

Examining Job Seekers' Motives of Impression Management Tactics on Social Networking Sites and their Assessment by Recruiters

Enschede, November 16th, 2011

D.A. Molenaar, MSc.

Master Business Administration, HRM Track

Student number: 0091715

University of Twente, Enschede

Supervisors

Dr. T. Bondarouk

Dr. H.J.M. Ruël

Management Summary

Recruiters nowadays have started focusing their attention towards Social Networking Sites (SNS) for they provide an ideal basis to judge one's personality on. Even though SNS provide an ideal basis for jobseekers to present themselves towards others, research on this topic has been scarce. This thesis describes the process of our investigation towards this phenomenon. The thesis takes the reader through the process of investigation, from idea generation and journal selection towards the eventual end-product of a research paper.

In the papers described in this thesis, we first describe how we developed scales for quantitatively measuring various online Impression Management tactics that job seekers can employ on SNS in order to positively present themselves to others. Using a sample of 186 students from various universities, a confirmatory factor analysis showed that self-promotion, supplication, ingratiation and photograph usage can be viewed as dimensions of online Impression Management tactics. We used our developed scales to investigate the potential effectiveness of online users using these Impression Management tactics. The usage of online Impression Management tactics was compared with what recruiters assess as important Impression Management tactics on SNS to create a measure of job seekers' behavioral effectiveness of Impression Management tactics.

We showed that self-promotion and photographs was used significantly less often by job seekers than recruiters would expect given their perceived importance. Both supplication and ingratiation showed no significant differences between job seekers and recruiters in terms of their use. Finally, we investigated the possible motives for adopting online Impression Management tactics by job seekers. A significant relationship was found between the intention to employ SNS-based job search and usage of online Impression Management tactics. However, with the exception of photograph usage, no significant relationships were found between a user's awareness of recruiters checking online SNS profiles and the job seekers use of Impression Management tactics.

Table of contents

| | |
|--|----|
| Management Summary | 2 |
| Table of contents..... | 3 |
| 1. Preface..... | 4 |
| 2. Introduction..... | 5 |
| 3. The paper for the journal of Cyberpsychology, Social networking and Behavior, and the paper for the International Journal for Selection and Assessment..... | 8 |
| 4. Final conclusions and discussion | 36 |
| 5. Appendices | 39 |
| APPENDIX A - LETTER TOWARDS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF CYBERPSYCHOLOGY, BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL NETWORKING | 39 |
| APPENDIX B – REVIEWER COMMENTS..... | 41 |
| APPENDIX C - RECRUITMENT TEXT FOR PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND RECRUITERS..... | 45 |
| APPENDIX D - INFORMED CONSENT..... | 47 |
| APPENDIX E - FINDING THE APPROPRIATE MEASUREMENT SCALES | 52 |
| APPENDIX F - RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SCALES..... | 60 |
| APPENDIX G - RESEARCH REPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS..... | 67 |

1. Preface

Whether you are in a HR professional, student, teacher, or in any kind of occupation, everyone nowadays seems to have their entire life posted on the Internet. In so-called Social Networking Sites every person can write down their entire life story with status updates on current activities, open links towards all of their online friends, picture albums, and so much more. This exciting world of opportunities might also have a downside: How does one ensure that only close friends will watch their site, and would you want to limit your online visibility in the first place? Limiting one's visibility might ensure a feeling of privacy, it might also stroke against the nature of having an online presence – the presenting of oneself and finding of new friends.

Another motive for having an online Social Networking Site profile might be that it could help the current situation you are in. For instance, when looking for love, why not create an online profile in a dating site and see whether there are others who have similar interests at the click of a mouse?

This thesis focuses on the job seeker, and whether Social Networking Sites poses advantages to this group. I focus on the current literature of Impression Management to find out whether job seekers online present themselves towards recruiters, and whether they use the same tactics as in, for instance, a face-to-face job interview. For the past months, I have used questionnaires to find out whether the old Impression Management models hold up in an online environment, and whether recruiters tend to focus on/give preference to certain tactics. The results are presented in two paper, which can be found in this thesis. Additionally, several appendices are added to give insights into the process of forming these papers. For example, appendix B gives insight towards the texts we used for gathering our recruiters and students. Appendix C shows our request for approval concerning the ethics committee. The entire process described in the appendices result in a set of papers revolving around Impression Management on Social Networking Sites. The following chapter will shortly introduce the reader to the subject, also explaining the difference in two papers. After, the papers are presented and will lead in a discussion chapter, focusing more extensively on the contribution of the two papers on scientific research.

2. Introduction

As we state in the beginning of the paper for *Cyberpsychology, Social Networking and Behavior*, Social Networking Sites (SNS) are nowadays generally used not only to discuss hobbies and to share interests with others - increasingly employers are using them to screen job candidates. Additionally, as we state in the beginning of the paper for the *International Journal for Selection and Assessment*, recruiters are nowadays also using SNS more often to perform an easy background check on a job seeker's personality. For both, this notion is not new. Research by Rosenbaum (2010) has demonstrated that SNS users create their profile with a wide variety of an 'imagined audience' in mind, indicating that we use for instance Facebook not only to present our self towards friends and family, but also towards persons unknown to us. Recruiters have jumped to this opportunity to create an easier way of checking a job seekers personality and past experiences. As Bohnert and Ross (2010) have stated, in line with what research by ComScore (2011) has shown, recruiters are now more and more aware of this feature and have started using SNS for this purpose. As Vazire and Gosling (2009) have shown, rating one's personality using SNS is a fairly cheap but effective way of personality checking, with a nearly sixty percent congruence in results between SNS background checking and using assessment centers. Not surprisingly, the feature of SNS background checking will continue to rise in popularity for recruiters.

Job seekers do have multiple ways of protecting oneself against this form of 'invasion', as Walther (2008) has shown. One of which is to shield off all information towards unknown others. Not only can one never be sure that he/she shields off all their information from others (e.g. a recruiter can use others to become friends with a job seeker so they can still see all their personal information and judge their personality), this can also be a counter effective strategy. If one shields off their visibility, they might form the impression that they have something to hide. Perhaps a better strategy is to proactively promote their online presence by focusing on good qualities that the job seeker possesses. This form of promotion is called online Impression Management.

Impression Management isn't a very new concept; it was already introduced in 1959 by Goffman. Although some variations exist on the definition of Impression Management, we adapted the definition of Schlenker (1980) from a social to a more job-related setting, creating our working definition of Impression Management as 'the conscious or unconscious attempt to control the images that are projected in job-related social interactions'. These social interactions can range from interactions prior to recruitment (e.g. presenting oneself 'professionally' towards potential employers) to interactions during or after their professional career (e.g. referring past employers towards others). Studies towards Impression Management have been done in a wide variety, however for online Impression Management, a scientific basis did not yet exist. Even more, some

papers (e.g. Harris, van Hove and Lievens, 2003) have even stated that online users are naturally inclined to shield off their 'online presence' as the awareness of privacy invasion becomes more apparent to them. These ideas do not coincide with the idea of Impression Management and therefore, using the logic of problematization or the art of spotting problems (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011), we find the topic of these papers sufficiently contributing to the theory of Impression Management and Social Networking. From a practical viewpoint, providing both job seekers and researcher with a mutual understanding of each other's focus and usage of *online* Impression Management tactics will aid both parties in more accurate ratings of each other and thereby, a more effective means of selection. The job seekers knows the aspects that recruiters tend to focus on and can therefore adjust their tactics towards these, vice versa does this research aid recruiters in not only creating awareness of job seekers' Impression Management tactics, but also insights into which aspects to focus on. The two papers presented here focus on both parties in the Impression Management model – the recruiter and the job seeker. Both papers present insight into the existence of online Impression Management tactics for recruitment purposes, and whether or not this is a multidimensional construct – as was demonstrated for offline Impression Management by Stevens and Krisoff (1995). The paper for Cyberpsychology, Social Networking and Behaviour also focuses on antecedent of this Impression Management in job seekers. Both papers result in a discussion written towards insight on job seeker behavior or recruiter behavior in online environment. After, a final chapter of this thesis will dive into several discussion points and relevant contribution of the papers. The appendices concern how the work was done. Here one can find relevant data from factor analyses and reliability analyses, but also papers requesting ethical approval from the ethics committee and a research report which was sent to all participants.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating Research Questions Through Problematization. *The Academy of Management Review*, 36, (2), 247-271.
- Bohnert, D. & Ross, W.H. (2010) The Influence of Social Networking Web Sites on the Evaluation of Job Candidates. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 3, 341-347.
- Walther, J.B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23, 2538-3557.
- Goffman E. (1959) *The presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Pinguin Books.Hall, J.A. Harris, M.M., van Hove, G., & Lievens, F. (2003). Privacy and Attitudes Towards Internet-Based Selection Systems: A Cross-Cultural Comparison. *International Journal for Selection and Assessment*. 11, 230-236.

- Rosenbaum, J.E. (2010). Just being themselves? Goals and strategies for Self-Presentation on Facebook. *Paper submitted for the Southern States Communication Association 80th annual conference*, September 11th, 2009.
- Schlenker, B.R. (1980). *Impression Management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Stevens, C.K., & Kristoff, A.L. (1995). Making the right impression: A field study of applicant impression management during job interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, 587-606.
- Vazire, S., & Gosling, S.D. (2004). E-Perceptions: Personality impressions based on Personal Websites. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 87, 123-132.

3. The paper for the journal of Cyberpsychology, Social networking and Behavior, and the paper for the International Journal for Selection and Assessment.

The research described in the introduction of this thesis has resulted first in a paper for the journal of Cyberpsychology, Social Networking and Behavior. In the appendices, the attached letter to the editor can be found, in which we explain why we think the paper fitted right in with the journal's purposes.

After a few months of review, two anonymous gave their thoughts on the paper to us back. The comments from the reviewers can be found in appendix B.

The second paper is written for the International Journal of Selection and Assessment. We believe that the story will fit right in with the goal of this journal. We used the adapted version of the first paper, and transformed the story towards recruitment needs instead of jobseeker needs.

Examining Job Seekers' Motives of Impression Management Tactics on Social Networking Sites and their Assessment by Recruiters

Running Head: Impression Management tactics on Social Networking Sites

Abstract

While Social Networking Sites (SNS) provide a perfect basis for Impression Management (Impression Management), the effectiveness of the latter has so far only been studied in offline job search settings. Impression Management is defined here as the conscious or unconscious attempt to control the job-related images that are projected in social interactions. In our study, we first developed scales for quantitatively measuring various online Impression Management tactics that job seekers can employ on SNS in order to positively present themselves to others. Using a sample (N=186) from first-year to last-year university students from various universities from the Netherlands, Slovenia en Germany, a confirmatory factor analysis showed that self-promotion, supplication, ingratiation and photograph usage can be viewed as dimensions of online Impression Management tactics. We used our developed scales to investigate the potential effectiveness of online users using these Impression Management tactics. Recruiters from various companies in the Netherlands, aimed at the assessment of students and young professionals, were assessed on how important they deemed the Impression Management behaviors used on SNS. The usage of online Impression Management tactics was compared with what recruiters assess as important Impression Management tactics on SNS to create a measure of job seekers' behavioral effectiveness of Impression Management tactics. When perceived importance by recruiters and usage of Impression Management tactics by jobseekers are aligned, we can speak of effective Impression Management tactics behavior. Using the Wilcoxon signed rank test, we showed that self-promotion and photographs was used significantly less often by job seekers than recruiters would expect given their perceived importance. Both supplication and ingratiation showed no significant differences between job seekers and recruiters in terms of their use. Finally, we investigated the possible motives for adopting online Impression Management tactics by job seekers. Bivariate correlations showed a significant relationship between the intention to employ SNS-based job search and usage of online Impression Management tactics. However, with the exception of photograph usage, no significant relationships were found between a user's awareness of recruiters checking online SNS profiles and the job seekers use of Impression Management tactics. The implications for theory development and future research directions are discussed.

Introduction

Social Networking Sites (SNS) are nowadays generally used not only to discuss hobbies and to share interests with others - increasingly employers are using them to screen job candidates¹. Job seekers have the opportunity to present themselves to companies by consciously creating an online 'presence'. This widely known process is what Goffman has termed *Impression Management*.² Although some variations exist on the definition of Impression Management, we adapted the definition of Schlenker² from a social to a more job-related setting, creating our working definition of Impression Management as 'the conscious or unconscious attempt to control the images that are projected in job-related social interactions'. These social interactions can range from interactions prior to recruitment (e.g. presenting oneself 'professionally' towards potential employers) to interactions during or after their professional career (e.g. referring past employers towards others). Whereas this study intends to explore the relationship between SNS and Impression Management, we focus primarily on the interactions prior or during the recruitment and selection phase. This subject has recently certainly received much attention in both offline (e.g. Proost et al.³) and online settings and is often seen as a new direction of research into recruitment (Rosenbaum⁴ Berkshire⁵). Recent studies have shown that Impression Management in online settings can be effective in terms of success on dating sites, while other studies have focused more on determinants of and motives for using Impression Management for both personal and employment-related usage (coined as 'upward impression management' by Rao et al.).⁶⁻⁸ These studies however only investigate the general extent of Impression Management usage, e.g. by asking general questions on how much jobseekers care about their image on SNS, whereas Stevens and Kristoff concluded that Impression Management, in general, is a multidimensional construct by which one can choose from different 'Impression Management tactics' to create a certain impression on others.⁹

A popular taxonomy for Impression Management tactics is the scale developed by Bolino and Turnley, and its validity has been shown in many, mostly offline, work situations.^{8,9} The scale includes five tactics: 1) self-promotion, which involves highlighting one's abilities or accomplishments so as to be viewed as competent, 2) ingratiation, that is complimenting others to increase the target's level of liking, 3) exemplification, showing that one behaves like a model employee by going beyond and above the requirements of the job, 4) intimidation, that is creating the attribution of danger with others in order to protect one's reputation, and 5) supplication, which means advertising the recognition of certain limitations in order to appear needy.

The model by Bolino and Turnley has only been validated in offline settings, e.g. during solicitor interviews and behavioral ratings on their Impression Management tactics. We argue that the setting of SNS brings some new opportunities to present oneself towards others. One commonly researched theme on SNS behavior is the presentation or shielding off of photographs. For instance,

Steel, Evans and Greene (2005) found that certain behavioral aspects on photographs such as smiling or being shown with others results in higher inter-rater agreement of personality than when these aspects are not present. Related, Evans, Gosling and Carroll studied how well one could judge the SNS profile of known or unknown others. In the results, the SNS profile picture had a large impact on the ability to judge one's behavior. We therefore argue that jobseekers shield off their SNS profile pictures to avoid the stereotyping threat. Current theoretical Impression Management models do not include for this tactic, because only with the coming of SNS the shielding off of pictures became relevant to one's self-presentation. This research is therefore theoretically relevant because it intends to not only confirm but also extend the Impression Management framework.

From a more practical viewpoint, no study to date has investigated what Impression Management tactics are used by job seekers in online settings such as SNS. Interestingly, there are many anecdotal success stories, and even handbooks written on the usage of online Impression Management by job seekers, but no-one has tried to develop tools to quantify the online usage of Impression Management tactics and to investigate online Impression Management effectiveness. As such, current knowledge lacks a validated instrument for measuring online use of Impression Management tactics. The creation of an instrument for assessing online Impression Management tactics would be a great advantage for researchers and practitioners, for example by enabling a comparison between offline and online Impression Management tactics in a job-related context. Another purpose could be to study the effectiveness of using Impression Management tactics. Existing instruments for offline usage of Impression Management tactics has given researchers (e.g. Proost, Schreurs, de Witte, & Derous¹³) the means to compare offline Impression Management tactics usage by job seekers and their importance as perceived by employer evaluators. As a result, a measurement of Impression Management effectiveness is achieved. When job seekers' usage of Impression Management tactics coincides with what is perceived as important by their observers (potential recruiters), we can argue that the usage of Impression Management tactics by job seekers is successful.

Currently, there is no validated instrument to quantitatively measure the usage of Impression Management tactics in online settings, and there have been no studies that have considered the effectiveness of particular Impression Management tactics. This is despite both the practice of, and the theoretical development on, recruitment and selection potentially benefitting greatly from such developments by redirecting their focus towards the usage of specific Impression Management tactics rather than relying on general impressions. This assessment leads to our first research question:

RQ1a: What SNS-based Impression Management tactics can be distinguished in job seekers' usage? RQ1b: How effective are these Impression Management tactics in a

job-seeking context in terms of difference between Impression Management usage by job seekers and perceived importance of these Impression Management tactics by recruiters?

In a job-seeking context, research has indicated some possible motives for using online Impression Management tactics on SNS. Plummer, Hiltz and Plotnick¹⁰ examined job seekers' behavioral intentions in using SNS as part of their job application strategy. This job application could be for instance by searching not only job advertisement sites, but also SNS to browse for new jobs. One could nowadays also use SNS to advertise jobs via a network of friends promoting a vacancy towards a jobseeker, if he or she is open for these opportunities. With the coming of new SNS, new ways of promoting and finding jobs are offered. However, some basic elements in job seeking behavior might always be present. For example, the study of Plummer, Hiltz and Plotnick successfully tested a model where privacy concerns, beliefs in justice and risk, and performance expectancy were found to be determinants of job seekers' intentions to use SNS in applying for a job (by browsing through the available vacancies). Out of these determinants, the study demonstrated privacy concerns to be a major factor in job seekers' consideration of using SNS in applying for a job. Combined with the study of Stevens and Kristoff⁷, it seems reasonable to expect that an increase in a job seeker's intention to apply for a job is matched by an increase in the use of Impression Management tactics. However, it is still unknown *which* tactics will show an increase in usage when one decides to use SNS in applying for a job.

Another motive for applying online Impression Management tactics is a job seeker's awareness that their online presence can be viewed by any audience, including future employers. Evidence from Walther¹¹ suggests that mindfulness of the perceived audience is correlated with the motivations for editing one's SNS presence. Walther¹¹ implies that a job seeker's awareness of their audience increases the extent of Impression Management tactical usage in computer-mediated environments such as SNS. However, Lewis, Kaufman and Christakis¹² suggest that an increase in this awareness is followed by an increase in privacy concerns and, consequently, reduced usage of Impression Management tactics. It is therefore vital to also investigate the role of job seekers' awareness in relationship to the Impression Management tactics they use. By relating awareness to the various Impression Management tactics, a more nuanced image should result that could explain the apparently contradictory findings of Walther¹¹ and of Lewis, Kaufman and Christakis¹². This is reflected in our second research question:

RQ2: What is the relationship between a job seeker's awareness of their online presence and potential audience, their intention to use SNS in finding a job, and the specific Impression Management tactics they use on SNS?

Method

Participants

University students (N = 186) served as the participants for the job seeker element of the study. The participants (56,1% female, 43,9% male) all indicated that they used SNS. The participants' studies were primarily management-related (63.3% - e.g. Business Administration, Marketing), other mentionable studies were computer science (16%), psychology or communication studies (20%). The choice of students is justifiable here since, as Basil¹⁴ argued, they are the demographic group of interest in the current study. A total of four different universities - located in the Netherlands, Slovenia, Germany and Finland - participated in our study. Of the participants, 33.9% were German, 26.9% were Dutch, and 21.5% were Slovenian. Their mean age was 23.1 years (SD = 4.81). The complementary number of participants came from Australia, Brazil, Finland, Russia, and Uzbekistan however none of which accounted for more than four percent of the total participant population. An analysis of variance indicated no significant differences in Impression Management tactics between students of different nationalities or from different universities. Students were recruited via a network of university students and professors promoting the need to participate in this online study.

For measuring the perceived effectiveness of the job seekers' Impression Management tactics, recruiters (N = 131) formed our group of participants. These (mainly) corporate recruiters were selected via a network of online HR groups and other recruiters. The recruiters tended to focus on young professionals and are therefore ideal to compare with the student sample. All the participating recruiters were Dutch, focused primarily on the selection of graduates from universities and, of them, 123 participants indicated that they did use SNS to collect data about job seekers. The questionnaire was designed to reject recruiters who denied usage of SNS, and therefore the final number of recruiters in the study was 123.

An important issue that needs to be addressed is the variability in SNS. Analysis on students' responses show that 74% use Facebook the most, followed by LinkedIn with only 26%. However, because students were asked to give a top-three of most used SNS, no final conclusions could be made on which SNS our sample students had in mind when providing answers.

Procedure

After demographic questions and an assessment of the perceived frequency of SNS usage, students were faced with a set of questions on their Impression Management tactics on SNS. Questions were derived from the Impression Management scale of Bolino and Turnley⁸ and adapted for an SNS environment. Each item was to be answered on a 7-point scale. The Impression Management scale randomly contained five items each on self-presentation ($\alpha = .873$) and photograph usage ($\alpha = .734$), and four items each on supplication ($\alpha = .814$), ingratiation ($\alpha = .782$), and intimidation ($\alpha = .752$). Sample questions are 'I show others my previous experience on SNS' for self-presentation; 'I

shield off pictures on SNS that are unprofessional' for photograph usage; 'I act like I don't understand something on SNS to gain help' for supplication; 'I compliment others on SNS' for ingratiation; and 'I can intimidate others on SNS to maintain my image' for intimidation. Four items pertaining to defensive tactics were also included, but later excluded from the analysis due to their only moderate inter-item reliability ($\alpha = .673$).

Following this, participants were assessed on their intention to use SNS in job seeking by three items ($\alpha = .882$) and on their awareness of their online visibility by three items ($\alpha = .774$). These last two constructs of intention and awareness were administered using self-made scales and included questions such as 'I intend to search for a job using SNS' and 'I am aware that my SNS profile can be seen by unwanted others' respectively. All the items were to be answered using seven-point Likert scales.

Recruiters were essentially presented with the same Impression Management scale of various tactics as the students, but with each item assessing how *important* they judged that behaviors corresponding with the various Impression Management tactics that were observable on the job seekers' SNS. An example item is 'I find it important that job seekers on SNS show their previous experience' for self-promotion. In addition to the Impression Management tactics scale, they were also assessed as to their intentions in checking job seekers' SNS for a range of purposes, such as for monitoring a 'talent pool'. For assessing the effectiveness of job seekers' Impression Management tactics on SNS, we compared our student participants' answers on which Impression Management tactics they used with what recruiters said they considered important Impression Management tactics on SNS.

Results

Principal Component Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine which Impression Management tactics the student participants deployed on their SNS. A principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation (varimax) was conducted on the 24 items related to Impression Management tactics and photograph usage. The KMO measure was .872 and Bartlett's test result of Sphericity, $\chi^2(153) = 1295.36$, $p < .001$, indicating that the items were sufficiently well correlated for factor analysis. Four components had eigenvalues over 1 and in combination these explained 63.3% of the variance. All the factor loadings were in the range of .518 to .854 and can therefore be classed as somewhere between acceptable and very good according to Kaiser¹⁵.

One of the considered Impression Management tactics, exemplification, was eventually excluded since the analysis failed to form a separate cluster for this component. With the exclusion of exemplification, the items that did cluster confirmed our expectations that self-promotion (component 1), supplication (component 2), and ingratiation (component 4) can be accurately

measured using the scale adapted from Bolino and Turnley⁸. Interestingly, limiting access to certain ‘unprofessional’ photographs (component 3) came out as an Impression Management tactic in itself. This result confirms the first part of our first research question that there are certain Impression Management tactics on SNS that job seekers can use.

Effectiveness of Impression Management tactics

For this part of the research, a distinction was made among the students who had completed the questionnaire. Given that the usage of Impression Management tactics when applying for a job at the end of a university career was only of interest for the particular question on Impression Management tactics effectiveness, we focused for this part of the study only on students who indicated that they were nearing the end of their study. Our original sample consisted of students in various stages of their study, including first-year students who might not be very concerned with their professional image at the time. We argue that it was best to focus for this part of the study on last-year students for they are the most homogeneously concerned with Impression Management as they are close to finding a new job. Given the sample size was substantially reduced ($n=73$) by this choice and due to this choice our sample data was not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to compare the Impression Management tactics of job-seeking students with what recruiters believe to be important aspects on SNS. The use of self-promotion was viewed as significantly less important ($z = -5.91, p < .01$) by job seekers ($M = 2.49, SD = 0.92$) than the importance attached to it by recruiters ($M = 4.05, SD = 0.69$). Photograph usage, or the deliberate concealing or deleting of photographs, was also significantly less ($z = -4.86, p < .01$) viewed as important by job seekers ($M = 2.59, SD = 0.93$) than what one might expect given the importance attached to this by recruiters ($M = 3.49, SD = 0.83$). The other Impression Management tactics considered, supplication and ingratiation, did not show significant differences between students and recruiters. These results partially confirm the second part of the first research question, that supplication and ingratiation are the most effective Impression Management tactics as used by job seekers and perceived by recruiters. Table 1 summarizes the means and standard deviations for the Impression Management tactic usage by students, compared to the importance attached to these aspects by recruiters.

TABLE 1. MEANS OF RESPONSES ON IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT TACTICS: COMPARISON OF STUDENT USAGE AND RECRUITER PERCEPTIONS (n = 73)

| | <i>STUDENT</i> | | <i>RECRUITER</i> | |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| | MEAN | STD. DEV. | MEAN | STD. DEV. |
| Self-promotion* | 2.49 | 0.92 | 4.05 | 0.69 |
| Supplication | 1.46 | 0.57 | 1.81 | 0.64 |
| Ingratiation | 2.53 | 0.82 | 3.01 | 0.75 |
| Photograph usage* | 2.59 | 0.93 | 3.49 | 0.83 |

* Means are significantly different using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations between Impression Management tactics, Recruiter awareness, and SNS job-seeking intention

To answer our second research question, bivariate correlations were calculated between the job seekers' various Impression Management tactics, their awareness that recruiters would check their background on SNS, and their intention to use SNS in searching for a job. Table 2 displays the correlation coefficients between the assorted variables. Besides all the Impression Management tactics correlating significantly with each other, the intention to use SNS in finding a job positively correlated with self-promotion ($r = .33, p < .01$), supplication ($r = .23, p < .01$), ingratiation ($r = .27, p < .01$), and photograph usage ($r = .27, p < .01$). Although the participants' awareness that recruiters would access their SNS sites did not generally correlate significantly with their Impression Management tactics, there was a significant positive correlation between awareness and photograph usage, albeit at only a 95% confidence interval. ($r = .18, p < .05$).

TABLE 2. CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT TACTICS, INTENTION TO SEARCH FOR A JOB USING SNS AND AWARENESS OF RECRUITERS CHECKING THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE PROFILE (N = 185)

| | SP | SU | IN | PH | AW | IN |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Self-promotion (SP) | - | .387* | .632* | .350* | .140 | .333* |
| Supplication (SU) | .387* | - | .442* | .214* | -.029 | .230* |
| Ingratiation (IN) | .632* | .442* | - | .385* | .011 | .272* |
| Photo usage (PH) | .350* | .214* | .385* | - | .187* | .272* |
| Awareness (AW) | .140 | -.029 | .011 | .187* | - | .224* |
| Intention (IN) | .333* | .230* | .272* | .272* | .224* | - |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

The results presented here have shown that the Impression Management tactics identified by Bolino

and Turnley⁸ are on the whole recognizable in a SNS setting. The presence of online Impression Management on SNS is not only confirmed, the current study has also shown that online Impression Management tactics related to self-promotion, ingratiation, and supplication are distinguishable. Interestingly, restricting access to, or deleting, unprofessional photographs on SNS could also be identified as a *separate* and distinct Impression Management tactic. This finding indicates that our previous Impression Management model needs to be updated so that it can be used for further research in online environments. As discussed in the introduction, new ways of presenting oneself towards other offers the availability of new Impression Management tactics. This study therefore confirms the offline Impression Management tactics studies, but is also in line with the notion of not showing too much information in online environments, as the studies of Evans, Gosling and Carroll demonstrate. , our research has shown that the former Impression Management tactics models can be used interchangeably with online and offline environments. The study has also shown that the intention of using SNS in finding a job is significantly correlated with using all of the considered Impression Management tactics, whereas awareness that recruiters would check SNS is only significantly correlated with photograph usage. While the latter finding confirms previous studies¹², which found that privacy concerns led SNS members to shield off certain parts of their profile, this does not seem to have significant effects on other forms of Impression Management tactical usage. Nevertheless, we must remain cautious in interpreting these results since our methodology does not allow influences to be firmly established. We are limited in making conclusions on causality, although we do suspect that increased usage of Impression Management tactics will be a consequence of deciding to use SNS in searching for a job. We recognize that more in-depth research on this relationship is needed to strengthen the sense of causality.

With regard to the effectiveness of Impression Management tactics, the current study was able to find significant perceptual differences relating to self-promotion and to photograph usage, indicating that only supplication and ingratiation were viewed by both parties as similarly effective (and relatively less important than other aspects by the recruiters) Impression Management tactics. An important remark here is that the usage of the various Impression Management tactics by job seekers and the expectations of recruiters, and any similarities or differences in the scores of both parties, does not say anything about the success of employing these tactics in terms of, for instance, more quickly acquiring a job. What it does say however, is that for certain Impression Management tactics one now knows that first, recruiters are checking SNS for these, but also that the expectation of recruiters' perception is consistent with the actual usage. This consistency can arguably lead to a decrease in errors in personality judgment and perhaps even higher selection accuracy. The danger exists however -as with all such questionnaires- that in the study items were intuitively answered with an extremely high or low score due to the phrasing of a question or its misinterpretation. The

threat of between-person ambiguity was diminished by only choosing those factors that were both reliable and valid in the principal component analysis, both for students and recruiters. The risk of between-group ambiguity nevertheless still remains and could influence the results.

Even though some results must especially be taken with caution, the current study is the first to quantitatively assess the effectiveness of specific Impression Management tactics in an online environment. No earlier research on the *effectiveness* of Impression Management tactics has been demonstrated, because only with the coming of SNS researchers were offered a means of comparing. If any, the current research confirms the study by Pan and Fan who state that impression management does not differ in computer-mediated environments or face-to-face settings – their study however didn't account for a SNS setting. The results have major implications for both practice and research. Recruitment and selection practitioners need to be very much aware that many job seekers do alter their SNS profile to offer a more professional impression, and might have to adjust their expectations towards this. Second, job seekers do not seem to be very aware of what recruiters want to see on SNS, which could lead to differences in expectations and, in the worst case scenario, a rejection. The results suggest that job seekers could be more effective in their Impression Management by focusing on promoting themselves as well as in closing off certain photographs to unintended audiences, even though they may not be aware of who may be looking. Recruiters need to be more aware that not every job seeker is as active in managing their SNS image as they possibly imagine. The limitations in this study were first, the usage of a student sample as job seekers, and also the number of students used. Even though this student group did provide us with an opportunity to see certain development towards Impression Management tactics as student move throughout their study, a student sample does not represent the entire population of job seekers. As we have demonstrated with the results presented here, there is enough ground to base further research on Impression Management tactics as used by a more generalized set of job seekers. Other limitations in this study are concerned with the most used SNS by both recruiters and students. We deemed it very important that our participants should be able to fill in our questionnaire based on the SNS they indicated they used mostly. Using this argument, the study resulted in a more generalizable model of online Impression Management tactics. However, this has confronted us with issues on comparability, for instance between recruiters and students. Initial analyses on the participants did provide us with some answers to this problem, however we were not able to statistically compare the recruiter and student' responses due high variability between respondents within-group. Given the highly practical nature of this problem, we encourage practitioners in future research on this topic to focus on the limitation presented here so that proper comparison can be made between groups. Limitations aside, from a research standpoint this study contributes to Impression Management research with a quantitative basis on which to build further large-scale

surveys on, and hopefully encourages researcher to see the opportunity of using SNS to quantify Impression Management behaviors and build on the foundations laid by the current study.

References

1. Bohnert D, Ross WH. The Influence of Social Networking Web Sites on the Evaluation of Job Candidates. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking* 2010; 3: 341-347.
2. Goffman E. (1959) *The presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Pinguin Books.
3. Ellison N, Heino R, Gibbs J. Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 2006; 11: 415-441.
4. Hall JA, Park N, Song H, and Cody MJ. Strategic misrepresentation in online dating: The effects of gender, self-monitoring, and personality traits. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 2010; 27: 117-135.
5. Leary MR, Kowalski RM. Impression Management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin* 1990; 107: 34-47.
6. Rao A, Schmidt SM, Murray LH. Upward Impression Management: Goals, Influence Strategies, and Consequences. *Human Relations* 1995; 48: 147-167.
7. Stevens CK, Kristoff AL. Making the right impression: A field study of applicant impression management during job interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 1995; 80: 587-606.
8. Bolino MC, Turnley WH. Measuring Impression Management in Organizations: A Scale Development Based on the Jones and Pittman Taxonomy. *Organizational Research Methods* 1999; 2: 187-206.
9. Harris KJ, Kacmar KM, Zivnuska S, Shaw JD. The impact of political skill on impression management effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology* 2007; 92: 287-285.
10. Plummer M, Hiltz S, Plotnick L. Predicting Intentions to Apply for Jobs using Social Networking Sites: An Exploratory Study. 44Th Hawaiian International Conference on System Sciences 2011; 1-10.
11. Walther JB. Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in Human Behavior* 2007; 23: 2538-3557.
12. Lewis K, Kaufman J, Christakis N. The Taste for Privacy: An Analysis of College Student Privacy Settings in an Online Social Network. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication* 2008; 14: 79-100.
13. Proost K, Schreurs B, De Witte K, Derosus E. Ingratiation and Self-Promotion in the Selection Interview: The Effects of Using Single Tactics or a Combination of Tactics on Interviewer Judgements. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology* 2010; 40: 2155-2169.

14. Basil MD. The use of student samples in communication research. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media* 1996; 40: 431-440.
15. Kaiser HF. *An index of factorial simplicity. Psychometrika* 1974; 39: 31-36.
-

Examining Recruiters' Assessment of Impression Management Tactics as Used by Job Seekers on Social Networking Sites

Running Head: Impression Management tactics on Social Networking Sites

Abstract

Recruiters nowadays have started focusing their attention towards Social Networking Sites (SNS) for they provide an ideal basis to judge one's personality on. Even though SNS provide an ideal basis for jobseekers to present themselves towards others, research on this topic has been scarce. Impression Management is defined here as the conscious or unconscious attempt to control the job-related images that are projected in social interactions. In our study, we first developed scales for quantitatively measuring various online Impression Management tactics that job seekers can employ on SNS in order to positively present themselves to others. Using a sample (N=186) of students from various universities, a confirmatory factor analysis showed that self-promotion, supplication, ingratiation and photograph usage can be viewed as dimensions of online Impression Management tactics. We used our developed scales to investigate the potential effectiveness of online users using these Impression Management tactics. The usage of online Impression Management tactics was compared with what recruiters assess as important Impression Management tactics on SNS to create a measure of job seekers' behavioral effectiveness of Impression Management tactics. When perceived importance by recruiters and usage of Impression Management tactics by jobseekers are aligned, we can speak of effective Impression Management tactics behavior. Using the Wilcoxon signed rank test, we showed that self-promotion and photographs was used significantly less often by job seekers than recruiters would expect given their perceived importance. Both supplication and ingratiation showed no significant differences between job seekers and recruiters in terms of their use. Finally, we investigated the possible motives for adopting online Impression Management tactics by job seekers. Bivariate correlations showed a significant relationship between the intention to employ SNS-based job search and usage of online Impression Management tactics. However, with the exception of photograph usage, no significant relationships were found between a user's awareness of recruiters checking online SNS profiles and the job seekers use of Impression Management tactics. The implications for theory development and future research directions are discussed.

Introduction

In the last ten years, the Internet has increasingly become a source of valuable information for recruiters to base their recruitment and selection practices on (Anderson, 2003). With the coming of Social Networking Sites (SNS), recruiters have started using these sites to advertise job vacancies, identify passive job candidates, or harvest information about potential hires (NACE, 2008). Where much research on the topic of SNS in job-related settings focuses on the applicant's online behavior, research on e-recruitment using SNS has been almost non-existent (Plummer & Hiltz, 2009) whereas also recent studies didn't pick up this research opportunity. The practice of recruitment seems to precede research on this topic, as a recent survey by CareerEnlightment (2011) demonstrates. The survey results indicate that 89% of the interviewed companies use SNS for recruiting, but also that 20% of these employers now use SNS to *screen* their potential employees or even (in one-third of the cases) reject a potential candidate on what they have found on these SNS. These numbers are expecting to grow in the near future and therefore we argue that it is vital to create a research-based framework to first, understand the nature of SNS-based recruitment and selection, but also investigate the effectiveness of these practices.

What makes SNS different from the face-to-face assessment of jobseekers is that within SNS, job seekers have the opportunity to present themselves to companies by consciously creating an online 'presence'. This widely known process is what Goffman (1959) has termed *Impression Management*. Although some variations exist on the definition of Impression Management, we adapted the definition of Schlenker (1980) from a social to a more job-related setting, creating our working definition of Impression Management as 'the conscious or unconscious attempt to control the images that are projected in job-related social interactions'. These social interactions can range from interactions prior to recruitment (e.g. presenting oneself 'professionally' towards potential employers) to interactions during or after their professional career (e.g. referring past employers towards others). Whereas this study intends to explore the relationship between SNS and Impression Management, we focus primarily on the interactions prior or during the recruitment and selection phase. This subject has recently certainly received much attention in both offline (e.g. Proost et al., 2010) and online settings and is often seen as a new direction of research into recruitment (Rosenbaum, 2010, Berkshire, 2005). Recent studies have shown that Impression Management in online settings can be effective in terms of success on dating sites, while other studies have focused more on determinants of and motives for using Impression Management for both personal and employment-related usage (coined as 'upward impression management' by Rao et al., 1995). These studies however only investigate the general extent of Impression Management usage, whereas Stevens and Kristoff (1995) concluded that Impression Management, in general, is a multidimensional construct by which one can choose from different 'Impression Management

tactics' to create a certain impression on others.

A popular taxonomy for Impression Management tactics is the scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999), and its validity has been shown in many, mostly offline, work situations. The scale includes five tactics: 1) self-promotion, which involves highlighting one's abilities or accomplishments so as to be viewed as competent, 2) ingratiation, that is complimenting others to increase the target's level of liking, 3) exemplification, showing that one behaves like a model employee by going beyond and above the requirements of the job, 4) intimidation, that is creating the attribution of danger with others in order to protect one's reputation, and 5) supplication, which means advertising the recognition of certain limitations in order to appear needy.

The model by Bolino and Turnley (1999) has only been validated by the authors in offline settings, e.g. during solicitor interviews and behavioral ratings on their Impression Management tactics. We argue that the setting of SNS brings some new opportunities to present oneself towards others. This poses a theoretical problem by which the currently validated model doesn't apply to online environments and therefor disproves the theory. One commonly researched theme on SNS behavior is the presentation or shielding off of photographs. For instance, Steel, Evans and Greene (1995) found that certain behavioral aspects on photographs such as smiling or being shown with others results in higher inter-rater agreement of personality than when these aspects are not present. Related, Evans, Gosling and Carroll studied how well one could judge the SNS profile of known or unknown others. In the results, the SNS profile picture had a large impact on the ability to judge one's behavior. We therefore argue that job seekers shield off their SNS profile pictures to avoid the stereotyping threat. Current theoretical Impression Management models do not include for this tactic, because only with the coming of SNS the shielding off of pictures became relevant to one's self-presentation. This research is therefore theoretically relevant because it intends to not only confirm but also extend the Impression Management framework.

From a more practical viewpoint, no study to date has investigated which Impression Management tactics are used by job seekers in online settings such as SNS. Interestingly, there are many anecdotal success stories, and even handbooks written on the usage of online Impression Management by job seekers, but no-one has tried to develop tools to quantify the online usage of Impression Management tactics and to investigate online Impression Management effectiveness. As such, current knowledge lacks a validated instrument for measuring online use of Impression Management tactics. The creation of an instrument for assessing online Impression Management tactics would be a great advantage for researchers and practitioners, for example by enabling a comparison between offline and online Impression Management tactics in a job-related context. Another purpose could be to study the effectiveness of using Impression Management tactics. Existing instruments for offline usage of Impression Management tactics has given researchers (e.g.

Proost, Schreurs, de Witte, & Derous, 2010) the means to compare offline Impression Management tactics usage by job seekers and their importance as perceived by employer evaluators. As a result, a measurement of Impression Management effectiveness is achieved. When job seekers' usage of Impression Management tactics coincides with what is perceived as important by their observers (potential recruiters), we can argue that the usage of Impression Management tactics by job seekers is successful.

As was noted by Garcia-Izquierdo, Aguinis, and Ramos-Villagrasa, the current theoretical models on e-recruitment suggest that information gathered by companies that might inflict discrimination is invasive to the solicitor and therefor leads to negative reactions. These models however do not coincide with online Impression Management for nowadays people tend to put all of their personal information online. This research intends to clear up the contradiction of a job seekers possible reluctance to provide recruiters with personal information and the impression management model by investigating whether job seekers nowadays are using SNS to find jobs. Next to the contradiction, there is also no validated instrument to quantitatively measure the usage of Impression Management tactics in online settings, and there have been no studies that have considered the effectiveness of particular Impression Management tactics. This is despite both the practice of, and the theoretical development on, recruitment and selection potentially benefiting greatly from such developments by redirecting their focus towards the usage of specific Impression Management tactics rather than relying on general impressions. The existing instrument for offline Impression Management tactics might be invalidated due to factors inherent towards online behavior. For instance, Harris, van Hove and Lievens (2003) argue that privacy perceptions can cause job seekers to present themselves differently in SNS. This is conflicting with the old model of Impression Management by Bolino and Turnley (1999) for the authors didn't account for this factor in offline settings. Online environments may therefor invalidate current Impression Management models. By using the method of Alvesson and Sandberg (2011), though 'problematization' a need for empirical research exists by having two intuitive ideas which can be applied for the same model. In this case, both privacy concerns and Impression Management can be the foundation for online behavior on Social Networking Sites. We believe that to tackle this problem, the study first needs to validate the current Impression Management model in online environments. This assessment leads to our first research question:

RQ1a: What SNS-based Impression Management tactics can be distinguished in job seekers' usage?

RQ1b: How effective are these Impression Management tactics in a job-seeking context in terms of difference between Impression Management usage by job seekers and the assessment of these Impression Management tactics by recruiters?

In a job-seeking context, research has indicated some possible motives for using online Impression Management tactics on SNS. Plummer, Hiltz and Plotnick (2010) examined job seekers' behavioral intentions in using SNS as part of their job application strategy. This job application could be for instance by searching not only job advertisement sites, but also SNS to browse for new jobs. One could nowadays also use SNS to advertise jobs via a network of friends promoting a vacancy towards a jobseeker, if he or she is open for these opportunities. With the coming of new SNS, new ways of promoting and finding jobs are offered. However, some basic elements in job seeking behavior might always be present. For example, the study of Plummer, Hiltz and Plotnick (2010) successfully tested a model where privacy concerns, beliefs in justice and risk, and performance expectancy were found to be determinants of job seekers' intentions to use SNS in applying for a job (by browsing through the available vacancies). Out of these determinants, the study demonstrated privacy concerns to be a major factor in job seekers' consideration of using SNS in applying for a job. Combined with the study of Stevens and Kristoff (1995), it seems reasonable to expect that an increase in a job seeker's intention to apply for a job is matched by an increase in the use of Impression Management tactics. However, it is still unknown *which* tactics will show an increase in usage when one decides to use SNS in applying for a job.

Another motive for applying online Impression Management tactics is a job seeker's awareness that their online presence can be viewed by any audience, including future employers. Evidence from Walther (2007) suggests that mindfulness of the perceived audience is correlated with the motivations for editing one's online presence. Walther (2007) implies that a job seeker's awareness of their audience increases the extent of Impression Management tactical usage in computer-mediated environments. However, Lewis, Kaufman and Christakis (2005) suggest that an increase in this awareness is followed by an increase in privacy concerns and, consequently, reduced usage of Impression Management tactics. It is therefore vital to also investigate the role of job seekers' awareness in relationship to the Impression Management tactics they use. By relating awareness to the various Impression Management tactics, a more nuanced image should result that could explain the apparently contradictory findings of Walther (2007) and of Lewis, Kaufman and Christakis (2005). This is reflected in our second research question:

RQ2: What is the relationship between a job seeker's awareness of their online presence and potential audience, their intention to use SNS in finding a job, and the specific Impression Management tactics they use on SNS?

Method

Participants

University students (N = 186) served as the participants for the job seeker element of the study. The participants (56,1% female, 43,9% male) all indicated that they used SNS. The participants' studies

were primarily management-related (63.3% - e.g. Business Administration, Marketing), other mentionable studies were computer science (16%), psychology or communication studies (20%). The choice of students is justifiable here since, as Basil (1996) argued, they are the demographic group of interest in the current study. A total of four different universities - located in the Netherlands, Slovenia, Germany and Finland - participated in our study. Of the participants, 33.9% were German, 26.9% were Dutch, and 21.5% were Slovenian. Their mean age was 23.1 years ($SD = 4.81$). The complementary number of participants came from Australia, Brazil, Finland, Russia, and Uzbekistan however none of which accounted for more than four percent of the total participant population. An analysis of variance indicated no significant differences in Impression Management tactics between students of different nationalities or from different universities. Students were recruited via a network of university students and professors promoting the need to participate in this online study.

For measuring the perceived effectiveness of the job seekers' Impression Management tactics, recruiters ($N = 131$) formed our group of participants. These (mainly) corporate recruiters were selected via a network of online HR groups and other recruiters. The recruiters tended to focus on young professionals and are therefore ideal to compare with the student sample. All the participating recruiters were Dutch, focused primarily on the selection of graduates from universities and, of them, 123 participants indicated that they did use SNS to collect data about job seekers. The questionnaire was designed to reject recruiters who denied usage of SNS, and therefore the final number of recruiters in the study was 123.

An important issue that needs to be addressed is the variability in SNS. Analysis on students' responses show that 74% use Facebook the most, followed by LinkedIn with only 26%. However, because students were asked to give a top-three of most used SNS, no final conclusions could be made on which SNS our sample students had in mind when providing answers.

Procedure

After demographic questions and an assessment of the perceived frequency of SNS usage, students were faced with a set of questions on their Impression Management tactics on SNS. Questions were derived from the Impression Management scale of Bolino and Turnley (1999) and adapted for a SNS environment. Each item was to be answered on a 7-point scale. The Impression Management scale randomly contained five items each on self-presentation ($\alpha = .873$) and photograph usage ($\alpha = .734$), and four items each on supplication ($\alpha = .814$), ingratiation ($\alpha = .782$), and intimidation ($\alpha = .752$). Sample questions are 'I show others my previous experience on SNS' for self-presentation; 'I shield off pictures on SNS that are unprofessional' for photograph usage; 'I act like I don't understand something on SNS to gain help' for supplication; 'I compliment others on SNS' for ingratiation; and 'I can intimidate others on SNS to maintain my image' for intimidation. Four items

pertaining to defensive tactics were also included, but later excluded from the analysis due to their only moderate inter-item reliability ($\alpha = .673$).

Following this, participants were assessed on their intention to use SNS in job seeking by three items ($\alpha = .882$) and on their awareness of their online visibility by three items ($\alpha = .774$). These last two constructs of intention and awareness were administered using self-made scales and included questions such as 'I intend to search for a job using SNS' and 'I am aware that my SNS profile can be seen by unwanted others' respectively. All the items were to be answered using seven-point Likert scales.

Recruiters were essentially presented with the same Impression Management scale of various tactics as the students, but with each item assessing how *important* they judged that behaviors corresponding with the various Impression Management tactics that were observable on the job seekers' SNS. An example item is 'I find it important that job seekers on SNS show their previous experience' for self-promotion. In addition to the Impression Management tactics scale, they were also assessed as to their intentions in checking job seekers' SNS for a range of purposes, such as for monitoring a 'talent pool'. For assessing the effectiveness of job seekers' Impression Management tactics on SNS, we compared our student participants' answers on which Impression Management tactics they used with what recruiters said they considered important Impression Management tactics on SNS.

Results

Principal Component Analysis

A confirmatory factor analysis was used to determine which Impression Management tactics the student participants deployed on their SNS. A principal component analysis with orthogonal rotation (varimax) was conducted on the 24 items related to Impression Management tactics and photograph usage. The KMO measure was .872 and Bartlett's test result of Sphericity, $\chi^2(153) = 1295.36$, $p < .001$, indicating that the items were sufficiently well correlated for factor analysis. Four components had eigenvalues over 1 and in combination these explained 63.3% of the variance. All the factor loadings were in the range of .518 to .854 and can therefore be classed as somewhere between acceptable and very good according to Kaiser (1974).

One of the considered Impression Management tactics, exemplification, was eventually excluded since the analysis failed to form a separate cluster for this component. With the exclusion of exemplification, the items that did cluster confirmed our expectations that self-promotion (component 1), supplication (component 2), and ingratiation (component 4) can be accurately measured using the scale adapted from Bolino and Turnley (1999). Interestingly, limiting access to certain 'unprofessional' photographs (component 3) came out as an Impression Management tactic in itself. This result confirms the first part of our first research question that there are certain

Impression Management tactics on SNS that job seekers can use.

Effectiveness of Impression Management tactics

For this part of the research, a distinction was made among the students who had completed the questionnaire. Given that the usage of Impression Management tactics when applying for a job at the end of a university career was only of interest for the particular question on Impression Management tactics effectiveness, we focused for this part of the study only on students who indicated that they were nearing the end of their study. Our original sample consisted of students in various stages of their study, including first-year students who might not be very concerned with their professional image at the time. We argue that it was best to focus for this part of the study on last-year students for they are the most homogeneously concerned with Impression Management as they are close to finding a new job. Given the sample size was substantially reduced ($n=73$) by this choice and due to this choice our sample data was not normally distributed, the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test was used to compare the Impression Management tactics of job-seeking students with what recruiters believe to be important aspects on SNS. The use of self-promotion was viewed as significantly less important ($z = -5.91, p < .01$) by job seekers ($M = 2.49, SD = 0.92$) than the importance attached to it by recruiters ($M = 4.05, SD = 0.69$). Photograph usage, or the deliberate concealing or deleting of photographs, was also significantly less ($z = -4.86, p < .01$) viewed as important by job seekers ($M = 2.59, SD = 0.93$) than what one might expect given the importance attached to this by recruiters ($M = 3.49, SD = 0.83$). The other Impression Management tactics considered, supplication and ingratiation, did not show significant differences between students and recruiters. These results partially confirm the second part of the first research question, that supplication and ingratiation are the most effective Impression Management tactics as used by job seekers and perceived by recruiters. Table 1 summarizes the means and standard deviations for the Impression Management tactic usage by students, compared to the importance attached to these aspects by recruiters.

TABLE 1. MEANS OF RESPONSES ON IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT TACTICS: COMPARISON OF STUDENT USAGE AND RECRUITER PERCEPTIONS ($n = 73$)

| | <i>STUDENT</i> | | <i>RECRUITER</i> | |
|-------------------|----------------|-----------|------------------|-----------|
| | MEAN | STD. DEV. | MEAN | STD. DEV. |
| Self-promotion* | 2.49 | 0.92 | 4.05 | 0.69 |
| Supplication | 1.46 | 0.57 | 1.81 | 0.64 |
| Ingratiation | 2.53 | 0.82 | 3.01 | 0.75 |
| Photograph usage* | 2.59 | 0.93 | 3.49 | 0.83 |

* Means are significantly different using the Wilcoxon Signed Rank Test at the .01 level (2-tailed).

Correlations between Impression Management tactics, Recruiter awareness, and SNS job-seeking intention

To answer our second research question, bivariate correlations were calculated between the job seekers' various Impression Management tactics, their awareness that recruiters would check their background on SNS, and their intention to use SNS in searching for a job. Table 2 displays the correlation coefficients between the assorted variables. Besides all the Impression Management tactics correlating significantly with each other, the intention to use SNS in finding a job positively correlated with self-promotion ($r = .33, p < .01$), supplication ($r = .23, p < .01$), ingratiation ($r = .27, p < .01$), and photograph usage ($r = .27, p < .01$). Although the participants' awareness that recruiters would access their SNS sites did not correlate significantly with their Impression Management tactics, there was a significant positive correlation between awareness and photograph usage, albeit at only a 95% confidence interval. ($r = .18, p < .05$).

TABLE 2. CORRELATION COEFFICIENTS FOR IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT TACTICS, INTENTION TO SEARCH FOR A JOB USING SNS AND AWARENESS OF RECRUITERS CHECKING THEIR SOCIAL NETWORKING SITE PROFILE (N = 185)

| | SP | SU | IN | PH | AW | IN |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| Self-promotion (SP) | - | .387* | .632* | .350* | .140 | .333* |
| Supplication (SU) | .387* | - | .442* | .214* | -.029 | .230* |
| Ingratiation (IN) | .632* | .442* | - | .385* | .011 | .272* |
| Photo usage (PH) | .350* | .214* | .385* | - | .187* | .272* |
| Awareness (AW) | .140 | -.029 | .011 | .187* | - | .224* |
| Intention (IN) | .333* | .230* | .272* | .272* | .224* | - |

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Discussion

Where SNS have become a valuable source of information for recruiters to scan potential candidates, the study presented here intends to answer two main questions. First, what specific elements trigger jobseekers to engage in online Impression Management tactics? Second, are these online tactics performed by jobseekers recognized by recruiters and perceived as important, or is there a difference between the usage by jobseekers and the perceived importance by recruiters? To answer either of the two questions, the study required a validated framework of online Impression Management tactics based on the model by Bolino and Turnley (1999) and extended with new forms of tactics, like the deliberate shielding off or deletion of photographs. The results presented here have shown that the Impression Management tactics identified by Bolino and Turnley (1999)

are on the whole recognizable in a SNS setting. The presence of online Impression Management on SNS is not only confirmed, the current study has also shown that online Impression Management tactics related to self-promotion, ingratiation, and supplication are distinguishable. Interestingly, restricting access to, or deleting, unprofessional photographs on SNS could also be identified as a separate and distinct Impression Management tactic. This finding indicates that our previous Impression Management model needs to be updated so that it can be used for further research in online environments. Nevertheless, our research has shown that the former Impression Management tactics models can be used interchangeably with online and offline environments. The study has also shown that the intention of using SNS in finding a job is significantly correlated with using all of the considered Impression Management tactics, whereas awareness that recruiters would check SNS is only significantly correlated with photograph usage. While the latter finding confirms previous studies, which found that privacy concerns led SNS members to shield off certain parts of their profile, this does not seem to have significant effects on other forms of Impression Management tactical usage. Nevertheless, we must remain cautious in interpreting these results since our methodology does not allow influences to be firmly established. We are limited in making conclusions on causality, although we do suspect that increased usage of Impression Management tactics will be a consequence of deciding to use SNS in searching for a job. We recognize that more in-depth research on this relationship is needed to strengthen the sense of causality.

With regard to the effectiveness of Impression Management tactics, the current study was able to find significant perceptual differences relating to self-promotion and to photograph usage, indicating that only supplication and ingratiation were viewed by both parties as similarly effective (and relatively less important than other aspects by the recruiters) Impression Management tactics. An important remark here is that the usage of the various Impression Management tactics by job seekers and the expectations of recruiters, and any similarities or differences in the scores of both parties, does not say anything about the success of employing these tactics in terms of, for instance, more quickly acquiring a job. Also, the danger exists, as with all such questionnaires, that items were intuitively answered with an extremely high or low score due to the phrasing of a question or its misinterpretation. The threat of between-person ambiguity was diminished by only choosing those factors that were both reliable and valid in the principal component analysis, both for students and recruiters. The risk of between-group ambiguity nevertheless still remains and could influence

the results.

Even though some results must especially be taken with caution, the current study is the first to quantitatively assess the effectiveness of specific Impression Management tactics in an online environment. The results have major implications for both practice and research. Recruitment and selection practitioners need to be very much aware that many job seekers do alter their SNS profile to offer a more professional impression, and might have to adjust their expectations towards this. Second, job seekers do not seem to be very aware of what recruiters want to see on SNS, which could lead to differences in expectations and, in the worst case scenario, a rejection. The results suggest that job seekers could be more effective in their Impression Management by focusing on promoting themselves as well as in closing off certain photographs to unintended audiences, even though they may not be aware of who may be looking. Recruiters need to be more aware that not every job seeker is as active in managing their SNS image as they possibly imagine. The limitations in this study were first, the usage of a student sample as job seekers. Even though this student group did provide us with an opportunity to see certain development towards Impression Management tactics as student move throughout their study, a student sample does not represent the entire population of job seekers. As we have demonstrated with the results presented here, there is enough ground to base further research on Impression Management tactics as used by a more generalized set of job seekers. Other limitations in this study are concerned with the most used SNS by both recruiters and students. We deemed it very important that our participants should be able to fill in our questionnaire based on the SNS they indicated they used mostly. Using this argument, the study resulted in a more general model of online Impression Management tactics. However, this has confronted us with issues on comparability, for instance between recruiters and students. Initial analysis on the participants did provide us with some answers to this problem, however we were not able to statistically compare the recruiter and student' responses due high variability between respondents within-group. Given the highly practical nature of this problem, we encourage practitioners in future research on this topic to focus on the limitation presented here so that proper comparison can be made between groups. Limitations aside, from a research standpoint this study contributes to Impression Management and recruitment research with a quantitative basis on which to build further large-scale surveys on, and hopefully encourages researcher to see the opportunity of using SNS to quantify Impression Management behaviors and build on the foundations laid by

the current study.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating Research Questions Through Problematization. *The Academy of Management Review*, 36, (2), 247-271.
- Anderson, N. (2003). Applicant and Recruiter Reactions to New Technology in Selection: A Critical Review and Agenda for Future Research. *International Journal for Selection and Assessment*, 11, 121-136.
- Basil, M.D. (1996). The use of student samples in communication research. *Journal of Broadcasting and Electronic Media*, 40, 431-440.
- Bohnert, D. & Ross, W.H. (2010) The Influence of Social Networking Web Sites on the Evaluation of Job Candidates. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, 3, 341-347.
- Bolino, M.C., & Turnley, W.H. (1999). Measuring Impression Management in Organizations: A Scale Development Based on the Jones and Pittman Taxonomy. *Organizational Research Methods*, 2, 187-206.
- Ellison, N., Heino, R., & Gibbs, J. (2006). Managing Impressions Online: Self-Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11, 415-441.
- Garcia-Izquierdo, A.L., Aguinis, H., & Ramos-Villagrasa, R. (2010). Science-Practice Gap in e-Recruitment. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 18, 432-438.
- Goffman E. (1959) *The presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Pinguin Books.Hall, J.A., Harris, M.M., van Hove, G., & Lievens, F. (2003). Privacy and Attitudes Towards Internet-Based Selection Systems: A Cross-Cultural Comparison. *International Journal for Selection and Assessment*. 11, 230-236.
- Harris, K.J., Kacmar, K.M., Zivnuska, S., & Shaw, J.D. (2007). The impact of political skill on impression management effectiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 92, 287-285.
- Kaiser, H.F. (1974). An index of factorial simplicity. *Psychometrika*, 39, 31-36
- Leary M.R., & Kowalski, R.M. (1990). Impression Management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 34-47.
- Lewis, K., Kaufman, J., & Christakis, N. (2008). The Taste for Privacy: An Analysis of College Student Privacy Settings in an Online Social Network. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 14,79-100.
- Park, N., Song, H., & Cody, M.J. (2010). Strategic misrepresentation in online dating: The effects of gender, self-monitoring, and personality traits. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 117-135.

- Plummer, M., Hiltz, S., & Plotnick, L. (2011). Predicting Intentions to Apply for Jobs using Social Networking Sites: An Exploratory Study. *44Th Hawaiian International Conference on System Sciences*, 1-10.
- Proost, K., Schreurs, B., De Witte, K., & Deros, E. (2010). Ingratiation and Self-Promotion in the Selection Interview: The Effects of Using Single Tactics or a Combination of Tactics on Interviewer Judgements. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40, 2155-2169.
- Rao, A., Schmidt, S.M., & Murray, L.H. (1995) Upward Impression Management: Goals, Influence Strategies, and Consequences. *Human Relations*, 48, 147-167.
- Schlenker, B.R. (1980). *Impression Management: The self-concept, social identity, and interpersonal relations*. Monterey, CA: Brooks/Cole.
- Stevens, C.K., & Kristoff, A.L. (1995). Making the right impression: A field study of applicant impression management during job interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80, 587-606.
- Walther, J.B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23, 2538-3557.

4. Final conclusions and discussion

As I briefly described in the first chapter of this thesis, we have set out this research with some initial questions in mind. These questions can be distinguished into two categories, one reflecting the questions posed as research questions in the papers (for example, the question of which online impression management tactics can be distinguished on social networking sites). The other big question revolves around the relevance of this research and the questions posed. I believe that in the papers themselves, the first set of questions was generally well answered. In this chapter I would like to focus on the relevance of this research, and particularly what sort of knowledge has science gained from this study. From a practical viewpoint, the relevance of this study is clear; the study presented here can help both recruiters and jobseekers in understanding each other's thoughts and behavior, thereby aiding in avoiding errors in judgment. For example, jobseekers can use this study as a reminder that recruiters are focusing on their SNS profiles and in particular, what they claim to have achieved in the past. Steering recruiters towards this information can create a more positive image because the jobseeker provides a recruiter with information that he/she wants to see on their SNS profile. From a recruiter standpoint, understanding that not every jobseeker intends to shield off their photographs on e.g. Facebook can also help them in judging a potential applicant. In the sample used here, it was clear that the recruiters expected jobseekers to shield off certain unprofessional aspects of themselves, whereas our job seeking student sample did not live up to this expectation. This misfit in expectancies does not make our applicants bad candidates; it simply means that recruiters need to be aware that our sample jobseekers have a certain limit in impression management towards recruiters. As stated in the introduction of this thesis, what makes this study different is that by using the Impression Management model by Goffman (1959) we can now claim not only that there are limits in Impression Management for jobseekers, but also that these limits are part due to photograph usage where a difference of expectation is a vital cause for miscommunication.

For researchers, observing the communication and expectations between jobseekers and recruiters, the question still remains why we need to study Impression Management tactics. In the first chapter of this thesis, a justification of the research presented here was by means of 'problematization' or spotting problems (Alvesson & Sandberg, 2011). This means that opposing ideas could be applied to a theoretical model by the use of intuition or logic, but only empirical research can demonstrate which idea suits the theoretical model best. In this study, two ideas could logically have been the basis for explaining why people in general use SNS to promote themselves for recruitment purposes. One was the existing Impression Management model (Leary & Kowalski, 1995), stating that *situational factors* (in this case, the need of a job) can cause a person to convey a certain image of themselves towards others. On the other hand, another situational factor is that a

jobseeker puts all of their information for unknown others to be seen. According to Lewis, Kaufman and Christakis (2008) these privacy concerns will cause jobseekers to diminish their online presence, thereby decreasing the amount of Impression Management. This is an important contrast, which not only forms the basis of this study but also questions previous studies on online impression management. For example, the study by Walther (2007) stated that the awareness of one's online audience enables an author to edit his online presence. That study however is relatively outdated, now that SNS have evolved and have become more accepted into our society. Anecdotal evidence of people being fired over the content on their SNS profile are becoming more and more general, thereby increasing privacy concerns in general. The study presented here doesn't merely replicate the study by Walther (2007), it also challenges its conclusion by conflicting models of either Impression Management or privacy perceptions. On top of that, the study presented here *extends* the findings by previous studies by focusing on specific tactics jobseekers might use. Using this method, we were able to show that situational factors make impression management possible, and that privacy concerns – even though recruiters sometimes expect otherwise – are not an issue.

As this study has shown, not only does Impression Management exist in SNS environments, a large proportion of tactics that are used in offline environments are used in online environments. Even more so, the deliberate usage of photographs (e.g. by deleting or shielding off photographs from online public) can be seen as an additional tactic which doesn't apply to offline environments. If nothing else, the study shown in this book has laid a basis of Impression Management in online environments like Social Networking Sites. This is a vital conclusion, for it also comes with a warrant that no research on offline Impression Management should be applied directly to its online variant. Even though similarities between the two exist, several factors influence its online form where the offline does not. For instance, creating an online 'presence' also implies that one's communication with others is presented towards others. This means that not only a job seeker, but also his/her friends on SNS are responsible for the creation of an online presence. As Vazire and Gosling (2009) have shown, recruiters tend to judge information given to them by others on a job seekers' SNS as more accurate than the information presented by the job seeker him/herself. This could result in a deliberate screening of open communication, or even intimidation in the case of providing false information openly. Even though intimidation was a tactics in the Impression Management model, this argumentation has not been given and tested. Researchers and practitioners must therefore not assume that one tactics is interchangeable with one and other until further directed research on the topic has been done.

Concluding, the two papers have demonstrated from both a recruiter angle as well as that of the job seeker, that in order to prevent mismatches in the recruitment and selection process using forms of Social Networking Sites, a mutual understanding is needed from both sides to make the

most and most effective use of Social Networking Sites in a job seeking process. Where this study has laid some 'ground rules' as to which aspect both job seekers and recruiters should focus on in either promoting/selection, much research still needs to be done. For example, to demonstrate true effectiveness of SNS background checking, studies are needed to compare those job seekers that are selected using SNS and those that are not. Also, using the method described in the papers still leaves room for 'noise' in the study. For instance, the sampling method might have been biased for only students are asked to participate, which doesn't apply to the entire online population. More extensive research could make the research more general across the entire population and, even more importantly, build on with the foundation laid by the study presented in these two papers.

References

- Alvesson, M., & Sandberg, J. (2011). Generating Research Questions Through Problematization. *The Academy of Management Review*, 36, (2), 247-271.
- Goffman E. (1959) *The presentation of Self in Everyday Life*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Hall, J.A. Leary M.R., & Kowalski, R.M. (1990). Impression Management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107, 34-47.
- Lewis, K., Kaufman, J., & Christakis, N. (2008). The Taste for Privacy: An Analysis of College Student Privacy Settings in an Online Social Network. *Journal of Computer-mediated Communication*, 14, 79-100.
- Vazire, S., & Gosling, S.D. (2004). E-Perceptions: Personality impressions based on Personal Websites. *Journal of Social Psychology*, 87, 123-132.
- Walther, J.B. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication: Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 23, 2538-3557.

5. Appendices

APPENDIX A - LETTER TOWARDS THE EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF CYBERPSYCHOLOGY, BEHAVIOR AND SOCIAL NETWORKING

Dear Ms. Wiederhold,

On behalf of my co-authors, I am submitting the enclosed paper for consideration for publication in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*. We believe that our article fits the journal very well, for the journal explores (among other things) the impact of the Internet and multimedia on both society and behavior, as does our paper. In this paper we have measured and analyzed strategies that job seekers use to present themselves on social networking sites, and the effectiveness of these strategies as they are perceived by online recruiters. As possible motives for this online impression management, we investigated the effects of job seekers' awareness of their audience and their intention to use social networking sites in finding jobs.

We believe that our work starts a dialogue on the usage of social media in job-seeking behavior, and creates a basis on which future studies could build.

We argue that our paper continues from the research of Bohnert and Ross, which was featured in this journal in 2007. Our study was inspired by other such works published in *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*, such as the earlier works of Palandri in 2000, and Jung, Youn and McClung in 2007, and also the more recent work of Haferkamp and Krämer in 2010. We believe that the readers of *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking* will find our results interesting, for they are both practical and scientifically valid.

This work has not been submitted elsewhere for publication nor has it been published in part or whole elsewhere. I attest to the fact that all authors have agreed on the validity and legitimacy of the data and its interpretation, and have agreed to the submission to the journal of *Cyberpsychology, Behavior and Social Networking*.

With kind regards,

David Molenaar

Examining Job Seekers' Motives and the Effectiveness of Impression Management Tactics on Social Networking Sites

Running Head: Impression Management tactics on Social Networking Sites

David A. Molenaar, M.Sc., Tanya Bondarouk, Ph.D., and Huub Ruël, Ph.D.

University of Twente, School of Management and Governance

P.O. Box 217

7500 AE Enschede, the Netherlands

Address correspondence to:

David Molenaar, M.Sc.

Universiteit Twente, School of Management and Governance

P.O. Box 217

7500 AE Enschede, the Netherlands

E-mail: d.a.molenaar@gmail.com

Telephone: 0031-(0)610701501

Acknowledgement

We would like to thank Michel Rijnders and Leon Willemsens at Netwerven for their help in acquiring many recruiters willing to participate in the study. We would also like to thank Anke Diederichsen, Stefan Strohmeier, Robert Kaše and Adam Smale for their active participation in acquiring many students willing to participate in the study.

Disclosure Statement

No competing financial interests exist.

APPENDIX B – REVIEWER COMMENTS

The following comments were given by two reviewers from the journal of Cyberpsychology, Social networking and Behavior.

Reviewer(s)' Comments to Author:

Reviewer: 1

Comments to the Author

The paper proposes a study in which Impression Management Tactics (IMT) used by job seekers are compared with those expected by job recruiters. The subject is very interesting and the study well written and linear in his presentation.

However there's one critical weakness that needs to be faced and solved. Without this passage, or if there's a lack in data collected that doesn't permit to solve this critical aspect, I cannot recommend this paper for publication.

The most important weakness concerns the sample used (students) and the types of SNSs normally utilized by them. In brief, the study compare the IMT of students at the end of their university paths and those that job recruiters could expect, but it doesn't consider that the firsts and the seconds could use (and think to) different types of SNSs. And, from this point of view, SNSs such as Facebook or MySpace are very different from SNSs such as LinkedIn, ResearchGate or Academia (as regards motives for using it, which information are more important, data shared with friends, etc.).

So, without the possibility to control the variable determined by the types of SNS used by students (or to which students think in answering to the questionnaire), there's a "noise" that doesn't permit to interpret correctly results of analysis.

In other words, for comparing students' IMT and job recruiters idea about the use (and the effectiveness) of IMT used by job seekers, the first passage is to differentiate (and control) students on the base of the types of SNSs they use. Indeed it could be possible that the correlation found (and not found) changes on the base of the types of SNSs used.

So, I would invite author(s) to look at the possibility to control the SNSs variable ... otherwise I couldn't recommend the paper for publication.

Reviewer: 2

Comments to the Author

Review of "Examining Job Seekers' Motives and the Effectiveness of Impression Management Tactics on Social Networking Sites" (CYBER-2011-0333)

Title:

The title should be revised to include a reference to the recruiter portion of the study. Without this key piece of information, readers will be surprised with the inclusion of this material.

Abstract:

Although many readers will be familiar with the term “impression management” prior to reading this article, the authors should briefly describe what this refers to in the abstract. The authors also need to do a better job of informing the reader about the sample in this study. The phrase “final-year students of online IM tactics” is especially confusing without reading the rest of the article. The authors also need to discuss the inclusion of the recruiters in more detail.

Introduction and Literature Review:

Although the authors contend that the term “impression management” is widely known, they still need to briefly define this concept and explain how it is relevant to their particular topic. They should also consider not using the acronym “IM” for this term as it may easily be confused with “instant messaging,” especially given the topic of this paper.

In the first paragraph, the authors mention that other studies focus on the “determinants and motives for using IM.” It would be beneficial to the reader if they provided more context for this literature. Were these studies examining anything related to employment or personal activities? Also, what do the authors mean by stating the IM is a “multidimensional construct?” That is, how was IM measured in the other studies?

The authors should also provide a more detailed discussion about the contribution of their study. Why is this research important beyond the fact that no one has investigated IM in job seeking? Also, it would be beneficial if the authors would briefly describe how a person would use social networking sites to obtain jobs.

The first research question should be divided into two questions at the “and” in the question. The second portion should also be rewritten to discuss the effectiveness in terms of the applicant and recruiter perceptions.

Method:

The authors need to include more detailed information about their student and recruiter samples. For the students, what were the ages and gender distribution? How were the students recruited to

participate in the study (e.g., online survey, classroom survey)? How many universities participated in this study? The authors will also need to provide a rationale for only having $n=186$ and how this impacted their results, especially because the sample was reduced even further to $n=73$ later. Also, is there any additional information the authors could supply regarding the recruiters? For example, what are some examples of business types that are exclusively interested in hiring recent university graduates?

The authors need to provide more detail regarding their IM tactics questions. They should include sample questions for each scale, especially since they adapted existing items to become relevant to an online environment. They also need to include the response categories.

Similarly, the authors need to provide additional information regarding the recruiter questions (e.g., example items for tactic importance, intentions, monitoring, and effectiveness). They should also include the response categories.

Results:

I appreciated that the authors referred the reader to their second research question on page 7 and believe it would be beneficial for them to tie the relevant results to their first research question as well.

The authors mention that their sample size was reduced to $n = 73$ in the analyses. How does this impact their results? What is their rationale for only focusing on students nearing the end of their study?

Discussion:

The authors mention that an interesting finding emerged regarding the use of unprofessional photos on SNS but do not provide any rationale for this finding in their discussion. They need to address this as it is an important contribution of their research as it demonstrates how current IM scales need to be modified and perhaps reconceptualized for the online environment. The authors also need to provide explanations that support each of their significant findings and tie it to the relevant literature in this area of study. They should also consider explaining why some of their findings were not significant (e.g., supplication and ingratiation) and how this is similar to or divergent from the existing literature.

Again, I think the authors need to really highlight the importance of this study. Why is it important

to know the differing importance placed on online IM for applicants and recruiters? Also, what specifically should recruiters and applicants do to modify their online IM as a result of this study's findings? The authors should also mention their small sample size as a limitation.

APPENDIX C - RECRUITMENT TEXT FOR PARTICIPATION OF STUDENTS AND RECRUITERS

For the students:

Dear students,

Do you have a Facebook, Twitter, Hyves, LinkedIn or another Social Networking Site's account? Would you be interested to know about successful impression management tactics in those sites? If your answer is "yes", then this e-mail is for you!

You are kindly invited to participate and fill in the questionnaire for the international research project into the link between the usage of Social Networking Sites (e.g., Facebook) and job searching behavior. Your answers will be treated anonymously, and working with the questionnaire will take you 10-15 minutes... But in return (upon your interests) you will receive results of this study, where you may learn about specific impression management tactics through the Social Networking Sites.

The project is initiated by the HRM and International Management research groups of the University of Twente, The Netherlands. The research is truly international as students from several universities are participating in it: University of Twente (The Netherlands), Università' Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan, Italy), Saarland University (Germany), American University of Beirut (Beirut), University of Sydney (Australia), University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), and the University of Vaasa (Finland).

Research team / University of Twente, The Netherlands:

David Molenaar

Tanya Bondarouk

Huub Ruël

For the recruiters:

Dear sir/madam,

For our international research project I am currently investigating the various ‘tactics’ that job seekers use to present/brand themselves towards (future) employers using Social Media Sites, and the perception that recruiters have on this behavior. For this study I need many recruiters in order to achieve accurate results and to compare your perception with the actual self-presentation strategies that job seekers use. Therefore I kindly request if you would be willing to participate in the (online) survey.

In return for participating in the study you will get the opportunity to receive the results, which can illustrate difference in job seekers’ and your perception on their Social Media usage.

Your answers will be treated as confidential and cannot be reduced to individuals. The questionnaire can be accessed by clicking on the link below.

<LINK>

If you have any questions or comments about the questionnaire or confidentiality, please feel free to contact me at <MAIL>

I wish to thank you in advance for your time, and I would really appreciate your time and input if you were to fill in the questionnaire.

With kind regards,

David Molenaar,

MSc Applied Psychology and Master Student Business Administration at the University of Twente.

APPENDIX D - INFORMED CONSENT

The informed consent was needed to ensure that student were not asked for any personally invading questions. Below are the request form and the eventual approval (via e-mail).

Enschede

The Netherlands

CONFIDENTIAL

REQUEST FOR ETHICAL

APPROVAL

1. **School:** Universiteit Twente, MB

2. **Project Title:** Comparative analysis of Impression Management on Social Network Sites, as enacted by job seekers, and perceived by recruiters.

3a): Name, position and address of Project Supervisor/Director of Studies:

Dr. Tanya Bondarouk

3b): Names of other collaborators on project:

Dr. Huub Ruel

4. Name(s) of Researcher(s)/Students working on this project:

David Molenaar, MSc

5. Expected duration of project from: 20th March 2011 to: 31st July 2011

6. Aim(s) of Project:

The aim is to determine, which of Impression Management tactics are used by students on Social Network Sites (SNS), to what extent do those tactics contribute to the Job Seeking intentions, and whether there is change in this usage at the end of their study (when finding jobs become more important).

Also, we want to investigate how recruiters perceive Impression Management (IM) tactics exposed by students, and to which extent they find these tactics important for the recruitment process .

7. Briefly describe the design of the project:

Using constructs from Impression Management (IM) literature and the literature on Social Media Usage for professional means, an Online Impression Management (OIM) model will be developed and tested via questionnaires among students. Through online questionnaire, data will be collected to test hypotheses on OIM and the intention of finding jobs using SNS. Also, online questionnaires will be sent to recruiters from various agencies to determine whether these tactics are important for recruiters or not, and whether recruiter think they will be more successful in monitoring job seeker's SNS. For reasons of comparison, the same items as used in the first questionnaire will be transformed for the recruiters, adjusted towards how important they perceive them on job seekers' SNS. Following this, empirical claims will be made, leading to report of the project in form of a master thesis.

8. Will the participants be: (please tick as appropriate)

Students?

Staff?

Other: (Please specify): recruiters from various agencies.

9. How many participants will be involved?

A total number of 500 participants will be involved in the entire study. It is expected that responses from approximately 100 participants will be collected from each of the selected universities.

10. State how participants will be selected:

The participants will be recruited with the help of collaborators in each of the university:

University of Twente (The Netherlands), Università Cattolica del Sacro Cuore (Milan, Italy), University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), University of Saarland (Germany), and University of Sydney (Australia).

11. Has statistical/methodological advice been sought on the size and design of the project?

Yes, by Dr. Bondarouk, Dr. Ruel, and various statistical books.

12. What procedure(s) will be carried out on the participants? (Explain in terms appropriate

to a layperson)

Students are provided with an online link to the questionnaire. After explaining the goal of the questionnaire and how participant can fill out the form, some demographical information is gathered (age, current study). After determining whether students have a SNS profile and which one these are, they are asked 35 questions about how much they use impression management on their most used SNS. Example questions are ‘I show others my qualification on this SNS’. Last, the questionnaire determines their intention of finding a job using SNS.

At the same time, recruiters are given a questionnaire via an online link (to a different questionnaire), where they are asked whether they monitor job seekers via SNS, and how they do this (several options are given, like adding job seekers to their SNS friends). After, the same questions are given for IM tactics, the only difference is that the recruiters are asked how *important* they perceive this behavior to be on SNS. Last, the questionnaire determines the perception of success in selecting job seekers using SNS.

After both questionnaires, participants are thanked for their participation and given the opportunity to fill in their e-mail address. This e-mail address will only be used to send aggregated results of the study, if they wish.

13a): What potential risks to the interests of participants do you foresee?

There are no foreseeable risks to the participants. Participants will be informed about the purpose, nature and the course of the session in advance using an information sheet. Participants will have the right to withdraw at any time without personal consequences. Personal details and obtained data will be treated confidentially (all information is stated in advance)

13b): What potential risks to the Researchers do you foresee?

The researcher does not foresee any risk.

14: Will informed consent be obtained from all participants? NO

(If written, attach a copy of the consent form and information sheet)

15: If there is doubt as to a subject’s ability to give consent, what steps will be taken to ensure that the subject is willing to participate (e.g. assistance of independent colleague/next of kin or other means)

All participants will be above 18 years of age and fluent in English. If there is any doubt about the participants' ability to answer the questions seriously, they will be excluded from the research.

16: What information will be given to subject(s)?: (Attach copies of letters or information sheets to be given to participants.)

Information will be given through an information sheet (see Participant Information Sheet 1).

17: Where will consent be recorded?

Online.

18a): Will participants be informed of their right to withdraw? Yes

19: Does the project involve any other disciplines and/or Ethics Committees?

No

20: Will payments to participants be made? No

21a): Will the project receive financial support from outside the Universiteit Twente? No

22: Will any restrictions be placed on the publication of results? No

23: Are there any other points you wish to make in justification of the proposed study?

No

24: I have read the University's guidelines on ethics related to research, and to the best of my knowledge and ability confirm that the ethical considerations overleaf have been assessed. I am aware of and understand University procedures on Research Ethics and Health & Safety. I understand that the ethical propriety of this project may be monitored by the School's Research Ethics Sub-Committee. YES

<SIGNATURE>

Information Sheet 1

Dear respondent,

Thank you for agreeing to participate in the international research project about the usage of Social Network Sites (SNS).

Please start with filling out the questionnaire, that will take 10 till 15 minutes.

There are no right or wrong answers, just give the answer which suits you best. Please remember that you have the right to withdraw the questionnaire at any time. Also by indicating that you wish to proceed, you understand that all

data will be recorded on a secure data drive. Of course, your answers will be dealt with the greatest confidentiality. The data is used only for the knowledge development and can't be reduced to persons. When you're not able to complete the questionnaire, it is possible to finish the questionnaire at another time (on the same computer).

By clicking 'Next' you will agree with the statements above.

For any questions with regard to this research or confidentiality, you can contact <MAIL>

With kind regards,

David Molenaar

APPENDIX E - FINDING THE APPROPRIATE MEASUREMENT SCALES

For measurement, we turned to relevant literature on the topic of Impression Management to find existing scales which could be validated in an online environment. Below are all scales used in the research – all of which were transformed into an online questionnaire.

Bolino and Turnley's (1999) IM Scale

Respond to the following statements by thinking about "how often you behave this way"

Self-Promotion

1. Talk proudly about your experience or education.
2. Make people aware of your talents or qualifications.
3. Let others know that you are valuable to the organization.
4. Make people aware of your accomplishments.

Ingratiation

1. Compliment your colleagues so they will see you as likable.
2. Take an interest in your colleagues' personal lives to show them that you are friendly.
3. Praise your colleagues for their accomplishments so they will consider you a nice person.
4. Do personal favors for your colleagues to show them that you are friendly.

Exemplification

1. Stay at work late so people will know you are hard working.
2. Try to appear busy, even at times when things are slower.
3. Arrive at work early to look dedicated.
4. Come to the office at night or on weekends to show that you are dedicated.

Intimidation

1. Be intimidating with coworkers when it will help you get your job done.
2. Let others know you can make things difficult for them if they push you too far.
3. Deal forcefully with colleagues when they hamper your ability to get your job done.
4. Deal strongly or aggressively with coworkers who interfere in your business.
5. Use intimidation to get colleagues to behave appropriately.

Supplication

1. Act like you know less than you do so people will help you out.
2. Try to gain assistance or sympathy from people by appearing needy in some areas.

3. Pretend not to understand something to gain someone's help.
 4. Act like you need assistance so people will help you out.
 5. Pretend to know less than you do so you can avoid an unpleasant assignment
-

The following questions (items) are concerned with the usage of your *most used* Social Network Site (SNS, e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter or Hyves), and your intentions to search for a (future) job through Social Network Sites.

Please respond to all items as openly as possible. There are no right or wrong answers.

First, please indicate which SNS you use the most in general...

Facebook

Hyves

LinkedIn

Other: _____

| Please answer these questions for your <u>most used</u> SNS... | How often do you behave this way? | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|---------------------|---|---|--------------|
| | <i>never</i> | <i>occasionally</i> | | | <i>often</i> |
| 1. On this SNS, I show others my experience | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 2. On this SNS, I show others my qualifications | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 3. On this SNS, I make others aware of my talents | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 4. I use this SNS to let others know that I could be valuable to an organization | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 5. Using this SNS, I make people aware of my accomplishments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 6. On this SNS, I compliment others to show that I am a friendly person | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 7. On this SNS, I take an interest into someone else's personal life | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|
| 8. Using this SNS I praise others for their accomplishments | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 9. On this SNS, I show that I will do/have done someone a favor | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 10. Using this SNS, I let others know that I tend to work very hard | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 11. On this SNS I try to display myself as busy, even when in reality it isn't so | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 12. I limit my presence on this SNS to times outside college hours | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 13. On this SNS, I show that I (also) tend to work outside office/college hours to show my dedication to my interests | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 14. I use this SNS to let people know that I can make things difficult for them if they push me too far | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 15. I use this SNS to show how I dealt strongly or aggressively with colleagues who interfere with my business | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 16. I use this SNS for intimidation in order to get others to behave appropriately | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 17. On this SNS, I act like I know less so other people will help me out | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 18. Using this SNS, I try to gain sympathy from other people by appearing needy in some areas | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 19. On this SNS, I pretend not to understand something to gain someone's help | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 20. On this SNS, I act like I need assistance so people will help me out | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 21. I scan my SNS profile for unwanted or wrongful 'tagging' or 'spotting' of myself in pictures | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 22. On this SNS, I shield off certain pictures from public viewing to promote a | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| professional look | | | | | |
| 23. I delete certain photos on this SNS to promote a professional look | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 24. I post certain pictures on this SNS to facilitate a professional image | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 25. I seriously consider how I am portrayed in certain pictures on this SNS | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 26. I use this SNS to claim that I am not responsible for something (potentially damaging) | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 27. I use this SNS to claim that something (possibly damaging to my image) is not as bad as it seems to be | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 28. I use this SNS to apologize for things that might display me differently than I expected | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 29. On this SNS, I (have) show(n) that I accept responsibility for (possibly) damaging content on SNS or actions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| Please indicate how <i>likely</i> you consider the following questions... | <i>Never thought about it</i> | | | | | <i>A little likely</i> | | | | | <i>Very likely</i> | | | | |
|---|-------------------------------|---|---|---|---|------------------------|---|---|---|---|--------------------|---|---|---|---|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 30. Do you consider it likely that unwanted people will see your SNS profile? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 31. Do you consider it likely that a (future) employer will check up on your SNS profile? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 32. Do you believe that employers are now checking up on your SNS profile? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| 33. Are you inclined to <i>withhold</i> certain information on your SNS profile because of (future) employers (possibly) checking up on you? | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

| | | | | | |
|--|--------------------------------------|---|---|---|---------------------------|
| <p>34. Are you inclined to <i>show more</i> information on your SNS profile because of (future) employers checking up on you?</p> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <p>Please indicate how <i>likely</i> you consider the following questions...</p> | <p><i>Never thought about it</i></p> | | | | <p><i>Very likely</i></p> |
| <p>35. I intend to search for information about (future) employers, using this SNS</p> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <p>36. I intend to search for information about (future) jobs, using this SNS</p> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| <p>37. I intend to search for jobs using this SNS</p> | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

9. In the following question, first please make a top-three of Social Network Sites which you use the most. Write down your three most used SNS in the left column of the table below. If you have less than three Social Network Sites, please write these down in the table as a top-two or only the first line.

Then, please indicate in the matrix the amount of hours that you spend on these websites. Time spend on these websites does not simply mean that you are logged on. Time spend on the website represents the time you spend on activities such as communicating with others, producing new information, checking news feeds or updating your profile.

| Social Network Site | Less than 1 hour per week | Less than 1 hour per day, but more than 1 hour per week | Between 1 and 2 hours per day | Between 2 and 3 hours per day | More than 3 hours per day |
|----------------------------|---------------------------|---|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | |
| 3. | | | | | |

10. Please write down your top-three (or top-two or only-used) SNS again in the left column of the table below.

Then, please encircle the frequency with which you carry out the following activities on each of the Social Network Sites that you wrote down.

1 = I *never* carry out this activity when I am on this site, 2 = I *rarely* carry out this activity when I am on this site, 3 = I *sometimes* carry out this activity when I am on this site, 4 = I *often* carry out this activity when I am on this site, 5 = I *always* carry out this activity when I am on this site.

| Social Network Site | Joining discussions | Updating/editing your profile | Universal search: Browsing without special purposes | Initiating discussions | Meeting new people | Keeping in touch with friends | Keeping in touch with family | Keeping in touch with fellow students |
|----------------------------|---------------------|-------------------------------|---|------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| 1. | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 2. | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |
| 3. | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 | 1 2 3 4 5 |

APPENDIX F - RELIABILITY AND VALIDITY OF THE SCALES

Statistical analysis Student Questionnaire

Reliability Analysis

Self-promotion (5 items):

**Reliability
Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| ,873 | ,874 | 5 |

Supplication (4 items):

**Reliability
Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| ,814 | ,831 | 4 |

Ingratiation (4 items):

**Reliability
Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| ,782 | ,781 | 4 |

Intimidation (3 items):

**Reliability
Statistics**

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| ,752 | ,754 | 3 |

Defensive tactics (Excuses, Justifications, Apology 1 & 2):

Reliability

Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| ,673 | ,688 | 4 |

Photograph usage (5 items):

Reliability

Statistics

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| ,734 | ,735 | 5 |

Coding scheme – Which item corresponds with which code?

| | |
|---|------|
| - I show others my experience | SPR1 |
| - I (have) show(n) that I accept responsibility for (possibly) damaging content or actions on SNS | APO2 |
| - I act like I know less so other people will help me out | SUP1 |
| - I act like I need assistance so people will help me out | SUP4 |
| - I apologize for things that might display me worse than expected | APO1 |
| - I claim that I am not responsible for something potentially damaging | EXC |
| - I claim that something (possibly damaging to my image) is not as bad as it seems to be | JUS |
| - I compliment others to show that I am a friendly person | ING1 |
| - I delete photos to promote a professional look | PHO3 |
| - I intimidate in order to get others to behave appropriately | INT3 |
| - I let others know that I could be valuable to an | SPR4 |

| | |
|---|-------------|
| organization | |
| - I let others know that I tend to work very hard | EXE1 |
| - I let people know that I can make things difficult for them if they push me too far | INT1 |
| - I limit my presence to times outside classes | EXE3 |
| - I make others aware of my talents | SPR3 |
| - I make people aware of my accomplishments | SPR5 |
| - I post specific pictures to facilitate a professional image | PHO4 |
| - I praise others for their achievements | ING3 |
| - I pretend not to understand something to gain someone's help | SUP3 |
| - I scan my profile for unwanted 'tagging' or 'spotting' of myself in pictures | PHO1 |
| - I seriously consider how I am portrayed in pictures | PHO5 |
| - I shield off pictures from public viewing to promote a professional look | PHO2 |
| - I show how I aggressively dealt with others who interfere with my business | INT2 |
| - I show my interest into someone else's personal life | ING2 |
| - I show others my qualifications | SPR2 |
| - I show that I (also) tend to work outside class hours to show my dedication to my interests | EXE4 |
| - I show that I will do/have done someone a favor | ING4 |
| - I try to display myself as busy, even when in reality it is not | EXE2 |
| - I try to gain sympathy from other people by appearing needy in some areas | SUP2 |
| On SNS... | |
| - Unwanted people (will) see my profile | AWARENESS_B |
| - A (future) employer (will) check up on my profile | AWARENESS_C |
| - Employers could now be checking up on my profile | AWARENESS_D |

| | |
|---|----------------|
| <p>Please indicate how often you behave this way on SNS</p> <p>- Withhold certain information on my SNS profile because of (future) employers (possibly) checking up on me</p> | ACT_ON_AWARE_B |
| <p>- Show more information on my SNS profile because of (future) employers checking up on me</p> | ACT_ON_AWARE_C |
| <p>- Limit my profile visibility to as private as possible</p> | ACT_ON_AWARE_D |
| <p>- Search for information about (future) employers</p> | INTENTION_B |
| <p>- Search for information about (future) jobs</p> | INTENTION_C |
| <p>- Search for jobs</p> | INTENTION_D |

Factor analysis:

**Rotated
Component
Matrix^a**

| | Component | | | | |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| SPR3 | ,828 | | | | |
| SPR5 | ,797 | | | | |
| SPR4 | ,778 | | | | |
| SPR2 | ,726 | | | | |
| SPR1 | ,608 | | | | ,506 |
| INT2 | | ,760 | | | |
| INT1 | | ,748 | | | |
| INT3 | | ,693 | | | |
| JUS | | ,607 | | | ,306 |
| EXC | | ,602 | | | ,326 |
| SUP1 | | | ,866 | | |
| SUP3 | | | ,819 | | |
| SUP4 | | | ,779 | | |
| SUP2 | ,305 | ,357 | ,536 | ,307 | |
| ING1 | | | | ,772 | |
| ING2 | | | | ,736 | |
| ING3 | ,377 | | | ,691 | |
| ING4 | ,439 | | ,410 | ,452 | |
| APO2 | | | | | ,814 |
| APO1 | | ,301 | | | ,631 |

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

**Rotated
Component
t Matrix^a**

| | Component | | | | |
|------|-----------|------|------|------|------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| SPR3 | ,828 | | | | |
| SPR5 | ,797 | | | | |
| SPR4 | ,778 | | | | |
| SPR2 | ,726 | | | | |
| SPR1 | ,608 | | | | ,506 |
| INT2 | | ,760 | | | |
| INT1 | | ,748 | | | |
| INT3 | | ,693 | | | |
| JUS | | ,607 | | | ,306 |
| EXC | | ,602 | | | ,326 |
| SUP1 | | | ,866 | | |
| SUP3 | | | ,819 | | |
| SUP4 | | | ,779 | | |
| SUP2 | ,305 | ,357 | ,536 | ,307 | |
| ING1 | | | | ,772 | |
| ING2 | | | | ,736 | |
| ING3 | ,377 | | | ,691 | |
| ING4 | ,439 | | ,410 | ,452 | |
| APO2 | | | | | ,814 |
| APO1 | | ,301 | | | ,631 |

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

**Rotated
Component
t Matrix^a**

| | Component | | | | | |
|------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 |
| SPR3 | ,825 | | | | | |
| SPR5 | ,787 | | | | | |
| SPR4 | ,783 | | | | | |
| SPR2 | ,731 | | | | | |
| SPR1 | ,595 | | | | | ,526 |
| ING4 | ,449 | | ,419 | | ,410 | |
| INT2 | | ,726 | | | | |
| INT1 | | ,720 | | | | |
| INT3 | | ,676 | | | | |
| EXC | | ,649 | | | | |
| JUS | | ,631 | | | | |
| SUP1 | | | ,861 | | | |
| SUP3 | | | ,818 | | | |
| SUP4 | | | ,774 | | | |
| SUP2 | ,315 | ,313 | ,559 | | | |
| PHO3 | | | | ,775 | | |
| PHO1 | | | | ,735 | | |
| PHO2 | | | | ,697 | | |
| PHO5 | | | | ,650 | | |
| PHO4 | ,329 | ,448 | | ,468 | | |
| ING2 | | | | | ,744 | |
| ING1 | | | | | ,731 | |
| ING3 | ,369 | | | | ,687 | |
| APO2 | | | | | | ,813 |
| APO1 | | ,302 | | | | ,610 |

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

APPENDIX G - RESEARCH REPORT FOR PARTICIPANTS

A research report was made for our participants, both recruiter and students. All participants received an automated e-mail via the online questionnaire system with a PDF attachment. The PDF was formatted in UT style, however for readability I have removed this style.

Dear respondents,

First of all, we would like to thank you – both recruiters and students - for your participation in our research project. Without your help this research project wouldn't have sparked such interesting results. To summarize these results, we will first remind about the rationale of the study, and then describe the demographic data about participants, followed by the most interesting in our view, findings.

Goal of the study: Online Impression Management

The goal of the current study was to investigate how (young) job seekers present themselves towards future employers when soliciting for a job or even when nearing the end of their study. This form of self-presentation isn't a new concept, as the so-called Impression Management tactics have often been used in job interviews. An example of Impression Management tactics is the stressing of one's previous experiences throughout a job interview (even when not asked), or calling up a (potential) employer at very early hours to show that you don't have that 'nine-to-five work mentality'. All these tactics can be used to give off a desired (consciously created) image of you towards a recruiter or employer.

Now, as this Impression Management (IM) tactics can be described as 'offline' tactics, our goal was to investigate:

- Is there also a form of online Impression Management, and how can we measure the tactics involved?
- What causes these online IM tactics to increase?
- How do recruiters perceive these tactics, and do differences exist in expectations from recruiters and IM tactics usage by jobseekers?

Demographics

Following our research questions, we invited two groups of respondents: students and recruiters. We were able to get responses from 185 students (76 male and 109 female), which consisted for 27% of Dutch students, 34% were German students and 22% were Slovenian. The remaining 17% were students from various countries, i.e. Finland, Russia and China. Most students were 20-23 years old and majoring in Business Administration or Economics. Most students had indicated they didn't have any problems with previous experiences on Social Networking Sites.

For the latter part of the study, we got responses from 131 (Dutch) recruiters in various fields but all indicating they were active on Social Media for monitoring and gathering information on potential solicitors. Most used Social Networking Sites to gather background information were (in this order) LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, and most used techniques for gathering online information was by making direct contact with solicitors (e.g. ‘friending’ or ‘following’), receiving updates from the people already known to the recruiters, and comparing different Social Media to check for (in)consistencies.

Measuring Impression Management

Because the concept of Impression Management isn’t that new, some models to measure IM in job interviews have been created. The most used scale (Bolino & Turnley, 1999) states that IM can consist of five different behaviors. These are:

- Self-promotion: Emphasizing one’s abilities and previous experiences.
- Ingratiation: Complimenting others to increase your own level of liking
- Intimidation: Creating the attribution of danger with others in order to protect one's reputation
- Exemplification: Showing that one behaves like a model employee by going beyond and above the requirements of the job
- Supplication: Advertising the recognition of certain limitations in order to appear needy

Because we were interested in online IM tactics, we added to this model one other feature, which was the deliberate shielding off or deleting of undesirable or unprofessional photographs.

Because we received so many respondents, we were able to distinguish these behaviors in an online environment; therefore we could use the answers to investigate possible motives for students to use the IM tactics online.

Awareness of online observers and intention to search for a job using Social Networking Sites

From literature, we distinguished two possible motives for jobseekers to start using IM tactics online. The first is awareness of the possibility that other observers than your friends are looking at you on Social Networking Sites. The second motive is the intention to apply for a job by using your Social Networking profile.

Our study found that job seekers intend to use Social Networking Sites to apply for a job and therefore think about using IM tactics to present themselves towards others. Interestingly, we didn’t find relationships between the students’ awareness of (unintended) others and IM tactics, except for photograph usage. This could indicate that the conscious awareness of recruiters checking them does only lead to an increase in (unprofessional) photograph deleting.

Effectiveness of IM tactics

To this point, we only investigated the student responses in our study. However, because IM tactics

are directed towards others (in this case: recruiters) a very large part of our study consisted or comparing the answers of students on IM tactics usage with what recruiters deemed important IM tactics online. We compared final-year students' answers with what recruiters indicated as important online behaviors for jobseekers, and our main findings were that:

- The IM tactics of self-promotion was used much less often by jobseekers that recruiters thought important
- Our recruiters (generally) expected jobseekers to shield off or delete certain photographs, whereas jobseekers didn't comply to this expectation
- The amount of supplication and ingratiation did not differ between the two parties

Conclusions

- Students can be more aware that they are checked in their online environments. This doesn't have to be negative; one can also use this awareness to promote themselves online. Also, our study shows that recruiters want to see a professional image on Social Networking Sites, and one *might* increase their chances of finding a job by employing these sites to promote one's experiences and qualifications more and delete the (less suited for work) photographs. Checking for inconsistencies across Social Networking Sites might also be a good idea.
- Recruiters on the other hand need to be more aware that students use all Social Networking Sites for various reasons, and not just for them. Previous studies have shown that students don't want to delete their (unprofessional) photographs because they want to show their complete personality online (including these photographs).
- Related, recruiters need to be aware that differences do exist in Social Media users. Where one tries to use Social Networking Sites to promote oneself towards everyone (even unintended others), others could be less aware of this background check. We therefore stress that even though Social Networking Sites could be used as an additional screening tool, these sites are still very much open to subjectivity and should therefore not be used as the only source of background information.

REFERENCES

Bolino, M.C., & Turnley, W.H. (1999). Measuring Impression Management in Organizations: A Scale Development Based on the Jones and Pittman Taxonomy. Organizational Research Methods, 2, 187-206.