CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Scope and Source of Review

E-recruitment has been addressed by researchers from diverse fields of research; ranging from social science and cognitive psychology to information systems (IS) and consumer behavior. Social scientists and cognitive psychologists have explored the perceptions and attitudes of the various stakeholders towards the E-recruitment process (Cable and Yu 2000; Stone et al. 2006), while IS researchers have looked at the technical aspects of online recruitment systems (Ruta 2005; Lee 2007). The marketing researchers have considered job seekers/applicants as potential customers and have tried to understand their preferences and expectations of applicants about job websites from a consumer behavior perspective (Maurer and Liu 2007). Due to this interdisciplinary nature of E-recruitment, the following literature review was conducted with the objective of identifying E-recruitment studies published in the context of different interdisciplinary domains. The time-frame chosen for identifying the studies was 2000 to 2010. The rationale for choosing this particular time-period for this review may be justified by the fact that there has been a lack of research in E-recruitment in the preceding decades. Breaugh and Starke’s (2000) review of recruitment studies, one of the highly cited works in recruitment research, did not cover any topic related with E-recruitment. A later review of E-recruitment studies by Lievens and Harris (2003) also consisted of papers published during or after 2000. A pilot search using keywords pertaining to E-recruitment in various electronic journal databases also could identify only one article on E-recruitment published before 2000 – “Internet recruiting and employee discrimination: a legal perspective” by Hogler,
Henle and Bemus published in the Human Resource Management review in 1998. The choice of the timeframe was therefore justified from the literature search process. The studies identified for the literature review were obtained from the electronic databases EBSCO, JSTOR, PROQUEST, Science Direct, Emerald Insight and Google scholar. Journals from different streams of management were searched ranging from HR, IS, Marketing and other interdisciplinary journals. Search terms used to identify potential studies included ‘E- recruitment’, ‘Internet based recruitment’, ‘Web- based recruitment’, ‘E-selection’, ‘Online recruitment’ and ‘E- HRM’. Besides, studies pertaining to the theme of E-recruitment such as traditional RJP studies, papers on theoretical aspects and usability studies in the context of the internet were also searched to identify potentially relevant papers. Only articles published in peer-reviewed journals were considered for this review. Except for a few relevant papers, conference papers and doctoral dissertations were excluded from the final set of papers. The choice of peer-reviewed articles over conference and working paper articles was prompted by the fact that the former are considered as the most credible representations of research and such articles undergo rigorous peer review process to get published (Lievens and Harris 2003). A few exceptions include one conference paper proceeding by Kroustalis and Meade (2007) and one conference paper presented by Wolfswinkel (2009) due to relevance of topic.

2.2 Perceived Advantages of E-Recruitment

E-recruitment has been found to help organizations in significantly reducing recruitment related costs. As an example, Dow Chemical’s was able to reduced its hiring cycle from 90 to 34 days and cost per hire by 26 % through online recruitment practices (Maurer and Liu 2007) A survey by the Society of Human Resource
Management (SHRM) in 2002 showed that major US MNCs such as Nike, Home Depot and JC Penny have resorted to online recruitment and selection processes in recent times (Chapman and Webster 2003). In the Indian context, a case study by Kumari, Bhatt and Pandey (2010) on Hindustan Coca Cola Beverage Pvt. Ltd. revealed that the firm was outsourcing its recruitment and selection processes to major Indian third party service providers such as Naukri and Monster. Majority of Indian organizations have likewise shifted from the traditional HR system to an online platform (Doh, Stumf, Tymon and Haid 2008). Costs associated with traditional recruitment activities have been reduced by almost 80% in India by using E-recruitment media (Tyagi 2012). Thus E-recruitment has brought about a revolutionary change in management of two traditional HR functions - recruitment and selection (Bartram 2000; Maurer and Liu 2007).

2.3 Perceived Disadvantages of E-Recruitment

Despite having numerous promising advantages over traditional recruitment practices, in one respect, there is a serious disadvantage of E-recruitment. Being a relatively new medium of job advertisement, it has been found to be perceived as less credible in comparison with traditional recruitment channels such as campus interviews, newspaper ads and career fairs (Kuhn and Skuterud 2000; Zusman and Landis 2002; Cable and Yu 2007). This is a major shortcoming of online recruitment, since perceptions about credibility of job-related information posted in such websites may have significant impact on the job-seekers’ eventual preference to apply for jobs through such websites over other media such as personal channels, newspaper ads and job fairs (Kuhn and Skuterud 2000; Zusman and Landis 2002). From previous studies, two factors could be identified to have significant impact on the perceived credibility
of the posted job advertisement - the believability of the information (trustworthiness) and the usefulness of the information conveyed through the ad (expertise). Using cognitive theories of information processing and attitude formation, researchers such as Cable and Yu (2000) and Dineen and colleagues (2002) have found that people tend to believe more in information received through face to face communication than those received through remote sources. Add to that, since information can be posted in the web by anybody owning a website or by a person with the license to modify web content, the genuineness of such information has been found to be less than that shared through more official media such as newspapers and television commercials. Unfamiliarity with the World Wide Web (WWW) and computer systems may also create less trust among job seekers regarding the authenticity of the job ads. At the same time, the details of the information may get overlooked in the background of a complex website design.

2.4 Factors Affecting E-recruitment Message Credibility

Despite the benefits of E-recruitment as a low cost job search medium, information about job vacancies posted on online recruitment websites has been found to be considered as less trustworthy by job seekers compared with more traditional recruitment sources such as newspaper advertisements, employee referrals and career fairs (Kuhn and Skuterud 2000; Zusman and Landis 2002; Cable and Yu 2006). As an explanation to this, researchers have referred to the Media Credibility Theory (Cable and Yu 2006). Media Credibility Theory suggest that indirect and non-expert channels of communication may be perceived as less credible compared to more direct and expert channels such as face-to-face interaction or traditional print media. Media credibility, which is, ‘the perceived accuracy and believability of a particular source
of information’ (Cable and Yu 2006; 2007) may also differ from media to media depending on how interactive a medium is. Credibility has two distinct dimensions—expertise and trustworthiness (Cacioppo et al. 1986; Cable and Yu 2007).

Expertise refers to ‘the volume of information that is available in a media, which is perceived to be important or interesting by the information processor’ (Cable and Yu 2007). In E-recruitment’s context, the expertise of a recruitment source will be the extent to which the job seekers perceive the information available in the source to be relevant for their job search and job application. Trustworthiness dimension of media credibility refers to ‘the extent to which an information source is perceived to provide truthful and bias free information’ (Cable et al. 2000; 2006).

2.4.1 Empirical Research on Media Credibility in E-Recruitment Context

Cable and Yu (2006) have propounded that in general, organizations try to overhype their risk-taking culture and subdue their rules orientation to attract talent. But jobseekers typically undervalue such information and make their own judgment based on prior work experience with the organization or they prefer to rely on word of mouth publicity. In E-recruitment context, the scope of the organization glorifying its image to attract talent increases. Simultaneously, job seekers too can become disillusioned with the facts presented in the corporate career sections and consider the information lacking in credibility. Therefore, firms need to redesign the content of their corporate websites so that jobseekers can be convinced of the credibility of the information posted through such sources. In an earlier study, Cable and his associates (2000) have conducted a research on understanding how jobseekers use different sources of information about an organization to form their attitude to apply in those organizations. This study showed that word-of-mouth information about an
organizations’ image was considered to be more authentic by job-seekers compared to the message portrayed in the corporate career websites. Therefore the traditional recruitment media were considered to be more credible by the respondents compared with E-recruitment.

Zusman and Landis (2002) conducted an experimental design to see if there is any difference in credibility perceptions of job seekers between traditional and web-based recruitment. Their results revealed that paper and pencil recruitment formats were more preferred than web-based format by job applicants. The researchers suggested that one possible reason for such finding could be that applicants got distracted by the different peripheral features of the web-based format. The traditional paper based job advertisement could have been considered to be more informative and concise. Zusman and Landis also found out that web-sites with more attractive and interactive features were more favorably perceived by the job applicants compared to less attractive ones.

The preference for face-to-face recruitment channels such as personal networking and contacts with headhunters as job search options have been confirmed in the research of Feldman and Klass (2002) who found that internet job search engines were preceded by personal networking and headhunters as the most preferred outlet for getting a job. However, Feldman and Klass also found that the respondents kept internet based job portals ahead of newspaper ads and other forms of media such as career fairs and campus placement services. This finding indicated that E-recruitment may be gradually able to replace newspaper ads and other indirect methods of traditional recruitment (eg. job fairs) for job search by today’s labor pool.
Speaking of information credibility in case of E-recruitment, organizations have the power to manipulate the contents of their career pages to suit their recruitment needs. Firms may use their online career websites to reflect a positive image of their organization. If job seekers perceive organizations to be deliberately exaggerating the facts, they may view the recruitment message with less trust and belief. Young and Foot (2005) conducted a content analysis of the fortune 500 company’s corporate career websites which showed that corporate organizations try to glorify their image as benevolent employers in the contents displayed in their career websites. From this, it may be inferred that E-recruitment lacks the same level of believability and credibility as associated with the traditional recruitment media to win the trust of job-applicants.

On the other side of the coin, E-recruitment also does have some potential advantages which are lacking in traditional recruitment sources such as cost effectiveness and a wider job market (Lievens and Harris 2003). However, initially, the job-seekers must be free of any apprehensions related to the believability of the information posted in the E-recruitment websites. Job seekers may develop a favorable attitude towards E-recruitment only when they get the justification for the validity of the information posted in such sites. This justification can be provided in terms of perceptions about the believability, accuracy, trust and depth of the information provided in the job portals among jobseekers. Thus, it may be inferred that jobseeker perception about a recruitment website may be influenced by those design parameters of the website which may invoke a sense of trust and believability about the website in the minds of the users (such as the source of the information, the message content etc).

Existing research has indicated that candidates have to be absolutely convinced about the authenticity of the job related information before they wish to apply for it. In case
of job boards, the medium is low in credibility due to the lack of interactivity. The challenge is to provide them with a job preview which appears realistic in its content. As suggested by Van Hoye and Lievens (2007), it remains to be explored how multiple employee testimonials affect applicant attraction. At the same time, there is no study to investigate the impact of RJP s in the testimonials on the overall credibility of the message. Most of the RJP research has been restricted to traditional recruitment research only, which makes studies in this aspect all the more necessary.

Previous research has found that job seekers tend to feel attracted towards an organization if they can identify some attributes about their prospective employer/organization which they value/desire (Kristoff 1996). This concept, known better as the person-organization (P-O) fit, has been extensively researched over the past fifty years, with results showing employees with high P-O fit were less willing to quit their organization and vice versa. In order to increase the trustworthiness of the recruitment message, it is important that the job-seekers believe in the organization first. The question arises as to how to give the applicants a sense of high P-O fit? What are the key elements of a website which can reflect the employer as a perfect fit to the talent pool out there in the labor market?

Dineen, Ash and Noe (2002) tried to see if person organization (P-O) fit theory could be used to predict job seeker attitude towards online recruitment. They administered a survey on 312 students from a Midwestern university in USA by asking them about their perceptions of objective and subjective fit regarding a career webpage of a fictitious company, Office Pro Inc. The site provided a fit-check option to the candidates where they could check how much the organization was fitting with their expectation and get, on a scale of 100, their P-O fit scores instantly. Different versions of the same organizational webpage were created and were shown to two separate
groups of respondents. One webpage provided additional information about the organizations’ values reflecting the organizational culture, while the other showed only job related information. The results gave implication that providing additional information about the organization’s values and culture in the career websites may have some impact on the applicant’s subjective and objective P-O fit and their subsequent attraction towards that organization. This study provided indications that using E-recruitment websites to increase P-O fit perceptions of job-seekers may be a very good strategy for talent acquisition and retention.

The culture of an organization has been found to be a vital factor in affecting employees’ turnover intentions. E-recruitment websites can be designed specifically to give an implication about the organization’s culture (Braddy et al. 2006). Therefore, E-recruitment channels can be used by the HR department of a firm to promote a positive culture of the firm. To understand to what extent organizational familiarity affects job seeker’s decision to apply, Allen and his fellow researchers (2007) used the brand equity theory from the marketing literature to explore the impact of an organization’s brand name on the perceptions of jobseekers. A structural equation modeling was done which revealed that jobseekers tend to be attracted to apply in an organization depending on the amount of information accessible in the webpage about it, the brand image of that organization and based on personal attitude towards that organization. The authors suggested that organizations should take necessary endeavors to project a favorable public image in the web content of their recruitment websites, which may help them to attract potential employees.

As is with the case of the authenticity of the recruitment message, another issue with online recruiting is the perceptions regarding fairness of the online recruitment process itself. How fairly do the corporate recruiters screen the resumes of online
applicants? Dineen, Noe and Wang (2004) examined this question. Their literature review suggested that individuals’ trust in e-commerce systems is largely dependent on the user’s familiarity with the technology, perceptions about its reliability and on the control mechanisms to check for system redundancies. E-recruitment systems are relatively new in the job market compared to traditional recruitment media. Therefore, there is a high probability that job seekers may be apprehensive about the reliability of such systems. Then again, the job boards and career websites are free to display any message tailored to their needs by manipulating the web content. This may seriously reduce the trust factor among the users. Basing their view on the procedural justice theory of fairness and the theory of technology acceptance, Dineen and colleagues (2004) hypothesized that job seeker’s perceptions about the decision making agent (most often the recruiting manager/executive), the time taken to follow up for the interview and their level of comfort with E-recruitment systems may be some crucial factors behind applicant perception towards e-recruiting. Their analysis yielded support for the relationship between procedural justice and website content parameters such as consistency, provision for appeal, provision for additional information, the nature of the decision agent (human/automated) and timeliness of reply.

Although the above studies give some strong implications about the impact of positive employer branding campaigns on job seeker’s application decision, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007) have argued that neutral word-of-mouth publicity may serve a better purpose of promoting the organizations to the job seekers compared to company fabricated culture and value testimonials based on the postulates of the source credibility framework. They used a sample of 108 nurses registered in a Belgian university in a simulation study. Participants were divided into two groups. Each
group was asked to visit the website of a medium-sized regional hospital to search for job vacancies. The website was modeled on an actual hospital website. The homepage displayed information regarding the organization. The job vacancy page listed a job of a head nurse. For one of the groups, an employee testimonial page was provided along with the job vacancy page. The other group was directed to another website, where they received information about the same job from a neutral person. Both the employee testimonial as well as the word of mouth pages featured the same person— a lady clad in a nurse uniform. The result showed that word of mouth was definitely considered to be a more credible source of information than employee testimonials. At the same time word of mouth information about the organization/ work environment was considered to be more credible than personal facts/ experience of the individual. However, as suggested by the researchers, it remains to be seen the impact of multiple employee testimonials and RJP based testimonials on applicant perceptions of credibility. Also other modes of word of mouth such as weblogs, chat rooms, social networking sites and newsgroups need to be examined to better understand the role of word of mouth in job seeker behavior.

2.4.2 Application of Realistic Job Previews in E-Recruitment: Empirical Evidence

Popovich and Wanous (1982) define an RJP is a "persuasive communication" that is designed to change attitudes about the job and the organization (i.e., to make them more realistic). RJPs have developed based on the assumptions of the realistic information hypothesis (Meglino et al. 1997; Breauh and Starke 2000), which states that people recruited through certain sources (e.g. employee referrals) are likely to possess more accurate information about the job and the organization compared to other sources of job information (for eg. campus placement officers, newspaper ads
etc). This may be because when candidates are contacted for job through referrals, they receive the job related information from a current employee of that organization. As a result, the information received is considered more realistic than those portrayed by third party officials or advertisements. Therefore, online job ads may find it difficult to establish a sense of realism in their content to attract potential employees.

To counter such effect, organizations have tried to use employee testimonials in E-recruitment ads to give jobseekers a peep into the real work environment. However, such practices have been limited to using only positive feedback about the workplace from the employees (Breaugh and Starke 2000). RJP s, which have been used extensively in traditional recruitment research, have been completely neglected in E-recruitment research till date (Strohmeyer 2007; Wolfswinkel 2009). Hence it is not known whether providing employee testimonials with realistic previews will be considered more credible by job seekers compared with positively designed testimonials. It has already been discussed in the previous section that since the content of a webpage can be manipulated by the firm owning the website, therefore, if jobseekers find only good feedback given by employees about their organization in the testimonials, they may consider such feedback less credible and lose the desire to apply for job in that organization (Young and Foot 2005). Hence providing positive as well as negative information about the job may induce a sense of authenticity about the information among job seekers. It has also been found that people consider any information as trustworthy if they receive information that is different from what is expected by them (Breaugh and Starke 2000). In this regard, RJP s definitely provide unexpected information about a job.

From the above discussion it becomes evident that an RJP can actually change job seeker attitudes by increasing the credibility of the advertisement. Drawing upon the
Yale Persuasive Communication Model (YPCM) as suggested by Popovich and Wanous (1982), it becomes further evident that the source of the message and the message content both are crucial elements of persuasive communication to be effective. Hence it is essential that the persuasive message comes from a credible source and with a believable content. Another critical property of an RJP is that it contains important information about the job and the organization being considered by the applicant from a neutral point of view (Barksdale et al. 2003).

Given this brief explanation of RJP effectiveness, the importance of the timing of the RJP becomes apparent. If the RJP is given after a job offer has been accepted, it is too late for the individual to get any prior idea of the workplace atmosphere. Thus, the RJP is unlikely to affect employee satisfaction and turnover (Breaugh and Billings 1988). Therefore, it is necessary that RJP based applicant attraction strategies should be implemented at a very early stage of career cycle, favorably for those job seekers who are about to enter the job market for the first time in their lives. Traditionally, RJPs have been utilized for lower level and entry level jobs that are being filled externally through recruitment advertisements (Dugoni and Ilgen 1981; Breaugh 1983). It has been found that RJPs are more effective when used for attracting inexperienced job seekers (Meglino et al. 1997). To be effective, an RJP must convey accurate information. However, the information must be more than accurate; it must be both specific and broad in scope. Concerning specificity, if an applicant is to be able to make an informed decision about a job offer, the individual must receive information that is sufficiently detailed to allow such a decision (Breaugh and Billings 1988). Similarly, the information conveyed in the RJP should cover a broad range of topics (e.g., job duties, coworkers, supervision, reward practices, company politics, and work unit climate).
For most part of the job search process, information that is already known to the applicant will not be perceived as important. Thus, information conveyed in the RJP should be largely information that the applicant is lacking. Furthermore, it should deal with aspects of the job that are of concern to the applicant (Breaugh and Billings 1988; Saks and Cronshaw 1990; Phillips 1998). To insure realism and relevance, the organization should do everything it can to provide information that is accurate, specific, and broad in scope, credible, and important. Concerning the source(s) of the information to be communicated in the RJP (whether a booklet, conversation, film, etc.), multiple sources of work-related information should be utilized in order to develop an RJP that provides realistic and relevant information (e.g., job incumbents, the immediate supervisor, the job description, employee manuals, personnel department representatives, exit interviews with former employees). With rise of Web 2.0, we now have a host of interactive online platforms where job related information including RJPs can be posted. RJP based employee testimonials can be more effective especially when such information is posted in company independent forums. Such a medium of RJP presentation may help in enhancing the persuasiveness of the message conveyed through RJPs (Popovich and Wanous 1982).

It remains to be seen whether and how the nature of the testimonial content (positive/realistic) affects the credibility of E-recruitment advertisements. The research question which can be drawn from this query is – will job seekers consider employee testimonials with realistic information as more authentic and believable compare to testimonials with only positive information about a firm? Based on this research question, it is proposed that online job descriptions be designed with employee testimonials having realistic job previews (both positive and negative information
about the job). This study wishes to understand how such design manipulation affects the credibility of online job advertisements in the minds of job seekers.

2.4.3 Use of company independent sources for posting employee testimonials: empirical evidence

Due to the possibility of content manipulation by the website owner in case of E-recruitment, it has been time and again observed that job seekers have relied less on job related information posted online and have preferred more traditional media to seek such information. Such user behavior can be interpreted through the source credibility framework (Van Hoye and Lievens 2007), which posits that more credible information sources are considered more persuasive in changing attitudes as well as behaviors. In E-recruitment context, this theory suggests that job seekers perceive credibility of different recruitment sources based on the level of neutrality of the sources. This is because, the more neutral a recruitment source, less is its motivation to explicitly promote the recruiting firm. Therefore, company independent sources of E-recruitment should be considered as more credible than company dependent sources (Van Hoye and Lievens 2005; 2007).

Earlier E-recruitment was conducted primarily through company-dependent sources such as job boards (e.g., Monster.com) that post job descriptions and specifications for organizations for a fee or via organizations’ official websites, including pages dedicated solely to recruiting. In recent years, a new wave of internet revolution has taken place with the advent of Web 2.0 technology (blogs, chat-rooms, social networking sites etc.), which has made the cyber experience of users more interactive and real-time (Russell 2008). Nowadays, we have several WEB 2.0 enabled web-based platforms such as social networking websites (MySpace, Facebook etc.) being used by headhunters to recruit passive job seekers and independent blogs such as
Glassdoor (www.glassdoor.com) where ex and current employees can post their testimonials about their previous and current workplaces respectively (Russell, 2009). In the E-recruitment context, the most representative Web 2.0 tools are:

- Blogs, created by applicants and employers and headhunters (High-tech-job, Glassdoor etc.).
- Online Social Networks: Facebook or professional networks (LinkedIn) to find customers, partners and future employees, to hunt and contact “passive” applicants.
- Virtual worlds: Second Life.

Such platforms have the advantage over company owned websites for being considered as credible, due to the fact that such media are free from any outside corporate influence and generally firms do not have control over the content of such websites (Van Hoye and Lievens 2007). Employee testimonials are an important means which organizations can use in their website design features to portray their culture. Fazio and Zanna (1981) found that jobseekers like testimonials because they are first-hand personal accounts of the organizational culture and anecdotal evidence indicates that testimonials are highly persuasive in recruitment contexts (Highhouse, Hoffman, Greve, & Collins, 2002). Cober et al. (2003) also suggested the positive aspect of using employee testimonials citing the fact that such testimonials provide a human touch, enhancing feelings of identification with the hiring organization. Web 2.0 platforms such as web blogs have opened up a new avenue for communicating free thoughts to the masses in this digital age.

In online recruitment, there may be simultaneous advantages and disadvantages of using RJs in employee testimonials. There is a possibility that job seekers may find
negative information about the firm shared by an employee as a shock and as a result may lose interest in applying (Cable et al. 2000). There remains the possibility that irrespective of the testimonial’s content, job-seekers may perceive any feedback by employees being fabricated by the firm itself in an attempt to glorify its image. This may have negative repercussions on the perceived credibility of the job site. However, if the same information is posted through a neutral third party channel, then the message may be able to project a greater air of honesty (Popovich and Wanous 1982) among the job seekers. Providing job related realistic information through neutral web channels such as company independent social networking sites and blogs can therefore be an important medium for providing RJP's since they provide a neutral and inside view of the workplace environment and at the same time are not influenced by the company. Such information can lead to online word-of-mouth publicity (Van Hoye and Lievens 2007).

The main difference made by the company independent recruitment channels is that in the latter, both positive and negative message can be propagated depending on the sender’s choice. The message host is not compelled to glorify the information as he/she is not part of the organization. Therefore, company independent media are more capable of propagating a sense of realism and as such can be ideal for hosting RJP type information. Earlier research has not addressed the question as to whether communicating job vacancies through word of mouse channels such as blogs can enhance the credibility of E-recruitment advertisements. Hence, it is proposed that online job ads be posted through company owned career pages as well as company independent sources such as a neutral blog featuring testimonials from past employees. Websites dedicated to such testimonial hosting have recently been started in the USA, for example Glassdoor (www.glassdoor.com) is a website where
anonymous bloggers can post what they feel about their present or previous workplaces. It is still to be seen whether providing realistic previews through company independent web blogs leads to a higher perception about credibility in the minds of the jobseekers and their eventual willingness to apply for the job compared with those hosted through company dependent sources. Therefore, this study wishes to compare perception of testimonials propagated through company owned (company dependent) platforms with those hosted through company neutral (company independent) sources.

2.5 Factors Affecting E-recruitment Website Quality

2.5.1 Empirical Research on Website Quality in E-Recruitment Context

Does the quality of an online job website have any effect on the overall the job search process? Jansen, Jansen and Spink (2005) asked this specific question in their study of e job queries and real time site visits recorded at the transaction logs of the website www.excite.com, a major job search engine during 1999-2001. The transaction log of excite.com had three sub-fields. The first one, time of day- kept record of at what time the users logged into excites’ website and for how long they stayed there. The user identification section consisted of an anonymous user code which helped in identifying the specific users, and the query term section which kept record of the exact query terms typed by the users during the job search. The results showed that on an average, job seekers spent relatively less time during their job search sessions. The most frequently used search terms were ‘employment’, ‘job’, ‘monster’ and ‘resume’. It was also found that only 52 % of the respondents were satisfied with the job search process- the biggest problem faced by them being the inability to locate jobs in time (Jansen et al. 2005). The search terms used frequently by the job seekers may not have matched those used by the recruiters. Deficiency in the design features of these
websites have been cited by other researchers as well (Maurer and Liu 2007) as a major reason why job seekers have been less willing to rely on E-recruitment media compared to traditional channels.

It has been argued from the perspective of Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory, that, a positive perception about the ease of use and usefulness dimensions of web quality is very much essential for the development of a favorable attitude for the job seekers towards the job portal (Zeithaml et al. 2002; Koufaris 2002; Loiacano et al. 2007). The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) theory states that ‘the acceptance of a new technology to an end user will depend on the perceived ease of use (user friendliness) and perceived usefulness of the technology’ (Koufaris 2002; Loiacano et al. 2007). Hence the goal of E-recruitment website developers should be to make the websites more user-friendly and full of useful information.

Braddy and associates (2003) found that navigational ease was positively related with a favorable recruitment message. Another paper which provides additional justification to the TAM theory is that by Tong et al (2005). Tong and his fellow researchers (2005) wanted to understand how the overall performance time and the mental workload exerted to perform a task influence’s a user’s perceived service quality. In E-recruitment term, this performance time was defined as the overall time taken to apply for a job through an online job board. It was found that for website with faster performance time, users had a higher perception of website quality. This gave empirical justification to their hypotheses that site quality and response time may have major impact on the user’s perceived service quality of E-recruitment websites.

Koong and others (2002) looked into five of the world’s most popular job boards; Monster, Vault, Dice, Future step and Headhunter; to compare and analyze the different functions available at these premier job search engines for the corporate
recruiters as well as the job seekers. They identified forty-six desirable attributes to facilitate the job search process based on a pilot survey. They then reviewed the web content of those five job boards to see which of those attributes were present in the website’s design features. The authors categorized the attributes into primary, secondary and unique attributes depending on the nature of their application. Their study revealed that none of those job boards had all the attributes; in fact, only Hotjobs and Monster had seventy five percent of the desired set of attributes. This study gave evidence that there is a scope for improving the design of the recruitment job boards to enhance the quality of the site for the job seekers as well as the corporate recruiters.

Cober and others (2004) conducted a longitudinal study between 2000 and 2002 to analyze the corporate career website features of Fortune’s ‘100 best places to work for’. Their analysis revealed that interactive features allowing jobseekers to choose their job search process led to better perception about P-O fit in the applicant’s mind about the organization. There was some evidence that targeted recruitment messages may have a positive impact on user perceptions. Cober and his associates (2004) also stated that there was a lack of understanding regarding exactly what sort of information was considered valuable by the job seekers in E-recruitment websites. Future research in this direction could be very much beneficial in redesigning the form and content of these websites. There was also the scope and opportunity to influence applicant’s decision to apply online by implementing realistic job previews, which, only a few of the Fortune 100 organizations had in place.

In one comparative analysis of Malaysian E-recruitment websites with respect to their global counterparts, Tong and Sivanand (2005) underwent a case study analysis of six E-recruitment service providers’ websites. Three such websites belonged to
international organizations such as Monster, CareerBuilder and Hotjobs, and the other three were indigenous Malaysian companies, namely, Jobstreet, JoblinkAsia and JobDB. They identified three types web platform tools- primary, secondary and auxiliary based on a literature review on form and content of web design. Their study revealed that all the six websites provided the primary platform tools, which were the basic navigational characteristics of the websites. These tools were log in, search, search by location, job description, keyword, company search, e resume service, job alert etc. The secondary tools were identified as those, which added aesthetical values to the site and make the job search process more enjoyable experience. In this regard, they found that CareerBuilder scored higher than any site, as it had a unique feature of radio broadcasting of jobs in their website, which all the others lacked. Overall, the Malaysian websites fared poorly compared to the international ones in terms of secondary platform application. The same trend was observed in terms of auxiliary support services such as career fairs, news/ press, online games and chatting. Several empirical studies have time and again established the importance of ‘ease of use’ and ‘usefulness’ factors behind formation of perceptions of website quality. Lin (2010) found that among factors such as the jobseeker’s attitude, the subjective norms that they develop, and perceived behavioral control, the website’s perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness also played their part in influencing perceptions of web quality. Terzis and Economides (2005) also included navigability and ease of use as a component in their proposed job site evaluation framework for evaluating the quality of an E-recruitment website.

How important are aesthetic features of E-recruitment websites in influencing job seeker’s attraction to the site? Dineen and others (2007) addressed this query in a later study. The researchers wanted to find the interrelationship between online recruitment
web aesthetics, customized information regarding perceived fit of applicants and applicant willingness to apply. Their study revealed that providing customized P-O fit information resulted in a better perceived fit towards the job by the applicants. Applicants who perceived lesser fit due to such provisions were found to avoid applying subsequently for these jobs. This trend was noticed to be more in websites with better aesthetic designs. This gave evidence that web aesthetics can be a moderator of the perceived fit of applicants and their eventual decision to apply.

Flow theory (Csikszentmihalyi 1990) suggests that human beings can sometimes experience a state of flow, which is a cognitive state of the mind where people have a sensation of being fully immersed in a task. From the flow theory, it may be inferred that while designing websites for e-commerce purposes, web developers must keep in mind the salient features of a website, which can trigger a flow experience in the consumers.

The empirical works done in this context support the logic proposed here (Koufaris 2002; Loiacano et al. 2007). From a job portal’s perspective, unique creative features like video podcasts of the organizations advertising the job will appear more appealing and convincing to the job seeker in comparison to dull textual advertisement (Koufaris 2002). Thus, from above studies, it becomes evident the importance of making the websites more easy to use, more useful and entertaining in order to enhance the perceived quality of a website becomes evident. High quality websites will help in triggering central route of information processing from the applicants (Petty et al. 1987) which in turn will help in engaging the job seekers to devote more time towards online job search. This can help E-recruitment websites to replace traditional recruitment channels as the most preferred medium for finding and applying for jobs.
2.5.2 Application of A-V Media in E-Recruitment Ads: Empirical Evidence

Communication channels that permit timely feedback (e.g., real-time exchange of messages), convey multiple language cues (e.g., words, facial expressions, body posture), allow tailoring of messages to personal circumstances (e.g., customized to the needs of a recipient), and provide language variety (e.g., written text, charts and graphs, verbal expression) are referred to as rich media (Daft et al. 1987). As per the media richness theory (Daft et al. 1987; Cable et al. 2000), synchronous media such as face-to-face oral communication, telephonic communications etc. are richer than asynchronous media such as mail correspondence or information in a webpage (Cable and Yu 2006). In earlier studies, textual communication has been found to be the least rich medium of communication (Zusman and Landis 2002; Cober et al. 2004; Cable and Yu 2006). Previous studies have shown that pictures strongly enhance and reinforce information about an organization’s values (Cober et al. 2004) and can impact memories more effectively than text (Cober et al. 2003). Moreover, the use of pictures in addition to text increases the viewer’s cognitive awareness, leading to an increase in attention to the information provided (Daft et al. 1987). Audio-visual cues have similarly been found to be more attractive for information processing compared to text based cues (Walker et al. 2009).

Such media may also lead to enhancing the perceived quality of a website. In this regard, the rise of video podcasts in recent times has opened up a whole new avenue of presenting online information. Video platforms, such as YouTube or Youjob, give companies the opportunity to present their job offers, and applicants the possibility of introducing their CV through live streaming videos. Until recently, organizations were only providing a brief text-based presentation about their profile. In MonsterIndia website (www.monsterindia.com), a recent addition has been the section of video
profile of organizations. The SHRM survey has shown the rise in use of interactive voice response (IVR) technology to screen applicants over telephone followed by computer aided interviews with selected applicants and finally face-to-face interviews (Chapman and Webster 2003). McGowan (2010) reported that by 2011, use of podcasts in online advertising will increase significantly and costs per download will range from a few cents to approximately $2, making it a very cost effective channel to host online advertisements. The podcast advertising industry has reached $400 million by 2011, indicating rise in its use and popularity.

Presenting corporate previews through video podcasts/ vodcasts can have more lasting effect on positive employer brand perceptions and consequently on better perceptions of website aesthetics. Not only that, such audio-visual previews can be easier to understand compared to the current practice of textual previews. In one study by Adams, Morris and Van Scotter (1999), face-to-face communication was found to be the best attention grabber, followed by video with audio, then audio only and followed by text only. Thus, it may be inferred that audio-visual medium has a definite advantage over text only medium because it helps in communicating complex information with multiple meanings (Daft et al. 1987), provides more cues to help engage the receiver with the message content and enhance a sense of affect (Allen et al. 2004). Additionally, richer media can serve as a source of inside information about the organizational atmosphere through cues such as facial expressions of supervisors, non verbal behavior and speaking tone. Walker et al. (2009) presented job seekers with employee testimonials in two different modes- audio-visual and textual. They found that testimonials shown through audio-visual mode was considered richer by the applicants than those delivered through text. However, their study did not focus on joint effect of RJP's and audio-visual channels in unison on job-seeker perception.
As per the employer branding literature, empirical evidence has been found that various early recruitment practices can be used to externally market the brand (Ambler and Barrow 1996; Collins and Stevens, 2002) and that employer branding has beneficial effects in terms of increasing applicant quantity and quality (Collins and Han, 2004). In consumer literature, Park, Jaworski and MacInnis (1986) divided brands in three categories on the basis of the consumer needs they fulfill: (a) functional needs, (b) symbolic needs, and (c) experiential needs. Symbolic attributes are linked to people’s need to maintain their self-identity, to enhance their self-image, or to express themselves (their beliefs, their traits and their personality) (Aaker 1997, 1999; Katz 1960; Shavitt 1990).

In terms of E-recruitment, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) defined instrumental attributes as describing the job or organization in terms of objective, concrete and factual attributes that the job or organization either has or does not have such as pay, perks and promotion. Symbolic attributes were described as subjective, abstract and intangible attributes that convey symbolic company information in the form of imagery and trait inferences that applicants assign to organizations such as an organization’s office ambience, non-hierarchical management and cooperative working environment.

Lievens and Highhouse reported that symbolic image dimensions accounted over and above instrumental attributes in predicting a bank’s perceived attractiveness as an employer. In another study, Slaughter et al. (2004) focused on the symbolic image dimensions and confirmed that they were related to organizational attractiveness. Finally, Lievens, Van Hoye and Schreurs (2005) confirmed that symbolic image dimensions were more effective than instrumental image components in attracting students to apply in the Army. Cable and Yu (2006) also gave similar implications
regarding the different perceptions about the credibility and richness of different sources of recruitment in the minds of jobseekers and showed that a richer source of recruitment led to a positive perception about the organization in the minds of the jobseekers. The credibility of the information also depended on the richness of the medium. These studies give important implications regarding the shortcomings of E-recruitment in terms of lack of credibility and richness of information compared to more direct and traditional modes of recruitment.

Earlier research has shown that audio-visual media has been a better channel to persuade audience compared to oral or booklet based channels (Popovich and Wanous 1982). Baddeley’s (1992) cognitive load theory does point in the same direction, where it is explained why information presented in different modes (some through audio, some through video mode) leads to easier interpretation of the message by the receiver. It is not proven, however, whether use of video podcasts can help in increasing the appeal of online job advertisements. Specifically, it is important to understand how using video-based information delivery styles increase the richness of the E-recruitment media thus enhancing credibility perceptions of the message. It has also been observed that the working memory of human beings consists of a video-spatial sketchpad and a phonological loop which can retain visual and audio stimuli independently (Chandler and Sweller 1991; Baddeley 1992). Thus, information distributed in parts through audio and visual channels such as in live streaming videos (podcasts and vodcasts) can be more helpful for processing of information than that presented as a whole.

Therefore, providing audio-visual cues in a message can help in enhancing the ease of comprehension of the same. This can have positive impact on perceived ease of use of the message. Again, taking cue from the Elaboration Likelihood Model (Petty et al.
1987), the information coming from a richer media will be processed with greater attention as well, which will enhance the perceived usefulness of the message, which can positively influence perceived usefulness of a message (Cable and Yu 2000). Based on the above discussions, this study wishes to understand the influence of audiovisual previews compared with text based previews on job seeker attitude towards the credibility and quality of online recruitment platforms.
2.6 Evidence from Secondary Data Analysis

In order to provide further support to the research gaps of interest that have been highlighted in the previous literature review sections, a secondary data analysis has been carried out to check the extent to which the most sought after employers of today have been applying realistic employee testimonials, company neutral testimonial hosting platforms and audio-visual corporate previews in their corporate websites.

Since this dissertation is focused towards understanding Indian job-seekers’ perception towards online recruitment, hence the websites of the most coveted Indian employers as per the 2013 ‘India’s Best Companies to Work for’ report developed by the Great Place To Work Institute (www.greatplacetowork.in) have been selected for a content analysis. The best companies to work survey, developed by Great Place to Work Institute in collaboration with Economic Times, gives a glimpse of the crème de la crème organizations in India.

The objective of this secondary data analysis is to provide further mettle to the discussion that the design deficiencies which have been identified in the literature review do exist in real world and therefore, should substantiate the reason for conducting this study. The choice of the best places to work as unit of analysis in the content analysis is prompted by the logic that if a significant portion of the most desired employers do not consider incorporating the design modifications proposed in this study in their websites, then such trend can be even more acute for firms with lesser recognition and visibility as employers.

However, such a trend may contribute to a general lack of trust and comfort towards online recruitment in India, a glimpse of which can be had from the India Online Landscape Survey conducted by a private consultancy firm Juxt Consultants (www.juxt.com) which points out that online job search is not a very popular activity
among active Indian job-seekers. Hence the secondary data analysis can help in providing additional support to identify one, if not the most important factor behind such reluctance.

Content analysis is a research technique for making replicable and valid inference from texts or other meaningful matter to the contexts of their use (Krippendorf 2004, p. 18). Content analysis has found its application as a qualitative as well as a quantitative analysis technique in different domains of research like analysis of corporate policy statements, understanding advertisement messages, critical review of political speech and others (Hara, Bonk and Angeli 1998; Peyrefitte and David 2006). Researchers who have studied form and content of E-recruitment websites have labeled various components of online job portals into mainly three broad divisions- primary, secondary and auxiliary/ unique components (Koong et al. 2002; Tong and Sivanand 2005). The most essential features required for the functioning of the online job hosting platform such as ‘log in’, ‘search menu’, ‘search by location’ option, job description, keyword search, company search, e resume service, job alert etc. have been categorized as primary components. The secondary tools were identified as those, which added aesthetical values to the site and make the job search process more enjoyable experience. Peripheral support services such as career fairs, news/ press, online games and chatting came under auxiliary or unique features.

The websites were content-analyzed based on the criteria defined by Tong and Sivanand (2005). The websites were scrutinized for the presence or absence of the following components under three broad domains- Core content (company background details, company history, separate webpage for services offered, clearly specified job descriptions, position and location of job mentioned), Secondary content (company culture, mission and corporate philosophy statement, profile of star
employees, awards or honors, community service, career growth and learning) and Tertiary content (contact information of HR, navigation menu, provision to apply online, campus recruitment information, job alerts).

Three additional criteria were included to check to what extent firms use audio-visual corporate previews in the ‘About Us’ section of the website, the nature of statements given in employee testimonials, and whether the employee testimonials have been provided through company dependent channels or company independent platforms. The top hundred firms listed in the Best place to work survey were included in the content analysis. The analysis was done in Microsoft Excel. Frequency of occurrence of the above mentioned criteria was calculated using percentage method. The results from the exercise have been summarized in Table 1. The specific findings which are of highest relevance for this thesis are:

- Audio-visual corporate previews have been utilized by only 28 firms out of the top 100 best places to work in India. Out of these, 19 have made use of both text and video to describe the workplace to the website’s visitors, while 9 firms have used exclusively video previews. Text based previews are more prevalent (70%).

- There is lack of employee testimonials in over half of these websites (52 %), while the remaining have showcased only positively framed employee testimonials. There is no evidence of use of realistic job previews in any of the websites of the 100 firms under investigation.

- 34 % of the websites do not have any social networking links, and there is zero instance of linking a firm’s employee testimonials to any external third-party blog.
Table 1: Content Analysis of Corporate Websites of 100 Best Places to Work in India

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name of Category</th>
<th>Unit of Analysis</th>
<th>Frequency Count</th>
<th>Percentage (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Core Content</td>
<td>Company Background</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>99</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Company History</td>
<td>94</td>
<td>94</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Separate page for services</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Clearly specified job descriptions</td>
<td>80</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Position mentioned</td>
<td>82</td>
<td>82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Location mentioned</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary Content</td>
<td>Culture/ Life@Firm</td>
<td>74</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mission statements</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Corporate philosophy statements</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Description of workplace</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>text</td>
<td>70</td>
<td>70</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>audio-visual</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>9</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>both</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>none</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Profile of star employees</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>22</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awards and recognition</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>86</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Service</td>
<td>85</td>
<td>85</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>----</td>
<td>----</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Content type of Employee Testimonials**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Positive</th>
<th>48</th>
<th>48</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None present</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career growth prospects mentioned</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Tertiary Content**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Contact information of HR</th>
<th>94</th>
<th>94</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Search menu/ navigation bar</td>
<td>96</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision to apply online</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>92</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Campus recruitment</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Alerts (RSS Feeds)</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Source of Social Networking Links**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Company Dependent</th>
<th>66</th>
<th>66</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Company Independent</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No link</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
From these findings the case for the research problem can be made more acute and demanding. It is at least verified through secondary data analysis that even a significant majority of websites belonging to the best firms in India have deficiencies in use of audio-visual corporate preview, realistic employee testimonials and company-neutral ad hosting channels. The findings further suggest the acute absence of the proposed design modifications in existing website content of Indian corporate firms, which further necessitates the timeliness and need for conducting the proposed study.