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Master of Arts

by

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Effects of Online Company Review Valence and Quality on Organizational Attraction
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Abstract

This study examined the effects of quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) and valence (positive vs. negative) of an online job review on organizational attraction. One hundred and sixty-one participants were told to imagine they were searching for a job and were then randomly assigned to read one of four online job reviews, which were formatted similar to reviews posted on Glassdoor.com. Overall, results indicated that participants who viewed an online job review with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction more aligned with the valence of the review than the participants who viewed an online job review with spelling errors. In other words, participants who viewed positive reviews with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction higher than participants who viewed positive reviews that included spelling errors. Similar results were found for the negative review, with the exception of company prestige. Hence, participants who viewed the negative review with no spelling errors rated the company’s attractiveness and their job pursuit intentions lower than participants who viewed the negative review that had spelling errors. As expected, individuals perceived online job reviews of higher quality (i.e., without spelling errors) as more credible than reviews of lower quality (i.e., with spelling errors). Overall, the current findings suggest that organizations will appear attractive to potential applicants if current or former employees write positive, high-quality reviews about the company.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Job seekers have access to multiple sources to find information regarding organizations and job postings. More than four million Americans job search online daily and over 52 million have used online job searches (Jansen, Jansen, & Spink, 2005). Potential applicants early in the job search process mostly relied on knowledge and judgments about a job and organization from other individuals in order to form their own opinion of job opportunities (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Glassdoor.com is a website that provides reviews on organizations and jobs written by prior and current employees. Because applicants mostly rely on judgments and information from other individuals, reading reviews that are posted on Glassdoor.com by others may influence potential applicants’ appraisal of that job opportunity. With job seekers having access to online sources such as Glassdoor.com, it is important to understand the influence these resources may have on potential applicants.

The number of web-based recruiting sources available is increasing, enhancing the importance of online word-of-mouth. Applicants searching for more information regarding specific jobs and looking for other individuals to assist in forming their opinions of job opportunities are likely to encounter word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth is defined as interpersonal communication of information about an organization or a specific job (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). Although word-of-mouth is usually associated with face-to-face interaction, it can be accessed online as well. In today’s
society, the Internet is used for communication and as a resource for finding, researching, and applying to jobs. An electronic version of word-of-mouth transferred to the Internet is known as eWOM, and accessing eWOM is becoming more common due to the number of online recruiting sources available (Lim & Van Der Heide, 2014). Reviews written on Glassdoor.com could be an example of eWOM because the identities of the reviewers are kept anonymous, and the writers write their reviews from their own personal experience, independent of the company. Therefore, even if reviews are written by current employees of the company, given that the reviewers remain anonymous, their reviews could be considered an example of eWOM.

Lim and Van Der Heide (2014) provided Yelp and TripAdvisor as examples of online communities that provide consumer reviews to other potential consumers. The online review communities are mostly consumer and product review communities, but there are now organization and job online review communities. Glassdoor.com is an online community similar to Yelp and TripAdvisor that is catered to an audience of job seekers as opposed to consumers. Given that potential applicants early in the job search process seem to mostly rely on information about an organization from other individuals when forming judgments about a company (Collins & Stevens, 2002), reviews shared on sites similar to Glassdoor.com may influence potential applicants’ organizational attractiveness and their intent to apply for a job at that organization. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the effects of valence (positive vs. negative) and quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) of written online company reviews on organizational attraction.
Organizational Attraction

Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) described organizational attraction as an individual’s interest in pursuit of an organization. They determined that organizational attraction has three distinct components: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige (Highhouse et al., 2003). The three components are interrelated, and they are used to measure overall organizational attraction. General attractiveness measures preliminary attitudes about the organization as a potential place to work. General attractiveness refers to individuals’ thoughts and attitudes toward a particular company and does not necessarily imply that actual actions will be taken to pursue a job at the company (Highhouse et al., 2003). Highhouse et al. describe company attractiveness as passive, given that individuals can be attracted to many different organizations and do not necessarily apply for a job at those organizations. On the other hand, job pursuit intentions measure applicants’ intentions to apply to a job at the company in the future. Job pursuit measures thoughts that imply further action regarding applying for a job at an organization. In other words, Highhouse et al. expected that general attitude toward a company would lead to intentions of job pursuit, which should ultimately lead to applying to a job at that company. The authors based this on Fishbein and Ajzen’s theory of reasoned action (as cited in Highhouse et al., 2003), which suggests that attitudes influence behavior, such that attitudes influence intentions to engage in behaviors. Company prestige measures social aspects of a company, such as reputation, status, and popularity. The construct of company prestige is based on social reference, such that a company is considered prestigious if it is associated with fame when people are evaluating it.
Research has shown that job seekers’ organizational attraction has an impact on the quality and the quantity of that organization’s applicant pool (Collins & Han, 2004). If high-quality applicants do not apply to a company, then that organization will not have the option to hire good employees. Collins and Han (2004) found that early recruitment practices, corporate advertising, and firm reputation had direct effects on applicant pool quantity and quality. Because organizational attraction should influence the actual pursuit of a job at a company, it is important to know what factors may affect organizational attraction.

One factor that may affect organizational attraction is information received about a company from others. For example, Collins and Stevens (2002) found that potential applicants early in the job search process mostly relied on knowledge and judgments about a job and organization from other individuals in order to form their opinion of job opportunities. Although those potential applicants used the information shared by others to determine their own level of organizational attraction toward the company offering the job opportunity, it is important to understand the influence different types of information may have on organizational attraction. The information provided by others can range from negative to positive. In the following section, valence of reviews is discussed in more detail, especially as it relates to word-of-mouth and organizational attraction research.

**Valence of Reviews**

The online reviews posted on sites similar to Glassdoor.com typically differ in valence. Message valence is described as the direction the message is framed, which could be positive or negative (Radighieri & Mulder, 2014). A positive message would
provide favorable information about a job or a company, whereas a negative message would provide unfavorable information. It is important to understand how valence of a review may affect potential applicants’ perceptions of a company. Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) found potential applicants spent more time receiving positive and negative word-of-mouth information from individuals who had more experience with the job and the organization being considered. The authors suggested that current and prior employees are considered more experienced than nonemployees. Glassdoor.com provides reviews on organizations and jobs written by former and current employees. Because applicants rely mostly on judgments and information from other individuals, reading reviews written by individuals that are posted on Glassdoor.com may influence potential applicants’ appraisal of that job opportunity.

Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) also found that exposing participants to positive word-of-mouth early on in the job search process positively predicted organizational attractiveness and likelihood to apply to that job. On the other hand, the time exposed to negative word-of-mouth early in the recruitment process did not predict organizational attractiveness or application decisions (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009). These results suggest that positive word-of-mouth may have an effect on organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions, but negative word-of-mouth may not have an effect.

Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) found that both negative and positive word-of-mouth had an effect on organizational attraction. Results showed that positive word-of-mouth was associated with higher organizational attraction, and that negative word-of-mouth reduced the effect of recruitment advertising on organizational attraction. In other words, negative word-of-mouth decreased the effect of positive job advertisements on
organizational attraction. Van Hoye and Lievens suggested that organizations should promote the spread of positive word-of-mouth to avoid negative word-of-mouth due to the possible impact it could have on organizational attraction. These findings suggest that both negative and positive online company reviews can influence organizational attraction. Therefore, valence of reviews should be examined in word-of-mouth and organizational attraction research, as suggested by Van Hoye and Lievens. Although neutral messages have been examined in the marketing literature (e.g., Tang, Fang, & Wang, 2014), only positive and negative messages were of interest in this study. Hence, in the current study, valence is the first factor that was examined. Another factor that may affect perceptions of reviews is the quality of those reviews.

Quality of Reviews

Spelling errors are common, and individuals writing reviews on sites similar to Glassdoor.com may make spelling errors while writing their reviews. In fact, in a study on mistakes made during online behavior, results showed that 63% of users made at least one spelling mistake while completing tasks online (Hargittai, 2006). Therefore, the quality of a written review has the potential to influence organizational attraction.

Kreiner, Schnakenberg, Green, Costello, and McClin (2002) examined the influence of spelling errors in an essay on people’s perceptions of the writer. Kreiner et al. used two different types of spelling errors in their study: phonological errors and typographical errors. Phonological errors were described as misspellings where the word is still pronounceable. For example, “torchure” is pronounceable as “torture” (Kreiner et al., 2002). Phonological errors are expected to occur if the writer knows the pronunciation of a word but does not know the correct spelling. Kreiner and colleagues
described typographical errors as misspellings where the word cannot be pronounced, such as “totrure” for “torture.” They stated that typographical errors can be due to typing or writing too quickly, bad coordination, or carelessness. The authors found that spelling errors influenced the perceptions of the writers, such that the writers who wrote an essay including spelling errors were perceived less favorably than the writers who wrote an essay without spelling errors. Specifically, when there were spelling errors, lower levels of writing ability were perceived about the writers, but spelling errors did not affect perceptions of cognitive ability or intelligence (Kreiner et al., 2002). However, the type of error (i.e., phonological vs. typographical) did not significantly influence the perceptions of the writer. In other words, the presence of spelling errors affected the perceptions of the writer, regardless of the type of error.

Appelman and Bolls (2011) found that newspaper articles with grammatical errors were perceived as less credible than newspaper articles without grammatical errors. Moreover, the errors had a detrimental effect on the perception of the source. Their research included grammatical errors consisting of the following: run-on sentences, sentence fragments, incorrect subject-verb agreement, incorrect pronouns, confused homonyms, double negatives, and incorrect capitalization. These types of grammatical errors were chosen to be included in their newspaper articles because copy editors were trained to notice and eliminate them from the text (Appelman & Bolls, 2011). Appelman and Bolls recommended that types of errors be assessed in future research, which provides further support for examining the effects of spelling errors in reviews.

Lim and Van Der Heide (2014) investigated how individuals process a review written on Yelp.com. Yelp.com is an online community that provides consumer reviews
to other potential consumers. Lim and Van Der Heide examined the effects of review valence and perceived credibility on the receiver’s attitude toward the reviewed restaurant. The receiver was the participant of the study reviewing the yelp.com reviews. The perceived source credibility was broken down into three dimensions: expertise/competence, trustworthiness, and caring/goodwill (Lim & Van Der Heide, 2014). Expertise/competence was measured by the reviewer’s perception of the communicator’s ability to make valid allegations. Trustworthiness was measured by the reviewer’s confidence in the communicator’s intentions to make valid allegations. Finally, caring/goodwill was measured by the receiver’s evaluation of the communicator’s intent toward the receiver. A 9-point semantic differential scale with six pairs of adjectives was used to measure attitudes toward the restaurant: foolish-wise, unacceptable-acceptable, unfavorable-favorable, wrong-right, bad-good, and negative-positive. Results showed that review valence and perceived competence of the reviewer were the only predictors of attitudes toward the restaurant. Specifically, higher perceived competence of the reviewer and positive reviews resulted in more positive attitudes towards the restaurant. Results also showed that perceived competence mediated the relationship between review valence and attitudes toward the reviewed restaurant.

Cheung, Sia, and Kuan (2012) assessed the factors that influenced the credibility of online consumer reviews. Specifically, they examined the effects of the quality of the argument that the message presented and the perceived credibility of the sources on perceptions of the review. Argument quality was measured by how convincing, strong, persuasive, and good the review argument was perceived to be, and source credibility was measured by how reputable, good, trustworthy, and reliable the reviewer was
perceived to be. The review that the participants were asked to assess was the most recent review they could recall seeing on Epinions.com, which is a consumer review website. Results showed that the quality of the argument and the perceived credibility of the source positively influenced the overall credibility, factual accuracy, and believability of the review. Therefore, both source credibility and message quality positively influenced how credible the online reviews were perceived to be (Cheung et al., 2012). Because the reviews that were assessed varied among participants, it is unknown if spelling errors were present in the reviews. If spelling errors were present in the reviews participants recalled, they may have influenced the credibility, factual accuracy, and believability of that review. However, that was not examined in that study, further showing the need to examine spelling errors in future research.

Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) investigated the effect of the perceived credibility of information sources on organizational attraction. Different recruitment sources shared information about an organization to potential applicants, who then rated the source’s perceived credibility and their organizational attraction toward the company being described by the recruitment source. Results showed that the credibility of the source affected organizational attraction, such that participants exposed to the source that was perceived as more credible rated their organizational attraction higher than participants exposed to the less credible source (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a).

These findings suggest that research ought to focus on the potential effects of quality and valence of online company reviews on organizational attraction. The two types of spelling errors Kreiner et al. (2002) used in their study (i.e., phonological vs. typographical) may be present in online reviews, and they may affect the perceived
quality of those reviews. Appelman and Bolls (2011) examined different types of grammatical errors, and of those grammatical errors, incorrect capitalization seems to be the most similar to spelling errors. In other words, although inappropriately capitalizing a letter is not the same as a spelling error and may not fall into either of the two categories of phonological or typographical errors described by Kreiner et al., it may have the same psychological effect on the reader.

The similarity between spelling errors and grammatical errors can lead to the possibility that online company reviews that include spelling errors may be perceived as less credible than reviews without spelling errors. Similar to how Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that the credibility of the source affected participants’ organizational attraction, a low-quality online company review (because of spelling errors) may be perceived as less credible, which may then decrease the influence of that review on organizational attraction.

**The Current Study**

Research has shown that potential applicants early in the job search process mostly relied on knowledge and judgments about a job and organization from other individuals in order to form their own opinion of job opportunities (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Because applicants mostly rely on judgments and information from other individuals, reading reviews written by individuals that are posted on Glassdoor.com may influence potential applicants’ attraction to a company. With job seekers having access to online sources such as Glassdoor.com, it is important to understand the influence these reviews may have on organizational attraction. Specifically, two characteristics of reviews were of interest in the current study: valence and quality. The purpose of this
study, therefore, was to investigate the effects of valence and quality of written online company reviews on organizational attraction.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

Early on in the job search, potential applicants rely mostly on judgments and information from other individuals when appraising job opportunities (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Job seekers have access to multiple sources to find information regarding organizations and job postings, including online sources. More than four million Americans search for jobs online daily, and over 52 million have used online job searches (Jansen et al., 2005). Glassdoor.com is an online source that shares job openings, job and organization reviews, salary information, and interview reviews. Glassdoor.com was founded in 2007 and has more than 8 million company reviews. With job seekers having access to online sources such as Glassdoor.com and the use of job and recruiting sites increasing, it is important to understand the influence information posted on these sites may have on organizational attraction.

Several elements of a written review have the potential to influence organizational attraction. One factor is the valence of the review. Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) found that exposing participants to positive word-of-mouth early on in the job search process positively predicted organizational attractiveness and likelihood to apply to that job. Moreover, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) found that both negative and positive word-of-mouth influenced organizational attraction, such that positive word-of-mouth was associated with higher organizational attraction and negative word-of-mouth reduced the
effect of recruitment advertising on organizational attraction. Therefore, valence of reviews should be examined in word-of-mouth and organizational attraction research, as suggested by Van Hoye and Lievens.

Another factor that may affect perceptions of reviews is the quality of those reviews. In a study on mistakes made during online behavior, results showed that 63% of users made at least one spelling mistake while completing tasks online (Hargittai, 2006). Spelling errors are common, and reviewers on Glassdoor.com may make spelling errors while writing their reviews. Cheung et al. (2012) assessed the factors that influenced online consumer reviews and found that the quality of the argument presented and the perceived credibility of the source positively influenced the overall credibility, factual accuracy, and believability of the review. Therefore, both source credibility and quality of the message positively influenced the credibility of the online reviews (Cheung et al., 2012).

Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that the perceived credibility of the information source had an influence on organizational attraction. Potential applicants exposed to the source perceived as more credible rated their organizational attraction higher than participants exposed to the less credible source. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Appelman and Bolls (2011) found that newspaper articles with grammatical errors were perceived as less credible than articles without grammatical errors. A review that includes spelling errors may also be perceived as a low-quality and unreliable review; therefore, it may not influence the reader’s organizational attraction to the extent that a reliable and high-quality review would. On the other hand, a review that does not include spelling errors may be perceived as a high-quality and reliable review; therefore,
it may influence the reader’s organizational attraction in the direction of the valence of
the review (see Figure 1). The review without spelling errors may be perceived as
credible, therefore influencing the organizational attraction in the direction of the valence
more so than the review with spelling errors that may be perceived as less credible.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant interaction between quality and valence
of the message on general company attractiveness, such that valence will have a
stronger effect on attractiveness when there are no spelling errors than when
there are spelling errors.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant interaction between quality and valence
of the message on job pursuit intentions, such that valence will have a stronger
effect on intentions when there are no spelling errors than when there are spelling
errors.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant interaction between quality and valence
of the message on company prestige, such that valence will have a stronger effect
on prestige when there are no spelling errors than when there are spelling errors.
Figure 1. Hypothesized interaction between quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) and valence (positive vs. negative) of the review on organizational attraction.
Chapter III

Method

Participants

Undergraduate students enrolled in Psychology classes at Xavier University, who are at least 18 years old, were welcome to participate in the current study. Participants were recruited through the School of Psychology’s Participant Pool using announcements made by the participant pool coordinator and paper study announcements posted on the research bulletin board on the second floor in Elet Hall (please see Appendix A for the study announcement). The initial number of students who participated in this study was 255. Forty-two cases were deleted due to missing data, 23 cases were deleted due to failing the valence manipulation check, and 29 cases were deleted due to failing the quality manipulation check, resulting in a total sample size of 161 cases. The number of responses per condition was 45, 33, 42, and 41. The condition with 33 cases had a negative review with no spelling errors; however, the unequal sample sizes are most likely due to the fact that random assignment was used. Although the target sample size of at least 45 cases per group was not achieved in all the conditions and the sample sizes were not equal, an observed power of above .90 was found for all effects, and the Levene’s test results provided support for the homogeneity of variance assumption. Participants received 15 minutes of research credit for participating in this study.
The final sample consisted of 71% females and 29% males. Regarding race, 81% were White participants, 8% were Black, 9% reported other races, and four participants chose not to report their race. Although the percentage of females was slightly higher than the overall percentage of females at Xavier University (54%; “Xavier University,” 2016), the majority of participants were female. Along similar lines, the majority of participants were White, similar to the overall percentage of White participants at Xavier University (72%; “Xavier University,” 2016). Therefore, overall, the current sample seemed representative of the Xavier University undergraduate student population with regards to gender and race. The average age was 20 ($SD = 3.88$). As for employment, 91% reported being previously employed, and 56% reported being currently employed.

**Materials and Measures**

**Online company reviews.** Participants were randomly assigned to one of four online company reviews (see Appendix B). The online company reviews varied on valence (positive vs. negative) and quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors). The structure of the reviews was the same, with the exception of changing specific words to manipulate valence and quality. The valence of the online reviews (positive vs. negative) was determined by manipulating the content provided in the review. For example, the positive review included the sentence “It is the best organization I have ever worked with,” whereas the negative review included the sentence “It is the worst organization I have ever worked with.” The quality of the online reviews (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) was manipulated by misspelling words in the review for the spelling errors condition. To strengthen the manipulation, the spelling errors in the company reviews consisted of both typographical and phonological errors, and the ratio of number of
misspelled words to number of total words was about 1:5. For example, a review with no spelling errors included the sentence “I enjoy going to work every day,” whereas a review with spelling errors included the sentence “I enjoy going to work evry day.” With the exception of the spelling errors and the valence of the message, the reviews were nearly identical in length, detail, and complexity. These reviews were formatted similar to actual reviews posted on Glassdoor (http://www.glassdoor.com).

**Organizational attraction.** Highhouse et al. (2003) measured organizational attraction with three subscales: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige (see Appendix C for the relevant reference). Each subscale has five items, and participants responded using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*) for all subscales. Highhouse et al. reported that all three subscales were internally consistent, with Cronbach’s alphas of .88, .82, and .83 for company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and prestige, respectively. In the current study, all three subscales were internally consistent, with Cronbach’s alphas of .92, .87, and .92 for company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and prestige, respectively. A sample item for company attractiveness is: “For me, this company would be a good place to work.” A sample item for job pursuit intentions is: “I would accept a job offer from this company.” Finally, a sample item for company prestige is: “I would find this company a prestigious place to work.”

**Credibility.** A credibility measure was included for exploratory purposes and as an additional manipulation check, because it was expected that the reviews with spelling errors would be perceived as less credible. Cheung et al.’s (2012) adapted measure of review credibility was used in this study (please see Appendix D for the relevant
reference). Participants responded using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Cheung et al. reported that the review credibility measure had a composite reliability of .96. In the current study, the credibility measure was internally consistent, with a Cronbach’s alpha of .91. A sample item for review credibility is: “I think this review is credible.” Please see Table 1 for the correlations among the organizational attraction dimensions and credibility.

**Demographics.** Optional demographic items were administered to gather background information on the participants, such as age and familiarity with Glassdoor.com (see Appendix E for all the demographic items).

**Manipulation check items.** Two manipulation check items were administered to ensure that the manipulation of the valence of the review and the manipulation of the quality of the review were effective (see Appendix F). Participants who selected the option that stated the company review they read included spelling errors were asked to provide an example of a spelling error they saw for exploratory purposes.

**Procedure**

The present study was submitted to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) to seek approval. After receiving IRB approval (see Appendix G for the IRB approval letter), data collection began. The website used for data collection was xavier.qualtrics.com. When participants accessed the survey link, they read the informed consent form (see Appendix H). If participants agreed to participate by clicking “Next,” they were directed to the actual survey. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four online company reviews, and they were asked to imagine they were searching for a job. Participants were told to imagine they accessed Glassdoor.com and read an online
Table 1

*Correlations among the Organizational Attraction Dimensions and Credibility*

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<tr>
<td>2. Job Pursuit Intentions</td>
<td>.85</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Company Prestige</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td>.77</td>
<td>(.92)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Credibility</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>.28</td>
<td>.38</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 161. Alphas are shown along the diagonal. All correlations were statistically significant, p < .001.*
review about a hypothetical company. Then, they were asked to complete an organizational attraction measure, a review credibility measure, two manipulation checks, and demographics. Once participants submitted their responses, they were directed to a separate survey in order to enter the information necessary to receive research credit (i.e., name, professor’s name, and course) and in order to read the debriefing form (see Appendix I). If the participants failed either manipulation check, their data were removed before conducting any analyses.
Chapter IV

Results

This study’s hypotheses proposed an interaction between quality and valence of the online company review on organizational attraction, such that valence would have a stronger effect on attraction when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors. A 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial analysis of variance (ANOVA) was conducted on each organizational attraction subscale to analyze the data. The three subscales were all highly correlated, above .70 (p < .001); therefore, a multivariate analysis of variance was not needed (please see Tables 2 and 3 for the ANOVA results and descriptive statistics). Results showed that there was a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on general company attractiveness, such that valence had a stronger effect on attractiveness when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors, \( F(1,157) = 29.76, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .27 \) (see Figure 2). Thus, Hypothesis 1 was supported. There was also a significant interaction between quality and valence of the review on job pursuit intentions, such that valence had a stronger effect on intentions when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors, \( F(1,157) = 47.01, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .23 \) (see Figure 3). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.
Table 2

*Effects of Review Valence and Quality on General Company Attractiveness, Job Pursuit Intentions, and Company Prestige*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>p</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>General Company Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>15.88</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.88</td>
<td>30.93</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6.52</td>
<td>12.69</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence * Quality</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>29.76</td>
<td>57.96</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>80.61</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>0.51</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Job Pursuit Intentions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>5.02</td>
<td>13.37</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.68</td>
<td>12.47</td>
<td>.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence * Quality</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.64</td>
<td>47.01</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>58.92</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>0.38</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Company Prestige</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>23.32</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>23.32</td>
<td>53.23</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>9.14</td>
<td>20.86</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence * Quality</td>
<td>17.61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17.61</td>
<td>40.20</td>
<td>&lt;.001</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>68.78</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3

*Descriptive Statistics for General Company Attractiveness, Job Pursuit Intentions, and Company Prestige by Condition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>General Company Attractiveness</th>
<th>Job Pursuit Intentions</th>
<th>Company Prestige</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valence</td>
<td>Errors</td>
<td>No Errors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$N$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>2.73</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2.50</td>
<td>0.74</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$N$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>2.91</td>
<td>0.59</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$M$</td>
<td>$SD$</td>
<td>$N$</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>2.47</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>2.57</td>
<td>0.72</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Figure 2. Interaction between quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) and valence (positive vs. negative) of the review on general company attractiveness.
Figure 3. Interaction between quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) and valence (positive vs. negative) of the review on job pursuit intentions.
Finally, there was also a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on prestige, such that valence had a stronger effect on prestige when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors, $F(1,157) = 40.20, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .20$ (see Figure 4). Thus, Hypothesis 3 was also supported. Therefore, all three hypotheses were supported.

Given that there were statistically significant interactions, simple effects analyses were conducted for each interaction, focusing on each level of each independent variable. Although all the findings are reported in Table 4, the results reported here pertain to the simple effects analyses that focused on each level of valence. Results showed that in the condition with a negative review, general company attractiveness ($d = 0.70$) and job pursuit intentions ($d = 0.59$) were significantly lower when there were no errors present than when errors were present. Therefore, when the online review was negative and did not include spelling errors, participants rated their general company attractiveness and job pursuit intentions significantly lower than when the review was negative and included spelling errors. When the online review was negative, participants did not rate company prestige differently between reviews with spelling errors versus no spelling errors ($d = 0.28$).

When the review was positive, results revealed that general company attractiveness ($d = 1.68$), job pursuit intentions ($d = 1.52$), and company prestige ($d = 1.77$) were significantly higher when the review included no spelling errors than when spelling errors were present. Therefore, when the online review was positive and did not include spelling errors, participants rated their general company attractiveness, job
Figure 4. Interaction between quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) and valence (positive vs. negative) of the review on company prestige.
Table 4

*Simple Effects Analyses for the Interaction between Valence and Quality of the Reviews*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors vs. No Errors</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Company Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td>3.00*</td>
<td>0.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Pursuit Intentions</strong></td>
<td>2.55*</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company Prestige</strong></td>
<td>1.20</td>
<td>0.28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors vs. No Errors</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Company Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td>-7.64**</td>
<td>-1.68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Pursuit Intentions</strong></td>
<td>-6.93**</td>
<td>-1.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company Prestige</strong></td>
<td>-8.06**</td>
<td>-1.77</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Errors</th>
<th>Negative vs. Positive Reviews</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Cohen’s d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Company Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td>1.48</td>
<td>0.32</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Pursuit Intentions</strong></td>
<td>2.29*</td>
<td>0.49</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company Prestige</strong></td>
<td>-0.66</td>
<td>-0.14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No Errors</th>
<th>Negative vs. Positive Reviews</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>Cohen's d</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Company Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td>-9.19**</td>
<td>-2.18</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Pursuit Intentions</strong></td>
<td>-7.42**</td>
<td>-1.76</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Company Prestige</strong></td>
<td>-10.21**</td>
<td>-2.37</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* p < .05. ** p < .001.
pursuit intentions, and company prestige significantly higher than when the review was positive and included errors.

As previously mentioned, credibility was included as an exploratory measure. However, it was expected that high-quality reviews (i.e., reviews with no spelling errors) would be rated as significantly more credible than low-quality reviews (i.e., reviews that contained spelling errors). As expected, findings revealed that credibility was rated significantly higher for high-quality reviews ($M = 3.08, SD = 0.80$) than low-quality reviews ($M = 2.14, SD = 0.74$); $t(159) = -7.73, p < .001, d = -1.22$. This was also examined at each level of valence. When the review was negative, reviews with no spelling errors were rated significantly more credible than reviews with spelling errors ($d = 1.10$). In other words, participants perceived the reviews with no errors as significantly more credible when the review was negative. Along similar lines, when the review was positive, reviews with no spelling errors were rated as significantly more credible than reviews with spelling errors ($d = 1.32$).
Chapter V

Discussion

This study examined the effects of quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) and valence (positive vs. negative) of an online job review on organizational attraction. It was hypothesized that there would be an interaction between quality and valence of the online company review on organizational attraction, such that valence would have a stronger effect on attraction when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors. The three interactions of quality and valence on general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige were statistically significant, such that valence had a stronger effect on attraction when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors. Therefore, all hypotheses were supported.

Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) found that positive word-of-mouth positively predicted organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions. In addition, Van Hoye and Lievens’s (2007b) findings revealed that both negative and positive word-of-mouth had an effect on organizational attraction, such that positive word-of-mouth was associated with higher organizational attraction. The valence of word-of-mouth and online reviews is one of several elements that has the potential to influence organizational attraction. Another element that may affect organizational attraction is the quality of the reviews. For example, Appelman and Bolls (2011) found that newspaper articles with grammatical errors were perceived as less credible than newspaper articles without
grammatical errors. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige, such that valence would have a stronger effect on attraction in the presence of no spelling errors than when there are spelling errors.

As expected, there was a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige. Overall, results indicated that participants who viewed an online job review with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction more aligned with the valence of the review than the participants who viewed an online job review with spelling errors. Specifically, participants who viewed positive reviews with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction higher than participants who viewed positive reviews that included spelling errors. For the negative condition, participants who viewed negative reviews with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction lower than participants who viewed negative reviews that included spelling errors, with the exception of company prestige. Hence, participants who viewed the negative review with no spelling errors rated the company’s attractiveness and their job pursuit intentions lower than participants who viewed the negative review that had spelling errors. When simple effects analyses were conducted on company prestige, results showed that in the negative valence condition, participants who viewed reviews with no spelling errors did not rate their company prestige significantly lower than the participants who viewed spelling errors. As previously discussed, company prestige measures social aspects of a company, such as its reputation, status, and popularity (Highhouse et al., 2003). The
current findings imply that reading a negative review about an organization will have a similar effect on perceptions of that company’s prestige, regardless of whether that review has spelling errors or not. In other words, whether or not a review includes spelling errors may not influence a participant’s perception of company prestige because the review is already negative.

In addition, the effect sizes for the positive conditions when comparing reviews with errors versus reviews with no errors were much larger (General Company Attractiveness, $d = -1.68$; Job Pursuit Intentions, $d = -1.52$; Company Prestige, $d = -1.77$) than the effect sizes for the negative conditions (General Company Attractiveness, $d = 0.70$; Job Pursuit Intentions, $d = 0.59$; Company Prestige, $d = 0.28$). These results suggest that spelling errors in reviews have a stronger effect on organizational attraction when the review is positive. One explanation for these findings is that there could be a floor effect when the review is negative. In other words, because participants were exposed to negative information about the organization and their organizational attraction was already low, viewing a negative review with spelling errors did not further decrease their organizational attraction. Negativity bias may have also played a role because negative information is more powerful than positive information. This finding demonstrates the importance of positive reviews posted on Glassdoor when evaluating an organization. Future research should further investigate the perceptions of organizational attraction in negative conditions to further examine the strength of the effect of quality on organizational attraction when the review is negative.

As expected, participants perceived the reviews with no spelling errors as more credible than the reviews with spelling errors. These results are consistent with past
research, which has indicated that grammatical errors negatively influence perceptions of credibility (Appelman & Bolls, 2011). The current findings suggest that individuals perceive online job reviews of higher quality as more credible than lower quality reviews. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that the credibility of the source affected organizational attraction, such that participants exposed to the source that was perceived as more credible rated their organizational attraction higher than participants exposed to the less credible source. The current study’s findings expand on those results and suggest that individuals viewing online job reviews align their opinions of an organization more with high-quality reviews that do not include spelling errors than with low-quality reviews that include spelling errors.

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

**Theoretical implications.** With job seekers having access to online sources such as Glassdoor.com, it is important to understand the influence these reviews may have on organizational attraction. Two characteristics of online reviews were examined in this study: valence and quality. Regarding valence, the significant effect of positive online reviews on organizational attraction supports past research, which suggests that potential applicants who are exposed to positive word-of-mouth are more attracted to organizations (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). Past findings regarding negative word-of-mouth are inconsistent such that some research found that negative word-of-mouth did not have an effect on organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009), whereas other results suggested that negative word-of-mouth decreased the effect of positive job advertisements on organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). The current findings suggest that negative reviews negatively affect organizational attraction, further
supporting prior findings that negative word-of-mouth had a negative influence on organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). Therefore, these results shed light on the word-of-mouth and organizational attraction literature by suggesting that potential applicants exposed to negative information will be less attracted to organizations.

As for quality of reviews, although individuals writing reviews on sites similar to Glassdoor.com may make spelling errors while writing their reviews, there is a lack of research examining the potential influence of the quality of reviews on organizational attraction. Indeed, Appelman and Bolls (2011), who found that newspaper articles with grammatical errors were perceived as less credible than articles without grammatical errors, recommended that types of errors be assessed in other types of research. Therefore, this study shed light on the importance of the quality of online reviews on organizational attraction by adding to the existing literature on valence of reviews. Specifically, the current findings suggest that valence has a stronger effect on potential applicants’ attraction to organizations when there are no spelling errors than when there are spelling errors, especially when the review is positive.

**Practical implications.** Results indicated that positive and negative online reviews had an effect on potential applicants’ attraction to organizations, such that positive reviews resulted in higher organizational attraction, whereas negative reviews resulted in lower organizational attraction. Therefore, organizations should be aware of the finding that online reviews do affect their organizational attraction. Similar to the suggestions of Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b), the current results also support the notion that organizations should promote the spread of positive word-of-mouth to overcome
negative word-of-mouth. Organizations should encourage their employees to write positive reviews about their employer to increase their positive word-of-mouth and increase the likelihood a potential applicant would choose to apply to their company.

Furthermore, companies should also emphasize the importance of the quality of those positive reviews shared so that they are perceived as credible in order to enhance the influence of the positive review on organizational attraction. Because reviews with spelling errors are possible, reading low-quality reviews posted on Glassdoor.com is realistic. Although not hypothesized, a main effect of quality of the reviews on credibility of the reviews was found, suggesting participants perceived the reviews without spelling errors as more credible than reviews with spelling errors. Organizations could potentially increase their attractiveness to potential applicants along with increasing their applicant pool if they encourage their employees to write positive and high-quality reviews online. Although this study focused on quality of online reviews, spelling errors in other company materials may also have a detrimental effect on organizational attraction. Therefore, organizations should ensure that there are no spelling errors in materials that are under their control, such as websites and job ads. Glassdoor.com currently does not have a spellchecker for reviewers writing their reviews, which may reduce the number of spelling errors made. However, providing a spellchecker would alter the quality of the original review. Therefore, Glassdoor.com and similar sites that provide the opportunity for people to write reviews should avoid providing a spellchecker for reviewers to use because that would alter the quality of the original reviews.

Practical implications can also be relevant to individuals, not just organizations. Specifically, people can have spelling errors in other written materials, not just reviews.
For example, people may have spelling errors in a résumé or an e-mail, which may reduce the quality of those materials. The current findings suggest that people should ensure that their work does not include spelling errors due to the detrimental effect it could have on their perceived credibility.

**Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The first limitation of the current study is that participants were college students at a small, private, and religious-affiliated university. This sample may not represent college students in general or other populations (e.g., working adults). Moreover, using college students may be a limitation because individuals with a college education may perceive reviews with spelling errors differently than individuals who are not college-educated. For this sample, results suggested that the quality of reviews was indeed important, but quality of reviews may not be important in other samples. Therefore, future research should consider using a more diverse sample with varying levels of education. Recruiting participants from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk would be a way to diversify the sample in regards to level of education.

A second limitation is participants’ familiarity or unfamiliarity with Glassdoor.com and similar sites that use online reviews. In fact, the data indicated that the majority of participants were not familiar with Glassdoor.com (83%). However, Glassdoor.com was described to participants, which should have reduced any issues related to participants’ unfamiliarity with the website. In addition, unfamiliarity with Glassdoor.com may be a strength because that should have reduced any biases participants may have had toward Glassdoor.com.
A third limitation is that this study asked participants to imagine they were applying to a job at a hypothetical company after reading a review about it, which may have influenced the external validity of the findings. In fact, only 35% of participants stated they were looking for employment at the time of data collection. However, the advantage of the hypothetical nature of this study is that it allowed for greater experimental control. For example, because participants would have never heard of the company before, they should not have previously-formed opinions of the organization used. However, future research should use actual applicants and real organizations. For example, future studies could use real candidates applying to jobs at a job fair. Alternatively, Glassdoor reviews posted about real organizations could be used after removing company names.

Another limitation that may also affect the external validity of the findings is that participants read only one company review. In reality, when gathering information about a company using Glassdoor.com, potential applicants are likely to read several company reviews. However, using a between-subjects design instead of a within-subjects design should have reduced demand characteristics. Therefore, although external validity may have been reduced, using a hypothetical company and a between-subjects design should have increased the internal validity of the results. Moreover, although only one review was used in each condition, the reviews were formatted in a similar way to actual reviews posted on Glassdoor.com. Nevertheless, future research should include several reviews of a single company in one condition, if possible.

Although this study examined the quality of online reviews, there are still other areas for future research. As previously mentioned, one topic that may be beneficial to
research in the future is whether spelling errors present in other company materials may influence organizational attraction. Such materials may include job ads or an organization’s website, which are areas that are under the company’s direct control. Examining the effect of the number of errors made is another interesting avenue for future research. Furthermore, although this study examined spelling errors, future research could investigate grammatical errors instead to assess if they also have a large effect on organizational attraction. Given that credibility was only explored in this study, it would also be interesting to further investigate the influence credibility may have on organizational attraction, such as examining the source of the review.

Conclusions

In summary, results indicated that the quality and valence of an online job review can influence organizational attraction. Specifically, online job reviews without spelling errors were perceived as more credible than online job reviews with spelling errors. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between valence and quality of the online job review on organizational attraction, such that valence had a stronger effect on attraction when reviews did not have spelling errors than when they had spelling errors. More specifically, participants who viewed an online job review with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction more aligned with the valence of the review than the participants who viewed an online job review with spelling errors. Overall, findings suggest that organizations will appear attractive to potential applicants if their current or former employees write positive and high-quality reviews.
Chapter VI

Summary

Research has shown that potential applicants early in the job search process mostly relied on knowledge and judgments about a job and organization from other individuals in order to form their own opinion of job opportunities (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Because applicants mostly rely on judgments and information from other individuals, reading reviews written by individuals that are posted on Glassdoor.com may influence potential applicants’ attraction to a company. With job seekers having access to online sources such as Glassdoor.com, it is important to understand the influence these reviews may have on organizational attraction. Specifically, two characteristics of reviews were of interest in the current study: valence and quality. The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate the effects of valence and quality of written online company reviews on organizational attraction.

Several elements of a written review have the potential to influence organizational attraction. One factor is the valence of the review. Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) found that exposing participants to positive word-of-mouth early on in the job search process positively predicted organizational attractiveness and likelihood to apply to that job. Moreover, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) found that both negative and positive word-of-mouth influenced organizational attraction, such that positive word-of-mouth was associated with higher organizational attraction and negative word-of-mouth reduced the
effect of recruitment advertising on organizational attraction. Therefore, valence of reviews should be examined in word-of-mouth and organizational attraction research, as suggested by Van Hoye and Lievens.

Another factor that may affect perceptions of reviews is the quality of those reviews. In a study on mistakes made during online behavior, results showed that 63% of users made at least one spelling mistake while completing tasks online (Hargittai, 2006). Spelling errors are common, and reviewers on Glassdoor.com may make spelling errors while writing their reviews. Cheung et al. (2012) assessed the factors that influenced online consumer reviews and found that the quality of the argument presented and the perceived credibility of the source positively influenced the overall credibility, factual accuracy, and believability of the review. Therefore, both source credibility and quality of the message positively influenced the credibility of the online reviews (Cheung et al., 2012).

Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that the perceived credibility of the information source had an influence on organizational attraction. Potential applicants exposed to the source perceived as more credible rated their organizational attraction higher than participants exposed to the less credible source. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Appelman and Bolls (2011) found that newspaper articles with grammatical errors were perceived as less credible than articles without grammatical errors. A review that includes spelling errors may also be perceived as a low-quality and unreliable review; therefore, it may not influence the reader’s organizational attraction to the extent that a reliable and high-quality review would. On the other hand, a review that does not include spelling errors may be perceived as a high-quality and reliable review; therefore,
it may influence the reader’s organizational attraction in the direction of the valence of the review (see Figure 1). The review without spelling errors may be perceived as credible, therefore influencing the organizational attraction in the direction of the valence more so than the review with spelling errors that may be perceived as less credible. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on general company attractiveness (Hypothesis 1), job pursuit intentions (Hypothesis 2), and company prestige (Hypothesis 3) such that valence would have a stronger effect on attraction when there are no spelling errors than when there are spelling errors.

**Method**

**Participants**

Undergraduate students who are at least 18 years old and enrolled in psychology classes at a small, private, Midwestern university were welcome to participate in the current study (see Appendix A). The initial number of students who participated in this study was 255. After data cleaning, the final sample size was 161. The final sample consisted of 71% females and 29% males. Regarding race, 81% were White participants, 8% were Black, 9% reported other races, and four participants chose not to report their race. The average age was 20 ($SD = 3.88$). As for employment, 91% reported being previously employed, and 56% reported being currently employed.

**Materials and Measures**

**Online company reviews.** Participants were randomly assigned to one of four online company reviews (see Appendix B). The online company reviews varied on valence (positive vs. negative) and quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors).
Organizational attraction. Organizational attraction was measured using Highhouse et al.’s (2003) organizational attraction scale, which had three subscales: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige (see Appendix C). Each subscale has five items, and participants responded using a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this study, Cronbach’s alphas of .92, .87, and .92 were found for attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and prestige, respectively.

Credibility. Cheung et al.’s (2012) adapted measure of review credibility was included in this study for exploratory purposes (see Appendix D). In this study, this measure had a Cronbach’s alpha of .91.

Demographics. Optional demographic items were administered (see Appendix E).

Manipulation checks. Two manipulation checks were administered to ensure that the manipulation of the valence of the review and the manipulation of the quality of the review were effective (see Appendix F).

Procedure
Participants were randomly assigned to one of four online company reviews, and they were asked to imagine they were searching for a job. Participants were told to imagine they accessed Glassdoor.com and read an online review about a hypothetical company. Then, they were asked to complete an organizational attraction measure, a review credibility measure, two manipulation checks, and demographics. If the participants failed either manipulation check, their data were removed before conducting any analyses.
Results

A 2 x 2 between-subjects factorial analysis of variance was conducted on each organizational attraction subscale to analyze the data (see Tables 2 and 3). Results showed that there was a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and prestige such that valence had a stronger effect on attractiveness when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors: general company attractiveness, $F(1,157) = 29.76, p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .27$ (see Figure 2); job pursuit intentions, $F(1,157) = 47.01, p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .23$ (see Figure 3); prestige, $F(1,157) = 40.20, p < .001$, $\eta^2_p = .20$ (see Figure 4). Thus, all three hypotheses were supported.

Given that there were statistically significant interactions, simple effects analyses were conducted for each interaction, focusing on each level of each independent variable. Although all the findings are reported in Table 4, the results reported here pertain to the simple effects analyses that focused on each level of valence. Results showed that in the condition with a negative review, general company attractiveness ($d = 0.70$) and job pursuit intentions ($d = 0.59$) were significantly lower when there were no errors present than when errors were present. Therefore, when the online review was negative and did not include spelling errors, participants rated their general company attractiveness and job pursuit intentions significantly lower than when the review was negative and included spelling errors. When the online review was negative, participants did not rate company prestige differently between reviews with spelling errors versus no spelling errors ($d = 0.28$).
When the review was positive, results revealed that general company attractiveness \((d = 1.68)\), job pursuit intentions \((d = 1.52)\), and company prestige \((d = 1.77)\) were significantly higher when the review included no spelling errors than when spelling errors were present. Therefore, when the online review was positive and did not include spelling errors, participants rated their general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige significantly higher than when the review was positive and included errors.

Although credibility was included as an exploratory measure, it was expected that high-quality reviews (i.e., reviews with no spelling errors) would be rated as significantly more credible than low-quality reviews (i.e., reviews with spelling errors). As expected, findings revealed that credibility was rated significantly higher for high-quality reviews \((M = 3.08, SD = 0.80)\) than low-quality reviews \((M = 2.14, SD = 0.74); t(159) = -7.73, p < .001, d = -1.22\). This was also examined at each level of valence. When the review was negative, reviews with no spelling errors were rated significantly more credible than reviews with spelling errors \((d = 1.10)\). In other words, participants perceived the reviews with no errors as significantly more credible when the review was negative. Along similar lines, when the review was positive, reviews with no spelling errors were rated as significantly more credible than reviews with spelling errors \((d = 1.32)\).

**Discussion**

This study examined the effects of quality (spelling errors vs. no spelling errors) and valence (positive vs. negative) of an online job review on organizational attraction. It was hypothesized that there would be an interaction between quality and valence of the online company review on organizational attraction, such that valence would have a
stronger effect on attraction when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors. The three interactions of quality and valence on general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige were statistically significant, such that valence had a stronger effect on attraction when there were no spelling errors than when there were spelling errors. Therefore, all hypotheses were supported.

Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) found that positive word-of-mouth positively predicted organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions. In addition, Van Hoye and Lievens’s (2007b) findings revealed that both negative and positive word-of-mouth had an effect on organizational attraction, such that positive word-of-mouth was associated with higher organizational attraction. The valence of word-of-mouth and online reviews is one of several elements that has the potential to influence organizational attraction. Another element that may affect organizational attraction is the quality of the reviews. For example, Appelman and Bolls (2011) found that newspaper articles with grammatical errors were perceived as less credible than newspaper articles without grammatical errors. Therefore, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige, such that valence would have a stronger effect on attraction in the presence of no spelling errors than when there are spelling errors.

As expected, there was a significant interaction between quality and valence of the message on general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige. Overall, results indicated that participants who viewed an online job review with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction more aligned with the valence of
the review than the participants who viewed an online job review with spelling errors. Specifically, participants who viewed positive reviews with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction higher than participants who viewed positive reviews that included spelling errors. For the negative condition, participants who viewed negative reviews with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction lower than participants who viewed negative reviews that included spelling errors, with the exception of company prestige. Hence, participants who viewed the negative review with no spelling errors rated the company’s attractiveness and their job pursuit intentions lower than participants who viewed the negative review that had spelling errors. When simple effects analyses were conducted on company prestige, results showed that in the negative valence condition, participants who viewed reviews with no spelling errors did not rate their company prestige significantly lower than the participants who viewed spelling errors. The current findings imply that whether or not a review includes spelling errors may not influence participants’ perceptions of company prestige because the review is already negative.

In addition, the effect sizes for the positive conditions when comparing reviews with errors versus reviews with no errors were much larger (General Company Attractiveness, \(d = -1.68\); Job Pursuit Intentions, \(d = -1.52\); Company Prestige, \(d = -1.77\)) than the effect sizes for the negative conditions (General Company Attractiveness, \(d = 0.70\); Job Pursuit Intentions, \(d = 0.59\); Company Prestige, \(d = 0.28\)). These results suggest that spelling errors in reviews have a stronger effect on organizational attraction when the review is positive, demonstrating the importance of positive reviews posted on Glassdoor when evaluating an organization.
As expected, participants perceived the reviews with no spelling errors as more credible than the reviews with spelling errors. These results are consistent with past research, which has indicated that grammatical errors negatively influence perceptions of credibility (Appelman & Bolls, 2011). The current findings suggest that individuals perceive online job reviews of higher quality as more credible than lower quality reviews. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that the credibility of the source affected organizational attraction, such that participants exposed to the source that was perceived as more credible rated their organizational attraction higher than participants exposed to the less credible source. The current study’s findings expand on those results and suggest that individuals viewing online job reviews align their opinions of an organization more with high-quality reviews that do not include spelling errors than with low-quality reviews that include spelling errors.

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

With job seekers having access to online sources such as Glassdoor.com, it is important to understand the influence these reviews may have on organizational attraction. Two characteristics of online reviews were examined in this study: valence and quality. Regarding valence, the significant effect of positive online reviews on organizational attraction supports past research, which suggests that potential applicants who are exposed to positive word-of-mouth are more attracted to organizations (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). Past findings regarding negative word-of-mouth are inconsistent such that some research found that negative word-of-mouth did not have an effect on organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2009), whereas other results suggested that negative word-of-mouth decreased the effect of positive job
advertisements on organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). The current findings suggest that negative reviews negatively affect organizational attraction, further supporting prior findings that negative word-of-mouth had a negative influence on organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b).

As for quality of reviews, although individuals writing reviews on sites similar to Glassdoor.com may make spelling errors while writing their reviews, there is a lack of research examining the potential influence of the quality of reviews on organizational attraction. Indeed, Appelman and Bolls (2011), who found that newspaper articles with grammatical errors were perceived as less credible than articles without grammatical errors, recommended that types of errors be assessed in other types of research. Therefore, this study shed light on the importance of the quality of online reviews on organizational attraction by adding to the existing literature on valence of reviews. Specifically, the current findings suggest that valence has a stronger effect on potential applicants’ attraction to organizations when there are no spelling errors than when there are spelling errors, especially when the review is positive.

Results indicated that positive and negative online reviews had an effect on potential applicants’ attraction to organizations, such that positive reviews resulted in higher organizational attraction, whereas negative reviews resulted in lower organizational attraction. Therefore, organizations should be aware of the finding that online reviews do affect organizational attraction. Similar to the suggestions of Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b), the current results also support the notion that organizations should promote the spread of positive word-of-mouth to overcome negative word-of-mouth. Organizations should encourage their employees to write positive reviews about their
employer to increase their positive word-of-mouth and increase the likelihood a potential applicant would choose to apply to their company. Furthermore, companies should also emphasize the importance of the quality of those positive reviews shared so that they are perceived as credible in order to enhance the influence of the positive review on organizational attraction. Although not hypothesized, a main effect of quality of the reviews on credibility of the reviews was found, suggesting participants perceived the reviews without spelling errors as more credible than reviews with spelling errors. Organizations could potentially increase their attractiveness to potential applicants along with increasing their applicant pool if they encourage their employees to write positive and high-quality reviews online. Although this study focused on quality of online reviews, spelling errors in other company materials may also have a detrimental effect on organizational attraction. Therefore, organizations should ensure that there are no spelling errors in materials that are under their control, such as websites and job ads.

Practical implications can also be relevant to individuals, not just organizations. Specifically, people can have spelling errors in other written materials, not just reviews. For example, people may have spelling errors in a résumé or an e-mail, which may reduce the quality of those materials. The current findings suggest that people should ensure that their work does not include spelling errors due to the detrimental effect it could have on their perceived credibility.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The first limitation of the current study is that participants were college students at a small, private, and religious-affiliated university. This sample may not represent college students in general or other populations (e.g., working adults). Moreover, using
college students may be a limitation because individuals with a college education may perceive reviews with spelling errors differently than individuals who are not college-educated. For this sample, results suggested that the quality of reviews was indeed important, but quality of reviews may not be important in other samples. Therefore, future research should consider using a more diverse sample with varying levels of education. Recruiting participants from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk would be a way to diversify the sample in regards to level of education.

A second limitation is participants’ familiarity or unfamiliarity with Glassdoor.com and similar sites that use online reviews. In fact, the data indicated that the majority of participants were not familiar with Glassdoor.com (83%). However, Glassdoor.com was described to participants, which should have reduced any issues related to participants’ unfamiliarity with the website. In addition, unfamiliarity with Glassdoor.com may be a strength because that should have reduced any biases participants may have had toward Glassdoor.com.

A third limitation is that this study asked participants to imagine they were applying to a job at a hypothetical company after reading a review about it, which may have influenced the external validity of the findings. In fact, only 35% of participants stated they were looking for employment at the time of data collection. However, the advantage of the hypothetical nature of this study is that it allowed for greater experimental control. For example, because participants would have never heard of the company before, they should not have previously-formed opinions of the organization used. However, future research should use actual applicants and real organizations.
Another limitation that may also affect the external validity of the findings is that participants read only one company review. In reality, when gathering information about a company using Glassdoor.com, potential applicants are likely to read several company reviews. However, using a between-subjects design instead of a within-subjects design should have reduced demand characteristics. Therefore, although external validity may have been reduced, using a hypothetical company and a between-subjects design should have increased the internal validity of the results. Moreover, although only one review was used in each condition, the reviews were formatted in a similar way to actual reviews posted on Glassdoor.com. Nevertheless, future research should include several reviews of a single company in one condition, if possible.

Although this study examined the quality of online reviews, there are still other areas for future research. As previously mentioned, one topic that may be beneficial to research in the future is whether spelling errors present in other company materials (e.g., job ads, company websites) may influence organizational attraction. Examining the effect of the number of errors made is another interesting avenue for future research. Furthermore, although this study examined spelling errors, future research could investigate grammatical errors instead to assess if they also have a large effect on organizational attraction. Given that credibility was only explored in this study, it would also be interesting to further investigate the influence credibility may have on organizational attraction, such as examining the source of the review.

Conclusions

In summary, results indicated that the quality and valence of an online job review can influence organizational attraction. Specifically, online job reviews without spelling
errors were perceived as more credible than online job reviews with spelling errors. Additionally, there was a significant interaction between valence and quality of the online job review on organizational attraction, such that valence had a stronger effect on attraction when reviews did not have spelling errors than when they had spelling errors. More specifically, participants who viewed an online job review with no spelling errors rated their organizational attraction more aligned with the valence of the review than the participants who viewed an online job review with spelling errors. Overall, findings suggest that organizations will appear attractive to potential applicants if their current or former employees write positive and high-quality reviews.
References


doi:10.1037/a0014066

Appendix A

Study Announcement

**Online Reviews of Organizations**

Ashley Cooper is conducting a study entitled, “Online Reviews of Organizations.” You will be asked to complete one short survey, lasting around 15 minutes. The study may be conducted on any computer that has Internet access. If you are interested in participating in this online study, please write down or tear off the URL at the bottom of this sheet.

You have to be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.

Participants will receive 15 minutes of research credit for participating in this study.

**Thank you for your participation!**

[Survey link was included here, as well as at the bottom of this sheet]
Appendix B
Online Company Reviews

Imagine you are currently searching for a job and that you plan on applying to jobs in the near future (1-2 months from now). Glassdoor.com is an Internet site where current and former employees anonymously write reviews on specific jobs and organizations. Imagine you were on Glassdoor.com and saw the following online company review about a hypothetical company, D.O. Financial Corporation. Please carefully read the following company review about D.O. Financial Corporation before proceeding.

**D.O. Financial Corp.**

*5.0 ★★★★★*

**“LOVE IT”**

**PRO:** D.O. Financial Corporation is a great company and an excellent place to work. It is the best organization I have ever worked with. I enjoy going to work every day.

**CON:** I do not have anything bad to say about D.O. Financial Corporation.

**D.O. Financial Corp.**

*5.0 ★★★★★*

**“LOVE IT”**

**PRO:** D.O. Financial Corporation is a grate compny and an excellent place to werk. It is the best orgnaization I have ever workd with. I enjoy going to work evry day.

**CON:** I do not have anynthig bad to say aboutt D.O. Financial Corporation.
Note. These four reviews represent the four conditions and are presented in the following order: Positive-No Errors, Positive-Errors, Negative-No Errors, and Negative-Errors.
Appendix C

Organizational Attraction Measure

This scale is not reproduced for copyright reasons, but below is the reference for this measure:


doi:10.1177/0013164403258403
Appendix D

Review Credibility Items

This scale is not reproduced for copyright reasons, but below is the reference for this measure:

Appendix E

Demographics

Please respond to the following demographic items:

Age ______________

Gender
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to respond

Race/Ethnicity
- White or Caucasian
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander
- Hispanic or Latino
- Biracial/Multiracial
- Other ______________
- Prefer not to respond

Major ______________

Year in College
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior
- Other ______________

Are you currently employed?
- Yes, employed full-time
- Yes, employed part-time
- No

Have you ever been previously employed?
- Yes
- No
Overall work experience; please state if your answer is in months or years by writing either the word “months” or “years” after the number you provide: 

Are you currently searching for a job?
- Yes
- No

Are you familiar with Glassdoor.com?
- Yes
- No

Have you ever accessed Glassdoor.com to read company reviews?
- Yes
- No

Have you ever posted a company review on Glassdoor.com?
- Yes
- No
Appendix F

Manipulation Check Items

1. The online review you read about D.O. Financial Corporation was:
   - Negative
   - Positive

2. The online company review you read included spelling errors:
   - True
   - False

3. If there were spelling errors, can you provide an example of a spelling error you saw in the online company review? _______________
November 23, 2015

Ashley Cooper  
e/o Dania Dhab  
Xavier University  
ML 6511

Re:  Protocol #15-054, Effects of Online Company Review Valence and Quality on Organizational Attraction

Dear Ms. Cooper:

The IRB has reviewed the materials regarding your study, referenced above, and has determined that it meets the criteria for the Exempt from Review category under Federal Regulation 45CFR46. Your protocol is approved as exempt research, and therefore requires no further oversight by the IRB.

If you wish to modify your study, including the addition of data collection sites, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

Please contact our office if you have any questions. We wish you success with your project!

Sincerely,

Mervell E. Mullins, Jr., Ph.D.  
Chair, Institutional Review Board  
Xavier University

MEM/sb
Appendix H

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a master’s thesis project conducted by Ashley Cooper at Xavier University. The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of jobs and organizations.

In this study, you will read a short online company review, and you will be asked to complete a few measures based on your perceptions of that review as well as a few demographic items. The total time to complete this study is approximately 15 minutes. Therefore, you will receive 15 minutes of research credit by participating in this study and completing the entire survey.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from Xavier University. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. You have to be at least 18 years old to participate in this study.

In order to award you research credit for participating, you will be asked to provide your name in a separate questionnaire. In other words, your responses to this study will remain anonymous, as they will not be associated with your names. Additionally, all data analyses will be conducted at the group level. Finally, only the researchers conducting this study will have access to your responses.

If you have any questions at any time during the study, you may contact the principal investigator, Ashley Cooper at coopera7@xavier.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Dalia Diab at diabd@xavier.edu. Questions about your rights as a research subject should be directed to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board at 513-745-2870.

By clicking “Next,” you agree to the following statement: I have been given information about this research study and its risks and benefits. I freely give my consent to participate in this research project.
Appendix I

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in our research project. The primary purpose of this study is to investigate the effects of quality and valence of reviews on organizational attraction. You were randomly assigned to one of four online company reviews. The company and review used in this study are fictitious and were not actually posted on Glassdoor.com.

Please do not discuss the specifics of our study with anyone or distribute this form to any potential participants, as data collection is ongoing. If you have any questions or concerns, or if you would like to inquire about the results of this study, please contact the principal investigator, Ashley Cooper at coopera7@xavier.edu or the faculty advisor, Dr. Dalia Diab at diabd@xavier.edu.