Utilizing Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing as Assistance Tools for Recruiters in the Selection of Job Candidates Based on the Person-Job Fit

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ABSTRACT

Due to the emerging nature of social networking sites (SNS) within the context of recruiting, more and more organizations have started to utilize Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing as assistance tools for recruitment processes. Employer branding and the publication of job postings on the corporate profile have become common tasks of organizations which aim to attract potential employees. However, research has rarely focused on the opportunities which SNS offer for the selection of job candidates as a prior step to recruitment. The selection of job candidates implies the necessity of identifying candidates whose knowledge, skills and personality traits are aligned with the requirements of a position. Selecting adequate candidates who fulfill these requirements comprises the concept of person-job fit, which draws on the importance of 'fit' between potential employees and a job. Misfits are costly as organizations face increased employee turnover and the inevitability to select and recruit new candidates in a second round. Thus, to prevent misfits, it is of importance to take every information into account which helps to evaluate candidates and accordingly, to determine the degree of person-job fit. This explorative paper aims to link the underlying concept of the person-job fit to the opportunities which are provided to recruiters by utilizing SNS as assistance tools to determine the degree of fit between a person and a job. Being aware of job requirements, recruiters can utilize social networking sites as screening mechanisms. Screening candidates' user profiles on SNS potentially assists recruiters in determining the degree of person-fit, and hence the degree of alignment between the candidate and the position to be filled in. Moreover, exploiting SNS as marketing tools, job candidates themselves gather opportunities for self-portrayal and self-branding. To identify current and prospective potentialities of SNS to determine the person-job fit, firstly, a theoretical section draws on existing literature about this topic and secondly, an empirical section draws on findings gathered from conducting eight interviews with recruiters and consultants. The outcomes of this research are especially relevant as they provide recruiters with insights about how they might utilize SNS for selection purposes in an effective manner.

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Keywords
Social Networking Sites, Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing, Person-Job fit, Selection, Recruitment, Screening Mechanism, Marketing Tool

1. INTRODUCTION

Due to the increasing emergence of social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing, companies nowadays are provided with more opportunities and challenges to select new staff (Broughton, Foley, Ledermaier & Cox, 2013). For instance, social networking sites (SNS) encompass the benefit of connecting recruiters with qualified job seekers, and moreover, recruiters are given the opportunity to use social networking sites to screen job candidates when they access their profiles' information (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013). According to Bohnert and Ross (2010), employers use this information 'in combination with other, more traditional information, such as an applicant's cover letter and 'résumé' (p. 341). Chang and Madera (2012) emphasized that the reason that 'some organizations are using social networks is that employers might want to verify information provided by applicants' (p. 184). Gathering as much information about a candidate as possible, via SNS and traditional application documents, assists recruiters in selecting the adequate applicant for the vacancy to be filled in. Boselie (2010) highlighted that the alignment between a person (i.e. job seeker) and a job (i.e. the unoccupied vacancy) is called 'person-job fit' (p. 148), and identifying the right person for a vacancy is considered to be important as 'selecting and recruiting the right people for the job and the organization increases the chances of success for both the individual employee in terms of employee well-being (e.g. job satisfaction) and the organization in terms of firm performance (e.g. productivity and high quality)' (Boselie, 2010, p. 147). Thus, the selection process is of high importance for both the employer and the job seeker as it is targeted at determining the alignment of the former and the latter one. If the right techniques are applied during the selection process, an optimal degree of person-job fit can be guaranteed, which is likely to 'increase the long-term success of an organization' (Boselie, 2010, p. 148). Therefore, bringing employees and employers together and facilitating communication via LinkedIn, Xing or Facebook, social networking sites serve as platforms for e-recruitment where the 'right people' might be identified and selected for a vacancy. Keeping in mind the person-job fit, recruiters have merely started to grasp which potentialities social networking sites may include for the selection of job candidates. Hence, developments are still at the outset and currently evolving. Consequently, this paper aims to bring together the concept of 'person-job fit' and the technological tool 'social networking sites' in order to examine how recruiters might utilize social networking sites as assistance tools within the selection process, with the purpose of identifying potential employees based on the person-job fit. Moreover, current selection practices, common trends and prospective opportunities as well as challenges with regard to candidate selection via social networking sites are to be explored and identified to present an illustration of how the future of SNS-based selection of job candidates, including the focus on person-job fit, might look like. To go further into depth, an elaboration is necessitated which draws on the motivations of recruiters to utilize social networking sites as assistance tool to identify the right job candidate.

1.1 Recruiters' Motivations to Utilize SNS for Selection Purposes

Referring to recruiters' motivation of using social networking sites for selection purposes, there is mainly the one advantage of gaining an authentic picture of a candidate. Facebook, Xing and LinkedIn provide an additional source of information about applicants (i.e. users' profile pages), including not only data 'generated for the purpose of recruitment […] [but additionally]

supplementary information on the applicant like sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, marital status, age and political views (Broughton et al., 2013). Moreover, employers can define 'the parameters of their searches' (Smith & Rupp, 2004, p. 67) such as profession, education, professional experience, allowing them to perform 'computer-assisted screening interviews and statistical employee turnover' (Smith & Rupp, 2004, p. 67). Hence, recruiters have opportunities to gain a realistic impression of job candidates and consequently, avoid financial losses which result from recruiting an inadequate candidate. The Global Social Recruiting Report 2014 by Adecco identified that approximately 68% of recruiters use LinkedIn to screen job applicants, while 52% use Facebook and while only 8% use Xing to check on the candidate's personal online representation. However, out of these 8% who screen Xing, 61% are recruiters of organizations which are based in the D-A-CH region (i.e. Germany, Austria and Switzerland). In the German-speaking region, Xing is of higher importance than LinkedIn (compared to 29%). About 30% of the surveyed employers in Western Europe expressed that they already excluded candidates from the recruitment process due to information, photos or content they have found online. According to a survey by Careerbuilder, the following reasons can additionally hinder candidates from being selected by recruiters: 'candidate lied about qualifications', 'candidate showed poor communication skills' or discriminatory comments published online (careerbuilder.co.uk). According to Bohnert and Ross (2013), an 'unprofessional Web site can significantly hurt a candidate's chances of being hired', whereas 'a professional-oriented [one] can enhance a candidate's attractiveness' (p. 345). Thus, job seekers can also exploit SNS and potentially benefit from it when they present themselves in a positive, but realistic, and reliable way. As Broughton et al. (2013) stated, 'young people are reported to be increasingly using social media tools to build an online career presence and search for jobs', and accordingly, job candidates have the opportunity of promoting themselves online by expressing qualifications within a professional profile. In addition, incorporating selection via SNS can shorten hiring times as social networking sites simplify and increase the information flow between job candidate and employer (Smith & Rupp, 2004). Moreover, this form of internet-based selection comprises the advantage of reducing recruiting costs, as the internet reaches a huge amount of people via social networking sites within a short amount of time, making ist possible that people everywhere in the world are able to read job advertisements. 'Head hunters', professionals who 'cultivate a thorough understanding of the ideal candidate profile and the client's culture/strategy, and undertake a focused search to identify competent individuals' (Mileham, 2000), and organizational recruiters, can access a wider, global pool of potential job applicants within a shorter amount of time and select the right person for the job from within this pool.

1.2 Research Question

Nowadays, recruiters as well as headhunters obtain easy and cheap access to social networking sites and the accompanied variety of user profiles of potential employees. Therefore, an increasing amount of recruiters has started to utilize social networking sites for selection and recruiting processes. However, this development, being sometimes referred to as social (media) recruiting, is only at the beginning of a revolution which might change prospective Human Resources (HR) practices drastically. Emerging recruiting tools, which also are incorporated into professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Xing, provide recruiters with increasing amounts of possibilities for selection and recruitment practices. Not only are recruiters

equipped with advanced assisting tools (i.e. SNS) for selection and recruitment purposes, but additionally, they face the challenge to apply these assistance tools in a manner that the person-job fit, and hence the alignment between a job candidate and a position, is guaranteed. Preventing organizations from selecting inadequate candidates is especially relevant as the organization otherwise would face high costs, caused by a misfit which has been provoked by hiring the wrong candidate.

Firstly, this research aims at exploring how current selection practices of organizations are structured and to what extent SNS are applied as assistance tools to identify appropriate job candidates for a vacancy to be filled in. Secondly, it aims to provide an outlook of how selection of job candidates via Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing will look like in the next couple of years; for instance, whether SNS-based selection might become more common or whether new SNS-based selection methods might occur. It is of high importance to explore and to consider how current trends change or will develop further in the future to continuously guarantee that the best applicant is selected for a vacancy, based on the person-job fit, to avoid unnecessary additional costs. Consequently, the following research question is formulated and to be answered with this paper: *'To what extent do Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing assist recruiters in the selection of the right job candidate based on the person-job fit?*

To explore prospective ways for recruiters to utilize SNS as assistance tools for the selection of the right candidate for a job, firstly, a theoretical section will be provided. Herewith, the concepts of selection and person-job fit are to be explained, and furthermore, the social networking sites Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing are to be presented and compared with regard to their opportunities and challenges for identifying a job candidate based on the person-job fit. These opportunities and challenges will be reviewed during eight interviews with recruiters and consultants. They will be asked about their current selection and recruitment practices, about their involvement with SNS and about their regards and attitudes towards the future of selection practices, which aim at identifying the best fitting job candidate. The research methodology section, which connects both the theory and the findings section, will specifically elaborate on the diverse methods which have been used during this research. After having elaborated on the interview findings, which provide additional information to the theoretical section and which either confirm or dispute theoretical findings, a discussion as well as a final conclusion will be drawn, including research-related limitations and implications for scientists and HR practitioners (i.e. recruiters and HR managers).

2. IDENTIFYING THE RIGHT JOB CANDIDATE VIA SNS

To gain a theoretical understanding of the emerging subject of selecting job candidates via SNS, this literature review aims at clarifying the concepts of selection and person-job fit themselves, and at examining the current stand in literature with regard to opportunities of Facebook and LinkedIn in terms of selecting the right people for unoccupied vacancies. Subsequently, the individual social networking sites will be linked to both concepts. According to Bondarouk and Olivas-Luján (2013), 'social media have to some extent replaced traditional media and communication in Human Resource Management (HRM) and forced the HRM business to reconsider its conventional ways of networking, branding and managing current and potential employees' (p. 11). Referring to the management of potential employees, social networking sites also change the capabilities recruiters are given to select job candidates.

2.1 Selection of Appropriate Job Candidates

To eventually explore how recruiters might utilize SNS as assistance tools for selecting appropriate job candidates, *selection* itself needs to be defined. Bloisi (2007) emphasized that selection 'consists of sifting through the pool of applicants and making decisions about their appropriateness' (p. 107), while Boselie (2010) referred to selection as 'choosing individuals who have the relevant qualifications for the job' (p. 147). Thus, it is to be highlighted that the selection process consists of identifying a job candidate who possesses the capabilities and qualifications which are required for a vacancy. According to Sekiguchi and Huber (2011), 'employee selection has traditionally focused on the assessment of the match between job requirements and qualifications of job candidates in terms of their knowledge, skills and abilities' (p. 203). Selection processes via social networking sites accordingly aim to identify appropriate (or 'right') job candidates based on the information given about them on Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing. According to Davison, Maraist and Bing (2011), the current use of social networking sites for selection involves 'HR professionals search[ing] social networking sites to gather information about applicants, screen out individuals, or develop targeted interview questions' (p. 154). Screening candidates' profiles on social networking sites, recruiters primarily search for their knowledge, skills and competences, comprising aspects such as certificates, degrees or diplomas, language, technical or social skills and abilities of job candidates (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Boselie, 2010). Boselie (2010) highlighted that 'the most qualified candidate is most likely to show the best job performance' (p. 156), thus, to determine the person-job fit, recruiters need to match the requirements for a job with the capabilities of potential candidates. As the identification of the right candidate for job 'is an important foundation for running a successful organization' (Boselie, 2010, p. 163), a misfit can be highly costly since a new job candidate needs to be selected, which costs time and which causes additional work through employee turnover (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Boselie, 2010).

2.2 The Person-Job Fit - Alignment between a Job Candidate and a Job

After having exemplified what *selection* actually means, this section focuses on the person-job fit. The person-job fit represents a relevant element of the selection process, as the recruiters' goal is to *select* a job candidate who *fits* to a position, hence, to guarantee a high degree of *person-job fit*. According to Boselie (2010), 'the concept of right [job candidates] […] refers to the optimal fit or alignment of an individual employee and an employer' (p. 148), being referred to as person-job fit (P-J fit). In their paper, Sekiguchi and Huber (2011) cited Edwards (1991), highlighting that 'PJ fit refers to the match between job requirements […] and applicant qualifications, or the match between the needs of the applicants and the suppliers from the job' (p. 203). As 'the P-J fit covers both (1) the aspects of the job and the candidate's qualities and (2) the nature of the job and the candidate's personal preferences and interests' (Boselie, 2010, p. 156), recruiters should be aware of the requirements for a job which need to be fulfilled by a job candidate. To find a job candidate which 'fits' to a job, employers first need to analyze the job environment including the responsibility for certain tasks, the organizational norms and values, and goal setting (Meifert, 2010). Here, the demands of the job are to be identified and consequently, the demands on the candidate can be identified. Thus, after having analyzed the job environment, the recruiter is in the position to derive requirements from this analysis in terms of social and cognitive skills as well as knowledge and personality traits. Lastly, the recruiter needs to match the job's

demands on candidates with their personal, individual capabilities to do the job. To determine the degree of alignment between a given candidate and a vacancy which is to be filled in, the recruiter usually executes job interviews or personality tests (Meifert, 2010). What is labeled as 'requirements' is commonly defined by the variables knowledge, skills (abilities) and personality traits, which affect and determine the degree of person-job fit (Caldwell & O'Reilly III, 1990; Kristof-Brown, 2000; Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011; Melanthiou, Pavlou & Constantinou, 2015; Chiang & Suen, 2015).

2.2.1 *Knowledge, Skills and Personality Traits of Job Candidates required for a Position*

Knowledge, skills and personality traits generally cover most aspects which are required by a job description and necessitated to perform the job. A job description, which includes the candidate's role, tasks and basic information, such as qualifications required, demands, and objective of the position identifies what is expected of the candidate (Meifert, 2010). For example, candidates only possess sufficient knowledge for a job if they fulfill required qualifications (e.g. Bachelor's or Master's degree), they only are capable of performing certain tasks if they have sufficient skills for doing so and they only can identify themselves with the objective of the position if they have specific personality traits (e.g. being ambitious, determined, creative or being a leader).

As on social networking sites, personal and professional information about job candidates are not grouped explicitly into these three categories of variables, indicators are used to identify levels of knowledge, skills and specific personality traits. The variable 'knowledge' is indicated by an individual's level of education (e.g. GPA, diplomas, certifications) and work experience in years (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011; Roulin & Bangerter, 2013). Furthermore, 'skills (abilities)' are represented by, for example, the ability to speak foreign languages, interpersonal skills, technical skills or managing skills. The ability to speak foreign languages is indicated by the amount of years an individual has studied the language, or by a language diploma (e.g. levels from A1 to C2 indicating proficiency). Interpersonal skills are indicated by e.g. social activities which suggest teamwork skills (Smith & Kidder, 2010. Technical skills are indicated by individual's information on technical proficiencies, e.g. certifications or diplomas (Smith & Kidder, 2010), while managing skills are indicated by managerial experience (Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011), which means the number of years an individual worked as a manager. Lastly, characteristics like (un-)friendliness, dynamism, maturity or extroversion (in contrast to introversion) represent 'personality traits' (Kristof-Brown, 2000). The degree of individual (un-) friendliness might be indicated by the common language of posts and comments of a job seeker. Dynamism describes the energy and willingness of a person to make something happen, which consequently might be indicated by professional experience or formerly extracurricular activities which prove an individual's intrinsic motivation (Kristof-Brown, 2000). Furthermore, maturity might be indicated by the frequency of posts which include unprofessional information and details on the job seeker (e.g. pictures of him/her drinking alcohol or smoking marijuana), as it can be assumed that mature job candidates are careful about which information and pictures they publish on social networking sites. Finally, extroversion or respectively introversion might be indicated by the amount of friends/contacts and the amount of posts and comments on SNS.

Knowledge	Skills (abilities)	Personality Traits
- level of education (e.g. GPA, diplomas, certifications) - work experience	- ability to speak foreign languages - interpersonal skills - technical skills (e.g. certifications, diplomas) - managing skills	- (un-)friendliness - dynamism - maturity - extro- or introversion

Table 1. Variables to determine the degree of P-J fit

The importance of these three variables is additionally supported by Adecco's Global Social Recruiting Report 2014 (p. 48) which highlighted that especially 'professional experience' (i.e. work experience) makes an applicant's social media profile attractive (0.63/1), followed by 'professional prizes and awards' (0.38/1) and 'personality emerging from profile' (0.32/1). 'Pictures', 'number of contacts' and 'hobbies' are the least important elements within social media profiles of potential candidates.

Consequently, if recruiters aim to search for appropriate job candidates via Facebook, LinkedIn of Xing to select them for a vacancy, they should consider the concept of the person-job fit. Thus, having explicitly identified knowledge, skills (abilities) and personality traits which are relevant and important for a specific job, recruiters are capable of screening Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing profiles for information about job candidates, which are given by the aforementioned indicators. They are either able to do this if they are searching for qualified candidates without having received any applications beforehand (i.e. headhunting) or do this as a step of preselection to gain additional information after having received traditional, paper-based applications.

2.3 Comparison of Social Networking Sites

In this section, a differentiation between Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing comprises overviews of the individual opportunities and challenges recruiters face with regard to the screening of social networking sites within the selection process. As Smith and Kidder (2010) emphasized, both 'Web 2.0 and SNS are characterized by user-driven content, combined with interactivity with other users' (p. 492). Although the social networking sites Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing generally serve the same purposes within the selection process, namely the gathering of additional information about candidates through user-driven content, the social networking sites differ with respect to the information they reveal and how they are to be obtained. It is to be pointed out that Facebook is usually regarded as a private SNS where one's contacts are represented by family and friends, while LinkedIn and Xing are referred to as professional SNS, where contacts are represented by colleagues, clients or employees (Wolff & Panter, 2012). According to Caers and Castelyns (2011), Facebook 'belong[s] to an individual's private sphere' (p. 438) as it shares personal information and connects friends, and Xing and 'LinkedIn to the professional sphere' (p. 438), as they share professional information, presents skills and connects professionals as well as job seekers with recruiters.

The following table is presented to give a short overview of numbers and facts of all three social networking sites:

	Facebook	LinkedIn	Xing
Date of Launch	2004	2003	2003
Revenue (2014)	$12.47 billion	$2.219 billion	$113.6 million
Amount of Users	1.44 billion	350 million	15 million
Target Group	Teenagers and Millennials	Graduates and Professionals	Graduates and Professionals
Purpose	Social Network (Friends and Family)	Professional Network	Professional Network
Use By Recruiters	28%	58%	9%

Table 2. Comparison between Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing (Smith, 2015; Wolff & Panter, 2012; Zehmisch, 2008)

The numbers of users and revenues underline the international orientation of Facebook and LinkedIn, compared to Xing, which is rather important in Germany, Austria and Switzerland. 66% of millennials, individuals of the age of 15-34, actively use Facebook, while 13% of millennials use LinkedIn (Smith, 2015), and while approximately 25% of millennials use Xing (Bernauer, Hesse, Laick, Schmitz, 2011). It is stressed that Facebook has a younger target group than LinkedIn and Xing, however, Xing's user base still is younger in comparison to LinkedIn's. This is additionally supported by the fact that only 30% of Facebook and Xing users have already earned a Bachelor's degree (Smith, 2015; recruiting.xing.com), as many users are still too young to attend university, or are still graduating. It can be seen that Facebook in general attracts a wider range of users including both teenager and adults, while, in contrast, LinkedIn's target group is more limited, focusing on employees, job seekers and graduate students. Xing focuses on the same target group as LinkedIn, however, the social networking site is not as international as Facebook and LinkedIn, being mainly popular in the D-A-CH region which leads to a significantly smaller user base. Furthermore, the Global Social Recruiting Report 2014 by Adecco illustrated that worldwide 28% of recruiters use Facebook for professional purposes, meaning they use their own account for selection and recruitment purposes, while 58% use LinkedIn and 9% use Xing.

2.3.1 *Opportunities and Challenges of Facebook for Identifying Job Candidates based on the P-J fit*

In this paper, Facebook is defined as 'a social networking service where users create personal profiles, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications when they update their own profile [and] [a]dditionally, users may join common-interest user groups, organized by common characteristics (e.g. workplace)' (Broughton, Higgins, Hicks & Cox, 2011; p. 7). Papacharissi (2009) described Facebook as a social networking site being 'open-to-all' (p. 199) and being the 'equivalent of a glasshouse, with a publicly open structure, looser behavioral norms and an abundance of tools that members use to leave cues for each other' (p. 199). Facebook has been primarily invented to make social connections and enable individuals to exchange personal information with their family or friends. Thus, profiles on this social networking site contain various information about applicants' personal life including hobbies, interests, relationship or marital status, political attitude, as well as professional information including schools and universities individuals attend or attended, or jobs they are working in (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013). Roulin and Bangerter (2013)

additionally expressed that generally, personal Facebook profiles embrace a wider range of information about individuals than professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Xing do; for instance, the combination of pictures, personal and professional information, and the amount of friends give an indication of (1) individual knowledge, (2) skills (abilities) and (3) personality traits such as 'openness, extroversion and agreeableness' (p. 149). Thus, all three variables which indicate the degree of person-job fit are to be identified via Facebook. Moreover, Facebook profiles are suited to offer 'information beyond, or even contradicting, an applicant's submitted documents' (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 491). Smith and Kidder (2010) stated that the social networking site Facebook sometimes provides a better overview of candidates than the one which is accessible via traditional screening methods (i.e. résumé or reference checks) and hence, using SNS to conduct background checks or screening on applicant is helpful for employers (Melanthiou et al., 2015).

However, Slovensky and Ross (2012) criticized that social network profiles and individuals' online activities not necessarily reflect how applicants would act within the working environment, as published information and postings are not reflective of actual attitudes and behavior with regard to employments. Not only might information gathered from social network profiles be inaccurate or unreflective, thus creating biases within the organization's selection process, but Facebook' policies itself state that an organization 'may face legal challenges if it considers an applicant's Facebook page as part of the selection process' (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 491). Thus, recruiters and headhunters need to reflect to what extent they are willing to face these legal, as well as ethical, challenges, and they need to consider how they justify selection decisions legally.

2.3.2 *Opportunities and Challenges of LinkedIn for Identifying Job Candidates based on the P-J fit*

LinkedIn is defined as 'a business-related social networking site mainly used for professional networking [where] users maintain a list of contact details of people with whom they have some level of relationship, called connections [which] can then be used to build up a contact network, follow different companies and find jobs, people and business opportunities' (Broughton et al., 2011, p. 7). LinkedIn, rather than Facebook, is sometimes used by recruiters (headhunters) to 'actively search for potential applicants' (Caers and Castelyns, 2011, p. 444) who are screened to determine the degree of fit between them and an unoccupied vacancy (i.e. person-job fit).

According to Roulin und Bangerter (2013), recruiters prefer professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn over personal SNS such as Facebook for gathering applicant information to predict the degree of person-job fit. LinkedIn is 'built like an extended online résumé' (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013, p. 144) and therefore, professional information about applicants (including (1) knowledge and (2) skills or abilities) are easily to be retrieved. Thus, two out of three variables which indicate the degree of person-job fit are determinable via LinkedIn. Davison et al. (2011) pointed out that LinkedIn provides more accurate information compared to Facebook because an individual's connections are in the position to 'view and verify or contradict the information' (p. 156). Hence, LinkedIn as a professional network seems to be more reliable to recruiters in terms of identifying the right job candidates for a vacancy. Furthermore, LinkedIn enables job seekers and recruiters, or headhunters, to easily and cheaply exchange detailed information which are job-related, without any legal or ethical concerns (as it is the case for Facebook) since LinkedIn has been specifically invented for this purpose. Utilizing

LinkedIn, employers do not only gain insights into candidates' information, the social networking site additionally enables recruiters to match candidates' profiles 'with any of the firm's employees who are listed as contacts' (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 494) to determine whether their qualifications fit to the requirements of a vacancy to be occupied. As LinkedIn is the world's largest professional social network, it is increasingly utilized to search and screen for appropriate job candidates for a vacancy (Chiang & Suen, 2015).

However, as LinkedIn provides access mainly to professional information and barely to personal information, recruiters hardly get an impression of the applicant's personality traits which as well influence the degree of person-job fit (Melanthiou et al., 2015; Smith & Kidder, 2010). Kristof-Brown (1990) stressed that especially contextual performance is significantly impacted by personality traits and values.

2.3.3 *Opportunities and Challenges of Xing for Identifying Job Candidates based on the P-J fit*

Lastly, Xing is often described as the German equivalent to LinkedIn, being defined as a social networking site which is utilized for networking and communication within a professional context (glossar.xeit.ch/xing), focusing on the German-speaking D-A-CH region. Xing is Germany's most popular professional social networking site (Bernauer et al., 2011; Deckers & Lacy, 2011; Wolff & Panter, 2012; Zils, 2015) and currently has eight million German-speaking users out of a total user base which accounts 15 million. Deckers and Lacy (2011) denominated Xing as 'Facebook for adults' (p. 94) which is supported by the percentage of German users being older than 26, who use Xing rather than Facebook. People younger than 26 still prefer Facebook over Xing. Especially qualified and specialized personnel (43%) is present on Xing, as well as directors and managers (39%) (recruiting.xing.com).

As Xing is structured in the same way as LinkedIn is, including professional information such as education, career, skills and knowledge, which are presented in a sequence as they would be in a résumé, Xing mainly offers the same functions to recruiters as LinkedIn does. Hence, referring to the screening of candidates, recruiters are able to use LinkedIn and Xing in the same way to gather information about applicants. As recruiters usually prefer professional SNS over personal SNS in terms of acquiring applicant information to predict the degree of person-job fit (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013), Xing might assist recruiters in identifying the right job candidates based on the professional profile information, including (1) knowledge and (2) skills, given on Xing. However, as Xing is similar to LinkedIn, it neither does provide access to personal information and thus, the third variable being identified as personality traits can barely be analyzed via Xing. Hence, the degree of person-job fit is only partly determinable based on Xing profiles, as it is for LinkedIn. Furthermore, Xing's limited user base (15 million users versus 350 million users of LinkedIn), which is mainly consisting of Germans, might represent a challenge to recruiters in terms of a restricted candidate pool. International experts as potential candidates might be excluded and especially for headhunters, this might be a disadvantage. Therefore, employers need to identify for whom they are searching and whether LinkedIn or Xing represents the more efficient tool to find the right candidate.

2.3.4 *Contrasting Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing*

All three social networking sides offer unique advantages to recruiters, as well as some challenges. Facebook reveals various information about applicants, including both personal and professional information. Facebook profiles provide an overall impression of job candidates as the data presented within the profile gives numerous indications about the person itself, including knowledge, skills (abilities) and personality traits. LinkedIn rather provides professional information (i.e. knowledge and skills) instead of personal information and serves as an extended résumé of applicants. However, LinkedIn and Xing do not necessarily give many indications about personal values and traits which affects the degree of person-job fit. There is consensus that Facebook profiles are more 'honest', while LinkedIn and Xing profiles are often used by applicants to market themselves in the best possible way. While basing selection decisions solely upon LinkedIn and Xing profiles is legal, the same is unethical regarding Facebook profiles. Furthermore, Facebook theoretically represents the biggest user base including potential employees, while Xing represents the smallest user base, putting LinkedIn in the middle of both. However, all three social networking sites might be attractive to employers, depending on the personnel recruiters are specifically looking for. Concluding, both Facebook and LinkedIn as well as Xing provide additional information to the traditional résumé which aids recruiters to measure the degree of person-job fit. However, screening or selecting candidates based on social network profiles necessitates careful consideration, as recruiters need to be able to justify their hiring decision. Besides this, recruiters should consider that information given on both social network sites do not necessarily have to be true or accurate, and thus, before basing selection decisions solely on SNS, the given information still should be checked and compared with traditional résumés.

2.4 SNS as Screening Mechanism and Marketing Tool

After having provided the concepts of selection and person-job fit, as well as opportunities and challenges of the social networking sites Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing, this section seeks to examine how recruiters actually can utilize SNS as an assistance tool to select the right job candidate based on the person-job fit, and how candidates might be able to influence selection decisions. According to Broughton et al. (2013), SNS can be either applied as a screening mechanism by employers or as a marketing tool by job seekers. However, both aspects are to some extent interrelated, as the screening of job seekers by recruiters can be influenced by job seekers, employing social networking sites as marketing tools.

2.4.1 *SNS as a Screening Mechanism*

On the one hand, utilizing SNS as a screening mechanism is especially relevant for the selection process, as the screening of job candidates helps to determine applicants who possess the 'minimum qualifications necessary to do the job' (Smith & Kidder, 2010, p. 494). As noted by Broughton et al. (2013), 'employers can use information available […] to cheaply and easily gain a broader image of a potential employee than that available through traditional recruitment methods' (p. 5). Users of social networking sites are rapidly spreading personal information on the internet, e.g. on Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing, which is accessible and, accordingly, visible to organizations (Caers & Castelyns, 2011) when they select job candidates and conduct background checks. According to the Global Social Recruiting Report 2014 by Adecco, 52% of recruiters use Facebook to 'check a candidate's online reputation' (p. 54), while 68% use LinkedIn and only 8% use Xing, which can be justified by its small user base compared to Facebook and LinkedIn. As cited by Broughton et al. (2013), a US survey by the society for Human Resource Management found out that recruiters are 'able to gain information with little time and effort', even those 'beyond that in a cover letter or CV', they can check

'information in a cover letter or CV' and lastly, assess 'applicant fit with the organization' (p. 16). Hence, referring to social networking sites as a screening tool, job seekers' profiles comprise various additional information (compared to the traditional résumé) which might help headhunters and recruiters to determine the degree of person-job fit based on the job requirements and the qualifications of the applicant (Sekiguchi & Huber, 2011). Moreover, '[s]ocial media sites can be used to identify potential applicants with certain characteristics or qualifications and to reach non-traditional applicants […] quickly and easily' (Broughton et al., 2013, p. 19). According to Russell (2007), a (pre-)screening mechanism via social networking sites can 'increase efficiency of the hiring process' and additionally, 'reduce the number of applicants who proceed into more manual and time-consuming steps in the selection process' (p. 70). Davison et al. (2011) even regarded LinkedIn and Facebook as being more accurate in representing information about job candidates, compared to those information being provided in a cover letter or a résumé. Consequently, referring to the social networking sites Facebook, Xing and LinkedIn as channels where user profiles can be screened by recruiters and headhunters, employers gain the opportunity to gather detailed information about job candidates solely from their LinkedIn or Facebook profile, enabling them to determine the degree of person-job fit. Recruiters or headhunters are capable of actively searching for job candidates who fulfill the requirements for an unoccupied vacancy, preferably on LinkedIn, without having applied for the vacancy; or they can prescreen profiles on Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing to increase the volume of information they already possess about candidates, based on application letters and résumés, before they invite the candidate to a job interview.

2.4.2 *SNS as Marketing Tool*

On the other hand, referring to social networking sites as marketing tools, candidates utilize SNS channels 'to market themselves to potential employers' (Broughton et al., 2013, p. 5). This aspect underlines that both the screening mechanism of SNS and SNS as marketing tools are interrelated, as the second function (i.e. marketing tool) impacts the outcome of the screening by recruiters and headhunters. For instance, applicants might be informed about organizational selection criteria and consequently adapt their profile page and their online behavior to 'send right signals' (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013, p. 145). According to Kietzmann et al. (2011), the social networking site LinkedIn is mainly used for self-branding within a professional context. Focusing on career, LinkedIn and Xing users primarily aim to build and communicate a (positive) reputation, being defined as 'the extent to which users can identify the standing of others in a social media setting' (Kietzmann et al., 2011, p. 247). Moreover, Bondarouk and Olivas-Luján (2013) stated that 'social media allow the individual to self-represent in a way that would influence or control the opinion that others might have about them' (p. 12), known as impression management. Individuals' profiles, including photographs and information about themselves, 'can be used as basis for impression formation' (Utz, 2010, p. 314). To form a positive impression towards others and to appear competent and congenial to potential employers, a professional profile picture for especially LinkedIn and Xing is of high importance, as well as keeping profile information up-to-date, utilizing the 'summary-function' to give a short personal presentation and checking for grammar and spelling errors (Deckers & Lacy, 2011; Wolff & Panter, 2012). In terms of Facebook profiles, it is not necessarily required to use professional pictures, however, the pictures and contents which are published should be acceptable from the potential employer's point of view and hence, pictures displaying unrestrained celebrating including, for instance, the consume of alcohol or more severe drugs should not be uploaded. Users need to consider the power of the social network and remember how many other users actually see and are able to comment on content they have published before (Deckers & Lacy, 2011). Consequently, if job seekers optimize their self-presentation on Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing in an appealing manner, they might be able to increase their chances of being selected and hired by a recruiter (Chiang & Suen, 2015). Additionally, Bissola and Imperatori (2013) point out than young employees regard LinkedIn as an important tool for career management, being 'cautious in how they use it because they understand that honesty and the reliability of the information provided are fundamental to social reputation' (p. 70). Honesty and reliability are moreover considered by Wolff and Panter (2012) as being important, stating that a credible and authentic self-representation on social networking sites is key to marketing oneself to potential employers, while exaggerations decrease a candidate's credibility. Although candidates might be (pre-)selected based on their promising profile information given on social networking sites, there usually still will be a job interview before they are hired and at this point, according to Meifert (2010), recruiters, who generally are trained to have excellent knowledge of human nature, will notice if they have been mistaken about the candidate based on his or her profile information. Furthermore, Sekiguchi and Huber (2011) highlighted that 'negative information (i.e. a low level of fit) [gathered about a job candidate via SNS] will be paid more attention and weighted more than positive information (i.e. a high level of fit)' (p. 204), which is also supported by Chang and Madera (2012) who hypothesized that '[e]mployers that use social network sites for selection purposes value negative information more than positive information.' (p. 187). Hence, job candidates whose profiles include unprofessional posts or pictures, showing for instance alcohol or drug abuse and excessive partying, encounter difficulties to convince recruiters from their professional skills and competencies. Consequently, applying Facebook, Xing or LinkedIn as marketing tools, job candidates might consider adjusting their profiles, including information and pictures, which need to be displayed in a professional manner to market themselves effectively and to increase the chances of being hired.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The aim of this explorative research paper is to investigate how the selection of job candidates via social networking sites like Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing might be able to influence Human Resource Management in the future. Eight interviews with HR managers/recruiters or consultants have been executed, with the intention to confirm or dispute the theoretical findings (section 2.4) with regard to advantages and disadvantages of using SNS as assistance tools for selection processes. Furthermore, the interviews shall provide prospects of how SNS might be utilized in the future to aid the identification of right job candidates for a job, via an analysis of Facebook, LinkedIn and/or Xing profile. With regard to this research, interviews represent an appropriate research method as they enable the researcher and interviewee to build a common understanding of the topic and draw conclusions upon it. Thus, the pre-determined questions, which are open-ended and of qualitative nature, are not to be simply answered and filled in with facts, but the conversational, semi-structured interview shall explore new ideas and future trends which might be indicated by recruiter's current practices. However, to gather relevant information and to guide the interview, both interviewer and interviewee need to be able to raise questions, concerns and ideas in a spontaneous manner. Thus, simple questionnaires would not lead to the required results, as interviewees would not

be able to ask questions about the study or to indicate that they have difficulties to understand complex questions.

3.1 Sampling Method

The interviewed companies or consultants have been chosen according to their willingness to participate in the interviews after having been contacted by telephone, social networking sites or e-mail. In total, about 45 companies and consultants have been contacted which have been chosen firstly, according to their publicity in my personal proximity and secondly, according to their activities on the social networking sites Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing. Companies which do not possess corporate profiles on at least one SNS have not been contacted. Approximately, one half of all potential interviewees did not reply, while 15 rejected to conduct the interview. Lastly, seven of them agreed to be interviewed. Thus, 15% of all contacted companies were willing to be interviewed or had the impression to be able to answer the questions.

The following table provides an overview of the conducted interviews.

Company	No. of Emp.	Function	Date + Dur-ation	Interview Form
Recruitment Business	1,000	Senior Community Manager	27-05 40min	Phone
Insurance Agency	3,500	Recruiter	28-05 40min	Phone
Consulting Firm (Environ-mental Management)	50	Director	02-06 30min	Phone
Freelancer	1	Social Media Consultant	03-06	E-Mail
Consulting Agency (HR marketing)	140	Recruiter	10-06	E-Mail
Consulting Agency (HR marketing)	140	Consultant	10-06	E-Mail
Recruitment Business	18	Recruiter	11-06 50min	Personal
Freelancer	1	Consultant for Self-Branding	12-06 45min	Skype

Table 3. Sampling table

Firstly, two interviews have been conducted with recruitment businesses who are specialized in personnel placement. These personnel service providers actively search for individuals who have specific capabilities, skills or knowledge and who can be employed for a given company and vacancy. Thus, employers know what they are searching for and are capable of executing the selection process in accordance with the person-job fit. Secondly, three interviews have been conducted with diverse organizations which either have an HR department which is responsible for all HR practices, including selection and recruitment, or which have a director who is responsible for recruiting. These organizations do mostly not search actively for job candidates as headhunter or personnel services do, however, they publish job postings via several means (e.g. SNS, newspapers, corporate website, and job portals) and wait for job candidates to apply. Lastly, three interviews have been

conducted with social media consultants who are specialized in giving advice to organizations with regard to how they might utilize social networking sites for recruiting purposes. These experts help organizations to optimize their recruiting processes by incorporating social media recruiting practices.

3.2 Interview Methods

Out of eight interviews, four have been conducted via telephone or Skype, three have been via email and one has been a personal interview. Since three different interview methods have been used, their individual advantages and challenges, including biases, need to be examined. The advantage of telephone interviews is that they can be completed within a shorter range of time as they are not affected by the fact of geographical dispersed interviewees (De Vaus, 1991). Due to the restricted time frame given for this research, telephone interviews present an efficient option to gather relevant information from interviewees. A common disadvantage of conducting telephone interviews is that all 'usual non-verbal cues are missing […] [which] means that the interviewer has to pay special attention to the phrasing and clarity of his or her questions (Burnard, 1994). De Vaus (1991) further stated that face-to-face interviews are better suited for complex questions as direct interaction and visual aids might be used to support the clarification of questions. Thus, the results of the telephone interviews might be biased as, on the one hand, interviewees might not comprehend questions and give unintended or unsuited answers without being aware of it, and on the other hand, the interviewee easily might lie to the researcher as the physicall reaction cannot be seen.

In the cases of email interviews, telephone interviews have initially been planned to be conducted, however, the interviewees felt more comfortable with taking their time to fill out the questions via email. However, besides facing the same biases as telephone interviews, conducting email interviews might be additionally biased as interviewees potentially do not express their own opinion, but that of colleagues they might have talked with, or they might have done some research on the topic in advance to please the researcher with their answers (Belk, Fischer & Kozinets, 2013). Hence, the answers might not resemble the interviewee's personal opinion.

Although every interview method involves specific advantages and disadvantages, referring to its reliability and significance, all three methods individually and sufficiently helped to collect relevant information to answer this paper's research question.

The interviews have been conducted semi-structured, based on predetermined questions (listed in the appendix), however, the interviews have 'unfold in a conversational manner offering participants the chance to explore issues they feel are important' (Longhurst, 2010). Thus, these interviews have been partially structured and the formulated questions only served as a guidance for the interviews, 'still ensur[ing] flexibility in the way issues are addressed' (Longhurst, 2010). For the email interviews, the predetermined questions have been sent in a form of a questionnaire to be filled in with short, relevant answers. Furthermore, the predetermined questions have been thematically structured and divided into three sections, focusing on firstly, general information, secondly, SNS-focused information and thirdly, opinion-based information regarding the future. Consequently, when having conducted the interviews, the interviewee has been provided with information about the research and the purpose of the paper. Having started with basic questions about the amount of recruits per month and how the selection process looks like, it was aimed to get to know the interviewee and how the selection and recruitment practices are handled within the organization. Thus, general information have

been gathered for the first section. Being provided with these general information, the interview was to be continued getting more specific and detailed during the second section, to collect information about the role of SNS in the selection process, whether recruiters can gather information on knowledge, skills and personality traits of candidates via SNS, about advantages, challenges, and the way SNS impact HR in general. Finally, for the third section, the interviewees were asked whether they considered social networking sites to be relevant for the selection of job candidates in the future, and if utilization of SNS might decrease or increase in specifically their organization and in organizations in general. Accordingly, future outlooks have been explored based on the current situation including challenges and advantages.

3.3 Analysis of Interviews

After having transcribed the interviews (transcripts available upon request), they necessitated an analysis. To categorize the qualitative data gathered from the eight interviews, a thematic analysis was conducted in the following section. According to Boyatzis (1998), a thematic analysis simply can be described as one process of 'encoding qualitative information' (p. 12). Thus, the data was reviewed and subsequently coded according to specific phrases which identify different sections of findings. Subsequently, information has been sorted into these sections or categories, with regard to patterns or topics which have been discovered. Based on the pre-determined questions, it has been expected that three broad sections would be identified, namely general findings, ways of utilizing SNS for selection purposes to identify job candidates and the future of selection based on SNS. Consequently, having applied a thematic analysis to determine broad patterns within the qualitative data gathered from eight interviews, the findings will be contrasted by the theoretical background which has been established before (see section 2).

4. FINDINGS

The findings of the interviews are divided into one section which solely focuses on insights gained from recruiters (section 4.1), and one section which focuses on insights from consultants (section 4.2). Both sections are thematically structured along three subsections which have been identified applying a thematic analysis; the first subsection focuses on general findings, the second subsection focuses on ways of utilizing SNS for selection purposes to identify job candidates, and the last, third, subsection focuses on the future of selection by applying SNS based on the person-job fit.

4.1 Insights from Recruiters

In this section, the findings of five interviews with recruiters are to be summarized and analyzed. The following table provides a short overview of the interviewee's answers, which will consequently examined in-depth.

	Utilized SNS	SNS is utilized for....	Measur-ability of P-J fit?	Future of SNS
Recruit-ment Business	Facebook LinkedIn Xing Google+	Employer Branding, Screening, Active Sourcing, Publication of Job Postings	Xing/ LinkedIn yes; Face-book no	Utilization will stagnate
Insur-ance Agency	Facebook	Employer Branding, screening	Yes	Utilization will stagnate
Con-sulting Firm (Environ-mental Manage-ment)	Facebook Xing (rather privately)	Screening	No	Utilization will stagnate
Con-sulting Agency (HR market-ing)	Facebook Xing LinkedIn	Employer Branding, Screening, Active Sourcing, Publication of Job Postings	No	Utilization will increase, in different forms
Recruit-ment Business	Facebook	Employer Branding, Publication of Job Postings, Active Sourcing	No	Utilization will increase, in different forms

Table 4. Short Overview of Interview Findings gathered from Recruiters

4.1.1 *General Findings*

First of all, it is to be stated one of the interviewed organizations is a large business, one is a medium-sized organization, while three are small-sized businesses. Furthermore, all five interviewees work in the field of recruiting, at least partly. However, two interviewees' functions specifically are concerned with utilizing social networking sites as a main task, while the other three interviewees only utilize SNS within their recruiting function. One interviewee is the director of the company, but additionally performs the recruiting function due to the organizational size. Referring to SNS, it is to be highlighted that all five interviewees utilize social networking sites with regard to selection and recruitment purposes. However, the individual ways of utilization differ widely. Every interviewee exploits the social networking site Facebook, while only two exploit LinkedIn and three utilize Xing. Additionally, there are differences in the frequency of utilization and the reasons for exploiting social networking sites. Here, the organizations mainly differentiate between marketing and recruiting functions. Interviewing the recruiters, it has been found out that four of five organizations use Facebook for reasons of employer branding and thus, possess a corporate online presence on Facebook to market the organization to public users. These profiles usually are administrated by the marketing department, while only some organizations administrate the online presence in cooperation with recruiters. Recruiters rather tend to utilize their personal profile for selection purposes. Furthermore, it is to be highlighted that all five interviewees still perform a traditional selection and recruitment process, starting with publishing job postings, screening submitted application documents, selecting candidates and conducting job interviews. However, depending on the organization, this process seems to include SNS at one or another stage, either to shorten or to simplify it. The following section will further go into detail about SNS-related findings.

4.1.2 *Utilizing SNS for Selection Purposes to Identify Job Candidates*

Referring to Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing as selection and recruiting tools, all five interviewees apply them in mainly three different ways: (1) to publish job postings, (2) to establish contact to potential candidates via active sourcing, and (3) to screen potential candidates. Here, it is to be highlighted that two of five interviewees publish job postings (on Facebook), that three interviewees apply active sourcing to establish contact to potential candidates (on Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing), and that

four interviewees use SNS as screening mechanism (Facebook, LinkedIn or Xing).

Consequently, exploiting social networking sites as screening tools to select candidates, seems to be mostly relevant to recruiters. Thus, the advantages or disadvantages each social networking site offers to recruiters, in terms of the aforementioned selection and recruiting tools, necessitate further examination. Referring to SNS as a screening mechanism, it can be stated that LinkedIn and Xing are considered to be more important than Facebook, as both are defined as professional networks. Three of four interviewees, who apply screening methods, utilize LinkedIn and Xing, while only one interviewee utilizes Facebook. In the former ones' opinion, professional networks include information which are relevant for the selection of a job candidates, while Facebook is considered to be a private network where profiles should remain unseen by employers. Furthermore, two interviewees stated that, at least in Germany, Facebook's terms and conditions legally prohibit employers from selecting and recruiting candidates based on profile information. Additionally, four interviewees perceived Facebook as rarely including relevant information which could be taken into consideration to determine the degree of person-job fit. Only few job candidates include enough professional information into their profile, hence, one interviewee stated: *'It is my own choice to name my employer within my Facebook profile, but few people actually do so. Thus, as a recruiter, I cannot even comprehend where someone is working, or what their job is at all.'* However, on the other side, one interviewee highlighted that Facebook profiles indeed present relevant information, as recruiters become capable of assessing candidates' personality. In this recruiter's opinion, Facebook reflects a person in a more realistic way than LinkedIn and Xing do and thus, the private social networking site is considered to be *'revealing individual's norms and values, based on posts and pictures which are published'*.

Two interviewees stated that individuals (i.e. recruiters) generally were able to measure candidates' knowledge, skills and personality traits via social networking sites, while two recruiters explained that candidates were able to lie and present false information online. One interviewee pointed out that this would not be possible on Facebook, but rather on LinkedIn or Xing. Interestingly, although four interviewees expressed to be screening profiles, only two thought that doing so actually might indicate relevant candidate characteristics. However, this finding can be explained by the steps the recruiters perform within the selection and recruiting process of new candidates. One interviewee describes it as a *'mixed process'*, which applies to all five recruiters and consists of the traditional recruiting process which is only being enriched with social media elements. The traditional selection and recruiting process can be described as to be starting with the publication of job postings, the screening of submitted application documents, the according selection of candidates and the conducting of job interviews. Presenting it like this, it consists of four main steps which can be affected by the utilization of social networking sites. The interviewees basically apply social networking sites within the first three steps, meaning that they publish job postings on SNS, but also on their homepage and in newspapers, depending on their target group. Furthermore, they screen application documents and accordingly select candidates. These two steps are affected by social networking sites as screening tools, since candidate profiles might influence the recruiter decision which has formerly only been based on formal application documents. Hence, four interviewees expressed to exploit the screening mechanism in form of a verification step which is included in the selection and recruitment process. Here, recruiters pre-select

candidates based on their submitted application documents and then, accordingly screen their SNS profiles to verify the information included in the applicant as well as their decision. Therefore, applying a 'mixed process' recruiters do not need to be certain about measuring candidates' knowledge, skills and personality traits reliably via social networking sites, but the sum of information assists them in identifying the right candidate for a job (i.e. high level of person job fit) and to make a final selection decision.

Concluding, it can be stated that there was a high consensus on the fact that social networking sites serve as an assistance tool for the selection process of job candidates based on the person-job fit. However, they additionally agreed that the traditional selection process cannot replaced by exploiting social networking sites. Although the combination of both screening mechanisms (profiles and application documents) supports and assists recruiters in identifying the best fitting candidate for a vacancy, at least the personal job interview cannot be replaced to certainly guarantee a high degree of person-job fit. The interviewees stated that both profile and application information not necessarily have to be true, but the personal job interview is considered to be of highest reliability as recruiters are trained to assess candidates.

4.1.3 *The Future of Selection based on SNS*
Due to conducting an explorative research, the interviewees' opinion towards the future of social networking sites is regarded as highly interesting. Two interviewees are confident that, in the future, social networking sites will be more and more exploited for selection and recruitment practices as they shorten and simplify many processes. Referring to the developments within the last fifteen years, one interviewee emphasized the following: *'At the beginning of our business, we attracted people by publishing job postings in newspapers. Then, job portals emerged and websites were utilized to post those job postings. Now, we have even more and more facilities in form of social networking sites. Of course, I am certain that the future will bring even more options for social media and develop them further.'* The interviewee also expressed to be certain that Facebook soon would include an option for corporate online presences where candidates directly could submit application documents. However, three interviewees stated that the role of social networking sites would remain the same as today. One interviewee highlighted the following: *'Social media has been hyped during the last years, especially during 2012 and 2013. Now, this hype is decreasing and those tools which are relevant and valuable have already been adopted and established. I think that this process will stagnate.'* Moreover, the interviewees agree that, whatever happens to social networks within the future, the traditional selection and recruitment process will remain relevant and that nothing could resign application documents and job interview.

4.2 Insights from Consultants
In this section, the findings of three interviews with consultants are to be summarized and analyzed. The following table provides a short overview of the interviewee's answers, which will consequently examined in-depth.

	Social Media Consultant	Consultant for HR Marketing	Consultant for Self-Branding
Contacted because…	Clients do not have sufficient know-how about recruitment via	Clients do not have sufficient know-how, and ask company to	Assists clients in establishing their 'human brand' and in

	SNS and do not want to acquire it	recruit staff for them	efficient self-presentation
SNS can be utilized for....	Reach passive candidates, screening, active sourcing	Employer branding, posting of job offers, screening	Self-branding (=marketing tool) of job candidates, screening for recruiters
SNS suited for Selection	Facebook, LinkedIn, Xing, Google+,… depends on target group	Xing and LinkedIn; Facebook considered to be unreliable	Can be every SNS, depending on objective of job candidate
Measur-ability of P-J fit?	Yes, one can measure a lot of information presented in public sources (e.g. scorings)	No, information might not be true	Yes, a profile can represent a person in a reliable way, lying would be ineffective
Future of SNS	Increasing importance, but different forms and features	Increasing importance, but different forms and features	Increasing importance, but different forms and features

Table 4. Short Overview of Interview Findings gathered from Consultants

4.2.1 *General Findings*

At the beginning, it is to be stated that the three consultants who have been interviewed all work in a field which is concerned with SNS, however, their focuses differ. One interviewee is a social media consultant who advises businesses in how to use SNS, especially LinkedIn, for corporate purposes. The second interviewee is a consultant of a consulting agency for HR marketing and explained that their business is contacted by clients who have questions about HR marketing or have difficulties to find new employees using traditional recruiting tools, thus, they additionally utilize SNS for recruiting staff for their clients. The third interviewee advises clients with regard to self-representation and self-branding, he helps them to establish their individual 'human brand'. Thus, it can be pointed out that two interviewees rather focus on general opportunities for recruiters while one interviewee is expert for the aforementioned aspect of utilizing SNS as a 'marketing tool' (section 2.4.2).

4.2.2 *Utilizing SNS for Selection Purposes to Identify Job Candidates*

According to these three experts, utilizing SNS as an assistance tool for the process of identifying and selecting job candidates provides different advantages to employers. Two interviewees highlighted that recruiters become able to reach passive candidates and to identify experts, thus, they might apply active sourcing. The consultant for HR marketing additionally emphasized that businesses are provided with the capabilities of publishing job postings and screening job candidates to gather additional information. All three interviewees stated that the opportunity of exploiting SNS as a screening mechanisms represents a relevant tool for recruiters, as gathering information about candidates helps recruiters to form a detailed impression about them. Accordingly, two interviewees explained that candidates' profiles on SNS usually provide recruiters with reliable, job-relevant information with regard to knowledge, skills and personality traits. One of them stated the following: *'Once, I built scorings. Of course, one can measure a lot of things using public sources. Nevertheless, one should not trust technical tools too much.'* In contrast, one interviewee remarks that information given on SNS not necessarily need to be true as users easily can present themselves in an unrealistic, but better way to recruiters. The interviewee expressed the following: *'The information which can be found online do not need to be reliable as they are entered by users themselves.'* and *'One should differentiate between professional and private networks. Xing and LinkedIn are better suited for screening compared to Facebook.'*

Challenging the idea of profiles which delude recruiters, the consultant for self-branding explained that individuals, who present themselves in a 'better way' online, *'have simply not understood the idea of self-branding'*. Job candidates, who aim to attract recruiters with their profile, should be honest and rather present their individual strengths instead of hiding their weaknesses by lying. To apply SNS as efficient marketing tools (see section 2.4.2), individuals should build their own authentic human brand to stand out of the mass of candidates; even if this brand has rough edges, it takes stand. Moreover, job seekers should not only present pure facts and data, but express emotions and dreams. The interviewee emphasized the following: *'Everyone provides recruiters with professional information, but rarely someone expresses emotions, dreams and visions. Thus, these information can lead to a competitive advantage.'* The interviewee additionally highlighted that recruiters, who screen candidates' profiles, will immediately build their opinion about these candidates, assess the degree of person-job fit and consequently, be able to identify the right candidate for a job.

Concluding, all three consultants on overall express the same functions of SNS and opinions as the recruiters do. Especially the function of exploiting SNS as screening mechanisms has been highlighted several times. However, within both sections, the interviewees express different opinions with regard to the reliability of SNS profiles, although nearly everyone applies screening mechanisms.

4.2.3 *The Future of Selection based on SNS*

Similar to the recruiters, all interviewees stated to be certain that the utilization of social networking sites for selection and recruitment purposes might increase in the future. Although existing tools, namely Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing, might develop further and prospectively include different features or functions, they will remain their importance in a different form. One interview stated the following: *'The internet processes so fast. When I recall Xing's initial years, so many features have changed in such a short time. The networks keep their name, but will change their form.'* Another interviewee expressed that *'we are only at the beginning of a process'*. In his opinion, SNS will not replace job portals in the near future, but one day, they might be able to replace current technologies. Moreover, the consultant for self-branding expressed the following opinion: *'When I am being asked how prospective developments might look like, one asks me to look into crystal ball, as I am not capable of predicting the future. It would be untrustworthy, as no-one can predict these developments.'* Concluding, these experts attached high importance to SNS and consider them to remain relevant in the future, but summarized that they were not capable of predicting future changes.

5. DISCUSSION

Drawing on these findings, the theoretical section pointed out two different functions to utilize social networking sites, namely *screening mechanism* and *marketing tool.* The former one can be applied by recruiters to identify and select candidates based on their profile information, while the latter one can be exploited by

job seekers/candidates to market themselves to recruiters. This does not mean to 'whitewash' their profile, however, it means to present it in a way that recruiters are enabled to easily gather relevant information at one glance, not only including professional information, but also personal information which express strengths, emotions and visions. Moreover, the theoretical section defined three factors which indicate a certain degree of person-job fit, including knowledge, skills and personality traits. These three factors can be assessed to different degrees by screening social networking sites. Especially the professional networks LinkedIn and Xing focus on the two former factors, while the private network Facebook can include all three factors.

Contrasting the theoretical findings with the empirical findings based on interviews, it is to be stated that the interviewees generally consider professional networking sites to be more suitable for screening mechanisms than private networking sites. Although the theoretical section concluded that Facebook profiles usually include all three factors (i.e. knowledge, skills and personality traits), while LinkedIn and Xing only include the first two factors, the interview findings indicate that recruiters consider Facebook profiles to be revealing less relevant information than LinkedIn and Xing. They justify their opinion by expressing that, for instance, many Facebook users do not even include their position or employer into their profile, while such information conform to the minimum requirements of LinkedIn and Xing. Without these professional information, screening Facebook is perceived as being unhelpful and as extending the selection process, whereas LinkedIn and Xing provide relevant information at a glance.

Referring to SNS as marketing tools, the theoretical insights are similar to the empirical findings. Some recruiters highlighted to be afraid that SNS profiles might not represent the real job candidates as all content entered by them could be adjusted and reflect a different person. The theoretical findings which have been explored in section 2.4.2 are partly in line with this opinion, highlighting that job candidates might be praising themselves and adjusting their profile in a manner that it fits to a recruiter's expectation. However, some other findings indicate that job candidates are mostly aware of the honesty and reliability that social networking sites require. They know that building a 'fake reputation' will be noticed at the latest when candidates attend a job interview and recruiters ask detailed questions. Linking these findings with the empirical findings, it is to be pointed out that some interviewees are afraid of gathering wrong applicant information due to the candidates' unrealistic self-presentation, while the other half considers candidate information to be complementary to the candidate's résumé. Thus, they would not base their hiring decision solely on profile information to determine the degree of person-job fit, but additionally screen application documents and conduct a job interview to be on the save side with regard to their selection decision. Concluding, the theoretical findings with regard to SNS as marketing tools are mostly in line with the empirical findings gathered from the interviews, as for both, there are two different points of view to be identified.

6. CONCLUSION

Within this paper, three different social networking sites have been contrasted with regard to their potential to be utilized as assistance tools for the selection of job candidates based on the person-job fit. Theoretically and empirically, the individual advantages of Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing have been pointed out, as well as the methods which can be applied, on the one hand, by recruiters to select candidates based on their profile information (i.e. screening mechanism), and on the other hand, by candidates to increase the chances of being selected based on such information (i.e. marketing tool).

It can be stated that the interviewed recruiters perceive LinkedIn and Xing as being reliable, professional networking sites which assist the effective selection of candidates, if their profile comprises relevant information such as knowledge, skills and personality traits. If these three factors are included, the degree of alignment between a position and a job candidate (i.e. person-job fit) might be estimated. However, as suggested by the interviewees, the degree of person-job fit might only be assessed in combination with application documents and a job interview. Profile information are considered as being merely sufficient for an estimation for the degree of fit. In contrast, Facebook is regarded as a private social networking site which should not be screened by recruiters, firstly, due to ethical and legal reasons, secondly, as it rarely includes relevant, professional information which might serve to estimate the degree of person-job fit. Most interviewees highlighted that Facebook usually is utilized for marketing purposes and employer branding, however, for recruiting purposes, it is restricted to posting job offers on the corporate website. Other recruiting activities such as screening and active sourcing should rather be applied via LinkedIn or Xing.

Finally, it is to be concluded that the traditional selection and recruitment process cannot completely be replaced by tools which the social networking sites Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing comprise - not today and probably not in the near future. However, the four main elements of the selection and recruitment process, namely the publication job postings, screening of submitted application documents, selection of candidates and conducting of job interviews, might be simplified by utilizing SNS. As stated above, SNS prove to be valuable for the publication of job postings on the corporate website. Moreover, SNS involve the advantage of being suitable for screening mechanisms. Additionally, referring to active sourcing, professional SNS might simplify the filtering of candidates according to relevant information. However, all these functions summarize what SNS overall prove to be to recruiters: *assistance tools* for the selection and recruitment process. Utilizing social networking sites as assistance tools simplifies and eventually might shorten the traditional selection and recruitment process as it is executed by recruiters. Nevertheless, applying an *assistance* tool includes the notion that this tool does not do more or less as *assist* a traditional process in a new way and hence, it does not *replace* it. Some elements of the traditional process, for instance the job interview, cannot be replaced by information which are given online (within a profile), as the job interview is considered to be the only element which reliably proves whether a person fits to a job. The findings indicate that SNS will further play a role in the selection and recruitment processes, they will develop and become even more multifaceted than they already are, including different features which might prove helpful for these processes. However, they simply will not be able to replace job interviews as these represent the only option recruiters currently can think of, which enables them to assess the degree of person-job fit before the candidate actually has been hired.

6.1 Limitations

The results of this research are limited by a variety of factors which are related to the interviews. First of all, this research has been of a small scale as only eight interviews have been conducted due to the limited time (ten weeks) and scope of this

paper. Thus, the interview results indicate a tendency with regard to recruiters' and consultants' opinion and experience of SNS as assistance tools for the selection of job candidates, however, they might not prove to be representative and generalizable if the amount of interviewees would be increased. Conducting a research which focuses on the future, a longitudinal study including a large amount of interviewees would prove to be more reliable and generalizable, as well as it would provide a clear tendency of how selection via SNS is developing. Furthermore, the interview partners are represented by seven Germans and one Austrian, thus, the results are not representative within an international context. Besides this, three different interview methods have been applied, namely telephone interviews, email interviews and personal interviews. Thus, the individual type of method might have affected the outcome of the interview. Email interviews might be biased as interviewees are not required to respond spontaneously, thus, they might express ideas, other than their own ones, which they originally gained from discussions with colleagues or from researching. With regard to both email and telephone interviews, non-verbal cues could not be analyzed or taken into consideration, thus, these results are purely based on verbal content. Concluding, the personal interview might have delivered more in-depth results compared to the other interview methods, which would affect the interview outcomes.

6.2 Implications

From a practical perspective, it can be highlighted that this research might support recruiters who have not started utilizing SNS for selection purposes yet. It points out that professional social networking sites such as LinkedIn and Xing are perceived by practitioners as being more reliable and helpful compared to the private network Facebook. Additionally, this research might raise awareness to the three factors knowledge, skills and personality traits which commonly are considered to be indicating the degree of person-job fit. Consequently, by being aware of these factors and identifying requirements for a position in advance, recruiters become capable of quickly screening profiles for relevant information. Additionally, besides utilizing SNS for screening mechanisms, recruiters might be triggered to start considering alternative recruiting methods such as the publication of job postings or active sourcing. However, they also might rethink to what extent it would be helpful to them at all to apply SNS as assistance tools for the selection process. Depending on their individual selection and recruitment process, SNS might not even be 'assisting' this process. Besides that, this research can also be relevant to job seekers as it partly advises candidates with regard to which information should be included in social networking profiles, and which better should be excluded. Thinking from the perspective of a recruiter might help them to rearrange their LinkedIn or Xing profile in a clear manner. Furthermore, form a scientific point of view, this research has connected two separate fields of research in HRM, namely recruiting via SNS with the concept of person-job fit. Current research highlights which opportunities and challenges SNS represent to recruiters and HR managers, however, many studies deal with social media recruitment in general. However, this research goes one step further, connecting the emerging subject of social networking sites with the highly important person-job fit as determinant for success of an employer-employee relationship, providing findings how SNS can be easily applicable for the selection process. Future research might further link SNS with the concept of person-job fit in form of analytical software programs which might automatically search for candidates and assess them on basis of algorithms which compare candidate requirements entered by the recruiter with information provided within user profiles. However,

developments with regard to the combination of selection and social networking sites have just started and it is questionable to what extent they might really be able to affect recruiters' work.

7. ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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9. APPENDIX

9.1 Interview Questions for Recruiters

9.1.1 *In English*

General Questions

1. How many candidates do you select and recruit per month?
2. How does the selection process of job candidates look like and which tools do you use for the selection of job candidates?

SNS-focused Questions

3. For which reasons does your company use social networking sites for the selection job candidates and at which points of time do you use them? (e.g. before job interview, before hiring)
4. In your opinion, is it possible to reliably measure job-relevant applicant information such as knowledge, skills and abilities within the context of SNS, and why?
5. vfcvWhy and when did your company start using SNS for selection and recruitment?
6. Does the utilization of SNS for the selection of job candidates save time and accordingly shorten hiring cycles?
7. How does the usage of SNS within the selection of employees change the HR processes in your organization? (e.g. additional jobs, division of work?)

Opinion-based Questions

8. What, in your opinion, are general advantages and challenges (or concerns) of using social networking sites in the context of selecting job candidates?
9. What do you consider to be differences of Facebook, LinkedIn and Xing for selection purposes?

10. How, in your opinion will the future of selection via SNS in your company look like? Will utilization decrease or increase and why? (For your company, in general?)

9.1.2 *In German*

Generelle Fragen
1. Wieviele Bewerber stellen Sie monatlich ein?
2. Wie gestaltet sich der Auswahlprozess der Bewerber und welche Mittel nutzen Sie, um Bewerber auszuwählen? (z.B. traditionelles Durchgehen der Bewerbungen, Überprüfung sozialer Netzwerke)

SNS-bezogene Fragen
3. Inwiefern und an welcher Stelle nutzt Ihre Firma Soziale Netzwerke für die Auswahl von Bewerbern?
4. Können Ihrer Meinung nach positionsrelevante Bewerberinformationen wie Kenntnisse, Fähigkeiten und Charakterzüge, die innerhalb Sozialer Netzwerke veröffentlicht werden, zuverlässig gemessen werden, und warum?
5. Wann und aus welchem Grund hat Ihre Firme damit begonnen, Soziale Netzwerke für die Selektion und die Rekrutierung von Kandidaten zu nutzen?
6. Hilft Ihnen der Gebrauch von Sozialen Netzwerken dabei, den Auswahl- und Rekrutierungsprozess zu verkürzen?
7. Inwiefern verändert der Gebrauch von Sozialen Netzwerken innerhalb des Auswahlprozesses die allgemeinen Personalabwicklungen in Ihrer Firma? (z.B. zusätzliche Anstellungen, Arbeitsaufteilung)

Meinungsbezogene Fragen
8. Was sind Ihrer Meinung nach Vor- und Nachteile (oder Bedenken) hinsichtlich der Nutzung von Sozialen Netzwerken für den Auswahl- und Rekrutierungsprozess?
9. Was betrachten Sie als wesentlichen Unterschiede von Facebook, LinkedIn und Xing für den Auswahlprozess?
10. Wie wird Ihrer Meinung in Zukunft der Auswahlprozess von Bewerbern in Ihrer Fima aussehen? Wird der Gebrauch von Sozialen Netzwerken steigen oder sinken? (z.B. für Sie, allgemein)

9.2 Interview Questions for Consultants
9.2.1 *In English*

General Questions
1. How many clients do consult on a monthly basis?
2. What are your clients' reasons and motivations to contact you?

SNS-focused Questions
3. How can companies use SNS for Selection and Recruitment?

4. Which SNS can be used most efficiently for the reasons and what are differences? (Facebook versus LinkedIn and Xing)
5. In your opinion, is it possible to reliably measure job-relevant applicant information such as knowledge, skills and abilities within the context of SNS, and why?
6. Which advantages offer SNS your clients, and which risks are there on the contrary?
7. Which legal or ethical risks exists when companies use SNS for selection and recruitment purposes?

Opinion-based Questions
8. In your opinion, which role will SNS play in terms of the selection and recruitment process in the future?

9.2.2 *In German*

Generelle Fragen
1. Wieviele Kunden beraten Sie monatlich?
2. Was sind die Gründe Ihrer Kunden, dass sie sich an Sie wenden?

SNS-bezogene Fragen
3. Wie können Firmen Soziale Netzwerke generell zur Personalgewinnung beziehungsweise zur Personalauswahl nutzen? (z.B. Veröffentlichung von Stellenangeboten, Suche nach Fachkräften)
4. Welche Sozialen Netzwerke sind hierzu am besten geeignet, beziehungsweise wo liegen Unterschiede? (Facebook versus LinkedIn und Xing)
5. Können Ihrer Meinung nach positionsrelevante Bewerberinformationen wie Kenntnisse, Fähigkeiten und Charakterzüge, die innerhalb Sozialer Netzwerke veröffentlicht werden, zuverlässig gemessen werden, und warum?
6. Welche Vorteile bieten Soziale Netzwerke Ihren Kunden, und welche Risiken stehen diesen gegenüber?
7. Welche rechtlichen oder ethischen Risiken gibt es, Soziale Netzwerke innerhalb der Personalgewinnung und – auswahl zu nutzen?

Meinungsbezogene Fragen
8. Welche Rolle werden Soziale Medien Ihrer Meinung nach in Zukunft für den Auswahlprozess von Mitarbeitern spielen?