E-RECRUITMENT: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF THE INTERNET AS A RECRUITMENT SOURCE

Erica R. Marr
B. Commerce (Marketing and Human Resource Management)

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business (Research) in the School of Management, Faculty of Business, Queensland University of Technology

2007
ABSTRACT

Keywords:
recruitment; recruitment source; realistic information; person-job; person-organisation; internet recruitment; e-recruitment

The present study has made a comparative assessment of recruitment source effectiveness. The study is based on the pre-hire measures of the quantity and quality of applicants, with a specific focus on e-recruitment. A nine year longitudinal study was employed over a period of pre-internet and post-internet use by a large organisation which enabled the exploration of changes in applicant data. Recruitment source effects were assessed through two perspectives: applicant and organisational. The relationship between source and applicant was explored in terms of key job and organisational attributes communicated to attract quality applicants, and their subsequent intention to pursue the job. The research was designed with two studies to capture the two perspectives. Applicant perspectives were assessed through the distribution of a survey to real applicants of the organisation. Organisational perspectives were captured through interviews with Human Resource Practitioners of eight mid- to large-size organisations. Results indicated that the quality of applicants generated by e-recruitment is equivalent to or less than that of other sources, therefore it is not the most effective recruitment source. Furthermore, recruitment sources had some effect on applicant intentions to pursue the job, but this relationship was not mediated by applicant perspectives. In terms of source information, job attributes were considered more important than organisational attributes in attracting quality applicants from both perspectives. Overall, the research has provided evidence to support the need for organisations to develop a recruitment strategy which incorporates a diverse range of sources to reach quality applicants in the desired target market.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE – INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction........................................................................................................... 1
1.2 Research Design.................................................................................................... 6
1.3 Conceptual Framework......................................................................................... 7
1.4 Thesis Outline..................................................................................................... 8

CHAPTER TWO – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION AND OVERVIEW................................................................. 11
2.2 AREAS OF RECRUITMENT RESEARCH...................................................... 13
2.3 RECRUITER EFFECTS....................................................................................... 19
2.4 ADMINISTRATIVE RECRUITMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES EFFECTS ...................................................................................................................... 21
  2.4.1 Realistic Job Previews...................................................................................... 23
2.5 RECRUITMENT SOURCE EFFECTS................................................................. 27
  2.5.1 Realistic Information hypothesis & Individual Differences Hypothesis......................................................................................................................... 30
    2.5.1.1 Realistic Information Hypothesis............................................................. 31
      2.5.1.1.1 Unmet Expectations........................................................................... 36
      2.5.1.1.2 Alternative Research Approaches...................................................... 37
    2.5.1.2 Individual Differences Hypothesis........................................................ 41
2.6 APPLICANT PERCEPTIONS................................................................................. 45
  2.6.1 Person-Job (P-J) and Person-Organisation (P-O) Fit Theories................. 46
2.7 SUMMARY........................................................................................................... 52
2.8 E-RECRUITMENT............................................................................................... 53
  2.8.1 Overview of e-Recruitment............................................................................ 53
  2.8.2 Perceived Advantages of e-Recruitment....................................................... 58
  2.8.3 Perceived Disadvantages of e-Recruitment.................................................. 61
TABLE OF CONTENTS contd

2.9 CONCLUSION.............................................................................................................. 69
  2.9.1 Overview of the Research Design................................................................. 72
  2.9.2 Thesis Structure............................................................................................... 73

CHAPTER THREE – STUDY ONE

3.1 INTRODUCTION....................................................................................................... 75
3.2 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE............................................................ 75
  3.2.1 Sampling Frame................................................................................................ 75
  3.2.2 Sample............................................................................................................. 75
3.3 METHOD.................................................................................................................. 77
  3.3.1 Secondary Data............................................................................................... 77
  3.3.2 Surveys............................................................................................................. 77
    3.3.2.1 Pre-Test.................................................................................................... 78
3.4 SURVEY MEASURES.............................................................................................. 79
  3.4.1 Recruitment Source....................................................................................... 79
    3.4.1.1 Recruitment source for job applied for.................................................... 79
    3.4.1.2 Recruitment source for future job search................................................. 79
  3.4.2 Applicant Perceptions..................................................................................... 80
    3.4.2.1 Advertisement Placement/Information....................................................... 80
    3.4.2.2 Comprehension....................................................................................... 81
    3.4.2.3 Usefulness of Information...................................................................... 81
    3.4.2.4 Interest in the Job................................................................................... 81
  3.4.3 Intention to Pursue the Job............................................................................. 82
  3.4.4 Demographic Data......................................................................................... 82
3.5 RESULTS
  3.5.1 Survey Descriptive Statistics...................................................................... 84
  3.5.2 Survey Intercorrelations............................................................................... 84
  3.5.3 Demographics............................................................................................... 86
3.5.4 Results for Hypotheses and Research Question

3.5.4.1 Hypothesis One

3.5.4.2 Research Question One

3.5.4.3 Hypothesis Two

3.6 DISCUSSION

3.6.1 Hypothesis One

3.6.2 Research Question One

3.6.3 Hypothesis Two

3.6.3.1 Applicant Perspective - Attention/advertisement placement

3.6.3.2 Applicant Perceptions – Comprehension

3.6.3.3 Applicant Perceptions – Useful information gained

3.6.3.4 Applicant Perceptions – Interest in job

3.6.3.5 Additional Results

3.7 CONCLUSION FOR STUDY ONE

CHAPTER FOUR – STUDY TWO

4.1 INTRODUCTION

4.2 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

4.2.1 Sampling Frame

4.2.2 Interviews

4.2.2.1 Pilot Study

4.3 MEASURES

4.3.1 Interview Questions

4.4 RESULTS

4.4.1 Research Question Two

4.4.1.1 e-Recruitment Use

4.4.1.2 Utility of e-Recruitment

4.4.1.3 Value of e-Recruitment

4.4.2 Research Question Three
| 4.5 DISCUSSION | ........................................................................ 132 |
| 4.5.1 Research Question Two | ........................................................................ 133 |
| 4.5.1.1 Utility of e-Recruitment | ..................................................... 133 |
| 4.5.1.2 Value of e-Recruitment | ..................................................... 137 |
| 4.5.1.3 Overall effectiveness of e-Recruitment | ..................................................... 139 |
| 4.5.2 Research Question Three | ........................................................................ 139 |
| 4.6 CONCLUSION FOR STUDY TWO | ........................................................................ 142 |

**CHAPTER FIVE – DISCUSSION**

| 5.1 INTRODUCTION | ........................................................................ 144 |
| 5.2 IMPLICATIONS | ........................................................................ 144 |
| 5.2.1 Applicant Perspective | ........................................................................ 148 |
| 5.3 LIMITATIONS | ........................................................................ 150 |
| 5.4 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH | ........................................................................ 152 |
| 5.5 CONCLUSION | ........................................................................ 155 |

**REFERENCE LIST** ........................................................................ 159

**APPENDIX 1** ........................................................................ 170

**APPENDIX 2** ........................................................................ 172

**APPENDIX 3** ........................................................................ 175
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 A Model to Assess the Effectiveness of Recruitment Sources for Organisations................................................................. 8

Figure 2.1 Framework for the Organisational Recruitment Process........... 15

Figure 2.2 A Model to Assess the Effectiveness of Recruitment Sources for Organisations................................................................. 72

Figure 3.1 Number of applications per year based on employment group..... 88

Figure 5.1 A New Research Model to Assess Recruitment Source Effectiveness for Organisations.................................................145
LIST OF TABLES

Table 3.1 Highest Level of Education for Participants………………………. 76
Table 3.2 Measures of Applicant Perception Variables……………………….80
Table 3.3 Means and Standard Deviations……………………………………84
Table 3.4 Intercorrelations Between Variables…………………………………85
Table 3.5 Number of applications received per job per year………………….87
Table 3.6 Percentage of Applicants Shortlisted………………………………89
Table 3.7 Percentage of shortlisted applicants per job…………………………90
Table 3.8 Mean number of shortlisted applicants per source in 2005……………91
Table 3.9 Percentage of successful applicants from the shortlisted pools per source in 2005…………………………………………………………92
Table 3.10 Coefficients for Ease in Finding and Ease in Understanding as Predictors of an Applicants Intention to Pursue the Job………………94
Table 3.11 Mean for Recruitment Source Used and Additional Information Obtained About the Job on Applicant Intention to Pursue the Job……………………………..94
Table 3.12 Coefficients for Recruitment Source and the Variables of Applicant Attention as Predictors of an Applicants Intention to Pursue the Job……………………………..95
Table 3.13 Coefficients for Recruitment Source and Average Interest in the Job as Predictors of an Applicants Intention to Pursue the Job………95
Table 3.14 Mean for Recruitment Source Effects on Applicant Intention to Pursue the Job…………………………………………………………96
DECLARATION

The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted for a degree or diploma at any other higher education institution. To the best of my knowledge and belief, the thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made.

Signature: ________________________________________________

Date: ___________________________________________________

__________________________________________________________
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The finishing of this dissertation is an exciting achievement and has only eventuated through the ongoing support of many people who I now wish to acknowledge.

Firstly I would like to thank my fiancé Adam for his continued encouragement and patience whilst I have been writing. I am sure he is looking forward to having company and a social life again at nights and on the weekends, I know I am.

I would also like to acknowledge the support that my employer and work colleagues have shown me. I have appreciated all the time off granted to me to finish my thesis, particularly during the final stages. In particular I would like to show my appreciation to my assistant, Liz, who has travelled the ups and downs with me and has been required to fill my shoes during my absences. Thanks so much.

Of course, I could never have reached this point without the great assistance of my study supervisor, Lisa Bradley. Her ongoing positive encouragement, expertise in writing and constructive feedback has contributed to my own development in writing and has ensured that the final product is of a much higher quality than it would otherwise have been.

I would also like to thank all the participants of my research. The organisation that was the basis for much of this research granted me extensive access to company data and to applicants applying for their positions, for which I am extremely grateful as the research could not have been achieved without this. Furthermore I extend a huge thanks to those Human Resource Professionals who took time out of their busy schedules to meet with me.

Lastly, to my family and friends I would like to say thank you for reminding me that life exists beyond work and study.
CHAPTER ONE
INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

The purpose of the study is to broaden the research on recruitment by assessing source effectiveness based on new measures that examine pre-hire criteria, with a specific focus on e-recruitment. This chapter will provide an overview of the current study in terms of the rationale behind the research based on identified gaps within the literature. This will be followed by a review of the research design and methodology, and a brief outline of the structure of the thesis.

Over the years the importance of effective human resource management practices for organisations has been highlighted by the increasing amount of research published within the media, in both scholarly and practitioner-focused journals and magazines (Barber, 1998). A key element of human resource management is the recruitment of staff, as this function generates the human capital that forms the foundation of companies. The future success of the company is predominantly based on the success of human resource efforts, which evolves through the identification and attraction of quality new employees generated from the recruitment process (Barber, 1998).

The research on organisational recruitment has attempted to assess how the recruitment process influences the applicant job-choice decision process. The measures for this assessment have primarily been post-hire recruitment outcomes as researchers attempt to link recruitment process variables with the applicant’s subsequent success on the job (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). The elements of the recruitment process which have been recognised as having a potential influence on recruitment outcomes include the impact of the recruiters involved in the process, the administrative recruitment policies and procedures of the organisation, and the recruitment sources used to reach and attract potential applicants (Rynes, 1991).

One of the underlying components of recruitment which traverses all three research areas and which is of key importance to the current study is the effect of the
information about the job, the organisation, or the recruitment process itself on the applicant decision process. Research on information effects assess whether the amount, type or presentation of information influences an applicant’s decision to apply for and accept a job, and whether these factors are related to post-hire variables such as the applicant’s subsequent performance and satisfaction on the job (Barber, 1998; Breaugh et al., 2000). These measures have formed the basis of previous studies as the identification of clear relationships between such variables can assist organisations with developing recruitment strategies that will increase the likelihood that successful employees will be hired.

Information about the job and organisation is initially reflected through the recruitment sources organisations use to reach potential applicants. The impact of source information on applicant perceptions is of interest to the current study as this relationship is recognised as being a primary determinant of source effectiveness. Traditional sources commonly used by companies include employee referrals, newspaper advertisements, employment agencies, and direct applications (also known as “walk-ins”). More recently organisations are introducing alternative sources such as internet recruitment to identify and reach candidates (Barber, 1998).

Source effectiveness, or superiority, has been the fundamental research issue investigated in relation to recruitment sources. This has primarily been assessed in terms of the effects of realistic information on applicants, the identification of demographic similarities between applicants and sources, and applicant perceptions of their fit with the job and organisation based on information provided by the source. Underlying these recruitment research theories is the concept of applicant self-selection, which implies that the recruitment source and the job and organisational information portrayed can influence the applicant job-choice decision process. These research theories will now be briefly discussed to further clarify the basis for the current research.

The primary focus of the current study is to assess the effectiveness of the internet as a recruitment source. Whilst the research on source effectiveness has examined a broad range of recruitment sources, to date there has been minimal exploration on the effectiveness of the internet in comparison to its rapid uptake as a recruitment source.
Much of the literature on internet recruitment has reported perceived positive and negative impacts for the organisation with limited theoretical and empirical research to support such claims.

In terms of the general literature on e-recruitment, advantages attributed to this source relate to its perceived cost-effectiveness, speed, geographic reach, and ease of use, whilst common disadvantages cited concern high application numbers, privacy and security issues, discrimination issues, and technology problems (Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Galanaki, 2002; Smith & Rupp, 2004). There have been few empirical studies undertaken to assess e-recruitment effectiveness based on measures of source superiority and the realistic information theory. The findings of these empirical studies provide little evidence to suggest that the internet attracts more quality applicants than other sources, despite its popularity as a source (Breaugh, Greising, Taggart, & Chen, 2003; Epstein & Singh, 2003). The confusion over the effectiveness of this source warrants further investigation and will be the focus of the current research.

Within the broader research on recruitment sources there has been an examination of the impact of the information contained within the advertisement on applicants decisions to apply for the job, and subsequent post-hire outcomes (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981; Kirnan, Farley, & Geisinger, 1989; O'Reilly, Chatman, & Caldwell, 1991). The results of this research has produced findings to support the premise that the provision of realistic information through sources regarded as being informal in nature, such as referrals, direct applications, and rehires, leads to better post-hire outcomes in terms of job satisfaction, performance and retention. Sources classified as being formal, such as newspaper advertisements and recruitment agencies, were found to be more likely to portray only positive information about the job and organisation and subsequently had lower reported levels of positive post-hire outcomes (Taylor, 1994; Taylor & Bergmann, 1987; Werbel & Landau, 1996). The current study will expand on this research theory by further investigating the effects of realistic information gathered, with a particular focus on formal sources.

As will be shown, the majority of studies undertaken with regards to this realistic information theory have incorporated post-hire measures of effectiveness. There
have been limited attempts to assess the impact of realistic information on the pre-hire measure of applicant attraction, with findings suggesting that realistic information does increase the attractiveness of the job and organisation if framed appropriately. However the results also indicated that the inclusion of too much realistic information can ultimately have the opposite effect and lead to the applicant choosing not to pursue the job (Buda, 2003; Thorsteinson, Palmer, Wulff, & Anderson, 2004). The acknowledgement of some source information effects on applicant attraction confirms the validity of incorporating pre-hire variables into the research on recruitment source effectiveness. Furthermore, whilst research results on source information indicate that informal sources provide more realistic information and subsequent higher levels of post-hire outcomes, it would be useful to combine the identification of source type with the pre-hire measure of applicant attraction. The current study will therefore assess applicant perceptions of source information on their subsequent interest in the position.

Also within the research on recruitment source is the concept of applicant self-selection. Self-selection is based on applicant perceptions of a potential match between their individual characteristics and those associated with the job and organisation (Rynes, 1991; Werbel et al., 1996; Williams, Labig, & Stone, 1993). The identification of a match are captured within the research on person-job (P-J) and person-organisation (P-O) fit theories. The findings of the research on the fit theories suggest that both job and organisational related factors can influence an applicant’s attraction to a job and subsequent post-hire outcomes (Carless, 2005; Saks & Ashforth, 1997). As with the majority of research on recruitment, the studies have predominantly used post-hire measures of success on the job in terms of performance, satisfaction, organisational commitment, organisational identification and retention to determine fit relationships. It is therefore important to examine whether perceptions of fit are related to the pre-hire measure of applicant attraction, and whether there is any source superiority evident within this relationship, a focus for the current study.

The use of pre-hire measures within the current study to assess source effectiveness and the quality of applicants generated has also evolved from two areas. The first area is the influence of the job market on positions, and the evidence that the
employment market has declined in recent years as reflected by data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics. A smaller overall applicant pool potentially leads to a smaller pool of quality candidates from which an organisation can select from. The second key issue relates to the limited focus of previous researchers on recruitment who have assessed post-hire criteria. This issue relates to the potential for actual on-the-job experience, such as training and development opportunities or supervision issues, to influence the results associated with the post-hire measures of these studies (Irving & Meyer, 1994; McEvoy & Cascio, 1985). The current study has therefore identified the need for research to be undertaken on the pre-hire outcomes of the recruitment process up to applicant commencement on the job.

Carlson, Connerley & Mecham (2002) identified in their research the need for organisations to assess recruitment through not only the number (quantity) of applications received, but the quality of applicants. Thus, it is argued that to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment, organisations should incorporate criteria such as the total number of applicants considered and the percentage of applicants who meet minimum job criteria.

A number of methods will be used within the present study to assess source effectiveness and to capture the pre-hire measures, including secondary data, survey data and interview data. The first measure of effectiveness will involve an analysis of secondary data captured on the percentage of total applicants shortlisted and interviewed as related to source.

The second measure of source effectiveness will be an analysis of data obtained from surveys issued to applicants of the organisation which will investigate their perceptions about the source and information provided, and subsequent intentions to apply for the job. The final measure of source effectiveness will be based on the perceptions of human resource practitioners involved within the recruitment process. With the recruitment and selection of staff being one of the primary tasks undertaken by human resource practitioners, constructive feedback on key job or organisation attributes they believe attract applicants, and on the overall effectiveness of the internet as a recruitment source will form the third measure of source effectiveness.
In summary, the current research proposed to assess recruitment source effectiveness combines a number of new research variables. The study is longitudinal over a nine year period whereby the organisation introduced e-recruitment four years into the study. This method quantifies the impact of e-recruitment on applicant data. The two different perspectives captured within the current research, one at the applicant level, the other at the organisational level, both link back to the realistic information hypothesis and the P-J and P-O fit theories, as will be highlighted within the literature review within Chapter Two, however the outcome measures will be pre-hire in terms of applicant interest in the position and the quantity and quality of applications received, as opposed to post-hire outcome variables. The inclusion of the two different perspectives within the one study to assess source effectiveness is a first for the research on recruitment. As such the research has been designed into two studies. This unique research design will now be discussed.

1.2 Research Design

A broadly recognised issue as acknowledged by researchers on recruitment relates to the numerous design differences between the studies which reduces the generalisability of the results (Barber, 1998; Breaugh et al., 2000; Zottoli & Wanous, 2000). These design differences include variances in the sources used, in effectiveness criteria studied (usually post-hire measures), in the type of job studied, and in the sample size of the study (Zottoli et al., 2000). The present research design has therefore incorporated a longitudinal study which is based on a diverse range of jobs within a large tertiary organisation in South-East Queensland in an attempt to confirm whether the research findings restricted by two of the design differences mentioned above (type of job and sample size) match the outcomes produced within this research.

As has been highlighted in the previous section, the current research is assessing source effectiveness based on pre-hire measures obtained via two different perspectives, one at the applicant level and the other at the organisational level. In order to source the data from the different perspectives the research has been designed into two different studies.
Study One is comprised of two components. The first component will capture the secondary data from the organisation on the percentage of total applicants that were both shortlisted, and appointed to positions, over a nine year period. An analysis of this information will determine both the quantity and quality of the applicants as related to source. This longitudinal approach was adopted to assess applicant quality and quantity pre- and post- implementation of the internet as a source by the organisation. The second component will examine applicant perceptions of source information and effectiveness, and their subsequent intentions to apply for the job. The data on applicant perceptions will be captured via the distribution of an electronic and mail survey to applicants of the organisation over a fifteen month period.

Study Two will evolve from both the literature on e-recruitment and the results of Study One through the design of an interview questionnaire for Human Resource Practitioners involved in the recruitment process. It is important to assess whether the perceptions of organisations reflect the perceptions of applicants about what information is important to capture within job advertisements in order to attract quality applicants. It is also important to acquire information about source effectiveness, and in particular e-recruitment effectiveness, from an organisational perspective given its rapid uptake by businesses as a recruitment source. The questions will therefore focus on these two research areas, with the value of e-recruitment examined in relation to its perceived utility and value as a source.

In order to capture the two different perspectives and research issues of the current study a conceptual framework has been developed and will now be presented.

1.3 Conceptual Framework

To date there has not been a formal theoretical model designed to assess the relationships between recruitment sources, applicant and organisational perspectives on their effectiveness, and subsequent pre-hire recruitment outcomes of the quantity and quality of applicants. The purpose of this study is therefore to propose a framework that will assess these variables, with a particular focus on the effectiveness of the internet as a source. This framework is represented in the
conceptual model shown in Figure 1.1. An overview of the structure of the thesis will now be detailed.

1.4 Thesis Outline

An outline of the structure of this dissertation will now be presented based on the two unique studies undertaken.

Figure 1.1. A Model to Assess the Effectiveness of Recruitment Sources for Organisations

Chapter Two – Literature Review

The second chapter provides a comprehensive review of the extensive literature on recruitment in terms of the measures of information effects on the applicant job-choice decision process. The first section presents a framework which captures the complexity of recruitment and highlights the three key research areas of recruiter
effects, administrative recruitment policies and procedures effects, and recruitment source effects. A review of the literature on these research areas is subsequently presented including a section that examines applicant perception theories in terms of the potential effect that recruitment information has on the applicant job-choice decision process and subsequent on-the-job (post-hire) outcomes. The initial decision and subsequent action to apply for a job, components of this job-choice decision process, are pre-hire measures identified for the current study. The final section reviews the literature on e-recruitment. An assessment of the effectiveness of this source in comparison to more traditional sources in generating quality applicants from both an organisational and applicant perspective has been identified as a gap in previous recruitment research studies.

**Chapter Three – Study One**

The design and methodology of the research in relation to Study One is presented. Data was captured from the Human Resource Information System, and from applicants of a large tertiary organisation in South-East Queensland, Australia. Secondary data from the organisation was sourced for the first component of the study. The second component involved a sampling strategy which obtained data via the distribution of a survey both electronically and by mail. A presentation of the results, and subsequent discussion of the findings in relation to Hypotheses One and Two, and Research Question One, is then presented.

**Chapter Four – Study Two**

Chapter Four presents the design and methodology of Study Two which involved face-to-face interviews with Human Resource Practitioners from eight organisations based in South-East Queensland. The results of Study Two are then discussed based on themes identified within the data in relation to the remaining two research questions.
Chapter Five – Final Discussion

The final chapter provides an overview of the results of Study One and Study Two and the implications from a theoretical and practical perspective. Limitations of the current study and identified areas for future research are also discussed.

In order to further clarify the aims and purpose of the current research, an extensive review of the literature on recruitment research and on e-recruitment will now be presented in Chapter Two.
The effective management of human resources has long been acknowledged by both scholars and practitioners as being a key component to the overall success of the business. Recruitment is just one element of human resource management, however it is of significant importance to this success as it is the method used to acquire the human capital for the organisation. Barber (1998: pg 5) defines recruitment as “those practices and activities carried on by the organisation with the primary purpose of identifying and attracting potential employees”. Recruitment and selection are necessary human resource processes initiated by organisations where the constant balancing act is to find and retain quality staff that meet the needs of the position and the company whilst minimising expenditure in the process.

The method used to identify the best qualified applicant for the job in terms of an individual’s knowledge, skills and abilities as matched against job requirements. The two concepts of recruitment and selection are closely related and it is difficult to differentiate when undertaking research as one process is dependant on, and inevitably influences, the other (Barber, 1998). As well, the majority of researchers agree that recruitment is not a one-way process, but rather a complex, two-way process. Whilst employers focus on looking attractive to a potential job applicant, the applicant is also attempting to look attractive to the employer. The assessment of attraction from both parties continues from the initial recruitment process through to the final appointment outcome (Breaugh, 1992).

The ability to attract and retain superior employees can lead to a sustained competitive advantage for organisations (Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998). There is a danger, expressed by Schneider (1983, 1987), and Bretz, Ash and Dreher (1989) that over time organisations routinely attract, select and retain a group of employees that are increasingly homogenous. This occurs through the ongoing
reliance on established recruiting sources (e.g. local newspapers) and selection techniques (e.g. face-to-face interviews only) whereby organisations narrow the array of characteristics possessed by selected candidates (Bretz, Ash, & Dreher, 1989; Schneider, 1983, 1987). Pressure is therefore placed on organisations to ensure their recruitment and selection strategies are regularly reviewed and are sufficient in sourcing a diverse range of quality employees within an increasingly competitive environment (Hinton & Schapper, 2000).

The current study focuses on recruitment rather than selection. Recruitment has been conceptualised by Rynes (1991: pg 49) as encompassing “all organisational practices and decisions that affect either the number, or types, of individuals who are willing to apply for, or accept, a given vacancy”. As early as 1976, Robert Guion (1976) acknowledged that the rapid technological developments in employee selection led to an emphasis on research in this selection area with the recruitment component being largely overlooked (Guion, 1976). Recruitment is, however, the key contributor to an organisation’s success as this component defines the applicant population available from which to select the best possible candidate. The evolving research on recruitment has continued after Rynes, Bretz and Gerhardt (1991) found evidence supporting the hypothesis that recruitment experiences frequently represent unobservable organisational characteristics and can positively or negatively influence job applicants.

Recruitment is not only an important business process for organisations, it also has significant consequences for individuals. The overall objective of achieving a “match” between an organisation’s job vacancies with an individual seeking a suitable job is influenced by the recruitment process, and because work is such a significant part of many people’s lives, job choice can subsequently impact on an individual’s wellbeing (Barber, 1998).

Researchers and practitioners recognise that the recruitment process is complex in nature, mediated by organisational, legislative, social and political requirements and expectations (Courtis, 1994; Hinton et al., 2000) with a multiple number of stages, activities and characteristics (Barber, 1998; Breaugh, 1992; Carlson, Connerley, & Mecham, 2002; Rynes, 1991). This complexity has led to the criticism of research on
recruitment that most studies are too simplistic in nature when compared to real-life complexities (Rynes & Barber, 1990), particularly when the costs associated with recruitment are estimated at being equivalent to one-third of a new hire’s annual salary (Spencer, 1984; Taylor et al., 1987). The major criticism has been the attempt by researchers and practitioners to render the participants, the people and organisations, as objects that are controllable and manageable units when applied to rational and scientific methods (Hinton et al., 2000). Gatewood et al. (1993) acknowledged that recruitment is a more complex concept that is influenced by the job choice process of applicants in terms of the series of decisions made about which jobs and organisations to pursue for future employment. Undertaking good quality recruitment research is therefore important and something this study will do, taking into account the applicant decision-making process.

In acknowledging the complexities of the recruitment process, an overview of the five key stages of the process will be detailed, based on Breaugh and Starke’s (2000) framework. This will be followed by a discussion of the three primary research streams on recruitment. These research streams focus on investigating the relationships across the process stages that may affect recruitment outcomes. The recruitment streams are identified as recruiter effects, administrative policies and procedures effects, and recruitment source effects, and will be discussed separately.

2.2 AREAS OF RECRUITMENT RESEARCH

Breaugh and Starke (2000) integrated numerous theories on recruitment and constructed an organising framework (refer Figure 2.1) of the recruitment process to highlight the complexities involved, and help identify future research directions for recruitment literature. The framework, acknowledged by Breaugh and Starke (2000) as being a simplified view of reality, identified five key stages of the recruitment process: establishing recruitment objectives, strategy development, recruitment activities, intervening/process variables (eg. applicant interest, message credibility, accuracy of applicant’s expectations) and recruitment results. A review of this framework will help clarify the diverse and complex elements that must be considered by an organisation when instigating a recruitment process.
Breaugh and Starke (2000) believe that the first stage of the recruitment process should be the establishment of objectives. In the past the one clear goal for the majority of organisations has been to attract a large number of candidates (Wanous, Poland, Premack, & Davis, 1992) irrespective of the quality and fit that these potential applicants have with the organisation. This simple goal has been challenged by researchers for a number of reasons (i.e. financial costs and time involved in processing applications and identifying potential candidates from unsuitable candidates) who suggest that organisations would benefit from considering a wider range of objectives that focus on what the organisation is ultimately trying to achieve (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Dessler, 2002; Rynes, 1991).

Establishing recruitment objectives involves asking some fundamental questions, the first and most important of which should be: What type of individual (knowledge, skills and abilities) does the organisation want to hire? (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). The initial assessment of the organisation’s and the position’s target market is of primary importance in the recruitment process as acknowledged by a wide range of researchers (Berry, 2004; Dineen, Ash, & Noe, 2002; Feldman et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004).

To identify the recruitment objectives, key considerations for organisations include defining the desired longer term goals with respect to the retention of new hires, their job performance, and their job satisfaction; establishing the amount to be expended during the recruitment process and the speed with which the position/s need to be filled; defining workforce diversity goals if relevant; and, establishing the desired size of the applicant pool. Defining the target market and establishing recruitment objectives will strongly impact the remainder of the recruitment strategy and the overall success of the recruitment process (Courtis, 1994; Dessler, 2002; Sessions, 2006).

In establishing recruitment objectives, organisations may want to focus on common themes that have been identified in previous literature, those of post-hire and pre-hire outcomes. Some researchers stress that post-hire outcomes such as the cost of
Figure 2.1. Framework for the Organisational Recruitment Process

Stage 1
Recruitment Objectives
- Retention rate
- Job performance
- Psychological contract filled
- Job satisfaction
- Cost of filling job
- Speed of filling job
- Number of positions filled
- Diversity of hires
- Number of applications
- Quality of applications
- Diversity of applicants
- Ratio of offers to acceptances

Stage 2
Strategy Development
- Whom to Recruit?
- Where to Recruit?
- Recruitment Sources to Use?
- When to Recruit?
- What Message to Communicate?

Stage 3
Recruitment Activities
- Recruitment Sources
- Recruiters
- Recruitment Message
- Realism
- Completeness
- Timeliness

Stage 4
Intervening/Process Variables
- Applicant attention
- Applicant comprehension
- Message credibility
- Applicant interest
- Job & organisational attractiveness
- Expectancy of job offer
- Accuracy of applicant’s expectations
- Self-Insight
- Knowledge, Skills, Abilities, Needs

Stage 5
Recruitment Results
- Compare outcomes to objectives

Source: Breaugh & Starke (2000)
recruiting, the speed with which jobs are filled, and job satisfaction and performance of new employees should be the primary consideration of organisations (Breaugh, 1992; Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Other researchers have argued that during the development of an appropriate recruitment strategy, pre-hire outcomes such as the number, quality and diversity of applications are of more importance to organisations than post-hire outcomes (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Williams et al., 1993). The research being undertaken for this study acknowledges the importance of both pre-hire and post-hire outcomes as they interrelate in the development of a successful recruitment process for an organisation.

The second stage of the recruitment framework involves the formulation of a recruitment strategy which is influenced by the responses from the first stage. Considerations for the organisation revolve around where the organisation should recruit from; what recruitment sources should be utilised; when the recruitment process should be undertaken; and what message the organisation wants to convey to potential candidates (Breaugh et al., 2000). The recruitment message is crucial in the recruitment process as what the employer can offer applicants is just as important as how an organisation undertakes recruitment (Langan, 2000). Overall consideration and identification of responses to these areas will lead to the development of a sound recruitment strategy and the implementation of recruitment activities that will achieve desired objectives (Rynes et al., 1990).

Identified as the third stage within the recruitment framework by Breaugh and Starke (2000) are the recruitment activities undertaken by the organisation. These activities encompass the establishment of the recruitment advertisement and recruitment message, the final advertisement of the positions through previously identified recruitment sources, and the engagement of relevant recruiters internal to the organisation to coordinate and participate in the selection process.

Stage Four of the recruitment framework relates to the intervening/process variables. These variables have been identified within the recruitment research as potentially influencing the relationship between recruitment activities and recruitment outcomes. For organisations to make decisions about recruitment objectives and what activities to undertake, it is important that an understanding is attained of why certain
recruitment activities result in particular recruitment outcomes as influenced by these variables (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Rynes, 1991). The intervening/process variables include applicant attention, applicant comprehension, message credibility, applicant interest, accuracy of applicants’ expectations, and applicant self-insight, and will be discussed in light of their role in the recruitment process.

Firstly, in order to generate applications, the attention of potential applicants must be captured. Therefore the initial recruitment actions of an organisation are crucial. Features commonly used to attract the attention of applicants include use of visual cues, layout and the incorporation of interesting/unusual information (Tybout & Artz, 1994). The relationship between recruitment activities (specifically, recruitments sources), applicant attention and recruitment outcomes is of interest to the current study and will be investigated.

Intervening variables also include the credibility and comprehension of the recruitment message by the applicant which can be influenced by the medium used to deliver the message. For instance, face-to-face conversation with the supervisor of the position has been linked with increased comprehension and understanding of the message, and higher credibility ratings as the supervisor is perceived to have a high knowledge and understanding of the position (Fisher, Ilgen, & Hoyer, 1979; Turban et al., 1998). The effect of applicant comprehension as influenced by the recruitment source and subsequent intentions to pursue the job will also be a focus of the current study.

Another key variable that has the potential to affect the outcome of a recruitment process is the amount of interest the message generates from potential applicants. Interest is usually linked with the portrayal of positive and attractive attributes of the job and the perceived likelihood by the applicant of being successful in the recruitment process (Rynes, 1991). Closely associated with establishing and maintaining the interest of applicants are the intervening variables of the accuracy of job expectations by applicants (Wanous et al., 1992) and the amount of self-awareness in terms of their own knowledge, skills and abilities that applicants have (Breaugh, 1992). These variables can affect the post-hire outcomes of job
performance, job satisfaction and retention, and also may influence the level of self-
selection that an applicant undertakes during the recruitment and selection process.

In terms of applicant interest, a study undertaken by Turban, Eyring and Campion
(1993) found that the key factors considered as the most important by applicants
when accepting a position are the work duties, the company itself, opportunities for
advancement, potential relationships with co-workers and job security. Interestingly,
some of the factors that lead to the acceptance of a position can also cause an offer to
be rejected. The factors that predominantly lead to the decline of a job offer relate to
the job location, the type of work, opportunities for advancement, perceived
relationships with co-workers and salary (Turban, Eyring, & Campion, 1993). Other
researchers have also identified that information pertaining to salary level,
opportunity to use knowledge and skills and challenging and interesting work
influence an applicant’s decision to apply for a position (Barber & Roehling, 1993).
The present study will also investigate specific components of applicant interest in
the job, as influenced by recruitment sources, and subsequent effects on their
intention toward the job.

The final stage of the recruitment framework as identified by Breaugh and Starke
(2000) is the recruitment results stage. This stage captures the review and assessment
of the success of the recruitment process that organisations should undertake by
comparing outcomes with recruitment objectives. This stage can provide invaluable
information to the organisation by highlighting both the successful and unsuccessful
components of the recruitment strategy established. Within the recruitment results
stage the immediate outcome of job offer and acceptance is the primary recruitment
outcome incorporated into the present research model.

A review of the literature indicates that the earliest research on recruitment addressed
the manner in which individuals searched for job openings (Myers & Maclaurin,
1943). In the last thirty years, interest in employee recruitment has increased
substantially. Over this period theories on recruitment have focused on the last three
stages of the recruitment framework. This research attempts to assess whether
relationships exist between the recruitment activities and the intervening/process
variables identified, and any subsequent effect on several outcome (or post-hire)
variables such as job performance, job satisfaction and turnover (Rynes, 1991). As mentioned previously, the narrative reviews undertaken by Rynes (1991) and Breaugh and Starke (2000) categorised this research on recruitment into three key research streams: recruiter effects, administrative policies and procedures effects, and recruitment source effects. It should be noted that the research on realistic job previews, which was one category used by Breaugh and Starke (2000) has been captured under the broader stream of recruitment administrative policies and procedures used by Rynes (1991). Each of these three research streams will now be discussed.

2.3 RECRUITER EFFECTS

The first research area of recruiter effects theorises that applicant perceptions of recruiters are empirically linked to job choice-related outcomes (Rogers & Sincott, 1978; Rynes & Miller, 1983; Taylor et al., 1987). Research on recruiter effects has investigated pre-hire variables including applicant impressions of recruiters, perceived organisational or job attractiveness, job-offer expectancy, intentions to pursue the job and job acceptance (Rynes, 1991; Rynes & Boudreau, 1986). This research will now be discussed.

Individual characteristics have been the basis of a number of studies on recruiter effects to assess whether a relationship exists between recruiters and applicants. These characteristics could be as distinguishing as the gender or nationality/race of the recruiter which can provide clues about the diversity of the organisation’s workforce, a potentially attractive attribute for candidates from minority groups. Alternatively, the recruiter characteristic could be as ambiguous as how ‘personable’ the recruiter is which the applicant may translate into how they may be treated if given the job (Breaugh & Stark, 2000). In the majority of research on such demographics the studies have either found that no relationship exists (Connerly & Rynes, 1997; Turban & Dougherty, 1992) or that if relationships did exist, they were small in size, as was the case with Taylor and Bergmann (1987) and Barber and Roehling (1993) whose results indicated that a minor positive relationship existed between applicants’ reactions to the recruitment process and the recruiter being male.
Chapter Two: Literature Review

The overall results provided limited support to the theory that personal characteristics of the recruiter represent hidden organisational attributes to the applicant (Connerly et al., 1997; Rynes, 1991).

Turban and Dougherty’s (1992) study on recruiter effects on applicants provided findings which supported the theory that recruiters play a key role in the initial stage of recruitment in maintaining applicants’ attraction. Specifically in their study, recruiter interest in the applicant was positively related to applicant attraction. There have been similar findings within other studies where results indicated that recruiter behaviours, whilst not having a direct effect on attraction to the organisation, had an indirect effect on applicant attraction. The research suggests that applicants relate to the amount of information about a job and organisation that the recruiter imparts. The more specific the information provided, the higher the probability that applicants can assess whether the job is suitable for them. It is these job and organisational attributes which influences applicants’ perceptions and attraction to the firm (Powell, 1991; Turban et al., 1998). Applicant perceptions are a fundamental component of the current study and will be discussed at a later stage of this review.

Relative to the recruiter effect theory, Breaugh (1992) has suggested that if this theory is correct, then a person’s direct prospective supervisor or work colleague should be more informative, and have more of a recruiter effect, on potential candidates than other recruiters who have less first-hand knowledge (e.g. an employee from the human resources department). Results for this theory have been mixed. Taylor and Bergmann (1987) produced findings to suggest that a positive relationship did exist between direct line managers and applicants and reported lower organisational attractiveness ratings for applicants who were interviewed by recruitment/personnel specialists. This theory however was not supported in Harris and Fink’s (1987) study, with no differences found by recruiter function across any of the four dependant variables of instrumentality of perceived job attributes; expectancy of offer; intention to accept offer; and, regard for company (Harris & Fink, 1987). Overall, the proposed effect of recruiters’ behaviours and actions on applicants’ perceptions and subsequent job-choice behaviours has received mixed results within the literature.
2.4 ADMINISTRATIVE RECRUITMENT POLICIES AND PROCEDURES EFFECTS

The second research area focuses on the effects of organisational administrative policies and procedures on recruitment outcomes, with studies examining one or more of the following variables: the role of realistic job previews/messages; the influence of corporate social performance; timing of recruitment follow-ups; recruiting expenditure policies; and, the nature of the application process on job offer acceptance rates and post-hire outcomes (Rynes, 1991; Rynes et al., 1986; Taylor et al., 1987). The premise underlying much of this research is that the policies and programs of an organisation may provide information to potential applicants of the working conditions in the organisation (Breaugh, 1992; Rynes, 1991), and therefore the attractiveness of the organisation as an employer (Turban & Greening, 1996). Aside from the vast amount of research executed on realistic job previews which will be discussed at the end of this section, the remaining four research areas mentioned above have received minimal attention, with results suggesting that their role in retaining suitable applicants for the position is not significant (Breaugh et al., 2000). This research will now be briefly discussed.

In a study undertaken by Turban and Greening (1996), the influence of corporate social performance (a construct that emphasises the multiple responsibilities of organisations to employees, shareholders, customers and the wider community and environment) on organisational reputation and organisational attractiveness for potential applicants was explored. Their findings indicated that corporate social performance does influence organisational reputation and organisational attractiveness, and could subsequently influence an applicant’s decision to apply for a job.

The timeliness of follow-up contact during the recruitment process has received some attention by researchers. The theory behind this area of research is that applicants are more likely to remain interested in the job and stay in the applicant pool if follow-up contact is undertaken in a timely manner. Early research on this theory by Arvey, Gordon, Massengill and Mussio (1975) and Ivancevich and
Donnelly (1971) found some evidence to support this theory. Their studies were based on an assessment of whether applicants remained in the applicant pool at various stages of the recruitment process (Arvey, Gordon, Massengill, & Mussio, 1975; Ivancevich & Donnelly, 1971). A more recent study by Taylor and Bergmann (1987) found no support for this theory, although their study incorporated the dependant variable of perceived job attractiveness at various stages of the recruitment process which may have contributed to the different outcomes. Job attractiveness at the initial application stage is relative to the research of this study and will be discussed in the applicant perception section at a later stage.

The effect of recruitment expenditure on recruitment outcomes has received very minimal coverage by researchers on recruitment. Results from both an applicant’s perspective (Taylor et al., 1987) and from an organisational perspective (Rynes et al., 1986) found that no significant relationship existed between recruitment expenditure and recruitment outcomes.

The other minor research area of the administrative recruitment policies and procedures field is based on the theory that the recruitment process itself will ultimately effect recruitment outcomes, and specifically that a more rigorous and complex application process will result in higher quality applicants. The study by Gersen (1976), cited in Rynes (1991), whose research was based on the recruitment process of teachers, found no observable relationship between the application process and applicant quality (Gersen, 1976).

The limited amount of research undertaken on these four areas of administrative recruitment policies and procedures effects (corporate social performance, timing of recruitment follow-ups, recruiting expenditure, and recruitment process complexities) makes it difficult to determine the validity of the theories. On the other hand there has been extensive research on the effects of realistic job previews on applicants, which is the fourth area of research in this section and will now be discussed.
2.4.1 Realistic Job Previews (RJPs)

As indicated, the majority of research published about administrative recruitment policies and procedures of organisations investigates the effects of realistic job previews (RJPs). RJPs involve the presentation of both favourable and unfavourable job and organisational attributes to a job applicant (Phillips, 1998). The concept behind RJPs is that applicants are more likely to stay with the organisation and be satisfied with the job if their expectations about the job and company match expectations generated by RJPs. This recruitment theory is based on assessments of post-hire outcomes such as job satisfaction, job performance and retention (McEvoy et al., 1985; Premack & Wanous, 1985; Rynes, 1991). RJP theory is not to be confused with the recruitment research on the realistic information hypothesis which is based on pre-hire applicant attraction theories and will be discussed with the recruitment source literature. RJPs are usually provided to applicants either via a booklet or a video, although face-to-face RJPs are the preferred method as studies have found that this two-way communication process assists the applicant attention and comprehension process (Phillips, 1998). The post-hire focus of RJP research is fundamental as comparisons between perceptions about a job, and actual job assessments can only occur once the applicant has been recruited and worked on the job for a period of time (Rynes, 1991). RJPs and their relationship with post-hire measures will now be discussed.

A measure of the effect of RJP on job attitudes in terms of expectations was undertaken by Buda and Charnov (2003). Their study provided evidence to suggest that the framing of RJPs does influence decision-making on the part of the applicant. When exposed to RJPs, applicant expectations on the job were lowered significantly. Furthermore, the expectations of applicants who were presented with negatively framed information were much lower than applicants who were presented with positively framed RJPs (Buda & Charnov, 2003). The authors highlight the need for practitioners to assess the content of the RJP to ensure that a balance is achieved in the framing of RJPs as there is the potential for a negatively framed RJP to lower attraction levels so much that the applicant will withdraw from the selection process.
The relationship between RJPs and the post-hire outcome of retention have formed the basis of much of the literature on RJPS. This relationship is based on two key underlying concepts: early work adjustment and self-selection. The concept of early work adjustment will initially be discussed in terms of applicants’ met expectations, their ability to cope and their commitment to the job. The concept of self-selection will subsequently ensue with a focus on the additional implications of this concept with applicant attraction.

The concept of early work adjustment incorporates several different hypotheses: met expectations hypothesis, coping hypothesis, and commitment hypothesis, each of which will be briefly reviewed. The *met expectations hypothesis* suggests that people will be more satisfied, and thus remain in the job, if early job experiences match pre-employment expectations. Meglino et al. (1988) in their study of US Army trainees, and Meglino, DeNisis and Ravlin (1993) in their study of corrections officer applicants, both had findings to support the met expectations hypothesis in that those employees exposed to RJPs prior to commencement on the job reported lower levels of dissatisfaction once on the job (Meglino, DeNisi, & Ravlin, 1993; Meglino, DeNisi, Youngblood, & Williams, 1988).

The second hypothesis related to RJPs and early work adjustment is the *coping hypothesis* which posits that new hires will use realistic job information to devise coping strategies to deal with problems on the job, and will therefore remain on the job longer. The coping hypothesis has received mixed results from researchers. Results from the study of Meglino et al. (1988) suggest that new hires exposed to realistic previews had higher levels of anxiousness about job elements, a finding which confirmed the results of Premack and Wanous (1985) that new hires exposed to realistic previews do not cope on the job. In contrast to this, Suszko and Breaugh’s (1986) study indicated that those applicants who were exposed to RJPs had higher perceptions of their ability to cope with the job than control group applicants.

The final hypothesis underlying the early work adjustment concept is the *commitment hypothesis* which suggests that people will demonstrate higher levels of commitment to organisations that provide key information needed for informed job choice decisions (Rynes, 1991). Premack and Wanous (1985), in their meta-analysis
of RJP effects, found new hires’ commitment to the job and organisation was higher for those who had been exposed to realistic previews. In a study undertaken by Suszko and Breau (1986), the research indicated that perceptions of honesty and openness were higher for RJP applicants than control group applicants. Meglino et al. (1988) also produced results that applicants’ perceptions of an organisation’s honesty and openness was influenced positively by realistic previews, thus an applicant’s commitment to the organisation was higher.

Whilst early work adjustment research is not applicable to the present study, the self-selection research on RJP, both in terms of employee retention, and on applicant job choice decisions, is relevant to the research being undertaken. Self-selection is defined as the matching of individual needs of applicants with the organisation’s culture and climate, ultimately leading to a better fit for the organisation and the new-hire (Rynes, 1991; Werbel & Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993). Self-selection has primarily been linked to turnover measures, with early research by Suszko and Breau (1986) indicating that voluntary turnover levels were lower for subjects exposed to RJP’s than for control group subjects (Suszko & Breau, 1986). These findings were supported by Meglino et al. (1988), who also produced results to indicate that RJP’s contributed to lower turnover rates for more intelligent and committed applicants. Subsequent research on self-selection within the RJP literature has acknowledged that this concept appears to influence earlier job-choice decisions to accept the job and have focused their studies on job-acceptance intentions of applicants.

Saks and his colleagues have initiated a number of studies to explore RJP effects on self-selection. Wiesner, Saks and Summers (1991) undertook a study that focused on a comparison of job choice decisions of applicants based on the amount of realistic information provided about jobs via job previews. Subjects were provided with either a written realistic job preview (which included both positive and negative aspects of the job) or a written traditional job preview (which focused only on the positive aspects of the position). The research undertook a comparison of job choice when a number of job opportunities were available to the individual. Whilst the subjects of Wiesner et al.’s (1991) study were limited to undergraduate students and not actual job applicants, the results of the study provided evidence to suggest that whilst
subjects who were provided with a choice of jobs acknowledged the value of the realistic job preview, they rated the job and organisation portrayed in the traditional job preview more favourably. There was also evidence to suggest that when only one job is available to an applicant, RJP s appear to have a negative impact on applicant attraction, thus applicants will be more likely to self-select out of the job choice (Wiesner, Saks, & Summers, 1991).

Saks, Wiesner and Summers (1994) subsequently replicated and refined the previous study to also assess the participants’ work-related needs. In this study, differences in job acceptance rates were only evident when more than one job choice was available, and again, the positive job preview was preferred over the realistic job preview (Saks, Wiesner, & Summers, 1994). The researchers also found that an applicant’s decision about the job involved matching their needs with their expectations, thereby indicating that a self-selection process is undertaken. Expanding even further on this area of research, Saks, Wiesner and Summers (1996) incorporated the job attribute of salary into the experiment to assess whether a higher pay level would offset negative attraction effects associated with RJP s. The results of this study again indicated that applicants prefer the traditional positive job preview over realistic previews if compensation levels were higher than or equal to the realistic job preview compensation amount. When the RJP compensation amount was higher than the traditional job preview compensation level, there was no difference in attraction recorded. This would indicate that applicants are more likely to self-select out of the process when realistic information is portrayed in the job preview.

The reviews on realistic job preview research acknowledge the difficulty in accurately assessing their effect on post-hire outcomes due to the vast range of moderator variables and boundary conditions that could impact on the final result. A number of researchers have acknowledged the impact that actual on-the-job experience has on employee performance, retention and other post-hire outcomes, such as training and development opportunities, changes in compensation, supervision issues and organisational culture effects. It is recognised that these variables may influence the post-hire results, and not the initial RJP as is presumed within these studies (Irving et al., 1994; McEvoy et al., 1985). Other factors which may impact the effects of realistic job previews on applicants include the number of
job offers available to the applicant, whether the applicant has unrealistic job expectations regardless of reality, and an applicant’s actual cognitive coping abilities (Breaugh, 1992). Whilst the focus of RJP research on post-hire outcomes is not applicable to the current study, some of the premises behind RJPs in terms of applicant self-selection are relevant to the research of this study. As self-selection relates more broadly to applicant perceptions of the recruitment process, and not just RJPs, additional literature on this concept is discussed at a later stage.

2.5 RECRUITMENT SOURCE EFFECTS

The final area of interest to researchers has been on the recruitment sources used by organisations to reach potential applicants for positions vacant, such as referrals, newspaper advertisements, direct applications and employment agencies (Rynes, 1991; Taylor & Schmidt, 1983). Potential applicants have been defined by Ryan, Horvath and Kriska (2005) as those individuals “who have some interest in the job and a reasonable possibility of applying” (pg. 235). The process of searching for and/or evaluating potential job opportunities within different organisations is undertaken by millions of people throughout the world every day of the year (Blau, 1994; Gatewood, Gowan, & Lautenschlager, 1993; Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987). Indeed, these people encompass individuals entering the labour force for the first time; individuals re-entering the labour force after a period of absence; individuals who have quit or been laid off by a previous employer; and those who are currently employed but seeking a new employer (Schwab et al., 1987).

The earliest research on recruitment sources was primarily descriptive in nature, focusing on how individuals searched for job vacancies. The results of these studies demonstrated a clear lack of knowledge or awareness of job openings by individuals which at the time disproved economic theory that assumed people were well informed and made rational job choices (Myers et al., 1943). Research on recruitment sources has subsequently expanded and diversified in depth and focus. In 1967, Soelberg developed a job search and choice model that broke the job search process into two phases: planning job search (prepatory); and job search and choice (active). This concept has endured over time and was further acknowledged by Blau
(1994) who found empirical support for this two-dimensional measure of job search behaviour.

The identification of these two job search phases is important as it acknowledges that preparatory job search may not automatically lead to active job search and that, for organisations, the latter phase is of more importance when developing strategies to retain current or attract new staff (Blau, 1994; Soelberg, 1967). The preparatory job search phase is a more difficult hypothesis to investigate as it is based on potential applicants who have not actively commenced identifying job options therefore creating problems for researchers in the identification of participants for the research studies (Ryan, Horvath, & Kriska, 2005). As a result, the majority of research has focused on the latter active job search phase, that of job search and choice, which is similar to Gatewood et al’s (1993) job choice process concept. The popularity of this job search phase can be attributed to the more focused and identifiable subject pool available for research purposes.

The fundamental component of the active job search phase relates to the recruitment sources used by organisations to advertise their job vacancies and reach suitable potential applicants. Job choice for an applicant begins with an individual’s evaluation of a range of information about the job and the organisation, commencing with information obtained from recruitment sources (Gatewood et al., 1993). The research on recruitment sources has evolved over time and now primarily attempts to ascertain the superiority of different sources (Breaugh et al., 2000; Rynes, 1991). The underlying theory of superiority in recruitment sources is that certain sources are more effective in reaching top quality candidates than others. Criteria for effectiveness have been predominantly post-hire in nature as researchers measure turnover rates, period of tenure, job satisfaction, absenteeism, intention to quit, organisational commitment and job performance of new employees (Rynes, 1991; Saks, 1994; Vecchio, 1995; Zottoli et al., 2000).

For the majority of studies on source superiority the findings support the hypothesis that sources deemed more informal in nature, such as job referrals, direct applications and re-hires, generate superior appointees to those applicants who were recruited via sources such as newspaper advertisements, employment agencies or
campus recruiters (Barber, 1998; Breaugh, 1981; Decker & Cornelius, 1979; Hill, 1970). While it is acknowledged that post-hire outcomes are important criteria for evaluating source effectiveness, additional parameters which focus on the recruitment process prior to hire should also be investigated (Rafaeli, Hadomi, & Simons, 2005). This pre-hire focus, specifically in terms of applicant and organisational perceptions of source effectiveness, forms the basis of the present study.

In addition to the pre-hire focus of the current study, the research problem being investigated has evolved from the increase in use of technology to perform business on a daily basis (Bush & Gilbert, 2002). One element of this technology is the introduction of the Internet into the recruitment process by organisations, commonly referred to as “e-recruitment”. The use of the Internet as a recruitment tool, and more specifically as a recruitment source for human resource practitioners, has occurred within a relatively short period of time but has become increasingly popular, primarily due to its reach in formerly untapped markets with minimal cost (Bingham, Ilg, & Davidson, 2002; Magrath, 2001; Smith et al., 2004). The question that arises out of the increasing reliance on and use of this source is whether e-recruitment is a worthwhile investment for organisations or should the focus of recruitment revert back to more traditional sources such as newspaper advertisements and/or advertising agencies? The costs associated with the recruitment of staff can be extensive and burdensome, and the choice of the recruitment source can have a direct impact on monetary and resource costs in terms of the effectiveness in reaching a manageable target market of quality candidates (Courtis, 1994). Therefore assessment of source effectiveness for organisations will have an impact on the success of the organisation’s ability to prosper and grow.

The research on recruitment source effectiveness has predominantly been based on two theoretical explanations, the realistic information hypothesis, and the individual differences hypothesis. Linked closely to these theories is the concept of applicant self-selection whereby applicants assess their potential fit with an organisation’s culture and with the job characteristics before making the decision to apply for a job. (Rafaeli et al., 2005). The relationship between applicant self-selection and recruitment source effectiveness has evolved from previous research on realistic job
previews. Applicant self-selection in terms of recruitment source effectiveness has explored perceptions of fit as assessed against person and/or organisational attributes, known within the literature as person-job (P-J) and person-organisation (P-O) fit theories. The current study will initially review the two recruitment source effectiveness hypotheses (realistic information hypothesis, individual differences hypothesis), followed by a section devoted to applicant perceptions in terms of the two fit theories as influenced by recruitment source information.

2.5.1 Realistic information hypothesis & Individual differences hypothesis

Numerous recruitment studies have aimed to identify which information is of greatest significance to individuals making a job/organisation choice. Results have predominantly supported the hypothesis that information that is directly related to the job, such as salary, job location or career development opportunities, is of greater importance than organisational or recruiter factors (Barber et al., 1993; Courtis, 1994; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Rynes et al., 1990). Research undertaken by Gatewood et. al (1993) provided results to indicate that exposure to information is fundamental to an applicant’s perceptions of job and organisational image. Furthermore, their research also yielded results that indicated that longer recruitment messages which incorporated positive statements about the organisation increased the level of attractiveness exhibited by the applicants.

In an attempt to explore and explain the process underlying the observed relationship between sources and outcomes and the relevance of information provided by the source, two key theories have evolved over time. The first is the realistic information hypothesis theory which focuses on the differences in the type of information conveyed by various recruitment sources, whilst the second theory, individual differences hypothesis, discusses the differences in the personal characteristics of the individuals recruited through various sources, for example, gender, race, qualifications, disabilities, or other job offers (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Rynes, 1991).

A review of the literature reveals a wide range of results that support, to varying degrees, both hypotheses. The research also attempts to pit these two hypotheses
against each other (Barber, 1998) when in reality their premises are vastly different and may in fact complement each other. A more effective recruitment strategy tailored for a specific target market could be developed for organisations if research clearly identified a relationship between applicant characteristics (broader than personal demographics) and the recruitment sources that individuals use, however this has not yet been a goal for researchers investigating the individual differences and realistic information hypotheses where data has predominantly been captured post-hire and not at the time of job search. Each theory will now be discussed in more detail.

### 2.5.1.1 Realistic Information Hypothesis

The realistic information hypothesis is based on the same assumption that underlies the realist job preview research of Breaugh (1983), McEvoy and Cascio (1985), Premack and Wanous (1985), Wiesner et al. (1991) and other earlier researchers. The realistic information hypothesis theory holds that individuals who are presented with realistic information (both positive and negative) about a job and an organisation via the recruitment source will survive on the job longer because their expectations are more likely to be met. This will subsequently increase their commitment to the job and trigger anticipatory coping mechanisms (Dugoni et al., 1981; Kirnan et al., 1989; O'Reilly et al., 1991; Saks et al., 1997).

To better comprehend the concept of the realistic information hypothesis, an understanding of the classification of recruitment sources as either formal or informal sources is required. Recruitment sources are often categorised as either formal (including employment agencies, campus recruitment, and advertisements through newspapers, television, radio or professional journals) or informal (consisting of referrals, direct applications and rehires) based on the amount of realistic information provided to the jobseeker (Decker et al., 1979; Kirnan et al., 1989; Rozelle & Landis, 2002; Saks, 1994).

Recruitment literature theorises that strategies used to promote only the positive components of the position and the organisation, attributed to formal recruitment sources, may ultimately lead to decreased job satisfaction and increased turnover
Chapter Two : Literature Review

among new employees who have difficulty coping with the negative aspects of work (Breaugh & Mann, 1984; Rozelle et al., 2002; Saks, 1994; Williams et al., 1993). On the other hand, the promotion of realistic information, which is attributed to informal recruitment sources, is proposed to reduce turnover and increase commitment levels of employees (Thorsteinson et al., 2004). One negative outcome linked to providing realistic information is that potential applicants may be less attracted to the organisation and self-select out of the recruitment process (Thorsteinson et al., 2004). Research on formal versus informal sources can be traced back to 1966 when Ullman published one of the first research articles on sources which found that informal recruitment sources (i.e. employee referrals and direct applications) had lower rates of turnover than the more formal recruitment sources of newspapers and employment agencies (Ullman, 1966).

Results from research that investigated what recruitment sources are employed by job seekers are surprisingly consistent both across and within studies. Early research by Rosenfeld (1975) reported findings with managerial and professional employees, whereby one-half found their most recent employment through direct (self-initiated) applications, or via friends/acquaintances (Rosenfeld, 1975). Both sources are classified as informal sources within the recruitment literature. Subsequent research findings support this result and indicate that job seekers generally use and obtain employment through informal sources (for example, friends or relatives) rather than from formal sources such as employment services (Judge & Cable, 1997; Schwab et al., 1987; Wanous et al., 1992).

From an organisational perspective, the use of formal recruitment sources as opposed to informal recruitment sources has been attributed to the size of the firm (Hausdorf & Duncan, 2004). Research suggests that large firms tend to use more formal sources and formal recruitment practices that are bureaucratic and resource-intensive, whilst smaller firms employ informal practices and sources for recruitment purposes (Barber, Wesson, Robertson, & Taylor, 1999; Bartram, Lindley, Marshall, & Foster, 1995). This has been accredited to three key differences between small and large firms. Firstly, larger firms employ more staff which ultimately leads to a higher number of job openings than in smaller firms. Secondly, large firms generally have a higher level of brand recognition than smaller firms and are more likely to generate
higher numbers of applicants. Finally, larger firms have a greater recruitment budget than small firms (Hausdorf et al., 2004).

A study by Scholarios and Lockyer (1999) provided evidence to support the theory that small professional practices (accountant, architects, lawyers and surveyors) placed increased reliance and emphasis on informal, non-validated methods of recruitment, including unsolicited letters of application and personal contact (i.e. referrals) to source new hires, whilst large firms used more formal recruitment sources such as headhunting and media advertisements. This was linked to the fact that for smaller firms, recruitment is an ongoing process where business partners continually assess current and future needs and expected turnover, and do not recruit in direct response to job vacancies. Furthermore, Scholarios and Lockyer (1999) suggest that as the smaller firms were unable to compete with the bigger professional companies in terms of salaries, conditions and experience, informal sources allow the business to sell their culture, job opportunities, work/life balance aspects and breadth of work to those candidates looking for more flexibility and freedom. These findings support the theory that informal sources are superior in attracting quality candidates for small professional firms. The grouping of sources as either informal or formal has provided a number of researchers with a more simplistic model for the assessment of the realistic information hypothesis. This research will now be reviewed.

The first study to directly investigate the realistic information hypothesis was undertaken by Quaglieri (1982) who had applicants rank a variety of recruitment sources in terms of the accuracy of the information received. Results indicated that inside recruitment sources (friends/relative referrals) were perceived by applicants to provide more specific and accurate information than outside sources such as newspaper advertisements and agencies (Quaglieri, 1982). These findings were further explored by Breaugh and Mann (1984) by also asking job applicants to rate the sources in terms of the amount of realistic information received. Applicants indicated that self-initiated (direct) applications (considered an informal source) were perceived to have accessed the most realistic information about the job, supporting the theory that informal recruitment sources provide more realistic information about positions vacant than do formal recruitment sources. There was one anomaly discovered in the findings of Breaugh and Mann (1984) in that employee referrals
(also classified as an informal source) had lower performance and retention rates than other sources, indicating that the proposed positive relationship between realistic information and post-hire outcomes was only partially supported.

Werbel and Landau (1996) tested for realism across the sources by comparing applicant expectations regarding the job with the opinions of current job incumbents. This research method was similar to a study by Williams et al. (1993) in that it captures actual realism of applicant expectations rather than retrospective perceptions of applicants about the quality of information obtained from sources. Results of Werbel and Landau (1996) partially supported the hypothesis that informal sources provide realistic information. New hires who were recruited via referrals from family or friends had greater positive realistic expectations than other sources, with employer-initiated contacts (direct efforts by a corporate recruiter to find job applicants) creating the lowest levels of realistic expectations. These findings confirm the results of researchers such as Quaglieri (1981) and Breaugh and Mann (1984).

The effect of realistic information on the primary post-hire outcomes of turnover, absenteeism and job performance has formed the basis of much of the subsequent research on the realistic information hypothesis and will now be discussed.

In a study by Taylor and Schmidt (1983) on packaging plant employees, partial support for the realism hypothesis was provided. Their research proposed that informal sources, in this case referrals and rehires, would generate employees with better post-hire outcomes than formal sources. Findings indicated that rehires, but not referrals, exceeded other groups of employees with respect to absenteeism and tenure. It is important to acknowledge that information quality was presumed in this study and not measured.

A later study by Taylor (1994) indicated that two-thirds of the applicants who were recruited from employee referrals reported receiving accurate information about the job, whilst of the applicants from other sources (“help-wanted” advertisements, driving schools, and “other” sources) only slightly more than half indicated that they had an understanding of the job. Furthermore, those applicants recruited from
referrals expressed a lower intent to leave. This contrasts with the results of Taylor and Schmidt (1983) discussed previously, however Taylor (1994) acknowledged that whilst there was some relationship between realistic information and tenure, this theory did not adequately explain differences in tenure.

Strong evidence in support of the realistic information theory was produced by research undertaken by Kirnan et al. (1989). Their study of the applicants and hires for the position of an insurance agent within a major insurance agency found that applicants who used informal recruiting sources (agent, district manager, sales manager, clerk, self-initiated, and acquaintance) were of superior quality to those who used formal sources (newspaper advertisement, employment agency, school placement). Quality was assessed on job success in terms of tenure and sales performance. The strong results for the self-initiated applicants, who were among the highest quality, were hypothesised to be due to the time taken by the applicant to investigate the job. This explanation obtained further support from Blau’s (1990) study on a sample of bankers whose results also confirmed a positive relationship between self-initiated applicants and high job performers.

Support for the explanation proposed by researchers on the relationship between self-initiated applicants and subsequent high job performance can be linked back to Breaugh and Mann’s (1984) research on the realistic information hypothesis. Their study investigated the post-hire variables of turnover and performance with findings indicating that new-hires recruited via self-initiated applications (ie. walk-ins) had obtained more realistic information about the job and the organisation than applicants recruited from employee referrals or newspaper advertisements. Subsequent research by Blau (1990) produced the same results for self-initiated applicants. In summary, the findings suggest that self-initiated applicants investigate the requirements of the job and the characteristics of the company before applying, and during this process would obtain higher levels of realistic information in order to make a sound decision about whether or not to apply. Armed with this realistic information, the self-initiated applicants would subsequently perform better in the job with the pre-knowledge of what is required of them. This explanation aligns with another hypothesis linked with the realistic information hypothesis, that being the unmet expectations hypothesis which will now be reviewed.
2.5.1.1.1 Unmet Expectations

The unmet expectations hypothesis is explained as the differences for applicants between pre-entry expectations of a job and organisation and subsequent post-entry experiences (Moser, 2005). This theory corresponds to the met expectations hypothesis in RJP research, however is broader in nature, exploring the relationships between a wide variety of recruitment sources and post-hire variables, not just RJP. Moser’s study investigated the relationship between recruitment sources and the post-hire outcomes of job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and the mediating effect of unmet expectations. The subject pool consisted of professionals within a large electronic company (the majority being engineers). The results found that internal recruitment sources (ie. direct contacts within the company or as a result or internships) had lower levels of unmet expectations and higher job satisfaction and organisational commitment levels. This again provides evidence to support the realistic information hypothesis for informal sources (ie. referrals, rehires or self-initiated applicants) and their positive influence on post-hire outcomes.

In contrast to these preceding findings, the studies of Williams et al. (1993) and Werbel and Landau (1996) found no significant source effects to explain the relationship between realistic information and turnover. In terms of performance, Werbel and Landau (1996) only found marginal support for the realistic information hypothesis for college placement hires.

The lack of evidence for source effects prevented Williams et al. (1993) from conducting research to formally test for mediation, which was the second component of their study, however the authors were able to provide data suggestive of mediation effects. In this component of the study there were some differences reported in the amount of pre-hire information provided by source indicating some support for the realistic information hypothesis. Results showed that rehires, nurses hired following clinical rotations, and applicants who used multiple recruitment sources had higher amounts of pre-hire knowledge than employee referrals, advertisements, walk-ins, or campus interviews. This finding blurs the distinction between formal and informal sources usually associated with the realistic information hypothesis, as employee referrals and walk-ins are normally classified as informal sources which provide high
levels of realistic information. It is important to note that Williams et al.’s (1993) study incorporated some superior research methods than previous researchers. Of relevance to the present study, the assessment of information realism was undertaken at the time of hire as opposed to the retrospective methods used by Breaugh and Mann (1984) and Kirnan et al. (1989), which can be affected by post-hire biases. A similar data capture method is used within the current research through an assessment of candidate perceptions at the time of the application submission and not post-hire.

In an attempt to clarify the discrepancies in the research findings on the realistic information hypothesis, a number of different approaches have been adopted by researchers. The variances in research models include the introduction of structural equation models, the use of “high-involvement recruitment strategies”, and the use of pre-hire outcomes as opposed to the traditional study of post-hire outcomes. The following sections will review in greater detail these variances in research approaches and their impact on recruitment literature.

2.5.1.1.2 Alternative Research Approaches

Griffeth, Hom, Fink and Cohen (1997) introduced structural equation models in order to assess mediation effects of source information on post-hire outcomes. The models were to increase the validity and reliability of the study. For this research the authors used a sample of newly hired nurses at a large medical centre. Results of the study indicated that recruitment sources were associated with realism, and that realism was significantly related to the post-hire outcomes of absenteeism, turnover and job satisfaction (Griffeth, Hom, Fink, & Cohen, 1997). In particular, school and self-initiated recruitment sources influenced coping efficacy, job choice commitment and role clarity. In fact Griffeth et al.’s (1997) study, which used a greater variety of realism indicators as well as researching met expectations, role clarity and coping skills, provided evidence that the direct impact of recruitment sources on post-hire consequences was beyond the impact that could be explained by the realistic information hypothesis.
Adopting a different approach to the traditional realistic information research methods, Collins and Han (2004) examined the effect of what they termed a “high-involvement recruitment strategy” on applicant quality. A high-involvement recruitment strategy involves the provision of detailed recruitment advertisements that convey information about the position and the organisation, information which cannot be processed subconsciously or peripherally by applicants but require thought and consideration. The results of their study found that high-involvement recruitment strategies have a positive effect on applicant quantity and quality only when the organisation has strong brand or company recognition as a result of company advertising or firm reputation, providing only partial support for the realistic information hypothesis.

A similar study on the information provided by source was explored by Buda (2003) who focused on the framing and presentation of this information. The study also assessed the impact of source credibility on applicants’ attraction to the job, willingness to accept the position, and perceived future performance. The results of the study indicated that framing did have a significant effect on the applicant decision process, and that this was further moderated by both the presentation order of the information in the advertisement, and by the credibility of the source. Buda (2003) found that for a recruitment advertisement to be effective it should include positive information at the start when being advertised through non-expert sources (eg. general media), or have the positive information presented last when advertised through a perceived reliable and expert source (eg. employee referral, occupational specific source). This result, taken in conjunction with the findings of Collins and Hans (2004) indicate that the amount of realistic information, and the framing of this information, can either positively or negatively impact on applicant perceptions about the job, which is further mediated by the credibility of the source and company/brand recognition.

Thorsteinson et al. (2004) made an attempt to further explore the source credibility theory whilst also expanding the scope of research on the realistic information hypothesis. The majority of studies had predominantly been based on post-hire outcomes so Thorsteinson et al. (2004) introduced the pre-hire outcome of applicant attraction. The argument behind their study was that by incorporating some realistic
information into the job advertisement, the perceived trustworthiness of the company will be enhanced, particularly if this negative information is common to many jobs. In assessing this theory, an investigation was undertaken based on the acknowledged risk by the authors that too much negative information, or negative information on certain job characteristics, could ultimately be detrimental and destroy the positive effects and credibility of the source and the organisation. Their findings indicated that realistic information could enhance the attractiveness of organisations, although rather than source credibility being the mediator of this relationship, it was found that perceptions of challenge was a partial mediator of the effect. The authors acknowledged the need for future research to examine the boundary conditions for when realistic information will increase attraction and the factors that influence the effect.

The difficulty in establishing clear conclusions about source effect as a result of design differences across studies has been a common problem highlighted by researchers on recruitment sources, and particularly by the authors of the meta-analyses research and narrative reviews (Barber, 1998; Breaugh et al., 2000; Rynes, 1991; Zottoli et al., 2000). Breaugh et al. (2003) attempted to address two identified areas that have been lacking in previous research. The first is the inclusion of the recruitment source of job fairs into the study, a source rarely examined in the past. The second area is the focus on pre-hire effectiveness criteria (eg. the quality of candidates generated by source, and the likelihood that a candidate accepted a job by source) as opposed to post-hire criteria. Their findings indicated that the more informal recruitment sources of employee referrals and direct applications yielded higher numbers of job offer recruits than other sources (eg. college placement offices, newspapers, job fairs). This result, however, was not mediated by applicant quality. The authors were unable to explain why employers selected applicants from the employee referral and direct application sources when these sources produced lower interview and test scores than employees recruited from other sources. One suggestion is that recruiters may incorporate other criteria to determine who receives job offers.

Rafaeli, Hadomi and Simons (2005) also undertook research to assess source effectiveness in terms of the quality of applicants. Their research defined this subject
pool as “yield ratio” which captured the “proportion of new hires from the complete pool of applicants produced by a recruiting source” (pg. 356). The results of their study indicate that recruitment sources do impact the quality of applicants in terms of both the total number of hires per source, and also recruitment costs per source, with employee referrals being associated with lower costs and higher yield ratio figures.

The attempt by both Breaugh et al. (2003) and Rafaeli et al. (2005) to assess the quality of applicants again indicates an attempt to address previously identified gaps in the research. Whilst Breaugh et al. (2003) studied a diverse range of recruitment sources in terms of applicant quality, their study suggested that the criteria used by recruiters’ to select appointees were not completely captured within the study. Furthermore, the study was only based on one specific job type (an entry-level IT specialist). The current study will complement the results of this study in two ways. Firstly, data on applicant quality will be captured at two stages in the recruitment process, at the shortlist stage and then at the appointment stage to help clarify source effects on applicant quality. Secondly, the study will capture applicants for a diverse range of positions (ie. blue-collar, white-collar, academic and senior executive) to increase the generalisability of the results found.

Rafaeli et al.’s (2005) study only captured information on two recruitment sources: newspaper advertisements (local and national) and employee referrals. The current study will introduce the relatively new recruitment source of the Internet in the assessment of the quality of applicants generated by source, an area of future research identified by Rafaeli et al. (2005).

In summary, the realistic job preview (RJP) and realistic information hypothesis theories are based on the premise that providing realistic (both positive and negative) information to an applicant, either via the recruitment source or through an RJP, will lower applicants expectations about a job, ultimately leading to measures of self-selection and better post-hire outcomes. Overall the research findings have generally supported the premise that applicants recruited via informal sources, such as referrals, re-hires and self-initiated applicants, are more likely to receive realistic information, and as a result have higher levels of performance, retention and job satisfaction. Understanding whether there are any source effects associated with the
perceptions of applicants about the information presented can assist organisations with improved recruitment strategies. To date there has been minimal attempts to link source information and applicants subsequent intentions to apply for the job, a gap which is being addressed by the current study and will be further explored at a later stage of this review. The other key relationship explored in the wider recruitment literature regarding applicants and recruitment sources is whether the demographic characteristics of applicants are linked to the source used, also known as the individual differences hypothesis. The research studies which have examined this hypothesis will be presented and discussed in the following section.

2.5.1.2 Individual Differences Hypothesis

The individual differences hypothesis has been the focus of a number of studies on recruitment source effectiveness, with a wide variety of factors being included as variables. This hypothesis claims that differences in the individual characteristics of the applicants are related to recruitment source (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Rynes, 1991). The earlier studies on this hypothesis provided little theoretical rationale for why source differences should be found, with studies based predominantly on those demographic differences that were convenient. Recent studies have improved in this field and have been more explicit in clarifying the linkage.

One of the first studies undertaken on the individual differences hypothesis was that of Breaugh (1981) who attempted to explain the findings of significance source differences for performance, work attitudes and absenteeism through demographic variables. The results however found no relationship across sources for age, gender, education, years with the company, years in the current position, or years under the present supervisor. In a later study, Breaugh and Mann (1984) also argued that there was minimal evidence for the individual differences hypothesis. The only finding within their study of significance was that individuals recruited via newspaper advertisements were more likely to be male and older. However, whilst their study established a relationship between newspaper sources and lower levels of performance and higher turnover rates, the authors could not find a direct link or provide a suitable explanation that associated this result to the fact that these recruits
were more likely to be older or male. Therefore the study provided minimal support for the *individual differences hypothesis*.

The structural equation modelling approach adopted by Griffeth et al. (1997), as discussed in the *realistic information hypothesis* section, also aimed to explore a variety of individual differences across a range of sources. The results of their study, which was based on a sample of 221 newly hired nurses, indicated that age, education level, race, and gender all differed across recruitment source, although applicant quality did not. Specifically, school recruitment sources were related to education and gender; referrals and walk-ins were linked to race; and recruiter sources were linked to age. Despite the use of a rigorous methodology, there was no evidence in Griffeth et al.’s (1997) study to suggest that individual differences mediated post-hire outcomes, again providing limited support for this hypothesis.

These results were further supported by the studies of Ryan et al. (2005) and Taylor (1994). Whilst Ryan et al. (2005) did not specifically investigate the *individual differences hypothesis*, an outcome of their study indicated that gender and race had no relationship with source. Taylor (1994) investigated whether there were differences across recruitment sources in reaching different populations. The research population consisted of truck drivers and captured demographic data on driving experience, age, gender and marital status, with the recruitment sources including employee referrals, driving schools, “help-wanted” advertisements, and “other” sources. The results of the study found little support for the *individual differences hypothesis*, with only a slight relationship being identified between marital status and source in that few single (unmarried but not divorced) drivers came through employee referrals and “other” sources. Again, there was no relationship identified between the *individual differences hypothesis* and the post-hire outcome of employee tenure.

In one of the first studies supporting the *individual differences hypothesis*, Taylor and Schmidt (1983) found that there was an observed relationship between individual differences (ie. height, weight, age, gender, prior rate of pay and shift preference) and success on the job in terms of those individuals rehired by the organisation. It should
be noted that their study included those demographic variables that had an anticipated relationship to relevant outcome variables.

Werbel and Landau (1996) collated data on the demographic characteristics of age and education as individual differences and confirmed the findings of Taylor and Schmidt (1983) that the age and education of new hires were related to recruitment through different sources. Specifically, Werbel and Landau (1996) found that new hires that were younger in age were generally recruited via college placement offices, although the authors indicated that this is probably because older applicants do not typically access this source. For older applicants, most new hires were sourced via referrals, possibly attributed to the fact that older applicants are more likely to have a greater network of friends and colleagues in the workforce to tap into. One finding of particular interest from this study was that age had a suppressor effect on job performance rather than a mediating effect, with older hires performing better on the job than younger new hires, except where the younger new hires were recruited via college placement offices.

A number of studies have also found support to suggest that individual differences relating to minority demographics are correlated to source. Within Kirnan et al.’s (1989) study, demographic information was captured and analysed across the recruitment sources. Whilst the researchers did not specifically study the individual differences theory, consistent results were found that indicated that female and indigenous applicants used formal recruitment sources more frequently than informal sources. Thus whilst informal recruitment sources were deemed to be more effective in producing superior quality applicants than formal recruitment sources, a reduction in the use of formal recruitment sources would lead to a reduction in the number of minority group applicants, such as females and Indigenous people, which would affect affirmative action objectives that organisations are legally required to comply with (Kirnan et al., 1989).

Further supporting Kirnan’s study, Blau (1990) also produced results in his study which indicated that whilst there were no differences among recruitment sources in terms of gender, education, marital status or motivation to apply, the recruitment of minorities was predominantly linked to newspaper advertisements, an identified
formal source, rather than the more informal sources of walk-ins or employee referrals. The importance of race and gender within the *individual differences hypothesis* was further explored by Thomas and Wise (1999) who noted that the influence of gender and race on perceptions of recruitment components was underrepresented in the recruitment literature. They identified that women and minorities placed more emphasis on diversity programs of the organisation than did men and non-minorities. Therefore those organisations who advertise information about their diversity programs, often a common component of formal source advertisements, have an increased likelihood that minority applicants will apply for positions.

A common theme to emerge from the more recent literature on individual differences is the acknowledgement of the increasing role that legislation has on recruitment, particularly in terms of equal employment and anti-discrimination within the workforce. Therefore, organisations must assess whether their recruitment strategy, including the recruitment source/s used, adversely affect any minority groups (Bartram, 2000; Courtis, 1994; Vecchio, 1995). Indeed, the findings of a number of researchers supports the claims of Thomas and Wise (1999) about the need for organisations to advertise, or actively promote diversity programs, in order to attract these demographic applicant pools if they are a key target market. Overall there is mounting evidence for organisations to develop and implement a recruitment strategy that considers the needs of all target markets and as a result uses a variety of sources applicable to the targeted applicants (Berry, 2004; Dineen et al., 2002; Feldman et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004).

The research on the *individual differences hypothesis* has produced mixed results. There has been some evidence to suggest that the personal demographics of applicants are related to recruitment sources used, however there has been minimal support which subsequently links these individual differences with post-hire outcomes. The research on the *individual differences hypothesis* has been reviewed within the current study because of its importance within the overall research on recruitment source effects. This hypothesis does not have a direct application to the research model developed for this thesis, however it is important to include to provide a complete picture and understanding of the research on recruitment sources,
and has therefore been reported. In considering the goals of the current research, the model developed is based on the *realistic information hypothesis* previously discussed and the person-job (P-J) and person-organisation (P-O) fit theories that will be discussed in the next section.

### 2.6 APPLICANT PERCEPTIONS

Identified throughout the research on recruitment has been the importance of assessing applicant perceptions to determine recruitment effectiveness. Applicant perceptions have been associated with the three key research areas of recruitment: recruiter effects, administrative recruitment policies and procedures, and recruitment source effects. Underlying this research has been the concept of self-selection which relates to an applicant’s perceived fit with the job and the organisation, and their decision to pursue a job. The process undertaken by applicants to locate, investigate and ultimately decide among alternative job opportunities is of crucial importance to organisations (Barber, Daly, Giannantonio, & Phillips, 1994). Job search involves two stages: identifying what opportunities exist, known as the extensive search stage; and obtaining in-depth information about those specific job opportunities, the intensive search stage (Barber et al., 1994; Rees, 1966).

Previous research on organisational choice has found that an individual’s thoughts about their compatibility with a specific job ("person-job" fit theory), or their perceptions of the capacity of a company to become a future employer ("person-organisation" fit theory) affects their decision to apply for and pursue job vacancies (Fisher et al., 1979; Highhouse, Lievens, & Sinar, 2003; Turban et al., 1998). Applicant perceptions of fit are derived from information contained within and relayed by recruitment sources, so the theories are closely linked with the research on both the *realistic information hypothesis* and the *individual differences hypothesis*. A review of the two fit theories and their relationship with applicant perceptions and source effects will now be undertaken.
2.6.1 Person-Job (P-J) and Person-Organisation (P-O) Fit Theories

The perceptions of applicants are commonly related to the work characteristics of a job and the work values within the organisation. Research on applicant perceptions has indicated that individuals who are attracted to a job or an organisation which exhibits characteristics similar to their own will undertake further action and actively pursue the job advertised (Rynes & Connerly, 1993; Schneider, Goldstein, & Smith, 1995; Schwoerer & Rosen, 1989; Williams & Bauer, 1994). Whilst P-J and P-O fit theories are closely related, they are also distinct constructs and should be considered separately (Saks et al., 1997). As with much of the research on recruitment, studies on applicant perceptions of P-J and P-O fit have predominantly used post-hire outcome measures including job performance, turnover, job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational identification. The lack of research on the immediate pre-hire outcome of recruitment, this being the attraction of applicants and subsequent job choice decisions, has been identified within this study and by other researchers as being an area for future research, and is addressed by the current study.

The study undertaken by Werbel and Landau (1996) tested the model of “person-job” (P-J) fit. The method used by the authors was based on an assessment of applicants’ own impressions of their suitability to the position. The results of the study indicated that fit varied across the sources with self-initiated applicants and referrals reporting higher perceptions of job fit than college placement offices and direct employer contact. Whilst P-J fit perceptions existed, there was no support for P-J as a mediator in terms of relationships between source and the post-hire outcomes of performance and turnover. This research therefore provides some indication that applicant perceptions do affect decisions to apply for the job, which is of interest to the current study, but had no subsequent effect on post-hire outcomes.

O’Reilly, Chatman and Caldwell (1991) provided support for the “person-organisation” (P-O) fit theory with results in their study highlighting that significant positive relationships exist, suggesting that if an applicant had a high person-organisation fit on entry into the organisation, their commitment and job satisfaction is higher and their intention to leave the organisation lower after one year in the
position. P-O fit theory was also supported by Ryan et al. (2005) who investigated applicant fit perceptions based on demographic groups. Their study indicated that minorities and women were more likely to have negative perceptions of their fit with an organisation than other applicants if these demographic groups are under-represented in the organisation.

Cable and Judge (1996) investigated applicant perceptions of both P-J and P-O fit and their relationship with job choice attitudes and decisions. Findings from their study indicated that an applicants intention to accept a job offer were related to P-O fit perceptions, but not P-J fit perceptions. An expectation of the study was that P-J fit would be related to actual job choice decisions, however no such relationship existed. In contrast, P-O fit was found to have a significant relationship with job choice decisions and with the post-hire outcomes of organisational commitment, job satisfaction, turnover, and in recommending the organisation to others (Cable & Judge, 1996). In a later study, Cable and DeRue (2002) also produced results in support of the P-O fit theory. Their study of employed individuals indicated that P-O fit perceptions were related to organically focused outcomes such as organisational identification. These results indicate that information that is relevant to the organisation, as provided by the recruitment source, can influence applicant perceptions about their fit with the organisation (Cable & DeRue, 2002).

In contrast to Cable and Judge’s (1996) results, Cable and DeRue (2002) and Saks and Ashforth (1997) produced results to also support the P-J fit theory. In the study undertaken by Cable and DeRue (2002) the results indicated that P-J fit perceptions were related to job and career-focused outcomes such as job satisfaction, career satisfaction and occupational commitment. Saks and Ashforth (1997) undertook a longitudinal study to assess fit perceptions. Their results identified a positive relationship for P-J fit theory with the post-hire variables of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and organisational identification. However, there were no similar findings for P-O fit perceptions which is particularly interesting in relation to the organisationally relevant outcomes of organisational commitment and organisational identification. Furthermore, P-O fit perceptions were negatively related to intention to quit and turnover.
Chapter Two : Literature Review

The findings of Saks and Ashforth’s (1997) study are interesting as an outcome of their research on recent college graduates suggested that formal job information sources (employment agencies, media sources, campus recruiters, and university placements) provided a better indication of fit for applicants than did informal sources (referrals from current/former employers, referrals from outsiders, re-hires, and walk-ins). This contrasts with previous research on recruitment source effectiveness which has suggested that applicants obtain employment as a result of informal sources and that these sources are associated with more positive post-hire outcomes (Rynes, 1991; Saks, 1994; Saks et al., 1997). There were a number of explanations offered by the authors for this result which included the potential for applicants to accept jobs offered from informal sources when their “fit” with the job is not as high as it could be, or the fact that formal sources (eg. campus recruiters) may be more selective in screening potential candidates.

Carless (2005) captured the P-J and P-O fit theories under the more globally conceptualised notion of person-environment (P-E) fit theory which operates on the premise that when a good fit exists between the person and the environment then people will display higher levels of satisfaction and mental and physical well-being. In their longitudinal study, which captured data at four different stages of the recruitment process (before the selection process, during the selection process, at the conclusion of the selection process, and after actual job offer), the results indicated that P-J and P-O fit perceptions are predictors of organisational attractiveness. Carless (2005) also found partial support for the relationship between job and organisational fit and job acceptance intentions, although this relationship was only prevalent at all stages of the recruitment process for P-J fit perceptions.

The results previously discussed indicate that applicant perceptions of fit can influence subsequent post-hire outcomes. There have also been a few studies that assessed fit in terms of applicant attraction toward the job, a pre-hire recruitment outcome, however the methodology used to capture these assessments, with the exception of the study of Carless (2005), was undertaken after the participants had commenced work with the organisation and not at the actual time of application. This research gap will be addressed in the current study through the gathering of data on applicant perceptions at the time of application.
In an attempt to broaden the research base on the fit theories researchers have included new measures or new approaches not previously attempted. The research undertaken by Van Vianen (2000) investigated P-O fit in terms of organisational culture. The organisational culture dimensions identified included concern for people and concern for goal accomplishment. The results of their study indicated that P-O fit measures for the two organisational culture dimensions had no relationship with newcomer affective outcomes (Van Vianen, 2000).

Kristof-Brown (2000) explored P-O and P-J fit from a recruiters perspective via two different studies. The first study indicated that recruiters judge P-J and P-O fit based on different types of applicant characteristics, such as KSAs (knowledge, skills and abilities), values and personality traits. KSAs were higher indicators of P-J fit as was hypothesised by the author, whilst values and personality traits were linked with P-O fit assessments. The second study investigated the factor structure and predictive validity of perceived P-J and P-O fit. The results indicated that perceived P-J and P-O fit are distinct constructs and that they offer unique predictions of hiring recommendations, however are highly related when considered together by recruiters (Kristof-Brown, 2000). The assessment of applicant fit from a recruiters perspective provides clues as to how organisations determine the information to be captured and portrayed by recruitment sources and throughout the recruitment process. With minimal research on this perspective existing in the recruitment literature, the current study will also attempt to assess organisational perspectives of source effectiveness in attracting applicants.

Overall the findings of the literature on P-J and P-O fit theories indicate that an applicant’s attraction to a job and decision to accept a job offer can be based on both job-related and organisational related factors (Barber, 1998; Carless, 2005). These factors contribute to measures of self-selection whereby the applicant makes an assessment of their fit with the organisation and the job, and subsequently undertakes a number of job choice decisions about whether they will participate in the recruitment process. With the majority of research being based on post-hire outcomes, the current study will incorporate an assessment of applicant perceptions
about the job and organisation, based on information provided by source, with the pre-hire outcome of their intention to pursue the job at the time of application.

There have been a number of studies to explore source effectiveness and applicant perceptions which attempt to address gaps in the research on both areas. As such, the authors have incorporated a range of new variables and hypotheses that warrant discussion. Themes evident in these studies again refer to the effect of source information on applicants’ attraction to the job and intention to apply for a job. Moderating variables include organisational familiarity and company policies and ratings.

A key limitation identified in previous research on recruitment research has been that the studies are typically based on post-hire outcomes, and not on the pre-hire perceptions of applicants and their subsequent decisions to apply for jobs (Ryan et al., 2005). In an attempt to address this gap, Ryan et al. (2005) explored the impact that information provided by the recruitment source had on “potential applicants”, defined as those individuals who were interested in and had some contact with the organisation about applying for a position. Findings from the research indicated that source information (termed “informativeness”) related to actual applicant behaviour but not to self-selection or performance in the selection process. When mediated by familiarity (that is, how well the applicant is familiar with the organisation usually as a result of brand recognition or through associations with staff of the organisation), a relationship existed between source informativeness and an applicant’s submission for a job. There was however no relationship between source informativeness and applicant intentions to apply suggesting that applicant perceptions are not a mediator of this relationship.

Aiman-Smith, Bauer and Cable (2001) assessed applicant fit by exploring perceptions of attractiveness and of the applicant’s intention to pursue the job through a range of factors including pay, promotional opportunity, and the organisation’s lay-off policy and ecological rating (which is determined by an outside organisation scoring against such factors as “green products”, recycling, environmental efforts, etc). Interestingly, applicant’s attraction to the organisation was strongly influenced by the company’s ecological rating, however their intention
to pursue the job was most strongly influenced by pay (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001). The findings by Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) indicate that factors unrelated to the organisation, but related to the job such as salary level, are more influential in the job choice process, providing support for the P-J fit theory.

Previous research has determined that source information does affect applicant perception in terms of post-hire outcomes. The inclusion of pre-hire outcomes as opposed to post-hire outcomes has been scarce within the literature, primarily due to the difficulties in reaching the applicant research populations, in comparison to the relative ease in accessing post-hire data. Both Ryan et al. (2005) and Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) have attempted to address this research gap, however there are a number of key research design features that reduce the reliability and generalisability of the results which the current study addresses. The study by Ryan et al. (2005) asked applicants to rate each recruitment source listed (12 in total) on a scale of 1-5 in terms of “accuracy and detail of information provided about the job” (pg. 239) but did not obtain specific details on the amount or type of information provided by the source. The current study will therefore investigate applicant perceptions of specific attributes of the job advertisement, including job-relevant information.

Within Aiman-Smith et al.’s (2001) study the participant group consisted of students and not actual job applicants. This study also included only one job-relevant variable in the measures of applicants’ intentions to apply for the job. As mentioned previously, the current study will explore a number of job-relevant characteristics such as salary, opportunity to use abilities, and whether the work is perceived to be interesting and challenging. Furthermore, the current study aims to assess applicant perceptions based on real-time applicant participants in an attempt to reflect actual applicant job-choice behaviour.

Overall, whilst there have been some recent attempts by researchers to address gaps within the research on recruitment, there are still areas of the recruitment process that require further exploration in terms of recruitment source effects on applicant perceptions and subsequent intentions toward the job.
2.7 SUMMARY

The recruitment framework developed by Breaugh and Starke (2000) and the diverse array of related research on recruitment provides a basis for the current research in identifying key areas to investigate to ascertain the effectiveness of recruitment sources. Research on recruitment can be classified into three key research areas: recruiter effects; administrative recruitment policies and procedures effects; and, recruitment source effects. One common theme that emerged across the research areas is the perceived importance of the information about the job and the organisation to the applicant and whether the mediums used to portray this information (ie. recruiters, realistic job previews, recruitment sources) effects applicant job-decisions and subsequent post-hire recruitment outcomes such as job satisfaction, performance and tenure. An outcome of this research has been a call to assess whether the components of the recruitment process impact on the immediate outcome of the recruitment process, the quantity and quality of applicants, based on measurements of pre-hire variables related to applicant perceptions and applicant intentions to pursue the job.

The current study has evolved from the research gaps identified. One component of the study will include an assessment of the quantity and quality of applicants in relation to the recruitment source used to determine source effectiveness from an organisational perspective. The second component of the study will focus on the relationship between recruitment source, applicant perceptions, and their intentions to apply for the job. Of particular focus for the present study is the effectiveness of the relatively new recruitment source being utilised by organisations, this being the internet. The study will further explore source effectiveness by researching the perspectives of organisations on the value of different recruitment sources. As the employment of the internet as a recruitment source by organisations has only occurred in the last two to three decades, literature on the subject has started to emerge, although relatively few studies exist which are based on methodological and rigorous research designs. Regardless, a review of the literature on internet recruitment will help clarify areas of interest and research for the current study.
2.8 E-RECRUITMENT

The rapid advances in technology have dramatically changed the way business is conducted and this increasing use of and reliance on technology is clearly demonstrated by the number of organisations and individuals who utilise the Internet and electronic mail (e-mail). The impact of technology on business is further reflected by the continuous rise in amount of literature exploring the effects of new technology development and implementation on the efficiency of business, including the impacts on human resource practices (Cullen, 2001; Dessler, 2002; Dineen, Noe, & Wang, 2004; Smith et al., 2004). In particular, the adoption of the Web as a medium by organisations has been faster than any other medium in history (Bush et al., 2002). This is demonstrated by the fact that while it took more than 30 years for radio as a medium to reach 50 million listeners, the Internet reached 50 million users within five years (Kerschbaumer, 2000).

In terms of human resource management, the Internet has changed recruitment from both an organisational and a job seeker’s point of view (Epstein et al., 2003; Feldman et al., 2002; Warner, 2005). Traditional recruitment processes are readily acknowledged as being time-consuming with long hiring cycle times, high costs per process and minimal geographical reach (Lee, 2005). In contrast to this, the rapid introduction of the internet into recruitment processes can primarily be attributed to the Internet’s unrivalled communication capabilities which allow for written communication (e-mails and documents) to be transmitted in a second; for organisation’s and individual’s web-sites to be accessed at the click of a mouse and for real-time conversations (print, audio and visual) to be conducted in an instant (Bingham et al., 2002; Wyld, 1997). This communication is quick, easy and cheap and its reach is on a local, national and international scale. The following section will provide an in-depth overview of the growth of e-recruitment in business which will provide a foundation for the research being undertaken in the current study.

2.8.1 Overview of e-Recruitment

E-recruitment, also known within the literature as online recruitment, Internet recruiting or cybercruiting refers to the practice of advertising job vacancies online,
and the formal sourcing of information about jobs online (Galanaki, 2002). Whilst e-recruitment is considered a relatively new concept for many organisations, articles on the topic first started appearing in the mid-1980s (Casper, 1985; Gentner, 1984). However, it wasn’t until almost a decade later in the mid-1990s that more systematic and rigorous literature and research on e-recruitment began to appear in human resource related journals. The rise in the amount of literature on e-recruitment was initially attributed to the sudden increase in the use of online recruitment by IT companies and universities (Galanaki, 2002) although as the technology field is constantly changing and progressing, much of what has been discussed in literature is now out of date (Bartram, 2000). It is therefore important that new research on e-recruitment is regularly published to report new developments as they arise.

Within developed countries it is reported that more than 75% of Human Resource professionals utilise Internet recruitment methods (ie. internet job boards) in conjunction with more traditional recruitment methods, such as newspaper advertisements and employee referrals (Anonymous, 2000). Among job seekers, an estimated one in four utilise the internet to source job opportunities (Smith et al., 2004). Further evidence of the growing use and reliance on e-recruitment was documented in a study undertaken by Lee (2005) who found that all of the Fortune 100 companies as listed by the 2003 Fortune magazine used some form of e-recruitment to advertise positions vacant.

The popularity of the internet as a recruitment source now sees a variety of positions being advertised on the internet, from traditionally blue-collar/trades type roles, to white collar and professional positions (Baxter, 2005). Wyld’s (1997, pg 16) prediction that “… the Internet may well be transforming forever the way corporations recruit employees and the way individuals hunt for jobs” has certainly come to fruition in today’s workforce. Indeed, the popularity of the internet as a means of sourcing jobs should continue to rise following the recent approval of a “.jobs” domain in the United States (Pont, 2005). Such a move could vastly reduce the costs of corporate recruiters who currently pay fees to post jobs on commercial job boards, and has the potential to take the commercial job boards out of the market if they are unable to capitalise on it (Zappe, 2005).
The increasing use of the Internet as a recruitment source has occurred via a number of means as identified by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 1999), cited in the article by Galanaki (2002). The three most common means of recruiting via the web are:

- The addition of recruitment pages to the organisation’s existing website. (As indicated by Lee (2005), this avenue is becoming increasingly common primarily as a result of the rising costs and inflexibility of using other e-recruitment means and traditional media);
- The use of specialised recruitment websites which act as a medium between organisations and potential applicants such as online job boards, job portals, job agencies and online recruiters; and
- The use of media sites which involves placing an advertisement in a more traditional media such as a newspaper which also has its own website and posts the same advertisement simultaneously on the website, usually for free.

Hausdorf and Duncan (2004) attempted to link organisational size with the usage of the internet by theorising that large organisations who are deemed to use more formal recruitment processes are more likely than small firms to know about and use the internet as a source. Their findings indicated that while the size of the firm had an impact on awareness and use of alternate internet source avenues (ie. job boards), the size of the organisation had no impact on the use of the company website for recruitment, or on the types of positions being advertised or the amount of information provided about the job. This finding again provides an indication of the increasing popularity and usage of e-recruitment in organisational recruitment strategies, regardless of firm size.

Organisations also promote and encourage the use of online recruitment by integrating it with the overall corporate marketing and branding strategies through the inclusion of their Internet address in mainline and classified advertisements (Boehle, 2000; Challapalli, 2005; Piturro, 2000). Indeed, there has been research which links corporate advertising with increased quality of applicants (Collins & Han, 2004). The findings from their study indicated that organisational advertising was the only predictor that had consistently significant direct effects on measures of
applicant quantity (total number of applications) and applicant quality (education and one year of on-the-job experience).

Internet recruiting also extends to more interactive recruitment tools, creating an avenue to build relationships (potentially long-term) between job seekers and organisations (Mooney, 2002; Piturro, 2000). Some of the key features of e-recruitment include the ability for organisations to initiate background checks, undertake interviews, create customised e-mail notification of recruiters for passive and active candidates, provide multiple language support, psychometric testing, interactive application forms and other assessment tools (Bartram, 2000; Bingham et al., 2002; Dessler, 2002; Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). The use of such web-based interactive screening tools is currently only utilised by approximately one-third of organisations (Hausdorf et al., 2004), however sophisticated internet recruitment tools are gaining popularity with companies in an attempt to reduce the size of applicant pools efficiently (Leonard, 2000).

The use of pre-screening tools on the internet is also attributed to the perceptions held by organisations that consequences of a bad appointment could be so significant that minimising the amount of personal or subjective involvement in the process will reduce the likelihood of this outcome, leading to a focus on objective and scientific recruitment methods. The internet is perceived to be non-discriminatory or prejudicial, being able to provide anonymity, and to transcend racial, ethnic and gender differences (Hayes & Sabir, 1996; Marzulli, 2002). This then raises questions of trust in information technology and its ability to screen fairly and appropriately, issues which are now being explored by numerous researchers (Smith et al., 2004; Tan & Thoen, 2002). In a study undertaken by Dineen, Noe and Wang (2004), participants confirmed the distrust in technology by indicating that human decision agents are more procedurally fair than automated (technology) decision agents, however as people become more familiar with technology, and as technology improves in this field, the trust in technology decision agents is likely to increase too. Whilst e-recruitment tools are acknowledged as being an important aspect of internet recruiting for organisations, their impact occurs after the initial recruitment stage and during the selection stage, so will not be included as an effectiveness measure of source in the current study.
As a comparison to other recruitment sources, Feldman and Klaas (2002) found that the use of the Internet was ranked third by managers and professionals as being an effective source to locate jobs, with personal networking identified as the most effective recruitment source and headhunters and professional recruiters cited as the second most effective source. Comments recorded from participants in their qualitative study indicated that networking provided personal advantages not associated with internet recruitment:

*Networking works best… because you feel comfortable with the people you are dealing with and they feel comfortable with you. Also, there is a level of trust that develops in relationships that can’t be leveraged over the Internet (Feldman & Klaas, 2002, pg 182).*

Other sources used as comparative measures in the study included college/alumni placement services, newspaper advertisements (ranked fifth), cold calls/sending resumes, professional organisations and career fairs. In comparing the internet with more traditional recruitment sources, Kuhn and Skuterud (2000) noted that the Internet appeared to have a complementary nature with other recruitment sources as those applicants who utilised the internet to search for job vacancies also used additional search methods deemed more traditional (eg. responded to media advertisements). Such a recruitment strategy from an applicant perspective is valid in light of the fact that all organisations adopt different advertising strategies and mediums and may not utilise the internet to advertise vacancies at all.

Whilst there have been relatively few rigorous research papers which include e-recruitment as a comparative recruitment source for theories on recruitment source effectiveness, there are numerous articles which review the perceived advantages and disadvantages of e-recruitment as a source when compared to the more traditional sources including newspapers, employment agencies, referrals and walk-ins. A review of this literature will provide an indication of future areas of research. The review will initially explore the advantages of e-recruitment cited within the literature, followed by an overview of the perceived disadvantages associated with internet recruitment. Incorporated into this discussion will be a review of the recent
attempts to incorporate e-recruitment into the research theories on recruitment source effectiveness, and specifically the realistic information hypothesis.

2.8.2 Perceived advantages of e-recruitment

The popularity of using an on-line method of advertising jobs as opposed to more traditional means can be attributed to a number of perceived advantages. The biggest perceived advantage of Internet recruiting is that individuals can quickly and easily access information on a wide range of job opportunities twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, reducing the need for employees to actively job hunt whilst performing current job duties, thereby minimising the visibility of the job search (Feldman et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). Given that on average job hunters spend around six to seven hours each week searching and pursuing suitable positions (Farris & Dumas, 1999), the flexibility of the internet is extremely attractive as a means of sourcing jobs. As indicated in Radcliff’s (2000) article on internet recruitment, using a few key words to search for job vacancies online is deemed by applicants to be easier than searching through newspapers, and responding to online advertisements quicker and more simplified than submitting hard copy resumes to companies (Radcliff, 2000).

For organisations, online recruitment provides an opportunity for jobs to be advertised in global, local or niche markets, presenting the flexibility for recruiters to adapt the source to target an identified job market, or allowing for a broad scope of potential applicants by opening the job to the global market (Smith, 2005). A further benefit of incorporating e-recruitment into the recruitment strategy and a key factor in its increasing popularity as a source is the ability for organisations to perform recruitment activities concurrently on the internet, as opposed to a sequential batch process for traditional recruiting (Lee, 2005). That is, organisations are able to source and process applications round-the-clock as opposed to the long hiring cycle time associated with traditional sources.

Feldman and Klaas (2002) also found in the results of their study that applicants accredited the internet as being a useful source to locate general information on a wide array of industries, companies and jobs, and also identified advantages in the
ability to enter an array of search variables when looking for jobs, including geographic location, job type or industry type, and to assess how hot or cold the job market was for their skills and what remuneration they could expect.

These days, organisations are able to post job vacancies almost instantaneously, generating applications and resumes for these positions in hours (Galanaki, 2002; Millman, 1998; Pollitt, 2004; Wyld, 1997). This capability is perceived as a major improvement on traditional newspaper advertisements where organisations are required to adhere to strict advertising deadlines and lag times for publication going to print, and for applicants to mail in their response to the advertisement (Stimpson, 2004; Wyld, 1997). The Internet has also been classified as a more interactive source for organisations who are able to engage applicants by providing pertinent and more in-depth information about the job and the organisation through links to testimonials and employment benefit sites (Bingham et al., 2002; Epstein et al., 2003; McCurry, 2005). Whilst there is potential to include a wide array of information, the success of e-recruitment will still rely on the information being of a quality nature, and relevant to the applicant (Gale, 2001).

Another advantage cited in the literature on e-recruitment are the reduced costs associated with Internet advertising compared to print advertising where the size of the advertisement and the publication itself impacts on the cost of posting the advertisement. With the restricted circulation numbers of publications, the small costs involved in posting an advertisement on the Internet are negligible compared to the potentially unlimited audience of this medium (Bussler & Davis, 2001-2002; Cober, Brown, Blumental, Doverspike, & Levy, 2000; Millman, 1998; Wyld, 1997). The internet is also perceived to be a method to address specific labour market niches through posting vacancies on websites for special interest groups, on electronic forums or discussions groups, and on niche sites such as bilingual-jobs.com, MBAfreeagents.com, or asia-net.com (which targets Asian-language speakers) (Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004; Stimpson, 2004). The downside to this strategy is that there is a potential issue for organisations with regards to discrimination and equal opportunity employment, discussed later in this section.
A further advantage identified with advertising online is its utility in attracting the interest of perceived high quality people who are not actively searching for a job, also known as passive job seekers (Galanaki, 2002; Gutmacher, 2000; Smith et al., 2004). Underlying this concept is the argument that the internet acts as a database of information for organisations, including information pertaining to potential applicants, if organisations know how to find and use it (Gutmacher, 2000; Leonard, 2000). This phenomena is closely linked to the concept of online social networking which occurs when individuals subscribe to or receive information about a company’s jobs and then either passes this information on to friends or colleagues, or refers a potential candidate directly to the company (Kaplan-Leiserson, 2005). The complexity in undertaking research on this phenomenon is attributed to the difficulty in capturing the subject pool for studies. As a result there is minimal information available on the benefits of passive applicants, although this topic is regularly highlighted as an area for future studies by researchers of e-recruitment (Galanaki, 2002; Smith & Rupp, 2004).

The utilisation of e-recruitment as part of the recruitment process has been linked to a number of perceived advantages from both an applicant and an organisational viewpoint that are not as applicable to the more traditional recruitment sources. The accessibility of the internet for organisations and individuals is one of the primary benefits associated with internet recruitment as this medium can be accessed 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can reach people on a local, national and international scale, with minimal restriction on who can view the information. Another advantage cited relates to the unlimited amount of information that can be provided by this medium with minimal expenditure required. The final key benefit of internet recruitment is the increased capability for organisations to target passive candidates, a crucial recruitment strategy for hard to fill jobs or during labour shortage periods. As with all recruitment sources, there are not only unique advantages related to the medium, but there are also a number of perceived disadvantages unique to the source which warrant discussion to ensure organisations utilise the source appropriately to maximise positive outcomes. An outline of the common disadvantages related to e-recruitment will now be presented.
2.8.3 **Perceived Disadvantages of e-recruitment**

In reviewing the impact of e-recruitment on the organisational recruitment process there have been a number of disadvantages identified by a range of authors (Capelli, 2001; Feldman et al., 2002). Of major concern is the perception that internet recruitment will generate a high quantity of applications (Carlson et al., 2002; Chyna, 2001; Dessler, 2002). This outcome is attributed primarily to the diversity and geographical reach of the source, which becomes both an advantage and a disadvantage to recruiting online. As the Internet has a globalised market, then it can be assumed that more potential applicants can access and view the job being advertised from anywhere in the world. In addition, as the majority of job seekers store their resumè electronically, submitting an application via electronic means requires less effort and involves fewer costs for the individual than traditional methods (Galanaki, 2002; Gutmacher, 2000; Smith et al., 2004). As a result, an assumption has been made that the number of applications received by the organisation for jobs advertised on the internet will increase. Whilst an increase in the size of the applicant pool allows the organisation to be more selective, potentially resulting in superior candidates being hired and subsequent improvements in organisational performance, a large applicant pool can also have the negative effect of increasing costs in administering recruitment and selection systems (Carlson et al., 2002). It is therefore important to determine whether the introduction of the internet as a source has led to the assumed increase in applications, forming the basis of the first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: That e-recruitment increases the number of applications received.*

It is proposed that this increase in quantity does not necessarily result in an increase in quality applications. As Barber (1998) noted, small applicant pools provide the organisation with few options about which applicant to recruit, whilst large applicant pools place heavy burdens on the organisation’s administrative system and may lead to the most suitable applicant being overlooked if the recruitment and selection process is insufficient. Thus, the primary objective of the recruitment process is identifying and attracting an applicant pool limited to a pre-determined ideal number
of candidates who possess the right attributes (Barber, 1998; Moser, 2005; Rynes et al., 1990).

The research by Rafaeli et al. (2005) which investigated source effectiveness in terms of the quality of applicants produced findings which indicated that recruitment sources do impact on the quality of applicants in terms of the total number of hires per source. Epstein and Singh (2003) also explored the source superiority theory associated with recruitment by attempting to ascertain the quality of applicants recruited via the internet as opposed to other recruitment sources through turnover measures. The results of their study indicated that applicants recruited from the internet had a turnover ratio of 55% with the only other source with a higher turnover ratio being newspapers (60%). The lowest turnover ratio was associated with employees hired from an agency (13%). Whilst this appears to be a negative outcome for the use of the internet as a source, their study did indicate that the number of qualified applicants recruited from the internet is increasing (16%) however for that particular organisation 46% of successful applicants were recruited internally or through a referral process. Source superiority is of importance to organisations as they need to ensure they are using the best sources to reach identified target markets.

The attempt to assess the quality of applicants from e-recruitment is of relevance to the current study. Research needs to be undertaken to establish if quality is increased inline with the proposed increase in volume of applications or whether the number of quality applications remains constant regardless of the applicant pool size. For the purposes of this study quality is defined as the number of shortlisted applicants and the number of appointed (successful) applicants who were assessed as having met specific requisite knowledge, skills and abilities identified by the organisation for the job, as opposed to measuring post-hire outcomes which was the approach used by Epstein and Singh (2003). Therefore, the following research question is proposed:

*Research Question 1: How does e-recruitment impact on the quality of applications received?*

There is also concern expressed in the literature that the increasing volume of general job boards will result in increased difficulties for applicants to locate vacancies that
match their requirements (Bartram, 2000; Boehle, 2000). One strategy being adopted by organisations to counteract this issue is by pointing job advertisements from all recruitment sources back to a dedicated job webpage on the company’s own website which is cheaper and enables all positions for the organisation to be listed in the one location (Lee, 2005).

Hinton and Schapper (2000) expressed dissatisfaction and frustration with applying for jobs online where they were regularly asked to select from pre-determined job categories that did not fit with their skills, experience and abilities. This confusion and negativity was also reflected in the findings of Feldman and Klaas’s (2002) study whereby one participant alluded to the difficulty in distinguishing job classifications and used the example of a manager searching for a position in a technical profession and under which job category they should search in: “engineer”, “manager”, “technical” or “professional”. Research in this area provides results from both ends of the spectrum. High levels of dissatisfaction were reported from applicants who encountered some degree of failure in applying for jobs online, whilst for companies that had tested and implemented more sophisticated systems, there were high levels of satisfaction and positive reactions to the experience by the applicant (Bartram, 2000).

In addition to where the jobs are advertised, there are ongoing concerns with the information being posted via this source about the job and the organisation. Whilst one of the advantages cited was the potential for e-recruitment to be more interactive and provide in-depth information (Bingham et al., 2002; Epstein et al., 2003; McCurry, 2005), concerns have been expressed about the potential for the information to be not of high quality, for it to be perceived in a negative way, or for too much information to confuse potential applicants and cause disinterest in the job or organisation (Gale, 2001).

A recent study by Rozelle and Landis (2002) contributed to the research on the realistic information hypothesis, discussed previously, through the attempt to determine whether the internet is a formal or informal source. The authors endeavoured to classify the Internet as a formal recruitment source due to the minimal contact between the candidate and organisation during the recruitment
process. The researchers were required to identify this classification in order to investigate their primary hypothesis that explored whether the use of the Internet as an information source correlated negatively with the amount of perceived realistic information provided about the organisation. The results did not support this hypothesis. Instead the findings indicated that greater use of the website was associated with perceptions of having obtained more information about the organisation, thereby indicating that the Internet would be more appropriately classified as an informal recruitment source. Understanding whether e-recruitment is perceived by applicants to provide realistic information will assist organisations with decisions about how much and what information to post on the web that will assist in attracting suitable candidates, and allow non-suitable candidates to self-select out of the recruitment process.

The previous research within the recruitment literature has explored the impact of information provided by the source on applicant attraction and their perceptions of fit with the job and the organisation, as discussed previously in the P-J fit and P-O fit theory review. Overall the results on these fit theories indicate that an applicant’s job-choice decision process can be influenced by both job-related and organisational related attributes (Barber, 1998; Carless, 2005). These attributes, as portrayed by the recruitment source lead the applicant to assess their fit with the organisation and the job, and subsequently self-select in or out of the recruitment process.

Research on the realistic information hypothesis and the P-J an P-O fit theories have incorporated a range of recruitment sources but there has only been one study which has attempted to assess these theories against internet source effects. Furthermore, the studies have predominantly been based on post-hire measures such as turnover, job performance and job satisfaction. As such there has been a gap identified with the need to measure pre-hire outcomes, and to incorporate the internet as a source to assess its effectiveness as compared with more traditional sources. The current study will therefore undertake an assessment of applicant perceptions about the job and organisation, based on information provided by source, with the pre-hire outcome of their intention to pursue the job at the time of application, based on the following hypothesis:
Hypothesis 2: That recruitment sources impact on applicants’ perceptions of jobs which influences their intention to pursue the position applied for

Whilst the diversity of e-recruitment is a positive element to recruiting through the internet, there is still the concern that organisations will breach equal employment opportunity legislation and diversity in organisations may be affected (Flynn, 2002; Lee, 2006; McCurry, 2005; Mullich, 2004). For many job seekers, the internet is still not the first recruitment source used and there is potential that a ‘digital divide’ will be created between people who can readily access computers and those who are unable to (Flynn, 2002; Keller, 1995; Mooney, 2002; Mullich, 2004), particularly between developed and non-developed countries.

Furthermore, people who are from minority or identified groups (e.g. disabled or Indigenous people) or who are geographically dispersed (e.g. rural) may not use this medium to source jobs vacant (Wyld, 1997), either because they don’t have access to the Internet or are not comfortable with such technology (Bartram, 2000; Galanaki, 2002; Mooney, 2002). Of interest were the findings by Kuhn and Skuterud (2000) that the gender divide was minimal, with females utilising the internet to source job vacancies as often as males. Without further research into the topic, it is difficult to ascertain whether the internet has a greater probability of discrimination than other recruitment sources. It is commonly agreed amongst authors that organisations should research and utilise a mixture of advertising sources that will ensure a wide and diverse market relevant to the job and the organisation are reached (Berry, 2004; Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004).

In the study undertaken by Feldman and Klaas (2002) a number of characteristics were identified about individuals who use the Internet to search for jobs. Their study indicated that individuals who were unrestricted about geographic location of the position and who had a broad set of preferences regarding firm size used on-line job hunting more extensively than other individuals. Furthermore, a higher desired salary increase by the applicant resulted in a more intensive use of the internet to job hunt. Interestingly though, whilst the diversity of the positions being advertised, and people recruited via the internet has been acknowledged, there are still very few
numbers of executive level roles advertised and filled via this source being reported (Stimpson, 2004).

Another concern which has been raised in numerous papers are privacy and security issues expressed by candidates regarding the personal details provided in resumes and applications posted via the Internet, and the potential for this information to be used for unethical purposes (Bartram, 2000; Feldman et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). There are also privacy concerns for passive job candidates not interested in being targeted whose details are accessed via back-door measures by head-hunters through corporate websites (Piturro, 2000). Some commercial websites and organisations are attempting to address this issue by introducing passwords to limit access and protect confidentiality, and by including privacy and job security statements on their career websites (Lee, 2005).

Other key issues that have been identified with e-recruitment include difficulties in posting resumes and applications; poor navigational links within and between sites; network problems in web searches; difficulties in accessing relevant information about jobs on web-sites (eg. job descriptions, salary levels, location of job and travel requirements); and lack of follow-up from organisations about the status of the job (Anonymous, 2000; Feldman et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002).

A review of the literature on e-recruitment has identified numerous perceived disadvantages being linked to this recruitment source which can have negative implications for the organisation’s overall recruitment process as discussed previously. The biggest disadvantage cited is the potential for large quantities of applications being received which bury quality applications and place extra burdens on the organisation in culling the applicant pools. From an applicant perspective the large number of job boards increases the difficulties with locating suitable vacancies. Furthermore, privacy and security issues in relation to personal information retained on the internet are also of concern. From an organisational perspective there can be problems with the marketing of jobs and information portrayed which could positively or negatively influence potential applicants, to be discussed later. Other disadvantages associated with e-recruitment include technological problems, lack of follow-up by organisations, and difficulties for candidates in identifying with the pre-
established job classifications used by job boards. Finally, diversity has been highlighted as both an advantage and disadvantage of e-recruitment. From a negative perspective a digital divide still exists where not everyone can access the internet and demographic characteristics also have the potential to affect e-recruitment usage.

Whilst the use of the internet as a recruitment source has been proclaimed within the literature as vastly improving an organisation’s recruitment process as a whole, there is a need for further research on its effectiveness in sourcing quality applicants. The advantages and disadvantages highlighted within the literature on e-recruitment provide numerous avenues for future research on this subject but is beyond the scope of the current study. It is therefore important to obtain an overall insight into the perceptions of organisations about e-recruitment’s effectiveness to verify or dispel some of these views. With the recruitment and selection of staff being one of the primary tasks undertaken by human resource practitioners, their first-hand experience with e-recruitment will provide constructive feedback in relation to the overall value and utility of the internet as a recruitment source in their recruitment strategy. The following research question is therefore proposed:

**Research Question 2: What views do HR professionals involved in the recruitment process have about the utility and value of the Internet as a recruitment source?**

As briefly mentioned in the previously outlined disadvantages of e-recruitment, the final area of concern with relation to e-recruitment has been the difficulty expressed with regards to marketing Internet recruitment as organisations face the challenge of achieving a balance between utility and creativity in delivering recruitment messages that will leave a positive impact on potential candidates (Cober, Brown, & Levy, 2004). The study undertaken by Cober et al. (2004) confirmed the previous research findings of Williamson et al. (2003) who ascertained that bright colours, pictures, and features such as sound and animation increase the aesthetic pleasure of a website. The conclusions drawn from these studies imply that for e-recruitment to be effective as a source, companies should invest in in-depth research and development of recruitment sites that appeal to and attract candidates in terms of both look and content (Williamson, Lepak, & King, 2003). Dineen, Noe and Ash (2002) explored attraction in terms of content attraction, such as whether the organisational work
values influence an applicant’s intention and subsequent action to apply for a position. Their findings identified that the web holds a unique advantage in recruitment in terms of recruiters being able to provide tailored feedback/responses to individuals via the internet in relation to jobs or the organisation which has the subsequent ability to influence attraction levels and applicant self-selection. The authors emphasise that caution should be exercised as the wrong amount or type of feedback may reduce applicant attraction levels.

As indicated previously, the research on the realistic information and P-J and P-O fit theories discussed previously within the literature review, focuses on the information provided about the job and the organisation. Literature suggests that aside from the discussion about the amount of realistic information to provide, the job title, design and content of the advertisement in terms of the employment benefits advertised influences potential applicants either positively or negatively, and can impact on their decision to apply for a job (Courtis, 1994; Dessler, 2002).

Development of the recruitment message content has been identified by Breaugh and Stark (2000) as being a crucial element in the establishment of the recruitment strategy as what is offered by the employer to applicants is as important as how the recruitment process is implemented (Langan, 2000). The experience that HR practitioners have in developing and placing recruitment advertisements on a regular basis will provide valuable insight into those components of a job advertisement that are perceived to be of high importance to applicants from a practitioners point of view. An organisational perspective of applicant attraction variables has not been evident in the P-J and P-O fit research so was an identified gap for the current research. To explore the characteristics deemed crucial in attracting applicants from an organisational perspective, the final following research question has been developed:

Research Question 3: What are the key considerations for HR practitioners when preparing an advertisement for a position vacant?
2.9 CONCLUSION

The research undertaken in the present study is being conducted to address a number of gaps within recruitment research. The study aims to explore the effectiveness of recruitment sources in generating quality applicants, with a particular focus on the internet as a source, a relatively unstudied source in terms of its effectiveness in generating quality applicants. Source effectiveness is being assessed by researching pre-hire recruitment outcomes in terms of the quantity and quality of applicants. Pre-hire measures have had minimal exposure in recruitment research. Source effectiveness will also be assessed from both organisational and applicant perspectives. These perspectives have not been incorporated into one study previously and will provide a holistic view of source effectiveness. The overarching research question being addressed in the current study is: Does e-recruitment add value to the recruitment process of organisations as opposed to traditional recruitment sources such as newspaper advertisements, referrals from friends and/or relatives, or other sources?

The literature on the relatively new recruitment source, e-recruitment, has identified a number of perceived advantages and disadvantages associated with this source, however there has been little empirical research undertaken to verify the claims made. Of key concern to organisations is the impact of e-recruitment on the immediate outcome of the recruitment process, the generation of applicants. Researchers and practitioners have acknowledged that whilst a larger applicant pool provides the organisation with the opportunity to be more selective, and should ultimately result in the identification of the best person for the job, it has been acknowledged within the literature that a negative effect of a large applicant pool are the increased costs in administering the recruitment process, with the possibility that the best candidate can be overlooked (Barber, 1998; Carlson et al., 2002). Given the global reach of the internet and the increased ease with which applicants can apply, it has been proposed that the internet as a recruitment source has led to an increase in application numbers, forming the basis of the first hypothesis:

*Hypothesis 1: That e-recruitment increases the number of applications received.*
The question that subsequently arises from this hypothesis is whether the quality of applicants also increases parallel to the increase in applications, or whether candidate quality actually remains constant or decreases. As has been acknowledged within the research on recruitment, the goal of the recruitment process is to attract an applicant pool that has a sufficient number of high quality candidates (Breaugh, 1992), and does not overwhelm the organisation’s recruitment process. A number of researchers have attempted to assess the impact of source on the quality of applicants. The majority of this research has been based on traditional sources such as newspapers, employment agencies, referrals, walk-ins and rehires. The measures of effectiveness have been post-hire in nature, including measures on job performance, satisfaction and turnover. This study therefore proposes to investigate source effectiveness with a specific focus on the little researched internet source. The quality of applicants defined for this study are identified as those candidates who meet and would have the capability to perform minimum pre-requisite criteria (knowledge, skills and abilities) of the position as determined by the organisation, so the pre-hire measures of the number of applicants shortlisted and appointed are proposed to be a good assessment of quality. As these pre-hire measures have not received much attention in recruitment research, the study will explore the outcomes of the quantity and quality of applicants, based on the following proposed research question:

*Research Question 1: How does e-recruitment impact on the quality of applications received?*

A major area of recruitment research captured within the studies on the realistic information hypothesis, and the person-job and person-organisation fit theories, are the perceptions of applicants on the information provided about the job and organisation. The research on applicant perceptions has indicated that that if the information about the job or organisation, as portrayed by the recruitment source, reflect or are similar to the characteristics and beliefs of the individual then they will be more likely to pursue the job (Dineen et al., 2002; Highhouse et al., 2003; Rynes et al., 1993). The studies on applicant perceptions of fit have also predominantly used the post-hire outcome measures of job performance, satisfaction and turnover with a lack of research on the immediate pre-hire outcome of recruitment, this being the attraction of applicants and their intentions toward the job. The ability to
understand the requirements of the job, the amount of immediate information available or easily accessible, and the characteristics of the job itself (ie. salary, challenging/interesting work, opportunity to use abilities) influence applicants’ perceptions of the usefulness of the recruitment source and their intention to pursue a job. Therefore, this study proposes the following hypothesis to clarify the relationship between recruitment source, applicant perceptions and intention to pursue a job:

_Hypothesis 2: That recruitment sources impact on applicants’ perceptions of jobs which influences their intention to pursue the position applied for_

The clear message from both an organisational and an individual perspective is the need for value in the recruitment process, stemming from the recruitment sources used to reach target markets. There is a plethora of research on source effectiveness with the results suggesting that informal sources such as rehires, referrals and direct applications, provide better quality candidates than formal sources, as determined by the measurement of post-hire outcomes. There has been little empirical research undertaken on the effectiveness of the internet as a source in contrast to the abundance of articles citing perceived advantages and disadvantages related to this source. This study will therefore undertake an exploration to confirm if these claims are correct, and whether e-recruitment is an effective recruitment source to use. This exploration will be based on the perceptions of those professionals who interact with e-recruitment on a daily basis, the HR practitioners within organisations. Effectiveness will be explored in terms of the perceived utility (ie. usefulness for the applicant and the organisation) and value (eg. cost-effectiveness and benefits to the organisation) of the source, with the following research question proposed:

_Research Question 2: What views do HR professionals involved in the recruitment process have about the utility and value of the Internet as a recruitment source?_

In conjunction with the decision to be made about which source/s to use when preparing to advertise a position, organisations must also consider the content and layout of the advertisement itself. Literature suggests that the job title, design and content of the advertisement in terms of the employment benefits advertised
influences potential applicants either positively or negatively, and can impact on their decision to apply for a job (Courtis, 1994; Dessler, 2002) as reflected in the realistic information hypothesis and person-job and person-organisation fit theories. It is important to assess whether the perceptions of organisations, and in particular Human Resource practitioners, reflect the perceptions of applicants about what information is important for job advertisements. To explore the perceptions of HR practitioners, the following research question is proposed:

**Research Question 3:** What are the key considerations for HR practitioners when preparing an advertisement for a position vacant?

### 2.9.1 Overview of the Research Design

In order to assess the effectiveness of sources, the study explores two perspectives, one at the organisational level and the other perspective at the individual level. The hypotheses and research questions being explored are represented by the following model (Figure 2.2) which captures the two perspectives being explored.

**Figure 2.2. A Model to Assess the Effectiveness of Recruitment Sources for Organisations**
In order to capture data from both perspectives, the research has been undertaken in two studies:

**Study One** will focus on Hypotheses 1 and 2, and Research Question 1. The study will capture quantitative data from the organisation to assess the value of recruitment sources (the quantity and quality of applications) and will also capture the perceptions of applicants in terms of the impact of recruitment sources and subsequent intentions to pursue the job.

**Study Two** builds on the results of Study One, and will incorporate Research Questions 2 and 3. The study will initially capture the perspectives of HR professionals on what characteristics should be portrayed by the job advertisement to gain the attention and interest of applicants, based on a number of the findings of Study One, and the information discussed within the literature review. Secondly, this study will capture the experience and perceived views of HR Practitioners on the utility and the value of the internet as a recruitment source in comparison to other sources.

### 2.9.2 Thesis Structure

As a result of the unique design of the current research, an overview of the structure of the thesis will be presented based on the two studies previously outlined.

Chapter Three will outline the research design and rationale used within Study One to capture the data. This will be followed by a presentation of the results obtained from the data analysis and a subsequent discussion of the findings in relation to the effectiveness of sources.

Study Two will be discussed in Chapter Four, which will provide an overview of the study design and rationale, followed by a presentation and subsequent discussion of the results of the qualitative data.

A final discussion of the results of Study One and Study Two will be presented in Chapter Five which will also incorporate the implications of the research from a
theoretical and practical perspective. Limitations to the current study and directions for future research will also be outlined within Chapter Five.
CHAPTER THREE
STUDY ONE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter Three presents the research related to Study One, which investigates the recruitment outcomes of the quantity and quality of applications received by source, and an assessment of the impact of recruitment sources on applicant perceptions and their subsequent intention to pursue the job. The research population and design will initially be presented, followed by an overview of the measures used within this study. The results of the study will then be presented, which will be followed by a discussion of the findings in relation to the two hypotheses and one research question proposed for Study One.

3.2 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

3.2.1 Sampling Frame
The sampling frame consists of applicants who applied for positions at a large University from South-East Queensland, and new hires who were recruited by the organisation. This organisation has been selected because of the policies and procedures that are inherent in this type of organisation that may impact either positively or negatively on recruitment and selection procedures, and because of the broad spectrum of jobs available. As identified within the literature, previous studies have been predominantly job specific, whilst the current population to be studied encompasses a broad range of job types, including blue collar (eg. gardeners, facilities staff, tradesmen), white collar (eg. administrative, marketing, finance, human resources), senior executive staff and academics.

3.2.2 Sample Data was collected from applicants who applied for positions vacant within the organisation over a period of fifteen months. A total of five hundred and thirteen (513) responses were received, four hundred and thirty-two (432) responses via e-mail, and eighty-one (81) replies in response to the mail-out. Participants ranged in age from 18 years to 66 years of age, with a mean age of 37.85 years. Of
the 513 responses, one hundred and ninety-five (195) were males, and three hundred and fifteen (315) were females. There were three hundred and fifty (350) respondents who originated from Australia, twenty-five (25) from Great Britain, twenty-two (22) from India, seventeen (17) from New Zealand, with the remainder originating from a wide range of countries.

Respondents were also asked about the number of years they have participated in the workforce, which ranged from 0 years to 45 years, with a mean participation rate of 16.54 years. The highest level of education that respondents could select from ranged from Grade 10 or below to Postdoctorate (PhD) level, with one hundred and twenty-seven (127) respondents (approximately 25%) indicating that they held an undergraduate degree, one hundred (100) respondents holding a Masters, eighty (80) respondents with a PhD, and the remainder of respondents distributed across the other seven categories as indicated in Table 3.1.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education Level</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade 10 or below</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grade 12 or equivalent</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diploma/Cert from TAFE</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>127</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Honours degree</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate certificate from University</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate diploma from University</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masters</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PhD</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>513</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Participants were also asked to indicate the type of position applied for. 74.46% of respondents applied for positions within the professional staff employment group which include positions such as information technology, marketing, administrative, finance, human resources, student support and facilities. 18.13% of participants applied for positions within the academic employment group (associate lecturer, lecturer, senior lecturer, associate professor, professor) and 3.51% of respondents applied for a senior staff position. The remainder did not indicate what type of position they applied for.
3.3 METHOD

Two data collection methods were used within Study One: secondary data obtained from the organisation, and data obtained from applicant surveys (electronic and mail). These methods will be discussed, followed by a section outlining the measures used within the survey.

3.3.1 Secondary Data

Historical data from the past nine years was obtained from the organisation. The nine year period consisted of four years pre-internet and five years post-internet use by the organisation as a recruitment source. The secondary data provided information on the number of vacancies advertised and the number of applications received over the nine year period, and whether there had been an increase since the Internet was introduced as a recruitment source. This longitudinal focus of the study increases the validity of the analysis of applicant data particularly as it relates to e-recruitment effectiveness.

Secondary data was also obtained on the original recruitment source used by both shortlisted applicants and those applicants that were successful in obtaining positions over a twelve month period. This data established the frequency of use of the Internet as a source and also assessed the quality of applications as these applicants were required to have met minimum pre-requisite selection criteria for the position as defined by the organisation. The year selected for this secondary data capture was chosen for two reasons. Firstly, the organisation had by the start of this year finished implementing systems to capture the data within the Human Resource Information System relevant for the study. Secondly, the year chosen was the fifth consecutive year that e-recruitment had been incorporated into the organisation’s recruitment strategy so the reliability of the data captured was deemed higher for the purposes of this study.

3.3.2 Surveys

A survey was made available to all applicants who applied for positions vacant within the organisation over a fifteen month period. A link to an on-line survey was included in the electronic acknowledgement e-mail that is automatically generated by
the organisation for individuals who e-mailed their application for the position they were applying for. Once a respondent completed and submitted the on-line survey, the results of the survey were automatically e-mailed to the researcher.

Furthermore, an additional 300 surveys were delivered via mail over a three week period to those individuals who submitted an application via alternate means, either by post, fax, or hand-delivery. The questions were structured into a five page questionnaire (refer Appendix 2). To maximise the return rate of the posted survey, preaddressed, stamped envelopes were included in the package.

Provided as a link to the on-line survey, and attached to the front of the questionnaire was an Information Sheet (refer Appendix 1) which informed participants that the survey was being undertaken to capture their views and opinions of recruitment processes and sources and that participation was voluntary. Participants were also assured that at no time would their questionnaire responses influence their application for employment at the organisation and that answers were to only be viewed by the researchers and not anyone involved in the selection process for the job they applied for. The Information Sheet also provided contact details of the researchers and the supervisor to enable potential respondents an opportunity to clarify any issues or problems regarding the survey. The research survey received approval of the University Ethics Committee.

3.3.2.1 Pre-Test A pre-test was initially undertaken prior to the distribution of the actual study to determine feasibility of the study, ensuring that items used were ordered and worded logically and thus understandable by potential respondents and to also confirm that the online survey was functioning correctly. Participants identified for the pre-test were work colleagues and associates known by the author who were able to receive the survey via email and access the online survey.

Participants were emailed a link to the online survey. Participants were asked to respond to the survey as if they had applied for a job with the organisation and were requested to provide feedback on the ease of completing the survey, any problems they may have had in understanding questions or the terminology/language used, and any other feedback they could provide.
Eight responses were received from the pre-test. The participants indicated that there were no problems in understanding the questions and confirmed that the survey was logically ordered and easy to complete. Some feedback suggested that a change to the aesthetics of the survey (e.g., use of background colour for the questions) would assist the appeal of the survey, thus potentially leading to an increase in the response rate. This feedback resulted in a change to the background colours for the final survey to break the questions up so respondents could more easily distinguish each question. The pre-test also confirmed that the online survey was functioning correctly and the responses to the survey were successfully emailed to the author once the respondent had submitted the survey.

### 3.4 Survey Measures

#### 3.4.1 Recruitment Source

There were two measures used for the recruitment source which consisted of four independent variables: Internet source, newspaper advertisement, friends/relatives, and an additional box labelled “other” with a space for the subject to describe what alternative source was used.

**3.4.1.1 Recruitment source for job applied for** Participants indicated how they first located the position vacant by checking one of four sources of recruitment. Similar self-report questionnaires have been used in a number of previous studies to gather information on participants’ recruitment source (Barber et al., 1994; Blau, 1994; Breaugh et al., 1984; Kirnan et al., 1989; Saks, 1994). Recruitment sources included in this study were selected after consultation with staff of the Human Resources Department at the Queensland University of Technology who considered newspaper advertisements, internet postings and word of mouth advertising through friends and relatives to be the most common recruitment sources used by the organisation.

**3.4.1.2 Recruitment source for future job search** The second measure investigated the recruitment source most commonly used by applicants to locate jobs vacant that they would be eligible to apply for. This measure was introduced to ascertain whether organisations are still perceived by applicants to predominantly use the
traditional recruitment source of newspapers as opposed to other sources. To measure this, subjects were asked about the likelihood that they would use the same sources mentioned in the first item (newspaper, internet, friends/relatives or other) to regularly find jobs that suit their needs and skills. Ratings were provided on a 6-point Likert scale with anchors 0 = Very Unlikely to 5 = Very Likely, and a sixth anchor of “Unsure”.

### 3.4.2 Applicant Perceptions

There were four dependent variables associated with the measure of applicant perceptions: advertisement placement/information; comprehension; usefulness of information; interest in the job. The independent measures for each variable of applicant perception are presented in Table 3.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependant Variable</th>
<th>Measure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Attention/advertisement placement</td>
<td>Ease in finding the advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of job title in bringing advertisement to attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of advertisement location in gaining attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impact of advertisement layout in gaining attention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Comprehension</td>
<td>Ease in understanding the information in the advertisement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Useful information gained</td>
<td>Additional information obtained</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in the Job</td>
<td>Salary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Opportunity to use my abilities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Challenging work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Interesting work</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3.4.2.1 Advertisement Placement/Information

This measure explored the ease with which subjects noticed the advertisement. Respondents provided ratings on a 5-point scale (‘extremely difficult’ to ‘extremely easy’). The second measure explored what aspects of the advertisement assisted in attracting the subject’s attention. Three specific characteristics of the advertisement perceived to be of interest to applicants were used for this measure with responses recorded on a 5-point Likert scale (‘no impact’ to ‘high impact’). The three characteristics included: (1) job title; (2) advertisement location; and (3) advertisement layout.
3.4.2.2 Comprehension Adequacy of the content of the advertisement in providing applicants with a basic understanding of the position title and duties to be undertaken in the role was measured using an item that asked participants how easy it was to understand the information in the advertisement. Participants provided ratings on a 5-point Likert scale with anchors 0 = Very Difficult to 5 = Very Easy.

3.4.2.3 Usefulness of Information This measure asked participants whether they were required to obtain additional information about the position vacant or the organisation after first locating the advertisement (‘yes’ or ‘no’) to assist in understanding the requirements of the position. If respondents answered ‘Yes’ they were then asked to identify where the additional information was obtained from by checking one of three information sources: organisational website, telephone request to the organisation for information mail-out; and an additional box labelled “other” with a space provided for the subject to describe the source of information. These options evolved from discussions with staff of the Human Resources Department from the organisation who identified the methods applicants could use to obtain additional information about job vacancies.

3.4.2.4 Interest in the Job To assess applicants’ interest in the position, the “job” category identified in Thomas and Wise’s (1999) study was incorporated into this study. The item asked participants to identify the importance of four factors when considering applying for a job. One change was made by the author to the original scale of Thomas & Wise (1999) with their third factor of “challenging and interesting work” being separated into two distinct factors that warrant separate measures. Participants were asked to provide ratings on a 7-point Likert scale which ranged from 1 = ‘extremely unimportant’ to 7 = ‘extremely important’. The factors included: (1) salary; (2) opportunity to use my abilities; (3) challenging and (4) interesting work.

A technological fault with some of the on-line survey responses led to missing values for one-fifth of the data for one of the four factors listed in the item: “challenging work”. As outlined above, an original measure of Thomas & Wise’s (1999) survey, that of “challenging and interesting work” was separated into two distinct factors for
this study. An analysis was undertaken of the 400 people who responded to both of the factors (“challenging work” and “interesting work”) which determined that the two measures received similar responses, a correlation of 0.744. It was therefore decided to substitute the missing values in the “challenging work” measure with each subject’s response to the “interesting work” measure to complete the missing data.

The current study investigated the average of applicants’ interest in the job, therefore the results of the four factors were subsequently combined for data analysis under a new variable titled “average of interest in the job” with a reliability scale of .82.

3.4.3 Intention to Pursue the Job

The final dependant variable used within the study explored applicants’ intentions to pursue the job they applied for. Intentions toward the job were assessed by adapting items from Highhouse et al.’s (2003) research on intentions toward the company. Highhouse et al. (2003) had selected and modified a number of items from prior studies in this area (Ployhart & Ryan, 1998; Rynes et al., 1983; Schwoerer et al., 1989).

The five items in Highhouse et al.’s (2003) study were designed to focus on the behavioural intentions of applicants regarding the company rather than the job, however, the items were reworded within this study to focus on the job applied for to provide a measure for this variable. The items were initially reduced from five to three which were considered relevant to the study. The remaining three items were then reworded to focus on job, not company. The items included ‘I would accept the job I applied for; I would make this job one of my first choices; I would exert a great deal of effort to get this job’. Subjects provided ratings measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = ‘strongly disagree’ to 5 = ‘strongly agree’). The coefficient alpha for this scale was .86.

3.4.4 Demographic Data

The survey contained eight questions to gather demographic information about the respondents. Demographic measures included gender, age, country of origin, highest level of education, and number of years in the workforce. Three additional questions were incorporated to provide information about the position that the subject had
applied for within the University to provide data on any links associated between the job and the recruitment source used. These questions included job category and level (e.g. Professional Staff: HEWA4; Academic Staff: Level B; Senior Staff); type of position (Full-time v Part-time, Ongoing v Fixed-term); and what campus the position was located at (Gardens Point, Kelvin Grove, Carseldine, Caboolture, Unsure).
3.5 RESULTS

3.5.1 Survey Descriptive Statistics

The following descriptive statistics relate to the data collected by the survey. The means, standard deviations and alpha coefficients for all variables of the survey are presented in Table 3.3. The variables measuring interest in the job and intention to pursue the job had reliability measures of .82 and .86 respectively.

Table 3.3 Means and Standard Deviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of sourcing jobs from newspaper</td>
<td>3.97</td>
<td>1.418</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of sourcing jobs from internet</td>
<td>4.64</td>
<td>.960</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of sourcing jobs from friends</td>
<td>3.14</td>
<td>1.442</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Likelihood of sourcing jobs from other sources</td>
<td>2.80</td>
<td>1.394</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease in finding the advertisement</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>.721</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of job title in bringing advert to attention</td>
<td>4.37</td>
<td>.904</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of ad location in gaining attention</td>
<td>3.38</td>
<td>1.288</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of ad layout in gaining attention</td>
<td>2.84</td>
<td>1.315</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease in understanding info in advert</td>
<td>4.42</td>
<td>.690</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in the job</td>
<td>5.93</td>
<td>.976</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intention to pursue the job</td>
<td>4.61</td>
<td>.613</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

3.5.2 Survey Intercorrelations

The intercorrelations between all variables in the survey are presented in Table 3.4.
Table 3.4 Intercorrelations between variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
<th>6</th>
<th>7</th>
<th>8</th>
<th>9</th>
<th>10</th>
<th>11</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Likelihood of sourcing jobs from newspaper</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Likelihood of sourcing jobs from internet</td>
<td>.180**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Likelihood of sourcing jobs from friends</td>
<td>-.020</td>
<td>-.014</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Likelihood of sourcing jobs from other sources</td>
<td>.072</td>
<td>.058</td>
<td>.292**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Ease in finding the advertisement</td>
<td>.029</td>
<td>.034</td>
<td>.059</td>
<td>-.056</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Impact of job title in bringing advert to attention</td>
<td>.154**</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.008</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.144**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Impact of ad location in gaining attention</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td>-.015</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td>.100*</td>
<td>.094*</td>
<td>.192*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Impact of ad layout in gaining attention</td>
<td>.187**</td>
<td>-.050</td>
<td>.038</td>
<td>.174**</td>
<td>.025</td>
<td>.134**</td>
<td>.518**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Ease in understanding info in advert</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>-.059</td>
<td>.012</td>
<td>-.053</td>
<td>.317**</td>
<td>.114*</td>
<td>.157*</td>
<td>.147**</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Interest in the job</td>
<td>.109*</td>
<td>.095*</td>
<td>-.035</td>
<td>.073</td>
<td>.069</td>
<td>.078</td>
<td>.142**</td>
<td>.067</td>
<td>.088*</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. Intention to pursue the job</td>
<td>.048</td>
<td>.057</td>
<td>-.004</td>
<td>.076</td>
<td>.094*</td>
<td>.170**</td>
<td>.060</td>
<td>.117*</td>
<td>.033</td>
<td>.081</td>
<td>1.00</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05   **p<.01
3.5.3 Demographics

To test the relationship between specific demographics and the dependant variables (attention/advertisement placement, comprehension, useful information gained, interest in the job, applicants’ intention to pursue), a number of independent t-tests were run. The first t-test examined the demographic variable of gender, with results indicating that there were no meaningful gender differences on the dependant variables. In order to explore the relationship between country of origin and the dependant variables, the variable of ‘Country of origin’ was re-coded into ‘Australia’ and ‘All Other Countries’. The t-test revealed that Australians find it easier to locate advertisements than other countries, but there was no other meaningful relationship attributed to a person’s country of origin and the remainder of the dependant variables.

To investigate the type of job applied for and any effects on the dependent variable, the variable ‘1st job applied for’ was re-coded into ‘Professional’ and ‘Academic’ staff, with the final value attributed to ‘Senior Staff’ classified as a missing value because of the low number of responses. The results of the t-test indicate that the advertisement layout in gaining applicants’ attention has more of an impact on professional staff than academic staff. Finally, a correlation was undertaken to test if there were any significant relationships between the demographic variables of ‘Age’ and ‘Approximate number of years in the workforce’ on the dependant variables. Results from the correlation indicate that older applicants are less likely to use the internet ($r = -.182$, $p < .01$).

3.5.4 Results for Hypotheses and Research Questions

3.5.4.1 Hypothesis One

_Hypothesis 1: That e-recruitment increases the number of applications received._

The first hypothesis explored the relationship between recruitment source and the quantity of applications received by the organisation, demonstrated by the component of the study model below. The specific focus of the hypothesis is to
determine whether the introduction of e-recruitment in the organisation resulted in an increase in the number of applications for the organisation.

To test the first hypothesis, a number of reports were generated from the organisation’s human resource information system which measured the number of applications received by the organisation each year and the number of vacancies advertised. The organisation introduced electronic recruitment in 2001 thus the data incorporates four years prior to the introduction of e-recruitment and five years post the introduction of e-recruitment. This data is represented in Table 3.5.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Number of jobs</th>
<th>Number of applications</th>
<th>Mean number of applications per job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1997</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>7,466</td>
<td>19.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>6,528</td>
<td>15.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>7,575</td>
<td>15.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>7,071</td>
<td>17.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2001</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>12,219</td>
<td>24.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>13,481</td>
<td>28.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>11,033</td>
<td>23.33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>8,297</td>
<td>16.24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2005</td>
<td>513</td>
<td>6,589</td>
<td>12.87</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data obtained indicates that the number of vacancies advertised remained fairly constant. The number of applications had a significant increase in 2001, the year that electronic recruitment was introduced, from 7,071 to 12,219, increasing the average number of applications per job significantly from 17.5 to 28.62 and providing initial support for the hypothesis that the use of the internet as a recruitment source increases the number of applications received by the organisation. These numbers remained high until 2004 when the numbers of applications per job decreased to similar averages that were received prior to the introduction of e-recruitment, down to 16.24 applications per job. This decrease coincides with a change to the
organisation’s e-recruitment strategy which ceased utilising two major Australian recruitment job boards.

To better understand the employment trends of the organisation a report was generated which placed the number of applications and jobs per year against the two key employment groups within the organisation, professional staff and academic staff. The results of this report are depicted in Figure 3.1. The results indicate that the increase in applications in 2001 is attributed primarily to the professional employment group, with only a gradual increase in academic applications. In contrast, the number of academic applications continued to increase after 2002, whilst the number of applications for professional vacancies declined significantly from 11,821 in 2002 to 9,198 in 2003, with another significant decrease to 6,517 in 2004.

**Figure 3.1 Number of applications per year based on employment group**

![Graph showing the number of applications per year for Academic and Professional groups](image)

3.5.4.2 Research Question One
Research Question 1: How does e-recruitment impact on the quality of applications received?

Research Question One explored the quality of applications sourced through the internet as compared to the proposed overall increase in the volume of applications received for positions, demonstrated by the component of the study model below:

In order to explore the first research question, a number of reports were generated from the organisation’s human resource information system based on data captured by the organisation. The first report detailed the number of applications received by the organisation each year and the number of applicants shortlisted each year. The data is presented in Table 3.6.

**Table 3.6 Percentage of applicants shortlisted**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of applications</td>
<td>7,466</td>
<td>6,528</td>
<td>7,575</td>
<td>7,071</td>
<td>12,219</td>
<td>13,481</td>
<td>11,033</td>
<td>8,297</td>
<td>6,589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of shortlisted applicants</td>
<td>1,235</td>
<td>1,232</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>1,137</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,432</td>
<td>1,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of applicants shortlisted</td>
<td>16.54</td>
<td>18.87</td>
<td>16.16</td>
<td>15.39</td>
<td>9.31</td>
<td>9.94</td>
<td>12.48</td>
<td>17.26</td>
<td>21.92</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With the introduction of a variety of internet recruitment sources in 2001 (job board, organisational website, media websites), an assumption that an increase in applications would result has been supported initially by the data (from 7,071 applications in 2000 to 12,219 in 2001 and 13,481 in 2003), although the number of applications has declined in recent years. Whilst applications increased, there was no comparative increase in the number of shortlisted applicants. The organisation has no limit on the number of applicants that can be shortlisted for each position, however
shortlisting is based on the applicants meeting established selection criteria to ensure only quality applicants are shortlisted. The data in Table 3.6 indicates that whilst on average between 15% and 19% of applicants were shortlisted over the period 1997 to 2000, this number decreased to 9.31% and 9.94% in 2001 and 2002 respectively. This decline in the percentage of shortlisted applicants provides evidence that whilst e-recruitment has increased the quantity of applications, it has not increased the quality of applicants applying for positions within the organisations as an increase in the percentage of shortlisted applicants would have resulted. This result is further supported by Table 3.7 which details the percentage of shortlisted applicants per job for each year. The percentage has remained relatively constant between 2001 and 2003 even though Table 3.6 indicated an increase in the number of applications over the same period of time.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1999</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2001</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2003</th>
<th>2004</th>
<th>2005</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Number of jobs</td>
<td>393</td>
<td>435</td>
<td>497</td>
<td>404</td>
<td>494</td>
<td>471</td>
<td>473</td>
<td>511</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of shortlisted applicants</td>
<td>1,235</td>
<td>1,232</td>
<td>1,224</td>
<td>1,088</td>
<td>1,137</td>
<td>1,340</td>
<td>1,377</td>
<td>1,432</td>
<td>1,444</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of shortlisted Applicants per job</td>
<td>31.82</td>
<td>35.31</td>
<td>40.60</td>
<td>37.13</td>
<td>43.45</td>
<td>35.15</td>
<td>34.35</td>
<td>35.68</td>
<td>35.53</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The second report generated the number of applications received from each recruitment source as identified by applicants over a period of one year. The sources in the report were grouped into three of the four key sources explored within this study: ‘newspaper’, ‘internet’, and ‘other’, with an additional category of ‘unknown’ where the source was either not recorded in the system or not supplied by the applicant. The internet source categories captured by the organisation included the organisational Website, Job eNewsletter, SEEK job board, Career One job board, My Career, and another category titled “Internet” to capture other internet sites. The newspaper sources utilised by the organisation included the Saturday Courier Mail, the Weekend Australian, the Australian Higher Education Supplement, the Courier Mail Higher Education Supplement, the Sydney Morning Herald, the Times, the
Koori Mail, the Melbourne Age and the National Indigenous Times. The categories of Placement Agencies, Professional and Overseas Journals and Internal (which for the purposes of this study were established as being either colleague sources or internal e-mail sources) were combined for the “Other” sources category. It should be noted that the organisation does not capture a unique category for friends/relatives.

Data from the second report were combined with data captured by a third report which provided a summary of the recruitment source initially used by shortlisted applicants to locate the vacancy over a one year period, and the recruitment source utilised by successful (appointed) shortlisted applicants over the same one year period. These measures were incorporated as shortlisted and appointed applicants for positions at the organisation were required to have met essential knowledge, skills and abilities to successfully fulfil the role, thus are deemed as quality applicants.

Table 3.8 displays the mean number of shortlisted applicants per recruitment source over a one year period. The data indicates that newspaper sources generate the highest quality applicants (mean=8.04) in terms of those applicants shortlisted for the position, ahead of the internet as a recruitment source (mean=4.85).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment Source</th>
<th>All Applicants</th>
<th>Shortlisted Applicants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>1029</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>8.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>4804</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>4.85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>156</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>2.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>606</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>2.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>6595</strong></td>
<td><strong>1412</strong></td>
<td><strong>4.67</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The data summarised in Table 3.9 provides information on the number of successful applicants (that is, those applicants offered the position) as a percentage of the number of shortlisted applicants per recruitment source over a one year period. Once again the data was grouped according to the recruitment sources used within this study: ‘newspaper’, ‘internet’, ‘other’, and the category ‘unknown’ as outlined previously.
The data indicates that the internet (39%), newspaper (36%) and other (41%) sources all generate approximately the same percentage of quality applicants in terms of those shortlisted applicants who were successfully offered the position. Overall, the results from Tables 3.8 and 3.9 demonstrate that there is no discernible increase in the quality of applicants that used the internet as a recruitment source as opposed to applicants that use newspaper or other recruitment sources, despite the increase in the quantity of applications that are associated with the use of e-recruitment.

Table 3.9 Percentage of successful applicants from the shortlisted pools per source in 2005

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment Source</th>
<th>Shortlisted Applicants</th>
<th>Successful Shortlisted Applicants</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>990</td>
<td>390</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>71</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unknown</td>
<td>223</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1412</td>
<td>487</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Further analysis of the data indicated that 15.79% of shortlisted applicants were internal to the University. As was to be expected, none of the shortlisted internal applicants sourced the vacancy from Newspapers, however 28.17% of the 71 Other shortlisted applicants were internal applicants, and 16.97% of the 990 Internet applicants shortlisted were internal applicants. This additional information indicates that for the organisation to attract quality external applicants, the Newspaper as a recruitment source provides the best results in terms of applicants being shortlisted, and applicants being appointed.

3.5.4.3 Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis 2: That recruitment sources impact on applicants’ perceptions of jobs which influences their intention to pursue the position applied for.

Hypothesis Two investigated the relationship between recruitment source, applicant perceptions and intention to pursue a job, as is demonstrated by the component of the study model below:
Results from the correlation (refer Table 3.3) indicate that job title and job layout (attention/ad placement) has significant importance to applicants who are most likely to source jobs from newspaper sources ($r=.154$, $p=.01$ and $r=.187$, $p=.01$ respectively). These two variables had no significance to applicants who were most likely to use the internet, friends or other sources to locate jobs. Job title was also found to be significantly related to applicants’ intentions to pursue the job. The significance of job title (attention/ad placement) and the dependant variable of applicants’ intention to pursue the job was higher for academic and senior staff positions ($r=.190$, $p=.05$) than it was for professional staff positions ($r=.154$, $p=.05$). The results provide some support to the hypothesis that recruitment sources impact applicants’ perceptions as measured by applicant attention, which does subsequently impact their intention to pursue the job.

The relationship between each recruitment source and the ease with which applicants understood the job (comprehension) were not significant ($r=.073$ for newspaper, $r=-.059$ for internet, $r=.012$ for friends, $r=-.053$ for other). To further test the hypothesis and predict the relationship between the ease in finding the advertisement (attention/ad placement) and ease in understanding the advertisement (comprehension) and the dependant variable of applicants’ intention to pursue the job, a regression analysis was undertaken. The results of the analysis did not support the hypothesis as the ease with which applicants’ found the advertisements and understood the information in the advertisements was not significantly related to their intention to pursue the job applied for ($R^2_{adj} = .005$, $F(2,503) = 2.236$, $p=.108$). The coefficients are indicated in Table 3.10.
Table 3.10  Coefficients for Ease in Finding and Ease in Understanding as Predictors of an Applicants Intention to Pursue the Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>( \beta )</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ease in finding the advertisement</td>
<td>.093</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease in understanding the advertisement</td>
<td>.004</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A univariate analysis of variance was then run to further explore the data and test whether the variables of recruitment source used by applicants and additional information obtained about the job impacted on applicants’ intentions to pursue the job. The results of the analysis indicate that there is no significance between the variables (\( F(3,497) = .891, p=.446 \)), thus the hypothesis was not supported. The means are presented in Table 3.11.

Table 3.11  Mean for Recruitment Source Used and Additional Information Obtained About the Job on Applicant Intention to Pursue the Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment Source</th>
<th>Additional Information Obtained About the Job</th>
<th>Mean</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.506</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.786</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.617</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Relatives</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.417</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>4.755</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No</td>
<td>4.778</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Recruitment source as a direct predictor of an applicant’s intention to pursue the job was shown through a regression analysis to be not significant (\( R^2_{\text{adj}} = .006, F(1,485) = 3.699, p=.055 \)). A multiple regression analysis was undertaken to explore whether the variables of recruitment source, impact of job title in bringing the advertisement to attention, ease in understanding information in the advertisement, impact of advertisement location in gaining attention and impact of advertisement layout in gaining attention were predictors of an applicant’s intention to pursue the job. The results indicate that the relationship is significant as a group (\( R^2_{\text{adj}} = .041, F(5,481) = 5.159, p=.000 \)). On an individual level, the recruitment source (\( \beta=.110 \)) was found to be a significant predictor of applicant intention when applicant attention was in included in the analysis, however the four variables of applicant
attention had no effect on this relationship. The impact of the job title ($\beta=.159$) and of the advertisement layout in gaining applicants attention ($\beta=.137$) were also significant at an individual level and therefore more likely predictors of the intention of applicants to pursue the job than the other variables. These results provide some support for the hypothesis. Table 3.12 presents a summary of the coefficients.

### Table 3.12 Coefficients for Recruitment Source and the Variables of Applicant Attention as Predictors of an Applicants Intention to Pursue the Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment source</td>
<td>.110*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of job title in bringing advert to attention</td>
<td>.159**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of ad location in gaining attention</td>
<td>-.035</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Impact of ad layout in gaining attention</td>
<td>.137**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ease in understanding info in advert</td>
<td>-.002</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p<.05  **p<.01

A multiple regression analysis was also used to test the predictability of recruitment source and the average of interest in the job on intention to pursue the job. The results of the analysis indicate that there is a significant relationship ($R^2_{adj} = .010$, $F(2,500) = 3.607$, $p = .028$). This provides partial support for the hypothesis in terms of the relationship between recruitment source ($\beta=.087$) and applicant intentions. Table 3.13 present a summary of the coefficients.

### Table 3.13 Coefficients for Recruitment Source and Average Interest in the Job as Predictors of an Applicants Intention to Pursue the Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variables</th>
<th>$\beta$</th>
<th>$P$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Recruitment source</td>
<td>.087</td>
<td>.049</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Average of interest in the job</td>
<td>.080</td>
<td>.073</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

An examination of the means of the sources, as displayed in Table 3.14, indicate that the recruitment source of “other” is more likely to impact on applicants’ intentions to pursue the job than the newspaper, internet or friends/relatives sources.
Table 3.14  Mean for Recruitment Source Effects on Applicant Intention to Pursue the Job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Recruitment Source</th>
<th>Applicant Intention to Pursue the Job</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper</td>
<td>4.646</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet</td>
<td>4.614</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends/Relatives</td>
<td>4.514</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>4.767</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The study did establish that the variables used to determine applicant perception were significantly related to each other. The results indicate that the job title was found to be significantly related to the ease with which applicants found the advertisement ($r = .144, p < .01$). Furthermore, the ease with which the job was found, and the impact of the job title, advertisement location and advertisement layout (the three variables which provided an indication of applicant comprehension) all had significance on the ease with which applicants understood the information in the advertisement ($r = .317, p = < .01, r = .114, p = < .05, r = .157, p = < .05, r = .147, p = < .01$ respectively).

Interestingly, the study also found that those applicants who were likely to source jobs from the newspaper were also likely to source jobs from the internet, whilst applicants who used friends or relatives to source jobs were more likely to use other methods alternative to newspapers and the internet to source jobs.
3.6 DISCUSSION

The current study has contributed to the research on recruitment by investigating the effectiveness of recruitment sources based on pre-hire constructs including applicant quantity and quality up to appointment. This approach was undertaken in response to the identification of this gap in research on recruitment sources as highlighted in the literature. The majority of previous research has evaluated recruitment source effectiveness by evaluating post-hire constructs (eg. employee tenure, performance and job satisfaction). However it has been argued that to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment sources, organisations should incorporate pre-hire criteria such as the total number of applicants generated, and the quality of the applicant pool (Carlson et al., 2002; Werbel et al., 1996; Williams et al., 1993).

Study One focused on investigating whether the introduction of the internet as a recruitment source added value to an organisation’s recruitment process. This was achieved firstly by analysing quantitative data from the organisation on applicants to determine the quantity and quality of applications received. These results were linked back to the recruitment sources used to indicate source effectiveness. The second component of Study One involved capturing and analysing data from job applicants of the organisation. This data was used to determine which recruitment sources are most frequently used to source job vacancies, and to explore whether recruitment sources impact on applicant perceptions about the job and organisation based on the advertisement information, and any subsequent impact on their intention to pursue the job. Of specific interest to the current study was the effectiveness and impact of e-recruitment on applicant perceptions and their job decision process.

3.6.1 Hypothesis One

Hypothesis One proposed that the introduction of the internet as a recruitment source by an organisation would result in an increase in the overall number of applications received. The findings from this study indicated that when the internet was first incorporated into the recruitment strategy and used by the organisation as a means of advertising positions in 2001, the number of applications did increase substantially.
This immediate increase in the volume of applications provides initial support for the hypothesis.

When the organisation introduced the internet as a recruitment source into their process, they reported utilising all the three key methods of recruiting on the Internet as described by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (1999). These include the posting of job vacancies on the company website (and additionally sending out an associated fortnightly e-Newsletter to subscribers, the number of which have increased substantially over the years); posting job vacancies on a number of large well-known commercial Australian job boards that included SEEK and Career One; and having positions posted on media sites associated with the major newspapers (for example, www.mycareer.com.au). The results indicated that over the period 2000 to 2002, whilst the number of jobs advertised remained relatively constant, the average number of applications per job increased from 17.5 in 2000 to 28.62 in 2002. One of the key disadvantages linked to e-recruitment as cited within the literature is the perception that a high quantity of applications will be generated from this source. This outcome has a subsequent negative impact on the effectiveness of the recruitment process due to the need for organisations to invest additional time and resources in culling the pool to locate the best candidates (Carlson et al., 2002; Dessler, 2002). The findings initially support this negative perception of a high quantity of applications associated with e-recruitment.

Three years after the introduction of e-recruitment, the numbers of applications received by the organisation declined to similar numbers received pre-internet recruitment, down to an average of 16.24 per job. The number of jobs advertised had only increased marginally over the same period of time (from 494 in 2001 to 511 in 2004). By capturing and analysing a longitudinal data set, the current study provides evidence to indicate that consistently high numbers of applications are not received on an annual basis. Overall, when the data from 2004 is combined with the results of the period 2000-2002 which indicated a sharp increase in application numbers, the research has demonstrated that there is only partial support for the hypothesis that e-recruitment increases the volume of applications received.
In order to discuss these results further, it is important to gain an understanding of the workforce of the organisation studied. The employees of the organisation are categorised into three employment classification groups: professional, academic, and senior staff. The professional employment group within this organisation encompass positions that are administrative in nature or that fall within the professions of information technology, finance, marketing and communication, human resources, and facilities management. Lecturers and professors are aligned to the academic employment group and the senior staff group comprise managers and key strategic positions.

For this particular organisation, one of the key findings for hypothesis one was that the volume of applications received in 2001, attributed to the introduction of the internet as a recruitment source, was significantly higher for the professional employment group than the academic employment group. These results indicate that applicants searching for jobs in the professional employment group are more likely to utilise the internet source than applicants searching for academic positions. The diversity of jobs advertised via the internet has had much discussion in the wider literature on e-recruitment.

It has been argued within the literature that advertising on the internet has had a higher uptake by organisations related to IT jobs, and that around two-thirds of internet job seekers are from non-technical professions and are young University graduates (Feldman et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002). In contrast, data captured by CareerMosaic (cited in Bartram, 2000) indicates that the positions advertised and job searches undertaken on the internet are becoming increasingly less technical with the five top job searches being for positions in the fields of management, sales, engineering, accounting and marketing. The results from the current study support these latter findings, demonstrating that recruitment on the internet covers a broad range of employment industries as positions in management, marketing, accounting, graduate and IT related positions are embodied within the professional employment group for this organisation. It is clear therefore that the variety of positions being advertised and applied for online has diversified from the IT/technical based focus as claimed in previous studies (Baillie, 1996; Starke, 1996) to a much wider field. There was no evidence that previous studies on recruitment source had included academic
type positions as a subject pool, thus the current study has contributed to the research by providing findings based on a new subject pool, with results indicating that academics do use the internet to source vacancies, although this is to a lesser degree than for professional type positions.

The slower uptake of e-recruitment for academic positions is possibly attributed to the traditional habits of academics who are required to stay abreast of current topics in their field and would access journals and other relevant papers associated with their discipline. There is also a continued focus on newspaper advertisements by the tertiary sector for this employment group. The majority of newspapers, such as the national newspaper “The Australian”, have sections in the employment pages devoted to higher education positions (titled the Higher Education Supplement). There are also numerous professional journals and publications aligned to the education sector which advertise a high volume of academic positions (for example, the “Campus Review” consists predominantly of academic positions vacant in tertiary organisations across Australia). Therefore, academics are required to read papers and journals as part of their job, and would source jobs the same way.

In relation to the decrease in application numbers the organisation reported that in 2004 they ceased to use the large commercial Australian recruitment job boards of SEEK and My Career as regular avenues of posting jobs, although they continued to advertise jobs on the organisational website and via media websites linked to newspaper sources. This change to the recruitment strategy resulted from a cost-benefit analysis undertaken by the organisation which signified that the number of quality applications (that is, people appointed to positions) received via the job boards were minimal in comparison to costs outlaid to place advertisement on them. Discontent with job boards has been a growing trend amongst organisations and with job-seekers. The initial appeal of job boards in reaching a wide applicant pool is now directly related to its acknowledged disadvantage of burying organisations under volumes of applications from candidates without appropriate credentials who are applying for any vacancy that resembles their perceived skills set (Boehle, 2000; McCurry, 2005).
As the organisation did see an increase in the volume of applications after introducing commercial job boards as a source to advertise positions, the decision to move away from commercial job boards appears to have contributed to the subsequent decrease in applications received by the organisation. A smaller applicant pool is deemed to be more advantageous for organisations if the quality of the pool is maintained (Bartram, 2000). A discussion of the quality of applicant pools for the organisation is undertaken later in this section. However, the current study has provided clear evidence that by undertaking an assessment of its recruitment target markets and the sources being used by successful applicants, the organisation can direct time and effort to using only those sources that generate suitable applications for the positions being advertised, and as a result, minimise applicant numbers. An ongoing regular assessment will help counteract the highly-cited e-recruitment issue of high volume applicant pools (Galanaki, 2002) which can lead to time-consuming and costly recruitment processes in the quest to find the best fit candidate (Carless, 2005; Carlson et al., 2002; Chyna, 2001).

A further contribution to the decline in application numbers received by the organisation could also be the result of more experienced web users who self-screen themselves against job requirements. With the rapid adoption of the use of the internet by individuals over a relatively short period of time (Bush et al., 2002), potential applicants possibly faced a less structured and more confusing e-recruitment environment five years ago than they do in today’s technology focused market. With the increasing ability to use advanced and simplified search tools to locate preferred positions, and with the additional information included on the website for positions being advertised by the company, it is possible that many applicants are undertaking self-selection and not applying for jobs if perceived skills and abilities do not match the job title and description (Highhouse & Hoffman, 2001).

This self-selection argument is grounded in the research on the realistic information hypothesis and the “person-job” and “person-organisation” fit theories (Turban et al., 1998; Werbel et al., 1996). These recruitment theories predict that specific sources provide organisations with the ability to provide information (positive and/or negative) about the job which the applicant can relate to at a personal level and
which will lead the applicant to assess their suitability for the role (Werbel & Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993). Self-selection as an outcome is a desired result for organisations as it would be expected that whilst applicant pools are smaller overall, the quality of the applicant would be higher as their skills should be better aligned to the position and organisational requirements. The results of the current study indicate that the level and amount of information provided within recruitment advertisements for the organisation has potentially contributed to applicants assessing their P-J and P-O fit, which is reflected in fewer applications being received by the organisation.

A final contributing factor to the decline in overall application numbers for the organisation could be current national unemployment trends. Statistics obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics indicates that the number of people searching for jobs has decreased due to a strong employment market. The figures from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) details the trend estimate of employed persons at 9,034,700 in January 2001, however this number increased to 10,025,300 as measured in December 2005. In contrast, the unemployment rate was at 7.0% in October 2001, but has subsequently declined to stand at 5.1% in December 2005 (ABS, 2006). These statistics indicate that the number of people seeking employment has declined, therefore the pool of applicants which organisations can tap into to fill their positions is smaller overall. Whilst these effects would contribute to the results, they are not strong enough to completely explain the findings of the current study.

Overall the results of the study provided partial support to the hypothesis that e-recruitment increases the quantity of applications for organisations. It was apparent that the initial introduction of the internet as a recruitment source led to a sudden increase in application numbers. With the literature on e-recruitment regularly citing as a disadvantage of this source the likelihood of an increase in application numbers, a misconception has been garnered by organisations that the use of internet recruiting will automatically result in this outcome. However, as evidenced in the current study, application numbers started to decline noticeably three years after the introduction of e-recruitment. The decline in application numbers can be attributed to three key factors: the organisation’s reduction in the number of internet sources initially employed; applicant self-selection about their fit with the job (P-J fit) and with the
organisation (P-O fit); and current national employment trends. The results therefore indicate that e-recruitment will not overburden organisations with an influx of applications on a constant basis. The next stage is to assess the quality of the applications being received via this source, which is discussed in the next section.

3.6.2 Research Question One

The first research question assessed the impact that e-recruitment had on the quality of applications received by the organisation. Quality is defined as being those applicants who meet and have the capability to perform the requisite criteria (knowledge, skills and abilities) of the position as defined by the organisation. Quality was determined initially through the percentage of applicants shortlisted pre- and post- e-recruitment. Further assessment on quality was achieved by determining the average percentage of shortlisted and appointed (successful shortlisted) applicants over a one year period for each recruitment source. The findings of the current study indicate that the quality of applicants were similar for all recruitment sources utilised by the organisation to advertise positions. These findings will now be discussed.

Firstly, whilst the number of applications increased with the introduction of e-recruitment, as was determined in the results for the first hypothesis, the percentage of shortlisted applicants declined over the same period of time. The organisation utilises selection criteria to reduce the field of applicants to a manageable number based on similarities between the essential knowledge, skills and abilities required for the position and the knowledge, skills and abilities possessed by the applicant as reflected in their application and resume. The organisation within the present study has not implemented online selection or assessment tools, therefore the organisation accepts all applications for positions advertised, regardless of whether the application meets the minimum selection criteria outlined in the position description. The assessment of the quality of the application does not occur until all applications are captured within the tracking system and distributed to the relevant department for consideration by the selection panel. The results of the study indicate that the average number of applicants shortlisted over the period 1997 to 2000 was between 15% and
19%, however this number declined to 9.31% and 9.94% in 2001 and 2002 respectively, and has been relatively stable since.

The decline in shortlisted applicant numbers as a percentage of the increase of overall application numbers over this timeframe provides sufficient evidence to indicate that e-recruitment does not improve the quality of applicants for the organisation. This outcome is not beneficial for the organisation as it is likely to result in a subsequent waste of time and resources for organisations whilst they process more applications, with no concurrent increase in applicants selected. This is supported by Bartram (2000) who discusses that the organisation makes an attempt to assess all the applications fairly when the numbers of truly quality candidates are minimal in comparison to overall applications received. This finding is therefore consistent with the general assumptions made in the literature on e-recruitment that an increase in the quantity of applications does not lead to a corresponding increase in quality applications (Carlson et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002).

To effectively gauge the quality of the candidates who utilised the internet as a recruitment source to locate the job in comparison to other recruitment sources used by the organisation, data was captured at two stages. The first stage captured the recruitment source initially utilised by applicants shortlisted for positions in the organisation over a one year period. The second stage involved capturing information on the recruitment source initially used by the subsequent successful applicants appointed to the positions over the same one year period. The quality of applicants within these two data sets were deemed high as all shortlisted and appointed applicants were required to have met the compulsory minimum standards for the position, the pre-set selection criteria.

For the first stage, the assessment of shortlisted applicants, a comparison of the quality of applications across the recruitment source categories indicated that applicants who initially located the job through newspaper sources were more likely to be shortlisted for the position applied for than those applicants who sourced the job through the internet. In terms of the research question posed by this study, evidence indicates that the internet as a source does not generate higher quality applicants than other sources. It cannot therefore be identified as a more effective
recruitment source for organisations than other sources. In fact, this finding indicates that newspapers continue to be an effective recruitment source for this organisation in attracting high quality academic applicants. Evidence supporting the newspaper as an effective source has not been an outcome of previous studies on recruitment source effectiveness (Judge et al., 1997; Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999; Wanous et al., 1992).

Specifically, this outcome challenges the findings of Feldman and Klaas (2002) whose qualitative research ranked newspapers as the fifth most effective strategy for finding jobs, and ranked newspapers first as the most frequently mentioned ineffective recruitment strategy in sourcing jobs. The limitation of their study was that the participants were MBA graduates from a six year period who, once employed within the workforce, categorised their role as that of manager or professional. With the diversity of positions available in the organisation in the current study, a more accurate reflection of effective recruitment sources and strategies can be obtained. Clearly, newspapers are still a quality recruitment tool that should remain in the recruitment process for the organisation of the present study and should still be seriously considered as a viable option and assessed appropriately by all companies.

In the second stage of the data capture which assessed the appointed (successful shortlisted) applicants, the results indicated that all recruitment sources (newspaper, internet and other sources) provided similar results. For this organisation, there is no one obvious recruitment source that best quality candidates favour over other sources when applying for jobs.

Overall, the results of the study has determined that the use of the internet as a recruitment source does not, as an individual source, contribute to an increase in the quality of applications received despite the increase in the quantity of applications that are associated with the use of e-recruitment. Whilst the results of the current study do not provide evidence to suggest that e-recruitment increases the quality of applications received, it does indicate that the organisation has achieved a balance in the recruitment sources being used to reach potential applicants, as there is not one
source that generates significantly low quality application numbers than the other sources.

The results of the data captured on successful appointed applicants across the recruitment sources indicates that differences between sources in attracting quality applicants is insignificant. This finding can be attributed to the diverse nature of jobs that are available within the current organisation which range from blue collar workers, to office professionals, academics and senior management. Other organisations which focus solely on computer-based technology to perform day to day duties, such as the engineering or information technology industries, are likely to produce vastly different results. This is related to the ease with which potential candidates can access the internet, either from their office or possibly from a home computer, thus the results of a similar study within a technology based organisation may indicate that internet sources are more likely to yield high quality applicants than other sources. Other blue-collar organisations, where workers who do not perform day-to-day tasks in an office environment such as the trades industry, may reflect a high quality rating for traditional sources such as newspapers.

The organisation in the current study is moving toward achieving the common goal of recruitment: the optimisation of an applicant pool size which reflects a balance between costs incurred and the recruitment of the best possible candidate (Breaugh, 1992; Carlson et al., 2002). It is obvious that any cost-benefit analysis being undertaken by the organisation is valid (for example, the move away from using commercial job boards in 2004) as whilst the number of applications received initially increased with the introduction of e-recruitment without a subsequent increase in quality (shortlisted) applicants, later changes to the recruitment strategy led to a decline in application numbers whilst the numbers of quality applicants remained constant.

The findings in the present study support the argument in the literature that the use of the internet as the sole recruitment source would be detrimental to the organisation and provides strong evidence for the need for organisations to implement a recruitment strategy that considers the needs of all target markets (Berry, 2004; Feldman et al., 2002). As outlined by Smith and Rupp (2004), the optimal
recruitment strategy should encompass a range of recruitment sources including newspapers/print media, employee referral programmes, employment agencies and the Internet. This approach will address the concern expressed within the literature on the potential for the internet to unfairly discriminate against people who are unable to readily access computer technology, termed the ‘digital divide’ (Bartram, 2000). All organisations need to assess whether the recruitment strategy implemented will adversely affect one or more demographic groups in the wider population (Flynn, 2002; Kuhn & Skuterud, 2000) and as demonstrated by Bartram (2000), the internet is not a key business tool used by all organisations across all nations.

In the current study there were no meaningful gender differences across the recruitment sources used or likely to be used by applicants, therefore all sources in the present study, including e-recruitment, are generating an equal amount of quality candidates across the genders. This finding supports the outcome of Kuhn and Skuterud’s (2000) study which suggested that there was minimal divide between the genders in relation to e-recruitment, with females utilising the internet to source job vacancies as often as males. The issue of access to sources, and in particular the internet, has been highlighted in terms of age, gender, race, educational background and geographical dispersion (for example, urban versus rural). Access issues must be considered by the organisation during the establishment of the recruitment strategy (Bartram, 2000; Flynn, 2002; Mullich, 2004). Previous research undertaken by Kirnan et al. (1989) in relation to more traditional recruitment sources found that female and indigenous applicants more frequently used formal recruitment sources such as newspapers and employment agencies. There was no data captured within the current study on race demographics, however there was evidence to indicate that recruitment sources were significantly related to age with results indicating that older applicants are less likely to use the internet as a recruitment source. This can be attributed to the fact that the internet is relatively new technology which older people may not have the knowledge, skills or opportunity to use as regularly as younger people. The minimal differences found within the current study in relation to demographic characteristics could be attributed to the both the diversity of the positions available within the organisation as discussed previously, and the use of a variety of sources by the organisation to advertise positions.
Chapter Three: Study One

The benefits of a diverse recruitment strategy is further supported by the findings of the current study that in order for the organisation to attract quality applicants external to the organisation, alternative sources such as newspapers and print media are crucial. For an organisation to prosper and grow, the introduction of new staff external to the organisation is fundamental to the generation of new ideas and introduction of new skills and concepts (Breaugh, 1992). The use of the newspaper by the present organisation was the only source to generate both internal and external candidates, and was the key source used to find quality external applicants in terms of the initial shortlisting of candidates, as found through stage one of the data capture. The results of the study found that those applicants who were shortlisted and/or appointed and who were already working in the organisation (termed internal applicants) sourced the positions from either the internet or from other sources such as colleagues or email. No internal applicants utilised the newspaper as a recruitment source. This result is primarily attributed to the ease with which internal applicants can access the internet, the probability that they know the location of the organisation’s job posting website, the widespread use of email, and the use of word-of-mouth amongst colleagues and peers about vacancies within the organisation. Therefore, with quality applicants coming through all recruitment sources used by the organisation, a diverse recruitment strategy is essential for the continued growth and success of the organisation.

This study has provided a new approach for assessing the quality of applicants based on the recruitment source used. Previous studies have attempted to address quality of source based on an assessment of post-hire outcomes of appointees, such as performance and resignations (Rynes, 1991; Scholarios et al., 1999; Zottoli et al., 2000). The current study has adopted a different measure to previous research in assessing the quality of applicants by capturing actual data on candidates that were shortlisted and appointed to positions vacant in the organisation who were required to have met minimum selection criteria. This approach addresses the gap in research on source effectiveness where researchers have called for future research to assess recruitment effectiveness by evaluating the pool of applicants generated in terms of quantity and quality (Barber, 1998; Werbel & Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993). These measures are important to assess as without a quality applicant pool to select
from, the organisation will not be able to appoint the candidate that best fits the job and organisation, subsequently leading to poor post-hire outcomes.

The results of the study found that there was no difference in quality across the sources used by the organisation: newspapers, internet and other sources (including friends/colleagues referrals). Therefore whilst it can be claimed that the introduction of the internet as a recruitment source does not positively affect the number of quality applications received compared to the increase in volume of applications, it also has no negative effect on quality.

3.6.3 Hypothesis Two

The second hypothesis focused on the individual perspective of e-recruitment by exploring the relationship between recruitment source, the perceptions of applicants and their intention to pursue the job applied for. To test this hypothesis a model was developed to test the significance of the proposed relationships. Applicants’ perceptions were based on four variables which included the placement of the advertisement; applicants’ comprehension of the information contained within the advertisement; whether applicants were required to seek additional information; and whether the content of the advertisement gained their interest in applying for the job. The hypothesis is reflected in the component of the research model below:

3.6.3.1 Applicant Perspective - Attention/advertisement placement

The first stage of the hypothesis explored the relationship between recruitment source, the placement of the advertisement, and applicants’ intentions to pursue the job applied for. Applicants’ perceptions of job advertisement placement were assessed by investigating whether the title of the job or the advertisement location
and layout were significant in bringing the advertisement to the attention of the applicant and their subsequent desire to pursue the job applied for.

It was important to ascertain whether applicant perceptions in terms of the placement of the advertisement changed based on the recruitment source used. The findings indicate that applicant perceptions, as measured by the impact of job title and ad layout, were affected by those positions advertised through newspaper sources, although there was no significant relationship between source and applicant perceptions, as measured by the location of the advertisement. This outcome signifies that the title of a job and the visual look of the advertisement gains the attention of applicants and has an impact (either positive or negative) on their attraction to the role. There were no significant relationships identified between job title, ad layout or ad location for those positions advertised via internet sources or through friends/relatives. The results of the study in terms of applicant perceptions about advertisement placement can most likely be attributed to the visual nature of newspaper sources where key tools such as font type and size of the advertisement have a strong influence on the look of the advertisement.

Whilst the results indicate that applicant perceptions of ad placement are consistent for all other sources, it suggests that an opportunity exists for organisations to experiment with these attributes and their effect on applicant perceptions and subsequent job-choice decisions. In terms of e-recruitment, vacancies generally have a generic appearance and rely more on key words contained within the advertisement to gain the attention of potential applicants (Hayes et al., 1996). As Cober, Brown and Levy (2004) discovered, the Internet presents a difficult challenge for recruiters as they strive to find a balance between creativity and utility in delivering recruitment messages that will impact positively on potential candidates. Organisations such as the one used in this study should research and experiment with the look, layout and content of recruitment messages posted in order to attract potential applicants. Consideration to the aesthetics of the recruitment strategy has had minimal exposure in recruitment literature with the focus predominantly on the content of the message (Highhouse et al., 2001) however with the interactive nature of the web this component warrants further investigation by organisations and researchers.
Applicant perceptions, in terms of the impact of the job title, had a subsequent effect on their intentions toward the job, the next stage of the relationship process. This suggests that a job advertisement comes to the attention of an applicant primarily as a result of the title of the job and the layout of the advertisement. When the job title appears to match the applicant’s desired field of work, their subsequent desire to pursue the job is significantly increased. There are a number of possible explanations for this result.

The significance of the title of the job on an applicant’s intention to pursue the job applied for was particularly strong in the academic and senior staff employment groups, but not the professional staff employment group. The significance of the employment group on this relationship could be based on the generic nature of the position titles for academic and senior staff. Academic staff are assigned to one of five specific job titles: Associate Lecturer, Lecturer, Senior Lecturer, Associate Professor, and Professor. Senior staff titles generally refer to senior management roles which incorporate the words “Manager” or “Director” in the title. These job titles are consistent across the tertiary sector and would therefore enable applicants to easily identify the type of role, and possibly the associated duties and responsibilities and approximate salary attached to the position. In contrast, positions in the professional employment group are diverse in nature and their titles generally less descriptive, thus applicants would have greater difficulty in relating the job title to the responsibilities and duties of the position without additional information.

In addition, the organisation predominantly uses a large block advertisement (usually one page in size) in the major state newspaper on a regular fortnightly basis. This advertisement is branded with the company logo and slogan and would be easily identifiable by applicants. There are, on occasion, stand alone advertisements placed in the same paper under a relevant sub-section (e.g. information technology positions) and in other national or industry specific newspapers which also display the corporate logo and slogan. The content of all print media advertisements include the title of the job/s and an approximate 50 word description of each position (optional) which is phrased to provide the key requirements of the role and some key desirable candidate attributes. This regularity and consistency in ad layout, appearance, content
and placement would over a period of time be recognisable to applicants, increasing their ability to find the advertisement.

In terms of the internet as a recruitment source, advertisements placed on commercial job boards are usually placed within pre-determined categories. For example, some general classifications listed on the SEEK job board on their homepage include: Accounting, Administration, Banking and Financial Services, Call Centre/Customer Service, Construction, Education and Training, Government/Defence, Graduate/Entry Level, Healthcare, Hospitality, HR and Recruitment, IT, Legal, Mining, Sales and Marketing, Trades and Services, and Volunteer. The use of such job board categories can be frustrating for organisations and applicants if they are unable to classify their field of work according to the pre-defined categories, as was identified by the research undertaken by Hinton and Schapper (2000). The difficulty for the current organisation to categorise the diverse range of professional type positions into pre-established classifications can be a contributing factor in the fact that no significant relationship was established between the internet as a recruitment source, the job title of the position and an applicant’s intention to pursue a position.

An additional outcome of the data analysis for this section was the effect that the recruitment source had on an applicant’s intention to pursue the job, however this relationship was not directly impacted by applicant perceptions. Further analysis established that the recruitment source of “other” had the highest effect on applicant intention. The difficulty in determining the sources captured within this category lead to problems in understanding why this result occurred. One potential explanation could be related to the informal use of employment agencies by the company, whereby individuals are originally hired on a temporary basis through a recruitment agency, and when the job is formally advertised they subsequently apply and are appointed to the position from the agency. The existence of this relationship does suggest that applicant perceptions are largely unrelated to source, but are more likely to be related directly to the content of the job advertisement.

3.6.3.2 Applicant Perceptions - Comprehension
The second stage undertaken to test Hypothesis Two explored whether a relationship existed between recruitment source, the ease with which applicants comprehended
the content of the advertisement and their subsequent intention to pursue the job applied for. Results indicated that no relationship existed between recruitment source and comprehension of the advertisement, therefore the additional variable of the ease with which applicants found the job was incorporated into the analysis. Further analyses of the results indicate that no relationship exists between these concepts, rejecting the proposed hypothesis.

One potential reason for this outcome could be the different advertising approaches adopted by the organisation. In terms of advertising vacancies in the newspaper, the organisation has a range of options which include just placing the title of the position in the block ad, or there is the option to add a small paragraph (maximum 50 words) about the job itself. Furthermore, for more specialised or senior jobs, stand alone advertisements are often commissioned which have no word limit and are likely to be quite explicit in job requirements and employment benefits. Therefore it would be difficult to assess comprehension of the advertisement without first identifying what type of advertisement method was used for the position the applicant applied for.

Secondly, with the move away from using commercial job boards, the organisational job website initially provides just a list of titles of job vacancies with no additional information. To access additional information the applicant is required to click on the job title link which opens the full position description documentation. Therefore the advertisement itself (that is, the job title) does not provide enough information for applicants to make a judgement on comprehension.

The findings of the current study could be attributed to stage in the application process that the data was collected. At the time of responding to survey, the majority of applicants would have accessed the full position description to apply for the job. In responding to the item on the survey applicants may have related to this additional information, rather than the initial job advertisement viewed, and as a result responded positively to the item skewing the final result. Whilst the findings did not support the proposed relationship, the concept of assessing applicant perceptions in terms of comprehension by source and subsequent intentions to pursue the job is new to research literature and has the potential to be a valid indicator of source effectiveness.
3.6.3.3 Applicant Perceptions – Useful information gained

The third stage of the study to test Hypothesis Two explored the relationship between recruitment source, usefulness of information gained from the source or additional information requested, and the applicant’s subsequent intention to pursue the job. The results indicated that there was no significant relationship between these variables for any of the recruitment sources, thereby rejecting the hypothesis.

The findings of this study could in part be attributed to the measure used within the study. The item in the survey did not investigate whether the request for additional information was in relation to generic information about the position or organisation, or whether it was in relation to the applicant’s potential fit to the position and organisation. However, it could also be argued that factors such as compatibility of knowledge and skills and interest in the position would be difficult to gauge from a job advertisement alone, or through additional information requested. Such attributes may be easier to determine through direct liaison with staff of the organisational area or who work in similar positions, as has been identified in research on recruiter effects on applicants (Breaugh, 1992; Taylor et al., 1987), however investigation of this particular theory was not within the scope of the current study.

Within the research undertaken by Williams et al. (1993), there was evidence for differences in the amount of pre-hire information provided by source. Whilst the internet has the capacity to provide an unlimited amount of information about the job and the organisation (Cober et al., 2000; Rozelle et al., 2002) the information may not be salient to the applicant, therefore limiting their attraction to the job. The difficulty in the current study in linking information obtained with the specific source used by the applicant, and a limited knowledge of the amount and type of additional information obtained may have contributed to the results.

The amount of additional information obtained by the applicant and what it pertained to, would affect their assessment of fit to the job and the organisation, if their attraction to the job is genuine. This argument underpins the research on “person-job” and “person-organisation” fit theories, whereby individuals’ thoughts about their compatibility with a specific job or their perceptions of the capacity of a company to become a future employer affects their decision to apply for and pursue
job vacancies (Highhouse et al., 2003; Saks et al., 1997; Turban et al., 1998). Research on the P-O and P-J fit theories by Dineen, Noe and Ash (2002), which was conducted in a web-based recruitment environment, found that personally relevant cues which suggest a high similarity between the organisation and the individual increased the attractiveness of the organisation and the position for the individual. Their results were an extension to previous findings by Kirnan et al. (1989) and Williams et al. (1993) whose studies supported the concept that more information provided upfront about a position and the organisation will assist applicants in determining their fit, and trigger self-selection decisions about intentions to pursue the job.

As there was no significant relationship evident in the current study in relation to recruitment sources, additional information obtained about the position or organisation, and an applicant’s desire to pursue the job, there is little support for these theories. It could be argued that as the applicant had already submitted an application for the position at the time of completing the survey, any self-assessment of fit would have already been undertaken and their intention to pursue the job established. This concept and theory of self-selection was identified as a possible explanation for Hypothesis One (Galanaki, 2002; Werbel & Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993). The results for this hypothesis (Three) highlight the need for organisations to ensure that the information about positions and the organisation as portrayed by source are accurate and appealing to applicants to ensure that quality applicants self-select to continue to pursue their application. Building on the current research, a more useful measure for the P-J and P-O theories would be assessing the effects of additional information on potential applicants’ intentions at two stages: prior to, and then after, the additional information is obtained to establish if a relationship exists.

P-J and P-O fit theories align closely with research on the realistic information hypothesis within the recruitment literature. Recruitment sources are often categorised as either formal or informal based on the amount of realistic information, that is, the positive and negative attributes of a job and company provided to the applicant (Kirnan et al., 1989; Saks, 1994; Williams et al., 1993). Research suggests that the range of information provided through informal recruitment sources
(consisting of referrals from friends/relatives, walk-ins and rehires) is more likely to consist of both positive and negative aspects of the job and the organisation and contain more realistic detail whilst formal recruitment sources (including employment agencies, advertisements through newspapers, television, radio or professional journals) commonly promote only positive images of the job and the organisation to attract candidates, thus portraying less realistic information about the job and organisation (Rozelle & Landis, 2002; Rynes, 1991; Williams et al., 1993).

The recruitment sources used by the organisation in the present study were a mix of both formal and informal. For the purposes of this study the internet was defined as a formal source due to the minimal amount of human contact involved and the reduced likelihood of realistic information being portrayed. The organisation also utilised newspaper sources which are classified within recruitment literature as formal sources, and family/friends which fall into the informal source category. As discussed, the results of the current study indicated that additional information obtained by applicants about jobs had no subsequent effect on their intention to pursue the job, results which were consistent across all of the sources used by the organisation. This finding provides no support to the realistic information hypothesis. The fact that there was no significant relationship linked to the informal sources of the organisation is actually in direct contrast to the research undertaken by Saks and Ashforth (1997) whose results on realism suggest informal sources increase the likelihood of an application being submitted for a position.

Whilst there was no clear distinction between formal and informal sources and the impact of additional information obtained on an applicant’s intention to pursue a job within the present study, it should be noted that the classification within this study of the internet as a formal recruitment source could be incorrect. Rozelle and Landis (2002) classified the internet as an informal recruitment source, a classification that resulted from findings which indicated that a greater use of the web led to perceptions of increased knowledge of the organisation. It would appear that the size, complexity and volume of information within an organisation’s website could mean that the internet straddles both classifications of informal and formal (Hausdorf et al., 2004). If this mixed classification is applied, then any further distinction of
effectiveness between sources based on the formal and informal classifications would be impossible.

There has also been evidence within the recruitment literature to suggest that using recruitment opportunities to “market” the organisation is an increasingly common strategy for many companies. This is most often achieved through the corporate website which is designed to “brand” the organisation as a great place to work (Boehle, 2000; Pont, 2005). By directing potential applicants to the company’s website to source additional information about vacancies, there is an opportunity to advertise unique and differentiating characteristics about the organisation which will assist in attracting candidates.

The marketing concept appears to be one strategy employed by the organisation in this study. Whilst this concept is outside of the current research parameters it does warrant some discussion in explaining the results of the current study. The organisation has created a slogan that can be applied to both its core service, that of providing quality tertiary courses to potential and current students, and to its potential employees as a desirable workplace. The slogan is “QUT, a University for the Real World”. All advertisements within the print media and online incorporates this slogan and external clients and potential applicants are directed to the company homepage through the inclusion of the company’s URL. From the company’s homepage there is a direct link to the webpage hosting the current positions vacant. Attracting potential applicants to a company’s website will increase the likelihood that the applicant will browse through related pages. As mentioned previously, there are unlimited options with the amount of information that can be made available on an organisation’s website. However what information an applicant accesses to help in their decision to apply for a job is difficult to determine and was not captured in the present study, thereby the amount of information and the usefulness of the information cannot be commented on in terms of its full effect on the results of the study.

3.6.3.4 Applicant Perceptions – Interest in job

The fourth and final stage used to test Hypothesis Two explored the relationship between recruitment sources, the average of applicant interest in the job and the
applicant’s intention to pursue the job applied for. The average of applicant interest in the position was measured on the combined factors of perceptions of salary, opportunity to use abilities in the job and the job being challenging and interesting. The results provided partial support for the hypothesis as a relationship was established between recruitment source and applicant intentions to pursue the job as mentioned previously, however there was no mediating relationship with the average of applicant interest in the job.

The lack of support for a relationship between recruitment sources and applicant interest in the job appear to contradict the findings of previous research which has suggested that the ease with which potential applicants locate recruitment advertisements and the content of the information available in the advertisement directly impact on an applicant’s engagement with the recruitment message and subsequent interest in and application for the position (Rynes et al., 1991). The P-J fit theory described in previous sections is linked to research on applicant interest in the job. This theory is captured within the claims of Breaugh and Starke (2000) that potential candidates would be more likely to engage in systematic reviewing and processing of information if the recruitment message contains information that is personally relevant to them as individuals.

The findings of the current study indicate that information provided about the job in initial recruitment advertisements is not guaranteed to capture the interest of applicants and influence their decision to pursue the position. As discussed in the results from the previous perception variable (additional information obtained), one suggestion for the finding could be the fact that an assessment of one’s ability to do the job and whether the position will be challenging and interesting would be difficult to determine from the information provided by the recruitment source.

In terms of the salary attribute of the job, the result could relate to the relatively low salaries offered by the organisation for specific professional positions, such as finance and IT roles, in comparison to the higher remuneration offered in the external job market, and particularly by private companies. In order to attract applicants to these roles, emphasis is placed on organisational policies that may be attractive to applicants, such as high employer superannuation contributions, or generous leave
entitlements. The results of Cable and Judge (1996) support this premise whereby applicant job choice decisions were related to perceptions of fit with the organisation (P-O fit), but not with the job (P-J fit). The variables for the hypothesis in the current study related to the job, and not organisational attributes, so it is not possible to draw clear conclusions as to this suggestion.

The outcome for this hypothesis is important when examining the internet, as the literature on e-recruitment has indicated that this source has the greatest capability of providing job relevant information because of its unlimited space capacity (Cober et al., 2000; Rozelle & Landis, 2002). As the significant relationship found was not related to the average of applicant interest in the job, one conclusion to be drawn is that the organisation has not utilised this source, or any source effectively to provide information on job attributes which have previously been proven to influence an applicant’s job decision process (Barber et al., 1993; Thomas & Wise, 1999) such as salary, opportunity to use their abilities and challenging and interesting work.

3.6.3.5 Additional Results

During the analysis of the data for Study One, a number of other results were found that, whilst not in the initial scope of the study, warrant discussion. Firstly, whilst the results of the current study provided no evidence of a relationship between the type of recruitment source used and the perceptions of applicants on an applicant’s intention to pursue a job, each of the components that explored the overall variable of applicant perceptions were of importance to the other. Of particular interest was the finding that applicants were more easily able to locate a position based on its job title. Furthermore, the job advertisement characteristics (position title, and advertisement layout and location) and the ease with which an applicant found the advertisement increased their understanding of the position. This supports the claims of Rynes et al. (1991) that recruitment advertising must initially be easy to find and subsequently engaging in order to gain an applicant’s interest and influence their decision to apply for a job. The results suggest that the organisation for the present study uses appropriate recruitment sources to target applicants, and ensures that the advertisements are placed in suitable sub-sections of the source which applicants identify with.
Another outcome of this study was the finding that significant relationships existed between the recruitment sources. Applicants who used friends or relatives as a key recruitment source were more likely to use sources other than print media and the internet. In contrast, applicants who predominantly used the newspaper to source positions vacant, were also likely to log on and use the internet to find vacancies. This result could be attributed to the fact that newspapers commonly post jobs advertised in print simultaneously on a related website. Kuhn and Skuterud (2000) identified within their research that jobseekers who utilised the internet to source jobs were more likely than other jobseekers to additionally use more traditional sources in their search for a job. The complementary nature of traditional sources with the internet was not a direct consideration of the current study but evolved through subsequent data analysis and supports Kuhn and Skuterud’s (2000) research findings.
3.7 CONCLUSION FOR STUDY ONE

The findings of Study One provide mixed results for the hypotheses proposed, and also provide preliminary answers to the research question asked. Firstly, the introduction of the internet as a recruitment source did lead to a subsequent increase in the quantity of applications received by the organisation, supporting the hypothesis proposed. The longitudinal data set subsequently captured information that indicated that application numbers declined a number of years after e-recruitment was implemented. This was primarily attributed to changes in the internet sources used, more experienced web users self-screening themselves against job attributes, and a more competitive labour market. Therefore, Hypothesis One received partial support overall.

Research Question One examined the impact of e-recruitment on the quality of applications received. The results showed that the percentage of shortlisted applicants per source were similar for all sources, therefore the quality was consistent across the sources. Through an additional analysis of a potential relationship between source and appointed applicants, the internet ranked second in the quality of applications, with newspapers generating the highest quality applicants. The fact that e-recruitment initially increased the number of applications received without a subsequent increase in shortlisted applicants indicates that e-recruitment has had an overall negative effect on the quality of applications received when considered as a function of total number of applications. A further additional finding is that in contrast to previous research on source superiority, newspaper sources do attract quality candidates and therefore remain a viable and important element of a successful recruitment strategy.

The final hypothesis of Study One incorporated numerous variables to investigate whether recruitment sources impact applicants’ perceptions of jobs, which subsequently influences their intention to pursue the position applied for. Overall there was limited support for the hypothesis in relation to applicant perceptions. One key finding was the existence of a relationship between newspaper sources, the job title and advertisement layout in gaining an applicant’s attention and their subsequent desire to pursue the job, with results significantly stronger for the academic and
senior staff job groups. No other significant differences were identified across the remaining recruitment sources for the other variables of applicant perception and the applicant's intentions toward the job. These results provide no support for the P-J and P-O fit theories within the literature on recruitment sources whereby researchers have found evidence to suggest that applicant perceptions of fit with the job and/or organisation are effected by source information, which subsequently influences their job-choice decision process. However there was evidence to suggest that applicants who sourced the job via the recruitment source of “other” had higher intentions to pursue the job than did applicants from other sources.

Study One has provided an indication of the effectiveness of the internet as a source in comparison to other sources based on applicant quality and quantity analyses from organisational data. Furthermore, Study One has examined the impact of recruitment sources on applicant perceptions, and whether there is a subsequent relationship with their intention to pursue the job. It is now important to analyse source effects from an organisational perspective to examine whether they match applicant perceptions and actual recruitment outcomes. The organisational perspective, captured within the second study for the current research will be discussed in the next Chapter.
CHAPTER 4
STUDY TWO

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The second study has been designed to assess organisational perspectives on source information and effectiveness in attracting quality applicants, with a particular focus on the impact of e-recruitment on organisational recruitment processes. The focus for the study evolved from the findings of Study One, and also from a review of the literature on e-recruitment which has had minimal theoretical research to substantiate claims made. Within this chapter, the design of the study will firstly be presented, followed by a brief review of the results from the data analysis. A discussion of the findings as they relate to Study One and the literature on recruitment will then be presented.

4.2 RESEARCH POPULATION AND SAMPLE

4.2.1 Sampling Frame
Human Resource Practitionerers from eight organisations were interviewed. The organisations were based within South-East Queensland and were from state and local government, the tertiary sector, recruitment sector, travel sector, banking sector and commodities sector. All of the organisations were mid-range to large in size. All of the organisations had their central office based within the capital city. Six of the organisations also had employees based in regions outside of the capital city across the State. The organisations were selected based on the strong likelihood that e-recruitment was used as a recruitment source. Furthermore, the majority of the organisations have a diverse workforce with a wide variety of positions that range from blue collar, to professional, to senior executive roles, similar the organisation used within Study One.

4.2.2 Interviews
Eight Human Resource practitioners from a range of organisations who are involved in the recruitment process for their respective organisation were interviewed. The
interviews were conducted face-to-face and were designed to ascertain the HR practitioners’ views on the key considerations for recruitment advertisements, and the effectiveness of the Internet as a recruitment source in terms of its utility and value as opposed to other recruitment sources. HR practitioner views are a crucial data source for the current study as they are predominantly developed based on an assessment of positive and negative outcomes of recruitment practices and processes implemented by the organisation. The views and assessments of HR practitioners are fundamental to the development and implementation of future recruitment strategies for organisations.

The interviews were undertaken after Study One was finalised and data had been gathered and analysed to test Hypothesis One and Two, and to answer Research Question One. Study Two was designed to explore the findings of Study One and to establish if the perceptions of human resource practitioners reflected practice and theory. To help establish trust and build rapport with the practitioners, the author self-identified her current employment status as a HR practitioner who also had experience with recruitment processes. The sharing of information and common understanding of current recruitment and human resource processes and practices assisted with the interview process.

4.2.2.1 Pilot Study In order to determine whether the questions developed for the interviews were appropriately phrased and encouraged responses that were suitable, a pilot study was undertaken prior to the actual scheduled interviews. Participants identified for the pilot study were work colleagues of the author who had experience in recruitment and were able to respond to the interviews in an environment similar to that used during actual interviews. The participants of the pilot study were requested to provide feedback on the terminology/language used in the interview questions, whether the questions were structured appropriately and the content comprehensible and appropriate. The pilot test resulted in one question being slightly re-worded to help clarify the purpose of the question.
4.3 MEASURES

4.3.1 Interview Questions

The questions for the interviews with the HR practitioners were developed after Study One was completed (Appendix 3). The questions were exploratory in nature to allow a dialogue to be captured based on the knowledge and experience of the practitioners in relation to the broad research questions of the study. The responses to the questions were analysed in order to identify whether there were common themes and responses emerging which supported the results of Study One and which supported the recurring themes that emerged in the literature on e-recruitment.

A variety of questions were employed to explore Research Question Two, this being the perceived utility and value of e-recruitment. The questions were designed to examine the claims made within the literature on e-recruitment. Questions related to the recruitment sources used by the organisation (“What recruitment sources does your organisation use?”), the types of positions advertised, and how applicants obtain additional information about the job and organisation. In relation to the internet as a recruitment source, the questions focused on what types of internet recruitment the organisations used (“organisational website”, “commercial job boards”, “media sites”, “other”), the perceived advantages and disadvantages of using the internet as a recruitment source, what types of applicants are most likely to use the internet as a source, whether e-recruitment can discriminate against minority groups, whether the organisation would stop using other recruitment sources and focus only on e-recruitment, and overall whether they believe the internet adds value to their recruitment process.

For Research Question Three the question within the interview explored what information within a job advertisement HR practitioners believe are of importance to applicants. The information requested was in relation to job and/or organisation attributes considered likely to attract an applicant’s interest in and subsequent decision to apply for the job.
4.4 RESULTS

The results from the interviews will now be discussed. The names of the participants have been changed where relevant to protect their identity.

4.4.1 Research Question Two

*Research Question 2: What views do HR professionals involved in the recruitment process have about the utility and value of the Internet as a recruitment source?*

The second research question explored the perceptions of human resource practitioners who are involved in recruitment processes on whether the Internet as a recruitment source is effective in attracting quality applicants. The effectiveness was assessed in terms of utility and value. A summary of how the internet is employed as a recruitment source across the organisations will initially discussed, followed by the results on the two components of effectiveness.

4.4.1.1 e-Recruitment use

Results from the interviews indicated that all the organisations used the internet to advertise their positions vacant. One key finding was that all organisations had a dedicated job website on their organisational website for positions vacant, and supplemented this source with alternate internet sources such as job boards and media sites. All recruitment advertisements contained information to direct the applicant to the organisational job website for further information about the job and how to apply. Positions advertised were from across all areas of the workforce, including blue collar/trade staff, administrative/operational services (eg. finance, human resources, information technology, marketing), engineering and mining positions, lawyers/legal related positions, property and construction industry positions, travel consultants, call centre/data entry operators, transport operators (eg. bus, train, heavy machinery), health professionals (eg. pharmacists, psychologists), and senior management. There was consensus across all practitioners interviewed that the positions least likely to be appointed via the internet were senior executive roles, with organisations predominantly engaging specialist recruitment agencies for
this purpose. Overall, there was substantial reliance on and use of the internet as a recruitment source for all the organisations.

4.4.1.2 Utility of e-Recruitment

An analysis of the qualitative data in terms of the utility of the internet as a recruitment source identified two major themes. The first theme which consists of a number of sub-themes is the perceived ease of access associated with this source from both an organisational and applicant perspective. This theme can be broken down into sub-themes related to the ability to post jobs to websites immediately (six practitioners); amend/change the information in the advertisement (all practitioners); link additional information from other websites to the job advertisement (five practitioners); and have the vacancy advertised 24 hours a day, 7 days a week (five practitioners). As cited by one practitioner:

Amanda: “...the internet is more cost effective, easier to upload onto the site and maintain, it reaches more people than the newspaper...”

All of these perceived advantages have been identified within the literature on e-recruitment, therefore practice does appear to support the assumptions made by authors on the subject.

Another sub-theme of the ease of access of e-recruitment relates to the demographic reach of the internet. There were no specific demographic characteristics identifiable within the results for the question which explored this aspect of e-recruitment that could be linked specifically to applicants who source positions via the internet. This indicates that the internet recruitment source has a broad demographic reach. Consensus amongst the practitioners was that the internet is now easily accessible and that the general public widely recognise the internet as being a major tool in the search for vacancies. These findings provide some support to the results of Study One where were no source effects related to gender, however Study One did indicate that age was related to the use of the internet in that older applicants were less likely to use this source. This result was indirectly supported by an alternate theme that emerged from the analysis of the data of Study Two in that demographic characteristics were more easily associated with other recruitment sources (not e-
Two interviewees provided similar responses in that “baby boomers”/older applicants purchase the weekend paper regularly from habit to read for leisure, and subsequently browse through the employment pages, therefore if an organisation is targeting this demographic pool then the newspaper would be a major tool to source these potential applicants.

The utility of the internet for the applicant, as perceived by the HR practitioners, is the ease with which individuals can canvas and apply for jobs as they can access the information at any time and because their resume is most likely retained in electronic form it can easily be attached or forwarded via electronic means for a position vacant:

Emily: “...most people have their CV stored electronically so they just have to fill in fields online and attach their CV. Its probably a sweeping statement but accessibility of computers is so easy so not an issue for people.”

The other key theme which emerged from an analysis of the data in relation to the utility of the internet as a recruitment source is the perceived over-abundance of positions being advertised on major job boards on the internet (four practitioners). This is a negative response to the perceived utility of the internet as respondents indicated that this could result in a reduction in application numbers because of reduced visibility of the job. This was reflected by the response of one interviewee:

Steven: “...95% of all jobs are put on the internet, however it is more difficult to source applicants from the internet because of the (job advertisement) clutter.”

This is a disadvantage which has been cited in the literature on e-recruitment in that the increase in job boards on the internet has the negative effect of creating difficulties for applicants to locate suitable positions to apply for (Bartram, 2000; Boehle, 2000). This will be further explored within the discussion on the results.
4.4.1.3 Value of e-Recruitment

The second component of this research question relates to the perceptions of the value of the internet as a recruitment source. An analysis of the qualitative data identified two themes relating to the perceived value of e-recruitment. The first theme is the cost-effectiveness of advertising via this medium. The data provided results to indicate that all the HR Practitioners perceived the internet to be a cost effective method of advertising, with minimal costs involved in advertising on company websites, and on major job boards and media sites, when compared to the high levels of exposure of the advertisement. The low costs were predominantly compared with the high costs associated with advertising in newspapers, the additional lag-time involved in the advertisement going to print, and potential for error in such advertisements.

The second theme that emerged was related to the communication capabilities in terms of the storage and provision of information about jobs and organisations. A general consensus amongst the HR practitioners is that nearly all individuals seeking jobs will use the internet at some stage of the job sourcing process to locate jobs and additional job or organisational relevant information. Therefore it is a medium that will reach the desired target market, and does result in quality applicants applying for jobs. The interview data indicated a decrease in the use of alternate recruitment sources, such as newspapers and recruitment agencies, with seven of the eight respondents concurring that the internet is the perceived better source in attracting quality candidates, particularly in the competitive labour market that currently exists. As one practitioner stated, the internet is:

Marilyn: “..able to give a lot more to both candidates and managers, people can track their progress, managers can access/update information.”

One practitioner employed within the commodities market differentiated from this widely held belief. The recruitment strategy employed by this organisation still heavily utilised more traditional paper based recruitment sources as the target market for positions advertised are still recognised as having minimal opportunity to utilise the web to source vacancies (rural-based and travelling long distances via road). This organisation did indicate that their recruitment strategy is trialling new e-recruitment
practices which to date has been successful in attracting quality applicants so will continue on a broader scale in the future. The one clear applicant pool identified by respondents as being less likely to be sourced via the internet was senior executive. The majority of respondents indicated that employment agencies/head hunters are employed to search for these candidates.

The final theme that emerged within the qualitative data was consensus amongst the HR Practitioners that whilst the internet is a cost-effective and useful source to use in advertising positions, there is still a need to assess the position or organisation’s target market. It was acknowledged that not all applicants would use the internet to source jobs, and that employing a diverse recruitment strategy would help ensure the right person for the job is reached and recruited. This theme was particularly evident in the responses of practitioners from organisations that comprise occupations not generally associated with technology, such as trade based roles or industries (six practitioners). As indicated by one interviewee associated with the travel industry:

Eve: “...in the war for talent you need to reach as many people as possible… will continue to use other sources..”

This finding supports the findings of Study One which indicated that the quality of applicants for all sources used by the organisation were similar. The results also support the common perceptions cited by researchers on recruitment of the need for organisations to develop a diverse recruitment strategy which utilises a range of recruitment sources (Dineen, Noe & Ash, 2002; Berry, 2004; Feldman & Klaas, 2002).

4.4.2 Research Question Three

Research Question 3: What are the key considerations for HR practitioners when preparing an advertisement for a position vacant?

Research question three examined what aspects about a position are of key importance when preparing a recruitment advertisement for a vacancy. There were two clearly identifiable criteria which emerged from the analysis of the interview
data. The first criterion cited by practitioners was the importance of including information pertaining to the salary of the position. As one practitioner stated:

   Lyn: “..there is one statistic that has proven that you will get 10% more applicants if salary is included (in recruitment advertisements).”

The second criterion that is considered essential to include in recruitment advertisements is the location of the job. Location was regarded as being more important for those organisations that identified themselves as being geographically diverse:

   Susan: “..we have more applications for our administrative roles that are based at our Carseldine campus from people who live north of the city because of the ability to drive and park there and not have to catch public transport.”

Other criteria that emerged on a recurring basis within the data, but on a less frequent basis than the two key criteria, included opportunities for promotion within the company, the work/life balance policies of the company, and the core competencies of the position. As indicated by the interviewees, these latter considerations predominantly emerge and are promoted during times of labour shortage, or when hard to fill positions are advertised, as stated by one interviewee:

   Karen: “..we’re in a candidate short market and after people with specific skills…money and the lifestyle of South-East Queensland and opportunities provided… such as projects and promotion are considered important.”

The identification of these criteria indicate that organisations undertake an assessment of target markets and incorporate information about the job and company that is considered to be relevant and attractive to the potential applicant. This suggests that applicants undertake some form of self-selection about the suitability of the job and/or the organisation based on initial information obtained from the recruitment source. This finding complements the results of Study One whereby the job title of the advertisement affected applicant perceptions and their intentions to
pursue the job. The findings of Study Two however provide more support for the person-job and person-organisation fit theories identified within the research on recruitment sources than did the results of Study One, as will be discussed in the next section.

4.5 DISCUSSION

Study Two aimed to explore the perceptions of human resource practitioners who are actively involved in the recruitment process on the effectiveness of recruitment sources utilised by their organisation. The focus of Study Two was to ascertain if there were common practices and common perceptions amongst human resources practitioners about recruitment sources in general, and in particular whether the use of the internet as a source adds value to their recruitment process. The questions were developed from two key sources. Firstly, the exploratory nature of Study Two provided a key opportunity to investigate whether the opinions of practitioners support the results of Study One which are based on quantitative data. Secondly, there are a number of common theories recurring within the literature on e-recruitment relating to its apparent cost-effectiveness, speed, geographic reach, and ease of use from both an organisational and individual perspective when compared to more traditional recruitment sources such as newspapers and agencies (Galanaki, 2002; Smith et al., 2004). Therefore the second study included questions that explored whether practitioners concur with these theories or whether the reality is different.

Specifically the questions explored the recruitment sources used, the types of positions advertised, what information within a job advertisement are considered important to applicants, how applicants obtain additional information about the job/organisation, perceived advantages and disadvantages of using e-recruitment, identification of the different characteristics of people as related to source used, whether the organisation would stop using other recruitment sources and focus only on e-recruitment, and overall whether practitioners believe the internet adds value to their recruitment process.
4.5.1 Research Question Two

The second research question investigated the views HR practitioners held about the internet as a recruitment source in terms of its utility (applicants using the internet to find jobs and subsequently apply), and its value (cost-effectiveness) in the recruitment process. The HR practitioners all had a positive view of the internet as a recruitment source and all used the three common means of internet recruitment, as identified by the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD, 1999), cited in the article by Galanaki (2002): organisational job websites, major job boards (specifically SEEK, and other job boards relevant to the profession/industry associated with the company), and media sites (specifically CareerOne which is linked to the major state newspaper).

The responses from the HR practitioners indicated that the majority of positions across the organisations, which included a vast array of professions, are advertised on the internet, with some organisations using only this source for specific positions. The predominant exception to the rule is the use of recruitment search firms to source senior executive positions within organisations which are of key importance to the success of the business. The majority of organisations stated that by using private recruitment firms, they can be assured of receiving quality candidates to select from, whilst going to the market through less targeted means may not generate appropriate applicant pools from which to choose the best candidate for these key senior management positions.

4.5.1.1 Utility of the e-Recruitment

The findings of the current study identified two key themes that HR practitioners highlighted in terms of the usefulness of the internet as a recruitment source, the first being its ease of access and the second concerning the over-abundance of jobs advertised via this source. These themes relate to commonly cited advantages and disadvantages of internet recruitment featured within the literature on the topic, the P-J and P-O fit theories, and the individual differences hypothesis research on recruitment source effectiveness as will now be discussed.
Chapter Four: Study Two

The primary theme that emerged was the accessibility of the source, both from an applicant’s and an organisation’s point of view. The concept of the ease of access of e-recruitment captures a number of sub-themes that emerged in the data. Firstly, the ability for companies to post jobs immediately on internet sites and add, delete or amend information pertaining to the job or the organisation as necessary, were major features associated with the internet’s ease of access. In addition, the fact that the information is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and can be accessed from anywhere in the world was a key indicator of its utility as a source, as cited by the HR practitioners and also authors who have reported on e-recruitment (Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Lee, 2005).

The results also indicated that a number of organisations request that candidates submit their applications via the internet. This allows for the automation of a number of processes which were previously reliant on human interaction, including the acknowledgement of applications received, and in some cases the initial screening of applications to reduce applicant pools to manageable sizes. As one HR practitioner claimed:

Steven: “...the internet as a communication tool is phenomenal. I remember the old day of paper resumes which was time consuming and huge volume-wise.”

The use of the internet as a recruitment tool is becoming increasingly common as mentioned within internet recruitment literature (Bartram, 2000; Bingham et al., 2002; Dessler, 2002; Galanaki, 2002). Whilst some of the organisations in the current study admitted to initial teething problems, the subsequent benefits for the organisation in receiving and managing job applications in a more timely and less costly manner has outweighed problems encountered.

Another sub-theme that emerged under the concept of the ease of access of the internet was in relation to the demographics of applicants. There were no specific demographic characteristics (eg. age, gender, race, etc.) associated with applicants considered likely to use the internet as a source. Instead, the consensus of the HR practitioners is that the internet is now utilised by the majority of organisations as the
primary recruitment source to advertise positions, as supported by Lee’s (2005) study which indicated that all of the Fortune 100 companies as listed by the 2003 *Fortune* magazine used some form of e-recruitment to advertise positions vacant. This has led to a conditioning of job seekers over the recent years to incorporate this source in their search for positions. The high accessibility of the internet, with free internet/computer access available in public libraries and many job-search agencies and centres, has contributed to this change in job search habits.

The results did indicate that demographic characteristics were more likely to be directly associated with other recruitment sources, and specifically that older applicants (for example, baby boomers were more likely to use print media, such as weekend newspapers, to find jobs. These perceptions indirectly support the results of Study One which found that older applicants were least likely to use the internet as a source, so would therefore use more traditional sources such as the newspaper. The findings from both studies provide some support for the individual differences hypothesis within the recruitment source literature which attempts to establish relationships between the personal demographic characteristics of an individual and recruitment sources used (Taylor, 1994; Werbel et al., 1996). This hypothesis has received mixed results over the years.

Werbel and Landau (1996) and Taylor and Schmidt (1983) found a relationship between the age and education of new hires and recruitment outcomes through different sources. However Taylor (1994) later found no support for the theory across a wide range of demographic variables, and Kuhn and Skuterud’s (2000) results, which incorporated internet sources, found no support for the hypothesis for the demographic characteristic of gender. For the current study a common premise emerged from the data as an explanation for why demographic characteristics were associated with newspaper sources. This premise related to the traditional habits of these demographic groups (older workers and passive candidates) both in job search methods and in purchasing the weekend paper to read for leisure. As stated by one practitioner:

Steven: “Many younger people wouldn’t buy the newspaper as they have no interest in world events or don’t like reading….. older people have the
behaviour where they sit down and browse through the paper with a cup of coffee.”

The final component of the perceived ease of access of internet sources was from an applicant viewpoint in that the majority of individuals retain their resume electronically, so the ability to apply for a position by simply forwarding your resume via the internet is easier and more seamless for applicants. The relative ease with applying for positions could increase the amount of quality and the amount of inappropriate applications received as individuals can view and pursue more job opportunities with less effort required (Galanaki, 2002; Gutmacher, 2000). For those organisations with more advanced internet recruitment tools, candidates are able to track their application within the recruitment process which ensures they are informed of where the process is at, and ultimately reduces the need for applicants to contact organisations via other means (usually the telephone) to enquire on their application status. These findings provide evidence to indicate that organisations believe the internet as a source within the recruitment process is fundamental in its ability to reach applicants, thereby confirming its utility as a recruitment source.

The other key theme that emerged from the results in relation to the utility of the internet as a source is the perceived over-abundance of positions being advertised via this medium. As one HR practitioner noted, “clutter” now exists with so many jobs being posted on the major job boards on a constant basis. As a result, the job advertisement may only appear on the “recently posted” or front page of the job board website for an hour or two, if that. As applicants are more likely to look at only the first few pages of the jobs available within their field, then the further down the list the job appears, the less likely that applicants will notice and apply for the job. This issue is particularly relevant to specific job families, such as accounting or call centre type roles. For such positions the perceived utility of the internet as an effective recruitment source is lower.

The problem associated with clutter is the difficulty companies face in differentiating their job and organisation from others in order to appear more attractive. Similar concerns were expressed by Bartram (2000) and Boehle (2000) who acknowledged that the increase of general job boards will subsequently result in increased
difficulties for applicants in locating suitable jobs. This negative perception of the utility of the internet links in with the P-J and P-O fit theories on recruitment (Dessler, 2002; Dineen et al., 2002) and with the findings from Research Question Two. The results for Research Question Two indicated that the primary characteristics of salary and location of the job, combined with organisationally-relevant characteristics such as work/life policies and promotion opportunities, provide an opportunity for organisations to differentiate their job, and assist applicants with determining their fit with the position and the organisation. These characteristics can counteract the problems associated with over-abundance.

Overall the results for the perceived utility of the internet as a recruitment source are mixed. There are clear advantages associated with the ease in accessing the source from both an organisational and applicant perspective, which have contributed to its rapid uptake as a recruitment source for organisations worldwide. However, in some instances this increasing utilisation of e-recruitment has led to an over-abundance of jobs posted within specific job families. Organisations are therefore focusing on other job and advertisement attributes that will attract applicants to pursue their vacancies.

4.5.1.2 Value of e-Recruitment

The second part of the research question investigated HR practitioners perceptions on the value of the internet as a recruitment source. Two key themes were identified within the results, the first being the cost-effectiveness of e-recruitment, the second was in relation to the source as a communication/information tool. The primary theme that emerged related to the perceived cost-effectiveness of the internet as a recruitment source in attracting quality candidates over a shorter period of time. As most companies have an organisational website already established, then the expense of creating a dedicated job site within the organisational website is negligent in the long term. The other cost-benefit factor involves the cost of posting jobs on major job boards. The minimal costs involved in posting an advertisement on the Internet compared to the potentially unlimited audience of this source has been a strong advantage cited by numerous authors (Bussler et al., 2001-2002; Cober et al., 2000; Wyld, 1997). In contrast, costs involved in advertising via other sources, such as newspapers, are high (Galanaki, 2002), as they are usually based on a cost per
advertisement approach which often runs into the thousands of dollars. There is also the length of time involved in placing the advertisement which can incur costs for the company in terms of backfilling positions on a temporary basis if necessary, as noted by Wyld (1997) and Stimpson (2004).

The second theme linked to the perceived value of e-recruitment is its storage capability for job and organisationally relevant information. As has been mentioned previously, information about a job or organisation that is perceived by applicants as being personally relevant will assist in an assessment of their fit to the job (P-J fit theory) and the organisation (P-O fit theory) (Dineen, Noe & Ash, 2002; Courtis, 1994; Dessler, 2002). This theme indicates that practitioners perceive that the information contained within the advertisement is of importance to applicants in the decision to apply for a job, and place value on the internet as a source due to its capacity to display more information than other sources, thereby providing support for these theories from an organisational perspective.

The general consensus amongst the HR practitioners is that nearly all individuals seeking jobs will use the internet at some stage of the job sourcing process to locate jobs and additional job or organisational relevant information. A common trend identified within the data was the mechanism used to force applicants to look at the internet in relation to job advertisements. With the creation of organisational websites, companies now direct applicants from other recruitment sources to the company web address to view information about the job and the organisation (Liz: “...everything points to our career website to apply online”). The primary reasoning behind this strategy is to reduce the amount of enquiries made about the position as the website can hold an unlimited amount of information for this purpose, and is free for the organisation to post, thereby reducing expenditure on other sources. Literature on internet recruitment has suggested that organisations are able to more easily engage applicants by providing relevant and in-depth information about the job and the organisation through links to other web pages (Bingham et al., 2002; Epstein et al., 2003; McCurry, 2005), which is further supported by Feldman and Klaas’ (2002) study that applicants accredited the internet as being a useful source to obtain information on a broad range of industries, companies and jobs.
The results to this component of the research question supports the key advantages of e-recruitment cited within the literature of this source being cost-effective and a useful communication tool to attract applicants. There is evidence within the results to suggest that applicants are being trained to use this recruitment source on an increasing basis. Furthermore, for organisations there is the capacity to adapt this source to suit the recruitment strategy with minimal costs involved, as this medium has the ability to reach either a broad audience, or a very specific target market depending on the company’s requirements. Overall, the perceptions of e-recruitment from an organisational perspective are that this source adds value to the recruitment process.

4.5.1.3 Overall effectiveness of e-Recruitment

One major finding from the interviews undertaken with the HR practitioners was the importance of distinguishing the organisation’s target market for each position advertised, and adopting an appropriate source to reach this market which may not necessarily be the internet. As has been the consensus of researchers, the optimal recruitment strategy for a company utilises a range of sources identified to reach the organisation’s target markets (Berry, 2004; Dineen et al., 2002; Smith et al., 2004). All practitioners interviewed clearly stated that restricting the sourcing of candidates to only one source, be it the internet or print media, would subsequently restrict the amount of people reached, potentially leading to the best quality candidates from identified target markets not being aware of the position vacant. Therefore, whilst the internet is considered a valuable source within the recruitment strategy, the use of multiple recruitment sources is more beneficial in obtaining quality candidates that fit the position and the organisation’s environment.

4.5.2 Research Question 3

The third research question explored the key considerations of HR practitioners when preparing an advertisement for a position vacant. The results identified two key criteria of recruitment advertisements in attracting applicants, these being the salary and the location of the position. A number of minor themes also emerged in terms of
opportunities for promotion within the company, the work/life balance policies of the company, and the core competencies of the position.

Within the data there was strong evidence to suggest that the salary of the position is one of the key attributes of a job used within recruitment advertisements to attract applicants. The findings challenge those of Study One which found no relationship between applicant perceptions of salary and their subsequent intention to pursue the job. One practitioner reported that they had reviewed statistics which indicate that an organisation will attract 10% more applicants when the salary level is included or mentioned in a favourable manner. The other reasoning behind the inclusion of salary levels was to alleviate applicants contacting the company to source this information. The location of the position was the other key attribute organisations generally include in recruitment advertisements, particularly for geographically diverse companies. The key reasoning behind this is that the location will assist in applicant self-screening processes. For example, an applicant that does not wish to move locations who notices a position advertised that indicates it is located in another city, region or country, will choose not to pursue that position.

The other minor considerations identified within the study as being of importance within recruitment advertisements include information pertaining to potential promotion opportunities within the company, generous and flexible work/life policies, and the core competencies required to fulfil the duties of the role. These characteristics were highlighted predominantly as being of importance when positions are deemed to be hard to fill, when special skill sets are required, or during times of labour shortages, as in the current market.

The findings support the theories behind self-selection, that of “person-job” and “person-organisation” fit assessments. As mentioned in Study One there has been research undertaken to indicate that the job title, design and content of the advertisement in terms of the employment benefits advertised influences potential applicants either positively or negatively, and can affect their decision to apply for a job (Barber et al., 1993; Dessler, 2002; Dineen et al., 2002). This study has provided more support for the P-J fit theory than P-O fit theory as the salary and location details are key characteristics of the position itself. One explanation for this result
could be that for organisations that have a high volume of vacancies, or where the type of positions are common in the market and of abundance (eg. accountant or call centre operator) the salary or location could be the only distinguishing features to attract applicants. It should be noted that one finding of Study One that was not evident in Study Two was the importance of the job title in the advertisement in capturing the attention and interest of applicants, although this attribute was not specifically asked about during the interview and may have been presumed as being an essential attribute and not an optional attribute by the practitioners.
4.6 CONCLUSION FOR STUDY TWO

The results of Study Two provide some complementary findings to those that emerged in Study One, and evidence to support some of the common claims about e-recruitment in the literature, and to support research theories on recruitment source effectiveness. Research Question Two assessed the perceptions of the effectiveness of the internet as a recruitment source from an organisational perspective, based on the qualities of utility and value. Overall the findings suggest that the internet is considered both a useful and cost-effective source for organisations. The primary negative perception of e-recruitment is the possibility of an over-abundance of positions advertised for specific job families which can be counteracted by effective use of job and advertisement attributes to distinguish the vacancy. In regards to its utility, the primary theme that emerged related to the internet’s accessibility. The perceived ease of access of e-recruitment was expressed in terms of being able to post jobs immediately; add, change or delete information pertaining to the advertisement; have the job advertised globally and on a 24 hour scale; and enable applicants to apply for jobs quickly and easily by forwarding resumes online. These sub-themes supported the common advantages cited within the literature on e-recruitment (Feldman et al., 2002; Galanaki, 2002; Lee, 2005; Smith et al., 2004).

The demographics of applicants also emerged as a sub-theme of ease of access, not in relation to the internet as a source, but in association with newspaper sources and in direct relation to the academic employment group. This demographic link to source confirms the individual differences hypothesis of recruitment research which suggests that individual characteristics, in this case age, are related to recruitment source (Taylor, 1994; Taylor et al., 1983; Werbel et al., 1996).

The value of the internet as a source was expressed in terms of its cost-effectiveness and its communication capabilities. Cost-effectiveness was determined by a comparison with expenditure on other source advertisements which have a restricted audience, and by reviewing recruitment processes and systems and establishing where the internet as a source has had an impact, such as allowing for applications to be received electronically. The communication capabilities in allowing organisations to alter the information provided in the advertisement, or on associated web pages,
was the other key theme to emerge in support of the value of the internet. This information can influence an applicant’s attraction and decision to apply for a job, providing support for the P-J and P-O fit recruitment theories.

Research Question Three explored the characteristics of job advertisements perceived as being important in attracting applicants. The findings identified two key themes which focused on the importance of the position salary, and of the position location, in job advertisements. The findings support the person-job (P-J) and person-organisation (P-O) fit theories that suggest that an applicant’s attraction to a job can be based on a perceived match between individual and job-related or organisational related factors (Barber, 1998; Carless, 2005).

Overall the key theme that emerged, which supports the perceptions of numerous researchers (Berry, 2004; Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Galanaki, 2002), is that the use of the internet as the only source is not going to be as effective as the adoption of a range of sources. The results for the current study indicate that for the recruitment process to be successful, organisations must assess the target market for the position being advertised, and develop a diverse recruitment strategy which employs a range of suitable sources.
5.1 INTRODUCTION

The current study has contributed to the research on recruitment by investigating the effectiveness of recruitment sources based on pre-hire constructs, with a particular focus on e-recruitment effectiveness. This approach was undertaken in response to the identification of a gap in research on recruitment sources as highlighted in the literature. The majority of previous research has evaluated recruitment source effectiveness by evaluating post-hire constructs (eg. employee tenure, performance and job satisfaction). However it has been argued that to accurately evaluate the effectiveness of recruitment sources, organisations should incorporate pre-hire criteria such as the total number of applicants generated, and the quality of the applicant pool (Carlson et al., 2002; Werbel et al., 1996; Williams et al., 1993). The current study addressed this research gap, and in doing so identified the need to capture both an applicant perspective of recruitment source effectiveness, and an organisational perspective, thereby two studies were utilised.

This chapter will discuss the theoretical and practical implications of the results from the two studies. This will be followed by an overview of the limitations of the current study, and possible areas for future research on recruitment sources identified during the analysis and evaluation of the results of the current study.

5.2 IMPLICATIONS

The present study developed a theoretical model with practical applications to investigate organisational and applicant perspectives of the value of e-recruitment in comparison to more traditional recruitment sources, and whether applicant perceptions are linked to their subsequent intention to pursue a job. The current study has contributed to research on recruitment source effectiveness through the development of a new model to assess effectiveness by linking perspectives from both the organisational and the applicant viewpoints to the recruitment source, as
demonstrated in Figure 5.1. From an organisational perspective, the model explores the relationship between recruitment sources and its impact on organisations in terms of the pre-hire recruitment outcomes of the quantity of applications, and the subsequent quality of this applicant pool. This relationship is also examined through organisational perceptions of the utility of recruitment sources, and the value of recruitment sources in achieving the ultimate goal of a quality applicant pool. From an applicant perspective the model assesses the relationship between recruitment sources and applicant perceptions of their fit with the job in terms of the job attributes advertised, and their subsequent decision to submit an application. The relationship between source and applicants is further examined through an assessment of organisational perceptions about key job attributes that sources should portray to attract quality applicants. The key outcome of the model from both an organisational and applicant perspective is that applications submitted are assessed as being quality applications that meet the essential criteria for the position.

The majority of prior literature on source effectiveness has primarily been based on subjects employed by the organisation, with data captured upon entry into the organisation which was then matched against specific employment outcomes such as performance and retention. There have been minimal attempts to assess source
effectiveness based on the immediate outcome of the identification and attraction of applicants who apply for positions vacant, be they successful or unsuccessful, with notable exceptions being the studies undertaken by Rafaeli et al. (2005) on cost per hire and yield ratios, and Breauh et al. (2003) on the relationship of recruiting sources and pre-hire outcomes (applicant quality).

This research gap has been highlighted by previous researchers such as Werbel and Landau (1996), Carlson et al. (2002) and Cober et al. (2004) who acknowledged the need for future research to evaluate source effectiveness taking into consideration the purpose of recruitment, that of generating a pool of quality applicants as defined by the organisation. The current study has made an attempt to assess source effectiveness from this early recruitment stage. Because of the new approach to assessing source effectiveness, the current study has incorporated a range of research measures from both an organisational and an applicant perspective. The combination of the two perspectives within the one model is a method which has not been attempted previously.

The results of this study presented evidence to suggest that the internet, a relatively new recruitment source, is not the most effective recruitment source for organisations to utilise. The findings provide no evidence to indicate that the use of the internet will generate better quality applicants than other sources. This finding was linked to an assessment of applicant quality at two points of the recruitment process, the shortlisted applicant stage, and the appointed (or offered) stage. In terms of applicants that were shortlisted for positions the results actually provided evidence that the newspaper as a recruitment source was the most effective in attracting quality applicants for the academic employment group. This outcome contradicts the findings of previous research which suggests that newspaper sources are relatively ineffective as a recruitment strategy whilst other more informal sources such as job referrals, networks and re-hires, generate superior applicants/appointees (Wanous, 1992; Judge & Cable, 1996; Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999). In terms of the quality of applicants appointed, or offered positions, the results on source effectiveness were similar for all recruitment sources utilised by the organisation. This finding again contradicts source superiority research which has previously established differences
in the quality of applicants between sources (Saks, 1994; Vecchio, 1995; Zottoli et al., 2000).

The method used to assess quality in the current study involved the compilation of secondary data from the organisation which captured the recruitment source first utilised by those applicants who met pre-determined position criteria and were shortlisted for and ultimately appointed to positions. The model used for the current study focused on pre-hire results up to and including the appointment of new hires, as targeting qualified and suitable applicants is a key concern for organisations (Hinton et al., 2000). There were no post-appointment measures, which have previously been the basis of research on source effectiveness, incorporated into the current study. The key exception to this being Breaugh et al.’s (2003) study (which examined yield ratios to assess the relationship between source and pre-hire outcomes in terms of the quality of candidates).

In terms of practical implications, the current study provides a contribution for practitioners and organisations by providing an evaluation on the effectiveness of recruitment sources, and recommends the continued use of a variety of sources to reach target markets. The finding of the current study that newspapers ranked first in sourcing quality shortlisted candidates for academic positions disputes the findings of previous research which has ranked newspapers sources at the lower end in sourcing quality applications. Researchers had previously claimed that informal sources, particularly job referrals and re-hires, generate superior employees to those recruited via more formal sources such as newspaper advertisements (Scholarios & Lockyer, 1999). The result of the current study is therefore of importance to practitioners, and particularly for organisations that recruit similar roles, as it indicates that newspaper sources are still useful in reaching specific target markets.

In terms of quality successful (as opposed to shortlisted) applicants, all sources used by the organisation were indistinguishable in superiority. Previous research has found distinctions in source superiority in terms of post-hire criteria. The results of the current study indicate that at time of appointment, there was no clear distinction of source superiority. The use of the internet or any other recruitment source as the sole recruitment source would be detrimental to the organisation and that the overall
optimal recruitment strategy for organisations should encompass a variety of sources (Berry, 2004; Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Dineen et al., 2002). Overall, the results provide support for use of pre-hire criteria within studies to assess source effectiveness as the primary goal of the recruitment process for organisations is the generation of a good quality applicant pool from which to select the best person for the job.

5.2.1 Applicant Perspective

As highlighted, the current study extended the research on the effectiveness of source recruitment by studying the perceptions of real-time applicants in today’s employment market, a method that has only been adopted by a few researchers such as Werbel and Landau (1996), Carlson et al. (2002) and Breaugh et al. (2003). Other research that has attempted to incorporate applicant data into findings included subject pools generally restricted to college graduates, and not to real-time applicants of an organisation. Applicant perceptions were based on four key criteria which derived from the two-stage job search process of identifying job opportunities and obtaining in-depth information about those specific job opportunities (Barber et al., 1994; Rees, 1966). The effect of applicant perceptions on intentions to pursue the job as related to source received mixed results in the study.

Firstly, applicant perceptions in terms of job advertisement placement were affected by both the job title and the ad layouts for positions advertised via newspaper recruitment sources, but perceptions were not affected by the location of the advertisement. No significant relationships existed between the perceptions of applicants about advertisement placement and their subsequent intention to pursue the job for the other recruitment sources: the internet or friends/relatives. The measures used in the model for the present study to assess the ease with which applicants noticed the advertisement were developed specifically for the study as no previous research on source effectiveness had studied placement as a unique construct. One key finding in the current study in terms of applicant perceptions was the significance of the job title of specific professions, such as the academic and senior staff professions within the organisation studied, and the applicant’s subsequent intention to pursue the job. It is acknowledged that the incorporation of advertisement placement as a component of applicant perception needs to be
replicated in future studies on source effectiveness to determine its validity as a unique construct.

The recruitment theories of “person-job” or “person-organisation” fit which link job and organisational attributes advertised with an applicant’s subsequent interest in and desire to pursue the job provide some explanation for the findings of the current research. The current study explored applicant perceptions in relation to advertisement location, layout and information. One of the practical findings highlighted within the current study is the title of the job and the advertisement layout were key features of the recruitment advertisement in gaining an applicant’s attention and that the job title had a subsequent positive effect on their intention to pursue the job applied for. The findings from an organisational perspective, as highlighted by the HR practitioners, suggested that information provided by the source about the job and organisation will help garner the interest of applicants and influence their decision to pursue the job. The results indicate that organisations need to consider carefully the content and placement of the advertisement to attract the right target market, with particular focus on the title of the job which has been shown to impact on the applicant job-choice decision process.

The research of the current study has provided partial support for one of the perceived disadvantages cited in the literature on e-recruitment, that the utilisation of the internet to advertise positions will result in a high volume of applications (Carlson et al., 2002; Boehle, 2000; McCurry, 2005). However, as the volume of applications decreased over the following years, the study has shown that application numbers will not become burdensome if the source is used appropriately. The use of longitudinal data in the present study provides a foundation for future studies to undertake similar assessments across a broad range of industries and organisations to make available further comparative data. Furthermore, the current study has highlighted the usefulness for organisations to undertake cost-benefit analyses with recruitment sources. The organisation in the present study assessed the cost effectiveness of internet job boards as a source after two years of use, and found that it was not providing quality candidates compared to associated recruitment and selection costs. The results of the current study indicate that the removal of these
sources from the recruitment strategy assisted with a reduction in the quantity of applicant numbers without affecting quality application numbers.

Overall, the current study has emphasised the need for organisations to undertake research on their target market in terms of which recruitment sources will be the most effective to reach these desired applicants. Furthermore, organisations need to experiment with the look, layout and content of advertisements, with a particular focus on the title of the job, to increase the chances that the job will be noticed and high quality applicants pursue the vacancy. This analysis will form the basis of an effective recruitment strategy that will effectively target and recruit best fit candidates in a cost effective manner.

5.3 LIMITATIONS

There were a number of limitations in the study which reduce the validity of the results. In relation to Research Question One, the organisation does not specifically capture data within their human resource information system on the friends/relatives recruitment source which was an identified source within the online survey completed by applicant participants. An assumption was therefore made in the current study that this source was captured within the “other” recruitment source and was subsequently categorised as such for the purposes of data analysis. Without accurate data on the friends/relatives source being recorded, then a true reflection of the effectiveness of this source as a recruitment tool for organisations cannot be determined.

A further key limitation was the range restriction in the responses to the questions relating to applicants’ interest in the position and applicants’ intention to pursue the job applied for. There was minimal variation in the responses to these survey questions, with the responses at the higher end of the range. This could be attributed to the self-selection theory, whereby only those applicants who believed their skills and abilities matched the position submitted an application, and as a result they had a high desire to pursue and obtain the job. This result potentially reduces the validity of the results and should be explored further in future studies.
The wording of a number of questions in the survey also provided a limitation to the results. Firstly, the research question relating to whether applicants obtained additional information about the position was a single item question which was quite broad in its terminology, so respondents may not have considered the item as thoroughly as was desired. The question only asked whether additional information was requested and did not investigate whether the request was generic in nature in relation to information about the position, department or organisation, or whether the information was linked to their personal fit to the position and organisation.

Furthermore, the majority of applicants would have, after initially finding the job advertisement, subsequently accessed the full position description to apply for the job. If the applicant potentially mistook the full position description for the initial advertisement, they would have responded positively to the item, when the research was seeking a positive response in relation to the advertisement only. Similar to this, the items in relation to comprehension about the job and interest in the position were assessed post-application so responses may have been positively inflated as it could be argued that their interest in the position is already high. It is therefore recommended that future studies should assess these items immediately after applicants have reviewed the advertisement, and not after they have applied for the position.

Secondly, with regards to the interest of applicants in a job and their intention to pursue the job applied for, the questions posed in the study were worded in contrasting styles. The item used to explore the components of a position that are of most interest to applicants when searching for a position were non-job specific, whilst the question that was related to an applicant’s intention to pursue a job was directly related to the position they had applied for with the organisation. The difference in approach appears to have contributed to a lower relationship than expected between the two variables. Future studies should make a clear distinction about gathering data related either to the specific job/organisation used in the study, or gathering data on a more generic level for both these questions.
5.4 DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Whilst the current study has contributed to the research on whether the internet as a recruitment source is an effective tool to use in reaching target markets when compared to more traditional recruitment sources, there is still a need for further research. During the analysis of results for the current study a number of other key research areas of interest were identified which are discussed below.

Firstly, it is recommended that further exploration on the use of the internet by different employment groups to source and apply for positions is undertaken. Initial results within this study indicate that applicants who search for jobs classified in the professional employment group are more likely to use the internet than those searching for positions in the academic employment group. Whilst there has been some research undertaken that indicates non-technical and management related positions are increasingly recruited via the internet (Bartram, 2000) the effectiveness of e-recruitment across the diversity of jobs available (blue-collar, white-collar, management) is needed, and specifically in relation to why there was a lower uptake of e-recruitment by applicants interested in academically related positions. Another longitudinal study in this research area would provide insight into this finding.

Furthermore, one of the proposed reasons for the overall decline in application numbers identified in the discussion related to Hypothesis One was the concept of applicants self-selecting themselves in or out of a recruitment process. This self-selection is usually an assessment made by the individual on whether their skills, knowledge and abilities match the key requirements of the job based on the detail of information provided about the vacant position advertised on the internet or through other sources. This self-selection is an attribute of the “realism hypothesis” theory and the “person-job fit” hypothesis that purports that individuals who are provided with realistic information about a job during the recruitment process will be better able to gauge their interest and fit to the position and will ultimately be more likely to remain in the job longer because their expectations are more likely to be met (Werbel & Landau, 1996; Williams et al., 1993; Breaugh & Mann, 1984; Galanaki, 2002). The current study did not include any measures directly associated with research on the these two hypotheses to ascertain if this assumption is true, therefore
future studies should include measures that assess the effects of the level of information provided about positions on the internet with the amount of self-selection applicants undertake.

The results of the current study also found that for this particular organisation, e-recruitment has no clear impact on the quality of applications received by organisations. The goal of consistently reaching a quality pool of candidates online has been identified as a major challenge for e-recruiters (Carlson et al., 2002). One key tool which can assist with the obtainment of this goal is the application of online assessment techniques. As Bartram (2000) indicated, the trend towards supervisory and department heads taking responsibility for recruiting and managing their staff, the development of an objective, job-relevant, fair and easy to use system is an ongoing challenge for companies. However, there are a number of assessment tools currently used by organisations across the globe and more rigorous and thorough research on their effectiveness in producing quality applicant pools is a key area of importance from both a theoretical and practitioners view-point.

As acknowledged within previous research on recruitment source effectiveness, an overload in applications for positions vacant can have a negative flow on effect and lead to dissatisfaction from a candidates perspective attributed to the slow response time and impersonal nature of the process (Feldman & Klaas, 2002; Smith & Rupp, 2004). Whilst the current study did not capture this specific aspect of applicant satisfaction, it would be a valuable research topic for consideration by future researchers when assessing the effectiveness of e-recruitment.

The present study also indicated that an applicant’s interest in the position in terms of salary, challenging work and the opportunity to use acquired skills had no significance to the applicant’s intention to pursue a job. One potential explanation for this result could be that applicants had already undertaken the process of self-selection and their intention to pursue the job was already high at the time of the decision to apply for the job. Alternatively, this result could be attributed to the difficulty in distinguishing these factors within an advertisement in the newspaper or on the internet or through additional information requested. Future research should further explore this relationship and determine whether such attributes are easier to
define through direct liaison with staff of the organisational area or who work in similar positions, and whether self-selection has an impact on the relationship.

One aspect of recruitment sources that was only partially investigated within this study was the aesthetics of recruitment messages and the sources used, and whether such aesthetics have a direct relationship with the submission of an application from a candidate. Research undertaken by Williamson et al. (2003) and by Cober et al. (2004) provides evidence to suggest that potential candidates react favourably to messages that are aesthetically pleasing in terms of colour, sound, and picture and suggest that organisations need to attain a balance between creative and informative recruitment messages to increase applicant attraction. The results of this study found that two key components of a recruitment message, job title and job layout, had an impact on applicants who sourced the job through a newspaper and not through the other sources. Future research should be undertaken to further investigate whether the aesthetics and content of a message do positively or negatively influence a potential applicant, particularly in relation to the internet which has unlimited possibilities for communicating messages (Cober et al., 2004).

Another commonality cited in previous research on e-recruitment has been the use of the internet by organisations to source “passive” job-seekers to fill positions (Galanaki, 2002; Gutmacher, 2000; Smith & Rupp, 2004). These “passive” jobseekers are generally those who, rather than actively source and apply for jobs, provide details of their resume and work history through a personal website, or who have information on their company’s website which is accessible by other organisations who may approach and attempt to poach them for an alternate position (Boehle, 2000; Pont, 2005). The participants of the current study were candidates who applied for positions at the organisation so are assumed to be active jobseekers. Therefore it is recommended that future research attempts to uncover the extent that organisations utilise the internet to source passive jobseekers and their quality as an applicant as opposed to jobseekers actively searching for positions. This area of research is becoming increasingly important to practitioners as the labour market becomes more competitive and “baby boomers” seek retirement or flexible work practices thereby opening up a large quantity of previously inaccessible job opportunities for the younger generations.
5.5 CONCLUSION

In summary, this thesis has assessed source effectiveness in attracting quality applicants through the measures of pre-hire outcomes and a specific examination of the internet as a recruitment source, research measures that have not had extensive coverage previously. Chapter One provided an introduction and overview of the study. The research focused on assessing the effectiveness of recruitment sources from an applicant and an organisational perspective. Effectiveness was defined in terms of the quantity and quality of applications. Highlighted within the research on recruitment source effects has been a range of design differences across studies which have led to difficulties in establishing clear conclusions as to source effects. New variables focusing on pre-hire outcome criteria and the rarely studied internet as a recruitment source were introduced into this study to address two primary gaps identified in the research. The assessment of the pre-hire criteria of the quantity and quality of applications was approached by developing two studies to examine different perspectives, one at the applicant level, and the second at the organisational level. The relationships between source and applicant perspectives were subsequently theorised to impact on the dependant variable of applicant intention to pursue the job. Emphasis was focused on the impact of e-recruitment on all proposed relationships and was the basis of broader research questions on source effects.

The two hypotheses and three research questions posed to assess the research model were then presented in conjunction with a brief outline of the design of the research which incorporated two studies to explore the two perspectives:

Study One

**Hypothesis 1:** That e-recruitment increases the number of applications received.

**Research Question 1:** How does e-recruitment impact on the quality of applications received?

**Hypothesis 2:** That recruitment sources impact on applicants’ perceptions of jobs which influences their intention to pursue the position applied for.
Study Two

*Research Question 2:* What views do HR professionals involved in the recruitment process have about the utility and value of the Internet as a recruitment source?

*Research Question 3:* What are the key considerations for HR practitioners when preparing an advertisement for a position vacant?

Chapter Two provided an overview of the extensive literature on recruitment, examining assessments of source effects on applicant quality based on a number of post-hire criteria. Assessment of source effectiveness, or superiority, is primarily in relation to applicant’s perceived notions of fit with job characteristics (P-J fit), or organisational characteristics (P-O fit), as influenced by the information provided by the source. Fit has predominantly been assessed on post-hire employee perspectives and outcomes. A gap was therefore identified in the literature on measures of pre-hire criteria to assess source effects. Pre-hire criteria, in terms of the quantity and quality of applications generated by source, were selected as such criteria form the basis of the recruitment pool from which an organisation can appoint from (Breaugh et al., 2003; Ryan et al., 2005; Werbel et al., 1996). The Internet as a recruitment source was also introduced into the measures of source effectiveness as there has been minimal research on this source in the academic literature.

Chapter Three presented the research methodology, results and discussion on the hypotheses and research question of Study One. The study captured data from a large University in South-East Queensland. Data capture methods included the acquisition of information from the University's Human Resource Information System over a nine year period obtained via system reports; and the administration of an electronic and paper-based questionnaire to applicants over a one year period. An overview of the design of the survey, including question development, scale development and pre-test procedures were presented. Demographic data in relation to the applicant subject pool was also incorporated. The findings provided no evidence to suggest that the Internet is more effective in attracting applicants than the traditional sources of newspapers, or word-of-mouth (friends/colleagues) despite its popularity as a source. This was reflected by partial support for Hypothesis One which indicated that
Chapter Five: Discussion

e-recruitment impacted on the quantity of applications (initial increase) with no concurrent impact on the quality of applications (Research Question One). Recruitment source also had no clear impact on applicant perceptions and their subsequent intention to pursue.

Chapter Four presented the research methodology, results and discussion on the two research questions of Study Two. The data was captured from face-to-face interviews with Human Resource Professionals from eight mid- to large-size organisations based in Queensland. The interviews evolved from the results of Study One and a review of the common advantages and disadvantages cited within the literature on e-recruitment. The results of Study Two generated complementary outcomes to Study One. Specific characteristics of source advertisements were related to applicant perceptions and intentions (salary and location). Furthermore, the overall value of the internet as a source, in terms of its utility and value was rated above other sources.

Chapter Five presented the implications of the results from Study One and Study Two from a theoretical and practical perspective. The limitations of the study were also presented and areas for future research highlighted.

Overall, it was determined that the internet is not the most effective source for organisations to use. The internet was equivalent to, or below, the effectiveness of other sources based on measures of quality up to commencement on the job. Newspaper sources were identified as attracting the highest quality shortlisted applicants for the academic employment group which disputes numerous research findings on this source’s effectiveness. However, organisational perceptions still indicate that e-recruitment is regarded as a more effective source in attracting quality applicants than other sources in terms of its ease of access, cost-effectiveness and communication capabilities, highlighting a discrepancy between perceptions and actual recruitment outcomes.

The primary contribution to recruitment research was the measuring of pre-hire criteria as opposed to traditional post-hire measures. The results indicated some support for source effects on the measure of applicant intentions to pursue the job. However, in measuring applicant perceptions, there was no identifiable relationship
between source and applicant perceptions, and their subsequent intention to pursue the position. The current model also assessed the relationship between source and applicant from an organisational perspective. The combination of two different perspectives within the one study was new to recruitment research.

The results from an organisational perspective provided some support for the P-J applicant fit recruitment theory in terms of the salary and location of the job. Overall, the research indicates that the attributes of the job are the first consideration for applicants when sourcing suitable positions, followed by organisational attributes. Organisations should therefore focus on the marketing of specific job attributes within the advertisement, including the job title, salary and location. The other key component of the recruitment strategy for organisations to concentrate on is the placement of the advertisement and which sources to use.

The results of the current study indicate that for the recruitment process to be successful, the strategy should incorporate a diverse range of recruitment sources to reach the desired target market, and not restrict the search to just one source such as e-recruitment. The future of recruitment will continue to evolve and provide a challenge for researchers and practitioners in determining recruitment theories and strategies that will help capture the best quality pool of applicants available.


INFORMATION SHEET

Title: A Study of the Recruitment Process

What is This Survey?

This survey is being conducted as part of our Master of Business (Research) studies at the Queensland University of Technology (QUT). This survey is designed to capture your views and opinions of recruitment processes and sources. Participation is voluntary. This is not a test and there are no right or wrong answers. We are merely interested in your views and opinions.

The responses you give are confidential. At no time will your questionnaire responses influence your application for employment at QUT. There will be no relationship between what you say and getting a job. Answers will only be seen by us as Masters students and not by anybody who will be involved in your selection process.

Project Descriptions

This study aims to extend the recruitment literature by investigating applicant impressions of organisational image and e-recruitment effectiveness.

Expected Benefits

It is envisaged that our research will build on the recruitment literature by determining the major components of organisational image, from an applicant’s perspective and ascertaining whether e-recruitment is a worthwhile source for organisations to continue to invest in when advertising job vacancies. The data received from the surveys will be valuable to gauge the perceptions of applicants on the usage of, and usefulness of, the original recruitment source used in locating the job. This is new research as previous research on recruitment has not included the Internet as a source and has predominantly involved surveying employees and not applicants.

It is hoped that as an outcome of this research organisations may be better positioned to tailor recruitment information and the use of appropriate recruitment sources to both capture and increase applicant interest in an organisation as an employer.

While your involvement in this project will not directly benefit you, we hope that by increasing understanding of these issues, recruitment information provided to people such as yourself can be improved in the future. Therefore, we would greatly appreciate your participation in this survey.

How Should I Respond?

For each question you are asked to select the one response that best fits your views. Please answer all the questions as openly and honestly as possible.

For example, the following question asks about the information contained in the job advertisement. If you believe that there was plenty of information in that particular position advertisement (the one for the job you recently applied for) you might answer like this:
Was there sufficient information about the position provided in the job advertisement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Inadequate</th>
<th>More than enough</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☑</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Who Will See My Answers?

_The responses you give are confidential and will remain anonymous._ QUT will at no time have access to any of the questionnaires completed by individuals. Findings will be made available on request to all who participate and complete the questionnaire in full, but in such a way that it is not possible for individuals to be identified.

Questions

For additional information about the project, or to have questions answered, potential participants should contact either of the Chief Investigators: Natalie Rose, on email ne.rose@qut.edu.au, or Erica Marr on e-mail e.marr@qut.edu.au, or the Masters Study Supervisor, Dr Lisa Bradley, on email lm.bradley@qut.edu.au.

Concerns

If you have any concerns or complaints about the ethical conduct of the project, you can contact the Research Ethics Officer, QUT, on + 61 7 3864 2340.

Please return the survey in the self-addressed stamped envelope enclosed, or alternatively you can complete the survey on-line at: http://www.hrd.qut.edu.au/recruitselect/jobs/recruitment_survey_intro.htm

Thank you very much for your participation in this project. It is greatly appreciated.
**Recruitment Source**

This question investigates the sources people use to find jobs to apply for. Please respond by marking one box corresponding with your answer.

1. Where did you first locate the job you most recently applied for?
   - a. Newspaper
   - b. Internet
   - c. Friends/relatives
   - d. Other (please provide details) 

2. What is the likelihood that you would use each of the following sources to find a job you could apply for? Please mark one box for each source.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Very unlikely</th>
<th>Very likely</th>
<th>Unsure</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Newspaper</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Internet</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Friends/relatives</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Other (eg. employment agency)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Advertisement Placement/Information**

The following questions aim to investigate your thoughts about the placement of, and information in, the position advertisement. Please mark one box for each question.

3. How easy was it to find the advertisement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Extremely difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extremely easy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4. How much impact did each of the following characteristics have on bringing the advertisement to your attention?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Characteristic</th>
<th>No impact</th>
<th>Some impact</th>
<th>High impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Job Title</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Advertisement location</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Advertisement layout</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

5. How easy was it to understand the information contained within the advertisement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Difficulty</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Very difficult</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very easy</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6. Did you obtain additional information about the job after first locating the advertisement?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Please indicate where you obtained this information from?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Organisational website</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Telephone request to organisational employee for duty statement mail-out</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**APPENDIX TWO : APPLICANT SURVEY**

---

**Interest in the Job**

The following question explores what characteristics of a position are of most interest to you when looking for a job. Please mark one box for each question.

7. How important are the following four factors to you when you consider applying for a job?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Extremely un-important</th>
<th>Extremely important</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. Salary</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. Opportunity to use my abilities</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. Challenging work</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. Interesting work</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5 6 7</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Intention to Pursue the Job Applied For**

The following questions will explore your motivations for pursuing the job that you most recently applied for. Please mark one box for each question.

20. I would accept the job I applied for

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. I would make this job one of my first choices

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

22. I would exert a great deal of effort to get this job

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
<th>Neither agree or disagree</th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 2</td>
<td>3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

This section asks for demographic information. It is important that you complete this section. Remember that you will not be able to be identified by this information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Options</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>What is your sex?</td>
<td>Male, Female, (Please mark the box)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is your age?</td>
<td>____________ years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What country are you from?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is the highest level of education you have completed? (Please mark one box)</td>
<td>1. Up to and including Grade 10 (or equivalent)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

173
8. Masters
9. PhD
10. Other

Approximately how many years have you been in the workforce for? _______________ years

What job category is the position you have applied for? (please mark the box of the appropriate category – more than one box can be marked if you have applied for more than one position)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>General Staff:</th>
<th>HEWA1 ($14,065-$29,434)</th>
<th>HEWA2 ($15,082-$30,887)</th>
<th>HEWA3 ($15,807-$35,163)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEWA4 ($18,051-$37,983)</td>
<td>HEWA5 ($39,238-$44,258)</td>
<td>HEWA6 ($45,521-$49,288)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEWA7 ($50,224-$54,941)</td>
<td>HEWA8 ($56,502-$64,036)</td>
<td>HEWA9 ($65,922-$69,061)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>HEWA10 ($70,632)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Academic Staff: Associate Lecturer Lecturer Senior Lecturer

Senior Staff

What type of position are you applying for? (Please mark one of each A and B)

A. Full-time Part-time
B. Ongoing Fixed-term

What is the campus location of the position you are applying for? (please mark one box)

Gardens Point Kelvin Grove Carseldine Caboolture Unsure

THANK YOU VERY MUCH FOR YOUR COOPERATION. We greatly appreciate the time you have taken to complete this survey.
HUMAN RESOURCE PRACTITIONERS

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. What recruitment sources does your organisation use? (e.g. newspaper, internet, recruitment agency, executive search agency, other)

2. What information within a job advertisement (regardless of source) do you believe is of most importance to applicants when applying for positions:
   Eg. Salary, benefits, location, skills, challenging and interesting work

3. How can applicants obtain further information about a vacancy and/or the organisation?

4. a) What types of positions do you advertise?
   b) Are there any that you advertise solely on the internet?

5. (If Internet used) Do you use the following internet recruitment measures:
   (Galanaki, 2002)
   a. Organisational website?
   b. Commercial job boards? Which ones?
   c. Media sites (e.g. those associated with newspapers such as CareerOne)?
   d. Other

6. From your knowledge of the response to positions you advertise on the internet, what sort of applicants do you think are most likely to use the internet to look for positions as opposed to other traditional sources like newspapers? Is this likely to correlate to differences in the quality of applicants?

7. What do you believe are the advantages with using the internet as a recruitment source as opposed to other sources?

8. What do you believe are the disadvantages with using the internet as a recruitment source as opposed to other sources?

9. Why do you think different sources received different responses for either different levels of jobs, or for different job types?

10. Do you believe that the internet could lead to discrimination issues? (e.g. racial, gender, age)

11. Have you heard of the term “passive candidates”? Do you source them? If so, how? Are they perceived to be of good quality?

12. Would you ever stop using other recruitment sources and just use the internet to source applicants? Why or why not?

13. Overall, do you believe the Internet has added value to your recruitment process from both an employer and a candidate perspective?