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THE USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN HUMAN RESOURCES: AN EMPIRICAL INVESTIGATION

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Abstract

Social media is a recent phenomenon having a significant influence not only on individuals but also on businesses. In today's global and rapid business environment, businesses use social media in their operations in a variety of ways including advertising, marketing, customer service, etc. Businesses use social media not only in such business processes, but also in human resources (HR) operations. The objective of this study is to examine the use of social media in HR operations and its impact on HR performance. More specifically, the current study examines the impact of social media use in pre-employment, employment, and post-employment stages of HR operations. The findings of this study reveal that there is a positive and significant relationship between social media use in pre-employment as well as social media use in employment stage in HR operations, while post-employment stage social media use does not have a significant impact on HR performance.

Keywords: Social media, human resources, employment, recruitment

1. Introduction

Accurate and effective communication has become one of the most important issues of today's contemporary world. Successes and failures are being linked to accurate and inaccurate communication. Rapid changes and developments in the technology and communication has led to the emergence of globalization, which created a competitive environment. In order to keep pace with this competitive environment, the use of internet and social media has become a necessity throughout the world. Social media, along with the new communication technologies, is one of the most important tools in communication. This phenomenon has affected entire world, albeit being a new concept.

Social media not only enables individuals to find and communicate with their friends and share information, but also becomes a platform for businesses to consider as a way of promote their brands, images, revenues, etc. In today's business environment, consumers are no longer taking action without reading consumer evaluations and comments on social media with respect to a certain product; and businesses are no longer making decisions and adjust their operations without the use of social media.

Recently, businesses are also using social media in their human resources (HR) operations. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of social media use in HR operations on the performance of the HR department. More specifically, this study investigates the impact of social media use in pre-employment, employment, and post-employment on HR performance. For this purpose, a structured survey was conducted to the businesses in a province located in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey.

The paper is organized as follows. In the next section, social media is briefly defined and explained. Then, the use of social media in HR operations is articulated. In the subsequent section, the methodological details of the paper is explained, along with the findings of the current study. The paper ends with the conclusion section.

2. Social Media

Although there is no generally accepted common definition of social media, websites with social content are meant by the concept of social media. Özmen (2009) defines social media as the virtual environments that enable individuals to get together with other users by creating their own online spaces, to share various types of digital materials, such as videos, photos, new, etc., and to interact with each other. Blackshaw and Nazzaro (2004) define social media as online and new information sources created, started, and used by consumers by the purpose of informing individuals with products, brands, individuals, and topics.

Emerging and increasingly pervading social media has become a significant phenomenon not only for individuals but also businesses and brands. Social media enables businesses to timely and directly contact with the end consumer with lower costs and larger effectiveness as compared to the traditional communication tools (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). In particular, beginning from 2005, social media has become an indispensable communication tool for institutionalized corporates and brands, and the existence of businesses on the social media environment has become a necessity (Kara and Özgen, 2012). Today, it is imperative for businesses to use a social media tool in their operations in terms of prestige and reputation (Kara and Özgen, 2012).

3. Human Resources and Social Media

The emergence of the digital media has led to the changes in many fields of business life. HR departments are one of these fields. Today, traditional HR practices are replaced with new approaches in which strategies and tools of digital term are used. Social media management is

one of the digital practices used in HR. Social media channels, such as Facebook and LinkedIn, are being used in business interviews and collecting information related to the job candidates. The most important reason of this choice is due to the economic and rapid access to the information via social media channels. There are millions of social media users on earth, so HR departments have to consider this phenomenon in their operations (Capital, 2013).

The adoption of social media by HR departments are lagging behind the other departments in businesses. Because corporates throughout the world create an institutional social policy, it is a necessity for HR departments to rapidly adapt to this process. The most fundamental purpose of HR is to bring in qualified human resource and increase their commitment to the firm. That's why the adaptation of the social media into the HR is of utmost significance (Aydın, 2012).

HR departments use digital and social media in line with their goals. Bakay (2013) states that HR use social media in their activities including, but are not limited to, reaching and hiring competent individuals, talent management, crisis management, and training. McClure (2013) mentions about the findings of a study of 300 HR department employees and reports that that HR departments use social media in five categories: recruitment, personnel communication, training, orientation, and team formation. Özpehlivan (2014) articulates that HR professionals use social media for communication, branding, promoting and activity, controlling the past, employee activities, benefits communication, weekly HR blog, and research, recognition as well as emergency notifications.

According to the business and competences report published by English commission in 2012, businesses use social media in various stages of recruitment process, including attracting potential employees and creating a positive corporate image. The findings of another study reveal that more than 90% of 500 global firms use social media for attracting potential job candidates (Broughton et al., 2013).

Cülcüloğlu (2013) stresses that social media, LinkedIn in particular, has become a resume database. Businesses that need employees investigate the resumes in this platform and find the appropriate candidates at no cost. In addition, thanks to Facebook, businesses are able to obtain information about the candidates' personality, political view, friend environment as well as their preferences. The fact that the resumes are more honest on social media enables and encourages HR departments to use these tools (Cülcüloğlu, 2013).

At the same time, social media technologies and communication channels enable a productive collaboration along with the participation of large communities. Today, employees at all ages in businesses use social media. Many businesses track and control their employees with regards to their use of social media tools. In addition to recruitment activities, businesses use social media as a tool to manage global teams (Werner et al., 2012).

Social media also builds a bridge between employee attitudes and organizational culture by means of the analysis of communication models among the employees. For this reason, social media is effective for organizations to achieve their goals. Thanks to communication

networks, organizations are able to have benefits by providing feedback and effective strategic position (Eisenberg vd, 2015: 147).

According to the information provided above, social media is used in various activities and fields in HR operations. It is also possible to state that social media is used in different stages of HR operations. For example, it is used in pre-employment and employment stages in HR operations, while it is used inside the businesses for not only activities related to HR but also for other departments and activities. Therefore, in line with the above discussion, the following hypotheses are suggested in the context of the current study:

Hypothesis 1: Social media use in pre-employment stage in HR operations is positively related to HR performance.

Hypothesis 2: Social media use in employment stage in HR operations is positively related to HR performance.

Hypothesis 3: Social media use in post-employment stage in HR operations is positively related to HR performance.

4. Research Methodology

4.1. Participants and procedure

To test the present study's hypotheses, we conducted a structured survey to the businesses located in Konya, Turkey. The survey was conducted in this province between November-December in 2015. 45 businesses in this region participated in the survey. The detailed demographical information is provided in Table 1.

Table 1. Demographic findings

Demographic variables	Frequency	Percentage	
Gender	Male	30	66,7
	Female	15	33,3
Age	20-29	11	24,4
	30-39	24	53,3
	40-49	7	15,6
	50 and older	3	6,7
Education	High school	3	6,7
	Vocational school	5	11,1
	Undergraduate	26	57,8
	Master's	11	24,4
Position	General director	2	4,4
	Director	20	44,4
	HR manager	11	24,4
	HR representative	9	20,0
	Other employees	3	6,7
Industry type	Manufacturing	12	26,7
	Service	21	46,7
	Trade	12	26,7
Years of operation	1-5 years	5	11,1
	6-10 years	6	13,3
	11-15 years	11	24,4
	16-20 years	8	17,8
	More than 20 years	15	33,3
Which unit is involved in HR operations?	No HR	1	2,2
	Personnel department	6	13,3
	HR department	35	77,8
	Administrative tasks department	3	6,7
How long have you been using SM in HR operations?	No use	4	8,9
	Less than a year	8	17,8
	1-2 years	12	26,7
	3-4 years	9	20,0
	5 years and more	12	26,7

33,3% of the survey responders are female, whereas 66,7% are male. The majority of the sample (53,3%) is composed of people aged 30 to 39, with 24,4% of the sample between 20 to 29, with 15,6% of the sample between 40 to 49, while 6,7% of the sample is 50 years and older. 82,2% of the survey responders holds an undergraduate or higher degree, while the remaining responders hold a high school or vocational school degree. Of the survey responders, 48,8% is the director or general director of the business, 44,4% is HR manager or representative, while 6,7% of the survey responders possess other positions at their businesses. As for the industry type, 26,7% of the survey responders work at a manufacturing business, 46,7% works at a service business, while 26,7% works at a trade business. In the sample, the majority of the businesses (33,3%) have more than 20 years of operation, while 11,1% has 1-5 years, 13,3% has 6-10 years, 24,4% has 11-15 years, and 17,8% has 16-20 years of operation. 77,8% of the survey responders report that their firm has an HR department, while 13,3% of the firms have personnel department and 6,7% of the firms have administrative tasks department that are involved in HR activities. 2,2% of the firms report that they do not have a department involved in HR activities.

As for the questions related to social media, out of 45 businesses, 41 reports that they use Facebook in their operations, while 30 of the businesses use Twitter, 18 use LinkedIn, 11 use Google+, 18 use Instagram, and 17 use Foursquare in their operations. 2 of the businesses report that they do not have social media account. In addition, 19 businesses use social media in their HR operations, while 7 use Twitter, 10 use LinkedIn, 3 use Google+, 6 use Instagram, and 4 use Foursquare. 17 businesses report that they do not use social media in their HR operations.

4.2. Data analysis

Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) was used to test the measurement and structural models. To evaluate the psychometric properties of the measurement scales and to test the research hypotheses presented in Figure 1, the component-based partial least squares (PLS) approach was used. The PLS approach was selected because it is well suited for predicting data and for exploratory research models. This approach is also very suitable when the distribution of the data is non-normal. The SmartPLS software package (Version 2.0.M3) was used to estimate the parameters of the research model (Ringle, Wende, & Will, 2005).

According to the reliability results from testing the measurement model, the measures are robust in terms of their internal consistency reliabilities as indexed by their Cronbach's Alpha values. Cronbach's Alpha values of different measures in the research model range from 0.87 to 0.94, which exceed the recommended threshold level of 0.70 (Gefen & Straub, 2005; Nunnally, 1978). In addition, in accordance with the recommendations of Fornell and Larcker (1981), the average variance extracted (AVE) for each measure exceeds the value of 0.50. Thus, the constructs in the research model have adequate reliability assessment.

Convergent validity of the scales was tested using SmartPLS by extracting the factor loadings and cross loadings of all the measurement items to their respective constructs. The

results presented in Table 2 reveal that all of the measurement item loadings on the intended constructs were between a lower bound of 0.61 and an upper bound of 0.96 and were at least 0.10 less on their loadings on other constructs (Gefen & Straub, 2005). In addition, each item's factor loading on its respective construct was highly significant ($p < 0.001$). Therefore, the loadings and cross-loadings of the measurement scales confirm the convergent validity of the measures for research constructs. Also, discriminant validity of the scales is also supported by the data.

Table 2. Loadings and cross-loadings

Constructs/Items	SMUPE	SMUEM	SMUPO	HRPER
Social Media Use in Pre-Employment (SMUPE)				
SMUPE 1	0,78	0,39	0,54	0,68
SMUPE 2	0,92	0,50	0,66	0,73
SMUPE 3	0,90	0,52	0,76	0,68
SMUPE 4	0,84	0,60	0,54	0,66
SMUPE 5	0,61	0,31	0,67	0,37
Social Media Use in Employment (SMUEM)				
SMUEM 1	0,56	0,93	0,56	0,68
SMUEM 2	0,52	0,94	0,62	0,69
SMUEM 3	0,55	0,96	0,61	0,74
Social Media Use in Post-Employment (SMUPO)				
SMUPO 1	0,69	0,50	0,87	0,60
SMUPO 2	0,73	0,55	0,93	0,64
SMUPO 3	0,72	0,56	0,96	0,72
SMUPO 4	0,53	0,60	0,75	0,66
Human Resources Performance (HRPER)				
HRPER 1	0,72	0,61	0,67	0,89
HRPER 2	0,62	0,51	0,50	0,82
HRPER 3	0,67	0,62	0,60	0,90
HRPER 4	0,71	0,66	0,82	0,87
HRPER 5	0,68	0,82	0,65	0,89

Note: Measurement items are available from authors upon request.

5. Results

The results from the structural model reveal that *Social Media Use in Pre-Employment* ($\beta = 0.41$, $p < 0.01$) is positively related to *Human Resources Performance*. The results also show that *Social Media Use in Employment* is positively related to *Human Resources Performance* ($\beta = 0.39$, $p < 0.01$). Finally, the results show that no statistically significant relationship exists between *Social Media Use in Post-Employment* and *Human Resources Performance*. R^2 value of *Human Resources Performance* is at an acceptable level ($R^2 = 0.76$). Therefore, we conclude that Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 are supported, but Hypothesis 3 is rejected.

6. Conclusion

Social media is a recent phenomenon not only attracts millions of individuals, but also becomes a platform for businesses to communicate with their consumers, employees, etc. In recent years, businesses are using social media in their human resources (HR) operations as well. The objective of this study is to examine the impact of social media use in HR operations on the performance of the HR department. The current study investigates the impact of social media use in pre-employment, employment, and post-employment on HR performance. For this purpose, a structured survey was conducted to the businesses in a province located in the Central Anatolia Region of Turkey.

The findings of this study show that the use of social media in pre-employment and employment stages of HR operations in businesses have a positive impact on the performance of HR operations. The findings also reveal that social media use in post-employment do not have an impact on HR performance.

According to the findings, HR departments should use social media even before recruiting the employees. HR departments may use social media for creating a candidate pool as well as attracting potential candidates by sharing photos and other content to show the cultural and working environment of the business. They may also announce open positions and create a platform to share ideas and make discussions of sectoral and current topics. Findings also show that HR departments should use social media during employment process. For example, one of the best ways to use social media is to check the social media profiles as well as the postings of the candidates. In this way, it is possible to have an idea about the job candidates with respect to their personality, interest fields, friend profile, political view, etc. The last but not least is that HR departments have the opportunity to use social media to check whether or not the information provided in the resumes holds true.

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