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by
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Abstract

The purpose of this research was to examine the effect of the medium used to communicate employee testimonials on organizational attraction. Based on Media Richness Theory (MRT), participants’ perceptions of the amount of information conveyed by a medium were hypothesized to be highest for employee testimonials presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by employee testimonials presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by employee testimonials presented in the leanest medium (picture with text). Utilizing the same three conditions, it was also hypothesized that participants would find organizations more attractive when their employee testimonials were presented in a richer medium compared to a less rich medium. Data were collected from a sample of 156 participants, who were randomly assigned to one of the three conditions. Results showed that participants did not find organizations more attractive when their employee testimonials were presented in a richer medium compared to a less rich medium. Participants also did not perceive any differences in media richness among the three conditions. Therefore, the results from this study did not provide support for MRT. Practically, these findings suggest that organizations may have a higher return on investment by inserting text employee testimonials on their recruitment website instead of investing in videos of employee testimonials. Nevertheless, future research should replicate the current study to further examine the factors that influence media richness in the context of organizational attraction.
Chapter I

Review of the Literature

Successfully attracting talent is crucial for organizations to remain effective (Allen, Mahto, & Otundo, 2007). The manner in which organizations attract talent has changed with the introduction of new technologies. One of the most influential developments was the creation of the World Wide Web. Web-based recruitment provides benefits to organizations over traditional recruitment methods including employment brochures or newspaper advertisements (Cober, Brown, Keeping, & Levy, 2004). Subsequently, researchers have begun examining potential applicants’ perceptions of different characteristics of recruitment websites (Cober et al., 2004). However, few studies have focused on reactions to web-based employee testimonials (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a).

When implementing employee testimonials, organizations must choose the type of medium through which the employee testimonial is communicated. Whereas some recruitment websites display a picture of the employee with a text quote beside it, others utilize a video (Maagaard, 2014). The type of medium selected should impact the return on investment for the organization because the richer the medium is, the more expensive it will be to produce. Although the cost of video production is dependent on factors including quality, length, special effects, and number of locations, the range of typical production costs is $500-$10,000 per finished minute (Lee, 2015). This illustrates the
need to investigate if different media are equivalent in their influence on applicant reactions. If they are not equivalent, then organizations should allocate their resources to produce employee testimonials in the medium which will most effectively attract applicants.

The purpose of this research, therefore, is to examine the effect of the medium used for employee testimonials on applicant reactions, focusing on organizational attraction. A meta-analysis of various predictors with job and organizational attraction revealed that overall, organizational attraction was one of the most popular outcome measures in the recruiting literature (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). Therefore, it is important for organizations to understand which factors may enhance attraction. However, limited attention has been given to the medium used for employee testimonials in the organizational attraction literature (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a; Walker, Field, Giles, Armenakis, & Bernerth, 2009), but implications are important for web-based recruitment. If different results are found for the different media, organizations should be educated on the value of using a specific type of medium for web-based employee testimonials in the context of organizational attraction.

**Organizational Attraction**

Organizational attraction is a potential applicant’s subjective judgment on the appeal of an organization based upon prior schemas, observable job characteristics, and observable organization characteristics (Allen et al., 2007). Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2003) stated that this construct consists of three dimensions: general company attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige. General attractiveness captures the affective attitudes about the attractiveness of an organization as a potential
employer. The second dimension, intentions to pursue a job at an organization, takes into account the thoughts that imply future action toward an organization. Finally, company prestige considers the social consensus of a company, including its reputation, acceptance, status, and popularity. Although these dimensions are correlated, the three components are distinct (Highhouse et al., 2003). Applicant attraction is a term that is used interchangeably with organizational attraction in the literature. For the purpose of this paper, the two terms will be treated as synonymous.

A considerable amount of research has been conducted on applicant attraction, but Breaugh and Starke (2000) discuss three major topics that have received attention: recruitment sources, recruiters, and realistic job previews (RJPs). First, the influence of the source of information about the job or organization on applicant attraction has been extensively studied (e.g., Barber, 1998). Organizations have used a wide variety of sources to reach out to potential applicants including websites, newspapers, job boards, and employee referrals. Different recruitment methods may vary in their effectiveness. For example, employees who were referred by a current employee to a position at a bank were less likely to turnover compared to employees who responded to job advertisements (Gannon, 1971). Second, research has focused on how the recruiter impacted the attraction of an applicant to an organization (Chapman et al., 2005). Recruiters vary in their levels of informativeness, credibility, and personability. All three of these recruiter characteristics may change the perception an applicant has of an organization (Chapman et al., 2005). Finally, RJPs have been thoroughly examined by researchers (e.g., Breaugh, 2008). Providing RJPs allows for applicants who have a low person-organization fit to self-select out of the recruitment process and, therefore, those who
remain in the applicant pool may experience increased job satisfaction if hired (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). Meta-analytic research has shown that RJPs are related to increased job satisfaction when studies were conducted in a field setting (Phillips, 1998).

An applicant’s attraction to an organization may depend on the stage of the recruitment process (Barber, 1998). Specifically, Barber (1998) stated that there were three stages to attracting an applicant to an organization. The first stage involves attracting potential applicants to an organization. The second stage includes keeping applicants attracted to the organization. Finally, the last stage influences job offer acceptance. This research will focus on the first stage of applicant attraction, which may be the most important stage in the process. Without attracting potential applicants to a position in the first stage, the other two stages cannot occur. Additionally, if the first stage is managed poorly, this could result in less qualified candidates (Allen et al., 2007).

One way organizations can initially attract applicants is to develop an employment-related website (Cober, Brown, Blumental, Doverspike, & Levy, 2000). Within the past decade, organizations have dramatically increased their use of websites for recruitment purposes (SHRM Staffing Research, 2008). Cober et al. (2000) describe five major advantages of organizations utilizing their own website as a recruitment tool as opposed to other approaches. First, websites are low-cost compared to traditional recruitment strategies. Second, websites allow for the uniqueness of the organization to be highlighted, whereas information on job boards is typically presented in a generic format. Third, an online careers page presents information to the potential applicant which has been shown to be directly and positively related to favorable attitudes toward the organization and indirectly and positively related to higher job pursuit intentions.
EMPLOYEE TESTIMONIALS AND ORGANIZATIONAL ATTRACTION

(Allen et al., 2007). Fourth, websites can communicate corporate culture and potentially attract applicants who would fit within the organization (Braddy, Meade, Michael, & Fleenor, 2009). Finally, websites can be designed specifically for the organization and can allow applicants to directly apply online. Research on website recruitment has focused on characteristics such as navigational ease, aesthetics, and valence of the content (Cober et al., 2004). Although these factors are important to consider, more recent research has begun to investigate a larger variety of website features including the presentation of employee testimonials (Walker et al., 2009).

Researchers have explored two important factors that increase applicants’ initial attraction to organizations which are applicable to employment-related websites and employee testimonials: conveying unexpected information and including specific information (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). In order to attract applicants, recruiters have to grab the attention of an individual. Information about the job or organization that is unexpected to applicants will stand out (Breaugh & Starke, 2000). For example, although recent research has highlighted organizations’ use of employee testimonials (Maagaard, 2014), a decade ago, it was not the norm for organizations to provide employee testimonials in recruitment advertising (Ryan, Gubern, & Rodriguez, 2000; Cober et al., 2000). Given that employee testimonials can be considered a newer technique for recruitment, including this information should grab the attention of potential applicants by conveying unique information about the organization that is unexpected. Breaugh (2008) explicitly called for more research on attracting applicant attention. Providing more specific information has also been found to increase applicant attraction, but information is often presented to applicants in a very general format (Breaugh & Starke,
Hence, providing specific examples in employee testimonials may strengthen the relationship between employee testimonials and organizational attraction.

Relevant to attracting applicants on employment-related websites is signaling theory. Signaling theory has been applied to organizational attraction to explain the influence of information on applicant perceptions and decisions. For example, Celani and Singh (2011) proposed that lack of information about an organization will cause individuals to use other sources to make inferences about an organization. Both individual- and organizational-level signals have been found to influence applicant attraction (Celani & Singh, 2011). Individual-level signals involve cues from a singular person. A common example is an applicant who construed the characteristics of a recruiter as representative of the characteristics of the organization he or she represents (Braddy, Meade, & Kroustalis, 2006; Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Celani & Singh, 2011). Organizational-level signals come from a larger source like corporate branding (Celani & Singh, 2011). An organizational-level recruitment campaign could involve advertising through employee testimonials.

An organizational-level recruitment campaign including employee testimonials communicates information to applicants about the organization’s workplace (Maagaard, 2014). Chapman et al. (2005) found that the strongest relationship occurred between the perceived work environment and applicant attraction. This underscored that potential applicants considered their future work environment when determining how attracted they were to an organization. Therefore, highlighting positive characteristics associated with the work environment may increase attraction to the organization (Chapman et al., 2005). Employee testimonials are one tool that organizations can utilize in order to
effectively communicate positive information about the organization’s environment and quality of work life (Cober et al., 2000; Braddy et al., 2009).

**Employee Testimonials**

Maagaard (2014) defined an employee testimonial as “text by a first-person narrator, attributed to an employee and conveying first-hand experience of life as a member of an organization” (p. 23). Employee testimonials have both an overt and covert purpose. The overt purpose of employee testimonials is to provide information to potential applicants, whereas the covert purpose is to control the organizational image and actively counter negative publicity (Maagaard, 2014). Employee testimonials personify the organization through stories told by individual employees who represent the values and culture of an organization. Use of employee testimonials has increased in the last decade, with large Fortune 500 companies, such as Walmart and BP, utilizing them for strategic communication. They are typically displayed under the employment-related section of organizational websites and can vary in length and detail (Maagaard, 2014).

Although research on web-based employee testimonials is scarce, marketing researchers have built a foundation by researching product endorsers. Advertisements that incorporate an endorser have been found to lead to increased perceptions of credibility (Mittelstaedt, Riesz, & Burns, 1995). Similarly, web-based recruitment which includes employee endorsements of the company may influence perceived credibility. Job incumbents may represent credible information sources because they are closest to the work situation and are seen as being an informed source of job-related information. Fisher, Ilgen, and Hoyer (1979) found that a job incumbent was the most trusted source of information when compared to an on-campus recruiter, friend, or professor.
The few studies conducted with a focus on employee testimonials have demonstrated the added value to organizational websites (Braddy et al., 2009; Walker et al., 2009). Braddy et al. (2009) demonstrated that employee testimonials can be utilized to convey an organization’s culture to site visitors. Additionally, Walker et al. (2009) created a fictitious organizational website to manipulate the presence of employee testimonials. The inclusion of testimonials was positively related to the amount of time participants spent on the website, site attractiveness, organizational attraction, and perceived information credibility.

Once organizations decide to include employee testimonials on their website, they must choose the type of medium through which the employee testimonial will be communicated. Whereas some recruitment websites display a picture of the employee with a text quote beside it, others utilize a video (Maagaard, 2014). The choice of medium is important because it impacts the return on investment for the organization. Specifically, the richer the medium is, the more expensive it will be to produce (Lee, 2015). This illustrates the need to investigate if different media are equivalent in their influence on potential applicant reactions. Walker et al. (2009) examined two media of employee testimonials: video with audio and picture with text. One limitation of their study was the potential confounding effects of audio with visual cues. They suggested that future research include a “picture with audio” condition. Implementing Walker et al.’s suggestion, the current study will focus on three media to communicate employee testimonials: video with audio, picture with audio, and picture with text. In order to better understand the impact that these different media used to communicate employee
testimonials may have on organizational attraction, media richness theory should be discussed.

**Media Richness Theory**

Media richness theory (MRT) suggests that communication effectiveness depends on finding a fit between communication requirements and media capacities (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft, Lengel, & Trevino, 1987). Draft et al. (1987) described four criteria that determine the richness of media: feedback, multiple cues, language variety, and personal focus. Richer media allow for immediate feedback such as handling questions and making corrections. Additionally, richer media convey more cues in the message including physical presence, voice inflection, body gestures, words, numbers and graphic symbols. Language variety is the range of meaning that can be expressed by the media. Media can communicate through a wide variety of language from precise, factual symbols (e.g., numbers) to broad, abstract concepts (e.g., values). Media that effectively communicate broader ideas would be considered richer. Finally, richer media show a personal focus, which can convey personal feelings and emotions or can be modified to include the receiver’s frame of reference, needs, and current situation.

According to these afore-mentioned four criteria, Daft et al. (1987) considered face-to-face communication to be the richest communication medium. Face-to-face communication allows for quick feedback in order to clarify, rephrase, or adjust information. Additionally, a multitude of cues are conveyed during face-to-face communication, which allows for the message to include a high variety of language and easily incorporate emotions. The telephone medium is less rich than face-to-face communication because when communicating over the phone, individuals can only rely
on audio cues such as tone of voice. However, the telephone still allows for instant feedback, personal focus, and the use of language variety. Written communication, such as memos or letters, is lower in richness than the telephone. Although communication can still be personalized, feedback is slow and few cues are available. The least rich medium is a standard document, bulletin, or report. These have the same disadvantages as written communication, are likely to consist of numbers, and also lack personalization (Daft et al., 1987).

MRT argues that the purpose of communicating is to reduce uncertainty and equivocality in order to promote communication efficiency (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft et al., 1987). Uncertainty is a lack of information. Media assist to reduce uncertainty by communicating a sufficient amount of information. Employee testimonials reduce uncertainty by having a job incumbent provide job-relevant information to applicants (Maagaard, 2014). Equivocality is the presence of multiple and conflicting interpretations of an ambiguous organizational situation. Media help in managing equivocality by facilitating the processing of rich information. As discussed above, various types of media differ in their capability to convey richer information (Daft et al., 1987). Employee testimonials often communicate potentially abstract concepts such as values and culture (Braddy et al., 2009). Communication effectiveness depends on finding a match between the requirements of the message and media capacities (Daft et al., 1987). This implies that if employee testimonials are presented in a richer medium, they should be communicating abstract information and reducing uncertainty. Only a richer medium will have the ability to communicate the organization’s message effectively because of the increased number of social cues, variety of language, feedback, and personal focus.
Although MRT indicates that media differ in their ability to reduce uncertainty and equivocality, research has just begun to consider these effects in a recruitment context. Cable and Yu (2006) examined how different media can be used by organizations to communicate a strategic image during recruitment. Results indicated that different media possess differing levels of richness and credibility to job seekers. Specifically, company websites were perceived as a richer medium and were more credible than electronic bulletin boards. Results also showed that perceptions of richness and credibility made job seekers’ image perceptions more in line with the image the organization intended to project.

Focusing specifically on organizational attraction, Walker et al. (2009) investigated reactions of participants to employee testimonials on recruitment websites. They manipulated the presence of employee testimonials and the richness of the medium used to communicate the employee testimonial (i.e., picture with text compared to video with audio). Participants reported higher levels of organizational attraction and perceived information credibility to an organization when the employee testimonial was presented in the video condition compared to the text condition. Based on Walker et al.’s call for future research to incorporate a “picture with audio” condition, the current study will focus on three media conditions of employee testimonials: video with audio, picture with audio, and picture with text.

Within these three combinations, the media only vary in the number of cues conveyed. These combinations of media are equivalent in their ability to give instant feedback, vary the amount of language, and show a personal focus. Accordingly, this research will focus solely on the perceived difference of the number of cues among the
different media through which employee testimonials are communicated. “Video with audio” should be considered the richest medium because it includes the most visual cues such as physical presence and body gestures. “Picture with audio” has fewer visual cues and therefore should be a leaner medium. Viewers must rely more heavily on audio cues, such as voice inflection, to convey information. Finally, “picture with text” should be the least rich medium because it provides the lowest number of cues. Along with a picture providing fewer visual cues than video, audio cues are also not available when the medium used is “picture with text.”

The purpose of this study is to investigate if the medium used to communicate employee testimonials will have a significant effect on organizational attraction. There are several ways that the current study extends previous research. First, only the employee testimonials from the hypothetical organization will be included in this study. Previous studies presented the employee testimonials as one of several features of an organizational website (Walker et al., 2009; Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). This research will only include the employee testimonials to control for the influence of other website characteristics such as navigational ease and aesthetics. Second, rather than utilizing a student sample (Walker et al., 2009), the current study will utilize Amazon’s Mechanical Turk (MTurk) to collect a more demographically diverse and representative sample (Barger, Behrend, Sharek, & Sinar, 2011). Finally, previous studies have typically relied on actors with scripts to create their conditions (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a; Walker et al., 2009). However, this research will present authentic, unscripted employee testimonials that were recorded by a real organization for recruitment purposes.
Chapter II

Rationale and Hypotheses

As previously discussed, it is important for organizations to understand how reactions to employee testimonials are affected by the type of medium through which the employee testimonials are communicated. According to MRT, the purpose of communicating is to reduce uncertainty and equivocality in order to promote communication efficiency (Daft et al., 1987). Media differ in their ability to reduce uncertainty and equivocality based on their ability to give feedback, display multiple cues, employ language variety, and show a personal focus (Daft et al., 1987). However, it is important to note that the conditions in this research only vary by the number of cues displayed. Specifically, “video with audio” should be perceived as the richest medium because it includes the most visual cues such as physical presence and body gestures. “Picture with audio” has fewer visual cues and therefore should be considered a leaner medium. Viewers must rely more heavily on audio cues, such as voice inflection, to convey information. Finally, “picture with text” should be perceived as the least rich medium because it provides the lowest number of cues. Along with pictures providing fewer visual cues than video, audio cues are not available.

MRT suggests that communication effectiveness depends on finding a fit between communication requirements and media capacities (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft et al., 1987). Employee testimonials communicate abstract information and reduce uncertainty.
Therefore, organizations must select a medium that has the ability to communicate the organization’s information effectively. Walker et al. (2009) showed that participants reported higher levels of organizational attraction when employee testimonials were delivered in a richer medium (i.e., video with audio) compared to a leaner medium (i.e., picture with text). Based on the overview of the literature on employee testimonials and MRT, the following is hypothesized:

**Hypothesis 1a:** There will be a significant effect of type of medium on perceived general company attractiveness, such that attractiveness will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).

**Hypothesis 1b:** There will be a significant effect of type of medium on job pursuit intentions, such that intentions will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).

**Hypothesis 1c:** There will be a significant effect of type of medium on company prestige, such that prestige will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).
followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).

Cable and Yu (2006) demonstrated how different media possess differing levels of richness to job seekers. Specifically, company websites were perceived as a richer medium than electronic bulletin boards. In order to check the manipulation of the current study, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant effect of type of medium on its perceived ability to transmit information, such that perceptions will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).
Chapter III

Method

Participants

Amazon’s MTurk was utilized to recruit participants. Participants were required to reside within the United States to prevent cultural norms and values from being a potentially confounding variable. The current study employed a single-factor three-level between-subjects design. Research materials were accessible for participants through Qualtrics. To participate in the study, MTurk users must have had a minimum of 50 human intelligence tasks (HITs) completed, with a minimum 95% HIT approval rate. Barger et al. (2011) compared MTurk data to other samples and found participants to be more demographically diverse and the data to be equally as reliable. Data were collected from 161 participants. Five participants failed the quality check and were not paid for their participation in the study. Data from these five participants were deleted and not included in the analyses. Therefore, a total of 156 participants were included in the final sample. The final groups had 57 participants in the “picture with text” condition, 49 participants in the “picture with audio” condition, and 50 participants in the “video” condition. The average age of participants was 37.71 ($SD = 11.50$). Please refer to Table 1 for the demographics of the final sample.
Table 1

*Demographics of Sample*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Total</th>
<th>%</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Race</strong></td>
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<tr>
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<td>Hispanic or Latino</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identified with another race</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1.9</td>
</tr>
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*Note. N = 156.*
Materials and Measures

Conditions. Prior to viewing their randomly-assigned condition, participants were presented with an introductory paragraph about a fictitious organization that was currently hiring (see Appendix A). After reading the introduction, participants viewed employee testimonials from the hypothetical organization. There were three conditions manipulating the medium through which the employee testimonial was communicated: video with audio, picture with audio, and picture with text. All information presented in the conditions was identical, except for the type of medium utilized. One group of participants viewed employee testimonials communicated through video with audio. A second group of participants viewed employee testimonials communicated through picture with audio. The final condition had participants view employee testimonials communicated through picture with text. A copy of the text of the employee testimonials is included in Appendix B.

Organizational attraction. Organizational attraction was evaluated using the three dimensions of organizational attraction described by Highhouse et al. (2003): general attractiveness, intentions to pursue, and company prestige. All three subscales have five items rated using a 5-point response scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. A sample item from the general attractiveness scale is “This company is attractive to me as a place of employment.” A sample item from the job pursuit intentions scale is “I would accept a job offer from this company.” A sample item from the company prestige scale is “This company probably has a reputation as being an excellent employer.” When Highhouse et al. evaluated the subscales, they found Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of $\alpha =.88$, $\alpha =.82$, and $\alpha =.83$ for general attractiveness, job
pursuit intentions, and company prestige, respectively. In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of $\alpha = .85$, $\alpha = .88$, and $\alpha = .90$ were found for general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige, respectively. For the reference needed to obtain the entire scale, please see Appendix C.

**Amount of information conveyed by medium.** Participants’ perceptions of the amount of information conveyed by a medium were assessed utilizing one item: “The way the testimonial was presented has the potential to convey lots of types of information.” This item was rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*.

**Adjectives scale.** In order to collect further information about participants’ responses to the different mediums, an adjectives scale was constructed for exploratory purposes. Participants were asked to determine whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective described the medium they viewed. The question stem “The testimonials that I viewed were…” was followed by several adjectives: compelling, interesting, lifeless, engaging, attention grabbing, and boring. These items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The items *lifeless* and *boring* were reversed-scored prior to computing an overall scale score. In the present study, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .89$ was found for this scale.

**Perceived credibility.** Perceived credibility was included for exploratory purposes and measured by a six-item scale adapted from McCroskey and Young’s scale (as cited in Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004), focusing on the credibility of the source. A sample item from this scale is “The testimonial was believable.” The perceived
credibility scale had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .88$. Please see Appendix D for the reference needed to obtain this scale.

**Demographics.** Several demographic variables were collected during the study, such as age, gender, and race. All demographic items are presented in Appendix E.

**Manipulation and quality checks.** Participants were assessed to gauge if they recognized the manipulation, or the medium through which the employee testimonial was communicated, expressed in the condition presented to them. They were tested using the following item: “Please select the type of medium you viewed when learning from current Pearson Pipe Products employees.” The three conditions were listed below the statement (i.e., video, picture with audio, and picture with text). The manipulation check was examined in an exploratory manner. Therefore, participants were paid even if they failed this check. One quality check was also included to ensure that participants were paying attention. This item asked participants to select *strongly agree*, and was administered after the first 10 items of the organizational attraction scale. Participants were only compensated $0.50 for participation in the study if they passed the quality check.

**Procedure**

Before the study was conducted, approval was obtained by submitting an application to Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F). Participants were recruited through MTurk. Recruitment information that was displayed as part of the MTurk user interface is included as Appendix G. Once users accepted the HIT, they were able to access the online survey. First, they viewed the informed consent form (see Appendix H). If users agreed to participate in this study, they received an
introductory paragraph about a hypothetical organization. Then, they were randomly assigned to one of three conditions: employee testimonials communicated through video with audio, employee testimonials communicated through picture with audio, or employee testimonials communicated through picture with text. After viewing the condition, participants were directed to a separate page to complete the organizational attraction measure, which included the quality check. Participants were then asked to complete a measure assessing perceived credibility followed by the amount of information item and the adjectives describing the medium item. Then, they completed the manipulation check item, followed by the demographic items. Finally, after submitting their responses, participants were directed to the debriefing form (see Appendix I). Participants who passed the quality check in the organizational attraction scale and who answered all required questions were compensated $.50 for participation. The final data set was secured on password-protected computers and is only accessible to the researcher and her thesis advisor.
Chapter IV

Results

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c were tested by conducting three one-way between-subjects analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to examine the effect of type of medium on each of the three subscales of the organizational attraction measure: general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige. Because these three subscales were highly correlated in this study (please see Table 2), three separate ANOVAs were conducted instead of one multivariate analysis of variance. Results indicated that participants who viewed employee testimonials in the different mediums did not report significantly different levels of perceived general attractiveness, $F(2,153) = 1.29, p = .278, \eta^2 = .02$; job pursuit intentions, $F(2,153) = 2.73, p = .069, \eta^2 = .03$; or company prestige, $F(2,153) = 3.03, p = .051, \eta^2 = .03$. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported. However, it should be noted that when only the picture with text and video conditions were compared, results showed a significant difference in perceived prestige, $t(105) = 2.57, p = .012$. Please see Table 3 for the means and standard deviations by condition.

In order to test Hypothesis 2, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was run examining the effect of type of medium presented to participants on their perceived amount of information conveyed by the medium. Results suggested that participants did not perceive the different types of medium as conveying different levels of information,
Table 2

*Correlations among the Organizational Attraction Dimensions, Credibility, and Adjectives Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. General Attractiveness</td>
<td>4.05</td>
<td>0.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Job Pursuit Intentions</td>
<td>4.00</td>
<td>0.71</td>
<td>.87</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Company Prestige</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.66</td>
<td>.71</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Credibility</td>
<td>3.62</td>
<td>0.80</td>
<td>.52</td>
<td>.50</td>
<td>.46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Adjectives</td>
<td>3.80</td>
<td>0.75</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All correlations are statistically significant, *p* < .001.
Table 3

Means and Standard Deviations for the Primary Variables by Condition

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Picture with Text</th>
<th>Picture with Audio</th>
<th>Video</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>M</td>
<td>SD</td>
<td>M</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Attractiveness</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>0.63</td>
<td>3.96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job Pursuit Intentions</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>3.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company Prestige</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>0.53</td>
<td>4.19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Credibility</td>
<td>3.57</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Amount of Information</td>
<td>3.74</td>
<td>0.79</td>
<td>3.51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adjectives</td>
<td>4.04</td>
<td>0.62</td>
<td>3.69</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note.* All scales range from 1 (*Strong Disagree*) to 5 (*Strongly Agree*).
Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, suggesting that participants may not have perceived any differences in media richness among the three conditions.

Exploratory analyses were also conducted. First, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was run to assess the effect of medium on perceived credibility. Results indicated that participants who viewed employee testimonials in the different mediums did not report significantly different levels of perceived credibility, $F(2, 153) = 0.36, p = .698, \eta^2 = .01$. In addition, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was run to assess the effect of the medium on the adjectives used to describe the employee testimonials. Participants indicated whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective (i.e., compelling, interesting, lifeless, engaging, attention grabbing, and boring) described the medium they viewed. The purpose of including these adjectives was to measure to what degree participants were captivated by the testimonials. Given that results were significant, $F(2,153) = 4.80, p = .010, \eta^2 = .06$, post-hoc comparisons using Tukey’s Honestly Significant Difference (HSD) procedure were conducted. Findings indicated that the means were significantly different between the picture with text condition and the picture with audio condition ($p = .038$), as well as between the picture with text condition and the video condition ($p = .016$), but there was no significant difference between the picture with audio condition and the video condition ($p = .953$). Please see Table 3 for the means and standard deviations by condition.

The manipulation check was investigated in an exploratory manner by examining the number of people who correctly identified their condition. Of the 57 participants who viewed the picture with text condition, 56 successfully responded that they viewed the
picture with text condition, and 1 participant reported viewing the video condition. For the 49 participants who received the picture with audio condition, 39 participants reported the appropriate condition, whereas 10 participants responded that they viewed the video condition. All 50 participants who viewed the video condition reported viewing the correct condition.
Chapter V

Discussion

Limited attention has been given to the medium used for employee testimonials in the organizational attraction literature (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a; Walker et al., 2009), but implications are important for organizations’ web-based recruitment strategy. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the medium used for employee testimonials (i.e., picture with text, picture with audio, video with audio) on applicant reactions, focusing on general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige.

Based on MRT, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant effect of the type of medium on organizational attraction such that attraction would be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials were presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials were presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials were presented in the leanest medium (picture with text). However, findings did not provide support for Hypothesis 1. Results indicated that participants who viewed employee testimonials in the different mediums did not report significantly different levels of perceived general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, or company prestige.

In order to check the manipulation of the independent variable and to provide further support for MRT, Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be a significant effect of
type of medium on its perceived ability to transmit information, such that perceptions
would be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials were presented in the
richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee
testimonials were presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by
those whose employee testimonials were presented in the leanest medium (picture with
text). Hypothesis 2 was also not supported. This implies that participants may not have
perceived any differences in media richness among the three conditions, which might
help explain why Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Exploratory analyses were conducted to try to shed some light on these results.
The current study included an adjectives scale which instructed participants to indicate
whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective (i.e., compelling, interesting,
lifeless, engaging, attention grabbing, and boring) described the medium they viewed.
This scale was included as a way to capture to what degree participants were captivated
by the employee testimonials they viewed. Surprisingly, means were significantly
different between the picture with text condition and the picture with audio condition, as
well as between the picture with text condition and the video condition, such that
participants perceived the picture with text condition to be more captivating than the
other two conditions. Moreover, there was no significant difference between the picture
with audio condition and the video condition.

To further explore the adjectives scale, each adjective was also considered
individually. One-way between-subjects ANOVAs were run to assess the effect of
medium on the responses for each adjective. Results for compelling, interesting, and
lifeless were not significant, but results were significant for engaging, attention grabbing,
and boring: $F(2,153) = 4.20, p = .017, \eta^2 = .05$; $F(2,153) = 11.92, p < .001, \eta^2 = .14$; $F(2,153) = 3.61, p = .029, \eta^2 = .05$. Subsequently, post-hoc comparisons using Tukey’s HSD procedure were conducted for these three adjectives. For engaging, means were only significantly different between the picture with text condition and video condition ($p = .016$). For attention grabbing, means were significantly different between the picture with text condition and the picture with audio condition ($p < .001$), as well as between the picture with text condition and the video condition ($p < .001$), but there was no significant difference between the picture with audio condition and the video condition ($p = .865$). For boring, means were only significantly different between the picture with text condition and video condition ($p = .022$).

It should be noted that out of the 49 participants who viewed the picture with audio condition, 10 participants responded that they viewed the video condition. Similar to the video condition, the picture with audio condition required the participants to press “play” in order to hear the audio. The resemblance between these two conditions may explain why the 10 individuals in the picture with audio condition reported that they received the video condition and may provide some insight into why there were no significant differences between these two conditions. Overall, these findings suggest that the picture with text condition was the most attention grabbing and engaging for participants, and perceptions did not significantly differ between the picture with audio condition and the video condition.

**Theoretical and Practical Implications**

The lack of support for both Hypotheses 1 and 2 leads to several important implications for both researchers and practitioners. Participants did not find organizations
more attractive when their employee testimonials were presented in a theoretically richer medium compared to a less rich medium. From a practical standpoint, the important takeaway for organizations is producing a video of employee testimonials may not be worth the substantial investment. As the range of typical video production costs is $500-$10,000 per finished minute (Lee, 2015), organizations may have a higher return on investment by simply inserting text employee testimonials on their recruitment website.

Interestingly, findings suggested that participants did not perceive any differences in media richness among the three conditions. Therefore, theoretically, MRT was not supported by the results of this study. Communication effectiveness depends on finding a match between the requirements of the message and media capacities (Daft et al., 1987). Employee testimonials were argued to convey abstract information, such as organizational values, which would require a richer medium in order to communicate the organization’s message effectively. However, the results of this study suggest that the text condition may be sufficient for the message of these employee testimonials. Utilizing audio and video features may be considered to be excessive by viewers.

Although this seems surprising, previous research has also found evidence against various components of MRT (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). Most relevant to the current study, Allen et al. (2004) presented a recruitment message from a military organization to participants in four different conditions (i.e., face-to-face communication, video, audio, and text) and did not find support for a strict hierarchy of media richness. The face-to-face condition should have been considered the richest medium based on the amount of information conveyed, the ability for two-way communication, personal focus, and social presence. However, the text condition was rated higher than the face-to-face condition
and audio condition on several dimensions of media richness. Therefore, future research should continue to investigate participants’ perceptions of media richness to determine what factors affect people’s perceptions of media richness.

As previously mentioned, for exploratory purposes, the current study included an adjectives scale which instructed participants to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective (i.e., compelling, interesting, lifeless, engaging, attention grabbing, and boring) described the medium they viewed. Interestingly, the adjectives were rated significantly higher for the picture with text condition than both the picture with audio condition and the video condition. There was also not a significant difference between the picture with audio and video conditions. Surprisingly, this indicates that the picture with text condition was the most captivating for participants to view.

Moreover, three of the adjectives were significant when considered individually. The means for the engaging adjective were significantly different between the picture with text condition and video condition. For attention grabbing, means were significantly different between the picture with text condition and the picture with audio condition, as well as between the picture with text condition and the video condition; however, there was no significant difference between the picture with audio condition and the video condition. Finally, the means for the boring adjective were significantly different between the picture with text condition and video condition. These findings indicate that the picture with text condition was considered to be more attention grabbing and interesting by participants, especially when compared to the video condition.
One explanation for this finding is that participants who viewed the picture with text condition were exposed to the employee testimonials without having to press play to hear them, and therefore, it is possible that participants did not listen to the employee testimonials in either the picture with audio condition or the video condition. However, participants were warned that they would be asked one or more factual questions based on the content and may not be paid for participation if they answered those items incorrectly. With such a warning presented, participants should have been motivated to pay attention. Moreover, the sample had a low rejection rate of only 3% of participants failing the quality check, and these participants were not included in the analyses. This further indicates that participants reviewed the materials in the study. Additionally, research has suggested that MTurk users provide an equally reliable source of data compared to other samples (Barger et al., 2011; Feitosa, Joseph, & Newman, 2015; Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010). Therefore, the notion that participants may have not listened to or watched the employee testimonials in the audio and video conditions seems to be an unlikely interpretation of these results.

Another explanation is that text may require more attention on an organization’s webpage than multimedia. This is supported by the means for the attention grabbing adjective being significantly different between the picture with text condition and the picture with audio condition, as well as between the picture with text condition and the video condition. It is possible that reading text requires more attention and cognitive activity than passively listening to the information in the picture with audio and video conditions. One interpretation of this finding is that because participants may have exerted more effort to process the employee testimonials provided in the text condition
than in the other two conditions, this may have caused them to find more value in this information.

Allen, Biggane, Pitts, Ontono and Van Scotter (2013) investigated job seekers’ visual attention and perceptions when viewing an organization’s website. By utilizing eye-tracking equipment to collect information on eye movements and fixations, participants focused on text first, most often, and the longest compared to images. Additionally, positive pupil diameter changes occurred significantly more when participants looked at text compared to images. Therefore, the Allen et al. study suggests that individuals paid more visual attention to text than graphic images. For organizations, this indicates that graphic images may be less important than the content of the text on a recruitment webpage. Hence, an organization’s resources may be better allocated for developing the message of the web-based employee testimonials rather than the medium through which the message is communicated. In the current study, for the picture with audio condition and the video condition, no text was included other than the organization’s name. Future research that investigates audio and video features can potentially include subtitles which may grab and require the attention of participants.

**Study Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The current study is not without limitations. One limitation is the use of a hypothetical organization. Although effort was exerted to make the organization description as realistic as possible, hypothetical scenarios often do not reflect real-world situations which may lower the external validity of the study’s findings. However, in a real-world situation, the researcher’s control is minimized because factors other than what the researcher intends to investigate may influence the results of the study. For
example, if employee testimonials from a real organization are utilized, participants may use prior information they have about the organization when evaluating their attraction to the organization. In order to draw stronger conclusions from this research and to enhance the internal validity of the results, a high level of control was maintained by using a hypothetical organization. Moreover, although the organization used was hypothetical, the employee testimonials were not. The authenticity of the employee testimonials should enhance the external validity of this study’s findings.

Although the internal validity of this study’s findings was also increased by minimizing differences among the three conditions, this consistency among the conditions lowers the external validity of the results. Specifically, the video condition presented the employee testimonials without any animation or graphics in order to keep the condition similar to the picture with audio and picture with text conditions. An employee testimonial video on an authentic recruitment website would typically include more of these features. Therefore, the testimonials in the video condition may have not been perceived as high-quality videos, which may have also lowered participants’ perceptions of company prestige. As previously mentioned, results suggested that the company was perceived as more prestigious in the text condition than in the video condition. Future research should include more realistic videos of employee testimonials to investigate how other multimedia features could influence organizational attraction.

Another limitation is collecting data online using MTurk participants. When studies are conducted online, participants can take the survey in any environment with internet access, where numerous external factors in their test-taking environment may influence their responses. Additionally, given that MTurk users are typically
compensated based on the number of studies they complete, they may be motivated to complete the study as quickly as possible. However, in an effort to enhance the quality of the data obtained, quality checks were included to ensure that participants were paying attention. The sample characteristics are also a limitation. For example, because the majority of the participants were White, this sample may not be representative of the US population. Finally, there is no way to confirm if participants met all the inclusion criteria set in this study. For example, one of the criteria was residence in the United States, but MTurk participants could have misrepresented themselves when setting up their account. Feitosa, Joseph, and Newman (2015) estimated that with restrictive geographical sample settings for a study, 5% to 10% of MTurk users may still be taking the survey outside of the United States. Despite this limitation, research has suggested that MTurk samples are demographically diverse and as reliable as traditional samples (Barger et al., 2011; Paolacci et al., 2010).

One final limitation of this research is that the use of authentic, unscripted employee testimonials does not allow for the message to be manipulated. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) manipulated the recruitment message of employee testimonials as being framed toward the organization or individual. Messages oriented toward the organization described the organization as a whole, whereas messages oriented toward the individual described the individuals working for the organization. When employee testimonials were framed toward the individual rather than the organization, organizational attraction was higher. In the current study, the majority of the employee testimonials referenced the organization (e.g., organizational values, the working environment). Future research
should include testimonials that are framed toward the individual because they may increase organizational attraction.

As previously mentioned, future research should also continue to measure participants’ perceptions of media richness to determine what factors influence people’s perceptions of media richness. In the current study, only one component of MRT (i.e., amount of information conveyed) was included. Future research should test all facets of MRT. Another avenue for future research includes incorporating different technologies to further understand how participants are engaging with web-based research materials. For example, Allen et al. (2013) employed eye tracking and pupil dilation software in order to examine the visual attention of participants when viewing company websites. Although this equipment can be difficult to integrate into a study, it allows researchers to gain insight into the physical behaviors leading to organizational attraction. Moreover, there are other metrics that can be investigated in order to help assess organizational attraction. For example, click-through rates for certain types of media on organizational websites, such as video employee testimonials, should aid researchers in understanding how interested applicants are in these recruitment techniques. As these types of technologies continue to advance, future research can employ them to improve our field’s current understanding of MRT, employee testimonials, and organizational attraction.

**Conclusions**

In conclusion, participants did not find organizations more attractive when their employee testimonials were presented in a theoretically richer medium compared to a less rich medium. However, findings revealed that participants did not perceive any differences in media richness among the three conditions. Therefore, the findings from
this study did not provide support for MRT. From a practical standpoint, these results suggest that producing a video of employee testimonials may not be worth a company’s time and resources. Nevertheless, future research should replicate the current study to further understand the factors that influence media richness in the context of organizational attraction.
Chapter VI

Summary

Successfully attracting talent is crucial for organizations to remain effective (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007). Researchers have begun examining potential applicants’ perceptions of different characteristics of recruitment websites (Cober et al., 2004). However, few studies have focused on reactions to web-based employee testimonials (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a). When implementing employee testimonials, organizations must choose the type of medium through which the employee testimonial is communicated. Whereas some recruitment websites display a picture of the employee with a text quote beside it, others utilize a video (Maagaard, 2014).

The type of medium selected should impact the return on investment for the organization because the richer the medium is, the more expensive it will be to produce. Although the cost of video production is dependent on factors including quality, length, special effects, and number of locations, the range of typical production costs is $500-$10,000 per finished minute (Lee, 2015). This illustrates the need to investigate if different media are equivalent in their influence on applicant reactions. If they are not equivalent, then organizations should allocate their resources to produce employee testimonials in the medium which will most effectively attract applicants. The purpose of this research, therefore, is to examine the effect of the medium used for employee testimonials on applicant reactions, focusing on organizational attraction.
MRT suggests that communication effectiveness depends on finding a fit between communication requirements and media capacities (Daft & Lengel, 1986; Daft et al., 1987). Employee testimonials communicate abstract information and reduce uncertainty. Therefore, organizations must select a medium that has the ability to communicate the organization’s information effectively. Walker et al. (2009) showed that participants reported higher levels of organizational attraction when employee testimonials were delivered in a richer medium (i.e., video with audio) compared to a leaner medium (i.e., picture with text). Based on the literature on employee testimonials and MRT, the following is hypothesized:

**Hypothesis 1a:** There will be a significant effect of type of medium on perceived general company attractiveness, such that attractiveness will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).

**Hypothesis 1b:** There will be a significant effect of type of medium on job pursuit intentions, such that intentions will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).

**Hypothesis 1c:** There will be a significant effect of type of medium on company prestige, such that prestige will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are
presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).

Cable and Yu (2006) demonstrated how different media possess differing levels of richness to job seekers. Specifically, company websites were perceived as a richer medium than electronic bulletin boards. In order to check the manipulation of the current study, the following is hypothesized:

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant effect of type of medium on its perceived ability to transmit information, such that perceptions will be highest for organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in the richest medium (video with audio), followed by organizations whose employee testimonials are presented in a more lean medium (picture with audio), followed by those whose employee testimonials are presented in the leanest medium (picture with text).

Method

Participants

Amazon’s MTurk was utilized to recruit participants. Research materials were accessible for participants through Qualtrics. To participate in the study, MTurk users must have had a minimum of 50 human intelligence tasks (HITs) completed, with a minimum 95% HIT approval rate, and reside within the United States. A total of 156 participants were included in the final sample (see Table 1). The final groups had 57 participants in the “picture with text” condition, 49 participants in the “picture with audio” condition, and 50 participants in the “video” condition. Participants who passed
the quality check and answered all required questions were compensated $.50 for participation.

Materials and Measures

Conditions. After reading an introductory paragraph about a fictitious organization, participants viewed employee testimonials from the hypothetical organization in one of three conditions: video with audio, picture with audio, and picture with text. All information presented in the conditions was identical, except for the type of medium presented (see Appendices A and B).

Organizational attraction. Organizational attraction was evaluated using the three dimensions of organizational attraction described by Highhouse et al. (2003): general attractiveness, intentions to pursue, and company prestige (see Appendix C). All three subscales have five items rated using a 5-point response scale ranging from 1= strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. A sample item from the general attractiveness scale is “This company is attractive to me as a place of employment.” A sample item from the job pursuit intentions scale is “I would accept a job offer from this company.” A sample item from the company prestige scale is “This company probably has a reputation as being an excellent employer.” In the current study, Cronbach’s alpha coefficients of $\alpha = .85$, $\alpha = .88$, and $\alpha = .90$ were found for general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige, respectively.

Amount of information conveyed by medium. Participants’ perceptions of the amount of information conveyed by a medium were assessed utilizing one item: “The way the testimonial was presented has the potential to convey lots of types of
information.” This item was rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree.

**Adjectives scale.** For exploratory purposes, participants were asked to determine whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective described the medium they viewed. The question stem “The testimonials that I viewed were…” was followed by: compelling, interesting, lifeless, engaging, attention grabbing, and boring. These items were rated on a 5-point response scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. In this study, a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .89$ was found for this scale.

**Perceived credibility.** Perceived credibility was included for exploratory purposes and measured by a six-item scale adapted from McCroskey and Young’s scale (as cited in Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004), focusing on the credibility of the source (see Appendix D). A sample item from this scale is “The testimonial was believable.” The perceived credibility scale had a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of $\alpha = .88$.

**Demographics.** Several demographic variables were collected during the study including age, gender, race, and highest level of education (see Appendix E).

**Manipulation and quality checks.** Participants were assessed to gauge if they recognized the manipulation, or the medium through which the employee testimonial was communicated, expressed in the condition presented to them. They were tested using the following item: “Please select the type of medium you viewed when learning from current Pearson Pipe Products employees.” The three conditions were listed below the statement (i.e., video, picture with audio, and picture with text). The manipulation check was examined in an exploratory manner. Therefore, participants were paid even if they failed this check. One quality check was also included to ensure that participants were
paying attention. This item asked participants to select *strongly agree*, and was administered after the first 10 items of the organizational attraction scale.

**Procedure**

Approval was obtained from Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board (see Appendix F). Participants were recruited through MTurk (see Appendix G). After accepting the HIT and viewing the informed consent form (see Appendix H), participants received an introductory paragraph about a hypothetical organization. Then, they were randomly assigned to view employee testimonials communicated in one of three conditions: video with audio, picture with audio, or picture with text. After viewing the condition, participants were directed to a separate page to complete the organizational attraction measure, which included the quality check. Participants were then asked to complete a measure assessing perceived credibility followed by the amount of information item and the adjectives describing the medium item. Finally, they completed the manipulation check item, followed by the demographic items. After submitting their responses, participants were directed to the debriefing form (see Appendix I).

**Results**

Hypotheses 1a, 1b, and 1c were tested by conducting three one-way between-subjects analyses of variance (ANOVAs) to examine the effect of type of medium on each of the three subscales of the organizational attraction measure: general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige (see Tables 2 and 3). Results indicated that participants who viewed employee testimonials in the different mediums did not report significantly different levels of perceived general attractiveness, $F(2,153) = 1.29, p = .278, \eta^2 = .02$; job pursuit intentions, $F(2,153) = 2.73, p = .069, \eta^2 = .03$; or
company prestige, $F(2, 153) = 3.03$, $p = .051$, $\eta^2 = .03$. Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

In order to test Hypothesis 2, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was run examining the effect of type of medium presented to participants on their perceived amount of information conveyed by the medium. Results suggested that participants did not perceive the different types of medium as conveying different levels of information, $F(2, 153) = 1.07$, $p = .345$, $\eta^2 = .01$. Therefore, Hypothesis 2 was not supported, suggesting that participants may have not perceived any differences in media richness among the three conditions.

Exploratory analyses were also conducted. First, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was run to assess the effect of medium on perceived credibility. Results indicated that participants who viewed employee testimonials in the different mediums did not report significantly different levels of perceived credibility, $F(2, 153) = 0.36$, $p = .698$, $\eta^2 = .01$. In addition, a one-way between-subjects ANOVA was run to assess the effect of the medium on the adjectives used to describe the employee testimonials. Participants indicated whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective (i.e., compelling, interesting, lifeless, engaging, attention grabbing, and boring) described the medium they viewed. Given that results were significant, $F(2, 153) = 4.80$, $p = .010$, $\eta^2 = .06$, post-hoc comparisons using Tukey’s Honestly Significant Difference procedure were conducted. Findings indicated that the means were significantly different between the picture with text condition and the picture with audio condition ($p = .038$), as well as between the picture with text condition and the video condition ($p = .016$), but there was
no significant difference between the picture with audio condition and the video condition \( (p = .953) \).

The manipulation check was investigated in an exploratory manner by examining the number of people who correctly identified their condition. Of the 57 participants who viewed the picture with text condition, 56 successfully responded that they viewed the picture with text condition, and 1 participant reported viewing the video condition. For the 49 participants who received the picture with audio condition, 39 participants reported the appropriate condition, whereas 10 participants responded that they viewed the video condition. All 50 participants who viewed the video condition reported viewing the correct condition.

**Discussion**

Limited attention has been given to the medium used for employee testimonials in the organizational attraction literature (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007a; Walker et al., 2009), but implications are important for organizations’ web-based recruitment strategy. The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of the medium used for employee testimonials (i.e., picture with text, picture with audio, video with audio) on applicant reactions, focusing on general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, and company prestige.

Based on MRT, it was hypothesized that there would be a significant effect of the type of medium on organizational attraction such that attraction would be higher for organizations when their employee testimonials were presented in a theoretically richer medium compared to a less rich medium. However, findings did not provide support for Hypothesis 1. Results indicated that participants who viewed employee testimonials in
the different mediums did not report significantly different levels of perceived general attractiveness, job pursuit intentions, or company prestige.

In order to check the manipulation of the independent variable and to provide further support for MRT, Hypothesis 2 stated that there would be a significant effect of type of medium on its perceived ability to transmit information, such that perceptions would be higher for organizations when their employee testimonials were presented in a theoretically richer medium compared to a less rich medium. Hypothesis 2 was also not supported. This implies that participants may not have perceived any differences in media richness among the three conditions, which might help explain why Hypothesis 1 was not supported.

Exploratory analyses were conducted to try to shed some light on these results. The current study included an adjectives scale which instructed participants to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective (i.e., compelling, interesting, lifeless, engaging, attention grabbing, and boring) described the medium they viewed. This scale was included to capture to what degree participants were captivated by the employee testimonials they viewed. Surprisingly, means were significantly different between the picture with text condition and the picture with audio condition, as well as between the picture with text condition and the video condition, such that participants perceived the picture with text condition to be more captivating than the other two conditions. Moreover, there was no significant difference between the picture with audio condition and the video condition. Overall, these findings suggest that the picture with text condition was the most captivating for participants, and perceptions did not significantly differ between the picture with audio condition and the video condition.
Theoretical and Practical Implications

The lack of support for both Hypotheses 1 and 2 leads to several important implications for both researchers and practitioners. Participants did not find organizations more attractive when their employee testimonials were presented in a theoretically richer medium compared to a less rich medium. From a practical standpoint, the important takeaway for organizations is producing a video of employee testimonials may not be worth the substantial investment. As the range of typical video production costs is $500-$10,000 per finished minute (Lee, 2015), organizations may have a higher return on investment by simply inserting text employee testimonials on their recruitment website.

Interestingly, findings suggested that participants did not perceive any differences in media richness among the three conditions. Therefore, theoretically, MRT was not supported by the results of this study. Although this seems surprising, previous research has also found evidence against various components of MRT (Dennis & Kinney, 1998). Most relevant to the current study, Allen et al. (2004) presented a recruitment message from a military organization to participants in four different conditions (i.e., face-to-face communication, video, audio, and text) and did not find support for a strict hierarchy of media richness. The face-to-face condition should have been considered the richest medium based on the amount of information conveyed, the ability for two-way communication, personal focus, and social presence. However, the text condition was rated higher than the face-to-face condition and audio condition on several dimensions of media richness. Future research should continue to investigate participants’ perceptions of media richness to determine what factors affect people’s perceptions of media richness.
As previously mentioned, the current study included an adjectives scale which instructed participants to indicate whether they agreed or disagreed that a specific adjective described the medium they viewed. The adjectives were rated significantly higher for the picture with text condition than both the picture with audio condition and the video condition. There was also not a significant difference between the picture with audio and video conditions. Surprisingly, this indicates that the picture with text condition was the most captivating for participants to view.

One explanation for this finding is that participants who viewed the picture with text condition were exposed to the employee testimonials without having to press play to hear them, and therefore, it is possible that participants did not listen to the employee testimonials in either the picture with audio condition or the video condition. However, participants were warned that they would be asked one or more factual questions based on the content and may not be paid for participation if they answered those items incorrectly. Additionally, research has suggested that MTurk users provide an equally reliable source of data compared to other samples (Paolacci, Chandler, & Ipeirotis, 2010; Barger et al., 2011). Therefore, the notion that participants may have not listened to or watched the employee testimonials in the audio and video conditions seems to be an unlikely interpretation of these results.

Another explanation is that text may require more attention on an organization’s webpage than multimedia. Allen, Biggane, Pitts, Ontono and Van Scotter (2013) investigated job seekers’ visual attention and perceptions when viewing an organization’s website. By utilizing eye-tracking equipment to collect information on eye movements and fixations, participants focused on text first, most often, and the longest compared to
images. Additionally, positive pupil diameter changes occurred significantly more when participants looked at text compared to images. Therefore, their findings suggest that individuals paid more visual attention to text than graphic images. For organizations, this indicates that graphic images may be less important than the content of the text on a recruitment webpage. Hence, an organization’s resources may be better allocated for developing the message of the web-based employee testimonials rather than the medium through which the message is communicated. In the current study, for the picture with audio condition and the video condition, no text was included other than the organization’s name. Future research that investigates audio and video features can potentially include subtitles which may grab the attention of participants.

**Study Limitations and Future Research Directions**

The current study is not without limitations. One limitation is the use of a hypothetical organization. Although effort was exerted to make the organization description as realistic as possible, hypothetical scenarios often do not reflect real-world situations which may lower the external validity of the study’s findings. In order to draw stronger conclusions from this research and to enhance the internal validity of the results, a high level of control was maintained by using a hypothetical organization. Moreover, although the organization used was hypothetical, the employee testimonials were not. The authenticity of the employee testimonials should enhance the external validity of these findings.

Another limitation is collecting data online using MTurk participants. When studies are conducted online, participants can take the survey in any environment with internet access, where numerous external factors in their test-taking environment may
influence their responses. However, in an effort to enhance the quality of the data, quality checks were included to ensure that participants were paying attention. Moreover, research has suggested that MTurk samples are demographically diverse and as reliable as traditional samples (Barger et al., 2011; Paolacci et al., 2010).

One final limitation of this research is that the use of authentic, unscripted employee testimonials does not allow for the message to be manipulated. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) manipulated the recruitment message of employee testimonials as being framed toward the organization or individual. Messages oriented toward the organization described the organization as a whole, whereas messages oriented toward the individual described the individuals working for the organization. When employee testimonials were framed toward the individual rather than the organization, organizational attraction was higher. In this study, the majority of the employee testimonials referenced the organization (e.g., organizational values). Future research should include testimonials that are framed toward the individual because they may increase organizational attraction.

As previously mentioned, future research should also continue to measure participants’ perceptions of media richness to determine what factors influence people’s perceptions of media richness. Another avenue for future research includes incorporating different technologies to further understand how participants engage with web-based research materials. For example, Allen et al. (2013) employed eye tracking and pupil dilation software in order to examine the visual attention of participants when viewing company websites. Moreover, there are other metrics that can be investigated in order to help assess organizational attraction. For example, click-through rates for certain types of media on organizational websites, such as video employee testimonials, should aid
researchers in understanding how interested applicants are in these recruitment techniques. As these types of technologies continue to advance, future research can employ them to improve our field’s current understanding of MRT, employee testimonials, and organizational attraction.

Conclusions

In conclusion, participants did not find organizations more attractive when their employee testimonials were presented in a theoretically richer medium compared to a less rich medium. However, findings revealed that participants did not perceive any differences in media richness among the three conditions. Therefore, the findings from this study did not provide support for MRT. From a practical standpoint, these results suggest that producing a video of employee testimonials may not be worth a company’s time and resources. Nevertheless, future research should replicate the current study to further understand the factors that influence media richness in the context of organizational attraction.
References


Appendix A

Introductory Paragraph

Please take the time to read the following information carefully. At the end of the study, you will be asked one or more factual questions based on the content. You may not be paid for participation and your HIT may be rejected if you answer any of those items incorrectly.

Imagine that you are currently seeking a new job opportunity. Pearson Pipe Products is a leading pipe manufacturer. They are known for providing site solution services which tailor their products to fit customers’ needs. Founded in the early 1980s, Pearson Pipe Products has grown from a small firm to a medium-sized organization. As the company continues to expand, Pearson Pipe Products is seeking new members to join their team.

Click “Next” to learn from current employees about their experience at Pearson Pipe Products.
Appendix B
Employee Testimonials

Employee Testimonial #1
Question: How would you describe the employees at Pearson Pipe Products?
Answer: “The people are so friendly here, just so friendly. I feel like it is my second home. Actually, it’s my first home. I feel like it is my first home. I never regret coming to work. I always look forward to coming to work. Not every day, but most of the time I do. I get real excited about coming to work because I enjoy the people I work with and I enjoy just the camaraderie with the people around in the company.”

Employee Testimonial #2
Question: What word comes to mind when you think about Pearson Pipe Products?
Answer: “Integrity, first and foremost. Myself and my team are out in the field with customers and competitors and I believe that we are always in the forefront of integrity, honesty, and doing the right thing.”

Employee Testimonial #3
Question: How would you describe the training that occurs at Pearson Pipe Products?
Answer: “I feel like it’s very hands-on. I’ve been at companies before where there is a week where you are literally sitting at a computer and watching training programs. And they are so boring and it is so hard to stay awake. My training here, I hadn’t done a physical inventory before. And my training for that was literally getting on a plane and going to one with another Cost Accountant and seeing the process first hand and actually experiencing that to understand what was expected and what my responsibilities were.”

Employee Testimonial #4
Question: What is the working environment like at Pearson Pipe Products?
Answer: “It’s a very open environment. You don’t worry about the level of employee that you are speaking to. Anyone from entry level up to the President interact at any time. And I see this a lot at large meetings and group discussions where we’re trying to work out problems and make it a better place to work and better results for our customers.”

Employee Testimonial #5
Why should someone consider working for Pearson Pipe Products?
Answer: “If you are looking for a company that is going to consistently challenge you to advance your skills and push you beyond your limits to advance your career then this is definitely the company for you.”
Appendix C

Organizational Attraction Scale

The Organizational Attraction Scale is not reproduced for copyright reasons, but below is the reference for this measure:


doi:10.1177/0013164403258403
Appendix D

Perceived Credibility Scale

The Perceived Credibility Scale is not reproduced for copyright reasons, but below is the reference for this measure:

Appendix E

Demographic Items

Age _____

Gender
  • Male
  • Female
  • My preferred self-identification is: _____________
  • 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
  • My preferred self-identification is: _____________
  • Prefer Not to Respond

Level of Education
  • Below High School
  • High School Diploma or equivalent
  • Some college, no degree
  • Associate’s Degree
  • Bachelor’s Degree (e.g., BA)
  • Master’s Degree (e.g., MBA)
  • Doctoral Degree (e.g., PhD)

Have you ever been previously employed?
  • Yes
  • No

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

Are you currently employed?
  • Yes – Full Time
  • Yes – Part Time
  • No
If not currently employed, how many years have you been unemployed? (If in months, please write the word months after the number): _______________

Years of overall work experience (if in months, please write the word months after the number): _______________

Did you experience any technical difficulties while completing this study?
• Yes
• No

As a back up to ensure you are compensated, please type your unique worker ID:
_____________
Appendix F

IRB Approval Letter

September 30, 2016

Elizabeth Morrison

Re:  Protocol #15-098, Effect of Medium Used to Communicate Employee Testimonials on Organizational Attraction

Dear Ms. Morrison:

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

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

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

Sincerely,

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

MEM/sb
Appendix G

MTurk Interface

Please note that you will have to enter your unique completion code TWICE, once HERE and once at the END of the study in order to be compensated, if eligible.

1. Please enter your completion located on the MTurk Dashboard. You must enter your completion code HERE:

[Box for ID number was included here]

Also, please SAVE your completion code because you will be required to enter it once again AT THE END OF THE STUDY.

2. Please click the following link in order to access the survey. After you complete the survey, click the “Submit” button below.

[Survey Link was added here]

[SUBMIT]
Appendix H

Informed Consent Form

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted by Elizabeth Morrison designed to investigate perceptions of an organization.

In this study, you will learn more about an organization and then will be asked to answer questions about that organization. You will also be asked to respond to a few demographic items. The total time to complete this task should be no more than 15 minutes, but you will be given 60 minutes to complete the entire survey.

There are no known risks associated with this study. Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Refusal to participate in this study will have no effect on any future services you may be entitled to from Xavier University. You will be paid $.50 for participating in this study. However, please note that if you do not complete all required items or if you do not pass the quality checks, you may not be eligible for compensation. You have to be at least 18 years old to participate in this study and be a resident of the United States.

Although you will be required to enter your MTurk unique worker ID at the end of the survey to receive compensation if eligible, the researchers will not be able to access any identifying information you provided to Amazon or MTurk. Moreover, the researchers will not release any of your survey responses to Amazon or MTurk, and only the researchers conducting this study will have access to your responses. Therefore, your responses will remain anonymous. Finally, no analyses of any kind will be conducted prior to the removal of all MTurk ID numbers from the data set.

If you have any questions at any time during the study, you may contact the principal investigator, Elizabeth Morrison at morrisone2@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 the Xavier University’s Institutional Review Board at 513-745-2870.

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

Debriefing Form

Thank you for participating in our research project. The purpose of this study is to investigate whether the medium through which employee testimonials are communicated affects organizational attraction. Although the organization described was hypothetical, the employee testimonials utilized in this study featured actual employees genuinely endorsing their current organization.

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, Elizabeth Morrison at morrisone2@xavier.edu, or the faculty advisor, Dr. Dalia Diab at diabd@xavier.edu.