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Cyber vetting and Online Personnel Selection in the Greek Marketing Sector: Exploring Employer's Use of Online Information and Its Effects on the Current Social Contract of Employment

Student Name: Filippos Keranis

Student Number: 406746

Supervisor: Daniel Trottier

Erasmus School of History, Culture and Communication

Erasmus University Rotterdam

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Abstract

As the perceived availability and credibility of conventional sources is increasing by the visibility and scarcity of online information sources, employers use online information to evaluate job candidates during personnel selection. This qualitative study investigates employers' sense making about cyber vetting. It also reports how employers use and communicatively frame cyber vetting to inform fit assessments. In-depth interviews of eight employers and marketing managers operating in the marketing industry of Greece indicate an important shift in the contemporary social contract, resulting therefore in changes in peoples' perceptions, understandings and uses about personnel selection and employability and what constitutes a "good fit". Specifically, research findings indicate that employers legitimize the practice of cyber vetting on the basis of efficiency, reputation and risk management and transparency. The new expectations emerging regarding cyber vetting and online screening extend employment surveillance beyond conventional work roles and contexts, and thereof moving it towards the individual. Research recommendations and contributions include introducing and clarifying the new digital social contract on employability, presenting the new transparency expectations to both employers and employees, as well as suggesting practical, ethical, and communicative implications to address the issue.

Keywords

cyber vetting, online screening, personnel selection, career management, employability, surveillance, social contact, transparency, efficiency, reputation management, communication technologies, online information, fit assessments

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1. Introduction

Employers consider personnel selection as a key variable for establishing competitive advantage in the market (Kraaijenbrink, 2011). Effective personnel selection highly depends on obtaining trustworthy and credible information on job candidates to evaluate who fits to current and future organizational criteria and standards (Dipboye, 2014). In traditional settings those work-related information could only be retrieved and authorized by the candidates themselves. However, information about job applicant is becoming extremely difficult to be obtained and accessed, due to the fear of employers to face libel claims (Shilling, 2009). Specifically, being concerned about former employees' libel claims, employers avoid giving references for former employees apart from employment dates (Shilling, 2009). Consequently, information seeking and applicant surveillance is more heavily practiced, resulting in even further distrust among employers and employees (Andrejevic, 2007). Moreover, driven by the fear of extreme impression management and deception, employers and HR managers tend to question information presented through the conventional communication practices used for offline personnel selection, such as resumes, references, interviews and others (Berkelaar, 2014).

Contemporary technological developments have had a significant effect on a number of business functions and practices. However, over the last years it has been noticed an increase in both interest and use of information technologies (IT) to Human Resource business activities, such as personnel selection and screening (Chapman and Webster, 2003). Based on this context, social media has turned into an essential and effective business tool. Specifically, companies have begun to use, increasingly more, the social media platforms in order to seek their potential employees (Secara and Brinzea, 2014). According to a survey conducted in 2013 by Jobvite, a top recruitment platform for social media, social recruitment stands as a key HR practice used by 94% of the interviewed recruiters. Another research conducted in 2006, showcased that 25% of the surveyed U.S. organizations screened job applicants, using search engines, such as Google and Yahoo, while 12% reviewed the potential employees' social networking websites (SNW) (Brandenburg, 2008), a percentage which has been doubled over one year (Zeidner, 2007). However, contemporary studies and evidence suggest that this particular practice has grown significantly in a number of other countries (Karl et al., 2010).

Specifically, more and more companies engage in online recruiting and selection

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mainly because it is a cost efficient option compared to traditional offline recruiting, and partly because of competitive pressure (Thielsch et al., 2012). This is mainly driven due to the technological changes and developments, and the globalization of the markets that have been undertaken over the last years, resulting in a lack of highly qualified personnel (Collins and Stevens, 2002), and to a “war of talent” (Burke, 2005). Those consequences are mainly based on the notion that in a globalized economy, talent is a valuable attribute and therefore the companies that manage to recruit and select the most qualified employees are gaining a significant competitive advantage in the market (Pfeffer, 2001). Consequently, employers and Human Resource managers keen on utilizing the online information available in order to reduce operation costs, reduce risks and gain competitive advantage commonly engage in the practice of “cyber vetting” (Ghoshray, 2013).

Cyber vetting is defined as the practice of conducting background checks on prospective employees using the information available on the Internet, including social media networks (Mikkelsen, 2010). In other words, cyber vetting occurs when information seekers in those cases, employers gather information about targets workers, from informal, non-institutional online sources to inform personnel selection decisions (Berkelaar, 2014). In contrast to traditional and institutional checks, which use public records and require employees’ permission and informal consent, cyber vetting typically involves extractive, informal and non face to face communication and it usually occurs without the employee’s knowledge and permission (Berkelaar, 2014).

The extensive practice of cyber vetting, over the last years has consequently affected a variety of personnel selection aspects including candidate elimination, targeted recruitment and selection, and employer-employee relationships. Despite the ongoing debate, the numerous ethical concerns and the absence of a concrete and clear legal framework on online information used for personnel selection (Peebles, 2012), employers continue to cyber vet, using the Internet to access, view and acquire institutional and informal information not intended for professional use (Berkelaar, Scacco, & Birdsell, 2014). For example, in 2014 approximately 51% of the cyber vetting organizations were found to disqualify candidates based on unfavorable information traced on the SNW sites, while 33% of hiring managers admitted to have made a hiring using online information (Grasz, 2014). Furthermore, a survey conducted by Microsoft indicated that 75% of HR managers and employee recruiters are forced by their companies to select their prospective employees using search engines, SNWs, photos, personal websites, blogs and others (Rosen, 2010).

Although employers argue that cyber vetting is similar in nature to conventional

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candidate selection practices, such as background checks, evidence showcase the exact opposite. Specifically, cyber vetting changes the amount, order, channel, content, context and type of the information regarding an individual's profile (Berkelaar, 2010). As a result, such important changes made, alter the evaluation criteria (Case, 2012) and consequently the overall personnel selection process (Jablin, 2001). Moreover the various Internet uses and its current implications also affect expectations on both parties involved in this process (job candidates and employers) on what information is required and needed to be available online (Berkelaar, 2014; Treem & Leonardi, 2012), thus several disruptions, misunderstandings and problems are being created. For example in offline and traditional settings when the necessary information are absent, employers tend to disqualify job candidates (Jablin, 2001). However, the processes and implications of using online information for personnel selection requires further investigation and research.

In addition, knowing that the evaluations made online by employers for personnel selection are based on incomplete imprecise and unverifiable information , we can rationally assume that this might result into expansive discrimination (Ghoshray, 2013). Specifically, due to the extensive use of social media among individuals and the enhancement in the ability of big data, a potential employer can sort and analyze a vast amount of data and mine incomplete and imprecise information to predict personalities from social networking sites, thus further enhancing the individual discrimination taking place on job selection settings (Mlot, 2013). For example, a particular employer can search in various social media sites to draw information for a particular individual and consequently establish judgments on the individual's suitability for a particular employment, without obtaining the individual's consent to such a search. As a result, because of lack of sufficient individual privacy law, denial of employment because of unsuccessful matching of an individual's privately obtained profile with a company's profile increases significantly the range of employee discrimination. This notion, aims to raise awareness that the practice of cyber vetting threatens the highly valued rights of freedom of speech and freedom of thought.

This study aims to examine the criteria, rationale and evaluation processes that employers and HR managers undertake when evaluate online information for personnel selection through cyber vetting. It tries to investigate the steps involved in the newly practiced method of cyber vetting, and shed some light on the way the cyber vetting is viewed and put into practice by employers. By doing so, a clear understanding on whether the nature, content, amount and degree of collective expectations on transparency, effectiveness and reputation management provided from online settings such as the social media have altered or evolved

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over time within the digital landscape of cyber vetting (Buzzanell, 2000; Phillips & Oswick, 2012). Selection practices and career practices are found to be interrelated and interconnected with one another (Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005), thus setting new hiring expectations and affecting work, employment and career relationships, dynamics (Jablin, 2001; Berkelaar, 2014). In addition, the selection criteria implemented in the hiring process of cyber vetting as well as how job candidates are being treated by employers during the process, which still lacks ethical and legal framework, is another aspect highlighted and examined in this research. (Cheney, Lair, Ritz, & Kendall, 2011, Ghoshray, 2013). As a result, ethical (Soneneshin, 2007), legal (Ghoshray, 2013), technological (Solove, 2013) and potential career consequences (Berkelaar, 2010) of personnel selection through cyber vetting will be addressed within the analysis, and therefore establishing a holistic view and understanding on the matter at hand. Although, the personnel selection process involves several phases, including hiring, promotion and termination, this particular research emphasizes on employer's views, insights and rationale during the hiring procedure. Specifically, the research aims to answer current considerations on cyber vetting and contemporary personnel selection processes and reveal the impact of those procedures to organizational processes and employment and career relationships. By understanding how employers use and make sense of online information, an important linkage can be established between the information available on online settings and the current personnel selection practices implemented. Therefore, an understanding of the various outcomes of cyber vetting on both an organizational (Ployhart & Weekley, 2010), and individual (Cheney, Lair, Ritz, & Kendall, 2009), level will have been established.

Research on cyber vetting's implications often depends on conceptual and legal arguments to criticize the practice's ethics, privacy, fairness, justice, as well as the dominant notion that each person has a single and consistent identity (Berkelaar and Harisson, 20). Such criticisms are rationally grounded, as this study effectively indicates. Psychologists have empirically examined cyber vetting's validity at predicting long-term job performance outcomes without compromising legal, ethical and organizational standards. Moreover, research suggests employers may be able to accurately define and assess personal traits from social media information (Stoughton, Foster Thompson, & Meade, 2013), whereas recruiters assume abilities from professional social networking sites and personality from personal social networking sites (Roulin & Bangerter, 2013). However, experimental work may create inconsistencies among legally protected groups. Specifically, Acquisti and Fong (2015) showed that demographic information found online, such as sex, primary language, and religion creates hiring biases. In response to this research, scholars and practitioners stress the

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need for solutions emphasizing legislative and organizational policy development, and even information and communicative fit assessments, thus constructing and communicating a sense of fairness, and justice around of the practice of cyber vetting. This study aims to further highlight those needs by providing solid empirical evidence, as well provide effective and feasible suggestions to address the legal, ethical and organizations issues involved with cyber vetting.

Cyber vetting also seems to affect social and organizational contracts as well, meaning the implicit expectations of how relationships must work (Berkelaar and Harisson). Employers attempt to understand and respond to the newly emerged practice of cyber vetting, resulting in expectations for employment and the ideal worker to also evolve in a similar and exponential rate. Berkelaar (2014) suggests workers and employers seem to share collective expectations, indicating that applicants should proactively share information online as a necessary part of contemporary professionalism and career management. This notion is further strengthened within this study. However this study also indicates the asymmetry of information that exists between employers and workers, resulting in having different perspectives on employability in general. Such expectations completely alter contemporary workplaces. The expectation that individuals construct their professional image in digital places, which quite recently were excluded from employment screening, highlights the increased extent of blurred boundaries between work and non-work contexts. This research tries to examine the proximity, nature and coalition of those boundaries in the contemporary workplace, by empirically investigating employers' perceptions and views about them.

There is a growing body of evidence describing the practice of cyber vetting and its implications. However, there is not a substantial body of work addressing the issue of cyber vetting in relation to contemporary employment practices. This study highlights employer's views on contemporary online screening methods and how their sense making influences current trends and perceptions of employability and personnel selection. To further highlight cyber vetting's implication, specific themes and terms were identified and determined through eight in-depth expert interviews with marketing and HR managers operating in the Greek market. Specifically, the study qualitatively analyzes in-depth interviews with 8 highly credited experts in the area of marketing. The goal of the interviews was to survey how employers report on cyber vetting and how they make sense of online information when engaging in personnel selection, therefore identifying how the overall process can be affected by employers' perceptions. The experts' responses somehow reflected many of the issues included in previous literature, as well as additional information regarding contemporary

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views and practices of online screening. Findings from both the literature review and the in-depth expert interviews made were synthesized using the qualitative scenario building approach, thus effectively grasping and highlighting the various notions, expertise knowledge and perceptions around this controversial, specialized and complex issue, concluding into useful and feasible suggestions and recommendations for future research, which can effectively address current issues involved in the practice of cyber vetting.

Consequently, the research tries to effectively and successfully answer the following questions and sub-questions in regards to cyber vetting:

- How does the content and availability of personal information retrieved from social media affect and potentially shift perceptions on online transparency by employer and HR managers in the marketing industry during personnel selection?
 - How does contemporary online screening methods impact the efficiency of selection and employment practices?
 - What are the employers' expectations on employee and career information when informing fit assessments during personnel selection?
 - What are the reputational and organizational consequences that need to be addressed when examining the cyber vetting process?

In the research made, the process of cyber vetting is placed and examined within the professional and business context of the Greek marketing industry. Specifically, the choice of focusing in this study solely on the marketing sector lies on threefold reasons. The first reason is a conceptual one. The marketing sector always existed and evolved in correlation, coexistence and parallel with the ability to access information and data on large groups of people to carry its business to business activities, there for being a sector heavily familiar with the notion of personal data collection (Burns and Bush, 2000). For that very reason it stands as prominent industry to ground our investigation, since fruitful and useful findings are believed to be drawn by it. The second reason is a practical one, since I possess a high access to contacts operating in this field due to my prior working experience, thus being able to gather this specific research sample both easily and effectively, and therefore limiting any possible time constrains present in relation to completion of this research. Finally, the marketing sector still remains an uninvestigated field in relation to cyber vetting, and therefore significantly enhancing the study's overall appeal and originality. By investigating employers who engage in such practices, the implications of cyber vetting to the

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organizational and employment processes of that sector can be effectively portrayed.

Generally, the study made effectively presents the information asymmetry around the hiring process as well as the emerging and collectively shared notions of transparency by employers during personnel selection, thus bringing societal and organizational concerns into the surface, including privacy, surveillance, identity and impression management, ethics, justice and professionalism. In additions it provides useful and feasible suggestions to address the issues and problems brought by the practice of cyber vetting. Therefore the societal aspect of the study is highly relevant, especially when placed in the contemporary workplace. The study also takes a step further from existing empirical and academic research on the issue of cyber vetting. It not only highlights the importance of transparency for personnel selection, but also examines how those emerging perceptions of transparency affect organizational procedures, such as hiring decisions. It also stresses the fact that shared notions of transparency can function as a catalyst for new social contracts of employability to be created. Moreover, by examining the practice of cyber vetting within the specific context of the Greek marketing sector it also highlights how employers' views, perceptions and sense making differ depending on the workplace and the organizational structure. Also, the small sample group used in this study with their expertise on the matter can provide a better and more in-depth understanding of the issue examined in contrast to a large scale sample group, with no knowledge or professional expertise on the matter. Finally, the fact that the study refers to the Greek marketing sector constitutes it as a pioneering and innovative work, simply because no similar work has ever implemented in this particular sector.

2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework in which this study is based upon consists of three main conceptual pillars organized into six subchapters. Each subchapter aims to answer and address a different aspect of cyber vetting, as presented through the research questions constructed. Specifically the first two chapters present a brief overview of the emergence and development of cyber vetting, analyzing current and shifting trends, processes and perceptions about it, thus establishing a holistic and clear understanding of the issue examined. The next chapter presents an overview of the technological developments such as Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), and challenges regarding cyber vetting. By doing so, the extent to which ICT technology impacts organizational processes, such as selection practices, can be effectively examined. The fourth subchapter deals with the issue of self-presentation and impression management in correlation with the practice of online screening, whereas the fifth subchapter presents the notion of digital stigma as a product of the rise of cyber vetting. These two chapters aim to showcase how impression management for both parties involved has altered within the digital landscape of cyber vetting, as well as present the dramaturgical consequences of digital stigma into a person's life, mainly caused by the process of cyber vetting. Lastly, the sixth subchapter addresses the problem of the limited organizational protocols in relation to cyber vetting and consequently the inadequacy of dealing effectively with the issue. This chapter raises questions that have to be addressed by organizations and the overall community in order to deal with the issue of cyber vetting in the future. By constructing the framework in such a manner, all the various elements and concepts involved in this controversial issue are effectively addressed. Consequently, the research questions designed can be successfully answered, through the findings and insights drawn by the analysis of each theme and concept included in the theoretical framework.

2.1 Shifting Trends on Transparency.

Evaluation criteria play a key role in the contemporary context of employment. Specifically, fit still remains the main factor in which personnel selection process is based upon (Edwards, 2008). This is mainly driven by employers' desire to establish a successful match between the candidate and business environments. According to Berkelaar and Buzzanell (2014), employers seek an ideal compatibility between the individuals' personalities and organizational values, therefore creating a more flexible and productive relationship between the two bodies. However, due to the increased abundance of information

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online and the rise of the practice of cyber vetting, the person-organization fit has been heavily disrupted, resulting in making such alignments far more complex in nature.

Several previous studies have focused their attention to fit's overall role in the personnel selection process (Edwards, 2008; Schneider, 2001), arguing that a more explicit operationalization of fit assessments is needed. However, they missed to address the sense making of employers and practitioners in regards to the organization-person fit and their rationale when assessing evaluation criteria for establishing those particular fits. Due to the information overload and the plethora of surveillance mechanism, proximity between an employer and organization is complicated even further (Andrejevic, 2007), since the newly visible information provide awareness on undisclosed information, thus disrupting social and organization relations, while setting the ground for complete workplace surveillance. As a result, an employer- applicant information asymmetry is created, causing organizational distrust to employments and conventional employment practices. For that very reason, in order to clearly define and reassess the environmental factors and fit criteria involved in the process of personnel selection the scattered, diverse and communicate context in which cyber vetting occurs must be take into consideration. According to Berkelaar (2015), ICTs "may alter social relations and norms and what counts as salient criteria" (p: 459), thus indicating the change that current technological developments have brought to conventional social practices such as, candidate selection.

Research evidence suggests, that availability of information stands as the main determining factor for fit assessments (Case, 2012). In simple words, the surplus of information is more important than the relevance of information, when informing criteria of organizational fitness. Therefore information types and sources go in parallel with what and who constitutes a "good fit". However, ICTs have significantly altered conventional information boundaries (Treem and Leonardi, 2012), thus changing the ways in which information become available to employers. As a result, employers have capitalized this information asymmetry to access externally sourced information, which are considered more credible and accurate. Besides information type, order and sources impact organization fit criteria (Case, 2012), cyber vetting has enabled access to information considered either illegal or unethical in the contemporary selection framework (Shilling, 2009), thus affecting the evaluation criteria of the overall selection process.

According to Brown and Vaughn (2012) information derived from cyber vetting is unstructured in nature. Moreover, unstructured information violates professional HR protocols on consistency (Shilling, 2009), therefore creating legal issues for practitioners.

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Employers communicatively restructure, redesign and contextualize cyber vetted-scattered information to make sense and establish organization-candidate fit. As a result, applicants are facing difficulties defining and determining which information types and sources are valuable and useful in contemporary selection practices. Specifically, cyber vetting reduces control of information from the applicant while increasing the control for the employer. This goes in contrast to traditional background checks of the past such as resumes and face-to-face interviews. Although applicants are familiar with cyber vetting's vast popularity, they are unaware of the nature of information extracted, their order and their consequences to the selection process (Berkelaar and Buzzanell, 2014). Consequently, employees, "increasingly perform anticipated criteria and associated organizational values" (Miron-Shatz & Ben-Shakhar, 2008), thus indicating increased control of work behavior on several different social contexts. Employers on the other hand, incorporate scattered illegal and unethical information in personnel selection decisions (Miron-Shatz & Ben-Shakhar, 2008) or seek information outside the professional context (Andrejevic, 2007). Therefore, the proximity of what stands as fit assessment for an applicant and an organization widens significantly, causing disruptions in the candidate-employer relationships as well as to the overall selection process.

Consequently, ICTs have made vast and different information accessible to large number of people both effectively and efficiently, thus altering both employer's and participants perception of what constitutes a "good fit". Finally, by limiting applicants' information control and increasing the one of employers, conventional employment relationships have altered, leading to an applicant-employer information asymmetry and social proximity.

2.2 Cyber Vetting in the Contemporary Context

The contemporary landscape and framework of personnel selection has been heavily influenced by the rise of ICTs. In recent years, employers have been found to incorporate ICTs into existing business practices in order to increase both efficiency and effectiveness (Chapman and Webster, 2003). Recent evidence showcase the use of interactive and two-way ICTs such as social media to make applicant information more visible, comprehensible and shareable among employers, while making managers' action less visible to the public eye.

In the contemporary context, visible and accessible information provide insights into underlying processes (e.g. personnel selection), and disrupts organizational and social structures, consequently creating circumstances for "total workplace surveillance" (Berkelaar

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and Buzzanell, 2014), and disrupting applicant-employer relationships (Andrejevic, 2007). As a result, the informative character of publicly available information provided by ICTs has transcended applicants' online screening beyond the workplace context, and therefore completely redefining what constitutes relevant information source and type for applicant selection process. Specifically, cyber vetting alters the perceived relevance and interpretation of applicant information during the selection process (Jablin, 2001), resulting to "information asymmetry" (Andrejevic, 2007).

Apart from the ethical aspect of the issue, scholars have not investigated heavily the differentiating factors of cyber vetting in comparison to traditional background checks (e.g. resume check), and how applicant evaluation assessments are affected by those differences. In addition, practitioners have mainly viewed ICTs' capabilities as solely technical, missing therefore their social and organizational implications (Zuboff, 1989). Changes brought by the ICTs regarding information salience, visibility and relevance have heavily affected contemporary notions of organization fit. Therefore, a more in depth investigation of the issue is needed.

Driven by the notion that cyber vetting improves applicant evaluation, employers more and more use ICTs to view applicants' values, motivations and objectives rather than their set of knowledge and skills. Based on the notion of employee branding, seeing applicants as a reflection of organizational culture, employers use ICTs' functions to safeguard, protect and/or improve organizational reputation. As Berkelaar and Buzzanell (2014, p: 459) suggest, cyber vetting "allows employers to regulate workers' public and private lives to serve organizational goals.

Furthermore, cyber vetting touches employers' fears and distrust on conventional practices as well. Specifically, research evidence showcase employers' concerns on applicant dishonesty (Levashina & Campion, 2009) and impression management (Barrick et al., 2009) in affecting managerial and business related decisions. Moreover, traditional applicant background checks are extreme limited and time consuming in nature, resulting in increasing online information seeking and applicant surveillance. Despite legal claims against cyber vetting, employers also experience increased liability when it comes to unprofessional and unstructured hiring decisions (Peebles, 2012). Consequently, cyber vetting stands as an effective tool for managing information asymmetry during selection practices. However, existing literature has been found limited in revealing the organizational and individual consequences of cyber vetting. For that very reason the particular study focuses on how technological developments on information technology impact employers' sense making

about cyber vetting and consequently affecting both organizational processes and individual lives.

2.3 Technological Theories on Cyber Vetting

Contemporary theoretical notions have significantly altered our understanding of how the traditional process of personnel selection has shifted and transformed through the introduction of information technologies (IT). For example, Social Information Processing (SIP) theory, and other theoretical frameworks clarify important contemporary concepts, such as computer-mediated communication, interpersonal communication, self-presentation online and impression management (Ellison et al., 2006), thus standing as the ideal base for grounding our own research study. In contrast to technological deterministic perspectives that focus on the technological characteristics of current technologies themselves, socially deterministic approaches focus in the social construction approach. Specifically, SIP theory highlights and reflects the ways in which new communication and technological developments both shape and are shaped by social practices (Dutton, 1996; MacKenzie & Wajcman, 1985), such as job candidate selection. Taking that notion, a better understanding of how online screening has evolved over time in relation to technology, will be established, resulting in effectively drawing conclusions about cyber vetting's current implications. As a result, the determining role of technology in shaping and altering perspectives, attitudes and perceptions about social and organizational practices, can be effectively highlighted. In his book, Dutton (1996, p. 9) argues that technology has the ability to "otherwise shape social choices, although not always in the ways expected on the basis of rationally extrapolating from the perceived properties of technology". For example, current studies have shown that when people placed in an online context, tension between impression management pressures and the desire to present a "realistic version" of one self escalates even further than offline settings, through communication strategies and tactics, aiming to present an "ideal self" (Ellison et al., 2006). This indicates the identity notions, that people undertake when uploading online information and consequently affect employers' sense making of that data posted. This is vital for answering questions regarding the rationale behind the evaluation criteria assessed by employers in online screening. Another important concept supporting those views is the notion of circumvention, which describes the strategies employed by individuals to utilize the capabilities provided by information technologies, while simultaneously engage in efforts to minimize the constraints associated with them (Howard, 2004). This notion described, clearly explains the logical processes that employers engage in when cyber vetting is taking place. Consequently assumptions on why this phenomenon

occurs can be drawn. Given all of the above, we can safely assume that the rise of cyber vetting goes in parallel with technological developments such as ICTs, thus indicating that strong relationship that exists between the two variables. As a result, perceptions on transparency, self presentation, career and impression management have completely altered within the digital landscape of cyber vetting, leading to consequences such as digital stigma becoming common, which heavily affect individual and social life, as well as the workplace. For that very reason, a further investigation needs to be made on the technological implications and challenges that cyber vetting entails and the impact of those on individuals.

2.4 Information Quality

Another both conceptual and practical implication brought by the practice of cyber vetting involves information quality. Information quality has been scientifically found to be of high importance for a variety of information intensive contexts, including data analysis, system reports, system use, assessment of Internet content, as well as an essential determinant of decision making (Stvilia, Gasser, Twidale, & Smith, 2007). As a result, researchers have constantly strived to assess the importance of information quality to end-users (Goodhue, 1995), with scientific research increasing in parallel with the availability of information. Previous research has emphasized on identifying, assessing and defining subjective indicators of information quality, whereas practitioners have attempted to identify measures and dimensions of assessing information quality by organizational stakeholders (Lee, Strong, Kahn & Wang, 2002), such as employers operating in the marketing sector. This study aims to further investigate this second scientific premise, by empirically determining and assessing the logical structures and measures implemented by employers during personnel selection, within the Greek marketing sector. Placing the research on such specific and narrowed context, the study attempts to establish more in-depth understandings on the importance of information quality for achieving organizational goals, such as employment.

Literature on information quality highlights the fact that is not a standardized construct, but a rather a social construct consisting of several dimensions. Although no universal agreement exists on the specific nature of those dimensions (Meyen and Willshire, 1997), there is a general consensus that information quality consists out of four key dimensions, with each one possessing different and distinctive characteristics (Lee et al., 2002): accessibility information quality, contextual information quality, intrinsic information quality and representational information quality).

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Although those dimension provide a relative structure on the notion of information quality, each one is a complex structure with several overlapping facets (Wang and Strong, 1996). For that very reason, no extensive analysis of each dimension will be given in this study, since there are no direct implications and contributions to the study's goals and objectives. However, peoples' perceptions in regards to information quality, is a subject directly related to the study's premises, and therefore further empirical examination is required and needed. Specifically studies have found that users' perceptions of information quality vary for many reasons (Arazy & Kopak, 2011). The research made tries to conceptualize those reasons by placing them in an organizational context and carefully assessing employers' sense making regarding information quality. Moreover, the challenges faced by hiring professional have increased exponentially due to the increased variety and diversity of information found online (Stvilia et al., 2007). Underlying the literature of information quality, we observe that the concept of "fitness" has become a widely adopted factor for assessing quality (Juran & Gryna, 1980). This perspective highlights the importance of taking users' viewpoints of quality, since ultimately they are the ones who will assess whether the information is fit for use (Arnold, 1992). That specific premise is the bases of this study, which is highly reflected in the questions designed to address those specific issues.

2.5 Impression Management, Self-Presentation and Cyber Vetting

Before further analyzing and empirically investigating the concept of cyber vetting, several behavioral aspects and practices regarding the issue at hand have to be defined and introduced. Self-presentation and self-disclosure processes are essential and crucial aspects in offline settings, such as employment relationships, especially in early stages (Taylor & Altman, 1987). This extremely useful when analyzing how employers are making sense of it when engaging to online screening or informing fit assessments, since it can significantly affect their perception on the procedures mentioned above. Goffman (1959), who dealt with the issue of self-presentation, effectively underlines the strategies that individual engages in "to convey an impression to others which it is in his interests to convey". Goffman's (1959) theory about the presentation of self is becoming increasingly popular in explaining differences in meaning and activity of online presentation (Hogan, 2010). Specifically, Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical approach is a primary example, explaining how individuals tend to present an "idealized" rather than authentic version of one self (Hogan, 2010). In his book, Goffman (1959) suggests life as a stage of activity, where individuals engage in performances which are defined as "activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and which has some

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influence on the observers” (p. 22). As a result, individuals who engage in such activities can adjust their behavior accordingly by selectively communicating information about themselves based on the situation and the setting. A process Goffman (1959) defines as “impression management.” Self-presentation strategies are essential and heavily important during relationship building like in the context of a job interview, since people will utilize the information given to make rational judgments on whether to pursue a relationship or not (Derlega, Winstead, Wong, & Greenspan, 1987). Contemporary research argues that when individuals are about to meet someone for the first time, they tend to shape their self-presentational behavior in accordance with the values of the setting in which it is placed (Rowatt, Cunningham, & Druen, 1998). Moreover, evidence suggest that even when interacting with strangers (like a potential employer), individuals tend to engage in self-enhancement (Schlenker & Pontari, 2000). Specifically, current findings indicate that perceptions created in a professional interview may not reflect the actual outcomes in a job setting situation and that the unstructured interviews made are particularly impacted by these self-presentation tactics mentioned above (Barrick et al., 2009).

However, contemporary research builds on the understanding that social pressures to present one’s positive attributes are portrayed in correlation with the desire to present one’s “real” (or authentic) self to others, especially in crucial relationships like the ones created in professional settings. In most relationships, trust is constructed through a process where one individual discloses information, thoughts and feelings to the other opposite partner, and interprets the feedback received by that partner as signs of understanding and validating (Laurenceau, Barrett, & Pietromonaco, 1998). Therefore, individuals tend to engage in self-disclosure practices when it comes to relationship building, resulting in an internal tension between authenticity and impression management, and creating therefore several consequences and outcomes to the relationship itself. This tendency applies to employment relationships as well, even when it takes place within the digital context of cybervetting, therefore significantly affecting work relationships and individual career management.

Another important element that need to be addressed, and is directly related to the notion of self-presentation, is the notion that one’s self is composed out of different self identities, which are either present or salient depending on the context and setting placed. Specifically, Higgins (1987) identifies three domains of the self, including the actual self (attributes an individual possesses), the ideal self (attributes an individual would ideally possess), and the ought self (attributes an individual ought to possess), arguing that there are several inconsistencies present between one’s actual and ideal self. In addition, several

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scholars and academics argue that in contrast to offline setting, involving face-to-face communication, Internet allows individuals to better express aspects of their actual self that they were skeptical in doing so in traditional settings (Bargh et al., 2002; Ellison et al., 2003). This is mainly driven by the anonymity and the lack of a shared society online, therefore allowing individuals to reveal even negative and harmful characteristics of their selves online (Bargh et al., 2002). However, this notion stands in contrast to Goffman's (1959) concept of "front stage" and "back stage", arguing that back stages, such as the online setting provided by social media, stand as the main area in which impression management takes place. Although earlier literature was based on a different kind of Internet medium, which was largely anonymous and separate from real life settings, such as the workplace or home, recent evidence showcase that the majority of the impression management practices and contradictions of self mentioned above occur within the contemporary digital landscape of social media as well.

Although self-presentation and impression management have been heavily examined and analyzed in regards to both offline settings (Jones and Pittman, 1982; Leary, 1995; Schlenker, 2003) and in general online settings (Ellison et al., 2003; Chambers, 2013), the area of personal and social media profiles on an employment context has not been studied that extensively (for exceptions see Dominick, 1999; Schau & Gilly, 2003), especially in terms to the marketing Greek sector. Therefore an important gap in current research on self-presentation online has been created, therefore increasing the need for professional empirical studies to be designed and launched in order to provide fruitful and useful findings on the subject at hand. Online personal profiles, as well as the uses and implications of the information available during personal selection is an area which differs significantly in its outcomes and consequences. For that reason, elaborate, professional and careful detailed research is needed, in order for employers to have a more accurate view of the rationales and identity notions that lie on the information found online and therefore being more critical and skeptical, when evaluating them during hiring processes. Specifically, this study will heavily touch upon the theme of transparency, aiming to investigate its role and function when informing evaluation criteria for applicant fit, as well as examine how employers make sense of the notion of transparency during personnel selection. As a result, more accurate and relevant evaluation criteria can be designed and implemented by employers, resulting in a more specialized, narrowed and relative screening process.

2.6 Digital Stigma – Product of Online Screening

Media accounts for a number of contemporary social phenomena, including cyber-bullying, invasion of privacy, sexual harassment and others. However, the emergence of digital media, especially of social media such as Facebook and Twitter, has led to the appearance and development of a new social outcome called “digital stigma”. According to Goffman (1959) (digital) stigma refers to when sensitive personal details are made public through online platforms, resulting in negative effect, a compromised reputation and persistent discrimination. In today’s social media contexts, such outcome is relatively common, since individuals upload information about themselves without being able to consent to the full set of consequences of such exposure (Trottier, 2013).

Digital stigma stands a direct outcome of the contemporary digital culture, since social media platforms are primarily used for the sharing of personal information. Specifically, the information uploaded online might lead to severe social consequences to one individual, since they might classify him as being a member of a specific group, or processing certain characteristics that are not socially acceptable to context and setting placed (Trottier, 2013). Consequently, a person’s well-being and overall opportunities are transformed to a social stigma that requires management. However, the degree to which a person deals and copes with stigma differs from person to person and is highly dependent to a number of socio-demographic parameters, such as age, gender, race and socio-economic status (Solove, 2007).

Digital stigma must be both understood and examined in relation to social media, which is the main focus of this study. Facebook’s contemporary uses and functions, stand as a fertile ground for digital stigma to develop and rise, since current Facebook administrators deliberately upload and repurpose user’s personal information, therefore making social exposure in an online setting unavoidable. However, since people use Facebook in different ways and the nature of the information shared differs from person to person, consequently their experiences with digital stigma are also being shared and altered accordingly (Trottier, 2013). As a result, the kinds and consequences of each stigma varies significantly depending on both the individual’s social background and the setting in which he is placed in.

As discussed above, digital stigma has numerous implications and outcomes into different aspects and stages of a person’s life ranging from adolescence and interpersonal and intimate relationships to the incident of death and the copying of dying (Trottier, 2013). However, for the purpose of this study the social impacts of digital stigma in relation to job

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applications and personnel selection will be examined, therefore establishing a direct linkage between the two variables, and therefore demonstrating their interdependence. In today's media environment evaluation criteria for job hiring have moved beyond the traditional background checks to the online screening of a user's personal profile (Berkelaar, 2010), therefore raising the question of what is actually being evaluated during the personnel selection process. A social media presence typically communicates more personal information compared to a traditional resume, including more information than a potential job candidate might want to reveal to an employer (Trottier, 2013), therefore enabling current social media services and function to utilize those information available, resulting to several issues to an individual's employment career and progress (Treem & Leonardi, 2012). An evident example of such a case can be traced into LinkedIn's newly developed service called "Recruiter", which recommends potential employees to employers and HR managers on the basis of their online media profile content, without the user's consent and overall knowledge (Anders 2013). Employers have also been found to ask security codes to access private content (Valdes, 2012), such as photos and private messages, thus further increasing the "stigmatization" process. However, denying a prospective employer's request to access such online information is highly likely to unavoidably harm a candidate's chances of being hired (Trottier, 2013).

Apart from the degree and ways in which people cope with digital stigma, there are short-term and long-term consequences involved in that process. Goffman (1963) introduced distinction between those who are discredited and those who are discreditable (1963). People who are discredited possess a stigma that is visible to an extent that makes it inescapable. On the other hand, discreditable means that an individual is able to hide their stigma, but the possibility that it may leak into the public is ever-present. Specifically, discreditable users do not always display their stigma, but they face the risk their stigma will re-surface. After experiencing digital stigma individuals tend to face a short-term social harm, having the fear that its consequences will be permanent, with severe long-term effect to a person's well being and progress (Solove, 2007). Although this study simply touches on the issue of digital stigma, it provides the bases in which future research can be grounded in order to produce insights, suggesting the harmful effects of cyber vetting to employment relationships and individual lives

2.7 Lack of Organizational Protocols

The rise of social media has consequently led that data about a large number of people is available online. Therefore, employers, utilize the information provided to decrease the risks associated with an offer of employment, by engaging in “cyber-vetting”. In contrast, contemporary business protocols referring to this practice provides a relatively weak and incomplete business guidebook, incapable of addressing the problem both effectively and efficiently. Given that situation, cyber vetting has the potential to fundamentally alter the scope of prospective employees’ rights (Ghoshray, 2013). Although employment screening has replaced to a large extent traditional background checks of the past, current employment law has failed to adequately tackle issues of privacy that have risen over the years (Solove, 2004). Specifically, the easy access of an individual’s online information and activities provided by today’s information technologies have shifted the personnel selection process, from background checks based on expertise and professional qualifications to the seeking of a desired persona. Consequently, discrimination within the employment selection context has significantly increased in current years.

For example, the Society of Corporate Compliance and Ethics along with the Health Care Compliance Association conducted a survey in 2009 examining 800 individuals working at profit, nonprofit and government institutions.¹ According to the study’s results, 50% of the respondents did not have a specific policy in place addressing employee use of social networking sites. From the organizations that did have a policy, 34 % have incorporated it in their overall policy on online usage whereas only 10% specifically addressed the use of social networking sites. Moreover, 53% reported that their organizations do not monitor such use, haven't encountered such an issue or have a "passive" system in place, which acts when an issue arises (Mikkelson, 2010). Although the research presented is not that recent and there may be further developments in organizational policy making, the findings presented stand as an indicator of the absence of organizational policies and guidelines that existed in business environments, therefore making a main priority to investigate whether such protocols exist in today’s workplace and if not stress the issue by proposing feasible and useful suggestions of organizational protocols on employment practices.

As mentioned above, the traditional employment screening primarily focuses on criminal records, financial checks, and other social judgments against the candidate driven by deterministic outcomes generated through an individual’s consent and knowledge. On the contrary, behavioral information found online are based primarily on users’ digital footprint,

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which derive from incomplete and static data. Therefore, cyber vetting might result in significant differences between actual information and “ideal” information uploaded online, thus further reinforcing the discrimination outcome (Ghoshray, 2013).

This extensive practice of online screening of potential employees is the product of society’s high dependence on social media (Berkelaar, 2010). By exposing their individual privacy on social media the applicant engages in an unstructured investigation of his digital persona (Ghoshray, 2013). The absence of organizational policies on online screening, raises and highlight the emerging debate between an individual’s right to privacy and an employer’s legitimate business interests (Riego et al., 2012), since the protocol needed for such practices has not evolved in parallel with technological developments. In particular, arguments in favor of cyber vetting include online information is both public and visible (Riego et al., 2012), while on the other hand the opposing side raises the argument of online information being private, personal, irrelevant and unstandardized proving that no ethical framework actually exists, and thus urging employers to make personnel selection decisions based on economic criteria and standards (Riego et al., 2012). However, even if organizations compliance and cooperation was possible, organizational guidelines remain unclear and vague on employer’s social media use (Berkelaar, 2014), thus providing fertile ground for such practices to develop and evolve in the future.

The organizational issues involved with the practice of cyber vetting move beyond the realm of privacy right, since the relevant employer views information, which has no right to. Specifically when an employer engages to such activities, violating rights of both the applicant and his surrounding people, could also be exposed to a series of liabilities (Riego et al., 2012), including violation of protected status, discriminatory hiring and intrusion of a person’s personal space. For example, for some applicants finding a job is directly connected with abandoning their fundamental right to protect their privacy, including their protected status on social media (Ghoshray, 2013), therefore further strengthening the gap between individual rights and current employment practices.

A primary example of companies’ inadequacy to address this contemporary issue can be easily understood when examined in the U.S. context. The organizational protocols legislated in the U.S. don’t provide any definitive guidelines on online screening apart from third party contractors, whose reports exclude many of the information desired by employers (Berkelaar, Scacco, & Birdsell, 2014). As a result, employers commonly engage in that particular process due to the lack of clarity that it entails. Cyber vetting offered employers an

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efficient, cost effective solution, allowing anyone involved to access information without having any specific knowledge or skills of organizational or ethical codes (Berkelaar, 2014). Employers who engage in cyber vetting invest relatively low effort and time with minimum risk, while the reward received is great. However, cyber vetting violates the norms on information acquisition, since it violates and expands work non-work boundaries within personal selection and consequently career progress occurs. Given cyber vetting's popularity in correlation with the inadequacy of current legislation, the absence of an operational protocol, the unclear ethical and social boundaries and increased information visibility online, the question of how both employers and job candidates make sense of cyber vetting to determine evaluation criteria and appropriate methods for personnel selection is being raised.

Given all of the above, several questions have been raised by communications scholars and the academic community as to whether employers using social networking sites to cyber vet potential and current employees constitutes as a violation of service agreement. According to Mikkelson (2010) organization policies, aiming to address that issue should:

- List the social media sites that will be searched for each applicant
- List the lawful information about applicants desired from every search
- State that a neutral third party will conduct the search, screening all applicants using the lawful criteria outlined above
- Prohibit any organization from "friending" (Mikkelson, 2010) an applicant to gain access to nonpublic social networking profiles.

This study aims to clarify the existing operational protocols revolving around cyber vetting, as well as try to address the various ethical and legal questions that are being raised in relation to the issue at hand. It will also try to set the ethical and legal boundaries, which are suitable and appropriate for the process analyzed. By doing so, a universal and widely accepted social/ethical standard, in which personnel selection by employers will be based on, will be set.

3. Research Design

The research design aims to produce fruitful and valid insights and findings on the subject examined. The research design is part of a larger study on employer's sense making on cyber vetting within the Greek market sector. Through detailed in-depth expert interviews with marketing managers and HR managers operating in that field, we tried to provide accurate insights and findings on that issue. Through this multi-method approach proposed we aim to identify four distinct set of outcomes. First, since it the main of the study, we will be able to identify how employers perceive the practice of cyber vetting. Secondly, the research design will allow us to gain insights on the actual practices and opinions of organizations practicing cyber vetting. Thirdly, we will be ale to establish understandings on possible misconceptions and malpractices by those organizations. Finally, we will gain a clear understanding on the main themes, issues and concerns on cyber vetting, allowing us to critically evaluate each one separately in a scientific and academic context. The last outcome aims to inform the scientific community and practitioners on the problems of cyber vetting that have to be addressed and provide practical suggestions to solve them.

3.1 Method

To answer the research questions raised and to effectively provide fruitful and accurate insights and evidence on the issue examined, a qualitative research method will be implemented based on in-depth expert interviews. Specifically, eight interviews with marketing experts were carried during April 2016. The experts came from private for-profit organizations operating in the Greek market, with high performance and reputation in marketing activities. The interviewees' expertise was related to the Greek marketing sector, as well as on recruitment procedures taking place within that specific sector, thus being a highly reflective sample group for achieving the study's goals and objectives.

The notion of "experts" in research literature refers to individuals responsible for the development, implementation, and control of policies, strategies and decisions (Otto-Banaszak, et al., 2011), such as personnel selection. Expert interviews are usually recommended as a data collection technique in research areas, which are relatively new (Meuser and Nagel, 1991), like the practice of cyber vetting (Berkelaar, 2014), since in most cases there is no available sample body, specializing or being familiar with that particular

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topic. Finally, expert interviews were used to better explore and understand the issues around cyber vetting, as well as to reflect their expertise, views and perceptions in regards to that practice.

The research method described used qualitative work with expert interviews for data collection, a qualitative analysis of the interviews made, consequently leading to the final phase of scenario development for analyzing and presenting the concluding results. The research is based on the approach, where qualitative data analysis is used as a foundation for qualitative scenario building (Brauers and Weber, 2006), where both participant and research construct and produce knowledge, insights and understandings through personal experiences, and thereof effectively reduce possible biases while adding credibility and accuracy to the overall project. Therefore we decided to implement semi-structured in depth interviews using experts in the fields of marketing who possess specialized knowledge on employment practices, to effectively process the complexity of such information as well as produce reliable data on the issue, thus enabling the research to establish general and holistic understandings. Expert interviews are considered as a “streamlined” (Bogner and Menz, 2002a, pp. 9-10) approach, where participants are recruited and determined deliberately (Muskat et al., 2012) based on their expertise, knowledge and position of power. The expert interviews have been chosen as qualitative approach, since few participants can contribute the most in there area of expertise, therefore ensuring that at least eight interviews could contribute to all the given topics analyzed. Through the expert interviews made, the knowledge gained gives quality and professionalism to the overall research (Meuser and Nagel, 2009), thus standing as credible source of information on the subject at hand. However before moving to the expert interviews, the question of what constitutes an expert had to be answered. According to Walter (1994, p. 271) a person is defined as an expert by virtue of its role as an informant. However the final decision lies solely on the researcher’s judgment.

The methodological structure used was to have was to have an overall qualitative approach of the data collected, using expert interviews, having key terms and themes identified and determined and finally displaying findings and insights through scenario building. The determination of key terms and themes, after transcribing the interviews was done with a content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004; Krippendorff and Bock 2008). Specifically, in the featured case study the topics transparency, reputation management, image making and efficiency were used as implications of cyber vetting. Afterwards, a qualitative analysis was implemented in order to build scenarios based upon the insights of the expert interviews. Scenario technique as a qualitative method allows the description of possible complex

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situations in the future (Muskat et al., 2012), therefore allowing researchers to establish predictions and identify the long-term effects of specific social phenomena. However, it is used to conceptualize results out of quantitative analysis as well (Fink, 2001).

In this study we have focused specifically on findings from the expert community. Therefore we have attracted and recruited leading experts in the Greek marketing sector and in contemporary employment practices. By conducting extensive and in-depth dialogue with those experts we have extracted their views, perceptions and attitudes towards the practice of cyber vetting. The main premise of this study is that experts prove a useful perspective that encloses organizational, technical and conceptual advances, therefore raising the quality of the overall research significantly.

More specifically, expert in depth interviews were carried out with both employers and HR managers, since it is a “conversation with purpose” (Webb and Webb, 1932), meaning that the purpose of the particular subject at hand can be better reflected and examined through that method. In depth interviews refer to a fundamental process through which knowledge about the social world is constructed through human interaction (Webb and Webb, 1932). Although interviewees are generally poorly informed and motivated, experts on the other hand are far more knowledgeable and motivated on the issue examined (Dorussen, Lenz and Blavoukos, 2005). As a result, the overall implications and impacts of the social phenomena under investigation will be successfully highlighted and portrayed. Ideally, the study wants to implement a category of in-depth interviews, which Kvale (1996) describes as the “traveler metaphor” or Guba and Lincoln’s as (1997) “constructivism” approach, where knowledge is not taken for granted but constructed through the discussion and negotiation taking place. Given the fact that neither employers nor other participants, since no one is familiar with the social, ethical and organizational framework (Riego et al., 2012), such a research method will be mutually beneficial for all parties involved in the process, due to its informative character. Through the interview process, the knowledge constructed can advance participant’s understanding on the matter examined and potentially result on a common solution of the issue. The main purpose of this study is to explore how employers make sense of cybervetting practices, therefore a method which is “intuitive” (Riego et al., 2012) in nature stands as the best possible way of reflecting a person’s experiences and insights on that issue.

In contrast to other methods, scientific in-depth interviews will provide more detailed information than the one available from other methods, therefore enabling to draw and produce original, detailed and experiential data, resulting in taking a step further to the topic’s

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scientific investigation. The semi-structured nature of the interviews made gives participants the opportunity to think about themes and topics and reflect upon them by linking them with their own personal experiences. Moreover, according to Broom et al., (2009) “Qualitative research is as useful as the reflexive nature of the researcher regarding his/her influence on data production and analysis”. Having that in mind and being aware that the method is prone to biases, a number of factors need to be taken into consideration, when designing and implementing the particular research method. Based on Hermanowicz’s (2002) tips, suggesting appropriate training of the interviewer and continuous restructuring and rehearsal of the questions asked, those biases can be somewhat reduced (Riego et al., 2012). For that very reason, the questions involved in this study were redesigned and restructured over and over again to effectively reflect the goals and objectives of the research made. In addition, the researcher conducting the research has rehearsed and practiced the overall interview design several times prior the actual implementation by setting pilot interviews with friends and acquaintances therefore significantly limiting possible noises and distortions from taking place and consequently further strengthening the research approach’s effectiveness, success and accuracy of results.

Regarding the practical aspects of the interviews implemented, several procedures have been made before and after the interviews to ensure their validity, accuracy and effectiveness. Specifically, mediated interviews have been avoided, since the goal the medium chosen to be interviewed “affects the data collection and analysis” (Kazmer & Xie, 2008), and therefore affecting the effectiveness of the method used. In addition, before the interview several research questions, addressing all the main points of the issue will be designed and constantly rehearsed by the interviewer, thus establishing a holistic view on the matter, as well as ensuring the success of the project. A careful invitation, stressing the purpose of the research along with an informed consent was given to all participants in order to ensure that all the official steps are being made, and therefore avoiding any legal issues to be created. Finally, eight interviews were made, with each one lasting more than 60 minutes, therefore further enhancing the success of the overall project (Hitters – Master Thesis Guidebook, 2015).

In more detail, eight experts operating in the marketing sector of Greece were interviewed using a semi-structured interview guide (Holstein and Gubrium, 1995). The interviews, which approximately lasted between 60-70 minutes, were recorded though a smartphone, possessing a recording device. The approach of an expert interview within a semi-structured discussion is a significant asset, since the interviewees are determined

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deliberately (Abels and Behrens, 2009; Bogner et al., 2005). The semi-structured interviews were designed and pilot tested, thus generating free flow of information from the target experts (Bandara et al., 2007). All interviews made, were conducted face to face, following the same interview protocol, thus ensuring the consistency of the study. Each interview was conducted by one researcher, who was responsible for the entire interview process (e.g taking notes, asking noted, etc.).

3.2 Sample

Given the nature and the purpose of the research, a community of experts had to be formed to act as an effective group. Therefore, I strategically selected a sample of eight employers and HR managers operating in the marketing sector in Greece, thus yielding accurate and original insights on this relatively unexamined and unstudied subject (Berkelaar, 2014). Although eight participants may not seem as an adequate number, however the data produced from them was more than sufficient for drawing conclusions on the issue, answering the research questions proposed, and establishing scientific perceptions and linkages on the relationship between the practice of cyber vetting and the Greek marketing sector. Additionally the majority of the participants involved in this study are representatives of the most active and prestigious marketing firms in Greece, responsible for some of the major marketing activities taking place in the Greek market, including Pernod Ricard, Johnson and Johnson, Procter and Gamble, Philip Morris and others. As a result, having respondents from those firms significantly advances the value and credibility of the concluding findings, thus being able to draw conclusions that reflect the overall sector examined. Specifically, Pernod Ricard, a multinational company operating in the spirits industry, claims 38% of the market-share, standing therefore as a leading company in that specific industry (<http://www.pernod-ricard-hellas.com/etairia>). The insights provided by the company's representatives were determinative for determining how multinational companies engage in online screening methods within the context of the Greek society. Moreover, tracking down and recruiting participants who meet the preset requirements and criteria needed for this research was extremely difficult, since the Greek marketing sector is a very closed environment based on disclosure of information and reputation management, therefore not much public discussion on sensitive and controversial issues, such as cyber vetting, takes place. As a result, eight marketing experts and HR professionals operating in Greece were selected and interviewed during a one-month period. The participants were identified through a judgmental procedure (Schwarz, 2014), which was based on several selection criteria, including minimum years of experience in the related field, proven expertise, recognition and

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relevance to the topic. The experts had also been chosen so that they could assist and contribute on some of the topics and areas in which the particular study is involved.

Specifically, the choice of who will participate in the interviews conducted was criterion-based, meaning they had to be actively engaged in the hiring process and/or operating in the Greek marketing sector. The research aim was to interview primarily participant who work in well-known and companies possessing a market share above 15% in the Greek marketing, thus being representative of the sector analyzed, and consequently allowing general and holistic understanding from being established. In addition, companies, which have a strong position in the market are more likely to follow standardized human resource management procedures such as online screening (Hornsby and Kuratko, 1990). Adding to that notion, Turban et al. (1998) found evidence that the organization's image, job characteristics (especially pay), and organizational characteristics (such as organizational size) were related to organizational attractiveness. However, this was not feasible in all cases. For that reason, both HR managers and employers of different departments, including CFOs and CEOs, were recruited in the survey. By doing so, a research body capable of producing fruitful, relevant and accurate insight was established. Employers selected, although operate solely in marketing they represent companies operating in different business sectors of Greece, thus allowing a comparison analysis to be made between the different fields, and consequently establish a clear and holistic view on the matter. The sample primarily includes employers, managers, executives and HR managers possessing different race, gender and ethnicity, therefore avoiding any potential biases that are involved (Broom et al., 2009). Table 1.1 shown in the Appendix section provides a more systematic and analytical description of the sample group used in the study, without however revealing any identifiable data about the respondents, therefore protecting their anonymity, as well as potential biases.

The main reason for focusing on employers rather than another party involved in the process of cyber vetting lies on their organizational role, their diverse experience and the ability of generating rich data and networks (Charmaz, 2009). Being a relatively closed group, with high institutional character, thus making it difficult to be recruited for a survey, led researchers in engaging into a snowball sampling process to gather the sample needed. Finally, knowing that organizations are relatively skeptical and protective in terms of their selection practices to avoid legal issues, researcher requested referrals at the end of each interview of people who can provide further or different insights on the issue at hand, thus different perspectives and approach were gathered and analyzed.

3.3 Data Collection

The first participants recruited for the interview were chosen out of judgment from the coordinator's past working experience, thus providing a good starting point for the project. Although this process may be a source of bias, by having specific requirements that research participants had to meet (minimum working experience, proven expertise and relevance to the topic and the practice examined) those biases were effectively mitigated. The rest of the participants were selected using the so-called snowball sampling, after the researcher has made a criterion-based judgment. According to Spreen (1992), snowball sampling can be situated within a wider set of link-tracing methodologies. By doing so, the researcher can take advantage of the social networks provided by the identified respondents to receive an "ever-expanding" set of useful contacts (Thomson, 1997). At the beginning, the first research participants, who were selected through the researcher's personal experience, were asked to recommend the next interviewees. In addition, each interviewee was asked to recommend further expert, who could participate in the study. It is important to mention that the snowball method possesses some drawbacks. In particular, one flaw of the method is that it might lead to exclusions that are not connected to the network, which initiated the research study (Otto-Banaszak, et al., 2011). In this case, a group that was (intentionally) excluded from the study were regular marketing employees, since they don't possess either the expertise or the organizational role to provide with useful and valid insights on the issue examined.

Regarding the practicalities of the recruitment process, the vast majority of the participants were initially recruited through phone calls made by myself or through an invitation sent via email asking them to participate in the study. After the recruiting process concluded, face-to-face interviews were conducted with all participants. Most of the interviews were conducted during the month of April due to practical and feasibility reasons, since I wasn't able to travel to Greece more than once due to the financial and time constraints involved. In addition and based on my professional experience in the marketing sector, April stands as a relatively unproductive month since not many marketing and promotional activities are taking place during that period. Therefore participants operating in that sector were available enough to participate in the interviews without doubts; hesitation or time constraints and consequently enhance the effectiveness of the overall procedure, as well as the accuracy and quality of the concluding findings. By doing face-to-face interviews conducted on natural settings, several advantages have been drawn in relation to the concluding findings, while several of the problems involved with long-distance interviews will be avoided. Specifically,

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participants' gestures, facial expressions and body language indicating their views on the matter analyzed were better examined in close distance. Moreover, the noises and technical problems that arise during mediated interviews such as the recording quality and retention of participants were effectively avoided, thus ensuring the quality and effectiveness of the overall method implicated. The main emphasis was to target HR executives operating in marketing firms and businesses since they are the ones mostly fitting the organizational characteristics and roles needed for the particular project (Berkelaar, 2010).

With participants' permission, all interviews were recorded, transcribed, and redacted. Data collected included recorded hours of employers' interviews, single-spaced pages of transcripts and field notes written by the coordinator during the interview. Therefore a detailed analysis of the subject, focusing on all the different elements involved, was implemented. Since the majority of the interviews were conducted with Greek-speaking participants, it is essential that key excerpts mentioned during the interview such as important quotes and phrases to be translated in English. Although it is a time consuming process it is essential for the quality and understanding of the project implemented. By doing so, a detailed investigation constructed in a professional and organized manner can be constructed.

As mentioned previously the overall semi-structure interview design was structured and pilot tested, therefore advancing its overall success and effectiveness. The interviewers were equipped with a "field kit" (Miles and Huberman, 1984), including a brief and clear introduction of the study, the core research questions and an informed consent to be given to the interviewee. The first two questions asked were designed to "set the scene". Specifically the first question was used to investigate the interviewee's expertise, whereas the second question was posed to clarify the expert's general perspective on the issue examined, as indicated below

Q.1: Please describe your role in the organization?

Q.2: How would you define the term online screening?

The expert semi-structured interviews chosen aims to provide new insights on cyber vetting and situate the overall research on a specific subject of interest (Charmaz, 2006), like employers' sense of cyber vetting. By doing so, a more narrowed down and in-depth investigation, reflecting participants' perception on this controversial issue can be made.

3.4 Data Analysis

This study investigates how employers report and make sense of the current process of cyber vetting. In addition, the overall method used is a qualitative one, therefore an analytic process involving both theory-driven and data-driven approaches should be implemented (Anderson, Schum, & Twining, 2005). Specifically, theory-driven approach stands as the most suitable analysis for evaluating qualitative data (Thomas, 2006). The purpose of using that type of analysis is a threefold one. First, to condense the raw textual data gathered into a brief and concise report. Secondly, to establish a clear and solid linkage between the research objectives and the finding drawn and finally to construct a rational framework based on the experiences and perceptions reflected in the raw data gathered (Thomas, 2006). On the other hand, a data-driven model was also put into action. Abduction seeks to explain a phenomenon by iteratively moving between different sets of data to inferentially construct an explanation for observed data using systematic “logical inference” and “insights” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 171). Specifically, the model designed is based on an information-based framework for dialogue management (Larsson and Traum, 2000), where the information gathered are comprehended as representations of the dynamic aspects of the dialogue (Stone and Thomason, 2003). To conform to this framework for dialogue, a data-driven approach must “provide parallel accounts of generation and understanding, in which the processes construct the same data-driven interpretations despite the different goals and premises they use in reasoning.” (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012, p. 171). In simple terms, a qualitative content analysis of the transcripts’ output data will be implemented, where specific themes and terms will be identified and highlighted based on frequency and consistency. The themes produced will stand as the theoretical bases in which the following analytical processes will be based upon, therefore enhancing the overall structure of the research design. By doing so, theory constructs knowledge by using specific observations in exchange of rules, or rational hypotheses, capable of evaluating the sample analyzed (Timmermans & Tavory, 2012). Finally, the information drawn stands as the bases for the inductive analysis that will follow, therefore both written and visual information are needed for such data interpretation to take place (Stone and Thomason, 2003).

After the raw data was transformed into meaningful insights and information through the process mentioned above, a comparative analysis was implemented in order for central concepts to be compared and collide with one another (Shepherd & Sutcliffe, 2011). As a result, the dominant themes emerging from this research were better addressed, resulting in a more in-depth analysis of the issue at hand. Specifically, through the comparative analysis

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made, three main themes emerged, namely transparency, efficiency and reputation. These themes were the ones that were most frequently mentioned in the interviews implemented, therefore highlighting their importance and significance in relation to the issue examined. The terms chosen were also selected because the participants placed specific emphasis to them, when mentioned and discussed during the interviews, indicating therefore their high value. Follow up questions, touching upon these concepts were also made, which furthered strengthened their linkage to the research questions. It is important to mention that not all participants framed those concepts using the same terms. However, the meaning they attributed to their chosen terms refers to these three themes included. The particular terminology used in this research was carefully selected since it is the most indicative for the participants' insights. After concluding on these three themes, the researcher paid serious attention on how frequently those terms were being mentioned in the later interviews made, therefore seeing if there is consistency between participants, leading to the argument of a collective sense making on cyber vetting. Moreover, the initial emerging themes were a determining factor for selecting and recruiting appropriate future research participants, who could take part in the interviews conducted and produce meaningful and useful insights. By doing so, the ways and the degree in which different organizational, industry and occupational parameters can impact the various aspects and understandings on cyber vetting, were clarified (Berkelaar, 2014) and therefore significantly expanded the existing spectrum of scientific research on this controversial subject.

In terms of the scenario development technique used in this featured case, Fink (2001), identifies three main steps taking place:

- Analysis on the scenario field finds descriptors and their cross linking.
- Within the step prognostic several basic alternatives are described.
- The final scenario development then checks on consistency between the several projections. The remaining 2 to 8 plausible scenarios can then be analysed, interpreted and described in a communicable form.

To identify a possible scenario out of several possible ones available, usually a trend variant will be used (Muskat et al., 2012). However, it is important to mention that all identified variants within a chosen scenario are equally possible. Therefore an accurate prediction of the probability of occurrence of the selected scenario is not possible to be established. The trend variant chosen is not always the most probable but usually the least extreme to happen.

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In the case study examined, the output data drawn out of the qualitative analysis is presented in the form of scenarios, constructed based on frequency and consistency. The in depth scenarios presented and indicated as the most relative from the qualitative content analysis made, were then constructed using a qualitative approach grounded upon the insights provided by the in depth expert interviews made. Specifically, the expert knowledge gained through the in depth interviews was used to build the distinctive scenarios analyzed. The specific scenarios are shown and analyzed in the results section later on.

Additional interviews with additional employers could somehow increase the project's overall credibility and effectiveness, since different views and perspectives on the issue must be documented and highlighted. However, taking into consideration that additional data might be as Berkelaar's (2014) suggests "counterproductive", from developing and clarifying central understandings on the subject, since it distracts from the initial focus set (Charmaz, 2009), I decided to remain on the eight participants initially interviewed, considering that the data provided was effective, sufficient and reflective to the research's purpose. In addition, double checks of the information gathered from the group examined were made to confirm that the raw data actually reflects the participants' perceptions and sense making processes.

4. Results

The experiment covers a period of approximately six months from January 2016 to June 2016. During this time we conducted eight interviews with marketing experts operating in the Greek market and having a significant role on employment decisions. Study examines how employers and hiring professionals make sense of cyber vetting in the contemporary workplace. Specifically, the paper aims to investigate the ways through which employers report and make sense of online information or the absence of expected information when engaging in personnel selection, resulting in creating emerging social contracts of career evaluation, job matching and employability in general. The data presented reveal how employers' current expectations on employees' online profile have significantly altered traditional and conventional selection criteria and processes of the past. Moreover, results illustrate the contradiction between employers' expectation of information transparency online by the potential employees and the actual information found online which are mainly driven and presented by a self-presentation rationale, and therefore affecting both the overall hiring process and the employer-employee relationships. Consequently, employers seem to reimagine current selection processes in today's online media environment, since they constantly adopt new emerging strategies and rationale involving new media. Finally, it is important to mention that the vast majority of the employers interviewed highlighted the importance of cyber vetting for current employment decisions, characterizing it as "unavoidable" and "inevitable" aspect of contemporary career management and process. Specifically, those two terms are indicative of the large extent in which employers engage in online screening within the marketing sector. "Developments in HR practices make online screening unavoidable", as Maria, an HR manager noted. Another marketing manager reported, "The way technology is progressing and with all those public profiles out there online screening is inevitable. Highlighting cyber vetting's transformative power several participants declared, "If technology allows me to search online, I will use Google [...]", whereas others said, "[...], since information is there, I will do it (cyber vet)". Moreover, the unavoidable character given by employers to the practice of cyber vetting is partially driven by Pfeffer's (2001) notion, arguing that in a globalized economy the companies that manage to recruit and select the most qualified employees are gaining a significant competitive advantage in the market, since talent is considered such a valuable attribute.

As to previous surveys (Berkelaar, 2015), most employers freely acknowledged engaging into cyber vetting practices. This is evident of how highly embedded is online

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screening in employment management within the contemporary society, and especially within the Greek marketing sector. However, even participants who officially denied cyber vetting, gave responses implying behaviors and practices directly related to cyber vetting, such as Google searches. Moreover, research evidence (Berkelaar, 2015) also indicated that whether cyber vetting occurs or not, highly depends on the number of applicants involved in the process. Specifically, the larger the “applicant pool” the lower the chances of cyber vetting taking place, since the particular process was found to be practiced on later stages in the selection process, where the applicant sample is significantly smaller. In general study showcased, that the practice of cybervetting is primarily influenced by the job’s specifications and employer’s overall experience and profile.

Through the in-depth semi-structured interviews made, participants revealed evidence and offered insights on the ways through which they practice and legitimize cyber vetting, what kind of online information constitute a “good fit” for an applicant and how those trends and practices are shifting in the cotemporary context, mainly due to the lack of organizational protocols. Specifically, employers framed cyber vetting in relation to the following themes: transparency (six out of the eight participants), efficiency (five out of the eight participants) and reputation (six out of the eight participants). Such intercorrelations of opinion across individual sense making reports indicate a shift towards collective meaning making processes (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012), showcasing therefore a change in discourse around the notion of employability and attendant behavior changes (Fairhurst, 2011). Each theme will be analyzed and discussed extensively below, thus indicating how those emerging concepts have altered and shifted conventional selection procedures.

4.1 Applicant Transparency

The empirical research conducted revealed transparency as a key theme of cyber vetting. Specifically, 6 out of 8 participants consider transparency as a determining factor when evaluating and addressing applicant fit. The majority of the employers interviewed (7 out of 8) justified cybe rvetting due to the lack of credible and accurate offline sources of applicant information.

Employers, who cyber vetted reported wanting to know the “real person” rather than the “deceptive” and “beautified” image presented in conventional applicant communication practices (e.g. resume). Employers seem to collectively believe that applicants present an “idealized” version of themselves in interviews and on resumes to “Get the job”, since

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applicants, as Nikos, a marketing manager reported, act during convention selection process on the bases of "... what the employers wants to see", and arguing that "On the Internet that's not the case. People don't think about the personal information they share online". A notion that goes against contemporary understandings on self-presentation and "impression management" in online settings (Ellison et al., 2003; Chambers, 2013).

Apart from their overall distrust to traditional sourced information, employers reported to seek new ways, channels and information to evaluate potential job candidates, since a more holistic understanding of a person is needed to establish an effective and successful applicant-organization fit. As Yiannis, a marketing manager said " We look for people who possess not only the required skills for the job, but also the character that matches our company's image." As a result, fit assessments focusing on an applicant's character, significantly complicate the screening and evaluation process, as well as make the hiring decision process relatively subjective, since it involves personal judgment to a high extent.

According to the interviews made, employers directly related transparency with the availability of information placed online, suggesting that "people with an open profile show they have nothing to hide", whereas they openly admitted being skeptical for people with a "close" or "limited" online profile (especially on Facebook). This is evident of how essential online openness is for employment transparency and evaluating employee fit assessments. However, that notion contradicts recent evidence, arguing that "nothing to hide cases", meaning people with publicly open profiles, sharing personal information online, often followed suggestions and recommendations by employers for cleaning their digital profile (Berkelaar, 2014). These two opposing sides have caused a debate to emerge on online transparency, resulting in different perceptions regarding employment practices and career management to be created. Differences in perception might cause disruptions and problems when evaluating fit assessments during personnel selections, consequently impacting individual lives and career prospects.

Furthermore, the majority of the employers interviewed considered transparency as a determining factor when evaluating employers' overall profile. Specifically, as one marketing manager noted, "A person with a clear profile is proof that he is a descent and honest individual, who is confident of sharing his opinion and views". In contrast, lack of online transparency "reflects poorly" as most employers reported, since it is associated with unprofessional and problematic character.

In accordance to the interview findings, employers expect relevant and sufficient

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applicant information to be available online. Therefore a collective and efficient evaluation of all the criteria needed could be established, resulting in making accurate hiring decisions. As one marketing manager reported “We expect relevant information about a candidates’ skills talents, capabilities and interests to be found online, since such information are commonly found and posted online. If not we make the assumption that the person lacks those skills needed.” This is crucially important in the realm of marketing, where applicants are requested and needed to possess particular skills, knowledge and knowhow.

Berkelaar (2015) argues that “underlying beliefs of easy access and sufficient information” results in employers assuming workers would digitally enact new transparency expectations, and consequently increase the availability of information online. This is evident in this research as well, since the majority of the employers interviewed assumed that sufficient information would be available online regardless of whether or not applicants engage in an online personnel selection process. Consequently, having a lot of personal information is perceived to a general condition for both job candidates and non-job candidates as well. Moreover, participants established a direct connection between online transparency and the younger generation of applicants. “ For young people everything is public and visible.” However, recent studies showcase that employees’ sense making on cybervetting does not differ by age or gender but in terms of communication intentions (Berkelaar, 2015).

Generally, employers considered more information as better for establishing appropriate organization-applicant fit, since a more holistic understanding of a candidate’s character could be establishes. This belief goes in parallel with contemporary notions of transparency and the new transparency imperative (Berkelaar, 2015). Given that, employers seem to justify online screening on the bases of availability of information and the absence of an official organizational protocol on the matter.

As a result, the assumption that employers view the lack of sufficient information online as both suspicious and problematic can be established. A large number of employers openly admitted they would hire the candidates having more online information, thus discriminating the ones with less available information. Specifically, employers said people who “give more” have higher chances of getting hired, since it shows they have “nothing to hide or fear”, leading therefore to the assumption that they stand as trustworthy and professional individuals and a proper fit for the organization at hand. As George, a marketing director reported, “If someone shares his opinion and views online, this tells me that he feels confident of expressing himself. [...] I would seriously considering hiring such a person.” Consequently, the findings drawn establish new transparency premises between employers

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and employees. New transparency assumptions in the organizational context imply that potential job candidates must proactively present sufficient information online. Berkelaar's (2014) research on online transparency during personnel selection further strengthens this argument. Berkelaar's (2014) findings highlight the importance of having information visibility during selection practices, setting online transparency as a core social value of both ethical and fit assessments. Furthermore, it suggests a shift in transparency expectations in the contemporary workplace, therefore highlighting the need for a new "digital social contract" (Berkelaar, 2014), which will address the issues created by this shift in the social contract of employability and career management. This study supports those notions, however it raises important questions and concerns on how this digital social contract will be operationalized. It suggests that the new transparency expectations have to be first be evaluated in terms of their implications for both employers and employees, before being placed into this social contract. It also stresses the need for mutual transparency to digital information for all parties involved in the process, thus having a rightness procedure, as well as mitigating potential risks involved in the process of cyber vetting. Moreover, the notion more is better seems to have been heavily embedded into the contemporary concept of online transparency. Finally, employers considered the potential candidates who failed to meet the standards and requirements of this new business "contract" (Berkelaar, 2014) on transparency, as dishonest, unethical and unsuitable for employers, resulting in new evaluation criteria of organizational fit to emerge in the new business context.

4.2 An Efficient Method

According to Case (2012), people prefer information sources that they consider as valuable, since they can offer and/or save time and money. Results indicate that employers consider cyber vetting as an effective tool for advancing the overall selection process. Specifically, six employers and marketing managers framed online screening as "efficient", arguing that it can significantly reduce the time needed to complete the hiring procedure, resulting in offering cost efficiencies for the organizations practicing it. In contrast to conventional background checks, employers consider cyber vetting as "less costly" and "more time efficient", showcasing therefore their positive predispositions for this particular personnel selection practice. It also implies that the practice can function as a replacement for traditional methods, which are relatively more costly and time consuming, and therefore highlighting the incompetence of conventional selections practices in meeting businesses' emerging financial and organizational needs. "Through the internet I can see the entire spectrum of the information I want in a less timely manner", said a marketing manager.

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Another employer also noted, “It costs me nothing to search the web for information, while regular procedures require time, money and human resources.” As a result, the underlying assumption that cyber vetting stands as an efficient alternative in comparison to the conventional and traditional practices and tools, can be established.

However, not all employers considered cyber vetting as efficient and as alternative tool for existing practices. A marketing manager reported that online screening can only “enrich” the process, when used in collaboration with the conventional background checks currently practiced. Specifically, he stated, “Online screening can never replace a face to face interview or the impression given by a CV. It can only provide you with a more holistic image about the person’s character.”

Moreover, several employers reported not to cyber vet, since the applicants evaluated had already been vetted by people, whose job is to evaluate and hire job personnel. One of those employers said “I don’t engage in cyber vetting. That lies on the duties of the HR department.” Therefore, employers who are positively predisposed in regards to cyber vetting, might not cyber vet, if they have knowledge that the applicant has been vetted by a trusted source, particularly from within the organization interested. Consequently the source and the organization’s task management defines whether cyber vetting will be practiced or not from marketing managers.

As reported by the research participants, the evaluation process as well as the organizational fit is primarily based on the size and type of the digital applicant context. Through comparisons made from within the digital landscape, participants could evaluate the applicants, establish assessments of organization-applicant fit and consequently take hiring decisions. Evidently, there is a strong linkage between cyber vetting and the nature and size of the applicant pool, which is available to employers.

Finally, participants reported that cyber vetting allowed them to be more selective and strategic in their hiring decisions. Due to high number of applicants interested for a job position, employers cyber vetted in order to evaluate applicants possessing equal qualifications, capabilities and skills. By doing so, employers could evaluate whether a person’s available online information could give a “competitive advantage”, and thus distinguishing him/her among the other potential applicant. As a result, an accurate and well-grounded decision can be made, reflecting each organization’s purpose, goals, and culture.

4.3 A commercially “clean” online persona

The research made also indicated that employers expected from candidates to demonstrate a commercially “clean” online persona. Driven by US electoral politics Berkelaar (2014) suggest that what constitutes a desirable image for a presidential candidate applies for job candidates’ online persona during online screening. This particular notion applies for the realm of marketing as well, as it is evident by the results drawn from this research. Specifically, this research suggests that the seriousness and professionalism of a candidate’s online persona is a key factor in hiring decisions implemented in the marketing sector of Greece. According to participants’ responses what constitutes a serious/professional profile is the nature of the information themselves. Specifically, information referring to sociopolitical and business related issues are relatively considered more serious and professional, whereas personal non-work related information are considered as a sign of an unprofessional profile. In regards to the seriousness and professionalism of online profiles, participants made a distinction between the online platforms, stating that LinkedIn has to be strictly characterized by a business related context, while being more lenient about the information found in social media platforms, such as Facebook. However, Yiannis, a marketing manager, reported “Personally I find people who post too much information on Facebook a bit posh” adding, that “if I find a person has a very open and public account, I will assume he is too extravert and it might affect my decision.”, therefore indicating that these notions also apply to some extent to social profiles as well. All of the above, showcase that identity management and career management stand as key factors for employment in the Greek marketing sector.

Employers’ views on identity management suggest that job personnel must possess a “professional, serious and clean” online public image that is consistent across all social media platforms. By doing so, according to participants, job candidates showcase that “they take their public image seriously”, “consider their online presence” and that they “stand as a safe and right choice for an organization”. Specifically, employers expected candidates to be “stable”, “honest”, “virtuous” and “upright” in both their professional and private lives. Employers reported that candidates who “looked normal” and where in live with their evaluation assessments, they were more likely to be called for an interview. This is indicative of the extent to which impression and identity management affects personnel selection decisions in the contemporary business context. Consequently, employers admitted to have disqualified candidates for “trashy photos”, “unethical comments” and “inappropriate language”. Moreover, participants stated that the focus is primarily placed on the nature and

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amount of the professional information shared rather than personal ones, implying the need for more “professional and business-related information and interests” to be posted online, along with “limited” self-information. “A person who posts too much about himself seems to be too egocentric and pretentious and I would probably not hire that person since it might not be a good team player or a serious character.” Implying that even social media profiles need to be professional in terms of their information has implications in regards to the future and overall nature of those platforms. This creates an important tension in regards to the quality of social networking sites (SNS) information. Although SNS are rich and freely accessible source of information, the increased possibility of irregular and variable information, stresses the need for users (in this case, employers) to make judgments about its quality (Arazy and Kopak, 2011). This trend is directly related to Lankes’ (2003) notion of information “self-sufficiency”, which suggests being responsible for making determinations of quality on unmediated information. This stresses the need for better understandings of issues of information quality, when employers use SNS during personnel selection, as well as understand the relevance of SNS’ information in the hiring process. Unlike previous research that directly links technological characteristics of information sources with information quality (Lee et al., 2002; Stvilia et al., 2007), recent findings presented highlight the dialectic tensions involved in the dimensions of information quality. This implies that assessments of information are not directly derived from features of the task, technology, and information; rather information judgments arise from the ways users engage and resolve the tensions presented to them in a particular socio-technical situation (Pike, Bateman and Butler, 2013). Recent studies also demonstrate that the language used in SNSs can impact impression formation online, demonstrating therefore affect employability in general (Scott et al., 2014). The study made also highlights this particular dichotomy between the social function of SNSs and their potential damaging consequences to career management. As Pike, Bateman and Butler (2013), suggest through their work “SNSs represent a new class of systems, as they are not owned, operated, or controlled by the organizations that employ the users assessing the quality of information provided by these systems. Therefore, as technology continues to evolve at an exponential rate, questions regarding the assessments of information within SNS, when being used to achieve organizational goals, will continue to possess high importance in the contemporary workplace and employability context.

However, organization fit is also an important aspect that is taken into account when analyzing a candidate’s online persona. As Yiannis, a marketing manager reported, “When looking online, I try to see whether a person’s online image fits and matches our organizational culture as well as the brands and products that will be allocated to him/her. If

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no match is found, then most likely no interview will be scheduled.”

Consistency between online and offline information, was also found to be an important evaluation assessment of personnel selection, since it is directly related with an individual’s ethics and honesty. As it was found in the research, when information as found to be either “incomplete” or “misleading and inaccurate”, it would most likely cause problems and disruption in the hiring process. In addition, using those terms, suggests that participants place a high value on online information, and thereof any absence, lack of or misconception will significantly impact the employment process. The meaning of those terms used by participants, further strengthens the argument, suggesting that employers seek online transparency and collectively make sense of it when informing fit assessments during personnel selection. The technological developments provided by ICT technology has enabled employers to cross check the information available both in conventional communications and online, thus being able to detect any kind of inconsistencies between the two-applicant communication sources. Those inconsistencies vary in nature and might include a number of different elements such as photos, personal information, and online content. According to participants, information deception negatively influences personnel selection decisions and it is presumed when online information appears inconsistent in any way with offline information. “If I find a person is lying in his online profile, this is something I have to report.”

Evidence suggest that employers expect a “clean” online persona, while strictly evaluating all information available in both offline and online settings, thus establishing reputational consistencies among the two information sources. Moreover employers’ reports also indicate that they expect from potential employees to carefully manage their online information and profile in a professional and serious manner, having in mind the potential audience involved. Therefore the assumption of the rise of a new business framework indicating the nature and order of information online is being established, which significantly affects the contemporary employer-employee relationships.

Employers also made a connection between cybervetting and high-ranked job positions and professions within the marketing sector, stating that online screening is more commonly used when the job position which is put into examination is of high importance for the organization. Therefore, it is the organization’s duty to have the clearest image possible for the person who is about to fill that specific position. Nikos, a marketing manager reported, when he has to evaluate a candidate for a valuable position he reported, “[...] to be brutally honest, I would check everything that is publically available. [...] For example, if you ask me,

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if I would look for pictures and I can tell you that I would.” Additionally he noted, “For example, if I’m looking for someone who was going to work for a product with specific needs, such as a luxury brand, ideally you want someone who has some sort of affiliation with such a way of living. So pictures should represent such a lifestyle.” Although that notion doesn’t refer to all participants, a significant amount (three out of eight), reported of making such affiliations, when engaging in online screening, therefore suggesting that several employers do not make the distinction between the online and offline self, during personnel selection. As a result, this has serious implications for both employability and career management practices, since a skilled marketer might be excluded or undermined in the selection practices for not demonstrating online the brand identity expected by the employers and their main clients.

Although recent results reveal the emergence of online self-censorship norms (McLaughlin and Vitak, 2012), the research data presented indicate that employer expectations play a dominating role in the selection process. Having in mind, that applicants still remain unaware of the consequences of seemingly harmless online information (Berkelaar, 2010), we can detect a shifting trend on both the evaluation assessments practiced during the selection process, as well as on the dynamic in the employer-employee relationship, where more and more power is taken away from the applicant, whereas the employer is gaining significant power and influence within the emerging business context. According to Edwards (2005), job candidates are “public figures” representing their organization. Research evidence supports this argument, since the majority of the participants reported of searching “clean”, “serious” and “professional” candidates. Organizations, therefore are searching and expecting candidates, who not only do not harm the company’s reputation but can actually advance it and improve it by appealing through their online persona to a commercially broad audience. However, it should be noted, that online identity and reputation management is a complicated and costly process. As a result, not all potential candidates have the socio-technical competence and resources needed to meet current “digital reputational expectations” (Solove, 2007). For that very reason, new alternative ways have to be designed and implemented in order to meet the demanding needs of all the parties involved in this contemporary digital business contract.

4.4 Cybervetting as Reputation and Self-Management Tool

A vast majority of participants viewed and framed cyber vetting as an effective tool of a company’s reputation management. Reputation management considers “organizational

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reputation and corporate image as the basis for sound corporate governance and competitive advantage (Horlick-Jones, 2005, p. 293). Therefore reputation management is directly related to the visibility of the company itself. Apart from the financial and practical aspect, participants reported that a “bad candidate selection” could cause damage to an organization’s overall reputation and image. Specifically, employers cyber vet to see whether a person’s online profile and the things they post and share online can have a harmful effect to the reputation of the company or the brand. As a marketing manager noted, workers are a company’s “brand ambassadors” and therefore they must “act properly and in line with the organization’s policies both offline and online.” Employers who reported cyber vetting admitted that the vast majority of the cases refer to “executive positions”, because there is “more at stake” and “they stand as the ‘face’ of the organization, thus indicating the need to manage the risk involved when hiring candidates for high-ranked positions, incurring greater scrutiny. The ICT technology included in the practice of cyber vetting, enables employers to establish a more holistic view of the potential contributions or dangers that a candidate entails to organizational reputation and image.

Due to the increase of information and news sources, employers were seen more concerned about the personnel selections, since the “media can take advantage of it to get to you”. As a result, today’s media environment is in direct linkage with the development and rise of the practice of cyber vetting. Contemporary information sources act as catalyst, urging employers to engage in online screening in an attempt to protect their company’s reputation from media scrutiny.

According to participants, workers should act in accordance to “company’s values, even after their work time”, therefore hiring decisions should be taken after careful thought and by taken into consideration the overall business culture of the organization, thus avoiding negative publicity from being created. This notion goes in parallel with contemporary beliefs on organizational reputation management and employee branding as necessary for organizational success (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002)

As reported, organizational reputation management through cyber vetting extended conventional business roles, entering non-work contexts. Because of the scarcity of online personal information available, employers could view beyond the conventional background business related data, therefore extending fit assessments across the full spectrum of role contexts. Driven by that notion a marketing manager noted, “ In trying to find information about a potential candidate, I regularly search for other people who can provide me with useful and objective feedback and information about that individual.”

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In contrast to conventional fit assessments based upon mutually agreed data, current evaluation assessments stretch across all life domains. Employers reported looking for candidates, who exhibit ethical character, conscientious and seriousness both in their professional and private life. Meeting those criteria is important in today's business context because as several employers noted "how people act in their daily lives has a direct reflection on how they might act in the office... what they say, what they think might influence their performance at the workplace."

Participants also considered online self-management as vital for contemporary notions on professionalism. Being a "serious" and "professional" both offline and online seems to be gaining further credit in today's business and working environment, therefore having implications for the at home/ at work distinction examined in this study, leading to the assumption that the distinction between the personal and professional self seems to be viewed as separate in the contemporary workplace. Regardless of the nature or the size of the organization, all participants shared a collective understanding that online personal management is needed when involved in the hiring process and that it is workers' responsibility to manage and create online information accordingly. Workers "are responsible for whatever they share online. If something is wrong at their social media page it is not my fault that I see it and report it." As a marketing manager noted "It is their public image so it is their duty to keep it in a serious and work-related manner if they want to have chances of getting hired." Surprisingly, digital professionalism expectations are espoused by employers who were either against or skeptical about cyber vetting, therefore indicating the universality of the practice in current work-related contexts. "You can't blame an employer who wants to know more about the person he is about to hire."

According to employers, workers must anticipate cyber vetting and therefore the duty of managing their online persona in accordance to digital professional expectations lies to them. "You are responsible for your profile. You must try to detect and manage anything that might hurt your image and lower your chances of finding a job." Regardless of the accuracy or the source of the information available online, participants collectively agreed that, "the duty for their own information is in their hands. They are the ones to blame or to take credit.". This perspective brings serious implications to both career and self-management, since applicants are proactively expected to manage and construct their online information according to the organizations' needs. If not so, they might be excluded from the selection process. Moreover, there are also other implications involved, since the people who won't cope according to the contemporary digital and organizational expectations might face social

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consequences, including the social outcome of “digital stigma”, which was previously mentioned, resulting to social and workplace isolation.

Generally, participants did not question the rising need to prioritize work-related content online, therefore suggesting that cyber vetting is inevitable in the current professional framework. For that very reason, employers stressed the need for managing online information in line with organizational values and contemporary digital expectations, thus extending work-related expectations beyond conventional and traditional employment boundaries. “You need to have a complete and clear view of the person you are hiring. Therefore everything needs to be in place and in order” Most importantly, employers have collectively accepted online screening and consequently online management, regardless of their personal beliefs and opinion, setting therefore cyber vetting as the “new normal” (Berkelaar, 2014).

Viewing cyber vetting as a reputational and self-management tool, employers further legitimated the practice of cyber vetting, by emphasizing on the organizational value produced through its use. Moreover, current notions, emphasizing on the reputational character of cyber vetting, advanced conventional fit assessments into a new level, where an individual’s professional, organizational and personal value collide, interact and coexist.

5. Discussion

This study examined employers' sense making regarding the contemporary personnel selection practice of cyber vetting. It investigates how shared and collective understandings inform and shape expectations of and responses to contemporary personnel selection and career management and employment relationships. Evidence showcase that employers construct fit assessments not solely by interpreting work-related information made available online by ICT technologies, but by formulating collective sense making of what constitutes the appropriate organizational fit in today's global digital information landscape.

First of all, findings revealed that employers are reconstructing fit assessments in the information economy. Specifically, employers emphasized the importance of the organizational environment when designing fit expectations. In addition they stressed the emerging need to assess the "whole" person, beyond conventional and traditional employment and business-related boundaries, therefore extending fit assessments in non-work role contexts as well. As a result, what currently represents a "good fit" and an effective personnel selection, incorporates contemporary notions of employee and organization branding (Alvesson & Wilmott, 2002; Lair, Sullivan, & Cheney, 2005), while possessing expectations on transparency and accuracy of the information available online. Therefore, cyber vetting further advances conventional work roles since it assumes people possess multiple identities, which are both visible and evident to the public.

Moreover, study indicates how online screening during candidate selection has moved from the conventional work places, times and roles to interpreting information in relation to non-work roles and contexts. Employers' beliefs, viewing online screening as something "inevitable" in today's working environment have further legitimized the practice of cybervetting, allowing it to significantly extend its surveillance context and spectrum. Specifically, cybervetting's advance capacities and technological capabilities have allowed employers to explore, interpret and reconstruct a wide range of information, therefore reconfiguring notions of fit assessments, a "good" candidate, and what constitutes accurate information sources. Finding indicate that employers' rationales about cyber vetting to some extent go in line with conventional background checks rules found in offline settings, since unstructured and unobtrusively obtained information are viewed by employers as more credible and accurate (Berger & Douglas, 1981). Despite the increased access to information, participants rarely questioned the practice of cyber vetting as an illegal or unethical process (Shilling, 2009), showing therefore the necessity that it possesses in current selection

procedures. Instead employers further justified online screening on the bases of the scarcity of the information present and the publicly available information online. Consequently, employers presented a collective attitude towards the increase of the information available rather improving information usage during personnel selection (Jablin, 2001), providing therefore clear indication on the evaluation criteria in which the hiring process is based upon.

The findings presented also indicate an important shift in the communication approaches involved during organizational processes such as personnel selection and career management. Specifically, reports from all participants interviewed indicate a change from individual to collective shared understanding and meaning making on contemporary personnel selection practices (Stigliani & Ravasi, 2012). Given that, we tried to examine how current discourses provide insights on employer's views and approaches about cyber vetting, as well as how contemporary approaches affect conventional fit assessments in today's media and digital environment.

5.1 Emerging Transparency Expectations

Participants evaluated cyber vetting from a transparency perspective, being therefore in line with contemporary beliefs viewing transparency as an ethical proxy (Plaisance, 2007). Findings suggest asymmetrical transparency expectations amongst employers, therefore increasing efforts from employees to attain both work and non-work goals and roles. Employers, justified the practice of cyber vetting under the notions of "nothing to hide" and "if online its public". Those notions set the discourse where the new transparency assumptions are grounded. Moreover, the particular beliefs are further strengthened by the shared imply that privacy is mainly driven by the intent to disclose negative and harmful information (Solove, 2011), and therefore countering arguments suggesting that privacy can have valuable societal implications (Turilli & Floridi, 2009).

Shared beliefs that employees must effectively and proactively manage online information for career management purposes further reinforces the transparency asymmetry argument. The evidence derived suggests that the practice of cyber vetting reconstructs, and shifts perceptions and usages about employment in general (Buzzanell, 2000). However those shared expectations created regarding how employees should act online have raised the question of whether this collective sense making reflects reality (Buzzanell, 2000) or ethical standards (Sonenshein, 2007).

According to Berkelaar (2014) these shared expectations of transparency have led to

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the rise of a social contract on employment and work called the “digital social contract”. Digital social contract prescribes normative expectations for workers’ digital visibility in exchange for employability, thereby expanding the worker role (Berkelaar, 2014). In simple terms, potential employees are expected to effectively manage and curate online information across all possible roles and contexts and in a manner that communicates professionalism and seriousness to the public, thus advancing career potential. Berkelaar’s argument is in line with the finding provided by this study, thus furthering strengthening the “digital social contract” construct and its implications in the contemporary context of employment.

In today’s work environment many professions have expected employees to engage in online career management to maintain employability (Buzanell, 2000) and employers have long desired for more information about workers (Jablin, 2001). These expectations are further enhanced by the various emerging needs created under this new social contract, including maintaining employability, and changing organizations and/or career (Buzanell, 2000).

Evidently, the new transparency imperative created, urging employees to manage and create career competencies has also significantly affected contemporary employer-employee relationships. The communicative characteristics of cyber vetting allow employers to extend evaluation assessments across all social spheres without providing any notice, clarity or guidelines to potential workers, therefore creating significant imbalances in employment relationships. On the other side, the adoption of this new transparency imperative by employees further stretches the existing work now-work boundaries, resulting in confusing workers on their nature, role, actions and overall behavior prior and during employment, as well as both within and outside the organizations. Consequently, overall corporate interests are prioritized against individual needs and wants (Deetz, 1993). Finally, new transparency expectations views each online site as a potential context for fit evaluation, therefore online career management has transformed to a complex and ongoing process, creating disruptions and confusions to employment processes. Such disruptions and distortions might include misinterpretations of online information, time constraint issues, and/or issues of access to online personal information. Those implications highlight the need that contemporary employers must possess the technical knowledge and digital literacy needed in order to cope in the digital context of employment.

5.2 Implications and Recommendations for Future Research

This study effectively illustrates how cyber vetting along with the increased visibility and the collapsed contexts accompanied it, are altering understandings, assumptions and fit assessments of personnel selection and career management and expanding these practices into now work frameworks. Consequently, such extensions create sociotechnical and communicative challenges for employers who engage in online screening, as well as for potential employers who need to manage and curate their online persona. Specifically, employers expect from qualified applicants to effectively and consistently construct their online personal image across time, space and contexts, excluded from conventional selection practices, thus causing distortions and misconceptions into candidates' minds.

Therefore, this particular research not only addresses issues of information exchange and sense making processes (Dipboye, 2014), but touches upon the emerging concept of digital career capital, a notion grounded on Inkson and Arthur's (2001) study on career capital. Based on our finding regarding how employers value and make sense of applicants' available information online and therefore absence of, we end up to the assumption that digital career capital extends past boundaries by highlighting the need of making career capital, employability and social identity, digitally and visible online. In contrast to the conventional methods, where employability was relevant only during personnel selection, in today's digital career capital, employers are expected to exhibit professionalism, seriousness, and competence across several different information sources and contexts. As a result, potential candidates tend to view employment/workplace and self in general as a single entity (Berkelaar & Buzzanell, 2014).

However, meeting current demanding expectations requires sophisticated and complex impression management skills, since people must manage their schema-compatible image (Goffman, 1959) across different platforms, spaces, roles, times and contexts to satisfy employers increased desires during early sense making processes (Weick, 1995). Although recent research in online impression management provides insights on how people utilize technological affordances to curate online assumptions, most studies focus on particular platforms (e.g. Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), thus illustrating only a partial image of the issue at hand. In addition, current studies argue that employees working at a distance are more likely to use impression management tactics (Barsness, Diekmann, & Seidel, 2005).

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However, they fail in addressing the extent to which those impression tactics are practiced, when individuals cannot clearly identify specific audiences or situation due to the multiple and scattered roles they have acquired in the contemporary employment contexts.

Generally, the evidence provided suggests that employers' cyber vetting disrupts employees' notion on online information. Specifically, when employers engage in cyber vetting they actually aim to interpret individuals across different roles and contexts (Maclean, Harvey, & Chia, 2012) guided by contemporary notions of what constitutes professionalism in today's digital landscape (Cheney & Ashcraft, 2007). Therefore, potential candidates, before engaging in the job selection process, are now expected to manage, curate and construct work and non-work standards in online communication in a manner that is both understandable and visible to employers. The asymmetry created between work and non-work boundaries goes in line with recent researches on work-life collision, arguing that organizational socialization is inevitable and immediate (Deetz, 1992; Berkelaar, 2013). Viewing candidates as organizational "brand ambassadors", employers who engage in cyber vetting view and evaluate all online visible information, regardless of nature and relevance, under the scope of employability.

Moreover, the research made showcases an important shift in fit assessments as well. The shift illustrates the need to reevaluate how socio-technical changes and challenges along with emerging notions on identity have significantly affected conventional selection and career management practices. Employers unintentional bias and inconsistencies between online and offline information have further distorted the selection process. Driven by ICTs' technological capabilities and the ethical aspect of employment decisions, this study aimed to address the issue of improving the communicative and technical capabilities needed in order for effective and ethical information use to take place during personnel selection (Case, 2012; Jablin, 2001).

Given that, employers must evaluate cyber vetting's overall consequences including, what applicant characteristics and which environments can result in achieving organizational goals. These evaluations suppose establishing understandings on which information sources provide credible, and accurate information for identifying qualified candidates able to fit to an organization's structure. Surprising, over time cyber vetting's ability to establish an effective employee-organization fit is significantly undermined as employees' awareness of cyber vetting's popularity is increased (Berkelaar, 2014). Specifically, potential candidates possessing advanced technological and computing competencies can undermine employers' attempts of retrieving "unbiased", "unstructured" and "informal" information, referring to the

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“authentic” person. For that very reason, researchers must provide alternative ways of practicing cybervetting, which address employers’ increased information needs as well as contemporary notions of cybervetting’s efficiency, uncertainty and reputation.

Moreover, research evidence highlight current trends to further complicate the meaning of identity (Tracy & Tretheway, 2005), reinforced by emerging corporate demands for applicant to present a professional, serious, consistent, transparent and “sanitized” image both offline (Lair et al., 2005) and online (Berkelaar, Scacco, & Birdsell, 2014; Berkelaar, 2014). Notions of consistent identity however, go against current beliefs suggesting that individuals act and communicate different identities, roles and personas across numerous spatiotemporal contexts. Therefore, arguments claiming identity as singular have not been fully adopted in the contemporary social context, resulting in distortions and misinterpretations when employers practice cyber vetting. In addition, recent research demonstrated diverse outcomes of information visibility on different group and gender categories, thus creating different understandings on identity in general (Eagly & Carli, 2007). These different understandings must urge employers and researchers to further investigate the extend to which digitally visible artifacts can act as a credible, fair and accurate source of information during personnel selection, thus countering arguments suggesting that they should remain salient due to increased visibility and inaccuracy.

Another important outcome provided by the research findings is an evident shift in employment surveillance from the employee to the individual. Consequently, employers must reconsider cyber vetting’s consequences for both employees and organizations (Andrejevic, 2007) to better prioritize their organizational needs and goals. Regardless of whether employees have conformed to contemporary notions of career management and personnel selection, evidence showcase that such surveillance decreases trust to the overall selection process, harms organizational identification (Andrejevic, 2007) and consequently increases (Paré and Tremblay 2007). For that very reason, employers must consider effective alternatives to cyber vetting, and therefore viewed again as desirable and appealing employers. The ones who continue to cyber vet must try to make the overall process more transparent, fair and interactive by either hiring a third party or use specialized and mutually agreed online information sources, thus avoiding (legal) claims of unethical and unprofessional hiring and/or employment discrimination. Finally, researcher can further assist by providing insights on employee’s views on cyber vetting and the extent to which they consider it as a valid process.

The research made also addresses employer’s doubts, skepticism and uncertainties

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regarding the communicative aspect of cyber vetting. It offers insights on how employers must communicatively engage in cyber vetting in order to advance and leverage personnel selection, and therefore gaining the competitive advantage needed in the contemporary work context (Gardner et al., 2012; Levashina & Campion, 2009). Research evidence showcase that when employers place themselves into employees role, they tend to question more ICT adoption and use (Berkelaar, 2014). Such perspectives highlight the need of carefully reconsidering the extent to which cyber vetting should be practiced, by having though in mind ICTs' competencies, uses, socio-communicative and technological developments. By adopting such communicative approaches, policy makers involved with employment procedures can effective develop an organizational protocol and framework addressing today's problems and complexities of information access, use and privacy brought by ICT technology (Solove, 2011).

5.3 Future Research, Limitations and Recommendations

Future research made should be based on these outcomes, findings and contributions, while also addressing the study's limitations. Unfortunately, the study's sampling approach (8 participants) prohibits generalizability for a wider population and its contemplative character might not reflect or represent actual behaviors. However it establishes clear insights on how cyber vetting is being practiced within the marketing industry of Greece. For that very reason, future research can include direct observations of the participants while engaging in the practice of cyber vetting, therefore a more empirical understanding of the issue at hand can be established. Furthermore, an experimental study using representative samples can better define whether employers' reported are actually being accomplished through cyber vetting either in the short term or in the long term. Such empirical work can bridge the existing gap between academic research and reality and therefore provide effective calls to varied set of answers regarding this complex issue.

In addition, further investigation into the emerging social contract is needed to establish and advance understandings regarding shifting fit expectations and criteria caused by differences and complexities in sense making about cyber vetting. Specifically, future research should use random and representative samples operating in different fields and from both Greece and abroad. By doing so, insights and evidence drawn by the research can result to generalizations about the wider population and establish different legal and social understandings about privacy, which might affect cyber vetting's existing evaluations (Solove, 2011). Moreover a cross-cultural inquiry on the matter can establish holistic

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understandings on the matter and showcase the differences presented from country to country. Although social contracts are mainly associated with important time periods or specific cultures, today's multinational business context and globalizations urges future research to provide further insights into how, when and to what extent does digital social contract transcends national boundaries. In addition, researchers should focus their attention in investigating how different interpretations and perspectives on transparency and privacy affect and influence sense making and practice of cyber vetting. Therefore a clear and meaningful linkage between transparency and cyber vetting will have been established, allowing researchers to provide further insights for the interrelationship of the two variables. Again experimental research using direct observation will provide empirical evidence identifying differences and contradiction between reported beliefs and actual practices of cyber vetting. Finally, similar methods should also be made and repeated at random time periods, thus identifying any differences and developments in the social contract over time.

5.5 Practical Implications

Several practical implications can be drawn from this study. First of all, employers need to consider how cyber vetting's communicative and informative aspect shape, affect and impact the overall effectiveness of personnel selection. Employers are currently relying on intuition and organizational communication when engaging in online screening, thus risking the chance of failed selection decisions. Therefore, researchers and communication scholars can help employers adapt more evidence-based selection strategies, meeting therefore cyber vetting's spatiotemporal peculiarities meaning that the information shared are not always reflective of the individual's self or situation, as well as the employers' demanding needs and wants on information accuracy, while also addressing the ethical concerns regarding the practice.

Overall, research findings pose serious doubts regarding the appropriateness of employers considering applicants' online information found in personal social networking sites (SNSs). Until today there are no sufficient evidence supporting the criterion-related validity of inferences based on social media assessments. Moreover, when it is not feasible to establish the criterion-related validity of a selection process (Sackett & Arvey, 1993), organizations often rely on content-related assessments to establish judgments. However, taking into consideration the social purpose of social media platforms, such as Facebook and having in mind that people do not use such sites to apply for a job position, it will be relatively difficult to establish content-related validity inferences based on the content found

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on Facebook and other platforms. Furthermore there are issues of availability of job-related information on social media, which we have stressed in this study, as well as the lack of consistent information across applicants and contexts. On those bases we strongly recommend organizations and hiring professional to be skeptical when using social media (e.g. Facebook) and other Internet information sources (e.g. Google search) until methods and measurements for determining, collecting, and assessing such information are proven to be valid. We also recommend organizations to construct specific policies addressing the issues involved with social media platforms, since as recent studies show (marketing) managers and regular employees are more likely to use social media information during personnel selection than HR professionals (Van Iddekinge, et al., 2013). As a result, it is crucial for HR managers to train and educate both (marketing) managers and employees about the potential issues and problems of such online information.

Another implication provided by this study involves applicants' need to constantly manage their online persona to effectively affect employability. Although people have systematically monitored and managed their professional image (Goffman, 1959), digital impression management and information scarcity involve relatively sophisticated communication strategies, thus making the overall process far more complex and demanding in nature. However, making relevant audience-related information visible online presupposes knowledge on the digital landscape's collapsed context, temporal demands, and invisible audiences (boyd, 2007). Furthermore, cyber vetting offers limited channels for applicants and very little ability to self-control, since it raises questions about the "authentic" person (Hogan, 2010; Marwick & boyd, 2010). Finally, non – work content, artifacts and narratives (boyd, 2007), contradict with contemporary notions of professionalism and employability.

By scientifically addressing the concept of cyber vetting, the study tries to challenge assumptions and perspectives on what constitutes the ideal fit, what indicates job competence, what online information is actually valuable and what is ethical in today's social contract. To answer and effectively address such queries scholars and researchers must cooperate with employers in order to make organizational interests and goals on employment visible and known to the public. However, this should be made by placing professionalism to the center of digital identity when being monitored online.

In particular, we urge employers, HR manages and policy makers to reconsider the environments and settings that constitute the appropriate fit assessments, therefore establishing a clear context where both employers and employees can proactively coexist, cooperate and operate. Specifically, current legislation primarily emphasizes on individual

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characteristics relevant for employment or illegal for personnel selection (Shilling, 2009), thus setting some relative boundaries regarding information use. However, research findings indicate that the already established framework defining which environment is eligible or thereof illegal needs to be further clarified or even redesigned completely. By redefining issues and notions of information access and control, employers have a better understanding into what extend online information can affect selection decisions and consequently social justice (Case, 2012; Jablin, 2001).

In conclusion, evidence indicate that differences in technological affordances (ICTs) and shifting information patterns and assumptions impact organizational processes such as personnel selection, and consequently affect to a large extend individual life and progress. Specifically, findings showcase how online information visibility or lack of, links with contemporary employability expectations by employers, thus causing potential candidates to actively and constantly curate their online persona, even when they are not actively seeking a job. Such shared and collective assumptions indicate an important shift in the contemporary social contract towards a digital social contract, implicitly pointing when, where and how should cyber vetting be practiced and potential candidates should manage their online information accordingly.

By carefully examining employers' sense making about cyber vetting, this study established a both theoretical and empirical understanding of contemporary expectations and assumptions on employment and career management. In addition, it provides insights on how peoples' collective sense making about information uses and affordances impact personnel selection practices, fit criteria and assumptions about career management and employer-employee relationships. Findings provide raise questions regarding ethical personnel selections, as well as on the short-term and long-term implications of information scarcity and visibility on both organizations and individuals. Furthermore, research evidence highlight the central role of information visibility to contemporary personnel selection practices. It also points out the importance of transparency as a determining factor in all forms of ethical assessments, therefore stressing the need that the particular concept needs to be further clarifies within today's business context. Finally, this study stresses the need for further research on how technological developments and affordances affect and impact organizational practices and perceptions of employability and career management in the contemporary sociopolitical context. As a result, a holistic understanding on cyber vetting's implications to both organizations and individuals will be established.

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Appendix

A. Table

Table 1.1: Research participants' non-identifiable data (pseudonym, age, gender, business position).

Participants Number	Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Business Position
1	Nikos	32	Male	Marketing Manager
2	Yiannis	39	Male	Marketing Manager
3	Maria	34	Female	HR Manger
4	George	46	Male	Marketing Director
5	Christos	54	Male	CEO
6	Apostolos	36	Male	Marketing Dorector
7	Eleni	42	Female	CFO
8	Spiros	53	Male	Marketing Manager

The pseudonyms used in this study are solely to refer to each research participant, and they are not in any way identifiable and/or real life names.

B. Interview Questions

General Questions:

1. Please describe your role in the organization?
2. How would you define the term online screening

1st Theme: Cybervetting and online information sources

3. Do you search for online information of a candidate during personnel selection?
 - If yes, which information sources and channels are you using?

4. Do you consider current online sources (e.g. social media as a reliable source of information?

5. How would you evaluate those online channels in terms of availability of information?

2nd Theme: Cybervetting and Technology-Effects and Impacts in the Selection Process

6. What is your opinion regarding the relationship between technology and information accessibility.

- Please elaborate.

7. What do you think is the role of technology in terms of transparency and accuracy of information?

8. Do you consider technological advancements have altered traditional and conventional employment management practices?

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- If Yes/No, please elaborate

3rd Theme: Online Information

9. What kind of information do you seek when searching online (visual, textual, relational, technological, absence of information)?

10. How do you evaluate the quality of the information placed online?

11. Generally would you consider the information present online as a reliable source for evaluating a potential job candidate?

4th Theme: Organizational Protocols

12. When searching for online information during personnel selection, are there any guidelines, rules, protocols or procedures you take into account?

- If yes, can you provide details on which rules you follow?
- Are those rules, protocols followed imposed to you by your organization or derive from your personal character?

13. Do you think that organizational protocols for information management are necessary in today's employment practices?

5th Theme: Evaluation Criteria

14. What are the criteria you take into account when hiring a candidate through online selection practices?

15. How do you evaluate the information found online?

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16. What are the determining factors in terms of the nature of the information searched online?

6th Theme: Perception

17. What are the main reasons for engaging in such online activities during the hiring process?

18. What kind of online information might prevent you from hiring a potential candidate?

19. Have you personally found such information during online search?

- If yes, can you elaborate more on your experience?
- How did you manage to track down such information?
- What criteria did you use to evaluate them?
- How did you feel?
- What actions did you take?

20. In the case someone fails to get hired for not meeting the company's online evaluation criteria, how would you communicate such event to the relevant job candidate? Have you ever experienced such a case?

- If yes can you elaborate more?
- What did you say?
- How did the candidate react?

21. Given your experience what are the reasons/drives for placing personal information online?

22. Do you personally consider such information harmful?

- If yes please elaborate more?

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23. Do you consider personal information threatening for a person's professional career? If yes, why?

24. How do you think people might get affected for such online personal information?

7th Theme: Recommendations

25. What kind of recommendation would you suggest for the future in terms of current online employment practices and why?

26. Is there something I didn't mention in this interview that you would like to discuss?

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C. Research Invitation

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing to invite you to participate in a study entitled “Cyber vetting and Online Personnel Selection: Exploring Employer’s Use of Online Information and Its Effects on the Current Social Contract of Employer-Employee Relationships.” I am conducting this study for my thesis paper as master student at the Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

The purpose of the research is to identify and address current employment practices within today’s online media context. Specifically it tries to investigate the sense making process of employers during personnel selection involving online media. I am inviting you to participate because you are directly involved in the case of online screening which is of interest to me in the context of my study.

If you agree to participate, I will contact you to make arrangements for an interview with you, which I expect to be approximately an hour long. I would be happy to accommodate your preferences regarding the mode, time and location of the interview.

Please find attached the consent form for participation in this study. I am asking you to review the information provided in the form. Please feel free to ask me any questions that may arise.

If you are interested in participating, please call me at this number: +30 6932545355 or e-mail me at pd.keranis@gmail.com Please note that this study has been approved by the Media and Business Faculty of the Erasmus University of Rotterdam.

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D. Informed Consent Form

CONSENT REQUEST FOR PARTICIPATING IN RESEARCH

FOR QUESTIONS ABOUT THE STUDY, CONTACT:

Filippos-Doros Keranis, email: pd.keranis@gmail.com, and Tel: +30 6932545355

DESCRIPTION

You are invited to participate in a research about “Cyber vetting and Online Personnel Selection: Exploring Employer’s Use of Online Information and Its Effects on the Current Social Contract of Employer-Employee Relationships.” The purpose of the study is to understand how employers make sense making of current employment practices involving online media.

Your acceptance to participate in this study means that you give your consent to be interviewed. In general terms, the questions of the interview will be related to online screening practices during personnel selection. Unless you prefer that no recordings are made, I will use a voice recorder for this particular interview.

In the case you feel uncomfortable, you are always free not to answer any particular question, and/or stop participating at any point.

Sincerely,

I have read this document and I understand what is requested of me as a participant in this study. I freely consent to participate

Interviewees Name

Date
