Copyright is owned by the Author of the thesis. Permission is given for a copy to be downloaded by an individual for the purpose of research and private study only. The thesis may not be reproduced elsewhere without the permission of the Author.
The influence of grooming style on recruiters’ evaluations of female applicants for a managerial position

A thesis presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements of Master of Business Studies in Communication Management, at Massey University, Palmerston North

Joanna Heke
2010
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to sincerely thank my supervisors Dr Marianne Tremaine and Dr Nicola Murray for their time, invaluable guidance and support.

Thanks also go to Jane, for teaching me how to use SPSS and helping making sense of my outputs and for being a calm voice in the middle of my statistics storm.

I would also like to thank all my friends and family who have supported and helped me along the way. Most of all I would like to thank my husband Aiden for his patience, understanding, and ongoing encouragement and my three beautiful little boys, who have helped keep things in perspective.
ABSTRACT

In an ideal world, employment assessments would only be based on rational decision-making involving, for example, the evaluation of employment history, education, references and demonstrable experience (Kyle & Mahler, 1996). However, physical appearance plays a significant role in interpersonal communications because it functions as a readily available source of nonverbal information (Graham & Jouhar, 1980). The aim of this research project was to examine how employment decisions regarding women in management might be influenced by gender-related aspects of women’s grooming style.

Evaluations from 114 British recruitment consultants were used to determine the influence of cosmetics, hairstyle and eyeglasses on impressions and evaluations of a female managerial job applicant. Eight variations of cosmetics, hairstyle and eyeglasses were used in the experimental treatments. Recruitment consultants viewed an identical job description and Curriculum Vitae for the fictional job applicant with one of the eight head and shoulders colour photos attached, and rated the job applicant on a number of impressions related to personal qualities and employment potential. The data gained were analysed using analysis of variance.

Results indicated that amendments to the grooming conditions did not significantly affect perceptions of employment potential, competence, independence or recommendations of salary. However, there were some significant main effects of femininity and masculinity related to the job applicant’s hairstyle and the respondents’ gender. Hairstyle changes had the strongest impact on the model’s perceived femininity and masculinity, with long hair significantly enhancing perceived femininity. Interestingly, female respondents gave significantly higher masculinity ratings to the job applicant than did male
respondents.

There were also a number of other significant two-way interactions that serve to consolidate the main grooming interactions found regarding femininity and masculinity. The two-way interaction between hairstyle and eyeglasses was significant for the reactions concerning 'employment potential', 'would work well under direction' and 'practical', and came near significance for the participants’ impressions of ‘competence’. In responding to all of these differently presented views of the same person, under the impressions listed above, it appears that respondents gave higher scores when they viewed the job applicant with a balance of grooming elements that were masculine (hair up, eyeglasses and no cosmetics) and feminine (hair down, no eyeglasses and cosmetics). Therefore, a job applicant with a very feminine appearance is perhaps not seen as appropriate for a managerial role compared with a moderately feminine-seeming applicant and likewise, a very masculine appearance may also be considered a less likely indicator of future success in a managerial role.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ........................................................................................................... i
ABSTRACT ........................................................................................................................... ii
List of Tables ........................................................................................................................ viii
List of Figures ..................................................................................................................... ix

Chapter 1: INTRODUCTION ....................................................................................... 1
  1.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................... 1
  1.2 Value of this study ................................................................................................. 2
  1.3 Research aim ......................................................................................................... 2

Chapter 2: LITERATURE REVIEW ..................................................................... 4
  2.1 Introduction ............................................................................................................ 4
  2.2 Dress ....................................................................................................................... 5
  2.3 Attractiveness ...................................................................................................... 10
  2.4 Cosmetics ............................................................................................................. 13
  2.5 Hairstyle ............................................................................................................... 18
  2.6 Eyeglasses ............................................................................................................ 21
  2.7 Conclusion ............................................................................................................. 23

Chapter 3: PAST FINDINGS AND RESEARCH QUESTION DEVELOPMENT 25
  3.1 Cosmetics ............................................................................................................. 25
  3.2 Hairstyle ............................................................................................................... 26
  3.3 Eyeglasses ............................................................................................................. 26

Chapter 4: METHODOLOGY ............................................................................ 28
  4.1 Introduction ......................................................................................................... 28
  4.2 Sample .................................................................................................................. 28
  4.3 Stimulus materials ............................................................................................ 29
   4.3.1 Model ........................................................................................................... 29
   4.3.2 Dress ............................................................................................................. 29
   4.3.3 Photographs ............................................................................................... 30
   4.3.4 Job description ............................................................................................ 32
   4.3.5 Curriculum Vitae/Résumé ........................................................................... 32
  4.4 Measures .............................................................................................................. 33
  4.5 Procedure ............................................................................................................. 36
  4.6 Ethical considerations ......................................................................................... 38
List of Tables

Table 1 . Internal Consistency of Competence Impressions........................46
Table 2 . Internal Consistency of Independence Impressions......................47
Table 3 . Internal consistency of Employment Potential Impressions..............49
Table 4 . Analysis of Variance: Competence Factor...................................146
Table 5 . Analysis of Variance: Employment Potential Factor......................147
Table 6 . Analysis of Variance: Salary Recommendations............................148
Table 7 . Analysis of Variance: Independence Factor................................149
Table 8 . Independent t test for Femininity.............................................150
Table 9 . Analysis of Variance: Femininity.............................................151
Table 10 . Independent t test for Masculinity.........................................152
Table 11 . Analysis of Variance: Masculinity............................................153
Table 12 . Analysis of Variance: Attractiveness........................................154
Table 13 . Analysis of Variance: ’Work Well Under Direction’ ....................155
Table 14 . Independent t test for ’risk-taker’..........................................156
Table 15 . Analysis of Variance: ‘Risk-taker’..........................................157
Table 16 . Analysis of Variance: ’Practical’.............................................158
List of Figures

Figure 1. Femininity and the two-way interaction of eyeglasses and cosmetics...61
Figure 2. Masculinity and the two-way interaction of gender and eyeglasses .....63
Figure 3. Masculinity and the two-way interaction of gender and hairstyle.........64
Figure 4. Competence and the two-way interaction of eyeglasses and hairstyle 65
Figure 5. Employment potential and the two-way interaction of hairstyle and eyeglasses ..................................................................................................66
Figure 6. Attractiveness and the two-way interaction of hairstyle and cosmetics 67
Figure 7. ‘Would work well under direction’ and the two-way interaction of hairstyle and eyeglasses ........................................................................68
Figure 8. ‘Risk-taker’ and the two-way interaction of gender and cosmetics .......69
Figure 9. ‘Practical’ and the two-way interaction of hairstyle and eyeglasses .....70