RESEARCH ARTICLE

Millennials' use of online social networks for job search: The Ecuadorian case

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Abstract

The study focuses on the way Ecuadorian Millennials use online social networks (OSN)—LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter—for job search (JS). This quantitative, descriptive and cross-sectional research was based on Ajzen's theory of planned behavior (TPB). It was determined that Ecuadorian millennials, compared with millennials from developed countries, behave differently, and their attitude toward using OSN determines their actual use of OSN for JS. The main contribution of this research is that millennials' reflective attitudes need to be encouraged if they are to successfully accomplish any goal or initiative.

KEYWORDS

attitude, Ecuador, job search, millennials, online social networks

1 | INTRODUCTION

According to the World Employment Report by the International Labor Organization (ILO), it is anticipated that, in the next 5 years, 213 million new workers will enter the labor market. Two hundred million out of 213 million will belong to developing countries (ILO, 2014). However, employment opportunities have not increased at the same rate, the immediate consequence of which will be the growing youth unemployment rate. The situation worsens in emerging countries, where the unemployment rate is expected to be 13.7% in 2017, that is, 53.5 million unemployed young persons (ILO, 2016).

The National Institute of Statistics and Census (INEC) in Ecuador conducted an annual survey of employment, unemployment, and underemployment, the results of which showed that young adults from 25 to 34 years old—referred to as millennials in the report—represent 31.4% of the total unemployed persons in Ecuador (INEC, 2016). The rising unemployment rates offer the opportunity to quantitatively understand the relationship between the use of social networks and job searches among this population.

The proposed model uses the extended structures of Ajzen's (1991) theory of planned behavior (TPB), as recommended by Lin

(2010). The model is based on three behavioral structures called attitudinal, normative, and behavioral control. This model was statistically evaluated and the levels of influence of each structure on the dependent variable, related to the intention to use online social networks (OSN) for job search (JS), were quantified. Lin (2010) studied job searches using specialized recruitment services websites. These options are still valid; however, their use has been diminished due to the great impact of social networks in recent years (Sulaj, 2017). The research model used in this paper considers a new mechanism of JS, that is, the use of social network—LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter—by Ecuadorian millennials.

LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter were selected because these social networks have a significant number of users in Ecuador and a greater affinity to the purpose of this study. Facebook is the dominant network with 11 million registered users in Ecuador, but only 6.4 million are active users. Facebook is followed by Instagram with 3.1 million users, then LinkedIn with 1.8 million and, finally, Twitter with 0.8 million users. Instagram was ruled out because job opportunities are not widely advertised in this network. Users preferably use these networks from mobile devices (Alcázar del, 2017).

This paper aims to provide sufficient information to close the following knowledge gaps: (a) the lack of similar studies in Ecuador or in the Latin American region, (b) unlike Lin (2010), this paper uses social networks such as Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter instead of JS

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web pages, (c) the results allow generalization, (d) by using the applied statistical technique, multivariate relationships can be established, analyzed, and assessed.

In regard to the first gap, the study contributes to the expansion of the academic research on this topic in emerging countries, and to develop a research model that forecasts the impact of using OSN—whose relevance in the workforce is already globally significant—for job searches within this population.

In regard to the second gap, the increasing use of Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter to select and recruit staff, as stated by Sulaj (2017), should be noted. This situation was different when Lin (2010) conducted research using JS web pages, which are less relevant today.

In regard to the third gap, the study sample was collected in different locations in two main cities. This large sample contrasts with the small amount of information obtained to date about the impacts of OSN on the general population, using restricted samples that limit the generalization of results, according to Bentley, O'Brien, and Brock (2014); Nikolaou (2014); Power and Phillips-Wren (2011); Yap and Choi Lee (2014). This is the case, particularly, on the millennial generation as stated by Bolton et al. (2013); Sadovykh, Sundaram, and Piramuthu (2015); Sadovykh and Sundaram (2016); Viswanathan and Jain (2013).

In regard to the fourth gap, the previous studies of the impacts of social networks on the population's behavior in general, for example, Sadovykh et al. (2015), used basic quantitative validation methodologies, as correlation analysis, Student's t-test, analysis of variance, and χ^2. These tests are appropriate for measuring the correlation between two variables, but their application is limited when establishing multivariate relationships, especially in the case of latent variables. On the contrary, according to Chion and Charles (2016), structural equation models allow concurrently grouping, evaluating and validating relationships among several constructs. This differs from other multivariate analysis methods because it explicitly allows considering the measurement errors, as well as the explicit estimate of the variance of such errors. The structural analysis methodology is widely used in nonexperimental research, especially when the methods for theoretical verification are not well developed or when the ethical constraints impede the experimental research. Because it is a multivariate analysis technique, it is very powerful for the estimation and validation of latent variables. Therefore, we highlight the opportunity to improve the quality of the quantitative analysis in previous research studies through the application of these analytical models that have a better technological profile and use more detailed statistics.

Finally, the study results provide academic knowledge about millennials' way of thinking and feelings with regard to the use of OSN for JS in Ecuador, a country with a large population of young people and a lack of scientific studies that emphasize the importance of the relationship between OSN and JS.

This paper is organized as follows. First, the theoretical support and prior related research studies are presented. Second, the methodology used is described. Third, the research results are analyzed. Fourth, a brief discussion of the findings and their implications are included, as well as recommendations for future studies.

2 | THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Ajzen's TPB (1991) is the fundamental theoretical support of this study. This theory has been the preferred strategy for human behavior research during the last three decades, and has been applied in hundreds of social sciences, management and health studies (Xie, Bagozzi, & Ostli, 2013).

Ajzen (1991) conducted several tests to evaluate behavioral performance as a function of joint intentions (motivations) and perceived behavioral control (skills). He proposed that three conditions must be met to predict behavior: (a) The measures of intentions and the perceived behavioral control must be compatible with the predicted behavior; (b) the intention and perceived behavioral control must remain stable during the evaluation and observation of the behavior; and (c) the predictive validity depends on the accuracy of the perceived behavior. Ajzen's proposal (1991) was based on previous research that found that when behaviors do not need strong controls, they can be accurately predicted on the basis of intentions.

Hence, Ajzen (1991) formulated the TPB, according to which there are three inductors or independent determinants of intentions. These are the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control. Research showed that the more favorable the attitude, the subjective norm, and the perceived behavioral control, the greater the individual's intent to show the associated behavior. The three predictors can impact the intention individually or as a whole. The implementation of the TPB in a particular area of interest provides extremely useful information to understand different behaviors and to carry out effective actions of adjustment or modification (Ajzen, 1991).

Various studies used this theory in areas that involved interaction with OSN. For example, Lin (2010) conducted research that included an analytical model with the TPB to assess the impact of the attitudinal, regulatory and control structures on the intended use of websites for processing job applications. The results showed that the attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control of job seekers significantly influence their intention to use these mechanisms. Similarly, when the constructs of perceived usefulness and ease of use are included, they show a positive influence on attitudes. Interpersonal influence has a positive impact on the subjective norm, whereas the ease of use and self-efficacy positively influences the perceived behavioral control. However, the external influence was found not to be a good predictor of the subjective norm.

Jaidi, Van Hooft, and Arends (2011) examined the effects of different mechanisms for providing data about JS. The authors used TPB for a set of students at a top graduate school and a longitudinal follow-up of the real effects on participants was conducted. The study included a hierarchical linear model to analyze the relationships among participants from different sources of information with regard to job seekers' attitudes and perceptions about the ways to use applications, JS intentions, real behavior and effective decisions. It was found that recruitment ads and positive word-of-mouth

comments were positively related to intent and behavior. Advertising and negative word-of-mouth comments were only partially related to intent and behavior. The presence of recruiters' delegates on the university campus was negatively associated with intent and behavior. This suggests that recruiters should direct the information carefully.

Kulkarni and Nithyanand (2013) analyzed the job seekers' use of OSN. The purpose of the study was to examine social influences as key factors in young people's decisions about JS. The study offered several recommendations to recruitment professionals to help them achieve effectiveness in the selection process.

Warmerdam, Lewis, and Banks (2015) conducted a qualitative-quantitative study on the factors that influence the JS of Australian millennial university graduates. Using TPB, the researchers explored the influence of its constructs on millennials' changing intentions of how to approach an ideal organization. The model represented 51.6% of the variance in the intent to be linked to the organization in the next 6 months. The significant predictors were the subjective norm and perceived behavioral control, not the attitude, which had an insignificant relationship. The researchers recognized that one limitation was the poor capacity of generalization due to the small setting.

Fort, Pacaud, and Gilles (2015) confirmed the relationship between TPB variables and the intention to look for employment in a study conducted in an important French business school. The moderating effects on the JS experience and the two dimensions of the five-factor personality model—extraversion and conscientious-ness—were analyzed. The results showed that the variables of the TPB were significantly related to the JS intention, and conscientious-ness and extraversion acted as moderators of the relationship between the attitude and intention to search for employment.

Roulin and Bangerter (2015) reported that professional recrui-ters most frequently used OSN to hire the staff required by their companies. They used the theory of signs, which allows them to interpret the signals sent by job seekers who send their personal and professional characteristics through electronic media. The results suggest that both recruiters and potential applicants perceive professional networks, for example, LinkedIn, as a potential antecedent of the person's adequacy to the job, and social interactions, for example, Facebook, as a potential antecedent of the person's adequacy in the organization.

Teoh and Wester (2015) conducted qualitative research related to the use of social networks for JS, and showed that job seekers prefer these methods over the traditional ones because they have a positive perception of the benefits. In addition, they found that the JS process, in general, has not changed much, although it can be more effective as a result of the job offers posted online. The authors concluded that the benefits obtained from online platforms are access to international job offers, more effective and easy interaction with one's network and other bidders, greater visibility as a result of an online professional profile, and access to specific niche platforms for certain professions. Despite these efforts, academic research on the use of OSN for JS is still limited (Nikolaou, 2014).

2.1 | Study variables

The variables included in this research, based on Ajzen's (1991) TPB, are detailed below. Independent variables are attitude, subjective norm, and perceived behavioral control; the dependent variable is the intention to use OSN for JS.

The first variable, attitude, is related to the predisposition toward the behavior, and to the person's favorable or unfavorable stance toward performing the behavior. The attitude is significantly related to the intention to look for employment (Fort et al., 2015), even though other research studies found only moderate correlations between attitude and intention (Fort et al., 2015). Warmerdam et al. (2015) obtained an insignificant correlation between attitude and intention, unlike the expectations and significant evidence affirmed by other authors.

The second variable, subjective norm, refers to society's influence on the performance of the behavior. This influence may come from the person's family or friends. Recent research stated that JS decisions are associated with strong comparisons and social influence (Kulkarni & Nithyanand, 2013). This happens because the perceived value of the JS decisions increases when others attest to it and when there is a strong influence in regard to the relationship with employers in certain social contexts (Kulkarni & Nithyanand, 2013). In addition, the information that is transmitted orally from nearby sources, such as family members and friends, influences the perceptions of labor relations with certain organizations (Kulkarni & Nithyanand, 2013). The applicants tend to look for information in their social context when they lack objective information about the organization and when the JS decisions are considered extremely important and emotional (Kulkarni & Nithya-nand, 2013). Young people in emerging countries, despite their intelligence and clear life objectives, are affected by socio-cultural obligations such as elderly care when they make decisions about their future jobs (Kulkarni & Nithyanand, 2013). Liu, Huang, and Wang (2014) reaffirmed that the subjective norm determines the unem-ployed persons' interest to rely on their next of kin who encourage them to look for employment. Moreover, Warmerdam et al. (2015) determined that there is a strong positive correlation between the subjective norm and recent graduates' JS intentions.

The third variable, perceived behavioral control, refers to the person's ease or difficulty to perform the behavior, and reflects their previous experience and the advantages or obstacles to their intention to perform the actual behavior. This variable is related to the judgments of how well a person is able to complete a course of action to deal with a situation associated with the specific behavior (Ajzen, 1991). The results of previous research on this variable show moderate effects with regard to the influence on intention. Hence, while the β factors are significant in some cases, in others they are not important (Fort et al., 2015). Warmerdam et al. (2015) found that this variable had the highest positive correlation with the intention. Liu et al. (2014) also reported that this variable plays a key role in unemployed persons' motivations to look for employment. In their analytical study, the authors discovered that motivations are positively related to the JS behavior, the number of job offers, and job status. In addition, Liu et al.

(2014) identified four sources of self-efficacy: successful achievements, indirect experiences, verbal persuasion, and mood.

The fourth variable is the intention to use OSN for JS. The TPB (Ajzen, 1991) suggests that when the attitude and subjective norm are positive, and perceived control is high, the intention of the associated behavior is also high. This leads to encouraging efforts to achieve the purpose (Liu et al. 2014). This theory states that when behaviors do not need strong controls, they can be accurately predicted on the basis of intentions. In other words, their measurement is sufficient to know the effect they have on actual behavior.

Finally, the participant's age, gender, business education, and geographic location were included as moderating variables to identify millennials' behavioral differences.

2.2 | Development of the study model and hypotheses

The starting point for the study of model development and hypotheses positing was the formulation of the following research question: What is the relationship between TPB and the intention of millennials who live in Quito and Guayaquil—the main Ecuadorian cities—to look for a job through OSN, namely LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter?

The study model was based on Ajzen's TPB and the three behavioral structures recommended by Lin (2010), namely attitudinal, normative, and behavioral control. All three structures impact the dependent variable: the intention to use OSN for JS. Each of these structures included several elements, which are detailed below.

The attitudinal structure includes the attitude variable and two elements of influence: perceived usefulness and ease of use (Lin, 2010). This author defined the perceived usefulness as the improvement in performance the users believe they have achieved as a result of using the system. The attitudes toward the use of the system will change to the extent that the behavior results change. The ease of use is defined as the belief users have about the level of effort they will have to make to use the system. Previous studies about the influence of this variable on the intention to use are inconsistent. However, this paper resorted to millennials' high affinity with technological tools (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010) and anticipated the significant impact on the intention to use. This presumption was emphasized because millennials, despite being aware of their vulnerability when using digital media, continue posting and sharing personal information online (Lam, 2016).

To assess the impact of the attitudinal structure in the intended use of OSN for JS, we propose the following hypotheses:

Millennials from Ecuador are more likely to look for a job when they

H1: *Appeal to their attitude and willingness to use OSN.*

H1a: *Believe that their perception of usefulness promotes the use of OSN.*

H1b: *Believe that the system's ease of use promotes the use of OSN.*

The normative structure includes the subjective norm variable and two elements of influence: social influence and external authority. Lin (2010) stated that the subjective or social norms that drive behavior depend on interpersonal and external influences. In this study, social influence is in the word-of-mouth information provided by family, friends or colleagues. External authority includes media reports, government advertising, and other related information. Since social networks are, by nature, sources of significant influence, we hypothesize that there should be an important correlation between the "normative structure" and "intention to use" variables.

To assess the impact of the normative structure on the intended use of OSN for JS, we propose the following hypotheses:

Millennials from Ecuador are more likely to look for a job when they

H2: *Accept the social norms as determinants of effort when using OSN.*

H2a: *Think that internal pressure contributes to the use of OSN.*

H2b: *Think that external pressure contributes to the use of OSN.*

The behavioral control structure includes the perceived behavioral control variable and two elements of influence: ease of use and self-efficacy (Lin, 2010). According to Ajzen (1991), the perceived behavior control is related to the individual's ease or difficulty to have a certain behavior. Lin (2010) found that the ease of use acts as a belief in behavioral control. In addition, the author also found that self-efficacy is a determinant of behavior control and the successful implementation of technological systems. Lin (2010) defined self-efficacy as the confidence that individuals have in their ability to carry out the related action or behavior. This study used Palfrey and Gasser's (2008, p. 1) denomination of "digital natives" based on millennials' knowledge and ease to use social networks. Therefore, the influence of the control variable may be relevant to the intention to use.

To assess the impact of the control structure in the intended use of OSN for JS, we propose the following hypotheses:

Millennials from Ecuador are more likely to look for a job when they

H3: *Use their knowledge and capacity to manage technological tools and OSN.*

H3a: *Are convinced that the system's ease of use supports using OSN.*

H3b: *Are convinced that their self-efficacy supports using OSN.*

This model and the hypotheses are shown in Figure 1.

3 | METHOD

3.1 | Measuring constructs

This study used a 30-item instrument. The instrument allowed measuring four variables. The independent variables were attitude (AT), subjective norm (SN), perceived behavioral control (PBC); the
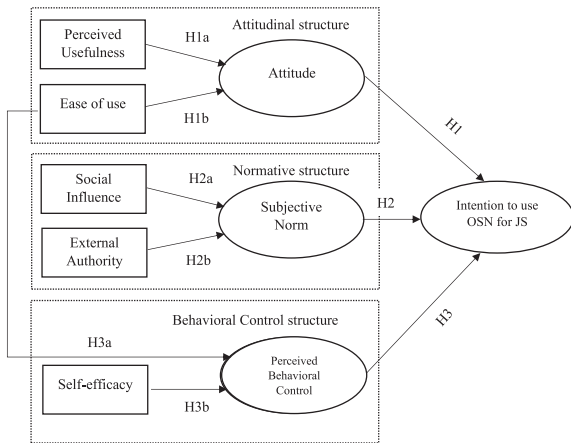
FIGURE 1 The relationship between the variables and the study hypotheses. Adapted from Ajzen (1991) and Lin (2010)

dependent variable was behavioral intention (BI). From AL-Majali and Nik Mat (2010), we adopted the 14 items proposed for the main constructs. Thus, behavioral intention included three items; attitude included four items; subjective norm, four items and perceived behavior control, three items. From Lin (2010), the authors adopted 16 items for TPB subconstructs. The perceived usefulness (PU) included four items; the ease of use (EU), three items; social influence (SI), three items; external authority (EA), three items; and self-efficacy (SE), three items. The items were originally written in English, translated into Spanish, and were included in the instrument after a translation back into English and an adaptation to this research. The questionnaire strictly followed the procedure recommended by Ajzen (2002 revised 2006). All items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale that ranged from 1, *completely disagree* to 7, *completely agree*. Appendix A shows the variables, elements along, and the description.

3.2 | Characteristics of the sample and data collection

Four hundred and thirty students from six Ecuadorian universities were surveyed. Eleven surveys were discarded due to inconsistencies; hence, 419 valid surveys were used. The students were encouraged to participate after the academic coordinators agreed to grant a performance bonus if they were to fill out the survey. The students were selected through a probabilistic procedure based on a simple random sampling: 52% of the students were in Quito and 48% of the students were in Guayaquil. Both cities were selected because of their similarity to other Latin American realities where there is a strong multicultural environment, and the technological tools related to this study were widely used. The participants were 59% women and 41% men; their age ranges were 21–23 years, 45%; 24–26 years, 18%; 27–29 years, 11%; 30–32 years, 12%; and 33–35 years, 14%. The fields of education were business sciences, 75%; exact sciences, 8%; social and political sciences, 5%; life and health sciences 2%; and others, 10%. The data were collected during the second half of 2017.

4 | DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 | Data preparation for analysis

The quality of data distribution was verified before using the SPSS statistical package. The existence of extreme values was verified to detect inconsistencies in the surveys. Then a descriptive analysis was conducted, including evidence of asymmetry and kurtosis, to check the normality of the distribution. The Kolmogorov–Smirnov (KS), Shapiro–Wilk test (SW), Lilliefors (L) and Anderson-darling (AD) tests were conducted as recommended by Razali and Wah (2011). Since none of the tests were conclusive, we opted for log-transformed data. Rodriguez and Ruiz (2008) recommended that when there is negative asymmetry, it is necessary to apply the reflection principle to the distribution before the logarithmic transformation. This procedure obtained a reflex distribution with a positive bias and using the base-10 logarithm. Subsequently, the SW indicator was computed for the closest values to the unit. As indicated by Razali and Wah (2011), low values led to reject the hypothesis of normality, whereas the values closer to one confirmed the normality of data.

Finally, we proceeded to test the empirical and conceptual one-dimensionality of the variables to identify the elements that might be inappropriately representing a variable and to ensure that each variable measure one single concept. The empirical one-dimensionality was completed as a result of the confirmatory factor analysis. For this, measurement models were developed for each variable and the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI) was observed. All the variables obtained GFI values greater than 0.9. According to Byrne (2010), GFI values closer to one have a very good fit. For this reason, it was not necessary to make any changes in the distribution and clustering. The conceptual one-dimensionality was reviewed by analyzing the relationship between the elements within each variable and the measured concept.

4.2 | Validity and reliability

We proceeded to evaluate the reliability of the measurements through convergent and discriminant validity. The convergence validity was determined by the Bentler-Bonett coefficient, also known as the Normed Fit Index (NFI) or Delta 1. This indicator measures the extent to which each element of the variable is part of each variable. The variable has convergence validity when the value is equal to or greater than 0.9 (Pino, 2008). The values obtained for this indicator were for behavioral intention, 1.000; attitude, 0.997; subjective norm, 0.998; perceived behavioral control, 1.000; perceived usefulness, 0.976; ease of use, 1.000; social pressure, 1.000; external authority, 1.000; and self-efficacy, 1.000. The discriminant validity refers to the extent to which the scale elements only estimate one variable and test it through the factor loadings of the model elements. According to Chion and Charles (2016), significant factor loadings have values that are equal to or greater than 0.4. The results obtained loadings were greater than this value in all cases.

In addition, to certify the validity of the survey , Casaló, Flavián, and Guinalíu (2012) recommended three types of confirmation (a)

apparent, (b) content, and (c) construct. The apparent validity was verified by human resources professionals and academics, and through pilot tests that collected the recommendations included in the final version of the survey. The validity of the contents was included after an extensive literature review which, according to Casaló et al. (2012), guarantees that the set of items represents all the referred aspects. In addition, to measure the construct validity, the factorial analysis was conducted to verify that the various elements and variables were related to one factor in the studied model. Cronbach's α coefficient was also calculated to determine reliability. The obtained values were above 0.8, which confirmed the internal consistency of the survey. Thus the scale measured what this study proposed (Chion & Charles, 2016).

4.3 | Evaluation of research model

We used structural equation modeling to evaluate the model. The following results were obtained. Normed χ^2 or CMIN/DF equaled 5.014, goodness-of-fit index (GFI), 0.746; normed of fit index (NFI), 0.815; parsimony ratio (PRATIO), 0.910; and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), 0.098. These indicators reflect an appropriate adaptation of the model to the information collected from the 419 valid surveys (Byrne, 2010; Chion & Charles, 2016; Ximenez & San Martín, 1998). Table 1 shows the standardized coefficients, standard error, critical ratio, and significance level for each variable. Figure 2 illustrates these relationships.

According to these results, hypothesis H1 is supported: attitude has a significant and positive influence on millennials' intention to use OSN for JS. Hypothesis H1a is also fully supported: perceived usefulness has a significant and positive influence on the mediator attitude of millennials' intention to use OSN for JS. Hypotheses H2, H3, and H1b are rejected. Despite having a positive influence, they did not have statistical significance. Hypotheses H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b had a positive influence and statistical significance. However, because these hypotheses are included in the model and are related to the subjective norms and perceived behavioral control variables— whose hypothesis H2 and H3 were rejected—H2a, H2b, H3a, and H3b were accepted but excluded from the analysis.

To complement the validation of the model, moderating variables were included to know the fitness of the different cohorts in the study. We analyzed the following: (a) men, (b) women, (c) Quito, (d) Guayaquil, (e) 21–23-year-olds, (f) 24–26-year-olds, (g) 27–29-year-olds, (h) 30–32-year-olds, (i) 33–35-year-olds, (j) business education, (k) other educational training, (l) Quito-men, (m) Guayaquil-men, (n) Quito-women, and (o) Guayaquil-women. Other combinations were not considered because the sample was too small to generate consistent results. The cohorts that fit the model were: ages 33–35 with a CMIN/DF, 3.906; women with a CMIN/DF, 3.328; Quito with a CMIN/DF, 3.240; Guayaquil with a CMIN/DF, 3.025; education field "others" with a CMIN/DF, 2.453; the combinations Quito-women with a CMIN/DF, 2.652; and Guayaquil-men with a CMIN/DF, 2.419.

TABLE 1 Standardized coefficients, standard error, and critical ratio for relations among variables

Input variable		Output variable	Coeffi-cient	Standard error	Critical ratio	p-Value
AT	→	BI	0.818	0.049	16,759	***
SN	→	BI	0.045	0.038	1,166	.244
PBC	→	BI	0.082	0.044	1,854	.064
PU	→	AT	1,053	0.086	12,185	***
EU	→	AT	0.063	0.034	1,867	.062
SI	→	SN	0.354	0.043	8,145	***
EA	→	SN	0.631	0.092	6,861	***
EU	→	PBC	0.414	0.039	10,580	***
SE	→	PBC	0.496	0.044	11,247	***
BI1	→	BI	1,000			
BI2	→	BI	0.985	0.042	23,547	***
BI3	→	BI	1,049	0.041	25,524	***
AT1	→	AT	1,000			
AT2	→	AT	0.912	0.042	21,783	***
AT3	→	AT	0.887	0.046	19,260	***
AT4	→	AT	1,014	0.045	22,420	***
SE3	→	SE	1,000			
SE2	→	SE	1,082	0.047	23,094	***
SE1	→	SE	0.964	0.045	21,208	***
SI3	→	SI	1,000			
SI2	→	SI	1,118	0.043	26,001	***
SI1	→	SI	0.915	0.044	20,929	***
SN4	→	SN	1,000			
SN3	→	SN	1,016	0.036	28,557	***
SN2	→	SN	0.924	0.038	24,208	***
SN1	→	SN	0.839	0.048	17,353	***
EA3	→	EA	1,000			
EA2	→	EA	1,247	0.149	8,348	***
EA1	→	EA	1,230	0.148	8,331	***
EU1	→	EU	1,000			
EU2	→	EU	0.95	0.041	23,063	***
EU3	→	EU	0.804	0.043	18,606	***
PU1	→	PU	1,000			
PU2	→	PU	1,337	0.095	14,142	***
PU3	→	PU	1,314	0.093	14,053	***
PU4	→	PU	1,331	0.095	13,947	***
PBC3	→	PBC	1,000			
PBC2	→	PBC	1,018	0.07	14,514	***
PBC1	→	PBC	0.929	0.069	13,546	***

Note: All coefficients are significant (*p* < .001), except for SN on BI, PBC on BI and EU on AT.

5 | DISCUSSION

The results of the model evaluation contradict Lin's (2010) study. Lin reported that in Taiwan, a country where the model was applied, the
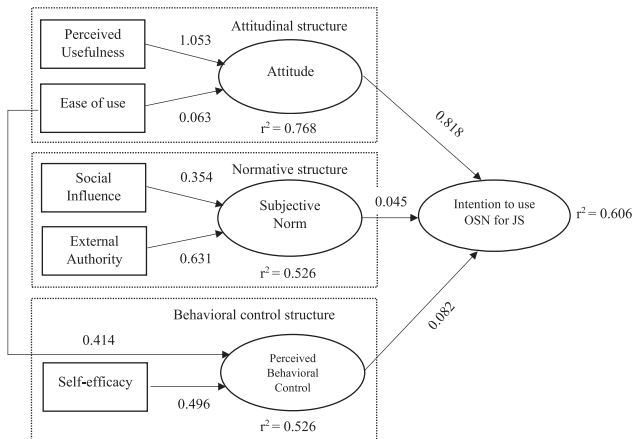
FIGURE 2 Research model with standardized coefficients

use of employment websites instead of social networks had a positive influence on all structures of the model: attitudinal, normative, and control behavior. This is also contradicted by Warmerdam et al. (2015), who conducted a study in Australia and stated that the variables with the highest incidence on the intended use of OSN for JS were subjective norm and perceived behavioral control. In contrast, attitude was not significant. This was not the case with millennials in Ecuador. This study found that attitude is the variable with the highest impact—not normative or perceived behavioral control—to promote the intended use of OSN for JS. This circumstance makes a geographical and evolutionary difference with regard to the use of electronic media for this purpose.

This study demonstrates that the behavior of Ecuadorian millennials depends exclusively on their attitude, that is, their beliefs, tastes, affinities, disposition, and feelings towards the use of OSN for JS. This attitude explains their tendency to use them to be part of an organization. There are several reasons that explain why attitude is more important for Ecuadorian millennials than social influence or technology skills to use OSN, as it has been promoted internationally.

First, despite the fact that millennials are aware of their technical capacities and are very sensitive to public opinion on social networks, their individualism and confidence in their knowledge prevail. Moreover, the possibility that recruiters could use the information provided online may be a sensitive issue. Second, the constant use of social networks causes monotony, that is, the attractiveness of OSN is undermined over time if the networks do not strive to generate new and attractive changes for the users. As a result, millennials' use of OSN depends more on their favorable attitude than on social influence or their abilities. Singh (2016) conducted research on millennials in India. The author emphasized that personal motivations related to the use of social media are strong predictors for its use, which depends on the type of social network and the amount of time spent on social media. In addition, Singh demonstrated that boredom has a negative impact on millennials' attitudes in regard to what OSN can offer. The level of boredom is lower in older age groups, while higher among younger people. Third, the availability of smartphones with access to social networks (44.7%) is not as widespread in Ecuador as in developed countries (National Institute

of Statistics and Census – INEC, 2017). Sulaj (2017) reported that the use of mobile devices to search and recruit personnel—called mobile recruiting—has replaced the traditional systems on a global scale.

It is demonstrated that the model has a better fit for the 30–32 year age group. This result shows that, for older Ecuadorian millennials, OSN is a useful tool to select job offers. This does not necessarily occur for the younger cohorts, who use OSN only to browse job opportunities without expecting a positive result.

6 | CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

First, the study verified that the attitudinal structure of the TPB model—including the perceived usefulness and ease of use variables—constitutes the most powerful drive to predict the intention to use OSN for JS. According to the results, attitude is the variable that most influences the behavioral intention as a result of its relative weight within the model.

Second, the study found that the norm structure—including the subjective norm, social pressure, and external authority variables—does not significantly influence the intended use of OSN for JS, as expected according to the theoretical model of research. This situation reflects an apparent disparity between the scientific evidence and public perception. This viewpoint considers millennials to be a homogeneous and controlled generation in regard to their behavior due to the messages and images they insistently receive through digital media. Millennials have also been cataloged to be highly influenced by external factors and to have little capacity to make their own decisions. In Ecuador, the belief that millennials are highly influenced by social pressure is dismissed, even though such influence come from reliable sources, friends, family or external factors such as the media, public, or private organizations, or the government. It seems that the shortfalls faced by young people from Ecuador encourage their self-confidence, that is to say, the attitude to resolve problems without having to consult others all the time. Therefore, it is inaccurate to say that millennials are motivated exclusively by social influence or are encouraged by the preconceived notions of society. On the contrary, Ecuadorian millennials have learned to make their own decisions based on reflection and emotional control with respect to the use of OSN for JS.

Third, the study demonstrates that the control structure—including perceived behavioral control, ease of use, and self-efficacy variables—does not have a significant influence on the use of OSN for JS. This result is unexpected. The original approach of the study model reinforces the control structure statement. Millennials' knowledge and technology skills are confirmed. The study results also highlight that millennials intensively use digital media. These skills are included in their intellectual heritage, but are not necessarily used to facilitate the selection of job options. The results of the study reveal that, on the one hand, millennials use OSN as a means to achieve their goals but, on the other hand, using OSN for JS causes distrust because companies, professional recruiters, and specialists may poorly manage their personal data. In other words, millennials are aware of the consequences of the inappropriate use of OSN.

Fourth, the study results show that perceived usefulness has a greater influence on attitude than ease of use. External authority is more relevant than social pressure, in comparison with the subjective norm, whereas the ease of use and self-efficacy variables have a similar statistical influence on perceived behavior control. The attitude structure is more relevant than the control structure. The latter is more important than the norm structure with regard to its influence on the intended use of OSN for JS.

The impacts of these results, in relation to the Ajzen's (1991) model, are diverse. Even though several international research studies validated this theory, it has not been validated in developing countries, where the underlying conditions of the theory are not expressed and fulfilled as in developed countries. There are gaps or knowledge inconsistencies that need to be verified to make generalizations. In this case, it is concluded that the norm and control beliefs do not positively influence the results. Their weight is insignificant in comparison with the attitudinal beliefs. We suggest several explanations for this occurrence.

The results show that millennials from emerging countries such as Ecuador display particular behaviors that do not comply with the stereotypes made by researchers from developed countries. Therefore, research studies like this are relevant because they identify whether the behaviors are applicable to the region and, based on the results, appropriate actions—such as recruitment, motivation and labor relationship strategies—can be taken.

This research model can be used internationally to conduct future studies on the behavior of young people, in regard to the decision-making process for selecting career options. The main idea this study offers is that society should promote millennials' reflexive attitudes towards any goal or initiative to engage them and ensure their participation, rather than assuming that they are going to behave in the way various social studies have concluded. It is not advisable to engage millennials through massive strategies because there are differences within that population. For instance, younger cohorts behave differently than older cohorts, men act differently than women; persons with business education are different from other professionals and cities welcome populations that behave according to the rules of the region.

6.1 | Marketing implications for academics and practitioners

The research model, besides benefiting the field of human talent management, has the following marketing implications. First, it can be used for a thorough customer assessment and for analyzing millennials' purchasing intentions in emerging countries such as Ecuador. Second, it provides clear guidelines about the ideal mechanism for developing efficient customization tactics to meet the needs of this generation. Third, millennials' behavior requires the implementation of interactive relationship marketing strategies, preferably through social media. The integration of social media provides several benefits to organizations, consumers, and marketing applications. For organizations, the benefits are a faster response time, broader coverage, and low cost. For consumers, the benefits are two-way communication, word of mouth support for decision-

making, and improvement of the value proposition for younger audiences. Marketing professionals can have the opportunity to attract new customers, draw attention to the brand, create new channels for customer service and campaign support, and strengthen the brand equity, position, and integration of marketing programs (Valos, Riza, Driesener, & Maplestone, 2016). Finally, to effectively reach out to millennials, it is advisable to integrate neuromarketing tools, such as storytelling, to appeal to their emotions and create favorable attitudes towards the products or services in various segments of this population group.

7 | RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The results obtained after the validation of Ajzen's (1991) model suggest that the intention to use OSN for JS should be analyzed using Davis's technology acceptance model (TAM; Davis, 1985), as this model may fit better with the particular conditions in emerging countries. According to Casaló et al. (2012), the TAM uses the belief-attitude-intention sequence that may better explain the behaviors based on consumer's beliefs, which are framed in a single attitudinal structure—perceived usefulness, and perceived ease of use. These factors explain consumers' attitudes, intentions to use, and the real use of the new technology.

In Sri Lanka, Weeransinghe and Bandara-Hindagolla (2018) conducted a detailed literature review of the use of social networks based on the TAM. This model was used because it is psychologically supported, it explains the acceptance of using technology better, and, thanks to its simplicity and parsimony, the model can be adapted for studies of technology use in various contexts. The study concluded that the social influence variable in the TAM is an important determinant of attitude, but has a negative impact on the intended use of OSN. Gentry and Calantone (2002) stated that the TAM is more accurate than TPB thanks to TAM's constructs, perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness because they apply to all attitudes in various contexts. In contrast, the TPB states that the factors that influence attitudes are unique to each situation.

It is worth mentioning that the sample—419 participants—was selected on the basis of statistical criteria to achieve scientific validity and reliability. However, the model could be improved through an intensive training process among stratified sampling of the cohorts that showed the best fit to better understand the users' behaviors.

This research was conducted with university students, but future studies may also include professionals who are actively or passively looking for employment. Hence, we could form new cohorts of professional fields, including the socioeconomic status as a moderating variable, and thus have a broader basis to facilitate the generalization.

Finally, more research studies are needed in societies similar to Ecuador to be able to generalize the results.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE A1 Description of questionnaire items

Variable	Variable code	Item	Description
Behavioral intention	BI	BI1	I intend to use online social networks (OSN) for job search (JS).
		BI2	I will use OSN for JS.
		BI3	I plan to use OSN for JS in the near future.
Attitude	AT	AT1	Using OSN for JS is a pleasant idea.
		AT2	Using OSN for JS is a sensible idea.
		AT3	Using OSN for JS is an exciting idea.
		AT4	I like the idea of using OSN for JS.
Subjective norm	SN	SN1	People who influence my behavior think I should use OSN for JS.
		SN2	The majority of people I respect think that it is a good idea to use OSN for JS.
		SN3	People whose opinions I value think I should use OSN for JS.
		SN4	People who are close to me think I should use OSN for JS.
Perceived behavioral control	PBC	PBC1	I could use OSN for JS.
		PBC2	The use of OSN for JS is completely under my control.
		PBC3	I have the necessary skills to use OSN for JS.
Perceived usefulness	PU	PU1	The use of OSN helps me to be up-to-date in my career.
		PU2	The use of OSN increases my chances to find suitable employment.
		PU3	The use of OSN increases the effectiveness of my JS.
		PU4	The use of OSN is a very useful mechanism for JS.
Ease of use	EU	EU1	I find it easy to learn how to use OSN.
		EU2	My interaction with OSN is clear and understandable.
		EU3	It would be very easy for me to become an OSN expert.
Social influence	SI	SI1	My decision to use OSN for JS will be influenced by my family members.
		SI2	My decision to use OSN for JS will be influenced by my friends.
		SI3	My decision to use OSN for JS will be influenced by my colleagues or peer group.
External authority	EA	EA1	I have read/seen news reports that mentioned the OSN is an efficient way to look for a job.
		EA2	Traditional media (newspapers, magazines, radio, and TV) influence my JS through the use of OSN.
		EA3	The Government encourages Internet-based JS.
Self-efficacy	SE	SE1	I'm confident when using OSN for JS, even though I have never used them for this purpose.
		SE2	I'm confident when using OSN for JS, even though I don't have someone to show me how to proceed.
		SE3	I feel comfortable using OSN for JS on my own.