INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MODERN TRENDS IN SOCIAL SCIENCES (IJMTSS)

GAE
GLOBAL ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

THE MALAYSIAN JOB MARKET: EXPLORING SOCIAL NETWORKING SITES (SNSS) AS AN ALTERNATIVE COMMUNICATION METHOD BETWEEN EMPLOYERS AND JOB SEEKERS

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Abstract:

Interpersonal communication refers to the exchange of information, ideas, and feelings between two or more individuals. It is propounded as an essential component of human life; however, rapid technological advances have been changing the nature of interpersonal communication. As a result, the use of technology-oriented mediums like social networking sites (SNSs) has gained a prominent role in communication, particularly in the recruitment process. This subsequently alters the way employers and job seekers communicate with one another, which sparks the interest of researchers to further investigate the phenomenon. As an effort to contribute to the discussion, this paper reports an empirical study that investigated the use of SNSs in the communication between employers and job seekers. The objective is to understand the conceptualization of SNSs between employers and job seekers, the communication activities that occurred, the antecedents of choosing job advertisements from the job seekers' perspective, and the consequences of using SNS platforms. This was achieved by adopting the Users and Gratification Theory as the underlying principle of the investigation. Purposive sampling was used to select 19 informants from various states in Malaysia. In-depth interviews were conducted to elicit data from these informants and it was later evaluated and combined in a thematic data analysis using the NVivo 12 software. The findings showed that the concept of quality communication comprises six (6) categories, namely data quality, reliability, matching and bridging, job security, opportunities for advancement, and transparency.

Keywords:

Social Networking Sites, Recruitment, Employer

Introduction

Information is the key ingredient that constitutes the basic thread of social structure in a social organization where it contains messages and images between networks (Castells, 2010). No individual or social system can function without communication (Ayee, 2013) as it is an ongoing process of information transmission and reception of messages (Lamichhane, 2016) in the everyday activities of human life (Venter, 2019). Communication is an active process of interaction where people spend approximately 70 percent of the time communicating by sharing and receiving information through various means (Ansari, 2021). Thus, the ability to communicate effectively is recognised as a key factor that influences how individuals are perceived and the quality of their relationships with others (Morreale & Pearson, 2008). In addition, the presence of new media, especially social media, further facilitates interaction to happen regardless of place and time (Laksana & Fadhilah, 2021), which helps to connect people and ease the search and share of news or information (Krishna, 2022).

For the last twenty years, the pattern of interpersonal communication has undergone massive changes with the growing dominance of social media platforms, where people connect comfortably with the world in real-time without the need to go out from their comfort zones (Gulla & Jha, 2019). This sea-change in communication technologies has contributed to the transformation of both work and organisational structures where communication practices and technologies have become more important in all organizations (Baker, 2002) and good communication skills are valued as a basic requirement in the job market (Lamichhane, 2016). In relation to this, recruitment has emerged as a critical human resource function for organisations where the functions consist of attracting and recruiting new employees with appropriate knowledge, skills, abilities, and aptitudes (Allen, Scotter, & Otondo, 2004).

The recruitment world is going through rapid transformations using new tools and advancements of the current technology (Rathee, Rajain, & Monika, 2020). The continuous emergence of new technologies prompts continuous changes in the global employment landscape (Oncioiu, Anton, Ifrim, & Mândricel, 2022) including in Malaysia. In the 2021 Employer Brand Research report, Randstad Malaysia (randstad.com.my, 2021) found that 36 percent of local respondents used social media to search for jobs as opposed to 26 percent in 2020. Randstad Malaysia (2021) also pointed out that organisations are now shifting their recruiting strategy to a virtual hiring environment.

This study attempts to have an in-depth understanding of what motivates employers and job seekers in Malaysia in their selection of communication medium in recruitment to gratify their social needs and to investigate what influence do certain communication mediums have in relation to the prediction of choices made by both employers and job seekers.

Research Objective

The research objective is as follows:
i) To examine the antecedents of choosing job advertisements on SNS platforms from the perspective of job seekers.

Literature Review

Srinivas (2015) defines recruitment as the overall process of attracting, selecting, and appointing suitable candidates for either permanent or temporary jobs within an organisation. Previously, the recruitment process was conducted via conventional means; however it has evolved and will continue to do so for decades ahead owing to the rapid development of

technology. The arrival of the World Wide Web (better known as the Internet) in the mid-1990s had forced recruiters to begin using online advertising and online databases. This is evidenced by the significant increase of internet usage for job searching purposes between the end of 1998 to mid-2000 (Fountain, 2005). Brown (2008) also agreed that the Internet emerged as a major institution in the complex recruitment process by merging the gap between employment-seeking workers and employers wishing to fill job vacancies in their respective organisations. Hence, numerous employment resources exist on the web to aid employers in their search for workers and individuals in their search for work.

Kajanová, Sedláček, & Soósová (2017) predicted that job searching using SNSs will be very high in the future and that professional SNSs like LinkedIn will become the only and exclusive way to secure a job, particularly in the context of Slovakia. Similarly, Ahmad & Lodhi (2015) stated that LinkedIn is among the best professional sites for employers to find potential employees in Karachi. On the other hand, findings by Caers & Castelyns (2010) showed that although both LinkedIn and Facebook are used simultaneously in the recruitment and selection process by employers in Belgium, the former is used more often than the latter. This is because Facebook is considered less professional than LinkedIn and employers tend to value the information on LinkedIn differently as opposed to those available on Facebook. There is also a broad range of evidence that advocates the benefits of SNSs to young people (Collin, Rahilly, Richardson, & Third, 2011), employers and recruiters (Harrison, 2008; Hefferan, 2010), students (Hamat, Embi, & Hassan, 2012; Teoh, Tan, & Chong, 2013), and organisations (Parveen, Jaafar, & Ainin, 2015). The use of SNSs for job searching and hiring purposes is also prominent in many countries across the globe, with Mumbai and Chennai recorded the highest number of high-impact websites and SNS users in 2011 (Hirsch, Thompson, & Every, 2014).

In the local context, it was reported that approximately 86 percent of the Malaysian population were active SNS users as of January 2021, which is an increase of 24 percent as compared to the 62 percent of users in 2016. It was reported that Facebook was the leading SNS platform in 2020 followed by Instagram, Facebook Messenger, and LinkedIn, and that the number of Facebook users in Malaysia is estimated to reach approximately 24 million in 2023 (Müller, 2021). A survey by JobStreet.com involving a total of 394 employers and 379 employees, from which 58 percent were senior-level executives, indicates that employers who embrace SNSs are more likely to have a competitive advantage over those who do not use SNSs at all (JobStreet Malaysia, 2013).

Despite the prominence of online job searching, many job seekers are still prone towards conventional job searching methods such as job advertisements in the newspaper (Kuhn & Skuterud, 2000). Sulaiman & Burke (2009) believe that such scenario may be due to the fact that certain mediums may be appropriate for specific situations only. Furthermore, there is an availability of various mediums that can be used by employers to recruit and hire new employees; however many of them are still in favour of the conventional recruitment medium. A research by Rooy, Alonso, & Fairchild (2003) stated that job seekers who do not use technological advances are extremely limiting their search and putting themselves at a competitive disadvantage as compared to their peers who use SNSs to search for a job. Nevertheless, their findings also showed that a combination of both conventional and technology-oriented methods will result in the most successful job search, as evidenced by the number of relevant positions found.

According to Sullivan (2013), job seekers are likely to place heavier weight on job-related information retrieved from primary sources as compared to those obtained from secondary sources like advertisements and corporate websites. This is because primary source information is regarded as more credible and authentic, which gives a first-hand view on what it is like to work in a respective company. For this purpose, most job seekers often start with SNSs like Facebook. This statement is supported by Lindsay, Greig, & McQuaid (2005) who posit that SNSs have been acknowledged as an important method in disseminating information about job opportunities. In order to disseminate accurate, genuine, and authentic information regarding job vacancies and organisations, previous researchers believe that there should be an element of informativeness in employers (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). This means that an individual is more informative in aspects like the nature of business, job offer, benefits, and other details related to the organisation, which in contrast to less informative employers (Breaugh, 1992).

For the purpose of communicating recruitment messages to future employees, most employers will choose from a variety of media (Allen et el., 2004). They will also focus on utilising SNSs (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram, and WhatsApp) as a medium to advertise job vacancies in order to attract more job seekers without any geographical restrictions (Rana & Singh, 2016). Subramaniam (2017) stated that such medium offers the ability to connect with many people simultaneously where the messages can be dispersed to a large number of receivers. However, the Media Richness Theory (MRT) suggests that communication outcomes depend on the match between media capacities and communication requirements (Daft & Lengel, 1986). This is supported by several theories which posit that media differs on a number of important characteristics or features, including richness, social presence, and symbolic carrying capacity. Therefore, even though employers are free to use a variety of media to communicate recruitment messages, it is important for them to select the most suitable media as the ability to communicate certain types of information effectively differs across different types of media (Allen et el., 2004).

Methodology
This study was conducted via the qualitative approach involving a face-to-face in-depth semi-structured interview, which was guided by a set of questions pertaining to the issue being explored. Qualitative research is commonly used to generate a more efficient evaluation of the research questions that cannot be answered through a quantitative approach (Mackey & Gass, 2015). Kozinets (2002) explained that qualitative method aims to reveal what is kept underneath of needs, desires, meanings and choices in the world that is rich with symbolism. Hence, the use of such method would help the researcher to gain a thorough understanding of the beliefs, motives, and behaviour.

The sample for this study comprised a total of nineteen (19) informants. These informants consisted of eleven (11) employers who were based in Kuala Lumpur as well as eight (8) job seekers who were bachelor's degree graduates from several local universities. Table 1.1 below shows the demographic profile of these job seekers.

| Informant	Gender	Age	Graduation Year	Level of Education	University
1	Male	23	2013	Bachelor's degree	UiTM
2	Female	21	2015	Bachelor's degree	Uni. Malaya
3	Female	21	2015	Bachelor's degree	Uni. Malaya
4	Female	21	2015	Bachelor's degree	Uni. Malaysia Kelantan
5	Female	21	2015	Bachelor's degree	USM
6	Male	21	2015	Bachelor's degree	UiTM
7	Female	22	2014	Bachelor's degree	Uni. Tun Hussein Onn
8	Female	22	2014	Bachelor's degree	UiTM

Table 1.1 Job Seekers' Profile

Findings and Discussion

Following the data analysis process, the researcher had categorised the findings into twelve groups. The antecedents are advertisement mediums, information dissemination, accessible, reliable, efficient, cost-savings, privacy concerns, pool of talents, and unreliable advertisement. Figure 1 maps the findings for objective three while Figure 2 maps the group, subgroups, and reference.
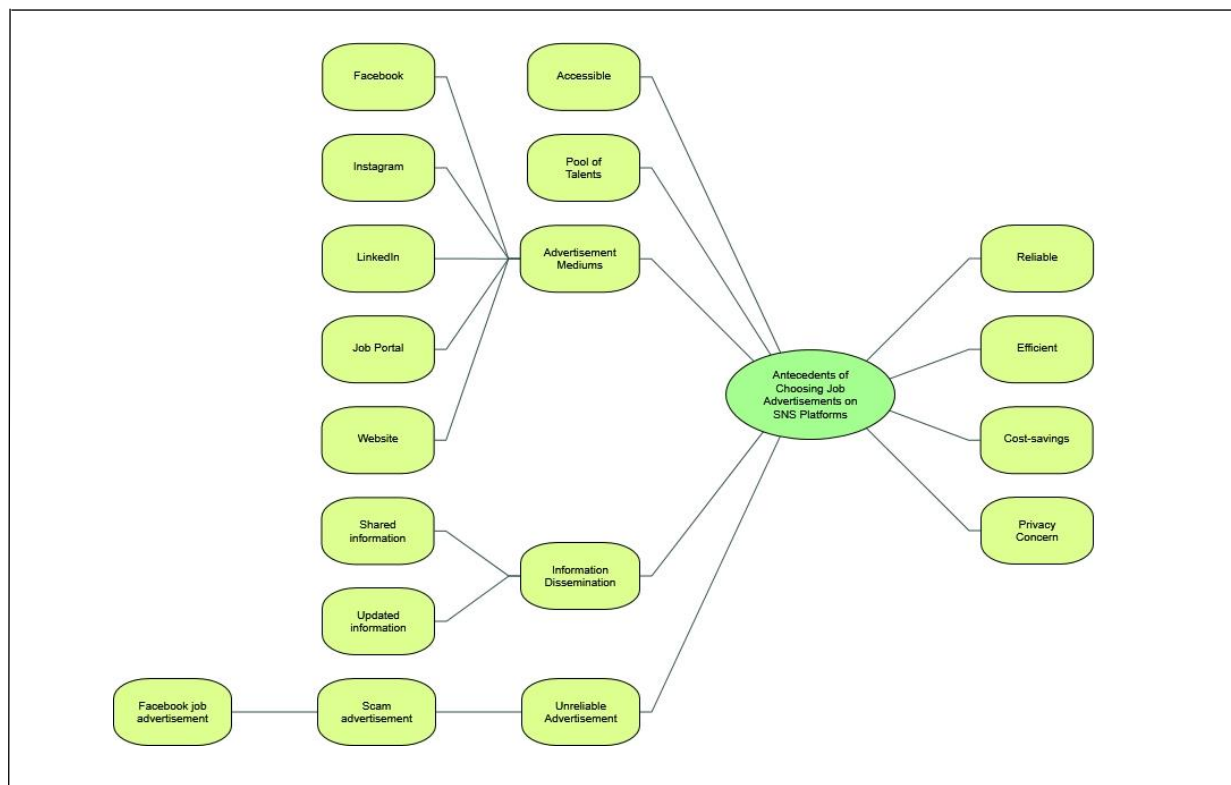
Figure 1: Antecedents of Choosing Job Advertisements on SNSs
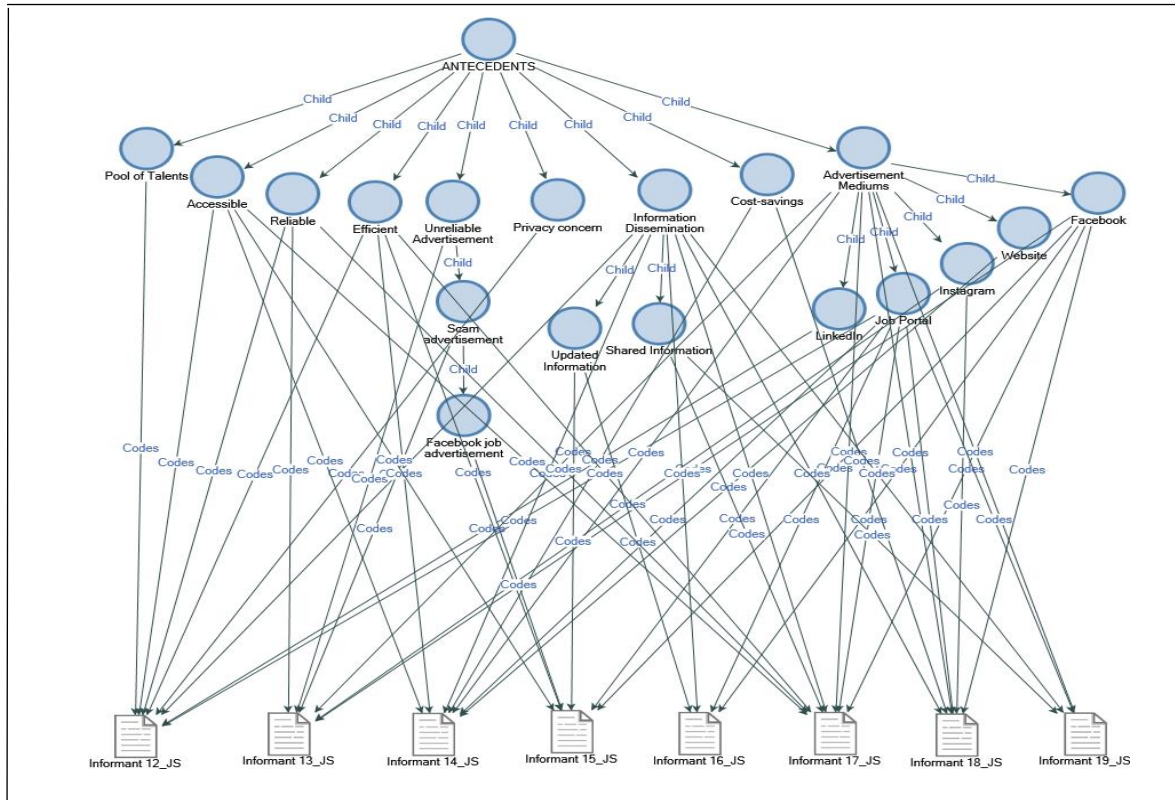
Figure 2: Antecedents of Choosing Job Advertisements on SNS Platforms, Subgroups, and Reference

Based on the findings, it can be seen that advertisement mediums are the most prominent antecedent. The majority of informants admitted of using SNSs not only for socializing but also to search for job advertisements. They also admitted of following certain preferred companies for the purpose of obtaining updates and the latest news, including the announcement of vacancies that these companies might post on their SNSs. Furthermore, the informants believe that SNSs are good alternatives to search for jobs and obtaining the latest updates, and among the most popular SNSs used by them include Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter.

The advertisement mediums antecedent comprises a total of five subgroups, namely job portal, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and website. It was found that the majority of informants have registered for job portals, such as JobStreet.com, Indeed.com, MauKerja.com, and JobsMalaysia.com. These informants believe that job portals are reliable and trusted as it contains genuine job advertisements and requires the use of emails for job application purposes. They also feel satisfied when using job portals because they always get email notifications related to jobs and current job listings, which makes it easier for them to apply.

The informants also believe that Facebook is helpful for job seekers, not only due to its function that reconnects many people at once but also because the medium is easy to use, light, and fast. In contrast, the informants are less prone of using Instagram to search for jobs because business owners rarely post job advertisements on Instagram. On the other hand, even though LinkedIn

is a well-known SNS among professionals, it was less utilised by the informants of this study. Such finding is in line with Nikolaou (2014) who reported that younger job seekers and human resource professionals are more prone towards Facebook and job boards while LinkedIn is more prominent among the older generation in both groups. This serves as an explanation of why the informants of this study (i.e., young graduates) are more inclined towards job portals and Facebook. Moreover, it was found that the majority of informants were less keen on using website as a job searching medium. This is probably due to the fact that all information and details about the jobs were also available on the job portals that the informants had previously registered, hence allowing them to send their applications directly from the job portals.

It was also found that the informants regard shared information under the information dissemination as an important antecedent when utilising SNSs to search for jobs. As young job seekers, these informants would share any job information that they considered trustworthy to their friends, graduates, or family and relative chat groups. They also indicated that the use of SNSs like Facebook provides the freedom to share link, information, or other beneficial details about jobs and vacancies. The informants also admitted of receiving numerous links that were shared and forwarded by their friends and family through SNSs as well as instant messaging applications like WhatsApp or Instant Messenger. Moreover, the informants considered updated information as equally important as shared information. They believe that having up-to-date and latest information about job vacancies is good and facilitates them to apply, hence it is one of the points that they (i.e., job seekers) would consider before registering for a certain SNS.

Furthermore, most informants also deemed accessible as highly important because its absence, would limit their access to information or to register for an SNS account. They also indicated their preference towards user-friendly SNSs that are simple and easy to navigate. Nowadays, having an SNS account like Facebook, LinkedIn, Instagram, or Twitter has become a current trend. The Secretary General of the Ministry of Communications and Multimedia Malaysia, Datuk Seri Mohammad Mentek, reported that there are approximately 28 million users of SNSs in Malaysia as of January 2021 (The Star, 2021). Such figure indicates that the majority of Malaysians are active SNS users, hence suggesting that most job seekers will have at least one SNS account and use it as a source of information. Therefore, the informants believe on the crucial necessity for them to have an easy access to any kinds of SNSs. They also consider SNSs to play an intermediary role between job seekers and employers where many of them stated that SNSs have helped them in job searching. However, it should be noted that reliability is a concern and highly considered aspect for job seekers to choose and register for a certain SNS.

Another two antecedents are efficient and cost-savings. Most informants considered SNSs to be efficient due to the fact that it is simple, fast, and convenient. They also believe that any job applications can simply be sent online as opposed to the conventional method of sending job applications via postal service. This subsequently relates to another finding which is cost-savings. The majority of informants feel at ease when using SNSs because they no longer need to queue at the post office while being able to save some money on printing resumes and stamps. They also agreed that SNSs as a low-cost advertisement medium. Whereas, only one informant expressed particular concern on the users' privacy while using SNSs. This is because the informant does not like other people, particularly employers, to stalk the informant's personal SNS account and that there should be boundaries on what can and cannot be viewed.

This is because the informant feels unsafe and does not intend to share any personal information and data to outsiders.

Meanwhile, another antecedent that emerged from the finding is pool of talent. One informant believed that SNSs are among the recruitment mediums that play important roles in getting talents. The informant explained that the current employment market is considered to be employers' market where employers have the privilege of choosing the best talents, hence creating a tight competition amongst job seekers. The findings further indicate that there are many active fake accounts that offer jobs with good salary and benefits. Many informants shared their personal experiences of applying jobs through fake advertisements but received no response. They also believe that there are many scam advertisements and job seekers must be careful and do a detailed check on the companies before applying. Moreover, the informants said that based on their experience, Facebook has the most fake job advertisements. Hence, this antecedent illustrates how the informants viewed SNSs.

Limitations, Suggestions, and Direction for Future Research
One of the major limitations encountered by this study was obtaining cooperation and agreement from employers to be interviewed. Moreover, a number of employers declined from being interviewed due to time constrain. This resulted in a small sample of employers, which also forms another challenging aspect of this study. Hence, future research can expand the investigation further by focusing on a different group of informants, specific industries, or government agencies to gain a better understanding on their recruitment process.

Conclusion
This study utilized the in-depth interviews on two separate groups which focused on employer and job seeker. The interview conducted on employers in order to understand their conceptualization of SNS, activities of SNS that they implement and the consequences of using SNS in job advertisement. The interview also conducted towards job seeker in order to know the antecedents of choosing job advertisement when using SNS platforms. Findings from the interviews has been discussed and measured delicately to present better understanding.

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