E-Recruitment: Effects of Enjoyment and Attitudes toward Web Sites on Corporate Image and Intention to Apply

Seonghee Cho
University of Missouri-Columbia, choseo@missouri.edu

Woojin Lee
Arizona State University, Woojin.Lee.1@asu.edu

Juan Liu
University of Missouri - Columbia, jlrm7@mail.mizzou.edu
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ABSTRACT

Companies have been using their Web sites to share job opportunities and company information with job seekers since the Internet became a major source for obtaining information. Despite the prevalence and importance of Web sites for recruitment, only a few studies have examined the effects of Web sites on job applicants’ perception of corporate image and attractiveness. Furthermore, no research has adopted the technology acceptance model and self-efficacy to examine the impacts of Web sites in terms of recruitment. Results of this study revealed significant relationships among perceived enjoyment, usefulness, ease of use, technology self-efficacy, and attitude toward Web sites, corporate image, and intention to apply.

Keywords: E-recruitment, Attraction, Corporate Image, Technology Acceptance, Self-efficacy
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INTRODUCTION

The Internet has become part of our daily life. More than 74% of American adults use the Internet and 60% use broadband connections at home (Rainie, 2010). Ninety three percent of American adults between the ages of 18 and 29 use the Internet (Rainie, 2010). A 2002 study showed that more than 61% of these young adults used the Internet to look for a job, versus 42% of those aged 30-49 and 27% of those aged 50-64 (Online Job Hunting, 2002). A study in 2007 found that 88% of men and 94% of women aged 25-34 used an Internet job site to look for a job (Nakamura, Shaw, Freeman, Nakamura, & Pyman, 2009). In response to the increased use of the Internet for job seeking, companies have included job information on their Web sites. About 92% of the largest North American corporations had employment sections on their corporate Web sites as early as 2000 (Nakamura et al., 2009). Furthermore, one study said the majority of organizations reported that their career page was the second most visited section of their Web site, after their general home page (Peter, 2001).

Use of the Internet surely reduces the direct costs of job searches for both job seekers and employers (Autor, 2001). A Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM) study reported that the average cost per hire from an Internet site was $377 versus an average cost per hire of $3,295 from a major metropolitan newspaper (Schweyer, 2004). In addition, in a study by SHRM, 25% of recruiters reported that online recruiting was the best method to secure the highest quality job applicants, second only to employee referrals at 28% (Internet Recruitment, 2006).
Although research on use of the Internet in hospitality and tourism marketing is abundant (Bai, Law, & Wen, 2008; Benckendorff & Black, 2000; Perdue, 2001), research on adopting Internet technology in recruitment is scarce despite the prevalent use of the Internet by both job seekers and employers. Furthermore, there is no research examining the effects of Web sites on corporate image and job applicants’ attractiveness using the technology acceptance model, which has been widely employed to explain Web site users’ behaviors. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to explore the effects of hotel Web sites on job seekers’ attitude toward those Web sites, corporate image, and applicants’ attractiveness (intention to apply).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Technology Acceptance Model

The technology acceptance model (TAM) is widely applied in studies of Internet-related behavior. A main purpose of TAM is to explain why users accept or reject information technology on the basis of external variables, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude toward technology, and behavioral intention to use, as shown in Figure 1 (Davis, 1989; Legris, Ingham, & Collerette, 2003). TAM (Davis, 1989) acknowledges that attitude is a determinant of intention to use a certain technology and suggests that attitude is determined by perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU). TAM also posits that PEU affects PU. TAM has been extensively tested and validated by previous studies (Ahn et al., 2004; Hsu & Lin, 2008; Lin, 2007; O’Cass & Fenech, 2003); therefore, it is commonly accepted for the study of Internet-related behavior, and we believe that it is feasible for use in explaining job seekers’ Web site usage behaviors. In a job-seeking circumstance, perceived usefulness of a Web site is the extent to which a job seeker believes that using the Web site will enhance his or her ability to
acquire job information. Perceived ease of use is the degree to which a Web site is perceived by a job seeker to be easy to use in finding job information and thereby submitting his or her job application through the Web site. Based on TAM, three hypotheses were developed for this study:

*Hypothesis 1*: Job seekers’ perceived usefulness of a hotel’s Web site will have a positive impact on their attitude toward the Web site.

*Hypothesis 2*: Job seekers’ perceived ease of use of a hotel’s Web site will have a positive impact on their attitude toward the Web site.

*Hypothesis 3*: Job seekers’ perceived ease of use of a hotel’s Web site will have a positive impact on their perceived usefulness of the Web site.

![Original technology acceptance model](image)

*Figure 1*. Original technology acceptance model.

**Perceived Enjoyment**

Perceived enjoyment refers to the extent to which using a technology is perceived to be personally enjoyable, a form of intrinsic motivation, separate from the instrumental value of the technology, or extrinsic motivation (Davis et al., 1992; Webster & Martocchio, 1992). Previous
studies found a positive effect of perceived enjoyment on perceived ease of use of computer technology (Hwang & Yi, 2002; Venkatesh, 2000). In a job-seeking circumstance, perceived enjoyment is the extent to which using a company’s Web site to seek a job is perceived to be an enjoyable, exciting, fun, and interesting experience. Based on the relationship between perceived enjoyment and perceived ease of use in previous studies, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 4: Enjoyment will have a positive impact on job seekers’ perceived ease of use of a hotel Web site.*

Emotional arousal is one factor influencing specific self-efficacy of using computer technology (Bandura, 1986). Since people partly rely on their state of psychological and physiological arousal to judge their level of anxiety or vulnerability to stress (Bandura et al., 1977), emotional arousal has a negative impact on their self-efficacy (Marakas et al., 1998). As enjoyment is the opposite of anxiety and stress, enjoyment was found to have a positive effect on specific self-efficacy of using computers (Hwang & Yi, 2002). Thus, we hypothesize:

*Hypothesis 5: Enjoyment of a Web site will have a positive impact on job seekers’ specific self-efficacy of using a hotel’s Web site to seek a job.*

Studies of consumer behaviors have found that consumers in a good mood are more likely to like a brand (Hoyer & Macinnis, 2009). In a job-seeking circumstance, we propose that job seekers in a good mood are more likely to like a company. If a hotel’s Web site creates in job seekers feelings of enjoyment, interest, fun, and excitement while they search for a job on the Web site, the job seekers may be more likely to form a positive image of the corporation and apply for a job. Therefore, we propose the following hypotheses:

*Hypothesis 6: Perceived enjoyment will have a positive impact on corporate image.*
Hypothesis 7: Perceived enjoyment will have a positive impact on job seekers’ intention to apply.

Technology Self-Efficacy

Technology self-efficacy (TSE) is a person’s perception of his or her confidence in using technology (Marakas et al., 1998). According to Marakas et al. (1998), there are two levels of TSE: the general level defined as an individual judgment of efficacy across multiple computer domains and application-specific self-efficacy defined as an individual’s perceived efficacy in using a specific application. Previous studies found a significant impact of general TSE on perceived ease of use (Venkatesh & Davis, 1996; Venkatesh, 2000). However, Agarwal et al. (2000) found that a relationship between specific TSE and perceived ease of use is stronger than a relationship between general TSE and perceived ease of use. Other researchers also have validated that specific technology self-efficacy is a more powerful determinant of perceived ease of use than general TSE (Hwang & Yi, 2002). In a job-seeking circumstance, specific technology self-efficacy would refer to a job seeker’s perception of his or her capability to use a company’s Web site to acquire job information and submit a job application. Thus, we propose the following hypothesis.

Hypothesis 8: Job seekers’ technology self-efficacy in using a hotel’s Web site to search for a job will increase the perceived ease of use of the Web site.

Attitude toward Hotels’ Web Sites, Corporate Image, and Attractiveness

Attitude toward a firm’s Web site has been extensively researched in advertisement literature in relation to a consumer’s purchase intention (Coulter & Punj, 1999). For instance, positive attitudes toward advertisements were found to be positively associated with brand attraction (Cober et al., 2004). Cober et al. (2004) suggested that when a job seeker is using the
Internet to seek a job, his or her attraction to a company is similar to a consumer’s attraction to products based on attitudes he or she forms toward an advertisement. Moreover, previous studies found that the corporate image formed by job seekers through companies’ recruitment materials was directly related to their intention to apply and other behaviors (Gatewood et al., 1993; Treadwell & Harrison, 1994; Turban & Keon, 1993). As Cober et al. (2004) proposed, corporate image could mediate the relationship between job seekers’ attitude toward a company’s Web site and their attraction to the company as an employer. Therefore, we hypothesize the following:

**Hypothesis 9:** Job seekers’ attitudes toward a hotel’s Web site will positively influence their attraction to the hotel.

**Hypothesis 10:** Corporate image will mediate the relationship between job seekers’ attitude toward a hotel’s Web site and their attraction to the hotel.

**METHOD**

**Sample and Procedure**

We recruited 249 participants from undergraduate senior-level hospitality courses in the spring of 2010 at two large universities in the United States, one in the Midwest and the other in the Southwest. Of 249, we obtained usable data from 201 participants, yielding a response rate of 81%.

Participants were randomly assigned one of four hotels’ actual career Web sites. We conducted a pilot test to obtain a list of the most preferred hotels among undergraduate students enrolled in a hospitality course at a university in the Midwest. We asked the respondents to list four hotels that they would like to apply to or were considering applying to for a job. The four hotels mentioned most were Starwood, IHG, Hyatt, and Hilton.
Participants were asked to visit a Web page hosting the survey instrument. Once participants entered their ID and password, they were automatically routed to the Web site of their assigned hotel and asked to navigate the Web site as if they were actually looking for a job. When they completed this task, they were automatically routed to questions measuring perceived enjoyment, perceived usefulness, perceived ease of use, attitude toward the Web site, technology self-efficacy, corporate image, intention to apply, and demographics.

Measurement

Perceived Enjoyment. Perceived enjoyment (PE) was measured using four items adapted from Igbaria and Livari (1995). A sample item is “I think using this Web site is enjoyable” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Perceived Usefulness (PU). PU of a company’s recruitment Web site was measured using four items adapted from Williamson, Lepak, and King (2003). A sample item is “This Web site contains all the information job seekers like to have when they evaluate prospective employers” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Perceived Ease of Use (PEU). PEU of the Web sites was measured using three items adapted from Williamson, Lepak, and King (2003). A sample item is “It is easy to use this company’s online application system” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).

Attitude. Attitude toward Web sites was measured using five items adapted from Chen and Wells (1999). Respondents were asked to rate the extent of their evaluation of fun, exciting, cool, entertaining, and flashy (1 = very poor, 5 = very good).

Technology Self-Efficacy (TSE). TSE was measured using five items adapted from Hsu and Chiu (2004). A sample item is “I feel confident finding information about job-related Web sites by using a search engine” (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree).
Corporate Image. Corporate image was measured using four items adapted from Javalgi, Traylor, Gross, and Lampman (1994) and Nguyen and Leblanc (2001). A sample item is “The company is a good company to work for” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

Intention to Apply. Job applicants’ intention to apply was measured using three items adapted from Nguyen and Leblanc (2001). A sample item is “I want to submit my resume to this company” (1 = *strongly disagree*, 5 = *strongly agree*).

RESULTS

Participants’ Demographic Profile

The average age of respondents was 22.79 years, and almost two thirds of the respondents were female (63%). Most of the participants were white (70%), followed by Latino (13%) and African American (7%). The respondents spent about five hours every day surfing the Internet, including hours for school work, and had owned a personal computer for about five years on average. The majority had searched for job information online (73%) and 51% were actively looking for a job.

Measurement Model

We conducted a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) using AMOS 18. Results of the CFA showed that all paths in the measurement model loaded significantly on their respective factors (lowest critical value = 8.91). The fit indexes showed an appropriate level of model fit ($\chi^2 = 567.30$, df = 320, p<.001, CFI = .94, IFI = .94, TLI = .93, RMSEA = .06). We assessed the composite reliability and convergent validity suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981). The internal consistency reliability (ICR) of each construct was measured by computing the composite reliability coefficients. Bagozzi and Yi (1989) suggested that all composite...
reliabilities should be above the .60 cutoff value. As shown in Table 1, the internal consistency reliability values ranged from .85 (usefulness) to .91 (enjoyment). Since none of the values for all seven constructs (enjoyment, ease of use, usefulness, self-efficacy, attitude toward the Web site, corporate image, and intent to apply) indicated less than .6, one can conclude that the scales were reliable (see Table 1).

The convergent validity of the scales was confirmed because the CFA outputs indicated that all factor loadings were greater than .60 and were statistically significant (Bagozzi & Yi, 1989). With regard to the discriminant validity, Fornell and Larker (1981) claimed that if the average variance extracted (AVE) was greater than .50, the discriminant validity of the constructs was supported. As shown in Table 1, all AVE values of the seven constructs were greater than .5.

Table 1
Reliability, Convergent Validity, and Discriminant Validity of Constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Construct</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>C.R</th>
<th>A.V.E.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Enjoyment</td>
<td>3.22</td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease of Use</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>.88</td>
<td>.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Usefulness</td>
<td>3.92</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-Efficacy</td>
<td>4.02</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Attitude</td>
<td>3.34</td>
<td>.83</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Corporate Image</td>
<td>3.58</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intent to Apply</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>.91</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Hypotheses Testing

We tested the structural model shown in Figure 2. The structural model fit was acceptable ($\chi^2 = 734.92$, $df = 329$, $p<.001$, CFI = .91, TLI = .89, IFI = .91, RMSEA = .08). All paths in the model were significant and took the expected direction. Thus, all hypotheses were supported.

![Figure 2. Model with standardized path estimates.](image)

Note: All paths are significant at 0.001, except $^a$ ($p=.008$).

Results of the structural model testing are shown in Figure 2. Perceived usefulness of a hotel’s Web site ($\beta = .33$) and perceived ease of use ($\beta = .39$) were positively related to attitude toward the hotel’s career Web site. When job seekers perceived using a hotel’s Web site to be easy, they were more likely to perceive that the Web site was useful in terms of seeking job information and applying for a job ($\beta = .74$). Perceived enjoyment was positively related to perceived ease of use of a hotel’s Web site ($\beta = .51$). Job seekers were more likely to feel
confident using a hotel’s Web site to seek a job when they enjoyed navigating the Web site (β = .28). In addition, when job seekers enjoyed a hotel’s Web site, they tended to form a more positive image toward the hotel (β = .21) and were more likely to apply for a job at the hotel (β = .32). Technology self-efficacy was positively related to the perceived ease of use of the Web sites (β = .38). Attitude toward the Web sites was also positively related to the corporate image (β = .37) and the corporate image had a positive impact on job applicants’ attraction to the corporation as an employer (β = .56).

DISCUSSION

This study contributes to the recruitment and technology literature by applying the technology acceptance model and technology self-efficacy to one of the most important issues of human resource management, recruitment. Few researchers have empirically studied the impacts of companies’ Web sites on perceived organizational image and job applicants’ intention to apply, despite the prevalent use of the Internet to search for information and job opportunities. We adapted TAM and TSE as an e-recruitment framework and provided the first applications of TAM and TSE in employee recruitment research (although TAM and TSE studies in consumer behavior literature are abundant).

The original TAM proposed by Davis (1989) suggested that external variables (enjoyment, in our study) would affect perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use, and PU and PEU would affect users’ attitude toward technology, which ultimately affects users’ behavioral intention to use a particular technology. Davis (1989) also suggested that PEU was related to PU, which would demonstrate a relationship with behavioral intention to use (see Figure 1). In our model, we proposed that PU would have indirect impacts on job seekers’

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intention to apply based on attitudes toward Web sites and corporate image rather than testing
the direct relationship of PU and intention to apply as proposed by Davis. We hypothesized that
job seekers first would form an opinion about whether they like or dislike a company’s Web site,
and then they would establish their images of the company. This company image that is
influenced by attitude would affect job seekers’ intention to apply. The results confirmed the
modified TAM we proposed in this study. Our findings indeed indicated that PU had a positive
effect on job seekers’ attitude toward Web sites, and this attitude had a positive impact on the
 corporate image, which in turn had a direct impact on job seekers’ intention to apply.

As TAM suggests, we found that perceived enjoyment was related to PU and PEU.
Borrowing arguments from the consumer behavior literature, we proposed that PE would affect
corporate image and intention to apply. We hypothesized that if a hotel’s Web site creates in job
seekers feelings of enjoyment, interest, fun, and excitement while they search for a job on the
Web site, the job seekers would form a more positive image toward the hotel and feel more
attracted to the hotel as an employer. Our study confirmed this hypothesis. This was the first
study to examine these effects in the context of Web-based recruitment. This finding has
important implications for the hotel industry. The hotel industry should consider Web sites not
only as tools for advertising job openings and providing information, which are traditional
recruitment functions, but also as doorways to the virtual world where job seekers can
experience the fun and exciting work environment at the hotel.

Results of this study also confirmed the impact of technology self-efficacy. Previous
research confirmed the strong relationship between TSE and PEU (Venkatesh & Davis, 1996;
Saleem, Beaudry & Croteau, 2005). An individual’s PEU of a particular system was driven by
that person’s general TSE; in other words, once someone has a certain confidence in his or her
computer-related abilities and knowledge, that confidence can affect the individual’s judgment about how easy or difficult a new system will be to use (Venkatesh, 2000).

Despite the contributions of our study, we should note some limitations. First, we included only four large hotel companies. The small number of hotel Web sites might have limited variances in the study variables and does not reflect the whole hotel industry. Thus, future research should include more hotels’ Web sites to examine the relationships proposed in our study. The four hotels included in this study are large corporations, and many people have used or heard of them. This experience might have influenced the participants’ perceptions and might have affected their perceived corporate image and intention to apply. Thus, it would be valuable for future researchers to measure previously formed knowledge and attitude toward hotel Web sites and examine whether that knowledge and attitude affect corporate image and intention to apply after navigation of the Web sites. Second, the data collection occurred in spring 2010. Although it is relatively recent, it would be interesting to see if any of the hotels included in this study have changed their career Web sites and whether the change resulted in different relationships with corporate image and job seekers’ employment attraction.

REFERENCES


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