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The Impact of Beauty during Job Applications

Authors

Sevag Kertechian

Interdisciplinary Research Center in Management Sciences - Paris 1 Sorbonne University, Paris, France

Abstract

It is now obvious that makeup increases perceived women's attractiveness by men and women. Nevertheless, when it comes to the hiring process, the impact of the picture used on the curriculum vitae (CV) is often neglected. Our study aims to determine the circumstances under which corporal appearance can influence employers' choices. We will analyze the moderating effects of facial aspects, especially the use of cosmetics as an embellishing agent. The results of our study, which were obtained through multiple correspondence tests concerning ready-to-wear salesperson job offers, have served to evaluate the extent of this impact. While all things being equal, our results show that professional makeup positively affects recruiter's

perception, and considerably increases the number of convocations for interview in France and Italy.

Introduction

The idea of ugliness seen as a stigma, as opposed to the idea of beauty which is almost tyrannical, is a common occurrence in our modern societies (Vigarello, 2004). Appearance, which is part of the concept of beauty (Garner Moyer, 2007) can be assessed by its physical or sartorial facets (Pages-Delon, 1989). Their combination forms what is called corporeal appearance 'heard as the body and objects carried by him, the body, its presentation, representation' (Pages-Delon, 1989). In recent years,

embellishment practices such as the use of cosmetics are remarkably developing. The use of cosmetics helps increase the attractiveness and appreciation of women (Drakuli, 1993, 1996). The attractiveness of the female face promises women a social reward (Lennon et al., 1999; Amadieu, 2002; Hamermesh, 1994, 2012). In general, the use of cosmetics causes more or less negative impressions (Graham and Jouhar 1981; McKeachie 1952; Hamid, 1972). Also, according to Goffman (1973), the recruitment process is a stage where the individual implements strategies using its looks to its advantage. Consequently, it appears interesting to discuss the impact of the use of cosmetics as an embellishing agent on the recruitment process.

In other words, with equal skills and for the same position, will a recruiter prefer to call back a woman wearing makeup or a neutral looking woman?

Literature review

Makeup and impressions in the making

Graham and Jouhar (1981) were pioneers in concluding a positive influence of the use cosmetics on both looks and personality. Indeed, the use of cosmetics will have either a positive or negative influence on the personality traits, i.e. A woman using cosmetics in a professional way, may look more serious and skilled (Etcoff et al., 2011 ; Bielfeldt et al., 2013). In this founding study (Graham and Jouhar, 1981), four faces of

women that were considered moderately attractive based on a pre-test were assessed via six appearances descriptors (attractive, clean ...) and fourteen personality traits (honest, true, warm ...). Embellished women appear more "neat, feminine, elegant, eye-pleasing, and more attractive." These findings can be compared with studies proving a negative impact on the formation of impressions. McKeachie (1952) and Hamid (1972) emphasize the negative effects of using cosmetics. In their studies, women were judged as being "frivolous, cold and not very sentimental". Similarly, women wearing makeup would be "immoral, superficial" (Workman and Johnson, 1991) and more likely, victims of "sexual assault" (Workman and Johnson, 1991). The professional world is not spared by these impressions; thus, embellished women applying for an accounting job are less entitled than those who are not glamorized (Kyle and Mahler,

1996). More recently, Huguet, Croizet and Richetin (2004) conducted a similar study with a sample of students from different program courses (psychology, business school and aesthetics school). The results show a positive impact in terms of attractiveness on older faces and slightly less on other faces. In terms of personality traits, made-up women were judged "colder, less endearing, more superficial and less sociable" than non-embellished women. Women who used cosmetics were systematically considered "superficial" and "immoral". Nevertheless, Richetin et al., (2004) admit uncompromisingly that the IAT (Implicit Association Test) did not "determine if the quantity of makeup was decisive in the formation of impressions".

Makeup and beauty: a question of quantity?

Nancy Etcoff et al., (2011) provide some answers concerning the efficiency of makeup. Her results show that "professional makeup" makes the individual "friendlier and more professional". According to Etcoff et al., (2011), professional makeup refers to a moderate application. *A contrario*, a natural makeup ("*minimal*") and a glamorous makeup ("*dramatical*") are not recommended. That is why it is recommended in order to enhance your look to apply thinkoncealer, mascara, natural blush and lipstick. It is also important to say that makeup changes with skin type and colour. Her study confirms the research conducted by Forbes, Jung and Haas (2006). The questions of Huguet, Croizet and Richetin (2004) find an answer here. Indeed, the load of makeup applied is essential; "glamor makeup" does not inspire confidence, but

makes the woman sexually more attractive. Women without makeup and slightly embellished are unlikely to be perceived as socially effective (Etcoff et al., 2011; Bielfeldt et al., 2013). The eyes must be well highlighted in order to be attractive (Mulhern, Fieldman, Hussey, Leveque and Pineau, 2003). Red lips are considered attractive (Schaffer, 2007). The findings of Niesta-Kayser, Elliot, and Feltman (2010) fit into this belief. These researchers found that men prefer women wearing red lipstick. In consequence, the use of cosmetics influences judgment and shapes impressions. There is also a matter of appropriateness in the cosmetic gesture that comes into play for achieving professional success. However, there is no empirical verification of this proposal.

First impressions based on appearance are difficult to overcome; recruiters will often deny this truth. In fact, only 3% of recruiters admit relying on the appearance of their candidates (Robert Half survey, 2011). Attracting the eye, makeup allows the face to be defined as a visual stimulant (Cash, Rissi and Chapman, 1985). It is one of the factors that affects how people perceive others the most (Patzer, 1983) and especially women, since their "value" is often established and judged by their level of attractiveness (Lennon et al., 2003). The use of cosmetics can amplify physical attractiveness, there is a kind of consensus on this finding (Cash, Dawson, Davis, Bowen and Galumbeck, 1989; Cox and Glick, 1986; Mulhern, Fieldman, Hussey, Leveque, and Pineau, 2003; Workman and Johnson, 1991). When the information available on a CV is limited, an attractive face will fill this gap (Banducci, Karp, Thrasher and Rallings, 2008). The attractiveness bias

suggests a positive impact on the overall judgment (Chiu and Babcock. 2002). The stereotype "what has been cared for is good" is also activated when the individual judges a woman wearing cosmetics (Graham and Jouhar 1981). But what about the enhancement of attractiveness during the first few steps of the recruitment process?

Research design and methodology

The correspondence tests

It has been thirty years since the Anglo-Saxon countries have started using the testing method. Drawing heavily on what has already been done in France in the early 2000s (Petit, 2003, 2004; Amadieu, 2002, 2004), we put together false applications for sales positions in the ready-to wear sector.

There are two methods that are traditionally used to measure differences during the hiring process; the residue method and the testing method. For this research, we mobilized with the testing method. The researche of Petit (2003, 2004) in France proves the worth of the testing method in economics, and in human resources management thanks to Amadieu's studies (2004). Up until the 1970s in the United States, we practiced the "In-Person audits" where discrimination during the hiring process was examined. The question now is how to isolate the tested variable independently from personality bias. Given this methodological limitation, we decided to establish the "correspondence test" to disqualify the influence of the human bias factor. Thus, we will limit ourselves to sending out CVs.

However, in order to limit the methodological errors, we did not send the CV of the same person with and without makeup to the same company.

Procedure

We believe that setting the factor of preference for a professionally embellished face (hence a more attractive face) at the forefront is possible thanks to the method of correspondence test. The objective is to measure and compare the applications simultaneously between themselves. The method we will be applying here is that of a "field experiment" (Jupp 2006) since it is a concrete situation, as opposed to a laboratory situation. In addition, we will be studying the impact of makeup on CVs in two different countries: France (Paris) and Italy (Milan). Also, these two fields are similar in terms of application (diploma and

skills), as we found the same companies. Moreover and for that reason, the data collection was easier (collection of messages with phones). The use of the correspondence test methodology has never been tested for comparing results by country. Therefore, this is a novelty in the field, such as the impact of makeup when sending out CVs. The retail division (sales positions in ready-to-wear) is preferred for several reasons:

- These two fields are considered as fashion capitals (Dillon, 2010, p. 115).

- To have a reasonable chance of getting answers.

- To improve the statistical reliability of our results.

• To ensure the discretion of our approach to not raise suspicion.

Numbers and emails were created especially for the testing. We started the testing on October 2014 till March 2015. Thus, the two profiles of the candidates that we came up with are "ordinary". In order to maximize the response rates, we responded to recent job postings. In fact, if an offer is too old, the company would not go through the trouble of examining the CV. Choosing the ready-to-wear sector is relevant in this case, considering that we can find the same stores in France and Italy. There is a form of homogeneity in our applications. The realization of the applications is split into two groups named G1 and G2. The picture changes depending on the profile: Caucasian and North African[1]. The women of G1 are makeup-free. We find

the two candidates again in Group 2 (G2). Women of G2 are embellished with makeup. Our two candidates were made-up according to professional makeup criteria[2] (Etcoff et al., 2011). We have a total of 4 applications per country. For each CV, the name and first name of the applicants differ depending on the country. Applications were sent electronically.

Results and discussion

First, we will analyse the results from all countries, and then we will group the results by country. Furthermore, we are considering that a positive response equals an invitation for a future job interview. The convocation is obtained either by e-mail or phone call. All the responses in Italy and France were obtained by phone calls. Out of 400 submitted applications, we received

149 positive replies. Previous studies discuss individuals'
preferences for embellished faces; applicants wearing makeup
collect significantly more positive inferences.

Our literature review also examined the quantity and techniques
of applying makeup. It appears that makeup needs to be applied
professionally in order for it to be "effective" (Etcoff et al., 2011;
Bielfeldt et al., 2013).

Please See Table 1 in the PDF Version

The differences are statistically significant. This table shows us
that makeup is related to the response variable. In other words, if
G2 candidates get more positive responses, it is because makeup
has a positive effect towards the person recruiting. Recruiters

will tend to call back more embellished candidates ($p<0.01$ in France and Italy). It invalidates the hypothesis (H0) that the two variables are independent. Indeed, makeup impacts the responses to our candidates whether they are Caucasian or North African and either in France ($p <0.01$) or Italy ($p <0.1$). We also translated our results into the odds ratio in order to measure additional chances of getting a job interview.

Please See Table 2 in the PDF Version

The odds ratio is frequently used in medicine, especially for risk calculation in developing cancer for smokers. However, we can also use the odds ratio in order to calculate the additional chances of belonging or developing something. Here, the odds

ratio shows us that for glamorized candidates, there are significantly more positive chances of getting a positive response.

In France, getting a positive response is 11.55 times more likely with the use of cosmetics for saleswoman jobs in the ready-to-wear division. In Italy, these odds are 7.89 times higher. Without being too specific, the chances of getting a positive response to our two G2 candidates are at least 7 times greater when wearing professional makeup.

Conclusion

All things being equal, we emphasize the influence of professional makeup during the time of selection based on CV. For saleswoman jobs in the ready-to-wear division, the use of makeup allows our applicants to get at least 3 times more

positive responses (Table 1). We also discussed this impact, depending on the types of candidates and countries. It appears that this impact is almost identical in France and Italy. The odds of getting a positive response from our G2 candidates are at least 7 times greater with professional makeup. The results obtained with the odds ratio are very significant (Table 2).

If it is easy to make a distinction between "without makeup, natural, professional and glamorous makeup" (Etcoff et al., 2011), a future research should draw the lines between these different uses of cosmetic products.

Regarding the methodology and in order to improve the validity of our results, a larger study could have been set up. First, the sample can be extended to a larger number of candidates and

secondly the number of sent CVs could have been more consistent in order to strengthen our statistical processing. In addition, we could analyse the moderating effect of professional makeup thanks to the variance test (Evrard et al., 2003) to refine our analysis. Also, the mediation test would have determined whether the nature of the mediator makeup was the result of the enhancement of physical attractiveness or the activation of the stereotype "what has been cared for is good" (Graham and Jouhar, 1981). After all, it all comes down to knowing whether the recruiter, looking at a professionally embellished candidate, sees a "smart, honest and faithful" woman, or a beautiful and attractive woman.

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