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Technology adoption in employee recruitment: The case of social media in Central and Eastern Europe

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ABSTRACT

Social technologies are increasingly used in several organizational functions, including human resource management. The focus of this study is on social media adoption in employee recruitment and selection in Central and Eastern Europe (CEE). The theoretical lens used in this study is the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT), extended to include the impact of the recruiters' managerial position and educational level on technology adoption. Results obtained from partial least squares path modeling, using cross-sectional data collected from 224 recruiters, showed that the core hypotheses of the UTAUT were supported, namely the positive impact of performance expectancy, effort expectancy and social influence on behavioral intention, as well as the positive impact of facilitating conditions and behavioral intention on usage behavior. As expected, the recruiters' characteristics triggered many interaction effects, but none of them impacted facilitating conditions. Managerial implications are discussed and future research suggestions are provided.

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1. Introduction

Social technologies are used in many organizational functions and for several purposes. Literature reviews of social media research provide evidence on their use in risk and crisis communication (Veil, Buehner, & Palenchar, 2011), sales and marketing (Andzulis, Panagopoulos, & Rapp, 2012), public relations (Khang, Ki, & Ye, 2012), knowledge management and sharing (El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2015), and organizational communication (Ngai, Moon, Lam, Chin, & Tao, 2015). Social media can also be used in human resource management, including for recruitment and selection (Tufts, Jacobson, & Stevens, 2014; Wolf, Sims, & Yang, 2014).

The use of social media in employee recruitment, often referred to as 'social recruiting', includes different practices and offers several advantages. Recruiters use platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter to post job ads, attract and recruit job applicants, and pre-screen applicants (Caers & Castelyns, 2010; Cain,

Scott, & Smith, 2010; Melanthiou, Pavlou, & Constantinou, 2015; Ollington, Gibb, & Harcourt, 2013; Pike, Bateman, & Butler, 2013; Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning, 2014). As a result of this social media use, the recruitment process becomes more dynamic, relational, and authentic, and the employer brand and attractiveness are enhanced (Carrilat, D'Astous, & Morissette Grégoire, 2014; Girard & Fallery, 2011; Girard, Fallery, & Rodhain, 2013; Henderson & Bowley, 2010).

The importance of studying social media use in recruitment and selection stems from the critical role of staffing practices in today's increasingly competitive and global talent market (Ployhart, 2006). The adoption of technology in recruitment is becoming a necessity for employers wishing to have a competitive advantage in the labor market, and attract scarce critical talent (Deloitte Consulting LLP, 2014). The examination of topic will thus provide numerous practical implications for recruiters, and fill several topical and methodological research gaps.

The present study was inspired by four primary gaps in the existing literature on social media use in employee recruitment and selection. First, while social media seem to gain popularity in employee recruitment and selection practices, many scholars noted a significant gap between research and practice, with early academic research being primarily non-empirical and lacking sound

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theoretical foundations (e.g. El Ouiridi, El Ouiridi, Segers, & Henderickx, 2014; Gibbs, MacDonald, & MacKay, 2015; Roth, Bobko, VanIddekinge, & Thatcher, 2013; Van Osch & Coursaris, 2015). Moreover, research is particularly needed on social media use in organizational contexts to address questions regarding the factors that facilitate or hinder their adoption (Ngai, Tao, & Moon, 2015). Second, despite the popularity of the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) as a model of technology adoption in the organizational context, only a small number of studies applied it empirically (Dwivedi, Rana, Chen, & Williams, 2011; Taiwo & Downe, 2013), hence the need for further replication. Third, research on technology adoption in recruitment and selection tends to focus on the U.S. context and on the applicants' perspective (Anderson, 2003). This gap prompts the need for more research from the recruiters' standpoint and in other countries. Fourth, given the importance of recruiters' characteristics, such as competence with new technologies, personality, and educational level, and their impact on innovation adoption in selection (Anderson, 2003), there is need to examine more recruiters' characteristics such as managerial position and education. Therefore, this study contributes to the literature in three main ways: we contribute to the nascent but growing body of empirical evidence on social media adoption in recruitment; we focus on the recruiters' perspective, and investigate social media usage in the under-researched region of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE); and we replicate the UTAUT model and extend it by incorporating the recruiters' managerial position and educational level as potential moderators.

In the following sections, the study's theoretical background is presented along with a brief review of previous research on the UTAUT's application to social media adoption. Next, the research hypotheses are presented with a proposed extension of the model with the recruiters' managerial position and educational level as moderators, followed by the data analysis and findings. Finally, the results are discussed and research limitations highlighted. Future research suggestions and managerial implications are also presented.

2. Theoretical background

There are several user acceptance models that can serve as theoretical frameworks for studying technology adoption (Venkatesh, Davis, & Morris, 2007). Venkatesh, Morris, Davis, and Davis (2003) developed the Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) based on the conceptual and empirical similarities of eight prominent models. The models incorporated in the UTAUT are the theory of reasoned action, the technology acceptance model, the motivational model, the theory of planned behavior, a model combining the technology acceptance model and the theory of planned behavior, the model of personal computer utilization, the innovation diffusion theory, and the social cognitive theory (Venkatesh et al., 2003). The utility of the empirically-tested and cross-validated UTAUT lies in its ability to help managers assess the likelihood of success for new technology introductions, and understand the drivers of their acceptance in order to proactively design interventions targeted at users that may be less inclined to adopt and use new systems (Venkatesh et al., 2003).

Limited research has applied the UTAUT to social media adoption. Previous studies investigated social technology adoption in different countries and by various users including university students in Malaysia (Ismail, 2010), the U.S. (Huang, Hood, & Yoo, 2013), and Korea (Yoo & Huang, 2011); public relation practitioners in Turkey (Alikilic & Atabek, 2012) and the U.S. (Curtis et al., 2010); pre-service teachers in Turkey (Baltaci-Goktalay & Ozdilek, 2010); and health education specialists in the U.S. (Hanson et al.,

2011). However, previous applications of the UTAUT on social media were not exclusively quantitative, as some scholars used the model to guide their qualitative research method (e.g. Gruzd, Staves, & Wilk, 2012) or as part of a canonical action research project based on a single case study (e.g. Mandal & McQueen, 2012). Given that the UTAUT has not yet been applied to social media adoption in the context of human resource management, the present study examined its applicability to recruiters in particular.

Timing is a critical factor in the application of the UTAUT. Venkatesh et al. (2003) emphasized the necessity of timing measurement during the active adoption of the technology in question, as opposed to measurement in a stage where the said technology is already rejected or accepted due to its wide popularity. In this study, timing is taken into consideration by focusing on the region of CEE whose countries share similar digital conditions. In fact, in terms of digital technologies, CEE is relatively behind compared to Western Europe and the United States. Recent reports indicated that the penetration rates of the Internet and social networking sites were respectively at 54% and 33% in CEE, compared to 78% and 44% in Western Europe, 81% and 56% in North America, and 18% and 7% in Africa (We Are Social, 2014). These figures reflect the state of the infrastructure and information access conditions in these regions. In a report on the Internet economy, the Boston Consulting Group constructed an e-friction index that measures the factors preventing consumers, companies and countries from realizing the Internet's full benefits (BCG, 2014). In this report, CEE countries were mostly in the medium friction group, with Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovenia and Poland nearing scores of 50 out of 100 (BCG, 2014). By comparison, countries like the United States, Switzerland and the Netherlands had friction scores below 25 (BCG, 2014). A high level of e-friction, exceeding 75 in countries such as Nigeria and Pakistan, has many negative impacts, including impeding Internet adoption and use by businesses (BCG, 2014). Therefore, as CEE does not suffer from severe e-friction and is still relatively lagging behind other countries in terms of Internet and social networking penetration, it is estimated to be a convenient target for a study on technology adoption.

3. Research model

The UTAUT attempts to explain the intention to use a technology as well as subsequent usage behavior, in mandatory or voluntary organizational settings, with four key constructs (Venkatesh et al., 2003). These constructs are performance expectancy, effort expectancy, social influence and facilitating conditions (Venkatesh et al., 2003). Previous research on social media acceptance provides preliminary support for some of the hypothesized positive impacts of these constructs on behavioral intention and use behavior.

Performance expectancy is the degree to which an individual believes using a technology will help him or her attain gains in the job, and the strongest predictor of the individual's behavioral intention (Venkatesh et al., 2003). In academic settings, performance expectancy was positively associated with scholars' intention to use, and actual use of, social media (Gruzd et al., 2012), and with students' intention to adopt social networking sites as a learning technology (Ismail, 2010). For both personal and professional usage, performance expectancy also predicted the behavioral intentions of health educators (Hanson et al., 2011). The direct impact of performance expectancy on social media use was, however, found to be non-significant in non-work activities (Workman, 2014), and for small businesses owners who recognized the value of social media but were still not motivated to start using them (Mandal & McQueen, 2012).

Effort expectancy, which is the degree of ease associated with the

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