

**The Impact of Social Media in the  
Recruitment Process: An Employers'  
Perspective**

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## **Abstract**

This research aims at identifying the current patterns regarding the use of social media by human resources professionals and hiring managers in the recruitment process, as well as the risks and challenges involved in making use of this practice for the companies that choose to do so, and the future expectations regarding the continuity of this practice in recruitment efforts in the future

An extensive literature review research was conducted in order to build the knowledge base necessary to serve as a foundation to the elaboration, conduction, and findings analysis of a survey responded by thirty-six human resources professionals and hiring managers in three different regions of the globe: United States, Ireland, and Brazil

The results of this research show a continually growing adherence to the practice of using social media in the recruitment process, with great importance being given, in special, to the use of professional social networking websites, such as LinkedIn. The research also found that the reasons for which companies choose not to make use of this practice are normally correlated to the challenges faced by companies which have chosen to do so, such as the legal risks and the moral hazard involved in obtaining information these professionals would not have access to otherwise, and that can positively or negatively influence in their decision making process

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## INTRODUCTION

### **Chapter 1**

A recent survey conducted in the United States by CareerXroads reveals that 42% of Fortune 500 companies, such as General Electric, PepsiCo, have a Facebook or LinkedIn page. And the number of recruiters who are planning to use social media for recruiting went up from 83% in 2010 to 89% in 2011. The big majority planning to use LinkedIn (87%), some 55% planning to use Facebook, and about 49% planning on using Twitter as an online tool for recruitment.

It's known that, despite all the incredible technological development, people still cannot be in every place at the same time or even make them known on a one-on-one basis by hundreds of people within one single day, it's not physically or timely possible. But social media has made it possible as "the gap between who's online and who's not is shrinking" (Valentine, 2011 p 40), and most people in the world today is somehow connected to some sort of social media, whether it's Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, or any online blog (Kuchar & Moss, 2011).

All the figures and information from various different sources that were provided above gives us a very clear idea of how powerful the social media websites have become in the past few years, not only in what they were initially intended for, which was informal communication and sharing, but in what the business world made of them: extremely powerful tools in job hunting, company promotion, customer interaction and why not, hiring.

And it is the use of social media for hiring purposes the topic to be further studied, discussed, and analysed throughout the research here to follow. What is the employers' perspective on this topic and what is the guideline of good practices when going online to help your company make the best recruitment decisions? This is what this research will primarily try to answer.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Chapter 2

#### 2.1 - What is Social Media?

##### *Social Media vs Social Networks*

Many are the ways to define what social media is, according to Cambridge Dictionaries Online, social media is defined as “forms of media that allow people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones” But with the rise and immense popularity of sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter there seems to be some confusion differentiating social media from social networks According to Antony Mayfield, vice president, head of content & media at iCrossing, “Social media is best understood as a group of new kinds of online media, which share most or all of the following characteristics participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness” (2008, p 5) By “participation”, Mayfield (2008) highlights the fact that social media “blurs the line between media and audience” by encouraging contributions and feedbacks “Openness” has to do, according to Mayfield (2008), with the fact that there are rarely any barriers to accessing social media and making use of its contents, making it very easily accessible and open to anyone to use The “conversation” factor highlights the major difference between traditional media and social media Whereas traditional media broadcasts information, “social media is better seen as a two-way conversation” (Mayfield, 2008 p 5) By “community”, Mayfield (2008) points to the importance of social media in allowing communities that share the same interests to form quickly and communicate effectively And finally, when mentioning connectedness as one of the main characteristics of social media,



Mayfield (2008 p 5) states that “most kinds of social media thrive on their connectedness, making use of links to other sites, resources, and people”

*What are social networks then?*

As observed above, social media is composed of different ways of communicating, sharing, and interacting, and social networks are just one of these ways. Other forms of social media include blogs, wikis, videos, podcasts, and so on (Joos, 2008). But it's not by chance that the concepts of social media and social networks get mixed and are sometimes seen as one, certainly, social networks represent the major form of social media due to the immense popularity of sites like Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter (Hunt, 2010). Also, by looking at the definition of social networks, it's easy to understand how it can easily get mixed with the concept of social media. According to Boyd and Ellison (2008 p 211), “social networks are web-based services that allow individuals to (1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (3) view and traverse their list of connections and those made by others within the system” It's important to notice the keywords used in this definition of social networks and how they relate directly to the definition of social media. Words like “web-based”, “system”, “profile”, “articulate”, “connections”, and “traverse”, all relate back to the concepts of participation, openness, conversation, community, and connectedness applied by Mayfield (2008) in his description of social media.

As observed above, social networks are just one of the many forms in which social media is presented, but certainly a very significant one. The next section will list, analyze, and discuss the

three major social network sites (Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn) and their current use by organizations in their recruitment processes

## 2.2 – Social Networking Websites

### *Facebook*

Only eight years after its creation, by Mark Zuckerberg from his Harvard college dorm in February 2004, Facebook has achieved an astonishing number of registered users which is now over 800 million, with estimates of reaching the billion marks before the end of the present year, more precisely in August of 2012 (Silver, 2011). This will represent that for every seven people in the planet, one will be registered to Facebook, on average. Even though the rate of growth for Facebook users might be slightly slowing down on the overall, big markets like Brazil and Indonesia are just now starting to massively join the social network, showing growth rates in the number of users of 11,37% and 4,15%, respectively (Silver, 2011). These figures show how much growing potential Facebook still has in such big markets like the Brazil. Not to mention the Indian market with over 1 billion people and representing such a growth potential.

This is just an illustration of how powerful Facebook can be for companies wishing to make use of social media as a resource in their recruitment process. If used wisely, it is probably safe to say it's the most powerful tool for companies to interact with their current and potential employees and customers, as it's able to, within one single webpage, reach hundreds of millions of profiles, gain access to a huge amount of precious information about these potential employees and customers, and interact with them as well. According to Carisa Miklusak, an emerging media consultant for *CareerBuilder.com*, and CEO and founder of emerging media

company MediaStrategies, in Vancouver British Columbia, “Facebook is the largest social media site in the world. If candidates are friends, then we have access to the largest pool of candidates possible” (Hunt, 2010 p39). That’s not to mention the immense publicity space it provides for the potential employees and customers to learn about the company as well, which is just as important as the other way around. As mentioned by Hunt (2010), companies are increasingly using Facebook for more than promoting corporate culture as they are also posting jobs on their Facebook pages or directing users to their corporate website for job links and application forms. With the increasing number of companies making use of social media for recruitment purposes, it’s very important that hiring managers learn how to optimize the way they use this tool in order to be effective. According to Hunt (2010, p39), with Facebook, “companies need to actively attract “friends” by keeping their content fresh and engaging” (Hunt, 2010 p39). In other words, companies need to be proactive by keeping their Facebook page always up-to-date with the latest news and opportunities, as well as interact with their Facebook “friends”, which can create a greater level of commitment between both parts and facilitate future top-talent search by the company.

But the use of Facebook as a recruitment tool goes beyond creating a Facebook page, keeping it up-to-date and occasionally interacting with its visitors. In fact, a recent survey conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM 2008), reported that 34% of companies make use of social networking sites, such as Facebook, for recruiting and contacting potential applicants, while 19% planned to make use of this tool in the near future. Still according to SHRM (2008) 13% of organizations use social networking sites, such as Facebook, for screening applicants, with another 18% planning to use it in the future (Davison, Maraist, and Bing, 2011). These numbers are able to demonstrate that there is more to Facebook in recruitment than simply

a space for company exposure. More and more companies are making use of Facebook as a screening tool, meaning hiring managers are increasingly looking at potential candidates' Facebook profiles as a way to filter candidates, at pre or post-interview stages, based on a variety of factors, such as pictures, recent status updates, groups the individual has joined and so on (Siedsma, 2012).

With the increase in the use of Facebook for recruitment purposes, many issues have arisen with respect to the reliability of the information encountered in Facebook profiles, the true amount of job-relevant information found on these profiles, and lastly but not less important the legal implications of having access to personal information protected by law, such as gender, marital status, religion, and so on. These issues will be further discussed later under this section, as they deserve special attention.

### *Twitter*

Twitter consists of what is called a "microblog" where users have the option to post short messages of no more than 140 characters on their profile for their "followers" to read, as well as to "follow" other people and read what they have "tweeted" lately (Hunt, 2010). Any major company today has its Twitter account where they post the newest updates about the company, do online promotions, and keep up with their customers as well as gaining new ones. It's also very convenient as the user has the option to choose who they want to follow and by doing so, only get updates on these people/companies they follow, based on their interests and needs, making it a powerful tool for companies to easily direct its messages to active readers and reach for more accurate potential candidates (Hunt, 2010).

As well pointed out by Hunt (2010), despite the fact that Twitter might be infested by celebrities and other famous people, business are also using it in many different ways, including as a recruitment tool. Still according to Hunt (2010), one of the most ways that companies do this is by posting jobs on their Twitter account with a URL for their corporate website, creating a direct link for more information. Business are also able to search for talents via Twitter, maybe not as successfully as they can on LinkedIn, but “companies are able to identify candidates by querying for competencies, companies, activities, or key words, as well as sending direct messages to potential candidates” (Hunt, 2010 p 39). Aware of the increasing use of Twitter by different organizations worldwide, Twitter created a service called Twitter 101, a special guide through which they intend to help organizations on how to use the site to their advantage, along with best practices and case studies.

Job-seekers are also starting to realize they can – and should – take advantage of the presence of every major – and even small – organization on Twitter to help them get the perfect job (Cuthbert, 2012). “Job seeker should avoid creating an online presence they would not want their future boss to see. If you are using social media to check out companies, they are doing the same for you” (Cuthbert, 2012, p 3).

### *LinkedIn*

LinkedIn, a professional-orientated social network, differs from the regular social network websites in what its focus and main purpose is for professional networking in the ‘online world’ (Joos, 2008). Professional networking was always the challenge for many workers throughout time, and websites like LinkedIn re-invents the way people network today, as you are able to

create a much broader and global professional network than you ever had within minutes (Hall, 2011)

On LinkedIn, any company is able to search for talents and establish relationships and potential candidates at no cost. It's as simple as creating a profile and the company is instantly part of the largest professional network in the world (Hunt, 2010). Companies wishing to go a step further can choose to purchase a premium membership account, known as a business account, for access to extra features, such as the ability to post jobs, make direct contact with any LinkedIn user, save and manage prospects' profiles, and so on (Hunt, 2010). One of the most popular and effective features of LinkedIn for companies is job posting, and even though it may seem like an easy task to do, posting a job on LinkedIn requires very clear and accurate job descriptions, and for that reason "hiring managers wanting successful results must truly understand the desired qualifications for a position before posting a job" (Hunt, 2010).

Out of the three major social networks, LinkedIn is reportedly the top preference for hiring managers. This is what a Jump Start Social Media's survey has found after surveying 100 hiring managers at small, medium, and large organizations on how social media is being used in the recruitment process (Victor, 2009). According to the survey findings, 75% of hiring managers use LinkedIn to research the credentials of potential candidates, while 48% use Facebook, and 26% use Twitter to research candidates before making a job offer. According to Veronica Fielding, president of Digital Brand Expressions and Jump Start Social Media, "Because LinkedIn is the most professionally oriented of the three, it tends to attract hiring managers who are doing due diligence" (Victor, 2009). When it comes to the use of social networks as a tool to find potential candidates to fill openings the numbers are slightly different but the order is

preserved, with LinkedIn still being the top preference among hiring managers (66%), ahead of Facebook (23%), and Twitter (16%)

## 2.3 – Other Forms of Social Media

### *Blogs*

The contraction for the term Web log, a blog is “a Web site in which journal or newsletter-type entries are made and frequently uploaded ( ) in some cases, readers are allowed to respond to the postings and thus engage in a two-way conversation with the blogger and other readers”

(Joos, 2008 p 53) Blogs have the potential to be an excellent way to get in touch with a large amount of passive candidates that might be reading the blog content just out of curiosity, specializing therefore the blog content into more specific occupational areas may even increase the chances of reaching a more accurate audience for future recruitment purposes (Joos, 2008)

There are also the blogs that are produced by recruiting agencies, in this case, aiming at reaching for both active and passive candidates as they tend to be more specialized into specific areas of interest, such as finance, information technology and so on. As Joos (2008) states very well, “establishing a blog as a recruitment tool is something that any company can do as free software is readily available on the Internet for download, the major issue being keeping the content appropriate, interesting, and focused

## *Wikis*

Unlike blogs, a wiki is a type of Web site that allows authors to collaborate on the information provided on the site. One of the most widely known is Wikipedia, a free encyclopedia which contains millions of articles written by volunteer contributors (Joos, 2008). An excellent example of an employment oriented wiki can be found at the WikiBooks.org Web site where an assortment of open-content instructional resources can be found. One of the wikibooks available on this site is *The Find Employment Wikibook*, which according to a quote from its introduction “is an attempt to explain the process of finding a job and getting hired by that job” (Joos, 2008 p. 54). Just like blogging software, wiki software is also readily available for free on the Internet, making it completely accessible for any company interested in engaging in that area of social media.

## *Marketing Videos*

A marketing video is a great tool for smaller companies to help them put a name and face together so they can project to potential employees an idea about the culture and working conditions, among other things, of the company (Joos, 2008). A great example of a successful use of employer marketing video is at GettingHired’s website. They allow its short video to “present your company to the potential candidate”. Its job-seeker video marketing tool is also very useful for graduating students seeking jobs where excellent communication and presentation skills are strong job requirements (Joos, 2008). Due to its wide availability for free and the great reach ability any company should consider the use of marketing videos as a support to the recruiting and hiring processes.



### *Podcasts*

Podcast is another form of social media sometimes used for recruitment purposes, either directly or indirectly. According to Joos (2008 p 55), “A podcast is an audio file that is delivered via the Internet to computers or digital handheld devices” Created for entertainment purposes podcasts are now used for a variety of reasons, such as “talk shows, music, tutorials, lectures, interviews with subject-matter experts, commentaries, and information about recruiting and hiring” (Joos, 2008 p 55) Goulston & Storrs, a Boston-based law firm, has a series of podcasts on its website called the “Goulston & Storrs Recruiting Podcast Series”, which was created to let potential candidates “listen directly to our partners and associates answering questions about different aspects of what it’s like to be a lawyer at our firm” (Joos, 2008) Another example of the use of podcasts for recruitment is found at IBM, where a peer-to-peer podcast series was created to allow employees to share their knowledge with other professionals inside and outside the company

### *Text Messaging*

Even though it may sound strange that a company would make use of text messaging as a way of interacting with potential candidates, this can actually turn out to be a very convenient way of communication between hiring managers and candidates for a job. According to a study by *TMC net* and described by Joos (2008 p 56), “a recruiting coordinator ( ) sends text messages to confirm interviews with young candidates or answer questions, however he does not use them to make an initial contact. It’s a quick, concise way to communicate “under the radar screen”” Recruiters who make use of text messaging, in order to appeal to generation Y members who are

so used to communication in real time, use two main strategies “(1) send a targeted email and then follow up with the same people at some point in the future by text messages, or (2) send a text message to just those who click through in response to the initial email” (Joos, 2008) The low-cost and wide availability of text messaging also make it a very powerful tool for companies to keep in close and real-time contact with potential candidates

Finally, there are the social network websites The most widely known being Twitter- which has already been discussed above – Facebook – the most popular of them all – and LinkedIn, devoted exclusively for career networking/recruitment purposes Due to their impressive popularity and therefore huge reach potential, the following will discuss and analyze these websites in respect to their ability to influence or support recruitment and hiring processes

## 2.4 – Social Media and Recruiting

More and more businesses are stepping into the social media arena to recruit viable candidates for positions at their companies – and having great success according to social media gurus (Hunt, 2010) And that’s where the questions proposed by this research come into play, as it tries to go the extra mile and identify not only the extent to which managers are in fact using social media to help in the recruitment process, but to identify how this is done more effectively in order to optimize valuable resources for the company, such as time, money, and ultimately the hiring of top-talents

Even though this research will be focusing on how social media is used by hiring managers, understanding the current world scenario in regard to the extent to which this is actually done by different managers around the globe is still very important And according to a survey of more

than 2,500 employers conducted by CareerBuilder, which was released in August 2010, “35% of respondents use social media to promote their companies. Of those, 21% are using it to recruit and research potential employees, and 18% are using it to strengthen their employment brand” (Hunt, 2010 p 37)

Microsoft is an example of a large corporation which uses social media for recruitment purposes. It started by creating a Web Log (Blog), through which they intended to educate interested people on happenings, new technologies, and best practices at Microsoft but also put a “face” to Microsoft Recruiting (Joos, 2008). And this is just one way companies can use social media for recruitment purposes. Another way, which will be discussed later in more detail, is the candidate filtering by researching their social networks’ profiles. For now, let us focus on the different modes of social media that companies make use of in order to interact with potential future employees.

According to a Right Management survey from 2011, most of the human resources professionals and hiring managers agree that social media has a very heavy influence in their hiring decisions. The survey also showed that LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter were the three most popular sites used by human resources professionals and hiring managers, and most interestingly, it showed a very relevant difference in the rate of usage for each of these sites in the three different geographical regions of study: North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific (Alleyne, 2011).

While 93% of the North American human resources professionals and hiring managers surveyed said they use LinkedIn for recruitment purposes, this figure goes down to 42% and 32% for the human resources professionals and hiring managers located in Europe and Asia-Pacific, respectively (Alleyne, 2011). The table below gives a more broad understanding of this

difference in the usage rates of the top-three social networking sites (LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter) by human resources professionals and hiring managers in North America, Europe, and Asia-Pacific

	<b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
<b>North America</b>	93%	34%	18%
<b>Europe</b>	42%	62%	35%
<b>Asia Pacific</b>	32%	75%	48%
<b>Global</b>	52%	58%	34%

Table Percentage of recruiters who said site was useful in each of the regions surveyed (Alleyne, 2011)

Two significant conclusions can be made out of this table. The first is that even though it is a more professional oriented social network and despite its massive popularity among recruiters in North America, globally speaking LinkedIn still comes second to Facebook when it comes to usefulness in the recruitment and hiring processes. The second conclusion we can make by observing these figures is that there is in fact a huge discrepancy among the different regions on which social networking site is the most useful for recruitment purposes. That fact raises many questions in regard to the use of social media in recruiting. One of the questions is whether there is in fact an optimum way of using social media in recruitment or if that is too subjective and dependent on too many variables to be assessed with precision. Also, why is LinkedIn so popular in North America but only one in every three hiring manager in Asia Pacific think this site is useful? Does it have to do with cultural differences and contrasting perspectives or could the Americans have found the optimum way using this tool while the Asians have mastered in the use of Facebook for recruiting? These are all interesting questions that help us gain a better

understanding of how social media is used for recruiting and hiring purposes and what is the optimal way of doing so – if there is one. At the end of this paper the researcher will attempt to answer most of these questions to the best of his abilities backed up by the research here to follow.

In contrast to the technology industry, where using social media for recruiting is almost a norm (Joos, 2008), such practice has very little popularity among the human resources professionals in the healthcare industry (Sheehan, 2010). According to a recent survey conducted by *CareerBuilder* “while 26% of healthcare employers are using social media to promote their company, just 14% are using it to recruit potential employees” (Sheehan, 2010 p. 31). Ben Jablow, managing director of *MiracleWorkers.com*, calls for the importance of social media in finding top talents and urges employers from the healthcare industry to engage in such practice. His urge is reinforced by the director of human resources for several nursing homes and assisted living facilities in Oklahoma, in the United States, Lisa Nice-Graham, when she states that she makes use of social media for recruiting in a regular basis and that is “one of the most effective means of recruitment there is” (Sheehan, 2010 p. 31). Nice-Graham also brings up a very interesting point when comparing the traditional methods of recruitment to what she labels as ‘social recruiting’ “Usually I find a better quality candidate because they’re more passive job seekers versus the newspaper, which usually has responses from people who are unemployed – and often are unemployed for a reason” (Sheehan, 2010 p. 31). This statement is very powerful in the way it compares the traditional methods of recruitment to the ‘new’ methods, through the use of social media, especially because it brings in to the discussion a very key concept, and that is the concept of passive versus active job seekers and how it affects the way employers will recruit. Passive job seekers are those who are currently employed but that are passively looking

for an opportunity that will enrich his career either financially or professionally (Victor, 2009)

Generally speaking, for the simple fact they are currently employed, this type of job seekers will have an advantage over the active job seekers in the eyes of the recruiters as tend to be more qualified. The active job seekers on the other hand will be trying every method available to get a job as he will, generally speaking, be unemployed and in need of one as soon as possible (Victor, 2009). This is not to say that only passive job seekers are online and therefore by using social media hiring managers will find the best potential candidates, but it is certainly to say that by using some of the traditional methods, such as newspaper, there will be a higher chance the hiring manager will find more active job seekers who could be in desperate need of a job and as Nice-Graham said, unemployed for a reason.

Another very interesting fact that calls for the importance of using social media for recruitment purposes is that, in times of economic crisis and high rates of unemployment, as it is the case for most countries nowadays, “job hunting has become a second career for many people. And it’s no surprise that in a number of fields, particularly for entry-level positions, the search for a new job is being conducted almost exclusively online” (Russo, 2011 p 14). This statement is backed up by a recent research conducted by Simply Hired, where it was found that about 88% of all entry-level positions in the United States were registered exclusively online. These figures call attention to the fact that the world is currently going through a major change in the way employers and employees interact, and as these numbers grow each year, it’s essential that companies are up-to-date not only to the new forms of interaction but also on the best way of making use of them.

## 2.5 – Risks and Challenges

### *Online vs Face-to-Face Networking*

Despite all the good reasons mentioned so far for making use of social media for recruiting, some aspects must be looked at with caution before a company decides to do so. These aspects represent the challenges faced by companies that already make use of this tool in their recruitment efforts, as well as the risks that a company planning to introduce this mechanism needs to assess.

Monika Morrow, a senior vice-president for the talent and workforce solutions firm, says that “recruiters like social media because it enhances their sourcing. But social media has not replaced other recruiting methods” (Alleyne, 2011 p. 44). According to Morrow, from a job seeker perspective networking is the most important element in helping them get a job, and that element requires more than just online interaction (Alleyne, 2011). It’s important here to relate back to our concept of networking. In current times, where almost everything we do is computer-based or somehow connected to the internet, it’s easy to assume that networking has to do exclusively with online interaction, tweets, emails, and so on, but the fact is that networking was done way before computers even existed. Therefore, it’s crucial that both employers and potential employees realize that true networking goes beyond the computer screen and has face-to-face interaction as one of its main elements (Andrade, 2011). According to Premier Search CEO, Bernie Reifkind, social media should be only one of many tools, and “none of it matters if you don’t pick up the phone and make human contact” (Sheeham, 2010 p. 31).

### *The issue of Accuracy and Reliability*

Another challenge commonly faced by companies that make use of social media in their recruitment process has to do with the accuracy and reliability of the information contained on the potential talents' online profiles (Cam, Scott, & Smith, 2010). It can be very difficult to determine whether the information displayed on a candidate's online profile is in fact accurate, and that's where, one more time, the human interaction comes into play. Relating back to what Reifkind said, the use of social media should be just an element of the whole mix, an increasingly important element, but never the only one (Sheeham, 2010).

In contrast, there might be a higher chance that the information found in online social networking profiles will be more accurate and reliable than the information contained, for example, in the cover letter or the curriculum vitae of a potential candidate, simply because a lot of these potential candidates are not expecting that their profiles will be viewed by potential employers (Davison et al, 2011), and therefore will not worry about portraying a professional image, instead, they just be themselves, and that's exactly what recruiters are looking for.

### *Background Checking*

Still on the topic of information found on social networking profiles, another major challenge is faced by companies currently making use of social media in their recruitment efforts, and that has to do with background checking (Victor, 2010). To what extent is the information contained on online profiles, such as tweets, statuses updates, pictures, and pages of interest, used against or in favour of a potential candidate? Is this information in fact relevant to the employer? The



researcher will attempt to answer these questions throughout the research here to follow, but a lot has been already said on the subject

Victor (2010) emphasizes the fact that every company should always be proactive in managing their reputation, and that starts by hiring the right candidate with the right profile for the company. To hire the right candidate involves more than simply hiring the person with the best technical or academic skills, it involves choosing someone that will fit within the company's culture and values (Cain et al, 2010). For that reason, many companies have now implemented their own social media policies to deal with challenging situations involving the company's name, employees, and social media. The same is being done on a managerial level where each day more hiring managers are paying greater attention to what is being posted online by potential employees in order to assess whether that candidate, would fit within the organization's culture (Victor, 2010). And that is exactly what online background checking is all about: checking for recent posts, photos, pages of interest, and the use of inappropriate language in potential candidates' social networking profiles as a resource to help identify which ones the recruiter believes will or will not be a valuable addition for the company in terms of organizational culture (Victor, 2010).

### *The Issue of Legality*

The topic on background checking brings up another very interesting issue, which deals with whether recruiters have the right to use such information contained on social networking sites against or in favour of potential candidates. In other words, do companies have the right to refuse a job applicant based on information found on public online profiles? A lot of debate is currently

going on this issue, but the consensus seems to be that yes, but with restrictions and limitations (Victor, 2010)

According to Victor (2010), there is no question about the fact that social media, and social networking profiles especially, are all a very valuable source of very revealing information about a job applicant, but key is to use these sources in a cautious way and with a clear idea of what information you are going after, and stick with it. Because this is a relatively new topic, laws regarding this type of action are still being implemented at local or state levels in different parts of the world as more situations come up. "The legality of using social networking websites for screening also requires more study. Many employers assume that it is acceptable as long as specific laws (e.g. civil rights laws) are not violated" (Davison et al, 2011 p. 156)

The problem is that not only civil rights laws can be violated during this process of gathering information from a potential employee's personal online profile, there is also the issue related to privacy rights (Davison et al, 2011). To what extent is making use of this information a violation of privacy rights? According to Victor (2010 p. 81), "it is better to err on the side of safety in terms of the law, and put some clear guidelines in place in your organization". This is especially true because of the fact that, even though most of the specific laws on this matter are still under construction, many lawsuits have been brought against organizations that make use of social networking sites for background checking, which could become a motivation for other organizations not to adopt this practice (Victor, 2010)

Examples of lawsuits against companies for making use of information found on social networking sites include the fact that not every candidate will have their online profile checked, which constitutes discrimination. And even though it might be hard for the applicant to prove he

was discriminated against on the basis of his personal information found in social networking profiles, it could also be extremely difficult for employers to prove they didn't do it, and that is why "it is better to err on the side of safety in terms of the law" (Victor, 2010 p 81) Other examples of lawsuits include the violation of the terms of services of these social networking sites by the employer, as according to some job seekers the use of these sites to assist in hiring decisions constitutes commercial use, which is prohibited under the terms of service of some of these site, such as Facebook (Victor, 2010)

# METHODOLOGY

## Chapter 3

### 3.1 – The Research ‘Onion’

A commonly neglected chapter in dissertations, Methodology “refers to the way the knowledge is created and is closely related to epistemology, which is the philosophical theory of knowledge” (Horn, 2009 p. 107). To gain a better understanding of what are methodology and epistemology, let us first understand the concept of research philosophy. Research philosophy “relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge” (Lewis, Saunders, Thornhill, 2012 p. 127). To fully understand what that means let us imagine the whole research process as an onion and all of its different layers. To get to the center of the ‘onion’, which corresponds to the data collection and analysis process, there are five other very important layers that will tell about the nature of the research.

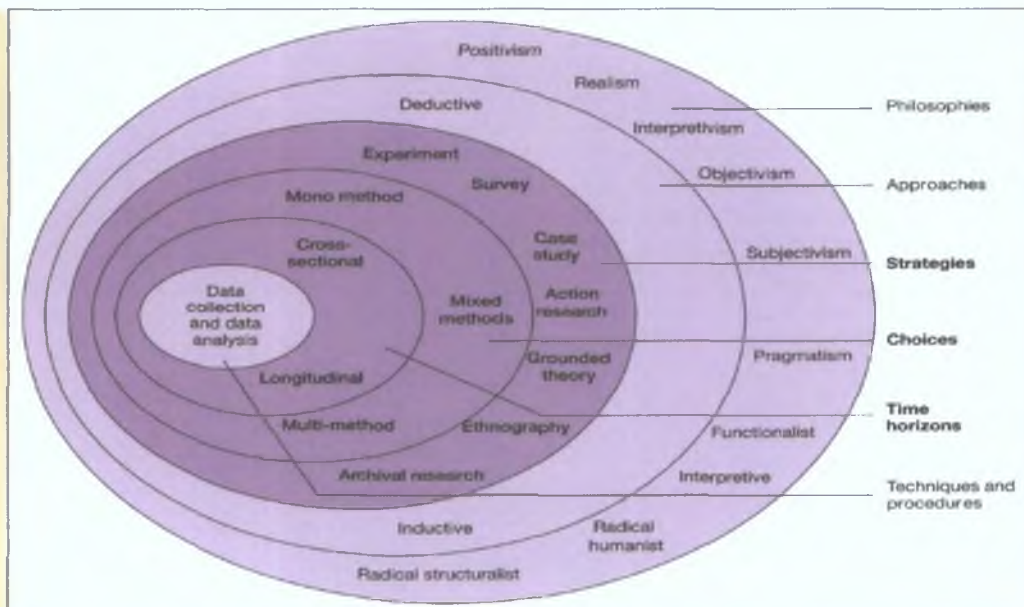


Figure 5.1 The research ‘onion’

Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrian Thornhill 2006

The outer layer of the 'onion' will tell which philosophical approach the researcher chose to take on his topic of study, and therefore determine through which perspective the researcher will be looking at his topic. There are four main philosophical approaches to a dissertation research: positivism, realism, interpretivism, and pragmatism (Lewis, et al 2012). And they will be discussed in more detail further in this chapter. The second layer of the 'onion' deals with the approach to be taken by the researcher in regard to the method of research, which can vary from deduction, in which the researcher will move from theory to data as he progresses with the research process, induction, through which the researcher goes the reverse way, moving from data to theory, and abduction, where the movement involving data and theory takes place in both directions continually throughout the research process. A combination of these approaches is also sometimes used (Lewis et al, 2012).

The third layer of the research 'onion' deals with the design of the research, which can be categorized as quantitative, qualitative, or a combination of these techniques. The quantitative design deals with data collection techniques and analysis measures that will create numerical data, while on the other hand, a research with a qualitative design will primarily generate non-numerical data (Lewis et al, 2012). These two different designs as well as the different possible combinations of them will be discussed in greater detail later in this chapter. Following the research design, the next layer of the 'onion' relates to the strategy or strategies to be used when conducting the research. This step deals with the different ways through which a researcher can conduct the process of answering his research questions. The most commonly used strategies are surveys, case studies, interviews, and experiments (Horn, 2009). Finally, the fifth layer of the research 'onion', which is the closest to the previously mentioned 'center of the onion', relates to the time horizon of the research. This 'layer' is concerned with whether the researcher intends

that his or her research will be “a snapshot taken at a particular time” (Lewis et al, 2012 p 190), in which case it will be a cross-sectional time horizon, or whether the researcher aims for his or her research to be more of a “representation of events over a given period” (Lewis et al, 2012 p 190), in which case it will represent a longitudinal time horizon of the studies

It's important to understand that all these different layers of the 'onion', that will ultimately compose the methodology used in the research, must be presented in a very cohesive way in order to make sense together. The different layers chosen to compose the 'onion' must fit together, or in other words, there must be a coherent link among the philosophy, approach, design, strategy, and time horizon chosen to enclose the center of the 'onion' (Lewis et al, 2012)

### 3.2 – Research Philosophies

#### Positivism

The philosophical position according to which “only phenomena that you can observe will lead to the production of credible data” is known as positivism (Lewis et al, 2012 p 134). A researcher that chooses to use a positivist philosophy on his research will most likely also adopt a deduction approach to his or her research, and that is due to the nature of positivism. By definition, a positivist research philosophy deals with the creation of data by observing an existing theory, and experimenting a potential hypothesis derived from this observation is what the deduction approach is all about (Maylor and Blackmon, 2005). From this perspective it is easy to notice the links that exist among the different aspects of the research, or the different layers of the 'onion'. Another important aspect of the positivist research philosophy is that it will tend to focus on observations that are quantifiable and will often make use of statistical analysis. That is

not to say that positivism philosophy and qualitative design can't work together, but normally a qualitative design will be the preferable methodological choice when a positivist philosophy is in place (Lewis et al, 2012)

## Realism

Like positivism, realism takes a scientific approach to the creation of knowledge, but in the realist philosophical approach, a reality that is completely independent of the mind exists and governs how this knowledge is in fact created (Horn, 2009) There are two main types of realism direct and critical The direct realism research philosophy claims that "what we experience through our senses portrays the world accurately" (Lewis et al, 2012 p 136) In other words, what we understand from the world is directly related, exclusively, to what we see and the sensations created by seeing these things The critical realist research philosophy, on the other hand, claims that the process that goes on in our minds after we experience the sensations created by seeing the world is in fact what determines how we perceive it

When relating these different perspectives of the same philosophy to the research context, it's easy to understand how they can lead the researcher in such opposing ways If a researcher chooses to use a direct realist philosophy to the study, he or she will be, more than likely, assuming a perspective that perceives raw theory as absolute, therefore ignoring the epistemological values incurred when taking a more critical approach And it is the use or lack of use of these critical eyes to the world being studied that will determine the way the researcher will lead his studies in terms of research philosophy

## Interpretivism

The interpretivist research philosophy supports the theory that part of the role of the researcher is to observe and analyze people behaviour, rather than objects or other material things, as what is called 'social actors' (Lewis et al, 2012) According to the interpretivist approach, as the name suggests, humans, just like in theaters and movies, interpret a role in society In terms of the approach of this philosophy to a research, with an interpretivist eye to the research the researcher will attempt to understand human behaviour and the implications and reasons for such behaviour in the context of the society in which he or she is inserted

## 3.3 – Research Design

### Qualitative vs Quantitative

As previously mentioned at the start of this chapter, the quantitative approach is more concerned with the numerical data, and its research methods will normally include a data collection technique and a data analysis procedure that will create numerical data (Lewis et al, 2012) This approach to research design is also normally associated with a positivist philosophy, a deductive approach, and with experimental and survey strategies Also, in this research design “the researcher is seen as independent from those being researched, who are usually called respondents” (Lewis et al, 2012 p 163)

A qualitative approach on the other hand, is more concerned with non-numerical data and will often include in its methodology a data collection and analysis techniques that will create this non-numerical data (Lewis et al, 2012) A qualitative research design is normally linked to an



interpretive philosophy, as “the researcher needs to make sense of the subjective and socially constructed meanings expressed about the phenomenon being studied” (Lewis et al, 2012 p 163) The research approaches normally associated with the qualitative design are normally the inductive approach, and sometimes as well, the deductive approach The same happens in regard to the strategies associated with the qualitative research design, such as case study, Grounded Theory, and narrative research In a qualitative research design “data collection is non-standardized, so that questions and procedures may alter and emerge during a research process that is both naturalistic and interactive” (Lewis et al, 2012 p 163)

### 3.4 – My ‘Onion’

This researcher, based on the research questions proposed to be answered and the nature of the context in which the studies involve, which are not particularly a common ground to the research and the researcher, opted for a more quantitative design for the research here presented

This researcher understands though, the use of some qualitative elements, such as the generation and analysis of non-numerical data in order to successfully answer the research questions proposed in full

With a philosophy that is more closely related to the previously discussed positivism, a research approach that is similar to what constitutes induction, as the researcher makes use of data collection techniques to “explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework” (Lewis et al, 2012 p 144), and also by making use of a research strategy which entails the elaboration, conduction and analysis of a survey, this researcher believes to

have found the combination of layers that best suits the purpose of this research in trying to answer the proposed questions

## SURVEY FINDINGS

### **Chapter 4**

This chapter will portray an individual analysis of all the questions contained in the survey that was prepared by this researcher and answered by human resources professionals and hiring managers from the United States, Ireland, and Brazil. As mentioned in the methodology chapter, this survey aimed to help this researcher to answer the research questions here proposed. As a reminder of what these research questions are, they are listed as follows to identify what is currently being done in terms of the use of social media by companies in their recruitment efforts, to find out what are the trends and expectations for the near future in regard to the use of social media for recruitment purposes, and to identify what is the optimal way to use social media for recruitment that will ultimately use the least amount of time and money, as well as involve the least amount of risks for the companies.

As mentioned above, the following will be an individual analysis of what the answers to each of the survey questions represent to the research as a whole, especially when taken into the context of what was described in the literature review chapter as being the trend in the use of social media for the past five years. Each of the next pages will contain one of the questions presented at the survey and a short analysis of the results obtained, as well as what they represent in terms of the overall research and its questions.

The survey was composed of a total of twenty multiple choice questions as well as a final question where the survey respondent was asked to express his or her own opinion on their own words. The first five questions will not be individually analyzed here as they only served

demographic purposes, as well as separated respondents by the industries and economy sector in which their companies operate

The first question segregated respondents by gender, and out of the thirty-two people who answered the survey, twenty (62.5%) were male and twelve (37.5%) female. The second question had respondents separated by age groups. The answer options given on the survey were a representation of the different generations that were relevant to this research. Out of the thirty-two respondents, twenty-three (71.8%) were born between 1961-1981 (generation x), another seven (21.8%) people who answered the survey were part of the generation y and were born between 1982-2003, and two (6.4%) respondents were born between 1943-1960, therefore part of the baby boom generation. The third question, still serving a demographic purpose, asked the respondents where in the world their company's home office was located. This question also serves the purpose of helping to identify specific patterns in behaviour in terms of the use of social media for recruitment, in different regions of the globe. For the purpose of this research three different options were given as potential answers: United States, Ireland, and Brazil. The results obtained from this question also represent one of the limitations of this research as no data from the Asiatic region was collected and also due to the fact that the big majority of the respondents (68.7% or twenty-two people) had their companies located in the United States. The other ten participants in the survey had their company's home offices equally distributed between Ireland and Brazil (15.65% or five people from each location).

The fourth and fifth questions of the survey were aimed at segregating the survey participants in groups based on the sector of the economy and the industry in which their companies operated, respectively. Sixteen (50%) of the survey participants work for companies that operate in the retail industry, eight (25%) answered their companies operate in the wholesale industry, four

(12.5%) said that finance was the industry in which their companies operated, two (6.25%) said their companies operated in the services industry, and another two (6.25%) said the industry their companies operated was the IT industry. Finalizing the initial five questions, the fifth question had to do with the sector of the economy in which the companies the respondents work for operate. And the results obtained show that twenty (62.5%) respondents work for companies that operate in the private sector, while twelve (37.5%) work for public companies.

From the results obtained above it is important to notice that the results here to follow will be representing the answers of a majority of male middle-age American human resources professionals, mostly from private companies which operate in the retail industry. But, it is also important to notice that the number of respondents from different genders, age groups, nationalities, economy sectors, and industries are also of great relevance, if not crucial, to the overall result of the research.

Before starting the more specific individual analysis of each question presented in the survey, let us first clarify the order of the questions, as well as the fact that the research was divided into two completely different sets of questions depending upon the answer given to the key question number nine. The first three questions here to follow were aimed at gathering information regarding the use of social media by the respondent in their personal lives, as a way to measure how much and what type of social media each respondent consumed out of the work environment, if any at all. Question number nine will determine which set of the remaining questions each of the respondents will get to answer, and the reason for this is simple: question nine asks whether social media is or not used in the respondents' company for recruitment purposes, a positive answer led the respondent through a set of questions (13-20) regarding the use of social media for recruitment in their companies, and a negative answer led the respondent

through a different set of questions (10-12) where the reasons why social media is not used in their companies is investigated

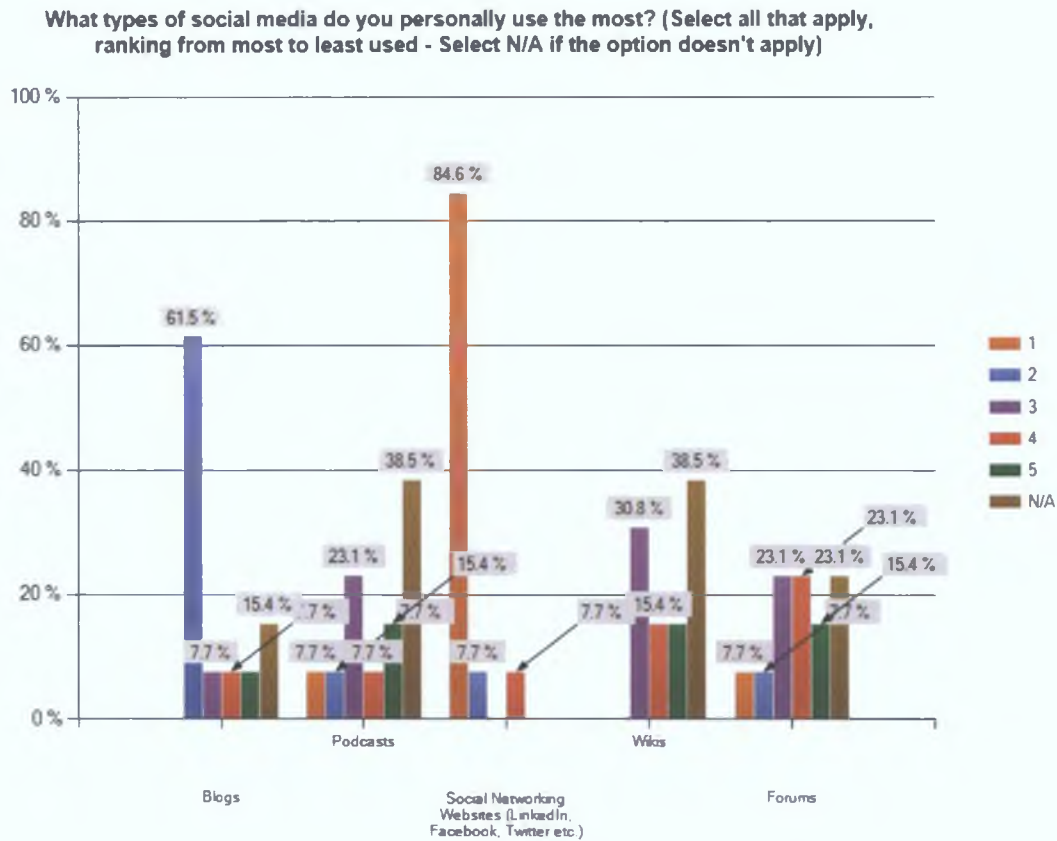
Finally it is important to clarify that, for the purpose of the survey, a clear distinction in terminology between 'social media' and 'social networks' was made to the survey participants in order to guarantee that the questions would be answered in the manner intended by the researcher, and that the results would not be misrepresented due to a confusion in the understanding of the often mistaken terms. Here is the clarification that was made to the survey participants before each question in which one or both of the terms were used or even mentioned in one of the answer options

*“For the purpose of this survey, social media refers to any form of media that allows people to communicate and share information using the internet or mobile phones, whereas 'social networks' refers to a form of social media which includes websites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, etc”*

Having all of these aspects of the survey clarified, let us start, in the following page, the more detailed individual analysis of the results obtained from each question

## 4.1 – Individual Questions Analysis

### Question 6

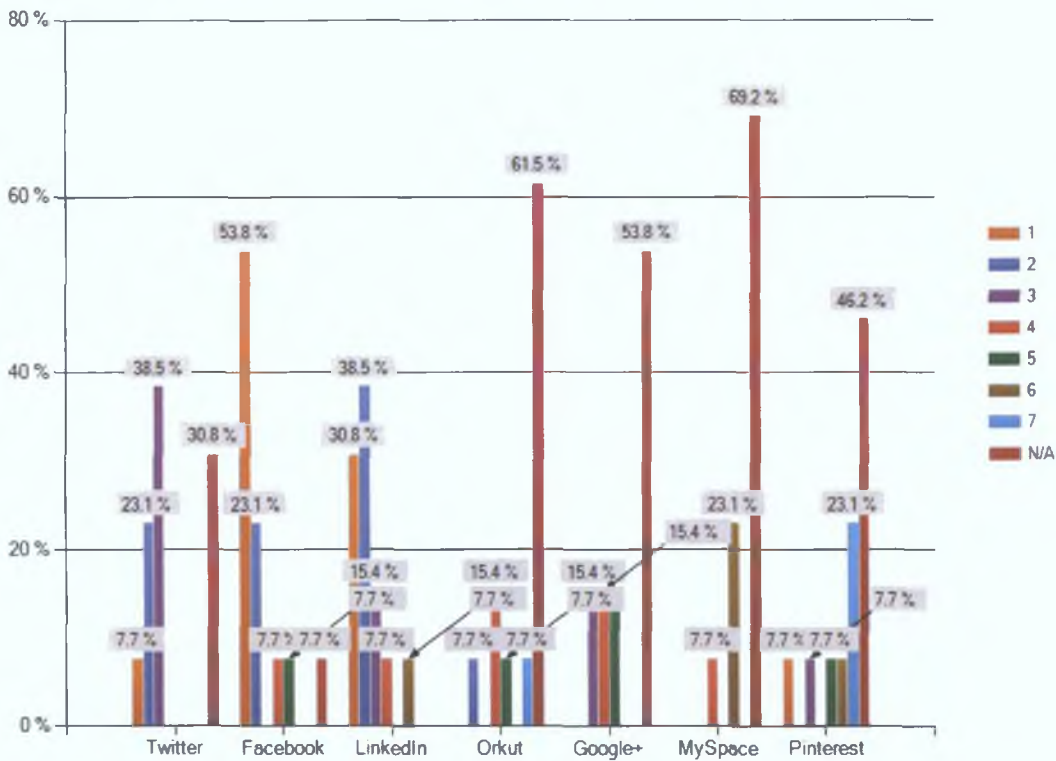


According to the results obtained from this question, where the respondents were asked to rank from 1 to 5 the types of social media they personally use the most, 84.5% ranked social networking websites, such as Facebook or Twitter, as their number one choice, followed by blogs, wikis, forums, and finally podcasts. It's important to notice here that this order of preference represented by the results here obtained is in accordance with the numbers previously mentioned in the literature review chapter where social networking sites were presented as the number most popular form of social media, that even being the reason why so often there is a

confusion in the distinction of the meaning of social media and social networks, as a lot of times they seem to be thought of as the same thing.

**Question 7**

**Which social networking websites do you personally use the most? (Select all that apply, ranking from most to least used - Select N/A if the option doesn't apply)**

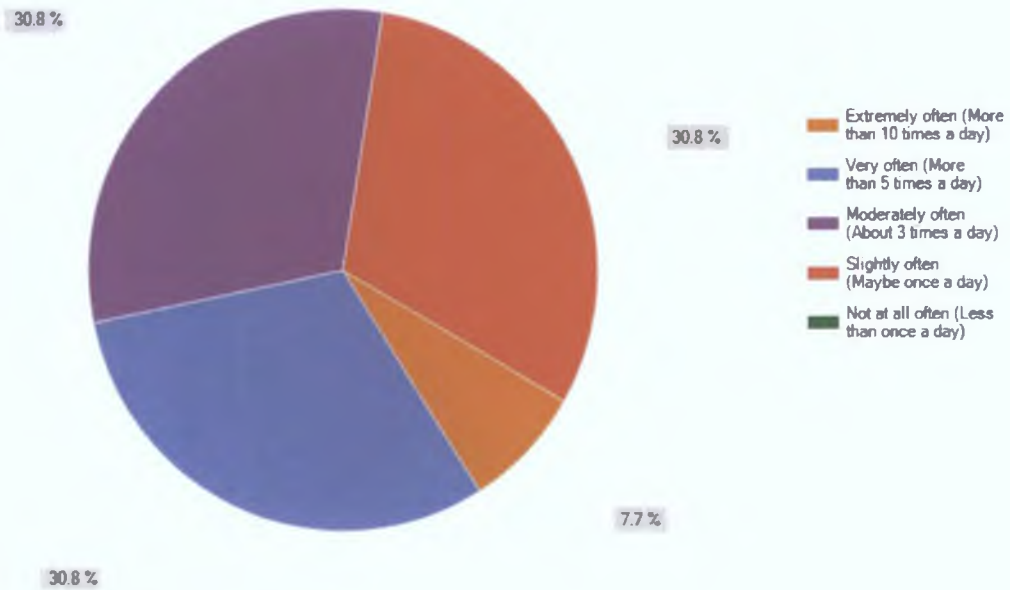


When specifying the question towards the social networking websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, respondents were once again asked to rank from 1 to 5 the websites they personally use the most. Not surprisingly, Facebook ranked number one, being chosen as the most popular social networking website, followed by LinkedIn, and Twitter, and confirming once again what was previously stated above within the literature review chapter.



**Question 8**

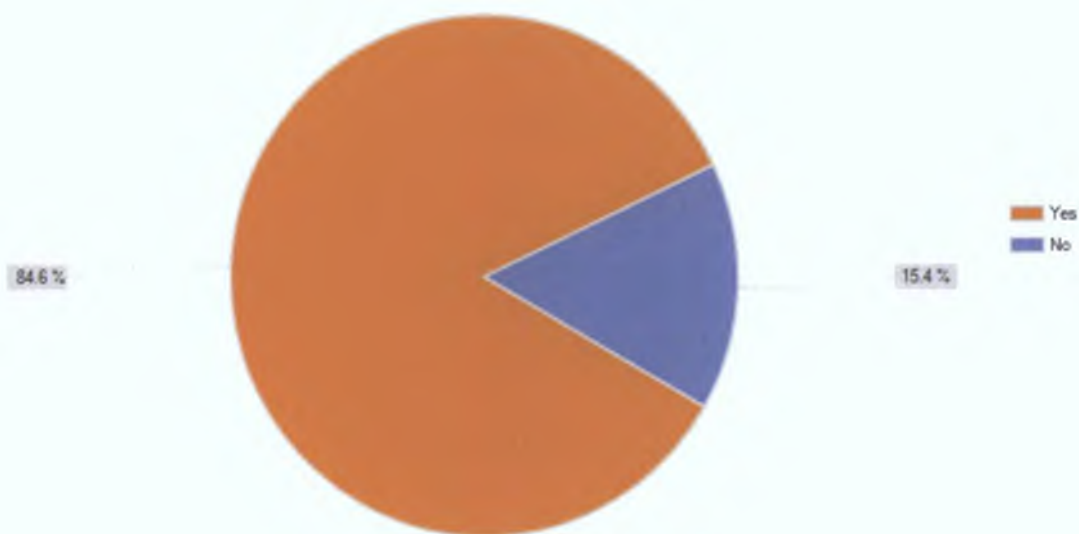
**On average, how often do you visit your preferred social networking websites?**



On question 8, the frequency with which the respondents visit social networking websites was inquired, with over 68% of all respondents saying they visit their social networking websites at least 3 times a day, with over 30% saying they visit these pages more than five times a day. This numbers show how social networking websites are each day more present in everybody's lives, and also indicates that the chance they will bring this habit into the workplace is very high, as we will se next.

*Question 9*

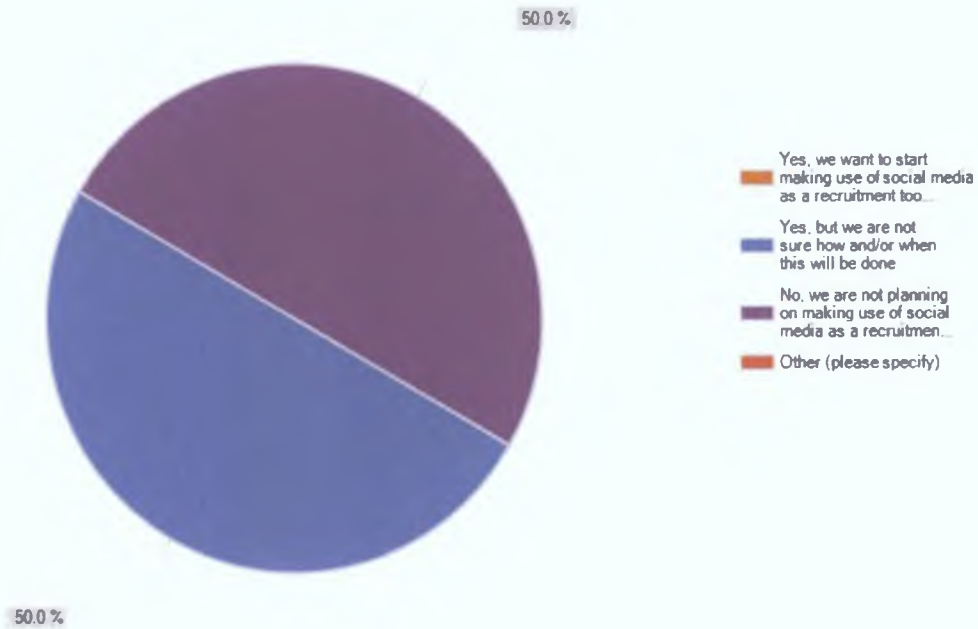
**Do you or your company currently make use of social media in any way during the recruitment process?**



Question nine was the key question which determined which set of questions would follow depending upon each respondent's answer. The question dealt with a decisive topic of this research: whether social media was used for recruitment purposes in each respondent's companies. Astonishing 84.6% answered that 'yes', social media is used in their companies for recruiting purposes, while only 15.4% saying that 'no', they do not make use of social media in their companies. Very interesting to notice here that these numbers are in accordance with the numbers above presented within the literature review chapter, where according to a 2011 CarrerXRoads survey conducted in the United States, 89% of companies were planning to use social media in their recruitment efforts.

**Question 10**

**Even though you do not currently make use of social media as a recruitment tool, are you planning on implementing this practice in the near future?**



Question ten is the first question asked to the respondents that answered ‘no’ to question nine and therefore do not make use of social media for recruitment in their companies. The question intended to find out whether these companies that are currently not making use of social media for recruiting were in fact planning to do so in the near future. And the results obtained were lower than those observed in the recent survey mentioned above, with 50% of the respondents saying ‘yes, but we’re not sure how and/or when this will be done’, and 50% saying ‘no’, against 89% saying ‘yes’ and 11% saying ‘no’ in the recent survey by CareerXroads previously mentioned. The limited amount of respondents to this survey is believed to be the cause for such discrepancy.

### *Question 11*

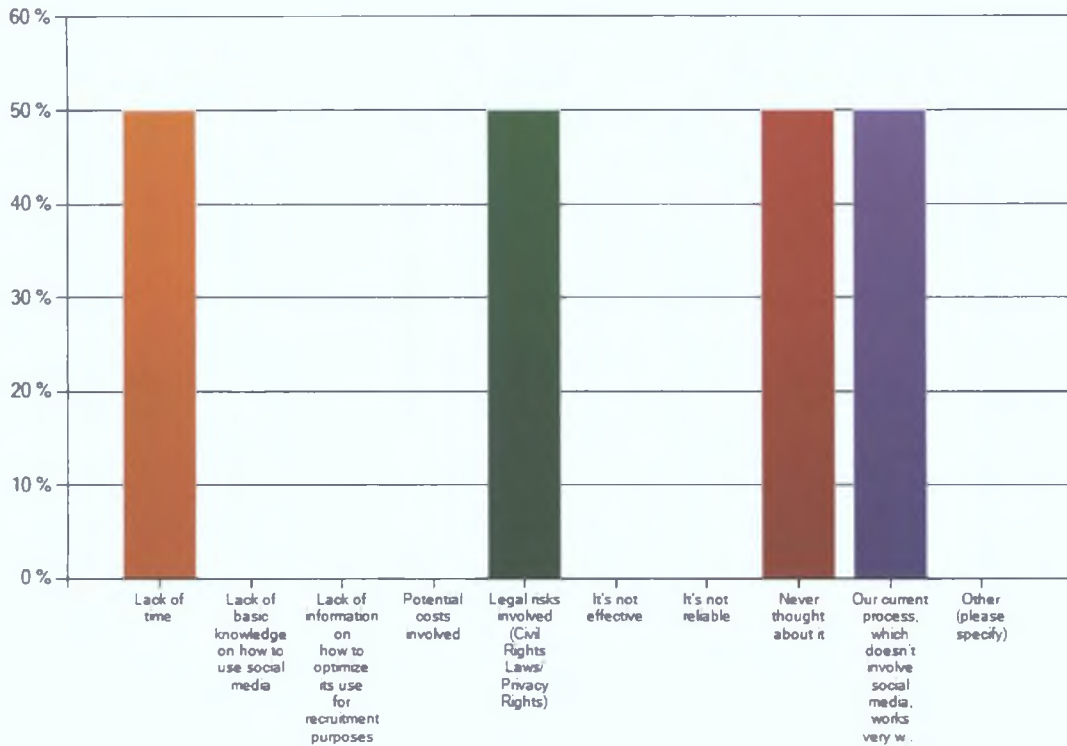
Question eleven has no statistical data due to the fact that only one of the alternatives of possible answers for question ten would lead to this question, and no answer was computed for this specific alternative. The question was as follows:

**How soon is this practice intended to be implemented in your company?**

From the four different possible answers to question ten, only the first alternative, which stated that 'yes, we want to start making use of social media as a recruitment tool in the near future' would lead the respondent to question eleven. As none of the respondents chose this alternative as their answer to question ten, no results were obtained from this question, and therefore no data was collected.

**Question 12**

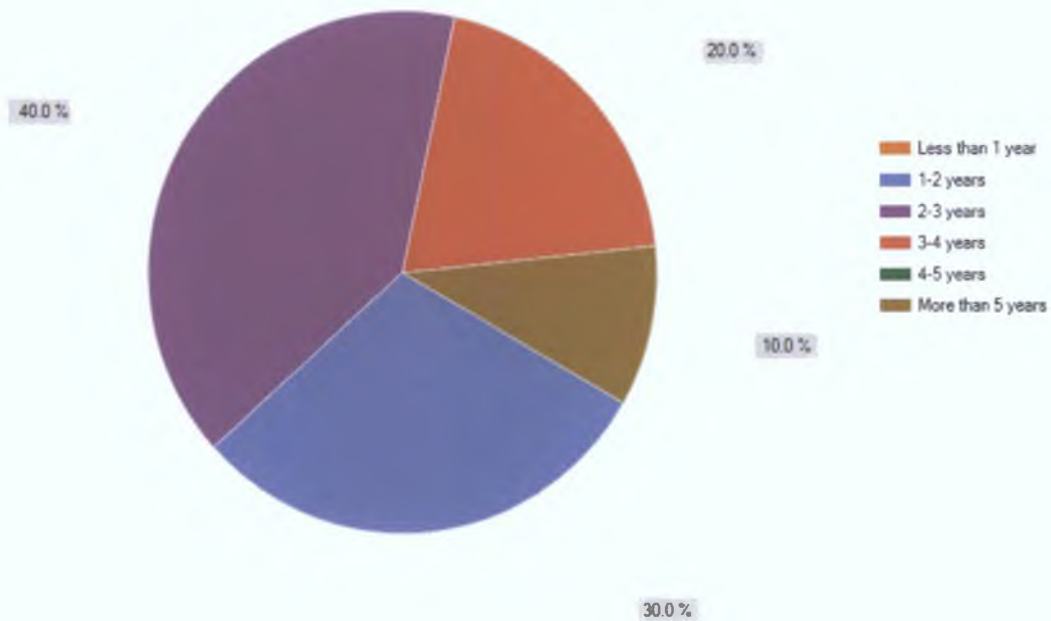
**What do you consider to be the most relevant reasons for companies not making use of social media as a recruitment tool? (Choose all that apply)**



The last question directed at respondents who work for companies that do not make use of social media for recruitment, question twelve aimed to find out the reasons why these companies were not making use of this practice in their recruitment process. The ten different alternative answers above were presented to the respondents, but only four were chosen as being a reason for the company not to make use of social media for recruiting. The four chosen answers that best described the reasons why social media is not use for recruiting in these respondents' companies were: 'Lack of Time', 'Legal Risks Involved', 'Never Thought About It', and 'Our Current Process, Which Doesn't involve Social Media, Works Very Well For Us', all picked as an answer the same amount of times.

*Question 13*

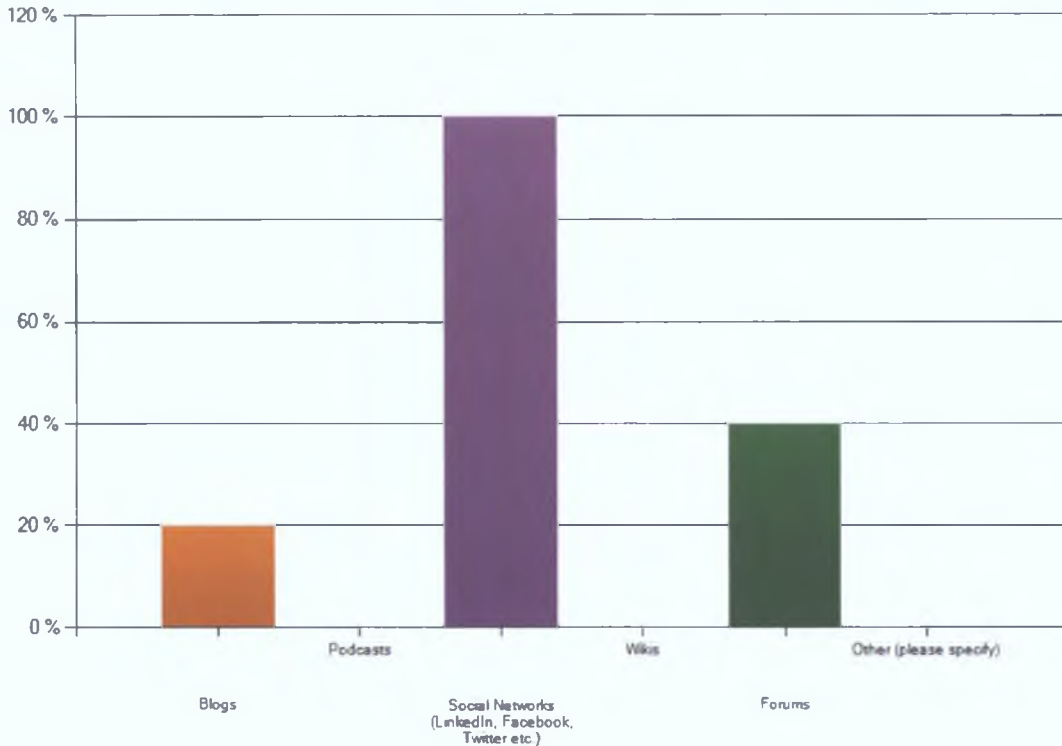
**How long have you or your company been using social media in the recruitment process?**



Question thirteen was the first question presented to the respondents who answered 'yes' to question nine and therefore do make use of social media for recruiting purposes. The question intended to find out for how long the practice of using social media in recruitment had been in place in the companies each respondent works for. A total of 40% of the respondents said they have been using social media for recruiting purposes for a period of 2-3 years, while a total of 30% said this practice has been in place in their companies for 1-2 years, meaning that 70% of all respondents have only been using social media in recruiting for the past three years. These statistics denotes how recent, and simultaneously current, this practice is in fact. Only 10% of the respondents said to be making use of this practice for over 5 years.

**Question 14**

**What types of social media does your company use for recruitment purpose? (Select all that apply)**

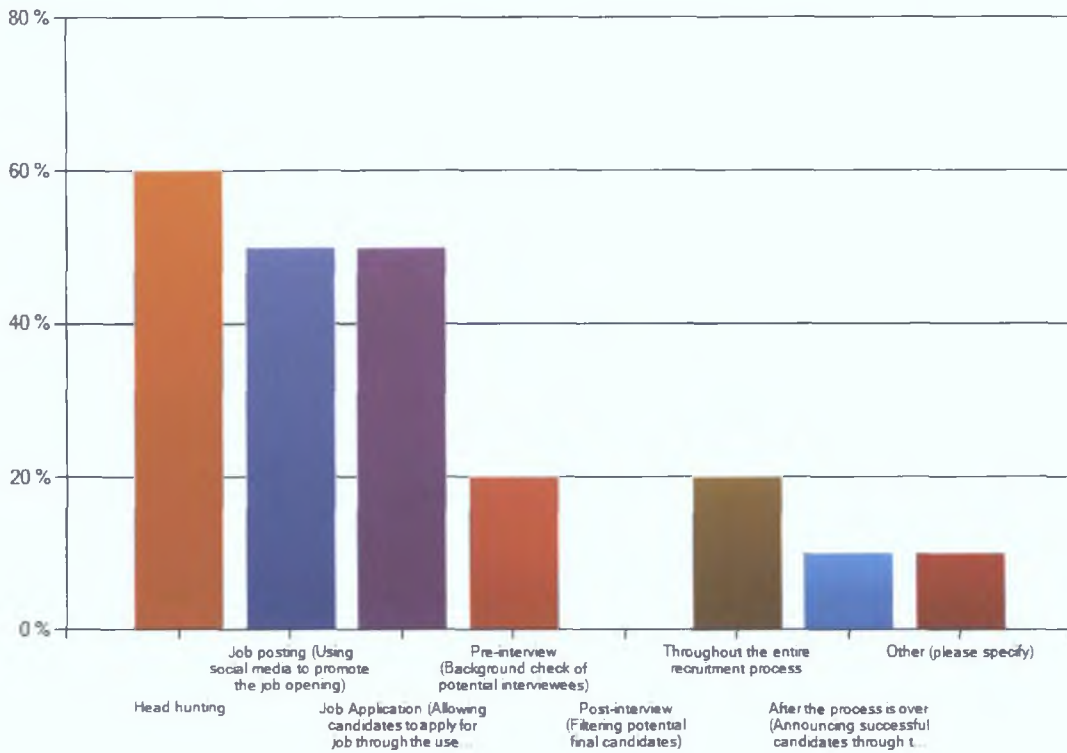


Question fourteen asked respondents what types of social media they used in their recruiting efforts, and once again social networking websites were, by far, the top preference of the majority. In this case specifically, 100% of the respondents who make use of social media for recruitment purposes said they make use of social networking websites when doing so. 40% claimed they also make use of online forums, and 20% said blogs were also used in their recruitment efforts. This one more time shows the power that social networking websites have not only on people's personal lives, as previously observed, but also in the workplace. And most importantly for the purpose of this research, in the recruitment process as well.



**Question 15**

**At what stages of the recruitment process do you or your company make use of social media?**

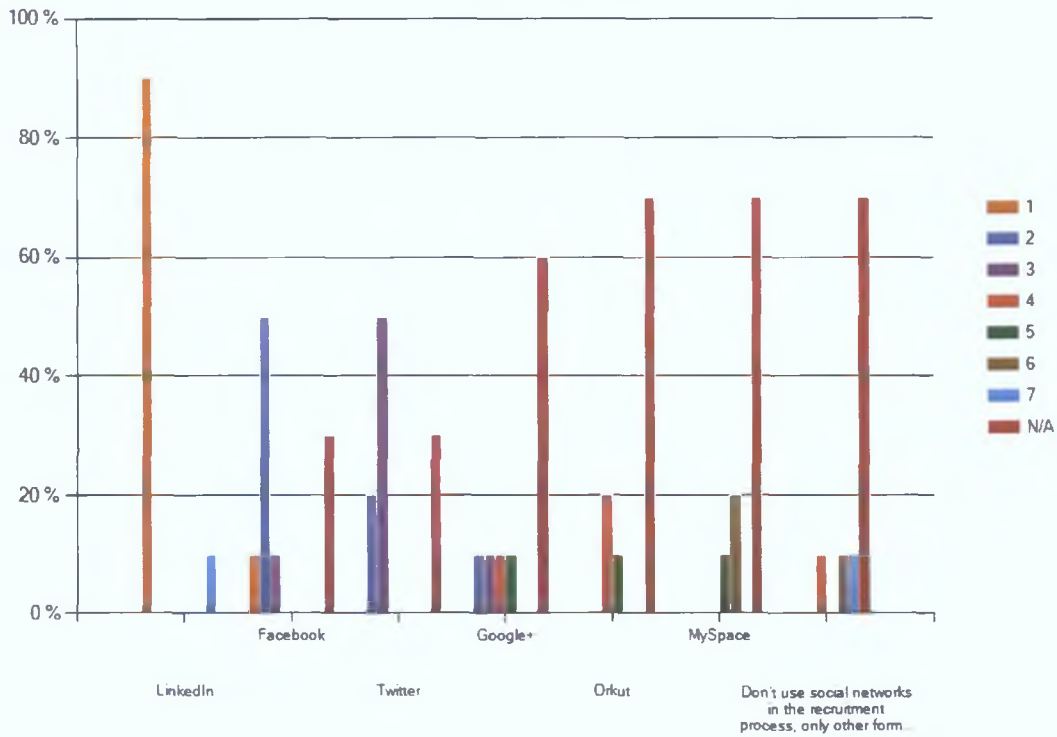


One of the most interesting questions to help this researcher answer the research questions proposed was question15, which asked the respondents at which stage during the whole recruitment process did they make use of social media. The answers varied considerable, but 60% of the respondents agreed that social media was used in the head hunting process. 50% also mentioned 'Job Posting' and 'Job Application' as two stages of the recruitment process where social media is used. 20% of the respondents said they used social media during the pre-interview stage/background checking potential interviewees. 10% said they use social media after the process is completed, and 10% answered 'other', which they all specified as 'branding'. Also, 20% of respondents said to make use social media during the entire recruitment process.



**Question 16**

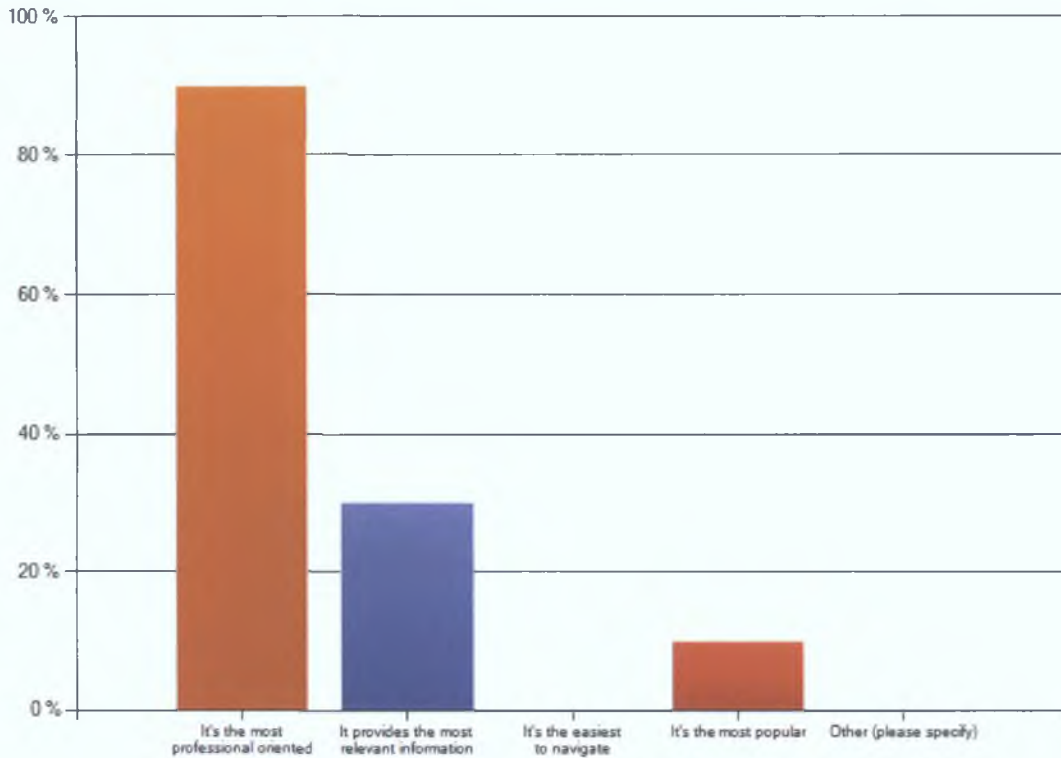
Among the different social networks, which ones do you believe are the most useful in the recruitment process? (Select all that apply, ranking from most to least relevant - Select N/A if the option doesn't apply)



On question sixteen, again the social networking websites were the topic being analyzed. Differently than when asked about their preference for personal use, this time around, when the context of the question involved the use of this type of social media for recruiting, Facebook did not come first. In fact, 90% of all respondents said that LinkedIn is the most useful of all social networking sites when it comes to the recruitment process. Second in the list came Facebook, with 50% of respondents listing it as the second most useful, and third, Twitter, with 50% saying it's the third most useful, after LinkedIn and Facebook. All the other possible answers, such as Google+, Orkut, or MySpace had over 60% of respondents saying they are not even used by them.

### Question 17

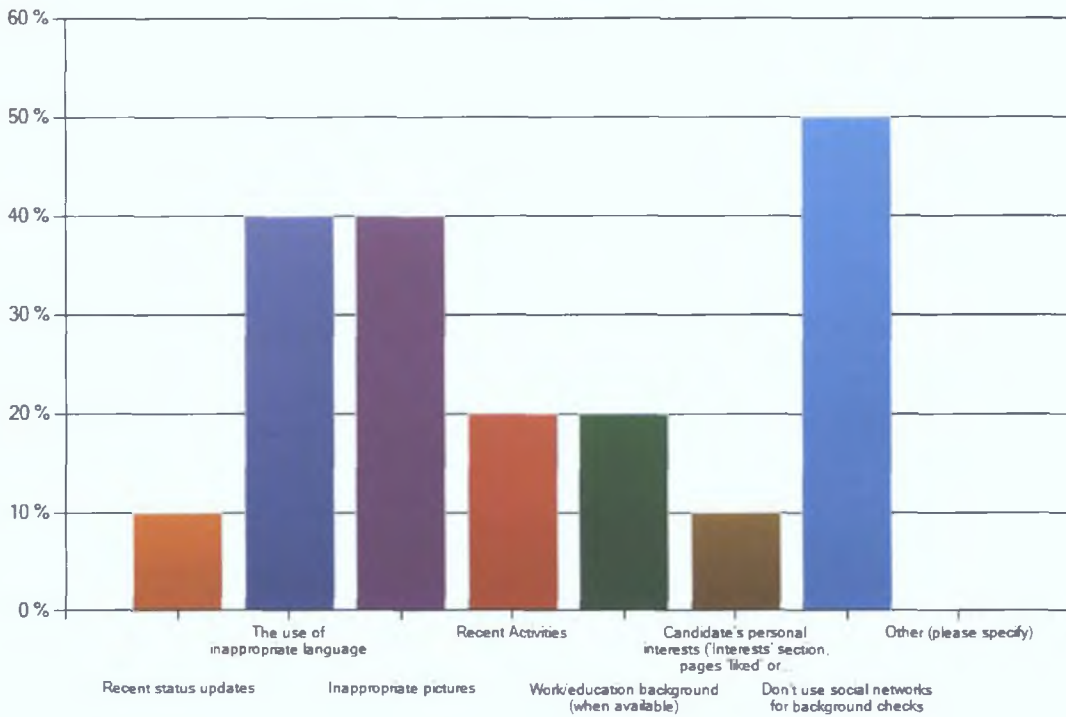
Based on your answer to the previous question, why do you believe your top choice is the most advantageous in the recruitment process?



When asked on the main reasons why they chose their top answer to the previous question, 90% of respondents said it was because the option they chose was the most professional oriented. 30% said that among the different social networking websites, their pick provided the most relevant information, and 10% also mentioned the fact that 'it is the most popular'. When looking at the results obtained at question sixteen it seems clear that the results from question seventeen make direct reference to LinkedIn when it says that 'It's the most professional oriented', with the same amount of respondents that chose LinkedIn as their top choice also choosing this alternative as the top reason for doing so. This just emphasizes the importance given by human resources professionals and hiring managers to LinkedIn as a recruitment tool.

**Question 18**

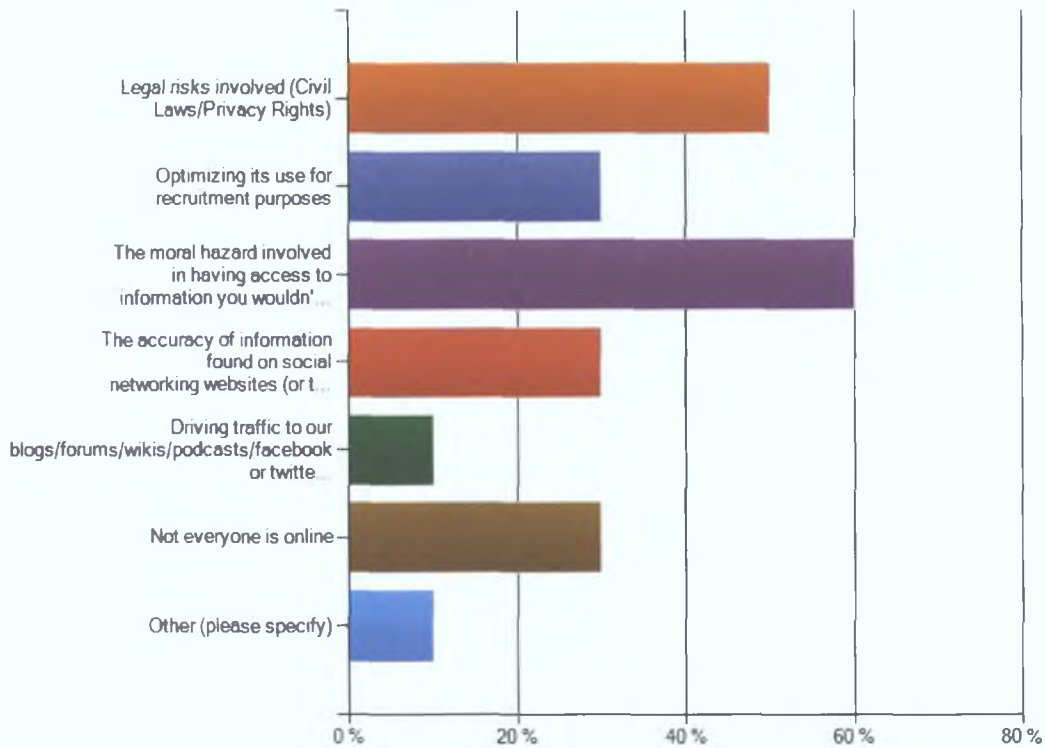
**Do not consider LinkedIn while answering the following question. When making use of social networks for background checks, what information on potential candidates do you consider to be the most relevant to you? (Select all the apply)**



On question eighteen, respondents were asked to not consider LinkedIn for the purpose of answering the question. The reason behind it was to gain a better understanding of how the non-professional oriented social networking websites are used for recruitment, therefore finding out what seems to most relevant out of the non-professional information on the employers' perspective. Surprisingly, 50% of respondents said not to make use of social networking sites for background checking. On the other hand, 40% claimed that 'The use of inappropriate language' and 'Inappropriate pictures' were among the most relevant pieces of information for hiring managers when performing a background check through a social networking site. Only 20% mentioned 'Recent Activities' and 'Work/education background' as relevant information.

### Question 19

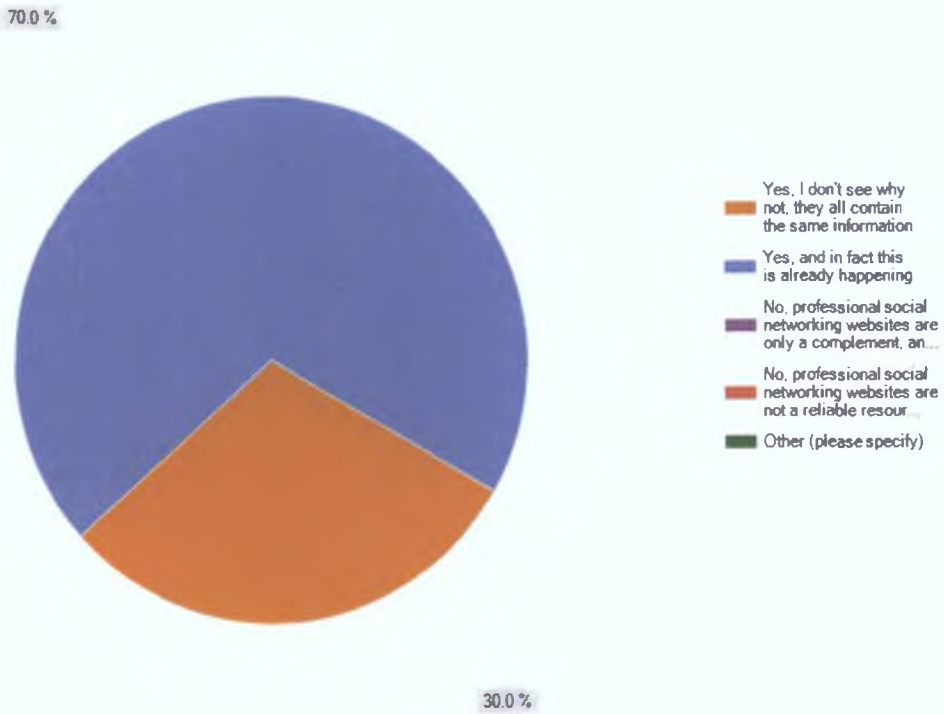
What are the main challenges faced by companies that make use of social media as a recruitment tool? (Select all that apply)



Trying to get the perspective of companies that do make use of social media for recruitment purposes on the risks and challenges involved in this practice, question nineteen of the survey asked the respondents what were the main challenges they faced due to the use of social media in their recruitment efforts. And, in agreement with data previously observed within the literature review chapter of this research, the biggest challenge faced by companies has to do with 'The moral hazard involved in having access to information you wouldn't otherwise'. Also not surprisingly, the 'Legal risks involved' was ranked as the second biggest challenge faced by these companies. Other answers include 'Optimizing its use for recruitment purposes', and 'The accuracy of the information found on social networking websites'.

*Question 20*

**Do you personally believe that professional social networking websites, such as LinkedIn, can possibly replace CV's/Resumes in the future?**



To finalize the multiple-choice questions of the survey, respondents were asked on their opinion on whether they believed that professional social networking websites could possibly come to replace CV's/Resumes in the near future, and the results were quite surprising to this researcher. Simply 100% of the respondents said to believe so. Out of them, 70% claimed that in fact this is already happening, while the other 30% said that they could not see why that would not happen, as they all contain the same information. Not one single respondent said not to believe professional social networking sites could replace CV's/Resumes in the near future.

### *Question 21*

Question twenty-one was an open ended question which gave respondents the opportunity to express, in their own words, whether they believed social media to be a powerful resource in the overall recruitment process and explain why they thought so. The question was stated as follows:

***Do you believe that social media is a powerful resource in the overall recruitment process?***

***Please tell why you agree or disagree***

- 1 Yes, it is always available and anyone registered is considered a candidate
- 2 Disagree. It is useful but not powerful enough to influence a decision. Resume is still very important although LinkedIn profiles can serve as a resume
- 3 Strongly Agree
- 4 I agree. It helps us to get the job posting more effective. It helps on getting more information about the candidates
- 5 Yes, we live in an online world. And that helps us gain access to very useful information about pretty much everything
- 6 Our world is simply going paperless, we have to catch up

- 7 Yes It is part of branding for both candidate and company it also allows for the company to tell their story to the passive candidates
- 8 Agree We have to fish where the fish are it's all about telling our story and sharing why we should be employer of choice
- 9 I believe that it is complementary resource and very helpful
- 10 I do, makes information more readily available LinkedIn is by far the best tool out there for name generation I completely disagree with using Facebook or similar sights for background checks
- 11 Yes, because it s a fast and efficient process
- 12 Yes - Progress is always good

\*All other respondents opted not to answer this question

By observing the different answers given to this question, there seems to be a pattern of thought in regard to the future of social media in the recruitment process Over 90% of the respondents above agreed that social media is a powerful resource and that, inevitably, its presence in the recruitment process will continue to grow in the years to come

## CONCLUSION

### **Chapter 5**

In this chapter this researcher intends to have a discussion that will involve an overall analysis of the survey results presented above in the context of what was previously observed in the literature review chapter. By doing so, this researcher plans to create the knowledge necessary to get to a conclusion on the overall research and therefore answer the research questions previously proposed.

The survey that was presented and analyzed above was built to gather the most relevant information in regard to the current practices in the use of social media for recruitment purposes, the future trends to be expected, the challenges of making use of such practice, and the reasons why some companies still choose not to do it. In other words, the survey was designed to help this researcher answer the research questions previously proposed and discussed.

When analyzing the results obtained from the survey we could notice that, except in a few instances, there seemed to be a positive correlation between what was previously suggested by the research conducted in the literature review chapter, such as the different surveys conducted by other sources, and was observed in the survey above presented and conducted by this researcher.

Let us start by making an analysis of the first research question and whether we have an answer for it. The first research question aimed at finding out about the current practices in place in regard to the use of social media for recruitment purposes. This researcher believes this was accomplished through the analysis of both the literature review research and the analysis of the results collected from the survey conducted. According to the research observed in the literature



review 89% of the American companies surveyed by CareerXroads said to be planning to make use of social media in the near future. This research was conducted in 2011 and this number had grown by 6% from the previous year, showing a crescent trend in the utilization of this practice. These numbers are even more relevant when contrasted with those found when analyzing the results collected from the survey conducted by this researcher. According to this researcher's survey, previously presented, 84.6% of the respondents said to be currently making use of social media for recruitment, which are very close figures to those presented by CareerXroads survey as the trend for 2012. On the other hand, due to a limitation of this researcher's survey in what it had a considerably smaller number of participants, only 50% of the respondents currently not making use of social media for recruitment said to be planning to do so in the near future.

Still trying to answer the question regarding the practices currently in place regarding social media in recruitment, another aspect was observed both in the literature review chapter and in the survey analysis presented in chapter four. And once again there seemed to be a positive correlation between what was observed through the literature review research and the survey findings. That aspect is the LinkedIn factor, and the importance that is perceived to be given by human resources professionals to this social networking website as a powerful tool in the recruitment process. As observed in the survey findings analysis LinkedIn was chosen by over 90% of survey participants as the most useful of all social networking websites when it comes to online recruiting tools. Also, the reason given by the same 90% of survey respondents to why LinkedIn was their top preference over the other social networking websites was simple: it is the most professional oriented and it contains the relevant information in the perspective of a hiring manager.

Another aspect observed and analyzed and that help us understand how social media is currently being used deals with the level of usage of other forms of social media rather than social networking websites. The results obtained by the survey conducted by this researcher were not unexpected due to the fact that they were in accordance with what was previously observed and described throughout the literature review research. Other than blogs, which seem to still have some sort of popularity among the human resources professionals and hiring managers, other forms of social media such as forums, wikis, and podcasts show to be just another alternative way of reaching to potential candidates in what can be seen a lot of times as an unconventional way, which form many companies is a positive thing, as it helps to differentiate their company from other companies in the industry.

An additional piece of this research that helps in answering another research question deals with two aspects of social media in recruitment that are correlated, one being the reasons why some companies still do not make use of social media in their recruitment process and the second being the challenges faced by the companies that currently do make use of this practice. After analyzing the data collected through the literature review research and contrasting with this researcher's survey results it can be observed that the main challenges that companies making use of social media for recruiting face are end up being the exact same reasons why some companies still do not make use of social media in their recruitment efforts. And the main ones are the moral hazard involved in gaining access to information you would not in a non-online context and the legal risks involved in this practice. As discussed in the literature review, the main reasons for the use of social media in recruitment to be of potential legal risk for the company doing it are civil and privacy rights, as well as discrimination. The civil and privacy rights are concerned with the question whether companies should be allowed to make use of the

information they find on non-professional social networking profiles as a mechanism to assist them in the recruiting decision making process. From the survey conducted by this researcher 50% of respondents that do make use of social media for recruitment purposes say they choose not to make use of social networking websites for background checking, for the exact reason of avoiding potential legal implications, as well as to avoid the moral hazard involved, as previously mentioned. The issue of discrimination, on the other hand, is concerned with the fact that not everyone's profile is being looked at by the companies, creating a potential context of disadvantage for one or more of the parts involved, either for the lack of information on one part, or for the excessive information collected on the other parts.

The final aspect of this research, that needs to be addressed to help this researcher answer the research questions, deals with the expectations for the near future in regard to the continuity of use of social media in the recruitment process of companies around the globe. As mentioned above the numbers suggest there is a crescent number of companies either already using social media for recruiting or planning to do so in the next year or two. Also, according to the survey conducted by this researcher, over 90% of the survey participants said to believe that social media is not only a powerful tool in the recruitment process but also believe it will continue to play a very active role in the human resources departments of companies in the future, to the point where they will and, according to some, already are replacing the each day more old – fashioned CV's and/or Resumes.

Having all of these aspects analyzed and discussed it seems reasonable to say that the research has been successful in answering the proposed questions in regard to the practices currently in place, future expectations and trends, and the risks involved in the use of social media as tool in the recruitment process, all from an employers' perspective.

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## **APPENDIX**

### *Tables*

Table 2 1

	<b>LinkedIn</b>	<b>Facebook</b>	<b>Twitter</b>
<b>North America</b>	93%	34%	18%
<b>Europe</b>	42%	62%	35%
<b>Asia Pacific</b>	32%	75%	48%
<b>Global</b>	52%	58%	34%



Figures

Figure 3.1

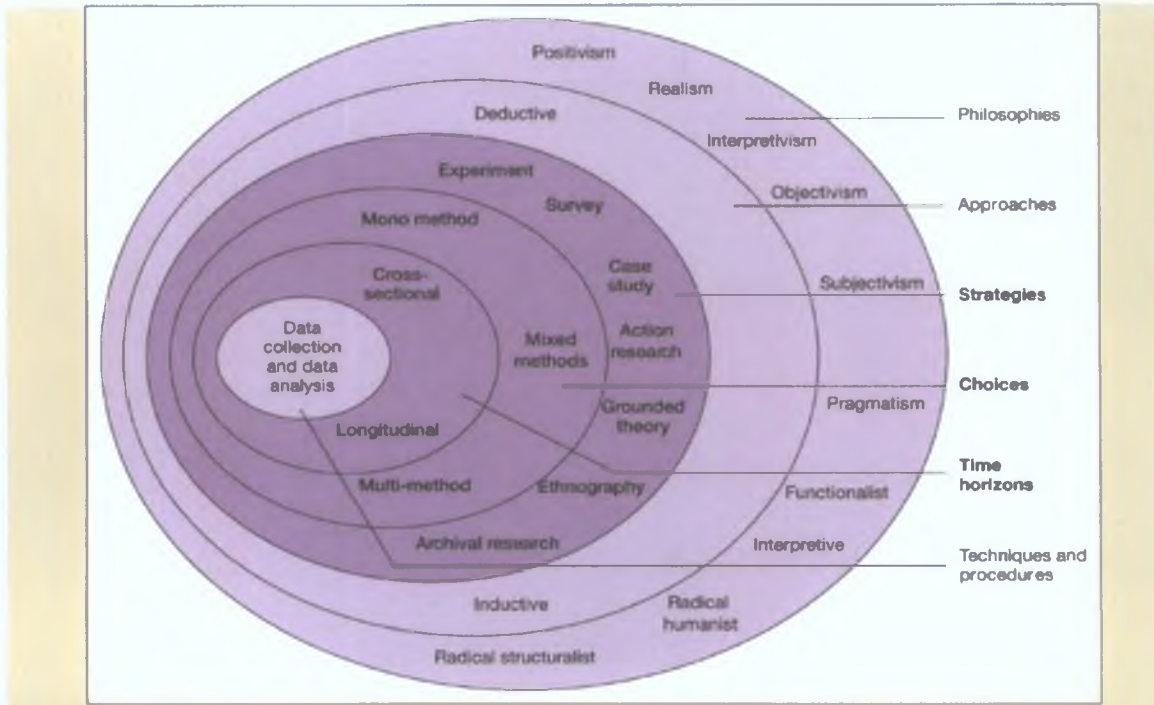


Figure 5.1 The research 'onion'

Source: © Mark Saunders, Philip Lewis and Adrien Thornhill 2006

Figure 4.1

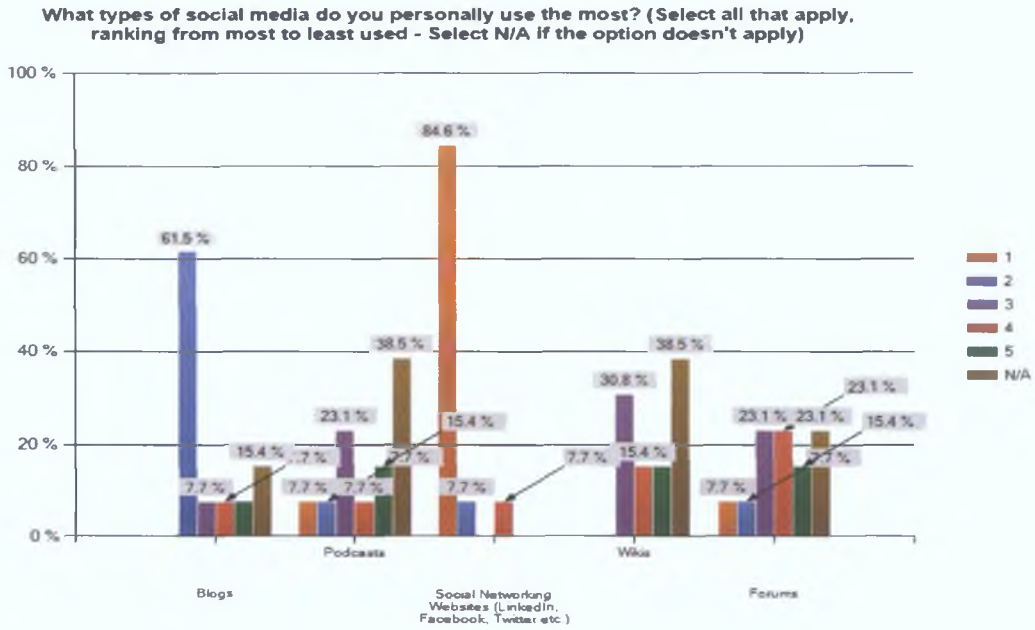


Figure 4.2

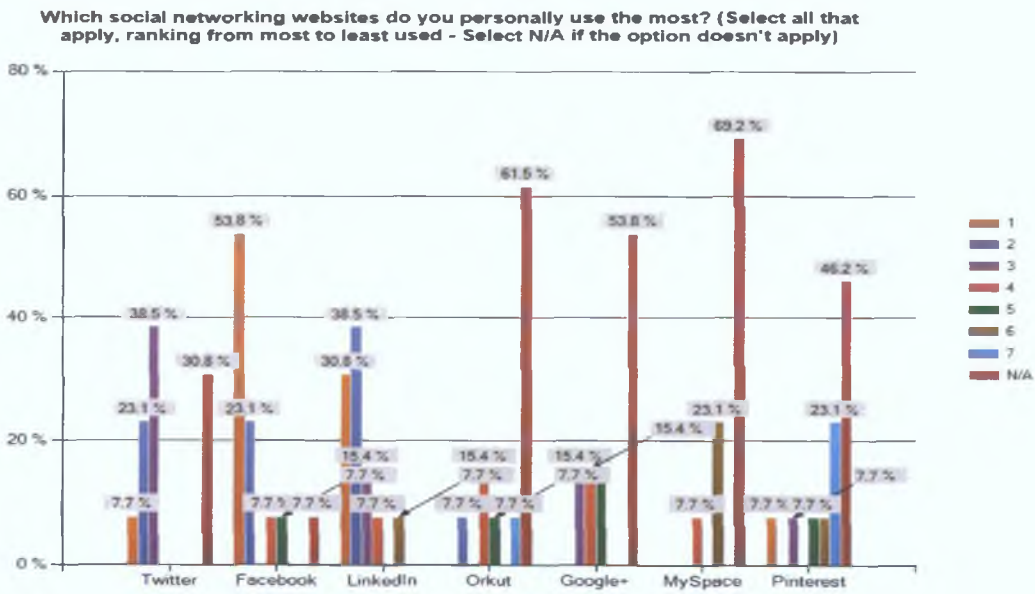


Figure 4.3

On average, how often do you visit your preferred social networking websites?

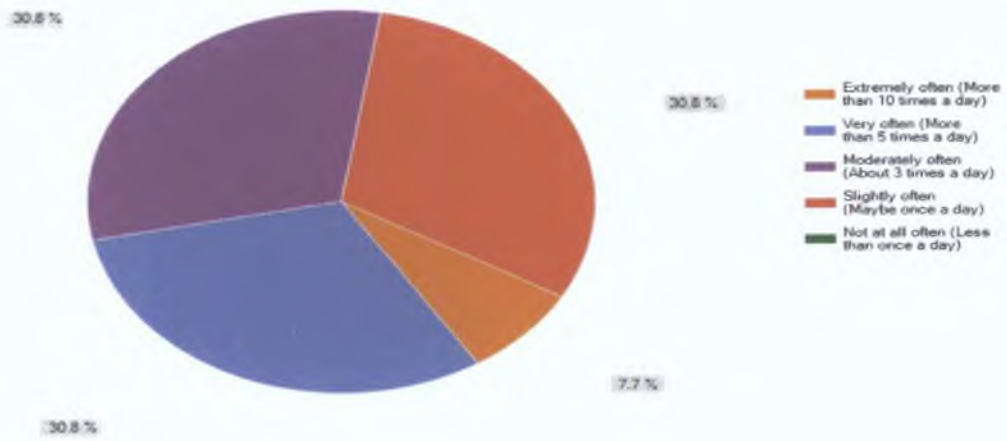


Figure 4.4

Do you or your company currently make use of social media in any way during the recruitment process?

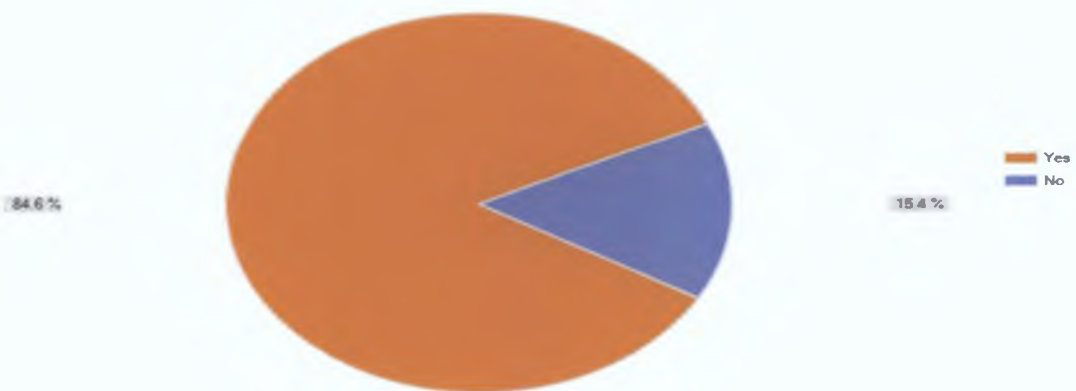


Figure 4.5

Even though you do not currently make use of social media as a recruitment tool, are you planning on implementing this practice in the near future?

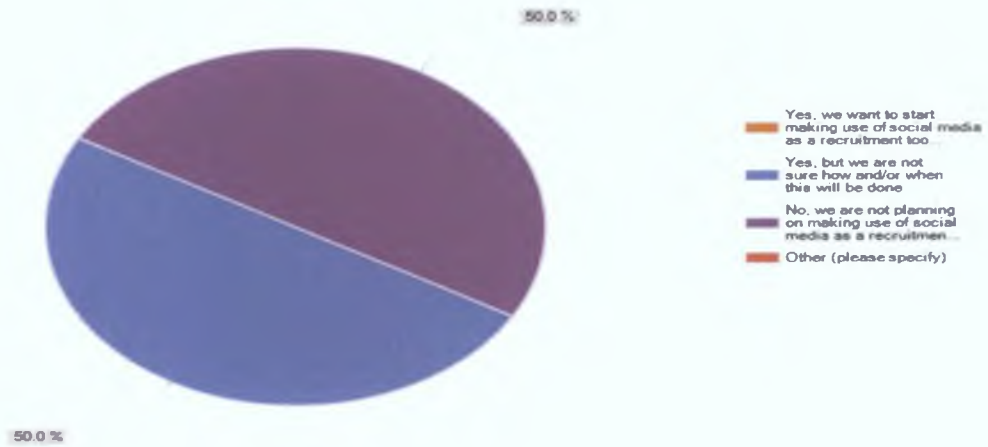


Figure 4.6

What do you consider to be the most relevant reasons for companies not making use of social media as a recruitment tool? (Choose all that apply)

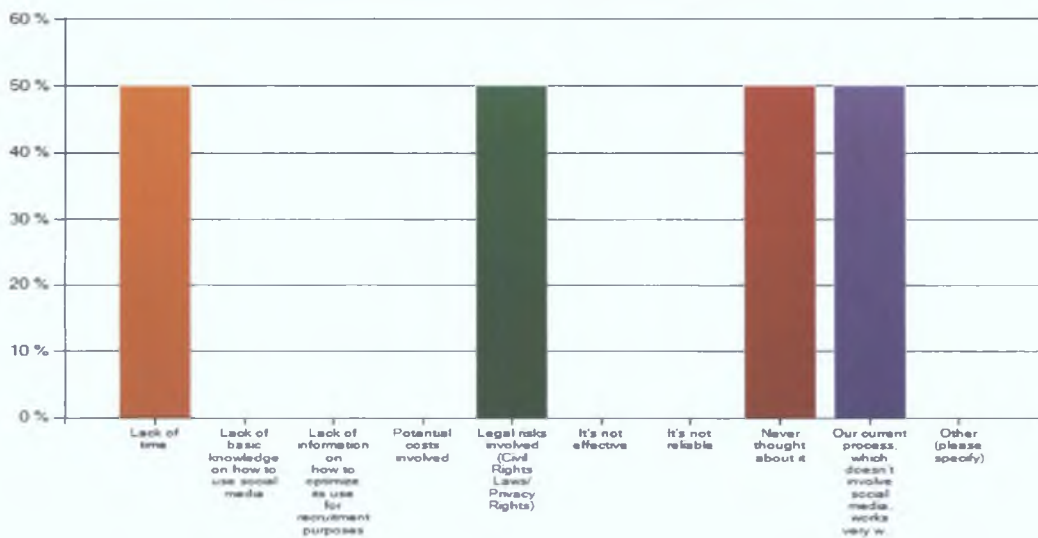


Figure 4.7

How long have you or your company been using social media in the recruitment process?

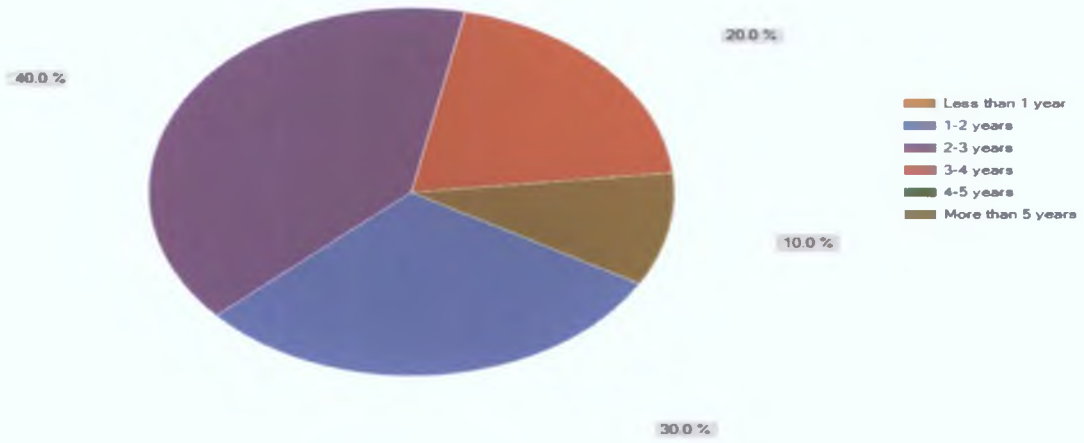


Figure 4.8

What types of social media does your company use for recruitment purpose? (Select all that apply)

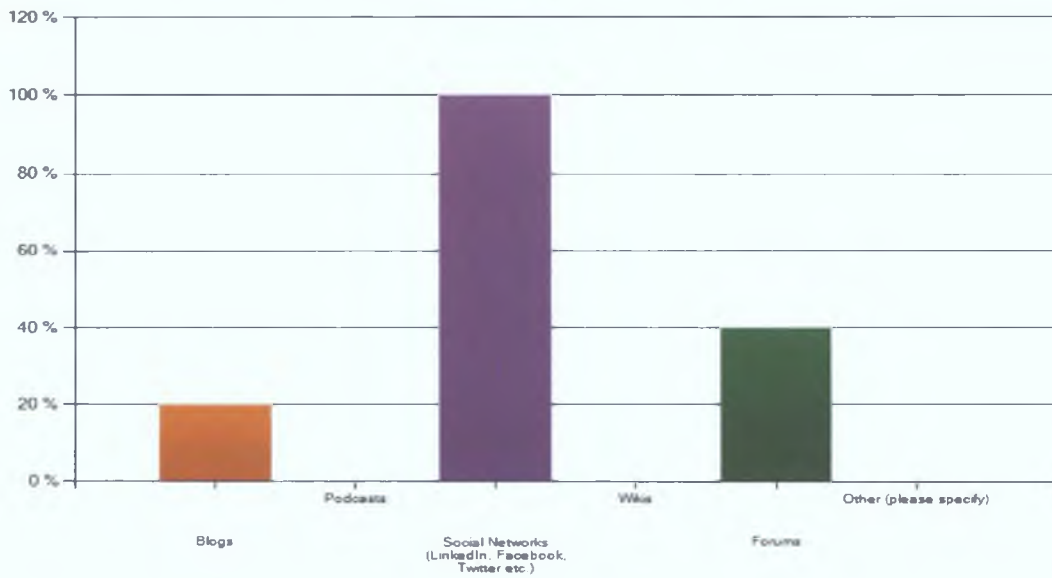


Figure 4.9

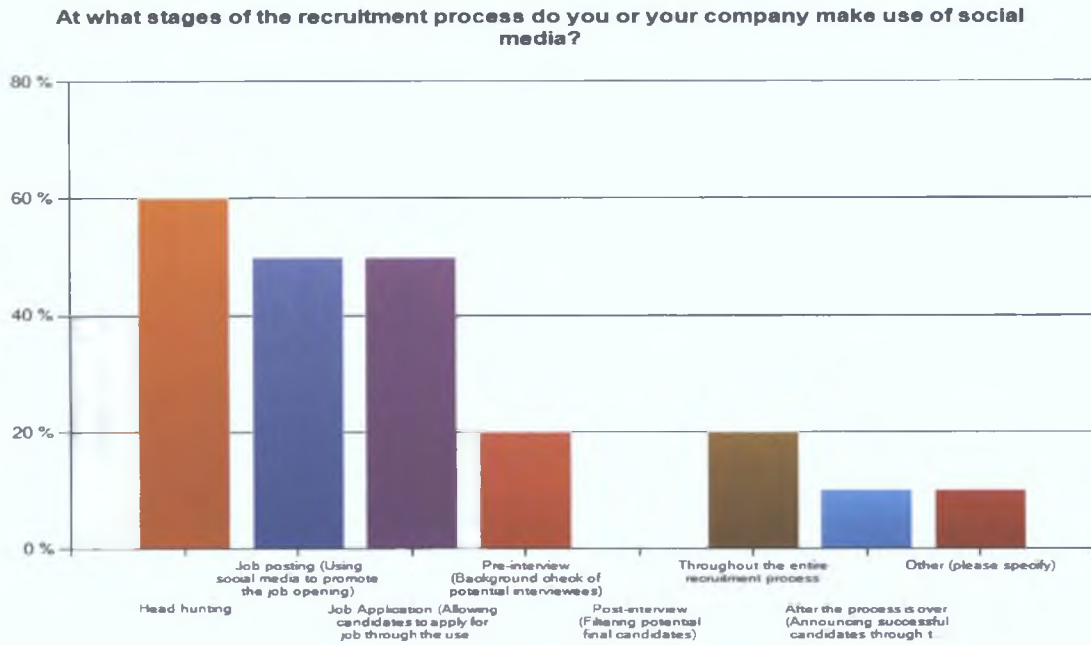


Figure 4.10

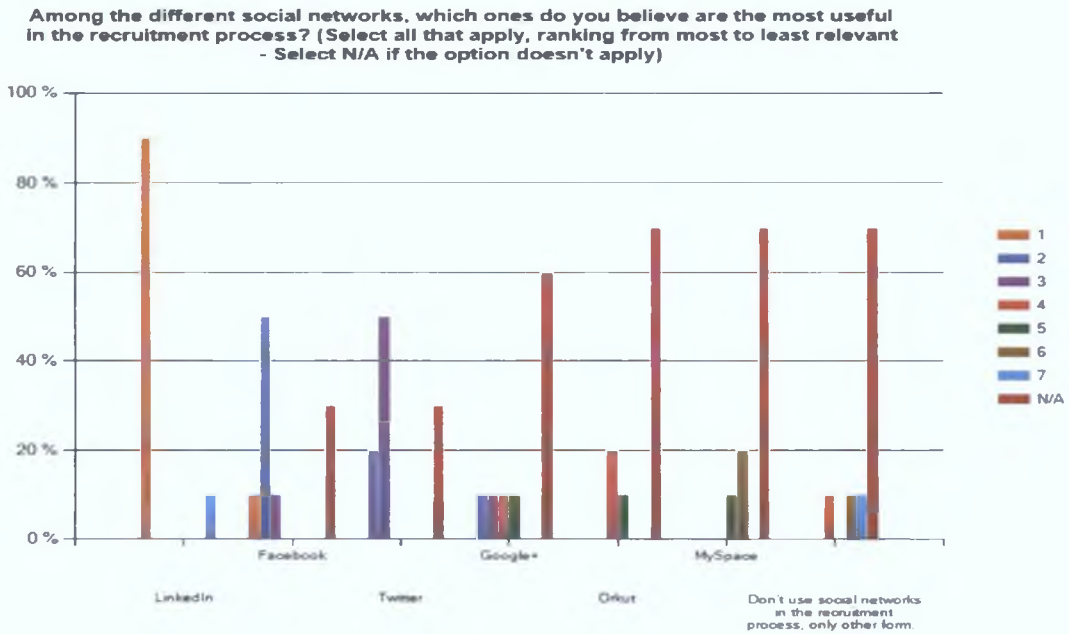


Figure 4.11

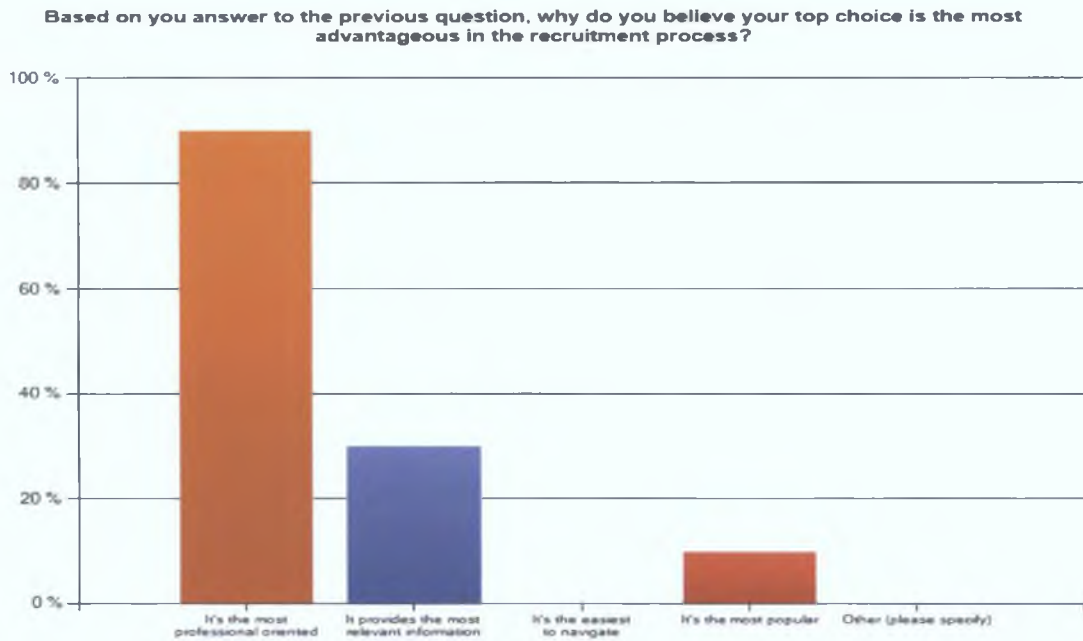


Figure 4.12

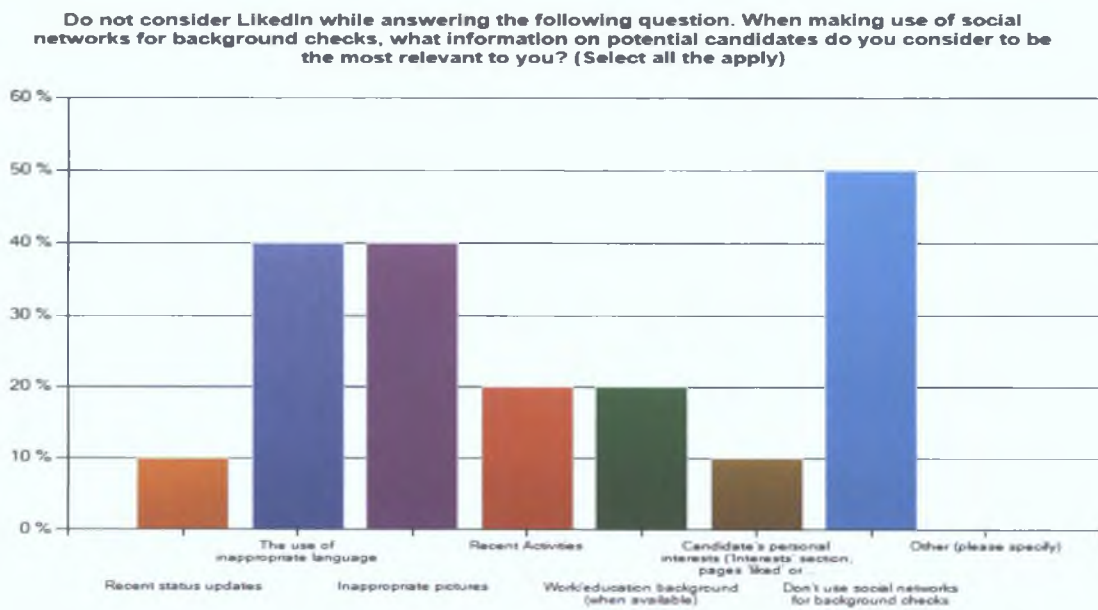




Figure 4.13

What are the main challenges faced by companies that make use of social media as a recruitment tool? (Select all that apply)

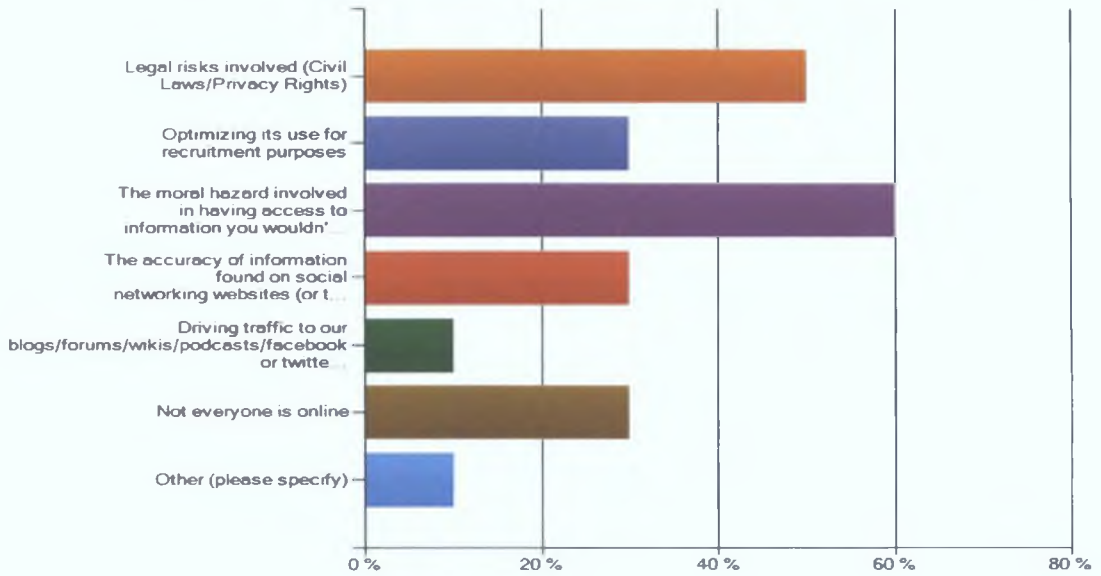


Figure 4.14

Do you personally believe that professional social networking websites, such as LinkedIn, can possibly replace CV's/Resumes in the future?

