

Millennials' Uses and Gratifications on LinkedIn: Implications for Recruitment and Retention

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Abstract

While popular press has examined Millennials' in the workforce, there is limited academic research about Millennials' job searching strategies. This study draws on uses and gratifications theory to examine the motives, uses, and gratifications of U.S. Millennial job seekers for using LinkedIn. Consistent with previous uses and gratifications research, an online survey found Millennials ($N=216$) use LinkedIn to find information, communicate with others, and for surveillance needs. Millennials use about 42.8% of the features available on LinkedIn for professional development, entertainment, and networking. Finally, this research found that Millennials obtain social/functional and hedonic value from using LinkedIn. Collectively, the results indicate that Millennials are using the site regularly, although at less than half of its capacity, regardless of whether or not they are job searching, but in ways that violate the expectations of potential employers and recruiters. Theoretical contributions and business communication implications are discussed.

Keywords

LinkedIn, uses and gratifications theory, Millennials, Generation Y, job searching, career development

LinkedIn is the leader among professional social networks (Fernández-Alemán et al., 2017) and is commonly used by recruiters and hiring managers to pursue and evaluate potential employees. Today's workforce, particularly the entry and mid-levels of the U.S. workforce, is composed of Millennials, also known as Generation Y, which are the fastest-growing user demographic on LinkedIn (LinkedIn, 2017). Approximately a

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quarter of LinkedIn users are Millennials, with over 80 million Millennial profiles on the site (Aslam, 2020). The growth of LinkedIn with younger and more diverse audiences continues to expand which is demonstrated by the fact that almost half of the users log in to the website daily (Chaudhary, 2017).

Millennials are distinct from other generations because of their unique career perceptions. Millennials typically look for three primary criteria when job searching: high pay, sense of achievement, and meaningful work experience (Brack & Kelly, 2012). To avoid the often-coined term, “job hoppers” Millennials find greater job satisfaction when they are working on teams, seeing the results of their efforts, and have flexibility and feedback from their employer (Smith, 2018). Unlike previous generations, Millennials have had LinkedIn available to them for the entirety of their job searching experience, which makes the use of the platform unique for Millennials and generations to follow. While Gen Xer’s actively use LinkedIn, the platform was not readily available nor as robust as it is today when they were beginning and growing their careers. Although Millennials are a fruitful cohort to study, little research examines exactly how they use social channels like LinkedIn throughout their job search, but what is known indicates that Millennials are using LinkedIn in distinctive ways (Carmack & Heiss, 2018).

Uses and gratifications theory is a goal-oriented framework that is an ideal fit for better understanding how and why Millennials use LinkedIn as a larger part of their career searching and networking behaviors. To date, there is little to no research examining how and why Millennials use LinkedIn for career development, and limited research applying uses and gratifications theory to career development, job searching, and to LinkedIn. Furthermore, communication research about LinkedIn has been relegated to the importance of teaching LinkedIn skills to help students use the site, but limited research has been done to understand the motives of Millennials for using LinkedIn (Carmack & Heiss, 2018). To begin to remedy this gap in the literature, uses and gratifications theory is applied as a theoretical lens to better understand how Millennials use LinkedIn for their job searching and professional needs to provide recommendations for recruitment and retention of Millennial employees.

The purpose of this study is to examine how Millennial job searchers use LinkedIn for their careers. Following the framework of uses and gratifications theory, this study addresses the primary motives for using LinkedIn, how members of this generation use LinkedIn as part of the job search process, and what value these job seekers derive from using LinkedIn. Understanding the motives helps to determine how Millennials actually use the website, including which features they take advantage of and which they do not use. Finally, the gratifications sought by active and non-active Millennial job seekers are examined and it is hypothesized that active job seekers will use more features on LinkedIn than those who are not actively seeking employment.

Review of Literature

The job search is an inherently communicative process of looking for new work and is a common activity in today’s society (Wanberg et al., 2012). Securing employment is

directly related to both the job search behaviors that a job seeker performs and the amount of effort a job seeker exerts during their job search (Blau, 1993). In the last several years job searching research has expanded to focus on job search predictors and outcomes, including the effect communication has on job searching activity and the strategies used by Millennials to find employment, making this a rich and timely area of research (Doyle, 2014; Gordon, 2010; Holmstrom et al., 2013, 2014; Smith, 2017; Wanberg et al., 2012).

Job searching is a difficult task that “requires the use of complex strategies, substantial self-control, and self-regulation skill” (Price & Vinokur, 1995, p. 192) and relies on a variety of communication skills and strategies. Job searching behavior refers to the specific activities that an individual engages in to acquire knowledge about employment opportunities (Bretz et al., 1994). Job searching behaviors include preparatory efforts such as gathering information and securing leads, as well as active behaviors like applying to jobs and interviewing (Bretz et al., 1994). The process of job searching requires job seekers to continually manage their impressions through communication tactics and LinkedIn can help job seekers do this, but also provides opportunities for both preparatory and active behaviors online.

Granovetter (1995) outlines three primary techniques used to find and apply for jobs: formal means (i.e., advertisements and employment agencies), personal contacts, and direct application. Job searching through personal contacts relies on the help of an individual who is personally known by the job seeker in a context unrelated to job searching (Granovetter, 1995), this strategy is also considered networking. Job searching through personal contacts is beneficial to job seekers but is typically used in tandem with other job searching strategies like direct application (Mau & Kopischke, 2001). However, Millennials do report networking with personal contacts as a primary job searching strategy used for finding post-graduate employment and cite using LinkedIn as an essential tool for networking while job searching and identifying and applying for relevant opportunities (Carmack & Heiss, 2018; Nikolaou, 2014; Smith, 2017). From previous research, we know that job seekers use social media channels to help them find jobs and engage in both preparatory and active job seeking behaviors using social media (Smith, 2018).

The Uses and Gratifications of LinkedIn

Uses and gratifications theory is an audience-centered theory used to understand how and why people select and use a variety of mediums, including social media. The central premise of uses and gratifications theory is understanding what people do with media, which rests on the assumption that people are active, rather than passive, consumers of media (Katz et al., 1973). Although the roots of uses and gratifications theory centered on radio use (Papcharissi, 2009; Wimmer & Dominick, 1994), research has expanded to include television (Bogart, 1956; Geiger & Sokol, 1959; Macoby, 1954), magazines (Kim et al., 2015; Payne et al., 1988) cell phones (Leung & Wei, 2000), the internet (Jimenez et al., 2012; Leung, 2001; Ko et al., 2005), social media (Wang et al., 2012) and mobile apps (Gerlich et al., 2015; Schmitz Weiss, 2013). This

extensive application of the theory demonstrates its utility across mediums to better understand the motives and gratifications of media users.

Uses and gratifications theory asserts that people utilize media to fulfill specific needs (Rubin, 1983). Early uses and gratifications research argued that there were three primary reasons for using mass media for gratifications including surveillance, diversion, and personal identity (Blumler, 1979). Surveillance needs are typically cognitive in nature, whereby the user looks for information about something within the world around them. Diversion has a broader definition, which includes relief from boredom, music, comedy, entertainment and excitement. Lastly, personal identity refers to how people use media materials to emphasize something important in their own life or situation (Blumler, 1979).

The internet has particularly rejuvenated the utility of uses and gratifications theory because of its interactive nature and asynchronicity (Ruggiero, 2000). Over the last two decades researchers have studied new media to determine user motivation and gratifications for using new media. For example, Papacharissi and Rubin (2000) demonstrated that entertainment and information seeking were the greatest reported uses of the Internet, followed closely by convenience, passing time, and interpersonal utility. Similarly, Leung (2009) discovered that there were four motives connected to Internet use: recognition needs, social needs, cognitive needs, and entertainment needs. This was further illustrated by Shao's (2009) research which indicated that people participate in online communication by producing their own content as a form of self-expression but also interact with user-generated content for social gratifications. Wang et al.'s (2012) research demonstrated the use of social media among college students for emotional, cognitive, and social reasons, but also added in habitual needs which are defined by Katz et al. (1973) as ritualized needs that help bring structure to one's day. Habitual needs could explain why people check social media websites when they wake up, or respond to emails before going to bed.

Although there are a myriad of social networking websites, LinkedIn reports to be "the world's largest professional network with more than 600 million users in more than 200 countries and territories worldwide" (LinkedIn, 2020). The mission is to connect professionals to enhance their productivity and success (LinkedIn, 2020). In the decade and a half that LinkedIn has been in operation, the site has expanded from a place to park your resume to an interactive social networking site where people can message, share stories, blog, connect, update their credentials, and job search (LinkedIn, 2017). Today, LinkedIn is touted as the primary social media tool used by recruiters, and routinely used by professionals to assist with personnel decisions (Karl & Peluchette, 2013; Klumper, 2013; Ollington et al., 2013).

Websites like LinkedIn, among other social networking sites, offer opportunities for all three of the theory's foundational gratifications (surveillance, diversion, and personal identity), making it particularly appealing for use. On LinkedIn users can monitor the professional developments of peers and other contacts, read about industry trends, and continue to build and expand their personal identity and network. Similarly, LinkedIn can be used for entertainment and information seeking, as well as for recognition needs, social needs, cognitive and entertainment needs like Leung

(2009) discovered. Currently, there are approximately two billion Millennials worldwide and roughly 40% of the Millennial population are LinkedIn users (LinkedIn, 2017). Millennials expect to find employment opportunities through networking (Smith, 2017), making the use of LinkedIn ideal for their objectives. Within the context of job searching, Millennial LinkedIn users leverage the site to find employment opportunities (Bradley, 2011; Carmack & Heiss, 2018), establish professional connections (Bradley, 2011; Buck, 2012; Buettner, 2017; Carmack & Heiss, 2018), and advance their careers (Myers et al., 2011). Each of which can be grouped into a larger gratification such as information seeking, social needs, and personal identity.

Using LinkedIn for personal identity and social needs seems to be some of the most significant gratifications among Millennial users. Millennials use LinkedIn to form meaningful connections by keeping their networks fresh and active, strengthening their global connections, and learning more about people they have met or plan to meet (Rynne, 2016), due in large part to the influence of their friends and parents (Carmack & Heiss, 2018). This is consistent with Florenthal's (2015) research indicating that college students see interpersonal communication as a benefit to using LinkedIn. Millennials will continue to use LinkedIn over time when they feel like their parents and friends encourage and approve of their use of the platform (Carmack & Heiss, 2018).

However, LinkedIn also reports that Millennials use the site to self-publish through blog posts and articles about their experiences and in their areas of expertise (Rynne, 2016), demonstrating the uses and gratifications of the site for personal identity. Additionally, Millennials engage with content on LinkedIn related to their interests which broadly include social media and marketing, employee engagement, and recruitment (Rynne, 2016). This information is consistent with the uses and gratifications of college students on LinkedIn set forth by Florenthal (2015) of building an online identity and information seeking, and further demonstrates how LinkedIn can also be used as entertainment and/or diversion, the foundational themes of uses and gratifications theory.

Although LinkedIn is primarily a social networking platform for people to network and make career connections, Millennials stand out in their use when compared with other generations. Research indicates Millennials are using the passive features on LinkedIn to build their personal brands and sell themselves through various strategies on LinkedIn (Carmack & Heiss, 2018; Rynne, 2016). One of the most popular ways to do this is through profile optimization. Profile optimization includes activities such as adding a professional profile picture, creating a distinctive headline, customizing a LinkedIn URL and sharing it, and telling a professional story through a personalized summary and experience (Rynne, 2016). While these recommendations come directly from LinkedIn's Millennial research, they are upheld by empirical studies which indicate that users lacking some of this information could "lose points" compared to job candidates who have optimized their profiles (Roth et al., 2013). Profile optimization is also a primary reason why LinkedIn is taught in the classroom and students are strongly encouraged, often required, to create and optimize a profile (Hutchins, 2016). Furthermore, recruiters report looking for employment history, education, years of

experience, and self-presentation the most when viewing a profile (Chiang & Suen, 2015; Zide et al., 2014). Recruiters also report wanting to see professional photographs on profiles (Chiang & Suen, 2015; Zide et al., 2014) and LinkedIn data argues that those with professional headshots receive 14 times more views than those without (Chaudhary, 2017). Thus, it is no wonder that Millennials are optimizing their profiles on LinkedIn in greater depth, regularity, and detail than users from other generations.

LinkedIn is commonly used by recruiters and human resources professionals to assist with identifying talent and making hiring decisions. This is due in large part to the variety of features offered on the site. For example, recruiters frequently examine the number of connections that a LinkedIn user has since this type of information cannot be gathered from a traditional resume but can be an indicator of potential success in sales, marketing, public relations and recruiting careers (Gilham, 2011). Research indicates that LinkedIn users with 150–400 contacts have the greatest job searching success (Buettner, 2017). When contacts exceed 400, job seekers are viewed as “collecting contacts” and these connections are viewed as superficial (Buettner, 2017) underscoring the need to strategically use the platform. This is something unique to the Millennial cohort because they are expected to have fewer contacts since their professional experience to date has been shorter than members of Gen X or the Baby Boomers.

Additionally, LinkedIn users can catalog their own skills and have that information verified and “endorsed” by peers and former work colleagues to present a complete and more accurate picture of themselves (Davison et al., 2011). From a recruitment standpoint, LinkedIn is changing the way organizations locate talent and shifting the responsibility onto the job candidate to market themselves. Thus, LinkedIn users who do not take advantage of the various functions on the site (i.e., skills, endorsements, recommendations) are found less often by recruiters which can put them at a disadvantage when job searching (Zide et al., 2014).

Since Millennials are the largest user base of LinkedIn, the largest cohort in the American workforce, and rich with digital wisdom, they are a unique cohort to study. Moreover, knowing that Millennials have distinct career expectations as compared with previous generations, and are in the early stages of their professional careers, make them a robust group to better understand. Additionally, there is little information about why and how Millennials in general (those still attending and graduated from college) use LinkedIn as part of their job searching process. Therefore, to begin to more empirically understand how LinkedIn is used by Millennials, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1a: What are the primary motives of Millennial LinkedIn users?

RQ1b: Do active/non-active Millennial job searchers differ in terms of their motives for using LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?

RQ2a: How do Millennial job searchers use LinkedIn as part of their job/internship search process?

RQ2b: Do active/non-active Millennial job searchers differ in terms of how they use LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?

While uses and gratifications theory has been criticized for its inability to produce more than descriptive data and that data cannot discern a difference between gratifications sought versus gratifications obtained, the theory remains important for understanding new media forms that emerge, which can include platforms such as LinkedIn. Now that majority of job searching is done online, including both preparatory and active behaviors, applying uses and gratifications theory is a natural fit. Also, because Millennials use more than one strategy for their job searches (Mau & Kopischke, 2001), uses and gratifications theory can help distinguish their motives and goals for using specific channels like LinkedIn. Drawing on uses and gratifications theory, this study fills that gap in the literature by providing insights into motivations, uses, and gratifications for using LinkedIn among Millennial job seekers. Thus, the following research questions and hypothesis are proposed:

RQ3a: What gratifications do Millennial job searchers obtain from using LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?

RQ3b Do active/non-active Millennial job searchers differ in terms of the gratifications obtained by using LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?

RQ4a: What features available on LinkedIn do Millennial job seekers use?

RQ4b: Do active/non-active Millennial job seekers differ in how they use the features available on LinkedIn?

H1: Millennials actively searching for a job or internship will use more features on LinkedIn than those who are not currently job searching.

Methods

To answer the research questions and test the hypothesis proposed, survey results of Millennial job seekers are reported. Participants are considered a Millennial if they are born between 1982 and 2004 (PEW, 2014).

Data Collection

Study participants were recruited using two methods following institutional review board approval. First, the survey was distributed to members of a research participation database at a public research university in the Mid-Atlantic United States. Next in order to get a broader range of Millennial job seekers, respondents were recruited using Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk) and compensated (\$0.25) for their participation (for reviews regarding M-Turk see Buhrmester et al., 2011; Paolacci et al., 2010). These datasets were combined to look at the broad range of ages represented by the Millennial generation. After removing incomplete questionnaires and those who did not meet the age requirements, the combined datasets yielded a total of $N=216$ responses (80% from research database, 20% from MTurk).

The mean age of respondents was 21.73 years ($SD=3.231$), ranging from 18 to 33 years. The data skewed female with 87% of respondents identifying as female ($n=188$), and 13% identifying as male ($n=28$). The racial demographic of respondents

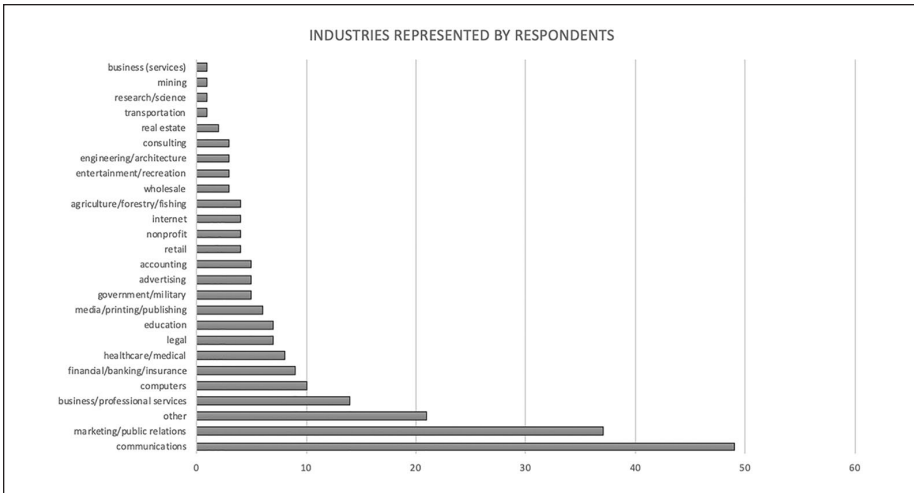


Figure 1. Industry represented by respondents.

are as follows: Asian ($n=16$, 7.4%), African American ($n=11$, 5.1%), American Indian ($n=3$, 1.4%), Hispanic ($n=11$, 5.1%), Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander ($n=3$, 1.4%), White/Caucasian ($n=168$, 77.8%), and prefer not to answer ($n=4$, 1.9%).

Among the respondents, 57.9% ($n=125$) indicated they were actively looking for a job and/or internship, while 42.1% ($n=91$) were not actively involved in job or internship searching at the time of the survey. When asked if they were currently using or have used LinkedIn as part of their job and/or internship search strategy 64.4% said yes ($n=139$), while 35.2% ($n=76$) said no. Figure 1 demonstrates the range of industries represented by the respondents in the sample.

Respondents were asked to what extent they found LinkedIn useful for performing specific job-related tasks. Results indicated they found LinkedIn most useful for creating a professional network ($M=3.72$, $SD=1.159$) and least useful for contacting people ($M=3.02$, $SD=1.076$). Table 1 summarizes these findings.

Measures

Motivations. Motivations for using LinkedIn were measured by adapting scales from previous research (Florenthal, 2015; Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Zhang et al., 2011). A total of 16 survey items ($\alpha=0.942$) were developed for this analysis. Items measuring motivation were measured using a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with each statement. Table 3 summarizes the items and descriptive information for this scale.

Uses. To determine how respondents were using or have used LinkedIn in the past, survey items were developed drawing from previous research (Florenthal, 2015;

Table 1. Using LinkedIn.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Create professional network	3.72	1.159
Up-to-date friends' careers	3.60	1.177
Maintain professional relationships	3.52	1.156
Identify employment opportunities	3.38	1.18
Exchange information	3.12	1.114
Contact people	3.02	1.076

Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000; Zhang et al., 2011). A total of 22-items were developed to measure uses ($\alpha=0.941$). Items measuring motivation were measured using a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with each statement. Table 5 summarizes the items and descriptive information for this scale.

Gratifications. Gratifications for using LinkedIn were measured using three values identified by De Vries and Carlson (2014): functional value, hedonic value, and social interaction value. This scale included 12-items ($\alpha=0.946$) measuring each value were measured using a 5-point Likert Scale ranging from “strongly disagree” to “strongly agree” with each statement. Table 7 summarizes the items and descriptive information for this scale.

Analysis

A principal component factor analysis was used to answer RQ1a, RQ2a, and RQ3a. A Mann-Whitney *U* test was used to determine if differences existed among active and non-active job seekers (RQ1b, RQ2b, and RQ2c). To address RQ4a, frequencies and percentages are reported, and to answer RQ4b, a chi-square test for association was used. An independent-samples *t*-test was used to test H1.

Results

Motivations for LinkedIn Usage

The goal of RQ1 was to understand the motives, or the reasons why Millennials use LinkedIn. To address RQ1a, a principal component analysis (PCA) with direct oblimin rotation was used to assess the motivations for using LinkedIn among Millennials. Solution criteria include eigenvalues greater than 1, explained variance, and factor loading score for each factor (>0.4). Despite measuring six motivations, the PCA revealed two components with an eigenvalue greater than one. A third component, with a value of 0.943, was also included in the analysis. The three-components solution explained 68.8% of the total variance, with each factor explaining 53.9%, 9.1%, and 5.9% respectively. Table 2 summarizes the results of the PCA. Each of these items

Table 2. Factor Analysis Results—Motivations.

Factor item	Factor 1: information	Factor 2: communication	Factor 3: surveillance
I can get information about job/internships for free	0.856		
I can find relevant job/internship opportunities	0.822		
I am on LinkedIn because companies use it for recruiting and posting jobs	0.821		
LinkedIn is easy to use	0.819		
I am on LinkedIn to access information about jobs and internships	0.772		
LinkedIn provides me with a new way to research job/internship opportunities	0.77		
I can see what is happening in my desired industry	0.65		
I can give my input about my professional interests		0.935	
I can express myself professionally		0.838	
I enjoy answering questions from others about my professional interests		0.698	
I can get diverse points of view from others about my professional interest		0.689	
I like that I can check profiles of professionals working in my desired industry		0.500	
I like that I can read articles and gain insights from my desired industry		0.430	
I like to use LinkedIn to help others find job/internship opportunities			0.931
I like to encourage others who are going through the job/internship search process			0.697
LinkedIn makes me feel like I belong to a group that shares my professional interest			0.471
Eigenvalue	8.622	1.450	0.943
%Variance	53.89	9.06	5.89
Cumulative %	53.89	62.95	68.84

were collapsed to form a new scale to answer RQ1b. Table 3 summarizes the new variables.

Items loading on factor one were related to information, factor two items were related to communication, and factor three items were related to surveillance. Based on the results of this analysis, Millennials are motivated to use LinkedIn to get information, communicate with others about their professional careers, and for surveillance of contacts. A closer look at how this analysis can give us additional insights into why Millennials use LinkedIn. Information seeking was the most important

Table 3. Motivations: Survey Items, Descriptive Information, and Reliability Analysis.

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Information $\alpha = 0.923$	3.78	0.84556
I can get information about job/internships for free	3.91	0.989
I can find relevant job/internship opportunities	3.82	0.955
I am on LinkedIn because companies use it for recruiting and posting jobs	3.68	1.052
LinkedIn is easy to use	3.82	1.062
I am on LinkedIn to access information about jobs and internships	3.79	1.076
LinkedIn provides me with a new way to research job/internship opportunities	3.78	1.025
I can see what is happening in my desired industry	3.69	0.986
Communication $\alpha = 0.880$	3.66	0.78099
I can give my input about my professional interests	3.71	0.92
I can express myself professionally	3.81	0.93
I enjoy answering questions from others about my professional interests	3.48	1.03
I can get diverse points of view from others about my professional interest	3.60	0.96
I like that I can check profiles of professionals working in my desired industry	3.83	1.04
I like that I can read articles and gain insights from my desired industry	3.50	1.03
Surveillance $\alpha = 0.796$	3.2388	0.9289
I like to use LinkedIn to help others find job/internship opportunities	3.09	1.098
I like to encourage others who are going through the job/internship search process	3.37	1.128
LinkedIn makes me feel like I belong to a group that shares my professional interest	3.25	1.077

reason cited for using LinkedIn. Items that loaded highest on this variable include looking for information on jobs and internships and opportunities to apply for jobs and internships. Additionally, surveillance (factor 3), revealed that Millennial LinkedIn users like to use the site to share information about jobs and internships with others. Thus, we can conclude that actual information about jobs and internships drive much of the Millennial interest in using LinkedIn.

The second factor, communication, also provides interesting insights into how Millennials use LinkedIn. Items that loaded higher on this factor tended to be those

that reflected using LinkedIn as a personal expression tool. For example, the first two items that loaded on this factor included giving input about one's professional interests and expressing oneself professionally. This indicates that Millennial users see LinkedIn as a tool for not only seeking information related to job and internship opportunities but as a way to present themselves professionally.

RQ1b investigates if there are differences between active and non-active job seekers in terms of motivations for using LinkedIn. The presence of outliers in the dataset and non-normal data distribution (assessed by Shapiro-Wilk test $p > .05$) across all three variables (information, communication, and surveillance) required the use of the Mann-Whitney U test to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the two groups. The analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference between active job seekers ($Mdn=3.86$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn=3.86$) when it comes to motives of using LinkedIn for information, $U=5513$, $z=-0.011$, $p=.991$, $r=-0.001$; or for communication, $U=5453$, $z=-0.284$, $p=.777$, $r=-0.019$ between active job seekers ($Mdn=3.67$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn=3.83$; or for surveillance $U=5557$, $z=-0.152$, $p=.879$, $r=-0.01$ between active job seekers ($Mdn=3.33$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn=3.17$). Therefore, based on this analysis we can conclude that Millennials, regardless of whether they are actively job searching or not, share the same motives for using LinkedIn to find information, to communicate, and for surveillance. This finding implies that Millennials maintain their LinkedIn profile on a consistent basis regardless of their current job seeking status.

Uses for LinkedIn

RQ2a examined how Millennials use LinkedIn as part of their job search. A second PCA with direct oblimin rotation was used to determine how Millennials used LinkedIn. Solution criteria include eigenvalues greater than 1, explained variance, and factor loading score for each factor (>0.4). Despite measuring seven uses, several of the measures were merged during the PCA to provide a three-component solution with an eigenvalue greater than one. The three-components solution explained 67.3% of the total variance, with each factor explaining 45.2%, 16.6%, and 5.5% respectively. Table 4 summarizes the results of the PCA. The three components revealed in the analysis can be characterized as professional development (factor 1), entertainment (factor 2), and networking (factor 3). These items were collapsed into three variables used to determine if there were any differences between how active job seekers and non-job seekers use LinkedIn (RQ2b). Table 5 summarizes the new variables.

Similar to the findings of RQ1, this analysis also points to some of the tendencies of Millennial LinkedIn users. In the case of the professional development factor, items that loaded higher indicated a desire to use LinkedIn as a platform for professional branding, self-expression, and increasing one's visibility in a professional setting. In this case, it appears that Millennials incorporate professional branding into their professional development activities. Similarly, the third factor, networking, respondents indicated that they used the site to overcome offline challenges (e.g., being too shy to

Table 4. Factor Analysis Results—Uses.

Factor item	Factor 1: professional development	Factor 2: entertainment	Factor 3: networking
I use LinkedIn to market myself	0.934		
I use LinkedIn to gain visibility in my desired industry	0.912		
I use LinkedIn to brand myself	0.86		
I use LinkedIn to network with others who share my professional interest	0.794		
I use LinkedIn for professional development	0.763		
I use LinkedIn because it is easy to share information about my professional interests	0.761		
I used LinkedIn to check the profiles of professionals working in my desired industry	0.747		
I use LinkedIn to follow companies/organizations that I am interested in working in	0.722		
I use LinkedIn to communicate people in my professional network	0.696		
I use LinkedIn to occupy my time		0.885	
I use LinkedIn to pass time when I'm bored		0.880	
I use LinkedIn when I have nothing better to do		0.880	
I use LinkedIn because it is entertaining		0.803	
I use LinkedIn because I just like to use it		0.772	
I use LinkedIn because it is enjoyable		0.714	
I use LinkedIn to make contact with people who I am interested in, but am too shy to talk to			0.853
I use LinkedIn to make contacts with people who I am interested in, but have no chance to meet in person			0.715
I use LinkedIn to create groups and ask others to join			0.661
I use LinkedIn to meet new people			0.634
I use LinkedIn to keep interact with my contacts			0.582
I use LinkedIn to make new contacts			0.551
I use LinkedIn to search for or interact with old or forgotten contacts			0.519
Eigenvalue	9.948	3.650	1.220
% Variance	45.22	16.59	5.55
Cumulative %	45.22	61.81	67.36

speak to someone and not having an opportunity to network with a person offline). Taken together, these two findings indicate that LinkedIn provides Millennial users with a space to brand themselves and to increase their networking capabilities.

To address RQ2b, a Mann-Whitney *U* test was used. This test was selected because of the violation of assumptions for an independent samples *t*-test (the presence of outliers and non-normal distribution of data). The analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference between active job seekers ($Mdn=3.89$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn=3.78$) when it comes to using LinkedIn for professional development, $U=5228$,

Table 5. Uses: Survey Items, Descriptive Information, and Reliability Analysis.

		M	SD
Professional development	$\alpha = 0.944$	3.6277	0.90122
I use LinkedIn to market myself		3.74	1.095
I use LinkedIn to gain visibility in my desired industry		3.69	1.07
I use LinkedIn to brand myself		3.66	1.096
I use LinkedIn to network with others who share my professional interest		3.61	1.076
I use LinkedIn for professional development		3.68	1.076
I use LinkedIn because it is easy to share information about my professional interests		3.58	1.096
I used LinkedIn to check the profiles of professionals working in my desired industry		3.56	1.085
I use LinkedIn to follow companies/organizations that I am interested in working in		3.66	1.104
I use LinkedIn to communicate with people in my professional network		3.46	1.073
Entertainment	$\alpha = 0.925$	2.5148	1.03947
I use LinkedIn to occupy my time		2.3	1.188
I use LinkedIn to pass time when I'm bored		2.39	1.192
I use LinkedIn when I have nothing better to do		2.39	1.223
I use LinkedIn because it is entertaining		2.62	1.215
I use LinkedIn because I just like to use it		2.69	1.249
I use LinkedIn because it is enjoyable		2.71	1.238
Networking	$\alpha = 0.860$	2.9382	0.85963
I use LinkedIn to make contact with people who I am interested in, but am too shy to talk to		2.74	1.209
I use LinkedIn to make contacts with people who I am interested in, but have no chance to meet in person		3.04	1.164
I use LinkedIn to create groups and ask others to join		2.54	1.187
I use LinkedIn to meet new people		2.79	1.124
I use LinkedIn to keep interact with my contacts		3.18	1.183
I use LinkedIn to make new contacts		3.32	1.108
I use LinkedIn to search for or interact with old or forgotten contacts		2.96	1.18

$z = -0.824$, $p = .410$, $r = -0.056$ or for entertainment $U = 5432$, $z = -0.369$, $p = .710$, $r = -0.025$ among active job seekers ($Mdn = 2.67$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn = 2.50$), or for networking $U = 5584$, $z = -0.128$, $p = .898$, $r = -0.008$ among active job seekers ($Mdn = 3.00$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn = 3.00$). In response to RQ2a and RQ2b, we can conclude that Millennials are using LinkedIn for professional development,

Table 6. Factor Analysis Results—Gratifications.

Factor item	Factor 1: social and functional value	Factor 2: hedonic value
I can find out about potential jobs using LinkedIn	0.971	
I can interact with potential employers using LinkedIn	0.945	
I can meet potential employers using LinkedIn	0.928	
Using LinkedIn is useful for me	0.854	
I can make new professional contacts using LinkedIn	0.849	
Using LinkedIn is helpful for me	0.82	
Using LinkedIn is practical for me	0.795	
Using LinkedIn is functional for me	0.727	
Using LinkedIn is exciting for me		0.954
Using LinkedIn is fun for me		0.952
Using LinkedIn is entertaining for me		0.925
Using LinkedIn is pleasant for me		0.718
Eigenvalue	7.672	2.072
% Variance	63.93	17.26
Cumulative %	63.93	81.2

entertainment, and networking, but the analysis did not reveal a statistically significant difference in how active job seekers and non-job seekers use LinkedIn. This is consistent with the analysis of RQ1b in that LinkedIn usage appears to remain consistent despite job seeking status.

Gratifications for LinkedIn

RQ3a investigated the gratifications Millennials obtained from using LinkedIn. Three values identified in previous research served as the basis for this analysis: functional value, social interaction value, and hedonic value (see De Vries & Carlson, 2014). A third PCA with direct oblimin rotation was used to determine gratifications for using LinkedIn. Solution criteria include eigenvalues greater than 1, explained variance, and factor loading score for each factor (>0.4). The social interaction value and functional value merged during the PCA to form one of the two-component solution. The two-component solution explained 81.2% of the total variance, with each factor accounting for 63.9% and 17.3% of the variance. Table 6 summarizes the results of the analysis. The two components were collapsed to form two new variables: social/functional value and hedonic value. These new variables were used to address RQ3b. Table 7 summarizes the new variables.

RQ3b investigated the potential differences between active job seekers and non-job seekers in terms of the value derived from using LinkedIn. Similar to the previous analyses, the presence of outliers and non-normal distribution of data indicate the Mann-Whitney U test was appropriate to determine if there is a statistically significant difference between the groups. The analysis did not find a statistically significant

Table 7. Gratifications: Survey Items, Descriptive Information, and Reliability Analysis.

		M	SD
Social and functional value	$\alpha = 0.960$	3.7961	0.92047
I can find out about potential jobs using LinkedIn		3.94	1.003
I can interact with potential employers using LinkedIn		3.87	0.997
I can meet potential employers using LinkedIn		3.85	1.061
Using LinkedIn is useful for me		3.75	1.074
I can make new professional contacts using LinkedIn		3.82	1.001
Using LinkedIn is helpful for me		3.67	1.082
Using LinkedIn is practical for me		3.77	1.016
Using LinkedIn is functional for me		3.7	1.082
Hedonic value	$\alpha = 0.935$	2.9073	1.05672
Using LinkedIn is exciting for me		2.83	1.187
Using LinkedIn is fun for me		2.78	1.166
Using LinkedIn is entertaining for me		3.19	1.127
Using LinkedIn is pleasant for me		2.83	1.142

difference between active job seekers ($Mdn=4.00$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn=4.00$) when it comes to using LinkedIn for social/functional value, $U=5103$, $z=-1.033$, $p=.302$, $r=-0.071$; and active job seekers ($Mdn=3.00$) and non-job seekers ($Mdn=3.00$) when it comes to using LinkedIn for hedonic value, $U=5225$, $z=-0.736$, $p=.462$, $r=-0.05$. This is consistent with previous analyses (see RQ1b and RQ2b), Millennial LinkedIn users maintain an online presence on LinkedIn regardless of their job seeking status.

A closer examination of the findings of the RQ3a and RQ3b analyses reveal more about the gratifications Millennials obtain from using LinkedIn (see Table 8). Specifically, the social/functional value reiterates findings of previous analyses that point to LinkedIn being a valuable resource for job and internship information. Millennial LinkedIn users find value in interacting and meeting with potential employers and adding to contacts to their professional networks. Knowing that they could interact with a potential employer socially on LinkedIn is an incentive to maintain their professional brand on the site, which also helps explain why Millennial LinkedIn users are more likely to use the site consistently. This supports previous findings in this analysis that point to LinkedIn as being part of Millennials professional self-branding efforts and maintenance of their LinkedIn profile whether or not they are an active job seeker.

LinkedIn Features

RQ4a investigates how Millennial job seekers use the features available on LinkedIn. Respondents reported using an average of 5.98 ($SD=3.344$) of the 14 possible

Table 8. Correlation Matrix of Motivations, Uses, and Gratifications.

	Communication	Surveillance	Professional development	Entertainment	Networking	Social functional value	Hedonic value
Information Communication	0.697**	0.696**	0.793**	0.298**	0.525**	0.861**	0.517**
Surveillance		0.652**	0.717**	0.290**	0.506**	0.662**	0.511**
Professional development			0.630**	0.387**	0.517**	0.658**	0.509**
Entertainment				0.354**	0.612**	0.840**	0.553**
Networking					0.638**	0.256**	0.695**
Social functional value						0.523**	0.590**
							0.538**

**Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

Table 9. LinkedIn Features and Chi Square Results.

	<i>n</i>	%	<i>df, N</i>	Pearson chi square	<i>p</i>
Profile picture	169	78.2	1, 216	1.611	.204
Experience	165	76.4	1, 216	0.001	.979
Education	161	74.5	1, 216	1.279	.258
Profile summary	145	67.1	1, 216	0.458	.499
Endorsed skills and expertise	124	57.4	1, 216	0.543	.461
Interests	108	50	1, 216	1.017	.313
Volunteer experiences and causes	101	46.8	1, 216	0.072	.789
Honors and awards	91	42.1	1, 216	0.288	.592
Languages	60	27.8	1, 216	1.006	.316
Recommendations	39	18.1	1, 216	0.354	.552
Certifications	47	21.8	1, 216	0.263	.608
Projects	28	13	1, 216	0.045	.832
Publications	21	9.7	1, 216	1.538	.215
Discussion posts and comments	17	7.9	1, 216	3.457	.063

LinkedIn features. Respondents indicated using the profile picture ($n=169$, 78.2%), experience ($n=165$, 76.4%), and education ($n=161$, 74.5%) features the most, and less than 20% reported using the projects ($n=28$, 13%), publications ($n=21$, 9.7%), and discussion posts and comments ($n=17$, 7.9%) features. A series of chi-square tests for association between those actively and not actively searching for jobs and how many LinkedIn features they use (RQ4b) were conducted. All expected cell frequencies were greater than five. Results of these analyses did not find any statistically significant differences (see Table 9). In other words, there was no difference regarding how active and non-active job seekers used specific features on LinkedIn.

Findings of this analysis indicate that the top three LinkedIn profile features used by Millennial LinkedIn users are: profile picture, experience, and education. The use of these features aligns with the previous analyses indicating that LinkedIn is part of their self-branding strategy and the social value they place on using the service. These three features, in particular, allow the user to craft a message tailored to potential and future employers that showcase their professional interests and skills. Providing additional information about experience and education helps Millennial LinkedIn users create a narrative of their credentials and skills they can bring to the workforce.

An independent samples *t*-test was used to determine if active job seekers used LinkedIn features more than non-active job seekers (H1). There were no outliers in the data, as assessed by inspection of a boxplot. LinkedIn features used were normally distributed, as assessed by the skewness and kurtosis values for the outcome variable falling within -2 to 2 , and there was homogeneity of variances, as assessed by Levene's test for equality of variance ($p=.373$). Non-active job seekers used more features ($M=6.13$, $SD=3.284$) than active job seekers ($M=5.87$, $SD=3.396$); however, results of the independent samples *t*-test revealed this difference was not statistically significant, $t(214)=0.563$, $p=.574$, $d=0.07$. As a result, H1 was not supported by the data. This

Table 10. Summary of Research Questions and Hypothesis Findings.

RQ1a	What are the primary motives of Millennial LinkedIn users?	Millennials were motivated to use LinkedIn for: (1) Information (2) Communication (3) Surveillance
RQ1b	Do active/non-active Millennial job searchers differ in terms of their motives for using LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?	There was not a significant difference between active job seekers and non-active job seekers related to using LinkedIn for information, communication, or surveillance.
RQ2a	How do Millennial job searchers use LinkedIn as part of their job/internship search process?	Millennials turned to LinkedIn for: (1) Professional development (2) Entertainment (3) Networking
RQ2b	Do active/non-active Millennial job searchers differ in terms of how they use LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?	There was not a significant difference between active job seekers and non-active job seekers when it comes to using LinkedIn for professional development, entertainment, or networking.
RQ3a	What gratifications do Millennial job searchers obtain from using LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?	Millennials gratification for using LinkedIn included: (1) Social/functional value (2) Hedonic value
RQ3b	Do active/non-active Millennial job searchers differ in terms of the gratifications obtained by using LinkedIn as part of the job/internship search process?	There was not a significant difference between active job seekers and non-active job seekers when it comes to gaining social functional value or hedonic value from using LinkedIn.
RQ4a	What features available on LinkedIn do Millennial job seekers use?	Features Millennials most frequently used on LinkedIn: (1) Profile picture (2) Experience (3) Education
RQ4b	Do active/non-active Millennial job seekers differ in how they use the features available on LinkedIn?	There was not a significant difference between active job seekers and non-active job seekers when it comes to using the profile picture, experience, or education features of LinkedIn.
H1	Millennials actively searching for a job or internship will use more features on LinkedIn than those who are not currently job searching.	Not supported - non-active job seekers used more features, but the difference was not significant.

finding is consistent with the aforementioned analyses that indicate Millennials consistently maintain their LinkedIn presence as part of their self-branding strategy regardless of job seeking status. A summary of the research findings can be found in Table 10.

Discussion

Despite hiring managers and recruiters naming LinkedIn as a main source for identifying potential employees, there is a lack of understanding surrounding how Millennials, the largest cohort in the U.S. workforce, use the social networking platform for job searching and career development. This study is among the first to fill this gap in the literature by surveying Millennials to determine their motives, uses, and gratifications for using LinkedIn. This study extends uses and gratifications theory into a new context and demonstrates why Millennials use LinkedIn, how they are using the site, and the gratifications they obtain from their use. Additionally, the findings provide information about the specific features Millennials take advantage of on LinkedIn, which is beneficial for employers to understand. Most notable are the results that active job seekers and non-active job seekers do not differ in the ways they use LinkedIn or in the gratifications they seek to obtain from using the site, which has various implications for the theory and for hiring managers.

Millennials report three reasons why they use LinkedIn: to find information, for communication, and surveillance needs. Through examining the mean scores for the individual items, respondents use LinkedIn to find free and relevant information about jobs (see Table 4). The findings of this study support those of LinkedIn's research about Millennial users (Rynne, 2016) demonstrating Millennials use LinkedIn for communication (Buettner, 2017). Although the participants in this study did not report using the features of LinkedIn like blogging or self-publishing, they do use LinkedIn to communicate with existing connections and to form new connections. Millennials also reported using LinkedIn to find information, including information not solely related to new job opportunities. This demonstrates that LinkedIn is used for more than just career advancement. Finally, respondents use LinkedIn for surveillance purposes which includes monitoring the career achievements of connections and feeling like they belong to a group. Using social media for surveillance is not novel, however, understanding that Millennials use LinkedIn for surveillance regardless of whether or not they are job searching, is an interesting note with potential for future research. Cumulatively, the researching findings of RQ1 are consistent with previous LinkedIn research findings that demonstrate LinkedIn is useful for finding employment opportunities and establishing professional connections (Bradley, 2011; Buck, 2012). RQ1 findings are also in line with previous uses and gratifications research on social media which describes the motives people have for using social media to include finding information, communication, and surveillance (Papacharissi & Rubin, 2000).

Although LinkedIn offers users a different experience and different features, even being described as "social networking" rather than "social media," this study indicates that Millennials use LinkedIn just as they would any other social media website like Facebook or Instagram. This is generally supportive of uses and gratifications theory by demonstrating that despite the unique characteristics of the site, Millennials use LinkedIn for professional development, entertainment, and/or networking. These needs have both similarities and differences between the needs outlined by uses and gratifications theory and are discussed in what follows.

Previous studies suggest that Millennials expect to find employment through networking (Smith, 2017), and that interpersonal communication is a benefit to using LinkedIn (Buettner, 2017; Florenthal, 2015). Individual item analysis for the networking factor indicates that respondents use LinkedIn to contact professionals they may not have a chance to meet in person and to interact with existing contacts (see Table 6). Thus, a primary motive and use of LinkedIn among Millennials is to develop their professional network, regardless of whether or not they are actively job searching. This indicates that surveillance of their network is an ongoing activity and use of the site, consistent uses and gratifications theory that people use social media websites for surveillance purposes. The results of this study support the findings that Millennials are more often passive users on the site (Carmack & Heiss, 2018), further upholding the surveillance gratification of site usage. Therefore, LinkedIn plays a role in broader career networking strategies and is one tactic for helping people maintain relationships.

The professional development factor highlights how Millennials use LinkedIn to advance their careers. Respondents reported using LinkedIn to brand and market themselves, increase visibility among recruiters, follow companies they are interested in potentially working for, and making professional connections (see Table 6). This underscores the use of LinkedIn for surveillance, but also demonstrates how the site is used for personal identity purposes, further illustrating the utility of uses and gratifications theory in this context. In order to gain more insight into how Millennials use LinkedIn for professional development, this study also investigated what LinkedIn features Millennials used. Results indicated that Millennials use an average of six LinkedIn features on their profiles, which is about 42.8% of the platform's capabilities. However, this is inconsistent with how employers and recruiters expect Millennials to use LinkedIn.

Recruiters are increasingly turning to LinkedIn to find new talent and make hiring decisions. According to Zide et al. (2014), recruiters look for optimized profiles that make use of all the features available on LinkedIn. Despite using less than half of the features available, the features used by Millennials do touch on three important indicators recruiters look for on LinkedIn profiles: employment history, education, and years of experience (Zide et al., 2014). However, by not utilizing all of the features, including interests, languages, volunteer activities, and projects, Millennials are not providing recruiters with a holistic picture of themselves. Recruiters use LinkedIn to find out additional information about candidates that a resume cannot provide such as endorsements, recommendations, and interests (Zide et al., 2014). When Millennials do not take advantage of these features on LinkedIn, they are putting themselves at a disadvantage with recruiters and may be overlooked in favor of other candidates who are using more of the features that LinkedIn offers.

A common critique of uses and gratifications theory is that it is difficult to discern between gratifications sought and gratifications obtained. In this study, gratifications obtained were measured and two gratifications for using LinkedIn were identified: social/functional value and hedonic value. Social/functional is described as information gratification, or having access to helpful, functional, practical and useful content (Jahn & Kunz, 2012). Previous research argues that when people satisfy social/

functional values through the use of a platform, they use the platform more often or more intensely (Cvijikj & Michahelles, 2013; De Vries & Carlson, 2014; Jahn & Kunz, 2012). In the analysis, the items for social value and functional value collapsed into one factor indicating that respondents did not differentiate between the social capabilities of LinkedIn and the functional capabilities of the platform. Respondents find value in the ability to learn about potential jobs and meet and interact with others, and find LinkedIn to be a helpful, practical, and functional way to do this. The hedonic value refers to fun and enjoyment obtained by using a particular medium, which is consistent with the gratification of diversion. This could explain why people use LinkedIn to read about organizations, find jobs, and keep up with others; they find these activities fun and enjoyable. These values reinforce the previously discussed motives and uses for LinkedIn, offer a potential explanation as to why there is no difference between active and non-active job seeker's use of the site, and bolster the claim that LinkedIn is part of larger career development efforts.

Finally, this study investigated if active job seekers and non-active job seekers used LinkedIn differently. Results of this analysis found no statistically significant difference when it comes to motivations, uses, and gratifications of using LinkedIn, nor were there any statistically significant differences related to the features used by active and non-active job seekers. In other words, Millennials, whether actively searching for a job or not, tended to use LinkedIn the same way. Through looking at why and how Millennials use LinkedIn, one can deduce that there are three primary strategies Millennials employ on LinkedIn. First, they use the platform to meet information and surveillance needs, which helps them to stay up-to-date on what is happening in their desired field including finding new internship and employment opportunities. Second, the features of LinkedIn allow for continued professional development through personal branding and self-presentation, known through uses and gratifications theory as personal identity. Third, the ability to fulfil hedonic values, otherwise known as diversion within uses and gratifications theory. As demonstrated by this study, these three strategies are useful despite whether or not one is actively searching for a job.

Practical Application and Implications

This study demonstrates that although LinkedIn has an inherently different purpose than other social media websites such as Facebook and Instagram, it is used for the same reasons among Millennials. Therefore, employers should recognize that Millennials expect to see content on LinkedIn that goes beyond job advertisements. Employers can leverage this finding and create groups on LinkedIn, share relevant stories, and engage with connections, in addition to posting information about job openings. The utilization of these features by organizations is proving to be a powerful tactic for content marketing (Singh, 2017), employee engagement (Eghan, 2015) and recruitment of employees.

Secondly, Millennials are not taking advantage of all the features the site has to offer. While the scope of this study did not examine why Millennials are not using many of the features of LinkedIn, the findings from this study demonstrate a

disconnect between how employers/recruiters expect Millennials to use the site, and how they are actually using it. For example, despite recruiters noting that they look to LinkedIn to find information beyond a resume, cover letter, or that provided in an interview, Millennials are not leveraging the site in the same way. Millennials are using the site to post their resume, connect with others, and find information. The motives of Millennial LinkedIn users do not justify their use of all the individual and unique features of the platform. Employers/recruiters could be more transparent about their reviews of LinkedIn profiles and could ask applicants to utilize specific areas of the site more.

Finally, employers and recruiters can learn from this study that Millennials are regularly using the site regardless of their employment status. Millennials in this study did not report using additional features of the site based on whether or not they were looking for a job or internship. This demonstrates that LinkedIn is likely a secondary job searching strategy for Millennials and that employers should not recruit or advertise jobs solely on LinkedIn. This is consistent with previous research illustrating that Millennials search for jobs using multiple strategies, and networking is reported as one of them, but that networking is not conducted over LinkedIn (Smith, 2017).

Limitations

The authors made efforts to generalize the findings by recruiting from two sources (research database and MTurk), the sample skewed more toward current college students, females, and those pursuing a career in the communication industry. Related to the recruitment limitation, a post-hoc power analysis of the sample revealed the sample size did not provide enough statistical power, thus more information is needed to draw definitive conclusions. Taken together, the sample size and demographics of respondents does provide a limitation to the study. Future research in this area should seek a more balanced sample, particularly when it comes to gender identification.

The Millennial sample in this study was also limited to only those Millennials living and job searching in the United States. Further, since career expectations may differ in other countries, research could examine Millennial LinkedIn users throughout other countries and compare their use and gratifications with American LinkedIn users. Future research should address Millennial LinkedIn usage from a global perspective.

Another limitation comes from the effects size in the analysis. The effect size analysis for each variable showed that the independent variable (active/non-active job seekers) had a negligible effect across all measures. Thus, there is not enough information to make a clear statement about the relationships between motivations, uses, and gratifications for using LinkedIn among active and non-active job seekers. While the main focus of this study was to understand how and why Millennials use LinkedIn for job searching, it was beyond the scope of this study to uncover the effectiveness of the strategies used by Millennials in the job search process. Future research should provide a more in-depth examination of Millennial profiles on LinkedIn in order to better understand the effectiveness of this job searching strategy.

A third limitation to consider has to do with age and/or career stage. Older Millennials, who have had more professional experience than those just graduating and beginning their full-time, post-graduate job search, may use LinkedIn in different ways and to fulfill different gratifications. For instance, they might use the site more for surveillance than personal identity, being that their own identity is more established than it was when they graduated college. Certainly, if this study were executed with a different generational cohort, the results could be different as well.

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