

# **The role of Social Media in Recruitment: The case of India and China**

## Abstract

This conceptual study examines recruitment trends via social media in two leading nations, India and China. These two nations have experienced a phenomenal growth in trade over the last decade. Multinationals from various regions have enhanced their presences in these two countries. This has created an increased need for talent at various levels in organizations. Organizations in these two economies have resorted to various channels of recruitment to meet this amplified demand of talent. This paper uses the theoretical frameworks of both the TAM (technology acceptance model) and national cultures to understand applicants' and organizations' intention to adopt technology such as social media. It provides theoretical hypotheses and a practitioner framework to enrich the understanding of this topic.

## **1. Introduction**

India and China are considered leading nations in Asia for both offshoring and outsourcing services. According to global institutional reports, they rank highly as favorable destinations for multinationals interested in doing business overseas. In 2014, India and China ranked 7<sup>th</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> respectively in foreign direct investment (FDI) among 26 nations. China is ranked within the top two for three consecutive years, while India has held a position within the top ten ranks. These rankings not only indicate very promising business environments, but also suggests investors' confidence in doing trade with these two nations. Table 1 provides the ranking of the top ten nations for the FDI index from 2012-2014 (A.T.Kearney, 2014).

This increased presence of multinationals in these emerging economies has created an increased focus on organizational recruitment. Traditional forms of recruitment have been expanded in many emerging nations to attract employees from various labor sources (Fernández-Aráoz, 2007; Kavitha & Pillai, 2011). Companies have begun to identify other methods to attract talent such as e-recruitment, social media and “sea turtle” strategies (hiring natives from overseas) to meet this amplified demand for talent (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011; Meredith, 2008).

This paper will examine and discuss how social media has been adopted as a recruiting tool in these two nations. Social media recruiting can be defined as using online platforms such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, among several others, to identify work or personality-related characteristics of applicants. These sites allow individuals to create a personal or professional persona, to form a collective body of in-group members, and to network and interact within these specific boundaries. Organizations usually visit these sites to get a comprehensive picture (work

and non-work) of their applicants before making final hiring decisions. Using social media for recruitment becomes complex as different privacy laws govern their adoption and usage (Boyd & Ellison, 2007; Black, Stone, & Johnson, 2014). This has generated a magnitude of controversies as well as concerns in different nations where local governments have strong policies towards its usage (Chao & Efrati, 2010).

Social media has distinct recruiting advantages for organizations and applicants. First, it allows organizations to create realistic job previews to ensure applicants get accurate expectations of their jobs. A case in point- Marriot group launched, MyMarriott Hotel, a social media game that allowed applicants to understand a variety of tasks right from housekeeping services to customer management to culinary preparation. Thus, this organization was able to get qualified applicants; and the applicants got an authentic picture of their work expectations (Freer, 2012). Second, it helps organizations identify passive applicants or those not looking actively for a job. These passive applicants are usually highly qualified individuals who may not respond to traditional methods of recruiting (such as headhunters). For example, the CFO (Chief Finance Officer) of Oracle was recruited through LinkedIn suggesting that some genre of individuals might require different recruiting platforms (Datta, 2010; Kavitha, & Pillai, 2011). Finally, these sites allow organizations to seek talent with specific KSAs (knowledge, skills and abilities) improving the criterion for applicant-job and applicant-culture fit. Social media platforms provide adequate information about an applicant's competencies allowing for organizations to match applicants' KSAs (knowledge, skills, and abilities) with the positions' TDRs (tasks, duties, and responsibilities) and also organizational culture very well. In a 2013 study, 69% of the organizations in the US used social media to get a comprehensive understanding of

applicants. Hiring managers ranked the holistic information obtained about applicants from social media as an important criteria for using this method of recruitment (SHRM, 2013).

India has embraced various forms of social media for recruitment. In 2015, Facebook, Whatsapp, Google+, Twitter and LinkedIn were the most commonly used social media platforms for both personal and professional networking. Facebook dominated the social media landscape having 53% of the users, Whatsapp with 44%, Google + with 40%, Twitter with 34% and LinkedIn with 29%. Men were the predominant users (76%) of Facebook compared to women (24%) (Kemp, 2015). Indian organizations that adopt social networking methods for recruitment commonly use LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter to source potential applicants (Trivedi, 2014).

In China, many global social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, Youtube, Instagram, and Google+ are prohibited by the Chinese government. However, several domestic Chinese internet companies are very popular among locals. China has 629 million social media accounts today compared to a global tally of 2.08 billion (Kemp, 2015). The adoption of domestic social network websites combined with the stringent controls instituted for internet usage by the Chinese government has created a unique social media market. For example, the Chinese usually communicate using their own social media platforms through Weibo (micro blog tools), Sina Weibo, Tencent Qzone (equivalent to Facebook and Twitter in China), Tencent QQ (Instant Message tools), Tencent Wechat (Mobile communication and private social networking app), Renren (equivalent to Facebook in China) and Youku and Tudou (equivalent to YouTube in China). In contrast to the relatively mature U.S. hiring industry and its history of adopting technology, the use of social media in recruitment or job-search services in China is still at its embryonic stages (Osawa & Mozur, 2012).

Both these nations have robust information technology industries and relevant infrastructures to support online practices (Meredith, 2008). China represents one of the largest population of active Internet as well as social media users in the world (CNNIC, February 4, 2015). As of 2014, China showcased approximately 642 million users with an Internet penetration of 46.3%, while India had 243 million users and a 19.7% penetration. The global and Asian averages for Internet penetration are 42.3 % and 34.7% respectively. China exceeds both the global and Asian averages suggesting a strong market for Internet services (Internet World Stats: Usage and population statistics, 2014). Table 2 provides these relevant values for both India and China.

This paper will identify how social media recruitment adoption is influenced by societal and technology factors in these two economies. This article will provide information on the following sections: 1) theoretical framework and literature review, 2) social media recruitment practices in Indian and Chinese organizations as it relates to technology acceptance, network externalities, and national cultural dimensions, and 3) concluding remarks. This research will also provide hypotheses, a theoretical model, and a practitioner framework to enrich the readers' understanding on this topic.

## **2. Theoretical Framework**

This research will draw on two theoretical frameworks, the technology acceptance model (TAM) and the national culture in understanding the adoption of social media in these two cultures. The rationale for investigating more than one theoretical framework is based on prior research (Mayer & Sparrowe, 2013) suggesting that integrating theories from multidisciplinary fields will definitely help augment perspectives on the phenomenon. Further, scholars suggest that exploring additional context-specific determinants beyond the original TAM model is

necessary to enhance the explanatory power given the field of information technology (IT) is so dynamic (Van der Heijden, 2004; Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009).

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a widely used theoretical framework that provides a better understanding of technology adoption intention and behavior in different environments and cultures. The TAM model indicates that individuals will adopt new technology based on its functionality (referred to as “perceived usefulness”) and simplicity (referred to as “perceived ease of use”) (Davis, 1989). Scholars also suggest that an understanding of the TAM model can be enhanced by incorporating other variables related to technology adoption (Shim & Viswanathan, 2007; Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009). This paper will include the role of network externalities (direct and indirect) on technology usage and its consequences thereof.

Network externalities suggests that when users’ share their positive experiences and perceptions of the benefits of social media sites with their colleagues, friends, or families, this social exchange will lead to an expansion of its usage (Powell, 2009). A distinguishing feature of any social media is that it provides a common platform for users to present themselves, choose their own social circles, and develop personal (e.g., Facebook) and professional (e.g., LinkedIn) relationships. Therefore, network externalities is considered an important factor that impacts Internet adoption (Gupta & Mela, 2008) and social media users specifically (Lin & Lu, 2011). As the users of any internet services reach an enormous number, the adoption of their services becomes “self-sustaining” (Van Slyke et al., 2007) and attracts more users (Lin & Bhattacharjee, 2008). Scholars refer to such high numbers as a “critical mass” and suggest that current or potential social media users’ perceptions of the members that they associate with (due to common hobbies, interests or professional contacts) determine their intention to adopt the site (Sledgianowski & Kulviwat, 2009; Gupta & Mela, 2008; Katz & Shapiro, 1986). For example,

LinkedIn in India has more than doubled its number of users since its inception as applicants and recruiters have publicized its benefits and opportunities to other users. Thus, such platforms attract more like individuals who embody the commonality of its purpose and utilitarian value (Press Trust of India, 2015).

Indirect network externalities also have shown to play an important role in technology adoption (Economides & Katsamakas, 2006 Gupta & Mela, 2008; Parker & Van Alstyne, 2005). Indirect network externalities refer to the complementarity services of various platforms that make it easier for the users to choose these services. For example, the operating systems (E.g., Windows OS) and its application software (E.g., Office Suite) complement each other promoting more users to buy these products due to the compatibility derived from using these compatible software applications (Gandal, 1994). An empirical study examined Taiwanese users' perceptions on indirect network externalities derived from using Facebook (Lin & Lu, 2011). Perceived complementarity was represented by a variety of supporting tools available on Facebook such as phone-sharing, video sharing, social activities, fan pages, and finding friends. The results suggested that indirect network externalities impacted users' perceptions of using Facebook. Individuals are more likely to adopt Facebook (or any other social media) when complementary resources (such as supporting tools and applications) are offered so that users can get maximum benefits from their time spent on these services. Complementary services help create rich social dividends among users enhancing its utility and usage (Lin & Bhattacharjee, 2008).

In addition to network externalities, various scholarly studies (Ribiere, Hadad, & Wiele, 2010; Stone, Isenhour, & Lukaszewski, 2007; Srite & Karahanna, 2006; Cardon et al., 2009; Barron & Schneckenberg, 2012) suggest the other reasons leading to individuals' intentions to

adopt technology. An individual's behavior towards adopting technology may be a result of their cultural and social environments. National cultural dimensions are important predictors in defining individuals' work and non-work related behaviors (Hofstede, Hofstede, & Minkov, 2010). Therefore, the role of national culture in adopting SNS for recruitment is investigated in this paper as well.

In an empirical study of 389 students in the US on their adoption of Facebook, the results suggested a social media's user friendliness and utilitarian values largely enhanced its usage. The number of global consumers for Facebook is increasing every day as they are able to get information with a click of a button (ease of use) and also stay richly connected socially (usefulness). This research also demonstrated the importance of other factors in technology adoption such as "perceived playfulness" and "trustworthiness." Consumers also seek social media outlets for the pleasure it gives them and also in the confidence their information will be private. Thus, these factors could also dictate individuals' and cultural preferences' towards technology (Rauniar, Rawski, Yang, & Johnson, 2014).

Shin (2010) demonstrated in a study on social media in US and Korea that US respondents indicated "perceived usefulness" was a very important predictor for the adoption of any online social networks. Korean respondents also preferred "perceived playfulness" as an important predictor in their use of social media. Ribiere, Hadad, & Wiele (2010) concluded from their research on social media from different cultures such as the USA, Thailand, and Bahrain that "perceived usefulness" was a very important predictor for its usage in all three cultures. This suggests that functionality was an important feature for technology adoption by individuals raised in different cultural backgrounds.

In an empirical study of international students and technology adoption, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty-avoidance, and power-distance dimensions influenced usage of technology. This research demonstrated that “perceived usefulness” is viewed positively in masculine cultures as it enables individuals to use technology to advance their professional goals. Masculine cultures have a strong focus on personal achievement and accomplishment. On the other hand, feminine cultures, view “ease of use” as an important element in technology adoption. Individuals from these societies seek procedures that are straightforward in its implementation. In cultures high in uncertainty-avoidance, the adoption of technology by important stakeholders (superiors, family members) will lead to its increased usage by others; uncertainty-avoidance cultures need assurance from their social environments to reduce any anxiety in adoption of new practices. Similarly, individuals from cultures high in power-distance and collectivism will adopt technology to comply with important cues (such as superiors’ usage) as this behavior reflects deference. On the contrary, individualistic and low power-distance cultures will not seek specific signals or cues in their environments to adopt any kind of technology (Srite & Karahanna, 2006).

National cultural dimensions of power distance, uncertainty-avoidance and individualism/collectivism also impact adoption of technology. The Nordic countries of Norway, Finland and Sweden had the highest adoption of web usage as these cultures exhibit low values of uncertainty-avoidance, power-distance, and individualism. High uncertainty-avoidance cultures may be reluctant to venture into social media as these sites may lead to ambiguous or risky outcomes. France, a high uncertainty culture, has had several issues with technology adoption (such as Google, Facebook) as it violated the local social and cultural norms (Barron & Schneckenberg, 2012). Cultures high in power-distance may not endorse open information-

sharing that is characteristic of social media as it minimizes the role of authority and loyalty. A case in point- Google Inc. had to suspend its operations in China (a high power-distance culture) as the government did not like the manner in which individuals freely shared their opinions on various political, social, and cultural issues. The communal sharing of information diminished the role of the government, which is the considered the absolute authority in China, and reduced the perception of loyalty of its citizens (Chao & Efrati, 2010).

Collectivist cultures are more likely to engage in social media as it allows them to create their own inner-groups which is extremely meaningful in their contexts (Barron & Schneckenberg, 2012). Thus, the functionality (or perceived usefulness) of social media in forming such internal networks is important for collectivist cultures. Similarly, another study indicated that collectivist (Turkey, India, China, Macao, and Thailand) were more likely to engage with technology to create these strong social networks. Turkey and India had the highest averages for the number of online friends its members had on social media sites, while individualistic cultures such as US and France had lower numbers (Cardon et al., 2009).

Ribiere, Hadad, & Wiele (2010) in a study of 376 respondents from different cultural backgrounds (Bahrain, Thailand, and the USA) identified the importance of uncertainty-avoidance (UA) and long-term orientation (LTO) in using social media. Respondents from the USA, who had the highest score of UA in this sample, used social media less as they were concerned recruiters may make hiring decisions based on their social lifestyles. They were anxious about the ambiguity associated with any social media recruitment process. Respondents from Thailand, who had the highest score in LTO, focused on building and fostering relationships via social media to help them plan their professional careers. They valued the functionality social media may provide towards helping their careers.

Collectivist cultures may also perceive social media forms of recruitment as impersonal and objective. These cultures typically hire applicants based on personal relationships making the recruitment process very subjective. Applicants from cultures high in power-distance will prefer to be recruited by methods that are considered prestigious in their cultures (Stone, Isenhour, Lukaszewski, 2007). For instance, in India it is very common to hire entry-level employees through cognitive or psychometric tests as it reflects elitism (Meredith, 2008). Organizations that seek to use social media recruitment in high power-distance cultures should make this method appear exclusive (Stone, Isenhour, Lukaszewski, 2007). These various studies indicate that cultural dimensions also play an important role in technology adoption. The role of national culture in understanding organizations' and applicants' intention to adopt social media for recruitment has not been widely studied in India and China.

This conceptual study will fill this gap and also expand the body of knowledge in the extant literature (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). This research will adopt the theoretical lens of the TAM (perceived usefulness, ease of use, and behavioral intention or adoption), network externalities, and the national cultural dimensions to understand how social media is adopted for recruitment. This article will address both applicants' and organizations' perspectives towards social media recruiting. Table 3 provides the cultural dimensions for both India and China for some cultural dimensions that will be used to analyze the results for this study (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010).

Based on this literature review, we propose the following hypotheses:

- H1: Direct network effects have a positive relation with the intention to use social media for recruitment.
- H2: Indirect network effects have a positive relation with the intention to use social media for recruitment.

- H3: High scores in masculinity are more likely than those of low to moderate the intention to use social media recruitment for its perceived usefulness
- H4a: High scores in collectivism are more likely than those with low scores to moderate the intention to use social media recruitment for its perceived usefulness of forming collectivist networks.
- H4b: High scores in collectivism are less likely than those with low scores to moderate the intention to use social media recruitment for its perceived usefulness of forming collectivist networks.
- H5: High scores in long-term orientation are more likely than those with low to moderate the intention to use social media recruitment for its perceived usefulness of career planning.
- H6: High scores in power-distance are more likely than those with low scores to moderate the relationship between cultural value (such as prestige of the recruitment source) and the intention to use social media recruitment.
- H7: High scores in power-distance are more likely than those with low scores to moderate the relationship between cultural value (such as employee loyalty) and the intention to use social media recruitment.
- H8: High scores in uncertainty-avoidance are more likely than those with low scores to moderate the relationship between cultural value (such as the opinions of key referents) and the intention to use social media recruitment

### **3. Discussion**

#### **A. India and Social Media Recruitment**

Direct network externalities suggests as users publicize the positive benefits of any network services to friends and colleagues it will attract more members and expand the use of these services (Lin & Lu, 2011). A case in point-India has witnessed a 50% growth in the use of LinkedIn by talent professionals over a period of 6 years. In 2009, 3.4 million users were registered on LinkedIn, while in 2015, this count reached 30 million users. This suggests that word-of mouth among professionals about the benefits of this recruiting tool has led to its wide acceptance and adoption among hiring managers (Press Trust of India, 2015).

Indirect network externalities suggest that complementary services (such as referrals, developing connections, etc) will only enhance the adoption of these websites as it embodies utilitarian functions (Lin & Lu, 2011). LinkedIn offers several complementary services appealing to different genres of the applicant population. For instance, a feature called “university page” encourages college graduates to start developing their online resumes and networking even before they graduate. India has 40 million students on LinkedIn and is a large part of the users of this website. This feature also allows students to reach out to alumni from their colleges so that they may start identifying potential career paths or find appropriate mentors. The LinkedIn Pulse feature appeals to senior business leaders who like to share their rich experiences on topical business, economic, and cultural perspectives (Manve, 2014).

India’s is considered a masculine culture (Hofstede’s score: 56) as its society is driven both by achievement and success. Masculine cultures will support management practices and organizational tools that will be beneficial for firms to be more competitive (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). Organizations in India have realized that social media helps accomplish better recruitment outcomes in terms of employer branding, recruitment costs, and quality of applicants. Talent branding reduces cost per hire by 50% and employee turnover by 28% (India Recruiting Trends, 2015, p.21). HCL, a leading technology firm, saved approximately \$500,000 in recruitment costs as it embraced social media platforms. Social media recruitment has even replaced conventional practices, such as personal referrals, as it provides stronger quality in hires. In a study of 300 organizations, the use personal referrals (recruiting family and friends) reduced from 55% in 2012 to 45% in 2015, while that of social media recruitment increased from 53% to 69% (India Recruiting Trends, 2015, p.24). The use of social media recruitment by organizations has increased a significant 23% over the last four year (from 21% in 2011 to 44% in 2015). This

suggests that the Indian work culture is willing to adopt management tools that are perceived beneficial for its evolution and progress.

India is considered a collectivist country (Hofstede's score; 48) as its members nurture and support its in-group members (such as family, neighborhood, school). This characteristic of individuals wanting to belong to different social communities replicates well in organizational environments also. Employees like to belong to referent groups that provide a sense of identity and belonging (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). A study of 150 respondents from five different industries examined how HR departments used social media for various organizational purposes. The main four areas that social media was adopted was for internal branding, collaboration and communication, sourcing, and talent management. Organizations from these various industries used social media to create pockets of employee networks (branding, collaboration, sourcing, talent etc.) to create a sense of groupism for their employees. These firms adopted social media as a powerful tool to create communities where employees gather together for specific employee-related activities (Pareek, Jindal, & Nair, 2012). For instance, social media helps create talent communities between prospective applicants and interested recruiters that engage in a variety of HR activities such as sourcing, person-job fit, person-culture fit, and onboarding (Krithika & Vanithamani, 2013). This interactive networks that social media provides is important in collectivist cultures as personal interactions are considered important steps for applicants in finding jobs (Stone, Isenhour, & Lukaszewski, 2007). Social media also allows recruiters understand applicants' connections or professional groups helping in any decisions towards the hiring process (India Recruiting Trends, 2015).

India is considered a long term orientation culture as individuals always plan ahead in both their personal and professional roles. For example, a majority of the Indians have arranged

marriages where their spouses and weddings are chosen and planned ahead of time by family members (Gannon & Pillai, 2010). Similarly, the recruitment culture leverages social media to build meaningful relationships with potential recruits with the intention to help them make better career decisions. This interactive engagement not only allows applicants to plan for their careers, but also allows hiring managers to create strategies for talent pipelines (Bhattacharyya, 2014; Bhanot, 2012). Current employees in different organizations showcase their successful career trajectories on social media with the intention to allow new recruits decide if these are the right careers for them. CISCO, an IT company, has current employees who are alumni from leading academic institutions share their day-to-day work experiences with potential applicants from the same institutions with the purpose to help them plan if these are the careers they are looking for. Similarly, L'Oreal India, has introduced online games (such as Reveal and R U HR?) on social media which requires recruits from different levels to experience their jobs virtually before they decide to take up jobs. These simulated recruitment experiences allows applicants to plan their careers in a more careful and cautious manner (Sangani, 2013). These management tools are relevant in the Indian culture as both applicants and recruiters likes to think ahead or plan strategically (Gannon & Pillai, 2010).

India is considered a high power-distance (Hofstede's score: 77) with a paternalistic management style of authority and loyalty. Superiors wear their power openly, yet show benevolence to their subordinates. Subordinates show unflinching loyalty and deferential behavior to their superiors (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). In such a context, employees would not like to openly share their resumes on any recruitment sources as it demonstrates disloyalty. Employees usually demonstrate a strong sense of loyalty both to their superiors and organizations (Sachitanand & Bhattacharya, 2008). Many employees become passive applicants

as their culture has trained them be loyal to their organizations and superiors (India Recruiting Trends, 2015). These applicants have to be proactively reached out to as they may not do anything that diminishes their sense of commitment. Kavitha and Pillai (2011) demonstrated that almost 85% of the applicants recruited via social media in Indian organizations were passive applicants. In a global study, Indian companies ranked third after US and China in sourcing passive candidates via social media (India Recruiting Trends, 2015). India's workforce that is trained to be loyal may need different recruitment approaches to source applicants. The high percentage of passive applicants being sourced via social media in India suggests that employees might perceive their loyalty will be compromised if they actively share their resumes publicly. Please refer to Table 6 that provides the results of the top five nations that sources passive candidates via social media.

Organizations from countries high with power distance will prefer to use recruitment sources that reflect power and prestige (Stone, Isenhour, & Lukaszewski, 2007). The Indian IT (information technology) industry, considered very prestigious, has been very influential in changing conventional practices in other industries. Firms in the IT industry adopt progressive management practices integrating any form of technology for management purposes (Nilekani, 2009). In a study of social media and its role for HR in five industries (information technology, telecomm, retail, manufacturing, and financial services), 80% of the IT industry respondents indicated using social media as an effective management tool (Pareek, Jindal, & Nair, 2012). For example, well-known IT companies, such as Infosys and Wipro, have reduced their campus recruitment approaches in lieu for social media platforms. These methods have helped create strong brand presences among multiple applicant pools (college students, young professionals, etc.) thus generating broader recruiting sources. HCL Technologies, another leading IT

company, has decided to use Twitter not only to source candidates, but also to conduct brief screening interviews (Srivastava, 2015). These changes in the recruitment culture has prompted other companies from similar and different industries to follow similar methods (Bhanot, 2012; Sengupta, & Nandakumar, 2012; Khosla, 2014). This suggests that organizations from high power distance cultures will adopt practices that reflect a sense of status and standing among their peers (Stone, Isenhour, & Lukaszewski, 2007).

India is considered a culture with medium scores on uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede score: 40) which suggests its members may feel anxious by ambiguous situations. In such societies, new management practices might not be easily accepted unless important referent sources (such as supervisors, colleagues, friends, etc) adopt these methods. The implementation of new practices by key individuals signals to others that using these tools or services might not be risky (Srite & Karahanna, 2006; Stone, Isenhour, & Lukaszewski, 2007). In a study examining preferences for using social media by various respondent types (such as decision makers, influencers, and implementers) in five industries, implementers (who implemented the final decisions) followed the decisions of their supervisors' choices (the decision makers) in employing the usage of social media. For example, 69% of the decision makers adopted social media for various HR functions. Their willingness to use these progressive tools prompted both influencers (58%) and implementers (60%) to follow these practices. 83% of the decision makers were open to trying social media for different functions, which prompted 79% of the influencers and 58% of the implementers to be try these methods also. This institutional study provides preliminary evidence as to how the roles of key stakeholders can influence the final decisions for adoption of new practices by other members (Pareek, Jindal, & Nair, 2012).

## **B. China and Social Media Recruitment**

Though several social networking websites exist in China, social media recruitment is still at its budding stages in Chinese organizations. China underutilizes social professional networks for recruiting when compared to the trends in other countries. An institutional survey suggests that only 24% among 3,894 Chinese hiring managers indicated that they use social professional networks as a recruiting source compared with that of 44% in the United States and that of a global average of 43% (LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 2015).

Direct network externalities has played an important role in China in expanding the social professional networks user base. For example, before LinkedIn (LingYing.com in China) entered the Chinese market in February, 2014, the company only had 4 million users from China on its global website. After the Chinese version of the website was launched, the number of LinkedIn users has reached 10 million (XinHua, 2015, July 21). This suggests that as users publicize the benefits of this recruiting website, more users will become members to take advantage of these services (Lin & Lu, 2011).

The indirect network externalities (i.e., complementarity) is particularly interesting construct when examining Chinese version of LinkedIn. In any LinkedIn's website, a variety of complementary services and features are provided to help recruiters screen candidates and find the most qualified. Some of those services include the algorithm-based, candidate-screening, and profile recommendations that help recruiters fill positions quickly. Other features such as the "InMail" enables recruiters to send personalized messages to different users, "Update Me" allows recruiters to stay connected with their candidates, and "Your Connections" provides a picture of the various professional connections of job candidates (Venkatraman, 2014).

However, some of these complementary tools and services when introduced in the Chinese LinkedIn website was not congruent with the typical Chinese online behaviors. For

example, a majority of the Chinese people do not use and/or check emails daily, but use WeChat (Instant Messaging Services on mobile platforms) or Weibo (similar to Twitter services). The InMail feature of LinkedIn did not add much value to both Chinese recruiters and job seekers because the messages being sent by this tool were not likely not to be opened or responded in a timely manner by either of the recipients. LinkedIn modified this limitation by incorporating Sina Weibo and Tencent Weibo into its platform as well as allowing users to link their LinkedIn accounts with their mobile app accounts. Chinese recruiters perceive such complementary services and features as value-adding for their recruiting tasks. Thus, they are more willing to adopt or continue using LinkedIn or any such social media site for recruiting tasks (XinHua, 2015, July 21).

China is considered a masculine culture (Hofstede score: 66) whose members value achievement and accomplishment in both their personal and professional lives. Organizations are willing to adopt any management practices that will make their firms stand out in the market place (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). Many organizations in China have adopted social media for enhancing internal knowledge capital (Liu & Rao, 2015). Several domestic social network websites, applications, and services are burgeoning in China. In 2014, 2.52 million employers recruited via the Internet which is an increase of 28.2% from the previous year. The report also revealed that the number of online job seekers has increased from 103.9 million in 2013 to 115.25 million in 2014 rising by 10.9% (iResearch, 2015). Chinese enterprises, especially SMEs (small and medium-size enterprises) have a robust demand for skilled employees as there is a gap between the supply and demand of talent. Organizations have to be creative and identify different methods to seek talent. The rapid expansion of the internet and its various applications for organizations such as professional websites, social media, and mobile platforms has changed

the recruitment culture in China (iResearch, 2015). The strong masculine culture further endorses such adoption as the managers believe these services would add value to their recruitment culture (Srite & Karahanna, 2006).

China with its individualism score at 20 indicates a highly collectivist culture. The Chinese like to belong to “in-groups” and will demonstrate loyalty to the members in these groups in exchange for any reciprocal benefits. This collective spirit, comes from, *Guanxi*, a Chinese word for relationships that reflects individual connections and social exchanges. The Chinese believe that business contracts, transactions, and recruiting and more should be built on strong personal relationships. Such cultural differences between the Western and Chinese networking also explain why LinkedIn has been not so successful in China as in the U.S. and other countries in the world. The concept of *Guanxi* is highly valued in both the personal and business world. Individuals may prefer to use instant messaging platform such as WeChat (Whatsapp in China) to exchange job-related information or seek for referrals instead of a social website which might be perceived as less personal. The 2013 Global Recruiting Trends Report conducted by LinkedIn shows that China was below the global average in terms of using social professional networks. Only 24% of talent acquisition professionals who participated in this study chose social professional networks as a source for recruiting talent compared to the global average of 36%. The collectivism culture in China may impede or slow down the adoption of social professional networks for talents acquisition (LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 2013, 2015).

China has a long-term orientation culture (Hofstede score: 87) that suggests its society is thrifty and plans ahead. The high score on this dimension indicates that the Chinese will generally consider the economical long-term consequences of any decision whether it is personal or professional (Hofstede, Hofstede, Minkov, 2010). Managers will adopt and implement tools

that will be both cost-effective and help their firms strategically. Traditional means of recruitment are not able to meet the needs of both domestic and multinationals that seek talent from the same labor pool. For example, Marriott International plans to hire 20,000 employees in 2015 as it expands with 40 new hotels (Osawa & Mozur, 2012). Such rapid demand for talent require that organizations make tactical changes to their recruitment culture that will provide positive and long-term consequences. Many companies (domestic and multinationals) have adopted innovative methods of social media recruitment realizing that traditional approaches are not only expensive, but also not effective for their enhanced hiring needs. For example, the subsidiary of Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu Ltd offers a "virtual office tour" on Weibo (the counterpart of Twitter in China) which is designed and delivered in a video game format. Applicants are able to visit various offices of the company in different cities and experience onboarding processes virtually. This has been very effective as it has helped firms recruit large numbers cost-effectively. The Chinese's culture of being frugal and strategic has made both local firms and Chinese subsidiaries of multinationals consider social media in various creative ways to attract talent (Osawa & Mozur, 2012).

China is considered high a power-distance culture (Hofstede's score: 80) which suggests that the Chinese society accepts the role of power and subordinates obey their superiors without any questions. Employees are expected to be faithful and devoted to their superiors and any indication of disloyalty is viewed negatively. In such cultures, members will hesitate to contact headhunters or post their resumes on social media platforms as it will be considered a sign of being unfaithful (Srite & Karahanna, 2006). In a global institutional study, China ranked number one for identifying passive talent via social media in both 2013 and 2015. In 2015, 80% of the applicants recruited via social media in Chinese organization were passive job seekers (Linkedin

Talent Solutions, 2013; 2015). This suggests that organizations might have to use social media platforms as the only method to reach out to this specific group of talent- passive-who remain loyal and satisfied with their jobs, but may welcome career changes (Kavitha & Pillai, 2011; Sun, 2015).

The cultural dimension of power-distance also indicates the importance of prestige in any given culture. Chinese organizations have realized the importance of employer branding and are adopting proactive strategies to market their brands to build a prestigious “image” (Linkedin Talent Solutions, 2015). The most effective employer branding tools perceived by the surveyed professionals include social media (e.g., WeChat, Weibo) and online professional networks (e.g., LinkedIn, Tianji.com). The use of these services is considered prestigious among recruiters and also helps firms stand out with job seekers (Sun, 2015). For example, distinguished firms such as the e-commerce giant Jingdong use social recruiting practices showcasing the importance of being innovative to different methods of recruitment (Sun, 2015). Chinese companies are also creating different ways to make their recruitment methods look distinguished. For example, Weibo, the Twitter counterpart, launched a service for jobseekers to post "micro-resumes" where jobseekers provide a brief profile of their KSAs (knowledge, skills and abilities) using no more than 140 characters. Lenovo, an IT company, also adopted this “micro-resumes” approach as a pre-screening tool to later interview the quality hires. These companies, well known in their industries, act as role models, for firms in other industries to follow (Osawa & Mozur, 2012).

China has a low score on uncertainty avoidance (Hofstede score: 30) suggesting the society is adaptable to any changes and are flexible to try different approaches. The nation has slowly changed its insular trading policy to promote western ideas and management practices since the 1990s. This has been a radical change for its economy and businesses from its

totalitarian regime of the 1980s where the government ruled with a firm hand (Meredith, 2008). Today companies are willing to try different approaches in management that will add value to the firm. Talent professionals or hiring managers are more likely to take risks and experiment with new recruitment tools to gain competitive advantages. There is steady increase of employers using social media for recruitment in China (iResearch, 2015). For example, Tianji, the Chinese version of LinkedIn, is adding 500,000 users per month suggesting that this method is slowly being accepted by other applicants and firms (Osawa & Mozur, 2012).

#### **4. Conclusion**

There is a strong trend among organizations worldwide to adopt a SMAC (Social media, mobile, analytics, and cloud) approach in their talent management culture. Organizations embrace different tools in technology tools to integrate effectively with various stakeholders in their business environments (Rajan, 2015). These SMAC management tools help create strong brand images, fill positions quickly, and prove cost-effective. The need for organizations to have a compelling brand presence is going to be a strong imperative for recruiting talent globally. The increased demand for talent burgeoning in emerging economies requires firms to identify various channels to source their talent. Traditional forms of recruitment, such as headhunters, are very expensive as firms seek specialized and upper levels of talent globally (Rajan, 2015; Aon Hewitt Study, 2015).

Institutional studies have examined recruitment trends (Aon Hewitt Study, 2015; India Recruiting Trends, 2015) to understand current and future developments in India. These studies have examined large samples of 95 organizations from 14 industries (Aon Hewitt Study, 2015) and 300 leaders from 14 industries (India Recruiting Trends, 2015) suggesting reliability and

credibility of information. Hiring volumes have increased substantially from 53% in 2012 to 78% in 2014 indicating organizations have to identify several different methods to source talent. Senior management talent is most sought after labor pool as multinationals and locals compete for this group of specialized skills. Brand awareness of organizations is becoming an important recruitment tool for hiring managers to attract talent. Professional networks has been identified as one of the best methods to create brand awareness replacing conventional forms such as referrals and company websites. Its use for branding in organizations has increased from 53% in 2012 to 69% in 2014. Organizations adopt a variety of sourcing channels (social media, referrals, campus hiring, recruitment firms etc.) to meet the challenges of its enhanced recruiting needs. Social media has raced ahead conventional forms of sourcing such as employee referrals and job boards increasing from 21% in 2011 to 44% in 2014. Social media has been identified as one of the methods to identify both quantity and quality of hires. Organizations are using various metrics such as cost-per hire, time-to fill position, and quality of applicants to identify the most effective sourcing methods. Indian organizations have been identified as one of leading nations to use recruitment metrics effectively at 53% which is ahead of the global average of 24% (please refer to Table 4 a). These studies suggests that Indian organizations are adopting progressive methods in sourcing and recruiting talent (Aon Hewitt Study, 2015; India Recruiting Trends, 2015).

China has a unique social and mobile ecosystem due to its domestic Internet, mobile and social media platforms (Kemp, April 14, 2014) and its government control of external social media platforms (Liu & Rao, 2015). The mobile Internet is becoming extremely popular among Chinese netizens. Approximately half of the population own a mobile phone and usually individuals maintain an average of two active SIM (subscriber identity module) subscriptions

(Kemp, April 14, 2014). The ubiquity of mobile devices prompts recruiters in China to adapt and focus on mobile recruitment. For example, 51job, one of the most popular social media recruitment websites in China, was one of the few early adopters to provide mobile recruitment apps to source talent in 2011 (iResearch, July 30, 2015). Other important online recruitment platforms such as Dajie followed to develop mobile apps as well. The report indicates that mobile recruitment market still has the great potential to grow in China (iResearch, July 30, 2015). LinkedIn Talent Solutions surveyed 3,894 talent decision makers in China for a better understanding of the recruiting trends in China (LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 2015). The top three most important recruitment trends are organization branding, recruiters' satisfaction of hired talent, and the emergence of social media. First, the majority of the surveyed subjects (87%) emphasized the importance of employer branding and its significance on hiring qualified talent. Second, hiring managers' satisfaction with applicants has emerged as a key indication of the quality of the hires. Finally, 40% of decision makers consider social professional networks as an essential and long-term recruitment tool. Employee referral programs continue to play important roles as important sources for applicants suggesting the importance of *guanxi* (Liu & Rao, 2015). 52% of the surveyed companies rely predominantly on referral programs compared to the global average of 32% (LinkedIn Talent Solutions, 2015).

This conceptual study provides three contributions. First, it provides a theoretical model with hypotheses that can be tested by scholars either empirically or qualitatively (please refer to Figure 1). It integrates three different streams of literature from the TAM, network externalities, and national cultures to provide a comprehensive understanding of the topic. A multidisciplinary approach will help researchers get innovative perspectives on the subject (Mayer & Sparrowe,

2013). For example, the role of network externalities and national cultures has not been examined by many studies before.

Second, it provides frameworks for global managers (please refer to Table 5 and 5 a) that practitioners may use to enhance their understanding of recruitment practices via social media. Recruiters and applicants in India and China have adopted social media as it is also congruent with their national cultural values. Organizations in masculine cultures will adopt recruitment tools that will make their firms more competitive in the market. The collectivist orientation in both these cultures is interesting as it provides different recruiting outcomes. In India, this orientation endorses any group memberships where members behave towards each other in social reciprocity. In China, the collectivism impedes interaction via social media as it minimizes the rich social personal exchanges associated with recruitment. The long-term orientation supports the ideas of having talent pipelines and planning strategically. The cost-effectiveness of social media method satisfies the frugal orientation of these cultures. Social media recruitment helps source passive applicants which is very meaningful in these work cultures where employee loyalty is very valued. Social media helps identify 83% of passive recruits in China, and 69% in India which is ahead of the global average of 61%. The Indian work culture needs assurance from important referents to adopt new recruitment tools, while the Chinese are willing to experiment with new hiring practices (Agrawal, 2011; Sachitanand & Bhattacharya, 2008; Sun, 2015; Osawa & Mozur, 2012; India Recruiting Trends, 2015).

Third, it provides a comparison of social media recruitment approaches between two leading countries from the BRIC (Brazil, Russia, India and China) nations. Such a cross-cultural perspective has not been addressed in the literature before. Therefore, this conceptual study can be considered a pioneer research in the extant field of human resource and international

management. Both these nations have integrated social media recruitment due to increased demand for talent prompted by increased globalization. There are some distinctions also that global managers should be cognizant of. In China, it is important to use local versions of LinkedIn and Twitter with culture-specific features to attract local talent. The role of the government in China is very important to consider while firms adopt any social media. In India, seeking the approval of important change agents within or outside the organization helps introduce new practices and approaches. In India, the collectivism orientation helps create online recruitment communities to satisfy the group mindset; in China, this orientation may impede any online clustering due to the cultural connotation of *guanxi* (Liu & Rao, 2015).

This research is not without limitations. It is a conceptual paper that examines social media practices in India and China. However, it has integrated articles from scholarly, non-scholarly and institutional sources from a variety of databases such as ABI Global Inform, Business Source Complete, Google Scholar, among several others. Several conceptual studies (Leidner & Kayworth, 2006; Strohmeier, 2007) have provided interesting research outcomes.

**Table 1: FDI (Foreign Direct Investment) Confidence Index Ranking for the top 10 nations**

#	Nations	2012	2013	2014
1.	United States	4	1	1
2.	China	1	2	2
3.	Canada	20	4	3
4.	United Kingdom	8	8	4
5.	Brazil	3	3	5
6.	Germany	5	7	6
7.	India	2	5	7
8.	Australia	6	6	8
9.	Singapore	7	10	9
10.	France	17	12	10

Source: A.T.Kearney (2014)

**Table 2: Internet Usage in India and China**

Country	Internet Users (As of June 2014)	Country Population	% of Population Penetration
<b>India</b>	243,000,000	1,236,344,631	19.7%
<b>China</b>	642,261,240	1,355,692,576	46.3 %

Source: Internet World Stats: Usage and population statistics (2014)

**Table 3: India and China: National Cultural Dimension scores**

#	National Cultural Dimensions	China	India
1.	Uncertainty-Avoidance	30	40
2.	Individualism/Collectivism	20	48
3.	Long-term orientation	87	51
4.	Indulgent versus Restraint	24	26
5.	Power-distance	80	77
6.	Masculinity	66	56

Source: The Hofstede Centre. Retrieved from <http://geert-hofstede.com/countries.html>

**Table 4: Passive candidate recruiting: The global breakdown**

#	Countries	Passive candidate recruiting (%)
1.	China	83
2.	United States	72
3.	India	69
4.	Spain	68
5.	Brazil	67
	<b>Global average</b>	<b>61</b>

Source: India Recruiting Trends (LinkedIn talent solutions, 2015)

**Table 4a: Talent Analytics: The global breakdown**

#	Countries	Talent Analytics (%)
1.	India	53
2.	Brazil	32
3.	Mexico	30
4.	United States	29
5.	South Africa	25
	<b>Global average</b>	<b>24</b>

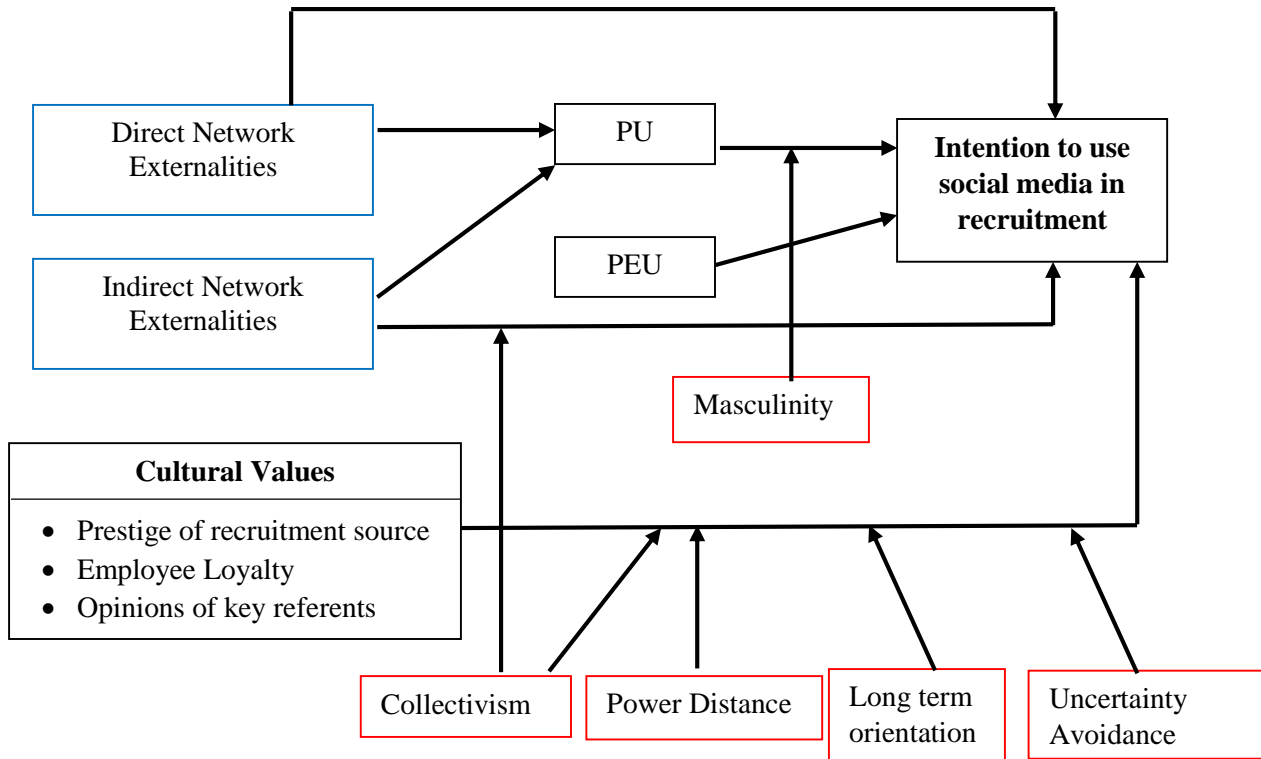
Source: India Recruiting Trends (LinkedIn talent solutions, 2015)

**Table 5: Recruitment via Social Media in India: A framework for practitioners**

#	Cultural Characteristics	Recruitment Outcomes via Social Media
1.	Masculinity	Design social media recruitment sites to make firms appear more competitive
2.	Collectivism	Develop internal networks among applicants, alumni, hiring managers to fulfill the group mindset
3.	Power Distance	Use social media to tap into passive applicants as loyalty is important Use social media to make the firm look distinguished
4.	Long-Term	Create talent pipelines for hiring managers and applicants who want to think strategically
5.	Uncertainty Avoidance	Identify important stakeholders (directors, managers, etc) as change agents to develop any social media platforms

**Table 5a: Recruitment via Social Media in China: A framework for practitioners**

#	Cultural Characteristics	Recruitment Practices via Social Media
1.	Masculinity	Design, develop and provide complementary products and services in social media platforms as well as mobile platforms to source quality talents
2.	Collectivism	Guanxi(personal relationships) may impede the intention to use social professional networks
3.	Power Distance	Use novel approaches and tools (e.g., gaming, micro-resume, etc.) to seek and source passive talent and promote employer brand and image
4.	Long-Term	Social media recruitment enables recruitment managers to find quality hires in a strategic and cost-effective way.
5.	Uncertainty Avoidance	Chinese enterprises are willing to adapt and customize social professional networks (E.g., local social media platforms, mobile recruitment)



**Figure 1: Research Model integrating TAM, network externalities, and national cultures**  
**Perceived Usefulness (PU); Perceived Ease of Use (PEU)**

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