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Master of Arts

by

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Thesis Chair
The Effect of Company Information Source on Organizational Attraction
Thesis Committee

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<th>Name</th>
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Abstract

The purpose of the current study was to examine how information received through Glassdoor reviews posted by current employees may affect organizational attraction in comparison to two traditional information sources: word-of-mouth and company-dependent sources. A total of 159 participants were presented with a scenario stating that they were considering applying for a full-time position with a particular organization. Then, they were randomly assigned to receive information about the company from one of three sources: Glassdoor, word-of-mouth, or employee testimonial. It was hypothesized that participants who received their information through Glassdoor reviews would report significantly higher levels of organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions than participants who received their information through word-of-mouth, which was delivered by a career counselor, or employee testimonials. However, findings revealed no significant differences on organizational attraction among the three conditions. These results suggest that information received from a Glassdoor review posted by a current anonymous employee does not lead to significantly higher levels of organizational attractiveness or job pursuit intentions than information received through word-of-mouth or employee testimonial. Exploratory analyses were conducted on source credibility, and revealed that participants did not perceive significant differences in the level of expertise of the three sources, but they did find the career counselor to be a significantly more trustworthy source than the Glassdoor reviewer. Future research should examine how negative Glassdoor reviews may influence organizational attraction, as well as how alternative information sources, such as former employee reviews on Glassdoor.com, may affect source credibility and organizational attraction.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

The internet has revolutionized the job market for both employers and employees. Many companies use websites, such as Indeed.com, to post positions and locate potential candidates. Job seekers have also shifted away from newspaper advertisements and visiting companies in person, to locating opportunities online. In order to learn more about companies, job seekers previously needed to refer to job boards or company websites (Lievens & Harris, 2003). Now, job seekers can search for organizational information on community forums, blogs, and review websites. One format for finding such information is online feedback mechanisms.

Online feedback mechanisms are large-scale word-of-mouth networks where individuals can share their opinions and experiences on a variety of topics, including organizations (Dellarocas, 2003). An example of such a network would be Glassdoor.com, a website that contains overall reviews of employers, as well as interview reviews, benefits reviews, and salary details. The website contains a wealth of information for job seekers, with six million company reviews and growing. However, Glassdoor does not only function as a resource for employees, but also for employers. Organizations can hold accounts on the website to post information about their company, such as videos, photos, or a description of their company culture. Additionally, employers have the option to comment on reviews regarding the company.
One feature that makes Glassdoor distinct from typical online feedback mechanisms is that it contains reviews from both company-independent (former employee) and company-dependent (current employee) sources. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) demonstrated that web-based word-of-mouth had a stronger relationship with organizational attractiveness than web-based employee testimonials. Another key feature of Glassdoor is that user reviews are anonymous. Research has suggested that anonymous communicators do not feel the pressure to align to the norms and expectations of the powerful group (Douglas & McGarty, 2001) and are more likely to be honest (Antonioni, 1994). Luarn and Hsieh (2014) found that anonymous online communicators were significantly more likely to express their opinion than non-anonymous communicators. They also found that anonymous participants who did not share the majority opinion were more likely to express their opinion than non-anonymous participants (Luarn & Hsieh, 2014). Therefore, there may be a difference in readers’ perceptions of the information received from identifiable company-dependent sources and information received from unidentifiable company-dependent sources. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of information received through Glassdoor.com reviews on organizational attraction, in comparison to information received through company-dependent sources (e.g., recruiters) and company-independent sources (e.g., customers).

**Organizational Attraction**

Barber defined organizational attraction as “the first phase of recruitment, in which organizations identify potential applicants and try to persuade them to apply through various recruitment practices” (as cited in Van Hoye, 2012, p. 3). Identifying the determinants of organizational attraction is important, because if applicants do not apply
during the first phase of recruitment, they will not be reached by later recruitment activities (Carlson, Connerly, & Mecham, 2002; Murphy, 1986). Research has shown that applicants form perceptions of organizations early on in the recruitment process (Cable & Graham, 2000; Gatewood, Gowen, & Lautenschlager, 1993), and this can determine their attraction to the organization (Barber, 1998). Applicant attraction, synonymous with organizational attraction, can be influenced by job and organizational characteristics (Rynes, 1991), perceived fit with the organization, alternative job options, and perceptions of treatment during the recruitment process (Gilliland, 1993; Saks & Uggerslev, 2010). Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) determined that there are three distinct dimensions of organizational attraction: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige. General attractiveness evaluates participants’ preliminary views on an organization as an employer. The job pursuit intentions dimension assesses how participants would feel about actively pursuing employment with the organization or recommending the organization to a friend looking for a job. Finally, prestige measures participants’ attitudes about the reputation of the company, and other aspects subject to social influence.

Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, and Jones (2005) conducted a meta-analysis examining the predictors of job-organization attraction, job pursuit intentions, acceptance intentions, and job choice. Items that measured overall attraction to the organization or job fell under job-organization attraction. The construct of job pursuit intentions was defined as applicants’ intentions to pursue a position at an organization or remain in the applicant pool. Acceptance intentions were operationalized as the likelihood an applicant would accept a job offer, and job choice was measured by
determining whether applicants accepted real job offers for real positions. The authors found that perceived work environment and organizational image had the strongest relationships with job-organization attraction. They also found that the strongest predictors of job pursuit intentions were type of work and the organization’s image. Recruiter personableness was found to be a strong predictor of job pursuit intentions. Additionally, perceived work environment, perceptions of the recruiter, opportunity to perform, and type of work were predictors of acceptance intentions. A more recent meta-analysis by Uggerslev, Fassina, and Kraichy (2012) revealed that perceived fit was the strongest predictor of applicant attraction, above organizational characteristics, job characteristics, recruiter behavior, and recruitment process. Additionally, Turban and Cable (2003) found that organizations with better reputations are able to attract more applicants. Past research has also investigated the relationship between information sources and organizational attraction, and has found that word-of-mouth is positively related to organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2004, 2005, 2007a, 2007b). The following sections will discuss information sources further, and how organizational attraction is influenced by different sources.

**Word-of-Mouth**

The information that applicants receive about an organization helps form their opinions of the organization. One of the ways applicants can gather information about a company is through word-of-mouth. Word-of-mouth is defined as an interpersonal communication about a company or its products, via an independent source (Bone, 1995). This definition identifies three key characteristics of word-of-mouth: It is a social phenomenon because it is an informal exchange between people (Buttle, 1998), it is a
type of information source about a company or its products (Cohen & Golden, 1972), and it is a company-independent source that is not under the direct control of the organization (Bone, 1995).

Research on word-of-mouth has been primarily examined in the marketing literature. Generally, word-of-mouth has been found to be a more effective information source than commercial sources (Bone, 1995; Buttle, 1998; Laczniak, DeCarlo, & Ramaswami, 2001). Information received through word-of-mouth can affect consumers’ brand opinions and purchase decisions (Bansal & Voyer, 2000; Bone, 1995; Buttle, 1998; Wirtz & Chew, 2000). In the realm of recruitment research, word-of-mouth has been found to be strongly related to brand image and application decisions (Collins & Stevens, 2002). Furthermore, word-of-mouth was found to have a strong effect on organizational attractiveness (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b).

Word-of-mouth can occur in positive and negative forms, and both forms can affect organizational attractiveness and the effectiveness of recruitment advertising (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2004). Van Hoye and Lievens (2005) investigated whether recruitment advertising and word-of-mouth can lessen the effects of negative publicity on organizational attractiveness. Participants who were exposed to positive word-of-mouth and recruitment advertising reported higher levels of organizational attractiveness. Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) found that when applicants were presented with positive word-of-mouth early in the recruitment process, it was linked to organizational attractiveness and application decisions. Fisher, Ilgen, and Hoyer (1979) found that students who received positive information about a company were more likely to accept a job offer from the company. Caudill and Diab (2012) found significant differences between
positive and negative word-of-mouth, and results showed that positive word-of-mouth enhanced company attractiveness and job pursuit intentions. Lastly, participants who were exposed to positive word-of-mouth after receiving negative feedback reported higher levels of organizational attractiveness (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005).

Although Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) stated that valence should be considered when looking at the effects of word-of-mouth on organizational attraction, the current study will not be including a negative valence condition due to the inclusion of a company-dependent source. The author was unable to identify a situation in which a company-dependent source (e.g., recruiter) would purposely provide negative information to a job candidate. Therefore, a positive message will be delivered by all sources in this study.

**Online feedback mechanisms and word-of-mouth.** Although research on Glassdoor is limited, studies examining online feedback mechanisms have been conducted (Mayzlin, 2003; Chevalier & Mayzlin, 2003). Online feedback mechanisms are large-scale word-of-mouth networks (e.g., message boards, online customer reviews) where individuals can share their opinions electronically (Dellarocas, 2003). Anecdotal evidence has shown that online feedback mechanisms may influence people’s decisions and behaviors (Guernsey, 2000). Mayzlin showed that online feedback mechanisms “can serve as low-cost and, potentially, very effective channel for acquiring and retaining customers, complementary to advertising” (as cited in Dellarocas, 2003, p. 4). However, they also spread negative information which could affect the company’s reputation. Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) investigated the effect of customer reviews on online book sales for Amazon and Barnes & Noble. The authors found that 5-star reviews (the highest
rating possible) increased book sales and 1-star reviews (the lowest rating possible) decreased book sales, with 1-star reviews having a greater impact than the 5-star reviews on customer behavior. Liu (2006) also examined how online feedback mechanisms can affect consumer behavior. Specifically, the author examined how user-submitted messages on a popular movie message board influenced box office revenue. Results showed that electronic word-of-mouth significantly predicted box office revenue. Furthermore, the volume of the word-of-mouth messages was more predictive of box office revenue than the valence of the word-of-mouth messages.

Another term used for electronic word-of-mouth is “word-of-mouse.” Hennig-Thurau and Walsh (2003) found that consumers reported using word-of-mouse information to make better purchase decisions and save time when making decisions. Research has shown that word-of-mouse may also influence job applicants’ decisions (e.g., Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). For example, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) investigated the effects of word-of-mouse and web-based employee testimonials on organizational attraction. They found that applicants who received company information via word-of-mouse reported higher levels of organizational attraction than applicants who received their information through web-based testimonials. The authors also found that when the word-of-mouse message focused on the organization, instead of employees, there were higher levels of organizational attractiveness and organizational pursuit behavior.

**Source Credibility**

Prior research has shown that the source from which applicants receive company information may affect their attraction to the organization (Barber, 1998; Rynes & Cable,
The source credibility framework, which suggests that more credible sources of information are more effective in changing behavior and attitudes, has been used to determine how different sources may affect applicant attraction (Eisend, 2004; Pornpitakpan, 2004). According to Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, there are three determinants of source credibility (as cited in Fisher et al., 1979). The first determinant, trust, means that trustworthy sources are perceived as more credible than sources who are trying to persuade or influence. The second determinant is expertise. Information sources who are more knowledgeable about the company are perceived as more credible. Finally, the third determinant is likeability. Information sources who are liked by the applicant, such as friends or family, are perceived as more credible.

In their study comparing word-of-mouth and employee testimonials, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that applicants were more attracted to an organization when they received company information through word-of-mouth, and source credibility completely mediated this relationship. The authors suggested that the reason for this effect is that company-independent sources do not serve the explicit purpose of promoting the organization. In another study, Van Hoye and Lievens (2005) found that participants perceived word-of-mouth as more credible than recruitment advertising, but source credibility did not mediate the relationship. Bone (1995) found that the influence of word-of-mouth was most powerful when the source was perceived as an expert. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) found that perceived credibility of recruitment advertising partially mediated the effect of word-of-mouth on organizational attractiveness. Finally, in a recent study, Van Hoye (2012) found that the relationship between word-of-mouth and organizational attraction was partially mediated by the credibility of the information
source. Therefore, source credibility is another important factor to consider when investigating organizational attraction.

In an early study conducted on the role of source credibility in recruitment, Fisher and colleagues (1979) investigated how company information sources and information favorability affect source credibility and job offer acceptance. The authors included four information sources in their study: a professor, an on-campus interviewer, a job incumbent, and a friend who had previously applied to the company. Participants received either favorable or unfavorable information about a company from one of the information sources, with the information being consistent across sources. The authors tested source credibility based on the three determinants of credibility previously outlined by Hovland and colleagues (as cited in Fisher et al., 1979). First, they found that the most trusted information sources were the friend and job incumbent, and that the interviewer was the least trusted source. They also found that sources were viewed as more trustworthy when they delivered negative information rather than positive information. In regards to perceived source expertise, participants rated the friend as fairly knowledgeable regardless of the information favorability condition. Although the incumbent and professor were rated as more knowledgeable when they included negative information about the company, the differences were not statistically significant. The interviewer was seen as significantly more knowledgeable when she or he delivered negative information. For likeability, the authors found that the interviewer was significantly less liked than the other information sources. Their findings also indicated that participants were significantly more likely to accept a job offer if they received
positive information. Furthermore, participants were significantly less likely to accept the job offer if their information source was the interviewer.

As previously stated, one of the three determinants of source credibility is trustworthiness. One factor that could influence the trustworthiness of a source is anonymity. As mentioned previously, reviews posted on Glassdoor are written by anonymous users. Anonymity is defined as “the degree to which a communicator perceives the message source is unknown and unspecified” (Anonymous, 2008, p. 387). Rains (2007a) found that participants perceived health information received from anonymous internet sources to be as credible and influential as information received from identifiable government sources. In work group research, anonymous communicators generate more critical comments (Jessup, Connolly, & Galegher, 1990). Research on multisource feedback found that employees who believed their ratings were anonymous were more likely to give honest feedback, compared to employees who were concerned that their responses would be connected to them (Antonioni, 1994). According to Rains (2007a), anonymity allows users to express an idea or information, without facing the consequences of it being associated with them. In a recent study, Luarn and Hsieh (2014) examined the effect of anonymity on a participant’s willingness to express true opinions on controversial topics in virtual communities. The authors found that anonymous communicators were significantly more likely to share their opinions than non-anonymous communicators (Luarn & Hsieh, 2014). Furthermore, they found that when participants held an opposing opinion, they were significantly more likely to share it when they were anonymous as opposed to non-anonymous.
The Current Study

In summary, the purpose of the current study was to investigate how different company information sources affect perceptions of organizational attraction. This study focused on how information received through Glassdoor from current employees might differ from word-of-mouth or company-dependent information sources. Research has shown that word-of-mouth can be a more powerful predictor of organizational attraction than company-dependent sources (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a; Fisher et al., 1979). However, there is a lack of research examining how information received from these sources compares to information received through Glassdoor. The research on source credibility suggests that information received through Glassdoor may be perceived as more credible than company-dependent sources due to trust. If readers think that Glassdoor reviewers are free of company influence due to their anonymity, they should be viewed as more trustworthy than company sources. Information received through Glassdoor reviews may also be perceived as more credible than word-of-mouth sources because of source expertise. Reviewers on Glassdoor should have experience working for the organization; therefore, they may be perceived as more knowledgeable about the organization than a word-of-mouth source who has never worked for the company.
Chapter II  
Rationale and Hypotheses

Identifying the determinants of organizational attraction is crucial because companies might lose potential applicants if they do not apply during the first phase of recruitment (Carlson et al., 2002; Murphy, 1986). Several predictors of organizational attraction have been found in the literature, including perceived work environment, company reputation, and perceived fit (Chapman et al., 2005; Turban & Cable, 2003; Uggerslev et al., 2012). Job applicants gather information on these factors through information sources, such as word-of-mouth. Recruitment research has found that word-of-mouth has an effect on organizational attraction (Fisher et al., 1979; Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a, 2007b).

Glassdoor.com has emerged as a new way job seekers can gather information on organizations. Glassdoor features company reviews from anonymous current and former employees. In order to determine how Glassdoor reviews might affect organizational attraction, the source credibility framework is used because source credibility has been found to be a mediator of the relationship between word-of-mouth (the electronic version of word-of-mouth) and organizational attractiveness (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). Source credibility was also found to affect the likelihood of an applicant accepting a job offer (Fisher et al., 1979).
Source credibility research has found that there are three determinants of credibility: trust, expertise, and liking of the source (Fisher et al., 1979). Due to the anonymity of the source, information received through current employees on Glassdoor was expected to be perceived as more trustworthy than information received from company-dependent sources. The anonymity of the reviews allows current employees to express their honest opinions, independent of company influence. Information received through Glassdoor was also expected to be viewed as more credible than word-of-mouth sources because of the source’s expertise. Specifically, current employees writing reviews have experience working inside of the company, unlike word-of-mouth information sources. Taking all of this into consideration, the following hypotheses were proposed.

**Hypothesis 1:** Positive company information received through Glassdoor.com reviews will lead to significantly higher self-reported levels of general company attractiveness than company information received through word-of-mouth or company-dependent sources.

**Hypothesis 2:** Positive company information received through Glassdoor.com reviews will lead to significantly higher self-reported levels of job pursuit intentions than company information received through word-of-mouth or company-dependent sources.
Chapter III

Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Buhrmester, Kwang, and Gosling (2011) found that data collected from MTurk samples are at least as reliable as data collected from traditional samples. Furthermore, MTurk participants were found to be more demographically diverse than other Internet samples, and significantly more diverse than American college samples (Buhrmester et al., 2011). Participants were required to be at least 18 years old and live in the United States in order to be eligible to participate. They also had to have a Human Intelligence Task (HIT) approval rate of at least 95%. Participants were compensated $0.25 if they passed both the manipulation and quality checks. A total of 179 responses were collected, but only 159 were used in the final data analyses. One participant failed the quality check and 19 participants failed the manipulation check. In the final sample, 53 participants were included in each of the three conditions. Participant demographics are reported in Table 1.

Vignettes

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three paragraph-long descriptions of an organization. Vignettes contained the same positive company information, such as a
Table 1

*Demographics of Sample*

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<th>Gender</th>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<td>54.7</td>
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<td>0.6</td>
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<th>Race</th>
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<td>74.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Black or African-American</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian</td>
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<td>4.4</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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<td>Biracial/Multiracial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
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<td>Prefer Not to Respond</td>
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<td>1.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school diploma or GED equivalent</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>12.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some college/Technical school</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>28.9</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associate’s Degree</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bachelor’s Degree</td>
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<td>33.3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Advanced Degree (e.g. Masters or PhD)</td>
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<td>10.1</td>
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<td>Question</td>
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<td>%</td>
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<td>----</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently employed?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, employed full-time</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>54.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes, employed part-time</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>20.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>25.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Have you been previously employed?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>93.7</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
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<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Are you currently searching for a job?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>29.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>110</td>
<td>70.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Were you familiar with Glassdoor.com prior to this study?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>55.8</td>
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<tr>
<td>Have you ever accessed Glassdoor.com to read company reviews?</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>36.1</td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>Have you ever posted a company review on Glassdoor.com?</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>6.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>149</td>
<td>93.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note. N = 159.*

*aN = 157.*

*bOnly participants in the Glassdoor condition responded to this question (n = 52).*

*cN = 158.*
strong work-life balance and supportive company culture, but the information source was different (see Appendix A). In the first condition, participants were told that they came across a review for the organization posted by an anonymous current employee on Glassdoor.com. The instructions indicated that this review was similar to several other positive reviews on the website. Participants in this condition were also given a description of Glassdoor.com, specifically the purpose of the website and what content is featured on it. In the second condition, the word-of-mouth condition, participants were told that they emailed a community career counselor to ask for any information on the organization of interest. The message presented was a reply from the career counselor, with the information the counselor had gathered from several individuals in the community who work at the organization. In the third condition, participants were told that they found an employee testimonial on the organization’s website. Additionally, participants were informed that the review was similar to several other reviews on the company’s website.

Measures

Organizational attraction. Highhouse et al. (2003) measured organizational attraction using three dimensions: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and prestige. Only general attractiveness and intentions to pursue were of interest in the present study; therefore, prestige was not measured. The general attractiveness and job pursuit intentions subscales are each measured using five items on a scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample general attractiveness item is: “This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.” A sample job pursuit intentions item is: “I would accept a job offer from this company.” Highhouse et al. found that both
subscales were internally consistent, with alphas of .82 and .85 for the attractiveness and intentions subscales, respectively. Both scales were also internally consistent in this study with an alpha of .88 for general attractiveness and an alpha of .84 for job pursuit intentions. The source needed to obtain these items is provided in Appendix B. For exploratory purposes, an open-ended question was included at the end of the organizational attraction items. Specifically, participants were asked to justify the organizational attraction ratings they gave in a few sentences.

**Source credibility.** Source credibility items were also included for exploratory purposes. Fisher et al. (1979) measured source credibility using three scales assessing trust in the source, perceived expertise of the source, and likeability of the source. The current study adapted items from the trust in the source and perceived expertise of the source scales. Each scale was measured using three items on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). A sample item from the perceived trust in source scale is: “I believe this person is telling me the truth as he/she sees it.” A sample item from the perceived expertise of the source scale is: “This person really knows a lot about this company.” In this study, the trust in source scale had an alpha of .65, and the perceived expertise of the source scale had an alpha of .84. Please see Appendix B for the source needed to obtain these items.

**Manipulation check.** In order to determine whether the manipulation of the independent variable was effective, a manipulation check was included in the current study. After completing the organizational attraction items, open-ended question, and source credibility items, participants were asked to indicate who the source of their message was. If participants failed this manipulation check, their responses were
discarded prior to running the analyses. As previously mentioned, a total of 19 participants failed the manipulation check. The manipulation check item can be found in Appendix C.

**Quality check.** One quality check appeared in the organizational attraction items to ensure that participants were paying attention. The quality check asked participants to select “Agree.” If participants failed the quality check, their responses were discarded prior to running the analyses. As previously mentioned, one participant failed this quality check.

**Demographics.** Demographic questions included several items such as age, gender, previous work experience, current employment status, experience applying for employment, and whether respondents were seeking employment at the time of data collection. All demographic items are listed in Appendix D.

**Procedure**

The current study was submitted to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) seeking exempt status. Initially, approval was received for collecting data from Xavier University’s Psychology Participant Pool. Therefore, the first round of data collection included college students who participated in the study to receive research credit. However, given that the desired sample size of 156 was not reached, a decision was made to collect another sample using Amazon’s MTurk. In order to ensure that participants in the second round would not be significantly different from the participants in the first round of data collection, only the second sample was used in the main analyses. Moreover, as previously mentioned, Buhrmester et al. (2011) found that MTurk participants were found to be significantly more diverse than American college samples.
After receiving IRB approval for this modification (see Appendix E), the study was posted on MTurk as a study examining perceptions of organizational attraction (see Appendix F). The survey was administered online through Qualtrics. Before starting the survey, participants viewed an informed consent form (see Appendix G). After agreeing to participate, respondents were presented with a scenario stating that they are considering applying for a full-time position with a particular organization. Before applying for the position, however, they have decided to seek more information about the company. Then, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three study conditions (i.e., Glassdoor, word-of-mouth, and employee testimonial). Next, participants completed the items measuring general company attractiveness and job pursuit intentions, including the quality check item, followed by the open-ended question. Then, participants were asked to complete the source credibility items and answer the manipulation check item. Once participants submitted their responses, they were debriefed (see Appendix G) and received a unique completion code to submit on the MTurk interface. Participants who successfully passed the manipulation and quality checks were compensated $0.25.
Chapter IV

Results

A high correlation was found between the two dependent variables; \( r(157) = .77, p < .001 \). Therefore, two separate one-way between-subjects analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to test the hypotheses. Means and standard deviations of the organizational attraction dimensions by condition are shown in Table 2. Hypothesis 1 stated that participants would report significantly higher levels of general company attractiveness when they received positive company information through a review posted on Glassdoor than when they received information through an employee testimonial or from a career counselor. Results showed that there was not a significant effect of company information source on self-reported levels of general company attractiveness; \( F(2, 156) = 0.11, p = .90, \eta^2 = .00 \). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that participants would report significantly higher levels of job pursuit intentions when they received positive company information through a review posted on Glassdoor than when they received information through an employee testimonial or from a career counselor. Results showed that there was not a significant effect of information source on self-reported levels of job pursuit intentions; \( F(2, 156) = 0.42, p = .66, \eta^2 = .01 \). Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was also not supported.
Table 2

*Means and Standard Deviations of Organizational Attraction Dimensions by Condition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>General Attractiveness</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Counselor</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.21</td>
<td>0.55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Testimonial</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassdoor Review</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.22</td>
<td>0.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job Pursuit Intentions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Counselor</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.06</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Testimonial</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassdoor Review</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.95</td>
<td>0.59</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Exploratory analyses were conducted to examine perceptions of the source credibility of the three company information sources. Source credibility was assessed through items measuring perceived trust in the source and perceived expertise of the source. Therefore, two separate one-way between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted on perceived trust and perceived expertise. See Table 3 for a list of the means and standard deviations by condition. Results showed that there was a significant effect of company information source on perceived trust in the source; \( F(2, 156) = 3.69, p = .03, \eta^2 = .05 \). Post-hoc tests using Tukey’s Honestly Significant Difference procedure showed that the career counselor condition (\( M = 3.99, SD = 0.58 \)) was rated significantly higher on perceived trust than the Glassdoor condition (\( M = 3.70, SD = 0.56 \)), \( p = .04 \). The career counselor condition was also rated higher on trust than the employee testimonial condition (\( M = 3.74, SD = 0.62 \)), but the difference only approached statistical significance (\( p = .07 \)). Finally, the employee testimonial condition and Glassdoor conditions were not significantly different from each other. As for source expertise, results revealed that there was not a significant effect of company information source on perceived expertise of the source; \( F(2, 156) = 0.23, p = .58, \eta^2 = .01 \).
Table 3

*Means and Standard Deviations of Source Credibility Dimensions by Condition*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Trust</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Counselor</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.99</td>
<td>0.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Testimonial</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassdoor Review</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Expertise</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Career Counselor</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>0.67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employee Testimonial</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.70</td>
<td>0.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassdoor Review</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>3.65</td>
<td>0.64</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Chapter V
Discussion

The purpose of the current study was to examine how information received through Glassdoor reviews may affect organizational attraction in comparison to two traditional information sources: word-of-mouth and company-dependent sources. Research has shown that job applicants develop an opinion of organizations during the initial stages of the recruitment process (Cable & Graham, 2000; Gatewood et al., 1993), and this can affect their level of organizational attraction (Barber, 1998). An applicant’s organizational attraction can be influenced by organizational characteristics (Rynes, 1991), perceived fit with the organization, recruitment process (Uggerslev et al. 2012), and even the source of company information (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). Prior research has shown that one particular source, word-of-mouth, can lead to higher levels of organizational attractiveness than company-dependent sources (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). In recent years, Glassdoor has emerged as a new source for company information, yet research is lacking on how this resource may influence job candidates. Therefore, this study focused on the effectiveness of Glassdoor as an information source.

Hypothesis 1, which predicted that participants who received positive company information through a Glassdoor review would report significantly higher levels of organizational attraction than participants who received their information through an employee testimonial or a career counselor, was not supported. Hypothesis 2, which
predicted that participants who received positive company information through a Glassdoor review would report significantly higher levels of job pursuit intentions than participants who received their information through an employee testimonial or career counselor, was also not supported. Overall, these results indicate that having Glassdoor as a company information source does not seem to impact participants’ level of general company attractiveness and their job pursuit intentions.

The first possible explanation for the results found is that Glassdoor reviews may not have an effect on organizational attraction. Although this could be a possibility, no significant differences were found between the other two sources used in the study. This result is not consistent with previous findings that word-of-mouth leads to higher levels of organizational attraction than company-dependent sources, such as recruitment advertising, recruitment events, publicity (Van Hoye, 2012), and web-based employee testimonials (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). This could mean that the manipulation of the source may have not been effective. However, a manipulation check was included to ensure that the manipulation of the independent variable was effective, and only people who passed this check were included in the data analyses. Nevertheless, further research is needed to determine if Glassdoor may lead to significantly different levels of organizational attraction than company-dependent and company-independent sources.

The sources used in the vignettes may also shed some light on the current results. It is possible that the findings may have differed if other sources were used for the company-dependent and word-of-mouth sources in this study. Perhaps using an employee testimonial instead of recruitment advertising may have increased the level of organizational attraction for the company-dependent source. For example, Van Hoye
(2012) found that recruitment advertising was not predictive of organizational attraction when controlling for word-of-mouth, and that recruitment advertising was negatively correlated with credibility. More research is needed to investigate the impact of various company-independent and company-dependent sources on organizational attraction.

The source credibility analyses had interesting results that may also offer some insight into the current findings. Results showed a significant difference in perceived trust between the Glassdoor source ($M = 3.70$) and the career counselor source ($M = 3.99$), and a marginally significant difference between the employee testimonial ($M = 3.74$) and the career counselor source. In other words, the career counselor was found to be significantly more trustworthy than the Glassdoor reviewer, and more trustworthy than the employee testimonial (marginally significant). These findings are similar to Fisher et al. (1979) who found that the word-of-mouth source in their study (a friend) was rated as the most trustworthy source, and the interviewer as the least trustworthy. Interestingly, the authors also found the job incumbent to be one of the most trusted sources (Fisher et al., 1979), but in the current study, the employee testimonial was rated lower on trust than the career counselor.

One factor that may have contributed to differences in perceptions of trustworthiness between the current study and Fisher et al. (1979) is the inclusion of an interaction between the source and participant. Specifically, in Fisher et al.’s study, participants were asked to assume that they had met the job incumbent in person, and held a lengthy conversation where they asked questions about the job. On the other hand, in the current study, no interaction was described between the participant and incumbent who gave the employee testimonial. Furthermore, the career counselor (the most
trustworthy source) was the only source in the current study with whom participants had any sort of “interaction,” even though that interaction was through email. Another potential factor is the medium used to deliver the message. Walker, Field, Giles, Armenakis, and Bernerth (2009) compared the credibility of employee testimonials delivered via video with audio to testimonials presented as text with a picture. They found that when testimonials were delivered via video, they were perceived as more credible and lead to high levels of organizational attractiveness (Walker et al., 2009). Cable and Yu (2006) found that information received through employees on a company-independent electronic bulletin board was perceived as less credible than information received through a company representative at a career fair. In summary, future research should further examine the possibility of differences in credibility among company-dependent sources and how the level of interaction and type of medium used play a role.

Along similar lines, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that web-based word-of-mouth was perceived as more credible than web-based employee testimonials. However, they also found that higher credibility in the word-of-mouth source as opposed to employee testimonials resulted in higher ratings of organizational attractiveness. It is interesting to note that in the vignette used in their study, Van Hoye and Lievens identified a friend working at another organization as the word-of-mouth source. In the current study, the word-of-mouth source was a career counselor. Therefore, other factors might be at play that may have resulted in a word-of-mouth source significantly enhancing organizational attraction in their study but word-of-mouth having no effect in this study. For example, participants might perceive a word-of-mouth source who is closer to them (e.g., a friend) as more of an expert than a word-of-mouth source with
whom they do not have an established relationship (e.g., a community career counselor). Alternatively, they may perceive a source close to them as more likeable than other sources. Interestingly, in this study, no differences in source expertise were found among the three sources, and source likeability was not measured. Given past findings showing that more credible sources lead to higher levels of organizational attraction (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a), more research examining the relations between different source credibility dimensions and organizational attraction is needed.

Another possible explanation for the findings in this study is the highly positive message across the three conditions. The career counselor \( (M = 4.21) \), Glassdoor \( (M = 4.22) \), and employee testimonial \( (M = 4.17) \) conditions all had high means for organizational attractiveness that were above 4.00. The career counselor \( (M = 4.06) \), Glassdoor \( (M = 3.95) \), and employee testimonial \( (M = 4.00) \) conditions also had high and similar means around 4.00 for job pursuit intentions. Given that all three vignettes presented the same company information, using positive organizational characteristics may have portrayed the company as too desirable of an employer, regardless of the source of the message. The current study did not include a negative valence condition because of the inclusion of the employee testimonial as an information source, a company-dependent source that is used to promote the organization and should not spread negative information. Prior research has found that positive word-of-mouth can lead to higher levels of company attractiveness and job pursuit intentions than negative word-of-mouth (Caudill & Diab, 2012); therefore, using Glassdoor may have an effect on organizational attraction when both positive and negative reviews are included. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) found that when negative word-of-mouth was presented with
recruitment advertising, participants reported significantly lower levels of organizational attractiveness. They also found that negative word-of-mouth impacted the effectiveness of recruitment advertising to a greater extent than positive word-of-mouth (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b). Furthermore, Fisher et al. (1979) found that sources were perceived as more trustworthy when they delivered negative information. On the other hand, Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) did not find a relationship between negative word-of-mouth and organizational attraction. Future research should investigate how negative information received through Glassdoor and word-of-mouth may affect organizational attraction in comparison to positive information.

A final possible explanation for the results is that the source used for the Glassdoor review was a current employee (as opposed to a former employee). One feature that makes Glassdoor distinct from typical online feedback mechanisms is that it can contain reviews from both company-independent (former employee) and company-dependent (current employee) sources. Current anonymous employees posting on Glassdoor may be considered either a company-independent source due to their anonymity or a company-dependent source because they are still tied to the organization. As a company-independent source, word-of-mouth sources should have no self-interest in promoting the organization (Buttle, 1998), which should be applicable when the source is anonymous. However, because the reviewer is a current employee, readers may be suspicious of positive reviews and view the reviewer as company-dependent. Originally, it was expected that the anonymity of the Glassdoor reviewer may increase perceptions of trustworthiness, but it may have instead decreased perceptions of trustworthiness. In fact, the Glassdoor condition received the lowest mean rating on trustworthiness, although it
was a minor difference and only significantly different from the career counselor. Rains (2007b) found that when controlling for perceptions of confederate anonymity, participants rated anonymous confederates as being less trustworthy, less persuasive, and possessing less goodwill towards the group than identifiable confederates. Further research is needed to assess the credibility of Glassdoor as an anonymous information source.

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

Even though there were no significant results for the main analyses, the current study adds to the literature on information sources and organizational attraction. Previous research has indicated that word-of-mouth does influence organizational attraction (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b, 2009), and that word-of-mouth can have a more powerful impact on organizational attraction than company-dependent sources (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). The current study shed light on how a previously unstudied information source, namely Glassdoor reviews, may affect organizational attraction.

If Glassdoor reviews do not significantly differ from word-of-mouth or employee testimonials in terms of predicting organizational attraction, companies may not need to be concerned with the reviews that appear on their Glassdoor page. Instead, their time may be better spent focused on increasing the effectiveness of their own communication channels if they wish to enhance applicant attraction. For example, Roberson, Collins, and Oreg (2005) found that when recruiters delivered more detailed recruitment messages, this increased participants’ perceptions of organizational attributes and fit with the organization. Furthermore, they found that there was a positive relationship between
advertisement specificity and intent to apply, which was mediated by perceptions of person-organization fit (Roberson et al., 2005). Additional research is needed to examine the effect of Glassdoor reviews on organizational attraction under different conditions (e.g., using negative reviews, reviews from former employees, and more specific reviews).

Theoretically, this study also added to the source credibility literature with the findings on perceptions of trust and expertise. There were no significant differences among the sources in regards to expertise. On the other hand, the career counselor was found to be significantly more trustworthy than the Glassdoor reviewer. These results are similar to a previous study by Rains (2007b), which found that participants perceived anonymous confederates to be less trustworthy. These findings, along with the current results, suggest then that anonymity may harm source credibility by possibly lowering the trustworthiness of the source. Practically, these results indicate that applicants may perceive career counselors as a more credible source of company information than company-dependent sources. Organizations may want to consider fostering positive relationships with career counselors, such as those at universities, in order to attract talent.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

One limitation of this study is the use of vignettes. However, in order to deliver a positive message about an organization with the same information and only manipulating the source, a hypothetical vignette was needed. Although this may have reduced the external validity of the findings, it controlled for potential confounding variables, such as
an existing organization’s reputation or participants’ perceptions of a real organization. Therefore, this approach should have enhanced the internal validity of the findings.

Another limitation is the use of MTurk participants. Participants were compensated for partaking in the study, which may have been their primary motivation to complete the study. However, manipulation and quality checks were employed to identify participants who were not giving the survey their full attention, and participants who failed these checks were not included in the final analyses. Moreover, only about 30% were actively searching for a job at the time of data collection, which may have also affected participants’ motivation to participate in the study. Therefore, the data were reanalyzed exclusively focusing on participants who were seeking employment at the time of data collection, and a similar pattern of results was found. Therefore, whether participants were searching for a job may have not affected the findings. Nevertheless, future research should attempt to include actual job applicants to enhance the external validity of the results.

The lack of a negative valence condition was an additional limitation of the study. Prior research investigating the effects of word-of-mouth has included both positive and negative messages (Caudill & Diab, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b, 2009). However, because the current study included an employee testimonial as one of the information sources, this company-dependent source would be used by organizations for promotional purposes and should not spread negative information. Therefore, in order to enhance the realism of the study, only positive reviews were used. Nevertheless, future research should investigate how negative reviews on Glassdoor.com influence organizational
attraction in comparison to positive reviews, as well as positive and negative word-of-mouth.

A final limitation of this study is that some participants were not familiar with Glassdoor.com, which may have affected the way they perceived this source in comparison to participants who were familiar with the website. In order to address this limitation, a description of Glassdoor.com was provided to participants in the Glassdoor condition prior to reading their vignette. Additionally, the data were reanalyzed exclusively focusing on participants who stated they were familiar with Glassdoor, but there was no difference in the pattern of results found. Further research can provide insight into whether previous exposure to Glassdoor can impact how effective this source may be in influencing organizational attraction.

An interesting area for future research would be to compare how current employee reviews impact organizational attraction in comparison to former employee reviews. Former employees on Glassdoor are a unique word-of-mouth source because they are independent of the organization, but have prior experience working directly with the organization. Additionally, differences in source credibility between the two types of reviewers could be examined. Another possible research direction would be examining how employer usage of the various Glassdoor functions affects applicant attraction. Organizations with free accounts on Glassdoor.com can write responses to reviews written by current and former employees. Future research could investigate how applicants react to companies that do post responses versus those who do not, and what sort of responses elicit the best reaction. For example, one employer may take a defensive stance when reacting to a negative review while another acknowledges that the
organization is in need of improvement. Furthermore, organizations with premium accounts can customize their Glassdoor page to include statements about the company, photos, and videos for “branding” purposes. Future research should examine whether these features increase applicant attraction, and give organizations guidance on whether these functions are worth their time and money.

Another possible direction for future research would be investigating the impact of personal connection with the source on participants’ perceptions of Glassdoor reviews. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) found that word-of-mouth from a friend was perceived as more credible and had a more positive impact on organizational attraction than word-of-mouth from an acquaintance. Similar results may be found if applicants have a relationship with the individual posting a Glassdoor review. For example, future research can examine whether reading a Glassdoor review posted by a friend may lead to higher levels of organizational attraction than a review posted by an unknown individual.

A final suggestion for future research would be to investigate the online resources that job applicants use for information gathering, and how those compare to the resources recruiters and organizations use. The internet is a vast resource with the popularity of some websites changing constantly, whereas others remaining a staple in users’ daily lives. Organizations invest valuable time and money in Facebook advertisements and LinkedIn postings hoping to attract valuable talent, but the individuals they are seeking may not be using the same websites to search and apply for jobs. Therefore, future research can provide guidelines to organizations regarding where their online messages may reach the largest and most talented applicant pool.
Conclusions

In conclusion, the current study adds to the growing literature on company information sources and organizational attraction. Results suggest that information received from a Glassdoor review posted by a current anonymous employee does not lead to significantly higher levels of organizational attractiveness or job pursuit intentions than information received through a career counselor or employee testimonial. The source credibility analyses revealed that participants did not perceive significant differences in the level of expertise of the three sources. However, participants did find the career counselor to be a significantly more trustworthy source than the Glassdoor reviewer. Future research should examine how negative Glassdoor reviews may influence organizational attraction, as well as how alternative information sources, such as former employee reviews on Glassdoor.com, may affect source credibility and organizational attraction.
Chapter VI

Summary

Online feedback mechanisms are large-scale word-of-mouth networks where individuals can share their opinions and experiences on a variety of topics (Dellarocas, 2003). An example of such a network would be Glassdoor.com, a website that contains user reviews of employment and interview experiences with organizations. Glassdoor contains a wealth of information for job seekers, with six million company reviews and growing. One feature that makes Glassdoor distinct from typical online feedback mechanisms is that it contains reviews from both company-independent (former employee) and company-dependent (current employee) sources. Another key feature of Glassdoor is that user reviews are anonymous. The purpose of this study was to investigate the effect of information received through Glassdoor.com reviews on organizational attraction, in comparison to information received through company-dependent sources (e.g., recruiters) and company-independent sources (e.g., customers).

Organizational Attraction

Barber defined organizational attraction as “the first phase of recruitment, in which organizations identify potential applicants and try to persuade them to apply through various recruitment practices” (as cited in Van Hoye, 2012, p. 3). Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) determined that there are three distinct dimensions of organizational attraction: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and
company prestige. General attractiveness evaluates participants’ preliminary views on an organization as an employer. The job pursuit intentions dimension assesses how participants would feel about actively pursuing employment with the organization or recommending the organization to a friend looking for a job. Finally, prestige measures participants’ attitudes about the reputation of the company, and other aspects subject to social influence.

Past research has investigated the relationship between information sources and organizational attraction, and has found that word-of-mouth is positively related to organizational attraction (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2004, 2005, 2007a, 2007b). Word-of-mouth is defined as an interpersonal communication about a company or its products, via an independent source (Bone, 1995). Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) found that when applicants were presented with positive word-of-mouth early in the recruitment process, it was linked to organizational attractiveness and application decisions. Another study found that participants who were exposed to positive word-of-mouth after receiving negative feedback reported higher levels of organizational attractiveness (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005).

Online feedback mechanisms are large-scale word-of-mouth networks where individuals can share their opinions electronically (Dellarocas, 2003). Chevalier and Mayzlin (2006) examined the effect of customer reviews on online book sales. The authors found that 5-star reviews (the highest rating possible) increased book sales and 1-star reviews (the lowest rating possible) decreased book sales, with 1-star reviews having a greater impact than the 5-star reviews on customer behavior. Liu (2006) showed that electronic word-of-mouth on a popular movie message board significantly predicted box
Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) investigated the effects of word-of-mouse and web-based employee testimonials on organizational attraction. They found that applicants who received company information via word-of-mouse reported higher levels of organizational attraction than applicants who received their information through web-based testimonials.

**Source Credibility**

Prior research has shown that the source from which applicants receive company information may affect their attraction to the organization (Barber, 1998; Rynes & Cable, 2003). The source credibility framework, which suggests that more credible sources of information are more effective in changing behavior and attitudes, has been used to determine how different sources may affect applicant attraction (Eisend, 2004; Pornpitakpan, 2004). According to Hovland, Janis, and Kelley, there are three determinants of source credibility: trust, expertise, and likeability (as cited in Fisher et al., 1979). In their study comparing word-of-mouse and employee testimonials, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that applicants were more attracted to an organization when they received company information through word-of-mouse, and source credibility completely mediated this relationship. In another study, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) found that perceived credibility of recruitment advertising partially mediated the effect of word-of-mouth on organizational attractiveness. Therefore, source credibility is another important factor to consider when investigating organizational attraction.

One factor that could influence the trustworthiness of a source is anonymity. Rains (2007a) found that participants perceived health information received from anonymous
internet sources to be as credible and influential as information received from identifiable government sources. In a recent study, Luarn and Hsieh (2014) found that anonymous communicators were significantly more likely to share their opinions than non-anonymous communicators. Furthermore, they found that when participants held an opposing opinion, they were significantly more likely to share it when they were anonymous as opposed to non-anonymous.

In summary, the purpose of the current study was to investigate how different company information sources affect perceptions of organizational attraction. This study focused on how information received through Glassdoor from current employees might differ from word-of-mouth or company-dependent information sources. Due to the anonymity of the source, information received through current employees on Glassdoor was expected to be perceived as more trustworthy than information received from company-dependent sources. Information received through Glassdoor was also expected to be viewed as more credible than word-of-mouth sources because of the source’s expertise. Taking all of this into consideration, the following hypotheses were proposed.

*Hypothesis 1:* Positive company information received through Glassdoor.com reviews will lead to significantly higher self-reported levels of general company attractiveness than company information received through word-of-mouth or company-dependent sources.

*Hypothesis 2:* Positive company information received through Glassdoor.com reviews will lead to significantly higher self-reported levels of job pursuit intentions than company information received through word-of-mouth or company-dependent sources.
Method

Participants

Participants were recruited from Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Participants were required to be at least 18 years old, live in the United States, and have Human Intelligence Task (HIT) approval rate of at least 95% in order to participate. Participants were compensated $0.25 if they passed both the manipulation and quality checks. A total of 179 responses were collected, but only 159 were used in the final data analyses after removing those who failed the manipulation and attention check. In the final sample, 53 participants were included in each of the three conditions. Participant demographics are reported in Table 1.

Vignettes

Participants were randomly assigned to one of three paragraph-long descriptions of an organization that contained the same positive company information, but were delivered by a different source (see Appendix A). In the first condition, participants were provided a description of Glassdoor.com, and presented with a review for the organization posted by an anonymous current employee that was described as similar to several other positive reviews. In the second condition participants were told that they emailed a community career counselor to ask for information on the organization of interest, and presented with the counselor’s reply email. In the third condition, participants were told that they found an employee testimonial on the organization’s website, also described as similar to several other testimonials on the website.
Measures

**Organizational attraction.** Highhouse et al. (2003) measured organizational attraction using three dimensions: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and prestige. Only general attractiveness and intentions to pursue were of interest in the present study; therefore, prestige was not measured. The general attractiveness and job pursuit intentions subscales are each measured using five items on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). Both scales were found to be internally consistent with an alpha of .88 for general attractiveness and an alpha of .84 for job pursuit intentions (please see Appendix B for source needed to obtain this measure).

**Source credibility.** Source credibility items were also included for exploratory purposes. Fisher et al. (1979) measured source credibility using three scales assessing trust in the source, perceived expertise of the source, and likeability of the source. The current study adapted items from the trust in the source and perceived expertise of the source scales. Each scale was measured using three items on a scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). In this study, the trust in source scale had an alpha of .65, and the perceived expertise of the source scale had an alpha of .84. Please see Appendix B for the source needed to obtain this measure.

**Manipulation check.** In order to determine whether the manipulation of the independent variable was effective, a manipulation check was included in this study. After completing the main measures, participants were asked to indicate who the source of their message was. If participants failed this manipulation check, their responses were discarded prior to running the analyses. The manipulation check item can be found in Appendix C.
Quality check. One quality check appeared in the organizational attraction items to ensure that participants were paying attention. The quality check asked participants to select “Agree.” If participants failed the quality check, their responses were discarded prior to running the analyses.

Demographics. Demographic questions included several items such as age, gender, previous work experience, and whether respondents were seeking employment at the time of data collection. All demographic items are listed in Appendix D.

Procedure

The current study was submitted to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) seeking exempt status. After receiving IRB approval (see Appendix E), the study, with the Qualtrics survey link, was posted on MTurk. Before starting the survey, participants viewed an informed consent form (see Appendix G). After agreeing to participate, respondents were presented with the scenario that they are considering applying for a full-time position with a particular organization, and have decided to seek out more information on the company. Then, participants were randomly assigned to one of the three study conditions (i.e., Glassdoor, word-of-mouth, and employee testimonial). Next, participants completed the organizational attraction items, including the quality check item, followed by the open-ended question, source credibility items, and the manipulation check item. Once participants submitted their responses, they were debriefed (see Appendix G) and received a unique completion code to submit on the MTurk interface.

Results

Two separate one-way between-subjects analyses of variance (ANOVA) were conducted to test the hypotheses due to the high correlation between the two dependent
variables; $r(157) = .77, p < .001$. Means and standard deviations of the organizational attraction dimensions by condition are shown in Table 2. Hypothesis 1 stated that participants would report significantly higher levels of general company attractiveness when they received positive company information through a review posted on Glassdoor than when they received information through an employee testimonial or from a career counselor. Results showed that there was not a significant effect of company information source on self-reported levels of general company attractiveness; $F(2, 156) = 0.11, p = .90, \eta^2 = .00$. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Hypothesis 2 stated that participants would report significantly higher levels of job pursuit intentions when they received positive company information through a review posted on Glassdoor than when they received information through an employee testimonial or from a career counselor. Results showed that there was not a significant effect of information source on self-reported levels of job pursuit intentions; $F(2, 156) = 0.42, p = .66, \eta^2 = .01$. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was also not supported.

Exploratory analyses were conducted to examine perceptions of the source credibility of the three company information sources. Source credibility was assessed through items measuring perceived trust in the source and perceived expertise of the source. Therefore, two separate one-way between-subjects ANOVAs were conducted on perceived trust and perceived expertise. See Table 3 for a list of the means and standard deviations by condition. Results showed that there was a significant effect of company information source on perceived trust in the source; $F(2, 156) = 3.69, p = .03, \eta^2 = .05$. Post-hoc tests using Tukey’s Honestly Significant Difference procedure showed that the career counselor condition ($M = 3.99, SD = 0.58$) was rated significantly higher on
perceived trust than the Glassdoor condition ($M = 3.70, SD = 0.56), p = .04. The career counselor condition was also rated higher on trust than the employee testimonial condition ($M = 3.74, SD = 0.62), but the difference only approached statistical significance (p = .07). Finally, the employee testimonial condition and Glassdoor conditions were not significantly different from each other. As for source expertise, results revealed that there was not a significant effect of company information source on perceived expertise of the source; $F(2, 156) = 0.23, p = .58, \eta^2 = .01$.

**Discussion**

Overall, the results indicate that having Glassdoor as a company information source does not impact participants’ level of general company attractiveness and their job pursuit intentions. The first possible explanation for these results is that Glassdoor reviews may not have an effect on organizational attraction. However, significant differences were not found between the word-of-mouth source and company dependent source in the current study, which is inconsistent with previous findings (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). This could mean that the manipulation of the source may have not been effective. A manipulation check was included to ensure that the manipulation of the independent variable was effective, and only people who passed this check were included in the data analyses. Nevertheless, further research is needed to determine if Glassdoor may lead to significantly different levels of organizational attraction than company-dependent and company-independent sources.

The sources used in the vignettes may also shed some light on the current results. It is possible that the findings may have differed if other sources were used for the company-dependent and word-of-mouth sources. For example, Van Hoye (2012) found
that recruitment advertising was not predictive of organizational attraction when controlling for word-of-mouth. More research is needed to investigate the impact of various company-independent and company-dependent sources on organizational attraction.

The source credibility analyses had interesting results that may also offer some insight into the current findings. Results indicated that the career counselor was significantly more trustworthy than the Glassdoor reviewer, and more trustworthy than the employee testimonial (marginally significant). These findings are similar to Fisher et al. (1979) who found that the word-of-mouth source in their study (a friend) was rated as the most trustworthy source, and the interviewer as the least trustworthy. Interestingly, the authors also found the job incumbent to be one of the most trusted sources (Fisher et al., 1979), but in the current study, the employee testimonial was rated lower on trust than the career counselor. It appears then that differences in credibility can lie among company-dependent sources, and future research should further examine this possibility.

Along similar lines, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) found that web-based word-of-mouth was perceived as more credible than web-based employee testimonials. However, they also found that higher credibility in the word-of-mouth source than employee testimonials resulted in a higher level of organizational attraction. It is interesting to note that in the vignette used in their study, Van Hoye and Lievens identified a friend working at another organization as the word-of-mouth source, whereas the current study used a career counselor. Therefore, other factors might be at play that may have resulted in a word-of-mouth source significantly enhancing organizational attraction in their study but word-of-mouth having no effect in this study. Interestingly, in
this study, no differences in source expertise were found among the three sources. Given past findings showing that more credible sources lead to higher levels of organizational attraction (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a), more research examining the relations between different source credibility dimensions and organizational attraction is needed.

Another possible explanation for the findings in this study is the highly positive message across the three conditions. All three information sources displayed means around 4.00 for both levels of organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intentions. Given that all three vignettes presented the same company information, the positive organizational characteristics may have portrayed the company as too desirable of an employer, regardless of the source of the message. Future research should investigate how negative information received through Glassdoor and word-of-mouth may affect organizational attraction in comparison to positive information.

A final possible explanation for the results is that the source used for the Glassdoor review was a current employee (as opposed to a former employee). One feature that makes Glassdoor distinct from typical online feedback mechanisms is that it can contain reviews from both company-independent (former employee) and company-dependent (current employee) sources. Current anonymous employees posting on Glassdoor may be considered either a company-independent source due to their anonymity or a company-dependent source because they are still tied to the organization. Further research is needed to assess the credibility of Glassdoor as an anonymous information source.
Theoretical and Practical Implications

Even though there were no significant results for the main analyses, the current study adds to the literature on information sources and organizational attraction. Previous research has indicated that word-of-mouth does influence organizational attraction (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007b, 2009), and that word-of-mouth can have a more powerful impact on organizational attraction than company-dependent sources (Van Hoye, 2012; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). The current study shed light on how a previously unstudied information source, namely Glassdoor reviews, may affect organizational attraction. If it is true that Glassdoor reviews do not predict organizational attraction, companies may not need to be concerned with influencing the reviews that appear on their Glassdoor page. Instead, their time may be better spent focused on increasing the effectiveness of their own communication channels if they wish to increase applicant attraction.

Theoretically, this study also added to the source credibility literature with the findings on perceptions of trust and expertise. There were no significant differences among the sources in regards to expertise. On the other hand, the career counselor was found to be significantly more trustworthy than the Glassdoor reviewer. These results are similar to a previous study by Rains (2007b), which found that participants perceived anonymous confederates to be less trustworthy. These findings, along with the current results, suggest then that anonymity may harm source credibility by possibly lowering the trustworthiness of the source. Practically, these results indicate that applicants may perceive career counselors as a more credible source of company information than company-dependent sources. Organizations may want to consider fostering positive
relationships with career counselors, such as those at universities, in order to attract talent.

**Limitations and Future Research Directions**

One limitation of this study is the use of vignettes. However, in order to deliver a positive message about an organization with the same information and only manipulating the source, a hypothetical vignette was needed. Although this may have reduced the external validity of the findings, it controlled for potential confounding variables, such as an existing organization’s reputation or participants’ perceptions of a real organization. Therefore, this approach should have enhanced the internal validity of the findings.

Another limitation is the use of MTurk participants, who may have primarily been interested in participating for compensation. Manipulation and attention checks were employed to identify participants who were not giving the survey their full attention. Nevertheless, only about 30% were actively searching for a job at the time of data collection, which may have also affected participants’ motivation to participate in the study. Hence, future research should attempt to include actual job applicants.

The lack of a negative valence condition was an additional limitation of the study. However, because the current study included an employee testimonial as one of the information sources, this company-dependent source would be used by organizations for promotional purposes and should not spread negative information. Therefore, in order to enhance the realism of the study, only positive reviews were used. Nevertheless, future research should investigate how negative reviews on Glassdoor.com influence organizational attraction in comparison to positive reviews, as well as positive and negative word-of-mouth.
A final limitation of this study is differences in previous participant experience with Glassdoor.com, which may have affected their perceptions of the source. In order to address this limitation, a description of Glassdoor.com was provided to participants in the Glassdoor condition prior to reading their vignette. Additional research can provide insight into whether previous exposure to Glassdoor can impact how effective this source may be in influencing organizational attraction.

An interesting area for future research would be to compare how current employee and former employee reviews impact organizational attraction. Additionally, differences in source credibility between the two types of reviewers could be examined. Another possible research direction would be examining how employer usage of the various Glassdoor functions, such as commenting on reviews or adding company images, affects applicant attraction.

In conclusion, the current study adds to the growing literature on company information sources and organizational attraction. Results suggest that information received from a Glassdoor review posted by a current anonymous employee does not lead to significantly higher levels of organizational attractiveness or job pursuit intentions than information received through a career counselor or employee testimonial. The source credibility analyses revealed that participants did not perceive significant differences in the level of expertise of the three sources. However, participants did find the career counselor to be a significantly more trustworthy source than the Glassdoor reviewer. Future research should examine how alternative information sources, such as former employee reviews on Glassdoor.com, may affect source credibility and organizational attraction.
References


General Instructions

Imagine that you are currently seeking a full-time job. One company in particular has caught your attention, and you are interested in learning more about it.

Instructions for Glassdoor Review Condition

You have turned to Glassdoor.com to learn more about the organization you are interested in working for. Glassdoor is a company review website where current and former employees can post reviews of employers, including benefits, salary, and their overall employment experience. Interviewees can also share reviews on the company’s interview process. Below is a review posted about the company on Glassdoor. This review is similar to several other positive reviews about the organization.

Glassdoor Review
“Excellent experience”

5 out of 5 stars

Current Employee – Anonymous Employee

Recommends

I have been working at BDH Corporation full-time (More than 3 years)

Pros
I have a lot of great things to say about this company. The company has a supportive culture. I really enjoy the people I work with; they are intelligent and motivated. I have good work-life balance. The company offers paid time off and a comprehensive benefits package. There are also many opportunities to advance in the company.

Cons
None

Instructions for Word-of-Mouth Condition

You have emailed a community career counselor to learn more about the organization you are interested in working for. Below is the counselor’s response to your inquiry.
**Word-of-Mouth Email**

Good afternoon,

Yes, several others I have counselled in the community have been working full-time at BDH Corporation for more than 3 years. These are the things I have heard about the company from them. They said that working for BDH Corporation has been an excellent experience, and had a lot of great things to say about the company. The company has a supportive culture. They said they really enjoy the people they work with; the staff is intelligent and motivated. They mentioned that they have a good work-life balance. They also said that BDH Corporation offers paid time off and a comprehensive benefits package. I also remember hearing that there are many opportunities to advance in the company. Overall, they recommended working for BDH Corporation.

Please let me know if you have any other questions.

-Jordan Morris, Career Counselor

**Instructions for the Employee Testimonial Condition**

You have turned to the company website to learn more about the organization you are interested in working for. Below is an employee testimonial that is featured on the organization’s homepage. This employee testimonial is similar to several others on the organization’s homepage.

**Employee Testimonial**

I have been working full-time at BDH Corporation for more than 3 years, and it has been an excellent experience. I have a lot of great things to say about this company. The company has a supportive culture. I really enjoy the people I work with; they are intelligent and motivated. I have a good work-life balance. The company offers paid time off and a comprehensive benefits package. There are also many opportunities to advance in the company. Overall, I would recommend working for BDH Corporation.

-Jordan Morris
Appendix B

Sources for Main Measures

The main measures are not reproduced for copyright reasons, but below are the relevant sources needed to obtain the organizational attraction and the source credibility scales.


Appendix C

Manipulation Check Item

What was the source of the company information you received?

- An email from a community career counselor
- A review posted by an anonymous current employee on Glassdoor.com
- A testimonial from a current employee
Appendix D

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

Highest Level of Education Completed
- Some high school
- High school diploma or GED equivalent
- Some college/Technical school
- Associate’s Degree
- Bachelor’s Degree
- Advanced Degree (E.g. Master’s, Ph.D.)

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

Have you 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

Were you familiar with Glassdoor.com prior to this study?*
- 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

MTurk Worker ID Number ____________________

* Only participants who received the Glassdoor condition received this item.
Appendix E

IRB Approval Letter

May 24, 2016

Kara Colley
6906 Roe St.
Cincinnati, OH 45227

Re: Protocol #15-086, The Effect of Company Information Source on Organizational Attraction

Dear Ms. Colley:

The IRB has reviewed the request to modify your study, referenced above. We understand that you will be collecting a second set of data using MTurk. We are able to continue to approve your study based on the information you provided. Therefore, your above-referenced study, as modified, continues to be approved in the Exempt category under Federal Guidelines 45CFR46.

Please note that if you wish to further modify your study, it will be necessary to obtain IRB approval prior to implementing the modification. If any adverse events occur, please notify the IRB immediately.

We truly appreciate your efforts and attention to compliance within the spirit of human subject’s protection. We wish you great success with your research.

Sincerely,

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

MEM/sb
Appendix F

MTurk Interface

I am conducting a study to examine perceptions of organizational attraction. You will be asked to read a short scenario and complete one short survey and demographic items, lasting no longer than 15 minutes. The study may be completed on any computer or tablet that has internet access. Please note that in order for you to be compensated, you will need to enter your compensation code in the box below once you have completed the study.

Please click the link located below to begin the survey. After you have completed the study, click the “Submit” button below.

Survey Link: [Qualtrics link will be added here]

Completion Code: [Box to enter Completion Code]

[SUBMIT BUTTON]
Appendix G

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a thesis project conducted by Kara Colley at Xavier University. The purpose of this study is to investigate perceptions of organizational attraction.

In this study, you will read a short scenario about a company. Then, you will be asked to complete a short scale and demographic items. The total time to complete this task should be no more than 15 minutes, but you will be allotted an hour to complete the study. You are expected to answer all required items in order to be compensated. Please pay attention and read all information carefully because if you fail either the attention check or the quality check, you will not be compensated.

You must be at least 18 years old and live in the United States to participate in this study. 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. Keep in mind if you do choose to withdraw, you will not be compensated. All your responses will be anonymous. You will receive a completion code after you complete the study. This code must be entered into the MTurk interface form in order for you to be compensated. Your Mturk Worker ID number that you will provide at the end of the study will only be used as a back-up for compensation purposes, and will be deleted prior to any analyses being performed and will not be included in the final data set. Moreover, the researchers will not be able to access any identifying information you provided to Amazon or MTurk.

If you complete all required items and pass the quality and attention checks, you will have $.25 compensated to your Amazon Mechanical Turk account. You may only take part in this study one time.

If you have any questions at any time during or after the study, you may contact the principal investigator, Kara Colley at colleyk@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 project and its risks and benefits, and I freely give my consent to participate in this study.
Appendix H

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in this research project. The purpose of the current study is to investigate the effect of information source on organizational attraction. You were randomly assigned to one of three conditions, representing three different sources (Glassdoor, word-of-mouth, and employee testimonial). The company, information sources, and information provided in this study are fictitious.

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, Kara Colley at colleyk@xavier.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Dalia Diab at diabd@xavier.edu.