Social recognition and employee engagement: The effect of social media in organizations

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Abstract
In the contemporary dynamic business context (characterized by stiff competition, high uncertainty, growth of global as well as virtual organizations, etc.), setting up systems for recognizing and engaging employees which need constant endeavor from present-day organizations. Hence, organizations are actively exploring and adopting novel initiatives through strategies platforms for their employer engaging effort, moving the organization image to the “company of employee’s choice” and connecting their strategic talent acquisition supply chain into that eco-system. Qualitative data analysis through 65 semi-structured interviews with employees working with various Software and Research & Development sectors, Human Resources and Talent Management professionals working for information technologies companies, IT-enabled (Business Process Outsourcing) BPO, and KPO (Knowledge Process Outsourcing) Services, as well as talent acquisition organizations, confirm the utilization of social media for social recognition & employee engagement in their organizations. The study contributes to the fields of talent management and social networks and has several key messages for practitioners regarding the expediency and effectiveness of social networks in organizations.

Keywords
Social networking, talent management, employer engagement, HRM, India

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Introduction
The fast-moving technology and internet-based e-economy demand an equally fast-moving skill set from their workforce. Like technology itself, the skills that current organizations possess are subject to rapid obsolescence unless the skills are updated to reflect the current state of technology. Social media technology skills are increasingly becoming important as organizations attempt to adapt to meet the needs of customers. Social media, such as WhatsApp, Chatter, LinkedIn, Snap Chat, We Chat, Telegram, Twitter, YouTube, Instagram and Face book allow people to engage in virtual communication. Businesses are beginning to use social media to engage people who may be interested in their goods and services. These technology tools allow the business and interested consumers opportunities to connect, follow, and engage socially. Thus, businesses are rushing to hire individuals who understand how to use social media to engage current and prospective customers.

This is evident by the increasing demand in the job market for people who have social media skills. A report by Lombardi, 2012 stated that employment postings with the need for social media skills grew 87 percent between 2011 and 2012. Studies also supported the extensive use of social media by the organizations for their recruitment and hiring activities.

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Top business schools are starting to recognize the importance of teaching social media concepts, technologies, and skills in their curriculum. For example, social media-related courses are being offered from schools such as Harvard Business School, Columbia Business School, Indian School of Business, Stanford Graduate School of Business, and Indian Institute of Management with a specific focus on how to draw on social media within an organization. Each course aims to build a community of learners who understand real-world business applications of social media. A report from the Harvard Business Review confirms the need for student preparation to use social media. In this study, 2100 Fortune 500 organizations participated in a survey to share their attitudes toward social media. The survey indicates that 79% of the organizations surveyed are planning to or have implemented social media in their organization strategy, but 67% of organizations lack confidence in the ability to leverage social media adequately.

In the strategic human resource management (SHRM) literature, two theoretical perspectives provide useful frameworks for linking human resource management (e.g. policies and practices) to business strategy and competitive advantage. One strategic perspective focuses on the external economic environment determining business strategy. And the other perspective focuses on the resource-based view (RBV), which emphasizes the internal resources and capabilities within the firm as sources of competitive advantage. In other words, according to the RBV, an organization’s business strategy can be aligned with developing human capital and organizational capability resulting in a competitive advantage for that organization. Deriving from this concept, talent has become the key differentiator for organizations across the world, for leveraging competitive advantage. Talent is broadly defined here as personnel with appropriate skills and qualifications. Hence in the current global dynamic business environment, talent management has become a topic of immense interest. This, for both practitioners and academics, is in particular more challenging for emerging markets like India, which are recording rapid economic growth.

In the last couple of years, India is consistently growing at a rate of 7% to 8%. Historically, from 2000 until 2011, India’s average quarterly GDP (Gross Domestic Product) growth has been 7.45%. During most of the 2000s, it has been acknowledged that India has been preferred for direct investment, behind China even ahead of the developed countries like the U.S. In 2011, India’s foreign exchange reserves rose to $300 billion and the value of Indian exports increased to US$20.6 billion during January 2011 with a 34.5% increase from its last year data (Reserve Bank of India, 2011). And all this occurred despite there were a worldwide economic slowdown and less developed infrastructure than that in most Western nations.

One of the biggest contributors to the growing Indian economy is its software industry, known as one of the biggest sectors for wealth generation in the country for the last many years. In many financial years, it has contributed more than 5% to the country’s GDP (Gross Domestic Product) alone. At a global map India still enjoys a leading player status for the provision of information technology, software, outsourcing, information, and communication technology-related services. Almost 50% of all IT and product development offshore projects by companies responding to the 2006 ORN survey were implemented at various locations in India. More than any other country, India provides a large pool of qualified software talent, at still reasonably low labor costs compared to U.S. and European wage levels. Besides, it is one of the few industries where India has registered rapid international expansion.

In the year 2008, the Indian IT (Information Technologies) and ITES (Information Technology Enabled Services) industry employed about 2.2 million employees in comparison to 0.8 million in 2004, and in 2009 it required 3,75,000 engineers. As of 2020, India’s IT workforce accounts for 4.36 million employees. Moreover, the software industry has been noted as one of the key engines of economic development and employment generation in emerging markets. According to NASSCOM, the sector aggregated revenues of US$180 billion in 2019, with export revenue standing at US$99 billion and domestic revenue at US$48 billion, growing by over 13%.

Recent assessments suggest that the Indian IT industry supports roughly 9.5 percent of total GDP (Gross Domestic Product) and is expected to generate $225 billion in revenues by 2020 (India Brand Equity Foundation (IBEF), 2015). The Indian IT industry is now among the largest employers in the country with an estimated workforce of 10 million. To sustain such a growing industry, a continuous supply of competent and committed workforce to deliver performance is required. However, given, the poor employable skills of Indian graduates on the one hand and the strong demand for skilled employees on the other, India facing a stiff challenge when it comes to recruiting and retaining talent. In FY 2016, this industry experienced annual turnover rates of 21.9 percent. Thus, talent development and retention is a major challenge for the Indian IT industry. To meet such a challenge, firms are adopting new technologies and innovative methods. As mentioned above, this paper highlights the increased adoption of SNSs (a new model of social networking) to manage talent in the Indian context.

**Literature review**

**Employee engagement**

Employee engagement appeared in the literature for nearly two decades. To date, there is no single and generally accepted definition for the term employee engagement is available. Gallup organization-defined “employee engagement as the involvement with and enthusiasm for work” cited by Dernovsek. He also linked employee
engagement to “positive employees’ emotional attachment and employees’ commitment.” Perrin has defined it as “employees’ willingness and ability to help their company succeed, largely by providing discretionary effort on a sustainable basis.” Robinson et al. define employee engagement as “a positive attitude held by the employee towards the organization and its value. An engaged employee is aware of the business context and works with colleagues to improve performance within the job for the benefit of the organization. The organization must work to develop and nurture engagement, which requires a two-way relationship between employer and employee.” Furthermore, Fernandez explains the difference between job satisfaction, a popular construct in management literature, and engagement suggesting that employee engagement is not the same as employee satisfaction and employee engagement is a critical concept. “Engagement is about passion and commitment—the willingness to invest oneself and expand one’s discretionary effort to help the employer succeed, which is beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer.”

Though there are varied definitions of this construct one popular similarity is reflected by the global surveys conducted by survey houses and research organization is in most organizations a significant size of employees are disengaged and all organizations are highly concerned about this challenge. Organizations are always exploring new means to engage their employees. Given the popularity of social network sites, many large organizations had been looking for ways to extract business values from social networking technologies and there is a possibility of the use of these technologies to enhance the company’s engagement strategies which the current study is exploring.

**Social networking sites**

This notion of social networking sites has come into existence with the web and Internet revolution. The concept has been derived from the social capital approach and social network theory. Social network theory focuses on relationships among actors (i.e., individuals, work units, or organizations) and thereby distinguishes itself from more traditional organizational research perspectives that examine individual actors in isolation. The central premise underlying social network theory is that actors are embedded within networks of interconnected relationships that provide opportunities for and constraints on behavior. Both the structure and composition of these social networks have been proposed as potential sources of social capital. Bourdieu defined social capital as “the aggregate of actual or potential resources which are linked to possession of a durable network of more or less institutionalized relationships of more or mutual acquaintance and recognition.” Social capital has been acknowledged as a concept having significance to the study of “network social processes.” According to Burt, the structure of the network is important, especially in social capital formation. The original information can be obtained by exploiting a network composed of low redundant contacts. On the other hand, Alquezauri and Filieri highlight the importance of trust in the development of social capital.

Supporting the importance of social networks, research has found social capital to be associated with the innovation, performance, and survival of groups and organizations, and with individual outcomes such as work attitudes, job performance, and finding employment. While social capital has received considerable attention in other areas of business, such as in assessing the linkages between organizational social capital and knowledge or value creation within the MNCs there has been relatively little research in the field of talent management. In addition to this, for decades, even though studies on social networks have been conducted in fields like sociology and anthropology, recent developments in web and Internet tools provide a rich and unprecedented opportunity to re-examine some assumptions and findings concerning the structure and behavior of social networks.

The purpose of this article is to examine the usage of social media for employee engagement in organizations operating in India. The emerging of internal and external social media platforms is creating immense possibilities for the organizations to elevate collaboration between colleagues and improving employee engagement at the workplace and the current research is exploring this aspect of social media. In this study, social networking sites (SNS) are considered as a mode of social networking since the concept of Social media draws heavily from concepts like social networking and social capital. Hence, applying the social networking concept in employee engagement, the research question that this study address is: “What is the impact of social media on the employee engagement of organizations?”

**Research methodology**

Our research is explicitly exploratory and therefore employed qualitative and inductive methods. As the research phenomenon (SNS) lacks a theoretical explanation on the specifics of usage of SNSs by the HR professionals in organizations, hence, the grounded theory approach is expected to allow this to be examined in greater depth, providing insights on the HR strategy of the organizations. In this study, HR professionals, namely HR managers, senior HR managers and HR consultants were selected as the sampling frame, due to their critical role in providing HR solutions and services in their organizations. Moreover, these HR managers and consultants use extensively web and internet in their workplace in their different job responsibilities and characteristics. Hence, it is reasonable to assume that they can provide information about the usage of social medias in organizations. Since the research is exploratory, semi-structured interviews were
mainly chosen for this study. We took the help of open-ended questions like “What is the usefulness of social media in organizations,” “how they are used by the HR professionals in their organizations,” that offered the respondents the opportunity to explain their opinions and reasons behind the use of social media. 88 Senior HR managers were interviewed for this study. In this study, we have treated each interview with an HR manager as an exclusive data source. The interviews lasted 60 minutes on average. All interviews were tape-recorded and transcribed.

Result

In this research, the qualitative data analysis was primarily focused on identifying content relevant to the HR managers’ perspectives about the use of social networking sites in the talent management process of the organization. The major themes that emerged in the study are as follows.

Social media usage

The internal social media bestow employees with convenience and enable flexible mode to communicate, exchange personal and professional information with colleagues, share knowledge, and fostering flexible learning opportunities among peers. The virtual and digital trust which is getting established over these platforms within and outside of the organization can be capitalized in many folds. In this study, it has been experienced that professionals care more about what Google search and social media are thinking about them58 and how the “digital world” retrieving and displaying search outcome about them from the public database or social media than their neighbor, family, friends, and colleagues in the “physical world.”59,60 During this paradigm shift, the “word of mouth” is converging as “the world of mouth” through various social networking media and channels. Hence driving enormous attention, bringing positive emotions and traffic to each walks of life. Earlier research shows that the number of social network users worldwide during 2018 is 2.62 billion and by 2021 it is expected to be 3.2 billion.60 The low-cost data services and the affordability of handheld devices across the globe with free access to various social networking site brings unparalleled user traffic to the social media platform. The speed, durability, information, education, coverage, flexibility, and publishing rights are playing unmatched incentives to all generations to hang-out in these platforms.

Social media platform advantages

SNS (Social Networking Sites) as a medium is getting used by the employees their emotions that include happiness and unhappiness. More and more employees are joining SNS every day to stay connected. Everyone is connected to Social Networking Sites (SNS). Organizations are seriously encouraging the use of Social Networking Sites to understand employee emotions. SNS that has been started as a stay-connected tool is now considered as a powerful weapon to understand employee emotions. Some of the responses are as follows:

- “Organizations are using SNS for creating happy and engaged employees. Here are some ways employers have adopted to help their employees achieve overall happiness and balance.
- “We offer a multifaceted benefit package [including transportation benefits] because it helps create a work environment where employees are productive and enjoy coming to work.”
- “During this challenging economic climate, our employees are working harder than ever—we are doing everything we can to maintain the same level of employee benefits. We want our employees to know how valuable they are.”

Social media helps reduce social isolation by providing multiple arrays of communication that engages individual or employees in authentic and relevant dialogue with a various set of people including colleagues on a global scale. Social media increase autonomy,61 eliminate social isolation,62 share emotion in written reflections, develop trustful and lasting relationships with colleagues,63 improve professional development, become transformational learners, increase innovative and creative thinking skills,64 be intrinsically motivated to participate in the process of collective intelligence,65 and improve communication and collaboration with other colleagues in the organization.65 Social media render a dominant tool for creating a strong employer brand in the digital space. A social recognition strategy can provide enormous opportunities for employers to tap into their employees’ social networks, stay engaged with external talents as well as with potential customers. Given that “internal employee referrals” continue as one of the preferred sources for getting top talents, the power to get the message out via LinkedIn, Instagram, Twitter, and Facebook drives winning recruitment efforts (see Figures 1 to 3). In a study concerning “employees perception survey” on recognition, the Year 2019 following trend emerged out of the survey (Sample Size = 65 working professionals, a Technology-enabled business).

Employee recognition and social media effect on social recognition

Employee recognition is active gratitude for an accomplishment, through which the organization reinforces behaviors and recognizes outcomes that the organization would like to see repeated during the entire employee lifecycle. It is an acknowledgment of the effort of employees in every possible opportunity within the workplace setup, this encourages employees to upkeep their performance and
redirect employees as an active and fully engaged workforce. Some of the interview quotes are as follows:

- “Employee recognition drives growth, transformation, and organizational performance. The second-largest factor for psychological distress in the workplace is the lack of recognition, which can lead to job dissatisfaction and social media helping us immensely to address these issues.”
- “Appreciation and recognition outside of organization wall via social media like; Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and LinkedIn can impel positive traction for the business and build employer branding at global platform.”
- “Due to the rapid expansion of internal social media adoption, several attempts have been made to unlock the potential benefits that this increasingly important tool brings to an organization.”
- “The use of social media technologies has increased across organizations as executives and managers attempt to leverage the power of the information and knowledge that exists within their companies.”

Most of the respondents agreed that monthly paycheques, annual bonuses, and project, or sales linked incentives are part of the employment contract therefore treated as an obligatory payout and accounted in the profit and loss account of the organization. According to a senior HR professional “the 2nd biggest reason for a high performer or high potential employees to quit their job is lack of praise and recognition.” Another leader said “successful leaders distinguish their employees’ contributions both in the one-on-one platform as well as public forums. The community or in the public domain the social recognition comes as the best means to play.”
Social recognition is all about positioning a strategic intervention or deploying key instruments within the organization so that it aids easy social interaction and the public sharing of recognition within peers, between managers and team members, and vice-versa. Some of the responses are as follows:

- “Inside the organization, an intranet or web-based recognition tool or platform can support great means to interact and broadcast various initiatives. Organizations can run various engagement events through recognition within the peer groups or open nominations or within all possible stakeholders in an organization to promote people’s work collaboration.”
- “The public recognition gives high impact messaging to employees, authenticates the work people do, removes bias since it is visible to many, and allow other employees to comment on the reward decisions.”
- “As well as these tools can help managers to overcome reluctance to recognize employees and their work.”
- “This social and open recognition builds a sense of appreciative work culture. People experience purpose while supporting other or diverse peer groups this promotes cross-team communication as well as fosters productivity and shared culture within the workplace.”
- “When a software developer gives shootouts to a logistic staff and appreciates about his or her support by enabling him the right kind of infrastructure for the lab setup within less TAT (Turn Around Time). That will encourage a greater sense of teamwork, promote shared success work behaviors and promote greater awareness around; how a group of diverse people (different moving parts) can complement each other to achieve a common purpose (fitting together).”

Some of the respondents argued that the employees’ Name and their work relations with us are confidential and classified, therefore social recognition may work adversely. Social recognition may endanger their organization from competitors poaching or headhunting perspective. One respondent pointed out that “though employees’ primary information’s were secret and classified to the organization, it is becoming a myth in the gig economy because of social media.” On the contrary, most of the employees of the global workforce voluntarily disclose their work, the organization they work with, and their achievements in multiple social media platforms and majorly through professional networking platforms like LinkedIn.

**Discussion**

In this study, the core research objective is to explore the use of Social media by the HR managers in organizations in India. Most of the participants in this study agreed that their organizations have started leveraging social media in their organizations which earlier studies have also substantiated. Besides most respondents felt that in the current business scenario, strategies of organizations have changed drastically. Several reasons are offered for this by the respondents some of which are supported by existing research. First, the key resource for firms competing in the new economy is no longer land, capital, or hard assets but the human capital. The connection between human capital and financial success is not a secret today, on the contrary, an understanding shared by the top management of organizations. Hence, the demand for a skilled worker is on a continuous rise, but on the other hand, the supply is slow. This is certainly applicable for countries like India where the economic conditions over the past decade or so has been phenomenal and is predicted to stay in the coming decades. Hence employee management is becoming a strong challenge for the HR professionals working in India.
as correctly pointed by many respondents in this study.\textsuperscript{69} While the interview results suggest that social media are extensively getting leveraged in different processes of the organizations, most of the HR managers and HR professionals reported that nowadays organizations are exploiting social media extensively for managing their employees in several ways: such as recruitment and selection, employer branding, employee engagement, employee engagement and supporting existing literature on such kind of studies. Besides, almost all participants accepted the risks involved in the high usage of social media concerning employee as well as organization privacy.\textsuperscript{70,71} Besides nowadays to deal with the existing talent crunch and the competition in the labor market more and more organizations are targeting the “best employer” status.\textsuperscript{72,73} Our interview analysis revealed that HR professionals are actively using social media for this purpose by posting and discussing different HR practices on different web forums and initiating feedbacks from the audiences. The respondents unanimously agreed that they are actively using their social networking sites pages for this purpose. Most of the participants we interviewed agreed that today organizations are using blogs and social networking sites, to establish their employer brands.\textsuperscript{74,75} In today’s competitive marketplace, employee engagement has been considered as a critical driver of business success.\textsuperscript{76,77} Social networking channels like blogs, intranet sites, and microblogging; via social networking sites provide numerous opportunities for companies to forge more genuine and direct connections with their employees.\textsuperscript{78} This has enabled the employee to discuss their viewpoints and issues with their leaders, fellow employees, and the superiors easily and openly. Our findings suggest that HR professionals are briskly using social networking sites to enhance employee engagement in their organizations. As the respondents highlighted there are different mechanisms employed by organizations for recognizing their employees. Organizations mostly prefer to appreciate employees in various community or group setups like recognition within a team, within the company, within a region, or within multiple social community platforms. Employees are highlighted for their exemplary work, characteristics, courage, judgments, accomplishments, skill, traits, and abilities. On the other hand, this activity communicates to employees that they are effective and imperative contributors to achieve organization objectives and purposes. Employees also realize their responsibility toward the organization as critical partners or stakeholders of the organization. Finally, these receiving appreciation experiences signal to employee’s uniqueness and individuality, which transmit directly to the employees’ self-worth, identity, and self-respect.\textsuperscript{79} Besides, recognition also positively influences employee’s perception of self-worth, promotes competitiveness, enhances trust and productivity.\textsuperscript{80} When the coverage of appreciation goes beyond the organizations’ restricted boundaries and reaches the larger population, the recognition brings a high degree of satisfaction and hence promotes employee engagement, trust, retention, and productivity at the workplace.\textsuperscript{80} Every social or public recognition strategy has both an external and internal dimension to explore. In this study, many respondents highlighted that social recognition in social media platform promotes employer Branding. The employee recognition updates in social media may redirect the traffic to the organization’s banner site, where the corporate can use this opportunity with a more detailed description of why the employee was recognized. On the same webpage, the employer may include a customizable banner ad to drive recruitment or general company product or services awareness or offering campaigns. The banner ad might highlight an upcoming career fair, new product launch, open house with customers or business stakeholders, current open positions-to be hired, community support or outreach program highlights, etc. These natural ways of information feed connect the organization with relevant and potential job applicants, customers suppliers. With an effective social recognition strategy, a forward-looking organization can build a strong bond with its employees, can propagate employee value proposition, and help in acquiring the attention of potential customers and community. Besides, as highlighted by some respondents, social media has been seen as a way for self-promotion which is always considered as a pervasive human motivation. Self-promotion or personal branding is an intrinsic part of general yet extremely pervasive human motive, to be perceived favorably by others. In the case of self-promotion, people desire to be received by others as being smart, talented, competent, courageous, capable, intelligent, and so on.\textsuperscript{78,81} In day to day life, people spend 40\% of their time talking about them, their choices, and their work.\textsuperscript{82,83} The recognition in social media enhances the self-promote score, views, likes, and re-tweet and may reach multifold of higher reach. This recognizes employee exclusivity and individuality, they associate directly to their worth, identity, and respect.\textsuperscript{84,85} \section*{Implications} There are several practical concerns about using social media in organizations. One such concern is the issue related to individual security. While leveraging social media organizations have to be vigilant about privacy and security, as the implications can be harmful to both the concerned individuals and the organizations.\textsuperscript{86} Besides, the use of social media encourages transparency and trust between managers and team members. The recognition through a social platform establishes the credibility of data, a shout-out in a larger forum (internal or external social media platform) gives complete credit of work to team or individuals those have accomplished the task. The willingness and courageous messaging about teamwork and bringing individual or team contribution in front of the larger population support a great deal of trust and reinstate the
manager’s intention therefore the manager’s effectiveness at the workplace experiences positive change. In this regard, organizations may make use of various applications like “Slak” or “Trello” or “workplace” by Facebook or “Chatter” that is designed for group communication and resource sharing. 

Workplace by Facebook and Chatter by the Salesforce, many more similar platforms enable users to create private and public groups. Besides, social media provides opportunities to the organization to create a culture of positive reinforcement, togetherness, and appreciative workplace. It also enables organizations to create a culture where every opinion is deemed valuable.

This can be achieved by a simple digital enhancement in social media by enabling employees to send cards of congratulations or thanks digitally to their colleagues for a job well done. As respondents highlighted many new-age companies are adopting peer-to-peer recognition enabling their employees to acknowledge their peers for their good work which increases employee engagement at the workplace and also promotes shared success. Peer recognition boosts work relationships and it improves confidence and employees’ self-esteem hence brings greater business results. Besides social media can be used in lifting organization morale. Our study validates these earlier findings. Because of its availability at zero cost and availability of a large number of employees on that network organizations use social media and social networks extensively.

Besides, interaction through social media helps executives to connect with the employees encouraging peer-to-peer and leader to employee transparent, communication. This also helps in sharing important information relating to organization growth, production, or performance to employees in a better way. As agreed by, most respondents in this study, acknowledging employees’ work and performances through social media is an incredibly effective tool to reward the employees of an organization and which results in enhancing the workforce morale as well. Besides, recognizing employees over social media helps the organization to reach out to the right people in a larger platform which also results in attracting talent from the external talent pool. The potential employees can recognize the future organization as a democratic and appreciative workplace where peoples are valued and recognized openly in a unlock platform. That entices the potential workforce and pulls the job applicants’ traffic to the organization. A social recognition approach can help the organization to attempt into their employee’s social hang-out circle or social network, to attract the unreached but potential talent available in the wider market at zero cost. Besides, the increased higher circulation of newsfeed also reaches out in many folds outside the organization’s intranet and thus to a wider talent pool or potential applicants, job seekers. These strategies drive many successful recruitment efforts by the current human resource practitioners of talent acquisition managers. Besides, social media can help to improve employee efficiency at work and job performance.

Social recognition in professional platforms like LinkedIn enhances the personal and professional branding of employees within the organization and outside of the organization. People from all over the world have an opportunity to network, engage, and learn from employees recognized for their special skills and competencies. People managers also can endorse employees for their critical skills and share testimonials about employee’s critical contributions in the form of recommendation. Consistent employee recognition through social media can aid employees to feel empowered and trusted. Another remarkable advantage of social media is it helps in increasing employer value propositions. When the organization allows its employees to share their online organizational recognition over social network sites, it reaches multiple groups and forums like Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn and within a quick cycle time, their entire network has access to it. This effort directly or indirectly enhances the employer value proposition. Also, more and more Gen-Y workforce are entering the workplace and they are always constantly digitally and socially connected through social media. The organization may consider a social platform that engages their employees in a centralized platform with the ability for peer-to-peer recognition, public recommendations or shout-outs and celebration which can be experienced through a multitude of likes and comments as well as the ability to track employee achievements, which ultimately will connect them to the GenY workforce spreading all over the world. This kind of employee engagement and recognition model can foster the levels of engagement through the very technology millennia and the Gen-Z workforce may find appealing.

Conclusion and future research

The major contribution of this study is to the social capital literature, in addition to contributing to the “relationship building” literature, by highlighting the efficacy of Social media as a relationship-building tool between the HR department and employees. In the workplace, HR professionals are not always able to make people interact and establish relationships, but it can create conditions where those interactions are more likely to emerge. As our findings suggested, Social media are emerging as one such medium that encourages human networks, involving social ties and relationships thus, assisting HR professionals in enhancing social capital and establishing employee relationships. This study is exploratory and has several limitations that are worthy of future research. First, our data were mainly collected through interviews and relied heavily on HR professionals, confined to a limited sample of IT/ITeS companies. Noting that it is entirely a new area of research, we had little choice but to rely on interview data collected from a limited number of organizations. However, we made efforts to reduce biases through the use of interview protocols and data triangulation, which were useful to
enhance the reliability of our findings. Second, our data were mainly collected from the HR practitioners, through interviews. Third, the study is only considering the usage of social media from the HR practitioners’ point of view. A study in different contexts including different perspectives (e.g. Project leaders/ marketing managers) could be an interesting area for future research. Indian companies prefer to employ practices blending with their uniquely “Indian approach” to any challenges that make them successful not only in India but also in global marketplaces. This study is an effort to highlight such practices and with our research, we have highlighted the importance of social media as a tool in Indian organizations. Nevertheless, the use of social media in organizations, from HR practitioners’ perspectives is a relatively under-explored topic, our study has presented an essential major step in discovering the usage of social media in this area.

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