

A. Chamaru De Alwis ¹

Aayanthi Umayangana Kulasekara ²

RECRUITMENT ADVERTISING: CHANGES WITHIN THE LAST FOUR DECADES IN SRI LANKA

Abstract:

Recruitment is one of the most important functions of the Human Resource Management and the success of the function is depended on the attraction of most suitable candidates to the relevant vacancy. To attract applicants, the organizations can be used no of modes, however among those, most popular one is newspaper advertisements. However just publishing advertisement on newspaper does not bring expected results. To get maximum results, the advertisements should be prepared in an attractive way. Under this study, it was evaluated the changes happen with newspaper advertisements

within last four decades to get understand how that advertisements has create attractively and to understand the trends of the current newspaper advertisements. For that, it has used 200 published advertisements with the period 1970 - 2009 as a sample of the study. According to the results usage of graphics, company logo, pictures, have been increased. On the other hand, usage of descriptive language in recruitment advertisements has been increased. Most of recruitment advertisements presented the position in direct, however there is a trend to present in creative ways and with a statement that encourage applications.

Keywords:

Recruitment advertisements, applicants, recruitment

Author's data:

¹ A. Chamaru De Alwis ,PhD, M.Sc (Mgt), B.Sc (Bus. Admin.) special
Department of Human Resource Management, University of Kelaniya
E-mail: dealwisac@gmail.com

² Aayanthi Umayangana Kulasekara, B. B Mgt. (HRM) Special
Senior Human Resource Executive at Arpico Finance Company PLC (Alliance Group), Sri Lanka
E-mail: ayanthi_umayangana@yahoo.com

Introduction

Success of the Human Resource Management [HRM] is depended on how well it achieves objectives of HRM within the organization. Basically, one of the main objectives of the HRM is to procure right people at the right time to do the right jobs. If any organisation fails to achieve this objective, then it is impossible to achieve any of their organisational goals effectively and efficiently. This process has recognised as a function of HRM and named it as as “Recruitment and Selection”. According to the Mathis and Jackson [5], “Recruitment is the process of generating a pool of qualified applicants for organizational jobs”. Basically, recruitment function deals with two major activities. That is; finding suitably qualified individuals from the job market and attracting them towards job vacancies. Success of all the other HRM functions is highly depended on the success of this recruitment process of the organization. Essentially, recruitment can be done two ways: internally and externally. In other words, attracting candidates within the organization and attracting candidates from external environment. Throughout this external recruitment category; number of alternative modes can be identified such as employee referrals, past employees, education institutes, internet job posting sites, employee agencies and advertising [6]. Advertising is the mostly practiced recruitment mode and it is consisted number of sub modes such as newspaper, television radio, posters and banners and etc. Among those, newspaper advertisements are the most popular recruitment mode among the sub modes of the Recruitment Advertising [RA]. Not only that, it is the most common recruitment mode, if is considered as a separate major mode of recruitment [1], [2]. However its success highly depends on the level of attraction of the advertisement. Perkins and

Thomas comment on that level of attraction and confirmed that the level of attraction as a vital for the success of the advertisement, because it is directly affected to the job seekers’ reputation, perceptions and job-pursuit decisions [10].

To get successful results from the advertising, employers have to address two major issues: selecting correct the advertising medium and developing advertisement construction in proper manner [3].

Under this study, it was given concentration to evaluate most popular mode; newspaper advertising to identify changes happened within the last four decades and the trends of the current newspaper recruitment advertisements.

The purpose of this study

This study was carrying out with the expectation of accomplishing following two objectives.

- To identify the impact of advertising practises in preparing job advertisement throughout last four decades

This was evaluated in three aspects of those have been used to measure effectiveness of the advertisements: Frankfurt; Germany

1. The way of presenting the advertisement
Some are happy to publish advertisements just using wordings without logos, any graphics or pictures. However there is a resent trend using those types of changes to the advertisements expecting to get more attention.

A number of organizations use open advertisement that contains the name of the organization offering the job and others wish to use blind advertisement that is not mentioned the name of the employer and providing just post box number and name of the post office [6].

There is another way of presenting advertisement. That is using pictures specially pictures of current employees in their advertisements. Using employees in RA’s provides

a real face for the corporate image and it demonstrates how employees have fulfilled their own aspirations and been successful in achieving their goals [9].

Using company logo and some graphical images with the advertisements are another ways of presenting at present, because the advertisement which makes use of white spaces and graphic images will often be more successful at capturing the attention of the reader [9].

2. The way of using the language of the advertisement

Generally, there are two types of language that can be used in advertisements as descriptive and short. Under this short language, they expect to provide just basic information to attract employees, however with this descriptive manner, it explains information in more details to get maximum attraction from suitable candidates.

3. The way of defining the position of the advertisement.

There are three common methods that can be seen with the advertisements. Directly mentioning position in the advertisement “Direct method without different formatting” and use some attractive, creative methods just like using different fonts, doing different formatting “Direct method with different formatting” to highlight from other advertisements in the same page are the first two. Third one is keep the position with creative heading which is describing some motive aspects of the position “Creative heading”.

- To identify the additional or indirect factors considered in developing job advertisement throughout last four decades.

This objective was achieved by evaluating following areas: the size of the RA (the height of the RA and the width of the RA) and the side of the news paper which the RA was published.

Methodology

Population

Population of this study was consisted by RAs which were published on “Sunday Observer” that is the most popular newspaper for job advertisements in Sri Lanka [5]. Selected period for the evaluation was forty years from 1970 to 2009 and the reason for selection was as shown below.

- *Change the national economic policy from close economy to open economy*

National economic policy was changed in 1977 from close economy to open economy. Since 1977, the Sri Lankan government has been implementing privatization program and under the open economy domestic companies have to face global competition. Under these circumstances companies have to work more effectively than earlier. Therefore the recruitment process should be more effective.

- *Information technology (IT) era*

Information technology is the next major significance factor influence to the business organisations. Actually after IT was become popular in Sri Lanka, IT has been playing major role in many business activities. Now companies need people who have IT background and were started to use IT for their marketing promotion activities. Job advertising is also one of their major marketing efforts which help to not only attract job seekers however also to built company image.

- *Change in Organizational culture*

Total Quality Management tools and are techniques are one of major management concept which many organisations were implement rapidly after the 1995 to overcome rapidly increased competition. Actually quality was replaced to the position of quantity in the management decisions with in last decade.

| Selected period (Population) | Cluster Sampling (Sub Groups) | Simple Random Sampling (Selected Sample) |
|------------------------------|-------------------------------|--|
| 1970 - 1979 | 1970 | 1970 march |
| | 1978 | 1975 May |
| 1980 - 1989 | 1980 | 1980 January |
| | 1985 | 1985 September |
| 1990 - 1999 | 1990 | 1990 march |
| | 1995 | 1995 April |
| 2000 - 2009 | 2000 | 2000 December |
| | 2005 | 2005 July |

Table 1: Sample of the study

Significance of the research

As per the Opatha [6] the quality of the HRM in an organisation depends heavily on the quality of the job applicants been attracted. That quality of the job applicants are depended heavily on the successful performance of recruitment process. Thus recruitment is very significant HRM function that has to be successfully implemented an organization due to following reasons: to acquire a pool of suitable qualified job seekers [not over qualified or under qualified job seekers] at the lowest possible cost and reduce the likelihood that an applicant, once hired would leave the organisation after a short period of time. Under this circumstance, designing a recruitment advertisement with essential information has to be given substantial attention.

If the recruitment message is advertised in a popular newspaper for that purpose, it is possible that the overall job seekers in the country are made aware of it [6], however it is not adequate, the advertisement should be more attractive and has to be employed proper strategies to get utmost attention from appropriate candidates at a minimum cost. If the advertisement has fulfilled those, then, it will be helped to attract more job

seekers, and then the selection process will be become more competitive and effective. Finally, it

will help the organisation to select the most suitable candidate to fill the vacancy.

Under this circumstance, it is very important to understand the trends behind advertisements, because it will bring idea how to prepare newspaper advertisements to get maximum attraction.

Literature Review

"Advertising is any paid form of non-personal presentation and promotion of ideas, goods and services through mass media such as newspapers, magazines, television or radio by an identified sponsor" [3]. An organisation can be published its job advertisements through different modes such as television, radios, banners, posters and newspapers. However the success of the advertisement depends on two basic requirements. Firstly, the right advertisement must be made at the right time in the right way. Secondly the advertisement should be consisted with appropriate information [8]. As per the Opatha [6] a good recruitment advertisement contains the following: A clear indication of the relevant job vacancy, a brief introduction of the organisation, a brief job description, a brief job specification, Rewards [Pay, incentives and benefits], way of sending applications, closing

date. Ryan et al [8] commented based on Price [7] that HRM has been marketed the employment product without really knowing or realizing it. He identified job offer as the first 'P' of the marketing mix [Product]. It is defined in the job description and may include conditions, hours, holidays, opportunities for personal development and promotion, and the like. Salary and other benefits offered defined as the "Price" of the product and place of the emplacement recognize as "place". Promotions of this offer are the communications that the organization has with its employees or perspective employees. It is important to adopt a marketing orientation to jobs and recruitment [9]. Ryan et al [9] comment based on Price [7], HRM managers would be well advised to see employees as "employment consumers" who are free to choose another supplier of employment just as a typical consumer may choose another product and he also suggested that organizations should forget the banality that "our employees are our greatest asset" and recognize that employees are customers of the organization.

From a marketing viewpoint, jobs can be identified as products. In marketing perspective, they are going to analysis customer's motivations, needs and behaviour to develop a product to satisfy customer needs. In the same way, HRM departments have to identify, employee need, motivations, and behaviour to attract and retain most appropriate cordierite to perform their organizational requirements.

Ryan et al [9] commented based on Price [7] as employers are the providers of these employment products and employees are the consumers of employment. Adopting this perspective, marketing can provide a useful strategic framework for HRM [9]. Marketing imply a desire to understand consumer needs and to work toward meeting their requirements. The basic principles of marketing such as consumer

analysis, segmentation, and targeting may be used to develop accurate and effective RA [9].

Findings

Obj. 1: Identifying the impact of advertising practices in preparing job advertisements

This objective was evaluated through based on the three important areas that affect to the effectiveness of advertisement: the way of presenting the advertisement, the way of using the language of the advertisement and the way of defining the position of the advertisement.

Way of presenting the advertisement

This was evaluated by categorizing all the advertisements in to six categories as shown in the table 2. Throughout all the four decades the advertisements have used just wordings without graphics, pictures or company logo hold foremost position among the six categories; however its position is continually diminishing. In 1970-1979 it has recorded 65% from all sample however when 2000 - 2009 it has reduced up to 36%. It was reduced by 55% from within the last four decade and form 1990-1999 and 2000-2009 it has reduced drastically by 40% when compared with the previous years.

The advertisements that has used wordings with company logo was consisted by 30% of the advertisements during the period in 1970 - 1979, however it has reduced by 40% with the three decades and finally it was represented with just 18% during the period of 2000- 2009. There is significant increase [600%] can be seen with the wordings with graphics category from 1970-1979 to 1990-1999 and recorded slight decrease (10%) from 1990- 1999 to 2000- 2009. The category that consisted wordings and pictures has risen on 1980 - 1989 and from 1990 - 1999 to 2000 - 2009 it has recorded 180% increase compared with past decade.

| Type | Percentage from total advertisements | | | |
|---|--------------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| | 1970-1979 | 1980-1989 | 1990-1999 | 2000-2009 |
| Wordings only | 65 | 52 | 48 | 29 |
| Wordings with Graphics | 5 | 12 | 30 | 27 |
| Wordings with Pictures | 0 | 4 | 5 | 14 |
| Wordings with Company logo | 30 | 32 | 11 | 18 |
| Wordings with graphics and pictures | 0 | 0 | 2 | 5 |
| Wordings with graphics and company logo | 0 | 0 | 2 | 4 |
| Wordings with pictures and company Logo | 0 | 0 | 2 | 3 |
| | 100 | 100 | 100 | 100 |

Table 2: The way of presenting advertisements

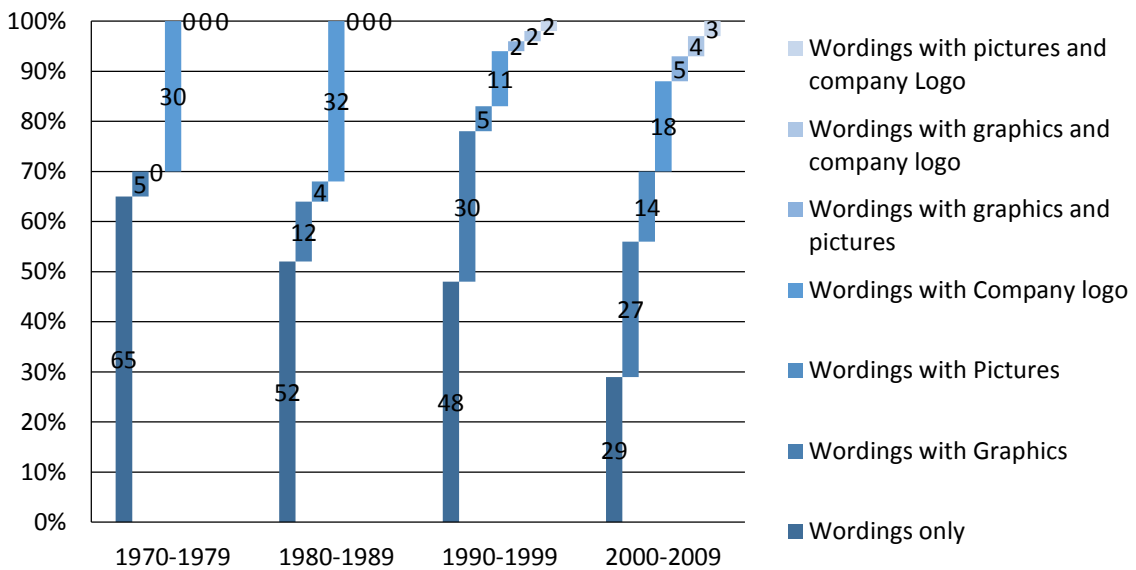


Figure 1: The way of presenting advertisements

Identify the way of Language usage of recruitment advertisements:

Basically, manner of the language used in RA was identified as the descriptive and the short.

Following figure 2 clearly shows the manner of language used as descriptive and short in the RAs

during last four decades. There is positive trend in using descriptive language with RAs and it can be identified from the first decade to 2000-2009. In 1970-1979 it was recorded just 25% however when 2000-2009 it has increased up to 48% that is almost close to 100% increased within the four decades.

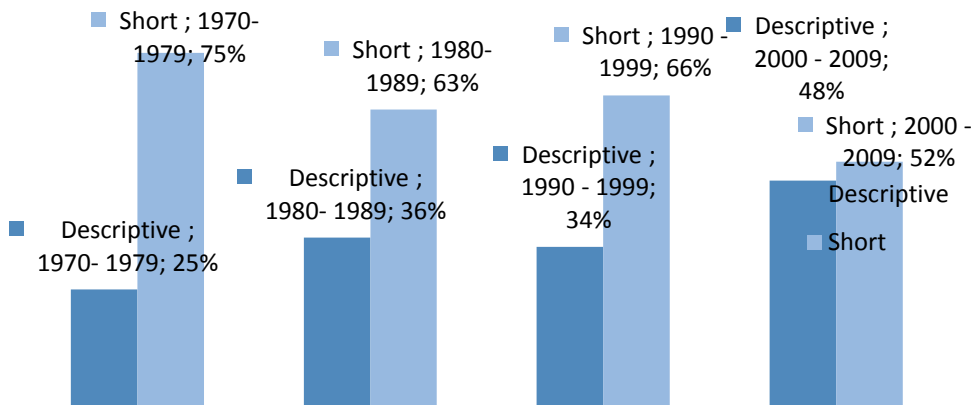


Figure 2: Manner of Language used in recruitment advertisement

Identify the way defining the position of recruitment advertisements

The way of defining the position is another important aspect which affects to the readership of the advertisements. 'Presenting this highly important factor of the RA' during the last four decades has slightly changed however almost all the decades employers has given their preference to mentioned it by using it in direct format "Direct method without

different formatting". However there is a trend that can be identified with the way of mentioning the position at present form 1990s. That is "Direct method with different formatting": creative headings by formatting it with different fronts or other ways of differentiate and "Creative heading": mentioning the position with some wordings to encourage applicants.

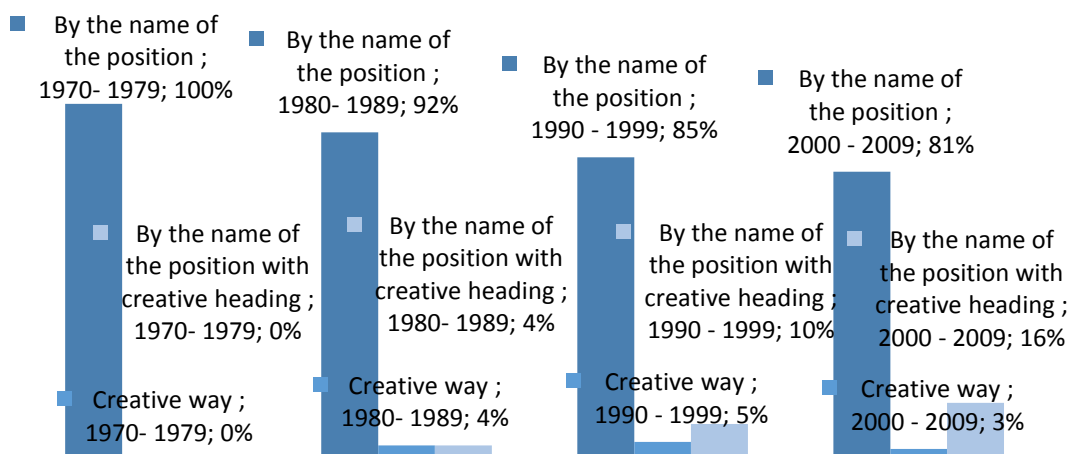


Figure 3: Manner in defining the Position

Obj.2: Identify the additional or indirect factors considered in preparing job advertisements:

This objective was achieved by evaluating following areas of the RA: the size of the RA (the height of the RA, the width of the RA) and the side of the news paper which the RA was published.

Average Sizes of the advertisements which were published during the selected period:

Size of the advertisements was highly affecting the readership of the advertisement. This objective was achieved by analysing the size of selected 200 executive level advertisements which contained private sector, government sector and NGOs and it was measured by column inches

| Criteria | Average size of the Advertisement | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------------------|------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1970- 1979 | 1980- 1989 | 1990 - 1999 | 2000 - 2009 |
| Average height | 10.42 | 19.32 | 18.54 | 21.92 |
| Average width | 8.82 | 11.59 | 11.52 | 14.31 |

Table 3: Average size of the Recruitment Advertisements

In this above table 3 illustrated that the height of the advertisement was slightly increased with compared to the increased rate of the width of the advertisement.

Side of the Page which the Advertisement published:

Side of the advertisement published were also affects to the readership of the advertisement. It's

popular that the readership is high on the advertisements published in the right side of the news paper.

Following tables 4 shows separately the number of advertisements which was published in both sides.

| Sector | Percentage of advertisements published | | | | | | | |
|--------------|--|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|-------------|-----------|
| | 1970 - 1979 | | 1980 - 1989 | | 1990 - 1999 | | 2000 - 2009 | |
| | Left | Right | Left | Right | Left | Right | Left | Right |
| Government | 5 | 3 | 1 | 8 | 3 | 2 | 3 | 4 |
| Private | 9 | 10 | 11 | 12 | 15 | 33 | 33 | 44 |
| NGO | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 1 |
| Total | 14 | 13 | 12 | 20 | 19 | 37 | 36 | 49 |

Table 4: Side of the Page which the Advertisement published

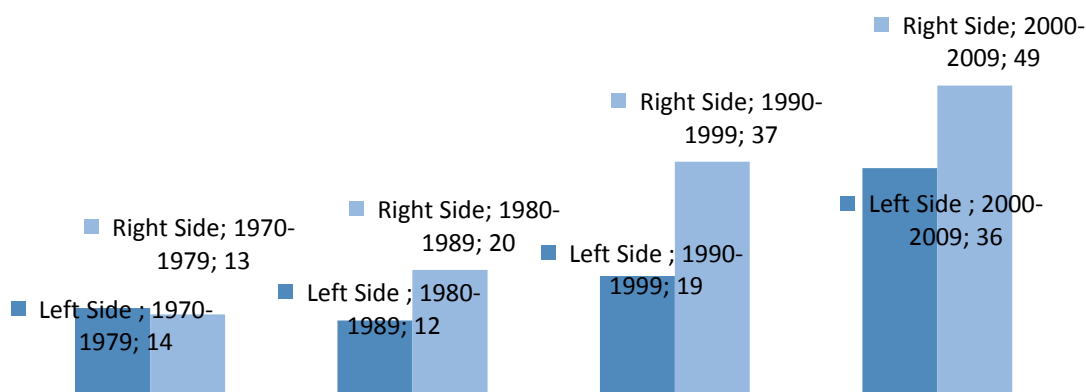


Figure 4: Side of the Page which the Advertisement published

According to the above table, 4 and figure 4, in 1970 - 1979, there was no much difference between selected sides of the page. However from 1980-1989 more of the advertisements has been selected right side than left side of the paper.

Discussion

Presentation of the RAs has been changed drastically during last four decades. The competition, technological development, the perspective towards quality and applications of TQM directly were affected to that development of the business atmosphere. During 1970 -1979, companies have used just classified advertisements that were consisted limited wordings. However at present 100% of employees are using descriptive

advertisements for attract executives to their organizations.

Usage of graphic designs was become popular after IT becomes popular in Sri Lanka. After 1990 when IT industry was developed rapidly in Sri Lanka, usage of IT in to business activities was increased. It was proven by showing the gradual increased of using graphic designs in RAs. This trend was mainly shown in the private sector advertisements rather than the government sector. Since; the competition among the private sector organizations. The reason is for using graphic design in RA is advertisement which makes use of white space and graphic images will often be more successful at capturing the attention of the reader.

Using the company logo was another technique which was used both government sector as well as private sector. People do not worry to read more and wants to get the nutshell within few second. Therefore, organisations have to use other techniques to convey the message other than putting advertisement with full of wordings. That was why, the importance of using only wordings in the RA become decreased.

Especially private sector organisations were increased their usage of descriptive language in RAs after the period of 1989s. As mentioned earlier, after the period of 1990s, private sector competition was increased and new management concepts like quality put into practice. Therefore, organisation more interest to introduced their self more and disclosed more details about the position and the qualification of the person they required. In that point, organisations were used more detailed advertisements or more descriptive language in RAs. This type of more detail advertisements helps to applicants to screen themselves and decide if they fit the requirement. In other wards fit into the job as well as the company. Therefore, possibility of getting most suitable CV's will be increased.

Just mentioning name of the position in RAs was showing a slight decrease. Most of private sector organisations were tried to use creative and innovative headings for the RAs. Even though, this will violate one of major criteria importance which was discussed earlier. This can be seen specially, when they advertised marketing field related positions.

Organisations were interest to put creative headings, just because not to disclose their job related details to the competitors and to get people who are really interest on that particular position. That means, putting creative heading will negatively affects to the readership and people who may read it is the people who is really interest on that position.

The height of the advertisement was slightly increased with compared to the increased rate of the width of the advertisement. In the period of 1970 - 1979, most of RAs were published as classified advertisements; especially in 1970s. However it was changed after the period of 1980s. Important factor which was affected to deciding the size of the advertisement was "cost". Even though, paper advertisements are more effective in converse the message in to large audience, this is one of costly method in RA. Therefore, financial strength of the organisation is indirectly affected to the size of the advertisement.

As per the details of the post discussion with HR Managers, 80% of HR managers were not very much aware of the side of the paper which they want to put their advertisement exactly. This was because, most of companies outsource to design their RA and only doing the finalising the art work. In that point, advertiser may give it to the publisher to without considering other critical points. Thus, under this background HR managers do not have much more idea about these critical factors. Out of ten, two organizations have requested the page number and side which they want to publish the RA.

Some organisations have given more interest to differentiate their advertisement form other RAs. To get reach that expectation, they have used different structuring formats and positioned important data in different spots of the space and continually used same format for company whole RAs. This is to keep the uniqueness of the advertisements which are published by a particular company. As a instance, one HR manager told that normally they are requesting to put their advertisement in black and white and positioning it in between the coloured advertisements.

Conclusion

Some of the advertising practices were highly affected on preparing and presenting RAs during

last four decades. Using of graphics, company logo, pictures, was increased and at the same time the usage of only wordings in RAs were highly decreased. On the other hand, usage of descriptive language in RAs was become increased when the short language usage was decreasing during the selected period. The advertisements have been written in a general or specific manner and most of RAs directly mentioned the name of the position however after the period of 1989s defining the position with creative heading has risen. When considering the other indirect factors which are affecting to the RAs, it shows that the height of the advertisement and the width of the advertisement have been increased. Even that the side of the paper which the advertisement publishing were affected to the readership however most of organisations do not aware about that.

References

- [1] Belt, J. A. Paolillo J. G.P. (1982) The influence of corporate image and specificity of candidate qualifications on response to recruitment advertisement, *Journal of Management* vol:8 iss:1, pp:105 - 114 [0149- 2063]
- [2] De Alwis, A.C., De Silva M.(2007) The Study of Online Recruitment and Selection in Sri Lanka, Fifth AMIS International Conference on Management
- [3] Dessler, G. *Human Resource Management* (2005) 10th ed. Pearson Prentice Hall ISBN 013127677 8
- [4] Kotler, P., Armstrong, G. *Principles of marketing*, (2004), (10th ed.). New Jersey: Pearson Education. ISBN: 0131018612 / 0-13-101861-2
- [5] Mathis, R. Jackson J.(2000) *Job Analysis and the Changing Nature of Jobs in Human Resource Management.*, 9th ed., Cincinnati, OH: South-Western College Publishing,.
- [6] Opatha H. D. N. P,(2009), *Human Resource Management.*, 1st Edition, Published by the Author, Sri Lanka
- [7] Price D. (1996) How marketing can sell your personnel product, *People Management*, Vol. 2 No 12, 21. ISSN: 0143-5124
- [8] Redman R.D., Brian T., Mathews P., (1998) *Managerial Recruitment advertisements - Just How Market Orientated Are They?*, Vol.6, No. 4, ISSN 1468-2389
- [9] Ryan, G., Gubern, M., Rodriguez I.,(2000) *Recruitment advertising: The marketing-human resource interface* *International Advances in Economic Research*, , Vol. 6, Iss. 2, pp. 354-364, ISSN:10830898
- [10] Williams, M.,L, Bauer, T. N. (1994) The effect of a managing diversity policy on organizational attractiveness. *Group & Organization Management*, Vol. 19 No. 3, pp 295- 309. ISSN: 1059-6011