



The Effect of Job Seekers' Perception on Social Network Strategy in Nigeria

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Abstract. The job applicants' perception on the use of Social Network Strategy (SNS) for job search and other related activities has been tilted towards solving the problem of unemployment. The study examines the above subject with the objective of enhancing the use of SNS for job search in Nigeria. The study adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire to elicit information from the respondents. Purposive sampling technique was employed in selecting the organisations while the Systematic random sampling technique was used in selecting the respondents. A sample size of 188 was used from a population of 477 subjects and determined through Taro Yamane formula. The hypothesis was tested through the application of ANOVA statistics. The result shows that the mean differences between the different categories of social network users was significantly different along the level of usage ($F_{3, 183} = 21.153, p < 0.05$). The study indicated that the perception of job seekers has significant effect on the use of social network strategy. The study therefore, concluded that the perception of job seekers will significantly affect the use of social network strategy amongst other advantages or outcomes. The study therefore, recommended the creating of awareness on the usefulness of social network in job search in a bid to reduce the negative perception of the populace on its effectiveness as a viable option for job search in Nigeria.

Keywords: Job Seekers, Perception, Social network, Job search, Applicants

1. Introduction

The understanding of the negative experience and perception of job seekers about the use of social

media strategy as a source of recruitment and selection by the employers appears to be imperious to actors in labour market and this significantly exert influence on the choice of potential applicants employer may decide to engage (Priyadarshini, Kumar & Jha, 2017). The other controvertible issue is ascertaining the extent to which many job seekers perceive the use of social network as a means of finding job in the global world. The consideration of age as a factor in determining job seekers' perception has been an on-going discussion. The function of age with regards to perception on the use of network has been examined by many scholars. Also, many scholars have theorized and classified two kinds of job search method; formal and informal sources (Saks, 2006). Blömer (2015) linked the concept of age with the methods of formal and informal job search and played down the gap between the influences of age on job search. Blomer (2015)'s findings demonstrated that younger workers make more use of this job search media in finding a new job and this includes the use of formal job search method. On the other hand, older workers appear to make more use of the informal job search method by developing a network and clinging to it. In other words, older workers make more use of informal job search method.

Saks (2006) suggests that organisation should make use of public intermediaries as formal job search methods: advertisements, employment agencies, and campus placements. However, the adoption of formal job search may take different forms. Saks (2006) posits that formal job search behaviour or activities include submitting application to employment offices/ agents, responding to radio advert and probably tapping information from social relations and other methods (Nikolaou, 2014; Hoye et al.,

2008). The reading of newspapers, internet postings or other publications could also be a part of the formal job search (Kanfer et al., 2001).

The informal job source may be dependent on private intermediaries (Saks, 2006). This job search method may be through the use of social relations network such as family connections, friends, relatives, and network of friends that has link with many organizations. The use of social networking websites could be seen as informal search behaviour and this may probably be linked with the aim of creating social networking websites.

Indeed, social network could play a significant role in day to day lives of the workers in socializing, finding jobs, building relationships and group networking; however, many job applicants appear to have negative perceptions of the SNS. They seem to have reservations on the use of social network and are extremely cautious about what they send or post on social media that may be detrimental to their employment aspiration/employability. These reservations may likely affect their attitude and constitute obstacles towards exploring social networks for job search and consequently, they may likely prefer informal job search portals and newspapers in the quest of securing employment. Brown and Vaughn (2011) stated that the present threats associated with “informal SNS searches include perceptions of invasion of applicant privacy, lack of clearly identifiable theoretical constructs used in the screening process, and the absence of data to ascertain that the information used in screening is job relevant”. Another debatable issue in the use of SNS is the unpredictability notion and the amount of information that is open and may be easily available and accessed when information is needed about the job seeker. The challenge to job search may be to bridge the labour market information gap through SNS by means of contact between employers and potential applicants. Pathetically, there are huge army of miserably unemployed youths and job seekers scavenging for job but many of them have no information and access to either the current and existing vacancies in different organisations. Many of these applicants after long search have become discouraged and frustrated; some have gone into crime and vices simply because they have no access to where the jobs are. Therefore, it seems necessary to enhance job applicants’ perception on the use of SNS by creating awareness on the practical use of social network for job search and other related activities for this multitude of unemployed persons in the country. The undertaking of training to impart knowledge and skills without access to gainful

employment to sustaining livelihood for the school graduates is tantamount to a fruitless exercise and a sheer waste of resources. This study therefore, intends to objectively ascertain how positive perception of SNS can play a significant role in aiding job seekers to realise the goals of having access to gainful employment.

2. Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

2.1 Theory of Planned Behaviour

This theory was propounded by Ajen (1991). The tenet of this theory is that planned behaviour is the basic function of one’s intention to perform the behaviour. The author identifies some variables that determine behaviour intention and actual behaviour and these are attitude, subjective norms, and perceived behaviour control. Thus, he infers that behavioural intention is a function of one’s attitude and their subjective norm to take action (Saedi and Nguyen, 2011). However, he posited that whether behaviour is favourable or unfavourable, it determines the attitude of a person. Certain factors appear to be very fundamental for decision making and this might be based on people perception (Kondalka 2007). Job seekers may need or want enough information to be at their disposal to enable them make informed decision. Notably, the IT age has availed a lot of information through the use of computers; nevertheless, it is of diminutive significance. Consequently, the information available is very critical to facilitate decisions. The quantity of information available to decision makers could be of positive or negative effect as Kondalka (2007) observed that “inadequate information is as dangerous as too much of information and every individual’s decision is highly affected by value attitudes and beliefs”. Individuals do have preconceived ideas about an issue, and accept what they want, and throw away information which is not acceptable to them. The implication of planned behaviour theory is that the job seekers’ need adequate information on the inherent advantage that SNS portends. SNSs appear to be of a vital significance in establishing a linkage between potential job applicants and employers which otherwise would have found it difficult to access job opportunities. The foregoing knowledge will influence the social perception of job seekers towards the usage of social network in search of gainful employment.

3. Conceptual Review

3.1 Perception

Perception is defined as “a process by which individuals organise and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment (Robbins, 2011). What one perceives may be different from objective reality. Perception may be dependent on the attitude of the individual job seeker. Personalities may differ in the way they see a particular event or observe an object or a situation due the individual differences and what makes up the individual personality (Kondalka, 2007). Perception is a process of interpretation of sensory impressions of the environment (Robbins & George, 2009). A person tends to react to situations differently as people may likely behave differently in different situations. The work setting and social setting are significant in perception because there are both internal and external factor that influence human behaviour. These factors are related to distinctiveness, consensus and consistency (Costello, Zalkind & Hamchek, 1962). However, the authors cautioned on what they regard as fundamental attribution error which is the tendency to underestimate the influence of external factors and overestimate the influence of internal factors (Costello, Zalkind & Hamchek, 1962). Finally, the authors concluded that personality and perception are closely related.

The study of perception seems to be vital in SNS because if people perceive object rightly irrespective of their age/status and they perceive each of the situations as close to the real fact, it helps them to interpret issues correctly. Accordingly, Taylor and Dunnette (1974) view impression and perception as complex phenomenon. Perception may be outcome of impression and is much wider in its nature. The impression applicants have about the social network appears to determine the extent to which they apply it in their quest for job search. Perception will enable job seekers to gather and organize information based on experience and the personality of the perceiver which are very important (Taylor and Dunnette, 1974). This appears to be the reason why two individuals can perceive an object in the same way but interpret it in different manner. One evaluates it and sees it as efficient and effective while to the other, it may not be helpful or useful.

Although, SNSs are playing significant part in our daily lives, making socialization, job search and interaction with others people easier, however, a lot of people have different perception of SNSs and tend to be very careful in its usage because of the belief that it could affect employers’ decision which might

be detrimental to their opportunity to get employment (Donthi&Nagaraju, 2018). Another concern is the perceived barrier which stems from the use of network sites which create exhaustion on the part of the users and consequently, develop preference for the use of formal job search; newspapers and job portals in finding employment. Brown and Vaughn (2011) argued that the perception of threat associated with the job seekers usage of SNS may be that of intrusion into the applicants’ privacy and many believe that there is no principle governing the way the job applicants are screened. Furthermore, and of equal concern is the variability in type and amount of information publicly available across an applicant pool and also, job seekers information might be distorted. Costello, Zalkind (1962) and Hamacheck (1971) have found very close relationship between personality and perception. CIPD, (2005) noted that lack of confidence by many applicants in the usage of SNSs have made many organizations to find it very difficult in short listing potential applicants to proceed to the next level of the recruitment process since online application has no geographical barriers. The weeding of unqualified candidates is time consuming and this tends to make employers think that the process of selecting and sorting out unqualified applicants through to online recruitment are less advantageous because of the time invested on it which could have been used for other tasks (Galanaki, 2002; Barber, 2006). There are also other risks that affect the perception of the use of social network; these may involve discrimination in the recruitment process (Doherty, 2010) also, the unethical practices associated with handling online profiles appear to pose a challenge. Wright (2011) and ACAS(2012) stated that legal issues like discrimination in terms of gender, race are perceived to be the major barrier to using SNSs as a recruitment method. There are issues like social exclusion because every one might not have access to SNSs tools (ACAS, 2012). The organizations may have or lose some of the good hands as the recruitment process is impersonal without face to face interaction (Pin, Laorden, & Sàez-Diez, 2001; Barber, 2006). Consequently, several qualified applicants are believed to have been eliminated from the recruitment method based on procedures (Pin et al., 2001). Therefore, ACAS (2012) pointed out that using informal methods of search by organizations may help to ameliorate this deficiency.

Bullock (2013) also noted that the use professionals are mostly required in the use of online process to search for job vacancies. His study and findings on the perception of applicants on the social network as a tool for job search indicated that the majority of

respondents considered social networking as of little importance when searching for a job vacancy. He concluded that although, the respondents may use or consider using social media sites when searching for a job, it may be seen as less important when compared to other job search websites. Huizing (2007) corroborated the foregoing viewpoint as he opined that job seekers use social networking sites as a second preference when intensifying their search for employment opportunities. Therefore, it becomes necessary for organizations to critically evaluate and enhance the use of SNSs as a method or strategy for recruitment (Lewis, Thomas & James, 2015). The decision to use social network site will be contingent on the choice of decision makers which need to factor relationship, age, gender, experience, level of intelligence and motivation, less time spent in using SNSs tool in job search. These factors appear to be very imperative in making decisions (Taylor & Dunnette, 1974). The authors finally concluded that the availability of correct information, individual personal bias and perception, the risk and time available are of equal importance in decision making. In other words, social network users may need adequate information, perceived advantages, and job opportunities available through social network in arriving at their final decision.

3.2 Social Network

The concept of social network is not new. Human interaction inherently promotes the formation of networks through social contacts (Tapscott & Williams, 2007). Collaborations used to take place on a much smaller scale between relatives, friends and associates in households and communities. The present situation has changed substantially and today one rarely comes across an organisation that functions without group collaboration and accordingly, it applies ICT in its collaboration space. In this space, social networking technology, for example, allows members to create personal profiles and network with other members, as well as with other organisations. Members network by adding other members as 'friends', posting public and private messages, participating in discussion forums and engaging in other forms of digitally media and social interactions (Veer, 2008). Social networking is a common human behaviour, but the question that arises is: Do social networks add value to organisations when it comes to issues that relates to 'productivity'?

Social networking is an interconnected system through which alliances are formed, help is obtained, information is transmitted, and actions taken to

achieve certain results. Social networks are systems where (a) users are first class entities with a semi-public profile, (b) users can create explicit links to other users or content items, and (c) users can navigate the social network by browsing the links and profiles of other users. This definition is consistent with **the one** used in previous studies (Boyd & Ellison, 2007). Social networks serve a number of purposes, but three primary roles stand out as common across all sites. First, social networks are used to maintain and strengthen existing social ties, or make new social connections. The sites allow users to articulate and make visible their social networks, thereby communicating with people who are already a part of their extended social network. Second, online social networks are used by each member to upload her own content. It might **be** good to note that the content shared often varies from site to site, and sometimes **it** is only the user's profile itself. Third, online social networks are used to find new, interesting content by filtering, recommending, and organising the content uploaded by users (Boyd & Ellison, 2007).

Social networking is a way in which many individuals come together to form different types of groups. These groups may be big, small, formal, informal, intentional or unintentional. From the organised method through which groups are formed, help is acquired, information is conveyed, and actions are taken to achieve certain outcomes. When it comes to online social networking, sites are commonly used. These sites are known as Social Networking Sites. Social networking sites have led to fundamental changes in the ways people interact **as** both the employee and the organisation (Martensen, Borgmann & Bick, 2011). New media of communication such as e-mail, forum and chat applications have altered the entire process chains (Picot & Neuburger, 2000). It **is** argued that social networking in particular have had a profound effect by changing the nature of efficiency of communication processes in both business and private life (Beck, 2007). Any activities where humans share stories and influence others can be considered as social networking (Nicholson, 2011).

In broad terms, Social Networking Sites do use a special computer-generated platform through which social relations are characterised and enacted from a user's approach. It can be defined as web-based services that allow employee to: (i) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, (ii) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and (iii) view and traverse their list of

connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd & Ellison, 2008).

4. Research Methodology

This study adopted a descriptive survey research design using questionnaire to elicit responses from the respondents. The research used primary data. The population of study was taken from two organisations located in Ogun State, Nigeria. Total population of staffers was (290) and (287) from both organisations respectively and the total is 477 staff.

The study adopts purposive and random sampling techniques. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the organisations and systematic random sampling technique was used to select the respondents. Two hundred and eighteen (218) questionnaires were administered on the respondents and 188 were completed and returned. The sample size of 218 was determined using Taro Yamane (1973) formula with 95% confidence level. The study adopted a structured questionnaire to gather information from the respondents. The questionnaire captured all the research questions and was divided into sections A and B. Section A focused on demographic information while section B dealt with the major variables in the research work. The research instrument was evaluated and validated by experts and colleagues and finally adjusted and modified before it was administered on the respondents. A pilot study was conducted with comparable or similar organisation to determine the reliability coefficient. The data collected were analysed with Cronbach Alpha coefficient which yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient above 0.70 which is an accepted value (Malhotra, 2007).

The researchers administered the instrument on the selected respondents with the help of five research assistants. After approval was obtained from the management of the organizations used, the questionnaires were administered on the respondents. A good number of the respondents completed the questionnaire instantly and same were collected immediately. Those who could not finish the same

day completed their questionnaires and submitted few days later. However, not all the questionnaires were retrieved as some of the respondents were not on seat when the investigators visited the organisations to retrieve the instrument. All the respondents were briefed on the purpose of the study and they were given assurance that their responses will remain anonymous and also be treated in strict confidence.

4.1 Method of Data Analysis

Data gathered on demographic information was analysed using descriptive statistics such as frequency counts, simple percentages and bar charts while the hypothesis was tested using multiple regression method of analysis. The equation for multiple regression analysis formulated for this study was:

$$y = x_1 + b$$

Where;

y= the dependent variable of the regression equation

x₁ = independent variable of the regression equation

b = constant of the equation

Therefore;

y = job search = dependent variable

x₁ = Social Network Strategy = independent variable of the regression equation.

4.2 Hypothesis

H₀: Perception of job seeker will not significantly affect the use of social network strategy.

H₁: Perception of job seeker will significantly affect the use of social network strategy.

4.3 Data Presentation, Analysis and Interpretation

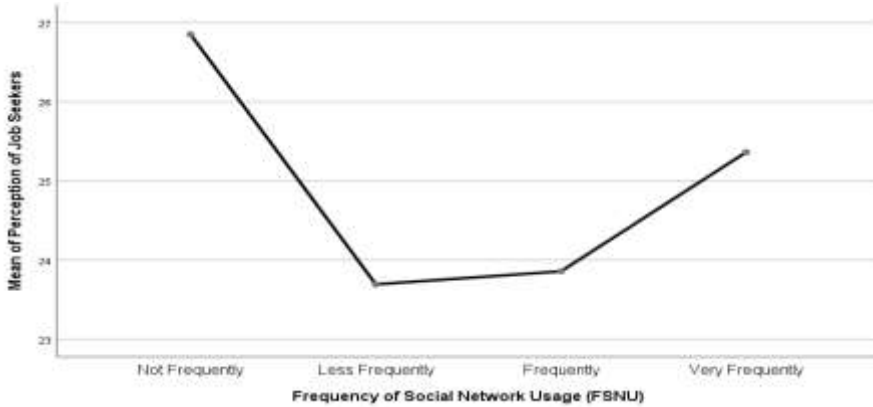
The data presented and analysed were those collected in the course of the study. The perception of job seeker and its effect on the use of social network strategy was tested with the One Way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) procedure which categorizes the data into four categories to determine whether or not perception affects usage. The results are presented in the tables that follow:

Table 4.1a: Descriptive Statistics
Perception of Job Seekers

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	95% Confidence Interval for Mean		Minimum	Maximum	Between-Component Variance
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound			
Not Frequently	27	26.85	1.167	.225	26.39	27.31	22	28	
Less Frequently	13	23.69	2.359	.654	22.27	25.12	20	29	
Frequently	70	23.86	1.859	.222	23.41	24.30	19	28	
Very Frequently	77	25.36	1.912	.218	24.93	25.80	21	29	
Total	187	24.90	2.116	.155	24.59	25.20	19	29	

Model	Fixed Effects		1.839	.134	24.63	25.16			
	Random Effects			.755	22.50	27.30			1.644

Source: Author's Computation August, 2020



Source: Author's Computation August, 2020.

Table 4.1a and the chart present the descriptive statistics of the ANOVA test. It shows that 27 of the 187 participants do not use social media networks frequently with a mean score of 26.85 and a standard deviation of 1.167, which shows that the responses were not far removed from the mean. Thirteen (13) of the respondents use social network less frequently, 70 use it frequently, and 77 use it very frequently with means of 23.69, 23.86, and 25.36 respectively. The standard deviations also ranged from 1.1 to 2.36 indicating varying levels of dispersion from the means but none is far flung.

Perception of Job Seekers					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	214.503	3	71.501	21.153	.000
Within Groups	618.566	183	3.380		
Total	833.070	186			

Source: Author's Computation August, 2020

Table 4.1b presents the ANOVA statistics which shows that the mean differences between the different categories of social network users is significantly different along the level of usage ($F_{3, 183} = 21.153, p < 0.05$). However, table 4.1c shows the specific groups that differ and the level or magnitude.

Dependent Variable: Perception of Job Seekers							
Tukey HSD							
(I) Frequency of Social Network Usage (FSNU)	(J) Frequency of Social Network Usage (FSNU)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval		
					Lower Bound	Upper Bound	
Not Frequently	Less Frequently	3.160*	.621	.000	1.55	4.77	
	Frequently	2.995*	.417	.000	1.91	4.07	
	Very Frequently	1.488*	.411	.002	.42	2.55	
Less Frequently	Not Frequently	-3.160*	.621	.000	-4.77	-1.55	
	Frequently	-.165	.555	.991	-1.60	1.27	
	Very Frequently	-1.671*	.551	.015	-3.10	-.24	
Frequently	Not Frequently	-2.995*	.417	.000	-4.07	-1.91	
	Less Frequently	.165	.555	.991	-1.27	1.60	
	Very Frequently	-1.506*	.304	.000	-2.29	-.72	
Very Frequently	Not Frequently	-1.488*	.411	.002	-2.55	-.42	
	Less Frequently	1.671*	.551	.015	.24	3.10	
	Frequently	1.506*	.304	.000	.72	2.29	

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

Source: Author's Computation August, 2020

Table 4.1c above presents the Tukey post hoc test of the different group(s). It shows that except for only two 'within groups' namely: 'Frequently' within the 'Less frequently' group, and vice-versa, which were not statistically significant ($p > 0.05$), all other within groups were statistically and significantly different ($p < 0.05$). The study therefore, concludes that based on the above results, perception of job seeker will significantly affect the use of social network strategy.

5. Discussion of Finding

The inferential statistics result of formulated hypothesis shows that Perception of job seeker will not significantly affect the use of social network strategy. Table 4.1b presents the ANOVA statistics which shows that the mean differences between the different categories of social network users is significantly different along usage rate ($F_{3, 183} = 21.153, p < 0.05$). The study therefore, concluded that based on the above results, perception of job seeker will significantly affect the use of social network strategy. This is in consonance with Priyadarshini, Kumar & Jha (2017) findings that the subjective experience and perception of job seekers about the extensive use of social media strategy as a source of recruitment and selection by the employers and its influence on the overall employer attractiveness will affect job search. The findings also show that low awareness of positive use of social network in job search was fundamentally responsible for negative and subjective perception of the job applicants on the effective use of social network as a modern labour market tool for accessing job vacancies in the organisations.

From experience, the institutions of higher learning in some countries lack in their curriculum practical skills and knowledge on the use information technology to face the challenges of modern and global environment. It is not sufficient to educate people without arming them with tools that will ensure the consummation of the knowledge acquired. Knowledge without the application of practical skills is of no relevance to the school graduates and the society. To address the problem will necessitate dealing with other obstacles that appear to defacilitate the use of SNSs. The critical factors apart from inadequate knowledge include; exhaustions, intrusion into the applicants' privacy and fairness which undermine the confidence of job applicants. These have been identified as the perceived barriers, concerns and threats associated with the job seekers' usage of SNSs (Donthi & Nagaraju, 2018; Brown and Vaughn, 2011). Therefore, there is the need to change the perception of job seekers towards understanding

the positive utilisation of social network instrument in their quest for job search and also in a bid to minimise unemployment problems particularly in the developing countries.

6. Conclusion

The study therefore concluded that perception of job seeker will significantly affect the use of social network strategy, the subjective experience and perception of job seekers about the broad use of social media strategy will affect their decision to adopt social network in job search. Many applicants arising from their personal experience and lack of adequate information about the advantage of SNSs have developed negative perceptions towards using social network. In equal vein, many job applicants have taken advantage of social network to achieve their career goals and aspirations. Although, there might be some shortcomings, but the study had shown that the merits are much more encompassing and do encourage job seekers to acquaint themselves with broad knowledge and usage of SNSs as it could put them in vantage position at getting lucrative jobs in today competitive labour market.

We therefore would conclude that, based on the perception of the prospective applicants, social network strategy will significantly facilitate contact between potential applicants and employers; social networks serve a number of purposes that maintains and strengthen existing social ties, or build new social connections between potential applicants and employers in the present era labour market.

7. Recommendations

From the study, we recommend as follows:

- That developing countries should create awareness about the usefulness of SNSs in reducing negative perception held by applicants on the effective use of SNS for viable and lucrative employment; and
- That institution of higher learning should build into their curriculum practical skills and knowledge on the use information technology and SNSs for job search and other related activities that could make the use of IT imperative.

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