

Identity and behaviors in the era of social recruiting: The Millennials' perspective

Francesca Mochi*, Rita Bissola**, Barbara Imperatori***

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Abstract

Drawing on social media and identity literatures our study aims at investigating the use of social media in the recruitment process by adopting the job seekers' perspective. Using a qualitative methodology with the analysis of pre and post task diaries made by 171 Millennials, the paper explores their behaviors and the tools they used in searching for a job position. Furthermore, the paper investigates how online identity and its co-creation process influence Millennials' willingness to use social media for recruitment purposes. Lastly, the research aims at exploring if and, potentially, how professional and non-professional social media, with their different features, users and goals, are constantly changing the recruitment process, thus offering suggestions for the design of effective recruitment practices.

Keywords: social media recruitment, identity co-creation, job seekers' perspective

* **Francesca Mochi**, assegnista di ricerca, Facoltà di Scienze linguistiche e letterature straniere, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano; e-mail: francesca.mochi@unicatt.it.

** **Rita Bissola**, Professore Associato di Organizzazione aziendale, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'economia e della gestione aziendale, Facoltà di Economia, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano; e-mail: rita.bissola@unicatt.it.

*** **Barbara Imperatori**, Professore Ordinario di Organizzazione aziendale, Dipartimento di Scienze dell'economia e della gestione aziendale, Facoltà di Economia, Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore di Milano; e-mail: barbara.imperatori@unicatt.it.

1. Introduction

The “war for talent” (Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod, 2011) is battled with the appropriate use of HR practices, and recruitment is in the frontline, being the first interaction of the organization with the outside world (Holland and Jeske, 2017).

Traditional recruitment practices and tools have increasingly been supported, or even replaced, by e-recruitment practices and social media (Bissola and Imperatori, 2014). Social media, professional (e.g. LinkedIn) and non-professional (e.g. Facebook), allow easy access to a wide pool of potential employees with different skills and competencies (Doherty, 2010). Recruiters use social media in order to access large amount of information about job applicants and discover their true identity and personality instead of relying only on résumés and job interviews information that could be sometimes untruthful (Berkelaar, 2014; Slovensky and Ross, 2012).

On the other hand, from the job seekers' perspective, social media allow job seekers to be more informed about the organizations and their vacant job posts, as well as they allow different and flexible means to contact the company. However, the plurality of information and tools that the job seekers have at their disposal complicate the job seeking process (Caers and Castelyns, 2011). Furthermore, they encounter the “posting paradox” (El Ouiridi, Segers, El Ouiridi and Pais, 2015): they know that their social media profiles are probably examined by recruiters (Curran, Draus, Schragger and Zappala, 2014; Root and McKay, 2014), but they sometimes still disclose inappropriate contents that can undermine the recruitment process.

The use of social media is thus not only a matter of utilize another tool during the recruitment process, but include job applicants' disclosure of their individual and social identity. Identity is a social process, and not only an individual possession (El Ouiridi, Segers, El Ouiridi and Pais, 2015); in particular with social media, it is a co-creation process in which the individual's identity claims are combined with the announcements made by others (Jackson II, 2010). Consequently, from the job seekers' point of view, the use of social media in the job searching process could be influenced by their awareness about identity disclosure and by their online image perception.

Despite the relevance of job seeking process and tools, previous literature mainly considers the e-recruitment process from the organization perspective (Caers and Castelyns, 2011; Zide, Elman and Shani-Denning, 2014). Research is lacking in considering job seekers' perspective about the process of looking for a job and about their evaluation of social media as recruitment tools.

Furthermore, the use of social media and internet-based websites and platforms seems appropriate to recruit Millennials who are considered digital natives (Kennedy, Judd, Churchward and Gray, 2008). However, although Millennials have always been immersed in ICT, they seem to use technology mainly for connecting with friends, while lacking in using it for job purposes (Zide et al., 2014) probably because of their awareness about the “posting paradox”.

Following these premises, the goal of the paper is threefold, first the research considers the job seekers' perspective by looking at the entire job seeking process and by exploring their behaviors and the tools they use to search for a job. In considering the job seekers' perspective, the paper aims at investigating their familiarity and evaluation of social media as recruitment tool as well as the role that they currently play in the process. Second, the research aims at exploring if and potentially how professional and non-professional social media, with their different features, users and goals, are constantly changing the recruitment process, thus offering suggestions for the design of recruitment practices. Third, the paper aims at investigating if and how online identity influences job seekers' use of social media in looking for a vacant job position.

The paper is organized as follows. In the theoretical framework, we identify the state of the art of social media recruiting literature and identity literature. We highlight the pros and cons of using social media in the recruitment process and their employer branding purposes, as well as the influence that social media can have on personal and social identity co-creation. In the research method we present the qualitative methodology used (i.e. pre and post task diaries) and the sample. We therefore present results and discussion in two different part, one related to the pre task diaries, the other related to the results that emerged from the post task diaries. A final part aims at comparing the pre and post task diaries results in order to highlight the Millennials' change in the job seeking process and in the use of social media as recruitment tools. Lastly, we conclude with theoretical and managerial implications.

2. Theoretical framework

Previous research shows increased social media use by HR departments to support recruitment and selection (Gibbs, MacDonald and MacKay, 2015). Most of research focuses on the implementation of e-recruitment practices along with the traditional ones and the benefits, or risks, that e-recruitment can allow, such as great access to jobs and information, constant connectivity and communication (Wandel, 2008), reaching passive job seekers (Gallagher and O'Leary, 2007). Social media plays a relevant role in attracting job seekers and influencing their perception of the organization (Melanthiou, Pavlou, and Constantinou, 2015). In particular, the existing literature highlights how social media, such as LinkedIn or Facebook, are used as an employer branding tool (Martin, Reddington, and Kneafsey, 2009). Employer branding is considered a consequent of organizational identity (i.e. how the organization and the employees see themselves, their insiders' views) and corporate identity (i.e. the projected image of the organization outside its boundaries) (Martin and Hetrick, 2009; Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpé and Lievens, 2018) and "describes the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity" or "the promotion of a unique and attractive image" as an employer (Backhaus, 2004, p.117; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p.502). The employer branding perspective not only considers the identity of the organization, but influence the job

seekers identity too: the job seekers are treated more as consumers, to which promoting the organization brand, than as talents. Similarly to consumers, in forming their desired social identity, job seekers identify themselves with particular brands, in this case employer brands (Helal, Ozuem and Lancaster, 2018; Lam, Ahearne, Hu and Schillewaert, 2010). Previous literature mainly considers the recruiters point of view in using social media while only few research focus on the job seekers' behaviors and perceptions (e.g. Mochi, Bissola and Imperatori, 2017); furthermore, there are few research concerning the influence that social media have on applicants' identity (e.g. van Iddekinge, Lanivich, Roth and Junco, 2016; van Zoonen, Verhoeven and Vliegenthart, 2016; Stoughton, Thompson and Meade, 2015).

Focusing on the job seekers' perspective, the Signalling theory (Spence 1973; 1974) reveals that when individuals have incomplete information about the hiring company or the job position they draw inference from the available data (Rynes and Miller, 1983) searching for cues mainly on corporate websites and social media (Braddy, Meade, Michael and Fleenor, 2009). Thus, the first step of the job searching process is to find online suitable information about the job position and the organization. Moreover, not only the contents of corporate websites and social media will allow information inference, but also their layout (Braddy et al., 2009). Thus, job seekers will also pay attention to the visual features of e-recruitment tools for deciding where to apply.

Furthermore, the Person-Organization fit (P-O fit) and the Person-Job fit (P-J fit) theories are especially relevant in the job searching process, as they promote applicants' self-screening and increase applicants' attraction toward the organizations (Bissola and Imperatori, 2014; Bunderson, 2001). In searching for a job position we expect that the job seekers will pay attention to the P-O fit and P-J fit as they feel more aligned with organizations that show similar values, culture, and appreciation of competencies that they own (Dineen, Ash & Noe, 2002).

Previous literature mainly considers the advantages and disadvantage of social media as recruitment tool with the organizational perspective, however, also in the job-seekers perspective social media have pros and cons.

First, social media allow the organization to create realistic job previews, for example by using gamification, to ensure applicants get accurate expectations of the position tasks.

Second, they allow job seekers search for employees' reviews to have "insights from the inside" by using social media and websites such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor and Vault (Holland and Jeske, 2017; Halloran and Thies, 2012). Thus, employees are brand ambassadors and employer advocates (Näppä, Farshid and Foster, 2014) and they can impact how the organization is perceived (Holland and Jeske, 2017). Furthermore, also the job seekers can influence the perception of other job seekers by spreading their opinion about the organization and the recruitment process, for instance by tweeting right after the selection process or by posting a comment of appreciation or disregard on Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram. Social media are indeed able of exacerbating the influence of word-of-mouth to a large number of

contacts by which users seek social support and feedback (Manago, Taylor, and Greenfield, 2012).

Third, they provide a common platform for users to present themselves, choose and develop their personal (e.g., Facebook) and professional (e.g., LinkedIn) networks (Lin and Lu, 2011; Nikolaou, 2014). In this sense, the social identity theory stated that social identification of the self is comprised by personal and social identities. Personal identity refers to the identification of personal features, while social identity considers a collective identification of the group that the individual belongs to (Luhtanen and Crocker, 1992; Onorato and Turner, 2004; Helal, Ozuem, Lancaster, 2018). Social media are able to influence both the personal and the social identities: individuals adopt social media as a platform to generate content that express personal opinions and preferences, in the meanwhile they are used to “enforce social inclusion by expressing identical behavior among the desired social group” (Helal, Ozuem, Lancaster, 2018, p. 982). Furthermore, identity, that evolves over time and are more a process than a fixed situation (Daskalaki and Simosi, 2018), and in particular online identity, is not only made by self-disclosure, but also by others that are part of the network and that can create personal content thus being involved in an identity co-creation process. When a friend posts a picture of us on Facebook, or a colleague tags us on LinkedIn during a business event, they are sharing information about us and participate to the co-creation of our identity. This also means that online identity is not always under our control.

Indeed, previous literature shows that social media can also have some possible drawbacks. According to Altman's (1975) and Westin's (1967) theories of privacy, individuals have the desire of boundaries between themselves and the environment in which they operate, especially the work environment (Stoughton, Thompson and Meade, 2015). In the case of social media screening, the applicants risk being devalued by the organization because of what is portrayed in the social media pages, content that sometimes are made by other people of the personal network (Stoughton, Thompson and Meade, 2015). They could feel a lack of control and the feeling of privacy invasion. Thus, previous research shows that job seekers seem to have contradictory feelings about social recruitment, they find the use of social media useful for gathering a multitude of information, although they feel that the recruitment process could be unequal and they feel the need to control their own web presence as consequence of potential employers observing and monitoring activities on applicants' private life (Truxillo, Bauer, Campion and Paronto, 2002).

Given those premises about the job seekers' process and feelings during the job research, we think that a deeper investigation is needed to further explore the multifaced aspects of the job searching process and social media recruitment. We also aim at exploring how social media is changing recruitment and selection by adopting the job seekers' perspective.

3. Research method

The study is explorative, and we adopted a qualitative methodology with the use of diaries in order to explore the Millennials' process of searching for a job position, their use of social media as recruitment tools and the influence that social media have on Millennials' creation and co-creation identity. The sample is composed by 171 Millennials, mean age 23, 88% females.

The Millennials were asked to write a diary in which for a month they had to detail how they searched for a job position. They were asked to write the entire job searching process, how they searched for information about the job position and the organization, which tools they used and what was the experience of using them, what information they were looking for, the pros and cons of those tools. After this month they were grouped in a laboratory and the researchers gave them a task: looking for a job in a specific company using only the professional (i.e. LinkedIn) and non-professional (i.e. Facebook) social media for acquiring information about the organization and a suitable job position. The laboratory task lasted about 20 minutes. The intention of the laboratory task was to expose the Millennials job seekers to different social media with a precise recruitment purpose and not for a relational one. We wanted to address if this exposure would have changed their job searching process and the tools they would use.

After the laboratory task the participants were asked to write for a month a post-task diary with the same requests of the pre-task one. The post-task diary allowed us to understand if their job searching process changed after the laboratory task.

4. Results and discussion

Both the pre-task and post-task diaries were analyzed in their contents. We adopted the Gioia's methodology to assess qualitative rigor (Gioia, Corley and Hamilton, 2013) and to aggregate the concepts in macro themes and dimensions.

The pre-task and post-task diaries revealed two main approaches in looking for a job position.

In the first one, the Millennials start to search a job position indiscriminately mainly on job posting websites, career days or through the world-of-mouth with relatives and friends. After mapping the job market, they choose a position that fits with their university career, competencies and interests. Only at this point they search for information about the company (e.g. CSR initiatives, presence of the organization in the Great Place to Work ranking). Lastly, they write the CV and cover letter accordingly to the job position they found and the organization the aim to work for.

The other approach comprises an initial self-analysis on competences, work preferences, short and long term goals, then the writing of the CV and cover letter and after that the research of a job position and of an organization that could be aligned with the job seekers' goals and characteristics. Lastly, the job seekers search further information about organization strategy, culture and economic stability. The

second approach is more introspective, based on the analysis of the personal identity and the alignment with the corporate identity. Approximately half of the sample used the first approach and half the second one.

The pre-task and post-task diaries give us also further information about the job position research, the use and perception of social media (professional and non-professional) as recruitment tools and how their use is influenced by the identity issues that the job seekers perceived.

4.1 Pre-task diaries

Values and competences congruence

In the pre-task diaries the Millennials, during the research for a job position, pay attention to the fit between their values, competences (teamwork, relational competences, foreign language competences) and goals and those showed by the organizations (Hu, Su & Chen; 2007). They also are interested in knowing if the features of the organization, such as career development plans, compensation, company location, working hours are aligned with their needs. Job seekers pay attention to the alignment between their personal identity and the organizational one by focusing on organization values and culture.

First of all, I look for information about the mission, vision and culture of the company to understand if they are aligned with mine (Vittoria).

I am interested in find out if the company has branches in a foreign country and if there will the possibility to work abroad and to use my linguistic competences (Luca).

Job seekers' image and identity

Millennials pay attention to their identity and to the perception of their personal image from the outside. They are concerned about reaching an offline identity that will allow them to stand out from the mass. For this reason, they search a direct approach with recruiters (e.g. by delivering the CV by hand or by reaching the recruiters by phone) or they try to promote themselves through the motivation letter. During the pre-task diaries they mainly focused on their offline identity, although some participants stated to be concerned about their digital identity and their online image especially on non-professional social network (e.g. Facebook, Instagram). They thus seem aware about the privacy issues related to social media, and the consequences of social media disclosure on their online identity.

After sending the CV by mail, I will try to reach the recruiter or the HR department in order to be sure that they have received it and to have the chance of introducing myself thus establishing a personal contact that could help me to be remembered (Gianni)

I prefer to present myself face to face, I don't trust social media to present the true self because social media profiles could be artificially improved to promote a desirable self-portrait (Alice).

Word of mouth (WOM) and network

The traditional WOM is the preferred method to acquire information about a vacant position and about the organization. Millennials rely on relatives, friends, but also professors for seeking advices, hints about suitable vacant job position and information about the organizational culture and their work satisfaction. They also use e-WOM by considering comments and posts on blogs, forums and sometimes social media such as LinkedIn or Twitter. It seems relevant to rely on people that previously know the job seekers, that know their inner value and their behavior in the real, and not only virtual, life. However, they also trust the opinion of employees or ex-employees.

I will use my friends and family network to find a job. The word of mouth is a powerful tool (Marta).

I will ask people who knows me a lot to guide me and suggest me a suitable organization, they are able to understand if an organization fits my needs and my personality (Giulia)

Risks of social recruitment

The Millennials highlight two main risks of using social media in the recruitment process: information that is not constantly updated or inaccurate, and risk of homogenization among a huge mass of job applicants. Millennials job seekers are concerned about the coherence of information among different social media, in effect professional and non-professional social media sometimes report different, if not conflicting, information. Similarly, information reported on social media can be different to the one reported on the corporate websites or job posting web pages.

Millennials are also concerned about their identity and they perceive the risks of homogenization, of being perceived as non-special, irrelevant, "one in a million". Furthermore, social media are thus an easy way to access information, but the information displayed are not as reliable as those that recruiters can find in the CV or in the cover letter.

I would prefer to use traditional recruitment tools such as corporate websites or career days fairs, because on social media we are all the same and it is difficult to emerge from the mass (Elena).

It is better for recruiters not to fully trust social media pages information, they are more inaccurate and not as reliable as the information that can be found on the CV (Andrea)

Job searching strategy

The participants focus mainly on traditional job searching tools such as word-of-mouth, specialized articles and journals, work agencies, labor exchange, University career day fairs. They interestingly think that another way to look for a job is to deliver their curriculum vitae by hand in the hope of being received by the HR director or by recruiters. They also mentioned online tools for searching

information and position, but still very traditional such as job posting websites, corporate websites and university portals.

University career days fairs or university online platforms are my main job searching tools because almost every day you can find a new job post and you can be sure that the information is reliable (Costanza).

Perceptions about the company and employer branding

Millennials pay attention to the credibility of the organizations and employer branding by exploring the Great Place to Work ranking in order to understand which are the best organizations to work for. They also research information about prizes, awards and social initiatives that the organization may have acquired or sustained. They also evaluate the organization and the vacant position accordingly to the professional development opportunities that they may have such as pursuing personal interests and ambitions, having the chance of international experiences and business trips. Lastly, they search information about organizational culture and climate.

In looking for a job position I pay attention to the CSR initiatives that the company has promoted during the last years (Elena)

I pay attention to the Great Place to Work ranking in order to decide which organization I will choose to search for a vacant position (Alberto)

Table n. 1 - Pre-task diaries results aggregation

1st ORDER CONCEPTS	2nd ORDER THEMES	AGGREGATE DIMENSIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fit between individuals' values and organizational ones • Attention to the organizational mission, vision and culture 	Values	Values and competences congruence
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational competences • Team work • Linguistic competences • IT competences • Certifications • Previous experiences 	Competences	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Direct approach with recruiters (by phone or in person before sending the CV) • CV and reference letter as main tools for promoting their image and identity • CV delivered by hand for a best face-to-face first impression 	Offline identity	Job seekers' image and identity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Updated personal information on Facebook • Attention dedicated to self image 	Digital identity	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> represented on Facebook • Online profiles sometimes are artificially improved and they do not show the real self 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • WOM between friends and relatives • Information search from professionals and practitioners • Advices, information about job position and vacancies from the employees • Organization culture information from ex-employees • WOM about job position from professors, at conferences and seminars 	Offline WOM and personal network	<i>Word of mouth (WOM) and network</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Information search and e-WOM from blogs and forum • Network on LinkedIn • e-WOM from Twitter 	e-WOM and digital network	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coherence of job position information between social network pages and corporate website • Coherence between corporate actions and communications on social network 	Coherence of information	<i>Risks of social recruitment</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Homogenization of people through social media • Easy way for giving self information to the employers but not as reliable as CV 	Job seekers' information reliability and identity	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cv delivery by hand • Word of mouth • Specialized articles and journals • Work agencies, labor exchange • University career day 	Offline tools	<i>Job searching strategy</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job posting websites • Corporate websites • University portals: Stage & Placement, AlmaLaurea • Facebook only for unrelevant and temporary job (e.g. baby-sitting) 	Online tools	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Great Place to Work and Top Employee ranking • Prizes and awards • Pro-environment initiatives • Social initiatives and for the employees' well-being 	<i>Credibility</i>	<i>Perceptions about the company and employer branding</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal interests and ambition • Coherence with the academic career • Business trips • Internationalization and experiences in other countries 	Professional development	

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Working environment• Organizational climate• Organizational culture		
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Source: our elaboration

4.2 Post-task diaries

During the brief task the young job seekers had the chance to focus on the use of professional and non-professional social media for recruitment purpose. In planning their job searching process after the experiment, they focus more on social media than before and they demonstrate attentiveness to the social media pages features. However, they still show reluctance in using social media and a hesitancy to rely on information shared through different social media. Another concern is about their privacy and the feeling of being controlled in their private life.

Social media features

Millennials demonstrate to pay attention to social media pages layout (i.e. colors, images, funny or explicative videos) and contents. They prefer professional social media such as LinkedIn to gather reliable information about the job position and the company, while non-professional social media are used to obtain information about employer branding and organizational culture. Lastly, they focus also on the social media pages usability and interactivity: some social media are easier to use and allow more interactions with recruiters.

I really appreciate when in the section "Home" of the corporate websites or in the social media pages you can find information about the company, photos, videos and links that allow more visibility of the company (Federica).

LinkedIn is clear and well structured, there is an easy access to fundamental information about job positions, on the contrary, Facebook is chaotic and the information are not always easy to find (Caterina).

Social media familiarity

The participants show a different familiarity with the professional and non-professional social media and a different perception of them as actual tools for recruitment. They are very familiar with non-professional social media such as Facebook, but they use them mainly for fun and for connecting with their friends or for "spying" people's life. On the contrary, professional social media, such as LinkedIn, are mainly unknown and perceived as useless for people who are at the very first start of their career. They perceived the non-professional social media not suitable for the recruitment process, but at the same time they are not very interested in using professional social media either.

Before the task I have never considered social media as a tool useful for looking for a job. I considered them only as a way to connect with my friends and followers (Alessandra).

I have rarely visited the Facebook page of a company, but after the task I will visit them more often (Vittoria)

Employer branding risks

Employer branding is relevant in the post-task diaries as in the pre-task ones. The participants highlight the importance of organizational promoted events and initiatives, along with an accurate storytelling. Social media are thus perceived mainly as an employer branding tool and they feel to be treated more as customers than possible employees. In the post-task diaries, they also underline the possible negative effects of comments posted on social media pages on the company employer brand.

Having social media pages could be a double edge sword for the company: negative comments of employees or ex-employees or clients could damage the good reputation of the company and thus the job seekers could perceive the company as non-attractive (Federica).

Information access through social media

Job seekers search for information about the job position and the competences they will need. They search in the social media pages of recruiters in order to find information that can give them an advantage in the selection process. For the same reason, they also want to look for information about their competitors in order to be better prepared during the group assessments. Lastly, job seekers search information about employees, especially those in the same position that the job seeker aims at, in order to understand the necessary competencies, the nature of the tasks and the employees' satisfaction about their job. They are also interested in knowing the network of employees in order to connect with crucial individuals (e.g. recruiters, HR director).

I will go on the LinkedIn and Facebook profile pages of the employees that the same position that I want to be recruited for in order to understand the competencies needed, but also the work that I will probably do (Francesco).

Perceived fairness of social media recruitment process

The job seekers are concerned about several issues: the privacy of their information and data, the reliability of information that can be found on websites and social media, and the perceived fairness of e-recruitment process. They think that information displayed on social media pages are not always reliable or complete, thus affecting the possibility of being recruited. Furthermore, they feel in distress for the possibility of privacy breaches and for the use of their personal information and behaviors in the evaluation of their profile and CV. This issue is especially true in social media where the personal online identity can be co-created with the contents shared by other people in the network. People inside our social media network can indeed reveal information about our identity. Furthermore,

Millennials job seekers perceived the risk of homogenization among all the applicants when using social media to candidate themselves for a job position. Because of those reasons, although Millennials experienced the potential of e-recruitment, they seem to prefer a traditional recruiting process.

I don't want to be rejected because of what I publish online on my social media pages or because of what my friends publish on my online page, I don't want to be judged by strangers based on what I do during the non-working hours, so I pay attention to what I publish online and to set the privacy settings correctly (Daniela).

I can't be in control of every content shared on my social media, as sometimes they are posted by friends, family members and so on, so I do not appreciate the recruiters snooping around my profile (Laura)

Table n. 2 - Post-task diaries results aggregation

1st ORDER CONCEPTS	2nd ORDER THEMES	AGGREGATE DIMENSIONS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Attractive and dynamic web pages • Colors • Images • Videos 	Layout	<i>Social media features</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LinkedIn: huge number of information, detailed job posting, information about the organization • Facebook: scarce information about job positions, employer branding, vision and culture 	Contents	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pages usability: clear and well structured pages, especially in LinkedIn, information easy to access although different • Interactivity: bi-directional relationship, comments, discussions, possibility to confirm competences (in LinkedIn), employees' evaluation and reviews 	Functionality	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media used mainly for amusement use • Social media used for "spying" other people • Social media used for communicating with friends 	Entertainment	<i>Social media familiarity</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LinkedIn and non-professional social media are mainly unknown and not used • Facebook and non-professional social media are known tools but not for recruitment purpose 	Knowledge of social media	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LinkedIn perceived as non-useful for early career job seekers and 	Professional social media	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> students • LinkedIn useful only for people advanced in their career • LinkedIn useful as word of mouth tool • LinkedIn useful as a cv 	usefulness	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media mainly used only for employer branding purposes (es. Storytelling) • Job seekers are treated more as customers than as prospective employees and talents 	Employer branding purposes	<i>Employer branding risks</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Possibility of negative comments • Pages not updated or careless 	Disadvantages of online communication	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers search information about their potential recruiters and selectors by looking at their professional and non-professional social media pages • Job seekers search information about the recruiters by contacting them through social media chat 	Information about the recruiter	<i>Information access through social media</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers search information about their competitors in the recruitment and selection process both on professional and non-professional social media 	Information about the competitors	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Job seekers search information about employees, especially those with a job position similar to what they seek (values, activities and tasks) • Professional network of the employees in order to connect with crucial figures 	Information about the employees	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Privacy restrictions have to be set by each individual • Distress for possible privacy breaches • Private life information and control • Identity co-creation made by people in the network • Peers and bosses judgement for behaviors outside the workplace 	Privacy	<i>Perceived fairness of social media recruitment process</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social media are preferable only as informal tools for connecting with friends • Preference for direct, personal contact • Risk of homogenization among other applicants 	Mistrust in social media recruitment	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Corporate website: perceived as 	Information reliability	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • more reliable and complete • LinkedIn: reliable for job position information • Facebook: reliable only for general information about the company 		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • After the task participants are more aware about the possibility of using social recruitment tools • After the task participants still prefer traditional recruitment tools and process 	Preference for traditional recruitment tools	

Source: our elaboration

4.3 Pre-task and Post-task diaries results comparison

The analysis of pre-task and post-task diaries allow us to compare the Millennials' job searching process and perception about social media before and after the experimental task and to highlight the main differences. As presented in Table 3, the factors that influence the choice of a job position or a company vary from the pre-task diaries, where the Millennials focus mainly on organizational values and competence congruence, to the post-task diaries, where they pay attention to social media pages in terms of content, layout, usability and familiarity, but also have concern about the reliability of information displayed. Furthermore, the job searching strategy slightly change. In the pre-task diaries job seekers mainly used offline tools such as WOM, job fair and professional journals, in the post-task diaries they consider online tools too and in particular social media, as they discovered their use for recruitment them in the experimental task. However, they remain reluctant in using social media for recruitment purposes and they still prefer traditional strategy such as WOM or corporate websites.

In acquiring information, in the pre-task diaries they mainly focus on the organization credibility and the possibility of professional development, while in the post-task ones they highlight the relevance of acquiring information about the employees (included the recruiters), their tasks but also their satisfaction and values, thus considering employees as ambassadors of the organization. Lastly, the identity issue is present both in the pre-task and post-task diaries. While in the pre-task diaries they are concerned about their offline image and they try to emerge from the mass by looking for a personal relation with recruiters and the employees of the HR department, in the post-task diaries they are concerned about their online identity and the evaluation of their social media profiles. The privacy invasion made by recruiters and the co-creation of their online identity made by the people of their network represent their main concern. Furthermore, they are afraid about the possible homogenization of online profiles and they search a way to affirm their identity and to emerge.

Table n. 3 - Comparison of Pre-task and Post-task diaries main results

PRE-TASK FOCUS		POST-TASK FOCUS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Values and competences congruence 	<p>Factors that influence the choice of a company/position</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Social media pages layout, contents, functionality Social media familiarity and usefulness Information reliability in the social media pages
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offline tools (WOM, work agencies, Universities career days, Specialized journal) Online tools (Job posting websites, University portals, corporate websites) 	<p>Job searching strategy</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Online tools (corporate websites, professional social media for job positions, e-WOM, non-professional social media for employer branding purpose)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Organization credibility (Great place to work, prizes, CSR) Possibility of professional development (business trips, culture, career) 	<p>Information acquired</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Information about the recruiters, the job seekers competitors, the employees
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Offline job seekers' identity 	<p>Job seekers' identity</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Homogenization using social recruitment tools Social media used only for employer branding Privacy issue Information reliability on social media

Source: our elaboration

5. Theoretical and managerial implications

The paper contributes to the social media recruitment literature by considering the job seekers perspective in the entire job searching process and by considering their perceptions about social media as recruitment tools (Sylva & Mol, 2009), while previous research mainly considers the recruiters point of view. The paper gives insights on the internal organizational environment and the informal dimension of the organization. It contributes to the Person – Organization fit and the Person- Job fit literature (Bissola and Imperatori, 2014; Bunderson, 2001) by highlighting that job seekers try to reach employees in a specific job position through different social media in order to have information about their competences, their job and also their evaluation of the organization. Furthermore, the paper also develops the signaling theory by considering the effects of social media features on job seekers' evaluation of the company (Braddy et al., 2009; Mochi et al., 2017). The paper also contributes

to the social media literature by adopting the job seekers' perspective in investigating the advantages and disadvantages of professional and non-professional social media. Lastly, the paper develops the identity literature related to the social media use in the recruitment process by considering how the self-disclosure on social media is a co-creation process made not only by the owner of the social media profile, but also by the others that belong to his network and that can share information and contents about his personal and work life (El Ouiridi, Segers, El Ouiridi and Pais, 2015). Thus, the job seekers' awareness of the issues related to the identity co-creation process can influence their willingness to use social media during the recruitment process.

Furthermore, the paper considers Millennials, the so called "digital natives", that are the new workforce of the organizations but whose behaviors and perceptions are still under investigated by the literature (Kennedy et al., 2008). The research shows how social media have changed recruitment practices and processes and allows to compare the Millennials' job searching process before and after the exposure to professional and non-professional social media used during the job search. We found that the awareness about social media tools increased after the social media experimental task exposure, but job seekers still prefer the traditional recruitment tools and processes.

Managers and recruiters, in designing social media recruitment practices, have to take into count some crucial points that seems to be particularly relevant for job seekers. First, they have to pay attention to organization employer branding and reputation through every social media as the job seekers still consider the social media mainly as an employer branding tool. Second, clear and complete information have to be present in every social media page and they must be coherent among different social media as job seekers have sometimes found incoherent information when looking at professional or non-professional social media pages. Third, recruiters have to reassure job seekers about privacy policies and the fairness of the social recruitment process. Job seekers still perceived the use of social media as detrimental for the privacy and consequently as unfair tools.

Lastly, organizations have to pay attention also at the employees that, with the use of social media, have become ambassadors of the organization. Job seekers search for information about employees and for their opinions about the job position and the organization expressed using Twitter, Facebook posts or review websites such as Glassdoor. Job seekers also search information about recruiters and their competitors during the selection process, thus recruiters have to be aware about it in order to be aligned with the organization in terms of information spread and cultural values.

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