

An Exploration of the Role of Social Media Platforms in the Employee Recruitment Process

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Abstract

If the explosion of professional and social networking media has radically changed the way in which people interact and communicate with each other both personally and within the workplace (McFarland and Ployhart 2015), what does this mean for the business and practice of HRM and more definitively what is its role in the recruitment process? There has been a relative paucity of empirical research exploring the processes and procedures individuals and their organisations utilise with respect to employing social media in the workplace, and specifically within the recruitment process. This gives rise to a critical gap in knowledge and understanding about social media in HRM practice. Utilising Jeske and Holland's (2017) conceptual framework which explores the legal moral and ethical tensions and dilemmas associated with the use of social media within the HRM context, this inquiry explores what the role of social media is within the recruitment process, and more specifically its use during the attraction campaign. It also addresses how individuals and their organisations use social media for the purposes of recruitment in the context of HRM practice? It questions whether individuals/organisations consider the use of social media in the selection process to be morally or ethically unfair? Finally it explores what meaning do those responsible for recruitment attach to their experiences when using social media for recruitment purposes and whether there are perceived as a consequences. Utilising an exploratory interpretivist methodology, the research analyses the meanings those individuals/organisations directly involved with the use of social media in recruitment, attach to their experiences. The findings confirm a dual use of social media by employers, connected with a belief that strengthened connections with potential applicants are possible, alongside the original intended use as an attraction tool. This research uncovered a haphazard approach by employers in controlling employee's use of corporate social media accounts and a blurring of the boundary between what is public and private. The thesis concludes by highlighting a need for further research and recommendations for HRM practice.

Chapter 1 – Introduction

1.1 Introduction

Technological evolution and the disruptive nature of social media in the twenty first century workplace is a central concern of this thesis. The relationship between the role of social media in the recruitment process and the tensions connected with the respect to the use of social media in recruitment and selection are explored throughout this thesis, although the emphasis concentrates on issues connected with the lack of strategic approach employers adopt when incorporating social media in their day to day HRM practice. A secondary layer is connected with the opaque nature of the use of social media beyond the first step in the recruitment process. Extending Jeske and Holland's (2017) conceptual framework, this research delves deeper into the call for an examination of concerns related to the use of social media in the recruitment phase of engaging new employees and how there are legal, moral and ethical issues to be considered. This research also extends Jeske and Holland's framework by exploring the perception that the use of social media for recruitment (particularly during the attraction stage) is devoid of any recruiter bias.

One of the key turning points in the technological world was the advent of social media platforms. The speed at which social media evolved in terms of its embeddedness in everyday life was largely unforeseen by those in the business world. Social media professional platforms span generational, cultural, geographic (and other) divides and provide a perception of immediacy and total connectedness for all users in an unprecedented manner. It could be concluded social media is not of little concern for most organisations.

There is rarely a news cycle which does not include press coverage associated with the use of social media for the greater good in society (Chaterjee, 2017), or conversely calling someone in the public eye to answer for an errant or inappropriate Tweet (sometimes so old it is hard for the Tweeter to remember context or sentiment) (Stewart and Elgot, 2017). Continuous accusations social media could be linked to childhood obesity (Barnett, 2014), rising incidences of cyber bullying (Gray, 2017) and increasing cybercrime (Illmer, 2016). Further, how its evolution and penetration into everyday life is causing individuals to feel sadder (Dent, 2017), happier (Sanghani, 2017), closer (Dunn, 2014) and sometimes more distant or isolated in society than ever before (Hosie, 2017). In the recent past, there have even been claims the use of social media was in-part responsible for the outcome of the presidential election in the USA (Hern, 2017). Also fake news (BBC Politics, 2017), real news, censorship, libertarianism, social media and data mining (Miller, 2017), informing public opinion, as a mechanism to alert loved ones to a person's whereabouts during a global crisis (Zorthian, 2017).

However, what is clear is the phenomenon of social media is not going anywhere and its ubiquity and infiltration into individuals lives might be considered to be all encompassing for some. The use of social media and its propensity to create a permanent digital record also raises interesting questions connected with the level at which individual's experience a world in which constant digital surveillance has become the norm. McFarland and Ployhart (2015, p.1653) suggest the world is in the midst of a social revolution whereby humans are stimulated by the interaction between connectivity and technology and they also suggest social media has the potential to theoretically revolutionise organisational behaviour and as such, it gives rise to a persistent call from management researchers that this subject is explored in

more detail (Jeske and Holland, 2017; Jeske and Schultz, 2016; Kluemper, 2013; McFarland and Ployhart 2015). They all suggested at a time when organisations are searching for the best way and to what extent they should integrate social media into their daily commercial activities, there is a critical paucity of guidelines or best practice, or more simply a way in which to separate fact from fiction.

Sites such as Facebook, Twitter and LinkedIn are among the most popular destination social media platforms. It is estimated that over 85% of the global population today have access to the internet at home, at work, or via mobile technology and this figure continues to grow (Curtis, 2013). The previous decade has signalled an explosion of social media activity, which includes both professional and personal facets and presents a significant challenge for organisations in harnessing the commercial benefits of social technology, whilst protecting their employer brand and reputation. Unfortunately, the call for Human Resource Management (HRM) practitioners to address social media has been largely reactive because of a perceived reputation risk and as a result of highly publicised public relations disasters relating to the inappropriate use of social media platforms by employees. Nevertheless, it has become increasingly important for HRM practitioners to emerge from the dark and begin to consider the broader implications of social media technology in terms of their strategic and administrative practice.

Denying the prevalence of social media and its penetration into everyday lives is futile and certainly nobody can deny its relative permanence however, the use of social media presents a unique challenge for HR practitioners and organisations. One particular concern is connected with the role of social media in recruitment and more specifically, the processes related to the attraction and recruitment of individuals to particular job roles. The scale of social media and the speed at which it

is evolving, means there is a difficulty for HR practitioners in integrating social media into the recruitment process, because of the number of legal, ethical and business related questions which must be addressed before proceeding, and further by the lack of empirical research that has been carried out to-date, addressing the role of social media in recruitment. Consequently this inquiry will explore the role of social media in recruitment. This chapter outlines the rationale for the research, the context and background regarding the use of social media in the recruitment process, further it confirms the aims and objectives in this inquiry. The chapter also outlines a summary of the literature which is critically analysed in the literature chapter. A framework for the research design is outlined and the key findings and emergent themes are briefly discussed.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives and Research Questions

Utilising an exploratory research framework, the aim of this research project is to explore the use of social media platforms as a tool in the recruitment process within the broader HRM practice context. The research was required because there is a significant and critical gap in knowledge related to using social media in the recruitment process. Following the extensive literature review, the findings support a contention that employers' have a general lack of awareness regarding the complexities of using social media for the purposes of recruitment. Throughout this research project a particular challenge was uncovering the nature and extent to which organisations are engaging in the use of social media in the context of day-to-day HRM practice. Many individuals and organisations allude to the utilisation of social media in their day-to-day practice, but felt the intensity of its use was not significant enough to warrant further examination. Conversely, within academia there is a call for research to help inform legal and ethical challenges for employers and to

illuminate the practical value for employers in their use of social media for recruitment. This presents a conflict which must be addressed if the topic is to be progressed in the research and the research objectives are as follows:

- To explore what the role of social media is within the HRM context including the nature and extent of the use of social media in the recruitment process and particularly within attraction of candidates, questioning how extensive it is, who in the organisation is carrying it out, which platforms and how they are routinely accessed.
- Interpret the meaning those involved with the use of social media for recruitment activities attach to their experiences with particular emphasis on the perceived business risks and benefits associated with the practice
- Explore how individuals/organisations justify their practice and examine what perceived consequences there are of such practices

Extending this further the research questions are as follow:

1. What is the role of social media in the recruitment process, specifically during the attraction campaign?
2. How do individuals/organisations use social media for the purposes of recruitment in the context of HRM practice?
3. Why do individuals/organisations consider the use of social media in the selection process to be morally or ethically unfair?
4. What meanings do those responsible for recruitment attach to their experiences when using social media for recruitment purposes?
5. What risks or benefits do individuals perceive as a consequence of their using social media for recruitment purposes?

1.3 The Significance of the Study

Knowledge about the extent of the use of social media for employment purposes in the UK is limited and beyond the outputs from a small number of narrow industry funded studies (Job Vite National Recruiter Survey, 2015) it is difficult to gauge the true picture of the practice. Furthermore, the theoretical link between employers' motivation to utilise social media for recruitment and the actual practice of undertaking the activity remains a relatively unexplored research area. The use of social media for the purposes of business activities transcends the nature and type of work being undertaken by individuals.

Commercial use of social media is by no means novel, its ubiquity in both business activities and its use by individuals on a personal level has been commented on by numerous authors, whose research focused on various aspects of social media, such as: defining what it is; understanding users' perceptions of their online privacy; what legal concerns surround it; and more recently to underpin social media use in HRM, (Amichai-Hamburger and Vinitzky, 2010; Boyd and Ellison, 2008; Bohnert and Ross, 2010; Kluemper and Rosen 2009, 2012; Madera, 2012; Qi and Edgar-Neville, 2011). Each author is united in the pursuit of defining and understanding the impact of social media on organisations and in society. That said however, the study of the use of social media in HRM is a quickly evolving area of research. Bondarouk and Olivas-Lujan (2013, p. xi) commented in the foreword (*Advanced Series in Management: Social Media in Human Resources Management*), in a similar manner to other fields of management research, social media has in effect begun to replace the more traditionally accepted forms of media and communication within organisations which has required "the HRM business to

reconsider its conventional ways of networking branding and managing current and potential employees”.

Studies have begun to explore the use of social media and particularly social networking sites (SNS) as useful platforms to identify candidate personality traits during recruitment and selection processes (Kluemper and Rosen, 2012). Other studies have attempted to identify the relevant issues for human resource practitioners (Cavico *et al*, 2013; Davison *et al*, 2011; James, 2011; Madia, 2011; Ollington *et al*, 2013; Solvensky and Ross, 2013;). In industry, on a smaller scale the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS) *The use of social media in the recruitment process* (2013) and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development (CIPD) *Putting Social media to work* (2014) and a series connected with *Unconscious Bias* (2018) in an attempt to address the enormity of social media and its impact in the workplace. Some of their most recent working papers have focused almost wholly on the impact of social media on existing employees but only make limited reference to the role of social media for recruitment. For example, the majority of studies have concentrated on the use of social media in disciplinary and grievance procedure, employees’ misuse of social media technologies, cyber deviance and cyber loafing as some of the key potential issues for employers to have to address and manage. Interpretation of the data which they have collected must be approached with caution, because sample sizes are minimal and fall short of uncovering the extent of organisational use of social media during recruitment and selection activities.

Significantly, the majority of empirical research at present steers clear of delving into the ethical and legal considerations for employers reviewing applicants’ social media activities (Kluemper and Rosen, 2012). However, Clark and Roberts

(2010) examined whether the use of social media in recruitment and selection processes can be considered a socially responsible practice. They concluded a potential discord between how individuals use social media at work and in their personal lives and how employers view the use of these social sites by their employees. Further, they recommended employers should spend time examining their business practices, emphasising how those practices might impact on society as a whole rather than relying on social media users to moderate their individual behaviour. Companies such as Ryanair (Morris, 2017), Waitrose (Smithers, 2012), Pepsi (Hobbs, 2017) and HMV (Jones, 2013) have all fallen foul of poor management of their social media activities.

Cavico *et al*, (2013) addressed the implications for organisations' management teams concentrating on the legal, ethical and practical considerations associated with the use of social media in the workplace. However, the foundation of the inquiry is embedded in the American legislative system and is therefore limited in scope to be replicated within British studies due to fundamental differences in employment legislation. Review of the current literature has revealed a scarcity of academic investigation into the extent of the use of social media by employers but at least anecdotally there appears to be a general acceptance employers' are undertaking some activity during the recruitment processes. Nevertheless there remains a critical requirement for further exploration of the topic. Although their paper focuses solely on Generation Y workers (Pyöriä, *et al*, 2017), Heinze and Faour (2013), outlined the need for further examination of the use of social media to attract applicants during the recruitment process.

There is some debate among researchers and in wider society, concerned with the scale, power and nature of the social media phenomenon. As a result, it is

has become an exhaustive academic challenge to define the numerous strands of social media what it is; what it means for society; who is responsible for it; why it is important and a variety of other such questions. Consequently, these unanswered and emerging questions, demand an explanation of the phenomena and an answer which utilises language that is both meaningful and easy to comprehend regardless of the intended audience. Considered collectively these issues present a significant challenge for researchers in terms of the provision of a practical framework for employers and HRM practitioners to manage their social media activities. The next section of this chapter addresses a brief synopsis of the key themes emerging from the literature concerned with this topic.

1.4 Summary of Literature Themes

In order to comprehensively explore the use of social media in recruitment, it was necessary to understand the technical process in much greater detail and within the context of the environment in which it is being employed. Given the complex nature of recruitment and its elements and the inability to truly separate all of the variables from the process of recruitment and selection as a whole, it would have been misrepresentative to focus wholly on one (recruitment) without at least providing an explanation and definition of both (recruitment and selection). In order to fully appreciate the depth of this research, it is important to also consider the contextual conditions of the labour market in the UK at present.

The framework used in this particular research is proposed by Jeske and Holland (2017) which outlined the requirements for employers to consider the legal, moral and ethical issues connected with utilising social media in the HRM context. They specifically hold that there are concerns for employers at both pre and post hire stages and warn of potential issues for employers to consider. In addition, the

majority of recent academic attention addressed social media in business and management and further focused on its impact on human behaviour, its use for commercial business purposes. The extent of current research lies primarily within Information Systems (Aral, Dellarocas and Godes, 2013) and Marketing (Khang, Ki and Ye, 2010). Nevertheless, Orlikowski and Scott (2008, p.434) also argued there is an “astounding paucity” of research connected with information technology in management research and they posit while undertaking a quick review of organisational research, worryingly it appears as if “technology is largely absent from the world of organising”. Research into the use of social media in recruitment has attracted meagre attention relative to its position within broader employment relations issues and Silverman *et al*, (2013) in conjunction with the CIPD argued with the maturation of social media comes an expectation of greater employee voice within organisations, which presents a significant challenge from an Employee Relations perspective. They give some attention to the concept of employee voice and commented there were potentially damaging consequences for organisations choosing to ignore the reach of social media and finally they underpin the benefits it can bring to their workforce if it is managed properly.

Throughout the literature review, a common concern which emerged was focused on the lack of academic attention on recruitment processes (Breugh and Starke, 2000; Breugh, 2013; Darnold and Rynes, 2013; Davison *et al*, 2011, 2012; Rynes and Cables, 2003). The gap in knowledge within this area could be attributed to the apparent indifference of management researchers, or an inability to observe the consequences of social media use in recruitment processes within a live context. Alternatively, it could be the case employers’ perceive they are already reaping the

return on their investment and do not look to academic circles to provide practical solutions to their management problems (particularly in relation to social media).

Schmitt and Kim (2008, p.300) maintained one of the most important decisions an organisation can make is the one to employ people. They argued most (if not all) of an organisations' activities can be attributed to, or are accounted for, by their human capital. The decision to employ individuals to satisfy a business requirement is made up of a number of elements, however principally it will be to recruit and select the most appropriate person with the right skills at the right time, for the right role. Although, simplistic in those terms, in reality it is a much more complex set of decisions often guided by external factors uncontrollable by the organisation. Dineen and Soltis (2011) contended that irrespective of the type of organisation, or industry they operate in, an employer's commercial success is directly correlated to the type of individuals they employ. A central and obvious concern in this regard is related to understanding the elements which make up the recruitment process from the employers perspective and in the majority of cases, it is a process which is fragmented and generally not comparable between most organisations even those operating within the same industry.

In the academic arena, several models of recruitment research have been identified and they were intended to set out and provide a *capture all* framework of the type of research activities which occur relating to the process of recruitment. Darnold and Rynes (2013, p.105) seem to have provided the most comprehensive model which concentrated on dividing recruitment research into; 1) recruitment context, 2) recruitment activities and decisions, 3) recruitment processes and recruitment outcomes (Fig 1.1). The scope of this research aims to explore the use

of social media for recruitment in both the areas of recruitment activities and decisions and recruitment processes.

For the purposes of this particular exploratory research, the primary focus is connected with the processes and procedures involved in recruitment activities. Many authors have put forward various definitions of recruitment, however Barber (1998, p.5) rather succinctly suggested “recruitment includes those practices and activities carried out by an organisation with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees”.

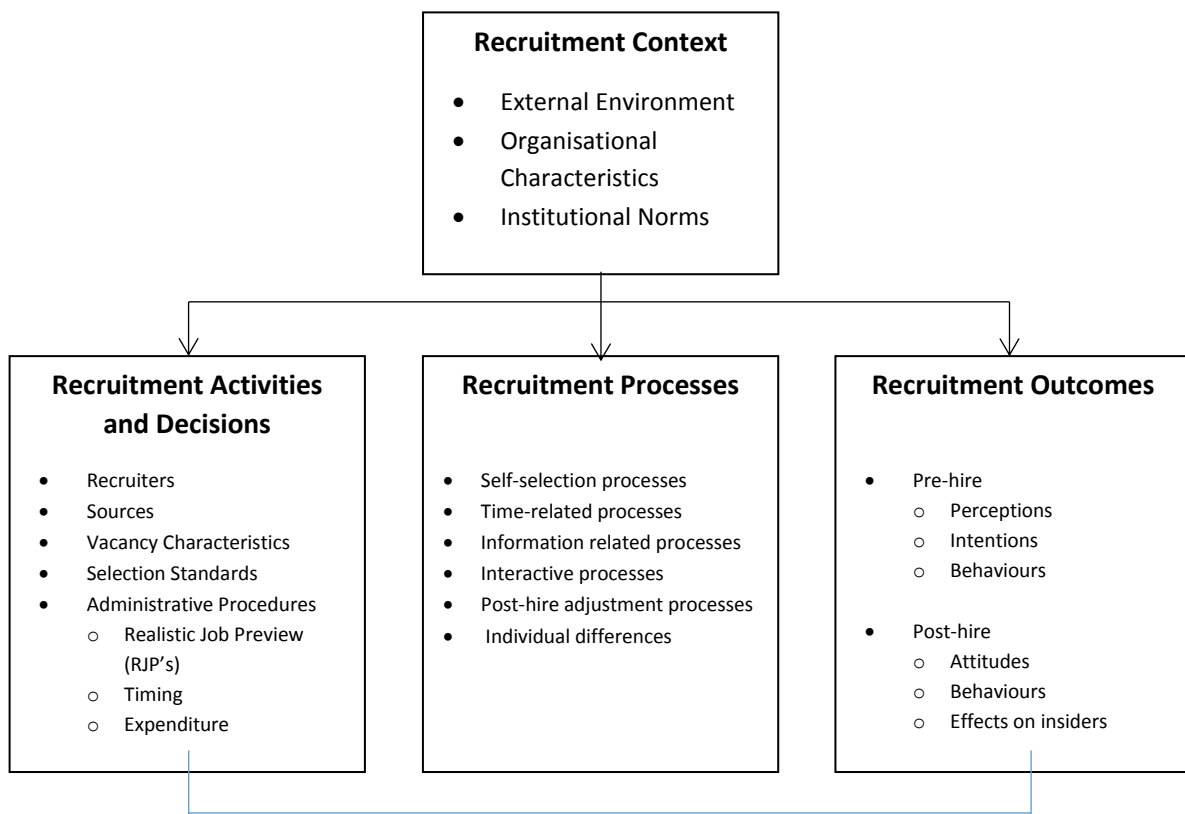


Figure 1.1 Recruitment in the Twenty First Century (Cited in Darnold and Rynes, 2013, p.59)

For the purposes of this particular exploratory research, the primary focus is connected with the processes and procedures involved in recruitment activities. Many authors have put forward various definitions of recruitment, however Barber (1998, p.5) rather succinctly suggested “recruitment includes those practices and

activities carried out by an organisation with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees”. Consequently, as a result of outlining a definition of recruitment it would be remiss not to also include a definition of the selection process, which Orlitzky (2007, p.273) described as being the HRM process which “pares down the number of applicants”. In addition, he extends this to encompass recruitment and argued whereas selection is covered by the former definition; “recruitment is comprised of those elements which serve to expand the potential pool of suitable applicants”. Attempting to separate recruitment and selection as two completely divorced entities is almost impossible and indeed is unnecessary because they are not mutually exclusive activities. As such, it may be sufficient to identify and discuss both recruitment and selection in such a way that attempts to draw attention to their relationship but also maintains respect for their individual characteristics.

Breaugh and Starke (2000, p.407) argued;

“...in planning a strategy for generating applicants one of the fundamental questions which should be addressed is for the organisation to identify; what type of individual does the organisation want to recruit (e.g. what knowledge skills and abilities are important? Is a diverse applicant pool desired?)”.

More importantly these are the types of questions any employer needs to consider at the outset of the recruitment process and they could be addressed through the use of social media. Breaugh and Starke (2000, p.409) also ask what recruitment resources should the organisation use to reach the desired applicant (e.g. web/internet presence versus job fairs). The speed of the message delivery in utilising social media means it is possible for the employer to advertise a job vacancy almost immediately, as opposed to other less contemporary routes which could be more time consuming (e.g. job fairs). However, there is a question about whether the speed at which employers wish to advertise unites with the requirements of the role

and the potentially high numbers of irrelevant applicants this approach may generate (Wanous, 1992). Several authors, including Rynes (1991) question the wisdom of organisations simply trying to attract as many applicants/candidates as possible without having a structured plan (setting out the process and its requirements in detail) in place prior to embarking on the recruitment process.

Breaugh (2013) commented on previous studies into recruitment and suggested research into recruitment processes had failed to address several important issues, stating almost all research relating to web-based recruitment practice appeared after 2000, which meant that researchers have little to draw from. Notwithstanding this contention, a view is still required about the literature relating to recruitment activities prior to this. There is a further question concerned with whether the two-way communication on social media between an employer and job applicants has facilitated a replacement for Colarelli's (1984) study (fig 1.1), which indicated Realistic Job Previews (RJP) were most successful when applicants interacted with the employer in a face-to-face situation.

There is not current research directly relating to this proposition, however it is likely further changes in technology and its influence on the way in which employers recruit, will require further exploration. Breaugh and Starke (2000) argued there is a critical need for research into recruitment sources as they claimed no recruitment study addresses the issues of attracting attention to and generating interest in jobs from applicants in the recruitment process. Their article was written at a time prior to the emergence of social media to the degree that it is prolific as it is today and also at a time when available jobs were in plentiful supply and the market was strong. As such, the context of recruitment research may have shifted and Taylor and Collins (2000, p.304) argued "effective recruitment is potentially the most critical human

resource management process for organisations to remain competitive”. This is as true today as it was then and probably even more so in the wake of the recent economic crisis.

Smedley (2014) maintained the role of advertising in recruitment is the most crucial element in the process and the breadth of choice and possibility which both active and passive jobs seekers have on the Internet, requires organisations to be shrewd enough to use the most appropriate language and terminology so as to be able to confidently reach their target audience. Whilst undertaking a review of recruitment in the twenty first century, Rynes and Cables (2003, p.70) suggested areas for future research and stated that the developments in recruitment due to technological advances remain almost completely un-investigated by researchers. Breugh (2012, p.390) echoed Rynes and Cables claim and he argued prior to 2000 there is no research to discuss in terms of web-based recruiting.

Dineen and Soltis (2011) suggested regardless of the size or type organisation being examined, it is almost universally understood the success of the organisation will largely depend on the type of people it employs. However, where the organisation sources these employees' from is another matter, which will be addressed later. Additionally, it could be argued that employees within an organisation can contribute to the competitive advantage and this raises an interesting question about whether the use of social media for recruitment purposes is a form of talent management activity, which in turn enhances an organisations competitive advantage. Cappelli (2008, p.2) argued very little has been happening in terms of talent management in the last decade or so and organisations are shying away from enhancing their internal labour capital (through development activities) because of a fear of their employees being *poached* by competitors. This concern

has assisted in providing the boundary for this particular research inquiry, because it would be unrealistic in scope to attempt to address both an organisations internal and external labour supply during the exploration and further it is unlikely the organisations would be undertaking extensive internal recruitment activities using social media platforms.

Smith and Rupp (2004, p.66) discussed the effect the Internet has had on the way in which organisations carry out their recruitment activities and they argued;

“...the internet has drastically changed the face of recruitment. Employers must now actively market themselves by instituting a well-implemented recruitment programme to find better quality candidates and improve hiring decisions, all in less time and at a lower cost”.

As recruiting organisations could use social media platforms to search for and attract both active and passive job seekers, there is a possible question about whether the organisations' equal opportunities policies and procedures are being adhered to and within that concern, there are questions about the legal and ethical concerns arising as a result of the use of social media for recruitment. Employers need to aware of the markets from which they are trying to attract applicants/candidates, because emerging social media platforms such as Snapchat, Instagram and Pintrest (used in conjunction with Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook) may allow them to target a much broader range of potential applicants.

So much of social media use in the workplace and in particular within HRM is connected with brand image and public relations. Henderson and Bowley (2010) posit the internet and new technologies are bringing about a rapid change to organisations communication channels and public relations activities. There is also another viewpoint which suggests the use of the internet and use of social media for recruitment and screening purposes is a morally hazardous activity and can lead to the erosion of social capital within organisations.

The conceptual framework for this research is realised in the view of surveillance. Typically surveillance in the workplace is considered to be included under within the context of the information technology policies. Organisations do not usually refer directly to the monitoring of employees emails and telephone calls as surveillance activities, moreover they consider it as a company right particularly where the employee is utilising company property. The surveillance literature explore surveillance theories at a societal level, however it is clear that their makeup can be applied to the employment relationship and further this could be extended to potential employees. Having briefly explored the current literature relating to social media and recruitment and surveillance, the next section briefly discusses justification for the methodology.

1.5 Overview of the Methodology

The methodological approach employed within this study was qualitative and used an exploratory case study as the framework for the techniques and guide the research design. Consequently, this methodological choice necessitated an extensive review of the literature related to recruitment practices and social media use in the context of employment and within broader HRM practice. It also involved a comprehensive examination of the literature which included (but was not limited to – in the order) the following areas;

- Human Resource Management
- Recruitment Research
- Recruitment and Selection
- e-Recruitment processes
- Social Media
- Social Media Marketing and Employer Brand
- Changing Technologies
- Social Media and the Law
- Observation/Surveillance and the Digital Panopticon

The data collection phase of this inquiry employed the use of face-to-face interviews (where possible), a review of organisational documents and a review of data collected from the internet. Interviews were audio recorded (with the participant's permission) and permission/consent was captured both in writing and orally prior to any interviews undertaken. Confirmation of the participant's right to anonymity and confidentiality surrounding the study was confirmed at the outset of the interviews and the main purpose of the interviews was to capture the multiple perspectives of those involved with utilising social media during the recruitment process within their respective organisations. The original intention was to source potentially suitable participants via their intensity of use of social media for recruitment purposes (e.g. early-adopter/established-user; regular user/no strategy; new user). It was important that the frequency/familiarity of use was not uniform across all participants, because the variability assists in providing a broader range of perceptions and experiences from which to draw final conclusions. There was no narrowing of selection criteria by any particular industry or sector as the research is not intended to provide generalisability in the findings, rather the heterogeneous nature of HRM processes and specifically that of recruitment mean, comparability between the cases is difficult.

Nonetheless, there was likely to be some similarities and as such, where possible, the appropriate comparisons and conclusions are drawn. Following the identification of suitable cases, initial contact was made via telephone or email and requested further information. All participants were requested to provide any supplementary commercial evidence such as copies of policies and procedures where possible. This documentation may include, but is not limited to;

- Policies and procedures relating to recruitment and selection

- Any other documents identified by the researcher or participants as being useful to this particular research

1.6 Considerations for the Methodological Approach

Jeske and Shultz (2016) argued the current state of knowledge regarding social media in recruitment (and selection) is ambiguous at best. There is little empirical evidence which supports the claim that social media in recruitment and selection is helpful. Their argument validates the main findings in this inquiry. Further, Bondarouk *et al* (2013, p. 24) suggested HR professionals “in future will need to possess knowledge about marketing and communication studies and web-based applications/develop new skills”. This research illuminates the extent to which social media is considered to be embedded across a number of the commercial functions within an organisation. Bondarouk *et al*, (2013, p. 24) also argued employers are increasingly using social media for recruitment because they perceived that the platforms are more common to job seekers and recruiters.

Essentially employers will spend time reviewing candidates’ social media because they can. In other words there is little to deter an employer from doing so while the legislation remains as ambiguous as it is. Thus, there is little in terms of vicarious liability for an employer engaging in this type of behaviour. What would deter them? Is there scope for the new law or regulation to deal with this in a way which might signal to other employers and organisations that this is a socially unacceptable practice? Probably not. There is simply no scope to control the boundary around which a genuinely engaging discussion can be achieved. Why does the employer search? There may be joint and several reasons. Some employing organisations argue it cheaper to recruit in this way or because of the time

consuming nature of volume recruitment or they even claim there is the potential for damage to the employers' commercial reputation.

These reasons also present a challenge for the organisations in terms of their legal and ethical obligations to current and future employees. There should be some consideration of the way in which an employer makes use of social media and attempts to address the main concerns. There is also a requirement to consider the effect this has on existing employees – are they worried about the scale of potential surveillance or observation?

Considering the main concerns for the justification of an exploratory method, it was noted that it is a relatively new contribution of knowledge to an existing phenomena. There is argument to support a number of approaches, however there is little in terms of substantial empirical data available as of yet and there is a persistent call from authors to address the shortfall in knowledge. Therefore there should be consideration of the types of discussions which can be had to ensure that the main considerations are addressed in this research.

It should be noted at this stage the use of a case study was considered in depth, however the nature of the boundary of a group of people as proposed by Yin (2014) meant that this thesis has adopted an exploratory interv=retivist approach, whilst utilising the principles of case study research. Yin (2014) proposed in order to have a suitable case study there was a requirement for at least six pieces of evidence to ensure that the scope of the case was wide enough. However, in the case of this exploration the evidence is limited because this is largely a new phenomenon. In practice it would have been useful and necessary to collect archival records but it was not possible as the archival records do not exist yet. Still, there was collection of recruitment and selection policies and further where possible a

collection online information such as screen shots from various platforms was utilised. Given the timing of Yin's proposal and the advancement of technology in the intervening years, it could be argued that there is methodological contribution in this thesis.

It would have been impossible for Yin to have foreseen quite how profound the impact of changing technologies might have in case study research and therefore his more traditional approach does not fully embrace the changing nature of the digital world. Because this research utilises case study principles it was necessary and sensible to first conduct a review of Yin's first proposal and then to consider the mechanisms by which he might have considered the veracity and suitability of information gathered from the web and from online sources. Consideration should be given to how far this can be extended in the longer-term. It is beyond the scope of this research inquiry to consider this in depth, however in view of the possible contribution there is argument that it could be extended further. There is much debate regarding the use of data collected from online sources (Cantrell and Lupinacci, 2007). The novelty of social media for the purposes of recruitment and selection bear some resemblance to the introduction of original HRM e-portal systems, but there is a further inconclusive method of exchange between the employer and the employee or applicant. There is no denying there is scope for the findings of this research to be considered in practice however, the sample provide such a diverse view it is difficult to argue a universally generalisable framework for all organisations.

Part of the central concern in examining this topic was related to the novelty of use of social media in the commercial setting. It was particularly evident in respect to HRM professionals and there appeared to be a nervousness associated with its use

in day-to-day activities, possibly as a result of an awareness of unnecessary digital observation or surveillance by employers. The prospective and possible uses of social media platforms to further enhance the recruitment process is arguably undoubtable.

1.7 Chapter Conclusion

It is clear from this chapter the nature of exploratory research generates several questions for the inquiry. Importantly it has also signalled the scale and breath of this thesis and how the fluid nature of the social media phenomenon created many challenges. The motivation for the study is clarified. It acknowledged the speed of evolution of technology and supported the claim that it presented a significant challenge in this particular research. The integration and use of social media platforms in the workplace has moved on considerably since the outset of this research. Nonetheless, the extent to which its use has been explored in practice remains limited. The following chapters in this thesis are concerned with an in-depth and critical analysis of the literature, the research methodology is outlined, the findings and discussion illuminate the realities of social media use in practice and finally the conclusion chapter brings together the inquiry and highlights the contribution to knowledge. The following chapter explores the key literatures connected with this exploration and concludes by providing a justification for the direction of the research.

Chapter 2 – Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

Jeske and Schultz (2015) proposed a requirement for an open and frank discussion with researchers and practitioners regarding the use of social media in recruitment, however, they also make some practical observations regarding the implications for employers. There are legal, moral and ethical considerations that must be addressed in order for the practice to grow and develop in a way that is legally defensible and further in a transparent, fair and meaningful engagement with private data which potentially could impact upon the employment relationship. The central framework in this thesis utilises Jeske and Holland's (2017) conceptual framework and is later adapted to include an extension of their framework as a result of the findings in this thesis. There are some considerations at both pre and post hire activity for employers which is vital to ensure legal, moral and ethical observation and compliance. Discussing other HRM functions Smith and Kidder (2010) outlined the key beneficial uses of social media such as collaborative opportunities for co-workers to discuss and share their knowledge.

In a similar fashion to the product life cycle (Moore, 1999; Vernon, 1966) the early adoption curve can be equally utilised to illustrate the adoption of social media by individuals to have a significant and relevant pertinence to this inquiry. The propensity for individuals to share their personal information on social media platforms (for some this has been ongoing for ten years or more) (Madden *et al*, 2013) creates a potential vulnerability when considering their future employment and whether this could be a hazardous activity (Zolkepli and Kamarulzaman, 2015). The adoption of social media in the workplace has been slower than personal adoption habits, but it has grown at an exponential rate. Further, research into the adoption

rates of social media by HRM departments or practitioners is extremely limited. However, Poba-Nzaou *et al* (2016) undertook a systematic review of the challenges associated with the use of social media in the context of HRM. Their Delphi study concluded the challenges for organisations wishing to adopt social media in their HRM practice broadly corresponded to the following issues. It is interesting to note the challenges did not specifically relate to the technology associated with social media, moreover they relate to existent internal and external factors. They identified various challenges relating back to the literature they identified, these included:

1. A lack of internal resources
2. The conservative attitude of managers

In addition, they revealed issues associated with social media platforms which included:

1. Not having a professional image and reputation on social media
2. The complexity and high speed evolution of social media
3. The uncertainty of the business value of social media
4. The quality of information provided by social media with regard to its relevance to jobs and work

These identified themes above are all indicative of the contrast between the perceived requirements for organisations to engage heavily with social media for the purposes of their day-to-day business activities. This chapter provides an overview of the current literature which is connected to the use of social media for recruitment in the context of HRM practice. Through exploring the literature related to social media and recruitment, the framework for the case study is introduced. It is important to set out the context of the literature review by first providing:

1. An explanation of the specific purpose for this particular case study
2. Comment on the previous treatment of the broad topic of social media in the workplace and social media in recruitment
3. An indication of the scope of the work presented in this chapter

One of the key purposes of undertaking the literature review was to explore previous studies specifically relating to social media and recruitment and more generally social media and recruitment independently. As a direct result of the novelty of this topic area, it was necessary to examine the scope and quality of recruitment research; social media in the workplace; social media and the law; surveillance theory and its use in HRM practice. The current research specifically focuses on social media and recruitment is situated in a limited number of small-scale studies. Consequently there is a genuine requirement for research which explores the use of social media for recruitment and research which particularly concentrates on the meanings individuals attach to their use of social media as they go about their daily recruitment activities. Although, explored in greater detail in the methodology chapter, the requirement and necessity for case study research into this topic is evidenced in this review of the literature, because employers appear to be embracing and utilising social media in their HRM activities without fully considering the potential risks.

2.2 Structure and Scope of the Chapter

Firstly the chapter will outline the current state of literature regarding recruitment research, exploring the research available currently, examining the nature of work and delving into the role of recruitment and recruitment processes and procedures in the context of HRM. The second part of the chapter will discuss recruitment and selection in a broader context and then proceed to narrow the focus to examine recruitment in detail, e-recruitment and recruitment and the use of social media. The third section of the chapter will explore social media, social media marketing and employer brand, changing technologies and social media and the law relating to recruitment practices. The final section of the chapter will examine the panoptic gaze

and the concept of surveillance both in society and more importantly in the workplace. This section concentrates on the changes in technology and their importance in the concept of surveillance. The purpose of including surveillance is to outline the conceptual framework in relation to this research and provides the lens through which the findings are to be explored.

As a consequence of considering Jeske and Holland's conceptual framework the chapter is organised to reflect three areas on which the literature focuses. In the first instance the literature explores recruitment and a central theme. It outlines where the recruitment processes is positioned within human resource management activities. In addition it explores the current position of research into the recruitment process. It aims to define what recruitment is, where social media is positioned within the process and considers other recruitment associated activities such as the use of e-recruitment systems, talent management, how employers attract candidates, their employer brand and how the increasing use of technology, AI and Algorithms to screen applicant information and associated issues with this practice. Finally the section concludes by summing up the salient points regarding the use social media in recruitment.

The second section of the literature review focuses on social media, its evolution and embeddedness in commercial activities. It explore the use of social media as a tool to increase effectiveness within the workplace and addresses how employers should be mindful of its day-to-day use. The legalities associated with the use of social media are then examined. It was decided that a comparative examination of the legislation both in the UK and USA wold be employed. The rational for doing so was connected with the obvious volume of use both at home and across the Atlantic. This was a useful exercise as it highlights the very different

approach being taken by individual countries in terms of composing new legislation. It was clear that there is some considerable work to be undertaken in the UK to address the historic nature of the law and how difficult it can be to apply these laws in an increasingly digital society.

The final section of the literature review chapter address the use of social media as a surveillance tool by employers. The section examines the concept of surveillance, its appropriateness as a useful terms in this context and the increasing vulnerability of individuals choosing to share personal sensitive information via online channels. The section begins by considering Betham's panoptic structure as a tool to control, albeit from largely within the penal system. Further, the section discusses Foucault's extension of the pantopticon to consider the digitalised nature of surveillance and its propensity to be harmful in society. Laterally, the section considers Haggartys assemblage theory and the potential for a manipulation of the individuals digital representation of their online behaviours which way be different to how they behave in the offline world.

2.3 Recruitment

2.3.1 Conceptual Framework Jeske and Holland's (2017)

Jeske and Holland's (2017) conceptual framework explores the key relevant issues associated with the scale of use of social media within HRM. Their suggested areas of concern provide a useful framework to help narrow the focus of this inquiry, and notably there is an extension of their finding which could be included in the pre-recruitment and selection issues. The concerted lack of strategic focus and/direction including development of supporting policy documentation highlights a potentially

vulnerable situation for organisations when faced with claims of unfair or discriminatory practices.

Table 2.1 Jeske and Holland’s (2017) Conceptual Framework connected with social media in HRM

Pre-recruitment and selection issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation management and employer branding • Cyber-vetting or data mining applicants via social media
Post-recruitment and selection concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting the organisational reputation and brand • Social media and competence • New HR risks

The also make some interesting recommendations as to how HR practitioners might address practical issues such as introduction of a code of conduct, by linking the code to training, avoiding unrealistic job previews to ensure management of applications expectations, strategic CPD, and address risk management as part of the HR agenda. They support a claim that increased education and awareness is vital form employers in terms of being able to successfully utilise social media in their day-to-day practice. They also give rise to questions connected with bias in the recruitment and selection process. This is something which is addressed elsewhere in the literature review chapter, but there is support for the argument that potentially the use of algorithms for screening and selection purposes and indeed for the purposes of attracting individual to an organisation might be considered inherently biased. Although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore whether this can be confirmed it is important to at least consider the context of the digitalised nature of their commercial activities. The literature review now explores the key debates

associated with Jeske and Holland's (2017) conceptual framework and considers the three main areas in this literature review.

2.3.2 Human Resource Management

It is important to consider the divisions between the theory of HRM and the simplicity of referring to an all-encompassing approach to HRM where employees are not treated individually. For example, consideration should be given to the differences between the approach an organisation adopts in terms of their employee relations and that of the policy documentation and procedures. They are usually treated separately both in the academy and in practice.

Before proceeding to examine recruitment research in more detail, a definition of HRM is outlined. HRM is defined as "involving the effective management of people to achieve organisational goals" (Greenwood, 2002, p.261). Human resource management can in turn be defined as "the process of analysing and managing an organisation's human resource needs to ensure satisfaction of its strategic objectives" (Hellriegel, Jackson, Slocum and Staude, 2009, p.356) and also as including "...the policies and practices involved in carrying out the "people" or human resources aspects of a management position, including recruitment, screening, training and appraising" (Dessler, 2007, p17).

An earlier description of HRM is provided by Stone (1998, p.4), who contended it is "the productive use of people in achieving the organisation's strategic business objectives and the satisfaction of individual needs". There is no universal definition which adequately explains what is HRM and consequently it has differing meanings depending on who is referring to it (Hendry, 1995). Recruitment is one of many facets of HRM practice and Armstrong and Taylor (2017, p.30), provide a comprehensive illustration of the HRM system (fig 2.1).

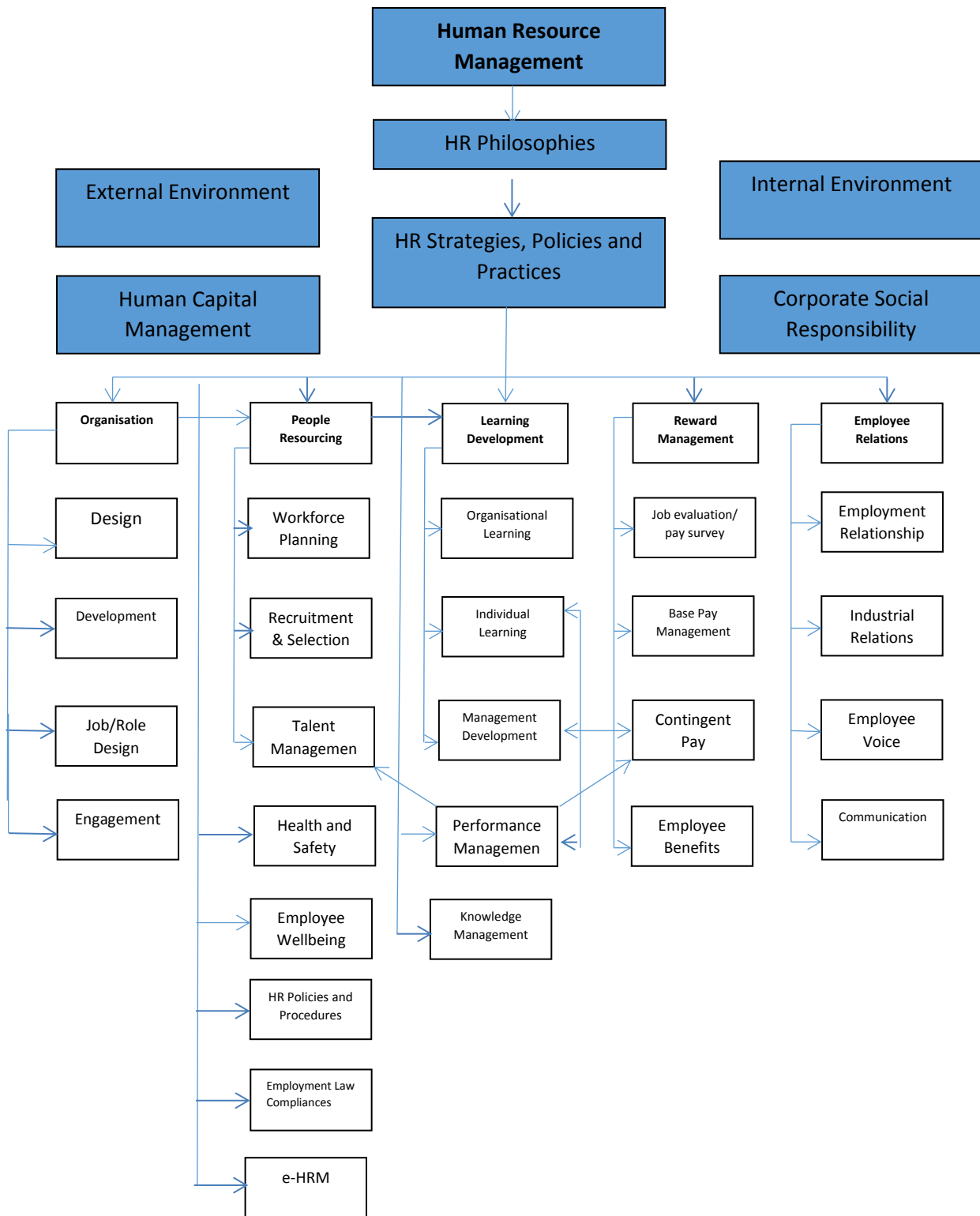


Figure 2.1 - The HR System (Armstrong and Taylor, 2017, p.30)

One of the most notable changes in the evolution of HRM is reflected in advancing technologies and their use for recruitment and selection processes.

Anderson (2003, p.122) drew attention to the impact of the changes in technology in HRM and suggested “there is a plethora of research examining applicant reactions to the changes and in turn a paucity of recruiters’ reactions”. It therefore follows, in this research project, that it is important to provide contextualisation of current recruitment processes and procedures and further to explore the many possible approaches an organisation may adopt.

Thus, having briefly examined HRM theory the chapter proceeds to consider the nature of work in the new economy, because along with the effects of changing technologies, applicant and worker profiles are no longer fixed in a traditional structure. Historical characterisation of workers have divided them into two types; firstly the traditional full-time, permanent employees; and secondly, non-standard workers (Cappelli and Keller, 2013). However, there is much debate about what is considered to be included in the concept of the non-standard group and given the changing nature of work, this title does little to properly define its meaning. The variety of work types (including, direct employment, co-employment, contract work) means that there are potential issues employers face when recruiting non-standard workers, which could potentially have an impact on their chosen sourcing methods and as such the nebulous array of work type has a propensity to affect recruitment decisions. Therefore it requires some examination of the concept in more detail.

Capelli and Kerr (2013) argued it is the classification of the work type which denies a greater understanding of the complexity of this issue and the organisation of work and its broader meaning for employers, needs to be considered in the context and environment in which the work is taking place in the first instance. The possible impact related to individual, managerial and organisational outcomes also requires attention (Ashford, George and Batt, 2007; Grant and Parker, 2009;

Humphrey, Nahrgang and Moregeson, 2007). In terms of how this might translate into the UK labour market, the CIPD 2014 *Spring Labour Market Outlook* revealed 69% of UK employers have current employees categorised as temporary workers. This figure includes those individuals engaged by employers on fixed terms contracts, agency workers and self-employed contractors (CIPD, 2014). Although later, the CIPD (2018) argued that as little as 3% of the total employment in the UK accounts for zero hour contracts, it could be argued that the parameters of these surveys could be biased. Having now considered HRM theory and work in the new economy, the chapter moves forward and discusses recruitment and selection more generally.

2.3.3 Research in Recruitment

There are numerous strands of research activities connected with the literature focused on recruitment and selection, social media and HRM. Often they have been researched independently in some depth, but less so in conjunction with one another. In order to define the boundaries for this particular research project, it is appropriate to provide an in-depth examination of recruitment and selection literature in the first instance. Darnold and Rynes (2013) claimed in the last 35 years since the first edition of the *Handbook of Psychologists*, substantial work has been undertaken to improve the extent of research into the topic of recruitment. They remarked the majority of this progress has been in the last decade including Guion's (1976) one-page address which acknowledged the requirement for recruitment research, and that the quality and quantity of knowledge had advanced somewhat. However, although substantial research progress has been made in this area, more recently there has been a lack of specific literature focused on the use of social media for

recruitment purposes (Brown and Vaughan, 2011; Davison, Marisat and Bing, 2011; Roth *et al*, 2013).

Darnold and Rynes (2013, p.104) referred to the outcomes of previous recruitment research reviews (Rynes, 1991; Rynes and Cables, 2003) and they concluded although excellent progress has been made in terms of the quantity of research into recruitment, it still required further organisational level research, including research which is more qualitatively focused, in order to fully understand the recruitment process and its elements. They suggested prior to 1991, the emphasis within recruitment research was too narrow and only examined individuals or single organisations, thus hindering the potential for generalisability from the research outputs. They found because of these boundaries “considerable leaps of faith” were required so that HRM practitioners could translate the findings into practical strategies for application within their respective organisations (Darnold and Rynes, 2013, p.104).

Prior to Darnold and Rynes review, the majority of studies recommended recruitment research should be concentrated more contextually within organisations, so as to provide richer data and to facilitate greater in-depth analysis, albeit it appears these recommendations and subsequent research outputs have not reflected the recommendations. They also referred to the dramatic changes in the business environment on a macro level, including the state of the economy in the last 20 to 25 years; the impact of globalisation and they argued rapid developments in technology such as the use of job-boards and social media platforms by recruiters, have not received nearly enough attention by researchers. Through examining the inconsistencies in research and reviews which have been carried out to-date, they contended it is clear further work by researchers is required.

Prior to Darnold and Rynes review, Collins and Stevens (2002, p.1121) claimed previous studies into recruitment have failed to acknowledge the complexity of the recruitment process and as such, led to numerous misrepresentations and a scarcity of robust theoretical grounding. Darnold and Rynes (2013) did not claim to have solved this problem nor have they suggested that it has been rectified by other authors in the field. On the contrary, they have continued to find a dearth in research which fully acknowledges the significant number of variables in the recruitment process and a continued lack of studies which combine some or all of the elements in recruitment, rather than treating them in isolation. Dineen and Soltis (2011) have suggested further research is needed to examine the concept of recruitment metrics, with specific reference to the various stages of the recruitment process, with the success of these metrics clearly defined in order to be useful and generalisable outside of the research context. They also argued if a researcher is to understand the size and quality of elements of the recruitment process, such as applicant pool they must understand and appreciate the use of targeting strategies by employers to guarantee the best possible results. This is something which is vital when organisations are considering the use of social media for recruitment, as there is not one generally accepted view connected to how the use of social media may generate the optimal number of applicants from a recruitment campaign. When considered collectively, the lack of academic attention in this area suggests there is obvious scope for further research and that it is critical the research is not carried out in isolation (from the other elements) and that it is conducted at an appropriate level within organisations.

In conclusion, this review of the literature relating to recruitment research has revealed that for many years there has been a significant gap in relation to the

knowledge and understanding of many facets of the recruitment process, albeit more recently there have been some advances. This research should further advance our understanding of the topic and before proceeding to the examination of the literature relating to recruitment; first it is important to consider recruitment more broadly. It is important later in this inquiry to treat recruitment and selection processes independently, because of the nature of the research questions and their specific focus on recruitment, but a general overview of recruitment and selection must be addressed first.

2.3.4 Defining Recruitment and Selection

Schneider (1987) contends recruitment and selection are interrelated but recruitment is the feeder into selection. Armstrong and Taylor, (2017, p. 248) define recruitment as the process of finding and engaging the individuals the organisation requires and conversely they define selection as the part of the process concerned with deciding which applicants or candidates should be selected for interview and subsequently appointed to jobs. Although these definitions are simplistic and belie the complexity of each element, they provide a helpful starting point. Pilbeam and Corbridge (2006, p.142) viewed recruitment and selection as absolutely fundamental to the efficient functioning of an organisation and they argued there is a serious negative and long-term organisational cost if it is managed poorly. The CIPD (2017, para.1) defined recruitment as “the process of finding the right person, in the right place, at the right time for the right role”. They suggested recruitment is a critical activity within an organisation and will be affected by those individuals responsible for its delivery. They also identified selection as involving two main processes: shortlisting; and assessing applicants to decide who should be selected for interview and offered a

job. Anderson and Shackleton (1993, p.19) proposed “in general, the quality of new recruits depend on the quality of the organisation’s recruitment practices”.

Attracting, recruiting and selecting the most suitable applicants for a job involves at least five stages (Armstrong, 2009; Armstrong and Taylor, 2014, 2017; Taylor, 2010; Torrington, Hall and Taylor 2011);

- **Defining the role:** prior to embarking on the applicant attraction stage, recruiters spend time defining the purpose of the job and what it will entail. This assists in clarifying what is required in an applicant. Ultimately this information translates into the job description and person specification;
- **Applicant attraction:** this may include an internal recruitment process or redeployment of a current employee. It may also include the use of the corporate website for advertising, employee referral schemes, external advertising media and/or instruction of recruitment agencies. In some sectors it may also involve use of local government job agencies;
- **Applicant shortlisting:** the employer goes through CVs, application forms or e-applications and makes decisions about which applicants to select for interview;
- **Selection methods:** which may include combinations of assessment centres, online skills tests, psychometric testing, telephone and face-to-face structured or unstructured interviews;
- **Offer of employment:** terms of employment may be considered by both parties, references taken, salary negotiations carried out individually or through a third party, employment contract exchange and the on-boarding/induction of new employee.

In order to fully appreciate the breadth of recruitment and selection activities, it was important in this research project to explore the processes involved in selection activities. Schmidt and Hunter (1998, p.272) claimed it is the particular selection methods an employer chooses which will have most profound impact on the outcome of the process, rather than as a direct result of the channels through

which they attempt to recruit these individuals, albeit they accepted the range of recruitment and selection policies and procedures may vary considerably from one organisation to another.

In terms of selection methods, they suggested face-to-face interviews remain the most frequent exchange between an employer and their applicants. Significantly, the CIPD (2016) and others (Armstrong 2009; Winstanley and Woodall, 2000) have argued the use of face-to-face interviews alone may limit the ability of an employer to test an applicant's suitability for the role and are considered as a weak predictor of future job performance. Armstrong (2009, p.544) previously suggested employers should use a *mixed method* approach, which would involve the use of complementary selection tools, such as, tests measuring intelligence or general ability and may also include psychometric tests or assessment centres. He believed this would provide the recruiting manager with a more in-depth analysis of the applicant's abilities. Schmidt and Hunter (1998, p.262) argued the validity of a hiring method is a direct determinant of its practical worth and they also contended it is the choice of selection method which is important to indicate variability in job performance. However, information about a person's *real* ability to contribute to the competitive position of a firm is not available until after the hiring decision has been made and he or she has joined the firm (Stigler, 1961). Further, Rees (1966) argued in order for employers to be able to predict future job performance they are forced to rely on alternative recruitment and selection methods to increase the quality of information. Although it is only anecdotally known, the search for alternative selection tools may be why recruiting managers are allegedly engaging in screening applicants social media profiles. Roth *et al* (2013) explored this claim and proposed for employers, there are many issues associated with screening

applicants/candidates social media accounts, not least the ethical and legal concerns they contribute and they caution employers engaging in this activity to be mindful.

In terms of selection methods, Alder and Gilbert (2006) suggested although candidates prefer unstructured interviews, they do not perceive them to be as fair a selection method as structured interviews. However, Schmidt and Hunter argued the most attractive option for employers might be in pursuing a combination of both structured interviews and testing of General Mental Ability (GMA) and according to their study, the central concern with selection methods is their reliance on the validity of the method used by the employer, so it could be argued that is a residual problem which remains unaddressed regardless of the positive benefits of advancing technology. Elsewhere, Schmidt, (1977) (cited in Schmidt and Borman, 1993) contended employers are creating a disadvantage for themselves by only carrying out face-to-face interviews in a competitive applicant market. Alder and Gilbert also suggested effective selection is based on examining the knowledge, skills, abilities and other characteristics of applicants, then matching them to the right job. Although there is no universally agreed model or framework outlining how recruitment and selection activities should be carried out, the process has clearly been impacted by changes in technology, most notably in terms of the scope for employers to search the internet and social networking websites during recruitment and selection activities. Whilst an understanding about why employers are searching candidates' social media accounts for the purposes of screening is an important area of research, it is also critical that it is understood how and why they are accessing social media platforms. Before engaging with that, the section now turns to define recruitment independently of selection. Barber (1998, p.5) developed the definition further and defined recruitment as: "those practices and activities carried out by the

organisations with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees". Breaugh (2008, p.103) on the other hand, deconstructed this definition even further and broke the recruitment process down into internal and external recruitment activities and he defined external recruitment as

"...an employer's actions that are intended to (1) bring a job opening to the attention of potential job candidates who do not currently work for the organisation, (2) influence whether these individuals apply for the opening, (3) affect whether they maintain interest in the position until a job offer is extended and (4) influence whether a job offer is accepted".

The likelihood of an organisation utilising social media for internal recruitment alone is limited and therefore it accordingly follows that the focus of this research project is on an organisations/individuals external recruitment activities.

Breaugh (2013, p. 392) also argued there are steps and decisions the employer needs to go through in order to secure the right person for the relevant job role and he stated,

"the organisation decides which type of individuals to target; a decision is made about the method to be used to reach these individuals; what message to be conveyed is decided; and finally a choice is made about which recruiters to use".

Ployhart (2006, p.868), defined recruitment as "the process of attracting, selecting and retaining competent individuals to achieve organizational goals".

However, as outlined previously, for the purposes of this thesis, the terms 'recruitment' and 'selection' will be treated individually and while there is scope to examine the use of social media for the purposes of both recruitment and selection, the focus here will be on recruitment.

Drawing on extensive sources relating to a general theoretical framework for the recruitment process Breaugh (2013, p.391) argued there is an inadequacy of consistent recruitment models available in order to provide a universal characterisation of all of its elements and he argued authors such as Dineen and

Soltis (2011, p.46) and Saks (2017, p.50) provide “incomplete models” of the recruitment process which fail to provide or make explicit reference to the relationships between any of the variables. In addition, he argued Allen *et al* (2004) and Breugh (2008) (therefore contradicting his own previous assertions), focused their research too narrowly and did not provide an adequate illustration of the overall process in any great depth. Breugh found this concerning, as it potentially raised questions about the reliability of the information available and in addition it demonstrated clearly that there is a significant fragmentation in the sources of quality literature from which to review the topic.

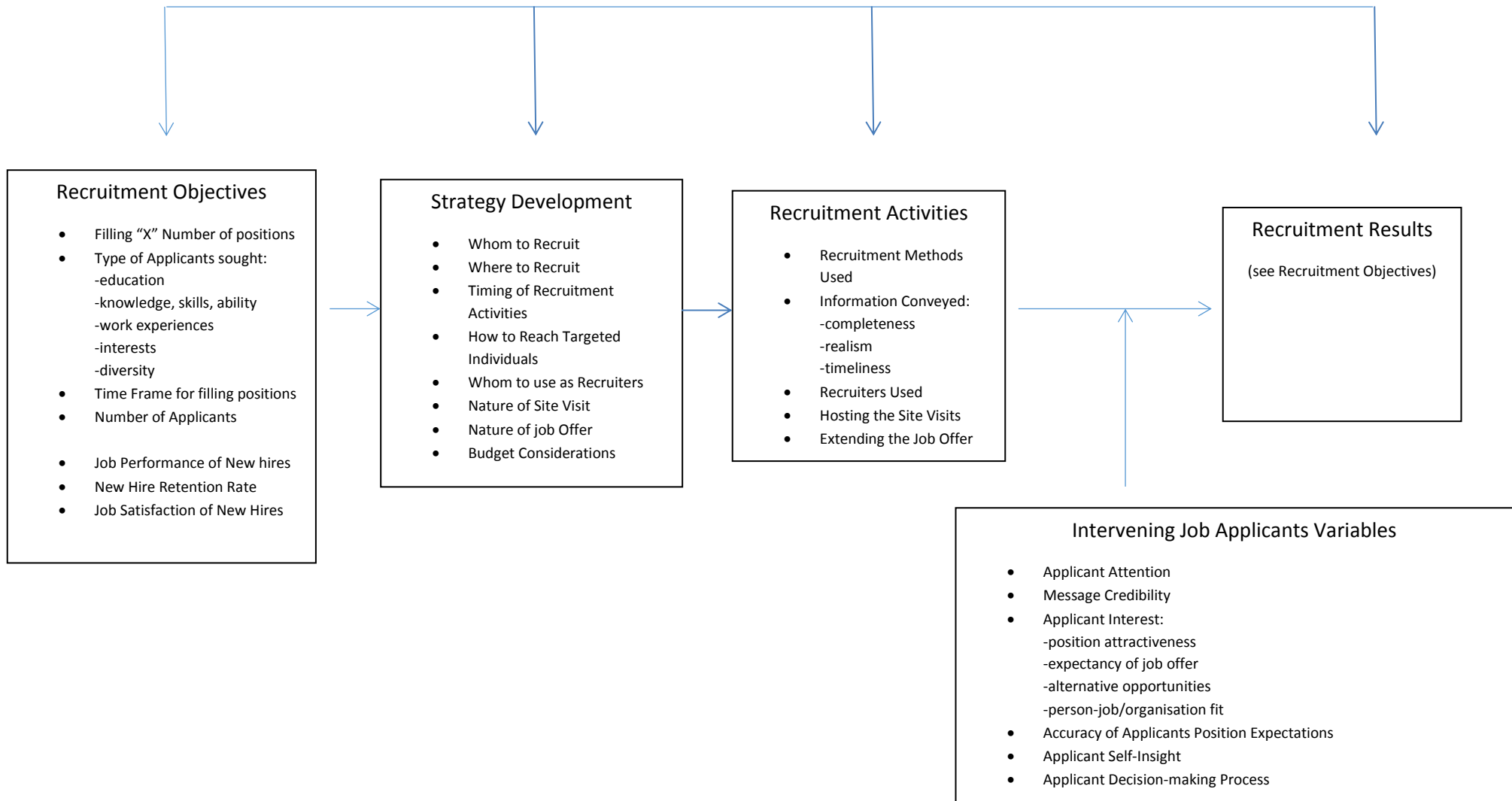
An illustrative conceptual framework (fig 2.2) was provided by Breugh (2008, p.104) which set out the elements of the recruitment process, albeit such a model is limited for this particular exploratory research, because it makes no explicit reference to the use of technology or social media for the purposes of recruitment. However, it is a useful starting point even if an additional layer may be required as the use of technology for recruitment activities continues to evolve. While it could be argued there is no requirement for technology to be outlined explicitly as it is concerned with the minutiae of the process, the proliferation of technology use in business activities, means it cannot sensibly be ignored, particularly as it can be used as a source of competitive advantage for the organisation.

2.3.5 Social Media in Human Resource Management

Ada and Kara (2016) conclude in their study that organisations make use of social media during all stages of the HR cycle (pre-employment, employment and post-employment) and they demonstrate that there is some relationship between the usage of social media platforms for positive HRM outcomes. In order to examine the literature connected with the use of social media in the recruitment process, first it is

important to examine its role in the broader HRM context. The use of social media beyond the scope of resourcing, should also be considered, and it has emerged that in fact the use of social media is embedded in many HR processes. However, what is clear that social media uses in HRM processes are evolving? There is a noticeable change in terms of the extension of social media beyond the recruitment and selection process. The extent of the use of social media in HRM processes is included in resourcing, but also within employee voice, the employment relationship, retention *etc.* Social media use does not necessarily mean it is always negative and as other authors have points out it can be used for the purposes of communication tools (Eyrich *et al*, 2008), employee voice in employment relations (Miles and Mangold, 2014) and further within learning and development activities (Dabbagh and Kitsantas, 2011).

Figure - 2.2 Model of the Recruitment Process (Breaugh, 2008, p.10)



Making use of Armstrong and Taylor's (2017) HR system to illustrate the extent to which social media is embedded in HRM it can be seen to include employee relations, the employment relationship industrial relations employee voice and communications. In addition it included learning and development and organisational, management and individual level. Performance and knowledge management are also included in the scope of embedded HRM activities. Further the use of social media can be utilised within reward mechanisms. There is argument to suggest that social media could be utilised in all categories of the HRM system and although it is beyond the scope of this thesis to explore, it is likely to require further attention from researchers in the future.

2.3.6 Social Media in Recruitment and Competitive Advantage in Recruitment

Authors have provided support for the contention that HRM practices can create a benefit for organisations, not least that of competitive advantage (Cox and Blake, 1991; Kaliprasad, 2006; Lado and Wilson, 1994; Taylor and Collins, 2000; Wright, Dunford and Snell, 2001). Specifically Taylor and Collins (2000), found recruitment activities in organisations were not only important for sustained competitive advantage, they are critical for organisational survival. Amit and Belcourt (1999, p. 175) claimed "HRM processes lead to enhanced productivity and strategic flexibility, which, in turn, create value and enable the firm to carry out its chosen market strategy". That is not to say recruitment processes *alone* provide this, rather it is the sum of all of the elements in the HRM cycle which may enhance the competitive advantage of an organisation. Bondarouk and Olivas-Lujan (2013, p. xiii) put forward a simplistic model of the potential advantages for organisations using social media in their commercial activities. They argued organisations could benefit from; reaching new audiences; reaching large audiences; transforming business; searching for job

candidates; increasing employee engagement and among a myriad of other potential possibilities, they have the ability to undertake extensive marketing activities.

Much of the literature relating to competitive advantage is connected with the RBV of the firm whereby “strategic human resource management emphasises the role of internal capabilities developed historically in firms, in explaining business outcomes” (Bloxall, 1998, p.265). Dineen and Soltis (2011, p.43) remarked as the first decade of the 21st century came to a close there was a continuing challenge for organisations to attract “the necessary human and social capital to develop maintain and increase their competitive advantage”. Lavelle (2003) assisted in popularising the phrase the “war for talent” and suggested the growth rate in the jobs market meant employers needed to provide employees with a compelling reason to stay or they could find themselves faced with ever increasing recruitment costs. The point being made here is that employers are suffering an increased challenge in attracting quality candidates for jobs within their organisations. The rationale for considering the impact of recruitment practices on competitive advantage stems from the realisation that organisations should not merely react to changes in the business environment and in this instance developing technologies such as social media. They should instead have robust structures in place to keep pace with the changes to bring about or sustain their competitive advantage in the markets they operate in.

It is increasingly apparent from the literature review that organisations who embrace social media for recruitment purposes can potentially add an additional layer of efficiency to the process (Breugh, 2013; Broughton *et al*, 2010; 2013; Caers and Castelyns, 2011; Cavico *et al*, 2013; Hyland, 2010; Madia, 2011; Polyhart, 2006; Heidemann *et al*, 2012) One of the ways organisations have strived to secure and/or maintain their competitive advantage in the recruitment process, has been as a

result of the adoption of e-recruitment systems, which will be explored in the next section.

2.3.7 e-Recruitment

At the dawn of the use of computers in the workplace, Rico (1962, p.32) questioned “what is the impact of computerisation on the staffing process?” and he suggested “managers in computerised firms have become more concerned with this problem as they began to recognise the implications of human involvement as opposed to the technical aspects of the use of computers in the workplace”. Further he became troubled by the rate at which the organisation would be able to exploit new technologies. Given that Rico was raising concerns about this issue a number of decades ago, it could be argued this remains true today as organisations battle to get to grips with and positively embrace social media for the purposes of their business activities. Along with the changes in technology came a requirement to modernise HRM practices, one of which has been the recruitment process and this included the introduction of e-recruitment systems.

Kavanagh, Thite & Johnson (2011, p.18) contended e-Recruitment fell under the umbrella of e-HRM systems which focused primarily on the HRM function and in the technological application of HRM processes and procedures. Other examples of e-HRM systems include the use of e-Training or e-Learning systems. e-Recruitment has evolved over a period of time and as organisations move away from using the more traditional methods of recruitment, for example utilising a paper-based approach to applications and manually sifting through applications *etc.* to now adopting an almost paperless system. Bartram (2000) undertook the seminal systematic review of the role of the internet on recruitment and selection and put forward the view the internet was still a supplementary tool in the recruitment

process. However, things have changed dramatically since then and now the extensive use of social media (at least anecdotally) could be considered to be central to the recruitment process, particularly from an applicant's perspective. It is likely the rise in mobile devices and mobile technologies have evolved this even further but Brown and Vaughan (2011) argued there is still a lack of research in peer reviewed publications which deal with this phenomenon and particularly social media.

Smith and Rupp (2004, p.62) contended:

“...the changing nature of hiring processes from more traditional and time-intensive manual methods to a more automated approach has the potential to provide a much greater saving in terms of time and money for the organisation”.

They also argued the costs of using internet-based jobs boards would assist in providing greater savings as an alternative to the more costly newspaper advertisements. Over a decade ago since this viewpoint was advanced, it is clear the sole use of job boards has moved on considerably and employers are now seeking to use social networking platforms in addition to them, or as an alternative method. Further, social media platforms can potentially provide an even greater cost-saving for the organisation (Broughton *et al*, 2010). It is also likely the use of e-Recruitment systems and specifically social media platforms with their global reach, permit the organisations the scope to recruit internationally with greater ease. From an applicant's point of view Thielsch, Träumer and Pytlik (2012) found those actively seeking jobs, on the whole, appreciate the immediacy of response from the employer through the use of e-recruitment systems. However, their paper did not explore the applicant's perceptions of the use of social media as part of the e-recruitment process. They suggested “more and more companies currently recruit online, partly because of cost savings and competitive pressure and partly because it is the best way to reach their target group of applicants” (Thielsch, Träumer and Pytlik, 2012,

p.59). Connected with an understanding of how organisations manage their recruitment activities is a requirement in understanding what they concern themselves with in relation to the concept of talent management.

2.3.8 Talent Management

Cappelli and Keller (2014, p.306) claimed talent management is a recent practitioner-generated term which covers a range of long standing practices that aim to place “the right person in the right job at the right time”. The CIPD (2013, 2018) concur with this statement and they expressed the same view in outlining their definition of recruitment. Talent management includes both the organisations internal and external labour market, whereas external recruitment is generally considered to be about attracting individuals to the organisation first and foremost. Notwithstanding this seemingly innocuous differential, both talent management and recruitment share some similar characteristics. For instance, there is an alarming similarity in the challenge for academics to define talent management, as has been the case with attempting to robustly define recruitment and within that, recruitment activities.

As the concept and term talent management was created in industry circles first and foremost, some organisations have used it to rebrand their more traditional recruitment and selection divisions/departments, without fully understanding its academic meaning and the conceptual assumptions related to it. Ployhart (2014) claimed despite the recent recession, the war for talent continues. The term “war for talent” was created by Steven Hankin of management consulting firm McKinsey & Co. It was then appropriated by Michaels, Handfield-Jones and Axelrod (The War for Talent, 2001) which discussed the issues with the internal and external jobs market relative to the last few decades. The term has been traditionally been used as a way

to illustrate the availability of talented individuals in the jobs market and the race by employers to secure them as employees.

Cappelli and Keller (2014, p.306), suggested “talent management is the process through which organisations anticipate and meet their needs for talent in strategic jobs”. They also examined the differences between inclusive and exclusive talent management practices and argued the majority of strategic HRM literature points to organisations engaging in exclusive behaviours and placing a disproportionate emphasis and investment in terms of the individual or the job, although they contended this was due to the employer’s greatest potential for return on investment. Whether the organisation is focused on retaining or attracting fresh talent to the organisation, a critical consideration for them is in how they go about attracting suitable applicants and further, they must consider the supply from the external labour market as they may be attracting talent from other industries or sectors and therefore prove to be irrelevant. In their detailed review of this topic, Cappelli and Keller argued social media can be most productively utilised in attracting applicants to apply for less strategic entry level roles within the organisation and this is as a consequence of the employer having a much greater reach in terms of its potential audience.

As a result, it is sensible to examine how organisations go about candidate attraction. In the recruitment industry and within employing organisations, there is a common tendency to use the terms *applicant* and *candidate* interchangeably that most would not pick up on or differentiate between the two (Lauby, 2011). However, there is a subtle difference in how they are treated for the purposes of recruitment activities; the former term applies to those individuals who have made an application for a job within the organisation; and the latter refers to those individuals who have

been through some form of screening process and are subsequently selected for interview.

2.3.9 Candidate Attraction and Recruitment Message

Throughout this chapter, reference has been made to applicants as key actors in the research, however for the purposes of clarity the words applicant and candidate are used interchangeably (*ibid*). In this section *candidates* are referred to specifically as the literature requires it and within the recruitment industry, candidate attraction generally refers to “the tools and techniques that employers use to attract potential candidates to fill a vacancy” (Whitford, n.d.). The CIPD (2009, p.3) set out the result of the market downturn on the war-for-talent and then in-turn devised the phrase war-on-talent. They meant to illuminate changes within organisations relating to their strategies for attracting, engaging with and motivating talent within their internal workforce. It was patently clear from their research that organisations were scaling back budgets and focusing on talent external to the organisation and instead started to focus on identifying talent within the organisation spending time and emphasis on retaining their skills. Although this is contradictory because the focus of this research is largely on the external labour force, it will be interesting to explore if in fact organisations/individuals are using social media for internal recruitment purposes.

Brown and Swain (2009, p.210) suggested the most convenient way for companies to decide how they will go about attracting applications was by considering employing their candidate attraction model AIDA (See Fig 2.3). They argued this was the best way for organisations and those responsible for attracting applicants, to approach their candidate attraction strategy. Brown and Swain (2009, p. 207) also identified “candidate attraction starts as soon as you have worked out “what to do” and ends as soon as you have acquired the candidate CV”. This is the

same for most recruiters, whether they are internal or external to the organisation and decisions need to be made about the approach to be taken by the organisation in terms of the “what to do” element of the process, because more often than not recruiters are faced with innumerable choices. Further, they concluded recruiters have various means by which to attract applicants and suggested using a combination of sources is likely to be the most successful for the organisation. They also stated organisations must establish whether the potential applicants are active or passive jobseekers and that this information will in turn help to inform the channels to be utilised. Various methods can be used (outlined in Table (2.1)). Unsurprisingly there is no explicit mention of the use of social media for candidate attraction, although later in their chapter Brown and Swain referred to the use of online networking, but nonetheless they caution recruiters to consider the privacy concerns which might arise from using social/professional networking sites.

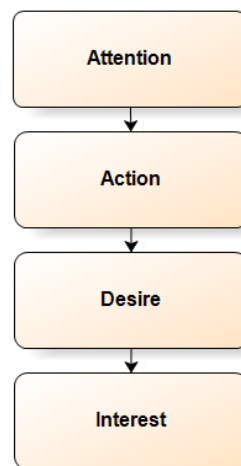


Figure 2.3 - AIDA Model of Candidate Attraction (Brown and Swain, 2009)

The Labour Market Outlook Report recently undertaken by the CIPD (Spring 2017) illustrated a changed picture in employment and they suggested the employers surveyed are intending to grow their workforce in the coming years. Their

report also suggested organisations are planning to concentrate their efforts and resources on basic pay, compensation and benefits packages, in order to attract fresh talent. They also found “employers that are having difficulties filling vacancies are significantly more likely to report that their organisation would pay more to attract new talent” (CIPD, 2017, p.8). They found this concerning as the vast majority of employers will not have adequate financial resources to compete with growing salaries and such they may have to consider alternatives methods of attracting talent to the organisation.

Cappelli (2008, p.3) supported the idea of developing talent management and he suggested organisations could benefit from the utilisation of management processes and procedures similar to that of operations and supply chain management. He argued there is a lot employers can learn from employing stepped processes, thus making internal HRM processes much more efficient and he likened the movement of employees internally and externally to that of a “product” life cycle in supply chain management practices. Whilst the use of technology for recruitment has been altered by the advancement of technology, the core principles have remained the same and the uncertainty organisations face with labour force planning may be enhanced or alleviated through the successful employment of social media tools in the recruitment process. Social media platforms can also potentially provide the employer with an economy of scale for large recruitment campaigns and conversely their use could provide the benefit of being able to create an intimate and more one-to-one relationship with passive job seekers.

However, De Kay (2009, p.102) argued there is no conclusive academic evidence to prove or disprove that social networking sites which are focused on professional or business networking activities, can claim they are the most effective


portal for employers in accessing passive job seekers and he attempted to answer the question whether there was conclusive proof positive either way but latterly he concluded it was a questionable assertion. Given that the data analysed within his study found almost all of the participants has revealed to recruiters that they subscribed to LinkedIn and were interested in hearing about potential job opportunities, it could be argued they were not to begin with, in fact truly, passive job seekers.

If the use of social media by organisations can be considered an element of web-based recruitment, Baum and Kabst (2014) argued the use of web-based tools for recruitment could potentially provide an employer with a more successful portal through which to attract candidates. This is because the information contained on web-based sources is considered to be significantly more information rich from the applicants'/candidates' point of view. There is a lack of research which has examined the applicant's perceptions of the use of these tools and as such, much further research is required. However, Baum and Kabst (2014, p.14) also claimed it is the organisation's brand-identity which has a much greater impact on applicant choice, referring specifically to internet based solutions than to more traditional print media. As such, they claimed it could be directly correlated to applicant attraction. Notwithstanding this assumption, what they concluded was that candidates responded increasingly to "employer knowledge" which in the main was revealed through websites and other internet based information sources.

The degree to which an employer can attract candidates via social media is a topic greatly debated. Some (Sameen and Cornelius, 2013; Jeske and Schultz, 2015; McFarland and Ployhart, 2015), argue that it can ensure a far greater range of potential for an employer to source passive candidates (passive candidates here

refer to those individuals who are not actively seeking work, but may have online profiles on recruitment site such as LinkedIn). Thus employer brand plays an important role in the potential for an employer to attract the right talent to their organisations.

Table 2.1 Choosing a Candidate Attraction Strategy.

	Strategy	Active	Passive	Used for	
1	Executive Search		✓	Individual Senior Roles	Niche specific and/or senior roles 
2	Targeted national press advertising	✓	✓	Senior individuals, group roles, or generic skills required	
3	Targeted Trade Press advertising	✓	✓	Specific sector background required. Senior to mid-level roles. Can be combined with 2 (above)	
4	Local radio and press advertising	✓	✓	Senior to junior roles in a specific geographical location	
5	Headhunting	✓	✓	Sourcing identified individuals for a specific role. Can be a tool in Exec search or stand alone	
6	Internet job board advertising	✓	✓	Range of general roles	
7	Company intranet or notice boards	✓	✓	Internal applications	
8	Talent mapping or research-led resourcing		✓	Senior to mid-level roles in competitor or other organisations	
9	Building candidate communities through websites, blogging, content development		✓	Non-specific recruitment. Brand development and potential candidates for the future	
10	Internal employee referral programme	✓	✓	Pays a good internal fee for successful recommendations. A company with high growth with lots of new people joining will do well from this	
11	Database search	✓	✓	Either external or internal. Often the first step for any role.	
12	Data mining, internet, CV banks	✓		For individual roles or more general set of skills. For signed off roles and networking	
13	Campus recruitment: milk round or targeted graduate advertising	✓		Volume Graduate Recruitment	
14	Local advertising in press and radio, notice boards, shop windows, press coverage, open days	✓		Volume local employer recruitment, eg. New shop or call centre	

Wadee (2013, para.3) suggested social media use for candidate attraction is still in it's "infancy and therefore it would be too difficult for organisations to address measuring their return on investment". There was also a question about how employers would go about measuring their return on investment, as traditionally social networking and social media tools have a relatively low start-up cost and thus the longer term investment would be difficult to calculate. However, as has been highlighted in the literature the scale of applications being received by some employers for relatively low level jobs, may offset the low cost of initial recruitment activities (Kaplan and Haenlien, 2010). There is no structural framework in practice as of yet, which addresses this issue however, most organisations will use social media in-built analytical tools as a mechanism to measure their return on investment.

Nikolaou (2014) claimed in a similar fashion to traditional networking connected with employment search opportunities, social media has been considered as an effective way for individuals to search for jobs (Van Hoye, Van Hooft and Lievens, 2009) and the use of social networking platforms provide an even greater scope and intensity for this activity. He dismissed Lievens and Harris's (2003) original claim that networking supplements existing job seekers methods and he argued the proliferation of the social networking platforms and social media has meant networking (offline and online) is now a core part of the process. Bird (2011) (cited in *Handbook of Psychology*, 2013) suggested where companies do not have postings on LinkedIn, Facebook or Twitter, they risk appearing *out of touch* to younger job seekers who have grown up in a mobile technology world with nearly instantaneous global communication ability. Having now considered what the literature has revealed in relation to candidate attraction, this raises questions about the *recruitment message* organisations are putting across to applicants.

Drawing on the work of Wanous (1992), Breugh (2012, p.402) supported the claim the way in which the recruitment message is worded can have a distinctive effect on both attracting candidates and in encouraging those potential applicants to apply for roles within the organisation. While there is much research relating to the importance of the quality of the recruitment message being conveyed during the recruitment process, often it has focused on traditional newsprint media and corporate websites and despite this practice diminishing somewhat, it continues to form part of the range of activities organisations engage in for recruitment, despite advancing technologies. The effect of the volume of information being conveyed and the realism in the information being supplied to applicants is attributed to the success in employers being able to attract suitable individuals.

However, Allen *et al* (2004) argued there were unanswered questions relating to the impact of recruitment communications specifically relating to pre-hire outcomes and they sought to establish which were the most effective. In doing so they discussed various issues relating to the quality and quantity of information contained in the recruitment message but more explicitly they focused on the effect of the vehicle through which the message was delivered. Their focus was primarily on Media Richness Theory (MRT). The previous subsections have examined the literature more broadly in relation to recruitment. As such, the chapter now turns to consider the literature, and its inherent paucity which has focused on recruitment and social media.

2.3.10 Recruitment and Social Media

Davison *et al* (2011) argued the employment of social media platforms can be a significant asset to employers but they also suggested it could have the potential to cause problems if it is used negligently and they sought to highlight the various gaps

in knowledge related to HRM and the use of social media in practice. They suggested employers are taking risks using social media for recruitment purposes and more specifically using social media (to screen applicants/candidates) when they are making a hiring decision. Anecdotal evidence of social media for screening purposes is plentiful, but is also problematic in research terms, because of the inability to generalise findings and the inability to confirm the validity of the information. It has been identified in the USA employers are asking applicants to access their Facebook accounts to allow interviewers to look at them during the interview process. This practice is commonly known as shoulder surfing and some commentators argue this is unethical, as it puts significant pressure on candidates to reveal personal information about themselves, information that they may not otherwise share with an employer. The extent to which shoulder surfing candidates is prevalent in the UK is not known, however, recent research undertaken by PriceWaterhouseCooper (Pidd, 2014) suggested younger employees would consider sharing their social media account passwords to guarantee job security. In response to this, a commentator from the academic community condemned the practice and suggested there are grave social issues with employers accessing their employees' social media accounts, because there are concerns related to the employees right to a private life.

In their review of current research related to social media and HRM, Davison *et al*, (2012) identified three key areas to be explored; recruiting, screening and selection, disciplinary action and termination. However, while their paper provides a useful review of current research, they do not outline the specific research requirements beyond asking some overarching questions. Their paper principally refers to legal cases which have occurred in the USA whereby applicants have not

been hired as a result of information the employer has obtained from social media sources. Notwithstanding this, there appears to be little substantive evidence available about this practice beyond superficial commentary. They also discussed ways in which an employer could address the validity and reliability of using information obtained from social media and they referred to the limitations of being able to address the gap in research. Finally, Davison *et al* commented on the need for further research as a way to provide advice and guidance to HRM professionals and organisations engaging or adopting these practices within their recruitment policies and procedures. The level of anecdotal evidence suggested by Davison *et al* illustrates further there may be aspects of the use of social media by employers which have not been examined or explored in enough detail. McFarland and Ployhart (2015, p.1666) posit the practical benefits which can be attributed to use of social media in recruitment and they put forward the following;

“...source qualified candidates more effectively and efficiently, inexpensively and with greater ROI. More effective sourcing of passive candidates because social media reach is greater”.

They insist organisations should give greater consideration to the use of social media in recruitment because it can potentially create a competitive advantage and bring a greater return on investment.

In their study, Kluemper and Rosen (2012) utilised the Five Factor Framework (FFF) and discussed the employers' ability to extract personality related information from an applicant's social media account. Their paper does not specifically set out or address why organisations might engage in this activity, which in some way denies the reader the context of the practice and given the risks associated with using social media for selection activities, it does not seem as if it can be a viable option for employers. However, they do imply the employer's rationale for searching social

media platforms for information about applicants might be to protect the reputation of the organisation. Sanchez Abril *et al* (2012) argued information available online is presented in a contextual vacuum and as such they ask whether is it reasonable for an applicant to be denied the opportunity to comment on the veracity or integrity of the information an employer may uncover. They are also critical of the lack of information relating to applicants' perceptions of organisations selecting or not selecting applicants as a result of content on their social media profiles. The use of social media from the perspective of the candidate remains an area which is under researched in academic terms although Roulin and Bangerter (2013) briefly touch upon the requirements in their paper. The lack of research could be mitigated by the investigation of the use of social media by recent graduates to determine their perception of the employers' activities. Nonetheless this claim is dismissed by Darnold and Rynes (2013), who argued the majority of recruitment research is carried out at a micro-level and therefore the success of its practical application in organisations is too difficult to gauge.

McConnon (2007) contended it is apparent there is a *boom* in social networking sites specifically dedicated to national and international job seekers (e.g. LinkedIn and others). In addition, sites like these assist recruiters in targeting passive job seekers which in-turn has led to "poaching" of competitor talent. Bonhard and Sasse (2006) proposed online social networks play an important role as a tool in the recruitment process for job seekers and for employers. Although their research focused on the use of recommender systems, it has aided in highlighting the range of possibilities in matching users (applicants) social media profiles with suitable vacancies within organisations. In the future, use of complex algorithms could mitigate the time organisations lose by sifting through high volumes of irrelevant

applications and this could further extend the use of social media within the recruitment cycle. Klumper and Rosen (2009) claimed in past that employers have used the social media platforms of their existing employees from which to reach out to potential candidates because they have traditionally considered existing employees as those best placed to identify new talent.

Nikolaou (2014, p.179) contended social networking sites “appear to be an increasingly useful tool for HR professionals to advertise job openings and seek information about jobs seekers in an efficient and cost effective way”. He suggested this is not surprising and referred to Stopher and Gosling’s (2013) claim that nowadays both job seekers and recruiters utilise social media extensively. He further supported the argument as social networking websites have become more of an integral part of both job seekers and HRM professionals, further research is required to address the gap in practice, which may assist in minimising the risk associated with their improper use in the recruitment and selection process.

Winter & Miguel, (2013) proposed there is genuine reputational concern for employers, because social networking websites allow applicants to communicate how they have been treated by various organisations. They support claims that the availability of social media platforms may “amplify the importance of applicant’s reactions in general”. Berkshire (2005) commented where a particular occupation experiences a shortage in suitable candidates, organisations could partner with social networking sites to provide them with leads to suitable candidates which may not be available to them when using alternative channels. Zeidner (2007) suggested society is now witnessing a trend whereby employers are accessing applicants’ Facebook accounts as an additional layer to the screening process, however, Smith

and Kidder (2010) disagreed and argued there are significant legal and ethical issues associated with the activity.

Madera (2012) on the other hand, examined the use of social media for recruitment in the USA job market and claimed many organisations are using social media to screen applicants. Madera (2012, p.1227) also referred to other research which found that over “35% of all employers in the US reported rejecting a candidate because of something that they had seen on social networking site about the applicant”. Although not the focus of this research, Madera’s findings identified the extent to which social media is being used for both recruitment and selection purposes by organisations. Its infiltration into the processes and procedures is not always explicit or overly transparent but nonetheless it seems at least to be embedded within the organisations where they are being utilised. Madera also raised important questions about the fairness associated with the use of social media for recruitment and particularly selection. He claimed there are issues about the perception of procedural fairness in terms of how candidates are being treated and questioned whether employers are taking this seriously enough as their processes and procedures evolve with technological advancement. Darnold and Rynes (2013, p.104) commented there are concerns about the sample structures and size in relation to recruitment research but while Madera’s paper is interesting, the breath of the sample beyond a student population fails to capture data which produces significantly generalisable findings. Additionally, the paper focuses wholly on the Hospitality industry and thus it would be difficult to theorise that these are universal issues faced by all employers. Brotherton (2012, p.24) argued, “for a majority of recruiters, LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook and employee referrals has officially surpassed online job boards as the preferred way to acquire talent”. This contrasts

with Darnold and Rynes (2013) who suggested there is still a quantity of employers who use more traditional methods such as jobs boards, recruiting agents, outsourcers *etc.*

In conclusion, this section has revealed a number of important issues connected with the role of social media in recruitment activities and has identified concerns about the lack of research which is a continual focus for academics interested in this area of research and it has provided a number of unanswered questions for exploration. Importantly, the use of social media as an attraction tool for employers has not yet been raised as an area of focus by those reviewing the subject area, but given the number of central questions which have emerged recently, the majority of emphasis is being placed on research into employers using social media as a tool to make selection decisions. This gap is important and requires attention however, in order to explore the issue, it is important first to understand *how* and *why* employers are using social media for recruitment at all. The following section of this chapter explores the use of social media more generally in organisations, examining how it can be used as an effective business tool, the relationship between social media and marketing and finally the chapter explored the law in relation to the use of social media in HRM practice.

2.3.11 Employer Branding

Russell and Brannan (2016) argued much of an employer's activities in terms of recruitment should be dedicated to the concept of getting the right people on the bus – or in other words attracting the most suitable candidates. The concept of employer branding as defined by Ambler and Barrow (1996, p.187) is connected with *“the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company”*. Further, Barrow and

Mosley described employer branding as the positioning of the organisation as an “employer brand” to both attract and retain the best prospective employees. Of course the term ‘best’ is problematic because it is highly subjective.

Dreher (2014), cited in Kluemper *et al* (2015) suggested reputation management will no longer be the sole responsibility of the communications department within organisations, moreover it will be dealt with and become the responsibility of the whole workforce. This is because all employers now have the opportunity to participate in online discussions thereby adding and sometimes detracting from the organisation’s image. Kluemper *et al* (2015, p. 158) suggest social media efforts in company branding can be helpful in building a positive company reputation, by which applicants can vicariously be influenced. It would be sensible for the organisations to consider how their employer branding efforts can be enhanced. There are a number of issues to be considered when discussing employer brand. There is very little an employer can do *per se* to convince applicants to apply for their particular roles. There is, however, the possibility for the employer to consider how an applicant will view the organisation in terms of future job or employment prospects. The degree to which an applicant is attracted to an organisation in direct correlation to the employers branding is difficult to measure and there is a dearth of literature in this area.

The scale of information a prospective applicant can access about an organisation is almost limitless with the advent of Web.2 technology and even more so now the majority of jobs are researched via mobile devices (Broughton, 2013). Applicants can make assumptions about their fit into an organisation based on the information they can access about said organisation such as the culture, benefits, style of management *etc.* This extends research related to Person-Organisation (P-

O) fit because it is not simply based on information gleaned directly from the organisation.

The Linos and Reinhard (2015, p.7) suggest employer branding has emerged from organisations applying marketing principles to the field of people management. It is concerned with employers' activities in communicating with both internal and external stakeholders for the purposes of attracting, engaging and retaining the best talent to their jobs. It is a tool with which an employers' can establish and communicate their key differences and similarities from other employers in terms of their attractiveness as a future employer. Their research insight paper (CIPD, 2015) was concerned with the extent to which employer branding is considered a phase or new fad for organisations or conversely whether it is the future for HRM. Although the paper does not directly answer the question, indirectly it refers to the argument that employers should be concerned about reputation and image management if they want to retain their competitive advantage in what is currently a difficult labour market. The links between "brand management" and individuals social life is not a new concept and further, the evolution of digital online social media extends this. Employer branding is considered not to be simply the business of advertising jobs, it is concerned with the link between the employers brand and how that might fit into the employers Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) responsibilities and why they may wish to engage to further their commercial activities. However, there are potential issues with embedding employer branding within an organisations, many of the respondent to the Linos and Reinhard's research stated there are issues with resistance and/or cynicisms from current employees and management.

2.3.11 The use of AI and Algorithms in the Recruitment Process.

Although not from an academic perspective, Dormehl (2014) argued that algorithms are ultimately devised by humans and are therefore inherently vulnerable to human prejudices and biases when they are written. It can be seen that the increasing use of technology in the workplace has also meant that there is an increasing use of technology to assist employers, recruiters and managers to make decisions about who to employ. A notable feature change to recruitment and selection has arisen as a consequence of the introduction of technologies which employers utilise and algorithms to rank candidates based on various job and sometimes non job related criteria.

The use of applications from organisations such as HireVue by organisations such as Unilver and Goldman Sachs give the impression that screening and ranking apps being commercially sensible activity (Feloni, 2017). Whilst Feloni is not critical of the activity, he raises some interesting questions regarding the potential for bias in the employment of applications such as HireVUe. HireVue is by no means the only application available on the market, however, it appears that the organisation provide support and guidance to employers attempting to remove bias form the hire process. They at least signal the potential for this to be problem and acknowledge that employer must work hard to ensure that they are conscious aware of potential biases prior to setting criteria. This is not something which is offered by all application providers. Pymetrics (Pymetrics.com, 2018) for example claim that their application removes even the need for employers to undertake this self-disclosure, they are than confident they have produced an algorithm so sophisticated, it is not required. Harver claims to be the global lead in the use of AI within the recruitment process and insist the eradication of CV's will lead employers to making better less discriminatory hiring

decisions (Academic On File, 2018) . This is a sizable claim given that the technology enabling this has not been in use for a protracted period of time and thus the longitudinal outcomes can only be theorised.

Chan and Wang (2018) discussed the increasing use of information gathered from online sources being utilised in hiring decisions. Although their research focused on the traditional method of gathering evidence from online sources, they raise an interesting question regarding whether the decision mechanisms utilised in the online world are comparable to that of the offline world. Further Acquisit and Fong (2015) argued that recruiter behaviours were altered as a consequence of information gleaned from online sources. This presents a unique challenge and opportunity for employers to reveal to candidates that they in fact utilise online information to make hiring decisions, but that they ensure their algorithms minimise the potential for bias towards the information that is found.

Another significant use of algorithms in recruitment can be found in the data mining of prospective candidates information which might be contained on platforms such as LinkedIn. Utilising clustering techniques, employers could be inadvertently marginalising whole sections of the labour market without even realising it (Shehu and Besimi, 2018). They also discuss the employment of data warehouses by employers as being potential both problematic and very useful. The storing of such great volumes of information might provide an opportunity for an employer to make a better hiring decision, but once again this is only possible if the variables in the algorithm are unbiased. Notwithstanding the potential negatives associated with the use of technology in data mining, candidate screening activities and possible biases, there is scope for greater candidate diversity in this regard. The

ability of employers to view candidate's information without the including of personal data such as names, age, sex, sexual orientation and gender can help enable this.

Bohnert and Ross (2010, p.342) discuss non-verbal cues which may arise from reviewing candidates social networking sites even at recruitment stage. For example, if as is the case with some organisations (eg Eversheds), those potential applicants/candidates are encouraged to join employer controlled recruitment groups. There is a danger that those responsible for making recruitment decisions may have unfettered access to photographs and platform content of the applicants thus potentially revealing personal attributes, such as one example – perceived physical attractiveness. Using Wiener's (1993) Attribute Theory, it is evident the content and photographs on social media platforms could have an effect on an employer's judgements about the applicant. He theorised pictures depicting users in a drunken stupor had a far lower rating, by decision makers, than those pictures taken in a professional or familial setting. While the employer might not be openly or consciously seeking information about the applicant, by default they may be exposed to it. There is also a risk of "similar-to-me" bias, which those responsible for overseeing the process need to be aware of and try to mitigate and while Bohnert and Ross's paper is useful in terms of determining the influence of social networking sites on candidate evaluation, it does so from a purely qualitative perspective. In order to fully understand how employers can mitigate bias in the use of social media for recruitment there appears to be a gap in the knowledge in terms of a substantively qualitative focus, which this inquiry attempts to address.

2.3.12 Section Conclusion

This section of the chapter has outlined the key considerations in relation to recruitment including the separation of recruitment from selection as two separate

steps in the applicant cycle. It was important and necessary to undertake this differentiation because the literature related to social media use in recruitment highlights the discomfort most employers have in relation to its embeddedness within the process. The next section of this chapter concentrates on social media in more detail. As a relatively new phenomena generally and particularly within HRM, it requires a broad examination of the available literatures.

2.4 Social Media

2.4.1 Introduction to Social Media

Over a number of years the use of digital applications including social media for HRM purposes has grown. The phenomenon, which is also termed e-HRM involves the use of web applications to support activities such as strategy implementation and policy and procedure applications (Ruel *et al* 2004). The context of the social media phenomenon should not be ignored. McFarland and Ployhart (2015) claimed the interactions of social media which cross section human resources should be considered at least in a twofold way. The first is the propensity for social media to impact organisational behaviour and secondly the impact of social media on the functions of HRM. They contend that social media cannot be considered in the same way that social interactions in the workplace are considered and that their context needs to be clarified to enable any meaningful outcomes in terms of theoretical contribution to this topic.

Attention now turns to examine social media and this section of the chapter focuses on exploring what it is - by defining it, outlining how it is used by individuals in the workplace and examining what are the legal implications of its use. The ubiquity of social media and its penetration into everyday life has been commented

on by many authors (Bohnert and Ross, 2010; Davison, Marisat and Bing, 2011; Hoffman and Novak, 2012; Roth, Bobko, Van Iddekinge, Thatcher, 2013; Wilson, Gosling and Graham, 2012). Commentators argue there is no denying that social media is here to stay and it is no longer considered fleeting. Sanchez Abril *et al* (2012, p.68) suggested the “newness of social media means that its ill-defined norms in terms of boundaries, raise important questions about legal, ethical and business related use across individuals work and life context”. In preparation for tackling social media and what it means for the recruitment process, first, we attempt to define the meaning of social media in the broadest sense.

2.4.2 Defining Social Media

McFarland and Ployhart (2015) draw out the discussion connected with the permanence of social media and they reflect on the indefinite record of comments, pages liked or photographs shared on social media could be problematic because attitudes, views and behaviours change over time but there may always be a permanent record of that view (McFarland and Ployhart, 2015 p. 1659). The term social media is used in this inquiry in a fashion which is intended to be all-encompassing and although used by many researchers in an interchangeable way, social media and social networking are different. The former refers to communications transmitted electronically and the latter refers to a functional tool which allows users to share information with one another. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010, p.61) proposed “social media is a group of internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundation of Web 2.0”. Hudson *et al* (2012, p.769) added there is a difficulty in accurately defining social media, “because of social media’s amorphous nature and infinite platform types”. Boyd and Ellison

(2008, p.211) define social networking media (SNM) as web-based services which allow users to carry out three main activities;

1. SNM are used to devise a public or semi-public profile within the constraints of a bounded system
2. They are used to share connections with other users with who they are linked
3. They enable users to review and “traverse” the lists of these connections

The breadth of social and professional media, ranges from blogging sites (Tumblr), publishing tools (Wikki's), micropublishing tools (Twitter), video sharing (YouTube) and social networking platforms (Facebook, Instagram,) professional networking platforms (LinkedIn). The scope of social media should not be underestimated because employers may engage in the use of a variety of platforms depending on what business purpose they intend to use it for. Broughton *et al* (2010, p.1) argued because social media is a relatively new phenomenon and as there is no common regulatory body and therefore it is difficult to find a universally agreed definition. In addition the constant changing nature of social media requires frequent revisions, for example at the outset of Web 2.0 technologies there was no opportunity to engage with social media on mobile devices. However, currently according to the Office of National Statistics (August, 2017) it is confirmed that the number of adults in the UK accessing the internet on mobile devices has risen to 73% from 70% in 2016. This gives rise to questions regarding what information employees of organisations are accessing on their personal mobile devices, something which the employer has little or no control. There is no suggestion that those individuals responsible for recruitment are accessing applicants' social media content but it does, however, provide an ease of access to do so if they wish.

For the purposes of this research, the broader term social media is used because it would be unnecessarily limiting to refer only to social networking sites for

data collection purposes and latterly in the discussion. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) contend that social media is an active domain; content and information considered up-to-date today may disappear from the virtual landscape tomorrow. This can be problematic as changes in technology may render some research obsolete even before it has been published and in fact, it can already be evidenced that this is the case, because the use of mobile technology and its implications for the business environment, has progressed considerably since the outset of this inquiry. Ingham (2010, para.1) argued the term social media:

“...still refers to a comparatively new set of internet technologies that enable people to connect, share knowledge, develop relationships and collaborate with each other in a way that has rarely been possible before”.

In order to fully understand the types of social media an organisation may utilise for the purposes of their business activities, it is useful to outline the key platforms being accessed and used by many organisations, which will be addressed in the next section.

2.4.3 Social Media Platforms

Broughton *et al* (2010, p.7) provided a succinct and useful synopsis of the most common social media platforms, although some additional more recent and emerging platforms have been added;

Table 2.3 Social Media Platforms (Adapted from Broughton *et al*, 2013, p.6)

<p>Linkedin</p>	<p>A business-related social networking site mainly used for professional networking. Users maintain a list of contact details of people with whom they have some levels of relationship, called connections. This list of connections can then be used to build up a contact network, follow different companies and find jobs, people and organisations.</p>
<p>Twitter</p>	<p>Microblogging service enabling its users to send and read publicly visible messages called Tweets. Tweets are text based posts of up to 280 characters displayed on the user's</p>

	profile page. Users may subscribe to others' Tweets.
Facebook	A social networking service where users create personal profiles, add other users as friends and exchange messages, including automatic notifications where they update their own profile. Additionally, users may join common-interest groups, organised by common characteristics (eg workplace). (Facebook.com, 2015)
YouTube	A video sharing website on which users can upload, share and view videos. A wide variety of user-generated video content is displayed, including film and television clips as well as amateur content such as video blogging. Media corporations including the BBC also offer some of their material via the site. Most videos enable users to leave and exchange comments.
Wikipedia	A collaborative web-based encyclopaedia project; its 18 million articles have been written collaboratively by volunteers around the world and almost all articles are freely editable by any visitor. A prominent web 2.0 site but not an example of social networking <i>per se</i> . N.B The rationale for the inclusion of Wikipedia is to demonstrate the blogging and forums associated with its maintenance. There are dedicated chat rooms and hashtags which create an online community of contributors, with some social elements.
Instagram	Instagram is an online mobile photo-sharing, video-sharing and social networking service that enables its users to take pictures and videos, apply digital filters to them and share them on a variety of social networking services, such as Facebook, Twitter, Tumblr and Flickr. (Wikipedia, 2014).
Pinterest	This is a visual discovery tool that people use to collect ideas for their different projects and interests. People create and share collections (called "boards") of visual bookmarks (called "Pins") that they use to do things such as plan trips and projects, organize events or save articles and recipes. (Wikipedia, 2014)

Google+	This is Google’s fourth foray into the social networking field. Not a particularly successful platform and is difficult to navigate and similar features to Facebook. (Smallbiztrends, 2017)
Snapchat	Snapchat is an image processing application that has quickly grown in popularity. You can use this application to share promo codes, demo your products or even partner with influencers as a strategy to increasing your brand awareness. (Smallbiztrends, 2017)
Whatsapp	Widely popular instant messaging tool which can be used as a client/customer service tool. Use it to quickly pass on internal communication or create a group as a way to advertise your products or services. (Smallbiztrends, 2017)
Yammer	An exclusively Microsoft platform, Yammer connects people across an organisation instantly and can be used for building on group work, instant messaging and as platform for two way feedback (Yammer.com, 2017)
GlassDoor.com	Glassdoor launched its company ratings site in June 2008, as a site that “collects company reviews and real salaries from employees of large companies and displays them anonymously for all members to see,” argued by TechCrunch (2013). The company then averaged the reported salaries, posting these averages alongside the reviews employees made of the management and culture of the companies they worked for—including some of the larger tech companies such as Google and Yahoo. The site also allows the posting of office photographs and other company-relevant media. (Wikipedia, 2017)

Broughton *et al* (2013) addressed answer questions concerned which platforms employers are accessing and what they are doing with the information once they have captured it. There are parallels in relation to the Broughton *et al* (2011) research paper and the focus of this exploratory inquiry into the role of social media for recruitment purposes, but the main difference is that Broughton *et al* fail to

fully investigate the nature and extent to which social media is being used for recruitment and how it can be used as a business tool in the recruitment process.

2.4.4 Social Media as a Business Tool and within the Workplace

Leftheriotis and Giannakos (2013) referred to research which has been undertaken to establish what organisations use social software for. In their review of the current literature they found organisations' made varying use of social software, which included but was not limited to, blogging, social bookmarking, enterprise forums, micro-blogging and social networks. McAfee (2006, p.22) commented although organisations adoption of new technologies for communication often trail behind that of individuals, social media is being increasingly utilised by organisations in the workplace and he noted "it can facilitate communication and knowledge exchange within the workplace in a way that has never happened before".

Bennett *et al* (2010, p.61) suggested "as the recession hit, it was more than ever critical for employers to opt for more radical and innovative approaches to their business activities". Their paper emphasised the propensity social media has in terms of social media in terms of "increasing workplace productivity" (Bennett *et al* 2010, p.62). Whether the introduction of social media into recruitment processes has increased productivity in HRM activities is yet to be explored but there is argument to support the claim its use can have a positive impact on brand image and help organisations foster a transparent culture internally. Ingham (2010) argued the benefits of social media use are often emergent and as such, it is only as their use develops (in organisational day-to-day activities) that their unanticipated benefits are revealed. They also argued from a commercial point of view, other departments (IT, Marketing *etc.*) within an organisation need to be involved in the day-to-day application of social media to compound its success. There is little scope for

argument about the influence of social media in workplaces today. As stated previously, the ubiquity of social media use in everyday life has been commented on by many. It has allowed businesses to interact with their customers in an unprecedented fashion and it has enabled colleagues to communicate with one another irrespective of place and time. Smart mobile technology now permits employers to track and monitor both consumers' and employees' activities minute-by-minute. Whereas previously, telephone and email communication were the most prominent forms of exchange (between organisations and their customers, employees and stakeholders), some businesses can now more or less instantaneously respond to all three groups, via some form of social platform. The most common use of social media by organisations is for communication with their customers and in their paper Wilson *et al* (2012), highlighted the enormity and pervasiveness of social media use related to consumers. Henderson and Bowley (2010, p.237) posit; "...today's internet technologies are bringing rapid change to organisational communication and their public relations activities". Their paper focused on the changes to a third sector's brand image to enhance their and their stakeholder's recruitment experiences and they concluded there are limitations in using social media for recruitment. Specifically, they suggested organisations require established online networks, an authentic recruitment message and a well-defined social media strategy in order to guarantee its success. Wandel (2008, p.35) suggested "the use of social media for recruitment purposes is becoming increasingly popular because social networking sites enable recruiters to maintain constant connectivity and communication".

Social media platforms are another facet of developing technologies and have allowed employers to gain access to information about employees' and job

applicants' private lives. On the one hand, access to this private information may provide employers with reassurances they are making the correct hiring decision but on the other hand, it could be facilitating employers in engaging in discriminatory practices whether they are consciously aware of this or not. In order to understand social media's influence in the workplace a basic understanding of what it involves is required. The use of the internet has impacted recruitment and selection processes and procedures in a profound way and the era of paper-based application forms has largely gone and has been overtaken by fully integrated e-recruitment systems. These have the power to track the employee lifecycle from as early as when an applicant first clicks onto a job advert on the employer's website. Employers can analyse and track where their applicants are being sourced from through search engine analytics. Some organisations use social media to search and find suitable applicants using only sites such as LinkedIn. Other employers make use of Facebook or Twitter as tools within the workplace for employees to share knowledge.

Qi and Edgar-Neville (2011, p.75) proposed the personal information people provide on their social networking sites and comments which have been posted by their friends or connections, can provide insight into a person's values, morals activities, biases and self-image. Anderson (2003) reviewed applicants' responses to the changes in recruitment as a result of technology advancement and concluded while it is useful to understand applicant responses to changing technologies, it would be more useful to understand the impact of the technology in the longer term and to try to identify other possible consequences. Although his study does not reflect the use of social media use in selection decisions, it has identified a common issue with the available research on this topic and he argued there is too much

emphasis on research using students as participants to the detriment of understanding real world recruitment and selection issues in the organisational context.

Kluemper and Rosen (2012, p.1144) acknowledged the way in which employers are using the internet and social media to collect information about applicants from the Internet and further they commented employers are exploring the web as a means of gathering information about current and future employees. McDonald and Thompson (2016) discussed the use of social media for profiling in the recruitment and selection process and this has been discussed prominently within the literature connected with the law and more generally within contemporary news media. Overall they conclude there are risks and potential benefits for employers considering using social media for recruitment and selection purposes and they warn employers should think carefully before embedding it within their processes and procedures.

Sylva and Mol (2009, p.311) suggested changes to the internet have led to significant changes in recruitment and selection practices. They argued the previous decade of research into the extent of the changes lacks depth in comparison to research into other HRM activities (Bauer *et al*, 2006; Hausknecht *et al*, 2004). They claimed organisations have a distinct lack of understanding about applicant perceptions of the use of technology in the recruitment and selection process. Their argument is disputed by Parry and Wilson (2009) who suggested much of the research relating to employers' adoption of online recruitment methods focused largely on applicant perceptions.

The use of the internet in recruitment and selection provides benefits for applicants as well, as it provides much wider choice and greater speed of access to

information about organisations and employers. Kluemper and Rosen (2012) highlighted the way in which the internet is used by applicants which enables them to learn about specific jobs in an organisation but at the same time providing them with valuable information about the broader organisation culture. Access to the internet and social media platforms provides information for applicants, a mechanism which cannot be adequately compared to older, more traditional recruitment and selection processes. In the past potential applicants of an organisation may have only become aware of a job opportunity through speaking to family or friends which aligns with the traditional understanding of social networks use in job search activity.

Cappelli (2001, p.140) suggests “finally the labour market...has become a true market: wide open, uncontrolled by individual companies and unconstrained by geography”. It was argued this has led to the consumerisation of applicants (Cober, Brown, Keeping & Levy, 2004). Wilson *et al* (2012) supported the contention that social media has become a core feature of people’s daily lives. They proposed peoples online and offline worlds have become at least partially (and in some cases wholly) integrated and the boundaries between work and personal life have become blurred for some users. De la Llama *et al* (2012) supported this and suggested applicants online and offline identities are almost indistinguishable.

As stated previously, social media use in business is predominantly focused on the communication channels within organisations and there is little to dispute its relevance in terms of access to customers. However, its growing use in terms of HRM activities requires some attention. Davison *et al* (2011) underpinned the dearth of current research in this area and suggested proper investigation into the extent of social media use in recruitment and selection is required to provide HRM practitioners with the evidence with which to alert recruitment decision-makers of the

risks. Consequently, one potentially important area for exploration is the legalities associated with the use of social media in recruitment and selection activities, which is examined briefly later in this chapter. A serious weakness in Davison *et al's* review of the research requirements is that it does not provide any clear alignment to the gaps in research highlighted by Rynes and Cable (2003). They do not reflect the need for organisational level research and thus a failure by researchers to investigate the recruitment process at this level will only exacerbate the gap in research. Having considered the use of social media in a broad organisational sense, the chapter now turns to the effect of social media on employer-brand.

2.4.5 Social Media Marketing and Employer Brand

Darnold and Rynes (2013) claimed the majority of recruitment research has focused on topics such as internal labour markets, search consultancies, procedural issues with selection processes carried out on the internet and performance outputs related to employee mobility (Gardner, 2005; Hamori, 2010; Jattuso and Sinar, 2003; Somoya, Williamson and Lorinkova, 2008). They asserted the most recent research has focused on recruitment and organisational characteristics. The findings in this area relate to concerns about employer brand which emphasise a much more business marketing focus and that often the metrics used to measure employer brand from a consumer point of view have crossed over with the employer brand from the perspective of future employees. Decisions candidates make when choosing an organisation to work for may be related to the public perception of the employer. The seminal paper relating to the theory of employer brand having an impact on applicant choice was produced by Collins and Stevens (2002, p.1131) which examined the relationship between applicant/employer choice and attraction techniques and found "organisational recruiting (eg brand building) tactics are related

to organisational attraction". An examination of the concept of early recruitment activities will be pertinent to this research as the majority of the activities undertaken employing the use of social media tools are likely to be in the very early stages of the recruitment process. It will be interesting to note whether the findings in this exploratory inquiry reveal a relationship between the individual perceptions of employer brand and subsequent employers' recruitment activities as a consequence of the practice.

Barber (1998) argued that following the economic downturn in the 1990s there was a requirement for key recruitment activities in attracting suitable skilled candidates with "rare and valuable" skills. It is likely that this continues to be as relevant now as it was then and further, because of the most recent economic crisis a new requirement for tools to assist in the positive attraction of candidates has emerged. Following the work of others (Aaker, 1996; Keller, 1993), Cable and Turban (2001) claimed consumer brand theories could be utilised by employers in examining the processes and procedures which affect applicant attraction. They also argued an employer's brand could impact on applicant choices at the early stages of recruitment in both positive and negative ways, much in the same way that consumer perceptions might impact their purchasing choices and they specifically utilised brand-equity concept as the theoretical foundation for their examination of the topic. Collins and Stevens (2002) support Cable and Turban's claim that job seekers form beliefs about the organisations they are attracted to and follow the same decision making patterns consumers do and further their findings confirmed highly-skilled job seekers in tight labour markets behave in a similar way to that of consumers behaviour. This raises interesting questions about whether employers look on their use of social media for recruitment with an entirely different focus to

their brand-image and corporate identity. Darnold and Rynes (2013, p.110) argued a number of authors theories (Cable and Graham, 2000; Cable and Turban, 2003; Turban and Greening, 1996), considered collectively serve to illustrate marketing tactics as way to influence applicants decisions. As such, there is a question to be posed around the use of social media for recruitment and its link however tenuous, to the marketing and public face of the organisation. Having examined the practicalities of the use of social media within organisations the next section also explores the legal issues connected to their use.

2.4.6 Legalities and the Use of Social Media in the Workplace

Keeping the role of social media in recruitment in mind, this section of the chapter examines the issues connected with the legalities in doing so. A recurring concern arising throughout this literature review has been about the challenge in addressing attempt to illustrate the legal requirements for employers (Cavico *et al*, 2013; Davison *et al*, 2011; Kluemper and Rosen, 2012). The central research outputs on which the majority of current academic papers focus on are based on a series of industry researched reports by online recruiter and employment commentator Career Builder. Researchers have utilised Career Builder reports from 2009 which suggested that almost 45% of employers were utilising social media to recruit and screen applicants (Careerbuilder.com, 2012). While these survey reports highlight the intensity of the use of social media for recruitment and screening purposes, they concentrated wholly on employers in the USA where the law relating to employee privacy differs greatly to that in UK.

There is a requirement to establish what perceived legal risks employing organisations attach to the use of social media in pursuit of their recruitment activities. How can recruitment managers demonstrate fairness in screening

applicants' social media profiles and further, for what job-relevant characteristics are they looking? Singer (1993) found applicants' perceptions of the fairness in a selection tool increased if the same selection tool was used consistently for each candidate. Failure to ensure recruitment and selection methods are fairly and consistently applied, by employers, could result in their having the inability to make a selection decision or facing claims of direct or indirect discrimination by aggrieved applicants. However, Broughton *et al* (2010) dispute the risks for employers using social media for recruitment and argued the likelihood of a successful claim being made in an employment tribunal is minimal. They reveal from all employment tribunal cases in 2008, only eight per cent were related to claims made during or after recruitment processes and none of the claims specifically related to the employers use of social media. However, James (2011, para, 15) maintained unless employers can genuinely provide a legitimate job-related reason for having a rummage through candidates' social media they leave themselves open to claims of unfair or potentially discriminatory treatment by applicants. Cavico *et al* (2013) argued the American courts are now beginning to examine legal claims caused by social media and employment disputes.

i) The USA Legislative System and Social Media in the Workplace

The USA legal system is divided into two major areas; federal (constitutional) law and state law. Federal law, although limited, exists across all states and must be upheld in each state regardless of localised judicial opinion. State law varies greatly from one state to another and changes regularly. Federal law is silent in relation to social media in the workplace but this comes as no surprise as federal law is constitutionally bound and therefore predates any technology of this kind. However, Genova (2008) refers specifically to Californian (statute) law in her paper which

focused on employees' rights to privacy and the specific laws she referred to are connected with "lifestyle protection" statutes of Californian constitutional law. With little theoretical underpinning or empirical data to support her claims, she argued employers have legitimate business interests in monitoring, for example, workplace internet use: to minimise legal exposure; to increase productivity and to avoid proprietary information loss. She also suggested two main motivators for employers to examine the Online Social Networking sites (ONS) of applicants'.

Genova (2008) regards the use of social media by employers as being wholly acceptable as long as it does not break any federal or Californian law. Although, critically, Genova does not specify which HRM decisions are involved, these can be inferred as the paper specifically relates to HRM activities within organisations. Helpfully, the paper highlights the issue with fairness and this is useful in illuminating some of the ethical considerations for employers. A weakness in this paper is the lack of scope beyond Californian law.

Cavico *et al* (2013) examined the legal implications for organisations using social media for employment-related purposes. They reviewed the legal rights USA employees have in respect of their right to privacy freedom of speech and their right to be treated fairly by employers. They make it abundantly clear it is the risk an employer faces in terms of claims of discrimination which present the biggest legal hazard. Supporting Jeske and Holland (2017), they outlined in detail the legal / ethical obligations and duties employers have to their employees but they concluded employers generally hold the power in the relationship. Those with employee status enjoy more protection than those who are merely job applicants in the recruitment process. They warn employers and managers about the risks associated with screening applicants' social media but stated employers should be vigilant when

carrying out background checks. They make no specific reference to the use of social media for recruitment and instead consider the recruitment process as a whole.

Sanchez Abril *et al* (2012) concluded those social media users' who have exposed themselves in the public eye cannot claim a reasonable expectation of privacy from potential employers. Evidence exists outside employment-related academic work and suggested the average user of social networking platforms has little or no expectation of privacy, however, there is also much anecdotal evidence of users of Online Social Networks (OSN), who feel an employer or any unauthorised persons accessing their OSN is an infringement of their human rights, regardless of the motivation in doing so. Wilson *et al* (2012, p.212) emphasised that debates about peoples' privacy concerns vary and concluded there is a disparity between peoples' "reported privacy concerns and observed privacy behaviour". Although they focused their legislative review in the USA, they also referred to an Australian study of 4000 students at Carnegie Mellon University (Gross and Aquisti, 2005), the results of which suggest over 50% of participants indicated they were not overtly concerned with privacy settings on their Facebook accounts. However, in a further study, Christofides *et al* (2009) suggested users of social media were now more generally concerned with their privacy settings. The suggestion individuals are concerned with their privacy on social media presents a serious problem for providers as OSN sites rely on users not having their privacy settings at the highest level thus enabling users to be targeted by advertisers and potentially recruiting employers.

More recently states in the USA, have reintroduced legislative bills relating to social media in recruitment activities. The purpose is to provide protection for applicants and employees and will ban employers and schools from requesting

applicants'/candidates' social media login details and passwords during interview processes. This is as a result of a complaint to the National Labour Board (NLB) about the practice of shoulder surfing. The bill has been passed through the House of Representatives now with some states not passing the law (Maryland, Delaware and Illinois), allowing employers to request social media passwords at interview stage (Kluemper, 2013 p.5). Myers *et al* (2008) proposed

"...in most countries, the lawmaker has fallen behind in setting up specific guidelines for the use and abuse of social networking websites in staffing, as is the case for other recruitment and selection issues, such as racial/gender discrimination".

Although more broadly discussing the use of social media for screening purposes, Kluemper (2013, p.7) suggested the lack of research which has been carried out to-date related to this practice should

"...serve as a warning that current Social Networking Websites (SNW) screening approaches may not yield valid and legally defensible results, despite being intuitively appealing to those currently engaging in SNW screening".

He also suggested there are parallels with existing screening methods, which have received a lot of academic attention and as such until the use of social media in recruitment and screening receives the same investigation, employers should proceed cautiously. To conclude this section, it has been argued the USA legislature system generally supports the employer in their pursuit of legitimate business activities, even if this requires them to engage in the practice of undertaking online surveillance of potential employees. The next section turns now to consider legislation in Britain related to social media in the workplace.

ii) UK Legislative System and Social Media in the Workplace

As with European law there are no specific key pieces of legislation in the UK which focus wholly on social media activities and employment. Instead, there may be an

interpretation of human rights law, equality and data protection laws. For clarity, the use of social media by employers to vet or screen applicants does not break any UK law, if the social media profile is open and available in the public domain.

Nonetheless employers may be inadvertently making hiring decisions based on information posted on social media websites about applicants' protected characteristics. Information about applicants' gender, race, sexual orientation, marital status or disability could be contained on their social media and use of this information might lead to claims of direct or indirect discrimination. Broughton *et al* (2010) commented social media claims in employment tribunals have been specifically related to employers dismissing current employees as a result of negligent comments posted on social media platforms or because of cyber deviance. In many of these cases employers have been heavily criticised about their social media policies, or lack thereof and although generally the employers' decision has not been overturned, most tribunal judges have commented on the lack of robust social media policies to support the decision to dismiss employees.

There appears to be an inconsistency in what is happening within organisations and what the legal profession are advising employers to do in relation to social media. At present, the legal community advises employers to ensure their social media policies are robust and include specific examples of unacceptable behaviour by their employees while using social media. However, if the research evidence put forward by organisations such as My Jobs Group, Xpert HR and the CIPD holds any merit, employers are led to believe some employing organisations are continuing to use social media as a selection tool for screening applicants. The overall picture suggests employers, on one hand, want their employees to engage with social media in the pursuit of their daily activities with the employer guiding and

controlling the overall message to their customers. On the other hand, the same employers want to review employees and applicants' social media activities despite any transparency in the practice.

Clark and Roberts (2010) proposed employees should be aware that aside from any existing workplace policies, employers may be monitoring their social media activities and this information could be used by the employer, in disciplinary proceedings, particularly if the users comments made on social media might harm or cause reputational damage to the organisation. In addition, there are no laws or legally binding guidelines to prevent employers gathering information about potential employees during or prior to a selection process. The collection of personal data is likely to be done in a way that the applicant would not be aware of and as such there is a legal question about meaningful equal opportunities in employment if employers are accessing applicants' social media, or where they are connecting with them on sites such as LinkedIn. The employer will then, potentially have access relating to the applicants *protected characteristics* which they may not otherwise have had, in the employment of a more traditional approach to their recruitment activities.

In the UK, the Information Commissioner's Office (ICO) provides some clarity and states employers should be transparent about the nature and extent to which personal information is being collected by the organisation for the purposes of the recruitment process. It may be difficult for the employer to justify why they require information from social media platforms about the applicant/candidate. The guidance provided by the ICO (2011, p.23) stated employers should:

“Ensure that those who will seek the information are briefed about which sources to use, ensuring that those sources are likely to produce relevant information...”

Comments made on social media by an applicant are potentially being reviewed and judged by employers out of the context of that particular situation and this strengthens the argument that employers may need to consider the ethics of holding applicants accountable for comments posted or pictures uploaded to their social media accounts. There is a question to be asked about whether the applicant has a voice in the recruitment and selection process. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, Silverman *et al* (2013) suggested there are many benefits to providing employees with a voice through social media channels but is there not a contradiction between employers encouraging employees to express themselves honestly (on social media) on the one hand, but on the other, not in a way that might harm the organisation?

There are some legal considerations employers must not ignore and Broughton *et al* (2013, p.29) discussed the implications for employers using social media for recruitment purposes and the concluded:

“The information available through SNS’s introduces a series of unique legal issues and challenges. Social networking sites easily allow for the potential for individual biases to effect hiring and screening decisions... Employers are not currently required to disclose what information on an SNS was used for screening decisions which may allow managers to discriminate against candidates.” Brown and Vaughan (2011, p.222)

Although the focus of this inquiry into the role of social media in recruitment does not specifically include what employers are doing in terms of selection and screening, Brown and Vaughan’s comments bring to light the potential issues arising from the practice.

Given the variety and volume of information available to employers about potential candidates on the internet, there is a question around whether an employer is more open to a challenge of fair *process* as a result of their use of social media for

recruitment. Currently there is not available research, which examines this issue. However, as the use of social media for recruitment and selection processes, it has a greater propensity to become problematic in the future. There are questions about the accuracy of the information available to employers and given the risk of hacking and the vulnerability of users information to misuse or misinterpretation, there is a concern for employers considering the use of this information for the purposes of making decisions with potentially legal consequences.

Additionally, considerations about privacy and the potential employees' right to privacy should be examined, but there are some who argue that once personal information has been posted on the internet, the author relinquishes their expectation of privacy, but this is an argument which rages (Althaf, 2011). There is a clear polarisation between those who think employers are not entitled to view applicants' private information and those who believe there is nothing wrong with the practice, as people are consciously disclosing the information publicly. Although, this inquiry does not focus on employers actions in relation to selection practices, it can be concluded from this literature review, there may be a blurring of the lines between the information employers are seeking and the information available to them by default. Most legal comment (The Law Society, 2015) has suggested employers need to have robust social media policies in-place to guide them in relation to what is and what is not acceptable practice in relation to reviewing applicants'/candidates' personal and professional social media activities. Setting out the legal requirements has facilitated in illuminating the extent to which social media screening of applicants is unregulated in The UK.

2.4.7 Section Conclusion

This section of the chapter has outlined the complexity of defining social media and its composite elements. It can be seen that there is a blurring of the boundary between the use of social media in the context of the workplace and the use of social media for personal connections. It is clear the adoption of social media is generally on a personal basis in the first instance and then later in the workplace. This generates numerous challenges for employers, not least the necessity to manage and control the flow of information within the organisation and increasingly on an external basis. Therefore, it was sensible to consider which laws relate in terms of the employment of individuals by organisations. The next section of this chapter considers the theoretical underpinning of surveillance. The motivation to consider the literatures connected with this topic are as a result of the increasing digitalisation of the workplace and the potential consequence for individuals and their respective organisations.

2.5 Technology and the Panoptic Gaze

2.5.1 Introduction

Prior to introducing this section of the literature review, it is important to consider what can be termed as surveillance. The research considers the use of the term surveillance as being potentially alarmist. However it might be considered that within surveillance there is an argument to state that the observations of potential employees might be considered a precursor to surveillance and as this technology evolves the propensity for employers to use social media as a surveillance tool increases. Therefore, it is pertinent within the scope of this thesis and this literature

review to include a review of the literature connected with social media and the digital panopticon.

In order to understand the conceptualisation of surveillance in the workplace and increasingly the potential surveillance of people prior to employment, it is necessary to review the literature connected with this topic. As such, this section of the chapter critically reviews the evolution of surveillance theories from Bentham's (1771) initial concept of the physical architectural structure of the panopticon, to the more recent contemporary conceptualisations of surveillance. This includes digital surveillance and how the nature of surveillance has evolved in post panoptic times.

Discussions relating to surveillance, particularly in Western societies, have occurred in many forms and more increasingly, spanning differing disciplines beyond surveillance scholars, for many years. Changes in technology have led discussions away from Bentham's late 18th century and latterly Foucault's (1991) conceptualisation of a panoptically controlled and disciplined society, whereby the physicality and location of the panoptic structure was static. More recently and in particular with the emergence of a networked society, the notion of physical panoptic control and discipline has become more fluid, less easily contextualised and far less easily identifiable within a bounded system. In fact some authors, Haggarty and Ericson (2000) dismiss the conception of a panoptic mechanism by which to control or discipline docile subjects (who are citizens of the state). They suggest instead the panoptic gaze is less clear in the current technologically advancing world. They propose a society which is experiencing a post-panoptic chapter, whereby surveillance is an assembly of various invisible and nebulous networks which are often opaque and too difficult for individuals to define. This section sets out the

literature surrounding surveillance. Although this thesis focuses more specifically on the post-panoptic view, it would be impossible to ignore its original evolution.

2.5.2 Exploring Bentham's Panopticon

Bentham (1771) and later Foucault (1995) made significant inroads into exploring and defining the area of surveillance. Bentham proposed the panopticon structure in various guises and conditions. His view put forward a structure whereby the central control (usually a person) could oversee the subject (usually a group of people) constantly and from any viewpoint. This was concentrated on the prison system and was intended to move away from the current systems of extremely poor conditions and physical punishment to which those in the legal system were often subjected. The overseeing individual (the prison guard) was usually invisible to the subject being viewed (inmate), thereby creating the perception of constant surveillance. The emphasis was on a controlling and disciplining environment which was supposed to encourage the subject to eventually learn to be self-moderating in their behaviour and discourage incidences of recidivism. This panopticon structure was intended to be utilised by the penal system with the premise prisoners needed to learn to alter their behaviour in order to be rehabilitated. It was also about a realisation that prisoners could not be inspected constantly and therefore a perception of constant surveillance was required. He also concluded that is panoptic design could be used in more than one context and posit it would be utilised workhouses, schools, hospitals and constitutionally to observe governments (in essence sousveillance).

Although the intention of the latter panopticon constructions were not meant to be punitive, many (the government at the time) opposed the idea and all versions of the panopticon faced much criticism. Bentham's view was largely considered as being too futuristic in the Victorian era and many felt the use of the panopticon was

inhumane, overly reductive and mechanistic, which is in stark contrast to what his original intentions were. His vision for this system drew somewhat from a biblical interpretation (Lyon, 1991) and although he did not live to see the inception of his ideas, the use of his model as a blueprint in modern prisons was later introduced. Examples included Kingston Penitentiary, Canada, Millbank Penitentiary, London and Mettray Penal Colony, France. Interestingly, the political elite in the UK did not have an appetite for the inspection principle but this was later the foundation of most prison plans. Bentham's conceptualisation of the panoptic structure found most fame in Foucault's (1995) writing and was considered as being an outcome from the age of enlightenment and in particular his discussion of the panopticon structure were considered as being far ahead of his time but unfortunately this was not realised until following his death.

2.5.3 Foucault – Discipline and Punishment

Bentham's (1771) proposed structure drew the attention of and support from the French historian and philosopher Michael Foucault (1995). He believed the panopticon to be a "marvellous machine" (Lyon, 1991, p.604) and considered it as a possible "laboratory...to alter behaviour and to train or correct individuals" (Lyon, 1991 p.604). He drew a parallel between the move from the old regime to modernity in terms of addressing crime and punishment. He also argued the new discipline would support an environment which induced in the "inmate a state of conscious and permanent visibility that assures the automatic functioning of power" (Lyon 1991, p.604). This built on the original idea of the panopticon structure being a mechanism by which to deter recidivism and was intended to appeal to modernity whilst remaining the same perceived impersonal, automatic machine. The slight difference in Foucault's (1995) view was in his judgement of the use of the panopticon beyond

the prison system, such as the factories, schools and hospitals and how they incorporate individualising observation with analytical arrangements of space. His contention was that society is made up of a group of docile individuals disciplined to do the bidding of whatever institution that surrounds them. In contrast to Bentham, Foucault wanted to shift the mind-set away from the concept of a goal of governing to a mode of governing. It was this mode of governing which Foucault considered as a move away the goal of governing to the mode of governing in terms of the main goal is still for society to prosper but one which is delineated by geography or nation state. The mode of governance instead focuses on discipline by opaque methods.

This was met with criticism however and Alford (2000) argued Foucault was too linear in his approach and therefore did not consider alternatives or the whole picture in society. A key difference between modern Western societies and the nature of the discipline Foucault describes is in the extent and type of power in work (Gallic *et al*, 2017). The visibility of those involved in inspection in sovereign societies is far less opaque than in that of the digital inspection experienced in society today.

2.5.4 Post-Panoptic Theories

Surveillance scholars (Haggerty, 2006; Murakami Wood, 2007; Lyon, 2008; Caula, 2010) argue society and work has moved beyond a panoptical approach to surveillance and alternative theoretical frameworks must be explored in to enable their application in modern Western societies. Deleuze (1992) and Deleuze and Guattari (1987), although broadly similar to Foucault's rationalisations, explored the concept of surveillance by adopting an alternative mode of analysis and attempted to extend Foucault's contention of a move beyond societies of discipline to societies of control. The important difference is found in the process and the method. The success of modern corporations largely relies on the constant surveillance and

continuous monitoring of market forces, workforces and strategies. Therefore, the question remains whether the extension of this type of surveillance to encompass potential employees as well could enhance the possibility of the success of the organisation and furthering of their commercial activities. Deluze (1992) also contended that society no longer includes watchwords, instead society is made-up of passwords and the individual is no longer a physical representation. He proposed as an alternative the *dividual* as individuals are divided; by their consumer behaviour and purchasing power. He also considered that the move from the physical representation to that of a data representation presented a further layer of opportunity for those individuals in control of the data to manipulate it for their own means.

2.5.5 Haggarty and Ericson's Assemblage – Beyond the Panoptic Structure

Haggarty and Ericson (2002) most notably were the harshest critics of Foucault. They contended the use of the Panopticon metaphor was widely over-stretched and the use of such a metaphor did not satisfy the requirement for a set of analytical tools which could analyse the more recent surveillance methods. The posited contemporary surveillance methods were so wildly differing from the type of surveillance Foucault was referring to that it would be impossible to categorise them in the same fashion. Modern networking societies, not wholly dissimilar to Deluze (1992) consideration of data representations, meant that organisations had much more control over their subjects (employees). Whilst their view reached beyond that of the workplace and they disagreed with Foucault and argued that the surveillance of the “underclass” was a disproportionately narrow lens through which to view surveillance theories. Instead they reasoned the networked society promotes an

“assemblage” of surveillance activities. They consider the following as the post-panoptic view of surveillance (Haggerty and Ericson, 2000:

- 1) is driven by the desire to bring systems together, leading to an increased convergence of formerly discrete surveillance systems and an exponential increase in surveillance capacity;
- 2) is increasingly growing and spreading by expanding its use for purposes of control, governance, security, profit and entertainment, and with the help of new and intensified technological capabilities, particularly the rise of computerised databases;
- 3) has a levelling effect on hierarchies of surveillance, due to new target populations being monitored with new and intensified technological possibilities
- 4) works across state as well as non-state institutions;
- 5) is primarily directed towards human bodies that are understood as a hybrid composition – a flesh technology-information amalgam; and
- 6) relies on machines to make and record discrete observations.

They argued that surveillance activities on society are largely utilised to gather information to identify patterns of behaviour, consumption, consumer behaviours *etc.* they also consider the review of this information should lead to profit. Individual’s data should be harnessed by organisations and used to further the commercial success. It could be argued social media platforms such as Facebook are an excellent example of this. There are various agreements which suggest Facebook and other such platforms receive free labour supply from those individuals generating content for the platform which is both unpaid and uncoerced. However, it

is beyond the scope of this study to examine whether this is an accurate assessment of social media in light of Marx (1976) Labour Theory of Value.

2.5.6 Section Conclusion Contemporary Conceptualisation of Surveillance

The literature connected with the post-panoptic view appears to focus more heavily on the volume of data and technology revolution. It was clear from this section of the literature review that there are potentially significant concerns connected with the use of social media in the workplace and how they may be considered as surveillance tools. Gailic *et al* (2017, p.27) suggested that social media platforms have made the role of the “watcher and the “watched” and power relations in society much more widespread. They posit individuals in society allow themselves to be watched and engage in the activity readily without coercion. There are number questions to be asked regarding what happens to the data once the surveillance has ceased (if indeed it ever does). Who owns the data about individuals and what it can be used for are a cause for concern. The data stored on social media platforms is no longer the users property and it could be argued in this context the architecture of participation is also the architecture of demise.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has reviewed the most relevant literature relating to recruitment and social media and surveillance and as such it has become abundantly clear that further academic work exploring the intersectionality of all three is required and this point has been repeatedly emphasised. In addition, the review has highlighted the critical gap in knowledge relating to the use of social media for recruitment purposes. There is a lack of understanding about the processes which employers go through in their use of social media for recruitment. Both recruitment and social media appear to have been researched about in some depth

independently. Nevertheless, there is a significant lack in academic work relating to their use in conjunction with one another and consequently what their usage together means for the business environment.

As set out in the introductory chapter, this thesis is exploratory and therefore the theoretical framework is emergent in terms of the phenomena and the lens of surveillance is utilised in order to qualitatively investigate the experiences of those utilising social media for recruitment purposes and what it means for their organisations and what the perceived consequences are. The following chapter outlines the methodological approach to the research, including the design and context and provides the methodological framework within which the research was undertaken.

Chapter 3 - Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

Definitions of research, including what it encompasses have been put forward by a number of authors (Bryman and Bell, 2015; McNeill and Chapman, 2005; Saunders, 2015; Walliman, 2006), however, in essence it can be considered as being an investigation which leads to an explanation and more often than not, may lead to the generation of further questions. The process of research can also be considered as studies which aim to create and contribute new knowledge to a particular field or area. Research is usually more complex than can be adequately explained in such a short definition. Undeniably, it is a much more elaborate and complex structure, involving the careful binding together of theory, philosophical assumption, knowledge and skill.

This is particularly true in the field of business and management research. This methodology chapter discusses, in detail, the research methodology which has been adopted in this study into the role of social media in recruitment activities within the broader HRM context. The chapter addresses the research strategy, outlines and justifies which empirical techniques will be applied. In addition, it defines the scope of the research and further it will reveal the limitations in the research design. It is anticipated this section of the thesis will help situate the research questions in relation to the existing research in management. Rooted in an interpretive tradition, the epistemological focus of the research implies the ontological assumption that reality is socially constructed and therefore it was concluded an inductive approach to the inquiry was entirely appropriate. The proposed methodology will utilise a framework which follows a case study design, with semi-structured interviews as the primary data collection method. Given the nature of the research questions, it was

decided that the most appropriate method to adopt for this investigation was an exploratory approach, which focused specifically on the process involved in the use of social media for recruitment. The field work employed a semi-structured interview technique. In a similar manner to case study methods the research also includes brief documentary evidence from some of the organisation's, providing potential for the use of triangulation analysis. The chapter is divided into three sections. To begin with, the interpretive tradition is explored. Following this, an examination of the research strategy is undertaken. In the final section, the research design is addressed which provides a rationale for individual/organisation selection, data sources chosen and the research analysis techniques are outlined.

3.2 Justification for the use of Inductive and Qualitative Methods.

In the first instance, the decision to proceed with an inductive qualitative approach was made on the premise that the nature of "social media is a very active and fast moving domain" (Kaplan and Haenlein 2010, p.64). Davison *et al* (2011) further argued the use of social media for the purposes of recruitment has yet to be explored by researchers. Social media within HRM is a relatively unexplored area in management research and arguably would benefit from an exploration from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective, however given the nature of the research questions and requirement within the aim of this research to richly explore these issues and present the findings. This qualitative exploration will aid in the contribution to the theoretical understanding of the use of social media for recruitment within organisations. Currently, much of the published research has largely followed an inductive qualitative approach (Cavico *et al*, 2013; Davison *et al*, 2011; James, 2011; Madia, 2011; Ollington *et al*, 2013; Solvensky and Ross, 2013), although, Kluemper and Rosen, (2009). Kluemper *et al*, (2012), provided some

quantitative empirical evidence relating to the use of social media, which specifically focused on identifying personality traits in job applicants. There is no attempt here to dismiss the usefulness and the need for researchers to adopt a positivist quantitative approach, in fact there is certainly a requirement for more quantitative research. However, following the review of the literature it was considered a qualitative study is justified in answering the research questions. Consequently, it is anticipated the outputs from this exploratory inquiry will raise further questions to be investigated.

There is considerable debate about the use of scientific approaches in the social sciences area and in particular, Blaikie (2007) commented on a controversy in relation to whether the use of scientific methods is at all appropriate in the social sciences. The disparity between the approaches can lead to confusion particularly where a mixture of methods (quantitative and qualitative) are adopted. Some (Easterby-Smith *et al*, 1991) argued that very often the nature of the inquiry will serve to inform the ontological position of the researcher and while the adoption of the interpretivist approach in this particular research is not intended to negate the validity of alternatives, rather it permits the researcher to explore the use of social media for recruitment purposes in a way which might genuinely inform future quantitative studies.

During the review of the literature there was an emphasis on exploring management research and its purpose when examining the processes and procedures relating to the administration of the HRM. The literature review has revealed a significant gap in relation to the use of social media as a tool for recruitment (Davison *et al*, 2011) and therefore, it is considered an important area where new research can build on what is known in terms of organisations' recruitment practices, or could assist in the generation of new theory. Research

studies in management often are considered interdisciplinary because academics frequently draw from other areas such as sociology, economics and psychology (and others) as a means to explain phenomena within organisations. Predominantly, management research serves to provide possible answers to management problems and to provide practical solutions for organisations to apply to those problems and as a means to provide a better understanding of management processes (Easterby-Smith *et al*, 1991; Remenyi *et al*, 1998).

Welbourne (2012, p.1) discussed the complexity of research in the field of HRM and argued answers which were considered “right yesterday may not work in the future”. Therefore, the revealing nature of the literature review supported an exploratory approach to this inquiry and in order to understand this practice in more detail, it is necessary to make observations and to try and capture the experiences of those individuals involved with the use of social media for recruitment in the first instance. Although in their review, Breaugh and Starke (2000) suggested research relating to recruitment has increased dramatically in the last 30 years, they argued there continues to be a significant gap in knowledge which satisfies the practical needs of employers and HRM practitioners and while this inquiry does not intend to solve a business problem, it could be considered the first steps in establishing the answers connected to the use of social media HRM practice.

There is a genuine concern among academics that it is almost impossible for interpretivist researchers to remain wholly objective as they collect their data and Miles and Huberman (1994, p.8) argued the nature of a qualitative inquiry presents an analytic problem, because “if the researchers use little pre-established instruments, it will be difficult to separate out “external” information from what they themselves contributed...”. There are varying perspectives as to whether this is a

concern and for the purposes of this research it is immaterial, because it is accepted this issue might be a problem and as such the research design was intended to mitigate the issue. To reiterate, the basis for pursuing an inductive qualitative approach in this research stems from the lack of explicit theory in the field of social media and HRM and more specifically recruitment. The research now turns to examine the research philosophies and provide justification for pursuing a qualitative approach for this research.

3.3 Research Philosophies and Research Methods

Although there was argument to support a purely qualitative approach in the research design for this inquiry, Hood (2006, p.215) commented on this issue more broadly and suggested “most researchers will not fit neatly into the categories of any given typology”. This is particularly true of this research, as there is an obvious argument for the employment of either a qualitative, quantitative or mixed methodological approach. Nonetheless, the gap in knowledge revealed by the literature review has identified a critical requirement, at this time, for an inquiry with a qualitative focus.

Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) classified philosophical assumptions into three categories; positivist, interpretive and critical paradigms. For the purpose of this chapter and this particular research, a review of the first two paradigms *alone* will be undertaken, as they presented the most logical approach from which to make a choice. Guba and Lincoln (1994), (cited in Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p.108) referred to the “scientific” or “naturalistic” approach to research and proposed when viewing the paradigms as human constructions, no one construction can be “incontrovertibly right” and further, because of their human construction (which both positivism and interpretivism contain elements) they are subject to human error. According to

Bryman and Cramer (2005, p.453), “a paradigm is a set of beliefs that prescribe how research in specific disciplines should be implemented and how the results of the research should be interpreted”. Essentially, a paradigm is a set of beliefs which encompasses the theories of a group of researchers, where these ideas underpin their research methodology and its interpretation (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2010).

Although these classifications assisted in identifying the varying beliefs associated with research construction, Myers (2013) cautioned researchers in not considering each paradigm as being mutually exclusive (qualitatively or quantitatively) because there is evidence to suggest both qualitative and quantitative inquiries can support either a positivist or interpretive approach. Lee (1989) argued the distinction between each paradigm is not “clear cut” and Myers further reasoned it does not always follow that qualitative research should lie within the interpretivist paradigm. Walsham (1995) and Yin (2003) agreed with this and contended that case studies can either be positivist or interpretivist in their approach. As previously pointed out, although a decision was made to pursue a qualitative line of inquiry with regards to this research project, a broad investigation was also made into the viability of a quantitative inquiry, to aid in its discounting, as a suitable alternative methodological approach for the investigation.

With respect to a quantitative focus in this research, any claim denying a positivist approaches suitability, would have been inaccurate; because there was scope for a scientific study which would quantify and assist in generalising the nature and extent to which social media is being utilised by individuals in organisations for recruitment purposes, both nationally and globally. However, in the first instance a more in-depth qualitative examination of the phenomenon is crucial. Orlikowski and Baroudi (1991) suggested projects in information systems can be considered

positivist if there is evidence of formal propositions, quantifiable variables, testing of hypothesis and deducing inferences about the phenomena from the representative sample to a specific population. As such, when considering asking the question why an organisation would use social media to attract and recruit new employees, although it might have been useful to quantify how many organisations conducted the activity and additionally to quantify the type of people (age, gender, management level, type of employment), there would not have been scope to address the underlying cultural reasons. A claim is not being made that this inquiry lacks a rigid set of theoretical assumptions from which the central thrust of the inquiry is driven; instead a more appropriate route was taken in the adoption of fluid objectives concerning the phenomena which need to be investigated thoroughly to uncover their meaning. The use of unrestricted propositions means the research permits further exploration of themes as they emerge and develop.

Critics of a positivist approach question the relevance of applied research in the HRM context. Anderson (2009, p.49) argued much of HRM research is undertaken in order to contribute to the solution of organisational or managerial problems and although it may be interesting, a positivist approach may serve only to describe the link between the independent and dependant variables. Additionally, she supports other authors (Maylor and Blackmon 2005; Remenyi *et al* 1998) who have argued there are issues with detachment in the pursuit of a positivist approach; there is a risk that it would not be possible in an organisational context for the researcher to be as detached from the phenomenon as the scientific method requires. Furthermore, van Manen (1977) claimed the use of qualitative methods allows the researcher to understand the lived experiences of the participants and he

focused on the meanings that people attach to their experiences in the context of the social and cultural situation in which they occur.

Along with these primary concerns Anderson (2009) also outlined issues with the volume of data (particularly that of quantitative data) and consequently she questions the researcher's ability to draw meaningful conclusions from any of the data collected. Anderson also set out her concern regarding the narrow scope of quantitative data and argued a necessarily limited questionnaire or survey would not be sufficient to answer the broader organisational level questions. As has been outlined previously, positivism as an approach has many critics; but interpretivism also is not without criticism. One of the primary concerns in relation to interpretivism (among others) is that it does not permit much in the way of generalisation, because it encourages the study of a small number of cases which cannot be applied to the whole population. On the other hand, Myers (2013, p 39) stated interpretivism, although not as common as positivist research in business and management, has grown in popularity over the last couple of decades.

Walsham (1993) provided an in-depth examination of the interpretative approach and proposed true knowledge of reality is gained only through social constructions, such as language, tools, shared meanings, documents etc. Usually in an interpretive research project there are no predefined dependent and independent variables, rather there is a focus on the complexity of human sense making as the situation emerges (Kaplan and Maxwell, 1994). For those employing an interpretative approach, a stance is taken that the phenomena must be observed and recorded in the context in which it is constructed in order for it to be fully understood. Another way of explaining this is that in order for the researcher to

understand and interpret social action, they must understand the actions of those in the context in which the phenomenon is occurring.

Creswell (2014, p.8) suggested a qualitative approach would allow the researcher to explore the perspective of a constructed reality or social constructivism, which is often associated with interpretivism. Social constructivists believe individuals seek understanding in the world in which they live and work and in addition, the meanings individuals seek and attach to phenomena will be varied. In other words, each participant's perception of their reality and the real world context will be different to one another. Bryman and Bell (2015, p.23) posit there are three layers to the interpretivist approach: first the interpretation of the real world as it occurs in the mind of the participant; second, the interpretation of the researcher of the participant's interpretation of their experiences and finally the interpretation (again by the researcher) of the data collected specifically relating to the theory and literature within the discipline. It is obvious therefore the "interpretations" are at risk of being clouded by the researcher's subjective opinion and they could suffer from serious misinterpretation. Notwithstanding this, the rationale for conducting a qualitative study stemmed from the observation that, given the human capacity to talk, the objective in understanding a phenomenon from the point of view of the actors is largely lost when textual data are quantified (Iacono, Brown and Holtham, 2009). This suggestion assists in guiding the research to examine the broader complexity of the study participants' views, rather than narrowing the scope to a minimum number of hypotheses, as may be the case when taking a more quantitative stance. As such, it follows an exploration of the viability of possible case studies in the context of this research is required. Although criticised in some research circles, case studies provide a valuable opportunity to explore the role of

social media in recruitment more thoroughly and this is addressed in the next section.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 The Principles of the Case Study Approach

Case studies as a method of choice receive both great notoriety and heavy criticism in academia. The oversimplification of the intrinsic meaning of case studies is grossly misleading for some and it is apparent there is a consensus that case studies are useful for nothing beyond as a means to generate hypothesis and develop theory. Depending on the circumstances this is not always the case, nor should it be taken literally. As with a naturalistic inquiry and the testing of hypothesis, there are occasions when a case study might be the most suitable or only option through which to explore the phenomena. Flyvbjerg (2013) argued there is an unquestionable issue with the employment of unsophisticated definitions of case studies and he chastised those who supported the notion that a case study is only useful for pilot studies or as a precursor to a more quantitative study.

Yin (2003, p.1) suggested the use of case studies depend on:

“...three conditions (a) the type of research question, (b) the control the investigator has over actual behavioural events and (c) the focus on contemporary as opposed to historical phenomena”.

The research objectives within this thesis required an exploration of events, process and decisions made, in order to understand and to explain the phenomena in greater detail. Other possible methodological approaches this research might have employed, in this inquiry, included the option of pursuing a phenomenological or ethnographic study however, there were limitations, so much so that it leads to their disregard as being suitable alternatives. Specifically the inability, of the researcher, to spend lengthy periods of time immersed in the environment where the

phenomenon is occurring led to the conclusion that a thick description of the situation would be impossible (Hennink *et al*, 2001).

Yin (1989, p.29) identified and outlined five components included in case study research design:

- 1) A study's questions
- 2) Its propositions, if any
- 3) The unit(s) of analysis;
- 4) The logic linking the data to the propositions
- 5) The criteria for interpreting findings

He further concluded "case study methods will allow the investigator to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real life events" (Yin 2003, p.2). More often than not, case studies focus on a specific organisation (or in the case of multiple-site case studies a number of organisations). Bryman and Bell (2015, p.62) confirmed there are choices available when using the case study research method and they included the selection of single organisations, locations, people or events. However, they are not limited to only single organisations, locations, people or events, a choice can be made to employ the use of multiple case studies. In examining case studies more generally and then narrowing the focus to the choice of case study participants for this research, it is clear there was an underpinning support for this method as being the best possible approach to this inquiry.

It is argued by Gummesson (2007) and Scapens (2004) that researchers using case study design have emerged as an increasingly important qualitative approach in management. Although more commonly associated with the interpretative approach, case studies are not restricted to qualitative inquiries and can be utilised when engaging with a positivist epistemology. Referring to the work of Stake, (1995) and Yin (2012), Creswell (2013, p.14) proposed case studies are a "design of inquiry found in many fields and their makeup usually involves the

researcher undertaking an in-depth analysis of a program, event, process, or activities of an individual". Robson (2002 p.5) proposed:

"Case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence".

Schram (1971) suggested:

"The essence of a case study, the central tendency among all types of case study, is that it tries to illuminate a decision or a set of decisions: why they were taken, how they were implemented and with what result."

Yin (1994) cautioned researchers in confusing case studies with alternative qualitative methods such as ethnography and he argued while they may have certain similar characteristics, their differences could have a substantial effect on the outputs of the research. The distinction in this research has been identified as the nature of the grouping of the units of analysis. Organisations and individuals working with organisations are identified as the unit of analysis, however this is addressed in more detail later in the chapter.

In his extensive analysis of case study methods, Yin (1981a, 1981b) defined case studies as "an empirical inquiry which investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between the phenomenon and the context are not clearly defined". He suggested "the case study allows an investigation to retain the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events such as individual life cycles, organisational and managerial processes, neighbourhood change, international relations and the maturation of industries" (Yin 1994, p.3). In light of this, it can be inferred adopting the case study approach is particularly useful in the case where the contextual conditions of the phenomena being studied are critical to the research outputs and where the researcher has limited control over emerging events. As a research strategy, the case study should

involve specific techniques for the collection and analysis of raw data and in addition should be underpinned by clearly set out theoretical assumptions. For the purposes of clarity the principles adopted in this research will be and exploratory case study methodology.

Yin (2003, p.5) proposed there are as many as six different types of case study. Firstly he suggested there is a numerical consideration which needs to be factored into the researcher's choice, although he also argued single or multiple case studies can be employed regardless of the type of inquiry. He further identified the six case study types which are set out in a 2 x 3 matrix (Table 3.1). Essentially, the three main types of case study are; exploratory (this inquiry); explanatory; and descriptive. A detailed explanation of exploratory case studies will be outlined in a moment, however, it is worthwhile to highlight the differences between all three and this is provided in Table 3.1.

		Types of Case Study	Characteristics of the type
2 x 3	Single	Exploratory	Search for causal and explanatory theories
	Multi	Explanatory	Data collection before theory
	Multi	Descriptive	Requires theory to guide data collection

Table 3.1 – Case Study Types (Yin, 2003)

Significantly, Yin (2003, p.6) pointed out the exploratory case study approach is the one which meets with the most controversy in research methods discussions and opponents of this method argued the researchers' lack of theoretical framework

at the outset and their use of intuitive paths will lead to “sloppy work” and could lead to a “disruption in the integrity of the data collected”. Rowley (2002, p.16) supported Yin and further suggested “case studies have been traditionally viewed as lacking rigour and objectivity when compared to other social research methods”. Also, she theorised researchers should be particularly careful to articulate the research design and implementation in a structured way and further she argued researchers adopting a deductive positivist approach to case study methodology could mitigate problems with reliability and validity.

Given the nature of the research questions and the scarcity of empirical evidence concerning the topic of social media in recruitment processes and procedures, the exploratory framework is justified as a suitable mechanism to provide the foundation for later theory development in the discipline of management research. Undoubtedly the exploratory case study method has considerable limitations and is subject to substantial criticism on the grounds of non-representativeness and lack of statistical generalisability. Notwithstanding these criticisms, Knights and McCabe (1997) argued as long as the aim of the study is not to provide generalisations, there is little problem, because individuals/organisations rarely operate in such a way that they would be so similar as to produce uniform comparisons. In addition, Stenhouse (1988) (cited in Bassegy, 1999), stated the primary task of a case-study is to provide in-depth evidence of participants experiences but argued it should not deal with trying to generalise the outcomes. Anderson (2009, p.55) suggested due to the enormous volume, complexity of content and richness, the data may be subject to differing interpretations; potentially at risk of researcher bias and would be difficult if not impossible to cross-check

information. Miles and Huberman (1994) contended it is the lack of step-by-step analysis which could cause the most serious weakness in the research design.

Despite these limitations and criticisms, it could be argued the adoption of the principles of an exploratory case study approach is the most appropriate. It can be particularly useful in helping to refine generalisable concepts and moreover case studies can lead to generalisations in terms of propositions and/or emerging theory. Yin (1994) commented in terms of analytical generalisations, case studies are useful and particularly so, when the researcher's aim is to generalise a particular set of results to some broader theoretical propositions. Yin further suggested the case study approach allows for rich and thick descriptions of the phenomena being studied, something which is supported by Eisenhardt (1989, p.543), who stated the case study can enhance the understanding of the phenomena more than could be achieved by statistical analysis. She contended case studies are:

"...particularly well suited to new research areas or research areas for which existing theory seems inadequate. This type of work is highly complementary to incremental theory building from normal science research. The former is used in early stages of research on a topic or when a fresh perspective is needed, whilst the latter is useful in later stages of knowledge". (Eisenhardt, 1989 p.548)

The case study makes use of multiple methods of data collection including interviews, review of documentation, archival records and direct participant observations (Yin, 1994). This is partly the reasoning for not wholly pursuing a case study methodology and instead adopting the principles of case studies. There was a particular difficulty in accessing multiple sources of information for both organisations and individuals because of the relative newness in the use of social media in recruitment. Therefore the ability to triangulate the data across at least six artefacts was extremely limited. Notwithstanding this barrier the core principles of an exploratory case study are utilised. The case study method approach has been

recommended for research which intends to examine procedural or process related issues within organisations which extend over a period of time (Benbast *et al* 1987; Walsham, 1993; Yin, 1994). Miles and Huberman (1994, p.27) argued “we cannot study individual cases devoid of their context in a way that a quantitative researcher often does”. As this inquiry into the use of social media for recruitment, does not aim to provide evidence of causal links between decisions and events made by individuals in the organisations, the exploratory case study approach is considered to be the most appropriate method.

Focusing largely on research within education, Stake (2005) has suggested there are three different types of case study: first an, intrinsic case study, is undertaken because of intrinsic interests, for example, particular curriculum, classroom, or book and furthermore, the researcher aims to acquire a deeper understanding of a certain case; second an instrumental case study which provides a basis from which an understanding of the issues can be achieved. Usually this case is a secondary interest of the researcher and used to support other interests. Finally there is a multiple case study or collective case study, which is similar to the extension of instrumental study. Stake’s study consisted of several cases in order to explore a certain phenomenon. In addition, she tried to investigate whether there were similarities or differences among the cases’ characteristics to obtain a better understanding of particular interests.

Further, Patton (2002) classified some characteristics of a well-constructed case study, which include structures which are holistic and context sensitive, comprehensive and systematic. He also explained a case might be layered in its structure and that it is possible to combine studies of individuals into studies, programs or organisations but the data would have to be collected at the lowest level

unit of analysis where possible. For instance, if the study wished to investigate how the culture of a school influences a teacher's motivation, the data could be collected about the teacher's motivation through interview. This process referred to the individual level of data collection. It continued by observing the school's culture such as the regulations, learning environment and formal-informal communication patterns between students and teachers, among teachers and finally among students. After gathering all data, it can be analysed to assess the possible relationships between the school's culture and teachers' motivation.

Gerring (2004, p.341) argued there are five primary misunderstandings related to the use of case studies, Table (3.2);

Misunderstanding No. 1	General, theoretical knowledge is more valuable than concrete case knowledge.
Misunderstanding No. 2	One cannot generalise on the basis of an individual case; therefore, the case cannot contribute to scientific development.
Misunderstanding No. 3	The case study is most useful for generating hypotheses; that is, in the first stage of a total research process, while other methods are more suitable for hypotheses testing and theory building.
Misunderstanding No. 4	The case study contains a bias toward verification, that is, a tendency to confirm the researcher's preconceived notions.
Misunderstanding No. 5	It is often difficult to summarize and develop general propositions and theories on the basis of specific case studies.

Table 3.2 Table of Misunderstandings in Case Study Use (Gerring, 2004)

In response, Denzin and Lincoln (2013) have argued in order to understand why the view of conventional case studies is so poor, there is a requirement to understand the role of cases and theory in human learning. The nuanced view provided by the

closeness of the case study method to real-life allows the researcher to develop their skills as a researcher, so they can fully appreciate that the meanings participants attach to their reality and cannot be only viewed as a set of “rule governed acts” (Denzin and Lincoln, 2013, p.174). They responded to each misunderstanding in turn, which is useful for this inquiry as it addresses some of their primary concerns and it is important for the research design in this research into the use of social media for recruitment to take into consideration each of the outlined misunderstandings and address their individual issues. Having broadly examined the case study method more generally, it is also important to set out more definitively the relevance of the use of an exploratory case study related to this research.

3.4.2 Exploratory Case Studies

Yin (2003, p.22) argued, by employing an exploratory case study approach, there is a legitimate assertion about whether or not there should be a fixed theoretical proposition. The first step in undertaking an exploratory case study is to define what is to be explored (Yin, 2003, p.5). The types of questions which are likely to require an exploratory study are questions of “what”, “how” and “why” (Yin, 2003, p.6) and Yin contended exploratory case studies are often the prelude to much wider social research undertakings and not just as a precursor to other case studies. What is different in the employment of an exploratory case studies is that they do not usually require pre-determined hypothesis nor do they demand stringent theoretical propositions to guide the study, rather a much looser set of objectives are utilised and the broad features of the phenomena will be defined at the outset. It is anticipated the propositions will be subject to continuous refinement as the study progresses, the data is collected and the early analysis is undertaken. More commonly when utilising exploratory case studies, the data is first collected (and

some or all analysis is undertaken) and only then are the final study questions defined (Yin, 2003). This is why critics of exploratory case studies make assumptions about the necessarily intuitive paths the researcher adopts and they also maintain there is a much greater risk of the methods being treated in a “sloppy” manner, leading to questionable *rigour* and problems with defending *validity*. Robson (1993, p.42) described a threefold classification outlining the purposes of research methods, commonly used by social scientists:

- *Exploratory - to find out what is happening.*
- *Descriptive - to provide an accurate profile of events, situations or persons.*
- *Explanatory - to seek an explanation of a situation or problem, usually in the form of causal relationships.*

Certain research requires the use of a combination of these approaches. For example, a study may utilise a combination of descriptive and exploratory methods as a means to generate theory and although there is no fundamental aim within this research to generate new theory; the likelihood is the research will generate additional questions meriting further exploration. In relation to the study here, there is an obvious requirement for an exploratory case study in the light of the literature review, because what literature is available is fraught with anecdotal accounts or the research has been industry lead and as such, has questionably objective outputs. The extent of what is known about the use of social media in terms of recruitment is limited. Davison *et al* (2011, p.154) have contended no research has been undertaken to-date which examined the potential use of social media by employers when considering their marketing activities or their employer brand, which in turn, might assist them in applicant attraction activities. Clearly, there is a requirement for an enhanced understanding of the emphasis organisations put on the use of social media in the context of their day-to-day recruitment activities.

The rationale for choosing to adopt the principles of an exploratory case study as the tool within which to examine this phenomena stems from a review of the options available. An exploratory case study is described by Yin (2003, p.6) as having given the method of case study the “most notorious reputation of all”. Consequently, having considered these issues, an investigation into the alternatives was undertaken and as a result, it was considered that a survey based approach would rely too heavily on predetermined items, which may be inconsistent with the terminology or experiences of the interviewees. Conversely, if a survey employed open questions, the reliability of interpretation becomes an issue (Daniels, Myers and Dixon, 2011). Easterby-Smith *et al* (1991) discussed the distinction between *pure* and *applied* research and argued the distinction is related to their outcomes. However, Phillips and Pugh (1994) find Easterby-Smith *et al*'s approach too formulaic and commented it is not particularly helpful in management research. They instead supported a classification which is threefold and argued there is a requirement for exploratory research which investigates problems about which little is known, testing-out research which applies existing theory to new problems/issues and problem-solving research which combines a variety of theories and methods to address real world problems.

Reymeni *et al* (2005 p.32) argued it is impossible to undertake an empirical approach to research without first having a thorough understanding of the theoretical issues which surround the issue or problem being addressed and knowledge about how the evidence may be collected. They contended it is not beneficial to think of empirical or theoretical approaches as being completely distinct from one another, because they suggested they are “intimately entwined”. Theorists or “armchair researchers” review the work of others and attempt to draw conclusions on the world

without necessarily ever having observed it first hand, while empiricists, on the other hand, spend time (sometimes a considerable amount) observing what is happening in reality. Robson (1993) has argued there is little evidence of the use of both quantitative and qualitative in case studies to such a degree that they can be termed as multi – strategy. He referred to them instead as being flexible and also suggested until more recently, the use of case studies was often considered as the soft option for researchers and the lack of generalisability from even multiple case studies meant they are usually viewed negatively in the scientific community. Having thoroughly considered the philosophical and methodological possibilities in this inquiry, it is important to reflect and outline the research design, which will be addressed in the next section.

3.4.3 Selection of Organisations and Individuals

Given the aim of this research and the choice to pursue an exploratory method and led to the adoption of an “interpretive stance”, which according to Walsham (1995b) leads the researcher to seek to uncover truths by understanding phenomena in their real life context. Consequently, the research will entail the study of the wider organisational context in which this phenomenon occurs. As this research is not based on underlying theoretical assumptions there were issues to consider prior to the identification of potential participants. The approach permits the exploration into whether the results are replicable in different organisations and thus assists in supporting the development of a theoretical proposition and in the event that the results cannot be replicated there may be scope for further investigation into the topic. The selection of the organisations and individuals within organisations should be purposeful and assist in supporting the validity of the findings and in any event, each should be able to stand alone.

Although the research design for this particular inquiry does not demand a statistically representative sample, nonetheless, there was a requirement for certain criteria to be applied in the participant selection phase. Without the benefit of a rigid theoretical framework to guide this process, the selection was prioritised around identifying and aligning the potential study participants with their intensity of use of social media as a tool in the recruitment process. It made sense therefore, to select individuals who have been regularly using social media for recruitment in the short, medium and longer term. Because of the nature of the research and its exploratory grounding, it was more productive to examine and potentially draw comparisons from the user's experiences of social media in recruitment and given the novelty of this recruitment tool, there is a limit in how far back (in years) the researcher needed to go to be able to identify suitable characteristics which would reveal the individual as being a viable and appropriate participant. The literature has revealed there is no "one size fits all" model of recruitment in practice and individuals within organisations' may approach it differently, with differing priorities, stages and timescales which may impact the quality of the recruitment outcomes. As such, this provided a particularly broad range of participants from which to select from. Further this meant the selection of the individuals in the first instance then led to the examination of the organisations as a secondary phase.

In light of the literature review, it is argued there is a fundamental need for further exploration of the use of social media in recruitment activities and Davison *et al* (2011) summed up the requirement for research in this area as being critical and suggested the use of platforms such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, while relatively new and growing, are also an area in which research is lacking. Some of the key issues arising relate to the lack of knowledge surrounding the purpose of

social media as a tool for recruitment. There appears to be little empirical evidence at all, which explores the nature and extent to which social media is being used by organisations as a tool for the recruitment process.

One of the most prevalent issues within this research has been in gaining access to organisations willing to participate in this study because of their unwillingness to confirm (on record) they are using social media for recruitment purposes, since often it does not appear as a formal layer of the recruitment process. It is usually considered to be part of the advertising step in the process. Nonetheless the selection of participants and their organisations has been primarily based on their intensity of use of social media. The next section of the chapter turns to explore the data collection methods used within this research and the next section of this chapter deals with it in some detail.

3.4.4 Data Collection

Bryman and Bell (2015, p. 424) suggested “interviews are probably the most widely employed method in qualitative research” and they added it is the high degree of flexibility for the researcher which make it one of the most attractive options. The two main types of interview involve structured and semi-structured formats; the former adopts a much more rigid approach and mirrors that of a more quantitative approach, while the latter provides an opportunity for the interviewer to explore themes as they emerge. In his detailed examination of interviewing within organisations, Whyte (1953, p.22) argued no single interview stands alone, “it has meaning to the researcher only in terms of other interviews and observations”. This statement is important to consider as the interviewer needs to be particularly mindful of making assumptions, which in turn may contribute to an issue of *bias* in the selection of relevant information for analysis. Robson (1993, p.227) further

commented while interviews can be used in research as a single data collection method, they also lend themselves to being used as part of a combination of techniques.

The use of interviews in quantitative research should not be confused with that of qualitative because although there are similarities they are also inherently different. Bryman and Bell (2007) identified the central differences between quantitative and qualitative interviewing methods. They described the method of approach in qualitative interviewing as being considerably more flexible and open, therefore allowing the researcher much greater scope to discuss topics or themes in an in-depth manner, or as they emerge, whereas, in the employment of a quantitative approach, the rigid structure of the interview format allows the researcher to obtain greater reliability and validity from the data collected. The design of interview questionnaires is focused on answering very specific questions, rather than using the interview as an opportunity to explore themes and topics more intensively. Further Robson (1993) suggested face-to-face interviews offer the opportunity of easily adjusting the line of inquiry depending on the participant's responses and Anderson (2009, p.188) supported this claim and suggested there is an opportunity for the researcher (in face-to-face interviews) "to probe interviewees further to build a more coherent picture of the topic being explored".

There are advantages and disadvantages in the use of interviews. The main disadvantage with interviewing as a technique is because it requires a significant level of skill from the interviewer, which if lacking, can have a detrimental impact on the outputs and quality of the data collected. The skills required to carry out an effective interview need to be honed and practiced in preparation for the data collection phase commencing. Some of the other disadvantages are its time

consuming nature and as such it is by the soft data collection method that some commentators profess. For example, Anderson (2009, p.188) suggested interviews lasting less than half an hour are unlikely to generate much in the way of valuable qualitative data but on the other hand interviewees are unlikely to be able to offer more than perhaps one hour of their time. This issue in-turn creates problems for the researcher, as the probability of their being able to generate more than a minimal number of interviewees is limited and therefore this contributes to rising concerns about the generalisability of any findings. The researcher also needs to be able to quickly build credible rapport with the participants in order to extract the richest quality data possible for meaningful analysis. There are also concerns about how the data collection can be recorded and Anderson (2009, p.188) drew our attention to issues with interviewees not permitting any or all of the interview to be audio or video recorded, particularly where there are matters which may be considered to be commercially or legally sensitive.

Although it is unlikely to be intensively utilised for the purposes of this research, telephone interviews raise some interesting issues. The relationship between the interviewer and the interviewee is likely to be fragmented, especially if they have not met face-to-face prior to the interview being conducted (Anderson 2009, p.188). There is also a lack of opportunity for the researcher to focus on non-verbal cues from the interviewee and as a result it would be more difficult for the interviewer to probe an interviewee further on a particular issue if they cannot tell whether the participant feels uncomfortable about the line of questioning. Consequently, it may be interesting to explore whether the use of platforms such as “Skype” or “Google Hangout” could mitigate this problem in the future and Anderson (2009, p.189) contended the opportunities for engaging younger participants by

using Web 2.0 technologies should be a consideration for researchers. On a more positive note, interviews are really quite useful where the topic being investigated is relatively unknown and (in particular this research) attempts to explore a phenomenon which has received little scholarly attention to-date. As such, there is an inherent usefulness in selecting interviews as the primary tool with which to collect the data for the purposes of this particular research.

Anderson (2013, p.212) illustrated the type of interview (fig 3.1) available and it was important to determine and select which type of interview would be the most appropriate choice at the outset of the study. Employment of in-depth interviews would be an excellent way to examine the topic. However in reality, the scope of the study participants' availability because of time constraints means it would not be sensible to adopt this approach. Given this particular study's intention is not to obtain quantitative data, it seems clear that the semi-structured interview approach is the most logical choice. This will allow for the participants to spend some time thinking about their processes and practices in relation to recruitment and further it will also offer the researcher the flexibility to probe answers to questions which may lead to richer data collection. Powney and Watts (1987, Ch.2) referred to a different typology in interviews (although their focus is on educational research) and they make a differentiation between respondent and informant interviews. The former means that the interviewer stays in control guiding the interview, in a very similar way to semi-structured interviews. The latter appears to be very much lead by the interviewees agenda, though Powney and Watts also argued this is merely a perception. Informant interviews are most akin to in-depth interviews.

Once all of the data has been collected via semi-structured interviews, it is anticipated a follow-up qualitative survey will be required. As such, the design of this

will need to be carefully considered to ensure the richest possible data may be garnered from the participants. It is not unusual for case studies to involve this step in the process and it is highly likely the early data analysis of the interview data will produce further themes for exploration.

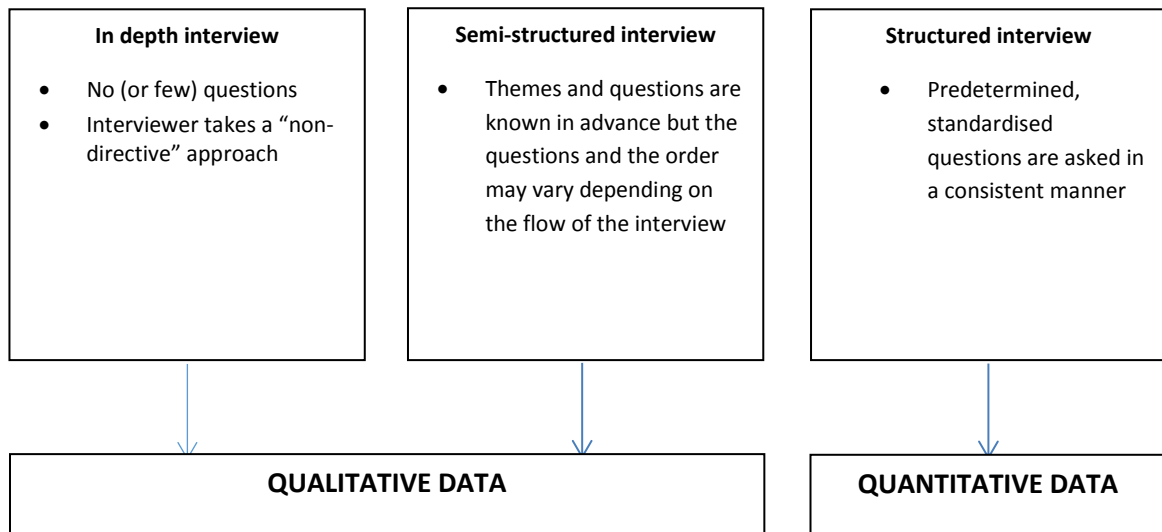


Figure 3.1 Interview Types (Anderson, 2013)

It is not unusual for case studies to involve this step in the process and it is highly likely the early data analysis of the interview data will produce further themes for exploration. The survey will be purely qualitative and will require free-form answers from the participants as a means to probe further some interesting findings from the data collected. Yin (2009, p.13) argued researchers can use multiple methods in any case study design, for example a case study can include a survey and conversely a survey could include a case study and having considered the merit of adopting *semi-structured* interviews as the most appropriate data collection tool, the following section addresses the unit for analysis and analysis techniques to be utilised within this research.

The interview structure varied throughout the data collection phase of this inquiry. Where possible the interviews were carried out face-to-face and it was always requested that the interviews were undertaken at the participants' organisations and place of work. In the majority of face-to-face interviews this was possible and it allowed the researcher to observe the day-to-day HRM departments. In some instances it was not possible to meet with the interviewee face-to-face and when this occurred the interviews were conducted by telephone or Skype. Increasingly researchers are turning to utilise tools such as Skype and WhatsApp to conduct interviews (Lo Iacono, Brown and May, 2016). While this facility was useful in terms of timescales and accessibility, there were some barriers to building up a rapport with the interviewees. The interviews were scheduled to last approximately 1 to 1.5 hours in length. The longest interview lasted one hour forty minutes and the shortest was about fifty minutes. This duration of the interviews presented challenges as they produced volumes of data. However careful reduction of the data mitigated the quantity.

The majority of interviews were conducted with an opening question which allowed the interviewee time to discuss their broad understanding of social media in the context of HRM and in particular within the recruitment process. A schedule of the interview questions is included in the appendix to this thesis, however on occasion where the interviews were a little less forthcoming with information particularly if they felt that they were divulging information that might be legally contentious. Therefore on occasion the structure of the questions was revised during the interviews to elicit the richest information. Notwithstanding any adjustments during the undertaking of the interviews, the core meaning of the questions remained the same and all questions were addressed during the interviews.

There were occasions whereby the interviews were conducted via telephone and via Skype, although this was limited. It required a slight alternation to the way in which the interviews were conducted. The feedback on the dictaphone on first interview was so loud it meant there was no possible way to utilise the interview and therefore a waste of time. However a further trial run ensured success on the next occasions. The nature of carrying out the interviews via Skype meant that there was little opportunity to build rapport with the participant. Once this was noticed a preliminary telephone conversation was undertaken with the participant prior to the skype interview. This appeared to put the participant at ease. The interviews were recorded by dictaphone and were transcribed over a period of weeks. Although a time consuming activity it ultimately allowed for the researcher to become fully familiar with the data. The analysis of the data is explored next.

3.4.5 Data Analysis

A recurring theme throughout this chapter was connected with the problematic nature of following case study principles. Yin (2003) set out the uncertainties faced by researchers, particularly when they are inexperienced and he warned a lack of planning in the research and case design will likely lead to a cessation of productive analysis from the data collected. As was the case with the methodological choices made at the outset of the research design, so too were choices required surrounding the strategy for the analysis of the data collected. Unlike the relative straightforwardness of statistical methods, a qualitative approach relies heavily on the researcher's "rigorous thinking" and "presentation of evidence" and their ability to carefully consider "alternative interpretations" (Yin, 2003, p.110). Miles and Huberman (1994, p.50) commented the analysis should be undertaken throughout the life of the project and the researcher should leave enough scope within the

project for changes and variations. They strongly recommended undertaking early data analysis as this will assist in ensuring the questions set out at the outset of the study are addressed in full. The unit for analysis needs to be clearly set-out to ensure the data collection is a fruitful exercise.

Evaluating and analysing rich qualitative data in a rigorous manner is difficult and "...no single qualitative data analysis approach is widely accepted" (Neuman, 2014). The approach in this project was to use an evolving set of categories to structure the qualitative data as it was gathered. Firstly, a set of seed categories (Miles and Huberman, 1984, Fitzgerald, 1997, Wynkoop and Russo, 1997) was formulated based on the initial theoretical model and these were used to formulate the initial structured interview script. In each interview other categories and sub-categories emerged and were incorporated into interview scripts for investigation in the following interviews. So the number of categories grew as the case studies continued. ed and revealed themes and documented revisions of the theoretical model.

The presentation of data is based on illustrated narrative style, or an oral narrative told in the first person, as described by Miles and Huberman (1994) and Myers (1997) and as used in Fitzgerald (1997) and Urquhart (1998). This approach as described by (Miles and Huberman, 1994) does not resort to explicit coding but looks for "...key words, themes and sequences to find the most characteristic accounts."

The analysis of the data followed an intuitive path and included the initial free coding of the interview transcripts, field notes and observations captured during the interviews. Several wave of coding were carried out to ensure that none of the key emergent themes have been overlooked. The researcher spent time any effort

reviewing each transcript repeatedly in order to be fully familiar and immersed in the data. Utilising the research questions the analysis explored the “how, what and why” questions in order to reveal the perceptions of the individual interviewees and build a picture of the approach adopted by their individual organisations.

A recurring issue in the data collection phase of this research is attributable to the very nature of interpretivist research and as a consequence the findings, at times, appear confusing or even ambiguous, which is why the initial coding was carried out intuitively rather than by selecting specific fragments of text which might have appeared more relevant at first. Furthermore, this decision was made in view of an attempt by the researcher to ensure that no significant themes were inadvertently overlooked. Early tentative analysis was also carried out simultaneously whilst the data collection phase continued, which meant although the overarching interview questions remained static, further supplementary questions were utilised to develop individual themes.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.51) argued early processing of the collected data is fundamental but there are many challenges in doing so in a meaningful way. They claimed the researcher must be particularly careful when writing up to ensure their personal bias does not creep in at any stage and they also advised any data which is not recorded verbatim, should be marked as such, to ensure it is clear it is the researcher’s opinion rather than an actual event or statement captured. Further, they posited it is difficult for the researcher to capture body language or tone of voice in the written word and the emphasis they place on this information within the research needs to be adequately outlined for the reader.

Miles and Huberman (1994) discussed the main concerns with the legibility of raw field notes or hand written transcription from the actual interviews and contended

there is much work for the researcher well in advance of any analysis taking place. Additionally, the transcription of audio files from interviews is fraught with “slippage” as the researcher may select information which is interesting to themselves (but that might not be of any true value), in lieu of information capturing the true essence of the phenomena, which might provide a much greater richness in the analysis phase. Miles and Huberman (1994, p.52) suggested it is important to record the immediate observations of the interview and then put forward some ways in which this can be done. Use of a contact record sheet (among other techniques) allows the researcher to immediately consider some themes which may have emerged from the content of the interview. This can be particularly helpful for the researcher as it may illuminate themes meriting further investigation in later interviews. Other examples of the techniques the researcher can employ for early analysis of the data include: use of codes and coding; pattern coding; memoing; case analysis meetings; interim case summaries; vignettes; pre-structural cases and sequential analysis. This list is not exhaustive and most researchers will have personal preferences rather it provides a picture of the type of techniques available. The actual sequence of events in analysing the data collected in this inquiry are as follows.

Table 3.3 Schedule of analysis of the data

Step no.	Process Followed
Step 1	Codes are assigned to initial materials collected (interview, documentary evidence and observations)
Step 2	Reflective commentary was added to the transcripts.
Step 3	The transcripts and codes are revised and further codes were added.
Step 4	The materials are then reviewed alongside the coding and patterns of phrases, consequences of events and language used is reviewed to assist in identifying any relationships and early emergent themes.
Step 5	Patterns are extracted and further reduction of the data occurred.

Step 6	Some generalisations of the data are made and reviewed further to check authenticity of the relationships.
Step 7	The generalisations were then grouped together to assist in compiling a sensible and coherent body of information to form the thematic constructs.

3.4.6 Unit of Analysis

During the design phase of the study, it was important to be clear about the unit of analysis. One of the main pitfalls in defining the unit of analysis, as described by Yin (2003, p.24), is found in identifying an incorrect unit of analysis and therefore confusing the reader and limiting the researcher's opportunity to capture answers to the questions set out at the start of the inquiry. The general definition of the case for this particular inquiry is defined as both individuals who are involved with the use of social media platforms in the recruitment of potential employees and their respective organisations. Whilst the individuals in the first instance are the primary unit of analysis, it was appropriate to consider their organisations in the same manner. The opportunity to collect data at an organisational level could not be ignored. Much deliberation occurred relating to the unit of analysis for this research, as it could have been argued the unit for analysis might have been social media and its role as a game changer in the delivery of cost effective recruitment activities. Notwithstanding this, the basis of this inquiry lies in understanding (beyond the technical role of social media as a tool to recruit and attract applicants), the experiences of those involved with and responsible for recruitment and thus utilising social media as a way in which to do so.

Arguably, there were other facets of this inquiry which might have presented as suitable units of analysis, yet the primary focus in exploring the answers still remained in capturing the experiences of those involved and that of their organisations. It therefore logically follows the research should discriminate, or rule

out, those within the organisation who are not involved with or are not responsible for recruitment; nevertheless they cannot be ruled out as sources of rich information pertaining to their experiences of experiencing first-hand the recruitment process through these channels. Without attempting to cover every possible source of data material, a practical boundary must be set to ensure that the research questions are answered and logical conclusions can be drawn.

Yin (2009, p.88) warned of a hazard for researchers in not providing clarity about the unit of analysis at the outset of the study. There may be a danger of a misunderstanding between the unit of data collection and the unit of analysis and thus causing confusion for the reader and this can be mitigated in the production of a clear case study protocol. With particular reference to this study, the questions in the protocol need to be outlined in such a way so that there is clarity in the differences between the questions being asked at an individual and at the organisational level. Even though the questions will be linked and form part of the study outputs, they are not mutually exclusive, for example, there will be questions put to the interviewees, which are related to their knowledge and understanding of the processes and practices within recruitment in the organisation. Conversely there may be documentation and interviews with the individual's line managers or supervisors, which will ask similar questions but are likely to elicit different answers and an alternative viewpoint. One source of data (e.g. interviewees) cannot be examined solely or in isolation from another and further, to focus only on the responses from the interviewees alone, might result in a distortion of the case study results. As such, a possible way to mitigate this issue would be to ensure that the data collection source and unit for analysis are outlined at the outset.

3.4.7 Issues with the Unit of Analysis

There is a possibility that there may be emerging problems with the unit of analysis as the study progresses. The informants may do more or less with social media but not feel comfortable in revealing this to the interviewer because they believe their organisation/line managers might frown on the behaviour, or they may feel that the study is looking for a particular answer to the questions posed. Other issues might be related to the interviewee wanting to manage the interviewer's impression of them and as such, it will also be important to think about the social and historical context of the situation in which the data is being collected (Miles and Huberman, 1994, p.10). A focus on understanding and defining the social and historical context within the organisation is vital to ensure any variability in processes and procedures at a local level are not overlooked by the researcher in the analysis phase of the study.

The influence of the cultural setting of the case is important to the overall understanding of the case, which is why it will focus on individual organisations whose cultural history may have an impact on the responses. The context of the way in which they make use of social media in the workplace will also impact the outputs of the research. For example McFarland and Ployhart (2015, p.1661) refer to the issue whereby the context of the use of social media and the differences between the uses for professional activities will vary greatly from that of an individual's intended personal usage. It could be argued that there is an issue with the concept of cultural differences. While the technological aspects of social media do not fundamentally change, the contexts in which they are used do (McFarland and Ployhart 2015, p. 1661) Brett, Tinsley, Janssens, Barsness and Lytle (1997) explore this in more depth.

3.4.8 Sample Selection

In the wake of repeated and numerous unsuccessful attempts to identify an appropriate single or multiple organisations in which to undertake this research, it became increasingly clear the novelty of social media as a tool in the recruitment process presented a stumbling block with specific regard to access. Once the barriers were identified the boundary of the research and sample population was refocused, which also resulted in the inquiry's redirection to examine a particular group of people, rather than single or multiple organisations. Consequently, this inquiry's methodological design utilised an adaptation of the traditional single case study framework, notwithstanding this, the fundamental principles of case study design were retained.

As outlined in this chapter, the sample population choice was connected in a case study "individuals involved with social media" boundary and thus relied on the identification of appropriate individuals within organisations using social media specifically for the purposes of recruitment activities. This led to the adoption of criterion sampling but alongside this it has also included convenience sampling techniques. A significant issue when identifying suitable participants was related to their general lack of conscious awareness regarding the frequency and intensity of use of social media on a day-to-day basis. Many of the individuals approached in the search considered their use of social media as merely part of their job and therefore irrelevant, or conversely they thought its purpose was such an insignificant part of their role, it did not merit further investigation by the researcher. In order to provide relevant and appropriate selection criteria, three specific social media user types were defined to assist with the identification of suitable participants. These criteria are as follows:

1. Social media use as one single element of their primary role responsibilities
2. Responsibility for social media platform communications within the context of HRM and recruitment activities
3. Concerned with or responsible for providing advice and guidance to either both employers seeking to implement social media or established social media use within the context of HRM practice and/or recruitment activities

Aside from the criteria, it was as important and necessary to establish the intensity of usage by the individual interview respondent's as a prerequisite selection tool to ensure they had the necessary relevant experience to provide meaningful responses aligned with the case requirements. Helpfully, the majority of the interview respondent's made use of social media (at least in some way) for recruitment on a daily basis. A secondary, but still important, element of the sample identification was identifying particular individuals within the organisation who have been using social media spanning differing periods of time, in an attempt to uncover whether their experiences have been different. Finally the organisations should be considered in the selection of the sample. Therefore, where the individual in the first instance was identified as suitable their organisations needed to be considered as appropriate for the study in addition.

As such, Table (3.3) highlights the individuals interviewed and Table (3.4) indicates their definitive role in terms of social media use. This chapter also contains a full profile of each participant and their particular organisations' commercial activities, alongside a summary of the nature of their social media use.

The case was then divided into three groups. The first group included individuals within organisations with direct involvement and responsibility for the day-to-day use of social media; the second comprises those individuals with indirect involvement but some responsibility for day-to-day use of social media in their role; and the final group contains individuals who provide advice and guidance to

employers using social media in their HRM activities. The final group were particularly important because by virtue of their individual job roles, they possess a unique understanding of the potential concerns and barriers for organisations considering or intending to implement the use of social media within the HRM context.

3.4.9 Background to the Study Participants

The participants of this study were comprised of twenty three interviewees' from various HRM related backgrounds. The majority of the informants had on average 12.5 years of experience in recruitment and or HRM activities. At the time of the data collection only five out of the twenty three organisations had formalised social media policies. Nevertheless when the data analysis commenced the interviewees were contacted again to establish a policy had been implemented since the data collection, however only three interviewees' confirmed that their organisations had taken steps to address their lack of social media polices and all three were still in the draft stage. As part of this case study the data was triangulated using a combination of interview testimony, data captured from social media platforms, documentation from the individual informants' organisations and interviewer observations.

Table 3.4 Organisations and Participants of the Study

Org.	Type of Involvement	Sector	Participant Number	Pseudonym
A	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Online Retail	P8, P15	Martha, Jonathan
B	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Recruitment IT Industry	P3, P4, P7	Tom, Mike, Naomi
C	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Education / Advertising Private Sector	P11, P12, P13, P14	Helen, Nicola, Ivor, Ken
D	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Healthcare	P19	Jennefer
E	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Healthcare	P20	Sean
F	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Legal Services	P5	James
G	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Recruitment and Talent Management	P18	Thomas
H	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Hospitality	P17	David
I	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Contractor Recruitment	P21, P23	Alex, Orlando
J	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Executive Recruitment	P10	Elizabeth
K	Advice and Guidance	Not-for-profit Professional Body	P6	Francis

L	Advice and Guidance	Public Sector / Advice and Guidance	P1	Paul
M	Advice and Guidance	Training and Consultancy	P9	Julie
N	Advice and Guidance	Private Sector / Consultancy	P2	Pete
O	Direct Involvement / Direct Use	Marketing Agency	P16, P22	Sarah, Sam

Organisation A

Organisation A is prolific supplier of online fashion and retail with a market reach both within the UK and in America. They provide online home shopping to a predominantly female market and have extensive support and logistics divisions in the Northwest of England. Their HRM department is made up of separate divisions dealing with (amongst others) employment relations, recruitment and selection and learning and development. During the preliminary discussions with the interview participants, it became clear that the HRM function appears to work separately in their divisions and in silo. Although they have a very well-established and thoroughly embedded recruitment policy, they currently do not have any formalised social media policy (although the most senior interviewee confirmed this was being drafted). They make use of social media platforms (Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn) extensively for applicant attraction purposes and employer branding activities, however they claim they do not make use of social media platforms to check the veracity of applicants' details. On checking social media sites, it became apparent that this organisation were the most extensively present on social media channels. They had a resourcing presence on Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and Glassdoor.com. Other interesting findings related to this company include their lack of an integrated approach with the learning and development (L&D) department. This causes issues because the L&D function are responsible for the on boarding and induction activity for the new members of staff and this includes co-managing the Facebook group for new joiners. As such there is often a conflict between those activities the resourcing team think the new starts should be engaging with and that those activities the L&D function deem more important. At the time of writing this thesis, the organisation did not respond to negative commentary on Glassdoor, although it is accepted that this

might have changed in the meantime. The use of other social and professional networking sites included making use of big data including analytics, targeted campaigns and capturing and storing of the publics' data. When the interviews occurred the most senior executive interviewed could not confirm whether or not this could include candidate data. Much of the social media content generation is outsourced to a marketing provider.

Organisation B

This recruitment organisation predominately focuses on Information Technology contractor sourcing for short and long term projects across a varied client base but primarily within the IT services sector. The organisation is based on the Isle of Man, but has an office presence both in Manchester and London. Organisation B also have a complementary sister company which specifically focuses on talent management solutions for their clients. Interestingly, the sister company was derived from a cost saving measure because the original organisation felt that there were excessive and rising costs connected with talent management solutions and therefore they decided to invest in the organic growth of their own service provider. They make use of social media extensively for the purposes of recruitment activities, making contact and developing relationships with potential candidates. They also revealed that they check potential contractor's social media profiles as they believe that a negative profile could harm their business activities. During the discussions with Organisation B, it became quite apparent that there were significant inconsistencies between the interviewees' social media candidate search activities. All three consultants interviewed had very different ways of mining data to uncover information about candidates. This was highlighted as a potentially problematic practice for the organisation. The inconsistency in terms of background checking could be considered to be a risk as there is no formalised policy in relation to what that is and what might not be acceptable information to check is. In addition, there was no evidence of a standalone social media policy or indeed any mention of social media in the recruitment policy related to the recruitment of contractors'. Ranked in order of extent of use, at the time of this research the organisation had a heavy presence on the following sites; LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, CTUK (Contractor

forum UK) and Glassdoor.com. Although the organisation is a umbrella agency for self-employed contractors, they confirmed in the interviews that they do searches on Glassdoor.com to ensure that placed contractors are not making derogatory comments on clients Glassdoor profiles.

Organisation C

Organisation C is a third level education institute. Senior representatives from the HRM Department and Communications Department were interviewed. In addition, the researcher was provided access to the organisation's external marketing and recruitment agency (who were also interviewed). The interviewees' revealed an extensive engagement with social media in terms of employer branding activities and applicant attraction but this is largely carried out by their marketing agency. The organisation has no formal social media policy, nor is there any mention of social media use included in their recruitment policy; although they confirmed that there are imminent plans to address this. Their communications manager confirmed that there is a policy in place regarding social media communication with students' but this is limited in scope with reference to what employees can and cannot post. Although beyond the scope of this study, it is important to consider the implications of providing weak or vague guidance to employees' regarding their conduct on social media platforms, particularly where there may be a reputational risk if something goes wrong. Interestingly, they were all concerned to various degrees about the use of social media by academic staff and how this might be unregulated and potentially harmful to the organisation employer brand reputation, although they consider it would need to be addressed sooner rather than later. There was evidence of a presence on Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook and various subject/discipline specific academic online forums and Glassdoor.com. It was brought to their attention at the time of the interview that there was some interesting but potentially negative commentary which had been posted by current members of staff anonymously on Glassdoor.com. At the time of writing and presenting this thesis the organisation was still not responding to the commentary. Interestingly, their marketing agency

intimated they were not aware of any issues and if they had been they would have brought this to the attention of the resourcing team sooner.

Organisation D

This organisation is a provider of end-to-end healthcare solutions for elderly people, including assisted living arrangements and innovative technological solutions to help them remain independent. There are approximately 900 employees located regionally in the UK. The UK head office is based in the Midlands; this is also where the HRM support function is located. The organisation currently uses social media platforms for marketing purposes (specifically Twitter, LinkedIn and Youtube). They provide advice and guidance related to their products to existing and potential customers. They believe this also helps with their employer branding activities, as there are opportunities for members of the HRM department to respond to recruitment queries. They form relationships and make contact with applicants via their LinkedIn page and advertise vacant positions both on their company website and on LinkedIn, although some positions are sporadically shared via personal Twitter accounts of members of the senior management team. There is not a strategic approach mentioned and the organisation has no formalised social media policy, although the HR Director stated that this was something of a “seven line edict” and employees know what is expected of them culturally. She suggested that they expect their employees to “know” what is right and wrong in terms of social media content, rather than providing them with explicit examples. As an interesting aside the most senior member of the HRM team also blogged for Glassdoor.com and has a prolific social media presence outside of the workplace. They felt the organisation was being dragged out of the dark ages to address social media and its potential impact commercially. They also consider the use of social media was something as a secondary priority for the company and that there was an uphill

battle to get social media embedded across their commercial and human resource activities.

Organisation E

Organisation E is a charitable organisation and is the leading provider of sexual health and relationship advice to young adults. They specifically concentrate on building relationships with their clients. The workforce is made up of employees working in professional support functions and nursing. The employee interviewed for the purposes of this inquiry confirmed that the organisations use of social media is in its infancy although they confirmed it is evolving as a result of the outgoing Managing Director's personal / professional use of social media platform Twitter. The interviewee believed there is an argument to support the contention there is a requirement for employees to see those in senior positions adopt the technology first and thereafter others within the organisation will also follow suit. Their interest in social media was dual, in that he felt opportunities are being lost to employers who are failing to acknowledge the power of social media as a tool to share knowledge and best practice both within the organisation and beyond. This is something he adopts both in his personal and professional profile. Sean makes use of social media to share knowledge and best practice with other like minded HR professionals and has co-authored a book which is a practical guide for employers advising how they can make social media work for them no matter what their size and scope is. He acknowledges that his interest in social media is largely driven by a personal need or want to share the great possibilities for both HRM professionals and employing organisations. Sean's interview was largely narrative and drew heavily on a personal and professional use of social media. Given the activities of the organisation Tom is employed by, he has a greater appreciation of the potential use of social media to reach younger audiences in a way that more traditional routes do not permit.

Organisation F

Organisation F is a medium sized law firm based in the Northwest of England with regional offices in the UK, Europe and the Middle East. There are approximately 2300 employees globally and the dedicated Graduate Recruitment Team and HRM function is based in the Northwest UK. For the purposes of this inquiry the central focus was on the Graduate Recruitment Team as they have the most highly visible social media presence within the organisation. They make comprehensive use of social media platforms (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, Google+) to communicate with applicants of the solicitor trainee scheme. Historically, and even more so recently, their solicitor training scheme attracts particularly high volumes of applicants. The Graduate Recruitment co-ordinator was interviewed and confirmed their social media presence was in their opinion at a reasonable level, but in comparison to their competitors the company is lagging behind. They mentioned the use of the increasingly popular platform Instagram but they confirmed they have moved away from using it because of some issues with confidentiality. Interestingly, James did not want to expand on whether this was a mistake or an indiscretion on the part of the person responsible for managing the social media accounts, although anecdotally later he revealed an issue the firm had encountered and had an issue with a member of staff connected with their personal life which was revealed through the organisations Twitter account. Although it could not be included as testimony in this inquiry, it is interesting to note that this became a common occurrence throughout this research. James also mentioned he feel that the social media management is an onerous task because of the expectation to be online at all times and it often required a lot of additional work outside of normal working hours.

Organisation G

Organisation G is a relatively small HRM consultancy firm specialising in employee relations and talent management solutions. They provide advice and guidance for employers who do not require fulltime in-house HRM support. They manage the social media advertising and attraction activities for some of their clients and where not, they support their clients with advice on how to attract the best candidates. They specifically focus on Small and Medium size Enterprise (SME) and state they offer a unique tailor made service. The organisation does not have a social media policy as the social media account is run by the owner and Managing Director of the organisation. The consultants also provide advice and guidance to clients on the types of information that they should be including in their social media policies, although this is only something which has begun to be requested more recently. It is interesting though, given the organisations lack of internal policy and they also they do not indemnify their client's if they are responsible for any issues arising from their advice regarding the use of social media. It was queried whether this is something organisation should be considering if they are planning to engage external organisations to assist them with their social media activity. The overarching theme emerging from the discussions with Thomas surrounds the lack of resources SME have to dedicate to social media activity. He, in particular, stated organisations do not have the time to spend trawling through the social media accounts of applicants and candidates which are publically available. He also believes that there is an issue with misinformation for employer's which might be making them consider not using social media at all, because they consider it is too much of an inconvenience. He uses both social and professional accounts and had a presence on LinkedIn, Twitter. There was no evidence of the organisation on Glassdoor.com, but this is not

surprising because there is no opportunity for organisations to make comments about the service, although this was evidenced on LinkedIn.

Organisation H

Organisation H is a small chain of independent boutique teashops concentrating on providing organic food and responsibly sourced (as opposed to Fair Trade) tea and coffee. Their ethos is to pay a little extra but do good for communities. Across three sites in a Northwest UK city, they employ over one hundred staff on a mixture of permanent, temporary and zero hour contracts. Their workforce is largely made up from the local student population working part-time during their studies. They have separate social media accounts for each site, but they are run and controlled by one person at each site, which changed regularly. A key and interesting finding during the discussions with this Organisation was related to the ethicality of examining applicants' social media accounts. In particular they focus on the publicly available information such as groups the candidate has joined and pages they have liked on Facebook. It is interesting how they consider this activity is perfectly acceptable because the information is something an applicant / candidate cannot make private. They also discussed the issues surrounding the demographic of their workforce and mentioned occasions where disciplinary action had occurred because of information found or seen on employees' social media accounts. They have no formalised social media policy but mention that they tell new starters to be very careful of their social media presence and that they must never bring the company into disrepute. David was keen to stress that a social media policy was being drafted, however by May 2017 this was still not completed or implemented. He confirmed he personally thought that applicants applying for jobs should always ensure their social media channels are vetted and they should consider what their posts will look like in a few years and how an employer might view them. The researcher got a sense that this was something he was discussing from personal experience, but he would not be

drawn on how this had affected him personally. The organisation has a concentrated presence on Twitter and Facebook. There is no evidence of the organisation on LinkedIn or Glassdoor.com.

Organisation I

Organisation I is a London based recruitment agency which specialises in the global placement of consultants in the areas of compliance, risk management, technology, and change and transformation management. With approximately seventy thousand consultants placed across the globe, they consider the use of social media in recruitment of consultants and communication with their client base as being central to the organisation's success. They make use of social media internally via a purpose built instant messaging network and externally, make exhaustive use of Twitter as a central platform for their employer branding activities, as a communications channel and for the ease of broadcast of key messages. They argue that individuals are over burdened with excessive amounts of emails and as part of their sustainability ethical approach, they are dedicated to removing the excessive level of email traffic through their servers. Critically however, they have no formal social media policy and those interviewed considered that the perceived guidance is vague. Alex and Orlando highlighted significant inconsistencies in their approach to using social media for recruitment purposes. Alex, confirmed she uses it purely for search activities and does not attempt to review candidates personal information, although she suggested she would cross check references from previous employers based on what is included on LinkedIn related to employment history. Orlando will conduct a full background check on contractors including checking all social media channels and he will often consider twice putting someone forward for a role if he has any concerns about the personal information he has uncovered. They both confirmed as long as they get the job done their employer is not really concerned with how it gets done. The organisation has a presence on Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, Glassdoor.com, Instagram and many contractor specific

forums. They make extensive use of targeted marketing campaigns via social media channels and they retain Big Data related to the visitors to their site company website including the recruitment pages. There was no clarity regarding what and how they collected, stored and used the data.

Organisation J

Organisation J are an executive search agency based in the Northwest of England. They are unique in this sector as they employ a retainer system with their clients for the purposes of talent attraction and resourcing. They work on a global basis and often find themselves looking to the European and international talent markets in their endeavours to align the most suitable candidates to meet their client's needs. In addition they provide leadership development, coaching and mentoring programmes to clients and candidates. Their use of social media is limited to the extensive use of LinkedIn and more recently the use of Twitter. They make use of LinkedIn as a database of potential candidates and Twitter to share meaningful content with their clients. Elizabeth considered that company is falling short of contemporary methods in comparison to their competitors regarding the use of social media and in the long term they intend to devise a strategy for developing their social media presence. They also considered that their target audience is less engaged with social media at this time but in the long run there will be a requirement for executive search agencies to be fully operational on social media platforms as digitally attuned senior executive progress in their careers. Elizabeth felt their target audience was older (45+ year) as it was focused on senior executives and they (in her opinion) are not usually present on social media channels because of generational reasons.

Organisation K

This organisation is the not-for-profit professional body in the UK for HRM professionals. They provide support and guidance to employers setting the benchmark for excellence in people and organisational development for in excess of 100 years. Their primary goal is to improve working lives. Francis is the Chairman of the of the organisation and participated in this research to add the view of the professional body in terms of how employers can use social media in all aspects of HRM and in addition he provided interesting insight into how employers can prepare for the future. Largely, his view was connected with training and development for the future and the skills employers require from their employees in order to continue to be commercially viable. He provided some interesting and relevant narrative regarding the use of social media from an employers' perspective, stating he considers the use of technology including social channels by employers is only going to grow and develop in the coming years. He also argued that there is requirement for employers to prepare themselves properly for the continued technological evolution. He personally uses Twitter to engage with stakeholders and develop a relationship and personal brand beyond the organisation, but he also felt that this helped the bodies' employer brand. He cannot see a justification for employers to make use of social media for selection purposes but he realises some employers' do. Interestingly he confirmed he would Google a candidate's name, but was absolutely clear that this would not be for the purposes of checking personal information related to their private life. He suggested the possible consequences for employers are limited as long as they are sensible and that the use of social media for resourcing can provide greater economies of scale for an employer. He also proposed that organisations should be encouraged to sign-up to a principles based

framework for good practice in terms of their recruitment activity and he stated there were moves for this to be developed within the recruitment professional body.

Organisation L

This organisation provides impartial and free advice to both employers and employees on the majority of aspects of workplace relations and law. They claim to support the building and maintenance of good relationships between employers' and employees, which they assert underpin business success. They provide a conciliation service to help resolve workplace problems. They also supply excellent value bespoke training services to employers. An independent council, made-up of representatives from employers, employee organisations and employment experts overseeing their activities, governs the organisation. This organisation also provides amongst other activities, advice, guidance and training to organisations connected with their use of social media in the workplace. They endeavour to guide employers towards following best practice in their use of social media in employee management processes and procedures. The interviewee from this organisation (Paul) felt that social media was something employers would be unable to ignore if they wished to progress and develop. Paul argued that there was a responsibility for both employers and employees to conduct themselves in an appropriate manner whilst using social media and should cause no commercial or personal harm to either party. He also considered how the changes in technology spanning a period of more than twenty years have materially changed the nature of recruitment practice. He mentioned potential issues for employers connected with high volumes of applicants because now it is so much easier for those searching for jobs to simply click and apply for many jobs. Paul was also concerned about employers failing to respond to candidates at the application stage of the recruitment process and feels that this might impact their employer brand as candidates perceive them negatively.

Organisation M

Organisation M is an organisation which specifically focuses on providing training to organisations focused on how to integrate social media into their daily work activities. They provide advice and guidance relating to the implementation, roll-out and operational use of social media platforms as a way to enhance their commercial activities. Their advice covers all aspects of social media use including activities such as client relationship management, HRM, Marketing and learning and development. Julie had a particularly evangelical attitude to organisations using social media and it could be argued her view was limited in objectivity. However, it was particularly revealing in terms of their experiences of organisations making the mistake of leaving the control and operation of their social media channels to generation Y workers. She was able to underpin the argument with first-hand accounts of organisations where they had suffered reputational damage as a consequence of adopting this strategy. Her testimony included stories of organisations where they spent time, effort and in some cases significant resources setting-up social and professional media accounts to only have them either fail because of poor maintenance or removed because of negative feedback, failure to respond to customers or the public deem they contain offensive material. In addition, it was revealing to note the volume of inquiries this organisation receive regarding using social media to scan applicants profiles in the recruitment process. Julie stated organisations are concerned with whether they are breaking laws when scanning social media accounts and are often unsure how to approach its management. The organisation did not have a social media policy, nor was there an indication of an intention to introduce one. Julie confirmed the organisation has a presence on LinkedIn, Twitter and Facebook. It is not surprising that there was no evidence of this

organisation on Glassdoor. Julie is an independent consultant and does not employ any staff at this stage. She mentioned, however, she does check potential client's social media presence before engaging.

Organisation N (Perry Timms)

Pete is a prolific blogger, founder of a transformational people management consultancy. He advises the national professional body matters relating to social media and HR. He advocates the use of social media in the workplace and believes there is no reason any organisation irrespective of size and scope cannot successfully integrate social media into their people management and commercial activities. Moreover, he believes that organisations' should be doing so in order to keep pace in the changing landscape of work as a result of technology changes. He has firm belief that organisation's should start to use social technologies sooner rather than later because it is likely to have a direct impact on their commercial activities. Pete suggested although employers might not always choose to examine social media platforms for information about prospective employees, they can if they choose. He confirms there are generational issues, but with time this will be less of an issue. He in a similar manner to Julie considers that employers can afford to make mistakes with social media but they should be acting a way that is fair, consistent and transparent.

Case O

Sarah and Sam own and manage a niche digital marketing agency specialising in supporting clients with their recruitment requirements via social media platforms. The organisation spends time working with their clients to establish their recruitment requirements and to develop a social media strategy to assist recruiting the best candidates. Their work concentrates on niche roles requiring specific expertise where organisations might have a particular difficulty recruiting through traditional channels. They are clear that they are not involved in any candidate vetting via social media platforms and they are not involved in the process in any way beyond candidate attraction. They believe there are significant generation issues and they feel that this unique selling point comes from the fact that offer a service to senior executive who otherwise wouldn't know or be aware of the reach of social media. They do not specialise in any one particular sector, they do find however, they tend to be engaged on campaigns for very hard to hire posts.

3.4.10 Firm – Organisational Level Logic Model

There are several ways in which a case study can be analysed (Yin, 2003). Many analysis methods rely on strong theoretical foundations having been laid at the outset of the study, while other techniques concentrate on proving or disproving the theoretical assumptions. Examples of the types of analytic techniques which can be used are: pattern matching; explanation building; time series analysis and logic models. Each have their individual procedures but a reoccurring theme throughout all, is the focus on developing internal and external validity when undertaking case studies. For the purposes of this research the model most likely to yield the greatest level of internal validity will be from the employment of the firm or organisational-level logic model.

More specifically, the research will rely on an alternative to the more traditional model which is generally more formulaic and linear, however, this choice of analysis technique is not without its issues related to this inquiry and given that the propositions are largely undefined and have been loosely drawn from the literature, the researcher cannot therefore rely on a testing phase of the theoretical framework. Not unlike the development of grounded theory, the analysis of an exploratory case study will be assisted by the employment of multiple analysis techniques and for the purposes of this research, the use of triangulation analysis will be employed. The examination of the individuals' experience of the use of social media for recruitment cannot be divorced from the organisational level policies and practices and as such, a clear case study protocol is required at the outset and a comprehensive understanding of the differences and requirements from the individual units of analysis will help shape the direction of the study.

Yin (2003, p.130) argued in reality organisations do not support or fit into the more traditional model. He contended the events which occur in organisations are “more dynamic” and do not necessarily progress in a linear fashion. He used the example of an organisation which is going through a period of transformation, whereby events may not always occur at the planned time or in the sequence in which they were originally intended and therefore it is much more difficult to illustrate these findings in a way which is more traditionally recognised. In addition, the use of an exploratory case study will also necessarily mean the events identified by the participants might not fall into a naturally occurring sequence. In fact, at the organisational level it may be that the organisation assumes the use of social media for recruitment follows a particular pattern and conversely those responsible for this practice may see it in a different order.

Miles and Huberman (1994, p.55) argued conceptual frameworks and research questions assist with the overload of information but there is a genuine concern for the researcher in thinking that all of the material looks “promising” when in fact there may be little substantive content meriting closer attention. The researcher needs to ensure nothing is overlooked and because the analysis of the data is necessarily selective, it would be impossible to cover or analyse every individual piece of information included in the data collection phase. This means careful coding of the material is imperative to ensure that nothing of significant value to the research outputs are accidentally or purposefully overlooked.

Consistent with other case-based research, this research uses an interview schedule derived from the research questions and prior literature to guide the interview (Yin, 2003) (See appendix 1). The schedule of questions were semi-structured in nature and probed areas such as who was involved in the decision to

adopt the management practice in question, how was the decision made, the reasons for adoption and how the adoption proceeded, including when the organisation both commenced and completed adoption and, if relevant, when and why the organisation stopped using the practice (Daniels, Myers and Dixon, 2011). A further layer of analysis will be required to contribute to the development of stronger validity in the findings of the research. This can be done with the employment of triangulation analysis.

3.4.11 Triangulation Analysis

One important concept of the case study is triangulation. Stake (2005, p.252) defined it as “a process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, verifying the repeatability of an observation or interpretation”. This principle is necessary to avoid misinterpretation and furthermore, triangulation analysis can be achieved through redundancy of data gathering and procedural challenges to explanations. There are normally six stages in conducting a qualitative case study: Firstly, the researchers should make conceptualisations of the topic; secondly, they select and emphasise a particular phenomenon and decide the research questions. After this stage, the researchers collect all the raw data from interviews, observations or documents such as programme files or reports, articles and proposals. The next steps are organising, classifying and editing the raw data into an accessible file; also searching patterns from data related to the topic. Then the researcher formulates triangulation of observations and develops interpretation. In the fifth stage, they select an alternative interpretation followed by writing a report in holistic and systematic forms.

3.5 Conclusion

This research intends to explore the nature and extent to which social media is being used within the case study. It will examine how extensive it is, who carries it out,

what platforms are accessed, what information is sought, how is it collated, to what use the information is put, how organisations justify their practice, what consequences there are of such practices *etc.* Based on a thorough examination of the literature, a series of propositions have been put forward to assist in guiding the case study. Having considered the range of possibilities in choosing a suitable methodological approach, it is considered that the interpretative, qualitative approach was the most appropriate. Furthermore, a choice was made to pursue an exploratory case study strategy as a tool to examine the phenomena in-depth. Within the case study a series of semi-structured interviews of individuals within a range of organisations involved with the use of social media for recruitment purposes was undertaken. Following the interviews and early data analysis, a second layer within the study emerged, utilising a repeat conversation addressing any salient themes which are revealed during the early analysis phase. The findings from the data collection are addressed in the following chapter.

Chapter 4 – Social Media Presence in Practice (Real or Imagined)

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the main findings following the analysis of the case study interviews together with the documentation and data collected from social media and collated during the data collection phase of this inquiry. The literature review definitely presented a growing concern for organisations connected with their use of social media for both their commercial business activities and their HRM practice. As such, in the first instance, a definition of the case is required. Rather than pursuing a multiple case study approach, this research presents a unique opportunity to utilise a single case study method with significant merit and thus it is justified. It is universally acknowledged that the pursuit and employment of a single case study method may be perceived negatively and consequently are often perceived as having too narrow a scope in order to successfully produce any great level of generalisability in their outputs. Nonetheless, as previously outlined in the literature review and methodology chapters, there is a relative paucity in terms of peer-reviewed empirical research into this particular topic. Given the possibility of extensive usage of social media in the HRM context a dedicated concentration of research efforts directed to this topic within a single case study frame is justified. The following research questions informed this study:

1. What is the nature and extent to which social media is being utilised for recruitment purposes?
2. Who carries it out?
3. What platforms are accessed?
4. What information is sought, how is it collated and to what use is the information put?
5. How do individuals within organisations justify their practice and what perceived consequences are there are of such practices.

The research findings in this chapter are based on the analysis of the following data sources: semi-structured interviews, information captured from social media platforms, documentation from the informants' organisations and the researchers observations during the interviews at their respective workplaces.

The chapter provides the results of the individual groups of individuals and their organisations connected with the use of social media for HRM purposes. There were 23 participants. The purpose of the chapter is provide some valuable insight into the use of social media in the recruitment process within various organisational contexts and alongside, it includes views from those individuals involved with providing advice and guidance to employers considering making use of social media for recruitment. In the discussions, each individual and their respective organisation are designated a pseudonym and categorised by letter. They are grouped according to their individual criterion for the purposes of sampling (Direct Involvement/Direct Use or providing Advice and Guidance to employers). It is important to note that the organisations make-up a varied group including a combination of private and public sector, but also an unusual mix of external recruitment agencies and in-house recruiters. It was considered that this would be a useful combination of organisations to focus on because of the diversity of their recruiting activities. In addition, where relevant, excerpts from their social media platform activity and documentation (where available) are provided for the purposes of illustration. Table (3.3, p. 135) illustrates the individual cases, their involvement and in which sector. Following this table is another table with a more in-depth description of their activities and finally a short synopsis of each case, outlining their HRM function, recruitment activities and briefly their social media use in recruitment.

4.1.2 The Key Themes

4.1 Summary of Key Themes

Major Theme	Sub-theme
1. Lack of policy documentation and strategic use inconsistencies	a) Education b) Return on investment c) Costs
2. Connections and connectivity	a) Beliefs about associated risks b) Beliefs about associated benefits c) Generational concerns
3. Online observation of future employees (surveillance activity)	a) Perception of negative connotations related to social media b) Inconsistency in use – say/do disparity c) Can surveillance of potential employees enhance the corporation

Table 4.1 - Summary of Key Emergent Themes

Having outlined the case boundary and the process of analysis undertaken, this section now outlines a brief summary of key findings. The chapter extensively evidences the range of activities which the interview interviewees are to undertake in terms of their social media use during, but not limited to, the recruitment process. The analysis has largely focused on understanding the role of social media in recruitment and reaching a thorough understanding regarding what activities are occurring throughout this process. In addition, it seeks to establish why the various interview interviewees undertake these activities.

Although all of the themes and sub themes, are considered discrete and should be acknowledged as such, for the purposes of this chapter, the following

themes are explored and illustrated in greater detail. Further, participants' interview testimony often addressed more than one theme; in which case the interview data are described where there is a logical fit:

- 1) What are the interviewees' experiences and perceptions of the nature and extent to which social media is being used by employers for HRM activities, including specifically recruitment
- 2) Establishing what platforms are being accessed by interviewees and once accessed, what information is sought, collated and how they store the information which has been collected

An overarching theme which emerged is related to the inconsistencies in the interviewees' testimonies regarding the nature and extent of the use of social media within organisations and more interestingly, not just between organisations in various industry sectors. In some cases among colleagues within the same organisation undertaking substantially similar job roles. A further inconsistency is related to the absence of formalised policy documentation, procedure guidance or any specifically targeted strategic documentation regarding social media use in the majority of organisations involved in the research. The scarcity of supporting guidance documentation has dictated that the interview interviewees are obliged to rely on their own instincts when examining their own processes and methods of utilising social media for recruitment purposes, which is an obvious cause for debate. This is further compounded by the interview interviewees' anxiety about the variation in approach to social media use among their colleagues.

In most instances, the interview interviewees did not appear to fully comprehend why their organisations are using social media for recruitment and as a consequence there appeared to be a general agreement among those interviewed, with respect to their competitor's use of social media, that they should also have an active social media presence in order to remain competitive. This uncertainty means it is difficult to propose any generalisability in the outputs of the research;

nonetheless, the findings contribute to the overall representation with regards to use of social media in the HRM context. The findings revealed a number of contradictions among the interview interviewees' opinions and beliefs. Specifically, there are discrepancies in their assertions regarding their use of social media for recruitment activities alone and this is juxtaposed by their confirmation of their use of social media for selection (vetting) purposes. In short – the overarching and key findings imply questions concerned with:

- A complete lack of strategic consideration or action on the part of the interviewees' and their individual organisations'
- No obvious strategic, or otherwise, consideration of the long-term implications for the business
- No sense of identification of the importance of social media linked to the organisations or individuals reputation or interests
- A concomitant lack of awareness of potential impact (positive and negative) on the organisations if social media is improperly used
- Absence of policies and procedures, codes of practice or guidelines to ensure actions are in accordance with business and HRM interests
- Total lack of clarity regarding the relative responsibilities within the organisations or the individuals' (and with external partners) as to who is responsible for what and how information is shared.
- An often over-reliance on external "experts" in defining online best practice for the organisations
- Social media use within HRM takes on a blended approach including learning and development, knowledge sharing, developing professional networks alongside recruitment activities, rather than its use in isolation

Given the scope of the literature reviewed in this inquiry which could be easily summarised as a potentially a great cause of concern for employers in terms of inappropriately or poorly structured use of social media in the HRM context, the findings at first glance seem to conceal the richness if their meaning. However,

further review and reflection of the data has revealed a much more subtle and potentially greater threat to employers and their recruitment activities in terms of social media use. Paradoxically there is a perceived necessity, on the part of organisations, to be constantly active and present in an online capacity for various commercial reasons but this is also heavily contrasted by a total lack of awareness regarding the impact and potential misuse of social media in this context. The potential and significant risk for individuals responsible for social media activity in organisations is evidenced by the lack of control, awareness, consideration and in some cases provision of basic guidelines.

The key themes in this chapter are set out in a narrative form with pertinent interview testimony utilised to illustrate the depth of the main findings. The structure of each section addresses the overarching research questions and reveals emergent themes. As such, the nature and extent to which social media is being used for is explored, what platforms are being accessed, what information is being sourced, how the information is being collated, what perceived consequences there are to using social media in recruitment and finally how the practice is justified by the interviewees and their organisations.

4.2 Nature and Extent of Social Media Use

The interview interviewees' replies to questions regarding the nature and extent to which social media is being used for recruitment purposes were quite varied. On the one hand, a number of the interviewees' were vague in their testimony but on the other hand, some appeared to have much greater clarity regarding what they believe they do not do, including activities such as vetting candidates through social media. Interestingly as some of the interviews developed this belief appeared to be not a wholly accurate description in some cases. Generally the use of social media for

commercial purposes was concurred with by the majority of participants, however the scope of this use was noted as relatively limited. In particular, there was confirmation that LinkedIn and Twitter appeared to be the most commonly used platform. There was also a distinct confirmation that the use of Facebook was not generally acceptable. It is interesting that Facebook was considered to be less of an acceptable platform, and some participants also confirmed the use of a Google search of a candidate name, but didn't distinguish that this was broadly the same issue.

Periodically during the discussions there appeared to be a blurring of the boundary between the interview interviewees' organisational use of social media for activities such as customer communication/interaction, employer reputation and brand management and its other secondary uses, such as the use of social media for the purposes of the HRM and specifically for candidate recruitment.

The overarching themes which emerged in relation to the nature of the use of social media for the purposes of recruitment was the interviewees' consideration of its practicality as a tool to create candidate awareness of a particular job and the broader organisation and additionally it can aid in the creation of a voice for the organisation to then communicate with those potential candidates. However, this perceived utility is also shadowed by an innate uncertainty, regarding the in-house skills and resources necessary, and often lacking, in managing those channels successfully and further concern regarding the potential reputational damage caused as a direct result of employees' use of social media in an inappropriate manner.

The majority of interview participants' referred to an extensive use of professional networking platform LinkedIn as their only social or professional media platform. They confirmed they perceive it as the most relevant and only professional

tool available to them for recruitment purposes. Furthermore, a number of individuals interviewed explained they, and their organisations, must have a high level of visibility online; otherwise they would lag behind their competitors in terms of digital presence. Whilst the specific focus of the research was clearly set out to each interview participant in terms of its particular emphasis on social media use for recruitment purposes in isolation, the findings revealed many of the participants naturally combine the use of social media not just in the recruitment process but also for learning and development opportunities, the sharing of information and other HRM activities. This has been interpreted as a form of fusion or blended approach in their use of social media within the HRM context. During the analysis of their interview testimonies it emerged that the majority of interview interviewees appeared to make no obvious distinction between the various uses of social media for recruiting, employer brand development, as a direct communication channel to engage with potential employees and for the purposes of learning and development activities. It appears the individuals have a self-identified reason or rationale for actively engaging with social media for the purposes of recruitment albeit the majority of the interview interviewees were unable to confidentially articulate why they did so. This outcome is particularly concerning because the lack of clarity of purpose related to the day-to-day use of social media, coupled with the absence of formalised social media policies and procedures means the organisation may be unnecessarily exposed to legal risks.

In summary the themes explored in this section relate to the individuals and their organisations' use of social media for the purposes of building connections developing their employer brandings, advertising and candidate attraction.

4.2.1 Social Media is Used for Making and Developing Connections.

Connections and the concept of connectivity developed as a recurring theme throughout the data collection and analysis phase of this research and it was noted each interview participant's views had subtle differences regarding what might constitute a valid connection. Despite this, they could collectively identify a universal role for social media activities in their resourcing networks. In particular, one interview respondent confirmed their use of professional network platforms as part of their daily activities:

"I use LinkedIn a lot and I think because of my position I have quite a lot of connections and certainly more than the average. I think it is the connection thing for me, certainly about social media generally." (Paul, P.1.S1.p1.)

Elizabeth described her development of online connections in terms of their importance to her job role success:

"The thing with connections is as a recruiter you are only as good as your network [online or offline]." (Elizabeth, P.10.S10.p11.)

Martha holds a senior resourcing position within her organisation and she discussed her opinion regarding the value of making connections through social media:

"LinkedIn - we use it purely for making connections and sharing our information but I think we need to more." (Martha, P.8.S8.p4.)

There were various discussions with the interview interviewees regarding the use of LinkedIn "endorsements" which platform users receive from/or provide to others.

This finding could be interpreted as a signal of LinkedIn's continued importance in terms of recruitment activity for the organisations. The use of platforms such as LinkedIn as a mechanism to make new connections or to retain existing relationships appeared to be a favourable outcome for the participants. However, when further questioned regarding the use of LinkedIn in terms of the usefulness of "endorsements", the overarching tone of response from the interviewees was one of

general negativity. Given that endorsements or connections might also be perceived as indicative of the strength of social or professional ties an individual possesses, this was a relatively surprising outcome.

A minority of the participants were more emphatic when they outlined their specific concerns directly relating to the credibility of “connections” and “endorsements” derived from professional networking sites, stating they believed the quality of “endorsements” are dubious and actually have little relative value in a commercial context. Furthermore, some interview interviewees’ commented they perceive there is an online culture whereby if an endorsement is provided, one is therefore received in return, irrespective of the defined relationship. Mike in particular was vocal about the issue and stated:

“If you get a lot of endorsements on LinkedIn it starts to look fake and people know there is a lot of - you endorse me, I will endorse you. It has reached saturation point. It is the same on Facebook but your endorsements are people liking your page . . . I don’t think you can take that from an endorsement.” (Mike, P4.S4.p2.)

Further he concluded the perceptions of “credibility” in his opinion is largely concerned with the authenticity of the content appearing on an organisations’ social media profile and he suggested the organisation’s message needs to be genuine to ensure potential candidates viewing the information also consider it credible.

Elizabeth considers endorsement provision as being more of an unwritten code. This is interesting because LinkedIn user guidelines make no reference to user etiquette in terms of providing or receiving endorsements:

“There is a sort of a code - if I endorse you, you will endorse me. I tend not to pay very much attention to it.” (Mike, P10.S10.p2.).

Moreover, Martha concluded:

“People don’t tend anymore to look at things like how many endorsements you’ve got, its more about what’s your current job, what skills do you have, what can you really bring to the organisation.” (Martha, P8.S8.p1.)

Her use of LinkedIn has been very important tool in the recruitment process, on the basis that the links, no matter how weak, made can support potential future working relationships. She regarded this as particularly helpful because if at a later stage there is a particular role or job to recruit for, she has an existing pool of active or passive candidates from which to begin her search. As a consequence, she recommends her team build as many online connections as they can to support the recruitment process and in turn contribute to the successful operation of the organisation:

“I encourage them [recruitment team] to make as many connections as they can, but I also ask them to try to connect with people who are of benefit to us”. (Martha, P8.S8.p1.).

On the other hand Sean commented:

“Well the endorsements feature [on LinkedIn], I never really look at anything like that, people start connecting with you randomly when you first log-on to LinkedIn it is more of a process thing”. (Sean, P20.S20.p2.)

The use of professional networking sites for generating business connections did not emerge as the single means by which the interview interviewees’ use social media platforms to connect with potential candidates. Engaging with Facebook and Twitter (although slightly less intensively) was identified as an alternative to LinkedIn and some of the participants confirmed they often use a combination of social and professional networking platforms to make their connections. It should be noted a clear distinction tended to be made between making connections with potential candidates online and those individuals currently employed, because making online connections with those individuals currently employed might be more problematic. It was intriguing that none of the interview interviewees could explain what process is followed in practice with regard to transition, maintaining or erasing the online relationship when a candidate is subsequently employed:

“I don’t really know what we do in terms of breaking the online connections at the end of the recruitment process. (Naomi, P7.S7.p6.)

Mike confirmed his organisation’s use of social media is closely aligned with marketing activities, rather than specifically linked with use of social media for recruitment purposes in isolation. He mentioned the use of online platforms (such as LinkedIn) as being a type of blogging space which is made use of to create awareness about the business and the developing the brand image among consumers. He believed this is necessary for business generation and as a consequence any recruitment activity or outputs are just one element in the overall online picture. He also, along with other interviewees’, believed their organisations and those responsible for social media do not make distinctions between the salient reasons for its use:

“In some companies marketing obviously [is a priority], social media is a great marketing tool - it is probably the best and some use it for recruitment”. (Mike, P4.S4.p1).

Having explored the use of social media with regards to connections and connectivity, we can now delve into the development of online collaboration activities and collaborative behaviours on social media platforms.

4.2.2 Social Media Use for Collaboration Activities and Collaborative Behaviour

Collaboration and collaborative behaviour provided an interesting addition to the concept of the blended usage of social media within organisations because it appeared there was a total lack of systematic organisational approach in terms of using social media for recruitment. In the process interview participants’ alluded to various uses of social media in the HRM context, albeit those boundaries remained fuzzy and indistinct. Sean, in particular discussed the use of social media in the HRM context with respect to small and medium sized enterprises and claimed the lack of

internal financial resources available which could be dedicated to online activities, mean the organisations he advises incorporate many aspects of HRM and learning and development activity in a combined way:

“In terms of HRM [and social media], it is about the external focus and there are some learning and development advantages to it, as well, because they [the organisation] are able to tap into what other organisations are doing very easily.” (Sean P20.S20.p5.)

The interview interviewees’ testimony referred to the use of social media platforms for the purposes of engaging in collaborative behaviour with internal and external partners, most confirming their organisations highly encouraged this activity. Additionally, there was a blurring of the various technology and tools, for example, the use of social media platforms does not appear to be disconnected from activities such as employees’ sending text messages, emails or cloud computing and the use of professional and personal networking platforms. Pete outlined the nature of the collaboration and considered that the use of free software as a valuable mechanism to encourage greater numbers of people to work together regardless of geographical barriers. Social media platforms are identified as being instrumental in encouraging collaborative behaviours, potentially benefiting the organisation by helping it become more agile. He stated the use of social media for collaboration is particularly useful because it helps organisations reconnect to working together more collaboratively:

“Using social [media] and being connected and collaborative must be brought together. Big companies are worried that technology has the opposite effect, but they shouldn’t move away - they should be moving towards it.” (Pete, P.2.S2.p8.)

With specific reference to collaboration in the workplace, James spoke about the use of the internal networking platform Yammer within his own organisation:

“We use Yammer [it works like Twitter] you can follow people and create profiles, it’s about sharing things [in the workplace] you might have in common, things that link you [and colleagues] together for work.” (James, P5.S5.p6.)

Sean maintains that he has made so many diverse connections via social media; he cannot believe he would have made them via any other channel. He specifically refers to a collaborative exercise whereby he and another prolific Tweeter (whom he connected with on Twitter) have gone on to co-author a book which specifically focuses on the barriers to social media for organisations despite never having met face-to-face or spoken on the telephone. He considers himself as evangelical regarding promoting the power of social media.

“I am four to five years into using Twitter, you are either for it and for it very strongly, almost evangelical about it, or you are kind of just, I don’t really see the point of it.” (Sean, P20.S20.p1.)

He also discussed the use of social media in terms of the concept of a community of practice:

“There is this community of really active [HR] people who share absolutely relevant and current thinking and I can tap into that any time I like, why wouldn’t I want to do that?” (Sean, P20.S20.p2.)

The exploration of collaboration and collaborative behaviour helps to build a picture regarding a blended use of social media within the organisations. A Strategic approach, or lack thereof, is explored next.

4.2.3 Adoption of a Strategic Approach

When asked about how the participants and their organisations began using social media for recruitment purposes, the majority confirmed their belief in its organic development and none reported their organisation had taken a strategic approach to the use of or integration of social media for recruitment. While there were discussions regarding the possible consequences of using information gathered from social media platforms to make HRM decisions specifically relating to discipline or grievances, it was generally agreed that there was no one specific catalyst for doing so. The responses to questions about the kind of approach each organisation might

take were varied and it was impossible to identify whether it was coincidental that collectively the group of individuals interviewed in this case all lacked a strategic focus in terms of social media use for recruitment. However, given the diversity of the interviewees' business activities with respect to industry and sector, this outcome could be suggestive of a worrying trend relating to the strategic management of social media activities within the HRM context.

Martha's organisation was the only one that spent any time researching or exploring what the benefits of making use of social media could bring to the organisation in a formalised fashion. She explained it reviewed the implications of using social media in recruitment and identified what it would cost in terms of time and resources. Research helped her team form a plan for comprehensive social media implementation but she also concluded it was very informal. The following interview testimony excerpts illustrated the variety of responses from the interviewees' regarding their use of social media more generally within the organisation:

Table 4.2 Participant Testimony (i)

Testimony	Participant Reference
"When we did our research we had to present to the board, [outlining] why we wanted to do it [use social media], we had to explain the business benefits of doing it and the risks for the business."	(Martha, P8.S8.p11.)
"It happened kind of by accident. I sort of stumbled across it [LinkedIn] one day and thought this is really good and it's kind of snowballed from there."	(Elizabeth, P10.S10.p4.)
"Our use is influenced by our CEO, he is really interested in social media and so when the first site	(David, P17.S17.p2.)

<p>opened they made a lot of use of social media and so it made sense for us to follow.”</p>	
<p>“In February [2014] it was actually our trainees [idea] they chatted with our senior our CEO about things they thought would make trainee recruitment better and they felt a Twitter account would work better for interaction and because he is really interested in social media, we got started from there. It was really organic to begin with.”</p>	<p>(James, P5.S5.p1.)</p>
<p>“When it all came on the scene, we felt it made good sense, it helped cut out expensive recruitment agents and so we were able to concentrate on getting the people [candidates] in and get them started. There was no one sit down discussion and decision to start using social media. It was there and it made good business sense to use it.”</p>	<p>(Naomi, P7.S7.p4.)</p>
<p>“Two years ago when I got here, some of the managers were saying things like you are misunderstanding the company, we are not that kind of organisation [in terms of using social media]. I was just like a bit of an arse and said things like “well you won’t have a business in five years if you don’t start to engage”. Now people are a little bit more like “ah maybe you were right.”</p>	<p>(Jennefer, P19.S19.p6.)</p>
<p>“I’ve been using social media for about 4-5 years now and I use it both personally and professionally. There are strong HR links on there, a really good network of similarly minded people. I think from a HR point of view, using social media falls into two categories; you are either all for it, very pro social media, or you are totally against it or are almost afraid of it. It’s a real marmite thing.”</p>	<p>(Sean, P20.S20.p1.)</p>
<p>“I would say that it is absolutely true that my organisation did not take a strategic approach to social media, nobody sat down and decided we need to do</p>	<p>(Alex, P21.S21.p4.)</p>

this. It was much more organic than that.”	
Participant Reference Key – (Pseudonym, Participant Number, Source Number, Page Number)	Name (PX.SX.pX.)

These specific quotes allude to a potentially chaotic approach to social media management within the interviewees’ organisations. The absence of strategic direction from within each of the organisations was particularly well evidenced because participants revealed there is no one individual identified as being wholly responsible for controlling the company’s social media accounts and when questioned further, they were unable with any great confidence to identify who (within their teams and organisation) might actually have ultimate control. They confirmed their belief there is instead a cultural acceptance whereby any individual contributing content to a social media account is then considered wholly accountable for the content at that particular time. Nonetheless, it should be noted the complete absence of policy or procedural guidance and documentation would in essence make it impossible to prove any subtle employee culpability if it was challenged.

None of the organisations had a social media policy or procedure which specifically focused on the use of social media for recruitment but (ibid) the majority of the interview interviewees’ felt there was a general cultural understanding among employees regarding their perception of how and how not to behave on social media platforms and they considered this is sufficient to deter unacceptable online behaviour. However, it should also be noted these were unsubstantiated assumptions, on the part of the interview interviewees, regarding employees’ awareness of culture within the organisations connected with acceptable social media behaviour. This is particularly problematic because there was no evidence of

any type of measurement activity which attempts to capture an employees' knowledge or awareness of culturally acceptable behaviours online. Yet, as none of the interview interviewees' organisations' have formalised social media policies or procedures confirming is or is not acceptable practice, it could be concluded there would be significant difficulty for the employer to attempt to enforce disciplinary sanctions in the event there was an unfortunate episode involving the organisations' social media account and potentially lead to an Employment Tribunal.

The interviewees were questioned further about this potential issue and some commented the use of social media in the workplace had not been formally addressed in policy documentation, or that it was inferred in the Information Technology policy, albeit more often than not the term social media was not explicitly stated. Martha's organisation in particular focuses on the use of social media regarding existing employees' behaviour but makes no specific reference to recruitment activities:

"Social media policy. We don't have one, but for us [this] links into employees' behaviour on social media. What we don't have is a policy or guidance document, which says to us as recruiters - this is what you can and can't put on social media." (Martha, P8.S8.p4.)

Naomi confirmed her opinion that there is requirement for a formalised policy:

"There is absolutely a need for a policy but we have not had the time to concentrate on it yet but it should not be some page's long policy that ties us up in long run". (Naomi, P7.S7.p9.)

Jennefer confirmed her agreement with Naomi in regard to it being a necessity for an organisation to have a social media policy, although she obviously considered that it was a functional and legal requirement rather than a purpose of being of any significant cultural value to employees engaged in the use of social media:

"I do think having a policy is important for a very simple reason, well there are two, the first is if you don't have one is that if you don't, you will lose at

employment tribunal and therefore you are kind of going to have to have one. And the other thing is about it being new.” (Jennefer, P19.S19.p8.)

Sean adds:

“Policies should be about common sense, but can you write common sense into a policy? I would always recommend to anyone to include “don’t be an idiot on social media”. (Sean, P20.S20.p3.)

Where commentary developed related to social media in terms of inclusion in policy documentation, some of the interviewees’ discussed the aging nature of explicit terms and references in policy documentation. They inferred there is an issue for policy writers using clearly defined terminology (such as, Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, etc.) because the speed at which social and professional networking platforms and the technology sounding it is evolving creates a time sensitivity connected with what should be included at any one time:

“The fast moving nature of social media and how complex it is, we don’t know, we have a team who specifically deal with this. We have a team of 50 people in London who eat, sleep, breathe, social media.” (Ivor, P13.S13.p5.)

Having reviewed Martha’s organisations discipline and grievance policy and procedure, it was noted that the language used was particularly generalised relating to social media but more importantly it did not merit a standalone policy document, it was instead included in disciplinary and grievance procedures:

Table 4.3 Group A – IT Policy Documentation Excerpt (ii)

Group Reference	Evidence
(GA.S8.P4)	Any communications that employees make in a professional capacity through social media must not: Breach confidentiality no must the do anything that could be considered discriminatory against, or bullying or harassment of, any individual, for example by: making offensive or derogatory comments relating to sex, gender

	reassignment, race (including nationality), disability, sexual orientation, religion or belief or age or; using social media to bully another individual (such as an employee of the Company); or posting images that are discriminatory or offensive or links to such content or; bring the Company into disrepute, for example by: criticising or arguing with, customers, colleagues, partners or competitors or; making defamatory comments about individuals or other organisations or groups; or posting images that are inappropriate or links to inappropriate content.
Name (GX.SX.pX.)	Group Reference Key – (Pseudonym, Participant Number, Source Number, Page Number)

Although Pete’s interest in social media is purely on a consultative basis, he argued organisations should adopt a self-moderating approach to social media in practice, which should ensure it used fairly and appropriately:

“Organisations should rely on professional rigour and practice rather than enforce something like a policy framework because I don’t think it is enforceable”. (Pete, P2.S2.p9.)

Francis on the other hand (also in an advisory capacity) commented that on the development of policy and procedural documentation within organisations:

“I think that they [policies and procedures] are part of the case and because this stuff [social media] has emerged really quite recently, we need to let custom and practice catch up and part of that custom and practice would be to write some sort of a sensible policy or rules about what is acceptable in terms of what you [employers] search in terms of social media. This is about good practice, acceptable practice, codes of conduct, which people would recognise and sign up to, either as individual recruiters or companies.” (Francis, P6.S6.p10.)

In her role as central communications liaison, Nicola confirmed the absence of policy documentation in her organisation:

“We still don’t have any signed off policy, so that has not been in place for the last 12 months”. (Nicola, P12.S11.p4.)

Pete further suggested employers should spend a lot of time considering what form of activities they wish to engage with on social media, because he believed as a consequence of not doing so the organisation could potentially suffer a commercial disadvantage:

“What needs to happen is that we bring a little bit more intelligence to this [recruiting online] and [think about] how we use our [advertising] placement techniques using digital [social media] and not just using a scattergun approach expecting it [social media] to “evolve” into something good, because you [organisations] will ignore digital at your peril, on the other hand if you just blindly throw everything towards digital you will also be missing out, most of your main competitors are getting it right so you have to as well.” (Pete, P2.S2.p7.)

Although strategic social media management is evidenced as being largely absent in terms of formalised policies and procedures, the interview interviewees’ did not appear collectively to be overly concerned with this issue, which is surprising given the high volume of cautionary narrative being communicated from advisory and professional bodies such as Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development, who have explicitly encouraged employers to develop robust policy and procedural documentation as a way in which to safeguard their potential legal exposure. Next the theme concerned with applicant attraction and advertising is explored.

4.2.4 Social Media use as an Applicant Attraction Tool

The use of social media for the purposes of advertising was identified by the interviewees’ as a secondary but still quite important, benefit arising from the use of social media for the purposes of recruitment. There was some discussion regarding the use of central corporate social media accounts as being potentially problematic for individuals and organisations because the content would not necessarily be audience specific or appropriate and consequently some “followers” or “users” of the

accounts may be put off the organisation because the generated content is not relevant or targeted. Naomi commented her organisation and argues it is not fitting to use the primary corporate social media account for the purposes of employee recruitment activities because it could be confusing for both potential candidates and customers of the business:

“Using the main corporate account and then not having a separate one for recruitment is foolish, if a customer of your brand is looking for product advice, do they really want to be looking at an entry level job advert. I don’t think so. It’s messy and it clouds the brand message.” (Naomi, P7.S7.p6.)

Tom confirmed his agreement with Naomi and regards the use of the central social media account of the organisation as the vehicle to communicate with customers and stakeholders alone:

“The main corporate account should be for customers only or potential customers”. (Tom, P3.S3.p4.)

A sub-category emerged during the discussions connected with advertising and was specifically related to an apparently increasing usage, by potential applicants, of employer review or rater sites such as Glassdoor.com. This is essentially a review site for jobs and the company markets itself as a similar site to TripAdvisor, but it is dedicated to jobseekers and employers. Just as travellers’ rate hotels and restaurants, current and ex-employees or recent job interview candidates can rate their experiences of working with or being interviewed by any particular organisation. As a consequence of these ratings, potentially undesirable and unsolicited feedback and unsubstantiated information highly visible to applicants and could be creating a negative perception of the organisation in the online arena. Although at present Glassdoor.com is more popular in the USA, it is receiving increasing attention from employers in the UK and it potentially has unquantified consequences for employers. In other words, although social media can provide an

excellent means by which an employer has the ability to create awareness of and define the employer brand among prospective candidates, there are also issues to manage such as the employer's authenticity and credibility of message.

A number of the participants mentioned the use of Glassdoor.com and they described how it has become concerning for their organisations, because of the inherent lack of control they have over the volume and nature of potentially negative content contained. Unlike Facebook and Twitter, employers are unable to easily and quickly remove negative comments from their profile, which under normal circumstances would be favourable as means to create limit any reputational damage. Although not revealed during the formal interview, one of the interview interviewees anecdotally recalled a recent serious online issue their organisation had when the details of two members of staff alleged extramarital affair was revealed by a spouse on the corporate social media account and via Glassdoor.com. The aggrieved partner of one of the employees concerned proceeded to launch an angry social media campaign directed at the individuals involved and the organisation. This was to the extent that they began answering customers and client queries about the outcome of the affair. They confirmed that the episode was short lived however, they were concerned about the lack of control and how much monitoring needs to occur on social media channels. This is obviously an extreme example of how personal issues can be reflected in the company brand image but it is more about the speed at which an occurrence can develop and it signals how important it is for organisations to be prepared and have clear guidelines in place.

Pete commented about applicants' motivation to spend time reviewing a particular organisation on a job review site either prior to or during the recruitment process and he cautioned this is not always a positive experience for either the

candidate or organisation. In his opinion, the digital footprint of the organisation ought to be considered as being just as important as an applicants' because they may wish to understand the view others hold including existing employees, regarding the organisation in terms of a RJP. Pete also maintained the way in which organisations' approach job advertising is evolving and specifically commented that organisations routinely seek his advice and guidance with regards to how they might position themselves and their employer brand on social media channels:

"They ask questions about how they might position their jobs online in a different way and it is clear now the language and style of advertising has changed. We have moved away from the old national newspaper [well a lot have] and now consider digital first. This is great – it opens up so many options." (Pete, P2.S2.p4.)

Once again these comments help to illustrate the lack of strategic focus in terms of a targeted social media approach by employers and Martha felt her organisation's approach to social media management is a direct consequence of ad-hoc advice from their marketing and/or advertising agency and as such their "plan" was to continue operating as they have been until something goes wrong:

"On our social media Twitter account [for example] we post images every day, or every couple of days, we post very visual fun things such as "Keep Calm, have a cup of tea", what is the worst interview question, fun stuff as well as more important job related stuff. This came from [a discussion with] our ad agency, they told us to do it, keep the account fresh. It has been working quite well, I don't think we would have thought to do it". (Martha, P8.S8.p6.)

Helen revealed that her organisation is heavily influenced by their advertising agencies' opinion. Historically, she and her team had only used social media for recruitment purposes where there was a requirement for high profile and high volume campaigns and more specifically when they had wanted to reach an international audience:

"It was really only then when we launched project [XXXX] that our agency [XXXX] were advising us that it is something we needed to do and they were facilitating it. They managed all of that side throughout each campaign. I don't

know a lot about social media. I don't use it personally so I cannot see the benefit of it in my job role.” (Helen, P11.S11.p6.)

When questioned about the role of social media in terms of recruitment processes, the majority of the interview interviewees' confirmed they used it for only attraction purposes. Notwithstanding these claims, it became evident that for some individuals this also extended to using social media for additional recruitment and selection activities, which is explored next. The evidence provided by the participants connected with the definitive role of social media as an attraction and advertising tool confirmed that the majority perceive it as a useful and somewhat necessary tool. Notwithstanding these assertions, some of the participants also discussed the changes in technology which have resulted in their being a need for employers consider their brand and how they can manage this as it continues to evolve. In particular, the participants see the benefits utilising professional platforms, such as LinkedIn, in the first instance and then considering targeting their message to individual audiences as and when necessary. The use of additional non-professional platforms appeared to be largely for niche job roles. Only one organisation confirmed the use of social media for pre-employment activities and this was limited to on-boarding of candidates.

4.2.5 Social Media Enhances Employer Brand

Another issue which was revealing is related to the emphasis the interview interviewees' placed on the potential for employer branding activities on social media platforms and specifically on how the use of social media platforms can assist in significantly developing the employer brand. In terms of dedicated recruitment activity, some of the interviewees' consider it was not enough to consider the candidate's personal brand management moreover, a greater emphasis must also

be placed on the organisation in relation to their online employer brand. While a number of the interview participants referred to employer branding activities in differing ways, it remains important and relevant to the research outcomes.

Employer branding is closely linked to employer voice and the authenticity of the employer message where candidates are concerned. Pete, suggested, that the profile of the candidate has changed and whereas previously (although he does not go any further to quantify this in terms of the length of time) applicants may have been more concerned with material matters such as salary, benefits etc., now they are just as concerned with their psychological connection with the organisation.

When questioned further as to the veracity of this contention, he responded:

“Candidates are going away from role profiles and salary descriptors [alone] and looking at the feeling and the emotional connection they have with the job and they are kind of building a picture about the culture of the org...people buy into a psychological connection with the role and where they can see themselves working.” (Pete, P2.S2.p4.)

Supporting Pete’s suggestion, Ivor and Ken discussed the intangible relationship candidates have with organisations particularly prior to joining the company. They discussed the potential for organisations to extend the candidate experience beyond an application process and panel interview:

“People [candidates] want to be able to see where they will be working, so a video can be made of people literally walking around the organisations, using drones for example.” I think it is something call augmented reality, basically it can also be part of the on-boarding process...you get to see your department before you arrive.” (Ivor, P13.S11.p5.)

“We need to do this, people are leaving organisations that they are often comfortable or happy in and then upheave themselves, so as much information as you can give them the better.” (Ken, P.13.S.11.p13.)

Further, Pete considered there is a potentially strong connection between the employer, the applicant and the authenticity of the employer's brand with regard to candidate perception. He believed this concern is extremely important because employers could be communicating a mixed message for candidates regarding the culture of the organisation and in his advisory capacity he recommends to employers that they spend time thinking about authenticity above anything else:

"I get a lot of questions about employer brand...they've [organisations] got to make sure that it is authentic. If they are faking or it is inauthentic then they are going to be in trouble." (Pete, P2.S2.p4.)

Pete also considered that when organisations use social media particularly well during a recruitment campaign but then spend nothing in terms of financial investment and dedication of resources to technology, there is potentially a mismanagement of the candidates' expectations. He believed organisations are at risk of losing employees as a result of their lack of technological advances:

"There really is an attrition danger if your internal digital profile and "look" does not match your external profile - if there is an inauthentic mismatch there, it is a problem." (Pete, P2.S2.p9.)

He also implies a sense of disappointment as a direct result of the contrast between the public social media face of organisations, the internal lack of progress in terms of the technology advancement and consequently the potential effect on the psychological contract. However, this was not explored fully during the interview. He was not alone in his concern regarding candidate expectations, Nicola commented on her frustrations:

"It think it is really important, something that keeps coming up all the time, is that when you are using social media to engage with staff, customers or potential candidates, there is an issue that when they then get into the organisation, those tools [social media] just aren't available".(Nicola, P12.S11.p11.)

Nicola suggested that there was a disconnect within her organisation in terms of senior members of staff wanting to control the employer brand message and she believed this might be a barrier to total implementation of social media in colleagues daily activities. This is explored in a later section of this chapter. Furthermore, her colleague agreed and suggested:

“I think generally organisations think only about their recruitment need in that moment, they think about getting people in and they don’t necessarily think about it from that point onwards. (Helen, P11.S11.p12.)

Sean argued that the use of social media within his organisation is most closely connected with the employer brand and developing employer branding activities:

“We kind of use it [social media platforms] more as an employer branding tool and then pumping out the odd job.” (Sean, P20.S20.p8.)

As an extension of employer branding activity, organisational culture is also relevant and explored in the next section.

4.2.6 Social Media Use Depends on the Culture of the Organisation.

Discussions related to culture within the organisations emerged more subtly during the data collection and analysis phase of this inquiry. Some consideration was given to concerns regarding the variety of backgrounds the interviewees’ come from in terms of industry and sector. Nonetheless, it became apparent that culture plays a pivotal role in comprehensively interpreting the views that those individuals who are responsible for using social media in recruitment hold. There was a discussion with a number of the participants relating to the use of social media having become an embedded factor in the culture of the organisation and interestingly other elements emerged which were included in the categorisation of culture, such as the role of the organisational culture in employer brand and the culture of the organisation in terms of their propensity to use social media for candidate selection and vetting purposes. It was concluded from the interviewees’ testimony, that there is a generalised

perception related to the type of organisation which might engage with social media platforms in their HRM activities. Specifically, there were comments which clearly contrasted with more traditional organisations and newer, perhaps more entrepreneurial, companies. Francis particularly argued that there are barriers to access and implementation of social media for older more established organisations:

“I think it is the case in some sectors and some companies who use social media in this way [for recruitment], more than in other areas [high tech organisations] and can engage where younger people are more active on it [social media], than say older more traditional blue chip employers.” (Francis, P6.S6.p1.)

This comment above can be interpreted in a positive way as it might signal an acknowledgement of the digital divide which exists, not just in terms of older-v-younger workers but a divide between more established traditional organisations and newer companies in terms of their adoption, engagement and implementation of social media within their day- business activities. A number of the interview interviewees’ commented that candidates and latterly new employees, may have an unrealistic expectation regarding an employers’ obligation. In addition, they question whether the available technical resources are internally available to provide them with the digital tools some individuals perceive they need to be effective in an increasingly digitalised workplace:

“I think job seekers consider access to social media tools – particularly if they have been recruited via social media channels, as necessary. Why would the not? It would be really strange if they got into the organisation, having had an online recruitment experience and then found they had no access to the same tools if it is part of their job.” (Tom, P3.S3.p5.)

Pete voiced his opinion that candidates would expect to have their digital profile screened by employers during the recruitment and selection process and as such, he postulated it was inconsequential whether it was part of a policy or procedure. In any case he noted it would still be a conceivable risk for an employer to omit policy

documentation in terms of transparency in process execution. However, not everyone agreed. As a consequence of considering the culture of the organisation it is hard to ignore one of the key influencing factors which might impact this, which are closely connected with the rate at which technology and social media is constantly evolving.

4.2.2.7 Impact Connected with the Speed of Technology and Social Media Platform

Development

Social media continues to evolve at a phenomenal speed and as such, there is a perceived commercial threat to organisations business activities, particularly when they neglect to keep abreast of technological innovations. The speed of change is problematic for many organisations' because so few currently possess dedicated in-house resources specifically aligned with ensuring they remain continually informed and fully prepared to respond to changes technological innovations may demand. More often than not, the individuals responsible, for social media, within organisations are frequently left to play catch-up with an ever-changing digital environment.

As a consequence, a few of the interviewees' questioned whether it would be possible to produce a universally applicable and perpetually current framework for best practice or a policy and procedure outlining meaningful helpful guidance related to the use of social media in the HRM, because of the pace of change in the technology. On the other hand, Francis commented there is little the employer can do as an alternative as they must develop some type of policy framework or guidance in the absence of a robust legal framework to protect the organisation. He specifically referred to employers who engage in probing candidates' social media channels for information beyond the CV or application:

“With respect to policies, I think that part of the case is because this stuff [social media] has emerged really quite recently. We need to let custom and practice catch-up and part of that custom and practice would be to write some sort of a sensible policy or rules about what is acceptable in terms of what you [employers] search in terms of social media, what information you access through social media, what you search for on candidates.” (Paul, P1.S1.p4.)

Conversely, Pete focused on a potential cause of detriment to younger candidates. He argued that the speed of technological change means younger candidates are placed at a distinct disadvantage because they have grown up in a digital world and as a result they habitually share personal content via social media channels as a matter of course. Therefore, they do not necessarily envision how their indiscriminate personal over-sharing might have the propensity to harm their future job prospects. He argued employers’ should be mindful of the variety of information they are searching for on social media platforms and he advocated it should be absolutely job relevant. He believed there is a distinction to be made between a candidate’s personal and professional life and therefore employers should not be seeking information which may not have any direct relevance to the particular job:

“It’s not even about a distinction between work and life; it is about the appropriateness of the material [being searched for] related to the job role...” (Pete, P2.S2.p3.)

Pete could empathise with employers and could understand why they might want to view a candidate’s personal information but continued to put forward his belief there should be less of a concern, for an employer, regarding an applicant’s activities outside the workplace and on their social media and further any employer ‘checking’ activities should be wholly concentrated on information related to the job role. He mentioned candidates’ awareness or expectations regarding employers searching social media and he believed candidates wholly anticipate and fully expect an employer to undertake extensive online searches relating to their online footprint.

However, just because a candidate expects it does not mean it is appropriate or truly necessary.

Considering this subject from an external consultancy perspective, Ken believed the pace of change has a profound effect on the way in which social media is being utilised (by employers):

“The fast moving nature of social media and how complex it is - we don’t know! We have a team who specifically deal with this... a team of 50 people in London who eat- sleep-breathe social media, because if we were having this conversation in 12 months it would be very different again” (Ken, P14.S14.p2)

While it is helpful and necessary to consider the racing nature of technological change independently, it could also be included in the structural changes the organisations are making or have made to their existing recruitment processes. Understanding how organisations have integrated their use of social media into their recruitment activities is important and is outlined in the next section.

4.2.7 Changes to the Recruitment Process

Discussions concerning the variety of ways in which organisations have changed their recruitment activities following the introduction of social media into the workplace were complex and from some of the interviewees’ remarkably vague. There was no uniformity in response in terms of adoption or approach taken by individual organisations. To a large extent there appears to be no strategic or systematic approach in the implementation of social media for recruitment purposes and a number of independent variables seemed to affect whether it was utilised or not.

The discussions regarding the integration and embedding of social media platforms into organisations’ recruitment processes were not without their complexities and as expected there was significant diversity in scope and approach

identified by all of the interviewees and their organisations. There is support for the contention that the use of professional and personal social media networking platforms does not yet replace more traditional recruitment methods, rather its utilisation has become an important element of a wider blended approach to online and offline recruitment process. During the interviews Martha confirmed her organisation endeavoured to utilise succession planning first as a means to recruit but if this proved unsuccessful they consider the level of seniority, of the role and make a decision regarding the most appropriate advertising channels (professional online networks, social media, recruitment agencies and local/national news press):

“The recruitment department decides the best avenue to advertise or market that role... to be fair they [managers] very rarely ask to have input because we recruit quite regularly for them. Head office, however at the other sites [distribution], you tend to find that it is the opposite.” (Martha, P.8.S8.p6.)

Pete commented that organisations are taking a much more measured approach when considering their options:

“Some organisations will still use online jobs boards alone and some still are going to place adverts in The Guardian because they still may want people who are going to read the Guardian but they are also recognising that they should or ought to consider the social channels. Why? - because they might miss out.” (Pete, P2.S2.p4.)

Paul believed that younger job seekers are more comfortable with experiencing recruitment in a virtual online capacity and he stated some candidates would not feel very comfortable operating outside of the online environment. He argued that for a recruiter this is fraught with issues, such as a lack of suitable candidates either online or offline which might otherwise be missed if only one channel is utilised. He also argued as a consequence of some organisations only pursuing online advertising it could cause a possible disconnect between the candidate and the employer because in his opinion and his experience, employers are routinely failing to get back to online applicants:

“It probably is the volume, everything is online. It is a very snapshotty thing and of course they will see something that might have only been online for two days and they will apply and get the response – had enough applications, that sort of thing. But it is all online now, definitely”. (Paul, P1.S1.p3.)

On the other hand, Elizabeth commented on the tangible benefits for recruiters as a result of developing professional networking platforms which can assist in the establishment of strong relationships with candidates’ which could be revisited easily however, she acknowledged this is unlikely to replace existing or traditional recruitment methods in their entirety:

“We would always retain the in-house database as a first source [in candidate search] and then use newspapers, because some senior staff who maybe searching or that we would be searching for might not have a social media presence.” (Elizabeth, P10.S10.p2.)

Elizabeth’s lack of confidence in social media as having the potential to replace traditional recruitment methods is not surprising and another interview respondent commented social media can provide an advantage in terms of saving time for organisations during their candidate search activities, on the other hand they also felt social media is not the quintessential tool in recruitment, moreover it is simply another layer to the process:

“I think social media is one of those things that you have got to have. I think you would be daft not to, there are lots of good selling points and there are lots of benefits associated with using social media.” (James, P5.S5.p2.)

Another theme related to how the recruitment process has changed within the interviewees’ organisation as a result of the introduction of social media and the ensuing discussions were connected with a blended use of social media within the recruitment process. This blended approach is made up of a number of characteristics and also revealed some organisations do not wholly rely on social media platforms to recruit. Instead - a combination of traditional attraction and recruitment methods are employed such as, job-board advertising, the use of

corporate websites, local or national newspapers, trade press and on occasion recruitment agencies alongside of or instead of social media platforms. In addition, some interviewees noted their organisation does not have a uniform approach when deciding whether or not to use social media for every vacancy. Rather, they made decisions on an *ad hoc* basis and each role was addressed on a case-by-case basis. Sometimes this was dictated by cost, other times it was related to the seniority of the role. At no time, however, was there a sense from any one respondent that their individual organisations utilised a particularly strategic approach to these making decisions. Naomi commented on her choice about whether to engage in social media advertising in her recruitment activities and she concluded this will often be based on the volume of roles she is recruiting for. On the contrary, David suggested:

“For more senior managers, we would probably use one or two recruitment consultant’s jobs boards and social media because of the general needs of the business. When recruiting at assistant management level we might use Caterer.com or Gumtree.” (David, P17.S17.p1.)

Pete raised an interesting point with reference to mining existing employees’ social media networks as means to find suitable candidates. He believed the range of internal networks existing within organisations mean employers’ have a readily available source of candidates. He also concluded the gap between the recruiting manager’s activities and the HRM professional is closing:

“The distance between the recruiting manager and the HRM manager closing because, I think it is the case that recruiters are thinking “hang-on recruiting manager - you are a technical expert of business analyst roles [for example] – I am in HR, you have got a network of people, I might be able to find your next employee from your networks, it’s about mining networks and connections, not just HR sticking a job advert out”. (Pete, P2.S2.p5.)

Without attempting to generalise, a possible consequence of the introduction of social media into recruitment and further the mining of internal online social networks may signal a diminishing reliance on HRM practitioners. Jonathan made reference to

this and concluded that there could be issues with fairness in the recruitment process when mining existing employees' social networks:

“The only way that I know of is its [social media] use and the recruitment of people to the organisation is through the “refer a friend” scheme, which has always had a little bit of a dubious issue because it means we are not really attracting people fairly anymore.” (Jonathan, P15.S15.p1.)

Nevertheless, there appeared to be a general belief among the interviewees that social media will not replace established methods of recruitment or selection; rather it would alter the way in which employers' approach candidate attraction activities.

The majority of interviewees also concluded social media alone cannot replace traditional methods of recruitment and selection James stated his organisation is considering using video application logs as part of their application process, which will require candidates to verbally respond to application form questions and further his organisation is already in some cases, requesting applicants interviewed via video link:

“Our video interviewing help show this is the future of recruitment and it is, because I think technology is going to play a much a big part of potentially what we and other legal firms have done.” (James, P5.S5.p6.)

Having considered the nature and extent to which the individuals and their organisations are using social media for recruitment purposes, it is prudent at this stage to turn now to examine who within the organisation is carrying out the activity and which platforms are being routinely accessed.

4.3 Actors and Platforms

As outlined in the methodology chapter, identification of the most appropriate and relevant people within organisations responsible for or actively participating in the use of social media for recruitment purposes was problematic. This was a continued cause for concern throughout the data collection phase because despite the

researcher setting out the boundary for the unit of analysis and outlining the intensity of use required in order to participate, some of the interviewees upon interviewing were later revealed as not quite as involved as had been suggested.

A notional thematic outcome was ambiguity which was related to the interviewees' general awareness regarding the concentration of usage of social media recruitment and clarity regarding responsible persons within each organisation. In the majority of cases there was no evidence of any clear parameter having been set regarding who, within each organisation, was responsible for or was carrying out the use of social media for the purposes of recruitment. This was particularly concerning given the lack of policy documentation and structure in place with the organisations. All interviewees interviewed confirmed some involvement in the use of social media, whether they were actively engaging in its use, providing advice and guidance for employers considering using social media in the HRM context, or they were responsible for engaging external partners in making use of social media for recruitment. Understanding which platforms are being accessed is key because it assists in identifying what activities are occurring and their revealing what rationale the individuals/organisations have in using them.

As the interviews proceeded to explore which social or professional media platforms are routinely used for the purposes of recruitment, it was revealed by the majority of interviewees there is no clear differentiation between social and professional platforms. For example, many interviewees referred to social media generally but then specifically discussed or made reference to LinkedIn, which is largely used for professional purposes. This may seem a minor concern for this inquiry, however, there are significant differences in relation to the information any employer might access and collect about an individual candidate from platforms

which have a more social focus (eg Facebook, Twitter and Instagram). Furthermore, probing the interviewees about which social media platforms they access might highlight their perceived importance in the recruitment process and it might also be indicative of who is controlling the accounts and thus responsible for the content.

During these discussions a lingering sense of uncertainty permeated the responses, particularly connected with defining social media. Some interviewees referred to using search engines, such as Google, as the starting point for their use of social media for recruitment. This in turn led to discussions connected with the indirect use of social media for vetting purposes, which revealed some interesting findings. This is explored later in the chapter.

The most common platform being accessed was revealed as LinkedIn. The interviewees' collectively confirmed they view LinkedIn as a wholly a professional networking platform and less risky to use (in the HRM context). Consequently, the interviewees concluded there is no ethical concern connected with using this platform for recruitment. Use of other social networking platforms such as Facebook and Twitter (although in most cases less intensively) were identified as the two platforms which followed LinkedIn closely in terms of usage. The following parts of this section outline which online platforms are frequently accessed by interviewees.

Table 4.4 Group / Platform / Use (iii)

Group	Social / Professional Media Platform	Corporate / Personal
A	LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram	Corporate and Personal
B	LinkedIn, Twitter, Facebook (Limited)	Corporate
C	LinkedIn, Twitter	Corporate
D	LinkedIn, Twitter	Corporate and Personal
E	LinkedIn, Twitter	Corporate and Personal

F	LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat, Whatsapp, Yammer	Corporate and Personal
G	LinkedIn Twitter	Corporate
H	LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram, Facebook, Snapchat	Corporate and Personal
I	LinkedIn, Twitter	Corporate
J	LinkedIn, Twitter (Limited)	Corporate
K	LinkedIn, Twitter, Instagram	Corporate
L	LinkedIn, Twitter	Corporate
M	LinkedIn, Twitter	Corporate
N	LinkedIn, Twitter, Google+, Instagram, WhatsApp, Snapchat, Pintrest	Corporate and Personal
O	LinkedIn, Twitter	Corporate

The table illustrates the purpose of platform use and also indicates, where the information was available, whether this an account used as the main corporate communication channel. It was important to make this distinction because the “users” believe they are using social media in one particular way, but in reality there is often a high degree of overlap occurring.

4.3.1 LinkedIn

In the main, LinkedIn was identified as the most popular platform and most of the interviewees’ determined it was the most useful business tool albeit there were significant concerns regarding the high financial costs associated with its use. Although all of the interviewees confirmed their use of LinkedIn to some degree within recruitment process, some outlined it was on a more intensive basis than

others. This is an interesting point, because the variability in use was not wholly related to intensity; it was also often prompted by the type and level of role being recruited to. This signalled an inconsistency in terms of the frequency and intensity of use and this inconsistency has been evidenced throughout the interviews, sometimes within the same organisations but also between people in the same organisation undertaking a substantially similar role. Tom and Naomi provided the most pertinent testimony of this, whereby individuals in the same organisation, undertaking a broadly similar role but with different individual approaches to using social media for recruitment. Firstly, Tom suggested that his use of LinkedIn was also influenced by his organisations other search methods of recruitment:

“I use LinkedIn on the basis of it being like a Google search, I will look at people’s profiles but not actively contact them on there.” (Tom, P.3.S3.p4.)

Naomi on the other hand, begins the search by using LinkedIn:

“Recruitment for me begins and ends with LinkedIn; I find people looking for jobs on there are the easiest to approach and they are open to a discussion.” (Naomi, P7.S7.p6.)

Almost all of the interviewees when asked, confirmed they have not signed-up for LinkedIn Prime membership because they and their organisations, considered it an unnecessary and overpriced. This was an interesting outcome given the interviewees declaration that LinkedIn was the most important platform in terms of recruitment activities. This might also be indicative of the perceived importance, or lack thereof, individuals’ and their employers’ place on social media.

The interviewees’ described their understanding of the differences and similarities between social and professional networking platforms. A number confirmed their position that applicants’ profiles on LinkedIn are “one and the same” as any CV they might submit for a job. Additionally, some use LinkedIn profiles to confirm accuracy of references. Some of the interviewees’ confirmed they routinely

undertake online searches of applicants job history including aspects such as their length of service in a job and their interests in terms of future jobs. Furthermore, a couple of the interviewees' consider the testimonials candidates have on these sites as verifiable references although this was not a view held by all of the interviewees. This ought to be approached cautiously in terms of generalisability because, Elizabeth stated she spent time examining prospective candidates' length of service in their current role and she disregards potential candidates if they are in their first year of a job role as she believes they are not active job seekers, although she could not explain why:

“What it is really useful when deciding whether to approach a candidate is related to how long have they been in their current role. If someone has just started recently, it’s not likely that they are going to want to move again. “It just makes sense they would be happy in the role and not looking to move.” (Elizabeth, P10.S10.p2.)

This further signals an inconsistency in the use of social media for recruitment and there is no obvious or legitimate rationale for a recruiter to make assumptions based on details such as length of service but it could be connected with an attempt to quickly shortlist prospective candidates, which might be as a consequence of the vast choice available via channels such as LinkedIn.

When asked about the specific nature of their use of LinkedIn, the majority of interviewees stated they utilised it as a database to keep track of passive job seekers. Interviewees involved in recruitment agent activity confirmed their belief that LinkedIn is an essential tool in the recruitment process, whereas those who are responsible for in-house recruitment felt even though LinkedIn can be viewed as a useful tool, it is not always an essential. Elizabeth provided the richest example of high intensity use of LinkedIn:

“LinkedIn. We do use an awful lot because as you know people are putting so much information about themselves on there and it is almost like having

access to their CV without having to go through a preliminary telephone call.”
(P10.S10.p1.)

The LinkedIn platform also appeared to provide the greatest credibility of all the platforms discussed but this was surprising because on the one hand, the interviewees' confirmed its use and in some cases necessity, on the other hand they distinguished they would never use it as a formal referencing tool, despite in some cases checking length of service and other such details. It could be concluded there was doubt in relation to the use of endorsements. Although some obvious benefits associated with LinkedIn were commented on by the participants, a notable negative assertion emerged surrounding the high costs associated with its use. In particular Elizabeth and Martha confirmed this:

“...the cost of LinkedIn is prohibitive really; if there is a new member of the team coming into the business you have to buy this expensive licence.”
(Elizabeth, P10.S10.p3.)

and:

“We don't use the paid for LinkedIn premium, it is just far too expensive. We couldn't justify the cost.” (Martha, S8.P8.p1.)

However, later Elizabeth contradicted herself and outlined her view that there is a way for organisations could justify the high cost, but it would be dependent on volume. She suggested that entry-level positions with a high volume requirement would justify the cost of a premium membership. However, on the other hand, she also perceived if the recruitment activity was for senior or executive position then it was often more expensive in terms of monetary costs, time and resources than the premium membership is worth.

An additional issue that emerged during interviews concerned with which social media platforms are routinely accessed by the interviewees'. This conversation was specifically connected with a perceived lack of control interviewees

considered they held in terms of social media usage both during recruitment and more broadly in terms of general commercial activity online. With respect to LinkedIn, the central thrust of these discussions concerned a general belief among senior executives within organisations that company related information, sometimes commercially sensitive, was not always in the full control of the organisation. In particular, one respondent referred to the potential drawbacks regarding the legal ownership of LinkedIn contacts lists. Pete suggested the legal opinion pertaining to ownership of contacts was outdated and further, he stated caveats or clauses that might be included in employees' contracts would be wholly insufficient to provide any legally binding protection for the organisation. Control as a separate theme is explored in detail later in this chapter and having considered the use of LinkedIn as a professional networking site, the section can now consider other platforms.

4.3.2 Facebook and Twitter

Collectively, the interviewees' intensity of use of Facebook and Twitter was revealed as varied, both as a tool in the recruitment process and as a system to collect information, although interestingly the majority coupled both platforms together when referring to them during the discussions despite their obvious and significant differences. This is an important point because with regard to demographic reach, both platforms target audiences who are constantly evolving and as such there may be instances where the right or most appropriate audience for the organisation's job role is being overlooked. A number of the participants mentioned their choices regarding which platform to select during the recruitment process is often influenced directly by the job role profile. Some interviewees inferred this is because they wish to avoid, where possible, spending a lot of time concentrating their efforts on numerous platforms with little prospect. However, they also reflected on occasion the

choice was largely guided by their advertising agency and/or an in-house social media expert and this might be considered as being a loose indication of an informal strategic approach. Mike confirmed the use of Facebook within his organisation was in the first instance, associated with their marketing activities:

“Facebook is definitely the best advertising tool for the organisation...any organisation would be sincerely lacking if they weren’t on there in terms of audience reach”. (Mike, P4.S4.p5.)

As was revealed to be the case with participants’ professional use of LinkedIn, the use of Facebook and Twitter was not consistent and often the choice regarding whether or not to use it were driven not by any formalised approach to social media (strategic or otherwise), rather it was guided by inherently low level variables. Specifically, one participant’s (Martha) organisation is involved in the use of targeted advertisements on Facebook and she thought this was the best channel to reach passive or active job seekers. Martha’s belief has meant her organisation has begun to make tentative investment into targeted “paid-for” advertising on the platform. She was keen to underline the investment is still very much in the testing phase and whether it is reused or not will be dependent on the success of this early phase:

“What we have recently tried with Facebook is pop-up ads. We can pick a demographic, it’s reasonably limited, but we can pick an age bracket, a location bracket or a catchment area and we can pick the time of day that we want it [the advert] to pop-up and there are different ways of doing it. We set an amount for that day for example we commit fifty pounds and if it is 5p per click, once it reaches the amount it stops we have to be careful that we don’t go live too early and miss all of the people, such as women coming home from the school run for example.” (Martha, P8.S8.p8.)

Martha’s comment may point to a more formalised intention regarding the use of social media in terms of strategic candidate management, albeit earlier in the interview she revealed these platform activities are still in the testing phase.

In terms of the blurring of the lines between both professional and personal networking sites, the use of Facebook and Twitter appeared to spark the most

controversy among the interviewees. Those responsible for direct use of social media were particularly vocal regarding a perceived inappropriateness of an employer to request that they use their personal social media accounts for work purposes and some deemed it an unnecessary intrusion into their own and candidates' private lives. This belief is contradictory because on the one hand, some of the interviewees' appeared to feel quite uncomfortable with the concept of using social media sites such as Facebook and Twitter for the purposes of vetting but on the other, there were some participants who suggested there are acceptable degrees of searching.

When interviewees were questioned about their social media activities at work beyond LinkedIn, Elizabeth suggested she had some experience of other platforms:

"I've dabbled with other platforms but not very successfully. Twitter is something the business needs to get better at. Recently a few of us have signed up and gotten Twitter accounts. (Elizabeth, P10.S10.p4.)"

Paul argued that there was no place for recruitment activity on Facebook. He could not see the commercial or HRM value of social or professional networking media platforms beyond LinkedIn:

"Well I think if you are going to do your recruitment via Facebook then I can't think your recruitment is going to be much good, can you. It's not really the place for recruitment is it...it would be such a waste of time." (Paul, P1.S1.p8.)"

Further, Elizabeth alluded to the role the employer has in creating the most suitable culture, to encourage individuals to be able to use social media in their recruitment activities:

"You have to be able to trust your employees to use their common sense and judgement around social media but that is difficult and you do worry they are going to have this huge Facebook rant at times. I wouldn't want to use it for work, but nothing wrong with a work Facebook page I suppose." (P10.S10.p7)"

David commented on the enormous reach in terms of candidates his organisation has as a result of their social media networks, in terms of the number of followers and how many likes the pages his organisation. He believed this was an indication of the strength of the organisation's online profile:

“On our main corporate social media accounts we have 14,000 followers on Twitter, 7000 on Facebook. Our general managers will be very active on Twitter and Facebook feeds so we feel it is a very living tangible thing to use for recruitment purposes.” (P17.S17.p2)

One interviewee argued that part of the concern for employers using Facebook and Twitter for recruitment purposes comes from a general lack of knowledge and understanding about social media at the most senior levels within organisations. In her experience, there is an issue for the employer in terms of the lack of in-house digital skills, which can result in organisations' having poor online presence and profiles:

“Part of the issue [with social media] is that the people at the top don't really understand it and as such they are letting those in the organisation with the least strategic experience be involved or control the brand-public image of the company on Facebook and Twitter”. (Julie, P9.S9.p4.)

Mike discussed the use of social media for recruitment activity, and for other business purposes, and maintained this activity potentially creates a commercial disadvantage for organisations. He argued organisations using social networking media for business purposes could be problematic particularly when the organisations request that employee's use their own personal social media accounts, because employees' may be more likely to spend time on their own social media channels rather than being productive. Despite his lack of evidentiary support, he is convinced it has a direct and negative impact on organisational productivity. He acknowledged his own distraction with Facebook during working hours.

“Well I guess the biggest thing is loss of productivity for employers. People constantly battering it rather than working, I am guilty of it, we are all guilty of it.” (Mike, P4.S4.p5.)

When Mike was asked about how his employer tackled this issue, he conveyed he was unable to answer because he was not aware of any processes or procedures his employer had or were intending to introduce as a means to mitigate this problem.

4.3.3 Yammer

Yammer is a private social networking solution for businesses enabling co-workers to connect and collaborate online in the workplace. It is an attractive social media package for some employers’ because it is relatively easy to monitor and control.

Only a minority of interviewees’ actively use Yammer within their individual workplaces, but the discussions surrounding its use were interesting considering a later theme regarding control. One respondent, James felt his organisation perceived Yammer as providing a much safer platform for use because it is hosted and supported by Microsoft and based on this, he felt there was a general belief among his colleagues that it had enhanced online protection settings. Alex commented:

“I could not imagine getting on with my day-to-day role without using Yammer. We use it all the time. It is a really good application if you are working on a big project involving other offices or head office. We can monitor how much time they are spending on the site and see if they are engaging with one another. It’s a good early warning signal if there is a sudden drop off in activity.” (Alex, P21.S21.p1.)

Working in the same organisation as Alex, Orlando suggested his use of Yammer is less business orientated:

“It makes sense to spend time getting to know colleagues in other areas of the business, then when we need to work together or a potential client comes up, you’re on that person’s mind. I realise that this is about building my own career and less about what the organisation can get from me.” (Orlando, P23, S.23.p2.)

Despite not directly referring to Yammer, Pete discussed how employers go about introducing new technologies and new ways of working such as making use of free

social applications in the workplace. However, he argued that high levels of bureaucracy do more to get in the way of organisations' progressing in terms of technology because some employers are bound by onerous procurement systems and thus the people making the decisions are often not involved with or are unfamiliar with the technology reducing prioritisation.

4.3.4 Search Engine Utilisation (Google)

As mentioned at the beginning of Actors and Platforms, the majority of the interviewees do not make the distinction between the various social media platform types, their use of emails, *etc.* and the use of search engines. This issue became increasingly apparent as the number of interviewees who mentioned the use of Google during the recruitment process was somewhat high. It appears that it is widely used as a first point of call search tool for candidate information for some. As an aside, the discussion moved on to the paid Google Analytics services which an employer can use and Helen's organisation, alongside their advertising agents use these tools to help evidence the success of a campaign and as a way to measure return on investment (ROI). More often than not, where interviewees have discussed the use of technology based analytic tools it appears they outsourced raising cost concerns. More generally Francis admitted his organisation does spend time undertaking Google searches of candidates and although he believes it is not an attempt to "snoop", there was an ambiguity relating to what information is being sought. He outlined:

"More experienced recruiters as a very minimum experienced recruiters would tend to just Google a name, I mean I did, I mean if we are looking at somebody joining at a reasonably senior level, the natural thing would be to Google a name and see what comes up." (Francis, P6.S6.p4.)

Elizabeth also disclosed she uses a Google search, when considering contacting a potential candidate:

“So it is important to look and anything that we find like that we are expected to have Googled them, particularly the more senior the role, it is so important.” (Elizabeth, P10.S10.p5.)

However, Pete disagrees and contended the idea of employers spending a lot of time reviewing candidates social media activity is just simply not happening:

“So I think people scare mongering a little bit about information being hijacked and this idea of a gross intrusion, I think the reality is, that it doesn’t happen as a regular occurrence.” (Pete, P2.S2.p3.)

4.3.5 Employer Rater Platforms (Glassdoor.com, ratemyemployer.com & Indeed.com)

Despite this having being discussed briefly in terms of advertising activities, an unexpected outcome from the various interviews was the revelation of the individuals and organisations awareness of and general concern with the employer rater site, Glassdoor.com. The significance of rating sites from the individual’s point is connected with the potential for future employees to read negative, unfiltered information about the company online. As previously mentioned, this platform could be a cause for concern because organisations cannot control the information circulating and as such, it would be difficult to know of, or attempt to defend any spurious or untrue claims from existing or ex-employees. The testimonies and contributors are anonymous. The response from participants about this platform was mixed; some indicated they felt it was useful, others felt that it has the potential to cause concern for the employer. Francis outlines its potential use for employers as a way to take the temperature of the organisation:

“Glassdoor for example, employers are starting to use as source of data in their own organisations to get some sort of sense of how people are feeling about the organisation, which is important.” (Francis, P6.S6.p8.)

Pete also thinks it is a platform which individuals and organisations need to pay some attention to because:

“If they (organisations) are faking that [culture] then they are going to be in trouble, because people will find out, you know they will be on Glassdoor.com and calling out the brilliant window dressing and the absolutely awful experience on the inside”. (P2.S2.p4)

Examples of the types of negative comments which feature on Glassdoor are illustrated in figs. 4.1 - 4.7 and it is interesting to note the openness of the content contributor and it could be inferred this is because they have left the organisation and no longer care. Although there are some positives in the content there could also be some cause for concern for the employer as there is subjective negative content that might harm the organisations employer brand.

Sponsored Jobs

Adecco Customer Service Advisors
Adecco – Manchester, England

Facebook Data Scientist, Marketing Science
Facebook – London, England

29 Jan 2014

dwf "Supportive company with opportunity for progression."
Former Employee - Solicitor in Leeds, England

Recommends Positive Outlook

I worked at DWF full-time (More than 5 years)

Pros
Up and coming company which has expanded rapidly in recent years and is keen to support ambition and innovation. Work life balance is a core value and many of those in senior positions support this philosophy.

Cons
IT system and infrastructure is in need of improvement. As the company has grown this aspect of the business has lagged behind. Focus on support in the community and charity is a company value but there are often internal barriers (eg. No specific time set aside for these activities) which limit employees ability to take part in these types of events.

Advice to Management
As the company is expanding and increasing turnover and profit, focus on investing in the employees with more training programmes and also more events (such as team building exercises) which will improve morale. Invest in a quicker and more efficient IT system.

Helpful

7 Jun 2013 Helpful (1)

dwf "Working at Davies Wallis Forester"
Former Employee - Anonymous Employee

Recommends Neutral Outlook

I worked at DWF (Less than a year)

uk business

Figure 4.1 Glassdoor.com Negative perceptions.

Figure 4.2 Glassdoor.com Negative perceptions.

Helpful

3 Oct 2015 Helpful (3)

"The 5th law firm I have worked for, and only nightmare story!"

Former Employee - Anonymous Employee

Doesn't Recommend

I worked at DWF full-time

Pros
Working with DWF makes you more appreciative of the next firm you work for.
You can use a job at DWF as a stepping stone to another law firm.

Cons
In my experience anyone considering a career with DWF is putting their career at serious risk.

I went in an award winning law student with exceptional grades and outstanding references from previous firms. I left 4 months later disgraced by the firm as an incompetent HR issue... I was then snapped up by the competition in my very next interview about 3 weeks later, given a much better higher paid job. I recei...

Show More

Advice to Management
Higher salaries will attract managers whom know what they are doing, its a balancing act I know, but in this case you've played it cheap and got it wrong.

Helpful (3)

Is this helpful? The community relies on everyone sharing – Add Anonymous Review

6 Jul 2015

"Pros and cons"

Current Employee - Business Intelligence Analyst in Manchester, England

In central London. Rob has led the company ever since... [Read more](#)

We're Hiring

Consultant
Robert Walters – Manchester, England

Associate
Robert Walters – Manchester, England

Follow View All Jobs

Company Benefits

There are currently no benefit reviews for this company.

Add Benefits Review

Job Seekers Also Viewed

- Premier Group Recruitment Reviews 20 Reviews
- Asons Solicitors Reviews 32 Reviews
- Fox Williams Reviews 1 Reviews
- Keoghs LLP Reviews 7 Reviews

Related Job Search

Figure 4.3 Glassdoor Negative Perceptions.

glassdoor.co.uk

(64) Twitter | The Stone Roses - I am the Resurrection - YouTube | JD Williams Interview Questions | Glassdoor.co.uk

Overview | Reviews (25) | Salaries (20) | Interviews (8) | Benefits (6) | Jobs | More

Follow | + Add an Interview

Why do you want to join JD williams?
↳ 1 Answer

Helpful

2 Feb 2012

Payment Advisor Interview
Anonymous Employee in Manchester, England

Accepted Offer | Positive Experience | Easy Interview

Application
I applied online. The process took 3 days. I interviewed at JD Williams (Manchester, England) in November 2011.

Interview
I applied for the job online. Was called shortly after for a telephone interview consisting of usual questions about work experience and competency based questions. Was told I had passed this screening phase and invited to a face to face interview. This was quite relaxed and was just me and one lady from recruitment who was very friendly and asked a lot of similar questions to the phone interview.

Interview Questions
Name an occasion where you have showed excellent customer service
↳ Answer Question

Negotiation
was a set wage

Helpful

Interviews > JD Williams
RSS Feed | Embed

Your CV is Missing
Upload a CV now and make it easier to 'Apply on Mobile'.

chrome
Browse safer with Chrome,
Google's official web browser.
Download Now

Figure 4.4 Glassdoor Interview Questions

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL glassdoor.co.uk. The page is titled "JD Williams Interview Questions | Glassdoor.co.uk". At the top, there are navigation tabs for Overview (25), Reviews (20), Salaries (8), Interviews (6), Benefits (--), and Jobs (More). The main content area displays two interview reviews for JD Williams. The first review, dated 28 Apr 2015, is for a "Customer Service Advisor Interview" by an anonymous employee in Manchester. It includes a status bar (Accepted Offer, Positive Experience, Average Interview), an application process description, an interview description (45 minutes long, personality test), and two interview questions: "Tell me when you received good customer service" and "Why do u want to work for our company". The second review, dated 15 Jul 2015, is for a "Select Service Interview" by an anonymous candidate, with a status bar (Declined Offer, Positive Experience, Average Interview) and an application section. The right sidebar contains a "Follow" button, an "Add an Interview" button, a "JD Williams Photos" section with a "See All" link, a "Company Benefits" section with a "See All" link, and a "Job Seekers Also Viewed" section featuring "Swinton Insurance Interviews".

Figure 4.5 Glassdoor Interview Questions

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL glassdoor.co.uk. The page displays a review for JD Williams. The navigation bar includes tabs for Overview (25), Reviews (20), Salaries (8), Interviews (6), Benefits (--), and Jobs (More). The review is dated 21 Nov 2015 and is titled "Don't get walked over". The reviewer is a former employee, and the review is marked as helpful. The review content includes a title, a rating, and several sections: "Pros" (Good training, free courses, nice people), "Cons" (VERY outdated systems, management bias), and "Advice to Management" (stop exploiting employees). A "Helpful" button is visible at the bottom of the review. On the right side of the page, there is a promotional banner for "ARE YOU READY TO #VOOM?" with an "ENTER NOW" button and logos for LinkedIn and Crowdfunder.co.uk.

Figure 4.6 Glassdoor Allegations of Nepotism

7 Apr 2016 Helpful (4)

"Toxic environment"

Former Employee - Senior Java Developer in Manchester, England

Doesn't Recommend Negative Outlook Disapproves of CEO

I worked at JD Williams full-time (More than 8 years)

Pros

I can't think of anything good about working at JD Williams apart from central city centre location with good transport links

Cons

Absolutely awful atmosphere.
Complete mistreatment of staff by senior management
Treated like a piece of dirt if you are not one of the gang
Whilst the benefits are good on paper management find every way they can to wrangle their way out of honouring them
The place is haemorrhaging money on a Business Transformation project which will fail due to the incompetence of the IT directors 'mates' who have been brought in to run the thing.
Forget about any career progression they will use you for whatever they need to.
No useful training is ever available.
Many people resigning without having other jobs to go to it is that bad.
People who have stood up and said 'this isn't working' are very quickly shown the door.

Show Less

Advice to Management

Give up

Helpful (4)

Software Developer jobs
Software Developer salaries (£39k)

Sales Assistant jobs
Sales Assistant salaries (£16k)

Your CV is Missing
Upload a CV now. It's easy.

WITH NO UPFRONT COST AND 1GB DATA

Work in HR or Recruiting? X

Figure 4.7 Glassdoor Allegations of Cronyism

The screenshot shows a web browser window with the URL https://www.glassdoor.co.uk/Reviews/TMP-Worldwide-Reviews-E247764_P2.htm. The page displays a review for "The Dunder-Mifflin of Recruitment Advertising" by a former employee in Atlanta, GA (US). The review includes a star rating, a "Doesn't Recommend" button, and a "Negative Outlook" button. The text of the review is as follows:

"The Dunder-Mifflin of Recruitment Advertising"
Former Employee - Anonymous in Atlanta, GA (US)
Doesn't Recommend Negative Outlook Disapproves of CEO
I worked at TMP Worldwide full-time (More than 5 years)

Pros

- A good place to start a career in digital if you're new to the space, a good start for college grads
- Few like-minded folks who are passionate about their work and believe in mission and vision
- Nice office space looking over the vast Dunwoody metropolis

Cons

- Easy to pigeonhole yourself into a specific position with no way to advance out, employees typically have to generate their own job there with little direction from management on advancement paths
- Management is typically lacking in vision from top down which typically has teams pitted against each other silos where the primary job is to keep clear of accountability. This is present in the way that teams address point of failure when they occur.
- Compared to other competitors, their client facing products/technology is generally 3-5 years behind.
- Advancement opportunities are rare due to lack of natural progression up the organizational ladder. This produces stale thinking and roadblocks to advancement.
- Constantly on the defensive regarding perceptions in social media. Glassdoor reviews are heavily monitored and positive reviews are delivered quickly to counter act any negative sentiment.
- Pay is not competitive with agencies especially in Atlanta where the current unemployment rate is at 5.2%

Show Less

Advice to Management

- Provide clear paths for advancement and ensure you're moving people along to keep ideas fresh and relevant.
- Embrace feedback and use it to grow instead of masking it.
- Spend time understanding why your attrition rate is high and look at ways to revise the culture and foster candid discussion.

Work in HR or Recruiting? X

The Windows taskbar at the bottom shows the date and time as 15:53 on 09/06/2016, along with several open applications including University of..., Chrome, Internet Explorer, TMP Worldwid..., Photoshop, Microsoft Outlook, Pseudonyms fo..., and Microsoft Excel...

It was interesting to note candidates could share interview questions with other potential candidates on the site. Some employers such as public or third sector employers may be less concerned with this as they often have transparent recruitment processes, however in the private sector this is usually not the case, thus creating an inconsistency. TAnother concern for one organisation was related to allegations of nepotism and cronyism (see Fig 4.6 & Fig 4.7). It is difficult to comprehend why the organisation does not respond to these claims as given that potential employees can readily see this information there might be implication for their employer brand.

Another rater site was mentioned by Martha, Indeed.com is a job and applicant search and find site (similar to Monster.com or Total Jobs) but operates in a slightly different way, because now employees and applicants or anyone connected with the organisation can provide an arbitrary rating of their experience of the employer. The criteria used to rate the employers is even more ambiguous than that of Glassdoor.com and comments:

“...and we found this with Indeed, when we got a negative comment all of a sudden four people who had already commented somewhere else had commented on that comment”. (Martha, P8.S8.p11.)

And further she mentions;

“...when we did our research [related to social media use], so what we had to do was present to the board, ...during that research there was one particular case that we came across which was not real at all and to be fair it was over a year ago and it was a candidate that had decided to go onto that site to make a complaint about the recruitment experience.” (Martha, P8.S8.p11.)

As a consequence of examining the various platforms and discussing at length their perceived benefits and disadvantages, a recurring theme which became apparent throughout the discussions, was in regards to the control individuals and organisations considered they have over them and as such, this is explored in the following section of this chapter.

4.4 Loss of Control over the information for employers

As discussed briefly throughout previous sections of this chapter, control has emerged as a significant concern for the individuals and organisations. This was concern centred on the perceived lack of control individuals and organisations have over the information which is being circulated or shared via social media channels. The majority of the interviewees stated that there is only so much the employer can legitimately do to protect the reputation of the organisation, particularly where candidates are sharing this information through their social media channels. Another facet of control was focused on the enormity and volume of information generated through the use of social media for recruitment. A specific example is the high number of inappropriate applications being regularly received by some employers as a result of advertising through social media. Some of the interviewees were concerned about the time and resources required to manage this properly.

Mike specifically he states:

“You cannot control what over 100 million people are saying about your organisation...a good example of that is the likes of Ryanair and their Twitter...whole hashtags are devoted to their bad customer service. How can the company control that?” (Mike, P4.S4.p5.)

He further commented employers have an issue with the use of social media when it is not relevant to their business activities. There is little point in using social media if the company does not have a social media presence or the people whom they are trying to attract do not look at, engage with or use social media;

“We use it (social media) for recruitment because it makes sense, but imagine you are a company writing programmes for nuclear vessels, you probably wouldn't need it”. (Mike, P4.S4.p6)

This however, contradicts a number of the interviewees who argue social media can be used regardless of the kinds of activities the organisations undertake. Martha in particular comments:

“What we have tended to use it for is things like part-time where we want to target specific people. And when is it more likely that they are going to be around or on Facebook...previously you would have no control over the reach really.” (Martha, P8.S8.p8.)

Tom believes his organisation use social media for so many different purposes he cannot see how an organisation would not require it usage:

“Our organisation uses social media for various things; to be honest it isn’t always clear where social media stops and other activities begin. I cannot imagine not having it.” (Tom, P3.S3.p5)

In terms of the volume of applications being received because of social media activity, it is easy to see why employers might be hesitant in making make use of social media for attraction purposes. Francis was particularly vocal about the high volumes of applications which employers have to deal with and he argued there is a requirement for compromise from both parties, in that, candidates have an obligation to ensure that they are making meaningful applications, but also employers are fulfilling their obligations and are responding to applicants in the current tough jobs market:

“...high volumes of adverts and applicants, but does that really help either party not particularly because employers can get absolutely bombarded with lots of very generic job applications and CV’s.” (Francis P6.S6.p5.)

Another example of the issue surrounding control was identified by Jonathan. He believes social media is being used as an unapproved source through his organisations “refer and friend scheme” and that this means those individuals responsible for managing the recruitment process have no control over the information that is being relayed to potential candidates. Essentially, his organisation uses a financial incentive for existing employees to refer “friend” for various jobs and then if the candidate is successful the employee receives a bonus. He maintains that there is a lot of unapproved and often incorrect information circulating *via* existing employee’s personal social media channels as a way to secure this money. Although

the focus of this section is not related to fairness as such, it could be considered an important factor.

There is also a view that the control of social media accounts internally within organisations is not clear. The “responsible” person is deemed often to be the person controlling the account at the time of use. This could be problematic and some of the participants realised a cause for concern, however because there is a critical lack of social media policy and procedure documentation within each organisation, it could be concluded again the employer is unnecessarily legally exposed. Having now explored the theme around control the chapter now considers what information is being sought from social media platforms by the individuals and their employers.

4.5 Information Sought

It was an interesting point in the discussions when they evolved to discuss the use of social media in terms of the information which is being sought and while there was not an attempt, by the interviewer, to try to uncover whether or not the interviewees and their organisations were / are using social media to specifically vet candidates. Nonetheless, at various stages throughout the interviews it became apparent that some of the individuals may be unofficially using social media directly and indirectly to form opinions and make judgements about candidates. Consequently, it would be impossible to ignore that this activity is occurring and still provide an accurate reflection of the discussions and further illuminate the meaning that those involved with the use of social media for recruitment attach to their activities.

The majority of the participants claimed that for various reasons they do not actively search candidate’s social media accounts. Further they revealed they do not actively search for specific information which is job or role related or otherwise.

Martha in particular, is very clear that social media in her organisation is used purely for attraction purposes and she stated it would be wholly inappropriate for her organisation to move in that direction:

“No! it’s [social media] purely an attraction tool.” (Martha, P8.S8.p13.)

Another example given was provided by James, who believes he would be more concerned about the resource (time, cost) it takes to spend time reviewing candidate’s social media and he comments;

“So it is not something that we do...the truth is, I just don’t have the time and to be fair, I would hate someone to look at my Facebook page and not because there is anything on there that I think I wouldn’t want someone to see, I just think that it is a very private thing”. (James, P5.S5.p9.)

On the other hand, David freely admitted he does use social media for the purpose of vetting but he maintains the use is concentrated on job relevant criteria and information such as, checking gaps on a candidates CV. His organisation will use social media as a “sense checking” tool, prior to making an offer of employment. He commented he and his colleagues would not spend time scrolling through an applicant’s social media newsfeed; instead they review elements such as the various groups that the potential employee is a member of and pages they have liked asserting it is much more revealing:

“I think we learn so much more than reading someone’s feed, I never bother to do that. It’s more about what they like and if that marries up on their CV”. (David, P17.S17.p13.)

But as can be seen from the last quote, while the intention is not to focus on candidate’s newsfeed, rather it is being used as a sense check for the CV. This activity could evidence a lack of transparency in the recruitment process within his organisation. There appeared to be no cause for particular concern in the minds of the participants who engaged in this practice, moreover, they appear to be content that this was now an “expected” part of the process. Pete stated that he argued

applicants would fully expect the employer to review their digital footprint and actually he argued certain candidates would find it strange if the employer did not. Referring specifically to employees from the marketing professions, further he argued some job roles require candidate's digital footprint examination because it is closely related to the type of work they will be undertaking for the organisation, but not so for jobs such as "forklift truck drivers" (Pete, P2.S2.p5.).

There appeared to be a strong feeling that there are only some job roles where this would be an appropriate course of action presenting a polarised view among the interviewees and contradictory testimony because there was no exploration beyond the marketing professions and this contrast could be indicative of the overall and general feeling of confusion, among all participants, about when to and not use social media for recruitment.

In addition, these discussions were moving into the realms of vetting activities, rather than for purely attraction purposes and generally there appeared with all participants to be little opinion to differentiate either practice. Naomi argued however that it should not matter which role the person is going to be taking in her opinion, it is more about the reputational risk for the employer and she feels that as an employer it would be harder for her to argue why she had treated candidates inconsistently. She said that there was a risk for the employer in behaving in this manner but admitted that she regularly undertakes this activity.

A surprising outcome from the discussions was focused on the impact of photograph content on candidates on social media accounts. It appeared that there is evidence that those individuals who seek out or happen upon photographic content are using it, although informally, to make generalised assumptions and

potentially discriminatory judgements about candidates, which are highly unlikely to be job relevant.

As mentioned in the previously, David revealed that although he does not spend time reviewing candidates "newsfeed" he does examine the pages that candidates of his organisation have liked or the groups in which they are participating in. He states that the organisations existing employees are trained in their first few weeks of working regarding what is and is not, acceptable in terms of content on their social media channels relating to the company. Part of what he suggests they are looking for is:

"What we are looking for is, are they trashing where they have worked previously on the internet? We have a commercial social media policy that is quite strict and because we are so social media savvy, they can say that they work for us by all means, they can take pictures of cakes and all that kind of loveliness, but we don't want to see things like, I had a really crap day at work today blah blah relating to us. That is when we will have a conversation."
(David, P17.S17.p7.)

When further questioned about how he would address any arising concerns relating to information he gleans from candidates social media account activity, he states that he would only tackle this in an interview situation if there was something serious or a particular anomaly which needed addressing and he states:

"If there is an anomaly, we would, we would tackle it but to be fair it is actually really rare that this would happen. It's more if we were to check and challenge someone it would be important stuff." (David, P17.S17.p7.)

Elizabeth mentions an occasion where she was involved in checking candidates' social media channels, although she was keen to point out that this was not in her current role, and in doing so this led her to make a decision not to interview, or subsequently employ the candidate as a direct result of the information she saw on there. She was very clear and explained this was not in her current role but nevertheless, she could see why it was important for the organisation that she

was working for at the time. This might be a signal of indirect vetting through the use of photo content and she maintains:

“I was recruiting, for some junior members of staff. It was really interesting to check out their Facebook profiles. It’s probably not right but it did sway my decisions and certain individuals who, I then didn’t invite to interview, because you could see what they were doing on the weekends and it was completely outrageous.” (Elizabeth, P10.S10.p4.)

There was a blurring of the lines between the use of social media for the purposes of recruitment and as a candidate vetting tool. When participants mentioned the use of social media for this purpose, they acknowledged that they should not but as it is so easily accessible they felt they could or should.

There was some discussion, regarding how employers can legitimately begin to or continue to use social media to review candidates’ profiles. Once again, the discussion moved beyond the sole use of social media for recruitment and he argues that the use of social media is a two-way process:

“...candidates will almost certainly spend time examining the organisation’s digital footprint and that of the people officer or the person responsible for the recruitment process.” (Pete, P2.S2.p3.)

On the contrary there is a responsibility for candidate’s to “clean up” or “manage” their own personal digital footprint to ensure the said information is not available for employers. He also suggests the news media have a role to play in terms of how widely publicised and communicated that every employer is “checking out” online social media profiles and content and he comments;

“So I think people scaremongering a little bit about information being hijacked and this idea of a gross intrusion, I think the reality is, that it doesn’t happen as a regular occurrence”. (Pete, P2.S2.p3.)

Some of the other interviewees discussed their use of social media for recruitment as being somewhat dependant on the candidates profile in terms of various characteristics. One example which was specifically mentioned by Tom was

related to his belief that he needs to use social media and in particular a blogging forum because this is where his particular potential candidates frequent. He states:

“...given the nature of our business and the need to recruit operational contractors, I find that using sites such as contractor forum UK as being more productive.” (Tom, P3.S3.p7.)

Having given some consideration to the type of content which is being examined on social media it can be seen that in terms of recruitment, the content of peoples social media channels is something which is being considered, the issue is related to whether the individual or organisation actively seeks this information out. In order to develop this further the next section explores how the information that is viewed and collected is then collated.

4.6 How the Information is Collated

Once again the responses to the questioning in this section were emerged as ambiguous. No participant mentioned that they store social media information during the recruitment process, it was not downloaded or stored, as part of any recruitment record keeping. There was no clear link between the concept of using social media for the purposes of recruitment activities and the interviewees' consideration of the Data Protection Act (1998) or further the GDPR (2017) regulations appeared to be minimal. It could be concluded that this was because the practice of storing the data is not occurring. There was some discussion with two of the interviewees regarding their obligations in terms of gathering and or storing information which might be protected.

Pete was the one of the main participants who specifically mentioned concerns with data protection and in particular he refers to the assurance committee in the UK and their anxiety regarding big data and how vulnerable individuals personal data is, which is often in the hands of organisations who although not

actively seeking out the information, are storing it for possible sale to other interested parties (including potentially recruiting organisations) in the future. He commented:

“...only yesterday this [data protection act] is something which cropped up with a body who are involved with data assurance. They are the people who have a responsibility beyond the information commissioner’s office and are looking at how we protect data ourselves. Think about the scandal where HMRC lost the CD rom with people’s records on it.” (Pete, P2.S2.p2.)

He believes this also involves an element of education for those involved in the use of social media for the purpose of collecting and storing the information they are gathering from particular platforms. There was an additional discussion about the use of legislation relating to the getting information expunged from social media and the internet. This falls under the legislation relating to the “right to be forgotten” but it is also tied up with the misuse of people’s data for the purposes of making recruitment decisions about their future employment based on information which has been commercially sold to employers for the purposes of vetting and selection.

Although not explicitly focused on the issues connected with collating the information from social media channels alone, education has emerged as a theme which may be categorised in this section. The participants appear to be somewhat concerned about the level of training provided to existing employees and there is a significant issue with the digital skills gaps within the organisations.

“We need to help our employees and consider the impact of social media in the longer term. What about some education, not just for the employees, but for management teams as well”. (Naomi, P7.S7.p5.)

And further:

“It’s is also about best practice and education of employers, we have got to get smarter and make young people more aware and support them (how do you use these social media channels, a) to present yourself and b) how to do a proper job application.” Francis, (P6.S6.p5)

Some of the participants suggested there was a need for both employers and applicants to spend time learning to understand and manage their personal and

commercial social media activities. Correspondingly, it will be necessary to examine what the information that is being sourced is used for by the individuals and their organisations, which is addressed in the next section.

4.7 For what is the Information Being Used

Broadly, although this is something which has been addressed in previous sections of this thesis it merits attention alone. It became clear during the interviews none of the participants were able to categorically verbalise for what they use information gleaned from social media. This is a cause for concern in terms of the potential for legal challenge by applicants, although interestingly this was not an issue the interviewees heavily focused on and the absence of a concern is somewhat worrying. David revealed that his organisation's recruiting managers do look at people's profiles as a back-up check following a review of the candidates CV. He considers it as a wholly appropriate method to use social media channels as a mechanism through which to do this. Most of the participants acknowledged that the use of social media for vetting purposes was not illegal but often then do not feel comfortable doing so, Martha in particular. However, in "contracting consultants" which is where Naomi's recruitment focus lies, she believes that it is part of the process but the organisation has no policy or procedure documentation in place to support the process, she maintains:

"Well we think this is just a matter of course, you cannot not do it, especially now, if you didn't you would be daft... it's not written down because it just happens, we don't see the point, it would be just stating the obvious". (Naomi, P7.S7.p5.)

Again, although considered in another section of the chapter, the potential for individuals and organisations to mine current employees professional networks, through social media channels, is signalling a change even beyond most basic use

of social media for recruitment. Pete is very much in favour of this practice and he believes:

“...it is about working with assets and resources and connections you have already got...” (Pete, P2.S2.p4)

Having looked at what platforms are being accessed and how the individuals and their organisations are using social media platforms, it is fundamental to explore how individuals and organisations justify their practice.

4.8 Practice Justification

A common and recurring theme throughout the discussions centred on the use of social media to “move with the times”, to enable the organisations to compete in their respective commercial markets. No one participant individually mentioned any internal discussions about social media within their respective organisations focusing on what the direct effect of social media use could have on the business.

A number of the participants mentioned other organisations use of social media in a negative way. They referred to the various decisions other organisations make as an example of how they then decided to distance themselves.

An example which was repeatedly mentioned related to Police Special Commissioner, Paris Brown (2013). Pete in particular argued Ms. Brown provides excellent evidence of a generational disconnect with the potential consequences of misusing social media on a daily basis and the naivety of social media users oversharing personal information online more generally:

“...it would be inappropriate [social media content] or that it would come back to haunt them and that is fine. Paris Brown and Kent Constabulary. A classic example of someone who was quite naively thinking that in a position that she was in, things that she had posted [on social media channels] in the past were not going to come back and haunt her”. (Pete, P2.S2.p6.)

And further Francis comments;

“Someone went back over her [Paris Brown’s] Twitter profile and when she was about sixteen or seventeen and she had a made a series of racist comments on her Twitter feed, just one of those stupid things that I think sometimes young people do, frankly. Unfortunately, that was enough for Kent police to say OK she is completely inappropriate for the role.” (Francis, P6.S6.p3.)

Another issue which emerged as a result of this story was the concern about generational difference between social media users. Specifically, there was a concern among the participants that if younger more digitally focused candidates are not careful enough about what kinds of information is appearing on social media channels about themselves, they are putting their future careers at risk as a result of this carelessness. There was a view whereby applicants are at risk of their digital past coming back to haunt them in future. Some of the participants felt that there is a role for the employer to play in terms of ensuring this does not happen, by not using social media for the purposes of only looking for negative information about candidates and others argued there was a significant role for the education system to play in terms of ensuring applicants are not being discriminated against as a result of their social media use.

There was some discussion with Pete regarding the kinds of advice being sought by employers relating to their use of social media. In his view, most employers consider the potential impact of negative use of social media in terms of making inappropriate judgements about candidates relating to their digital footprint. As such, Pete and Francis make various suggestions relating to the kinds of activities that employers can undertake to provide reassurance to potential applicants that their personal sensitive information is not being used for the purposes of making discriminatory judgements regarding social media content when they are making recruitment decisions.

“Take responsibility; we do need to be writing the rules and codes of practice that govern this, but it is an extremely hard thing to police. This is about good practice, acceptable practice, codes of conduct.” (Francis, P6.S6.p4.)

Pete suggests that professional rigour should be part of the culture within the organisation and it should help protect both the organisation and the candidate. He does not believe wholesale “snooping” is occurring within organisations.

Nevertheless, he agreed this might be the case for some job roles. His central concern was related to organisations seeking out information which might be considered to be illegal, such as information pertaining to candidates protected characteristics:

“Protected characteristics” I think is probably one of the most important areas for me where ACAS would probably say they haven’t got the right lines and the CIPD would probably say they haven’t got the right lines either and the organisation would almost have to rely on professional rigour and practice”. (Pete, P2.S2.p4.)

Further, Pete also argued that employers who are engaging in the use of social media for the purposes of recruitment are doing so because they recognise by not doing so, it could potentially impact their commercial business activities success. He states employers are using social media for, at least, recruitment because otherwise they “would be missing out”. As a result of examining what the information being taken from social media platforms is being used for, it is also a requirement to consider what the perceived consequences are in the minds of the interviewees and their organisations.

4.9 The Perceived Consequences

Most of the individuals were absolutely clear about the need to ensure that the reputation of the organisation is protected whilst operating on social media channels. They are concerned about many things including the organisation creating a social

media storm if they have many followers and sometimes they appear confused about the kind of voice they are trying to portray. Martha in particular comments:

“Yes, and what we are finding is on our careers pages, people don’t know where to go, so they find our career pages and put a complaint on our careers page so we now have a policy, we escalate it up to the multi-channel team and they have standard responses”. (Martha, P.8.S8.p5.)

There were also concerns about individuals right to a private life and discussions regarding what is fair emerged and debate about whether potential candidates could legitimately argue that they were being treated unfairly by organisations as a result of content they post on their social media platforms. Paul in particular, suggested employers must consider the right to a private life, and he stated:

“...the major debate about it [social media] is that I have the right to a private life and what is the boundary between, my private life and my working life and I think that is a debate which will rage on forever and a day. So for example I might personally have a Facebook account but if one of my friends posted something we will say from The Guardian slagging off the coalition government and then I shared it on my wall with a comment like “great article from The Guardian you know I think everyone should read this”. (Paul, P1.S1.p8.).

On the other hand Martha stated:

“My Facebook page doesn’t have anything on there and I would be happy to use it and then the whole policy came in here focusing on “what if”. (Martha, P8.S8.p13.)

Another interesting finding was related to the perceived negative outcomes associated with using social media because from an employer’s point of view they are having to cope with large volumes of applications and do not often have the resources to deal with this. On the other hand, the candidates do not have an especially good experience. As such, this can be problematic in terms of the potential reputational damage this could cause the organisation. Notwithstanding this, it can also be seen as a positive outcome because of the potential extensive

audience reach social media has and further how this can attribute to an economy of scale for the employer. They have the ability to data mine their employees personal and professional networks for potential candidates.

Additionally, some of the other interviewees argued that there are also negative concerns relating to whether social media provides an economy of scale. However, in the absence of a convenient or viable way to measure the total costs to recruit online, or to provide accurate predictions of social media cost per hire, it is difficult to confirm.

A particular issue conveyed by two participants was connected with a similarity between the use of social media for recruitment and the use of the “construction blacklist” by some employers over a number of years (BBC, 2016). This view essentially was that the use of social media on the scale that it is now available could be considered a list far greater than anything that could be compiled by any individual organisation and could be the most discriminatory list of all. However, the use of social media on this scale is far more subtle because the breath of information available to any employer to view privately with no tangible residual evidence. Pete argued that the use of lists such as this, in construction, provides employers access to information that is available in the public domain:

“The only thing now is that they wouldn’t need a blacklist, if they wanted to check out things like union activities they would just go and check out the candidates Twitter feed.” (Paul, P2.S2.p.3.)

Furthermore Francis argues;

“... the very well-known and public series of proceedings about the blacklist in the construction industry. What it points to at one level, is that employers have always been very keen to understand as much as they can about a perspective candidates...In today’s world we have various challenges with this, the first is, what is OK to check up on in terms of somebody’s digital profile because there is a lot of stuff [information] out there.” (Francis, P6.S6.p2.)

As discussed earlier, Pete pointed out that he considered the issue of excessive snooping on candidates was simply not occurring in organisations. Further, he suggested this perception it is causing an unnecessary fear in employers. That is because there is a concerted view of what is happening in the mainstream media in terms of the extent to which employers are considered to be using social media for that purpose. The concern regarding snooping according to one participant is in fact not a reality. However, there are times when it might be appropriate to consider using social media to vet a candidate, for example:

“...if you are employing a new chief information office to run your IT division you might want to look at what they are up to online because they are going to be running your domain but otherwise it is not happening really”. (Pete, P2.S2.p3.).

A theme regarding reputation management recurred throughout the dataset. Two specific issues were revealed during the interview. Firstly, the reputation of the organisation in relation to the use of social media and secondly, the personal reputation management activities of the candidate. In their accounts, most of the participants considered that there was a possible issue with managing the online reputation of the organisation and there was a general *fear* regarding the control of information, in particular Elizabeth suggested:

“...the organisations reputation needs to be protected...when you work in an organisation and people are active on social media, the whole business really or the vast majority had Facebook pages, so if you were a youngster coming in you could almost guarantee that you were somehow going to be or get connected to the board through their Facebook pages. From my own experience, we would want to protect our brand from having individuals who have not really thought through what they were putting out on social media. So yeah you would look at them (online) and make a decision whether to take that forward or not.” (Elizabeth, P10.S10.p5.)

James also stated there was a greater concern for the organisation because he was concerned with both the image problem for the organisation in terms of a viral mistake on the part of the person controlling the social media account and

additionally from the perspective of keeping up with the pace of change in the social media world:

“Yeah I do. I really worry about us not doing something [managing social media accounts]. I think as well because it is so adaptable, it changes so much, there are forever updates on Facebook and Twitter that you have to be aware of, having to set-up your privacy settings. I worry sometimes we just miss things because of the pace and we end-up accidentally sharing some information about somebody that we shouldn’t have shared. Or do we accidentally somehow give out information to candidates that aren’t necessarily something we want to share with them.” (James, P5.S5.p10)

An aside issue has been related to the digital skills gap within organisations and often throughout the discussions the participants felt they did not have the necessary skills in their current workforce. They also they considered that there may have been an issue in terms of generational understanding regarding what is required for appropriate account management. Julie, in particular, contended:

“Employers are making a grave mistake by putting their social media accounts in the hands of inexperienced interns with no continuity.” (Julie, P9.S9.p1.)

Pete stated there was an issue with this and suggested that there is a responsibility on the employing organisation to bring those individuals who are “digitally distant” together with those who are “digitally experienced” and provide a mentoring and education programme to address the issue. When the discussion moves to those who are not “plugged-in” in terms of their social media use, the language used by Pete is largely negative, which could potentially imply there is a problem with being removed from the digital world. However, he also recognised and stated that organisations need to be more active in providing in this development for some member of their workforce.

In terms of “candidates personal reputation management” the interviewees expressed preconceptions relating to the content on social media platforms. There appeared to be a generally negative attitude from the interviewees’ regarding this

and they stated it was the responsibility of the candidates to ensure their social media channels are controlled in terms of the quality, accuracy, tone and style of content. Pete argued further that there is a generational issue in that, he believes older workers are much less at risk, than younger workers because younger workers have “grown up” with social media and often don’t consider the consequences of their uncensored postings:

“So there is the kind who have grown-up and used it [social media platforms] maturely and never had a blemishes to worry about. Some have some worrying blemishes to consider and kind of cover-up, eradicate or make sure it is put into context and I think the third channel is to make sure that people don’t take this stuff too literally”. (P2.S3.p7)

He also suggests “people” or “employers” need to adopt a much more pragmatic approach to making judgements regarding this information because younger generation candidates live in the digital world. While other participants did not explicitly state that it is wholly the candidate’s responsibility to ensure their social media profiles are fit for employment purposes, they inferred that candidates are aware the information is available in the public domain and therefore is readily accessible to employers. This implies a cautionary note to applicants and candidates. Pete believes this is something potential candidates can address and if social media channels are sensibly managed, it would not be a problem and he commented:

“Addressing a few privacy controls and a little bit of rigour with yourself and you wouldn’t need it”. (Pete, P2.S2.p9)

Another issue which emerged in terms of the use of social media was the use of personal accounts for the purposes of business activities. Depending on the role (recruiters, sales executives etc) there was an expectation they would use their own personal social media accounts as they would be more authentic. Not all

interviewees experienced this, although a number had both personal and professional profiles on various social and professional networks.

4.10 Enormity of Social Media

The participants discuss the enormity of the scale of social media as being almost overwhelming to them and some discussed feeling that it is often too difficult often know where to start. Pete believes, employers should consider starting with small changes. The pace of change and the scope of social and professional media covers cannot be underestimated, most of the interviewees were somewhat confused or unclear about the best platforms to access for their recruitment activities and generally considered they had no choice but to choose the one that everyone else is using, or by way of copying their competitors. Although only two participants mentioned this, it should be considered an important issue because of the enormity of social media and the potential reach.

4.11 Future Direction of Social Media Use for Recruitment

There was a general discussion about the fear for employers in terms of total integration for employers in terms of social media, in that they considered there was a level of “*fear of the unknown*” (Pete, P.2.S2.p10). There is also a comment about the fear for more traditional (bigger) organisations in that, they are not as agile as smaller organisations or indeed start-up organisations. The majority of the participants stated that they believe social media will only grow in necessity and they should consider the longer term consequences on their organisations activities. There was a general feeling that social media will continue to evolve but at the very core of its use, the belief that recruitment processes and activities would continue in its absence.

4.12 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the salient findings in this study. The nature and extent to which social media is being utilised by individuals and their organisations is varied and is suggestive of a continued inconsistency in approach by those involved in the use of social media within HRM activities and specifically within the recruitment process. The overall picture highlights the subtle nature of how an employer justifies their practice. On the one hand, there appeared to be a categorical denial by the majority of the participants in terms of their use of social media for vetting or selection purposes. On the other hand, there were discussions alluding to the use of search engines to “Google” applicant’s names to see what might be retrieved. This supports an “online vetting” activity, but the participants involved appear not to consider this as an unethical practice. In addition, the consensus that there is something to be concerned with in terms of surveillance was not an explicit issue. The general feeling among those individuals was one of unease in terms of directly searching social media channels for information relating to an applicant and implies an approach relying on a situational judgement. As such, the findings allude to “situational surveillance or observation” with no clear parameters available either within the participants’ organisations or from the professional body, beyond a best practice approach.

There is an overarching issue regarding the overall lack of policy documentation could signal a general concern for employers. The contrasting nature of the literature and findings are explored in the next chapter. Generally there appears to be a disconnect between that of the narrative in the literature and the findings in this study.

Chapter 5 – Discussion – implications of the findings

5.1 Introduction

The interconnectedness of social media both within the world of work-life and personal lives of users is difficult to ignore and potentially careless. Its penetration into the daily lives of those who engage and use it for the purposes of connecting with others has grown exponentially in the previous twenty years. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) discuss the propensity of users to self-disclose, often to complete strangers and a wish to create a presence on social media. It began with simple blogging pages and extended to now include whole personas of individuals spanning across many social media platforms. This has been enabled by services provided by companies such as Hootsuite, Buffer and TweetDeck. The ability of users to share content and control their personal brand is far reaching but it also means the ability to make mistakes, which cannot be undone are just as possible. As analysed in the literature review chapter, the findings in this study highlight the requirement to consider the use of social media in recruitment and selection with a strategic emphasis.

The primary contribution to knowledge which emerged from this research has confirmed as Jeske and Holland (2017) put forward, there are significant issues at both pre and post hire stages in the recruitment process. There is certainly much work for employers' to undertake in terms of their use of social media in the workplace, both in terms of their employer brand and how they approach its use. It can be concluded that this research both confirms and extends Jeske and Holland's conceptual framework, by suggesting there is a requirement for sensible and robust policy documentation and the adoption of a more strategic approach to social media by employers. The research joins and furthers the academic discussion regarding

the explosive and changing nature and development of social media and technology and its impact on the HRM function. It alludes to a two-fold approach in organisations which require attention. Firstly, the use of social media for functional HRM day-to-day practices was found to be an administratively focused activity, eg, advertising and recruitment. The second was concerned with the social interactions of individuals in organisation and the clear adoption of a behavioural approach such as, interactions of a social nature within organisations taking on a cultural emphasis. On the other hand, a number of the participants in this research were enthusiastic of the benefits of social media use within HRM and supported a contention that employers should embrace social media.

There is a clear link between Poba-Nzaou's (2016) argument which underlined the importance of internal resources (dedicated to social media) and the fundamental lack of them in many organisations. This research outlined each participant's perception of the input of resources focused on social media within their own organisations and is connected with a perceived notion that social media is not important enough to spend time and resources not just within their HRM activities but more broadly within the wider organisations undertakings. The majority of the participants' organisations dedicated very little in terms of financial, or any other, resources to social media. This further supports Poba-Nzaou's argument that social media integration is often hindered by resource and conservative attitude of managers. There are other similarities with Poba-Nzaou's (2016) his findings in that there is a considerable issue with the speed at which social media is changing. A general lack of understanding overall regarding the business value of social media lends itself well to helping to over complicate the nature of social media in the

organisational context and in addition how the phenomenon is evolving and the rate at which is evolving.

Even though it could be argued that social media and changing technologies are disruptive for employing organisations (Christensesn and Clayton, 1995) and on some level takes the place of more traditional forms of communication, such as email and telephone, social media does not wholly replace these face-to-face social interactions in the workplace. As Ployhart and McFarland (2015) confirmed the phenomenon of social media in the organisational context is difficult to define, nonetheless it exists and the discrete and omnibus contexts of its impact should be acknowledged as such. A much greater emphasis on branding and social media branding connected with employer brand was also outlined by the participants in this research (Sivertzen *et al*, 2013). Brand in terms of commercial emphasis came first and was then later adopted by the HRM profession.

It was interesting to note that there was minimal evidence from the participants regarding the possibility of customisation of social media in the recruitment process and further how the use of social media would allow them to target specific groups. The only participants who made any mention of this were from the advertising agency. Although this is perhaps, as a result of the some of the participants lacking the technical knowledge regarding what possibilities can be drawn from social media. This raises a question related to Ryan and Derus (2015) call for further research into customisation. Given the cross section of participants in this research it might be argued that Ryan and Derous (2015) call is premature and indeed the requirement to understand the extent to which social media is being used on a quantitative scale might be more appropriate and more urgent.

Ryan and Derous (2015) also maintained there was a need for a coherent strategy within organisations, which in essence means there is call for employers to address the knowledge and understanding and approach to social media. There is also an argument to suggest that the need for a coherent strategy at an organisational level within employing organisations. Therefore it could be argued the personal approach to social media is lost and a more generic message is transferred by those in the organisation. A number of the participants in this study argued that their views are their own on their personal social media accounts however, they are genuinely unable to separate their work and personal lives to the degree to which they might be able, hypothetically, to suggest there was a clear separation. Incidentally, the use of those clauses in trying to remove any indemnity on the part of the organisation is largely redundant and have very little legal standing.

Interestingly, Ryan and Derous (2015) found that although practitioners and academics find novel approaches to recruitment to be relatively important, there is a disparity in relation to the attention they give it. Further, their findings were supported by the claims made by the participants in this study which note there are concerns which extend beyond the use of technology, albeit it is still an important theme.

With the potential issues from social and professional platforms such as Glassdoor.com, McFarland and Ployhart (2015, p.1673) pose the question whether an individual or organisation conveying or responding to negative information benefit from face-to-face contexts more than social media contexts. This is an interesting question and although it was not explored in this research, by virtue of the inclusion of Glassdoor.com, the participants suggested their awareness of the potential problem but none of the individuals questioned the possibility of contacting those contributors of these anonymous posts to discuss concerned raised. Even though

the participants did not appear to be particularly concerned with rater platforms, their cavalier attitude seemed commercially naïve, given the expanding nature of some sites.

Not wholly dissimilar to the a recent question posed by the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service regarding the outcome of a high profile misconduct hearing within the police, whereby a senior member of staff was disciplined for bullying a junior officer; they ask whether an employer should be concerned with the behaviour of employees outside their normal place of work. The facts of this case do not specifically address social media in the workplace, nor do they specifically address an employers' recruitment process however, the question of whether an employer should be concerned with the behaviours of their employees outside the workplace is a transferable question in this research. Legally, an employer is vicariously liable for the behaviour of their current employees regardless of whether they are in the workplace or not, which suggests that indeed an employer must be concerned with the behaviour of their employees. Notwithstanding this, many of the questions arising from this research have centred on whether an employer should be concerned with the private life of candidates or potential future employees. The answer to this question is that the law is relatively silent on the matter and further, it is an issue which requires a much more complex response. A persistent theme of ambiguity presents itself, which unhelpfully is a recurring thread throughout this research.

This chapter discusses the salient findings in this research. It seeks to discuss the findings in greater detail and examines the key themes arising from the analysis. A high volume of data was collected and presented in previous chapter and it would be beyond the scope of this thesis to address each issue to the extent that might be

required. Thus, the researcher has concentrated the focus on the fundamental themes arising from this research. In the first instance, the case is presented following which a brief overview of the key issues is addressed. The subsequent section of the chapter discusses how the research was conducted and provides an explanation of how it was undertaken. The ensuing sections address which elements of findings were congruent with the literature, highlighting what was surprising in the findings, outlines the implications arising from the connection with future research and current practice and finally it acknowledges the limitations of the research.

One interesting finding in this research was that of the participants' willingness to discuss their use of social media within the parameters of their organisation alone during the interview. There were some interesting findings in discussions that were had outside the interview. As the findings chapter has illustrated there was a general understanding of what social media is and could be in the context of the organisations. Echoing Jeske and Holland's (2017) contention that there are legal, ethical and moral issues for employers to consider, the findings illustrate that there was a general perception of the potentially unethical issues surrounding the use of social media if information is sought from personal social media accounts and the decisions made on that basis. However, the anecdotal narrative was very interesting in light of this research area. A number of the participants spoke "off the record" about instances they were aware of, but not directly involved with, concerning social media use by employers when making hiring decisions. They discussed instances where candidates were reviewed based on non-job relevant criteria, they mentioned that this was justified as checking for "fit" into the culture of the organisation.

Although it is not unusual for employers to consider criteria beyond the person specification when making selection decisions, the question must be posed as to

what information can be gleaned from social media which might justify an employer using non-person specification or job related information to make decisions regarding candidates' suitability for a particular job role. This question draws attention to the use of non-job related criteria in selection and presents issues such as dubious ethics when making decisions, once again confirming Jeske and Holland's findings. A candidate could unwittingly reveal information about themselves considered as a protected characteristic, or express a view or opinion an employer might not consider as being aligned with the values of the organisation.

Whether it is fair or indeed justified for an interviewer to define the culture of the organisation and make a decision within the narrow parameter of their perceptions and relate this to a candidate's online profile. When a candidate applies for a job role in good faith based on the criteria in the person specification or the job advert, arguably it is then unfair for the employer to introduce new and potentially ambiguous criteria (usually non job related). This also gives rise to questions regarding how difficult it is for employer to measure P-O "fit" at interview.

There are some other interesting findings, which have explored the nature of the platforms and their uniqueness in relation to individual participants' motivation to use one rather than another. More specifically, there appeared to be a hesitancy on the part of the participants to make use of the platform Facebook within their recruitment activities and there was a general sense that it was not relevant or appropriate. Also, evidenced in the findings was a persistent theme connected with privacy concerns. This was effectively related to the interviewees' perception of Facebook and that it is a personal social media space and therefore should not be utilised for the purposes of selection activities. A single reason for this assumption was not revealed. It appeared the participants considered their own personal use of

Facebook and how they might feel if their own or any potential employer engaged in reviewing the content of any social media site and made future employment decisions. They largely concluded that they would not feel comfortable with this.

The discussion chapter also seeks to address the findings with specific relation to the literature review and will consider the issues surrounding any related concerns for employers. There is no doubt social media has penetrated the world of work and as discussed in previous chapters, it appears to continue to grow at an exponential rate, providing further cause for concern for those employers who ignore the possible impact of social media in the commercial context.

An emerging question from this research is connected with why organisations might need to consider social media use in recruitment as a potential problem in terms of candidates and employment. However, it appeared the diverse nuances of the technology were overshadowed, at least in the minds of the individuals interviewed, by a desire to innovate or to gain a competitive advantage over competitors. The apparent absence of a genuine understanding about the technical features and potential pitfalls should be considered by employers.

5.2 Summary of Findings

Following the data collection phase of this inquiry was necessary to move forward and present an overarching view of the findings. Throughout this research process as was mentioned previously, there were challenges not just with identifying appropriate participants and their organisations, but also in triangulating the data and providing sufficient evidence to justify their inclusion. Throughout the undertaking of this study and in an effort to increase the construct validity of the overarching case, the interviewees' were heavily encouraged to review and comment on the interview transcripts and various drafts of the report. The adoption of this strategy was

intended to minimise misrepresentation of the perceptions of the interviewees' and to avoid the potential for researcher bias to intrude on the research. Predominately, the majority of the respondent's confirmed their agreement with the case report as a whole where they were able to identify their own contribution however, there were a small number of participants who felt their comments were not contextualised in a clear manner. In cases where this occurred, their original testimony was returned to them for further clarification. This activity was particularly time-consuming and while it was only pertinent to a small number of occasions, there were times where the changes and adjustments to the testimony led to an alternative view of the subject and thus created many additional revisions. However as Yin (2015, p. 199) argued these continuous revisions increased the reliability of the findings.

At the outset of this research the initial intention was to explore the role of social media in recruitment within the context of HRM and primarily this has been addressed however, a single overarching construct emerged, in that - the majority of interviewees confirmed that social media is not viewed as having a singular purpose within their organisations, rather there are joint and several reasons why an organisation or an individual might adopt social media within the confine of their job role including, but not limited to, recruitment and selection, employer branding, CSR activities, learning and development and relationship building. This was interesting because the literature revealed some reference to the use of social media for recruitment and warned employers of the perils of not managing its use properly but often this has specifically focused on specific uses: candidate search activities, reviewing employee's profiles for the purposes of disciplinary matters. Rather less discussion emerged as to why an employer might choose to adopt social media and what are considered to be some of the key issues with its use. This is confirmed by

Kluemper *et al* (2016) who proposed the categories of social media use by employers. They argue there is much greater scope for potential inclusion of social media within HRM activities, but hazard there are potential associated risks connected with their misuse.

5.3 Overview of the Emergent Themes

As outlined in the findings chapter there were three major themes identified in this research. Broadly they reflect interesting and relevant findings in this study. Outlined in table 5.1 the summary of major and sub themes is outlined. This discussion chapter broadly discusses the key narrative connected with each theme.

Table 5.1 Summary of key themes

Major Theme	Sub-theme
1. Lack of policy documentation and strategic use inconsistencies	a) Education b) Return on investment c) Costs
2. Connections and connectivity	a) Beliefs about associated risks b) Beliefs about associated benefits c) Generational concerns
3. Online observation of future employees (surveillance activity)	a) Perception of negative connotations related to social media b) Inconsistency in use – say/do disparity c) Can surveillance of potential employees enhance the corporation

Although in the first instance there does not appear to be a major issue regarding the use of social media in recruitment. In reality, there was a potentially major concern

for employers to consider because social media and social technologies are not going anywhere and if any employers continue to take such a cavalier approach, then they do so at their peril. In the literature, there is much debate about the ethical issues associated with making use of social media for the purposes of screening applicants and candidates and it generally appears that many individuals using social media for recruitment do not heavily engage in the use of search activities in social media technologies. There are inconsistencies in relation to their beliefs regarding what constitutes an ethical search for example, the use of Google searching by those individuals involved with social media is considered to be “fair game” because there was a perceived moral relativism, in that, there is appeared to be a genuine belief, if an applicant puts information online and in the public domain, they are somehow relinquishing their right to privacy. Nonetheless, this was not something which has even been clearly stated for employers. Therefore, there is a question about how they have arrived at this global belief.

Prior studies have alluded to a need for a more in-depth analysis of the use of social media in selection (Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Chauhan *et al*, 2013; Kluemper *et al*, 2012,). This call to action regarding the use of social media for the purposes of selection has not been categorically answered. This poses a number of questions. Firstly pertaining to an understanding of how employers are going about using the information they collect. This was an element which was included at the outset of this inquiry, however as the discussions developed, a reticence from those individuals involved in the use of social media in recruitment in terms of what activities they are conducting. Overall, the responses were centrally focused on recruitment alone but as mentioned in the findings a number of the study participants alluded to searching social media for information but did not want to discuss it as it fell outside of their

internal recruitment policies. Secondly, a misunderstanding or lack of ambiguity about the practice in the sense of its ethicality continued to be a factor. If those individuals responsible for social media management or those engaging in its use for selection do not really understand what it means in terms of ethical issues, a question might be posed as to whether they really consider the impact in the commercial context. No author has as of yet has explicitly stated the possible outcomes and thus a further layer of research is required in order to address these questions.

Another issue which is of concern was related to the level of inclusivity in terms of whether “all” applicants had access to social media and whether those people who are unable or unwilling to use social media in terms of their employment search activities are unnecessarily marginalised in the labour market. A perception of social media use as being more wholly suitable for a younger generation might be holding generationally older job seekers back.

There are opportunities for employers as well. The use of social media in a blended manner emerged from the findings. The use of social media as a means to provide a platform for employee voice, in learning and development and potentially from a CSR perspective should be explored further. A further issue which emerged related to the “off the record” use of social media in the selection process and most of the participants stated they use social media in their personal lives but little mention was made regarding whether they use it to search candidates’ profiles. This was not necessarily a problem, but all confirmed their awareness of but not involvement with undertaking online social media searches for selection purposes. However, some of the participants discussed in great detail their awareness of social media searching by others and most confirmed a level of discomfort with the practice

of social media use in this context. Therefore, an emergent proposition from this research is connected with the informal use of social media in recruitment and selection and requires further investigation. The majority of the participants felt there was some issue with using social media in selection but conversely they also stated if a candidate is prepared to put something online then they are not concerned with whether an employers is looking at this information.

There are numerous issues raised in the findings chapter which allude to a much broader concern for employers in terms of the use of social media. Discussions at a senior enough level within organisations does not appear to happen. There could be many reasons for this, including but not limited to the concerns regarding the ethicality of social media use in selection.

It is appropriate to consider the context of why an employer should be concerned with ethicality. The chartered body for HRM practitioners in the UK is currently exploring making ethical decisions concentrating on the principles of being a HRM practitioner with some emphasis on the divergence between the decisions which are made in the workplace and whether they align with the decisions those practitioners would otherwise make. The chartered body believe the decisions which are made in the workplace are separate to how an HRM employee might respond in their personal life and to avoid examining the gap between these decisions will hinder the profession from moving forward.

Firstly and foremost a return to defining HRM is required. In the literature review the definitions of HRM were presented and summarised as being too diverse in order to provide a definition. During the discussions with each case, it also became apparent in organisational practice this is also the case. The majority of interviewees' worked in organisations where the HRM function is limited and often

the role of HRM is not considered as being a central thrust of the organisations' success. This is a concerning finding as given the current economic climate, there is an argument to support the increased importance of the HRM function. Indeed

5.4 Addressing the Objectives of this Research

At the outset of the inquiry the intention was to complete the following objectives:

- To explore what the role of social media is within the HRM context including the nature and extent of the use of social media in the recruitment process and particularly within attraction of candidates, questioning how extensive it is, who in the organisation is carrying it out, which platforms and how they are routinely accessed.
- Interpret the meaning those involved with the use of social media for recruitment activities attach to their experiences with particular emphasis on the perceived business risks and benefits associated with the practice
- Explore how individuals/organisations justify their practice and examine what perceived consequences there are of such practices

The extent to which these objectives were met is evidenced both in the findings and here in the discussion of the thesis. Arguably, there are several interpretations which might be drawn however, in this instance and within the boundary of this case the data revealed a number of surprising outputs. While the literature has evolved since the outset of the inquiry, it does not negate the importance of what is included, nor does the progression of more recent research limit the findings in this research.

There were a number of central themes buttressed by secondary but still important sub-themes which alluded to a continued narrative of confusion and uncertainty for employers connected with integrating social media in their recruitment

practice. Despite the recommendations from professional and advisory bodies such as the Chartered Institute of Personnel Management and the Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service, those participants highlight the continued issues connected with the speed of technological change and the potential for employers to fall foul of misunderstanding of social networking and indeed the total lack of control they might have if it is managed inconsistently. This is echoed by a recent review by the Harrison (2017) whereby Laura Harrison, Head of Learning and Development, CIPD, concluded employers “should be bold in their approach to social technologies and the pace of technology change is unprecedented”.

5.5 Revisiting the Methodology

The methodological chapter in this thesis outlined the issues connected with the exploratory nature of this research. A number of considerations were given to the research methodology in this research, by and large, the considerations were centered on concerns related to the case study. Initially, the intention was to examine a small number of employers who were engaging in the use of social media for recruitment and selection however, during the time of the organisational case study recruitment phase it became obvious that it was not a viable strategy.

Therefore, as outlined in the introduction and methodology chapters, the decision was made to change the organisations and which people to include. As such the research includes people who are involved with the use of social media for recruitment purposes. The challenge from moving from the descriptive to critical was indeed an obstacle, which was difficult to overcome. However, the findings chapter addresses those findings in a coherent sensible and logical way. Exploratory research is not linear, nor should it be and the persistent call to action for quantitative research on this topic is not diminished by this research, moreover it further

compounds the need for both a deeper exploratory examination and a quantitative investigation further still.

The narrative was important at the outset of the research particularly that which focused on the wholesale snooping of applicants social media and even though it is still a problem for some candidates and employers, what has transpired revealed the narrative is not as uncomplicated as it has been put forward in past. In fact the concept of social media snooping is far more complex and users of social media in the course of their recruitment activities attached different significance on the type of uses which appear to depend on the context of the usage. They do not see the use of social media as a central facet in the recruitment process, as has been considered by some. Rather, it is an additional tool and the central thrust of the recruitment process remains the same. The view largely remains that recruitment is about getting the right people in the right jobs at the right time (CIPD, 2016). Social media can both add and detract from the core of the recruitment process and this is often guided by the level of the role and the demographic of the candidate.

Harrison (CIPD, 2017) discussed the pace of technology change and the digitisation of the workplace and outlined a concern amongst HRM professionals that there will be a further retreat by practitioners to “what is known” rather than a move to open up and embrace the changes in technology to the degree to which is required in order to help organisations grow and mature in the digital age. Although, the central thrust of her responses concentrated on technological changes in terms of HRM and learning and development, knowledge management and sharing concerns, it nonetheless lends support to the claims in this inquiry connected with nebulous reach of social media in the workplace. There is little disconnection between the use of social media for recruitment purposes from the use of social

media as an internal communication tool for knowledge dissemination and to link colleagues. The power of social media as a business tool cannot be underestimated. Notwithstanding Harrison's (2017) assertions regarding the speed of technological change, the participants in this case study appeared to be aware of the implications but did not appear unduly concerned. The overriding concern was still connected with how the organisation can attract, select and retain the best people for the job irrespective of the method.

5.6 Return to the Research Questions

This section of the chapter returns to the original research questions and outlines the relationship between the findings and the literature.

1. What is the role of social media in the recruitment process, specifically during the attraction campaign?

As discussed in the findings chapter the role of social media in recruitment has been revealed as being an element of but not central to the process. This was surprising given the apparent chronic obsession with the digital world. The facets of social media use which were considered more or less acceptable by the participants was the most surprising finding. At the outset of the study, no real consideration was given to the use of sites such as Glassdoor.com which latterly emerged as a significant professional and employer branding site for some. It was to some degree expected that LinkedIn would be an obvious choice of platform for employers but there were some interesting outcomes in the analysis. The findings chapter indicates the structure of each of the relevant organisations recruitment process. They largely followed a similar structure suggested by a number of academics (Armstrong, 2017, Armstrong and Taylor, 2014; Taylor, 2010; Torrington *et al*, 2011) regardless of the

size or activities of the organisation. The traditional process of identifying the vacancy and defining the role are still considered important although most of the individuals alluded to a lack of time for planning. Where the most significant change in the process occurred was during the applicant attraction stage in the process. Understanding the job role in the first instance was identified as being important and then more decisions follow regarding which social media channel is the most appropriate depending on the role. There was an inconsistency in the approach between the participants in this regard. Some of the participants mentioned falling foul of their poor choices concerning where to advertise. Several interviewees' mentioned instances whereby they had spent a lot of time short listing candidates because the volume of applicants was so great.

There appeared to be a relatively high level of crossover between the use of social media for recruitment and the way in which the employing organisation used social media for their commercial purposes. In some instances there are pitfalls connected with the direct use of social media without any specific or targeted strategic approach. More specifically within the

2. How do individuals/organisations use social media for the purposes of recruitment in the context of HRM practice?

Predominately the participants' referred to substantively little in terms of strategic approach to their use of social media for recruitment if they were directly involved in its utilisation. This was evidenced by a lack of response when questioned specifically about how they go about using it. This was alarming because all confirmed some use regardless of the intensity. Where a process was evidenced, they made use of social media at the outset of the process. This included but was not limited to using sites such as LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter for advertising purpose. Group A were the most involved in terms of having a dedicated resource and approach to social

media, commenting on the analytics of search engines such as Google SEO and how they help the team to make informed decisions, whilst still observing a level of caution. This correlates with the conclusions of Poba-Nzaou *et al's*, (2016) study, the findings in this particular inquiry also concur that managers' conservative attitudes and a lack of internal resources generally are inhibiting the progress of the adoption of social media in the recruitment process or indeed within any HRM process across the organisation. They consider an issue whereby managers spend time talking about the use of social media but fail to spend time investigating the viability as to whether it can actually be embedded into the organisations practice.

3. Why do individuals/organisations consider the use of social media in the selection process to be morally or ethically unfair?

4. What meanings do those responsible for recruitment attach to their experiences when using social media for recruitment purposes?

During the analysis of the data it was interesting to observe the similarities and differences between each participant's perceptions of the role of social media were. More specifically their perceptions connected with some elements were polarised. In particular they mentioned issues connected with the role of social media in theory and practice and these were quite broad. For example, the key theme regarding use of crowd sourced websites illustrated how relaxed they appeared to be. This is congruent with the literature surrounding the separation of the ethicality in theory and practice. The concept of applying moral sound decisions in practice can be disconnected from those of the employing organisation.

The majority of the interviewees' felt there was an issue with ethics and the use of social media in recruitment. Their references to potential concerns connected

with ethical behaviours concentrated on a number of anecdotal stories they had heard connected with the use of social media for recruitment and selection. They perceived little issue in terms of the use of social media in recruitment, but outline their objections to making use of it for selection. Their objections were largely concerned with the validity of the method and they mentioned issues related to how accurate the information was. Echoing Schmidt and hunters assertions that the validity of the selection method

5. What risks or benefits do individuals perceive as a consequence of their using social media for recruitment purposes?

The key findings related to the nature and extent to which social media is being used for the purposes of recruitment and selection illustrate that there was limited use of social media for selection and therefore the interviewees appear to consider there was little in terms of risk associated with this practice. Largely the interviewees felt there was little in terms of risks in using social media for recruitment. This adds to Klumeper *et al's*, (2011) contention that it is a relatively low risk activity for employers to engage with however, given the rise of employment tribunals and dismissal cases related to social media (HM courts and Tribunals Services, 2017) perhaps there should be some consideration of the potential issues connected with social media in HRM practice. The growing nature of social media in the commercial context mean that there are added risks for employers in terms of potential external litigation however, the reality of this possible risks appear to be largely ignored by the individuals in this inquiry.

5.7 Research Contribution

This section of the chapter addresses the key contributions to knowledge arising from the findings in this thesis. In the first instance, an extension of Jeske and Holland’s (2017) conceptual framework is discussed and outlined. Following this there is in-depth discussion regarding the various themes which emerged in this research connected with employer branding, connections, education and observations/surveillance of future candidates.

1) Extending Jeske and Holland’s (2017) Conceptual Framework

As outlined in the introduction chapter and the literature review chapter of this thesis, The conceptual framework utilised within this research is examines the pre and post hire issues employers need to consider as a consequence of using social media in recruitment and within selection activities. This inquiry extends this further by proposing and additional two categories which should be considered by employers.

Table 5.2 Extending Jeske and Holland’s (2017) conceptual framework.

Pre-recruitment and selection issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reputation management and employer branding • Cyber-vetting or data mining applicants via social media (<i>observations/surveillance</i>) • <i>Lack of strategic focus on the use of social media</i> • <i>Lack of policy documentation</i>
Post-recruitment and selection concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protecting the organisational reputation and brand • Social media and competence • New HR risks

They proposed that there are joint and several issues which employers should consider prior and following the recruitment and selection process. This current research puts forward an extension of this, by including categories including the lack of strategic approach adopted by employers and management policies and procedures guiding the process. In addition their category connected with data

mining is extended by adding observations and/or surveillance of future candidates. Each is explored in this chapter of the thesis.

2) Employer Branding and Social Media Features in the Recruitment Process

Almost a decade ago, the professional body for HRM practitioners CIPD, published a research paper questioning whether employer branding was the latest fad or the future of HR. The future is here and it appears that employer branding is not a fad, rather it is quite the opposite. The question of the importance of employer branding has grown at an exponential rate. The decisions employers make regarding their public facing message can have far reaching consequences. As outlined in the literature review, the changes in technology in the previous twenty years have resulted in a change in the way and employer can manage their employer brand. Dabrian *et al*, (2016) outlined the move from a position where employers could control the narrative about their organisation *via* static internet pages, to what is now an essentially uncontrolled phenomenon whereby people value the opinion of strangers. The concept of employer branding is not a new phenomenon however, changes in technology have resulted in a new layer of concern for employers in this regard. For example, there are significant issues arising from uncontrolled reputation management. With social and professional sites such as Glassdoor.com, Indeed.com and LinkedIn, increasingly employers need to be aware of and monitoring the flow of information pertaining to their status as an employer and to avoid doing so would not be a sensible course of action.

The circular nature of the recruitment process, from the employee and candidates' perspective, gives rise to an obligation for employers to think about the management of their brand, not only from the perspective of candidates but from

their customers or clients. It would be ill-conceived for employers to assume that technological advancement will abate because it is abundantly clear that this is not going to be the case and further developments, in technology terms, are likely to exacerbate the matter in the future. The findings illustrate a level of concern amongst the participants, even if it is not advanced by any internal strategic approach by the participant's organisations. A question needs to be posed regarding whether or not social media is genuinely a significant concern for employer because to make assumptions based on what is discussed in the literature alone would be unwise. Given that this is something which happens in practice, a more sensible option is to examine it in the context of where it is going to be or how it is already being used.

One of the most significant finding emerging from this inquiry is related to the use of social media in terms of employer branding, whether this is directly or indirectly a conscious decision by the employing organisation. Employer branding appears to be a key reasoning for the participants and their organisations to make use of social media in the recruitment process. Although, there were some discussions regarding the use of social media for the purposes of candidate tracking, explored elsewhere in this chapter, fundamentally it appeared the participants felt the primary benefit of social media was connected with building their employer reputation. This echoed Boxall's (1996) contention that competitive advantage can be achieved if the firm attracts and retains the best talent. In addition, it supports Ambler and Barrow (1996, p.187) who argued employer branding can be defined as "functional economic and psychological benefits that are provided by employment and identified with the employing organisation". The findings chapter illustrated the polarisation regarding what feedback employers receive from crowd-sourced platform such as Glassdoor.com. The finding in this research support Dabriain *et*

a/s, (2016) contention regarding the control of the employer brand. They argued that employer brand cannot be controlled by the employer and therefore it is both risky and naïve for an employer not to consider the potential consequences for their brand in the event online narratives are negative from current or past employees. They may consider how to control this but further they need to consider their employer brand. Van Hoyer and Lievens (2007) posit the employers can use employee testimonials on social networks to try to control their brand image. Although this strategy must be approached cautiously because in the event the brand message is perceived as fake or false by a prospective employee the organisation has no way to know or persuade that candidate, thereby potentially limiting the talent pool. Given the perceived attractiveness of an organisation can be linked to the employee value proposition it does not make sense for an employer to ignore the possibility of negativity contained on the internet. Although, some of the participants in this study were aware of Glassdoor.com, it was clear they felt only mildly concerned with the possibility of how it could impact the employer brand message. It could be concluded that this mild concern is as a result of the relative newness of the platform and their general ignorance of its potential reach.

One participant referred to a best and worst employers list, contained on Glassdoor.com, connected with employers in the USA. A search for a similar list for UK employers however revealed only a list of the ten best employers. The researcher wrote to Glassdoor.com to establish if this was as a result of defamation laws in the UK but to date (March, 2017) there was no response. Given that lists such as these exist, it points to a possible concern for UK employers to consider. In addition, it is not wholly dissimilar to the construction employee's blacklist which was discussed in the findings. Although the focus of the list of construction employees

concentrated on one particular sector, it confirmed employers consider criteria outside of the main personal specification when making selection decisions.

Sivertzen *et al's*, (2013) argued a contention that employers seek to continue to maintain their competitive advantage *via* employer branding activities, so did the majority of participants in this study, who recognised the need for sustainable social media presence to maintain their competitiveness in their individual markets. It is interesting however, given the extent of negative information on platforms such as Glassdoor.com and the lack of willingness on the part of those organisation who will not address the negative commentary displayed. Sivertzen *et al's* study considers the view of students' perceptions of engineering firms in the Norwegian market. There are similarities in terms of the language used by the participants in this research and those of the resource based view which support Sivertzen *et al's* theoretical underpinning. For example, the participants consider the capability of the organisation to attend to and manage social technologies and appear to consider doing so an attractive employer brand characteristic but they also appeared to consider the less attractive elements whereby an employer might use social technologies to snoop or undertake surveillance of future employees. The relationship between their apparent discomfort with using social media and it as an actor in undertaking surveillance was subtle throughout the findings, but nonetheless it was an apparent thread throughout.

3) Employer Rater Sites can have a Significant Impact on Recruitment Decisions

A point to note, which was set out in the findings of this research related to the best and worst places to work as set out by Glassdoor.com. A Google search with the term "worst place to work UK" results in several organisations being reviewed on

Glassdoor.com. It therefore might be sensible for an employer to consider the wording in these accounts and where they appear in simple searches undertaken by prospective employees. This is important because as much as an employer is concerned about their employer brand a prospective employee is carrying out these searches at the same time.

The platform Glassdoor.com has the potential to create serious problems for employing organisations. Particularly where the organisation ignores the negative commentary made by current and ex-employees but in addition because the information is often not cleansed or reviewed by the organisations it is likely to be questionable in its veracity. The participants did not appear to be overly concerned with the possibility that they might experience a reputational risk. Although they were generally aware that there might be an issue, it was not something they or their organisations' spent time considering to any great extent. The findings chapter illustrates the extent to which Glassdoor appears to have a generally negative tone in terms of employer branding and this is confirmed by the narrative put forward by (Group A, Group C and Group I). Aligned with Ambler and Barrow (1996) contention employer branding includes a 'package of functional economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company". This appears not to have changed substantially in the past decade. The majority of the participants appeared to view the role of employer branding as being significant in the recruitment process and that social media could be utilised to present the aspects of the employer's culture in a positive light.

In addition, the narrative suggested by Sivertzen *et al* (2013) can be supported regarding their assertions there are opportunities for employers consider their employee branding activity as necessary and important and it can be seen from

the findings this was acknowledged by the participants. Their awareness of social media as a tool in the recruitment process was well developed but they either did not have the resources or the technical knowledge to consider their approach in any great detail. With the exception of Group A, who evidenced a great deal of content focusing on the opportunities to learn and grow within their organisations the other groups largely made use of social media as a method of information transmission. In addition, the consideration of employer brand should extend to consideration of the type of audience. There is a growing recognition that Generation Y applicants will have an expectation that they will explore social media and be marketed at through the same channel for their future jobs and particularly those considering their first role following graduation.

Group A commented regarding their targeted job advertising *via* Facebook related to users cookies. This evidenced a level of sophistication relating to their approach to recruitment activities but also further echoed the contention that there is an overreliance on external consultancy input. Although this cannot be generalised at any great depth it was indicative of the overarching issue regarding a concern with an overreliance on external, often costly, input for employers. It cannot be argued this finding is significant beyond the individual participant's perceptions of the complexity of using social media for recruitment.

Lack of dedicated resources appears to be a fundamental issue for each individual interviewee's propensity to make use of social media for recruitment. Most of those interviewed felt their organisation see SNM as being an ancillary tool in the day-to-day commercial context. That is not to argue that they do not think it was important, moreover the felt it was not a crucial element to the business' success. This thesis does not try to intimate that organisations will fail if they do not embrace

or adopt social media rather it highlights how potentially it could promote or increase success for companies.

4) The Role of Digital Skills in Social Media Integration

As outlined in the literature review chapter, both in the UK and globally there is a digital skills crisis which was underpinned in the findings. It became apparent during the interviews with each group, they considered some of the potential problems with attracting candidates with enhanced digital skills. There is a potential paradox in this finding because there was a significant concern for employers in that they report they have difficulty attracting and recruiting digitally equipped candidates and yet there was no discussion regarding up-skilling their current employees, which might enhance employee retention. Given that the recent UK government (Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport, 2017) reported that digital literacy, at a minimum, should be included as part of the core primary school *curriculum* and further it should be addressed at all levels of education up to doctoral research. This may be indicative of a fluctuating landscape in terms of the cognizance and recognition of the immediacy requirement of digital skills within the UK. There is evidence of an awareness and acknowledgement at a macro governmental level that this is important, but this is not something which been embedded to any great degree within schools at this time.

In practice, it appeared the organisations consider the lack of digital skills as a slightly more complex issue. The majority of the participants claim they have little or no time to dedicate to the organisations social media channels. This is an interesting finding because as McCosker *et al*, (2016) pointed out, albeit in the context of the Australian labour market, having digital skills is not necessarily the goal. Moreover, it is a combination of communications management, marketing, content generation

and business management skills, which one single individual within any one organisations is likely to have a combination of all that is required. This perhaps adds to the confusion for an organisation in terms of where and when they can start considering building their social media presence. The levels of control they have over what is released in the public domain is grossly limited. This revealed a dilemma as most organisations do not engage with or undertake training and development related to social media use in the workplace. The absence of formalised training could possibly compound this issue as there is little HRM or learning and development practitioners can do within the organisation to further the digital agenda, with no strategic goal to rely on. Applying the use of social media in the context of HRM presents practicality issues for managers. For instance, McFarland and Ployhart, (2016) posit managers are trying to understand how or why their organisations should adopt the use of social media. This is further complicated by the rapidly changing dimensions of social media and the requirement to establish new legislation and new laws to assist address issues as they emerge.

5.8 The Role of Social Media in Recruitment

Echoing Johns (2006) assertions regarding the discrete contexts in terms of the use of social media within organisations, it became apparent that there was little evidence of conscious interaction with social media from the participants in terms of the participants' behaviours. As yet there appears to be little evidence of any accepted or universal business practice where social media for recruitment is concerned. Each participant appeared to consider their use of social media in recruitment as relatively ancillary to their main recruitment and selection activities. Findings put forward by Jeske and Shultz (2015) connected with the reliability and validity of using social media in recruitment and selection activities, the study

participants were either not aware of, did not engage in or did not care about the use of social media in their recruitment and selection activities. Although, it would be inappropriate to make assumptions regarding the interviewees' perceptions of validity and reliability, there is an inference of possible disconnection with the consequences of using social media considered in this context. As outlined in the literature review Jeske and Shultz (2015) argued the key issues regarding ethical and privacy concerns for employers, there was some discussion amongst the participants regarding the concerns but not in a way that specifically revealed any of their activities. It could be argued the interviewees do not engage in the use of social media to the extent that it is at the forefront of their minds. This finding might allude to Feldman and March's (1981) claim there was a disconnection between those who collect and those who evaluate the information gleaned from social media accounts of potential employees. Given the historical nature of Feldman and March's claims, it could be argued the speed at which technology is evolving might mean this disconnect is exacerbated further as the distance between the collector and evaluator of the information.

It is interesting to note, with the exception of one, none of the participants had received or elected to undertake formal or informal training, dedicated to the use of social media for business purposes, nor did they disclose any immediate plans to do so. There was not evidence of training and development activities in any of the organisations where they had disclosed use of social media. There may be a cause for concern for employers even where the organisations does not use social media specifically for recruitment and selection but in other activities such as marketing and learning and development. If there is absent of inconsistent training available for those employees involved there is a potential risk to both the organisations

commercial activities and more importantly their reputation. This is consistent with Pilbeam and Corbridge's (2010) contention regarding employers who choose to move away from validated recruitment activities to those which are unstructured and non-transparent, might mean the organisation is confronted with several new issues.

As outlined in the literature review there are numerous legal issues for employers to consider and as discussed by Lam (2016) the reach of these issues extends much further than recruitment and selection activities. However, this inquiry has revealed an inconsistency in the understanding and perceptions regarding legal and ethical concerns of those using social media in a commercial environment chiefly because they regard the predominance of their use to be that in a social capacity. They allude to the same boundary between work and private life as being blurred and as Lam referred to in her discussion regarding the dilemmas connected with social media in the employment context. In particular she made reference to employees' badmouthing the organisation and the feeling of a duty of loyalty employee's might experience in the event they discover a co-worker doing so. One participant confirmed their organisation routinely scans social networks to check if their employees are making slanderous comments regarding the organisation. They regard this activity as ethically sound because they are protecting the commercial reputation and employer brand of the organisation. Thus, it can be concluded social media has a potentially significant role to play in the recruitment process however, there are issues for employers to consider before proceeding.

5.9 Congruence with the Literature Review

Consistent with the findings in the literature was the uncertainty for the future in terms of social media influence, not simply within the recruitment process but more broadly its use in the practice of HRM. Jeske and Shultz (2015, p.9) discussed the

possible “insidious power imbalance” based on the uncontrolled collection of information within the recruitment and selection process and essentially until this can be looked at there is little that can be done to confirm for what purpose this information is being used. It is not enough to ignore the changes in technology or to avoid the opportunities it might provide a particular organisation in terms of their growth and commercial success. In addition, it is clear the use of social media in recruitment, however chaotic the individual or organisational approach, is continuing to grow. The findings in this research support (Jeske and Shultz, 2015; Schmidt and O’Connor, 2016) contention, which claimed there is growth in terms of the use of social and professional platforms within the HRM context, but there are continues issues to consider including the legal concerns with both discrimination and data protection.

Little was found in the literature on the question of the role of education in terms of social media in the workplace. Although Bratton and Gold (2015) argue there is a requirement for educators to focus less on the ‘what’ and ‘how’ in terms of HRM in practice and instead concentrate on the ‘why’. They argue the call from professional bodies such as CIPD to institutions of education to produce practitioners is causing the diminishment of theoretically bound learning at third level. This is both an interesting and relevant argument however, in the event that institutions of education focus less on “what” and “how” and more on the “why”, could this contribute to joining the argument from employers which proposes HRM practitioners are not equipped with the skills they want. This is likely to be a simplification of a complex and much wider reaching issue but it returns to the argument through which the empirical outputs from academic authors in this regard are limited and HRM practitioners are seeking guidance from professional and independent bodies such

as ACAS and CIPD in the absence of any clear conceptual, theoretical, framework to provide guidance.

In addition the use of social media as a marketing tool and the overlap concerned with the theory, which underpins both disciplines cannot be ignored. The goal of any branding strategy can be linked to both internal and external organisational goals. This research has concluded in an agreement with Yan (2011) that social media creates a sense of citizenship or membership within the organisations. It is important to consider the factors which affect the use of social media HRM in most organisations far exceed its use for recruitment alone. Most HRM departments are involved with internal and external communication and if this is to be delivered *via* social and professional media channels then there is a requirement for a coherent brand image which links closely with that of the marketing division. To undertake the use of professional or social media channels in silo from the other socially active facets of the organisation will lead to confusion in the message. A good example of this is illustrated by HMV when their employees who were being made redundant captured the live Twitter feed and clearly felt the web was an appropriate channel to air their concerns. The very fact the organisation did not anticipate this led to a high profile viral mistake. Similar to this a number of the case participants mentioned high profile cases where the social media channels within the organisations were used to produce a negative message. The perceived potential for chaos when using social media appeared, to some extent to serve to put the case participants off using it.

Even if potential candidates or applicants for jobs are not stakeholders of an organisations, the potential for those passive job seekers to become aware of the organisations and their culture is more likely through social media channels. The

ability to identify common interests (Kane *et al*, 2009) is extended for the organisation if they engage in branding activities. This is further compounded if an organisation considers activities such as on-boarding of new employees *via* social channels.

The most surprising outcome is the contrast between the literature reviewed in the study and the key findings from the data collection. The data analysis revealed an ordinariness in relation to the wholesale snooping of candidates' social media. It was not denied employers are making more use of social media for recruitment but the concept of excessive utilisation for the purposes of selection activities was not found in this study. It could be argued that the sample is too small to indicate generalisability and thus there is no attempt here to suggest that however, given the various backgrounds the participants come from, it might imply a general unwillingness to explicitly use social media for selection purposes. The literature also pointed to the differences in the use of social media even for personal reasons. Despite the paradox that is derived from social networking as being predicated on the assumption users are needed in order to signify it as being successful, personal use of social media is perceived as private by the participants in this study. There is a tension between the perceived use of social media in the workplace and the use of social media for personal purposes.

Social media use in the workplace has been argued as being distracting for employees. McMahon (2015) argued the cleverly used (+1) in tones of red encourage users to continuously check their social media accounts and therefore there is potential for commercial time to be lost. This might cause a concern for employers, although in the findings in this study, the majority of those participants with people management responsibility were not unduly concerned. McMahon also

implied that the social networking sites use of this was similar to Skinner's (1948) box experiments. Rosen *et al* (2013) further argued in their study, students spending extended periods on social media (via task-switching) whilst studying resulted in lower academic achievement than those learners who did not. It is beyond the scope of this study to attempt to comment whether there is a degree of veracity in the statement however, it is a genuine concern for some employers.

McMahon (2015) drew attention to an interesting point. The purpose of social media is to be connected with friends, family and other sub-groups in the social sphere but arguably it goes much further. For example, the use of social media might alert a passive job seeker, on the central individual's social media channel, to a job role they otherwise would not have had knowledge of. This aligns with Group A and Group C because they discussed the indirect outcomes from social media. Collectively they contended, albeit in different context, there are many indirect outcomes from social media for HRM. Often during the interviews the topic of discussion turned to the use of social media in disciplinary and grievance procedures and a number of participants referred to high profile cases where social media had been the cornerstone of a gaff or a viral mistake. Most recently the food operations chain Miller and Carter (BBC, 2017) were involved in a potentially damaging situation whereby one of their recruiting managers gave poor feedback to a candidate *via* WhatsApp. The company apologised profusely in the press but it is worth considering what internal social media policies existed for feedback following an interview. Also what training or development the manager was given. At its core, the majority of issues with social media, are usually as a consequence of poor or inefficient training of those individuals responsible for controlling the accounts. This begs the question about why are employers so reticent.

Similar to previous studies (Collins and Stevens, 2002; Darnold and Reynes, 2013) this inquiry supported the claim connected with the complexity of the recruitment process and although this research does not directly address either of their calls, it adds further support to the requirement for a more theoretical grounding in future research. Darnold and Rynes (2013) in particular highlight the significant number of variables in the recruitment process which is echoed in this study. Very few empirical studies have investigated the use of social media in recruitment and this inquiry emphasizes the requirement for a more forensic view of the use of social media for the purposes of recruitment and selection.

5.10 Chapter Conclusion

This discussion has highlighted the key contribution in this study. The issues to consider arising from this research are joint and several. The relationship between the literature and the findings in this study, on occasion, are essentially disparate. This gives rise to a number of questions. Firstly why, if as the research infers individuals are utilising social media in the selection process were the findings ambiguous. Although, it could be interpreted that the participants of this case do see the value of using social media in HRM, but their organisations lack of strategy, policy and procedure documentation serve to slow the integration of social media platforms formally. On the other hand, it could also be interpreted that the interviewees know enough about the law and consider the risks before proceeding. In any case this research has shown the salient issues with social media integration are connected with lack of researches, lack of fundamental strategic approach, inconsistencies in use, underdeveloped skills and abilities in platform use.

Finally returning to the original aim of this research exploring the role of social media in the recruitment process it can be clearly seen there is a certain utilization

within the recruitment process but this is fundamentally situational. There appeared to be an inconsistency in usage which was dependent on the nature of the job vacancy. In addition the more subtle issues around situational surveillance. It was abundantly clear at point throughout this research that those taking part felt there were occasions where it might be appropriate to use social media for screening and selection purposes but this was again dependent on a number of variables.

Chapter 6 – Conclusion of the Research

6.1 Introduction

This chapter brings to a close this research and will conclude by first summarising the original contribution arising from this research, Further it returns to the aim and objectives of the research. It also will provide an analysis and interpretation of the key findings and outcomes from each of the research questions. It addresses implications for both future research and practice which are connected with the theoretical and functional aspects of HRM. In addition, the chapter seeks to provide an overarching statement of the contribution to knowledge from this research and further it outlines the limitations and future directions for research into this topic.

This research has explored social media in the HRM context with particular reference to the recruitment process. A conceptual framework developed by Jeske and Holland (2017) was employed to examine whether their contention was accurate. The findings show the conceptual framework is conclusive, in that, there are clear legal moral and ethical concerns for employers in the utilisation of social media for recruitment, and further this research originally extends their framework to include issues concerned with the absence of policy documentation and a strategic approach or lack thereof.

Throughout this thesis, and in particular the narrative in the literature, there has been an increasing inference of a business environment which allegedly is endemic of “surveillance” and “snooping” activities by some employers who are engaging in searching social media for information relating to prospective employees. However, this narrative to some extent is revealed as not wholly true or reflective of the reality and day-to-day position within a number of organisations. It is acknowledged that this study is relatively narrow in scope and its outputs cannot be

widely generalised. In fact there is potential argument to support a claim that the term surveillance is in fact too heavy handed, and instead it should be considered that the term observation be utilised instead. The data analysed indicated some employers' approach their social media use in what might be described as a haphazard method. There certainly appeared to be little or no evidence of the adoption of strategic approach by employers in this research, which as outlined previously is concerning and further supports Jeske and Holland's claim that there are legal, moral and ethical issues for employers to consider. Therefore at the pre hire stage, arguably the absence of any policy documentation or adoption of a strategic approach by employers could be highly problematic.

Russell and Brannan, (2016) put forward an argument for getting the right people on the bus, or attracting and recruiting the best candidates, and they argued this is not as straightforward as first it might appear to be. This is particularly so, when employers' usage of social media for their recruitment activities include issues surrounding the technical ability of those in recruiting organisations with overall responsibility for social media accounts. A lack of digital expertise in recruiting teams exacerbates this issue further. Nonetheless, social and professional media are unquestionably here-to-stay and thus employers need to at least acknowledge the phenomena. There is a further argument related to the knowledge, awareness and understanding connected with those individuals at a senior level within the organisation with decision making responsibilities. Furthermore it could be argued that the participants in this case might have had biased view because of their involvement with social media on a day to day basis, this is explore later in this chapter in the limitations of the study. A recognition, by senior management teams of the potential benefits and drawbacks to using social media in recruitment and

HRM is required, as is a significant investment into the resources essential to implement its use and control those potential pitfalls.

Much in the way that Klumper *et al* (2016) organised their review of the literature relating to social media in HRM this thesis has fallen broadly in the first category and was concerned with external social media use encompassing activities such as branding and candidates attraction. Further, as argued in the literature review in this inquiry although Klumper *et al*'s categorisations are helpful, they belie the reality and greatly disordered nature of social media, generally, and within the HRM context. Consequently, while it would be sensible to categorise the structure of social media connected with its exact use and in what context within the organisation, there is also a tension in relation to what may or may not be included in any of Klumper *et al*'s categorisations. Furthermore, as the technology evolves the categorisations should be agile enough to respond to the changing landscape.

In terms of the methodological implications emerging from this research, qualitative research often generates a sense of uncertainty when considering the possible interpretations of the data by the researcher. In addition, when returning to the interviewees to check for clarity in the interpretation, there were instances whereby they retracted their initial commentary or decided to revise their initial comments. It was frustrating at times because the participant's initial assertions might have been revealed in an unguarded moment and thus could have added a layer of richness to the data. Nevertheless, the amendments were actioned and are reflective of the participant's commentary following verification.

It could also be argued that the themes which have emerged from this inquiry could have been interpreted by the researcher in an alternative manner, which again indicates the precarious nature of qualitative research. As a consequence of these

possible issues, there was not an attempt to over generalise any of the findings, and it was confirmed throughout the thesis that the findings were individual to the participant and their organisations and could not be compared to one another to any great extent, although there were some overlap. Although, there are common themes across the majority of participant's testimonies, it became increasingly clear during the collection and analysis of the data that organisations and individuals often adopt disparate approaches to social media use. In that, they all confirmed they are cognizant of the types of social technologies they can access for recruitment purposes and they are aware that there are possibilities in terms of social media use in the selection process. This further strengthens the claim that the lack of overall policy documentation and strategy in the approach to social media can leave the organisation vulnerable. The lack of uniformity could help to create an environment which is less sterile from an applicant's perspective; conversely it might create a risk of litigation for the employers if social media are not managed properly. As Jeske and Holland (2017) suggested, the perception of "more is better" in terms of information available to HRM and hiring managers is clear, this also means the extent of available information could become overwhelming. There is no single answer to these issues, moreover, the lack of structured framework adds to increasing complexity for employers intending to use social media for the purposes of recruitment and or selection. Jeske and Holland had previously argued the use of "good judgement" by those involved in the recruitment and selection process should be sufficient, however this is no longer acceptable because there is such an abundance of information at their fingertips, the potential for this to be used in a way which could be considered discriminatory is too great. This thesis echoed Jeske and Holland's (2017) contention that only when a structured framework for HR and

recruiting managers is available will employing organisations be able to use social media in a genuinely ethical and legally defensible manner. Further the original extension to their conceptual framework in this thesis highlights the need for organisations to adopt a more structured approach.

However, part of the issue which was uncovered in this research is the reluctance of those individuals involved in recruitment and selection to admit that they use social media for selection. The narrative in the findings revealed that individuals are reticent to use social media for selection but instead may perform a “Google” search of a candidates’ name or they might use information that is impossible to keep private on social media platforms. The possible observation (by employers) of candidates online information support a claim that there is a type of surveillance of future employees occurring in practice, but the level of depth to data mining was not clear. On the one hand, employing organisations are trying to manage their online employer brand reputation through expensive and sterile campaigns, but on the other hand, this research found a singular lack of policy documentation which supported the use of social media in the organisational context. The role of employees and ex-employees as brand ambassadors of an organisation cannot be underestimated. The growing use of Glassdoor.com and other employer rater sites mean applicants can bypass a cultivated employer brand image, communicated through well managed social and professional platforms, to the reality of an ex - or current employee’s revealing testimony regarding the culture of the organisation. There is a contradiction in terms of the image the employer is trying to promote on the one hand, but on the other, an apparent lack of dedication to formalising policy documentation to provide a clear message to current or prospective employees regarding what are and what are not acceptable behaviours

on social media platforms. These findings demonstrate that Jeske and Holland's claims were indeed correct. At pre-hire stages of recruitment and selection there is a requirement for employers to ensure that there are sufficiently robust practices in place so as to address any legal mora or ethical claims of procedural unfairness.

Another important finding was connected with the extent to which social media is used by employers. The narrative in the literature highlighted a persistent call for greater research into the phenomena because of their perceived embedded nature in recruitment and selection processes. However, it also became apparent from this research that social media are, more often than not, considered as a complementary tool in recruitment and selection processes rather than a single universally adopted approach which all organisations use. This serves to highlight although social media is to some extent and permeant feature, these processes were (and would be) conducted feasibly prior to the emergence of social platforms. Participants appeared to hold the belief that social media would ever replace the face-to-face aspect of the recruitment and selection process, potentially highlighting is precarious standing in the HRM context. Social media use was considered as a potentially cost saving tool due to the audience reach and its potential to contact passive job seekers whom the employer might not otherwise access. The potential return on investment, although not measure in this research is alluded to.

The theme connected with education and digital skills reflected both the literature analysed and the findings of this research. Jeske and Holland (2017) alongside authors such as Davison, *et al*, (2013) contended education is of particular importance in order for employers to guarantee they are maintaining legal and ethically robust boundaries in the use of social media. In this research, those individuals who could be considered experts advocated the use of social media in

the recruitment process but also mirrored the concerns raised by researchers of this phenomena. This thesis provided a response to the call from researchers for further exploration of this topic and it supported empirically that there is indeed a significant requirement from employers and those involved in its use in practice.

Throughout this research, some of the key challenges have been associated with the pace of change in terms of technology adoption and evolution. At the outset of the study there was a concentration on the use of social and professional media *via* desktops or laptops in the workplace. However, in the intervening years this has evolved to predominantly the use of mobile smart devices as the primary tool through which individuals engage with social media. As such, the technological structure which organisations require such as mobile ready websites etc. make it more difficult as their IT infrastructure lags behind.

Directly aligned with Cober, *et al's*, (2002) findings, compensation, culture and development information are generally communicated through the organisations website and most organisations continue to provide that type of information, in this way, it was interesting to note that this was largely the same as the categories of information found on Glassdoor.com. Therefore, it could be argued that these categories remain as important to potential candidates today. Although the participants did not explicitly state so, the use of LinkedIn to post information pertaining to the employer's compensation and benefits packages and to illustrate the culture of the organisation might also be considered as an employer branding activity. For those jobs seekers researching new job positions early targeted information relating to these categories could be helpful in terms of attracting them to the organisation. LinkedIn was used heavily by the participants and there was a certain inference that LinkedIn legitimises "observation", "surveillance" or "snooping"

activities as this is marketed as a professional website. There was distinct evidence of the employee's interpretation of LinkedIn's use and its distance from that of the use of Facebook or Twitter. There seemed to be an acceptance that LinkedIn provided a platform where it was acceptable to review applicant's information.

6.2 What this Research has Explored

Amongst a number of key issues this research has explored the nature and extent to which social media is utilised during the recruitment process. The research also endeavoured to probe how extensive the activity is, identifying who, within the organisation, carries it out, what social media platforms are accessed, what information is sought, how is it collated, to what use the information is put, how organisations justify their practice and what consequences there are of such practices.

This inquiry has satisfied these objectives; however, there were also many more questions which were raised during the inquiry. There was a recurring theme of inconsistency in approach by employers which essentially resulted in a certain level of hesitancy from individuals to even tentatively admit they are engaging in activities such as searching social media channels for personal information relating to candidates in the recruitment and selection process. It was also apparent there are significant differences related to what information platforms contain regarding social or professional content. The majority of the individuals interviewed had clear personal boundaries in relation to what might be considered unethical but would contradict themselves later by revealing activities which might very well constitute unethical behaviour.

There was a critical narrative which alluded to the use of social media as being embedded in the recruitment process and within HRM practices, the reality in

the alternative revealed a somewhat different view. The literature reviewed outlined the conceptual framework utilised in this study and in support of this, the key debates connected arguments for and against the use of social media in recruitment and selection are presented. Given the scope of this research produced such differing views with regard to social media in the recruitment context, it further illustrated the lack of a broad understanding both in practice and within the literatures relating to management. This finding and argument supports (Kluemper *et al*, 2016; Jeske and Holland, 2017; McFarland and Ployhart, 2015) and their contention that further empirical research is required to understand both the theoretical and practical implications. This research addressed some of those concerns and it is acknowledged that those individuals providing advice and guidance to employers realise with some clarity why a more structured framework is required in order for their use to be ethically robust and litigation free.

There also appeared to be a tenuous link between the strategic organisation of social media activities and the practice of its use in recruitment. It was revealed that there is very little evidence of a systematic approach having been adopted by individuals or their organisation related to the use of social media in any aspect of HRM practice. This inconsistency of use causes problems for employers because they have little control over the information which might be shared by employees on their personal social networks. As outlined in the literature review, the use of social media evidence in disciplinary and grievance activities is generally widespread in practice and employers rely on a defence that there are potentially reputational issues to consider when disciplining an employee for posting potentially defamatory material on their personal social networks. However, there is a cause to question

whether the extent of observation and/or surveillance employees and prospective employees are experiencing by their employing organisation appears to be growing.

The research illustrated the various subsets of individuals connected with the use of social media in HRM practice and specifically with reference to recruitment. There was definitive these which emerged connected with the concern of employer branding potential which social media provides. There is potentially huge opportunity for the individuals in this study and their organisations to make extensive use of social media for the purposes of recruitment and selection and by association build the employer brand. As highlighted by Kluemper *et al*, (2016), there is great potential for employers to adopt social media in their learning and development activities. It was not clear how this has been implemented in practice within this case, although one participant was keen to point out how the informal learning and networking opportunities social media presented were part of the core value offering for employee engagement. Furthermore, Kluemper *et al* (2016) commented on the use of social media by employers as an employer branding tool and they argued that this provided employers with a great opportunity to open the door, for prospective applicants, to their internal culture. Specifically it was often revealed social media is often used on an *ad-hoc* basis rather than being considered an acknowledged and transparent step in the recruitment process. This linked directly back to the findings in the literature review which suggested employers do not make use of social media in recruitment in a routine or co-ordinated manner.

Utilising an exploratory framework, the aim of this research project was to explore the use of social media platforms as a tool in the recruitment process within the broader HRM context. The main findings support and reveal, there was general

lack of understanding regarding the complexities of using social media for the purposes of recruitment.

Although this research was purely exploratory the findings revealed the nature and extent to which social media is utilised in the recruitment process could be viewed as wholly situational within the context of the job role being recruited. There did not appear to be one dedicated individual within organisations with total responsibility for carrying out social media use moreover, this generally falls to the recruitment team/s. The platforms accessed appeared to be primarily professional networks such as LinkedIn, although in some cases, Facebook and Twitter for advertising purposes. The information being sought by the participants in this study appeared to be largely related to CV's and it was utilised as a checking mechanism to verify content such as employment history or the dates of any particular breaks in service. Extensive collection or storing of applicant information was not evidenced in this study. It transpired in this study that the meanings those individuals involved with using social media for recruitment was relatively disconnected.

Generally the participants put forward they felt that social media was a useful tool in the recruitment process but was not a catalyst for recruitment activities in general. On the other hand, they displayed a general discomfort with the ethical issues surrounding searching and viewing personal information connected with applicants. There is little doubt arising from the findings in this research that individuals within organisations displayed a generalised discomfort with using social media for selection purposes. The lack of social media policies and procedures available for the purposes of triangulation in this research was indicative of the lack of apparent concern for employers and further supported the claim individuals and

organisations do not place a particularly substantial emphasis on the potential issues associated.

When considering how individuals and organisations justified their practice and examine what perceived consequences there maybe of such a practice, the individuals interviewed in this study made it clear that they did not consider social media management as a part of their job role. There was a polarisation between those individuals who felt entirely comfortable in using social media professionally and the opposite can be said for those who simply just do not engage in its use either personally or professionally. There was a sense particularly from the public sector employees, where they outsource their social media activity, that they perceived a negation of responsibility because their advertising and media agency “dealt” with all social media activity. It could be argued that this was a naïve perception because it is potentially even riskier since the organisation effectively has no control whatsoever. The use of an external organisation for these purposes would not indemnify the organisations from a claim of discriminatory practices in the recruitment process. Arguably the most important outcome in this research has been extending Jeske and Holland’s framework as it appears that there is still considerable work for employers to undertake to ensure that they are prepare for the further integration of social media into their day-to-day activities.

6.3 Return to the Methodology

The research was conducted utilising an exploratory method, which was based on the principle of an exploratory case study. The aim, objectives and research questions were compiled to highlight the gap arising from the review of the available literature. The objectives were furthermore utilised as the basis from which the structure of the interview. The questions posed (See Appendix 1) were intended to

be suitably broad enough in scope so as to capture the essence of the participants but also as a means to capture and produce empirical findings once analysed. At times the interviews became quite narratively driven as the interviewees relayed anecdotal stories of not necessarily their own experiences but the experiences of people they knew or people within their own organisations. Interestingly, quite a number of the interviewees mentioned a high profile or viral mistake by an organisation which captured news headlines in terms of employment practice.

There is no denying that there were issues related to the ability of the researcher to recruit appropriate participants, which led to issues such as a number of alterations and adjustments to the scope of the research. However, aside from these expected and unexpected difficulties, once the criteria for the sample had been identified it became rather less complex. The rationale for an exploratory study stemmed from the lack of available empirical outputs available in the current literature. There is a critical lack of in-depth examination into the practice of using social media for recruitment.

There was also a further attraction to employing the principles of case study methods in that it allowed scope to consider an extend Yin's (1981) Six sources by utilising data captured from the internet. It could be argued that these online artefacts might provide invaluable sources of information pertaining to the nature and extent to which each organisation or participant was actively engaging with social media for the purposes of their every-day work. Data was captured from various social media accounts associated with each participants and their individual organisations. The volume of information which was collected was considerable and thus further highlighted some of the salient issues with using social media data in research, not least the ability for this information to change on a daily basis. The fluidity of the

internet content posed an issue for this research because although information can be captured in great volumes, it can also quickly change and or disappear as a consequence of issues such as the enforcement of legislation protecting an individuals' right to be forgotten *etc.* It should be noted however, even though a great volume of information was collected from internet sources it provided little beyond confirming the various types of platforms the participants and their organisations use. In addition the content was largely superficial and did not provide any great clarity in terms of the culture of the organisations or the individuals. This may signal a further issue for researchers considering data collection from internet sources including social media platforms in the future.

6.4 Implications for Research

The extension of Jeske and Holland's conceptual framework, means there is further justification for greater in-depth analysis of this topic area. The absence of empirical data testing the propensity for employers to be at risk in terms of legal, moral and ethical issues requires further attention from the academy. Thus, as has been outlined by other authors (Kluemper *et al*, 2012, Jeske and Holland, 2017; Jeske and Shultz, 2016) further research is required to ascertain the implications in practice.

The findings also illustrated the intersection between the requirement for academics to provide theoretical frameworks fit-for-purpose in practice and employers engaging in meaningful research to support social media use in HRM practice development. It can be argued that this does occur to a certain degree which was evidenced by reports and research conducted by Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service and the Chartered Institute of Personnel Development however, it was particularly difficult to recruit suitable case participants for this research. The importance of

research collaboration with businesses, in order to progress the knowledge of this phenomenon, cannot be underestimated.

From a methodological perspective the implications arising from this research signal the difficulties in exploring a relatively new phenomena. The adoption of structured conceptual or theoretical frameworks could have the propensity to limit the exploratory nature of the research and therefore could further risk obviating key emergent themes. In addition, the general lack of awareness or consideration of the importance of social media in the commercial context presents a potentially significant challenge for employers. A worrying trend connected with the lack of or absence of social media policies and procedures in organisations made the triangulation of the data in this research more difficult. This was something which was considered by the researcher in great detail. The tension of the need for triangulation of case study research pitted against the novelty of the phenomena and the therefore the general lack of policy documentation meant another alteration to the research. Including the social and professional media platforms information was helpful in terms of examining the employers' employer brand. Although it should be noted again whilst a great volume of information gathered from social and professional platforms, the content following analysis was largely superficial in depth.

Further examination of this topic is certainly required. This thesis has demonstrated that there are many issues for organisations to consider in their day-to-day social media utilisation. In particular, the findings connected with strategy (or lack thereof) has highlighted the need for further in depth review of key senior decision makers within organisations because they are likely to offer an alternative view and therefore an alternative interpretation of the requirement for their organisations to use social media to the extent that is currently perceived.

6.5 Implications of the Use of Social Media in Practice

The implications for HRM professionals and organisations are joint and several. There was an overarching issue relating to the absence of employers having a robust framework to adopt or at least refer to when considering introducing social media or continuing to use it in their everyday HRM practice. The findings chapter noted the overall lack of concern from the participants, ranging from a laissez faire attitude to the importance of policy and procedures to genuine surprise that their current Information Technology policy documentation might not be sufficiently robust. It is worth recalling at this stage the study findings in respect to whether each participant's organisations had specific social media policies in place and how robust they are. At the time of writing this chapter, there remained only two respondent organisations who had explicitly set out social media policies. Those policy documents had not been revised or adjusted since the initial interviews. An impact case study might be required to examine the return on investment for employers wishing to use social media in their HRM practice and further the development of robust policies and procedures to guide any such practices. This might consolidate employer's confidence in relation to the use of social media for the purposes for HRM and more specifically for recruitment and selection.

6.6 Limitations of the Study

Following consideration of the findings in this research, and with particular reference to the use of social media in the HRM context and the lack of strategic approach often adopted by employer, there is cause to question the appropriateness of the sample. For example, there is a question to be posed as to whether a canvas of more senior leaders within the organisations might have revealed an implied strategic approach, but one which is not explicit in the day-to-day operational

strategy, and as such there could be further . There might also have been scope to consider a comparative analysis in terms of the interviewees responses specifically connected with strategic awareness and approach by organisations. There might have been further questions of the participants regarding the overall innovativeness of their organisations strategy which might have revealed a digitalization of their further plans.

A more conclusive finding in connection with strategic support for social media in the HRM context might would be required in order to categorially state organisations do not adopt social media strategically and the findings of this thesis have been amended to reflect it is that of the opinion of those involved in the sample and the absence of a strategy documents does not confirm there is no strategy rather that it “appears there is a lack of strategy”. This consideration support the claim that qualitative research can be problematic as it is the interpretation of the research which draws these conclusions. This issue is also addressed in the implications for research section of this chapter.

A significant limitation in this research derived from the unwillingness of participants to reveal the exact nature of their use of social media in the recruitment and selection context. A number of participants confirmed to the research “off the record” that they were aware of the practice of searching social media for information about candidates when making decisions in the selection process but were reluctant to categorially confirm they undertake the practice themselves. The reticence of interviewees to confirm their use of social media in selection alludes to a potential concern for employers. If any individual responsible for or connected with the recruitment process were undertaking searches of applicants or candidates social media channels on their own smart devices there would be little the organisations

can do to mitigate the risk of any discriminatory practices occurring. Although it could be argued that a clear framework of acceptable behaviors and a reasonable policy and procedure related to social media would assist in defending a claim if an employment tribunal arose.

Another limitation came about as a result of the time and the speed at which technology has evolved even since the data collection phase of the inquiry. When the preliminary interviews were conducted the use of personal smart devices in the workplace although prevalent, was less usual as a central element of the commercial activity of the organisations or their employees. However, as the research progressed this has become common practice and accepted within most organisations. As mentioned previously, the inability of employers to control what an employee is viewing on social media on their individual smart devices, such as applicant personal information, could create a potentially serious risk.

This research has explored the nature and extent to which social media is being utilised as part of the recruitment process by individuals within organisations. However, as pointed out by a number of authors (Davison, Hamilton and Bing, 2012; Davison and Bing, 2011; DeKay, 2009; Jeske and Holland, 2017; Jeske and Shultz, 2016; Kluemper and Bing, 2015; Nikolaou, 2014) a much more in depth examination of this topic area is required. This research reaffirmed this contention and added to the call for further research. There may be a requirement for research which follows a grounded approach because as was revealed in this research, there is certainly a case for both further exploration and generation of hypotheses connected with the phenomena to extend knowledge of this topic further.

Some of the most interesting findings have resulted in further questions being raised rather than answered. These questions include exploring further the

disconnect in terms of ethicality between a recruiting individual conducting a “Google” search of an applicant’s name rather than exploring a particular social media platform because both activities will generate largely the same information. This presents numerous problems and opportunities for research. It revealed a picture of uncertainty relating to the types of activities with which employing organisations are engaging with on social and professional networking media. The methodology of utilising a case study was a calculated risk given the lack of physical documentary evidence within organisations in terms of policies and procedures. It was difficult to triangulate the data in terms of the interviews and link them to the key emergent themes. However, there was a unique opportunity to make good use of data collected from social media platforms. It was unique in that when Yin originally set out his guidelines relating to making use of the Six sources in case study method the usage of data collected from internet sources was limited. At the time of Yin’s (2003) contention there was limited use of the internet which are experienced today and thus it would have been impossible for him to have outlined how significant and important this would be in the future. It could be argued that the use of internet data extends Yin’s (2003) Six sources further and could be considered an additional contribution from this thesis.

Throughout this thesis there has been a concerted effort to reiterate the exploratory nature of the research. This has afforded the researcher an opportunity to explore intuitively some areas which are not considered by other authors and as can be concluded from this research, there are still many questions which might be explored further. For example, the lack of policy documentation may have more far reaching consequences. It should be noted that in the UK during 2017 four hundred and three employment tribunal cases included social media content and prior to that

it was as little as thirteen cases (HM Courts and Tribunals Service, 2017). The growing number of employment related decisions including social media content is growing and therefore adds to requirement for further research in this area. Most researchers concentrated on the issue of using social media for selection and focused less so on its use in recruitment. Joining Orlitzky (2008) and others (Rynes and Cables, 2003), this research calls for further exploration into the recruitment process within the context of the HRM function. The opaque nature of social media and its propensity to change recruiting individuals' behaviour needs to be examined more closely. In particular, as addressed by McFarland and Ployhart, (2015) the context of social media use and extending the theoretical foundation on which it can be examined is vitally important. This thesis argued that social media is clearly context dependant (situational) and employer's ignorance of the scope and extent of its potential both positively and negatively cannot be ignored. McFarland and Ployhart also argued in support of the differences which affect behaviours depending on whether it is in the digital or non-digital context. They claim that there are issues regarding the perceptions users of social media have in relation to social interactions and further their belief that social media does not exist in a vacuum alongside non digital forms of interaction must be examined by researchers in more detail.

One of the findings in this research support this contention because of the obvious disconnect in the opinions of the participants which illustrated a disassociation between their use of social media for personal reasons and for that which are included within the commercial activities in their job. The interviewees' claimed that they do not use social media for candidate selection and indicated a perception that their recruitment and selection practices are devoid of any type of discriminatory behaviour. This indicated that they perceive that social media could be

used for negative purposes but continue to distance themselves. This research also supports a request from authors (Derous *et al*, 2012; Jeske and Shultz, 2016) to consider the implications for practice in terms of how an employer might approach the use of social media for recruitment and selection purposes, not simply for screening, but also for other aspects of the HRM function.

Further limitations arising from this research as outlined were connected with the small scale of the research and the considered narrowness of a single case study approach. However, the call for empirical data from both employers and academics is great. This research does not provide a structured framework for HRM practitioners or recruiting managers but it may provide some reassurance that organisations are approaching social media in the same potentially haphazard way that they may be doing so themselves. In some sense, as with the introduction of any new technologies there is a potential for mistakes to be made. The high profile nature of social media mistakes obviously mean the stakes can be higher, however there is an acceptable that adoption of new technologies have trial and error periods which must be acknowledged. That is not to say employers should continue to ignore the need for sensible and appropriate social media policies. Provision of guidelines for employees would provide opportunities for employers to engage in open and meaningful discussions with their employees and outline expected behaviours when they are engaging with social media for the purposes of HR functional activities.

The issues presented in the methodological section of this thesis presented the most significant challenge. The call for empirical research in this area has been repeated by a number of researchers over a period of time and it begs the question whether other researchers have faced the same challenges. How difficult was it for others in the same field to manage to gain suitable access to collect significant

amounts of data so as to draw any more meaningful conclusions or indeed provide any quantifiable outputs. It could be argued that another contribution in this thesis arises from the methodological challenges in attempting to conduct an exploratory case study. The literature revealed a limited number of case studies in this topic area and given the propensity for case studies to be the first steps in generating hypotheses it may confirm similar challenges have been confronted by other researchers in this field. The intersection of the topic in terms of the discipline and the apparent disconnect between information systems and management literatures also posed an issue. How much of the technical aspects of social media are required to be included in order to justify an information systems approach. It is limited in this thesis because essentially in order to understand the interface between employees and technology it is important to understand how and why they use it in the first instance.

A recurring challenge throughout this research was related to the recruitment of appropriate participant individuals/organisations. It became obvious as the recruitment phase of the project progressed, many organisations have not yet begun to formalise their use of social media in recruitment in terms of policies and procedures. As a result, their perception of the importance of this research topic was limited. Consequently the research focus was changed and instead explored the use of social media in recruitment first on an individual level and on a secondary level within the context of the organisation in which the practice is occurring. As a result of redefining the unit for analysis, the research was able to emphasise the experiences of those involved with the use of social media for recruitment, thus providing richer information for analysis.

6.7 Research Significance

At first glance the literature review in this research suggests there is a serious cause for concern for employer embarking on adopting social media in their HRM practice. However, the reality is not as might be expected. Although there is obvious requirement for consideration of the pre and post hire activities and employer might engage with during the recruitment process, the findings highlight that there is scope to do this in a sensible manner. The findings in this research support Jeske and Holland's (2017) claims that there are legal, moral and ethical concerns for employers, but then also extend them to encompass concerns in relation to strategy and robust policy and procedure documentation. The literature also contrasts with the findings, in that individuals in this research simply do not have the time and resources required to undertake intensive interrogation of candidate's social media accounts to the extent that was suggested. Notwithstanding this assertion, the availability of big data to employers continues to pose issues for employers in light of the employment relationship and GDPR (in the UK) requirements.

There is also an interesting complexity to this research in terms of "where next" because there still remains a reticence from employers to formalise social media in their recruitment and selection strategies. In the absence of any real commitment from employers to normalise the use of social media at both recruitment and selections and within the wider HRM context, it is likely social media will continue to be utilised in an unorganised manner. To some extent this is not yet problematic for employers, however its continued integration of social platforms in the commercial context is likely to create further layers of legal, moral and ethical considerations which will require attention. Given that in the context of this studies organisations and the individuals involved the little attempts that appear to be made

to provide robust guidance to their employees, this issue will simply continue to develop. Further the evolution and changes in technology will only serve to exacerbate this need.

Largely the opinion in the academy is that there is a call to explore empirically the use of social media within the context of human resource management practice, however, it could be also argued that this assumption needs to be qualified, and the findings in this particular inquiry support the contention, further and more explicitly defines a need for employers and researchers to work together to study this phenomenon. As a consequence of the findings in this research, there obviously remains a tension between the requirement for employers to embrace digital technologies and the practice of human resource management in ensuring that job applicants are treated legally, fairly and consistently. The tensions which exist in the employment relationship could be extended to that of future employees if the organisation is found to be utilising information gleaned from social platforms as criteria for decision making, thus potentially irreparably damaging the employer brand. In addition Apart from the use of Glassdoor.com, collectively the participants didn't appear to be very concerned with what might happen in terms of their organisations social media accounts. There seemed to some degree a level of apathy in terms of their approach and a general consensus that social media is so heavily embedded in daily life there is no need to be concerned with the practical and potentially legal implications of its use. Jeske and Holland (2017) discussed the potentially legal, ethical and moral implications for employers using social media for collecting information about candidates and that the social media phenomenon is absolutely impossible for employers to ignore. The salient issue is whether they are

being transparent regarding social media usage, which as was found in this research was not necessarily always the case.

6.9 Chapter Conclusion

This chapter has brought to a close the research project. The aim of this research was to explore the role of social media in the recruitment process. The outcomes have justified that social media does have a role in the recruitment process although the mechanism by which it is utilised by individuals within their organisations was revealed to be less than organised. The use of social media in recruitment can be concluded as being situational and context specific. There are a number of variables that lead to this situational use, including the type of role, the level of the role and the embeddedness of social media use dependent on the organisations. The research has revealed within the boundary of this case that there is a somewhat chaotic and haphazard approach adopted. Prior to the inquiry there was a belief that social media is used unreservedly by organisations in recruitment activities however, this research highlighted that this is not always the case.

There are significant outcomes in terms of practice and this research demonstrated that employers need to consider their activities when they do make use of social media in recruitment or in any HRM process or practice. There is a critical requirement for a practical framework from within which any employer choosing to engage with social media in their practice can draw from and embed in their HRM activities. The significance of this study underpinning the further critical need for research into this topic and research which supports practical outcomes for employers. The ubiquity of social media in most individual's everyday life was outlined conclusively in this research project and the overarching concern from an employer's perspective is that of control and sensible management of social media

channels within their commercial activities. Individuals will not cease to make use of social media rather it will continue to grow and evolve in time to come. As a consequence, employers and their organisations should consider the practicality of embracing this phenomena in order to harness the potential benefits of social media in their daily commercial activities.

Appendix 1

Interview Questions Guide

1. Tell me a little about how your organisation goes about recruiting people?
2. Tell me a little about how your organisation uses social media at present.
3. How did the use of social media for recruitment come about? (Is it a strategically planned activity or has it evolved)
4. Do you think that the use of social media for recruitment assists in enhancing your employer brand? Yes/No Why? (Demographic driven?) – It will be necessary for the researcher to understand the profile of the staff currently within the organisation (age/gender etc)
5. What social media platforms do you make use of?
6. In what way do you utilise these platforms for recruitment?
7. Why those ones specifically?
8. Do you know if there is a cost associated with the use of any particular media?
9. What attracted you to use social media for recruitment?
10. Did or do you have a specific strategy relating to the organisations use of social media for HRM proposes?
11. Do you use social media as a mechanism to attract specific groups of candidates?
12. Do you have a social media policy if so does it cover its use for recruitment and selection? If not why do you think this is the case? If they say no – does it concern you that you don't have a policy? Why?
13. Who is responsible for the management of your social networking accounts?
14. Do you think that the organisations ability to attract and recruit employees has improved since you adopted social media into the recruitment process? Yes / No – Probe further Why?
15. Do you think that the use of social media in recruitment is effective? Yes/No – Probe further Why?
16. Do you think that candidates respond well to the use of social media during the recruitment process?

Appendix 2

Reflections on the research (blog)

From an early career researcher perspective, developing the ability to approach this research reflexively has been the most challenging aspect of this project. The speed and pace at which social media has developed in past last five years has resulted in my own attitude changing in response to these changes. It became apparent early in this research project that the ability to attend to the changing nature of the literature and the methods by which employers can search for candidate information was going to difficult to keep pace with, however that is also the opportunity to be at the cutting edge of this research in this topic area. In particular I found it quite isolating because of the limited number of authors and other PhD candidates attempting to look at this the intersection of HRM and social media and the intersection of the two disciplines (Management and Information Systems) meant some critical decisions as to where to position this research. Clearly however the placement within the management literatures made the most sense, given the lack of technical discussion included in this thesis.

I initially came to this research with some level of basis, my initial thoughts reflected the narrative in the grey literatures. The premise that social media snooping was an egregious activity for employers to be undertaking and the privacy of applicants should be preserved at all costs. My background in HR was very much policy driven and furthered my belief that if there is no policy in place then the employer / employees should not be doing this. The reality of course is completely different. This research has forced me to consider the various shades of grey in terms of individual perceptions of what is an acceptable practice both in the business

and online context. There appears to some degree to be a disconnect between what is cultivated by employer branding activities and their very sterile nature and the truth of what an employer is prepared to do particularly if a job role had the propensity to impact the culture or reputation of the organisation.

Reflecting on my self-acknowledged bias, I felt it was necessary to spend time reflecting on my preconceived ideas after each interview and in particular how I felt about the data in connection with my research questions. My research questions were obviously written as a result of the call from the literature for employers to consider a framework for good practice in social media use. I followed a specific process of undertaking the interviews, immediately afterwards jotting down how I felt about it, then I made some quick field notes on how I or whether this was influenced by my assumptions, my values, culture or backing industrial experiences, I then considered what influence this might have on my findings and attempted to reevaluate my findings. This is an area of research which interests me greatly and I intend to explore further this topic within other aspects of HRM.

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