

Full Length Research Paper

Hype matters applicant attraction: Study on type of publicity and recruitment advertising

Chun-Hsien Lee^{1*}, Fang-Ming Hwang², Mang-Lin Wang³ and Po-Hao Chen¹,

¹Graduate Institute of Human Resource and Knowledge Management, National Kaohsiung Normal University, Taiwan.

²Department of Education, National Chiayi University, Taiwan.

³Department of Business Administration, Tamkang University, Taiwan

Accepted 11 November, 2010

This research studies the effects of publicity and recruitment advertising on applicant attraction. With manipulating publicity and recruitment advertisements design, participants with between-group designs were randomly assigned to groups. This study used a fictitious company and designed publicity and recruitment advertisements to understand which recruitment advertisement could improve applicants' organizational attractiveness while it received varying publicity. The results reveal that detailed recruitment advertisement was associated with higher advertisement truthfulness, advertisement informativeness, appropriateness, attitude toward the advertisement, and the organizational attractiveness. When receiving negative publicity, detailed recruitment advertisement could further improve applicants' organizational attractiveness. Besides, negative rather than positive publicity interferes with the impact of recruitment advertisement to a greater extent.

Key words: Recruitment, publicity, applicant attraction.

INTRODUCTION

Most definitions of recruitment emphasize the organization's collective efforts to identify, attract, and influence the job choices of competent applicants (Ployhart, 2006). The purposes of recruiting are to fill vacancies or attract and reserve outstanding talent for the future. Recruitment researchers have recently begun to explore how organizational factors other than recruitment practices can affect recruitment outcomes during the first phase of recruitment (Collins and Han, 2004). Compared to experienced job holders, external information is critical to first-time job seekers. Thus, our study focus on new entrants in labor market because they are lack of job seeking experience and usually weigh strongly with external sources or information from social influence on job decision (Collins and Stevens, 2002). That we employed college seniors as participants is situated to meet the case.

Recruitment — which is the means of attracting

applicants—is, to some extent, similar to the means of attracting consumers. It is a well-known fact that applicants consider the image of an organization as an important factor when evaluating prospective employers. Applicants are generally more attracted to companies that have a renowned name or brand recognition (Cable and Graham, 2000; Cable and Turban, 2001; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Turban, 2001). Additionally, people seem to be more attracted to organizations whose traits and characteristics they perceive to be similar to their own (Slaughter et al., 2004). Moreover, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) suggest that recruitment research could particularly benefit from the literature on consumers' product choice decisions in high involvement situations because these situations mirror the typical context in which a job and organizational choice decisions are made. The increased amount of interest in organizational attraction research is paralleled by the approach of employer branding (Lievens and Chapman, 2009). Recent evidence has revealed that a strong employer brand positively affects the pride that individuals expect from organizational membership (Cable and Turban, 2003).

Both the applicants and consumers create their

*Corresponding author. E-mail: fmh@mail.ncyu.edu.tw. Tel: 886-5-2263411 ext.2401. Tel: 886-7-7172930 ext. 2404. Fax: 886-7-7176901.

perceptions about a company through external information; thus, publicity and advertising influence job seekers' attitudes (Collins and Stevens, 2002). However, only a few studies have investigated the effects of publicity and recruitment advertisements on attracting applicants. This study examines the effects of publicity (positive or negative) and recruitment advertisements (general or detailed) on organizational attractiveness and applicant attraction.

Publicity and advertising are used as a means in persuasive communication that may contain negative or positive information about a company or brand. The main aim of this study is to attempt and identify which recruitment advertisements are likely to be effective for an organization facing negative publicity, as compared to those facing positive negativity. Therefore, the general purpose of this study is to investigate the impacts of publicity and recruitment advertising. The first specific objective is to examine whether publicity influences the organizational attractiveness, as perceived by potential applicants and whether organizational attractiveness will interfere with the effect of recruitment advertising. Another objective is to ascertain which types of publicity and recruiting advertising will have the strongest effect. Additionally, we examine the interaction effects of publicity and recruitment advertisements on organizational attractiveness.

Literature review

Publicity on recruiting

Publicity as a recruitment-related information source involves information about an organization as an employer; this information is disseminated through editorial media that is not paid for by the organization (Collins and Stevens, 2002; van Hove and Lievens, 2005). This kind of publicity influences a corporation's reputation and its brand image faces credible exposure (Cameron, 1994; Schwarz, 1986). Since the nature and frequency of received publicity depends on the decisions made that are external to the organization, it does not consistently provide information about brand attributes. Thus, publicity is likely to influence consumers' attitudes but not their perceptions of specific attributes (Collins and Stevens, 2002); further, publicity may induce a spillover effect on recruitment (Barber, 1998). Turban and Greening (1997) found that among Fortune 500 firms, those rated higher in corporate social responsibility had more media exposure; these companies were found to highly attract graduating student applicants. Collins and Stevens (2002) found that publicity has a stronger impact on job seekers' attitudes compared to their beliefs about specific attributes. In addition, publicity leads to an overall positive attitude toward an organization; however, publicity is not favorable in influencing potential applicants'

beliefs about specific job attributes. By way of an illustration of publicity, it can be stated that the effects of publicity are similar to those of brand equity; however, the media dominates publicity characteristics.

Positive publicity is good for an organizational image, and therefore, companies often earmark large portions of their marketing budgets for the improvement on corporation reputation and brand equity (Henthorne and LaTour, 1995). Therefore, publicity is recognized to be more credible and more influential than company-driven promotion (Collins and Stevens, 2002). On the contrary, negative publicity can do serious damage to an organization's credibility; in particular, it can potentially damage a corporate's reputation and brand equity. It can also have larger and negative impacts on word-of-mouth publicity. People have the tendency to assign more weight to negative information than positive information when evaluating companies. The media prefers to report unpleasant news or gossip to evince the audiences' interest; in other words, it would not be exaggeration to say that there is a high likelihood of a company receiving negative publicity.

In the world of business, the disadvantages of negative publicity are as much of a reality for firms as are sporadic bursts of positive public relations that firms indulge in (Menon, Jewell, and Unnava, 1999). Positive and negative information has different effects on persuasion. If the information is negative, it is judged to be more diagnostic (Baker and Petty, 1994). Diagnostic information would be more useful and relevant in the decision-making process. In addition, the issue of negative and positive information has been studied in the field of "impression formation." Results revealed that people tend to put greater emphasis on negative rather than positive information when creating overall evaluation of the target (Klein, 1996; Skowronski and Carlston, 1989). Negative publicity has been seen as the non-compensated dissemination of potentially damaging information by presenting disparaging news about companies in print, via broadcast media, or by word-of-mouth (Sherrell and Reidenbach, 1986). A strong response can reduce the impact felt by a company when it faces a negatively publicized brand (Menon et al., 1999); additionally, building a corporate reputation would be helpful in modifying negative publicity (Dean, 2004).

Publicity is an external source, which means that companies can only try to manage it indirectly through public relations efforts, press releases, press conferences, media interviews, public service activities, and special events (van Hove and Lievens, 2005). Moreover, publicity is considered to be a relatively credible source of information, and therefore, it is more influential than other market-driven communications (Bond and Kirshenbaum, 1998). Although there is a scarcity of literature on theoretical insights about job-seekers' reactions to negative publicity about known corporations, the question regarding how job-seekers process and integrate the

negative information with the positive one has been studied in the impression formation and consumers' behaviors literature in psychology. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₁: Publicity influences the potential applicant's attitude toward the organization. Particularly, positive publicity will cause a more positive effect than will negative publicity.

Recruitment advertising

The purposes of advertising are to establish and strengthen or change cognition, attitude, and behavior in a series of communicative activities; then, it aims to achieve the established goals (Tellis, 2005). Barber (1998) suggested that the primary objective of effective recruiting advertising is to attract potential applicants' attention and then persuade them to apply; job advertisements serve as an important tool because this is the first medium a potential employee sees before deciding on whether to apply for a job. However, people read advertisements not only when searching for employment vacancies but also to merely conduct a surveillance of the employment market. Recruitment advertisements are suggested to serve as a forum for organizational self-presentation that offers current information about the employment exchange as it is viewed by employers (Anat, 2006).

Corporations spend estimated billions of dollars every year on job advertisements, and these advertisements represent a significant proportion of the total amount of money spent on all the media used for recruitment (Thorsteinson and Highhouse, 2003). Further, some researches are interested in job-seekers' reactions to the variations in job advertisements. Blackman (2006) investigated the relative impact of three factors in a recruitment advertisement, using final-year commerce students: the use of the word "graduate" in the heading, "pictures" in the advertisement, and "career path" or "opportunities" for development and promotion. Jones, Shultz, and Chapman (2006) investigated whether individuals' decisions about responding to job advertisements are affected by how deeply they process recruitment messages (i.e., elaboration likelihood (EL)). They found that individuals in the lower (vs. higher) EL conditions choose more advertisements containing cues that are unrelated to the job, and fewer advertisements containing higher quality arguments; moreover, participants also reported that they "skimmed" and carefully read job advertisements in the past, providing varying evidence in EL among job seekers. Moreover, the use of general advertisements that include limited job attribute specificity or detailed advertisements that identify a job holder's clear and specific requirements cause practical concerns: the message specificity impacts, to varying degrees, individuals' opinions about the recruitment

advertising, perceived appropriateness of the job, attitudes towards the recruitment advertising and company, and their intentions to complete the job application process (Feldman, Bearden, and Hardesty, 2006).

Compared to recruitment advertisements, corporate advertising positively affects the quantity and quality of the organizations' applicant pools (Collins and Han, 2004), and it is likely to affect the job seekers' perceptions of the organizations (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey, and Edwards, 2000). In other words, corporate advertising affiliated with corporate marketing promotes a company to the external labor market in order to enhance organizational awareness and familiarity and strengthens the employment brand and applicant attraction (Cable and Turban, 2001; Cable and Turban, 2003; Chapman et al., 2005; Lievens and Chapman, 2009).

Potential applicants' initial contact with the organization (e.g., through a newspaper and the website) would influence the applicants' intention of job pursuit. Thus, applicants' decisions to apply would be affected by the general image of the company; this is especially the case for those who are amateur job seekers (Gatewood, Gowan, and Lautenschlager, 1993). The content in recruitment advertisement is easily accessible to newly graduated applicants this is attributed to general advertisement (Collins and Han, 2004). Furthermore, both the corporate and recruitment images would affect the intention of job pursuit (Gatewood et al., 1993). Thus, the content in the recruitment advertisement and the corporate image are important factors regarding job seekers' pursuit intention.

In addition, a research dealing with recruitment advertisements has revealed the benefits of the advertisements that include specific information (Mason and Belt, 1986) and additional information (Highhouse, Stierwalt, Bachiochi, Elder, and Fisher, 1999; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, and Slaughter., 1999). Highhouse et al. (1999) revealed that job applicants may infer certain information (i.e., pay rate) from the phrasing used in recruitment advertising. Lievens et al. (2003) state that image-oriented advertising techniques, especially constructed around a company's innovativeness, prestige, and sincerity, may indeed produce additional benefits in recruiting. Furthermore, evidence has revealed that the specificity of the detailed recruitment messages would enhance the applicants' perceptions of organization attributes and the person-organization fit that mediates the relationship between message specificity and pursuit intention (Roberson, Collins, and Oreg, 2005).

Recruitment advertisements that provide specific information to potential applicants, especially newly graduates, may induce a positive perception of advertisements that is truthful and informative, thus enhancing the attitude toward advertisements. Moreover, this causes an increase in an individual's perception of organization attractiveness and the likelihood of a further follow up

in the application process. Hence, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₂: Compared to the general recruitment advertisement, the detailed recruitment advertisement (covering greater specificity of information) induces a higher perceived advertisement truthfulness, advertisement informativeness, and attitude toward the advertisement.

Both advertising and publicity attempt to create awareness, change attitudes, and influence behavior. Advertising, which is defined as controlled communication, is designed for promoting a product that is paid for by an advertiser or marketer. Publicity is defined as a communication that is written by a third party reviewing or discussing an advertiser's product (Wang and Nelson, 2006). One major difference between the two is that consumers tend to consider publicity as more trustworthy than advertising because advertising is perceived as inherently manipulative, whereas news media are considered to be non-manipulative and more objective (Cameron, 1994; Wang and Nelson, 2006). Considering the interaction between publicity and recruitment advertising, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H₃: With negative publicity, the positive effect of detailed recruitment advertisement on an applicant's perception of organizational attractiveness is higher than it is in a general recruitment advertisement.

METHODOLOGY

Data and sample

The participants comprised 434 undergraduate students who majored in business administration from three universities. After the questionnaire validation check, valid questionnaires covered 422 participants (131 males and 291 females), and the average age was 21.03 years (SD = 1.51). Majority of the participants were sophomores (n = 191) and juniors (n = 171).

Design and procedure

This study uses a 2 (publicity: negative vs. positive) × 2 (recruitment advertisement: general vs. detailed) between-subjects factorial design. The participants were randomly assigned to different treatment groups. The material for publicity and recruitment advertisement were fictitiously designed. However, manipulation checks were carried out before the main study. Publicity contained the scenario-description reports, and the recruitment advertisement contained the print advertisements.

Publicity was based on the descriptions of the fictitious manufacturing company. One description was positive, whereas the other was negative. The descriptions were approximately equal in length and presented similar information. More specifically, the article stated that due to the failure of some decisions, the company would be restructured. Due to the concerns of external validity, this study adopted publicity on the basis of real newspaper articles about companies.

Recruitment advertising was displayed in two approaches. Its layout was similar to the typical structure found in actual job

advertisements. The *detailed* recruitment advertisement comprise the description of the company, job title, job content, company offer, candidate requirements, and contact information. In order to enable a realistic first assessment of organizational attractiveness, some other neutral/positive attribute information was also provided. The *general* recruitment advertisement provided relatively limited information about the company, the job, and the work context. The contents between recruitment advertisements were varied in the company information provided the job, and the work context.

The experiment was a between-persons design. Time was a within-subjects factor because we investigated whether the initial assessments of organizational attractiveness based on publicity would improve after a second evaluation, that is, after exposure to a different information source (recruitment advertisements). Advertising message was a between-subjects factor because the participants were exposed to either detailed or general recruitment advertising as a second source. The subjects were told that this study was intended to assess their reactions to publicity and recruitment advertisements. The participants were randomly assigned to one of the two levels of the between-subjects factor. At the beginning, the participants were handed a packet containing the experimental treatment and the questionnaire. Next, they were instructed to read each page and process the information carefully.

They were given a packet with instructions, including publicity (positive or negative) and a recruitment advertisement (detail or general). The booklet informed them about the purpose of the study and the procedure of reading an advertisement, and provided them with publicity articles about the company.

Firstly, the participants read a publicity article, which conveyed negative or positive information about the company manufacturing the computers; we measured their attitudes toward the company and their perceptions of credibility the publicity article they read. We then asked them three questions to confirm whether they had processed the information in publicity. Second, the recruitment advertisements were shown to the participants. In this section, the participants received a description of a job advertisement that varied in content. The truthfulness, informativeness, and appropriateness of the advertisements, organizational attractiveness, attitudes toward the advertisements, and attraction toward the firm were measured after the participant read the advertisements. In the last section, the participants were asked to provide their gender, age, educational background, and the type of school.

Measures

Attitude toward the organization was measured using a four-item, a seven-point semantic differential scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.82$) used by Sicilia, Ruiz, and Reynolds (2006). It was used to measure the attitudes toward the organizational brand. *Advertisement truthfulness* (four items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.76$), *appropriateness* (three items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.81$) and *advertisement informativeness* (four items, Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.77$) were measured using seven-point Likert scale used by Feldman et al. (2006). A sample item for truthfulness is, "The advertisement appears to be a truthful job advertisement." For appropriateness, one sample item asks participants, "I believe the company is seeking to hire people like me." An example of informativeness is, "I believe this job advertisement is very informative." *Attitude toward the advertisement* was assessed using a five-item, a seven-point semantic differential scale (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.86$) used by Feldman et al. (2006). *Organizational attractiveness* was assessed with five items (Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.88$) used by Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003). These items were designed to encompass the content used in an organization choice while retaining a focus on attractiveness rather than explicit intentions toward the company. As such, we used the items that addressed the preliminary attitudes toward the

company as a desirable place for employment. Responses ranged from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

Manipulation checks

To check the manipulation of publicity (negative/positive) and recruitment advertisements (detail/general), two items ($\alpha = 0.73$) were used to test the participants' perception of publicity, and four items ($\alpha = 0.77$) of advertisement informativeness to note the participants' perception of recruitment advertisement. The results indicated a significant difference between negative and positive publicities ($t = -30.01, p < 0.01$); in addition, there was a significant difference between the detailed and general recruitment advertisements ($t = 8.85, p < 0.01$).

RESULTS

Means, standard deviations, and correlations among the variables are presented in Table 1. Positive publicity was associated with the following: a higher attitude toward the organization ($M = 4.81, SD = 0.87$), higher organizational attractiveness ($M = 4.59, SD = 1.03$) and higher job pursuit intentions ($M = 5.10, SD = 1.07$). This was compared to negative publicity (the attitude toward the organization: $M = 3.84, SD = 0.85$; organizational attractiveness: $M = 4.36, SD = 1.02$; and job pursuit intention: $M = 4.91, SD = 1.05$). Furthermore, the detailed recruitment advertisement was associated with higher advertisement truthfulness ($M = 4.19, SD = 0.85$), higher advertisement informativeness ($M = 4.51, SD = 0.95$), higher appropriateness ($M = 4.51, SD = 1.01$), higher attitude toward the advertisements ($M = 4.76, SD = 0.93$), higher organizational attractiveness ($M = 4.83, SD = 0.94$), and job pursuit intentions ($M = 5.26, SD = 0.95$); this was compared to general recruitment advertisement (advertisement truthfulness: $M = 3.89, SD = 0.87$; advertisement informativeness: $M = 3.64, SD = 1.06$; appropriateness: $M = 3.97, SD = 1.15$; attitude toward the advertisement: $M = 4.10, SD = 1.05$; organizational attractiveness: $M = 4.14, SD = 1.01$; and job pursuit intention: $M = 4.19, SD = 0.85$). Furthermore, in Table 1, results revealed the correlation between variables are significant. Positive publicity is positively correlated with attitude toward the organization ($r = .489, p < 0.01$), organizational attractiveness ($r = .113, p < 0.05$) and job pursuit intention ($r = .093, p < .1$). General recruiting ad is negatively correlated with ad truthfulness ($r = -.174, p < 0.01$), ad informativeness ($r = -.396, p < 0.01$), and attitude toward the ad ($r = -.317, p < 0.01$). Notably, attitude toward recruiting ad is positively associated with organizational attractiveness (combined the effects of publicity and then recruiting ad sequence) ($r = .644, p < 0.01$) and job pursuit intention ($r = 0.772, p < 0.01$).

The independent-samples *t*-test was used to examine the effects of negative and positive publicity on the attitude toward the organization after the participants read the assigned public report. First, the results revealed that the perceived credibility between the positive ($M =$

$4.62, SD = 0.90$) and negative ($M = 4.59, SD = 0.97$) groups is non-significant different ($t(420) = -0.487, p = 0.627$), and both groups lie above the scale median; that is, either positive or negative publicity is perceived as credible. Next, the results revealed that the difference in attitude toward the organization between positive ($M = 4.81, SD = 0.87$) and negative ($M = 3.84, SD = 0.84$) publicity is significant ($t(420) = -11.493, p < 0.01$). Additionally, the results of regression analysis also reveal that positive publicity ($\beta = .486, p < .01$) and perceived credibility ($\beta = 0.131, p < 0.01$) have a significant positive influence on attitude toward the organization ($F(2,421) = 72.211, p < 0.01, \text{Adj. } R^2 = 0.253$). Thus, Hypothesis 1 is supported; publicity influences the applicants' attitudes toward the organization, and positive publicity induces a more positive effect than does negative publicity.

The independent-sample test was also used to examine Hypothesis 2: the differences in the four variables between the detailed and general advertisements. The results revealed that the detailed recruitment advertisement has higher advertisement truthfulness ($M = 4.19, SD = 0.85$), advertisement informativeness ($M = 4.51, SD = 0.95$), appropriateness ($M = 4.51, SD = 0.95$), and attitude toward the advertisement ($M = 4.76, SD = 0.93$) than has general recruitment advertisement ($t(202) = 3.617, 8.846, 5.155, 6.840$, respectively, all $p < 0.01$).

In order to examine whether publicity interfered with the effect of recruitment advertisement, an ANOVA was separately conducted on advertisement truthfulness, advertisement informativeness, appropriateness, and attitude toward the advertisements. The results are summarized in Table 2.

The results reveal that the main effects of publicity on the four variables are non-supported. The interaction effects of publicity and recruitment advertisement are significant on advertisement truthfulness ($F(1, 418) = 6.249, p = 0.013, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .015$), advertisement informativeness ($F(1, 418) = 6.164, p = 0.013, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.015$), and attitude toward the advertisement ($F(1, 418) = 5.809, p = 0.016, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .014$). The further cross interaction analysis is summarized in Table 3. Considering the above analyses, Hypothesis 2 is supported: the detailed recruitment advertisement induces a higher perceived advertisement truthfulness, informativeness, and attitude toward the advertisement than does the general recruitment advertisement.

The effect of publicity and recruitment advertisement on organizational attractiveness was examined using a two-way ANOVA. The main effects of publicity ($F(1, 418) = 4.503, p = 0.034, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.011$) and recruitment advertisement ($F(1, 418) = 50.810, p = 0.000, \text{partial } \eta^2 = 0.108$) are significantly supported. In addition, the interaction effect of publicity and recruitment advertisements is significantly supported ($F(1, 418) = 6.466, p = .011, \text{partial } \eta^2 = .015$) (Figure 1); thus, Hypothesis 3 is also supported.

Table 1. Means, standard deviation and correlations between variables.

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Publicity ^a	0.48	0.50								
Ad ^b	0.52	0.50	-.036							
Attitude toward the organization	4.31	0.99	0.489**	-0.051						
Ad truthfulness	4.04	0.87	0.047	-0.174**	0.217**					
Ad informativeness	4.05	1.10	0.064	-0.396**	0.183**	0.601**				
Appropriateness	4.23	1.12	0.074	-0.243**	0.122*	0.389**	0.531**			
Attitude toward the ad	4.41	1.05	0.090	-0.317**	0.260**	0.596**	0.644**	0.572**		
Organizational attractiveness	4.47	1.03	0.113*	-0.333**	0.293**	0.364**	0.424**	0.607**	0.644**	
Job pursuit intention	5.00	1.06	0.093 [†]	-0.231**	0.247**	0.273**	0.372**	0.553**	0.519**	0.772**

N=422; ^a 0 = negative, 1 = positive. ^b 0 = detailed, 1 = general; ** p < 0.01 * p < 0.05. [†] p = 0.57.

Table 2. Results of ANOVA of Ad truthfulness, Ad informativeness, Appropriateness and Attitude toward the Ad

Source	df	Ad truthfulness			Ad informativeness			Appropriateness			Attitude toward the Ad		
		MS	F	η ²	MS	F	η ²	MS	F	η ²	MS	F	η ²
Publicity	1	0.402	0.554	0.001	1.037	1.031	0.002	1.994	1.696	0.004	2.519	2.586	0.006
Recruitment Ad	1	8.984	12.363**	0.029	77.233	76.808**	0.155	29.722	25.277**	0.057	44.239	45.416**	0.098
Publicity × Recruitment Ad	1	4.541	6.249*	0.015	6.198	6.164*	0.015	3.556	3.024	0.007	5.659	5.809*	0.014
Error	418	0.727			1.006			1.176			0.974		

** p < 0.01 * p < 0.05.

Table 3. Summary of cross-interaction analysis of publicity and recruitment advertisement on Ad truthfulness, Ad informativeness and Attitude toward the Ad.

	Negative publicity / Detailed recruitment Ad (n=101)		Negative publicity / General recruitment Ad (n=118)		Positive publicity / Detailed recruitment Ad (n=101)		Negative publicity / General recruitment Ad (n=102)	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Ad truthfulness	4.27	0.79	3.77	0.87	4.12	0.91	4.04	0.84
Ad informativeness	4.58	0.96	3.48	1.00	4.44	0.95	3.82	1.09
Attitude toward the Ad	4.80	0.87	3.92	0.97	4.72	0.98	4.30	1.11

n means the number of participant in each group.

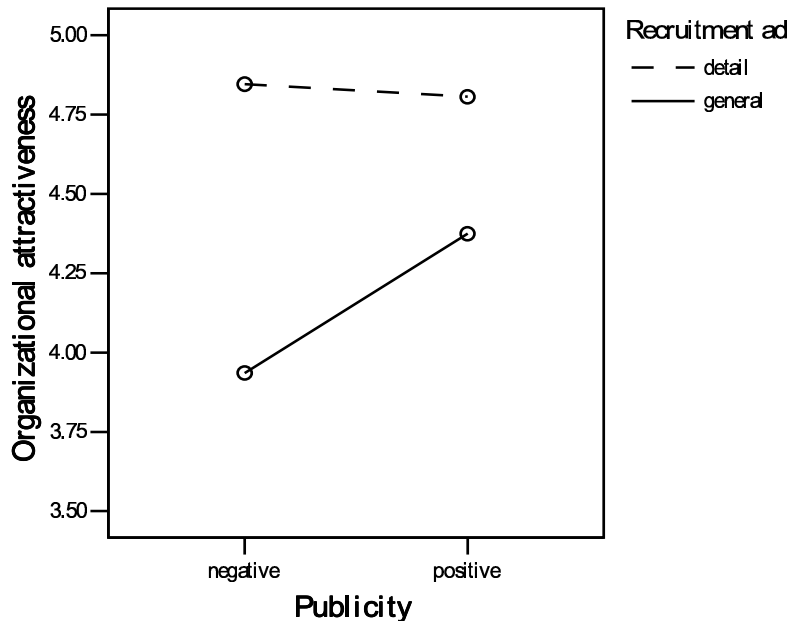


Figure 1. Interaction effect of publicity and recruitment advertisement on organizational attractiveness.
ad = Advertisement

DISCUSSION

This study reveals that positive publicity is associated with a more favorable attitude toward the organization and higher organizational attractiveness. It implies that publicity can be an influential external recruiting source; in particular, negative publicity seems to have a damaging impact on an organization. Moreover, providing a detailed recruitment advertisement induces higher perceived advertising impacts on potential applicants than does general recruitment advertisements. Detailed recruitment advertisements are associated with a higher advertisement truthfulness, advertisement informativeness, appropriateness, attitude toward the advertisement, and perceived organizational attractiveness; that is, potential applicants who receive specific and detailed information on a company, job, and work context will generate a better perception than those who receive general recruiting information.

The study also reveals that compared to positive publicity, negative publicity interferes with the impact of recruitment advertisement to a greater extent. However, positive publicity did not significantly increase the effect of recruitment advertisement on organizational attractiveness. This result is similar to the findings of research examining the effect of word-of-mouth publicity on applicant attraction; that is, although negative word-of-mouth publicity has an interaction effect with recruitment advertisement, positive word-of-mouth publicity does not (Collins and Stevens, 2002; van Hoyer, and Lievens, 2007a, b). According to an accessibility-diagnostics

perspective (Herr, Kardes, and Kim, 1991), the impact of recruitment advertisement on organizational attractiveness would be greater if there is an antecedent of a negative information source (namely, negative publicity). This is consistent with van Hoyer and Lievens (2005), that positive word-of-mouth publicity indeed increases organizational attractiveness after negative publicity.

Implications

In practice, organizations should try to create positive publicity and avoid negative publicity. Since publicity is under external control, organizations need to get involved in the business of public relations. In this study, the findings suggest that a company could use recruitment advertisement when facing negative publicity at the time of hiring employment. The results suggest that the inclusion of detailed information when practicing recruitment advertising positively affects a potential applicant's perception. Particularly, the freshly graduated applicants have limited information about a company and its job openings. The recruitment advertising that covers attractive cues and offers specific and detailed information has a favorable influence on potential applicants.

Limitation and suggestions

First, the use of student participants might result in a lack

of realism. Second, given that the participants may receive a variety of information and get influenced by personal factors, this study investigates only two of the information sources (publicity and recruitment advertisements), without covering the influences of individual characteristics. Moreover, the strength of publicity might be stronger in actual situations than in the manipulated ones, as stated in this study. Future research could investigate other sources influencing organization publicity and focus on the possible interaction between these sources.

REFERENCES

- Anat R (2006). Sense-making of employment: On whether and why people read employment advertising. *J. Organ. Behav.*, 27(6): 747-770.
- Baker SM, Petty RE (1994). Majority and minority influence: source-position imbalance as a determinant of message scrutiny. *J. Pers. Soc. Psychol.*, 67(1): 5-19.
- Barber AE (1998). *Recruiting employees: Individual and organizational perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, Calif.: Sage Publications.
- Blackman A (2006). Graduating students' responses to recruitment, advertisements. *J. Bus. Commun.*, 43(4): 367-388.
- Bond J, Kirshenbaum R (1998). *Under the radar: Talking to today's cynical consumer*. New York: Wiley.
- Cable DM, Aiman-Smith L, Mulvey PW, Edwards JR (2000). The sources and accuracy of job applicants' beliefs about organizational culture. *Acad. Manage. J.*, 43(6): 1076-1085.
- Cable DM, Graham ME (2000). The determinants of job seekers' reputation perceptions. *J. Organ. Behav.*, 21(8): 929.
- Cable DM, Turban DB (2001). Establishing the dimensions, sources and value of job seekers' employer knowledge during recruitment. In G. Ferris (Ed.), *Research in personnel and human resources management*, Greenwich, Conn: JAI Press. 20: 115-163.
- Cable DM, Turban DB (2003). The value of organizational reputation in the recruitment context: A brand-equity perspective. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.*, 33(11): 2244-2266.
- Cameron GT (1994). Does publicity outperform advertising? An experimental test of the third-party endorsement. *J. Pub. Relat. Res.*, 6(3): 185-207.
- Carlson KD, Connerley ML, Mecham RL (2002). Recruitment evaluation: The case for assessing the quality of applicants attracted. *Pers. Psychol.*, 55(2): 461-490.
- Chapman DS, Uggerslev KL, Carroll SA, Piasentin KA, Jones DA (2005). Applicant attraction to organizations and job choice: A meta-analytic review of the correlates of recruiting outcomes. *J. Appl. Psychol.*, 90(5): 928-944.
- Collins CJ (2007). The interactive effects of recruitment practices and product awareness on job seekers' employer knowledge and application behaviors. *J. Appl. Psychol.*, 92(1): 180-190.
- Collins CJ, Han J (2004). Exploring applicant pool quantity and quality: The effects of early recruitment practice strategies, corporate advertising, and firm reputation. *Pers. Psychol.*, 57(3): 685-717.
- Collins CJ, Stevens CK (2002). The relationship between early recruitment-related activities and the application decisions of new labor-market entrants: A brand equity approach to recruitment. *J. Appl. Psychol.*, 87(6): 1121-1133.
- Dean DH (2004). Consumer reaction to negative publicity: Effects of corporate reputation, response, and responsibility for a crisis event. *J. Bus. Commun.*, 41(2): 192.
- Feldman DC, Bearden WO, Hardesty DM (2006). Varying the content of job advertisements: The effects of message specificity. *J. Adv.*, 35(1): 123-141.
- Gatewood RD, Gowan M A, Lautenschlager GJ (1993). Corporate image, recruitment image, and initial job choice decisions. *Acad. Manag. J.*, 36(2): 414-427.
- Henthorne TL, LaTour MS (1995). A model to explore the ethics of erotic stimuli in print advertising. *J. Bus. Ethics*, 14(7): 561-569.
- Herr PM, Kardes FR, Kim J (1991). Effects of word-of-mouth and product-attribute information on persuasion: An accessibility-diagnostic perspective. *J. Consum. Res.*, 17(4): 454-462.
- Highhouse S, Lievens F, Sinar EF (2003). Measuring attraction to organizations. *Educ. Psychol. Meas.*, 63(6): 986-1001.
- Highhouse S, Zickar MJ, Thorsteinson TJ, Stierwalt SL, Slaughter, JE (1999). Assessing company employment image: An example in the fast food industry. *Pers. Psychol.*, 52(1): 151-172.
- Jones DA, Shultz JW, Chapman DS (2006). Recruiting through job advertisements: The effects of cognitive elaboration on decision making. *Int. J. Select. Assess.*, 14(2): 167-179.
- Klein JG (1996). Negativity in impressions of presidential candidates revisited: The 1992 election. *Pers. Soc. Psychol.*, 22(3): 288.
- Lievens F, Chapman DS (2009). Recruitment and selection. In T. R. A. Wilkinson, S. Snell, N. Bacon (Ed.), *Handbook of Human Resource Management* (pp.133-154). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.
- Lievens F, Highhouse S (2003). The relation of instrumental and symbolic attributes to a company's attractiveness as an employer. *Pers. Psychol.*, 56(1): 75-102.
- Martinez MN (2000). Winning ways to recruit. *HR Magaz.*, 45(6): 56-64.
- Mason NA, Belt JA (1986). Effectiveness of specificity in recruitment advertising. *J. Manage.*, 12(3): 425-432.
- Menon G, Jewell RD, Unnava HR (1999). When a company does not respond to negative publicity: cognitive elaboration vs. negative affect perspective. *Adv Cconsum Res*, 26: 325-329.
- Ployhart RE (2006). Staffing in the 21st century: New challenges and strategic opportunities. *J. Manage.*, 32(6): 868-897.
- Roberson QM, Collins CJ, Oreg S (2005). The effects of recruitment Message specificity on applicant attraction to organizations. *J. Bus. Psychol.*, 19(3): 319-339.
- Schwarz N (1986). Resistance to persuasion as a consequence of influence attempts in advertising and non-advertising communications. *Psychol. Quart. J. Hum. Behav.*, pp.72-76.
- Sherrell DL, Reidenbach RE (1986). A consumer response framework for negative publicity: Suggestions for response strategies. *Akron Bus. Econ. Rev.*, 17: 37-43.
- Sicilia M, Ruiz S, Reynolds N (2006). Attitude formation online: How the consumer's need for cognition affects the relationship between attitude towards the website and attitude towards the brand. *Int. J. Mark. Res.*, 48(2): 139-154.
- Skowronski JJ, Carlston DE (1989). Negativity and extremity biases in impression formation: A review of explanations. *Psychol. Bull.*, 105(1): 131-142.
- Slaughter JE, Zickar MJ, Highhouse S, Mohr DC (2004). Personality trait inferences about organizations: Development of a measure and assessment of construct validity. *J. Appl. Psychol.*, 89(1): 85-103.
- Tellis GJ (2005). Advertising's role in capitalist markets: What do we know and where do we go from here? *J. Adv. Res.*, 45(02): 162-170.
- Thorsteinson TJ, Highhouse S (2003). Effects of goal framing in job advertisements on organizational attractiveness. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.*, 33(11): 2393-2412.
- Turban DB (2001). Organizational attractiveness as an employer on college campuses: An examination of the applicant population. *J. Vocat. Behav.*, 58(2): 293-312.
- Turban DB, Greening DW (1997). Corporate social performance and organizational attractiveness to prospective employees. *Acad. Manage. J.*, 40(3): 658-672.
- Van Hoyer G, Lievens F (2005). Recruitment-related information sources and organizational attractiveness: Can something be done about negative publicity? *Int. J. Select. Assess.*, 13(3): 179-187.
- Van Hoyer G, Lievens F (2007a). Investigating web-based recruitment sources: Employee testimonials vs word-of-mouth. *Int. J. Select. Assess.*, 15(4): 372-382.
- Van Hoyer G, Lievens F (2007b). Social influences on organizational attractiveness: Investigating if and when word of mouth matters. *J. Appl. Soc. Psychol.*, 37(9): 2024-2047.
- Wang SLA, Nelson RA (2006). The effects of identical versus varied advertising and publicity messages on consumer response. *J. Mark. Commun.*, 12(2): 109-123.