USING ZMET FOR INVESTIGATING THE ROLE OF SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE EMPLOYMENT PROCESS

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Abstract: The purpose of this paper is to explore the role of social media in the employment setting as it is perceived by the job seekers. The study is a qualitative investigation in which thirteen in-depth interviews based on Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique (ZMET) were conducted in order to gain a deeper understanding of the link between social media and the process of employment. The 22 elicited bipolar constructs associated with the role of social media in the employment setting were framed into six deep metaphors: Connection, Resource, Journey, Control, Affective Distress and Transformation. The size of the sample and the deeply subjective nature of answers provided by the subject’s limits the generalization of the results for a wider range of job seekers in the social media environment. This research provides an insight into deep-seated motivations, attitudes and behaviors involved in the use of social media by job seekers.

Keywords: ZMET interviews, social media, employment, mental map, in-depth interviews, consensus map

JEL Classification: M31

1. INTRODUCTION

Social media is becoming more and more popular every day helping people to connect and communicate with each other, saving time and money. Statista (Statista, 2016) reports a spectacular growth of the Internet users in the last year from 2.21 billion in 2015 to 3.5 billion in 2016. Out of these, around 50% are active users of Facebook. According to Gemius Audience Report for Romania (Gemius, 2016) published in March 2016, out of 7.45 million users that connect to the Internet from a desktop computer, 80% access Facebook at least once a

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month. The large segment of Internet users aged 19 – 34 has the highest share of 45.2 % in total users.

*Social media overview* published in June 2016 by Zelist Monitor (Zelist, 2016) reports 8.4 million users of Facebook (desktop and mobile) and at least 2.5 million users of YouTube, Instagram, Twitter, Foursquare and LinkedIn without providing an assessment of multiple accounts users. Therefore, we are certain that we live in a world of multiplied communication though we have no certainty that the communication is deep and authentic.

Both the Internet and the Social Media have created a new, expanded world- a world in which space, time, customs and social norms are broader than in any other time in history. We are constantly invited and lured (and sometimes forced by the consequences) to live in this “digital world of mouth” (Nagendra, 2014) or “online world of mouse” (Rutter, et al., 2016) in which “personal social media usage has inevitably become intertwined with the workplace” (Drouin, et al., 2015: 123). Similarly to individuals, organizations cope with „a world where consumers can speak so freely with each other and businesses have increasingly less control over the information available about them in cyberspace” (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010: 59).

How individuals and organizations manage the transformative effects of social media (Aral and Sinan, et al., 2013; Ollier-Malaterre and Rothbard, 2015) arises the interest of both researchers and practitioners. Researchers question how social media is understood(Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010), investigate the weaknesses of current literature and the critical challenges associated with the adoption of SM in the employment settings(Poba-Nzaou, et al., 2016; Lam, 2016; El Ouiridi, et al., 2016), discuss the unequal interest of researchers for investigating the perspective of recruiters and the recruited (Lam, 2016; El Ouiridi, et al., 2016) and suggest solutions for using social media by employers and job-seekers (Madia, 2011).

Our study joins research investigating how job seekers and employees view the role of social media in the employment setting (Eren and Vardarher, 2013; Nagendra, 2014; El Ouiridi, et al., 2015). This study explores the metaphors associated with the role of social media in the process of employment. By using ZMET methodology (Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique), we could get access to thoughts and feelings that are difficult to discover by means of other
methods. We developed a consensus map reflecting the main concerns of study participants regarding the role of social media in the process of employment.

In studying the views of undergraduates on the use of SM for employment decisions, Drouin et al. (2015: 124) argue that “as social media is being used in employment decisions, but social media policies are still mostly non-existent or in flux, public opinions about these practices may help to shape future policy.” El Ouirdi et al. (2015: 9), studying the predictors of job seekers’ self-disclosure on SM, concludes that “results showed that high professional online image concerns predicted increased levels of career-oriented self-disclosure on social media”. This research provides an example of how resources and risks associated with social media may be questioned and clarified by job seekers and employers.

2. SOCIAL MEDIA IN THE EMPLOYMENT SETTING

Social media has been playing an increasingly important role in the relationship between the employee and the employer (Ladkin and Buhalis, 2016) and has been providing big opportunities for job seekers (Janta and Ladkin, 2013). Social media has enabled them to follow jobs available globally and at low cost, to collect information about hiring companies and also to use their personal web pages for promoting their own image and communicating the intentions to get a job to potential employers. Kwork (2011: 15) suggests a series of steps that job seekers may follow using social media: to understand expectations of a specific industry (in which they look for a job), to build a personal brand using social media matching industry expectations, to join professional organizations having accounts on social networks (for example, LinkedIn or Facebook) and to maintain the coherence of information on all social networks where the job seekers have accounts. Potential applicants may find out using social networks information about company culture, employment opportunities. Also, they may watch videos contain testimonials of employees or quickly interact with company representatives.

Similarly, social networks enable companies to get access to personal information of applicants, including their photographs. Companies may use them subjectively to select their potential employees (Smith and Kidder, 2010) before running face-to-face interviews. Cybervetting (or using social media for candidates’ selection) generates both positive and negatives effects. The research
of Donald et al. (2012) identifies a correlation between job performance and profile ratings analysis based on social networking websites but there is the risk of wrong profile matching due to incorrect or insufficient data. On social networks, there is an orientation towards self-promotion of individuals building and managing their profiles (Buffardi and Campbell, 2008) and presenting themselves in an exclusively positive light (Lee-Won, et al., 2014). Therefore, true matching between the expectations of employers and employees may be confirmed only by means of direct contact. So, it is not recommended that social media completely replaced other employment tools and rather be used as an extension of company’s current strategy (Madia, 2011).

3. Methodology

In our research, we were inspired by the question of Kwok (2011: 13): “Seeking jobs on social media: are you ready?” and we were also motivated by the curiosity to discover the way in which our students see the link between social media and the employment process. Without getting a definite answer to the question Are they ready?, we investigated the metaphors associated with the role of social media in the employment setting.

3.1 Metaphor Elicitation

Studies in linguistics, philosophy and sociology (Lakoff, 1993; Gibbs Jr., 1993; Kövecses, 2010) confirmed that metaphors are fundamental to language, thought and experience. A metaphor represents “figurative language, referring to the representation of one thing in terms of another” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980; Zaltman, 2003: 4) and it is an „appropriate tool for eliciting hidden knowledge” (Anghelcev, et al., 2015). The linguistic aspect of the metaphor is less important. The focus is placed on links among language, thought and action: „the metaphor is mainly a matter of thinking and action and less of language” (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980: 153). Moreover, Zaltman and Coulter (1995) argue for sensorality of metaphors and prevalence of visual metaphors. Images are considered more appropriate than words to reflect subjects’ mental representations regarding the investigated research problem. While language is the expression of conscious thoughts, images reflect the unconscious beliefs and emotions (Anghelcev, et al., 2015). In other words, we may state that “images evoke deeper elements of
human consciousness than do the words” (Harper, 2002: 13). Zaltman Metaphor Elicitation Technique allows the identification of unconscious thoughts and feelings, (Zaltman, 2003) and it is a very powerful tool for mapping consumers’ minds (Ling, et al., 2009). Working both with words and images (Bagley, et al., 2006), „the ZMET technique can be used to understand deep-seated psychological factors that underlie behavior” (Khoo-Lattimore and Prideaux, 2013: 1042).

3.2 Method

To administer the ZMET in-depth interview, we followed the instructions provided in ZMET patent published on Google Patents (Zaltman, 1995), in other Zaltman’s studies (Zaltman, 1995; Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Zaltman, 1996; Zaltman, 1997; Coulter, et al., 2001; Zaltman, 2003; Zaltman and Zaltman, 2008), as well as the arguments and demonstrations provided by Christensen and Olson (2002). We also found useful other studies using ZMET methodology. We looked into studies investigating decisions of tourists whether to adopt or not sustainable travel decisions (Khoo-Lattimore and Prideaux, 2013), perceptions over climate change (Anghelcev, et al., 2015), clicking-through thoughts of Internet users (Liu and Liu, 2013), adolescent mental model of MP3 (Ling, et al., 2009), consumer’s behavior in adopting the 3G mobile banking services (Lee, et al., 2003), consumer perceptions of the mobile internet (Sugai, 2005), sport event tourists’ behavior (Chen, 2010), brand meaning in higher education (Wilson and Elliot, 2016), consumers’ Internet perceptions (Joy, et al., 2009) and consumer trust in banking and banks (Andrei, et al., 2015).

3.3 Sample

In our study we interviewed 13 graduate students (10 women, 3 men), aged between 22 and 41, who have been using at least one social network for the past 2 years with at least 2-3 visits per week. Also, we made sure that all subjects involved in the research have accumulated at least 6 months work experience so that „participants knew the subject of research” (Christensen and Olson, 2002). Selected subjects in this research were graduate students in Business in their first year of study and they were recruited during mandatory classes. For their participation they received a bonus of one point for their final grade in the respective class. Studies showed that the number of constructs identified using
ZMET does not increase if the sample is bigger (Bagley et al, 2006) and 4-5 in-depth interviews provide approximately 90% of main information extracted from all interviews. (Zaltman, 1997). Generally, in-depth interviews in qualitative research are conducted until the information starts to repeat itself and there are no new elements. In our research, we reached this point after first seven interviews.

After expressing their consent to take part in the study, the subjects received, one week before the interview, a letter by email asking them to think about the role of using social networks in the process of employment and to select 8 images representing their thoughts and feelings on the topic. Students were free to choose these images from the Internet, newspapers and magazines or to take photos with their own camera. These pictures were brought to interviews, printed and scanned.

The in-depth interview lasted on the average 100 minutes and was video recorded with the explicit consent of each participant in the study. By Laddering procedure and probing questions, we have followed 11 steps of the ZMET interview.

4. ZMET PROCESS AND ANALYSIS

In what follows, we present each step undertaken in conducting the ZMET interview and the most suggestive and relevant examples.

Step 1 – Storytelling. The Participants were asked to explain how each image is related to the role of social networks in the process of employment. Using the laddering technique and the probing questions, we gained a deeper insight into the meaning of the chosen images for our subjects. For example, 5 participants chose images containing a magnifying glass. As we can see in Figure 1, the magnifying glass is shown in different usages, it zooms out an individual in a crowd, a detail of an individual, an object in a pile (a needle in a hay wagon), a detail on a map, a zoomed out detail.

![Figure 1: Examples of magnifying glass images brought by participants](image_url)
By means of questions, we learned that the same magnifying glass may very well refer to occasions for differentiation, invasive surveillance, an extremely difficult search, journey facilitated by social media or attention to details.

Step 2 – Triad Sort and Image Comparison. At this stage, we chose randomly three times three images out of eight. Then, we asked the subject to choose 2 images out of the 3 selected images that he or she thinks or feels have something in common and therefore are different from the third one. By repeating this process, we collected information to make up an extended list of constructs. For example, the comments made about the three images containing whether a telephone, a keyboard, a cutout of a man with a big “Me” on it have contributed to the eliciting of the 2 constructs kept in the final list: Accessibility and Social Media Profile/Self Branding.

Step 3 – Identifiying and Recording Sensory Metaphors. After having removed the images from the subject’s sight, the subject was asked to link the role of social networks in the process of employment with a sound, taste, color, smell or a tactile sensation. For example, one study participant linked the role of social networks in the employment process with a tune of old traditional music remixed by means of modern technology, with the sweet taste of vanilla chocolate cake, with the light blue color of the sky, with the smell of mornings in the mountains and the silk-like touch of a piece of material ready to be shaped.

Step 4 – Metaphor elicitation/ Most representative image. At this stage, the subjects chose the most relevant image out of the 8 previously chosen images. Then, they zoomed out so much its view that it enabled them to introduce new elements and new meanings. For one of the participants, the initial image exemplifying the role of social networks in the process of employment, presents a young woman wearing a business suit with trousers and high heels, caught in a jump over a gap between two rocks. The zooming out of this image has made the subject see not an easy gap but an abyss and then a mountain. The abyss was correlated with the fear of danger and the unknown in the space of social media and the mountain with the need for additional effort and with the enthusiasm of mountain climbing as an initial setting for a future important decision in choosing a job. The view was completed with other people, imagined almost bipolarly: they may be very well waiting, helping or sharing their own experience in order to support her or they may very well be just boycotting or malicious individuals.
Stage 5 – Missed images. Participants were asked if there were other images they would have wanted to bring but failed to do so due to various reasons. They were asked to describe the images. The absent images may reflect significant elements of people’s mindset related to the issue under investigation (Anghelcev, et al., 2015). For instance, the same subject declared that she would have liked to place her image on a bridge in the British city where she used to work during her vacation. The bridge was described as “the chance to link the two different worlds. By means of SN (social networks) you may link the pleasure to socialize with the need to search for a job. To be on a bridge meant that I took that step, that I made that link”. Beyond the universally known metaphor of the bridge, we noticed not only the simple distinction between pleasure to socialize and the job search but also their cataloguing as different worlds that require a bridge.

Stage 6 – Company perceptions about the role of social media in the employment process. At this stage, the subjects discussed what they think about the attitude of a potential employer towards the role of social media in the process of employment. This projective exercise allowed us to understand better the way in which the subjects view the relation they may develop with a potential employer by means of social media. Nuances, such as “Company promotional tool”, “Quick and free tool for getting to know potential employees”, “Waste of time, desired people are not searched on social media” or “Employers look up on social media just a list of skills, not people” allowed us to refine the list of constructs and the links among them. Moreover, the projection of subjects on the way in which a potential employer views the role of social media in the process of employment is linked to the way in which the subjects manage their personal accounts on social media.

Stage 7 – Critical message to the company. The subjects formulated just one message to a potential employer linked to the way in which this employer uses social networks to employ people. Messages such as “The profile on the social networks is just a small part of who I am”, “Indeed, you cannot get to know a person on social media” bring more light to the areas of their vulnerability and frustration associated with the relations built on social media. Messages such as “Handle with care”, “Specific, clear and concise job advertisements are better than lists requiring all the skills in the world” enabled
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us to refine the constructs such as *Quality of data/information or Quality of data selection.*

**Stage 8 – Surprise to the company.** The subjects had the opportunity to describe their thoughts and feelings that they had believed employers were not ready to hear. Potential employers were „surprised” by the subjects through messages such as: „My social media account is blocked for the employers”, „Do not tag people just based on information from social media”, „You fail to use technology at its real potential”.

**Stage 9 – The mental map.** To produce a mental map, the interviewer checked together with the subject the list of constructs elicited during the interview. The participants were able to add or remove any constructs so that they could obtain the most „accurate representation” (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995, p. 42) of the role of SM in the employment process.

![The mental map of Participant no. 1](image)

**Figure 2 The mental map of Participant no. 1**

As long as the mental maps of participants, such as the map shown in Figure 2, include the most significant elements for the representation of the role of SM in the process of employment, the key-words and their links mentioned in the mental map of each participant were the essential material for building and validating the consensus map.
Stage 10 – Creation of a summary image. Based on the 8 images with which the participant started the interview, each participant made a collage summarizing the thoughts and feelings on this topic as they were completed and refined during the interview. Three of the participants mentioned explicitly that the interview made them aware of the aspects they have not thought about earlier. In accordance with ZMET methodology, subjects were free to manage the images and their attributes (color, size, brightness, shapes, background, positions etc.) within the space of one summary image. During collage production and in the commentary on the final image, each participant provided elements for a deeper understanding of some constructs and links already shown in the previous stages and also allowed us „to ensure that a potential construct has not been missed” (Khoo-Lattimore and Prideaux, 2013: 1042).

Figure 3 presents the collage of a 24-year-old student, a freelancer with a work experience of over two years, whose main concern, reiterated in the interview, was the differentiation through creativity (to be out of the box) of both the employer and the job applicant. For this topic, Social Media is the substance through which the gear of the relationship between the employer and the job applicant becomes not only functional but also a stimulus for the creativity of these two players.

*Figure 3 The summary image created by Participant no. 7*
Participant’s observation is interesting: this substance is not the Social Media as technology as an immediate tool, but the social media spirit defined by the subject as the background support community, win-win relationships with the employer, the joy of meeting, mutual and continuous feedback. For this subject, the role of social media does not end after the employment interview.

In Figure 4, we present the collage of a 23-year-old student working for a multinational IT company with an accumulated work experience of over 5 years. She underlines the benefits of technology supporting social media. By means of technology and social networks diversity „All is global, all is open.” Social networks allow students to access jobs anywhere in the world. The person, the applicant is the main focus. Global self-branding facilitated by the social media comes „in a package” with „being taken under the magnifying glass” but „the key is found in each person’s hands using social media. Each person decides which social network to use, where to apply for jobs, to whom do you say Yes and to whom do you say No.”

![Figure 4](image)

**Figure 4** *The summary image created by Participant no. 2*

This participant views technology and social media as an intermediary, a facilitator between the applicant and the potential employer. Self-branding is the recurrent topic and the aim is the direct, non-mediated contact with the potential employer chosen by the applicant. She states that in Social Media for an applicant „I chose weighs more than I was chosen”. This time the role of social
media ends immediately after the direct meeting, the face-to-face employment interview made part of the agenda of the protagonists, was scheduled.

Stage 11 – The Vignette or a mental video. In the last stage of the interview, the interviewer asked the subjects to imagine a five-minute long story having at least three characters (the subject being one of the characters, the second character is the social media and the other characters are freely chosen by the subject), with an intrigue and the epilogue showing the role of social media in the process of employment.

At the end of the five-minute story, the subjects were asked to imagine what a person would think or imagine about the role of SM in the employment process after having heard only the last sequence of the final interview, the five-minute story they have just recounted.

This time, it also has been reconfirmed that „people think differently when they think in motion than when they think in still images or pictures” (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995: 42) and „steps 12 (Summary Image) and 13 (Creation of a Vignette or Mental Video) typically provide different but complementary information” (Zaltman, 1995: 3). Attributed to characters from the imagined story, there appeared thoughts and feelings that have not been mentioned during the interview. Subject no. 4, a woman with a work experience of 19 years, who has been both the applicant and the employer during her work life, focused during the interview on the need to use professional social media platform for employment purposes such as Linkdin. The following statement was reiterated several times „Professional social networks allow the recruitment of professionals by professionals”. The story imagined at the end of the interview completed the representation of the role of social networks in the process of employment with the following story „There was once a girl, isolated from the whole world but who instead had a long hair that she used to have access to the real world out there, the world where colors were colors, life was life, the birds sang, the butterflies flew... I am the girl, my hair is... my social network... that I use to make contact with the reality and with those who want to get to know me... . And... this girl would like to have a friend who would help her get rid of the prison she lives in and help her to socialize more with people around her. And she is not always successful in holding her hair and she throws it in different directions and clings it whether to trees, or animals and things that appear in her
way and by pulling her hair she brings them near her.” The end of the story says that: “The friend she is looking for founds the girl … makes her go through unusual situations and makes her known to people. She arrives to a town where everybody knows her, children play with her hair and braid it... and the hair goes on streets... yes, where people can touch it and can see the girl ... so she makes friends. Yes ... my story is about relations, friendship and getting to know people”. After this story of the reinvented Rapunzel, the story teller tells us that the meaning of this story for the listener may be the following “... it is complicated to manage such a social network, such a beautiful and long hair, ...it is complicated to maintain it and make only some people touch you, the people you want.”

It is an example of complementary information that helped us understand better how the subjects view the role of social media in the employment processing terms of opportunities and threats, personal power and vulnerability. In this case, the professional user of professional social networks seems to coexist with „the girl isolated from the whole world but who instead had a long hair that she used to have access to the real world out there, the world where colors were colors, life was life, the birds sang, the butterflies flew... ...”. For this subject having a long successful career, only this final sequence, the five-minute vignette, reveals her hidden thoughts and feelings related to her own vulnerability in using social media.

5 CONSTRUCTS ELICITATION

The material obtained during interviews (video recordings, transcripts, images produced by subjects, mental maps, the summary images) has been individually assessed by each researcher to extract preliminary key concepts and possible links among them. The unification of individual results from stage one of content analysis included the identification of synonyms and choosing a code or construct relevant for the general meaning of concepts extracted individually. We also had to return permanently to transcripts as to double check the meanings and to make sure that we included into the list all concepts mentioned by the subjects. The unification of individual results generated the first common list of 64 de key themes. The grouping of these key themes into bigger semantic fields led to the identification of 30 constructs. The next stage, data coding „in terms of
paired-construct relationships” (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995, p. 44) led to the final list of 22 constructs. The final list of constructs and links among them resulted after applying the rules recommended by ZMET methodology, according to which the consensus map includes constructs mentioned by at least 1/3 of participants and shows the links indicated by at least ¼ of the subjects (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995; Zaltman, 1995). Table 1 presents a selection of 9 constructs from the 22 included in the consensus map, explained by examples extracted from the statements of subjects. The 9 constructs kept in this table have been mentioned by 2/3 of the subjects.

Table 1 Selection of consensus map constructs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consensus Map Constructs</th>
<th>Illustrative statements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online community</td>
<td>Young people community. Friends. Team. SM coagulates interest-based and professional communities. SM is the main character in our lives and in our conversations. Community support increases the probability of success.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of SM communication</td>
<td>Direct and quick contact with people. Sharing ideas and experiences. SM as a megaphone. LinkedIn – a dialogue platform between professionals. Vague messages. Instant feedback.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lookout</td>
<td>Data protection decreases the risk of data theft. The information is there even if you delete it. Be on guard, eyes open. Handle with care, SM can be dangerous. Pay attention: personal life is not the same as professional life.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transgression in data use</td>
<td>The Big Brother is always there. Beware, you don’t know where the employer collects his data from. Trap. SM is like a lure. The employer might monitor your activity on SM. You are under the magnifying glass.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>accomplishment</td>
<td>SM is like a key to the dream of my life. Success story of job searching on SM. SM is the starting point for professional growth.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>happy/ feel good</td>
<td>Happy like a child. Having fun while searching for a job. Relaxed attitude in searching for a job. Hope and curiosity.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of data/ information</td>
<td>Incomplete information. Too many/few details. Quality of spelling and grammar. Relevant information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality of Social Media Profile/ Self branding</td>
<td>False information is detectable. The same person can be different on three different platforms Self-branding. Be yourself, the profile must be representative for who you really are. Good management of the SM account. Be reliable on SM platforms.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
6. CONSENSUS MAP

Constructs associated with the role of social media in the employment setting, as well as the links among them are presented in the consensus map shown in Figure 5. In the ZMET methodology, the consensus map is one of the most important outcomes. “Direct and indirect connections between constructs (or themes) represent a reasoning chain or thinking process showing how one idea leads to another. These associations are important because addressing one construct will have a ripple or multiplier effect on those with which it is causally connected” (Zaltman and Coulter, 1995, p. 45). In the consensus map which we developed, we kept the methodological conventions and we drew the originator constructs by circles, the destination constructs by rectangles and the connector constructs by diamond shapes. The links among the constructs are visually represented by unidirectional and bi-directional arrows.

Figure 5 The consensus map showing the role of Social Media in the employment setting
Originator constructs. Based on interviews with study participants and data analysis, we extracted five constructs complying with the description of ZMET patent, according to which „the originating construct is the attribute which the subject felt was the cause of the second construct” (Zaltman, 1995, p. 10). Quality of SM profile/ Self Branding, Me (as Human Being/ Employee), Accessibility, Known/ Unknown and Transgression in Data Use seem to be the cause elements in the representation of the role of social media in the employment process. The construct Quality of SM profile/ Self Branding (that is a more or less true reflection of the construct Me as Human Being/ Employee) has the most determining links as a cause element. Most of these determining links have double arrows underlining the effects of feed-back on the way accounts are managed on social networks.

Connector Constructs. We identified ten constructs having the role of connectors: Quality of SM communication, Online community, Quality of data/information, Lookout, Out of the box, Quality of the data selection, Vulnerability, You own the key, Anchor, Employer behavior. For example, the construct Quality of SM communication is most frequently mentioned ensuring multiple connections. The most important linking lines that were often mentioned in the final vignettes include two routes: Quality of SM Profile – Quality of SM communication – Employer Behavior and Quality of SM profile – Online Community – Quality of SM communication – Quality of data selection – Wanted Job.

Destination Constructs. For study participants, the two constructs Wanted Job and Puzzle Matching (Job of my life, The job that fits me or To make only some people touch you, the ones you want are just three examples of affirmations in this sense) were the most used aims for using social media in the process of employment. The construct Wanted Job is mentioned as the aim, but for most subjects, the generic question “What does the job you search for on the SM mean for you?” provided responses gathered under the umbrella of the construct Accomplishment. Apart from the job as such, the subjects also reported that there was an intrinsic personal value of even higher importance to them than the Wanted Job in itself. This construct gathers statements such as By finding the job I want, I become a winner or The Job I want is a step in my career journey. The construct Time saving/wasting is a bipolar result of the two originator constructs: Accessibility (One-click away distance to social media) and Quality of SM profile (The way a personal account is managed and The activities run on social media account). What subjects feel about the use of social media in the employment process might have been gathered in a connector construct if we had considered the implications expressed by the subjects on the themes that built the construct Quality of Social Media
Communication. But, as in more than 80% of the transcribed interviews, the emotions included in the constructs Fear, Frustration and Happy/Feel Good appeared as the outcomes in mental maps and in the vignettes, we chose to mark them as destination constructs. For the subjects, the feelings they had or believed they would go through using social networks for employment are an end in themselves. What they felt or what they think they would feel the context of this research seems to be even more important than the technical descriptions of jobs they look for that have been included in the construct the Wanted Job.

After designing the consensus map and revising the transcripts for one last check-up in figure no. 5, we could distinguish two main concerning themes of our interlocutors regarding the use of SM in the employment process. The A and B grey areas from Figure no. 5 visually mark the two concerning themes. In the A area, we showed the Big Brother phenomenon associated with social media (Transgression in data use) which in the opinion of our subjects often generates Fear and Frustration, amplifies Vulnerability (towards a potential employer and towards other users of social media) and deepens the need to be „in constant alert” / „to be on guard”. The A area is the place of worry for our subjects. The B area is the place of security. The B area emphasizes that the subject has the power of control in the SM environment. The subject is not just a candidate for the Big Brother. The subject owns the key to what type, when and how SM resources one may use. The subject owns the matching key to find the right employer and other interesting people and is able to find the anchor needed to get support from the online communities. Also, searching for a job on social media may be relaxing and pleasant.

7. DISCUSSIONS

For a broader perspective on the role of social media in the process of employment we framed the constructs from the consensus map into six deep-metaphors: Connection, Resource, Journey, Control, Affective distress, Transformation. We used the model of seven deep metaphors suggested and argued by Zaltman and Zaltman (2008). As it can be observed in the table no. 2, links between the constructs and the deep metaphors were made with five out of seven metaphors of this model (Balance, Transformation, Journey, Container, Connection, Resource and Control). This framing into five deep metaphors came as a natural continuation after using the model developed by Zaltman and Zaltman (2008), according to which, the surface metaphors may be grouped into metaphor themes, which in turn are framed into deep metaphors. If in Table1 we kept some constructs from the consensus map (as metaphor themes) illustrated through
several statements of the subjects (as surface metaphors), the Table 2 shows the framing of all the 22 constructs of the consensus map into six deep metaphors.

For the constructs Fear and Frustration, as these have been described and explained by the subjects, we found the deep metaphor Affective Distress, suggested by Anghelcev et al. (2015) to be the most appropriate.

**Table 2: The connections between consensus map constructs and deep metaphors**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Consensus Map Constructs</th>
<th>Deep metaphor</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Anchor</td>
<td>Connection</td>
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<td>Employer behavior</td>
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<tr>
<td>Me as Human Being/Employee</td>
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<td>Online community</td>
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<td>Puzzle matching</td>
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<td>Quality of SM communication</td>
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<td>Lookout</td>
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<td>Transgression in data use</td>
<td>Control</td>
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<tr>
<td>Vulnerability</td>
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<td>You own the key</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accomplishment</td>
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<td>Happy/feel good</td>
<td>Journey</td>
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<tr>
<td>Known/unknown</td>
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<tr>
<td>Wanted job</td>
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<tr>
<td>Accessibility</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of data/information</td>
<td>Resource</td>
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<tr>
<td>Quality of Social Media Profile/ Self branding</td>
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<td>Quality of the data selection</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Time saving/wasting</td>
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<tr>
<td>Out of the box</td>
<td>Transformation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fear</td>
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<tr>
<td>Frustration</td>
<td>Affective distress</td>
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Even though the deep metaphor of Connection is found in the dictionary definition of the social media, the role of social media in the process of employment for our subjects is mainly defined by the existence of the online community as a third party in the relationship with the employer and by the nature of online communication. Discussing the nature of social media communication, the subjects most often mentioned instant feed-back and direct quick access to people and community from all over the world.

The deep metaphor Resources reflects the subjects’ view on social media as a set of resources in the process of employment. The explicit statements of subjects
focused on four categories of resources provided by social media: the multitude of available data and information filters for selecting information, time and Self-Branding. Self-Branding is highly important for the interviewed subjects. On the one hand, it is presented as a resource implicitly delivered by social media. Signing into social media networks means that subjects have to create a personal account which is self-promotional in itself. On the other hand, the subjects view Self-branding as an outcome of the unique mix of shared personal information, features of online communities people belong to, quality of communication in which the individuals engage into and security measures taken for information shared in their accounts.

For our subjects, the wanted job is journey with multiple destinations. Each wanted job is just a stage that opens the way towards the next wanted job. According to the report of Jobvite (2016) on the American labor market, 74% of employees are open to a new job even if many of them are satisfied with their current job. For the generation subjects’ parents, the wanted job still means a job for life, with a strong anchor on education received in Romania before the fall of the iron curtain. For the millennials, the journey metaphor in their job relations has become an implicit feature. The journey does not end with the wanted job but with the feeling of accomplishment and state of well-being. The Internet and the social media opened roads that were otherwise inaccessible and also underlined the risk of „unknown and unbeaten” road. One of the subjects expressed this idea by saying that „A job in another country, found on a social network, may be a great chance but also a big fraud”.

The deep metaphor Control is expressed bipolarly in our study. On the one hand, the subjects state that they own the key for using SM resources. On the other hand, the Big Brother theme emerges in all 13 interviews and is directly connected with the deep metaphor Affective Distress by means of the constructs Fear and Frustration. The construct Look out delivered by means of expressions, such as „Handle with care, it can be dangerous”, coexist with the construct You own the key in expressions such as „I am the only responsible for my choices on SM environment” and also with the construct Vulnerability seen in statements like „SM makes me vulnerable by lack of privacy”. Job search through social media means that our subjects have the ability to manage these challenges. The responses of our subjects match perfectly the conclusions of Ladkin and Buhalis, (2016, p. 338) stating that „there is a need to realize that their multiple identities are all at least partly visible, and the boundary between what is personal and what is private again is blurred. Maintaining both personal and professional spheres is an on-going challenge.” In our study, this on-going challenge is visible especially in the last sequence of the interview, in the vignette, in which the subjects stated that an
effective job search using social media may give you the feeling of accomplishment by getting the wanted job and by not feeling that you under the constant surveillance of the Big Brother.

8. CONCLUSIONS

The ZMET methodology enabled us to understand the thoughts and feelings of the subjects related to the role played by social media in the employment process. Job search by means of social media leaves behind a big part of traditional offline practices. It includes completely new ways of interaction that allow a better differentiation of job seekers and employers. This differentiation is gathered in the construct Out of the Box and it is exemplified by the subjects in expressions such as „Openness towards the new. Three steps ahead. Step out from the crowd.” For our subjects, the differentiation made in order to find the wanted job on social media is more than a simple growth of probability to obtain a specific job. It means Transformation. In fact, the entire experience of communication through social media to find a job is a transformative one. A reinvented Rapunzel presented earlier is one of the illustrations in this sense. If we agree that the use of social media in the process of employment has become a rule and not just an option, the research provides both to job seekers and to employers an example of how ZMET interview may clarify the way in which they manage resources and risks associated with employment in the social media environment.

Right after the end of the interview and when the camera was stopped, almost all subjects of the study reported that the interview experience made them become aware of specific features of communication and job search on social media they had not thought about before. Instead of a traditional good bye, on their own initiative, they told us that they were leaving the interview with a richer and deeper understanding of the role of SM in job search. Generally, the summary of feelings related to the topic researched and presented in this study for job seekers may be a resource for increasing their chances to get a suitable job by a better and more efficient use of social networks. On the other hand, the research provides to employers the opportunity to adjust their online recruitment policies taking into consideration the views of job seekers. A mental map such as the consensus map developed in this study does not provide definite or generally valid answers but invites to interrogations that go beyond ready-made recipes.

The reduced size of the sample and the high degree of subjectivity in data interpretation are limitations of this research, reducing the generalizations of its results for the target population. On the other hand, ZMET methodology involves the implementation of an exploratory qualitative research which allows small
samples. As future research direction, the study can be expanded on larger sample, both as a size and a structure. We intend to make ZMET interviews not only with employers but also with employees, users or non-users of social media in recruitment policy.
REFERENCES


