To smile or not to smile?

The effect of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture on perceived credibility and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different vacancies

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ABSTRACT

This study explored whether smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture could influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for three different types of vacancies. In addition, this study also analysed whether perceived credibility increases the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. Previous research has addressed the influence of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture. However, this is the first study that empirically tests the effects of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture in combination with three different types of vacancies and a general public. Results were obtained from an online experiment with a 2 (facial expression: smiling versus a neutral facial expression) x 3 (job type: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) between subject factorial design ($N = 210$). The findings indicated that there is no difference on ratings of perceived credibility or the likelihood of being invited for a job interview between a candidate who smiled or showed a neutral facial expression. However, a mediating effect was found of perceived credibility on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

Keywords: smiling, LinkedIn, online personal branding, recruitment, perceived credibility, job interview

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1. INTRODUCTION

When soliciting for a job, most people try to put their best foot forward. Several studies have discussed and provided tips for job seekers to get the dream job they want. For instance, job seekers should develop interviewing self-efficacy (Tay, Ang, & Van Dyne, 2006), appropriate and control the fluency of their speech, and compose the things they say as an applicant (Hollandsworth, Kazelskis, Stevens, & Dressel, 1979).

Since the rise and growth of the internet and Social Network Sites (SNS), one can also use online visual cues to create a more favourable impression (Caers & Castelyns, 2010). Online cues can be considered a replacement for cues people would typically use in a face-to-face interaction (Walther, 2002). Particularly recruiters use SNS as a way to form an initial impression about a job candidate (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009; Caers & Castelyns, 2010). Especially LinkedIn, since the profiles on this SNS provide valid and truthful information about a candidate's personal information, work experiences, and relevant skills (Clark & Roberts, 2010).

By checking a LinkedIn profile, recruiters process online cues which can impact relationship formation. A theory that describes this process is the Social Information Processing (SIP) theory (Walther, 1992). This theory proposes that the absence of (social context) cues on the internet does not have an impact on a communicator's capability to exchange information (Walther, 1992). When someone is communicating online, social context cues, such as one's non-verbal behaviour, are not available. Thus, individuals look for other cues that can help them in forming an impression or creating a relationship, such as profile pictures. By choosing a certain profile picture, one can control – to a certain extent – their perceived credibility. According to Ohanian (1990), perceived credibility indicates the credibility of an individual and consists of three subdimensions: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. Individuals with a higher level of perceived credibility are more persuasive compared to others (Ohanian, 1990), and have perhaps a higher possibility of influencing job recruiters.

One approach that can possibly enhance perceived credibility and give applicants a competitive advantage on LinkedIn and the job market, is by smiling in your LinkedIn profile picture (Van der Land, Willemsen, & Wilton, 2016). Smiling seems to have a positive effect on likability and attractiveness (Lau, 1982; Otta, Delevati, Cesar, & Pires, 1994; Reis et al., 1999) and can improve the chance of acquiring a job (Krumhuber, Manstead, Cosker, Marshall, & Rosin, 2009). This is due to the effect smiling has on reliability and trustworthiness which positively influence employment decisions (Krumhuber et al., 2009). This is also strengthened

by Van der Land et al. (2016), as they indicate that smiling in a profile picture enhanced the chance of obtaining a job interview.

Although the study by Van der Land et al. (2016) provides some very interesting pointers for job applicants, their qualitative study was relatively small in scale and only used one vacancy (marketing consultant). Moreover, regardless of the widespread advice of numerous blogs on whether to smile or not in your LinkedIn profile picture, there is hardly any empirical evidence on this issue (Van der Land et al., 2016). To fill this research gap, this study explores whether smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture is contingent with different vacancies and if the implications still hold if a greater sample size is used. Therefore, the following research question was created: "*How does smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different types of job vacancies?"*

This research has scientific relevance for the following reasons. This study builds on prior work by Van der Land and Muntinga (2014), Van der Land, Willemsen, & Unkel (2015), and Van der Land et al. (2016) on the effects of visual cues in LinkedIn profile pictures. Second, this study provides insight into information processing online when assessing a job candidate. According to the SIP-theory, people adapt their (interpersonal) communication to the cues that remain available through the medium that they are using. Therefore, this study hopes to illustrate whether smiling is a determining cue when forming an impression of an applicant. Finally, the results of this study can contribute to the concept of warranting, which can be described as the legitimacy and validity of information about another person that one receives online (Walther & Parks, 2002). This study hopes to connect, or warrant, between one's LinkedIn profile picture and the perceived look he or she is trying to create. In addition, this study hopes to check whether smiling can attribute to forming a better impression.

This study also has practical relevance. First of all, the results of this study provide valuable knowledge on online personal branding which could benefit people in (successfully) obtaining a job interview and eventually increasing the chance of getting hired. Secondly, this study hopes to help job candidates in selecting the best profile picture corresponding to a particular vacancy. Finally, the results of this study provide job recruiters inside into possible tactics of job candidates which could influence their decision making process.

The remainder of this study is structured as follows. In the next section, the theoretical framework is provided. In the following chapter the method will be explained. Hereafter, the results of the study will be presented and the hypotheses will be confirmed or rejected. The last chapter of this study provides the conclusion and discussion. This final chapter will answer the research question, give theoretical and practical implications, and suggest future research.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter we discuss key concepts and review the literature. First of all, different theories regarding social and cognitive information processing will be explained more in depth. Next a short explanation of (online) impression management will be presented. In the following section, the hypotheses are proposed and substantiated. At the end of this chapter, the conceptual model will be presented. This conceptual model will visualize the relationship between the variables and present a theoretical answer to the research question: "*How does smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different types of job vacancies?"*

2.1 Social and cognitive information processing

When someone assesses an online profile picture, he or she processes information (Tong, Van der Heide, Langwell, & Walther, 2008). As this study fixates on online profile pictures, there are two main theories that will be addressed. The first theory is the Social Information Processing (SIP) Theory which explains how individuals are able to acquire impressions online and manage relationships with someone in an online environment (Walther, 1992). The second theory which is of importance is the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM), presented by Petty and Cacioppo (1986). This cognitive model provides a framework for understanding, organizing, and categorizing the basis processes which underlie the effectiveness of persuasive communication. Both of the two theories will be explained more in depth in the remainder of this paragraph.

Social information processing

In a face-to-face setting one could use multiple cues to transmit a message, such as speech or hand gestures (Kiesler, Siegel, & McGuire, 1984). However, when someone presents him or herself on the internet, these cues are limited (Sarbaugh-Thompson & Feldman, 1998). Therefore, individuals search for other cues which can assist them in forming an impression of someone online (Walther, 1992). This process is described in the Social Information Process (SIP) Theory (Walther, 1992; Walther & Parks, 2002). This theory implicitly states that the absence of social context cues on the internet does not have an impact on a communicators capability to exchange information (Walther & Parks, 2002). According to the SIP-theory, people adapt their (interpersonal) communication to the cues that remain available through the medium that they are using (Walther, 1992). The study of Ellison, Heino, and Gibbs (2006) supported this theory. In an online dating experiment, Ellison et al. (2006) illustrated that

stylistic aspects of messages are equally important as the content of the message itself. In addition, people participating in a virtual world (specifically a multi-user dungeon, also MUD) compensate for the lack of nonverbal cues by using smileys and MUD-specific feelings (Utz, 2000). Considering the topic of this study, it is interesting to explore whether visual cues presented in a LinkedIn profile picture will also become more important and thus influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

Cognitive information processing

Since LinkedIn profile pictures are used in this context to influence the likelihood of obtaining a job interview, it is interesting to explore which theories substantiate these actions. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) provides a framework for understanding, organizing, and categorizing basis processes which underlie the effectiveness of persuasive communication (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Since there was plenty of (contradicting) research focussing on persuasion, Petty and Cacioppo (1986) tried to integrate most of this research under one conceptual umbrella of communicative persuasions.

Within the Elaboration Likelihood Model there are two types of processing routes which both can lead to persuasion: the central route (direct) and the peripheral route (indirect). The major difference between those two routes is the amount of assimilated information. The central route is activated when extensive relevant thinking occurs. This means that the content of the presented message is closely inspected by the receiver and he or she will elaborate on an argument and think about the logic behind the presented message. Therefore, the attitude of someone will change based on comprehensive arguments and relevancy. When the central route is related to the recruitment process, it is expected that recruiters take the central route when he or she is carefully investigating the job applicant's qualifications (Chiang & Suen, 2015). However, a recruiter may also use the peripheral route. This route is activated when someone applies simple decision rules which can be simple judgmental cues or heuristic principles. This means that a recruiter is not deliberately exploring the candidate's qualifications and is influenced by other factors which are unrelated to job relevant information, such as visual cues in a profile picture (Chiang & Suen, 2015).

Due to limited time and processing capabilities recruiters cannot carefully investigate the job applicant's qualifications (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009; Van der Land et al., 2016). Therefore, it is expected that recruiters will process information using the peripheral route, which relies more on simple judgmental cues and heuristic principles. Thus, smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture might be an attribute to increase the likelihood of being invited for a

job interview. Based on the design and method of this study it is expected that the respondents will also take the indirect route as only the LinkedIn profile picture is available to provide information about the job candidate.

2.2 Online impression management

According to Leary and Kowalski (1990), impression management is "the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them" (p. 34). According to Goffman (1959), the impression someone wants to transfer consists of two types of impressions. First, there are impressions given which are expressed during verbal communication, such as speech. Secondly, there are impressions given off which are expressed during non-verbal communication, such as one's physical appearance. In the context of this study, the latter is most important. As this study is focused on visual cues in a LinkedIn profile picture, the impressions given are less important since the job applicant is not able to use speech or any other impressions given to regulate the final impression others form of him or her. Therefore, more emphasis is placed on the selected profile picture which makes the visual cues displayed in this picture more important (Papacharissi, 2002).

By choosing a specific profile picture one can portray certain qualities and traits which he or she thinks are important (Ellison, et al., 2006). For instance, a job candidate who wish to appear as outgoing could choose an outgoing profile picture to match the look he or she is trying to create (Papacharissi, 2002; Ellison, et al., 2006; Siibak, 2009). In the light of this study, it is interesting to explore how smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture contributes to forming an impression.

2.3 Smiling and credibility

The smile is universally recognized as an indication for positive emotional experience (Johnston, Miles, & Macrae, 2010). Research has demonstrated that smiling improves one's mood and reduces stress (Grandey, Fisk, Mattila, Jansen, & Sideman, 2005; Kraft & Pressman, 2012). Therefore, it does not seem odd that people like to smile. Kraut and Johnston (1979) conducted four studies in which they observed several group activities, such as bowling and watching an ice hockey match. In all four activities smiling turned out to be a social interaction. For instance, smiling was associated with talking and looking to others. This process of social involvement can be ascribed to the chameleon effect (Chartrand & Bargh, 1999). This effect proposes that people mimic mannerisms, postures, and facial expressions such that one's behaviour unintentionally changes to match that of others in a social environment. This

indicates that it can be beneficial for a person to smile as it can change and improve someone else's mood (Grandey et al., 2005; Kraft & Pressman, 2012).

Besides improving someone's mood and reducing the level of stress, smiling also contributes to the physical appearance (attractiveness) and likability of someone (Lau, 1982; Reis et al., 1990; Otta et al., 1994). Smiling in a picture also contributes to more positive scores on personality traits such as optimism, conciliation, calmness, reliability, leadership, happiness, beauty, sympathy, sincerity, and kindness (Otta et al., 1994). In addition, people who smile in a picture are considered more trustworthy compared to people who show a neutral facial expression (Scharlemann, Eckel, Kacelnik, & Wilson, 2001; Schmidt, Levenstein, & Ambadar, 2012). These results were also supported by Centorrino, Djemai, Hopfensitz, Milinski, and Seabright (2011), who let respondents participate in a modified trust game in which they had to decide whether they would invest money in someone based on a motivational video. Results indicated that smiling induces cooperation as people who smiled were rated more convincing and trustworthy compared to people who showed a neutral facial expression.

So far, we have discussed the impact of smiling on perceptions of attractiveness and trustworthiness (Lau, 1982; Reis et al., 1990; Otta et al., 1994; Scharlemann et al., 2001; Centorrino et al., 2011; Schmidt et al., 2012). In turn, there is literature which demonstrates that the increment of attractiveness and trustworthiness can also positively influence perceived credibility (Miller & Baseheart, 1969; Chaiken, 1979; Joseph, 1982; McGinnies & Ward, 1980). Perceived credibility indicates the credibility of an individual and consists of three subdimensions: attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness (Ohanian, 1990). Perceived credibility is of importance because it can influence the persuasiveness of a message and possibly the decision making of a recruiter (Van der land et al., 2015; Van der Land et al., 2016) In the light of this study, it is important to explore whether smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture also enhances perceived credibility. As smiling seems to increase one's attractiveness and trustworthiness, which are two of the three components of perceived credibility, it is expected that people who smile in their LinkedIn profile picture will be judged as more credible compared to people who show a neutral facial expression in their LinkedIn profile picture. This offers the following hypothesis:

H1: *People who smile in their LinkedIn profile picture will be judged as more credible compared to people who have a neutral facial expression in their LinkedIn profile picture.*

2.4 Smiling and the moderating influence of different job types

As this study examines whether smiling influences the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different vacancies, it is relevant to explore if smiling for different job vacancies will effect perceived credibility. One of the reasons this is relevant is due to the match-up hypothesis. Kamins (1990) illustrated the function of the match-up hypothesis by celebrity endorsed advertising. When the image of a celebrity and the image of the product he or she is promoting are congruent, the match-up hypothesis will propose a positive influence on product and advertisement evaluations. However, when the image of the celebrity and the promoted product are incongruent, the evaluations will decline. An example could be the promotion of any perfume with an attractive celebrity, such as Scarlett Johansson for Calvin Klein. The image of Scarlett Johansson is congruent with the type of product, since perfume can enhance one's attractiveness and Scarlett Johansson can be perceived as an attractive human being.

As there are different types of vacancies, it is interesting to explore whether smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture for a particular vacancy will affect credibility perceptions. According to the match-up hypothesis, the impression induced by a smiling person and the characteristics of the job vacancy should converge in order to create a satisfying fit. For instance, when someone is smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture and applying for an attractiveness-job, the smile should evoke signs of attractiveness in order to create a positive influence. However, when smiling evokes the opposite signs, it makes this particular candidate less favourable to get invited for a job interview. This study distinguishes between three types of vacancies: an attractiveness vacancy, an expertise vacancy, and a trustworthiness vacancy. For each of those jobs it is important to possess a certain set of qualities or traits which can help an individual increase his or her credibility perceptions. As not every job requires the same set of skills, it is interesting to explore when to express a smile and when to remain a neutral facial expression. More specifically, when to smile or remain a neutral facial expression in a LinkedIn profile picture when applying for an attractive, expertise, or trustworthy job.

The first job type is related to attractiveness. As displayed in previous sections, smiling contributes to one's physical appearance (Lau, 1982; Reis et al., 1990; Otta et al., 1994). When people are presented with two pictures of someone, either smiling or showing a neutral facial expression, the smiling picture is judged as more attractive compared to the picture with the neutral facial expression (Otta et al., 1994). As attractiveness positively influences one's perceived credibility, due to opinion change, product evaluation, and persuasion (Chaiken, 1979; Joseph, 1982), it is expected that when applying for an attractiveness job, smiling will contribute to the perceived credibility of someone. This offers the following hypothesis:

H2A: *Smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture interacts with job type, such that smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture positively affects credibility perceptions for an attractiveness job.*

The second job type is related to expertise. Smiling is positively related to eleven different personality traits, such as beauty and sympathy. However, the only personality trait which smiling did not increased, in previous research, was one's perceived intelligence (Otta et al., 1994). As few researchers have addressed the link between smiling and expertise, one can argue whether smiling influences one's perceived expertise. Furthermore, results indicated that smiling was not positively related when applying for a more serious job, such as a newspaper reporter (Ruben, Hall, & Schmid Mast, 2015), a research assistant (Fraudendorfer, Mast, Nguyen, & Gatica-Perez, 2014), or a management training position (Levine & Feldman, 2002). A possible explanation for these results is that more smiling leads to lower ratings of masculinity and independence compared to less smiling (Reis et al., 1990). Since leadership is closely related with masculinity (Koenig, Eagly, Mitchell, & Ristikari, 2011), it could be that applicants who smile in their LinkedIn profile picture are perceived as having less leadership qualities. In addition, applicants are expected to smile less when applying for a serious job (Ruben et al., 2015). Therefore, the following is hypothesized:

H2B: *Smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture interacts with job type, such that smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture has a negative effect on credibility perceptions for an expertise job.*

The final job type is related to trustworthiness. According to Centorrino et al. (2011), smiling can positively contribute to creating a feeling of trust. In their experiment, a trust game, respondents had to decide whether to invest money in someone based on a motivational video. The motivational video, in which people smiled, resulted in a higher amount of invested money compared to the video in which people had a neutral facial expression. Moreover, smiling in pictures also contributes to a greater feeling of trust. Scharlemann et al. (2001) created a trust game in which respondents had to rate sixty pictures of photographic models, either smiling or showing a neutral facial expression. Results indicated that smiling pictures were identified as more trustworthy compared to the pictures with a neutral facial expression. These results were supported by Krumhuber, Manstead, Cosker, Marshall, Rosin, and Kappas (2007) and Schmidt et al. (2012). The reason people trust someone who smiles is due to the informative signal

smiling generates. When someone expresses a genuine smile, he or she is being seen as honest which provides people with a feeling of trustworthiness (Centorrino et al., 2011). In addition, it is important that this smile is being perceived as genuine, otherwise smiling could have a different effect on trustworthiness (Krumhuber et al., 2007). As smiling is closely and positively related to trustworthiness, we hypothesize the following:

H2C: *Smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture interacts with job type, such that smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture has a positive effect on credibility perceptions for a trustworthiness job.*

2.5 Perceived credibility and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview

Perceived credibility is of importance for this study because it can influence one's persuasiveness (Ohanian, 1990). One can argue whether perceived credibility can also influence a job recruiter and the likelihood to obtain a job interview.

The selection process of a recruiter is based on a distinction between the person-job fit, which is determined by personality characteristics of the candidate, such as values and traits, and the person-organisation fit, which is determined by the experience, education, and skills of a candidate (Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, & Johnson, 2005). The person-job fit seems to be most crucial for recruiters, which refers to checking whether a candidate is qualified for the job opening (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Chiang and Suen (2015), who delved deeper into the research of Kristof-Brown et al. (2005), also added the person-to-person fit. This fit is based on subjective impressions, such as the opinion and background of a job candidate, and can also influence the hiring decision of a recruiter. This person-to-person fit is guided by the peripheral route of the ELM, which calls on simple judgmental cues or heuristics to influence one's attitude. Therefore, one can positively influence a job recruiter by using unrelated cues, such as perceived credibility, instead of job-related information (Chiang & Suen, 2015). Especially since recruiters have limited time to carefully investigate the job applicant's qualifications (Kluemper & Rosen, 2009; Van der Land et al., 2016), one's perceived credibility might be an attribute to get invited for a job interview.

The reason behind the potential positive effect of perceived credibility on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, is due to the persuasive subdimensions that construct perceived credibility; attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. It is acclaimed that people who are perceived as more credible are ought to be more persuasive (Ohanian, 1990). When this is related towards the recruitment process, it can be argued that people who possess a high

level of perceived credibility will have a higher chance of persuading the job recruiter and thus increase the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. Especially since Chiang & Suen (2015) proposed the person-to-person fit that allows job candidates to use simple judgemental cues to persuade a job recruiter. Therefore, the following hypothesis is presented:

H3: *A high level of perceived credibility increases the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.*

2.6 Conceptual Model

In Figure 1, a conceptual model is presented that integrates the discussed theories. This conceptual model displays the relationship between different variables and provides a theoretical answer to the research question: "*How does smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different types of job vacancies?"* As proposed in the first hypothesis, smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture has a positive effect on perceived credibility. This is due to the effect smiling has on the subdimensions of perceived credibility. Smiling positively influences the attractiveness and trustworthiness of someone which in its turn can alter one's opinion. The second hypotheses proposed that job type moderates the relationship between facial expression and perceived credibility. As said earlier in this paragraph, smiling has a positive influence on attractiveness and trustworthiness and is therefore proposed to have a have positive effect on job vacancies that require both of those personality traits. However, smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture will have a negative effect on job vacancies that demand expertise due to a decrease in independence and leadership qualities. Finally, it is expected that perceived credibility positively influences the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. This is due to the persuasiveness of attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness on one's decision-making in combination with the person-to-person to fit that allows job candidates to use simple judgemental cues to persuade a job recruiter.

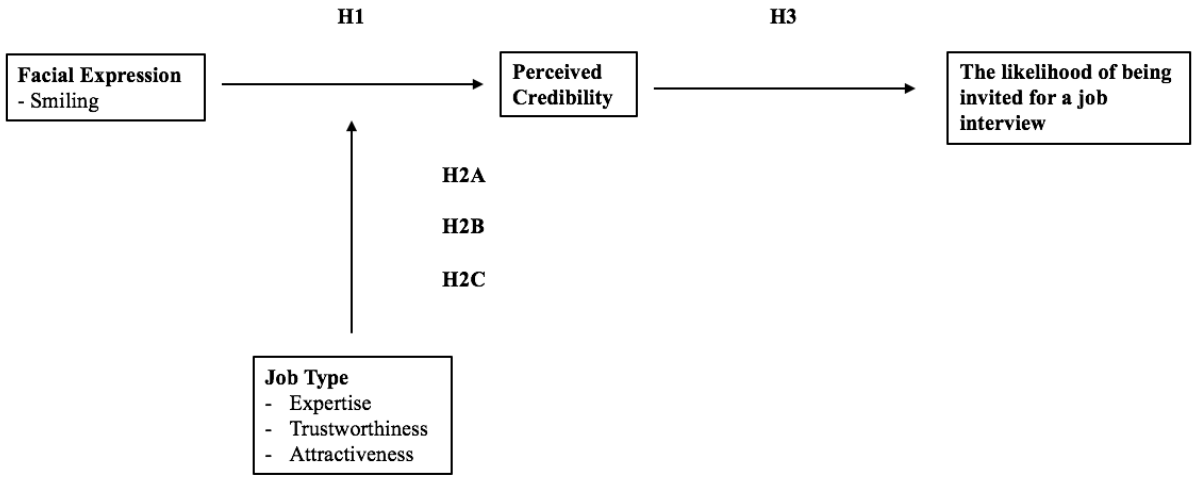

Figure 1. Conceptual Model.

3. METHOD

To test the hypotheses displayed in Figure 1, a 2 (facial expression: smiling versus a neutral facial expression) x 3 (job type: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) between subject factorial design was created.

3.1 Sample

The participants in this study were gathered through convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling technique in which subjects are selected because of their accessibility (Treadwell, 2014). This type of sampling technique is very useful when a researcher has constraints in terms of time or money (Treadwell, 2014). In order to complement the qualitative results of Van der Land et al. (2016), this study implements a much larger sample size. In this study the sample consists of a mix of students and (recent) graduates. This mix was chosen due to possible privacy-concerns of recruiters and the restricted time-span of this study which made it difficult to gather a large number of recruiters who would participate in this study. In addition, as this study focused on making first impressions of someone, which could be made by most of the people, a more general public will suffice.

Social network sites, such as Facebook and Twitter, were used to captivate the opinion of the respondents since this is a match with nature of this study (Im & Chee, 2011). In addition, gathering responses via the internet is much faster and leads to a higher response rate (Fricker & Schonlau, 2002; Treadwell, 2014). In total a sample of 213 respondents participated in the experiment. Three participants were excluded from the analysis due to their age which was under the limit of 18 years old. Therefore, the responses of 210 participants were used for the analysis (52.4% female; M_{age} = 34.10, SD = 14.50). Most of the respondents had a Dutch nationality (85.2%), the other 14.8% was a mix of different nationalities, such as American, Finnish, Greek, or British. A majority of the participants completed an applied science degree (36.2%), followed by 26.2% who completed a university bachelor degree. Most of the participants were somewhat experienced with LinkedIn (31%), followed by respondents who perceived themselves as experienced (21.4%). In addition, 5.2% of the respondents perceived themselves as very experienced while 7.1% thought they were very unexperienced. The remaining 35.3% thought they were unexperienced (11%), somewhat unexperienced (12.4%), or neither experienced, nor unexperienced (11.9%) with LinkedIn.

3.2 Experimental design

In order to test the 2 (facial expression: smiling versus a neutral facial expression) x 3 (job

type: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) between subject factorial design, an experiment was conducted. An experiment is the most appropriate research design to answer the RQ for several reasons. First, this study explores to what extent smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture will affect perceived credibility and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, which implies a causal relationship. Therefore, an experiment was chosen, as this type of research design is the best approach to identify a causal relationship (Bryman, 2001; Treadwell, 2014). Second, an experiment allows researchers to identify relationships and differences between groups (Treadwell, 2014). As this study has six groups (a smiling job applicant or a job applicant showing a neutral facial expression with one of the three created vacancies) and seeks to clarify the differences between them, an experiment was most appropriate.

3.3 Manipulation material

Job descriptions

To test the effect of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different types of vacancies, multiple vacancy descriptions needed to be created. This study adapted the descriptions of three job types from Van der Land and Muntinga (2014) who used Ohanian's (1990) Perceived Credibility Model as a foundation for creating three fictional job vacancies.

Van der Land and Muntinga (2014) used a focus group in order to establish three job vacancies related to attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness. The focus group consisted of fifteen university students (thirteen females and two males) and produced the following job vacancies: a *sales person at a fashion store* that represented the attractiveness vacancy, an *architect* that represented the expertise vacancy, and a *back office bank cashier* that represented the trustworthiness job vacancy. Van der Land and Muntinga (2014) performed a manipulation check in order to verify that these job vacancies represented the subdimensions of Perceived Credibility. Results of this manipulation check substantiated the jobs chosen by the focus group. In addition, results of Van der Land et al. (2015) supported the created job functions and descriptions for the subdimensions expertise and trustworthiness. The final job descriptions used for this study can be seen in Appendix A.

Profile pictures

Besides the replicated job vacancies, this study uses two LinkedIn profile pictures as stimuli for the experiment. These pictures contained a person who functions as a job applicant. The two photos differentiated based on the facial expression of the job candidate. In one photo the

job candidate expressed a smile while in the other picture the job candidate showed a neutral facial expression. First of all, the applicant in this study expressed a Duchenne smile (Ekman, Davidson, & Friesen, 1990). This particular type of smiling expresses joy, positive emotion, and happiness (Ekman et al., 1990). This smile was chosen as a non-Duchenne smile, or fake smile, could lead to negative emotions and a less positive rating in job attributes, such as reliability and motivation (Krumhuber et al., 2009; Bernstein, Sacco, Brown, Young, & Claypool, 2010). It was important to select the right smile, as there are fifty different types of smiles which can all relate to a certain emotion. (Ekman, 2009). The Duchenne smile is characterised by the *zygomaticus major* which generates a diagonal stretching of the lip and the *orbicularis oculi* which raises the cheeks of a person and generates wrinkles on the outside of the corners, also known as crow's feet wrinkles (Ekman et al., 1990).

Secondly, the gender of the job applicant was male. In order to strengthen the results of Van der Land et al. (2016) the gender of the applicant in this study also had to be male. Choosing a female applicant could lead to different results as there are gender stereotypic effects in the recruitment process (Curran, 1988). For instance, for some jobs gender is considered an important requirement to deliver an effective performance (Curran, 1988).

Thirdly, the age of the chosen job applicant was relatively young (26). The reasoning behind this choice was due to the impression a young person has on a job recruiter. According to Bendick, Jackson, and Romero (1997), young job applicants are rewarded more positive replies to their job application compared to older job candidates. Furthermore, these results were supported by Finkelstein, Higgins, and Clancy (2000) who found that age is more relevant in the recruitment process when considering an older applicant compared to a younger applicant.

Fourth, the job candidate wore a dark-coloured sweater. CareerBuilder (2011), a company that helps job seekers and employers, conducted an online survey in which they asked 2009 hiring managers and human resource professionals which type of colour is most appropriate to wear to a job interview. Results indicated that dark colours were most favourable. These results were supported by Ruetzler, Taylor, Reynolds, and Baker (2011) who indicated that employers prefer applicants to wear dark conservative clothing during job interviews.

Fifth, the face of the job applicant was clean shaven. Previous research demonstrated that when a male has a LinkedIn profile picture with a beard, the factor of expertise is increased (Van der Land & Muntinga, 2014). Moreover, bearded males in Europe are perceived as more masculine and attractive compared to males who are clean shaven (Barber, 2001).

Finally, the two pictures were photoshopped by a graphical designer in order to create two identical pictures. In addition, a LinkedIn-logo was included in the upper left corner of the profile pictures in order to increase the photo's likeliness to a real LinkedIn profile picture. The final pictures can be seen in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Created manipulation material for this study.

Quantitative pre-test

In order to test whether the difference between the two modified pictures was significant, a quantitative pre-test was conducted. As the final experiment would be conducted in a quantitative way, an online survey pre-test was used in order to provide the most valid predictions. Respondents ($N = 24$) got to see a smiling job applicant or a job applicant showing a neutral facial expression with one of the three created vacancies, and were asked to answer 15 items on a seven-point semantic differential scale. The 15 items were adopted from Ohanian (1990) and depicted the three subdimensions (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness) of perceived credibility. Based on the conceptual model and the theoretical framework, it was expected that the LinkedIn profile picture with a smiling job candidate would be rated higher on perceived credibility when related to an attractiveness and trustworthiness vacancy. In addition, the LinkedIn profile picture with a candidate showing a neutral facial expression was supposed to be rated higher on perceived credibility when related to an expertise vacancy.

The results of this quantitative pre-test indicated that there were no clear differences between the two LinkedIn profile pictures. First of all, an independent samples t-test showed no significant difference between a smiling job candidate ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .82$) and a job candidate who showed a neutral facial expression ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .69$) on perceived credibility in general, $t(22) = .14$, $p = .90$, 95% CI [-.08, .32]. Secondly, an independent samples t-test

showed no significant difference between the smiling applicant (M = 4.63, SD = .56) and the applicant who showed a neutral facial expression (M = 4.50, SD = .66) on perceived credibility ratings for an attractiveness vacancy, $t(7)$ = .34, p = .74, 95% CI [-.17, .62]. Third, an independent samples t-test showed there were no significant differences between the smiling applicant (M = 4.62, SD = .42) and the applicant showing a neutral facial expression (M = 4.30, SD = .71) on perceived credibility ratings for a trustworthiness vacancy, $t(6)$ = -.82, p = .44, 95% CI [-1.28, .64]. Finally, an independent samples t-test showed no significant differences between the smiling job applicant (M = 4.78, SD = 1.60) and the job applicant who had a neutral facial expression (M = 4.55, SD = .62) on perceived credibility ratings for an expertise vacancy $t(5)$ = .27, p = .80 95% CI [-.25, .48]. Since there were no significant differences between the two profile pictures, one could argue whether the differences between the two profile pictures were clear enough.

Qualitative pre-test

Since there were no significant differences between the two profile pictures, a qualitative pre-test was conducted in order to improve the manipulation material. Two applicants were added in this qualitative pre-test in order to create the best manipulation material possible. The first applicant was adopted from the study of Van der Land et al. (2016). In their study they explored how and why recruiters make certain decisions in selecting job candidates by asking questions to job recruiters about different types of LinkedIn profile pictures. In total seven pictures were created, including two pictures in which the applicant expressed a smile and showed a neutral facial expression. Those two pictures were adopted in this qualitative pre-test. The applicant in this study was 27-years old, which falls within the age-range chosen for the final experiment of this study. This applicant also expressed a Duchenne smile, wore a dark shirt, and was clean shaven. In addition, both profile pictures were photoshopped in order to create two identical photos and a LinkedIn-logo was included in the upper left corner. The LinkedIn profile pictures of this applicant can be seen in Figure 3.

The second applicant was recruited from Erasmus University in Rotterdam. This applicant was 27-years old, which falls within the age-range chosen for the final experiment of this study, and was recruited from Erasmus University in Rotterdam. This applicant also expressed a Duchenne smile, wore a dark shirt, and was clean shaven. In addition, both profile pictures were photoshopped in order to create two identical photos and a LinkedIn-logo was included in the upper left corner. The LinkedIn profile pictures of this applicant can be seen in Figure 4.

Figure 3. Manipulation material adopted from Van der Land et al. (2016).

Figure 4. Manipulation material for qualitative pre-test.

In total, 10 people were asked their opinion about the three applicants. More specifically, they were asked to identify in which of the three pairs of pictures, the differences between the two pictures were most noticeable. Results indicated that seven of the respondents selected the applicant in Figure 4. Whereas, two respondents selected the applicant in Figure 2 and one participant chose the applicant in Figure 3. As one participant indicated, "you can clearly see a difference in face expression when this model is smiling. This difference is not really present at the other models." Based on the results in this qualitative pre-test, the pictures of the applicant in Figure 4 were used in the final experiment.

3.4 Procedure

First of all, respondents were directed to a Qualtrics survey website after clicking on an online

link. This link was either distributed via Facebook or Twitter. Secondly, a short introduction was presented to the participants. This introduction offered a welcome message, the goal of the experiment, and background information on the researcher. This can be seen in Appendix B. The participants had to agree with the presented terms in order to continue. Subsequently, participants were randomly assigned to one of the six experimental conditions (e.g. smiling versus a neutral facial expression combined with one of the three designed job applications). The respondents were forced to view the assigned job description for at least 20s. When the 20s were expired, the participants were able to continue the survey. The next frame included the LinkedIn profile picture. Participants had to look 15s before they could continue towards the experiment questionnaire, which can be seen in Appendix C. For the manipulation check, respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the applicant by answering a dichotomous question. Since the adequacy of the manipulation – whether or not the job applicant smiled – is not a matter of participation perception, no further manipulation checks were performed (O'Keefe, 2003). In addition, some control variables were measured, such as age, gender, and education level. Finally, at the end of the survey, respondents had the opportunity to note remarks based on the survey-experience.

3.5 Measures

Each survey had the same set of questions/statements measuring perceived credibility and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. In addition, the respondents were also presented with a set of demographic questions, such as "please indicate your age". All items were measured on a seven-point Likert scale or a seven-point semantic differential scale, ranging from negative (1) to positive (7). A complete overview of the questions can be seen in Appendix C. In addition, Appendix D provides the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) and the Cronbach's Alpha for each factor.

To measure *perceived credibility*, this study uses a seven-point semantic differential scale provided by Ohanian (1990). This scale consists of fifteen items, five for each of the three subdimensions (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness). An example item for the attractiveness vacancy was "the candidate is unattractive/attractive", for the expertise vacancy "the candidate is unqualified/qualified" and for the trust vacancy "the candidate is insincere/sincere". In order to check whether the items of perceived credibility loaded together, a PCA was conducted. The PCA revealed three components exceeding 1, explaining 67.71% of the variance. In addition, 5 items loaded per factor which indicated the difference between each subdimension. The minimum factor loading was .56. The reliability analysis indicated a

high reliability of the scale as Cronbach's Alpha = .90 (Field, 2009). The reliability of the scale could not be further improved. Although the Principal Component Analysis indicated three different components (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness), the fifteen-item semantic differential scale of Ohanian (1990) was still used to measure perceived credibility as this is found to be a validated scale to measure perceived credibility.

In order to measure the *likelihood of being invited for a job interview*, two-items were used based on Fishbein and Azjen (1975). The first item measured the strength of the likeliness to invite the candidate to a job interview ("if you were a recruiter, how likely is it that you would invite this person to a job interview?") and the second item measured the subjective probability that the inviting behaviour will be effectively performed within the next three months ("how likely is it that if a vacancy opens in your office in the next three months, you would invite this candidate for a job interview?"). A principal component analysis was conducted to check whether the items loaded together. The PCA revealed the presence of one component with an eigenvalue exceeding 1, explaining 92.93% of the variance. In addition, the two items loaded with a minimum of .93 on component 1. The reliability analysis indicated that the scale can be considered highly reliable as Cronbach's Alpha = .92 (Field, 2009). The reliability of the scale could not be further improved.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Control variables

First of all, we checked whether different control variables had an influence on the dependent variable. In order to explore whether gender had an effect on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, an independent samples t-test was performed. The results illustrated that respondents' gender had no significant effect on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, as there was no difference between males (M = 4.59, SD = 1.52) and females (M = 4.65, SD = 1.37), $t(208) = -.30$, $p = .76$, 95% CI [-.45, .33]. Secondly, we checked whether education level had an influence on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. A one-way ANOVA showed no significant relationship between respondents' education level and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, $F(6, 209) = 1.44$, $p = .20$. Finally, we checked whether age had an influence on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. A one-way ANOVA showed no significant difference between age and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, $F(5, 209) = 2.03$, $p = .08$.

4.2 Manipulation check

As a manipulation check respondents were asked whether they were familiar with the presented job applicant. None of the respondents indicated that they were familiar with the job applicant used in the experiment. No further manipulation checks were conducted regarding the smile of the applicant, as the adequacy of the manipulation – whether or not the job applicant smiled – is not a matter of participation perception (O'Keefe, 2003).

4.3 Mediation

This study followed the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach in order to test whether perceived credibility mediates the relationship between the independent variable (facial expression) and the dependent variable (the likelihood of being invited for a job interview). Based on this approach, mediation is present when: 1) there is a significant effect of the independent variable (facial expression) on the dependent variable (the likelihood of being invited for a job interview), 2) there is a significant effect between the independent variable (facial expression) and the mediator (perceived credibility), 3) the mediator is significantly related to the dependent variable, and finally 4) the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable is reduced in magnitude when the mediator is included. In order to check whether mediation was present, the first assumption has to be met. Moreover, this means there needs to be a significant effect of facial expression on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. An independent

samples t-test showed no significant difference between smiling (M =4.70, SD = 1.43) and a neutral facial expression (M = 4.54, SD = 1.45) in a LinkedIn profile picture on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, $t(208) = .81$, $p = .42$, 95% CI [-.23, .55]. Since the first criterion of Baron and Kenny (1986) is not met, no mediation has occurred. However, all other analyses were still conducted in order to check for possible effects of the hypotheses. In addition, the remaining steps of Baron and Kenny (1986) were still performed in order to demonstrate that we can execute these tests.

4.4 Mediating and moderating variables

In this section the mediating and moderating variables will be examined and the hypotheses will either be rejected or confirmed by conducting multiple independent samples t-tests, a one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA), and a regression analysis. Table 1 provides an overview of the means and standard deviations per condition.

Table 1.

Means and standard deviations of variables per condition

Facial expression	**Smiling**						**Neutral facial expression**					
Job type	**Attra**		**Expert**		**Trust**		**Attra**		**Expert**		**Trust**	
	M	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***	***M***	***SD***
Perceived credibility	4.36	.15	4.45	.14	4.61	.14	4.37	.09	4.34	.13	4.35	.13
Likelihood of being invited	4.89	.25	4.41	.27	5.00	.24	4.95	.21	4.24	.29	4.39	.27
Likelihood of being invited in 3 months	4.74	.21	4.29	.29	4.93^{a}	.27	4.88	.24	4.50	.27	4.17^{b}	.25
Likelihood of being invited (total)	4.81	.22	4.35	.27	4.97	.25	4.91	.20	4.37	.27	4.28	.25

Note. Attra = attractiveness, expert = expertise, and trust = trustworthiness. Different superscripts within rows relate to significant differences between conditions, $p < .05$, two-tailed.

Facial expression and perceived credibility

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that people who smile in their LinkedIn profile picture will be judged as more credible compared to people who show a neutral expression in their LinkedIn profile picture. In order to test H1, an independent samples t-test was performed with facial

expression as the independent variable and perceived credibility as the dependent variable. The analysis showed no significant difference between a smiling job candidate ($M = 4.47$, $SD = .82$) and a job candidate who showed a neutral facial expression ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .69$) on perceived credibility, $t(193.09) = 1.06$, $p = .29$, 95% CI [-.10, .32]. Therefore, H1 is rejected. In addition, the second criterion of Baron and Kenny (1986) was not met, as there was no significant difference between facial expression and perceived credibility.

Smiling and the influence of different job types

The second hypothesis was a subset of three different hypotheses. The hypotheses posed that facial expression interacts with job type, such that smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture (H2A) positively affects credibility perceptions for an attractiveness-job, (H2B) negatively affects credibility perceptions for an expertise-job, and (H2C) positively affects credibility perceptions for a trustworthiness-job. In order to test the hypotheses a one-way ANOVA was performed. Results indicated that there was no interaction effect between facial expression and job type on perceived credibility, $F(2, 210) = .56$, $p = .57$. Post-hoc comparisons using the Tukey-test illustrated that for the attractiveness-job, there was no significant difference between smiling ($M = 4.36$, $SD = .87$) and a neutral facial expression ($M = 4.37$, $SD = .55$) on perceived credibility for the attractiveness job, $Mdifference = -.01$, $p = 1$, 95% CI [-.51, .49]. Thus, H2A is rejected. H2B posed that smiling has a negative effect on credibility perceptions for the expertise job. H2B can also be rejected, as there was no significant difference between smiling ($M = 4.45$, $SD = .79$) and a neutral facial expression ($M = 4.34$, $SD = .78$) on perceived credibility for the expertise job, $Mdifference = -.11$, $p = 1$, 95% CI (-.42, .64). Finally, there was no significant difference in perceived credibility ratings between smiling ($M = 4.61$, $SD = .79$) and a neutral facial expression ($M = 4.35$, $SD = .76$) for a trustworthiness job, $Mdifference = .26$, $p = .73$, 95% CI (-.28, .80). Therefore, H2C can be rejected.

The influence of perceived credibility on the likelihood of being invited to a job interview

To test the final hypothesis, a regression analysis was carried out. Hypothesis 3 (H3) proposed that a high level of perceived credibility increases the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. The results illustrated that perceived credibility predicted the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, $F(1, 208) = 102.86$, $p = < .001$, which explained 33% of the variance ($R^2 = .33$). In addition, perceived credibility was positively related to the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, $b = 1.10$, $\beta = .58$, $t(172) = 10.14$, $p = < .001$. Thus, H3 was confirmed. In addition, the third criterion of Baron and Kenny (1986) was met, as perceived

credibility was significantly related to the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. The fourth criterion was not checked as this is only done when the first three criteria are met (Baron & Kenny, 1986).

4.5 Additional analyses

Additional analyses were performed to complement the results in previous paragraphs. The Process Macro for SPSS (Hayes, 2013) was used in order to support the hypotheses and the performed analyses. The *Y* is the dependent variable (the likelihood of being invited for a job interview) and *X* stands for the independent variable (facial expression). Furthermore, the *M* represents the mediator in this study (perceived credibility*)* and the *W* stands for the moderator in this study (job type). Table 2 illustrates the relationships and interaction effects between the different variables of this study. These results strengthen the claims made about the proposed hypotheses.

Table 2.

Mediation and moderation using the Process Macro from Hayes (2013)

		***M* (Perceived credibility)**			***Y* (Likelihood of being invited for a job interview)**		
		b	***SE***	***p***	***b***	***SE***	***p***
X (Facial expression)	$a_{-.15}$	.11	.11	.30	c_1' .04	.17	.81
M (Perceived credibility)		-	-	-	*b* 1.10	.13	<.001*
W (Job type)	$a_{-.01}$	.05	.06	.43	-	-	-
XW	$a_{.13}$	.13	.13	.30	-	-	-
Constant		4.41	.05	<.001*	c_2' -.21	.56	.71
			$R^2 = .01$			$R^2 = .33$	
			$F(3, 206) = .94, p = .42$			$F(3, 206) = 51.22, p = <.001$*	

Note. (**) = significance on .05 level and (*) = significance on .01 level.

In addition to using the Process Macro, further analyses were performed to check for unexpected effects. The results in Table 1 illustrated there was a significant difference between the smiling job applicant ($M = 4.93$, $SD = 1.48$) and the applicant who showed a neutral facial expression ($M = 4.17$, $SD = 1.52$) on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview within the next three months for a trustworthiness vacancy. This was confirmed by an independent samples t-test, $t(64) = 2.06$, $p = .04$, 95% CI [.02, 1.52]. There were no other significant

differences between facial expression and different types of vacancies on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview and the items which construct this concept. In addition, a one-way ANOVA indicated that there was no interaction effect between facial expression and job type on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview, $F(2, 210) = 1.56$, $p = .21$. Figure 6 provides a final overview of all the hypotheses and whether or not they are confirmed or rejected.

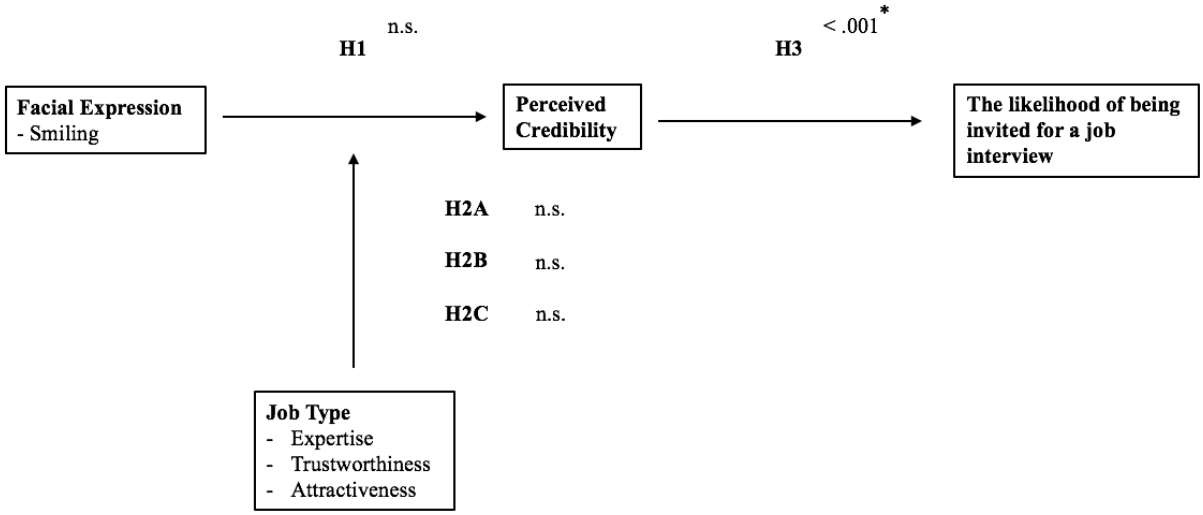

Figure 6. Conceptual model with significant relations

Note. (**) = significance on .05 level, (*) = significance on .01 level, and n.s = not significant

5. GENERAL DISCUSSION

The aim of this study is to answer the following research question: "*How does smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different types of job vacancies?"* By conducting a 2 (facial expression: smiling versus a neutral facial expression) x 3 (job type: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) between subject factorial design, this study aims to provide insight into the differences between smiling job candidates and candidates who show a neutral facial expression in their LinkedIn profile picture.

5.1 Discussion

The first hypothesis (H1) proposed that people who smile in their LinkedIn profile picture will be judged as more credible than people who have a neutral facial expression in their LinkedIn profile picture. Surprisingly, the results of this study indicate that there is no difference in credibility ratings between someone who smiles in a LinkedIn profile picture and someone who shows a neutral expression. Therefore, H1 was not supported.

The second hypotheses expected that job type had a moderating effect on the relation between facial expression in a LinkedIn profile picture and perceived credibility ratings. More specifically, smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture (H2A) positively affects credibility perceptions for an attractiveness-job, (H2B) has a negative effect on credibility perceptions for an expertise-job, and (H2C) positively affects credibility perceptions for a trustworthiness-job. We did not find support for any of these hypotheses, as there was no interaction effect between facial expression and job type on ratings of perceived credibility. However, an unexpected direct effect was found of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture for a trustworthiness vacancy on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview within the next three months. We will elaborate more on this result when discussing the unexpected findings.

The final hypothesis (H3) posed that a high level of perceived credibility increases the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. Results of this study provide support for this hypothesis which indicates that people with a greater perceived credibility will have a higher chance of being invited for a job interview. Furthermore, the results demonstrate that the persuasive nature of people with a high perceived credibility helps them obtain a job interview more quickly.

Apart from these results, some surprise findings came to light. First, we tried to find a difference between applicants who smiled in their LinkedIn profile picture and applicants who showed a neutral facial expression in their LinkedIn profile picture on ratings of perceived

credibility. We did not find any difference between those two conditions on ratings of perceived credibility. A possible explanation for this could be due to the smile of the applicant. The applicant expressed a Duchenne smile which is characterised by the *zygomaticus major* which generates a diagonal stretching of the lip and the *orbicularis oculi* which raises the cheeks of a person and generates wrinkles on the outside of the corners (Ekman et al., 1990). If these characteristics were not detected by the participants, one could argue whether the smile was genuine. Fake smiles, or non-Duchenne smiles, could lead to negative emotions and a less positive rating in job attributes, such as reliability and motivation (Krumhuber et al., 2009; Bernstein et al., 2010). In addition, there are fifty different types of smiles which can all relate to a certain emotion (Ekman, 2009). It is possible that the smile expressed by the applicant did not elicit the proposed responses or impressions. Another explanation for the close difference in perceived credibility ratings between the smiling job candidate and the candidate showing a neutral facial expression could be due to the gender of the applicant. For instance, males are expected to be agentic but when they are not perceived this way, they could get less favourable ratings (Heilman, 2012). Especially, since smiling makes one less independent and more feminine (Reis et al., 1990).

Second, we did not find a moderating effect of job type on the relation between facial expression and perceived credibility. A possible explanation for this outcome could be the job vacancies in this study. Van der Land et al. (2016) found positive effects of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview when someone was soliciting for the position of a marketing consultant. However, this study explored whether smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture could contribute when soliciting for three different type of vacancies (sales person, architect, and a back office bank cashier). It is possible that the respondents perceived the attractiveness job more appropriate for females. If males apply for a more feminine vacancy, it could negatively influence credibility ratings of a male applicant (Heilman, 2012; Curran, 1988). In addition, it was expected that smiling would decrease credibility ratings for an expertise job due to the negative effect of smiling on masculinity, independence, and leadership (Reis et al., 1990; Koenig et al., 2011). As the expertise-job for this study was an architect, one can argue whether an architect needs to possess leadership qualities in order to be a suitable for the job.

Third, we were surprised to find that smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture for a trustworthiness job had a positive effect on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview within the next three months. This was effect was unexpected as smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture for a trustworthiness job had no influence on perceived credibility ratings or the

likelihood of being invited for a job interview. A possible explanation for this finding could be due to the construct of the two concepts. As perceived credibility consists of three different subdimensions (attractiveness, expertise, and trustworthiness), it is possible that respondents did not attribute positive ratings to each subdimension which leads to a lower overall rating of perceived credibility. For instance, the difference between smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture or showing a neutral facial expression when applying for a trustworthiness job was larger for the subdimension of trustworthiness compared to the subdimensions of attractiveness and expertise.

Theoretical implications and practical implications

First of all, this study contributes to the existing body of literature focused on smiling in combination with job interviews by providing empirical evidence on the relationship between smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. Previous research, which focused on this topic, explored the effects on a qualitative level by interviewing eleven job recruiters (Van der Land et al., 2016). By empirically testing the effect of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture, this study generated different results which provides more insight into the effects of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture in combination with the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. However, it is important to note that most of the results in this study were not significant and do not add statistical power.

Secondly, this study provides insight into social information processing online when assessing a job candidate on perceived credibility and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. According to the SIP-theory, communicators adapt their (interpersonal) communicating to the cues that remain available through the medium that they are using (Walther, 1992). In this specific study there was no difference in credibility ratings and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview between a smiling candidate and a candidate showing a neutral facial expression in a LinkedIn profile picture. However, previous research indicated that smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture leads to a higher probability of being invited for a job interview (Van der Land et al., 2016). As the study of Van der Land et al. (2016) used the opinion of job recruiters, it is interesting to explore the differences in online information processing when assessing an applicant between job recruiters and a more general public.

Finally, the results of this study contribute to the concept of warranting which is the legitimacy and validity of information about another person that one receives online (Walther & Parks, 2002). In this study it was proposed that smiling can be an attribute to one's LinkedIn profile picture and the perceived look he or she is trying to create. For instance, being perceived

as more trustworthy when applying for a trustworthiness job. However, the results of this study illustrated that smiling does not have an effect on the warrant between one's LinkedIn profile picture and the perceived look he or she is trying to create for a particular vacancy. According to the warranting principle, information that is perceived as uncontrollable will carry more weight in creating impressions (Walther, Van Der Heide, Hamel, & Schulman, 2009). Therefore, it is possible that respondents perceived the smile as a controlled online visual cue which gives smiling less impact on the process of forming impressions.

Besides theoretical implications, this study also has practical implications. The results of this study illustrate that there is no difference in the likelihood of being invited for a job interview between a smiling applicant and an applicant showing a neutral facial expression. Therefore, one cannot give him or herself a head start on the job market by expressing a smile in their LinkedIn profile picture. The results of this study imply that one should focus on other job related attributes in order to increase the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for a sales person, back office bank cashier, or an architect.

Second, the results of this study provide recruiters with insight into possible tactics of job candidates which could influence their decision making process. This study showed that there is no difference on ratings of perceived credibility between a smiling job candidate and a job applicant showing a neutral facial expression, when soliciting for three different types of vacancies (a sales person, a back office cashier, or an architect). Therefore, recruiters who are searching for a candidate for one of these vacancies do not have to focus on whether or not a candidate is expressing a smile in his or her LinkedIn profile picture.

Limitations and future research

The first limitation regards the smile of the job applicant. As indicated by Ekman (2009), there are fifty different types of smiles which all relate to a certain emotion. It is possible that the smile expressed by the applicant did not elicit the wanted responses or impressions. Although a qualitative pre-test indicated that the differences between the smiling picture and the picture with a neutral facial expression were most noticeable with this applicant, it could be that smile elicited different responses than were expected. In addition, previous research used videos or face-to-face settings to test the effects of smiling on the recruitment process. It is possible that smiling online elicits different responses. Therefore, researchers could check whether smiling in a 'tangible' picture produces different results on ratings of perceived credibility and the likelihood of being invited for a job interview compared to smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture.

In addition, future research should explore whether different type of smiles in LinkedIn profile pictures lead to different responses.

A second limitation of this study concerns the manipulation material, as the female gender is not taken into consideration. Prior studies have shown that there are gender stereotypic effects in the recruitment process, as gender is considered an important requirement for an effective performance in particular jobs. (Curran, 1988). Smiling can lead to less favourable ratings in independence, leadership, and masculinity (Reis et al., 1990). This could influence the impression of the candidate, especially since males are expected to be agentic (Heilman, 2012). In addition, smiling is more related to females than to males which could influence the effect of the smile (Hess, Adams Jr, & Kleck, 2005). Therefore, future research should focus on the influence of smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture with a female applicant. For instance, one could present respondents with either a female applicant or a male applicant and check whether there are differences on ratings of perceived credibility and/or the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

The third limitation is focused on the sample of this study. Due to the restricted time span of this study and possible privacy-concerns of recruiters, the sample consisted of a general public. As recruiters have the key responsibility to determine whether or not the job applicant is suitable for the job, they could have different responses to the presented profile pictures in this study. For instance, Van der Land et al. (2016) showed that recruiters prefer applicants who smiled in their LinkedIn profile picture. Therefore, researchers could further explore the differences in the decision making process between recruiters and a general public.

The final limitation of this study is that it limits to provide job applicants with advantages and disadvantages on when to smile or remain a neutral facial expression in a LinkedIn profile picture when soliciting for a particular vacancy. As LinkedIn has over 433 million members (LinkedIn, n.d.), it can be important for an applicant to stand out on LinkedIn. Therefore, future research should explore how one can use personal branding on LinkedIn to (positively) influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

5.2 Conclusion

This study aimed to answer the research question "*How does smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture influence the likelihood of being invited for a job interview for different types of job vacancies?"* An online experiment was conducted with a 2 (facial expression: smiling versus a neutral facial expression) x 3 (job type: attractiveness, trustworthiness, and expertise) between subject factorial design to answer this research question. By asking 210 respondents their

judgment on either a smiling job candidate or a job candidate who showed a neutral facial expression, this study illustrated that smiling in a LinkedIn profile picture has no effect on one's perceived credibility. In addition, smiling does not interact with job type which indicates that smiling for a particular vacancy has no effect on ratings of perceived credibility. However, a higher level of perceived credibility did increase the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. This illustrates that one can use his or her credibility to persuade a job recruiter and obtain a job interview more quickly.

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Appendix A: Job vacancies (adopted from Van der Land and Muntinga, 2014):

Attractiveness vacancy

Imagine you are a recruiter and have to find a suitable job candidate for the vacancy below. Please study this vacancy carefully since you will be asked questions about it. There is a minimum of twenty seconds to study this vacancy before you can continue, but feel free to focus as long as you want.

Sales Person Fashion Store:

For an international male fashion brand, we are looking for males to promote our fashion clothes at the entrance of our store in Amsterdam. As a sales person, your duty will be to welcome and establish the first contact with our customers. The requirements for this vacancy are as following:

• Representative appearance.

• Camera and photo friendly.

• Aged between 25 - 35.

• Prior experiences in promotion.

• Preferably around 1.80 - 1.90 meters tall.

Trustworthiness vacancy

Imagine you are a recruiter and have to find a suitable job candidate for the vacancy below. Please study this vacancy carefully since you will be asked questions about it. There is a minimum of twenty seconds to study this vacancy before you can continue, but feel free to focus as long as you want.

Back Office Cashier at a Bank:

For a banking company we are looking for a cashier to work in the back office. As a back office cashier you are responsible for the daily operations and financial security procedures of this bank. The requirements for this vacancy are as following:

• You must be self-disciplined and reliable.

• You will possess two or more years of back office cashier experience at a bank or comparable environment.

• You will count money in cash drawers at the beginning of shifts to ensure that amounts are correct and that there is adequate change.

• You will ensure safe keeping records are all up to date.

• You will be trusted with confidential client information.

Expertise vacancy

Imagine you are a recruiter and have to find a suitable job candidate for the vacancy below. Please study this vacancy carefully since you will be asked questions about it. There is a minimum of twenty seconds to study this vacancy before you can continue, but feel free to focus as long as you want.

Architect at an Architectural Firm:

An established architectural firm currently holds a vacant position for an architect designing new apartment buildings in the North side of Amsterdam. These buildings will rise at the side of the IJ River as a prestigious project where the very upper class of the city is expected to be housed. Candidates will be requested to submit their resume including portfolio to apply for this position. The requirements for this vacancy are as following:

• A Master's (or equivalent) degree in Architecture.

• 5 - 10 years of experience with architectural design; conceptual thinker.

• Expertise in leading residential property development projects from initial design process to property transfer.

• Comprehensive technical knowledge of residential building codes.

• Computer skills: experience required in 3ds Max and AutoCAD.

Appendix B: Welcome text and introduction text**:**

Welcome text

Welcome to this research,

As a part of my study, Communication and Information Sciences at Tilburg University, I am conducting research on LinkedIn profile pictures and the effect these pictures have on the likelihood of being invited for a job interview. It only takes around 10 minutes to participate and involves answering a series of questions often on a seven-point scale. **Don't be afraid, all results are confidential and will be reviewed anonymously.** The results will only be used for the purpose of this study and will not be passed on to third parties under any conditions.

In order for my research to be successful, it is important that you answer all the questions. Keep in mind that there are no right or wrong answers since, they reflect your opinion. If you wish to receive more information about the research or have any other questions, please feel free to contact Bram Lips via

Thank you for your help, this is really appreciated. Without your participation, this research would not be possible and I would not be able to finish this project. To continue to the survey, and to acknowledge that you understand the noted terms explained above, please click the button in the right-hand corner.

Thank you very much!

Introduction text profile pictures

Below you will see the profile picture of the candidate you are considering. There is a minimum of 15 seconds to study this picture before you can continue, but feel free to focus as long as you want. **Please examine this picture carefully since you will receive a few questions about the candidate and the previous presented vacancy.**

Appendix C: Survey questions/statements

Please answer these questions like you are functioning as a recruiter. Don't take too long on filling in the answers as the first impression is most important.

- If you were a recruiter, how likely is it that you would invite this person to a job interview? (seven-point Likert scale)

- To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be (seven-point semantic differential scale)
• Unattractive/Attractive
• Not classy/Classy
• Ugly/Beautiful
• Plain/Elegant
• Not sexy/Sexy

- To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be (seven-point semantic differential scale)
• Not an Expert/Expert
• Unknowledgeable/Knowledgeable
• Unqualified/Qualified
• Unskilled/Skilled
• Inexperienced/Experienced

- To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be (seven-point semantic differential scale)
• Undependable/Dependable
• Dishonest/Honest
• Unreliable/Reliable
• Insincere/Sincere
• Untrustworthy/Trustworthy

How likely is it that if a vacancy opens in your office in the next three months, you would invite this candidate for a job interview? (7-point Likert scale)

Appendix D: Questionnaire items and factor loadings

Construct	Items	*Factor Loadings (Varimax Rotation*
Perceived Credibility	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: unattractive/attractive	.78
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: not classy/classy	.56
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: ugly/beautiful	.69
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: plain/elegant	.66
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: not sexy/sexy	.80
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: not an expert/expert	.82
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: unknowledgeable/knowledgeable	.81
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: unqualified/qualified	.78
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: unskilled/skilled	.83
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: inexperienced/experienced	.75
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: undependable/dependable	.59
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: dishonest/honest	.89
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: unreliable/reliable	.84
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: insincere/sincere	.84
	To what extent do you perceive the job applicant to be: untrustworthy/trustworthy	.84
	Cronbach's alpha: .90	
	Eigenvalue: 6.58	

Intention to be invited to a job interview	How likely is it that you would invite this person to a job interview?	.97
	How likely is it that if a vacancy opens in your office in the next three months, you would invite this candidate for a job interview?	.97
	Cronbach's alpha: .93	
	Eigenvalue: 1.86	