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## Analysing applicant's attraction with social networks on both sides of the table: those who recruit and those who are recruited have a compatible performance?

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### ABSTRACT

Applicant's attraction in recruitment is perhaps one of the best known areas that integrate knowledge from different fields of research, such as the HRM, Communication and Work and Organizational Psychology. Under this thematic, the social networks (SN) began to be understood as useful for recruitment purposes. The main objective of this research is to describe and understand the compatibility between the practices of recruiters regarding applicant's attraction using SN and the expectations of the latter ones when looking for jobs via SN. This work has allowed us to generate a set of considerations regarding the theoretical, empirical and practical levels.

### KEY WORDS

applicants' attraction; social networks; recruitment

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

In the economically globalized scenario where we currently find ourselves, it is advisable that organizations are prepared to constantly adapt to change in complex environments in order to achieve competitiveness levels higher than the competitors (Boxall & Purcell, 2003; Raisch & Birkinshaw, 2008; Gomes et al., 2013). In this sense, acting in the human resources (HR) field has shown to be a dynamic and complex process, particularly to those who have to deal with the important areas of talent attraction or retention, in which they must be able to combine the ability to understand and act at the level of individuals, but also using strategic organizational guidance. It is in this context that employers have been learning to deal with the complexity that managing employees requires, and in this sense, to foster effective HR management practices facing the specific situations of their activity in the search for positive differentiation (Paauwe, 2004; Parry, Stravrou & Lazarova, 2013).

It is under this demand of positive organizational differentiation through the human aspect that we can find meaning in the expression *war for talent*, which contains within it the idea of the relevance of organizations to devote themselves to the attraction and retention of human capital. In this context, organizations should develop efforts regarding good HR practices to get the most talented candidates, abilities and skills within the organization in order to facilitate the attainment of organizational goals (Gomes et al, 2013; Duarte, Gomes & Neves, 2014).

One of the most fundamental HR practices searching for value through the human factor is recruitment, which is positively associated with developers of success and business growth (Duarte et al, 2014). It is defined as a sequence of steps in which companies gather efforts to attract candidates with the profile and desired characteristics (Barber, 1998; Orlitzky, 2007). Finding the candidate that best suits the functions and needs of a business project in a sea of candidates can be challenging, and therefore, to develop the best strategies for applicant's attraction can be crucial for companies to differentiate themselves in a highly competitive business context (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010). As such, attracting the most talented candidates and the appropriate improvement of their skills is surely a valid path for fostering the success and survival of a company (Van Hoye, Bas & Lievens, 2013; Gomes et al, 2013).

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The spread of new technologies and the increasing use of new media in supporting management processes is nowadays a reality into the way people are managed in work contexts. This assumption is applicable in recruitment, putting into perspective how social networks (SN) can be used as a solid tool acting in applicant's attraction purposes, a fact that clearly motivates research interest (ex.: Gomes et al., 2013).

This study has the general objective of understanding the compatibility between organizations using SN for applicants' attraction purposes and the prospective applicants' expectations of job search activity via SN. In order to achieve this overall objective, two qualitative studies were developed with own and complementary objectives, allowing to realize (1) how organizations make use of the SN in the recruiting process and (2) to understand potential candidates' expectations of job search using SN.

## 2 HUMAN VALUE IN ORGANIZATIONS AND ORGANIZATIONAL ATTRACTION: THE CHALLENGES LAUNCHED BY SN VALUING THE HUMAN SIDE OF ORGANIZATIONS

One of the challenges that impose on companies nowadays is to know how to act among its human resources as an asset and not as a cost, lending them a transformative and strategic vision (Mathis & Jackson, 2002; Hatch & Dyer, 2004; Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010). This state of current thinking is the result of a long term process with clear landmarks, for which a remarkable diversity of factors has contributed to shape business management paradigms, shifting the way how people are viewed at organizations using an investment vision.

This value vision over the human factor had a higher expression in organizations with a presence in open and competitive markets, typically in countries in Europe and the United States of America (Gomes et al, 2013). With effect, Parry, Stavrou & Lazarova (2013) explain that this value perspective over the human factor was due to (1) political, (2) economic and (3) social factors. The level political, the authors highlight the major developments that have marked this period, as the fall of Communism (1989/90) and the consequent emergence of sovereign states based on capitalism, and also the integration and union of European countries which allowed the free access of goods, capital and people. Economically, globalization, the reorganization of economic powers, the big waves of expansion and economic decline, as well as uncertain markets and growing competitive pressures across the economies are also identified as change drivers in the organization's management practices. At the social level, the authors refer to the major European migratory waves that have occurred in the last decade of the twentieth century and the first of the twenty-first century, which took place following the fall of the Berlin Wall. Additionally, Brewster & Hegewisch (1994) stress the centrality of (4) scholars factors to clarify this value perspective over the HR. In this respect, the issue has been widely debated, giving the appearance of multiple theories of Human Resources Management and empirical research models of Work and Organizational Psychology supporting the relevance of valuing people for organizations. It is this context that we can place the emergence of RBV model (Resource-Based View) Barney (1991), establishing conditions for a resource to be considered strategic, which must be valuable, rare, inimitable and irreplaceable, and allowing companies the ability to differentiate themselves (Martin, Gollan & Grigg, 2011; Gomes et al, 2013). The model's assumptions when applied to Human Resources reveal the implementation of the strategic conditions of this feature to be adjusted.

With the arrival of the new millennium, business competitiveness gains stronger reliance on the knowledges of people and how they can apply it in organizations. Intellectual capital becomes an important aspect of the business world (Horibe, 1999; Mayrhofer, Brewster & Morley, 2004), and the idea that human capital provides companies their distinctive character, and contributes to ensure the survival and development of organizations (Harris & Ogbonna, 2001; Baron & Armstrong, 2007). In this strategic way of looking at human capital, there are requirements and crosscutting challenges that are needed to attend in the management of companies. It is in this context that Horibe (1999) believes that managers should strive for their human capital to be in constant learning, showing the need for effectiveness when organizations admit the entry of new people, as it represents new knowledge input. As such, the attraction, retention, and talent development of employees are directly linked to human capital development of a company, and thus, it should be a managers' concern to have a proactive talent attraction policy, making the expression *talent attracts talent* quite easily understandable (Camara, Guerra & Rodrigues, 2007, p. 27).

It is also in this context that remains valid and renewed the premise of the *war for talent*, that is, the importance of organizations to be effective in the search for the most talented candidates to support competitiveness and organizational success. The premise is based on the idea that if the scenario is adverse, companies need to identify, attract, retain, motivate and develop talented individuals to ensure their survival in the market. As such, organizations should find highly knowledgeable employees with relevant skills, providing them in exchange, learning opportunities and continuous development perspectives (Baron & Armstrong, 2007; Gomes et al, 2013; Michaels, Hanfield Jones & Axelrod, 2001). In this sense, it is critical to have accuracy when organizations deal with the applicants' attraction

challenges in recruitment, as well as compensation and incentive systems that allow companies in the sea of candidates, to attract those who will have the greatest competitive advantage, giving practical meaning to the commonly used expression by recruiters that the *attraction of candidates is business*.

### 3 APPLICANTS' ATTRACTION AND SOCIAL NETWORKS

Applicants' attraction is one of the stages of any recruitment process, relying on this stage the efficiency of the entire recruitment process. By definition, recruitment consists of "activities related to searching sources of intervention, able to provide the organization with a sufficient number of people necessary to achieve its objectives" (Chiavenato 1995, p.175). To do so, organizations need to take a set of communication decisions for recruitment in order to attract those who in the future may become employees of that company (Gomes & Neves, 2011). Applicants' attraction in recruitment is thus defined as the stage of the recruitment process where organizations develop deliberate efforts to attract a suitable candidate profile in quantity and quality to the desired profile (Duarte, Gomes & Neves, 2015).

Following this line of reasoning, the strategic decisions on recruitment imply knowing (1) where to recruit, whether internally or externally; (2) who to recruit, whether temporary or full-time workers matching the global profile; and (3) the job requirements, what are the characteristics necessary for the candidate's profile to meet the requirements that the job requires (Mathis & Jackson, 2002). More currently, SN have emerged as a means of applicants' attraction, allowing the fulfilment of the multiple benefits of action, including gathering more direct information about candidates (Gomes, et al., 2013). Organizational attraction is a remit of systematized study by researchers for nearly three decades, having strong diversity of theoretical approaches and empirical results. Research on organizational attraction tends to follow three main perspectives framework: (1) Cognitivist-informationist; (2) Attitudinal-Behaviourist; (3) Interactionist.

The cognitive-informationist perspective, refers to theoretical frameworks coming from cognitive psychology applied to organizational realities and work contexts. They attempt to explain cognitive processes' activation of individuals in the context of organizational attraction, leading to attitudes and behaviour prediction of potential candidates when they are exposed to different types of persuasive information (Duarte, Neves & Gomes, 2014; Gomes et al, 2013). This perspective is closely related to what Ehrhart & Ziegert (2005) call Environmental Processing, in which individuals organize and process information around them, and from there develop perceptions about the environment, influencing the attraction. Regarding the attitudinal-behaviourist perspective, it is based on theoretical models coming from social psychology and work and organizational psychology, aiming to explain the behaviour of individuals as a result of the prediction of their beliefs, attitudes and behavioural intentions, recognizing the applicant's attitudes as a result of a set of steps leading to behavioural intention and behaviour itself (Duarte Gomes & Neves, 2014). The attitudinal-behaviourist dimension, can be explained by Ajzen and Fishbein's (1980) Theory of Reasoned Action, arguing that the intention of an individual to have a (or not) behaviour is a consequence of action, that is, people act according to its intentions (Ajzen, 1988; Duarte, Gomes & Neves, 2014; Gomes, 2010). Finally, the interactionist perspective is based on theoretical approaches related to social psychology and work and organizational psychology, seeking to explain the applicants' attraction by the adjustment between the characteristics of the work / function and the characteristics of the candidates (Gomes et al, 2013). This perspective explains applicants' attraction based on the compatibility between people and the organization. At this level, Kim & Park (2011) show that the content of recruitment messages, web recruitment sites and the organization's personality can affect the fit between the candidate and the organization, explaining the attraction of candidates.

Having these theoretical perspectives in mind, and given the importance of organizational attraction to the success of a company, it's important to clarify a set of candidate attraction indicators that literature has systematically associated with effectiveness in applicants' attraction: attractiveness of the organization (Highhouse, Lievens & Sinar, 2003; Gomes, 2011); the characteristics of job and organizational attributes (Carless & Imber, 2007); social responsibility (Duarte, Gomes & Neves, 2015) the type of information and the means to use when recruiting (Roberson, Collins & Oreg, 2005); the image, organizational reputation and employer brand (Duarte, Gomes & Neves, 2014; Martin, Gollan & Grigg, 2011). These indicators have been successively associated with good results of applicants' attraction, as they have been linked to preferences of potential candidates by organizations, as well as decisions and application intentions to job offers. More recently, organizations have come to engage in attraction activities through the use of SN. This trend of activity surely shows the influence of technological factors on management, including HR management, materializing new performance practices in how to attract candidates and how does candidates seek the availability of jobs.

It's in this specific context that although the more traditional function of supply and demand of employment based on expertise large circulation newspapers is still valid, the truth is that with SN phenomena, both companies and candidates are still giving their first steps in this era of social networks when it comes to act in organizational

attraction (Guilroy & Hancock, 2012; Gilham, 2012). As the Internet's access democratization started a little over a decade, social networks are a cornerstone of Internet use that rewards the user as a producer and disseminator of content available to a community. Social Networks consists of a powerful tool allowing users to position themselves before a community through exchange and dissemination of very different types of content, ensuring the effectiveness of these networks on very different uses from entertainment, social, professional to business (Wodzicki, Schwämmlein & Moskaliuk, 2010; Parr, 2011). Thus, in addition to Facebook as a SN of wide dispersion, common users can have access to more specialized SN having content related to the labour market, such as LinkedIn, Career Search, Jobvite. These are examples of authentic communities built from the integration of businesses and users, allowing approaches between professional profiles sought by businesses and professional profiles available by users (Green, 2011; Guilroy & Hancock, 2012).

Following the recruiter's perspective, these specialized SN presents strong advantages related to the proximity to a remarkable diversity (either in quantity or in quality) of professional profiles having at their disposal very targeted information, especially in terms of search criteria such as professional experience, references, qualifications, personal and professional interests of potential candidates. As for the potential candidate's perspective, an active presence in these specialized networks allows them to be *within reach of the radar* of companies where maintaining a proactive stance in these SN means to have the ability to accompany business projects, an interest, business organizations of their vested interest. That is, it allows professionals to behave as potential candidates, by having a follower status of the organization, which indicates interest in any employment opportunities (eg.: Gilham 2011 (a)).

The way how SN work on recruitment procedures launch several issues on the remit of applicants' attraction (Stollak, Vandenberg, Felhofer & Sutherland, 2014). In fact, if we compare a more traditional process of attracting candidates in recruitment with a more SN's one, we find many differences, both from the perspective of companies as well as candidates. On the companies' side, there are changes in the way of access to knowledge about the candidates, their preferences, their referrals from co-workers, their record of digital activity, and points of interest. That is, all these elements that have traditionally been temporally slow to access and to verify, with the use of SN not only access is permeable as well as fast. Following the applicants' perspective several things also change. The access to knowledge of the organization, its projects, and its activity becomes more accessible and direct.

Following this framework, in particular, there are several questions that naturally can be raised about the *modus operandi* of both parties involved in attraction activities in recruitment. What is the best strategy to be followed by companies? What is the best strategy to be followed by candidates? Have the traditional methods of recruitment fallen into obsolescence and new attraction instruments will impose?

## 4 METHODOLOGY AND INSTRUMENTS

Recovering that the aim of this study is in the remit of understand the compatibility between the practices of recruiters in terms of applicant's attraction using SN and the expectations of the latter ones when looking for jobs via SN, this empirical study was conducted using a qualitative methodology through two separate studies, both of which are oriented to capture the realities experienced either by recruiters, either by potential applicants in particular of the Information Technology (IT) area. The choice for this IT area in particular relates to the fact that this is a very sought area in labour market, currently standing at full employment, and having the forecasts of severe lack of human resources for the next five years up to 1 million jobs in Europe (CEDEFOP, 2015). For these reasons, this area has varied pressures of demand, meaning that attracting applicants' in this context require strong attraction efforts by organizations.

The first study was designed to understand the recruiter's perspective while an intervening party in attracting candidates in recruitment procedures. To fulfil this purpose, three interviews were developed with recruiters with current functions in HR companies with experience in IT recruitment processes. Three companies have participated in this specific study (Company A; Company X, Company K). Questions asked placed the issues of: channels used when recruiting employees; why using SN channels; how to use SN as an employment dissemination tool; contexts that make the disclosure of employment through SN a better or worse choice; advantages and disadvantages of disclosing of job offers through SN for computer professionals (interview script available in Appendix 1)

In what regards the second study, it was designed to understand prospective applicants' expectations and considerations when using SN to search for job opportunities. To reach this purpose, four focus group sessions were developed (script in Appendix 2), having final year students of Computer Science courses in Portugal and also graduate students of engineering courses in Computer Science of the country's central region, aged 21 to 33 years, in order to get the perspective of these prospective candidates. Each session was attended from 7 to 11 participants. The focus group instrument is a guided interview technique, designed for small groups, with the aim of discussing a particular topic of relevance or interest, being a dynamic technique as a result of group interaction that can form (Berg, 2001).

These two distinct studies allowed a better understanding of the perspectives of recruiters and potential candidates, supporting the central objective of this study to understand the compatibility between the practices of recruiters in terms of applicant's attraction using SN and the expectations of the latter when looking for jobs via SN.

## 5 RESULTS STUDY 1

Regarding the issues related to the channels in the recruitment and selection of employees, Company X promotes the company's databases and social networks, giving as example the *sapo* jobs, online express or net jobs, explaining that *"those are the ones that have lower costs when compared with traditional channel"*. Company A also uses the company's website, the net jobs and the *sapo* job, adding that they *"use social networks when a client asks us a more qualified profile, but it is rare. We work more with the release of more operational profiles"*. Company K, in turn, uses the company's website, the presence of universities, Facebook and LinkedIn, distinguishing the latter ones as the channels that best meets the demand of candidates they are looking for. It is in this context that the company states that *"although there are no studies or data that prove, we begin to see in the kind of candidate who seeks us via LinkedIn. Are candidates with a profile of senior management (eg. middle managers and consultants), with an average age of around 30 years"*. Thus, it appears that the SN have begun to be part of the range of tools used in recruitment processes, leading traditional media tend to fade. However, there are still other methods, as exemplified by their own platforms for online employment disclosure, which in some cases overlap the use of SN.

Regarding the justification for the use of SN channels and not others, the answers vary. In the case of Company X, they point out some flaws in the use of recruitment channels via SN, recognizing their potential, stating, however, that they *"don't know for sure if it's good to stay only for social networks"* when it deals with the applicant's attraction, preferring the use of other online platforms as well. Company K justifies its options by *"what seems to work best for the company"*, not ruling out the use of other channels such as net employment or newspaper ad, although the latter has a more directed application of the company's advertising, then the disclosure of employment. Company A, in turn, explains the company's options, stating that *"for us these means become more effective due to our customers' needs as they seek candidates with a little qualified profile and normally this type of candidates does not use the Internet"*. One can thus understand that despite the SN are a present reality in the recruitment processes of companies, only the company K stands as an assiduous user of this type of tool.

Regarding the issues related to the way of use of SN as an employment dissemination tool, it was clear that companies use SN in the recruitment process, specifically Facebook and LinkedIn. Company K and A support their option due to satisfactory results, although the company K argues that *"when you want a more judicious recruitment, it may not arise as a better option"*, adding that *"it is still difficult to measure their effectiveness due to its recent entry to the recruitment methods"*. In justification of why their uncertainty in the use of social networks, the company K points out the fact that *"the ads are made simplistically and reach low-skilled and immediate needs"* and the fact that *"being a simplistic tool of recruitment, it applies when you want to recruit massively"*. As the company's A position on this issue, states that *"the profile we seek on a daily basis does not necessarily use these roads. When we want a more qualified set of applicants such as IT professionals, we use social networks more often, but not exclusively"*. Here we find an apparent conflict of opinions with regard to the profile that best suits disclosure of employment through SN. On the one hand, Company X describes as an effective method for low-skilled, as for companies A and K mention that the profile to best suit this type of communication, are individuals with a high qualification. This divergence of opinions can be explained by the recent entry of the RS in the recruitment scenario, as companies are still adapting and consolidating knowledge. Regarding the use of the RS in the recruitment process, the company K mentions that when using social networks in the recruitment process, they usually opts for LinkedIn, using Facebook as a secondary search, saying that when they are searching for candidates to recruit, they look first on LinkedIn and then search the name of that candidate on Facebook. When asked if a less professional Facebook profile would be an eliminatory factor in the recruitment process, Company K says no, claiming, however, that *"it is a good way to know the other side of the person"* in a more social way, adding that personally can influence the professional side.

Regarding the contexts that can make the disclosure of employment through social networks a better or worse choice, Company X states that *"much depends on what you want, if candidates more or less quantity, or with more experience"*, making repair the SN are more advantageous for recruitment in quantity. Company K adds saying that SN provides much help in the dissemination of employment opportunities, noting that in the opinion of the interviewee, SN *"are more adjusted to qualified workers. The average and more operational profiles come to information by other pathways"*. This thought seems to meet the Company A's position that assumes that *"in our work context, SN are beneficial to the demand for medium or senior profiles"*. At this point, it seems to be evident that, SN seems adjusted for recruitment when the applicants' searching contexts are pointed towards more qualified profiles (in the case of LinkedIn), as well as for the demand in quantity (in the case of Facebook).

With regard to the disclosure of jobs through the RS for candidates with a professional profile in IT, Company X, explains that *"professionals in the IT area are oriented to very technical functions and require the disclosure of an ad which detail the respective requirements. In our experience, the use of traditional media (such as newspapers), our website, and also social networks is important. We usually make a nonexclusive disclosure"*. Company X adds that *"it is common to make a search on LinkedIn to find these professionals"* Company K seems to share in part of the previous opinion, explaining that *"this kind of recruitment is clearly fitting the computer science professionals profile. It is a success factor"*.

Regarding the advantages / disadvantages of the disclosure of job offers through the SN for computer professionals, Company X states that *"these professionals may seek alternative practitioners (via SN) yes, but in a career development perspective and not necessarily about getting a job. As such, they send an application to companies that interests them and that they know that they can provide a professional growth in the future"*. It adds that *"requests that may spread in social networks may have little impact and few reactions, unless it's young graduates and those seeking their integration into the labour market, since they don't have a choice criteria too narrowed"*. It also adds that *"these professionals tend to be present in social networks with very well constructed pages, in view of your personal marketing"*, so that the companies identify and contact them. In a long-term perspective, Company A has stressed out that *"in the future they will continue to use social networks, by recognizing it as an actual phenomenon, and will continue to follow this new trend"*.

## PRELIMINARY DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS ON STUDY 1

The results of this first study suggest that SN, in general, is a valid tool for recruitment purposes and that despite being a recent tool, it has brought changes in the way how applicants' attraction can be performed. These results are consistent with what has been portrayed in literature, justifying the relevance of researching the problem presented here. However, there are certain aspects that seem to be in disagreement, both in terms of responses gathered in the interviews.

The overall job offer information channels used by companies are similar, with the three companies referring to the company website, the net jobs and the sapo jobs as the most used means. These choices suggest some changes in what regards traditional recruitment practices. However, while the company K advocates the use of social networks as the medium that best suits the company's recruitment needs, company X says that does not make a more assertive use of social networks as they present shortcomings at the level of communication that is done and the kind of public that arrives, preferring other means of online recruitment as well as SN.

Regarding the use of social networks as a recruiting tool, the X and K companies use LinkedIn and Facebook. However, Facebook is presented as a means of ancillary research, unlike LinkedIn, explaining that Facebook features relate more to the social and personal side of candidates. In this framework, the company A does not seem to have the exact same situation. Company A says it is satisfied with the methods used (company website, net jobs and sapo jobs, SN) and while noting the utility of using social platforms, they only make sense if they are directed to another type of candidates more qualified profiles. Regarding the recruitment of professionals in the IT area via SN, the companies' opinion also seems different. Company X argues, if we are talking about information technology professionals looking for their first job the scenario is relevant, as they may choose to search for offers in these channels for their first experience in the labour market. As for company K, on the other hand, it states that the job offer via SN for IT professionals has all the advantages, with a profile increasingly demanded in the business environment and framing growing applicant's attraction processes in the middle / senior management profiles.

## STUDY 2

According to the focus group script structure, we began by asking participants how they become aware of a job vacancy and how to act when this occurs. Most participants highlight the contact with the teachers, the mail of the institution where they study, job sites and LinkedIn, as can be confirmed by the following statements:

V1: *"First we know through the mail. It is the first option. Every day we receive mails with an offer, we are very well supplied"*

V2: *"I know through LinkedIn, net jobs or through ITJobs. These offers come to us"*

V4: *"We will hear here and there some company names, and research what this company does, what develops. If I'm interested I will directly send an e-mail."*

V3: *"Yes, we do research directly on the websites of companies. We may or may not be interested in those who come to us, but we will always seek to encourage us more"*

Researching for firms seemed to be a means that several participants pointed as being effectiveness, revealing that despite considering the contact and researching for firms to be important, it is not something that arises immediately when seeking for employment opportunities. It should be seen as a strategy when you already have some experience in the area. When asked about what they consider to be the best strategy for job search, participants said they do research on the companies' websites, but not all the offers that come to them are the ones that best fit their skills:

V5: *"we are guided more by what comes to us mainly by mail. Many colleagues go to the internship in a company that fits their interests, and this is their goal. Later, they start looking and start seeing other alternative deals".*

There was some diversity of responses regarding SN activity profiles at this level, as there are those who use social networks to actively seek work and others do not. These reviews are verified with the statements:

V7: *"We have nothing to justify our presence on SN if we are still students. There there is no experience".*

V8: *"I use LinkedIn and have the profile updated. I think in our area, it is mainly through social networks and the Internet that we should act, if we are searching for a job interview, because I think that in this area no one goes to the job center looking for possible interviews, so I think, especially in SN is where we'll search jobs forever".*

Regarding Facebook, although they do not to exclude it as a means of job search, participants tend to think that this type of network does not suit for seeking employment in their professional field. They explain that it is a shared network, but only with friends. The exhibition is also one of the factors that lead not to use this SN, explaining that sometimes Facebook can contain contents that are not appropriate to business environments:

V2: *"Facebook is a way to talk to our friends, it's our professional life. Even if it will work for a company I do not want them to have my Facebook. Because, for example, in our profile, we may have old photographs, with 3 or 4 years, at parties or with friends who do not always reflect our current image"*

V4: *"For me Facebook is not out of the question. We can even give "like" on the page of net jobs, for example, and then just drive us to the site of supply. Instead of going to Google and search for net jobs, go to their Facebook look".*

Participants using LinkedIn, say that it is an appropriate way, but depend on what is demanded for the job and what companies asks. They point out that in some cases, advertisers only require the curriculum to belong in a database for when a hiring opportunity arrives:

V9: *"It depends on what is it that we want and what we are looking for. I think there are many companies looking for people, but not just for that moment. They get the connection and try later when they need to have someone who already know what is available".*

V10: *"I have already been consulted through LinkedIn. The experience was good, but ... I went to an interview and got there and they told me 'this is just to meet you...', not truly offered me a job."*

In order to better understand the process of job search for IT professionals, it seems that participants do not use traditional means of job search, as the newspaper, but prefer face contact with companies instead. Participants point direct contact with companies as the medium they prefer, being one of the factors that claim to miss the SN:

V10: *"The demand is different, but in person is always more right than go for social networking, because I think we gain more points"*

V12: *"The first contact with the companies is preferable, as compared to the contact, by Likedin where the first impression is just our profile".*

Participants also point out advantages and disadvantages when it comes to job search by SN. It doesn't involve travel costs or ease of being contacted by companies if they have their profile in the SN is clearly a positive aspect. However, this can also be considered to be a disadvantage due to exposure. The reliability problems in the SN also constitute a drawback on the participants' point of view:

V7: *"The SN has only advantages due to distance. It's no mandatory to move to the companies to make the first contact by using LinkedIn. It also compensates for the time lost and travel costs"*

V2: *"I think it may have advantages or disadvantage because the company has access to your profile more easily because you are available on the SN. It may be good or may be bad for us, for our image and the company can have direct access to what we like, and what we see".*

V1: *"Anyone can put a perfect advertisement and many "likes", and can or cannot be a true offer. I still I find it a bit risky".*

Regarding a future perspective of using SN as a valid means of job search, the opinions are divided. On the one hand, there are those who recognize the potential of these platforms and to ensure that they will increase its use. On the other hand, participants were reluctant to use the SN, claiming that their use in the future will be the same, basing their views again by too much exposure. The following statements prove the participants' views:

V9: *"The future will bring more usage of SN. Some of us, now are still students, but in two months time, we will be junior professionals. We should always have an updated profile, as they may arise proposals".*

V10: *"I will use equally. I think it's because we are a bit exposed. No one has to know if you like more of this or that area".*

## PRELIMINARY DISCUSSIONS AND CONCLUSIONS ON STUDY 2

The results obtained in the four focus group sessions, enable to understand prospective applicants' usage of SN in job search activity and what their expectations seem to be. In general, SN is not the preferred means of research. Some of the participants have already begun the process of recruitment and job searching, though others have not yet entered this job search phase. Globally, they seem to have a passive attitude towards searching for job vacancies, particularly in the use of SN for this purpose. They seem to have some suspicion regarding this type of channel, and it also hinders a greater adherence to the use of SN in job search context.

Along with the use of SN, and specifically LinkedIn, research firms and direct contact appear to be the strategies privileged by participants for job search activities, revealing a preference for complementary job search activities in order to prevent the emergence of inadequate offers regarding their area of expertise. There were also different views over the use of SN for job search activity. On the one hand, there are those who recognize their advantages and immediately try using what these platforms offers (visibility, interest and opportunities), but there are those who still wait for the right moment to take the first step in creating an online profile to get a set of skills that justify their passive presence on social networks.

With regard to Facebook, participants appeared to be quite reticent in their use as the main job search engine. They claim that it is a SN to share only with friends and not to disclose it to companies, stating that there are facts and situations that they share on Facebook that cannot be seen as beneficial for their image with companies. Regarding the positive experiences in the use of SN in job searching activities, participants state that they were meeting their expectations, since the offer led to an interview, stating, however, that there are companies that do not advertise yet properly on these channels because sometimes they only seek professional to place in databases for subsequent use. The reliability of the SN was an issue discussed by the participants. While recognizing the potential of these networks, they say that there are risks when responding to an offer of employment, explaining that due to ease of access (primarily Facebook), anyone can create a business profile and disseminate an offer. This position is again demonstrative of a lack of confidence in those channels.

## 6 RESULTS INTEGRATION

The analysis of the data presented previously, allowed to point commonalities and differences between the opinion of recruiters and IT professionals about the use of the SN in the context of the job searching processes. Regarding the key channels for applicant attraction, recruiters prefer the dissemination of job offers on specialized websites for this purpose, as well as institutional site, database of companies, contact with universities, LinkedIn and Facebook. These data are consistent with the preferences of potential candidates, although it seems relevant to a better targeting behaviour by recruiters in higher education institutions. In what concerns the use of the SN for the dissemination of job offers, it seems to be relevant to consider that information disclosure fails when using SN, both by recruiters as by the candidates, despite the trend towards an increasing use of SN in both the parts.

In this aspect in particular, it was found that not all recruiters considered appropriate to use SN (Facebook) to search for qualified professionals. As for potential candidates, they tend to think that the job search alone in SN is insufficient, by considering to be relevant a direct contact with companies, as well as research on specialized sites. Despite this, they recognize that the SN in this area is useful. This seems illustrative of the recent entry of the SN in the context of applicants' attraction. Some uncertainty regarding if SN is the ideal choice to recruit such professionals still remains. Comparing the positions of recruiters and potential candidates, it appears that the opinions seem to meet. Companies looking for this profile in the SN, also look for applicants through complementary channels, such as newspapers or other media for that purpose.

As for the IT professionals, they also look for jobs using LinkedIn and also with more traditional means such as direct contact with the companies. Regarding the use of Facebook for these purposes, the opinions seem to be consistent, because despite the growing number of users on his network, the content shared are not of a professional nature, discrediting Facebook for job search activities. However, seen from another standpoint, Facebook it is an opportunity for companies to make themselves known, and creating visibility, proximity and communication with their target audiences.

Regarding the advantages and disadvantages of disclosing job offers through SN, the reduced costs, the cross-platform issue, are some of the advantages mentioned by recruiters. The IT participants on the other hand only pointed as beneficial lower travel costs, as a way of getting direct contact with companies and to know about employment opportunities. However, at this level, recruiters should have the awareness that they have to assure the credibility of the process, or the use of SN for this end will be undervalued. At this level, the recruiters appear to have a long way to go in terms of seriousness of message transmission and eventually, stress out the openness to personal contact, making the recruitment process not to depend exclusively on the use of RS.



Finally, with regard to the future prospects of using SN for the dissemination of job vacancies, recruiters seem to find that the trend is increasing, and that this is the case of a current growing phenomenon. As for IT participants, opinions seem to go in the same direction. These participants seem to consider that the use of SN with recruitment purposes will continue to increase, but they prefer not to exclude the direct contact with the company. When considering the overall data, some doubts about the current use of SN for the purpose of attraction still remains due to the fact that this is a recent method not only recruitment, as well as for job searching in general, showing some uncertainty about the contexts that make it a better or a worse choice in job search activities. Lastly, if we note that the ones who produce these types of platforms are IT professionals, it is curious to see that their trust on SN is limited and still prefer a face contact with companies for recruitment purposes.

## 7 CONCLUSIONS AND LIMITATIONS

In the first part of this work we've started by presenting a set of theoretical considerations about the reasons why the attraction of candidates is a growing strategic concern for organizations, with special focus on the use of social networks for this purpose. At a theoretical level, we've analysed theoretical perspectives that have addressed the development of HRM over the past decades in order to understand what drove organizations to adopt increasingly, an HR investment policy, and what were some of the reasons that led to this strategic thinking regarding HR management. At that point, it was important to address the issue of applicant's attraction and how the organizations may use the best attraction mechanisms to effectively attract the most talented employees.

The new paradigms brought by the Internet have changed market dynamics both in an economic, as well as in social scenarios (Amaral, Peixoto, & Gomes 2010). Thus, it seems important to realize the impact that SN may bring to the way applicants' attraction can be conducted, and to understand the differences when compared to traditional recruitment procedures (Gomes et al, 2013). It was mostly based on this assumption that we have found the motivation to develop our study. Considering all of these aspects, this work contributes to a number of considerations at a theoretical, empirical and practical level.

At the theoretical level, we were able to put into perspective existing considerations about HRM and applicants' attraction issues, and also added the social networks issue facing the theme of organizational attraction. At the empirical level, with the development of two complementary studies seeking to collect two perspectives (recruiters and candidates) that intervene in the same process through qualitative methodology, which provided interesting information by accessing both recruiters and applicants' perspectives when it comes to recruitment performances. On a practical level, by integrating our two studies, some guidelines may be followed to improve organizational practices, as we were able to have some understanding of both perspectives of the parties involved in this process.

At this point, we would like to outline some main outcomes from our research:

- Studying how applicants and how companies behave in recruitment scenario represents an interesting way of understanding the similarities and the contradictions in the behaviour of both
- Attracting applicants though Social Media represents a new challenge for organizations in competitive markets, in which the way how applicants and organizations behave seems to be not always adjusted
- Recruiters should develop a solid attraction communication strategy when reaching applicants, in order to develop trust and credibility in the information used for recruitment purposes
- Recruiters should be aware that with respect to our results, Social Media forces the use of short, compelling, realistic and direct information, in order to reach applicants with efficacy, minimizing credibility risks on Social Media usage
- Applicants should be aware that investing in an active, updated and proactive profile in Social Media is an effective way of being "in the radar" of recruiters
- Applicants should also be aware that the behaviour in Social Media is traceable for companies, and as such, the use of professionally specialized Social Media should be performed with criteria and with purpose direction

This work should be read in light of some limitations. Regarding the opinion of future candidates of IT professionals, it must be taken into account that some of the participants are in completion of studies stage, a situation that limits the answers regarding the use of RS in context search employment, as they seem more inclined towards the behaviour of a junior applicants' profile. That being said, the collected responses cannot be completely generalized to all IT professionals. In addition, not all participants have experience in the labour market, which has conditioned in some way the perception that these participants have about what recruiters may do to capture IT talents in this area. It is also advisable to expand the number of interviews to the consultants, as having more enterprises involved in the recruitment of these professionals in particular will surely bring renewed insights, and this may provide a solid contribution of opinions and better understand which practices these companies lead in their activity.

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## Appendix 1 – Interview Script

*[Presentation]*

*[Presentation of the study's purposes]*

### **Brief history and general information regarding the company**

Number of years of activity in the business area of HR

Number of workers in the organization

### **II. Applicants' attraction through SN**

In what regards the applicants' attraction policy, when you need to start a recruitment process, what are the channels you usually select?

What are the reasons why you choose these channels and not others? What type of information you usually place in a job advertise?

How do you describe the recruitment process when using SN? Is it different when compared with a more traditional one?

In your opinion, which contexts make the disclosure of employment through SN a better or a worse choice

What are the advantages and limitations when it comes to posting a job vacancy in SN when compared with more traditional methods of applicants' attraction as employment ads is newspapers?

## Appendix 2 – Focus Group Script

*[Presentation]*

*[Presentation of the study's purposes]*

Using a sheet of session where participants fill up their own data (age; gender; geographical origin; specific area of study; part-time or full-time job...)

- *Study contextualization*
- *Explaining how a Focus Group Session works*

### Questions placed:

#### 1. Job searching activity

- How do you usually know that a job vacancy is available? What are your previous experiences? What has resulted in the best way for you?
- (If they do not have previous experience) How do you think it is more likely to find a job?
- What type of strategies or tools have you tried when you had job search activities? What were the best ones?

#### 2. Using social Media: Instruments

- Have you ever used SN to find a job? What were the ones you have used? How did you use? What results have you obtained?
- Usually, how do you proceed when you search for job opportunities? What has changed with SN?
- How do you describe the job searching activity with SN?
- What are the contexts that can make job searching through SN the best or the worst choice?
- What are the main perspectives brought by SN when it comes to job searching?
- What are the advantages and limitations of job searching through Sn when compared with traditional methods?
- What will be the future of job searching?