

Online and Social Media Recruitment: Hospitality Employer and Prospective Employee

Considerations

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Purpose – This paper reflects on issues concerning online and social media recruitment in hospitality organisations. It considers the implications for employers and prospective employees, discussing areas of mutual relevance.

Design/methodology/approach – The paper draws on existing research to examine the subject of online and social media recruitment. Secondary sources are used to provide a framework for the consideration of online and social media recruitment for hospitality organisations. A model for understanding online and social media empowered hospitality recruitment is proposed.

Findings – Considerations for employers include website attributes, issues of fairness in the recruitments process and brand reputation. For prospective employees, the considerations centre on public and private online profiles. Considerations common to both include the value of an online presence, the blurring of boundaries in online information and legal implications.

Research limitations/implications – This is a discussion paper drawing on evidence from previous research to explore recruitment issues in the hospitality industry. It raises the profile of recruitment issues, mapping the field and providing the basis for further exploration.

Practical Implications – The paper provides a basis for understanding the impact of online and social media recruitment trends and issues and considers the implications for hospitality employers and prospective employees.

Originality/Value – The papers contribution is its reflection on debates from different disciplines and in offering the dual perspective of employers and potential employees from which to consider emerging themes as they relate to online and social media empowered recruitment.

Keywords – Hospitality; Recruitment; Human Resources Management; Online and Social media

Article Classification - General Review

Introduction

This paper reflects on the use of online and social media for recruitment purposes in hospitality organisations. The hospitality industry is renowned for having high labour turnover rates and an element of hard to fill vacancies, and attracting suitable employees remains an on-going challenge. Increasingly, organisations are looking for more innovative ways to make recruitment practices more effective, efficient, engaging and personal. This in turn may increase the quantity and quality of the applicant base and in the longer term potentially reduces staff turnover if the person – organisation fit is improved. Attracting the right employee can lead to better service and customer satisfaction, as well as cost efficiency where turnover is reduced (Bharwani and Butt, 2012).

The use of technology in the workplace has impacted on all areas of employment, with technology providing significant and advantageous ways in which to enhance organisational recruitment practices (Gregory *et al.*, 2013). The Internet has created opportunities for online recruitment practices to emerge for a number of years, and organisations have been utilising Web 1.0 technology by posting vacancies on websites and job boards. As a consequence, advertising external vacancies has become more cost effective, more rapid and it enables organisations to reach a wider audience (Anderson, 2003; Brady *et al.*, 2003; Hull, 2011).

More recently, the platform becoming widely used for recruitment purposes is Web 2.0 and Social Networking Sites (SNSs). Social media, Blogs, Videos, Wikis, Fora and chat rooms have empowered individuals to generate and share information and experiences online (Tussyadiah and Fesenmaier, 2009). The use of SNSs in the hospitality sector is widely practiced to engage customers in the brand and in generating online ‘buzz’ (Aggarwal, 2009). In the recruitment context on the one side, hospitality organisations can advertise vacancies for free either on their own platforms or on relevant groups. They also have the opportunity to observe prospective employee profiles in terms of both professional and personal attributes. On the other side, employees can build their profiles on SNSs, search for information on a company to see organisational structures and cultures, and exchange information not only with employers but potentially with existing employees. This is significant as employees can

find 'informal' information through comments from existing employees rather than the 'formal' information that companies provide.

Research into organisational recruitment and the breadth of topics addressed has increased considerably (Breugh, 2008), with online recruiting in particular emerging as a research field in human resources management and psychology (Boswell *et al.*, 2003; Dineen *et al.*, 2007). Trade Journals such as HR Magazine provide much information on emerging practices in the Profession, for example the advantages and disadvantages of using social media recruitment (Holland, 2012), urging human resources practitioners not to ignore opportunities (Gibbins, 2011) nor to get left behind (Newcombe, 2014). Practical guides and information for the use of social media in recruitment are also available (ACAS, 2013). Due to the massive growth in SNSs, its use by both organisations and individuals for professional reasons has become a critical issue at the intersection of human resources and information technology (Jacobson and Howle Tufts, 2012).

However, interest in the topic and an increase in research is not mirrored in the hospitality field. This is surprising, given the clear need for successful and cost effective recruitment. The hospitality sector has not been the subject of research into recruitment and selection methods that are widely used in other industries, and the impact of social media on human resource practices and employment in hospitality has not been widely discussed by academia or industry (Davidson *et al.*, 2010; Lucas and Deery, 2004; Madera, 2012). Hospitality online forums and trade journals have considered social networking and its role in corporate profile creation and engaging with customers, along with more creative, flexible and cost saving human resource practices. However, the issues raised specifically by recruitment through social networking sites are still largely unknown.

This is all the more surprising considering the nature of hospitality employment, which relies on large numbers of young people as one solution to high labour turnover, hard to fill vacancies and filling seasonal posts. In the UK, the sector's workforce has traditionally been much younger than across the economy as a whole with more than forty percent of hospitality employees currently under the age of aged thirty. The economy as a whole is currently around twenty five years of age (People 1st, 2013). The large number of young people employed in the sector is not unique to the UK and is evident elsewhere (ILO, 2010). The

high percentage of young people employed in the hospitality sector raises questions concerning the best way to recruit, select, train and motivate them (Solent and Hood, 2008). The study of the younger age cohorts, or Generation Y, in the global workplace has been widely researched (Chen and Choi, 2008; Gursoy *et al.*, 2013; Richardson and Thomas, 2012) but not in relation to social media recruitment. Given Generation Y's predisposition to use SNS's, using the Internet and SNSs for recruitment is an obvious way in which to find and attract young age groups. Facebook is the most popular and influential, with 1.28 billion active monthly users and 802 million active daily users as of March 2014 (Facebook, 2014). LinkedIn as the professional social networking site is the preferred source for recruitment. Twitter is widely used to announce jobs efficiently using hashtags to target specific groups, and Facebook often mediates the online reputation of an organisation and is used to engage people in the brand. Solnet and Hood (2008) argue that hospitality organisations may be able to improve their appeal to potential Generation Y employees by using their innate habit of social networking for communication, as the hospitality sector relies on young people as a labour source for many casual, seasonal, low skilled work and also as future leaders. Furthermore, organisations can build their online reputation amongst these age groups.

In one of the few studies from the hospitality sector, research by Madera (2012) explores the role of social networking sites as a selection tool with reference to selection process fairness and job pursuit intentions. Results of their research on college students majoring in hospitality management attending a career fair for hospitality positions indicate that organisations who used SNSs as a selection tool were perceived to be less fair than those that did not. Job pursuit intentions were also lower in this regard (Madera, 2012). These findings are consistent with research from other disciplines (Rynes and Cable, 2003; Withiam, 2011). In the hospitality context, Kwok (2011) asked if we are ready for job seeking on social media? A number of years on, and despite ad hoc discussions in the trade arena on the topic there remains a scarcity of research in this area. Our research asks *what can we learn from the wider body of research that resonates with the hospitality sector and what are the emerging practices of this type of recruitment?*

Four points for clarification set the context for this paper. First, the paper puts the possibilities and challenges for recruitment afforded by online and social media at the centre of the debate, arguing that these technology developments have given rise to changing recruitment practices. Second, it draws on research into online and social media recruitment

from human resources management, psychology, computer science and communication studies in order to present issues of relevance for recruitment in hospitality. Third, this discussion relates only to the external recruitment of individuals as these are central to addressing turnover and represent the unknown to the employer. Fourth, whilst recognising that the term for recruitment relates to employers rather than employees, it argues that a broader perspective is needed in the context of online and social media recruitment. A model for understanding current online and social media empowered hospitality recruitment is drawn to map the field and initiate further discussion of this area.

Discussion

This paper takes a dual perspective and considers the issues that online and social media recruitment raises for both hospitality employers and prospective employees. Traditionally, recruitment defined by Dessler (2013) as “finding and/or attracting applicants for the employer’s open positions” (Dessler, 2013, p146) is a term for employers, not employees. However, in this paper we widen the definition to include those who are seeking work. This is because the nature of Web 2.0 technology facilitates discussion, interaction and inclusion, thereby altering traditional structures and eroding boundaries. Traditionally, businesses advertised vacancies to potential employees (B2E). Web 2.0 now allows for potential employees to advertise themselves to businesses (E2B) with employee to employee (E2E) discussion also now an integral part of the process. Furthermore, recruitment is arguably about more than just filling vacancies. It can include succession planning, with Web 2.0 technology affording the possibilities of the engagement of future applicants in a companies brand, image and identity. This potentially leads to a more effective long-term recruitment strategy. Of particular significance in hospitality is that many employees have networks of friends and contacts who are also seeking jobs and social media can facilitate recruitment in this way.

For clarity, the discussion is organised in terms of the considerations for employers and employees separately. However, this creates a divide that in reality is artificial as a number of the issues overlap.

Considerations for Employers

Web 1.0 Environment – Company Websites

An important mechanism for online recruitment is a company's website which often plays a significant role in recruiting job applicants (Allen *et al.*, 2007; Chapman and Webster, 2003). The Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (2009) state that seventy-five per cent of organisations use their own websites to attract applicants, primarily large brands such as Marriott. These are preferred over using job boards, for example Monster.com and HotJobs.com. and other intermediary sites. Whilst they are an important platform for advertising vacancies, company website are favoured over the use of Internet job boards as these sites can generate too many applications from unqualified applicants (Steel, 2007), making shortlisting candidates an onerous task. One suggestion to limit the number of applicants might be interactive websites that can give feedback on person organisation fit (Hu *et al.*, 2007).

According to Gregory *et al.*, (2013), evidence suggests that fifty per cent of new hires originate from the Internet (Cober and Brown, 2006), with estimated cost savings to organisations using web-based or e-recruiting being as much as eighty-seven per cent (Maurer and Liu, 2007). Many of the large hotel chains (for example, Hyatt, Marriott and Four Seasons) have links to career opportunities on their sites, incorporating further opportunities to connect through Facebook, LinkedIn and Twitter, RSS and Blogs.

If companies engage in online recruitment from websites, according to Breaugh, (2008), the clarity of information concerning vacancies such as pay levels, working hours, job tasks etc. are the most important feature in relation to recruitment. However, due consideration should be given to ensure websites are attractive and easy to use (Rynes and Cable, 2003). Researchers from the disciplines of Psychology and Computers and Human Behaviour have explored the attractiveness and usability of company websites in detail. Work by Gregory, *et al.* (2013) offers a concise review of the growth in online recruitment practices, stating that researchers have been investigating how website features affect a potential job applicants decision to apply for a position in the organisation. They state that much work in this area focuses on the usability and aesthetics of the websites themselves (Williamson *et al.*, 2003) using techniques such as content analysis to measure applicants reaction to websites (Cober *et al.*, 2004), experiment stimulations to examine website effects (Braddy *et al.*, 2003), and the effects on recruitment of employee testimonials on websites (Walker *et al.*, 2011). The

relationship between information, organisational brand and attitudes towards website attraction for applicants is argued to be an important area to explore (Allen *et al.*, 2007).

Broadly, due to the role Web 1.0 plays in recruitment it is crucial to understand the best content to include and features to use on a recruitment website to attract job applicants (Gregory *et al.*, 2013). Results from their own research and others (Allen *et al.*, 2007; Selden and Orenstein, 2011) indicate that the website usability, aesthetics, accuracy of job information and amount of organisational information all impact viewers' attitudes towards organisational recruitment websites. Furthermore, it was found that there is a relationship between attitudes towards the recruitment website and attitudes towards the organisation. In other words, a poorly designed website with insufficient and inaccurate information or a lack of information was found to have a negative impact on the company profile. Companies should make sure websites are properly planned as it could be detrimental to brand image (Gibson and Swift, 2011). This has important implications for the subsequent formation of organisational attraction (Gregory *et al.*, 2013).

Web 2.0 Environment - Social Media Sites

SNSs for recruitment can be in the form of an organisation creating its own social network that encourages user generated content and discussion, or by being associated with other sites as in the case of LinkedIn.

Madera (2012) and Madera and Chang (2011) identify an emerging trend which is for hospitality organisations to encourage applicants to join their SNSs. This creates an on-going conversation and engagement between labour suppliers and buyers and brand development through Business to Employee (B2E) and Employee to Business (E2B) environments. On-going conversations are important in the development of lasting relationships between employers, existing and potential employees and others.

Hospitality organisations are frequently in competition for the best people with the recruitment of talented individuals high on the human resource management agenda, in particular graduates from leading hotel schools and universities. Organisations can engage with prospective employees (B2E) through dialogue on SNSs to discuss career opportunities and encourage applications. Also prospective employees can engage in conversation on

better preparing themselves to ensure best fit with the organisation (E2B). Many international brands also create social media sites for their existing staff where they can share information and achievements, which helps to facilitate brand buy in. In addition, employees may create their own groups on separate platforms for networking and sharing photographs with fellow employees that are not controlled by the organisation. Sites also exist to post views on employers, for example Glassdoor and ratemyemployer (Laird, 2014).

Social Media Sites – Selection and Screening Considerations

Beyond the hospitality field, research indicates there is increasing recognition by human resource managers that using SNSs to screen job applicants is increasing and is an acceptable practice (Clark and Roberts, 2010). This trend is identified in hospitality in the US where there is a trend for employers to use SNSs to screen job applicants (Madera, 2012).

To date, few organisations have tackled the question of under what circumstances or how managers or recruitment professionals should use SNSs as a means of selecting job applicants or monitoring current employees (Smith and Kidder, 2010). There is considerable debate in the industry around whether employers should do this (HR Editorial, 2013). These selection procedures have been widely researched and are summarised well by Caers and Castelyn (2011). They state that theoretically employers should only take into account work related factors in the selection process. However, there is plenty of evidence to suggest that other factors may be influential, including age (Lahey, 2008), gender (Riach and Rich, 2003), race (Pager, 2003), sexual orientation (Drydakis, 2009), obesity (Swami *et al.*, 2008) and facial attractiveness (Tews *et al.*, 2009). As individuals broadcast information about themselves on SNSs, this information is available to organisations to which they might potentially apply. As a result, SNSs run the risk of introducing biases into the selection process even before an interview is held (Caers and Castelyn, 2011). Instances have occurred whereby the screening of SNSs results in reducing the chances of employment based on inappropriate photographs and profiles (Newcombe, 2013).

In terms of screening job applicants, it can be argued that an employers decision to explore all information available regarding a job applicant prior to selection has a logical business interest (Pate, 2012). For example, a study by Kluemper *et al.* (2012) finds a link between job

performance and Facebook profiles. Taking this a stage further, an employer may be legally obliged to search all information so as not to be undertaking negligent hiring (Pate, 2012). It is widely known that the social network designed for the Professional sphere is LinkedIn, which many organisations consult. Using LinkedIn gives employers the easiest way into more targeted recruitment as aspects such as qualifications and career histories can be identified. However, more and more organisations are turning to Facebook for recruiting even though this is not the primary aim of this social networking site (Smith and Kidder, 2010). Screening of Facebook, Twitter and Instagram sites is often used to better understand the prospective employees character, personality and fit for the organisation. Employers can access 'private' pages if requested to be 'friends' by the job applicant (Zeidner *et al.*, 2008). Taking this a stage further, there is evidence that some employers are demanding applicant's passwords to social networking sites as conditions of employment (Pate, 2012).

At the heart of this issue is essentially what information could be seen as being related to a persons working life, as opposed to their personal life. Although both SNSs, the primary difference between Facebook and LinkedIn is that Facebook is about sharing information and connecting to friends, LinkedIn allows Professionals to connect, market their skills and share job information and knowledge and for career development. As such, Facebook arguably belongs to an individuals personal sphere, and LinkedIn to the Professional sphere (Caers and Castelyn, 2011). Put another way, LinkedIn is factual, function and 'hygienic' whereas Facebook is personable, social and often shows people 'off guard'. One suggestion is for employers to only use information that is found on LinkedIn in the professional context. However, monitoring and enforcing this is impossible. Alternatively, if prospective employees do not want to have their information publically available and be used by recruiters, they can use different privacy settings and adjustment. In this view, the onus is placed on the individual to protect what they consider 'personal' or 'private'.

The screening of SNSs and online profiles may also lead to unlawful discrimination, intentional or not. Amongst the many things potentially that an employer is likely to find out about an applicant through social media sites are colour, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability and race (Pate, 2012). This information permits the employer to explore areas beyond legitimate and legal applicant recruitment and selection (Pate, 2012). Because this type of searching effectively takes place without the knowledge of the applicant, the employer is free to discriminate without the applicant's knowledge. Whether this is taking

place or not, using SNSs for selection also raises issues of perceived fairness, as discussed earlier.

The reliability of SNSs information used for selection is also of concern as information might be misleading or untrue. Evidence from psychological research indicates that online community norms tend to lean towards self-promotion (Buffardi and Campbell, 2008) and may be inaccurate or exaggerated (Epstein, 2008). Facebook has received much scholarly attention with regard to how it fosters strategic and selective self-presentation behaviours that promote the self in an exclusively positive light (Lee-Won *et al.*, 2014). Caution for employers is urged (HR Editorial, 2012). Elsewhere, evidence suggests that online identities reflect offline identities with some accuracy (Back *et al.*, 2010; Gosling *et al.*, 2011). From an employers perspective, traditional recruitment practices such as interviews and references are still required to validate claims. Employers also have a responsibility to ensure accuracy on their own websites, as potential applicants may question if the information on the company website is credible. Van Hove and Lievens (2007) found that information available about a company on an independent website has greater validity, the suggestion being that in searching for organisation information, seek information given by other websites not affiliated with an employer.

Social Media Sites – Hostility Considerations

While the Internet may offer an efficient, fast and cost effective method for employers hoping to find suitable staff, it has an element of risk. Research suggests that employees have influence through the user generated content of SNSs in reporting unscrupulous employers (Janta and Ladkin, 2013). The term ‘flaming’ refers to hostile, abusive or insulting comments posted online. Employees may use social media sites to warn potential employees (E2E) about discriminatory and unethical practices, which may or may not be verified. More generally, many organisations may come under attack by ex-employees who set out to damage their reputation online.

Furthermore, social media is also increasingly playing a role in employer and employee relations. For example, Schoneboom (2011) analysed a case of firing a workblogger (“the Waterstone’s incident”) that drew mainstream media attention, highlighting that an individually operated blog can be helpful in pressuring the employer during an employee-

employer dispute. Related to this, research by Richards and Kosmala (2013) reveals expressions of employee cynicism through blogging. Photographs and videos appearing on social media may also be part of the whistle blowing campaign. As employees are at liberty to use social networks to express opinions and views on work colleagues, policies that guard against this should be included in contracts. Furthermore, employees can use professional groups to discuss issues such as salaries and job conditions in order to open public dialogue that can influence the reputation of the business.

Considerations for Prospective Employees

Opportunities Afforded by Social Media

From the perspective of the prospective employee, social media has given job applicants a tremendous opportunity for job seeking (Janta and Ladkin, 2013). Individuals can use social media to boost their job searching techniques for greater effectiveness, for example using professional networking groups such as LinkedIn, or sites that host online CV and other job related content that is shared by recruiters, such as VirtualCV (Maul and Wallins, 2010). Employees can also search for current jobs posted on Twitter as well as using social networks to announce their availability, and seeking information from their professional and peer groups concerning potential employers (E2B). The positive side to using social media and opportunities that individuals have to promote themselves has previously been summarized well by Kwok (2011). Job applicants have a wealth of online and social network opportunities available to them to promote their CVs and profile globally and at low cost. This can only be a positive development due to improved access to global vacancies.

Online Identity and Impression Management

As discussed earlier, evidence suggests that employers may view an applicant's personal profile on SNSs, and rightly or wrongly, impressions are formed in this way. As recruiters and employers may 'Google' prospective employees, Facebook and other SNSs may reveal a private persona that if not protected by privacy settings may give a very different picture from the professional one. Applicants need to be aware of the effects their social network profiles may have to their application success, in a positive or negative way (Caers and Castelyns, 2011). The fundamental issue is that the public/private spheres have become blurred,

therefore the invisible lines and relationships between online and offline identity have become an issue for concern (Asmaak Shafie *et al.*, 2012).

The online identity of a potential employee is clearly important and how these identities are constructed and maintained is an important area of research (Lee-Won *et al.*, 2014). How to influence the perceptions that others have based on identities involves the use of impression management, a process by which individuals control the impressions that others form of them (Leary and Kowalski, 1990). This is the subject of much research, for example in the case of individual Facebook users (Walther *et al.*, 2009) and in the context of organisations (Tong *et al.*, 2008; Lillqvist and Louhiala-Salminen, 2013).

Managing and forming impressions online present opportunities and challenges for both the actor and the perceiver. The opportunity for the actor is to create favourable impressions, and the challenge for the perceiver is to determine if the information accurately reflects the profile owners actual offline personality (Hall *et al.*, 2014). Establishing the trustworthiness or verification between the online and offline self is also problematic (Walther and Parks, 2002). Online identity and impression management has an impact in the context of recruitment for potential employees as the first impression created by online profiles may have an immediate effect on selection.

Online and Social Media Empowered Hospitality Recruitment

Driven by technological developments, the popularity of online and social media recruitment has resulted in the boundaries of the relationship between the employer and the potential employee stretching beyond the workplace and working hours (Pate, 2012). The discussion surrounding the possibilities and challenges afforded by Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 technology for both employers and employees are summarised in Figure 1. The framework presents the dual perspectives of employer and employee in relation to issues raised from previous research in hospitality and other fields.

The new technologies have altered the relationship between employers and potential employees and have afforded opportunities for new recruitment practices. The interaction and emergent practices between employers and potential employees is shown in Figure 2, which is a proposed model to demonstrate online and social media empowered hospitality

recruitment. On the one side, employers use their Web 1.0 and 2.0 environments to advertise vacancies, provide company information and facilitate recruitment, both directly and through agencies (B2E). On the other side, potential employees have their personal online presence through websites, blogs, twitter, YouTube and Instagram. Professional groups may also be used to promote themselves to employers (E2B). Whilst it is evident that in hospitality B2E and E2B communication and engagement is becoming commonplace. There is also evidence of E2E communication whereby employees engage in dialogue with each other. A key feature of online and social media empowered recruitment is that it is highly visible. Therefore organisations need to reengineer their policies to ensure their online presence improves their recruitment efficiency, employment relationships and online reputation. Equally, potential and existing employees have to manage their employment relationships and online reputation.

Implications

Returning to the question “*are we ready for job seeking on social media?*” posed by Kwok (2011), the hospitality sector can draw on debates from other disciplines along with demonstrating emerging recruitment practices. These possibilities and challenges for recruitment afforded by online and social media have implications for both hospitality employers and prospective employees in five main ways.

The first is the changing nature of the relationship between employers and potential employees, as demonstrated in Figure 2. Both now have an online presence. It allows both organisations and individuals to provide information to a global audience, can easily be updated, and can be used in a beneficial way in the case of an organisation to attract potential applicants and for individuals to promote opportunities and skills. How an organisation and an individual develops their identity on the web is currently uncertain and a matter for further research. Social identity theory that studies how identities are shaped (Ashforth *et al.*, 2008) may be a way forward. Despite these unknowns, what is clear is that the Web 1.0 and Web 2.0 result in both employers and employees being highly visible leading to benefits and concerns for both. The relationship is changed by the ease of access to information without temporal or geographical boundaries.

The relationship is also changed by the multiple direction of communication and inclusion of others. Social networks afford opportunities for the long-term engagement of past, current and future employees in the development and sustainability of the organisation and its reputation. Relationships with all of the categories of employees can be facilitated through social media, recognising that at different times each may play the role of promoter, recruiter, customer, or ambassador. Websites, Facebook, Blogs and Twitter can build a social and professional community that is a continuous loop which outlasts one particular role or place in time. The role of the Human Resources department in facilitating this loop is crucial and an important area for consideration. It may also require new skills related to information technology, and for online media communication strategies to be included as part of human resource management activities.

The relationship between employers and potential employees is further changed by emergent practices. There is evidence to suggest that in addition to external recruitment agencies, employers are using existing employees to recruit potential applicants. Some are questioning the need now for external agencies (Raemy, 2011). For example, Web technologies have made the process of recruiting migrant workers easier for both sides resulting in employees themselves being part of the recruitment of new workers (Janta and Ladkin, 2013). Marriott has developed a scheme whereby existing staff are used to recruit new employees by viewing photographs of staff working on Marriott's website (Peltier, 2014). As discussed by Janta and Ladkin (2013), recent studies (Andrzejewska and Rye, 2012; Findlay and McCollum, 2013) show that employers delegate responsibility for selecting 'good' workers to migrants themselves, thereby companies use their own employees as recruitment agents (Moriarty *et al.*, 2012). Employees may be asked to post messages online in selected social networks in their first language, and to engage in raising the awareness of a company in a particular community for potential recruitment. However, while hiring migrant workers via social networks is widely practiced, McGovern (2007) says of online recruitment that '*an unintended consequence of this practice is that information about jobs may become restricted to the ethnic groups that already have a foothold within the firm. In this way, hiring through social networks can become an exclusionary practice that gives the firm a nepotistic cast*' (p. 2007; p.227). This can result in an ethnic concentration within particular job categories, as confirmed by other research in the hotel sector (McDowell *et al.*, 2007).

The second implication for employers and potential employees afforded by online and social media is the digital divide (Minghetti and Buhalis, 2010). It should be remembered that the opportunities to develop an online presence and engagement in SNSs is currently not available to all. Access to technology and the web may be limited by factors such as low educational ability, cultural norms, low technology adoption, cost of services and geographical location. As identified by Caers and Castelyn (2011) the impact of SNSs is not uniform across the globe due to Internet availability and literacy rates, cultural norms and SNS adoption (Hargittai, 2007). The opportunities are not the same for all.

The third implication is ethical, caused by a blurring of boundaries which resonates with both employers and employees. For employers it is to be mindful of the information that can be regarded as job related as opposed to information that is not. Previous research indicates that applicants have a favourable disposition towards selection tools that are perceived to be job related (Rynes and Cable, 2003). Much information on SNSs is not specifically job related, but personal, for example photographs, and favourite music, and books (Withiam, 2011). Where to draw the line is problematic as the boundaries are unclear. The issue for job applicants is they often have multiple online identities for different aspects of their lives (Smith and Kidder, 2010). For applicants, there is a need to realise that their multiple identities are all at least partly visible, and the boundary between what is personal and what is private again is blurred. Maintaining both personal and professional spheres is an on going challenge.

Related to the above, the fourth implication is legal. As previously discussed, potential legal issues could arise from using social networks for recruitment. From an employee perspective, this could for example relate to discriminatory hiring practices, neglectful hiring and issues of privacy invasion. For employees it could relate to practices that damage a company's image or reputation. Online and social media recruitment has resulted in a plethora of legal concerns that are yet to be fully realised. Social media practices, tools and abuses creates additional challenges in the workplace. It is not the nature of employees rights, conduct, or expectation but the medium, reach, speed and permanency of actions that are altered (Jacobson and Howle Tufts, 2012).

The fifth implication points towards the critical role of the human resources function in hotel organisations. Their role is multifunctional, but in the case of online and social media

recruitment a company's social media policies will become increasingly important. Guidelines as a minimum or contracts on acceptable practice for arriving, current and past employees are required. This is crucial for reputation management and fostering employee relations. A strategy for social media recruitment is clearly vital (Clements, 2012).

Given that many of the issues raised are not fully understood, perhaps the way forward in the short term is for human resource teams to develop a best practice surrounding online and social media recruitment. As a starting point this could be the development of guidelines governing the procedures and practices that are used by the organisation for hiring, including exploring areas that have legal implications. It may also be necessary for human resource practitioners to work more closely with other departments in the organisation. For example, marketing and communications for online communication strategies, and information technology for website design and usability. New skills may also need to be included in human resource teams, for example in relation to the ability to contribute to a range of media including SNSs, Blogs, Wikis and using Twitter. A further challenge is the speed of response and need for continuous feeds as part of social network engagement. To keep information up to date and to add new content is a time consuming activity that possibly requires a dedicated team to manage it. Given the importance of brand image and the need for continuous recruitment, it is worth hospitality organisations investing the time to consider best practice in relation to online and social media recruitment. There is currently a split between human resource functions that embrace social media recruitment and those who actively ignore it (Roberts, 2014). The suggestion is that it is not a threat for human resource practitioners, but it is a reality and is highly beneficial (ACAS, 2013).

Conclusion

This paper argues that the use of online and social media for recruitment purposes and the wider implications of the activity including its benefits and challenges are just beginning to be understood. The labour markets of the hospitality sector give the issue a specific relevance. The paper advocates the importance of considering a dual perspective of the issues due to the erosion of traditional boundaries in the context of online and social media recruitment. An online and social media empowered recruitment model demonstrates the dynamic multi way dialogue between employers, current employees and prospective employees. What is clear is that the possibilities and challenges for recruitment afforded by online and social media are

facilitating change, whether these be legal, social, operational or many more. The consequences of online and social media recruitment will be most keenly felt by human resource managers, who will need to be at the forefront of responding to the issues raised by these emerging practices.

Directions for Future Research

To date the waters are largely uncharted on this type of hospitality recruitment, and this paper consolidates debates and practices as a starting point. Broadly, future research could offer different perspectives to explore the issues raised. For example, taking a human resource management perspective to explore the practical implications of this type of recruitment such as how to manage on-going dialogue with current and prospective employees would be one aspect. Alternatively, researchers could focus on the technology aspects that facilitate and mediate social media recruitment, such as website design and usability. The emergent practices of social media recruitment have both practical and theoretical implications which represent further opportunities for research. Recruitment practices and legal issues are practical areas that could be explored in hospitality organisations, and the sector could also be used for theoretical research into boundary blurring, online identities and the reliability of online information. The characteristics of the hospitality workforce afford opportunities to explore the emergent issues in online and social media recruitment and other sectors could learn from hospitality. Migrant workers in terms of their mobility and networks and a young workforce who have a specific engagement with Web 2.0 makes for a valuable setting for exploring these issues. Hospitality research is well positioned to be at the forefront of emerging issues and debates.

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