User Preference and Channels Use in the Employment Seeking Process

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Abstract: Trust is a major issue for social capital theory and the word- of mouth concept. This paper compares social network sites with other media under consideration of trust and support. The research evaluates the difference between sources regarding trust and support to explain the situation of social network sites under consideration of the employment seeking process. The aim of this paper is the evaluation of the use of social network sites and private social networks by comparing these with job boards, company information, newspaper and official employment agency web pages. It is to identify the possible differences between information channels and the reasons for the use of different sources for the employment seeking process. It also inverstigate if organisations media offer the highest value to transfer information about employment opportunities to individuals.

Keywords: trust, social capital, social network sites, word of mouth

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1 Introduction

This paper has addressed the first steps of evaluating and explaining the use of social network sites content for the employment seeking process. The research on this topic need more data and more variables to give a deeper insight into this topic. It would be further of interest to get more information about the reason on either to use or not to use social network sites comment for the employment seeking process. This paper is a pre-test for the future research to evaluate the social capital theory for social network sites.

The word-of-mouth concept describes the power of information e.g. in social networks. The shared-information, might not be official. As the source of information has comes from diversified individuals. Afterall, it is still up to the decision of individual reader. rivate individuals exchange information about issues of interest. The content of the information concerns the evaluation or description of products or services is for example. This information provides orientation for consumers for example and influences the buying behaviour of individuals. This can describe the power of social networks and explain the advantages of being a member of different networks. The value of the information can be described by the quality. The quality of the information is the reliability and validity. One value of social networks is the access to information and resources [1] [2]. This mechanism is described with the social capital theory [3]. The benefit of the information can be described with the usefulness and reliability [4] for individuals. The research field marketing has deeply explored the word of mouth concept and this paper describes the word of mouth concept for the employment seeking process. Trust is important for the operation of social network sites. Individuals would not exchange information or resources if they did not trust each other [5]. The phenomena on trust as part of social capital theory is described in many articles [6][7][8]. This explains the influence of trust on social networks and gives an indication that trust is an important variable in explaining the behaviour and thoughts of social network members to exchange information and resources.

The paper explores the kind of media that is used for the employment seeking process. The use of social network sites for the employment seeking process is a first indication in explaining the behaviour of individuals. The paper gives an indication what kind of media is trustworthy for the employment seeking individuals and which media can be used to transfer information to interested individuals [9]. The communication with individuals is an important issue for organisations to attract potential candidates to apply. The reason for candidates to use social network sites is the access to information and resources which provide an advantage. That is a theoretical explainable reason to use social network sites with the social capital theory [10][11][12]. The requirement for such use would be the benefit for the employment seeking individual and whether they can trust the information [13][9] [14]. The trust in the information and resulting benefits have a symbiosis and depend on each other.

Society is changing and social network sites provide new kinds of networks with many advantages and disadvantages for employment seeking individuals [15] [16]. The technological changes provide new opportunities. This situation makes it important to explore this new form of exchange and to explore the use of social network sites to explain the causal mechanism.

This paper is the empirical test of the results of the structured interviews regarding social capital on social network sites. The empirical research is needed to confirm the results of the structured interviews on a stable basis [17] and to give an answer to the question if social capital theory can explain causal mechanism on social network sites under the consideration of trust. Trust is an important dimension of social capital theory [8]. Trust can explain the behaviour of individuals and describes the social mechanism in the society.

2 Methodology

The paper uses data from a project at the University of Ludwigshafen. The data has been collected through a research project with a paper based survey in October 2014. The original purpose of the research project has to explain the behaviour of individuals under consideration of the employment seeking process. The project evaluated different issues and situations for employment seeking individuals and collected data about the reaction and behaviour of individuals. This data can support organizations to improve their recruiting process and to understand the behaviour of employment seeking individuals. This empirical method provides further information about social network sites and the use of social capital theory to explain the mechanism on social network sites. The questionnaire has different parts. All parts are under consideration of the employment seeking process and separated from the other questions batteries. The research project collected 440 surveys and the participants have an average age of 27,62 years, the median is 25 years and the standard deviation is 10,297 years. This means the participants are young people. The participants are mainly members of the generation Y which is growing and educated with new technologies like social network sites. The age is an indication that the participants are at the beginning of their careers or will be starting their professional career soon.

The social status of the participants is employed (40,45% participants), apprenticeship (4,23% participants), student (48,64% participants), unemployed (4,55% participants) and 2,05% participants did not answer this question. The question for their educational level is divided into university degree (37% participants), apprenticeship (30,9% participants), school degree (29,8% participants), no degree (0,2% participants) and two per cent participants did not answer the question. The social status can be an indicator for the use of social network sites for the employment seeking process and can be a reason for the

behaviour of individuals. The participants are mainly students and young professionals who are at the beginning of their careers.

The activities to identify an employment can be an important issue to explain the behaviour for the employment seeking process. The participants reported that 10,9% are actively looking for a new position, 23,9% participants are passively looking and not searching for a new position are 62,5 % participants. Two point seven per cent did not answer this question.
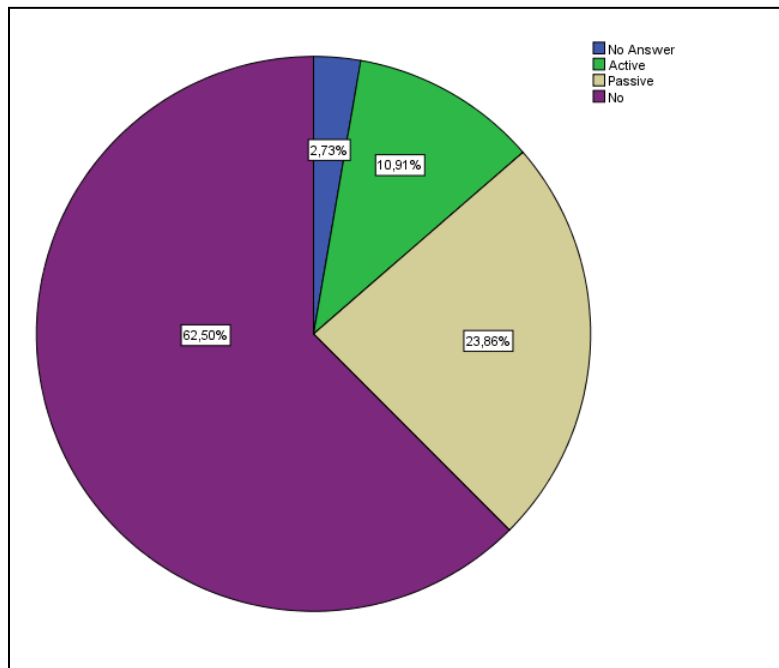

Figure 1
,,Are you searching for employment actively, passively or not at all?" Data from survey conducted by
Tom Sander in October 2014 (n=440)

The data has been analysed with the software package SPSS. The statistical tests of the data has been correlation by Spearman and cross table. The data is presented with the frequency to answer the research question. If it is useful, mean and median are mentioned.

3 Analysis of the data

The transfer of information for the employment seeking process is possible on different channels. The session concentrates on social network sites and compares them with newspaper, job boards, job fairs and webpages of the German employment agency. This means the first question is about the use of one of these channels for the employment seeking process. This is a first indication of whether the channel is useful and if people trust this channel.
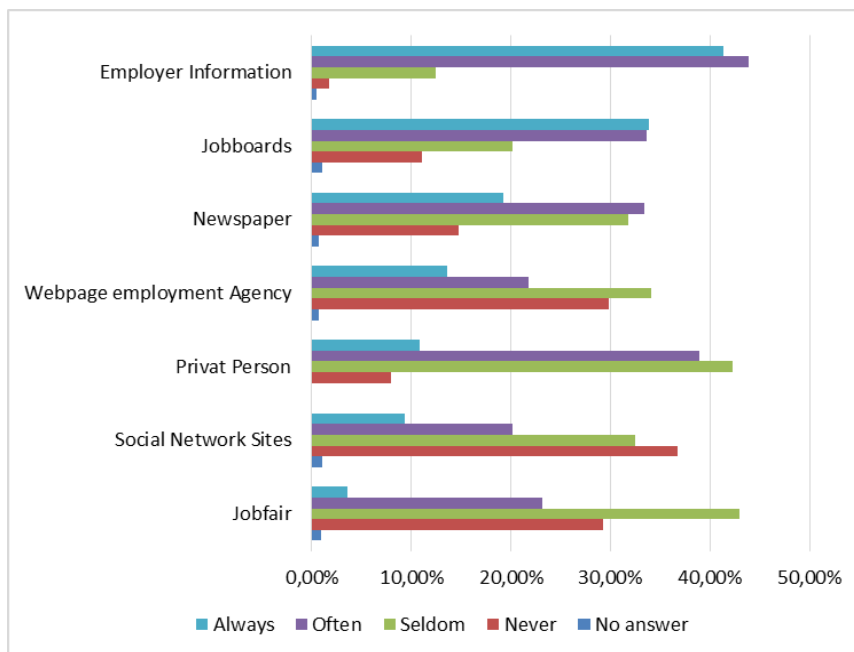

Figure 1

Distribution of responses on question "Which Source do you use for the employment seeking process?" Data from survey conducted by Tom Sander in October 2014 (n=440)

The result explores that the most frequently used information for the employment seeking process is employer information, for example web pages from companies. Social network sites are the weakest source for the employment seeking process and the tendency is clearly that individuals do not use this platforms for the employment seeking process. This provides the indication that social network sites are not useful for individuals to identify an employment opportunity. The social network sites have the highest number of participants who answer that with "never". The job boards are very strong and following the employer information. This means that job boards are very important for individuals to find a new position and organisations should use job boards to identify new employees [18].

The results for newspaper and private individuals does not explain any tendency, they have the main answers in the middle of the scale. Job fairs and Webpages of the employment agency have low results. This means the frequency of job fairs and webpages of employment agency is low.

The next step concerned the question about support and trust of the media to evaluate the value of the information on these platforms. The value depends on the reliability, validity and benefit for the social network sites member. The tendency to trust recruiting channel is negative for Job boards and social network sites. People trust social network sites always or often with 33,1%. if we compare the cumulated results of the surveys for "always" and often. Job boards have cumulated 75,4%Employment seeking individuals trust mainly information from the employer with the cumulated result of 97,1% for "always" and often. This information is from the source which is responsible for the content on the other platforms. Newspapers have 72,9% with always or often, job fairs have the cumulated result 64,1% and private individuals with 70,5% for always and often. These different channels are more or less similar. The webpage of the employment agency has a tendency to the middle of the scale and always or often answered 59,8%.
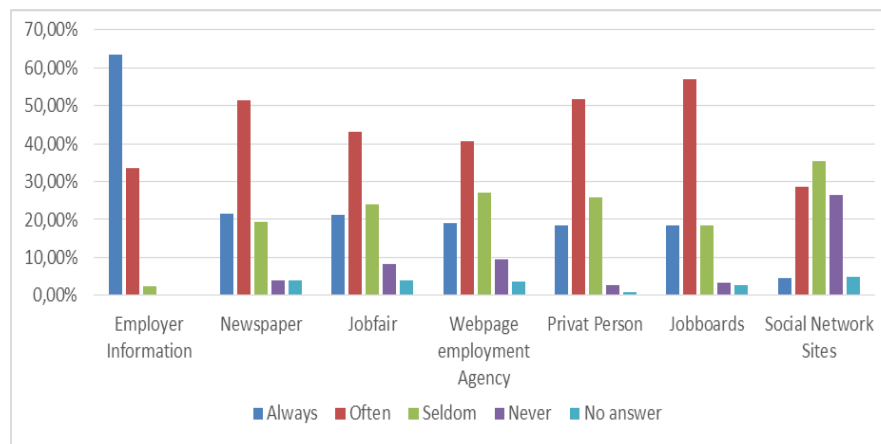

Figure 2

"Do you trust this sources for the employment seeking process?" Data from survey conducted by Tom Sander in October 2014 (n=440)

The test of correlations does not support any relationship between demographic variables and other variables. This means the result of statistic tests for a correlation cannot explain the behaviour of individuals on social network sites and does not give an indication that information channels to identify employment have a correlation with "educational level" or "Use of social network sites per week in minutes".

The main interest for research are social network sites. The result of the diagram explore clearly that comments on social network sites influence only a small group of individuals. The importance of social networks sites for society is of special interest. The question of interest is if people are influenced by the comments of social network sites to find a decision for employment opportunity.
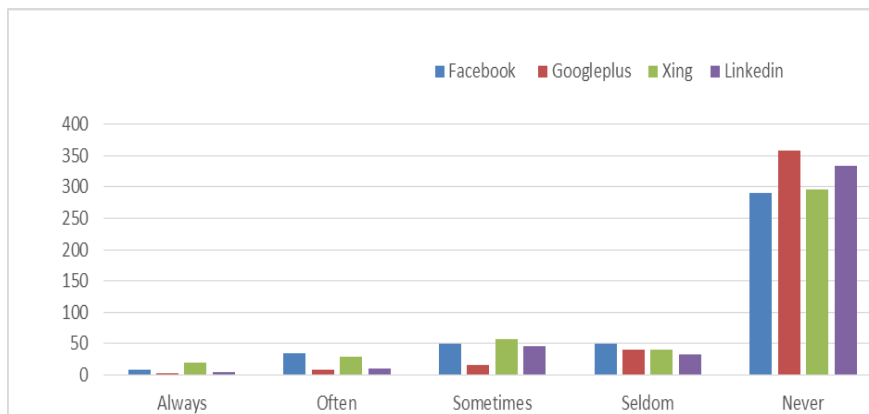

Figure 3

"How often have a comment on social network sites influenced the employment seeking process?"

Data from survey conducted by Tom Sander in October 2014 (n=440)

It appears that trust has an influence on the use of the information channel. Individuals use trustful channels more often and they expect to have a higher benefit with the trustworthy information sources. That gives an indication that the use of media and trust is relative. This support explanations about the importance of trust for the information channel.

4   Analysis of the data

The data explores the use of social network sites compared with other channels. The result is that individuals are not using social network sites or private person who are members of their real networks for the employment seeking process. This provides the indication that social networks neither online and offline are used frequently for the employment seeking process. Their trust towards social network sites content is low. The trust to private persons is below job boards, employer information and newspapers. This is a clear signal that private and online social networks are less trustworthy than other information channels for the employment seeking. The frequency with which they are using social network sites for employment seeking is an indicator for the reason for low trust. The marketing research has other results and the influence of word of mouth for marketing

research is very popular [19][20]. Content of social network sites or other social media platforms can damage companies and destroy value. This is not describable for the employment seeking process of individuals. The influence of social network sites on employment seeking individuals is low. The trust in social network sites for the employment seeking process compared with other channels gives a clear answer. People trust social network sites less than any other channel for the employment seeking process. The use of social network sites describes clearly that people prefer other ways to find new employment. The power of social network sites comments and content for the employment seeking process is at a low level.

Trust is a dimension of social capital [8]. Social network sites provide content and people trust this content at a low level. The level is lower compared with other opportunities to identify employment opportunities. This can be explained with the lower use of social network sites for the employment seeking process and the lesser importance of social network sites content for employment seeking individuals. The future of social network sites is vague. The statistical results for the use of social network sites compared with the other channels is weak.

5   Conclusion

The results provide data that gives the indication that the use of social network sites for the employment seeking process is at the moment not under consideration by individuals. There are some signals that some individuals use these networks but it has to be under observation whether social network sites may be of interest for the employment seeking process and able to provide beneficial support to employment seeking individuals in the future. Individuals are not aware of the potential of social network sites and the power of comments and content on social network sites does not have the influence for the employment seeking process as for marketing issues. The data explores that trust, use and influence of social network sites compared to other channels for the employment seeking process is low. The involvement of social network sites and the information which is provided on social network sites is not used for the employment seeking process. This means the dimension trust and information of social capital for the employment seeking process does not have any profound influence. Organisations who use social network sites for the employment seeking process have to be aware of this issue to find the best solution or make the best decision.

The correlation between demographic variables and the use of channels to collect information about employment is not confirmed. This means the statistical tests do not give an indication that there exists a relation between demographic data and the use of information channels. This means it is not explainable with the demographic data why individuals use which channel for the employment seeking

process. This research gap and statistical weakness needs further research to explain the behaviour of populations.

The future of social network sites for the employment seeking process and the opportunity to use social network sites for the employment seeking process needs more research. The research will evaluate the positive and negative effects of social network sites for the employment seeking process. The explanation of social network sites mechanism with social capital theory needs further efforts to give an answer to open research questions.

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