

Does intense language and suitable attire increase the likelihood of getting hired?

An experimental study regarding the effect of language intensity and attire in LinkedIn profiles on perceived person-environment fit, likeability and professionalism of a potential job candidate's hireability

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Abstract

This study explores how certain type of clothes (formal versus casual) used in LinkedIn profile pictures and the type of language (intense versus no intense) used in the profile summaries affect impressions of the perceived person-environment fit, likeability, professionalism and the likelihood of hiring. 109 participants were randomly assigned to one of four manipulated LinkedIn profiles. The study started with showing one out of the two vacancies. Because of random distributions, participants saw either a vacancy from The Joyful Bar (vacancy for a bartender) or one from WePacking (vacancy for a sales representative). After seeing the vacancy, one of the four LinkedIn profiles was shown to the participants and they gave ratings on the earlier mentioned dimensions. After this rating, the second vacancy was shown (if participants first saw the vacancy of The Joyful Bar, the second vacancy displayed was from WePacking and vice versa). Additionally, the same LinkedIn that was shown after the first vacancy, was displayed again and likewise participants gave ratings on the mentioned dimensions. The results of the current study among 109 participants showed positive correlations between the perceived person-environment fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability. Moreover, results regarding the vacancy of The Joyful Bar showed that, participants who saw the LinkedIn profiles with casual wear, gave higher ratings on the perceived fit, as opposed to people who saw LinkedIn profile pictures with formal attire. Lastly, theoretical and practical implications will be discussed.

Keywords: recruitment; EWOM; online impression formation; LinkedIn; perceived person-environment fit; likeability; professionalism; hireability; formal attire; casual attire; language intensity.

1 Introduction

The advent of the web 2.0 has led organizations to increasingly add social media channels to the mix of communication channels that they use for their interactions with (future) employees, customers and clients. One of the areas in which the use of social media has become indispensable is recruitment. Organizations that do not engage in using social media are at risk of missing opportunities, especially when it comes down to recruitment strategies (Maida, 2011; Adams, 2013). Via the use of social media, organizations have the chance to pre-select job candidates by screening their profiles before inviting them to a job interview (also called e-recruitment) (Van Der Land, Willemsen & Unkel, 2015; Verschuren, 2012; Mauer & Li, 2007). This pre-selection is an important stage in the recruitment process since it is cost-effective and efficient, and the Human Resource (HR) department can attentively focus on finding a perfectly suitable match (Maida, 2011; Keenan 1987).

One of the most frequently used social network sites for online pre-selection is LinkedIn. LinkedIn is an online professional networking website with more than 500 million members in 200 different countries and regions all over the world. On this site, professionals can connect with each other "to become more productive and more successful" (LinkedIn, 2017). A LinkedIn profile can provide all kinds of informative cues about someone, such as one's work experience, education, skills, and endorsers. It is customary to present yourself on the site via a profile picture.

In fact, research shows that the informative cues presented in an online LinkedIn profile can affect how recruiters perceive the profile owner and are likely to be taken into account in the hiring process. Even minimal cues such as clothing and the type of language one uses may have an effect on recruiters' perceptions of the profile owner. This is because, recruiters have limited time to completely check the LinkedIn profiles of potential job candidates and therefore recruiters need to work as effectively and efficiently as possible. Hence, HR employees often "resort to heuristic inferential strategies to economize their judgements" (Van der Land et al., 2015, p. 175). This means that, in order to form an impression about a potential candidate, HR employers oftentimes rely on minimal (visual or linguistic) cues (Van Der Land et al., 2015).

One of those minimal cues that could affect recruiters' evaluation of potential job candidate is information related to one's physical appearance, such as the type of attire one is

wearing in a profile picture (Larsson, 2014; Chiang & Suen, 2015; Karl, Hall & Peluchette, 2013). The fact that clothes are an expressive communication medium is emphasized by Morris (1977) as he stated that "it is impossible to wear clothes without transmitting social signals" (p. 213). Thus, with the type of clothes one wears, one can manage others' impressions (Karl, Hall & Peluchette, 2013). How others -in this case recruiters- interpret the meaning and messages communicated via the type of clothing is related to the theory of person perception. This theory holds that people from their perceptions by relying on information that is available externally rather than relying on inner representational resources (e.g., forming perceptions of one based on one's attire instead of one's perceived personality) (Clark, 1997; Smith & Collins, 2009).

Accordingly, studies on what type of attire is related to what kind of impressions showed that wearing formal clothes is associated with being knowledgeable, trustworthy and credible (Lavin, Carr & Davies, 2009; Chawla, Khan & Smith, 1993). In one of the studies, students rated the perceived competence of teachers, wearing contrasting clothes. In the different conditions teachers wore either formal professional attire (*Males*: dark business suits and a tie; *Females*: black (skirted) business suits, high heels), casual professional attire (*Males*: light colored slacks, dark sport shirt, no tie; *Females*: skirt and a sweater, pumps) or casual wear (*Males and females*: blue jeans, light colored t-shirt, sport/athletic shoes). The results showed that students rated the teachers wearing the formal professional attire as having the highest competence (this construct was measured in terms of credibility/reliability) (Morris, Gorham, Cohen & Huffman, 1996).

Additionally, studies on impression formation based on clothes in recruiting showed similar outcomes. Recruiters were found to prefer working attire (e.g., more conservative clothes such as a 2-piece suit) over casual/extravagant wear, since the former would emit professionalism (Jenkins & Atkins, 1990; Tan & Graham, 2009; Malloy, 1977). These findings underline that the way one presents him- or herself seems crucial for impression formation and determines how positively one is perceived by recruiters (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). In fact, research by Ehlers (2005) indicated that the first impression a potential candidate makes is even more important in the selection procedure than one's resume.

While the effect of formal (or professional) versus casual attire on impression formation may seem straightforward, a relevant factor that might be important, is the person-environment fit. This person-environment fit (also called congruence) refers to the compatibility between an individual and work environment characteristics (e.g., formal work culture or informal work

culture) (Kristof-Brown, Zimmermann & Johnson, 2005; Spokane, Meir & Catalano, 2000). The environmental congruence in this sense refers to correspondence of characteristics of the job seeker with that of the majority of persons within his or her (future) work environment. This congruence is important since it is a necessary, not sufficient, condition for job-satisfaction. In turn, job-satisfaction is an important factor for performance and the likelihood of tenure (Spokane, Meir & Catalano, 2000). In order to attract recruiters' attention, job candidates can (consciously or unconsciously) present themselves in a more desirable manner to the recruiter when their self-presentation is congruent with the environment for which the recruiter is recruiting. In terms of clothing, for example, this would amount to wearing the attire that is preferred in the given work environment, so they can "affect recruiters' person-environment fit perceptions by promoting themselves, which can in turn increase their opportunities to be offered subsequent job interviews or the job itself" (Chiang & Suen, 2015, p. 518; Guillory & Hancock, 2012). To give a concrete example, a profile picture depicting a candidate in a suit might lead to a more positive perception of that candidate among recruiters for a consultancy business, while a picture of that same candidate in casual attire might lead to a more positive perception of that candidate among recruiters for a bar.

Another factor that might impact the relationship between the candidate's attire and how positive s/he is perceived, is the language the candidate uses. Research shows that not only visual cues such as the type of attire seems to play a crucial role in impression formation; linguistic cues are also taken into consideration (Aune & Kikuchi, 1993). Owners of a LinkedIn profile have the opportunity to create a summary or description containing information about themselves. Studies show that the type of language candidate's use in their online profile can play a role in impression formation and, thus affects how recruiters' will perceive them (Chiang & Suen, 2015). One way to manipulate that impression formation is via the use of intense words (also known as language intensity). Language intensity refers to "the quality of language which indicates the degree to which the speaker's attitude toward a concept deviates from neutrality" (Bowers, 1963, p. 416). Language is considered more intense when it includes intensifiers (e.g., words such as 'extremely', 'enormous' or 'very').

In the beginning of this introduction, it is already mentioned that the type of attire can influence impressions (oftentimes formal attire is connected to characteristics like professionalism, competence and credibility) (Jenkins & Atkins, 1990; Tan & Graham, 2009;

Malloy, 1977; Morris et al., 1996; Lavin et al., 2009; Chawla et al., 1993). Relating these outcomes to research done by Hamilton, Hunter and Burgoon (1990), concentrating on language intensifiers, it suggested that highly credible sources (in this case people who are wearing a suit) are expected to use high intensity language, while such language use would inhibit persuasiveness for less credible sources (in this case people wearing casual wear). Violating these expectations would reduce persuasiveness for highly credible sources as well as lower credible sources. The above mentioned information suggests that the use of intensifiers on LinkedIn profiles may affect the recruiter's perception in such a way that job applicants who wear extravagant clothes (e.g., colorful casual outfit) in their profile picture and who are using intensifiers in their descriptions will be perceived as less credible compared to the job applicants wearing formal attire, and therefore the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview is reduced.

Although a proper amount of studies already investigated the effect of type of clothing in recruitment, the effect of language use in recruitment and the role of congruence, those factors have never been examined abreast in the same study connected to impression formation and the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview (Van Der Land et al., 2015; Chiang & Suen, 2015; Guillory & Hancock, 2012; Jenkins & Atkins, 1990; Tan & Graham, 2009; Aune & Kikuchi, 1993; Bowers, 1963). This study tries to fill this gap. Not only the research field will be enriched with this research, eventually it could provide potential job candidates with recommendations on how they should present themselves online in order to get invited to a job interview. The main question guiding this thesis is: “How does the type of attire in a LinkedIn profile picture influence recruiters’ perceptions of the candidate and affect the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview, and is that relationship strengthened by intense language usage or perceived person-environment fit?”

2 Theoretical Framework

2.1 E-recruitment, LinkedIn and impression formation

Businesses are always focusing on optimizing their business processes so that they can work as efficiently as possible (Maida, 2011; Keenan, 1987). One business process, which is oftentimes organized by the HR department, is the recruitment of new employees. Engaging in social media can help organizations with optimizing this latter process: by e-recruitment, organizations can save up to 90% of the costs of traditional recruitment methods and reduce the time spent on the hiring process by almost 25%. Additionally, potentially the most important factor, e-recruitment, can provide organizations with access to a world-wide pool of potential job candidates with diverse skills and expertise (Sylva & Mol, 2009; Melanthiou, Pavlou & Constantinou, 2015).

E-recruitment is not only an improvement for organizations, searching for a job via the internet is also convenient for job seekers. Job seekers who are searching for a job via the internet have a wider range of choices since they are not limited to information provided offline (they can compare organizations online). In this sense, job seekers can simply retrieve information about any company online, think about the different vacancies that are available. Thus, the internet also makes it easier and quicker for job seekers to apply for a job (Sylva & Mol, 2009). One of the most popular tools used for e-recruitment is LinkedIn (Geneste, 2013; Zide, Elman & Shahani-Denning, 2014).

When recruiters find the personal profile of a potential match, they are guided by all the cues in that profile (e.g. profile picture, work experience, resume, and education) in the process of forming an impression of the profile owner. This means that the way in which LinkedIn users present themselves in their profile is crucial, since recruiters form their opinions based on those available cues (Chiang & Suen, 2015). This process revolves around the theory of self-presentation.

Self-presentation is a phenomenon that was first described by Goffman (1959). According to him, self-presentation refers to the ways in which individuals manage impressions of themselves on their audiences. In online settings such as LinkedIn, users are in greater control of any kind of information that they display than in offline settings. For instance, LinkedIn users have the opportunity to think about the profile picture they pick, the kind of work experience they show, and the type of language they use. So, in order to convey the desirable impression,

users can, or even have to, manage their self-presentation strategically (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006).

2.2 Attire as communication and the principle of thin slices

Previous studies have shown that clothes function as a nonverbal communication medium. For instance, research into the function of dress, done by Roach-Higgins and Eicher (1992), argues that because of the fact that clothes are the first visible cue in a social situation, their importance is prioritized over discourse. This suggests that in a just limited amount of time, people make inferences about someone based on their clothes. In other words, first impressions are formed in a fraction of a second so, "clothes can communicate an extensive and complex array of information about a person, without the observer even having to talk to the wearer" (Howlett, Fletcher & Pine, 2013, p. 39).

A phenomenon that underlines the above is called 'principle of thin slices'. This principle mentioned that people make broad generalizations about personalities based on only a limited exposure to others (Carney, Colvin & Hall, 2007). Within the concept of thin slides, social behavior functions as the key from which observers draw inferences about personality characteristics. An important feature in this theory is accuracy. Is it possible to draw inferences about someone based on limited cues in social behavior in only a limited amount of time? According to Goffman (1979), Allport (1937) and Ambady and Rosenthal (1992) people are definitely able to form accurate impressions of others based observing behavior for a limited amount of time. Ambady and Rosenthal (1993) studied the principle of thin slices among students and teachers. In their study, students rated 13 teachers on different personality dimensions based on 10-second silent videoclips of the teachers. The results showed that the students were able to base accurate impressions of the teachers. They had the same prediction as people (supervisors) who had substantial interaction with those teachers.

2.2.1 Theory of person perception, stereotypes and impressions

With the notion that impression formation (based on clothes) happens in only a couple of seconds, it is useful to know the ways in which clothes give rise to particular inferences. A frequently used theory in this process of impression formation is called 'theory of person perception' (Smith & Collins, 2009). The main idea behind this theory is that we shape the world around us (e.g., our choice of romantic partners, judgements about others, norm violators), based

on our own impressions (Smith & Collins, 2009). The inferences that a receiver makes, while observing the sender, can be based on real-life context situations. Suppose that person A observes person B in order to form an impression of him/her. Person B is in a room and is accompanied by others. At one point person B laughs about a joke while nobody else in the room laughs about it. At this moment person A shapes his or her impression about person B based on context (because of *others* not laughing, certain inferences about person B are made) rather than solely focusing on the sender and then making inferences about him or her. However, these real-life context situations are not applicable in online settings and thus impressions are formed online by preconceived inferences, also called stereotyping (Smith & Collins, 2009; Caers & Castelyns, 2011).

Stereotyping is often defined as "beliefs about the characteristics, attributes, and behaviors of certain groups" (Hilton & von Hippel, 1996, p.250). The information someone holds because of stereotyping is important, as it can influence impressions of subsequent behavior (Naumann, Vazire, Rentfrow & Gosling, 2009). For example, research on stereotyping in relation to age in working environments revealed a 'poor performance stereotype'. This stereotype is about the belief that older workers are less productive, motivated, and skilled than younger workers (Posthuma & Campion, 2009).

Not all stereotyping is about features that are uncontrollable (such as age), some of the cues that trigger stereotyping are controllable. This means that inferences made by receivers are based on factors that the sender has in his or her own hands. Clothing can be considered an example of a factor that the sender can manipulate. Similar to the age example, the impressions a receiver holds because of the sender's clothing can influence assumptions about personality traits (e.g., competence/credibility, expertise, trustworthiness and intellectual capabilities), which in turn function as indicators of performance in the workplace (Hannover & Kuhnen, 2002; Caers & Castelyns, 2011; Ruetzler, Taylor, Reynolds, Baker & Killen, 2011). Research on stereotyping and clothing done by Slepian, Ferber, Gold and Rutchick (2015) stated that "wearing formal clothing is related to psychological formality and social distance, whereas casual clothing is related to intimacy and familiarity" (p. 661). Quite similarly, Ruetzler et al. (2011) mention that formal attire of job candidates resulted in being perceived as more intelligent, more trustworthy and having greater expertise. Similar to Slepian et al.'s (2015) findings, casual dress was generally associated with friendliness and approachability. Another study that was conducted in

the early ‘90s examined the role of applicants’ clothes in hiring recommendations and found that applicants were perceived as more forceful and received more favorable hiring recommendations when wearing more masculine clothing (e.g., wearing a suit opposed to wearing a dress) (Forsythe, 1990).

All in all, one’s attire can affect impressions, bias certain personality traits, and impact final hiring decisions (Ruetzler et al., 2011). Therefore, in the current research the following hypotheses are tested:

H1a: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture are perceived more as more likeable than users who wear casual attire.

H1b: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture are perceived more as more professional than users who wear casual attire.

H1c: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture are more likely to get invited to a job interview than users who wear casual attire.

H1d: Impression formation mediates the relationship between attire and being invited for a job interview: Formal clothing leads to more favorable impressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, affect the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

The previous section describes how clothing can affect impression formation. Applying this information to work situations, it is important to mention is that it depends on the nature of the company how one’s clothing affects how s/he is perceived (in a business where employees are expected to wear a suit, wearing a suit is most preferred and vice versa). In this sense, the nature of the company plays a moderating role in the current research and therefore the following hypotheses will be added:

H1e: In hypotheses H1a-H1d, the nature of the company fulfills a moderating role in a way that: in companies where one is expected to wear a suit, actually wearing a suit is more accepted (opposed to wearing casual wear) and in companies where one is expected to wear casual wear, actually wearing casual wear is more accepted (opposed to wearing a suit).

2.3 Theory of congruence, perceived person-environment job fit and impressions

The relationship between attire and impression formation might be affected by the congruency of a person’s attire with the work environment for which s/he is being recruited (Perdue, Readon &

Peterson, 2007; Chiang & Suen, 2015). The congruence principle is a phenomenon well explained in research by Holland (1959). In his study about personalities and working environments, he came up with six personality types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising and conventional), also known as the RIASEC types. According to Mount and Muchinsky (1978):

> "these types are believed to be both a summary of what is known about people in a given occupational group and a particular way of categorizing such information. Additionally, Holland states that work environments can be categorized into six types, with the six environmental types corresponding to the six personality types. The six environments are believed to characterize the common social and physical environments in our culture. The degree of congruence between an individual's environmental type and interest personality type is a basis for theorizing about person/environment interactions." (p. 85, Mount & Muchinsky, 1978).

The importance of this congruence principle, also named person-environment fit, is mentioned in research by Perdue et al. (2007). In their research they examined the relationship between person-environment fit and job-satisfaction. The results of that study showed that person-environment congruence seems to be positively related to job satisfaction. In other words, when people felt great congruence between the characteristics needed for their job and their own characteristics, they were more satisfied and therefore their likelihood of tenure will be greater and their achievements will be better.

With this information in mind, it seems to be important for recruiters to search for a perfect fit between the characteristics of a person and the characteristics needed for a specific job (e.g., when someone holds *realistic* characteristics (according to the RIASEC of Holland (1959)), that person will be more satisfied, will perform better and is more likely to keep the job, when the job involves *realistic* characteristics (according to the types of work environments that Holland (1959) sketched).

Recent work supports the notion that perceived-person-environment fit is an important element that weighs into recruiters' impressions of a candidate. In a study by Chiang and Suen (2015), the perceived person-environment fit was measured. In their research they stated that potential job candidates can influence recruiters' perceptions of the person-environment fit by presenting themselves in the preferred way (a way which fit the job), which can increase the

chance of getting invited to a job interview or even to get the job itself. The way job seekers present themselves influences the recruiters' impressions of the behavioral intentions of that potential job candidate (Chiang & Suen, 2015). This phenomenon of optimal self-presentation is also mentioned in a book by Stephan Greenblatt (1980). In this book he explains self-fashioning, which is about image-building which, in turn, affects perceptions of one's identity. Connecting all the aforementioned information to the type of clothes one is wearing in a LinkedIn profile picture, it suggests that recruiters who are seeing certain clothes, directly make inferences about the personality of that potential job candidate. This process can be related to an underlying mechanism called 'code' (McCracken & Roth, 1989). This code stands for knowledge about "social and cultural norms that members of communities or social groups share. The more people that understand the code, the more potent the clothing will be at communicating information" (Howlett et al., 2013, p.39-40; McCracken & Roth, 1989). Applying this to attire in organizations, it suggests that job candidates who wear the same type clothes as preferred in the organization, are perceived as more understandable (in terms of the culture/norms of the organization) than job candidates who wear attire different from that of their potential colleagues.

So, when the code of attire is related to the social and cultural norms of the organization, recruiters make inferences about the personality traits of a potential job candidate based on his/her clothes and take the potential fit between the job candidate and the organization into account. Previous research showed that wearing a suit results in higher perceptions of professionalism (Ruetzler et al., 2011). Suppose a recruiter is searching for a job candidate who holds high levels of professionalism, because that is an important characteristic for the job (for instance, in the health sector). When the recruiter comes across the profile of a jobseeker who wears a suit, the perceptions of professionalism increase, which will result in a better perceived person-environment fit. Consequently, recruiters' perceptions of how well the potential job candidate will perform on the job, will be more positive and therefore they are eventually more likely to invite that potential job candidate for an interview or even hire him or her (Chiang & Suen, 2015).

Taking all the previous information into consideration the following hypotheses will be tested:

H2a: LinkedIn users who wear formal attire in their profile picture, are likely to receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and are therefore perceived as more likeable than users who wear casual attire.
H2b: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture, are more likely to receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and are therefore perceived as more professional than users who wear casual attire.
H2c: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture, are more likely to receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and are therefore more likely to get invited to a job interview compared to users who wear casual attire.
H2d: Impression formation mediates the relationship between attire, perceived person-environment fit and being invited for a job interview: Formal clothing leads to higher ratings of perceived person-environment fit, which will lead to more favorable impressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, affect the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

2.4 Language and persuasiveness

As mentioned in the introduction, language plays an essential role in impression formation (Hancock & Dunham, 2001). Language is "a rule-governed system whereby one may choose to either follow or violate norms" (Averbeck & Miller, 2014, p. 72). The style of speaking and writing influences the persuasiveness of the communicated message. Persuasive messages are created to reinforce or change behavior, attitude, values of others (Bogdan, 2011). Relating this information to LinkedIn and e-recruitment, it seems that the description option LinkedIn offers its users is an important section. Within this section LinkedIn users have the possibility to describe themselves and so persuasiveness can play an essential role. When the message in the description section is persuasive, it could affect recruiters' perceptions of that LinkedIn user (e.g., h/she is probably suitable for the job because in the description h/she stated that h/she is a good team player which is a highly preferred feature for the job) and eventually it may even lead to recruiters contacting that profile owner. The question that arises: "How to create such a persuasive message that has positive effects on the recruiters (e.g., contact the profile owner for a job interview)?"

2.4.1 Language intensity and language expectancy theory

One of the ways to create persuasiveness in a message is the use of language intensity. As stated, language intensity are mainly "language markers that influence the extent to which a message differs from a neutral position" (Blankenship & Craig, 2011, p. 195). Language intensity can be divided into two forms. The first form of intense language contains emotion-laden words, or is about specific graphic language. In order to increase emotionality in a word, *semantic* intensifiers and *lexical* intensifiers can be used. As such, semantic intensifiers refer to "words that can replaced with a less extreme versions (e.g., using 'gigantic' instead of 'large')" (Burgers & De Graaf, 2013, p. 170), whereas lexical intensifiers are words that can be removed from the text but that will result in decreasing intensity (e.g., 'very large' is more intense than 'large') (Burgers & De Graaf, 2013, p. 170). The second form of intense language is about a reflection of the extremity of a source's position on an issue (Dillard & Pfau, 2002). This style is about specificity, which means that the more specific language someone uses to advocate their opinion about a certain topic, the more intense language is used. For example, if something is described as 'horrible', it is perceived as more intense than when it is described as 'discomforting' (Burgers & De Graaf, 2013). Additionally, messages containing high-intensive words are perceived as clearer and, therefore, more persuasive. For messages including low-intensive words the opposite was found: low-intensive messages are less understandable and therefore less persuasive (Liebrecht, 2015).

A crucial factor that has to be taken into account when considering the use of language intensifiers, is the discrepancy between the expected language use and the actual language one uses, because this also influences the persuasiveness of the message. This phenomenon is known as 'the language expectancy theory' (Burgoon, 1995). As mentioned in the beginning of this section, language use is about following or violating norms (Averbeck & Miller, 2014). Language expectancy theory states that whenever expectations are violated (either positively or negatively), it changes the impressions and attitudes towards the message source (Burgoon, 1995; Averbeck & Miller, 2014). In this sense, meeting the expectations is desirable for the message source in terms of credibility. As mentioned, using intensifiers influences the perceptions of the message source in a way that high credible sources (in this case people who are wearing a suit) are expected to use high intense language and lower credible sources are expected not to use intensifiers (note that over the top usage of intense language is probably

working against someone is every situation). Whenever message sources are meeting these expectations, they are perceived as more favorable, which positively affects the persuasiveness of the advocated message. Violating these expectations will reduce the persuasiveness of the message (Hamilton, Hunter & Burgoon, 1990; Averbeck, 2010).

Connecting all the above mentioned information, the following hypotheses will be tested.

H3a: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture and who are using high intensive words in their descriptions are perceived as more likeable than users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions.

H3b: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture and who are using high intensive words in their descriptions are perceived as more professional than users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions.

H3c: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire and who use high intense words in their description section on LinkedIn are more likely to get invited to a job interview than users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions.

H3d: Impression formation mediates the relationship between attire, language form and being invited for a job interview: Formal clothing and the use of high intense language in LinkedIn descriptions sections, will lead to more favorable impressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, affect the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

2.5 Study design

The current study measures the effect of attire in LinkedIn profile pictures on positive impression formation by recruiters (likeability and professionalism) and the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview. In this study two moderators are added: perceived person-environment fit (measured via: the perceived person-job fit and the perceived person-organization fit) and type of language (measured via: intense descriptions versus no intense descriptions). The moderator ‘perceived person-environment fit’ is hypothesized to strengthen the relationship between type attire and positive impressions in term of: when a LinkedIn user is wearing formal attire in their profile picture, it will enlarge the effect on positive impressions formed recruiters if it is congruent with the characteristics needed job the job. The moderator ‘type of language’ is hypothesized to strengthen the relationship between type of attire and positive impressions in such way that: formal attire and the use of intensifiers enlarge the effect on positive impressions

formed by recruiters. Subsequently, positive impressions mediated the relationship with the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview, the more positive the impressions formed by the recruiters, the more likely the job candidate is to get invited to a job interview and vice versa.

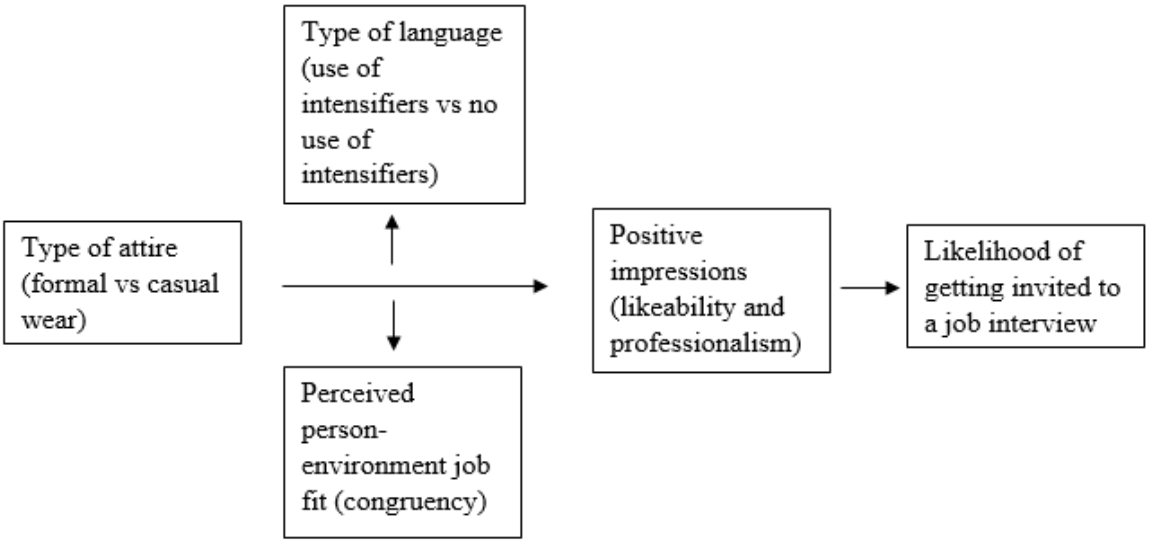


Figure 1. Conceptual model current study.

3 Method

3.1 Participants

In this study, a total of 109 participants (43 male, 66 females) participated. These participants were gathered via convenience sampling (mostly online) and had all partaken freely. Their ages ranged from 19 to 77 years old, with the average age of the respondents at 27.2 (*SD* = 9.36). Furthermore, the nationalities amongst the participants differed from each other. The majority had a Dutch nationality (N=90), while other participants were either Swedish (N=3), German (N=3), American (N=3), French (N=2), Spanish (N=1), Polish (N=1), Italian (N=1), Indian (N=1), Filipino (N=1), Canadian (N=1), Bulgarian (N=1) or Brazilian (N=1). Additionally, most of the respondents were highly educated since the majority of the sample had a university degree (N=57). In Appendix D, tables 1, 2 and 3 displays some demographic data.

3.2 Experimental stimuli and design

In this experiment two vacancies were shown to the participants: a vacancy for a bartender and a vacancy for a sales representative (see Appendix B). The information in these vacancies described: the (fictitious) organization, the job, what the organization wants from the job applicant (experience/characteristics) and what the job applicant can expect in return (salary/fringe benefits). Additionally, participants (randomly) viewed one of the 4 LinkedIn profiles of potential job candidates (see Appendix B):

Profile 1 (condition 1): The LinkedIn profile picture displayed someone who wears formal clothing and uses intense language.

Profile 2 (condition 2): The LinkedIn profile picture displayed someone who wears formal clothing and does not use intense language.

Profile 3 (condition 3): The LinkedIn profile picture displayed someone who wears casual clothing and uses intense language.

Profile 4 (condition 4): The LinkedIn profile picture displayed someone who wears casual clothing and does not use intense language.

So, in all of these profiles, only the type of attire (someone wore either formal or casual clothes in their profile pictures) combined with type of language (in the description section of the LinkedIn profiles of the job candidate either intensifiers were used or not) were manipulated, the

rest of the information (e.g., person in the photo, name, gender, traits of the person named in the description) remained the same.

3.2.1 Pretest

A pretest was conducted, which mainly functioned as a manipulation check (see Appendix A). In this pretest, each participant saw one of three profiles pictures (a suit representing formal clothing, a striped sweater representing medium casual clothing or a sweater with a funny text representing most highly casual clothing) and one of two profile summaries (including either intensive language or no intensive language).

After having seen a profile picture, participants indicated to what extent they considered the photo to be appealing. They also rated how formal the photo was according to them, and how formal the clothes were. Subsequently, participants read the profile summary and they indicated to what extent they considered the language use in the profile to be appealing and to be formal. All ratings were expressed on a scale from 1 (definitely yes) to 5 (definitely not).

In this pretest 31 people participated. Results of this pretest showed that the participants found the photo representing most highly casual clothing (funny text sweater) the most appealing (M = 2.31, SD = .53). Additionally, results showed that people rated the profile with the suit as most formal (M = 1.50, SD = 1.12). Moreover, participants were specifically asked how formal they would rate the clothes depicted in the picture. These results show that the photo with the suit was rated as most formal (M = 2.70, SD = 1.47). To summarize, these results indicate that the pictures with the suit are considered to be (most) formal and the picture displaying the sweater with the funny text to be the most appealing. Because of this reason, the picture featuring the sweater with the funny text was used in the current study in the conditions with ‘casual wear’.

With respect to the profile summaries, participants rated the intense language version as slightly more appealing (M = 2.30, SD = .99) and more formal (M = 2.38, SD = .96) than the version without intensifiers (*appealing*: M = 2.33, SD = 1.04; *formal*: M = 2.47, SD = 1.27)

3.3 Procedure

At first as the respondents were briefly introduced to the online survey. In this introduction text, the purpose of this study was mentioned, the amount of time it was expected to take part in the survey and it was emphasized to the participants that their answers should reflect their personal opinions. After this introduction text, the participants answered two control questions. The first

question was about whether the participant was working as recruiter and for the second question participants were asked if they ever participated in recruitment related working activities.

Subsequently, participants were assigned to one of the 4 conditions (see Section 3.2, *Experimental stimuli and design*). First, they saw a vacancy (either WePacking or The Joyful Bar). Subsequently, the participants saw one of the four LinkedIn profiles and answered questions regarding the perceived fit, how likeable the found the person in the LinkedIn profile, how professional they thought the person in the LinkedIn profile was and they answered questions about the likelihood of hiring. Subsequently, they saw a new vacancy (either The Joyful Bar or WePacking). Similarly as after seeing the first vacancy, the same LinkedIn profile was shown once again to the participants. After taking a brief look at this profile, participants were asked the same questions about the perceived fit, likeability, professionalism and the likelihood of hiring.

After this, the participants filled in some demographic data regarding their gender, age, nationality and educational level. Lastly, participants were thanked for their participation.

3.4 Measures

After having seen a vacancy and a LinkedIn profile, participants rated perceived person-environment fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability. All these constructs were measured on a 1 to 5 scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree.

3.4.1 Perceived person-environment fit

Two factors combined measured the perceived person-environment fit: the perceived person-job fit and the perceived person-organization fit. First of all, the perceived person-job fit was measured. A 3-item scale from Chiang and Suen (2015) was used for this. For example, recruiters had to indicate whether "The job seeker fits the demands of the job". All the items measuring this construct are listed in Appendix C. In a likely manner, the perceived person-organization fit was also measured via 3 items (Cable & DeRue, 2002). For example, recruiters had to indicate if "The job seeker's values match the hiring organization's values and culture". The Cronbach's alpha for this construct was .898 (M = 3.51, SD = 5.09).

3.4.2 Likeability

In order to measure likeability, a 9-item scale by Reysen (2005) was used. An example of such an item was "This person is similar to me" and "I would like this person as a coworker". All

items are listed in Appendix C. The Cronbach's alpha for this construct was .860 (*M* = 3.65, *SD* = 5.52).

3.4.3 Professionalism

In this study professionalism was measured via a 4-item scale. The items were based on existing definitions of professionalism. All items were inspired by Furnham et al. (2013), Weckert et al. (2013) and Nath et al. (2006). To give an example, participants were asked to indicate whether the potential job candidate "is professional". In Appendix C, all items are listed. The Cronbach's alpha for this construct was .810 (*M* = 3.79, *SD* = 2.78).

3.4.4 Hireability

The final construct measured in this study was the likelihood of hiring. This construct consisted of 6 items, all used in research done by Hoyt (2011). To give an example, participants gave an indication whether the potential job candidate "is a strong candidate for the position". All the items measuring this construct are listed in Appendix C. The Cronbach's alpha for this construct was .894 (*M* = 3.43, *SD* = 4.75).

3.4.5 Demographic variables

In the last part of the questionnaire control variables were added. These questions provided demographic data about the recruiters. In this survey information about age, gender, nationality and highest educational was collected. In Appendix C, all questions regarding demographic data.

4 Results

4.1 Control questions

First, regardless of the condition, in the beginning of the research participants answered two questions: whether s/he works as a recruiter or has ever participated in recruitment related activities. The results showed that 3 out of the 109 participants actually worked as a recruiter. Additionally, 47 out of the 109 participants had ever participated in recruitment related working activities.

4.2 Hypotheses testing

4.2.1 T-test and repeated measures ANOVA

The following hypotheses are tested in the next paragraph:

H1a: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture are perceived more as more likeable than users who wear casual attire.

H1b: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture are perceived more as more professional than users who wear casual attire.

H1c: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture are more likely to get invited to a job interview than users who wear casual attire.

H1e: In the previous mentioned hypotheses (H1a-H1d) the nature of the company fulfills a moderating role in a way that: in companies where one is expected to wear a suit, actually wearing a suit is more accepted (opposed to wearing casual wear) and in companies where one is expected to wear casual wear, actually wearing casual wear is more accepted (opposed to wearing a suit).

H3a: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture and who are using high intensive words in their descriptions are perceived as more likeable than users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions.

H3b: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture and who are using high intensive words in their descriptions are perceived as more professional than users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions.

H3c: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire and who use high intense words in their

description section on LinkedIn are more likely to get invited to a job interview than users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions.

First of all, a paired t-test was conducted in order to see if the results regarding the different vacancies could be combined. Results of this t-test showed that the perceived degree of the candidate's professionalism was higher in relation to the vacancy of The Joyful Bar (M = 3.87, SD = 0.69) than in relation to the WePacking vacancy (M = 3.70, SD = 0.69). The paired t-test found this difference to be significant, $t(108) = 2.58$, $p < 0.05$. Professionalism was the only dependent variable which significantly differed among the vacancies. Because of this significant founding, results regarding the two vacancies could not be compared. Important to mention is that there is no hypothesis which mentioned that the type of vacancy plays a role in the measurement of any dependent variables. In other words, this aspect was not intended to be measured. However, it is an important result to stress. Subsequently, a mixed-ANOVA was conducted to measure possible significant differences between the dependent variables (perceived fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability) as a result of attire and language, amongst the different vacancies (The Joyful Bar and WePacking).

Perceived fit. A mixed-ANOVA test showed a significant main effect of vacancy, $F(1, 105.00) = 4.85$, $p < 0.05$) and an interaction effect of vacancy x clothes $F(1, 105.00) = 16.50$, $p < .001$). The parameter estimates table showed a difference between casual and formal attire in terms of perceived fit for The Joyful Bar vacancy (B = -0.51, SE = .22, t = -2.35, $p < 0.05$). Taking the descriptive data into consideration, it suggests that the participants who saw the LinkedIn profile with casual attire, rated a higher perceived fit regarding The Joyful Bar (M = 3.80) compared to the people who saw the LinkedIn profiles with formal attire (M = 3.41).

Likeability. A mixed-ANOVA test showed a significant interaction effect for vacancy x clothes, $F(1, 105.00) = 4.53$, $p < 0.05$). Surprisingly, the pairwise comparison belonging to this measurement, showed no significant differences and therefore, this interpretation cannot be generalized.

Professionalism. The mixed-ANOVA test showed a significant main effect of vacancy, $F(1, 105.00) = 7.53$, $p < 0.05$). Furthermore, a significant interaction effect was found for vacancy x clothes $F(1, 105.00) = 4.92$, $p < 0.05$). Likewise as for the dependent variable likeability, a pairwise comparison belonging to professionalism showed no significant differences. Therefore, the interaction effect for professionalism on vacancy x clothes cannot be

generalized.

Hireability. Lastly, a mixed-ANOVA test for hireability showed a significant main effect of vacancy, $F(1, 105.00) = 5.50$, $p < 0.05$). Additionally, an interaction effect was found for vacancy x clothes, $F(1, 105.00) = 9.58$, $p < 0.05$). However, the parameter estimates table showed no significant differences and therefore, this interaction effect cannot be generalized.

All in all, this means that only hypothesis H1e is accepted, but only for the vacancy from The Joyful Bar.

4.2.2 Correlation analyses

The following hypotheses are tested in the next paragraph:

H1d: Impression formation mediates the relationship between attire and being invited for a job interview: Formal clothing leads to more favorable impressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, affect the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

H3d: Impression formation mediates the relationship between attire, language form and being invited for a job interview: Formal clothing and the use of high intense language in LinkedIn descriptions sections, will lead to more favorable impressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, affect the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

H2a: LinkedIn users who wear the formal attire in their profile picture, are more likely to receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and are therefore perceived as more likeable than users who wear casual attire.

H2b: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture, are more likely to receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and are therefore perceived as more professional than users who wear casual attire.

H2c: LinkedIn users who are wearing formal attire in their profile picture, are more likely to receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and are therefore more likely to get invited to a job interview compared to users who wear casual attire.

H2d: Impression formation mediates the relationship between attire, perceived person-environment fit and being invited for a job interview: Formal clothing leads to higher ratings of perceived person-environment fit, which will lead to more favorable impressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, affect the likelihood of being invited for a job interview.

To test these hypotheses, a moderated mediation analysis seems straightforward. However, because of the fact that no main effect was found for any of the independent variables (type of

clothes and/or language), a bivariate correlation analyses could properly test the upper mentioned hypotheses.

The hypotheses tested in this paragraph are all in a mediated format. To give an answer on H1d, a bivariate correlation analysis is conducted. Results of this test are summarized and can be found in Appendix E (table 4). As shown for both vacancies, all dependent measures correlated significantly with each other, regardless of the type of attire. Because of the fact that the type of attire was not determinative, H1d is rejected.

In order to answer hypothesis H3d, again a bivariate correlation test was done. Results of this test are displayed in Appendix E (table 5). For testing H3d, both independent variables (type of attire and type of language) were included. As the results for both vacancies showed, almost all measures (likeability, professionalism and hireability) correlated significantly with the independent variables. Only for the vacancy of the Joyful Bar, which was followed by the LinkedIn profile with casual attire and intense language, no correlation between likeability and hireability was found. Additionally, for the vacancy of WePacking which was followed by the LinkedIn profile with formal attire and intense language, no significant correlation between likeability and professionalism was found. All in all this means that, regardless of the type of attire or language, almost all dependent and independent variables correlated significantly with each other for both vacancies and therefore hypothesis H3d is not supported.

Moreover, the hypotheses H2a, H2b, H2c and H2d will be discussed in one section since results from H2d will answer the H2a, H2b and H2c as well. Likewise as for H1d and H3d, a Pearson correlation test was done in order to answer the upper mentioned hypotheses. Results of these tests can be found in Appendix E (table 6). As the outcomes for both vacancies showed, regardless of the type of attire, correlations between perceived fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability were found to be positively significant. Because of the fact that results showed no differences between the various types of attire (either casual or formal) on the dependent measures, H2a, H2b, H2c and H2d are not supported.

5 Discussion

5.1 Hypotheses in practice

In the current study the main research question was: "How does the type of attire in a LinkedIn profile picture influence recruiters' perceptions of the candidate and affect the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview, and is that relationship strengthened by intense language usage or perceived person-environment fit?"

5.1.1 Hypotheses H1a-H1e

To answer this question, several hypotheses have been tested. The first 5 hypotheses (H1a-H1e) described how someone's attire on their LinkedIn profile pictures could affect impression formation. More specifically, H1a suggested that people who wear formal attire in a LinkedIn profile will be perceived as more likeable than people who wear casual wear. Results showed no significant link between formal attire and higher ratings of likeability and thus, this hypothesis was not supported. A possible explanation for this is that people who wear formal attire might come across as more socially distant (and thus less approachable), which could have affected the participants' likeability ratings. As mentioned in the theoretical framework, casual dress is often associated with friendliness and approachability (Ruetzler et al., 2011; Slepian et al., 2015).

The second hypothesis, H1b, stated that wearing formal attire on LinkedIn profile pictures will result in higher ratings of professionalism, compared to wearing casual wear. The results of this study showed that formal attire and professionalism were not significantly connected to each other and therefore, H1b was not supported. A possible explanation for this could be that the person displayed in the picture regarding 'formal attire' smiled, which could have affected how he is perceived. A person smiling might come across as less formal or more approachable which could have negatively affected the perceived professionalism.

H1c predicted that wearing formal attire on LinkedIn profile pictures will positively affect the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview. Since the results showed that the likelihood of hiring was not affected by type of attire, H1c was rejected. A possible explanation for this could be that, attire might not be the most influential factor when deciding to invited someone to the actual job interview. Future research could request participants to explain whether they would invite a possible candidate or not.

The fourth hypothesis (H1d) posited a mediated relationship: formal clothing was

expected to lead to more favorable impressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, would affect the likelihood of being invited to a job interview. The current study showed no significant mediation between the independent variable clothing and the dependent variables likeability, professionalism and hireability and so, this hypothesis was rejected.

The fifth and last hypothesis, H1e, was a moderating hypotheses which suggested that for companies in which wearing formal attire is expected, actually wearing a suit is more accepted (as opposed to wearing casual wear). In turn, for companies where one is expected to dress casually, wearing casual attire is more accepted than wearing formal attire. In this study, results showed that (only) for The Joyful Bar vacancy the perceived person-environment fit was significantly higher for the LinkedIn profile displaying casual wear than for the profile with formal wear. Since for this vacancy, wearing a suit was not obvious, H1e was accepted. Note that this only applies to The Joyful Bar vacancy.

5.1.2 Hypotheses H2a-H2d

The second set of hypotheses were all regarding attire which mediated with the various dependent variables. First of all, H2a indicated that people who wear formal attire on LinkedIn profile pictures, will receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and will therefore be perceived as more likeable. The results of this study showed no effect between formal attire and higher ratings on perceived fit or likeability in comparison to wearing casual attire. Although, for both vacancies the correlations between formal attire, perceived fit and likeability were significant. The same holds for the casual wear profiles and because of that, H2a was rejected. The possible explanation for this rejection is mentioned under the discussion of hypothesis H2d.

Additionally, H2b suggested that LinkedIn users who wear formal attire on their profile pictures, will receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and are therefore more likely to be perceived as more professional (in comparison to people who wear casual attire on a LinkedIn profile picture). Results of this study showed no significant effect between formal attire and higher ratings on perceived person-environment fit and professionalism. However, for both vacancies, results did show a significant correlation between them. Since, this was also the case for the LinkedIn profile pictures with casual attire, H2b was rejected. The possible explanation for this rejection is mentioned under the discussion of hypothesis H2d.

The third hypothesis, H2c, predicted that LinkedIn users who wear formal attire on their profile pictures are more likely to receive higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit and therefore are more likely to get invited to a job interview compared to users who wear casual clothes. This research showed no effect between attire, perceived person-environment fit and hireability. Anyhow, results of a correlation test regarding both vacancies showed positive correlations between those dependent variables. Because of the fact that these results apply for conditions with formal attire as well as for the conditions with casual attire, H2c was not supported. The possible explanation for this rejection is mentioned under the discussion of hypothesis H2d.

The last hypotheses in this string, H2d, suggested that formal clothing will lead to higher ratings of the perceived fit, which will lead to more favorable expressions of likeability and professionalism, and these, in turn, affect the likelihood of getting invited to a job interview. Results on both vacancies showed a significant correlation between formal attire and perceived fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability. However, the same results were found for casual clothing and therefore, hypothesis H2d is rejected. A possible reason for all H2 hypotheses being rejected is discussed hereafter as they have a similar explanation. A possible reason for not supporting these hypotheses could be that, formal wear does not influence the perceived person-environment fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability. The assumption that formal attire is associated with specific jobs might be old-fashioned. One could also state that for sales representatives (who we expected to be associated with formal wear), a more accessible look is preferred (more casual wear) since they are dealing with all different types of organizations and people. Definitely when considering the mean age of the participants of the current study (M = 27.2), the notion that (only) wearing a suit (opposed to casual wear) is having positive effects on likeability, professionalism and hireability might be a bit outdated.

5.1.3 Hypotheses H3a-H3d

The third set of hypotheses described an effect of the two independent variables (type of attire and type of language) on the dependent variables (likeability, professionalism and/or hireability). The first hypothesis, H3a, predicted that LinkedIn users who wear formal attire in their LinkedIn profiles and use intense words in their descriptions will be perceived as more likeable than users who wear casual wear and do not use intense words in their descriptions. The current study showed no significant interaction effects of clothing, type of language and likeability and

therefore, H3a was rejected. The possible explanation for rejecting H3a is mentioned after the discussion of H3d.

The second hypothesis, H3b, suggested that LinkedIn users who wear formal attire on their profile photos and who use high intense words will be perceived as more professional than users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions. The results showed no significant relation between clothing, language and professionalism and thus, H3b was rejected. The possible explanation for rejecting H3b is mentioned after the discussion of H3d.

The third hypothesis in this string, H3c, indicated that LinkedIn users who wear formal attire and use intense words will be more likely to get invited to a job interview opposed to users who wear casual attire and do not use intense words in their descriptions. The current study showed no significant interaction effects of clothing, language and hireability and therefore, H3c was rejected. The possible explanation for rejecting H3c is mentioned after the discussion of H3d.

The fourth and last hypothesis in this string, H3d, was a mediated hypotheses which predicted that formal clothing on LinkedIn profiles and the use of intense language, will lead to more favorable impressions of likeability, professionalism and these, in turn, will affect the likelihood of hiring. A correlation test on both vacancies showed significant correlations between the dependent variables. However, also for casual wear significant correlations between likeability, professionalism and hireability were found. Because of that, H3d was rejected. A possible reason for all H3 hypotheses being rejected is discussed hereafter as they have a similar explanation. A possible explanation for rejecting the H3 could be that formality, either in clothes (formal attire) or in language (intense language) does not influence likeability, professionalism or hireability. Despite the fact that the pretest showed that the use of high intense words is most appealing, it is oftentimes associated with formality (also measured in the pretest). In turn, the use of high intense words can result as being perceived as less approachable and more socially distant and therefore, affect variables like likeability, professionalism and hireability. Another explanation could be that, since we are living in a society where social media, phones, camera's and images in general become more important and are used on a daily basis, it can be assumed that people form first impression about other based on (total) images (e.g.: appearance) rather than only on attire or language.

5.2 Theoretical and practical implications and limitations

This research supported the notion that for companies where one is expected to wear casual wear (in the current research, the vacancy of The Joyful Bar) actually wearing casual wear on your LinkedIn profile picture is preferred since it led to higher ratings of the perceived person-environment fit. McCracken and Roth (1989) and Howlett et al. (2013), described this phenomenon as sharing the same 'code'. If people (recruiters-colleagues-potential job applicants) speak or understand each other's codes (wearing the preferred clothing for that company) the more favorable one's impressions towards one another. Additionally, not only is this finding related to the theory of code, it also underlines the principle of thin slices (Carney et al., 2007), which is about people making generalizations about others based on a limited exposure time. In this research, participants formed impressions about the LinkedIn user based on limited features (picture and language). The results show that these features are enough to influence the perceived person-environment fit.

As for practical implications, everyone who owns a LinkedIn profile should be aware of the fact that visitors of a profile inevitably form impressions about the profile owner. As mentioned above, clothes are an important feature in relation to the perceived fit. As this result showed, if one is sort of expected to wear casual wear (for a certain job), actually wearing casual wear on your LinkedIn profile picture increases the ratings of the perceived person-environment fit. So, if one is applying for a job in which casual is preferred, really wearing casual wear increases the chance of recruiters' thinking he/she is a good match with the company.

Furthermore, taking a critical look at the current research, some limitations have been found. First of all, the number of participants was relatively low. Although, in the current study 109 participants should be enough to generalize results, it is a low number. If this study will be replicated, a larger amount of participants is preferred. Another limitation regarding demographical data, is the fact that the mean age of the participants in the current study is relative low. As mentioned in the previous paragraph, this could have affected the results in such way that the assumption of wearing a suit for specific jobs, is outdated. Also results from the pretest underline this assumption since participants found the sweater with the funny text, the most appealing. Now a days, even CEO's from billion-dollar companies like Facebook (Mark Zuckerberg) and Microsoft (Bill Gates) prefer casual attire over formal clothes. In future research the questionnaire used in this study should be distributed among a population with a

wider range of age. The third limitation of this study, is the fact that only one person is used for the LinkedIn profile picture (see Appendix A and B). The pretest showed that the person displayed in the pictures was overall perceived as appealing, which could have affected the dependent measures. Such a limitation refers to a mono-operationalization and in order to increase the validity, a future replication of this research should take that into account. The fourth limitation of this study was the blurry operationalization of likeability and professionalism. More specifically, being knowledgeable (item from the likeability measure) and being professional (item from the professionalism measure) are traits that are closely related to each other. So, future research should take this into account and be more distinctive in those operationalizations.

Moreover, out of the total thirteen hypotheses tested in this study only one hypothesis, H1e, was confirmed. All hypotheses in this research, were at least expressing one connection between the independent variables (type of attire and type of language) and the dependent variables (perceived person-environment fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability). Because of the fact that the pretest showed that formal attire was perceived as such and casual wear was not, this could not be the reason for not finding significant results. Additionally, the pretest conducted in this study showed that the use of intensifiers in text was perceived as more formal compared no use of intensifiers. So, for the same reason as for the type of clothes, this could not be the reason for not finding significant results. However, it is possible that the connection between type of attire and language (on the dependent variables) is more complex than previous literature suggested. Although, there is a lot of research about how type of attire is affecting how one is perceived (Slepian et al., 2015; Ruetzler et al., 2011) and how type of language affects impression formation (Liebrecht, 2015; Burgoon, 1995; Averbeck & Miller, 2014), the connection between those two is less clear. Future research should delve deeper into the relationship between clothes and language by measuring them in a wider variety of categories. In this research only two types of clothes were manipulated. In future studies, these categories could be extended. Similarly as for the type of clothes, the type of language measured in this research was also limited to two categories: intense or no intense use of words. Again, future research could measure the persuasiveness of the message in another way (e.g.: repeating words) to see how it affects the relationship between the two independent variables.

5.3 Conclusion

The current research was about online impression formation via the platform LinkedIn. In this study the type of clothes worn in the profile and the type of language used in the description section were manipulated (clothing: formal versus casual attire, language: intense versus no intense language). The perceived person-environment fit, likeability, professionalism and the likelihood or hiring were measured. Although positive correlations were found between the perceived person-environment fit, likeability, professionalism and hireability, only the hypothesis H1e (only for The Joyful Bar vacancy) was accepted. This means that wearing casual clothes on a LinkedIn profile picture can be working in one's favor if the preferred attire for that company is also casual, as it increases the ratings of the perceived person-environment fit.

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Appendix A: Pretest

Photos used for clothing impression formation



Figure 5. Profile: striped sweater (medium casual clothing)



*Figure 6***.** Profile: sweater with funny text (highly casual clothing)



Figure 7. Profile: suite (formal clothing)

Print Screen Pretest

Example pretest regarding profile 6: Most casual wear - Intense language

Please take a look at the following photo, we will ask you to answer some statements about the photo afterwards.



Do you consider this photo to be appealing?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Do you consider the profile photo to be formal?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Do you consider the clothes in the photo to be formal?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Please take a look at the following text, we will ask you to answer some statements about the text afterwards. The text is from someone who is applying for a job.

With my excellent previous working experience, I definitely unfold myself as a true young professional who has a great hands-on mentality. Personality traits such as friendly, creative, efficient, effective, commercial, customer-oriented and flexible, really describe me as a person.

Do you consider the language used in this text to be appealing?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Do you consider the language used in the description section of this LinkedIn profile to be formal?

- Definitely yes
- Probably yes
- Might or might not
- Probably not
- Definitely not

Appendix B: Experimental stimuli

Vacancy bartender (The Joyful Bar):

The Joyful Bar: We are looking for a new bartender!

About our company: We are a well-known bar hidden in one of the best hotels in the center of Amsterdam. Our customers vary from professionals to students. We serve them breakfast, lunch, dinner and drinks. We stand for quality and service, we want to make our customers feel as comfortable as possible.

Job description:

As a bartender, you mix and serve beverages maintaining set costs and presentation. You also oversee security of beverages, checks and money. You serve guests at the level of proficiency established by management.

We are looking for someone who:

- Is professional, reliable and full of energy
- Is committed
- Knows what he/she is talking about
- Has no 9-to-5 mentality
- Is customer-oriented
- Is outgoing
- Can speak English and Dutch

We can offer you:

- A suitable salary
- The best secondary labor conditions (e.g., a car, 40 days' vacation)
- Environment where you can be yourself
- A varying team of colleagues who like to get together every now and then!

Vacancy sales representative

WePacking: We are looking for a new sales representative!

About our company: WePacking, founded in 1953, delivers packing materials to international companies. We serve three sectors: retail, food industry and industrial packing. Not only do we offer premium service in delivery, we also provide our clients with the best professional advice.

Therefore, expertise is an important hallmark of our company.

Job description:

As a sales representative, you possess excellent skills in communicating and you have a good understanding of the company's products. Your daily activities:

- To develop, present, or respond to proposals for specific customer requirements, including requests for proposal responses and solutions
- To keep informed on industry news and trends, products, services, competitors, relevant information about legacy, existing and emerging technologies, and the latest product-line developments
- To collaborate with sales teams to understand customer requirements, to promote the sale of company products, and to provide sales support
- To plan and modify product configurations to meet customer needs

We are looking for someone who:

- Is professional, reliable and pro-active
- Is committed
- Has expertise in this field
- Is flexible
- Delivers service and quality
- Is extravert
- Speaks foreign languages

We can offer you:

- An attractive salary
- Excellent fringe benefits (e.g., car, 40 vacation days)
- A working environment which is supportive
- A joyful team, who likes to get a drink every Friday afternoon

LinkedIn profiles

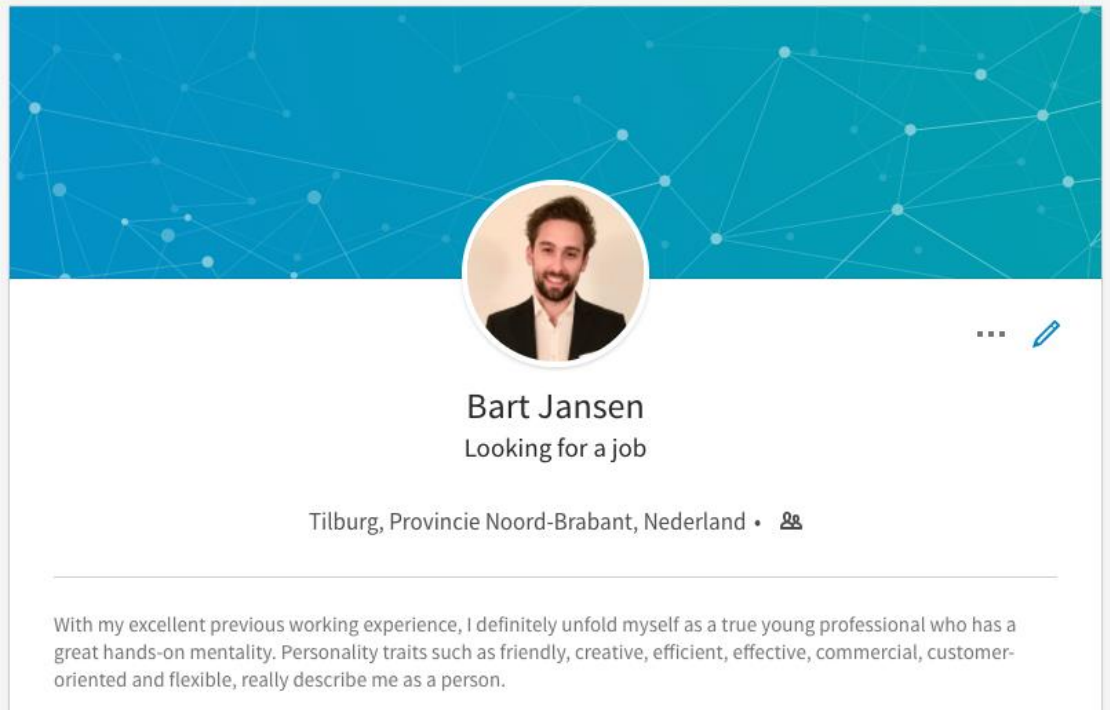


Figure 1. Formal clothing - Intense language

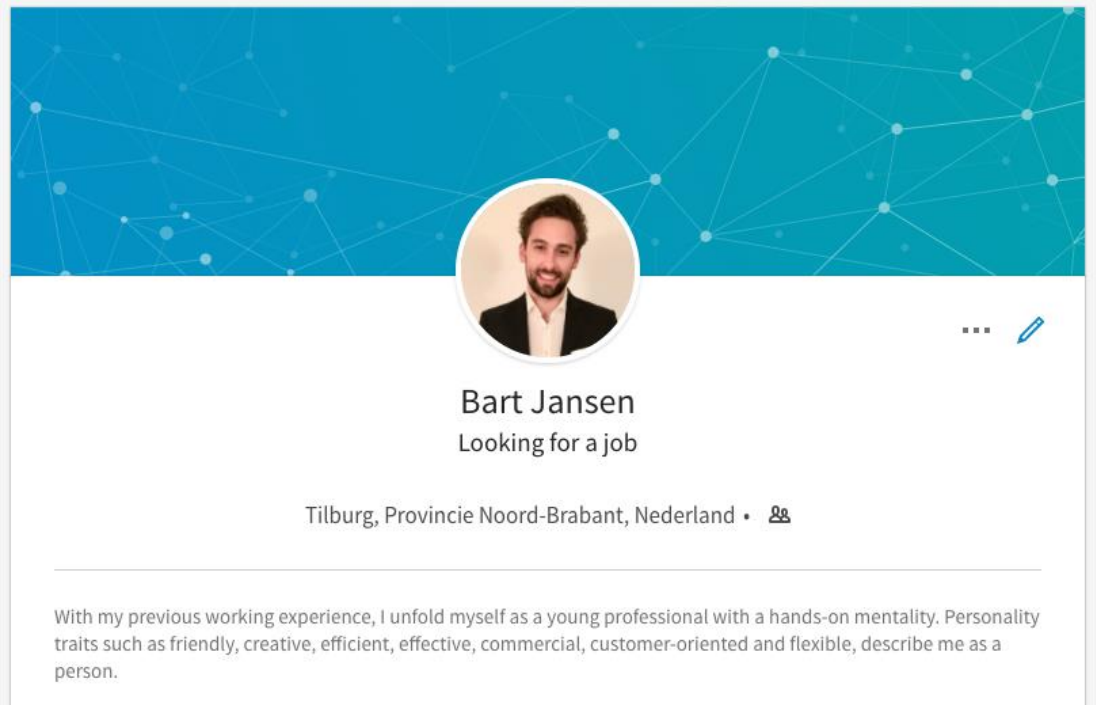


Figure 2. Formal clothing - No intense language

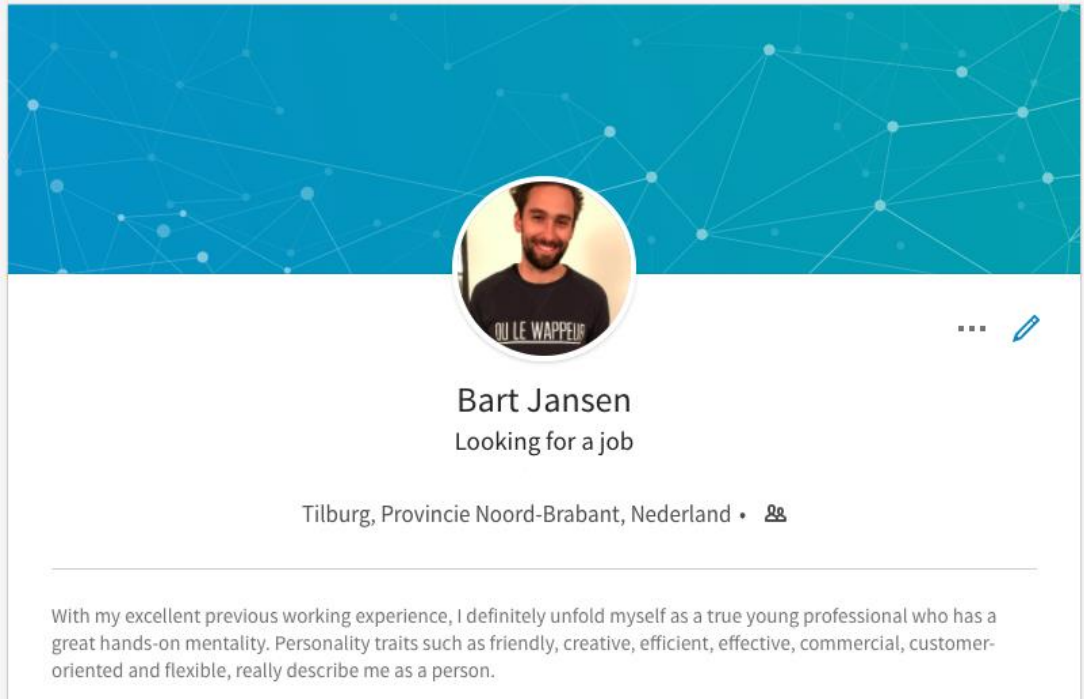


Figure 3. Casual clothing - Intense language

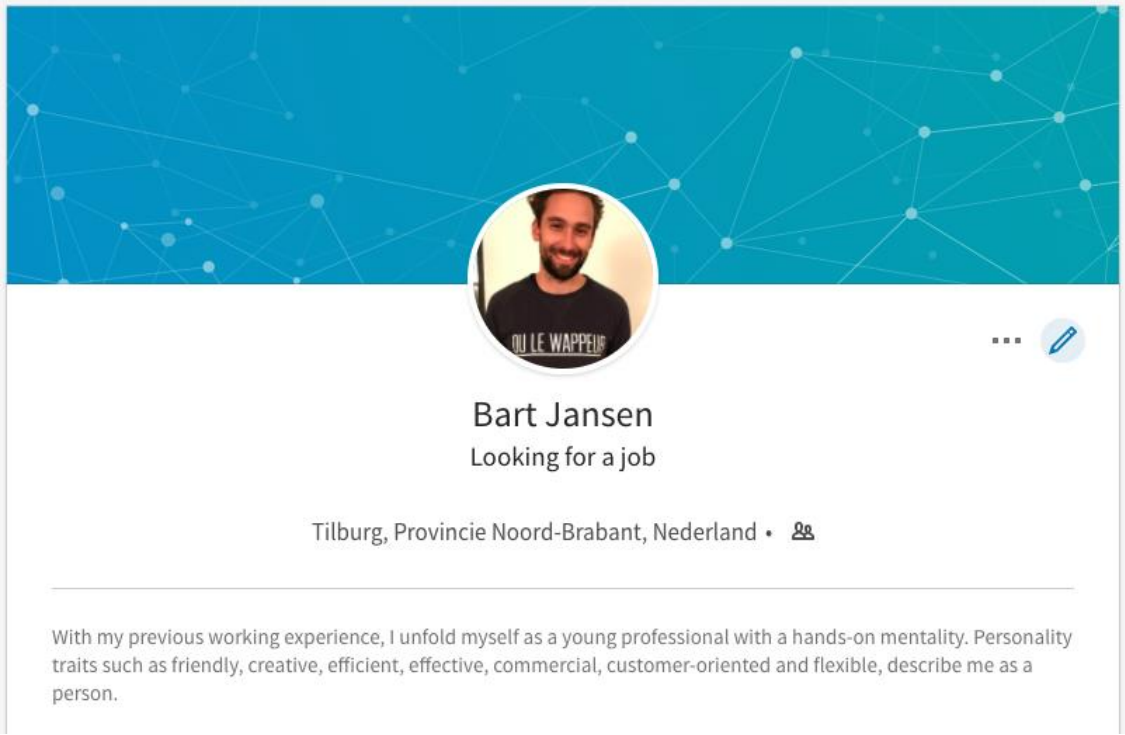


Figure 4. Casual clothing - No intense language

Print Screen Survey

Example survey profile 1: Formal wear - Intense language

Dear participant,

I would like to thank you for participating in this online questionnaire.
This questionnaire is part of my master thesis at Tilburg University.

After this text you will step in the (new) world of being a recruiter. You will see 2 vacancies and a LinkedIn profile. Based on those, you will answer some questions. It will take approximately 5-10 minutes of your time. Your participation in this research is anonymous and voluntary.
Remember that the answers should reflect your personal opinion, so there are no wrong answers.
The results of this study will only be used by researchers from Tilburg University for educational and/or scholarly purposes.

If you have any questions about this questionnaire or study, please e-mail to:

Thank you for you participation!

Lisanne van Egeraat

Before this research starts, we would like to ask you a couple of questions:

Are you working as a recruiter?

- Yes
- No

Have you ever participated in recruitment related working activities? (for example: lead a job interview and/or judge a curriculum vitae)

- Yes
- No

For this study, we want you to imagine that you are a recruiter for a professional recruiting agency. Below you will find a vacancy. We want you to read this vacancy carefully, as we will ask you to assess candidates for this vacancy afterwards.

***The joyful bar*: We are looking for a new bartender!**

About our company: We are a well-known bar hidden in one of the best hotels in the center of Amsterdam. Our customers vary from professionals to students. We serve them breakfast, lunch, dinner and drinks. We stand for quality and service, we want to make our customers feel as comfortable as possible.

Job description:

As a bartender, you mix and serve beverages maintaining set costs and presentation. You also oversee security of beverages, checks and money. You serve guests at the level of proficiency established by management.

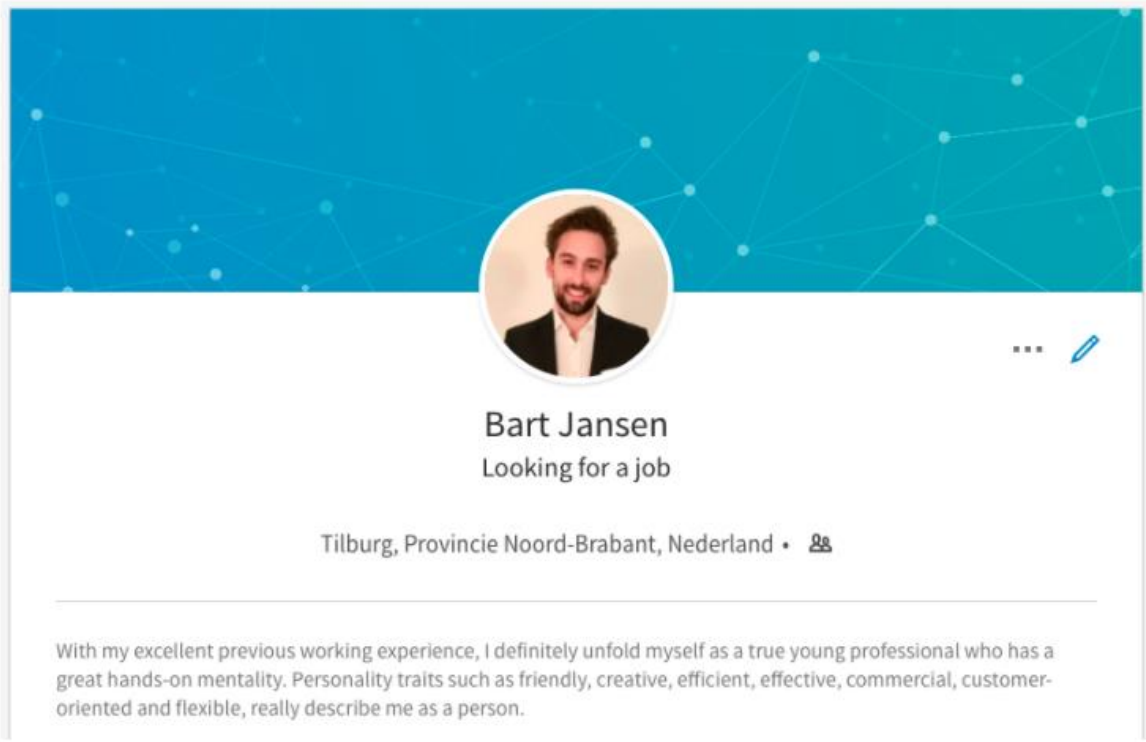
We are looking for someone who:

- Is professional, reliable and full of energy
- Is committed
- Knows what he/she is talking about
- Has no 9-to-5 mentality
- Is customer-oriented
- Is outgoing
- Can speak English and Dutch

We can offer you:

- A suitable salary
- The best secondary labor conditions (e.g., a car, 40 days' vacation)
- Environment where you can be yourself
- A varying team of colleagues who like to get together every now and then!

Take a look at the following LinkedIn profile.



Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The job seeker fits the demands of the job	○	○	○	○	○
Other employees will think this job seeker is qualified to do this job	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident that this applicant is qualified for this job	○	○	○	○	○
The abilities of the job seeker are a good match regarding the organization	○	○	○	○	○
The job seeker's values match the hiring organization's values	○	○	○	○	○
The hiring organization's values provide a good fit with the things that the job seeker values	○	○	○	○	○

Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This person is friendly	○	○	○	○	○
This person is likeable	○	○	○	○	○
This person is warm	○	○	○	○	○
This person is approachable	○	○	○	○	○
I would ask this person for advice	○	○	○	○	○
I would like this person as a coworker	○	○	○	○	○
This person is physically attractive	○	○	○	○	○
This person is similar to me	○	○	○	○	○
This person is knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○

Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I think this person is professional	○	○	○	○	○
I think this person is capable of doing the job	○	○	○	○	○
I think this person is going to carry out the job as well as possible	○	○	○	○	○
I think this person is able to learn things by himself	○	○	○	○	○

Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I would choose to interview the applicant for the job	○	○	○	○	○
I would hire the applicant for the job	○	○	○	○	○
This candidate would be committed to the job	○	○	○	○	○
The applicant deserves this job	○	○	○	○	○
I would entrust this candidate with important projects	○	○	○	○	○
This is a very strong candidate for the position	○	○	○	○	○

Thank you for assessing this first candidate. We now ask you to redo the exercise but for a different job.

***WePacking*: We are looking for a new sales representative!**

About our company: WePacking, founded in 1953, delivers packing materials to international companies. We serve three sectors: retail, food industry and industrial packing. Not only do we offer premium service in delivery, we also provide our clients with the best professional advice. Therefore, expertise is an important hallmark of our company.

Job description:

As a sales representative, you possess excellent skills in communicating and you have a good understanding of the company's products. Your daily activities:

- To develop, present, or respond to proposals for specific customer requirements, including requests for proposal responses and solutions
- To keep informed on industry news and trends, products, services, competitors, relevant information about legacy, existing and emerging technologies, and the latest product-line developments
- To collaborate with sales teams to understand customer requirements, to promote the sale of company products, and to provide sales support
- To plan and modify product configurations to meet customer needs

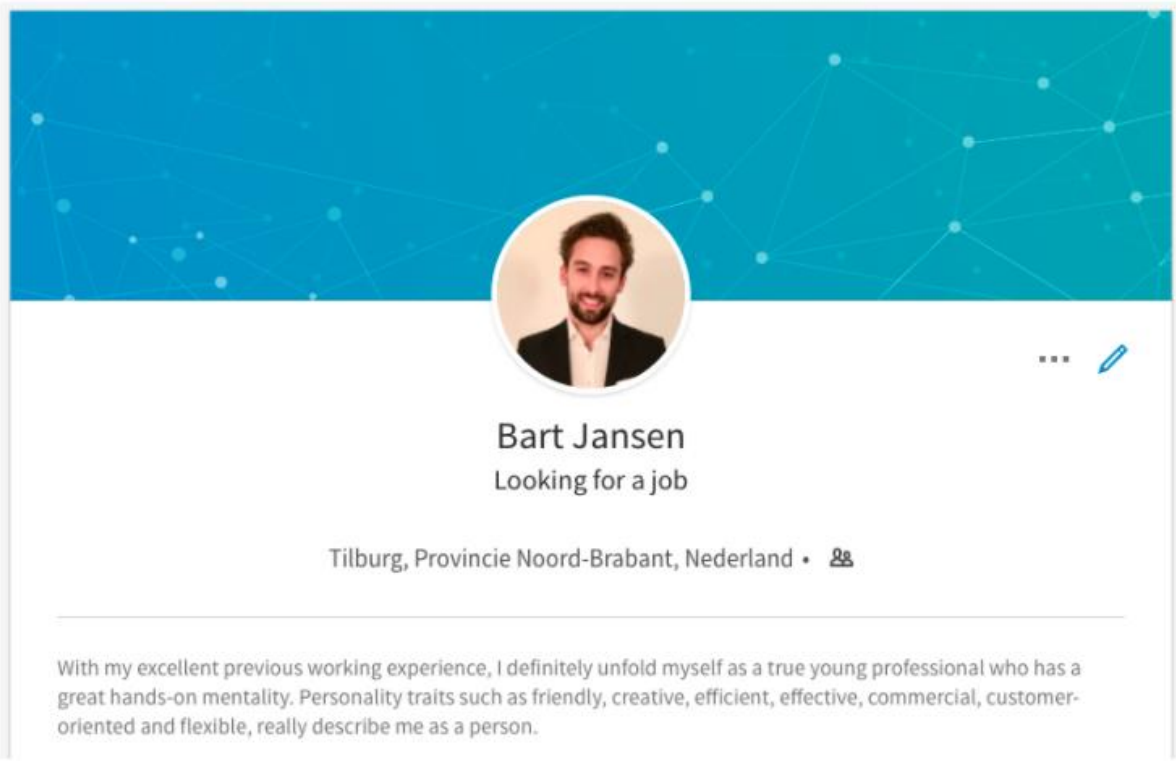
We are looking for someone who:

- Is professional, reliable and pro-active
- Is committed
- Has expertise in this field
- Is flexible
- Delivers service and quality
- Is extravert
- Speaks foreign languages

We can offer you:

- An attractive salary
- Excellent fringe benefits (e.g., car, 40 vacation days)
- A working environment which is supportive
- A joyful team, who likes to get a drink every Friday afternoon

Take a look at the following LinkedIn profile.



Bart Jansen

Looking for a job

Tilburg, Provincie Noord-Brabant, Nederland •

With my excellent previous working experience, I definitely unfold myself as a true young professional who has a great hands-on mentality. Personality traits such as friendly, creative, efficient, effective, commercial, customer-oriented and flexible, really describe me as a person.

Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
The job seeker fits the demands of the job	○	○	○	○	○
Other employees will think this job seeker is qualified to do this job	○	○	○	○	○
I am confident that this applicant is qualified for this job	○	○	○	○	○
The abilities of the job seeker are a good match regarding the organization	○	○	○	○	○
The job seeker's values match the hiring organization's values	○	○	○	○	○
The hiring organization's values provide a good fit with the things that the job seeker values	○	○	○	○	○

Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
This person is friendly	○	○	○	○	○
This person is likeable	○	○	○	○	○
This person is warm	○	○	○	○	○
This person is approachable	○	○	○	○	○
I would ask this person for advice	○	○	○	○	○
I would like this person as a coworker	○	○	○	○	○
This person is physically attractive	○	○	○	○	○
This person is similar to me	○	○	○	○	○
This person is knowledgeable	○	○	○	○	○

Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I think this person is professional	○	○	○	○	○
I think this person is capable of doing the job	○	○	○	○	○
I think this person is going to carry out the job as well as possible	○	○	○	○	○
I think this person is able to learn things by himself	○	○	○	○	○

Below are a number of statements. Indicate to what extent you agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly disagree	Somewhat disagree	Neither agree nor disagree	Somewhat agree	Strongly agree
I would choose to interview the applicant for the job	○	○	○	○	○
I would hire the applicant for the job	○	○	○	○	○
This candidate would be committed to the job	○	○	○	○	○
The applicant deserves this job	○	○	○	○	○
I would entrust this candidate with important projects	○	○	○	○	○
This is a very strong candidate for the position	○	○	○	○	○

You are almost done, but before this survey ends, I would like to know some demographic variables of you.

What is your gender?

Male

Female

What is your age?

What is your nationality?

What is your highest achieved level of education?

- Elementary school
- High school
- MBO
- HBO
- University Bachelor
- University Master
- University Research Master
- University PhD
- Other

This was it!

Thank you so much for participating and do not forget to save your answer (by clicking on >>>).

Appendix C: Measures

Perceived person-environment fit

1. "The job seeker fits the demands of the job"
2. "Other employees will think this job seeker is qualified to do this job"
3. "I am confident that this applicant is qualified for this job"
4. "The abilities of the job seeker are a good match regarding the organization"
5. "The job seeker's values match the hiring organisation's values and culture"
6. "The hiring organisation's values and culture provide a good fit with the things that the job seeker values in life"

Likeability

7. "This person is friendly"
8. "This person is likeable"
9. "This person is warm"
10. "This person is approachable"
11. "I would ask this person for advice"
12. "I would like this person as a coworker"
13. "This person is physically attractive"
14. "This person is similar to me"
15. "This person is knowledgeable"

Professionalism

16. "I think this person is professional"
17. "I think this person is capable of doing the job"
18. "I think this person is going to carry out the job as well as possible"
19. "I think this person is able to learn things by himself"

Hireability measure

20. "I would choose to interview the applicant for the job"
21. "I would hire the applicant for the job"

22. “This candidate would be committed to the job”
23. “The applicant deserves this job”
24. “I would entrust this candidate with important projects”
25. “This is a very strong candidate for the position”

Appendix D: Descriptive data

Table 1

Amount of participants per condition

Condition	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
Profile 1: Formal clothes – intense language	31	28.4	28.4
Profile 2: Formal clothes – no intense language	28	25.7	54.1
Profile 3: Casual clothes – intense language	29	26.6	80.7
Profile 4: Casual clothes – no intense language	21	19.3	100

Table 2

Division of highest achieved educational level amongst participants (based on the Dutch education system)

Highest achieved educational level	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
High school	7	6.4	6.4
MBO	6	5.5	11.9
HBO	33	30.3	42.2
University Bachelor	39	35.8	78.8
University Master	18	16.5	94.5
University Research Master	5	4.6	99.1
Other	1	0.9	100

Table 3

Division of age amongst participants

Age	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative Percent
19	1	0.9	0.9
20	4	3.7	4.6
21	6	5.5	10.1
22	15	13.8	23.9
23	16	14.7	38.5
24	15	13.8	52.3
25	16	14.7	67.0
26	9	8.3	75.2
27	5	4.6	79.8
28	2	1.8	81.7
29	4	3.7	85.3
30	1	0.9	86.2
31	2	1.8	88.1
33	1	0.9	89.0
36	1	0.9	89.9
37	1	0.9	90.8
43	1	0.9	91.7
50	1	0.9	92.7
51	3	2.8	95.4
53	1	0.9	96.3
54	3	2.8	99.1
77	1	0.9	100

Appendix E: Pearson correlation tests

Table 4

Summarized Pearson correlation results regarding H1d

Vacancy	**Type of attire**	**Correlation between likeability and professionalism**	**Correlation between likeability and hireability**	**Correlation between professionalism and hireability**
The Joyful Bar	Formal	$r(57) = .693$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .703$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .663$ $p = .000$*
	Casual	$r(48) = .729$ $p = .000$*	$r(48) = .616$ $p = .000$*	$r(48) = .673$ $p = .000$*
WePacking	Formal	$r(57) = .612$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .523$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .714$ $p = .000$*
	Casual	$r(47) = .703$ $p = .000$*	$r(47) = .715$ $p = .000$*	$r(47) = .831$ $p = .000$*

Note. * = significant correlation.

Table 5

Summarized Pearson correlation results regarding H3d

Vacancy	**Type of attire**	**Type of language**	**Correlation between likeability and professionalism**	**Correlation between likeability and hireability**	**Correlation between professionalism and hireability**
The Joyful Bar	Formal	Intense	$r(29) = .592$ $p = .000$*	$r(29) = .571$ $p < 0.05$*	$r(29) = .672$ $p = .000$*
		No intense	$r(26) = .776$ $p = .000$*	$r(26) = .815$ $p = .000$*	$r(26) = .683$ $p = .000$*
	Casual	Intense	$r(27) = .597$ $p < 0.05$*	r(27) = .300 $p = .113$	$r(27) = .591$ $p < 0.05$*
		No intense	$r(19) = .869$ $p = .000$*	$r(19) = .866$ $p = .000$*	$r(19) = .827$ $p = .000$*
WePacking	Formal	Intense	$r(29) = .307$ $p = .093$	r(29) = .413 $p < 0.05$*	$r(29) = .612$, $p = .000$*
		No intense	$r(26) = .760$ $p = .000$*	$r(26) = .579$ $p < 0.05$*	$r(26) = .765$ $p = .000$*
	Casual	Intense	$r(27) = .591$ $p < 0.05$*	$r(27) = .688$ $p = .000$*	$r(27) = .857$ $p = .000$*
		No intense	$r(18) = .873$ $p = .000$*	$r(18) = .759$ $p = .000$*	$r(18) = .799$ $p = .000$*

Note. * = significant correlation

Table 6

Summarized Pearson correlation results regarding H2a, H2b, H2c and H2d

Vacancy	**Type of attire**	**Correlation between perceived fit and likeability**	**Correlation between perceived fit and professionalism**	**Correlation between perceived fit and hireability**	**Correlation between professionalism and hireability**
The Joyful Bar	Formal	$r(57) = .543$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .527$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .742$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .663$ $p = .000$*
	Casual	$r(48) = .482$ $p = .000$*	$r(48) = .547$ $p = .000$*	$r(48) = .740$ $p = .000$*	$r(48) = .673$ $p = .000$*
WePacking	Formal	$r(57) = .545$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .826$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .788$ $p = .000$*	$r(57) = .714$ $p = .000$*
	Casual	$r(48) = .546$ $p = .000$*	$r(48) = .786$ $p = .000$*	$r(47) = .847$ $p = .000$*	$r(47) = .831$ $p = .000$*

Note. * = significant correlation