A Scientific Study:
Current Status Analysis of Cross Sectoral Recruitment and Job Searching Trends in Europe

Generation Y's Virtual Guide to
Skill Development and Personal Branding in Social Media

GEN Y's Guide

A Scientific Study:
Current Status Analysis of Cross Sectoral Recruitment and Job Searching Trends in Europe
(Intellectual Output 1)

Leading Organization
Sabancı University, Turkey

Participating Organization
Novancia Business School, France

Graphic Design
Berkay Güncan

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MESSAGE FROM THE COORDINATOR

Within the scope of their academic requirements, university students are expected to develop technical skills as they graduate. Although many curricula around the world are said to be adapted to improve variety of skills, it is difficult to suggest university graduates are well-equipped to satisfy the needs of employers. According to the Job Outlook 2016 report of NACE[1] (National Association of Colleges and Employers) soft skills including but not limited to leadership, teamwork, and communication are the skills new graduates lack most. Furthermore, employers also argue that lack of soft skills cause technical skills to be undermined and consequently, renders both sides of employment cycle unsatisfied.

'Generation Y's Virtual Guide to Skill Development and Personal Branding in Social Media' is crucial in bridging the gap between employers, career specialists and potential employees of Generation Y. The main goal is to develop and design a virtual guide to improve the employability, skill development and personal branding qualities of Generation Y job seekers. The project is expected to have an international impact as well as local and regional. To this end, global evolution of social media as a tool for employment has been investigated and the virtual guide, the output of the project, is designed accordingly. It is expected to help Generation Y students and recent graduates understand the evolution and become part of personal branding game in a global scale.

While the capability of Generation Y to adapt themselves to technological changes is undeniable, the use of social media as a crucial part of employment is a recent phenomenon. Many of recruiters are aware of the Generation Y's tendency for use of social media; hence, they already run background checks for the applicants. Besides, career centers in universities and professional human resources consultants are well aware of the various characteristics of Generation Y that render social media even more important than digital footprint. These students learn about opportunities, gather information on recruiters, seek jobs/internships, and share their experiences through social media. They also dislike the corporate ladder, they love and strive for authenticity, constantly seek for approval and feedback; prefer to work effectively and with a flexible timetable. All these preferences are in significant contrast with those of the previous generations and these preferences are currently reshaping and revolutionizing

both academic and corporate lives. This is why it is crucial for every university, enterprise, career office, and employer to understand the changes Generation Y brings to the corporate life and the mediums used for implementing these changes. This report, in conclusion, aims to inform all the parties in an effort to help constructing the new world of human resources. While the capability of Generation Y to adapt themselves to technological changes is undeniable, the use of social media as a crucial part of employment is a recent phenomenon. Many of recruiters are aware of the Generation Y's tendency for use of social media; hence, they already run background checks for the applicants. Besides, career centers in universities and professional human resources consultants are well aware of the various characteristics of Generation Y that render social media even more important than digital footprint. These students learn about opportunities, gather information on recruiters, seek jobs/internships, and share their experiences through social media. They also dislike the corporate ladder, they love and strive for authenticity, constantly seek for approval and feedback; prefer to work effectively and with a flexible timetable. All these preferences are in significant contrast with those of the previous generations and these preferences are currently reshaping and revolutionizing both academic and corporate lives. This is why it is crucial for every university, enterprise, career office, and employer to understand the changes Generation Y brings to the corporate life and the mediums used for implementing these changes. This report, in conclusion, aims to inform all the parties in an effort to help constructing the new world of human resources.

Şule YALÇIN
Project Coordinator
Sabancı University

I.   Project Summary

'Generation Y's Virtual Guide to Skill Development and Personal Branding in Social Media' is an EU-funded project launched in 2015. The main goal of the project is to develop and design a virtual guide to employability, skill development and personal branding in social media for Generation Y job seekers. In the long term, different outputs and activities of the project will contribute to employability of university graduates in Europe. In addition, the virtual guide will contribute to the modernization of higher education by using latest techno-logical innovations suitable for learning modules of the Generation Y.

Five parties are collaborating in the project: Novancia Business School (Paris, France), Sabancı University (Istanbul, Turkey), Abdullah Gül University (Kayseri, Turkey), Universum Communication (Stockholm, Sweden), Türk Kültür Vakfı (Istanbul, Turkey).

Currently, university graduates are generally well-equipped with various technological expertise, language skills and other practical competences. However, during the process of hiring, along with technical and practical skills, the employers are looking for soft skills such as leadership, effective collaboration and teamwork, and innovation. Although internship placements, employer introductions, and career consultancy services are offered to support students' transition from academic to profession-al life, there is still an urgent need to expand career education and define the exact competen-cies that are needed to get the right job. This is especially relevant for the generation 'Y' students who have different expectations and behavioral styles compared to previous generations. Hence, 'Guide for Gen Y' provides clues to students who want to improve their leadership, innovativeness and teamwork skills which are somehow over-looked in curricula of universities.

The project aims to serve multiple ends. The primary objective is to uncover how social media is and can be significant in the employment pro-cess. As part of this aim, behavioral attributes of Generation Y regarding job application are inves-tigated. To shed light on the whole process, career centers and employers are also examined. It is also projected to discover the ways for these parties strengthen their relationship with the help

[2]Brosdahl, D. J., & Carpenter, J. M. (2011). Shopping orientations of US males: A generational cohort comparison. Journal of Retailing and Consumer Services, 18(6), 548-554.

[3]Bolton, R. N., Parasuraman, A., Hoefnagels, A., Migchels, N., Kabadayi, S., Gruber, T., ... & Solnet, D. (2013). Understanding Generation Y and their use of social media: a review and research agenda. Journal of Service Management, 24(3), 245-267.

of social media. Finally, the outcomes of the project are expected to have impact on how universities leverage 'new media' in improving employability of their students.

Who is Generation Y?

Following Brosdahl and Carpenter's (2011)[2] generation categories; Generation Y is accepted as those who were born after 1981. Generational groupings claim that sharing a certain stage of life has a very important role in developing common perspectives. What distinguishes Generation Y from the other cohorts is their exposure to technology (Bolton et al., 2013)[3]. Although the significance of understanding the qualities of Generation Y is known by scholars and practitioners in various disciplines, Human Resources and Career Management fields appear as the flag-carriers among others. As Smola and Sutton (2002)[4] argue based on their extensive empirical research, most work values are directly associated to generational groupings. While scholarly work has been carried intensely, the world of practice also realized how important it is to figure out the needs, wants, and desires of Generation Y for more effective participation of human resources. This curiosity has grown so that Jessica Buchscaum of The Economist argued "Net Geners may be just the kind of employees that companies need to help them deal with the recession's hazards" (2008)[5]. With their familiarity to technology and multi-tasking, Generation Y has been considered as the cohort that is expected to revolutionize the design of jobs, workplaces and, of course, the ways how employees and employers match-up for the utmost benefit of each other.

II. Social Media and Employment

The role of social media in business, on the other hand, is one of the leading discussions in the ever-expanding business society globally. Focusing on marketing, Jayson DeMers of AudienceBloom argues that social media is the future of all businesses who want to reach customers and/or employees of their interest (Forbes, 2014)[6]. While the giants of social media such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn continuously develop their networks, the functions they serve has changed/improved gradually. In terms of employment, LinkedIn has always been the primary resource for employers; however, as the number of users in those media has grown dramatically all the possible channels started to serve for employment purposes. Adecco Group's "Work Trends Study"[7] on social recruiting reveals that on average 73% of job seeking and 55% of recruitment happens online (Adecco, 2015). Although there exists regional differences, the trend towards online platforms for employment activities is undeniable globally. Combining the aforementioned capabilities/tendencies of the Generation Y, both sides of the employment process are expected to benefit from the availability of social

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[4]Wey Smola, K., & Sutton, C. D. (2002). Generational differences: Revisiting generational work values for the new millennium. Journal of organizational behavior, 23(4), 363-382.

[5]Buchsbaum, J. (2008) Generation Y goes to work, The Economist.

[6]DeMers, J. (2014) The Top 10 Benefits of Social Media Marketing, Forbes.

[7]Work Trends Study, Adecco Management & Consulting S.A., October 2015

[8]Global Recruiting Trends 2016, LinkedIn Business Solutions, https://business.linkedin.com/content/dam/business/talent-solutions/global/en_us/c/pdfs/GRT16_GlobalRecruiting_100815.pdf

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media and social recruiting.

Recruiting trends in the world indicate how major a change has been experienced in the last decade. LinkedIn, surveying 3,894 talent acquisition decision makers who work in a corporate HR department and have some authority in their company's recruitment solutions budget, found out that 59% of the organizations invest more in their employer brand compared to previous year (LinkedIn, 2016)[8]. As the communications and employment are aligned in a strategic manner, the role of media is expected to expand throughout the coming years. On the other hand, as Benson et al (2014) suggest the number of Facebook and LinkedIn users among higher education graduates who seek for their first job is increasing. Furthermore, most graduates are now aware of the fact that social networking is useful after they are accepted to their jobs. Therefore, both ends of the employment process are in need of more improved ways of using social networking.

III.   About Gen Y's Guide Project

As the need for further research and development in the field of social recruiting become apparent, Gen Y's Guide project is clearly a step towards fulfilling the demand. To this end, Gen Y's Guide Project aims to understand and analyze the current situation in the European talent industry as well as provide outputs that will inform the parties involved in the 'modern regime' of employment. The project is based on the acknowledgement that the students, employers and the career centers at the universities constitute the foundation for the transformation of hiring methods. In this manner, this report provides the results of three different but complementary surveys that are conducted in different locations of Europe. The methodology, results and analyses are covered in the following sections.

IV.   Methodology and Samples

All three surveys (students, employers and career centers) are conducted in both EU countries (details below) and Turkey. Due to time and other constraints, sample can be defined as a convenience sample[9] since the project team leveraged its network to maximize the number of participants. The details regarding each survey are provided in the subsections.
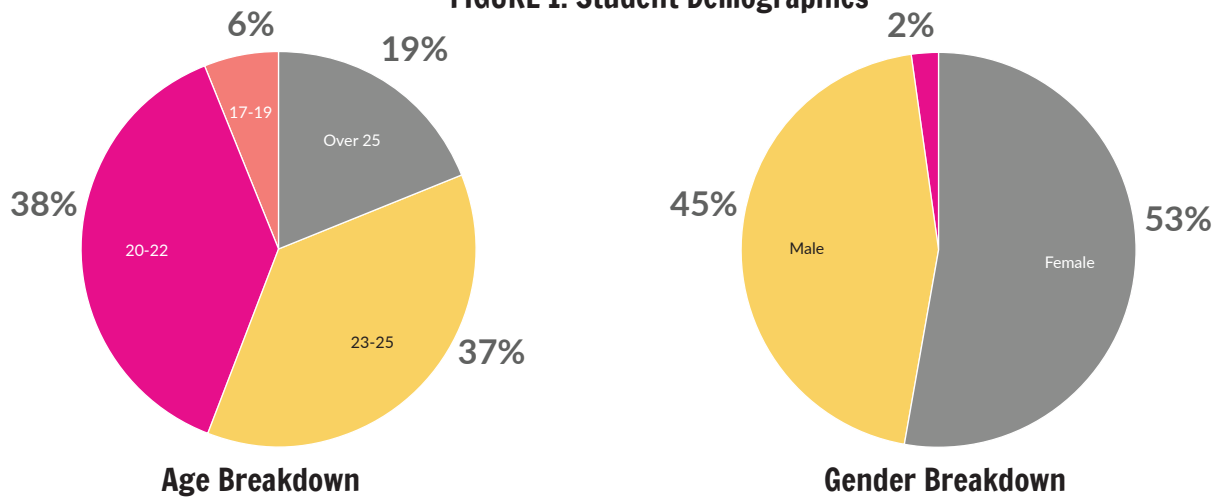
a. Student Surveys

The survey is conducted in 6 different locations in Europe including Turkey[10]. The other participants of the survey are from France, Germany, Sweden, England and Benelux. Total

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[9]Shadish, W. R., Cook, T. D., & Campbell, D. T. (2002). Construct validity and external validity. Experimental and quasi-experimental designs for generalized causal inference, 64-102.

[10]Student survey can be found in https://tr.surveymonkey.com/r/eustudents

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FIGURE 1: Student Demographics

Age Breakdown

- 6% 17-19
- 19% Over 25
- 38% 20-22
- 37% 23-25

Gender Breakdown

- 2%
- 45% Male
- 53% Female

number of 1329 students participated and the survey is conducted in 5 different languages in addition to Turkish; Swedish, French, English, German, and Dutch. The demographics of the students who filled the surveys are presented in the following graphs.

Total sample of 1366 students includes undergraduates, graduated students, masters and other graduate level students. The breakdown of the ages indicates this fact but one other thing is worth to mention: Since the majority of the students are around their mid 20s, their experience regarding job search is extremely relevant for the results of the project's premises. The breakdown of degrees pursued by participating students is shown in Figure 2. Gender distribution is also representative of the European job market in which the gap between males and females is less than the rest of the world.

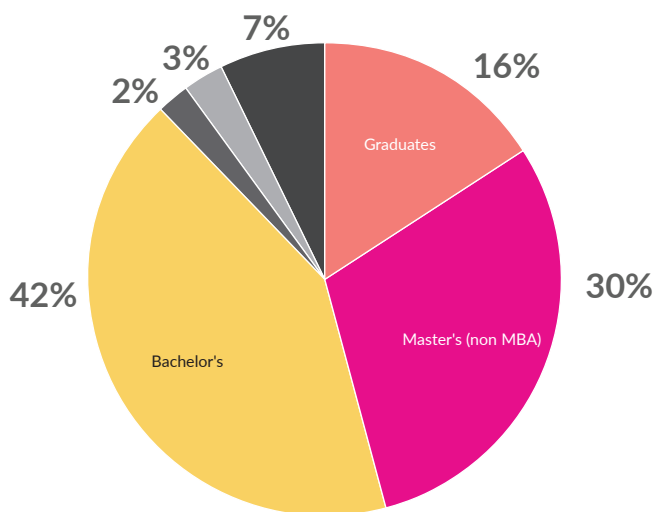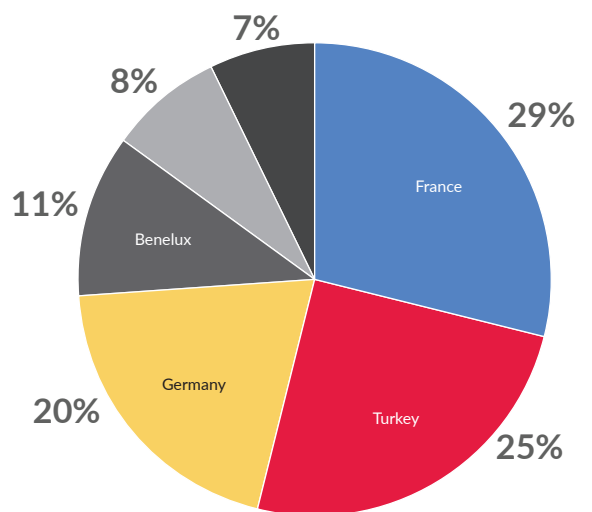## FIGURE 2: Pursued Degree

- 7%
- 3%
- 2%
- 16% Graduates
- 42% Bachelor's
- 30% Master's (non MBA)

FIGURE 3: Students' Country

- 7%
- 8%
- 11% Benelux
- 29% France
- 20% Germany
- 25% Turkey

Finally, in order to make sure the sample represents EU-wide tendencies, following distribution of countries for participating students is achieved (Figure 3). Please note that each participant answered the questions in their native language.

b.   Employer Surveys

A total of 100 employers attended the survey. Despite the effort to increase the partici-pation from different countries, the majority of the employees are from Turkey and France (Figure 4).

FIGURE 4: Employer Profiles

[11]Employer survey can be found in https://tr.surveymonkey.com/r/euhr
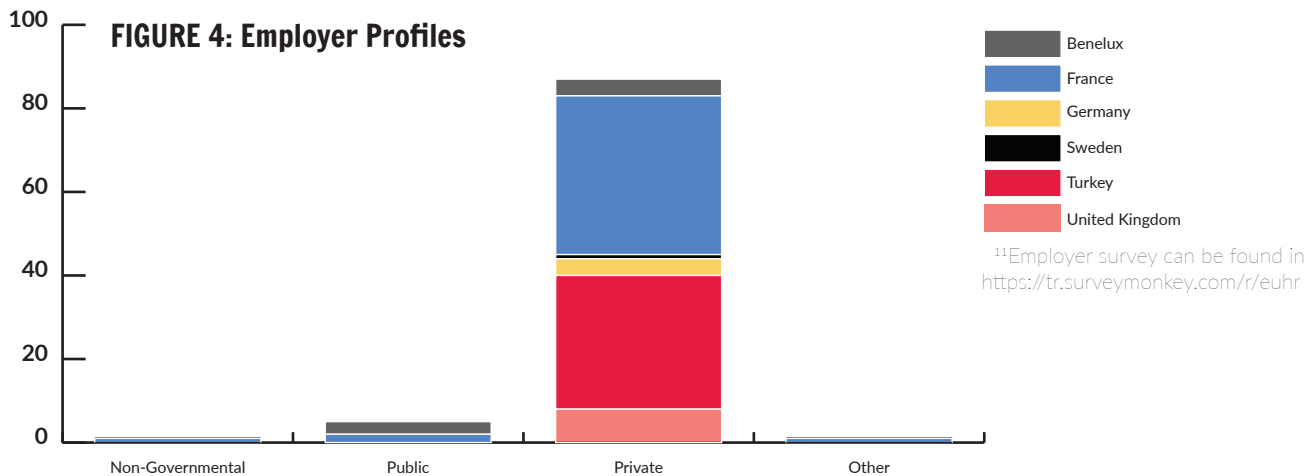
Considering the impact of hiring practices, the sensitivity expressed by private firms is not surprising. On the other hand, the future of social media and how it shapes the business world dramatically indicates NGOs and public organizations will have to follow private firms' grasp of the situation. Figure 5 shows the size of the firms who participated the survey. While majority of the European firms who responded the survey are SMEs, Turkish firms are mostly large enterprises. However, for both sub-groups the number of participants (56 for Europe, 44 for Turkey) is sufficient to make generalizable claims.

FIGURE 5: Organization Site

FIGURE 6: Career Centers
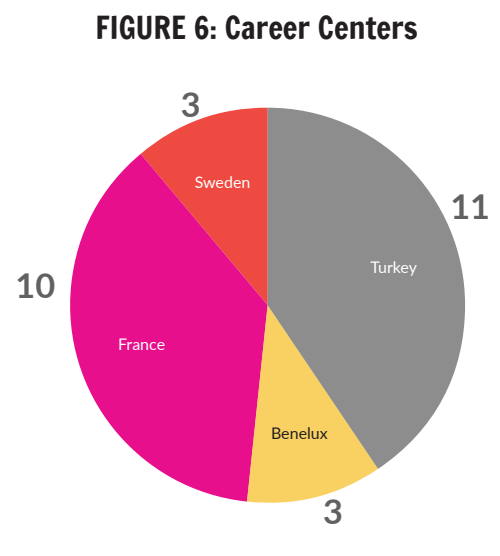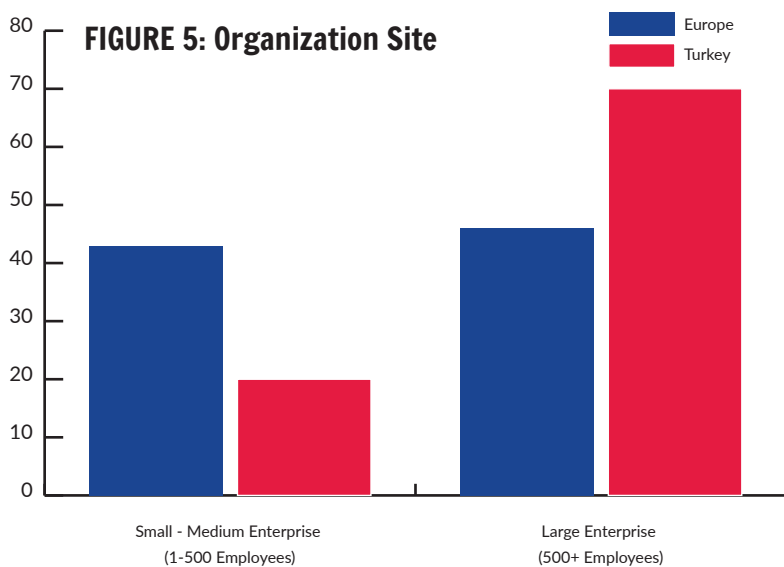
[12]Career Center survey can be found in https://tr.surveymonkey.com/r/eucareercenters

[13]Hofstede, G. (2003). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions and organizations across nations. Sage publications.
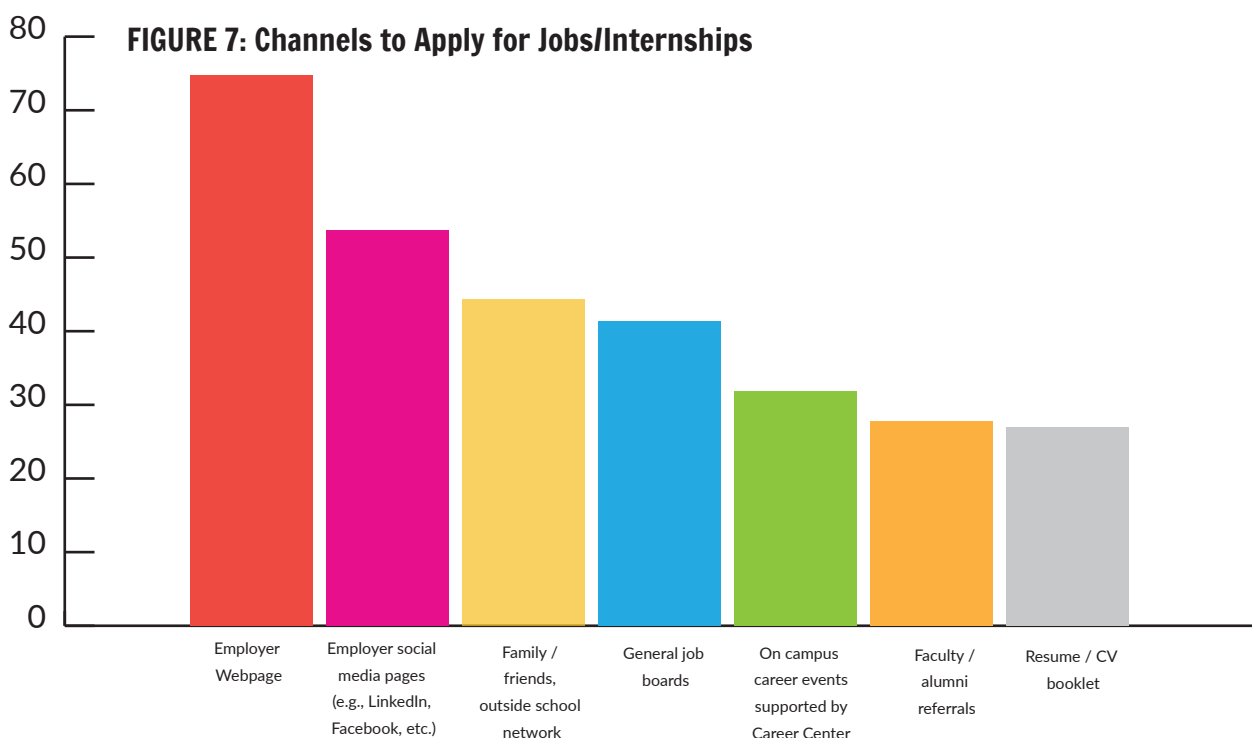
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c. Career Center Surveys

Career Centers in Turkey and Europe are also a crucial part of the project since they are the leading actor in the transaction between the students/graduates and employers. A total of 27 career centers are surveyed and the breakdown of the countries is provided below[12] (Figure 6). Unfortunately Germany and United Kingdom are not represented but considering the globally standardized career center practices in universities it is not evaluated as a major problem.
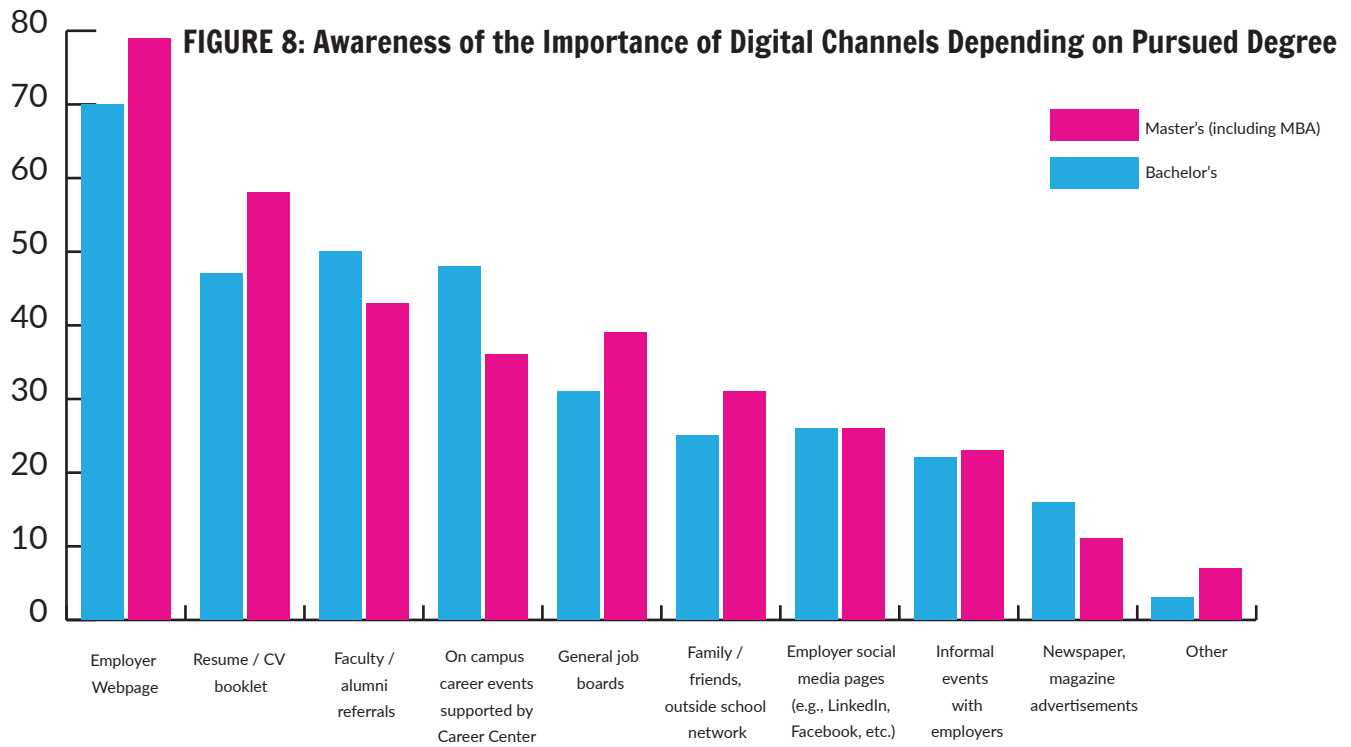
V. Results and Analyses

a. Students

The results of the study are manifold, so the most relevant ones are included in an effort to present how the analyses are conducted. Figure 7 indicates the impact of Generation Y on how jobs/internships are applied. The channel most frequently used for application is employer webpage and it is followed by employer social media pages. The network of applicants as a channel lost its once undeniable top position. Furthermore, the results are similar for Turkey, which is a country that is considered as more collectivist (Hofstede, 2003)[13]. Although collectivism is associated with strong ties and importance of relatives/friends in business related matters, the tendency of Generation Y and developments toward digital world has an influence beyond cultural underpinnings.

FIGURE 7: Channels to Apply for Jobs/Internships

Channel	Value
Employer Webpage	74
Employer social media pages (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.)	53
Family / friends, outside school network	44
General job boards	41
On campus career events supported by Career Center	32
Faculty / alumni referrals	28
Resume / CV booklet	27

In addition to national culture, the level of degree has an influence on the tendency towards using various channels for application. Figure 8 below indicates that master's students are more aware of the importance of digital channels.

FIGURE 8: Awareness of the Importance of Digital Channels Depending on Pursued Degree

Legend:
- Master's (including MBA)
- Bachelor's

Channel	Bachelor's	Master's
Employer Webpage	70	78
Resume / CV booklet	47	58
Faculty / alumni referrals	50	43
On campus career events supported by Career Center	48	36
General job boards	31	39
Family / friends, outside school network	25	31
Employer social media pages (e.g., LinkedIn, Facebook, etc.)	26	26
Informal events with employers	22	23
Newspaper, magazine advertisements	16	11
Other	3	7

The discrepancy between students' awareness levels can be explained in a more detailed study; however, it is safe to assume that the major difference between students at different levels is how seriously they approach the application process. In this manner, master's degree students are expected to express more adaptability to the changing employment practices. This speculation sounds more appropriate with the results presented in Figure 9.

FIGURE 9: Importance of Social Media

31% Student

Importance	Value
Extremely important	7
Very important	24
Important	30
Somewhat important	27
Not at all important	13

60% Employer

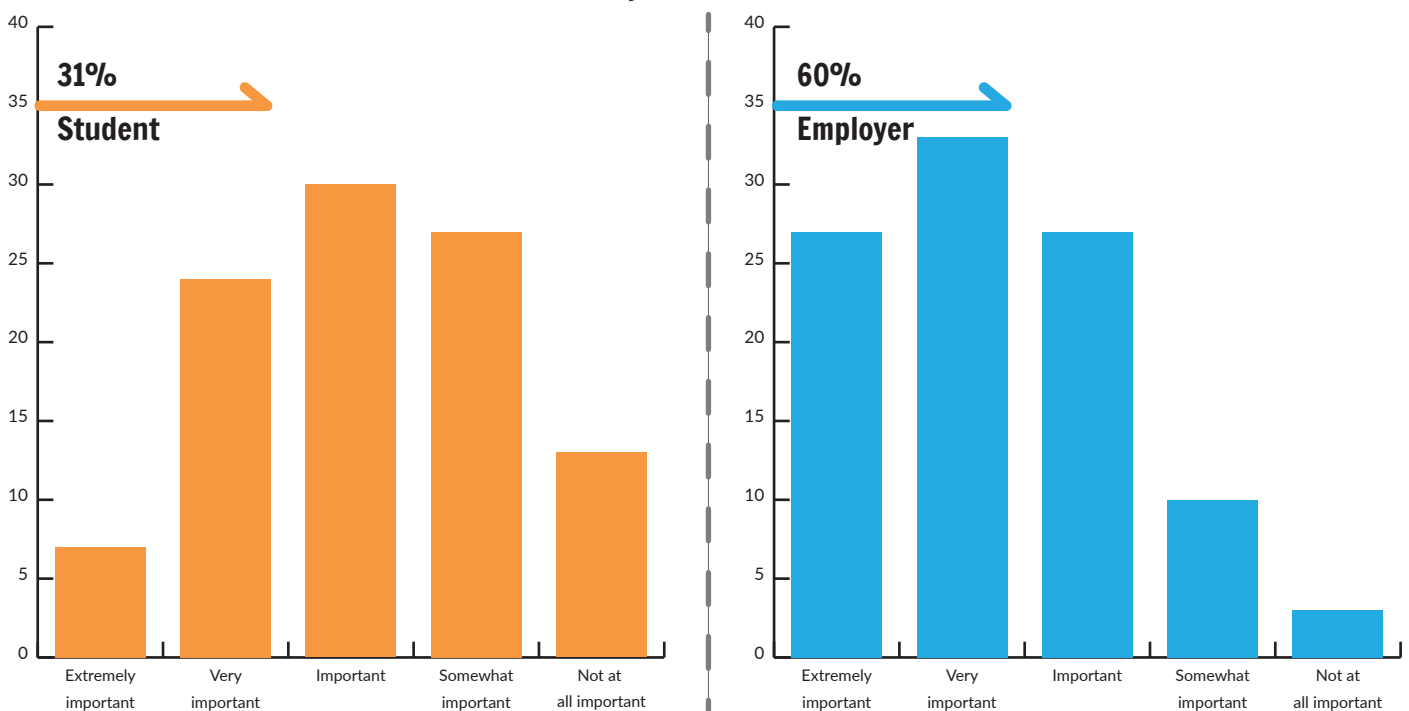| Importance	Value
Extremely important	27
Very important	33
Important	27
Somewhat important	10
Not at all important	3

Figure 9 shows the responses for the same question is asked to both students and employers: "How important is it to use social media tools for job search and application?" The results are appealing since 60% of employers find social media extremely or very important while only 31% of the students believe so. Therefore, students are not exactly aware of the importance of social media for their application processes.

When we delve deeper the social media channels, students exhibit a tendency of using Facebook for general purposes and LinkedIn for career related purposes (Figure 10).

FIGURE 10: Tools and Purpose of Social Media

General Usage

Career Related Usage (e.g., job search and application, networking, etc.)
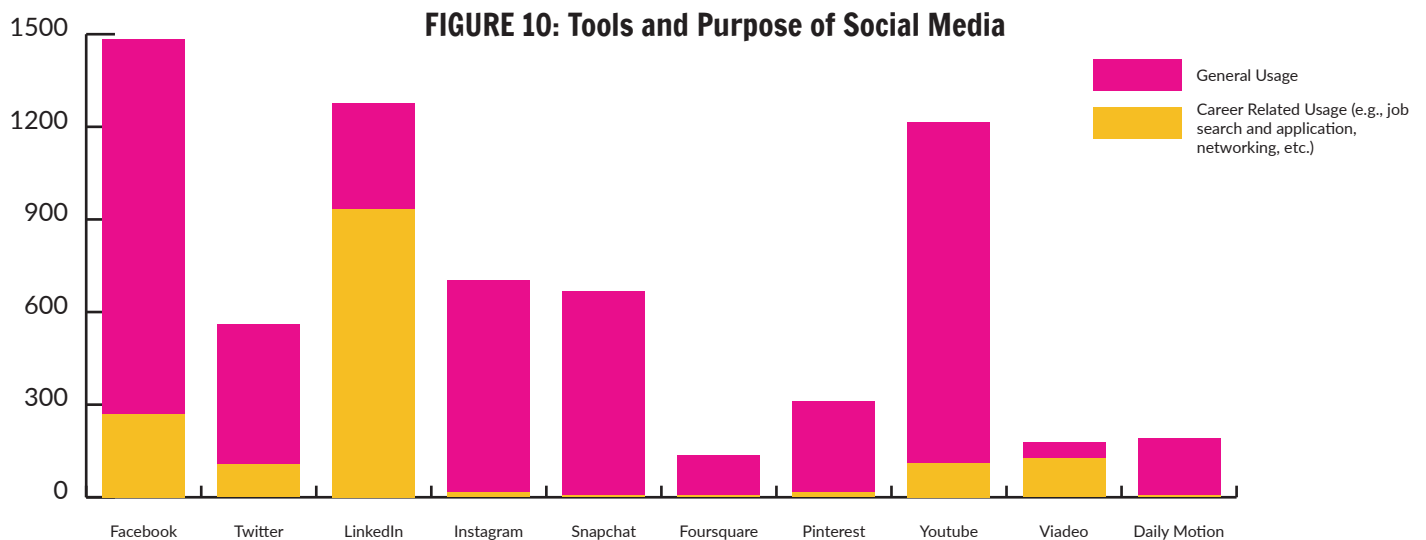
For most of the students Facebook, LinkedIn and YouTube are indispensable. On the other hand, Facebook and YouTube are far behind LinkedIn when it comes to career related usage. Although Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and Snapchat are good venues for networking, it appears that pursuing the opportunities directly via LinkedIn instead of through networking defines the behavior in students' case.

In addition to the channel preferences, the content of the information students seek has importance. Students who search for information through social media are mostly interested in the location, salary offers and work culture of their potential employers (Figure 11). Salary is not a surprising factor when it comes to job/internship applications but the location and work culture responses indicate that Generation Y, unlike their predecessors, are more interested in where and how they are going to work instead of basic compensation.

FIGURE 11 : Type of Information Sought
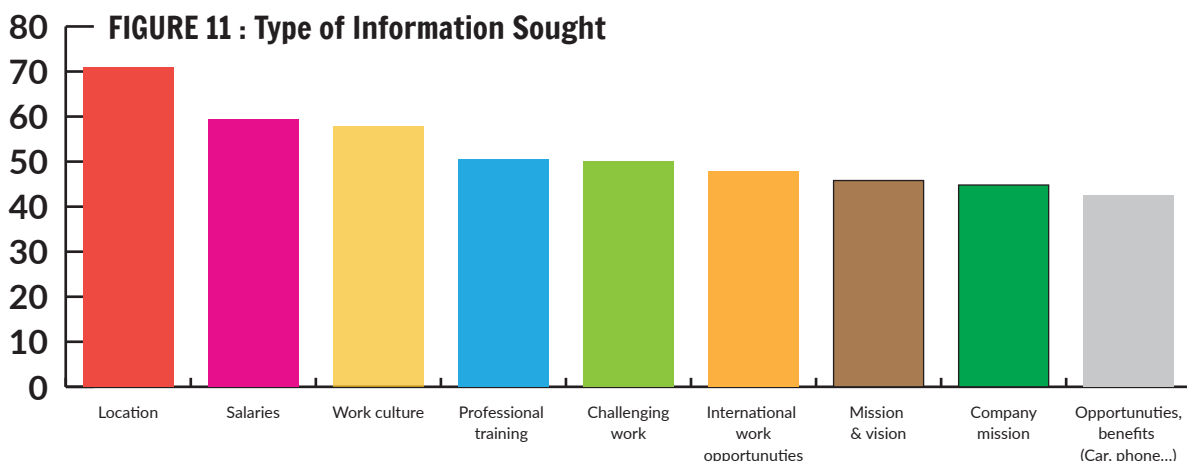
For Generation Y applicants, time is of the essence. Table 1 shows that time spent for application is undeniably the most important quality that employers should be careful about. In addition, digitalizing the process of application and recruitment has significant effects on the attractiveness of employees.

**TABLE 1: What makes application more appealing?**

63.2%	Less time spent to complete application
39.8%	Possibility to conduct an interview over online tools such as Skype, web-conference
35.7%	Possibility to apply through social networks such as Facebook or LinkedIn
31.7%	User friendly mobile app
6.1%	Possibility to upload video resume

Finally, some of the surveyed students also responded to the open-ended question asking their opinions on social media and employers. After a detailed analysis, three main subjects emerge: First of all, aligned with Table 1, time and convenience of the application process is a very important theme in open-ended answers. Some examples are available below:

> ❝ Make it short and clear
>
> ❝ To answer mails or messages immediately
>
> ❝ Directly say what you want from employee and what you offer to employee
>
> ❝ The whole point of social media is that it is supposed to be more succinct than paper-based contact/information, so keep it short and sweet online otherwise people will lose interest.

The second theme emerges from the recommendations of students is related to the content of the information. Students, it appears that, desperately need more and detailed information regarding the job description, workplace environment, and company culture. Combined with the results in Figure 11, it can be concluded that Generation Y sees social media as the channel for more intimate information rather than technical requirements written into job advertisements. Examples:
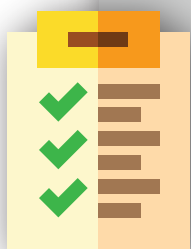
> ❝ More details! I'm tired of broad, vague-sounding job descriptions with buzzwords like motivated, dynamic, etc., that don't actually say anything about the work or workplace.
>
> ❝ Be specific about the job, ie. requirements, location and working time etc..
>
> ❝ My advice would be to give a better overview of all offers. What do the companies expect and what do I receive particularly. Usually one spends ages till you find all relevant information.

Third major subject in student testimonials is on targeting. Students want companies to define and target their audience more precisely for two reasons; first, they do not want to be bombarded by the public relations activities of employers and second, they want to reach their target recruiters more easily. Examples below indicate how so;

- ❝ Focus on your target group. Be reliable.
- ❝ Utilize it to ensure you reach maximum audiences, but remember not every graduate is invested in social media.
- ❝ Approach the right candidates

b. Employers

What discrepancies exist between the perception of students and employers is discussed in the previous section. However, there are some employer-specific results and analyses do exist in the sense that social media is also a recent phenomenon that they have to deal with. Figure 12 shows which tools are more frequently used and for which reasons.

LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter are the most frequently used channels by the employers. All three channels are considered as good venues for employers' branding/promotion activities; however, LinkedIn is by far the most preferred channel for recruitment and candidate

background check. LinkedIn is a focused platform in employment field but Facebook deserves a special attention since it is possible to find variety of information in it. Therefore, employers and applicants should pay attention to Facebook even more. On the other hand, candidate background check is a bit tricky area since background might mean professional background as well as private life. Professional background has utmost relevance for employers definitely but students are not comfortable with the probability of being investigated. As Figure 13 indicates students are aware of the fact that they are constantly being checked in social media. European students especially sometimes dislike the way employers use social media for background checks. One participant argues:

FIGURE 12: Tools and Purposes - Employer
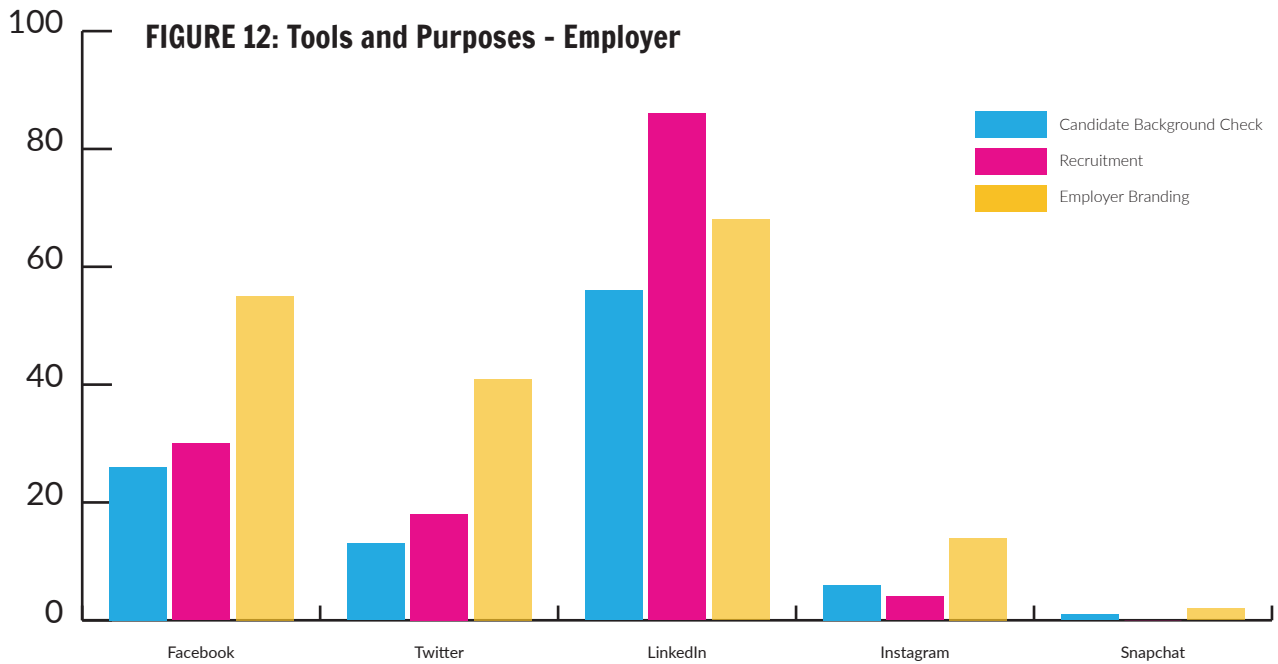
"People do not want (in my opinion) to link their private social media accounts (Facebook etc.) to job applications so I can't see the benefit of having job applications done through private social media. LinkedIn is the only exception to my mind as this is purely based around careers and business"

FIGURE 13: Employers Do Background Checks Students
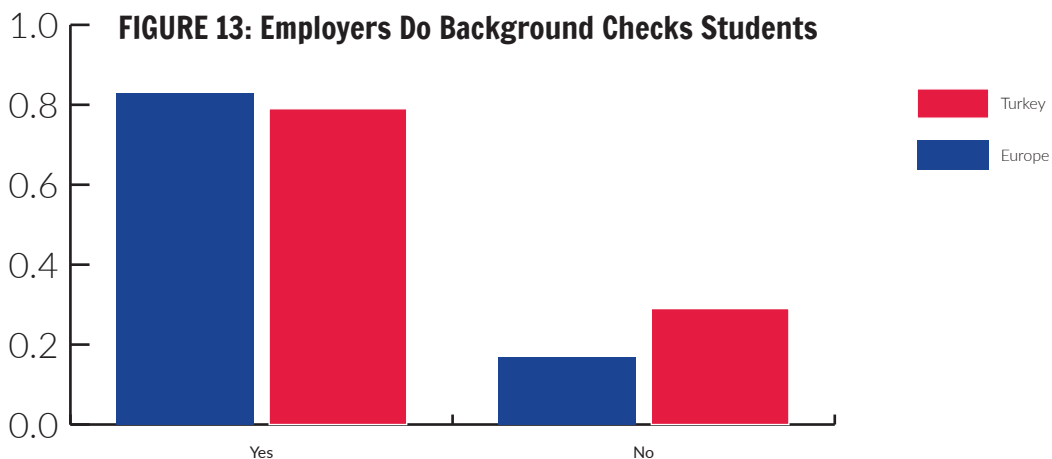
For many firms human resources and especially the process of recruitment are keys for accomplishing their strategic goals. In this manner, the decision between channels (traditional vs. unorthodox) for their full time or intern recruitment processes is crucial. Figure 14 shows that employers are sensitive to the new-fashioned ways of recruitment.

**FIGURE 14: Employers' Recruitment Channels**
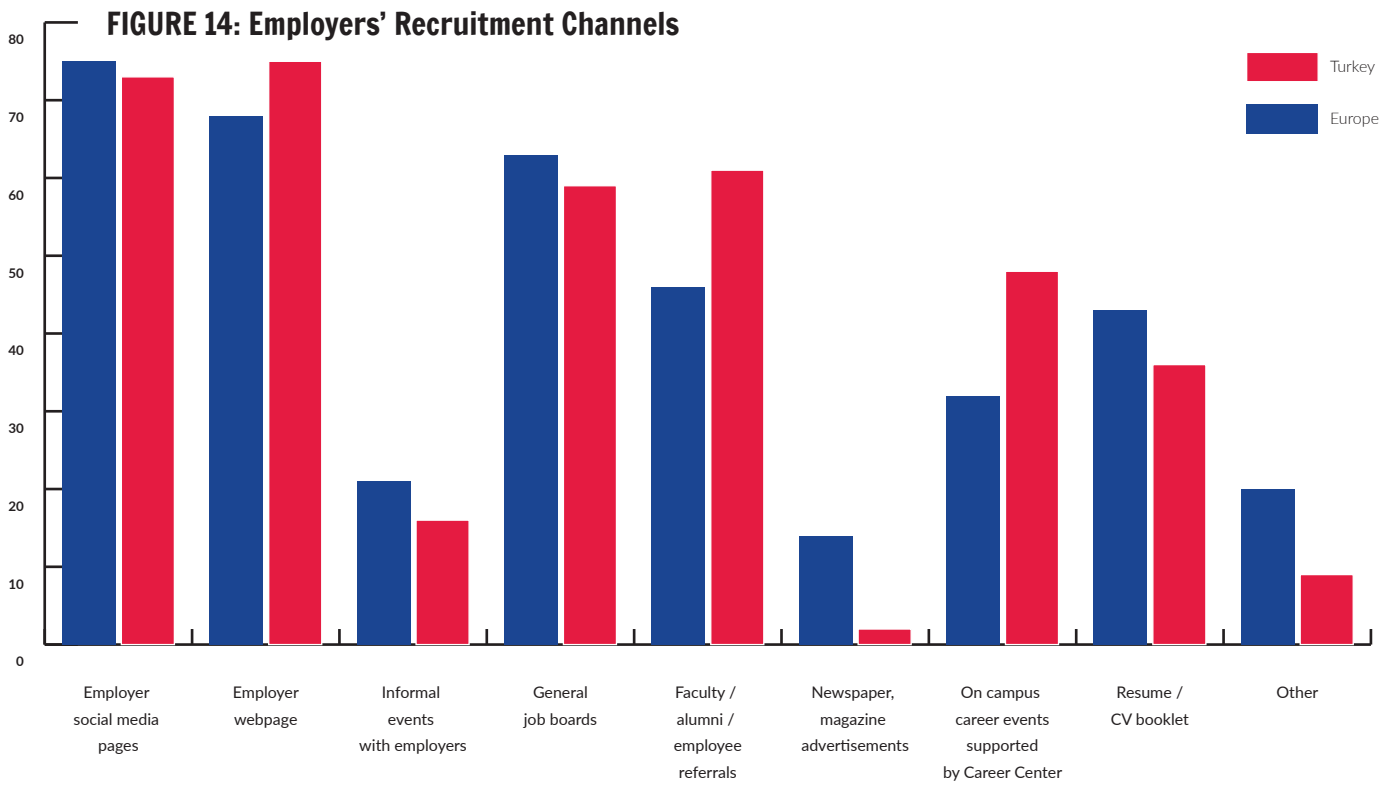
Around 70% of the employers use social media and webpage for recruitment. Although employers are eager to reach Generation Y more conveniently, neither content nor timeliness expectations of youth are satisfied as mentioned in the previous section. However, the attention of employers is obvious; therefore, future seems to get brighter. Finally, uses of recruitment channels are parallel in Europe and Turkey with a little but meaningful difference. On campus events are quite popular in Turkey as the graph suggests, and the reasons for the difference are twofold. First, Turkey, for the last couple of decades has been one of the largest countries in terms of young population[14]. Secondly and in connection with the demographics, the number of universities doubled in the last ten years in Turkey. Therefore, it is crucial for employers to pay attention on campus events. In the future, employers in Turkey might have to find ways to combine social media and on campus channels effectively.

c. Career Centers

When it comes to establish the link between university students and employers, the role of career centers is remarkable. Career centers provide various services including but not limited to career counseling, workshops, on-campus events and so forth. Figure 15 shows the broad range of activities provided by these centers. Similar to the results in employer activi-

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[14]OECD – Data, Young Population Retrieved on September 20th, 2017 from https://data.oecd.org/pop/young-population.htm

ties (Figure 14), Turkey is distinctive in terms of on-campus events; therefore it is safe to conclude campus means more for employment in Turkey. On the other hand, resume booklets are definitely more common in career centers in Europe. Furthermore, career centers are more effective in terms of job/internship placement in European countries.

**FIGURE 15: Career Center Activities**
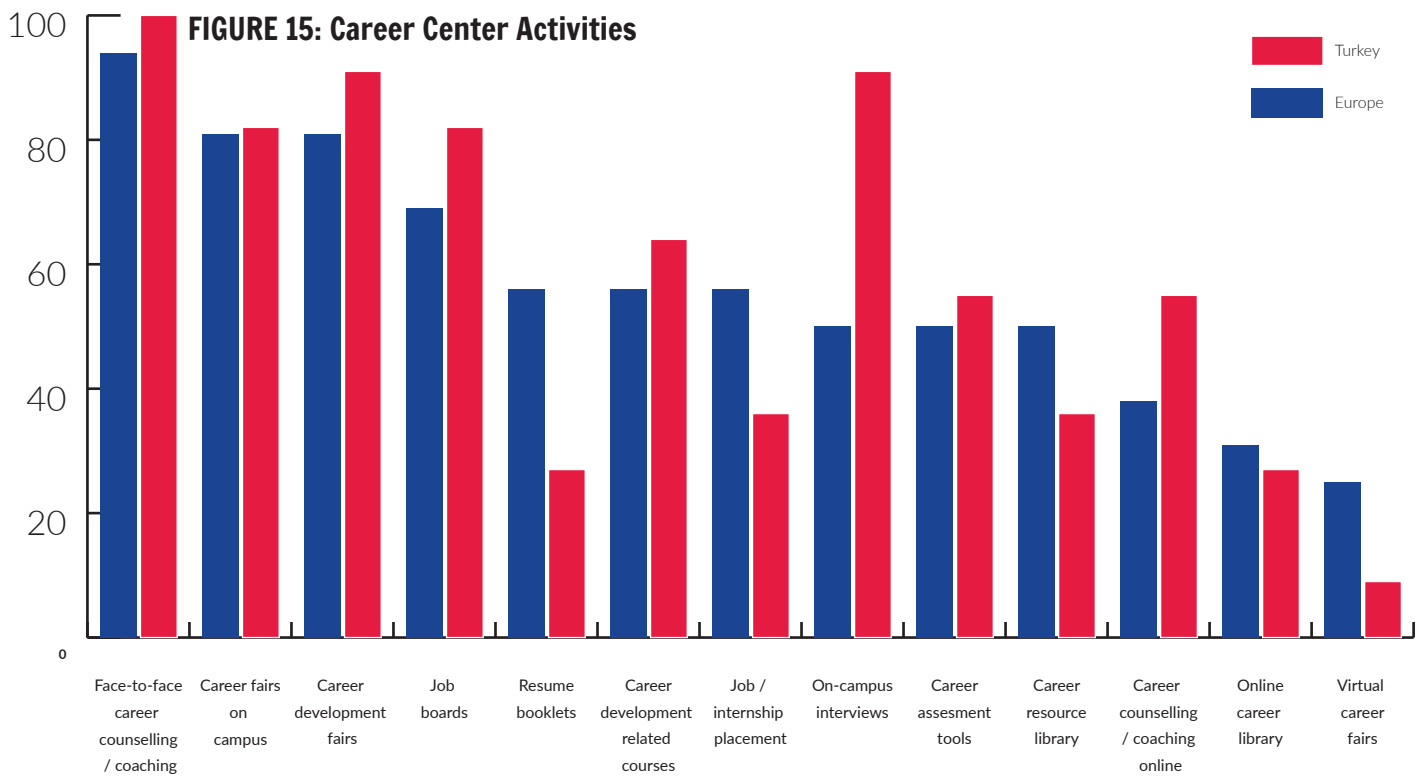
Considering their close relationship with the students and especially with Generation Y, their responsibility for following the trends in employment and introducing them to students is irrefutable. Figure 16 presents the results regarding how career centers perceive and use social media.

FIGURE 16: Career Centers' Social Media Usage and Perception
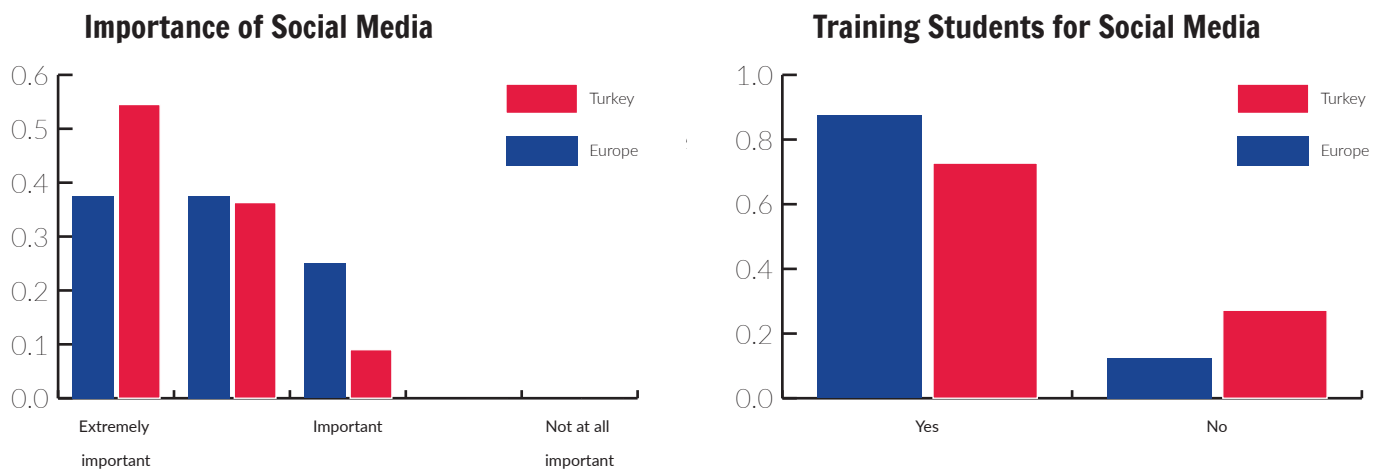
Compared to students and employers, career centers attach more importance to the role of social media in the process of employment. What's more, both in Europe and Turkey they have already started training students on how to use social media more effective. Majority of

FIGURE 17: Tools - Career Centers
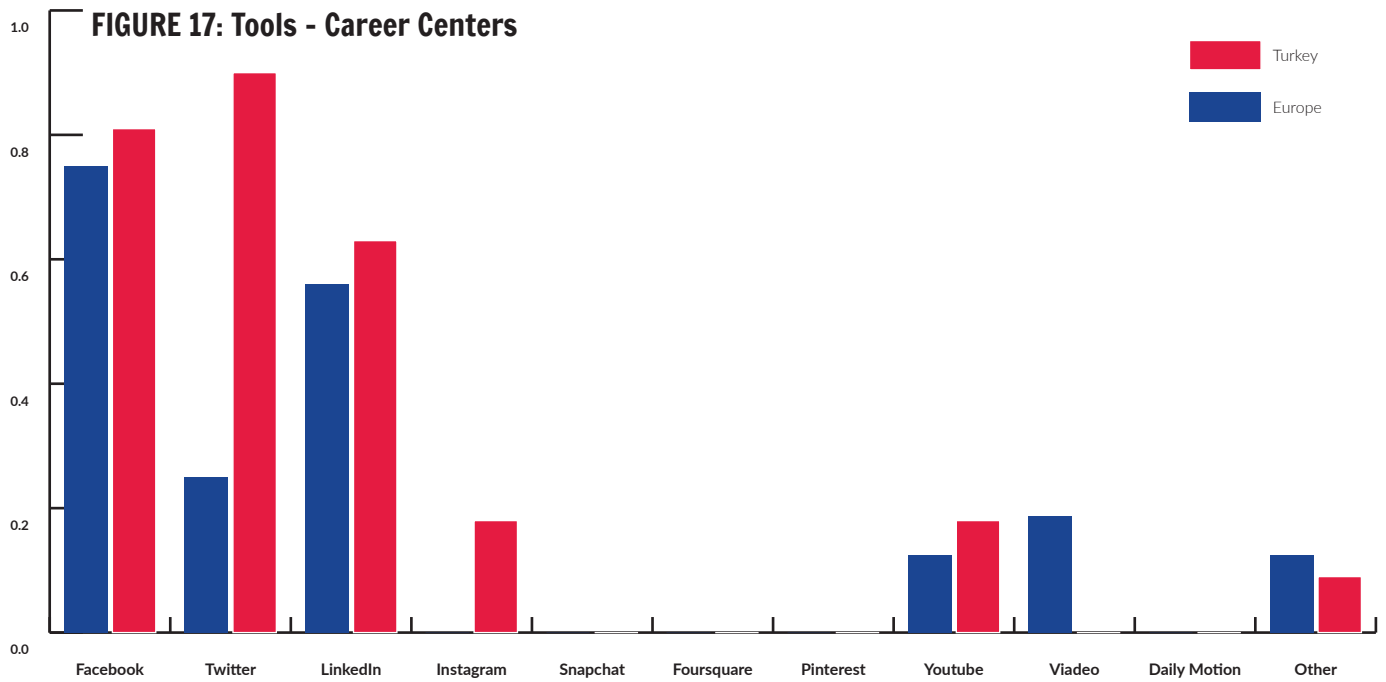
these trainings also cover personal branding, which is considered as one of the most important aspects of future employment routines (Labrecque et al., 2011)[15].

Figure 17 presents the details of social media preferences of career centers. Facebook and LinkedIn are by far the most common tools since former is useful for reaching larger audiences and later is directly a tool for employment. What attracts most attention; however, is the higher attention paid to Twitter in Turkey by career centers.

VI.   Conclusion

The results of the project once again clarifies that social media and employment have a relationship that should matter for everyone. Both employer and potential employees should realize that using social media effectively is part of their competency sets. Luckily it is possible to improve the ways social media used in employment. Accordingly, career centers are responsible for both following the trends in employment and instructing these two ends of the equilibrium about social media.

Although the trend towards social media usage is observable, there is a difference between employers and students in terms of motivation. Employers are by far more inclined to use social media for recruitment activities; students promote social benefits of 'new media'. Generation Y in Europe and Turkey have the capacity to adopt technological advancements; however, they require guidance in using social media for employment opportunities. Hence, the role of career centers in this transformation is multiplied.

Related to motivation to use, the content of social media communications by employers is a significant issue. Understanding Generation Y is the key for employers so that they can

[15]Labrecque, L. I., Markos, E., & Milne, G. R. (2011). Online personal branding: processes, challenges, and implications. Journal of Interactive Marketing, 25(1), 37-50.

attract the students they target. Students are clear about the content they want to view: Concise information that includes details of workplace culture, location and to the appropriate audience. The most precious thing for students is time; therefore, they can only spend time for the content that is related to their ambitions. Employers have to follow Generation Y more closely if they want to achieve fit.

Surveys enable making comparisons between EU countries and Turkey. Turkey bears a striking resemblance in terms of social media usage in employment activities except for a population effect. Young population and increasing number of universities make these institutions more important for career management. Including on-campus events, students from Turkey express a need for physical intimacy when it comes to employment. Two inferences can be made though. First, as mentioned multiple times, university based career management offices carry a heavier load in Turkey. Secondly and more broadly; although there is a global trend for social media in employment, contextual differences are still essential for understanding student behaviors.

Employment is a major issue for students and employers. It is undeniable that technology and social media will have an effect on employment practices in the future. This report not only sheds light on the direction of change but also is encouraging for possible solutions that technology can offer to the matching problem in employment field. Because Generation Y is the driving force of contemporary business sphere, understanding and guiding university students is and will remain one of the main objectives for other stakeholders in the employment market. As the number of projects similar to this increase all around the world, both European and non-European world has the potential to enhance through business.

Compared to students and employers, career centers attach more importance to the role of social media in the process of employment. What's more, both in Europe and Turkey they have already started training students on how to use social media more effective. Majority of these trainings also cover personal branding, which is considered as one of the most important aspects of future employment routines (Labrecque et al., 2011)[15].

Understanding Gen Y | Publications

Understanding Gen Y Training

A Scientific Study:
Current Status Analysis of Cross Sectoral
Recruitment and Jon Searching Trends in Europe

Employers & Gen Y:
The Soft Skills That Get You Hired

Generation Y's Virtual Guide to
Skill Development and Personal Branding
Training

For further information, please contact:

Şule YALÇIN
Manager
Career Development & Alumni Relations
suleyalcin@sabanciuniv.edu

Sabancı University, Career & Internship Office
Orhanlı, Tuzla 34956
İstanbul-Turkey

Phone: +902164839085

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REPORT

Generation Y's Virtual Guide
to Skill Development and Personal Branding in Social Media

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