

Asian Academy of Management Journal, Vol. 18, No. 1, 123–142, 2013

FACTORS INFLUENCING PERCEPTIONS OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS TOWARDS INTERNET RECRUITMENT

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to determine the factors that influence the perceptions of university students towards Internet recruitment. Data were collected from 250 university students from five universities through self-reported questionnaires that were e-mailed to them. The results indicate that factors such as user friendliness, information provision, and website usability are significantly related to the perceptions of university students towards Internet recruitment. Amongst the three factors, information provision appears to be the strongest predictor. It can be concluded that Internet recruitment will continue to gain prominence, and employers must pay considerable attention to their online recruitment information, appearance, features, and functions if they wish to attract the right job candidates.

Keywords: Internet recruitment, perception, user friendliness, information provision, website usability, university students

INTRODUCTION

Many organisations have witnessed the transformation of conventional recruitment methods to online recruitment, particularly since the mid-1990s (Joyce, 2002). The shift was made possible by the advancement of Internet technologies and the advantages generated by Internet recruitment. Over 40,000 jobs were reported to have been posted on the Internet and other online tools such as job boards, company websites, and niche sites (Internet Recruiting Report, 2006). Approximately 24.7% of job seekers found their jobs through the Internet in 2005 (Crispin & Mahler, 2006). In fact, it was reported that more than 4 million people are using the Internet to job search on a daily basis (Dessler, 2008). A recent international survey shows that 41% of job seekers went online to search for jobs (*The Star Online*, 2012), and the Kelly Global Workforce Survey (2011) found that 32% of respondents secured their most recent positions through online postings. The conclusion of Pin, Laorden and Diez (2001) that Internet recruitment has become a trend that has led to the emergence of a new

market in which there is an unparalleled level of interaction between potential employers and employees therefore comes as no surprise.

Schreyer and McCarter (1998) define Internet recruitment as "the recruitment process, including placing job advertisements, receiving resumes, and building human resource databases with candidates and incumbents" (as cited in Mohamed Othman & Musa, 2007, p. 36). Lievens and Harris (2003) identify five approaches to Internet recruitment, including company websites, job boards, e-recruiting, relationship recruiting, and surreptitious approaches.

Singh and Finn (2003) assert that Internet recruitment provides many advantages to recruiters and job seekers. For recruiters, the use of the Internet enables firms to enhance their growth in their ability to attract the right quality (in terms of appropriate levels of knowledge, attitude, skills and aptitudes) and quantity of human resources at any given time. The characteristics that are inherent to the Internet allow employers to contact candidates 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and 365 days a year (Internet Recruiting Report, 2006). As Gummesson (1991) notes, having the right person at the right time and the right place is crucial for any organisation. The use of Internet recruitment has enabled organisations to reach appropriate job seekers in wider geographical locations at any time. Furthermore, the Internet permits firms to recruit the right candidates at a much lower cost (Galanaki, 2002). For instance, a study by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) reported that the average cost per hire from Internet recruitment methods was \$377 in comparison to the average cost per hire of \$3,295 from recruitment through a major metropolitan newspaper (Internet Recruiting Statistics, 2007). In the case of job seekers, the Internet allows them to search for jobs either nationally or even internationally, regardless of time zone and location (Bartram, 2000), without having to spend a single cent. Job seekers can look for jobs, gather company information, and contact potential employers in order to match themselves with jobs.

Because of these advantages, many companies have turned to the Internet as a potential recruitment channel to reach a diverse pool of applicants (Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Jansen & Jansen, 2006; Mohamed Othman & Musa, 2007). The situation is no different in Malaysia, where Internet recruitment is widely employed. Jobstreet.com, a job portal founded in 1997 in Malaysia, is now the largest online employment company in Southeast Asia. As of May 2011, the company had more than 80,000 corporate customers and over 8 million job seekers (Jobstreet.com, 2011). Candidates can search for job vacancies through the portal and apply to various jobs by sending their resumes, which are stored on the web portal, to prospective employers online (Sylva & Mol, 2009). Other popular job portals in Malaysia include JobsDB.com, JenJobs.com, and StarJobs Online, to name a few. Joining the bandwagon is JobsMalaysia, an online job

recruitment portal created by the Malaysian Ministry of Human Resources. Formerly known as the Job Clearing System (JCS) under the Electronic Labour Interchange (ELX), employers who use JobsMalaysia can post job vacancies free of charge (Mohamed Othman & Musa, 2007). Likewise, job seekers can search for jobs through JobsMalaysia without having to pay a fee. All of these services complement the initiatives taken by many companies to post vacancies on their respective websites.

This study aims to identify the factors that influence the perceptions of university students towards Internet recruitment in Malaysia. Specifically, three factors are considered: user friendliness, information provision, and website usability. Although these factors have been investigated in different economies, similar research in a quickly developing country such as Malaysia remains scarce. A cursory look at the available studies in Malaysia reveals that the surveyed factors include website usability (e.g., Musa, Junaini, & Bujang, 2006), the benefits and limitations of Internet recruitment (e.g., Mohamed Othman & Musa, 2007), and the adoption of Internet recruitment technology (e.g., Tong, 2009). Factors such as user friendliness and information provision have received little attention. Furthermore, none of the previous studies have focused on the perceptions of undergraduate students. Because undergraduates are believed to be the group most likely to be affected by the technology that encompasses Internet recruitment, a survey of this nature could serve to narrow this gap, thus contributing to the extension of current knowledge.

Furthermore, this topic warrants continuous research attention because the use of Internet recruitment is posited to increase in the coming years. Branine (2008, p. 498) asserts that "most of the employers today have realised that the best graduate recruitment and selection means a better future for the company". The increase in Internet sophistication has resulted in different approaches to online recruitment by employers due to the realisation that the availability of specific resources or services attributes will affect the decision of applicants to use Internet recruitment as well as companies' abilities to attract and sustain returning applicants (Koong, 2002; Grönross, 2007). Job seekers, particularly university graduates, who are tend to be technology-savvy, are continuously exposed to new trends and methods of Internet recruitment. Consequently, their perception would be different now, and this component would not have been captured in prior studies. Internet recruitment services are therefore challenged to continuously analyse and incorporate the needs of their applicants into their information system designs so that desirable services can be offered. Practical implications are derived in terms of providing organisations that use Internet recruitment with a useful guide on the importance of the constant assessment of the appearance, features, and functions of their websites in order to attract a diverse pool of high quality candidates at the right time.

The remainder of the paper is organised as follows. The next section reviews the literature relevant to the research, followed by a discussion of the employed methods. The results and their implications are then presented and discussed, and the paper concludes with recommendations.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Perception Towards Internet Recruitment

Hill and McShane (2008) define perception as "the process of attending to, interpreting, and organising information" (p. 436). Perception involves three characteristics: (1) awareness of the object being perceived; (2) belief in the existence of the perceived object; and (3) the immediate acceptance of the perceived object (Shockley, 2007). In other words, the perception of a person is influenced and shaped by his or her mental models, which are the product of his or her prior knowledge and experiences (Gregory, 1970). These mental models guide the organisation and interpretation of sensory information through awareness and understanding of the environment. However, perceptions could vary amongst individuals based on their preferences and reactions when exposed to the same reality.

In the context of the current study, the perception of Internet recruitment has been operationalised in four ways in light of its characteristics. First, Internet recruitment allows any prospective candidate to obtain a satisfying view of his or her future career possibilities. Access to past and current job openings allows university students to determine how their current academic pursuits match the different jobs that they could possibly undertake in the future. They are able to identify a range of jobs that they could perform by mapping their skills, knowledge, and abilities against the different job descriptions advertised on the Internet, which therefore allows them to grasp the breadth of available job opportunities. Second, Internet recruitment could potentially prompt university students to be more aware of their future career opportunities. This outcome can be achieved by observing the frequency of openings, types and nature of jobs, locations and promotion opportunities.

Third and most importantly, Internet recruitment is perceived to have the ability to provide candidates with career information that could lead to better career decisions. The literature suggests that the impressions of a company that are formed during the pre-application information gathering stage could strongly affect the perceptions of job seekers towards the company and thus their intention to apply for jobs through its online recruitment system (Birgelen, Wetzels, & Dolen, 2008; Lievens & Harris, 2003). This phenomenon is aligned with the

subjective factor theory, which states that the decision of an individual to select a potential employer is largely dependent upon his or her personality and corporate image (Behling, Labovitz, & Kosmo, 1968). Accordingly, the effectiveness of online recruitment is contingent on the attractiveness of organisational recruitment websites (Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, 2008; Dineen, Ash, & Noe, 2002). Many websites contain very specific corporate information, which was not possible before the Internet age. Hyperlinks and the inclusion of a commentary page all provide useful and value-added information about the job and company. Furthermore, many job portals also provide value-added services such as tips and "do's and don'ts" when applying for a job. It is believed that the Internet will continue to provide candidates with more useful career information than any other resource, thus aiding them in making better career decisions. This is the fourth characteristic perceived to relate to Internet recruitment.

These four characteristics represent the perception of job seekers toward Internet recruitment. However, such perception is influenced by several factors which determine the decision of job seekers to use Internet recruitment (Lievens & Harris, 2003). In this regard, many researchers have argued that user friendliness, information provision, and website usability are amongst the most prevalent factors influencing perceptions of Internet recruitment in terms of applicant satisfaction and intention to use Internet recruitment (Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober, & Keeping, 2003; Derous, Born, & Witte, 2004; Sylva & Mol, 2009). These factors are elaborated in the following sections.

Factors Influencing Perceptions towards Internet Recruitment

User friendliness

User friendliness is the degree to which a system is easy to use such that less effort is required by users, thereby increasing the likelihood of usage (Tong, 2009). Many studies have found that user friendliness is one of the major determinants of applicant satisfaction and usage of Internet recruitment (Birgelen et al., 2008; Sinar, Reynolds, & Paquet, 2003; Sylva & Mol, 2009). A user friendly recruitment website contains several characteristics. First, minimal effort is required to search for information of interest. Second, desired career information can be obtained quickly and easily, leading to savings in time and effort (Childers, Carr, Peck, & Carson, 2001). Third, the website contains easy to follow search paths that will not confuse people when they search for jobs. Fourth, the website is easy to use and is not complicated (Tong, 2009). Observing the benefits of a highly user friendly Internet recruitment, such as attracting a large pool of applicants and reducing recruiting-related costs, many organisations are currently using e-Recruitment Web 2.0 applications (e.g., social networks, podcasts, blogs, online videos, etc.). These organisations believe that this

approach can help them reach the target candidates for the communication and sharing of information on job offers, marketing their corporate image on web, and fulfilling the expectations of the organisations' web users (Pillai & Dhobale, 2012).

Information provision

Information provision refers to the degree to which job seekers actively seek organisational and job-related information through company websites (Sylva & Mol, 2009). The occupational information that may be made available in the careers section of a corporate website includes specific job openings, salary information, interview processes, featured career articles, effective resume writing advice, self-assessments, and possibly instructions for job seekers who are currently involved in the recruitment process (Rosencrantz, 1999). This information is in addition to general company information, such as introductory (history, organisational structure) and service information for communicating and delivering excellent service (e.g., contacts, service centre addresses), which may enhance the trust of job seekers towards the company (Chou, Teng, & Lo, 2009). Much of this information cannot be provided by newspaper advertisements (Tong, 2009). Consequently, prior studies have found a positive relationship between information provision and perceptions of Internet recruitment (Birgelen et al., 2008; Cappelli, 2001; Cober, Brown, Blumental, Doverspike, & Levy, 2000; Derous et al., 2004; Fountain, 2005; Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001; Lievens, Dam, & Anderson, 2002; Sylva & Mol, 2009; Turban & Dougherty, 1992; Williamson, Lepak, & King, 2003).

The important characteristics of information provision that affect the perception of an individual towards Internet recruitment include the provision of correct, truthful, and timely career information (Birgelen et al., 2008; Williamson et al., 2003; Sylva & Mol., 2009). Such provisions are important because corporate websites not only provide candidates with the opportunity to learn about the institutions, including information about their corporate values and benefits (Lievens et al., 2002), but also to assess the presented information. More importantly, the career section must provide job seekers with relevant and applicable information at the right time that fulfils their needs (Birgelen et al., 2008). This feature is important because job seekers rely on the job information that is made available to them when applying for a job (Fountain, 2005). When a system does not meet the needs of a user and the information is unlikely to be used, it is very likely that users will have a negative perception of that particular website (Culnan, 1984).

Website usability

Usability is defined as the extent to which a product can be used by specific users to effectively, efficiently and satisfactorily achieve goals in a specified context of use (Musa et al., 2006). Therefore, website usability refers to the perception of job seekers that a corporate website offers an efficient and effective way to search for job opportunities (Karat, 1997). Usability is a quality attribute that assesses how easy user interfaces are to use (Flavian, Guinaliu, & Gurrea, 2006).

Many studies have found that user perceptions of usability are influenced by the characteristics of a website (Agarwal, Sambamurthy, & Stair, 2000; Birgelen et al., 2008; Braddy et al., 2008; Braddy, Thompson, Wuensch, & Grossnickle, 2003; Cober et al., 2000; Flavian et al., 2006; Musa et al., 2006; Tidwell & Walther, 2002; Thompson, Braddy, & Wuensch, 2008; Tullis & Stetson, 2004; Venkatesh, 2000). Web usability attributes include the effective completion of an online application during Internet recruitment, a pleasant interface and layout that include attractive text, colour, image, and photo usage, the availability of the functions and capabilities expected by job seekers in navigating the website, and the integration of various functions into the recruitment website. In fact, Cober et al. (2003) found that perceived navigational usability affects the intention of undergraduate students to use Internet recruitment. However, many Malaysian Internet recruitment websites were found to have low and poor usability (Bartram, 2000; Musa et al., 2006). Williamson et al. (2003) indicate that viewer perceptions of website usability will indirectly affect their interests on an organisation. At worst, poor usability could cause applicants to have negative overall perceptions towards Internet recruitment (Gibson & Swift, 2011; Williamson et al., 2003).

Research Framework

A research framework is constructed as shown in Figure 1. The figure shows the relationships between the independent variables (user friendliness, information provision, and website usability), and the dependent variable (perception of university students towards Internet recruitment). In line with the research framework and the a priori relationships established by studies, the following hypotheses are constructed to be tested in this study:

- H1: There is a positive relationship between user friendliness and the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment.
- H2: There is a positive relationship between information provision and the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment.

H3: There is a positive relationship between website usability and the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment.

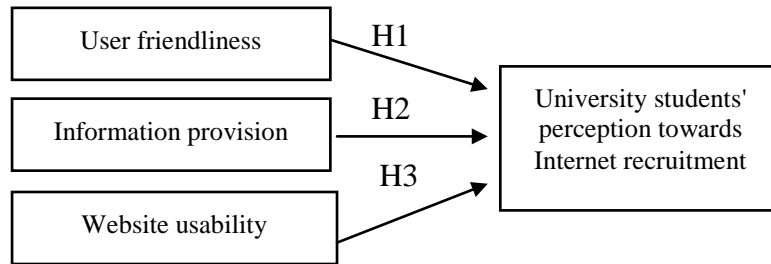


Figure 1. Research framework

METHODOLOGY

Sampling Method

A combination of stratified random, convenience, and snowball sampling methods were employed in this study because this approach allows for precise, detailed information and represents an inexpensive way to gather data. First, the respondents were stratified based on their universities before a convenient selection was made. A total of 300 questionnaires were e-mailed to university students from five universities located in the northern, western, and southern regions of Malaysia. The different locations were selected to ensure the representativeness of the study's population. In addition, the students were also asked to disseminate the questionnaire to their friends. The duration of the survey was 1 month, in which 280 students responded to the survey. However, only 250 completed questionnaires were usable for further analysis. The t-test results indicate no significant difference between early and late replies.

Survey Instruments

The items in the questionnaire were modified from the studies of Birgelen et al. (2008), with regard to three variables (perception towards Internet recruitment, user friendliness, and information provision), and Tullis and Stetson (2004), on website usability. Responses to the 18 questions on all of the variables (see Table 2 for details) were measured on a six-point Likert scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly Disagree to 6 = Strongly Agree. In addition, seven questions were included to collect demographic information from the respondents (see Table 1 for details).

Assessing Face Validity and Reliability

To achieve content validity, the instrument was piloted with 30 university students on a random basis. Consequently, minor adjustments were made to the questionnaire before it was disseminated. In terms of reliability, Hair, Anderson, Tatham and Black (1998) suggest that the minimum Cronbach's alpha value should be 0.60. All of the variables in this study exceeded the indicated minimum value and are therefore deemed to be reliable (see Table 2 for details).

Demographic Profiles of the Respondents

Table 1 shows that female students comprise the majority of the surveyed respondents, with Malaysian Chinese students dominating the responses compared to other ethnic groups. The majority of the students are 24 years old and younger. This phenomenon corresponds with the average age of university students. Amongst the universities, the highest number of respondents comes from Multimedia University (MMU). Many of the students indicated that they had used Internet recruitment, although a significant percentage had not used it before. The majority of respondents had not used Internet recruitment. This finding is not surprising given the fact that students in their first and second years at the university were also sampled. These students are obviously not ready to search for jobs; hence, there is no need for them to use Internet recruitment at this particular point in time. However, these students were also asked this question to gauge whether they were familiar with online recruitment portals, and the answer is that they are aware of the existence of such portals, although they have not used them before. Merikle, Smilek and Eastwood (2001, pp. 116 & 132) state that "stimulus information can be perceived even when there is no awareness of perceiving", and that "considerable stimulus information is perceived under conditions that do not lead to the subjective conscious experiences normally associated with perceiving." Accordingly, the validity of the responses collected for the study is justified.

Means and Standard Deviations of Independent and Dependent Variables Scores

Table 2 presents the means and standard deviations for all the variable scores. User friendliness achieved the highest overall mean score (i.e., 4.3392), followed by information provision and website usability. With the lowest overall mean approximating 4.00, it can be concluded that the respondents perceive all these factors positively. Perception of university students towards Internet recruitment obtained a mean score of 4.34, indicating that the respondents have positive perceptions of Internet recruitment. However, the standard deviations for many of

the items are above 1.0, implying inconsistencies in the answers given by the respondents.

Table 1
Demographic profile of respondents

	Variables	Frequency	Percent (%)
Sex	Male	112	44.8
	Female	138	55.2
Ethnicity	Malay	39	15.6
	Chinese	170	68
	Indian	39	15.6
	Others	2	0.8
Age	19 and below	19	7.6
	20–21	117	46.8
	22–23	106	42.4
	24 and above	8	3.2
University	Universiti Malaya (UM)	26	10.4
	Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM)	46	18.4
	Universiti Putra Malaysia (UPM)	26	10.4
	Universiti Sains Malaysia (USM)	34	13.6
	Multimedia University (MMU)	118	47.2
Year of study	First year	25	10
	Second year	123	49.2
	Third year	91	36.4
	Fourth year	11	4.4
Usage history	Yes	136	54.4
	No	114	45.6
Frequency of use	None	124	49.6
	Once per month	75	30
	2–3 times per month	17	6.8
	4–5 times per month	21	8.4
	6 times and above	13	5.2

Table 2
Reliability analysis, means and standard deviations of scores

Items	Mean	S.D.	Cronbach's alpha
Perception of university students	4.34	0.99	0.632
1. Using Internet recruitment, I obtained a satisfying view of career opportunities.	4.29	1.01	
2. The use of Internet recruitment has made me more aware of future career opportunities.	4.41	0.95	
3. Using Internet recruitment provides me with career information that will lead to better career decisions.	4.36	0.91	
4. I am more likely to find career information using Internet recruitment than through other sources of information.	4.30	1.09	
User friendliness	4.34	1.15	0.806
1. The corporate website is user friendly.	4.38	0.95	
2. I can find the information of interest to me with minimal effort.	4.34	0.99	
3. I can quickly and easily obtain the career information I need.	4.34	1.06	
4. The career section provides easy to follow search paths.	4.39	1.72	
5. The corporate website is easy to use.	4.25	1.01	
Information provision	4.25	0.98	0.801
1. The career information provided seems truthful to me.	4.38	1.06	
2. The career information provided seems to be correct.	4.39	1.05	
3. The website provides the most current career information for the organisation.	4.04	1.02	
4. Visiting the career section provides me with relevant information.	4.24	0.87	
5. The information provided in the career section applies to me.	4.19	0.92	

Table 2 (continued)

	Items	Mean	S.D.	Cronbach's alpha
	Website usability	3.94	1.00	0.660
1.	I can effectively complete my application using Internet recruitment.	4.13	1.08	
2.	The interface of the website is pleasant.	4.06	0.95	
3.	The website has all the functions and capabilities I expect it to have.	3.77	1.02	
4.	I found the various functions in the recruitment website to be well integrated.	3.80	0.94	

RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

Table 3 presents the Pearson correlation coefficient results, and Table 4 presents the multiple regression results between the independent and dependent variables. All of the variables are significantly positively correlated with the perceptions of university students with regard to Internet recruitment. Table 4 shows that the Variation Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all the variables are less than 10; multicollinearity is therefore not an issue. With an R-square value of 53.6%, all of the variables are significantly associated with the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment. Consequently, all three hypotheses (H1, H2 and H3) are accepted. Amongst the independent variables, information provision is the strongest predictor in terms of the perceptions of university students towards Internet recruitment.

Table 3
Results of Pearson correlation analysis between the independent and dependent variables

Variables	R
User friendliness	0.648**
Information provision	0.640**
Website usability	0.528**

** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed)

Table 4
Results of multiple linear regression coefficients between the independent and dependent variables

Independent variable	Unstandardised coefficients		<i>t</i> -tailed	Sig.	Collinearity statistics	
	<i>B</i>	Std. error			Tolerance	VIF
Constant	0.595	0.225	2.638	0.009		
User friendliness	0.369	0.061	6.019	0.000	0.552	1.811
Information provision	0.374	0.058	6.479	0.000	0.615	1.626
Website usability	0.147	0.054	2.727	0.007	0.634	1.577

$R = 0.732$; $R^2 = 0.536$; $F = 94.723$; Sig. = 0.000

DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

The overall mean perception of university students towards Internet recruitment is higher than the mid-point, suggesting that respondents across different levels of study agreed that Internet recruitment services are very useful for them, which they view as positive. The findings appear to support the earlier argument that Internet recruitment is gaining prevalence even amongst university students in a developing country such as Malaysia. Many students are aware of Internet recruitment, although they have not yet utilised it. This phenomenon might explain why JobStreet.com, in addition to other job portals, remains a popular means for employers and job seekers to search for talent and employment, respectively.

Regarding the independent variables, all three variables (user friendliness, information provision, and website usability) were found to be significantly associated with the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment, with high *R*-square values. This finding is consistent with the mean scores for the three variables, all of which are above the mid-point on a six-point scale. Amongst the three variables, user friendliness had the highest mean score, followed by information provision and website usability. These findings are not unexpected because students and any other job or information seekers would prefer job portals to be user friendly, to provide them with necessary information, and to be easy to navigate. However, judging from the obtained mean scores, improvements are still warranted.

Corroborating prior studies, the user-friendliness of recruitment websites appears to be one of the significant factors influencing the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment (Cober et al., 2003; Williamson et al.,

2003). In fact, this component is found to score the highest mean amongst all the variables. Sylva and Mol (2009) found that user friendliness is a significant factor predicting the satisfaction of applicants. The more user friendly a webpage is, the more job seekers would be willing to return to that particular webpage. As with any other online job applicants, students are technology-savvy and prefer a system that is easy to use and that allows them to obtain information about specific vacancies and complete applications with the least effort and time (Childers et al., 2001). Resumes can be sent online or stored in job portals so that applicants do not need to reproduce their vitae every time they apply for a job. In fact, many job portals have embedded this feature. Organisations or government agencies that post their vacancies online should take this issue into consideration if they wish to increase the usability of their job portals and, more importantly, attract high quality human resources to their online job areas. The growth of information technology has allowed interactive features to be incorporated into job portals. By embedding interactive features, organisations can provide their job applicants with a realistic job preview to guarantee applicant-organisation and applicant-job fit. This approach will eventually lead to the employment of the right human resources.

Similarly, the provision of information has been found to be significantly associated with the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment. In fact, information provision has been found to be the strongest predictor in this study, with a reasonably high *r*-value. Derosus et al. (2004) suggest that information provision is an important factor for the career aspirations of any applicant. It is not surprising that the perception of job seekers is affected by the information provided by the organisation. It is therefore paramount for organisations to provide appropriate background information on their websites to allow job seekers, including final year students or graduates, to learn more about the organisations (Lievens et al., 2002). The information should include vision, mission, corporate values, benefits and other important information concerning the background of the corporation (Fountain, 2005). In addition, it is equally important for firms to provide truthful job descriptions and specifications that are as realistic as possible on the career section of their websites so that students will have a clear understanding of what the jobs would require from them (Rosencrantz, 1999). This approach is meant to ensure a fit between the interests of the organisation and those of the job seeking individuals (Dineen et al., 2002). A feedback feature may also be useful in providing more information to prospective candidates. Furthermore, this feature allows questions from students to be responded to, as well as for students to share information with one another. Organisations are increasingly linking their sites to social networks through the use of Web 2.0 applications. However, this approach should be used with care because negative information may raise negative perceptions among job seekers, which could tarnish the reputation of the company.

The third variable, website usability, has also been found to significantly influence the perception of university students towards Internet recruitment. This finding is not surprising because Musa et al. (2006) discovered that many Malaysian e-recruitment websites suffer from usability problems. Braddy et al. (2003) suggest that job seekers are more willing to apply for jobs on websites that are easy to navigate. In fact, the more usable a website is, the more potential job seekers will return to that particular website (Musa et al., 2006). This phenomenon indicates that the web appeal of an organisation is an important determinant that influences perceptions of an organisation (Thompson et al., 2008), as well as satisfaction with and, therefore, continuous use of the corporate website (Flavian et al., 2006; Lohse & Spiller, 1999). The findings suggest that, in addition to allowing an application to be completed online, the use of attractive images and colours will increase the attractiveness of a corporate website. Specifically, Zusman and Landis (2002) recommend that high-quality organisational webpages should include attractive, exciting, bulleted or concise text, as well as pictures, colours, and a tool bar to enable easy navigation. Students are more likely to be attracted to a rich presentation of information, and corporate websites must therefore ensure that these features are available in an integrated fashion to project a positive image and to attract graduates to apply for jobs in these companies.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

This study has achieved its objectives of identifying the factors that influence the perceptions of university students towards Internet recruitment. It has contributed to the rich literature concerning this area of study, particularly in Malaysia. Managerially, the findings increase the understanding of employers of the factors that affect the perceptions of university students towards Internet recruitment, particularly corporations that use online recruitment. The study also guides job portals that are established by private companies or governments in terms of understanding the preferences of job seekers, particularly the surveyed university students in question.

Today's employers cannot afford not to adopt Internet recruitment given that new generations, particularly university students, have positive attitudes towards this recruitment method (Parry & Wilson, 2008). Furthermore, many job seekers today are seeking employment through the Internet, and many firms advertise their openings on their portals; therefore, employers have no alternative but to follow this practice if they want to recruit high quality human resources (Pin et al., 2001), including recent graduates for management trainee positions. Accordingly, organisations and government agencies should consider the important predictors of this study, i.e. user friendliness, information provision,

and website usability. It is hoped that the recommendations made in this study will shed some light on how employers can improve the effectiveness of their Internet recruitment efforts. Briefly, job sites must be user-friendly, and website designers must therefore consider all the attributes that meet the expectations of young job seekers when designing a website's interface (Birgelen et al., 2008). Internet recruitment companies and government agencies with job portals must consistently evaluate the user-friendliness and usability of their websites and make changes to their appearance as and when necessary. More importantly, pertinent information that communicates the background, values, and benefits of the company is also imperative in fostering a positive perception of the company. The provided information must be accurate, and openings should be promptly removed after positions have been filled.

Due to some limitations, the findings of this study should be interpreted with care. First, this study only considers e-mailed questionnaires as the sole method of data collection. More insights can be generated if this method is supplemented by other data collection methods, such as interviews, to determine which variables require further in-depth investigation. The respondents were sampled based on a combination of probability and non-probability sampling methods, i.e., convenience and network basis, which exposes the findings to a greater degree of bias; there is no way to assess the precision and reliability of the obtained data. Future studies should employ probability sampling methods to arrive at more precise and reliable findings. This study only purports to investigate three independent variables. Although the *R*-squared values are high, future studies should include other variables, such as the confidentiality of personal information or privacy risks (Tong, 2009), hiring decisions (Sylva & Mol, 2009) and the reputation of the company (Mohamed Othman & Musa, 2007). This approach would enable the findings to be generalised to a larger population. The number of respondents and the targeted institutions are also related to the issue of generalisability. A larger and more balanced sample is warranted in future studies. It is possible that a collaborative study with any of the job portals may yield more interesting findings.

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Wendy Ming-Yen Teoh et al.

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