational concepts or processes. That is, relation defined by linkages among units are a fundamental component of network theories" (Wasserman and Faust, 1994, 4).

Other perspectives underline that: "a social network is a map of the relationships between individuals that indicate the ways in which they are connected through different degrees of social familiarity starting from casual acquaintances to strong family connections" (Mitruțiu, 2005, p. 1). From a sociological viewpoint, Sandu (2003) defines social networks as "relatively durable structures of interaction between actors in a relationship of exchange, based on specific sets of expectations and resources" (p. 33). The term "social network" refers to those relationships between individuals or social groups based on continuity or repetitiveness (Hâncean, 2014).

To complete these definitions, network analysis is a research method (Hâncean, 2014; Mina-Raiu, 2015), in which the relationship between the units of analysis is important; a relationship that allows us to identify the role of each actor in the dynamics of the group. In other words, a social network represents a group of individuals who share common interests.

In the literature about social network we can find a variety of division of networks classified according to the type of relation and the number of members that share a specific network. Furthering on, we will list some of these types of networks: self-centered networks: at the individual-ego level and alters (Wolfe 1997; Hâncean 2014); bi-modal networks: relations between two sets of actors (relation between institutions, organizations, non-governmental organizations) (Geroliminis Zheng and Ampountolas, 2014); affiliation networks - actor/event - participation in an event, belonging to a party, etc. (Lattanzi and Sivakumar 2009); behavioral networks: shaped according to the activity field or the social system of the individual but also among individuals that share similar navigation patterns in the online environment (Esslimani, Brun and Boyer 2009); organizational networks: relationships between structures at the macro level (Hâncean, 2014); online social networks (Garton, Haythornthwaite and Wellman 1997).

The link between social networks and social networks sites is that both are based on the same theoretical approach, and has similar structures, but social networks sites occur online, and was particularity to protect the privacy of the users if they decide this. The social network sites are defined as web-based, that provide individuals to manage their web profile with the next assumption (Boyd and Ellison, 2007, 211):

1. "construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system

2. articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection

3. view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system"

Social networks have the characteristic of finding them both in the physical social life and in the online environment. The paradigm of social network sites as a theory, a concept, took from the theory of social networks, but is distinguished with the particularity of being realized in an online environment and brings a new dimension, that people can develop relationships with strangers. An important role here is the visibility of the social network of friends/acquaintances to each user. Boyd and Ellison argue, based on Haythornthwaite's study (2005), that this can happen by `latent ties` as: "the result of connections between individuals that would not otherwise be made, but that is often not the goal, and these meetings are frequently between "latent ties" who share some offline connection" (2007, 211).

## 3. TYPES OF SOCIAL NETWORKS SITES

A classification of social networks sites according to the degree of accessibility from the outside indicates the existence of closed and open social network sites. From the point of view of the efficiency of the informational contribution at the individual level, the open social networks sites present much more opportunities than a dense and closed system, in which the information will be repeated, and the individuals will not be exposed to new knowledge, beliefs and values.

The theory of social networks is described in terms of nodes and connections, the nodes being the individual components of the network, and the connections being the connections between these components (Mitruțiu, 2005, 2). Intercultural studies of anthropology and sociology have established that an efficient social network can have a maximum of 150 members. This fact is due to the psychological capacities of individuals to follow the lives of other members and to interact in a meaningful way with them. For this reason, social networks that exceed this number of members will always have a smaller cohesion group (Freeman, 2004; Hâncean 2014).

In order to be able to differentiate the roles of social network sites and the potential that their use has, it is necessary to classify them according to purpose. There are over 65 social media platforms (Jamie, 2019) worldwide, but White (2012), distinguishes seven types of online platforms that are more relevant for most of the people:

- Online platforms for social connections (Facebook, Myspace, Twitter, WhatsApp, Google+, etc.)
- Online platforms for multimedia distribution (YouTube, Flickr, Instagram, etc.)
- Online platforms for professional (discussion forums on specialized topics)
- Online platforms for informational (websites, blogs, forums)
- Online platforms for educational
- Online platforms for hobbies
- Online platforms for academic (Academia.edu, ResearchGate.net etc.)

In Romania the penetration rate of online platforms has reached 49% of the total population, and by 2022 the prediction is that it would reach 55% from the total population. This statistic is calculated based on last month active users, according to O`Dea (2018). As we can see from Figure 1, half of the population is using social network sites and the number of the users will increase in the future.
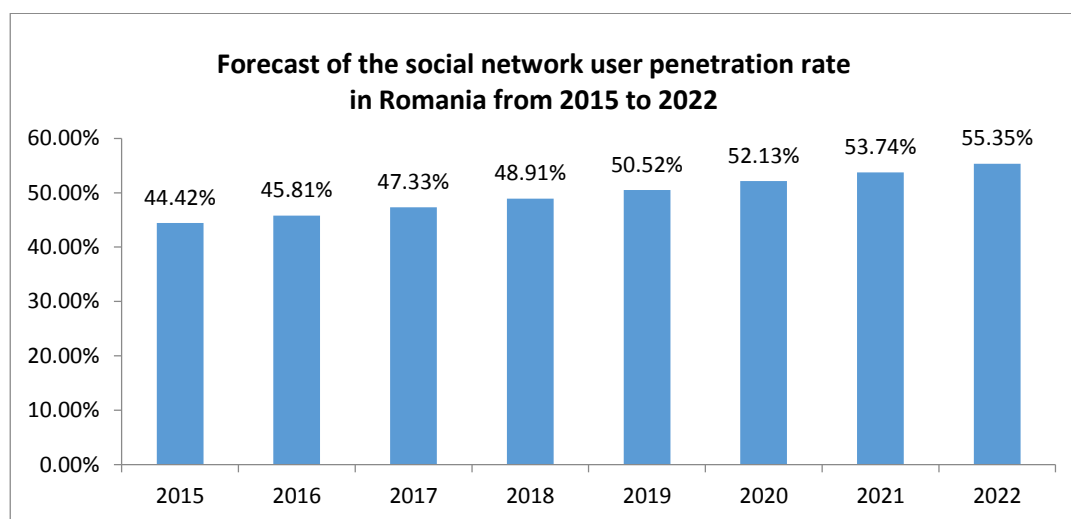


FIGURE 1 - PROPORTION OF POPULATION USING SOCIAL NETWORKS BY YEAR
Source: O`Dea, 2018, Statista

## 4. RECRUITMENT MANAGEMENT SYSTEM THROUGH NETWORK SITES

The human resource management and especially the recruitment management system has greatly developed with the new technologies and digital era. The employers are using digital tools in internal and external recruitment, as a form of classical and online recruitment (e-recruiting) (Smith and Rupp 2004). As Smith and Rupp (2004) point out: "hiring processes from the paper and time-intensive manual method to an automated one saves time and money and boosts productivity by leaving positions vacant for shorter periods of time. In addition, the cost associated with posting on a job board compares favourably with placing job ads in newspapers, and, in some cases, may be more cost-effective". The external recruitment tools have increased in number and diversity. Stan (2016) highlights the recent forms and modalities of external recruitment as: specialized recruitment sites; company websites as careers section; central and local press; job fairs and other career events (conferences, workshops, seminars, open-door days - open days for company visits); internal database (the computer system in which the former applications are stored, which can be reactivated for later use, in new sourcing processes); recommendations received from current or former employees and/or candidates; partnership with universities to promote the image of the employer, internship for students; contact

with agencies offering actual recruitment, mass recruitment services, head-hunting (executive search) and temporary placement agents (personnel leasing).

In many cases, external recruitment system through network sites is more efficient than through formal channels. The explanation is that it ensures a better match between people and positions, by focusing on the interest expressed in the knowledge of the case, on the direct experience and on the credibility and security of the information (Smith and Rupp, 2004; Koch et. al., 2018). Other advantages of this method would be the speed of identifying the right candidate and guaranteeing the quality, rapid integration and performance of the new employees through the people who recommend them. Employees recruited through interpersonal referrals not only can understand their position better from the beginning, but can even perform better, due to pre-existing relationships with older employees, links that can create solidarity with a high degree of satisfaction, motivation, commitment and loyalty (Doherty 2010). Thus, the integration into the team becomes immediate, and the informal training is provided by the existing employees. Another advantage, at least negligible, of the informal methods is the often very low cost, thus disappearing the expenses quite significant with the recruitment through the formal channels (Brezoiu, 2014; Gorman, 2015). On the long term, the use of social network sites and the activities that they imply are rooted with no signs that this seemingly irreversible process will cease. On the contrary, more and more people are becoming active factors in this phenomenon, including the elderly population. The phenomenon of social network no longer represents exclusively the youth, it is already becoming a channel of communication, sharing experiences and interests, or manifesting attitudes and ideologies for all age categories - a new, ever-increasing norm (Madia, 2011; Johnson, 2012; Popescu, Comanescu and Sabie 2016).

Social network sites can also offer prospects for disseminating and obtaining information about positions and potential employees. Different websites, such as LinkedIn, BestJobs, eJobs, Hipo and others, offer the possibility to publish job offers and CVs and search for suitable positions and candidates in their own databases, filtering by attributes such as the field of activity and location. Such advances offer new ways of disseminating and collecting information, and will undoubtedly serve to reduce space constraints in disseminating information on the labour market (Caers and Castelyns, 2011; Gorman, 2015; Koch et.al., 2018). LinkedIn is a social network site used mainly for professional networking, users manage a list that contains detailed contact details of the persons with whom they have a certain professional relationship, called "connections". This list of connections can then be used to create a network of contacts, track various companies and find jobs, people and business opportunities (Koch et.al., 2018). Therefore, the tendency of an increasing influence of social platforms on both the employees, as well as on the human resources and recruitment managers, is undeniable.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

By using social network sites to attract candidates suited to the needs of the organization, managers in the field will probably reach the level of professional recruiters. As the new generation continues to take on roles with increased levels of responsibility, it is possible that social platforms and their content will have an impact on all stakeholders. We are going through an unprecedented historical period, in which online channels are gaining ground, and the current generation of entry employees who are constantly using them will soon move into executive positions, for which selection and recruitment through such processes will increasingly affect many candidates.

Another important aspect in using these platforms is taking into account the differences between them. A recruitment strategy used on Facebook may have different results from the one used on LinkedIn, because the target audience may be different between different platforms (Caers and Castelyns, 2011; Hâncean, 2018). In Romania the most popular recruitment platforms used mostly to improve the image of organizations are BestJobs, eJobs and LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter (Brezoiu, 2014). Brezoiu (2014) argued that employers contact the candidates directly, using the recruitment social network sites in order to search for people whose profile corresponds to the available job. However, the time spent in the recruitment management system using social networks sites, guaranteeing the exposure of employers to a wide range of candidates, accelerates their attraction to the organization. Therefore, the exposure and the speed with which information circulates on social

network sites can be caused by the fluctuation of personnel, the accessibility of job offers of the competition in the online environment substantially increasing the mobility of personnel.

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