

From Great Expectations to Realistic Career Outlooks: Exploring Changes in Job Seeker Perspectives Following Realistic Job Previews in Sport

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Realistic job previews (RJPs) occur when both positive and negative information about a job is presented to a potential applicant. Because job seekers in the sport industry sometimes target opportunities based upon their personal affection for particular sports/sport organizations, the presentation of realistic information about the actual work could be key. The purpose of this two study, quasi-experimental research design was to examine the effect of RJPs on job seekers' levels of attraction to sport job openings, perceptions of person-job fit, and job acceptance intentions. Study 1 results suggested job seekers' acceptance intentions and attraction to the job changed after the job seeker encountered realistic information. Study 2 results suggested job seekers' acceptance intentions and perceived job fit changed after encountering an RJP where perceived prestige was a factor. Thus, RJPs appear to influence the attractiveness, acceptability, and perceived fit of a job opening in sport.

"Take nothing on its looks; take everything on evidence. There's no better rule."
—Mr. Jaggers, in Dickens's *Great Expectations*

Because employees are a defining feature of most businesses (Rynes, 1991; Schneider, 1987), one of the most important features of successful firms is the ability to attract, select, and hire individuals (also referred to as human capital) whose knowledge, skills, and abilities collectively support key strategic goals of the firm

(Barney, 1991; Becker & Huselid, 1998; Crook, Todd, Combs, Woehr, & Ketchen, 2011). In effect, "it is the people behaving in them that make organizations what they are" (Schneider, 1987, p. 438), and it is through the recruitment and personnel selection processes that organizations can execute the most fundamental means by which they can acquire premium human capital (Berkson, Ferris, & Harris, 2002; Rynes, 1991). Because recruiting employees is a time- and labor-intensive process that can prove costly for organizations if it is poorly executed (Barber, 1998; Ployhart, Schneider, & Schmitt, 2006), numerous studies have drawn attention to its importance for short- and long-term organizational competitive advantage and success (Barney, 1991; Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). However, limited research has been conducted on the recruiting of employees in sport business contexts, though, for reasons expressed next, there appear to be several distinctive motivations supporting it.

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For instance, one significant issue facing certain segments of the sport industry (e.g., highest competitive levels of professional sports, American intercollegiate sports) that has received minimal attention is the passionate attraction job seekers have to sport jobs of all types, irrespective of how it fits with an individual's interests, career goals, skill sets, and even needs (Kjeldsen, 1990; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Mensch & Mitchell, 2008; Todd & Andrew, 2008). The sport management academic discipline is brimming with students who have great expectations when it comes to being the next early career, high-profile general manager (e.g., Theo Epstein) or major university athletic director (King, 2009; Kjeldsen, 1990). Even high school students are increasingly dreaming big when it comes to the sport industry (Swanson, 2009). Though robust interest in sports is healthy for the growth of the sport management discipline, great (yet unrealistic) student expectations that emerge from robust interest and social adoration instead of factual evidence can have negative implications for organizational performance and job/career satisfaction once these individuals enter the job market and get hired by sport organizations (Todd & Kent, 2009; Wanous, 1992).

What is also clear from research is that unmet expectations among new employees often lead to a multitude of problems for employers, many of which can ultimately cost their respective organizations time, money, and resources (Barber, 1998; Galvin, 2001). Increased employee dissatisfaction and distrust, increased counterproductive work behaviors and turnover intentions, and decreased organizational commitment and organizational performance levels can all stem from new employees' unmet expectations in a general sense (Ambrose, Seabright, & Schminke, 2002; Barksdale, Belenger, Boles, & Brashear, 2003; Hom, Griffeth, Palich, & Bracker, 1998). Furthermore, in sport settings, previous work suggests that some heuristics used by job seekers may indeed be unique to the sport industry (Andrew, Todd, Greenwell, Pack, & Cannon, 2006; Cunningham, Sagas, Dixon, Kent, & Turner, 2005; Mensch & Mitchell, 2008; Kjeldsen, 1990; Todd & Andrew, 2008; Todd & Harris, 2009; Won & Chelladurai, 2008). That is, the way in which job seekers in the sport industry target job openings, assess those openings, and apply for those openings (all considered "heuristics") may indeed be altogether different from the typical method seen in other industries.

For instance, in sport, there may be a sense in which job seekers have unrealistic expectations about the work itself, which are largely formed from a personal affinity and passion for a sport brand, or specific environment where that brand exists (i.e., "I want to work in the English Premier League because I love the sport."). Moreover, it is possible that this personal connection to the sport brand or property masks itself in unrealistic expectations that are altered or reshaped when realistic job information is encountered (Cunningham et al., 2005; Todd & Kent, 2009). Indeed, after comparing sport management undergraduate and graduate students' and sport industry practitioners' perceptions of career expectations in sport

management, Mathner and Martin (2012) cautioned that sport management students' views of career development in the sport industry may be inaccurate and clouded by high interest and love of sport.

Therefore, given the high costs involved in recruiting, training, and developing new employees in general (Phillips, 1998; Ployhart et al., 2006; Wanous, 1992), sport organizations undoubtedly have a strong motivation to ensure they attract, and ultimately hire, the best available job candidates (individuals possessing the requisite abilities, education, and job skills for the advertised work) who also have realistic expectations of the work they will be doing once hired. Accordingly, the purpose of this exploratory effort is to examine the way in which job seekers' perceive sports jobs, and more importantly, how those perceptions change following the presentation of *realistic job previews* (RJP) in the sport industry.

The ensuing sections are divided as follows. First, a review and discussion of the importance of job preview information research to sport management is provided. Next, the *elaboration likelihood model* (ELM) is introduced as a theoretical foundation and its benefits to recruiting and personnel selection research are reviewed. Third, the methodology (including hypotheses development) and results of the two-study, quasi-experimental design of this research project are discussed. Lastly, how the findings are applicable to sport managers and instructors is explained. Recommendations about future lines of recruiting and RJP research that would greatly benefit the sport management discipline are also offered.

Realistic Job Previews

As a means to recruit premium talent, organizations employ numerous recruitment activities to attract superlative individuals for vacant job positions. Of these activities, it has been argued that "no recruitment issue has generated more attention than RJPs, the presentation by an organization of both favorable and unfavorable job-related information to job candidates" (Phillips, 1998, p. 673). Much like a medical immunization, RJPs are believed to be a beneficial recruiting tool for business organizations because they give potential employees a small dose of "organizational reality" (Popovich & Wanous, 1982). In short, before being hired, RJPs may better enable job candidates to self-select.

Self-selection is the method by which job candidates assess their abilities in relation to the organization and a specific job (Premack & Wanous, 1985). By having realistic information about the job position and business organization, these individuals can then make a more informed decision about their future (Breaugh & Starke, 2000; Bretz & Judge, 1998; Miceli, 1985). Job candidates will be more likely to accept a job if they perceive a strong fit (for the job and/or organization). Conversely, if job candidates believe they are not a good fit for the job or organization, they will be more likely to withdraw their name from further consideration (Saks, Wiesner, & Summers, 1994).

Realistic job previews can be delivered at numerous times in the recruitment process, including before the job interview, upon completion of the job interview, and after an employee is hired. They can also be administered to job candidates in a variety of different mediums. These include, but are not limited to, the following forms: (a) *videos* (Meglino, Denisi, & Ravlin, 1993; Reilly, Brown, Blood, & Malatesta, 1981), (b) *written descriptions* (Thorsteinson, Palmer, Wulff, & Anderson, 2004; Suszko & Breugh, 1986), (c) *site visits* (Reilly et al., 1981), and (d) *verbal presentations* (Dugoni & Ilgen, 1981; Suszko & Breugh, 1986). Ultimately, regardless of the form, scholars are largely in agreement that the balanced presentation of information that RJPs provide can have a significant and positive impact on employee job expectations, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions (Dilla, 1987; Earnest, Allen, & Landis, 2011; Phillips, 1998).

Interestingly, sport management scholars, while echoing the extant management literatures views about the value of RJPs to organizations, also have discussed possible attitudinal differences between applicants seeking sport/nonsport jobs. For instance, job seekers in sport may have heightened elements of social identity present in their career preferences (Kjeldsen, 1990; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Todd & Kent, 2009). This social identity is a function of the belief that working for a sport organization of high repute is not only desirable for what it says about the status of the individual job seeker (i.e., “the sport brand or sport property is elite, so I’m elite”), but in some cases, it is exclusively necessary to the job seeker (“I only want to work in Major League Baseball, not the Minor Leagues). As a result, job seekers in sport contexts may use somewhat distinctive heuristics (compared to jobs in other industries with lesser societal veneration) when considering whether or not an advertised job opening is desirable (Cunningham et al., 2005; Todd & Andrew, 2008).

Thus, two key points emerge from the aforementioned observations. First, RJPs are highly valuable to organizations because they offer job seekers a realistic picture of the job and that realism, by extension, tempers preemployment expectations. Secondly, job seekers in the sport industry are often affected by a personal connection to the industry in a way that colors their perceptions of jobs, their targeting of those jobs, and their expectations in those jobs. Therefore, what motivated the present line of inquiry was an underlying interest in how realistic information about a job influences the perspectives that sport job seekers form about (1) the extent to which the job is a fit for them, (2) their intentions to accept that job, and (3) their overall attraction to that job.

Study 1

Hypotheses Development

The ELM (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986) explains how, during the communication process, individuals come to form attitudes and evaluations. In sum, when individuals

receive and process persuasive communication, they will do so along a continuum that includes low and high elaboration end points. Elaboration, in the context of the ELM, refers to “the extent to which a person thinks about the issue-relevant arguments contained in a message” (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986, p. 128). When low levels of elaboration are used, individuals will most likely process communication information by way of peripheral processing. Via peripheral processing, attitude formation is not based on the message’s informational content and applicability “but rather on simple environmental cues (i.e., peripheral cues) such as characteristics of the information source (e.g., credibility, power, attractiveness) or the characteristics of the message (e.g., number of argument, length of message)” (Larsen & Phillips, 2002, p. 349). Contrariwise, with higher levels of elaboration, individuals use central processing, which means attitudes and evaluations, be it favorable or unfavorable, are formed based on the message content (Larsen & Phillips, 2002).

The ELM is a useful theoretical approach for explaining how job preview information may impact sport job seekers’ fit perceptions, possible job acceptance intentions, and attitude formation toward a sport organization’s job opening. Sport job seekers may possess a strong working knowledge of a particular sport team while at the same time having only limited information about explicit job and organizational characteristics that are relevant to their specific career interests (Cunningham et al., 2005; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Todd & Andrew, 2008; Todd & Kent, 2009). In other words, a sport job seeker may simultaneously have a lot of information about a National Basketball Association (NBA) team, such as the Miami Heat, while possessing very little information about a Heat basketball operations job opening and the Heat’s basketball operations department. Absent a complete understanding of a sport industry job, applicants are likely to look to other sources to help them develop a more perfect understanding of the open job position (Rynes, Bretz, & Gerhart, 1991; Schwab, Rynes, & Aldag, 1987).

Sport job seekers may especially rely on peripheral cues, such as team or league characteristics and perceptions of organizational personnel, including star athletes, more so than central processing when evaluating sport job openings (Cunningham et al., 2005; Todd & Kent, 2009). By relying on such cues, sport job seekers may draw correlations between peripheral processing information and job openings that are imprecise and that can result in unrealistic expectations about what job openings really entail. In turn, if those job seekers are hired by a sport organization, their unmet expectations may lead to decreased individual and organizational productivity (Ambrose et al., 2002; Barksdale et al., 2003; Hom et al., 1998). Thus, assuming a job seeker has both the ability and motivation to learn more about a sport employment opportunity, RJPs are of great value to both job seekers and sport organizations.

Job preview information that is realistic provides a mechanism for job applicants to develop a more perfect understanding of open job positions and the

corresponding departments within sport organizations (Breugh & Starke, 2000; Popovich & Wanous, 1982). Therefore, job seekers will most likely use central, rather than peripheral, processing to evaluate a job opportunity (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986). Central processing will lead to attitudes and evaluations that are grounded in message content instead of inferences about unknown job and organizational characteristics derived from other factors, such as team or league characteristics (e.g., perceived prestige associated with working in professional sports).

In fact, in an experimental design testing attraction to general sales jobs, Thorsteinson et al. (2004) reported realistic information that was both positive and negative was a more effective predictor than unidirectional information about the job. Similarly, because of the social veneration surrounding many jobs in sports and the popularity of the sports industry in general, the potential exists for job seekers to have perceptions of jobs in the sport industry that are largely generated in the absence of any realistic information about the actual work required in that position (Kjeldsen, 1990; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Mensch & Mitchell, 2008). In other words, sport job seekers may know very little about specific segments of professional sport team front offices (e.g., human resources, marketing and sales, community relations) and yet these individuals still may want to be a part of front office staffs because they are sport fans and knowledgeable about the organization as a sport team (rather than as a business organization). Thus, for the purposes of Study 1, the following hypotheses are examined:

H1: A video RJP of a sport job will impact job seekers' acceptance intentions.

H2: A video RJP of a sport job will impact job seekers' perceptions of person–job fit.

H3: A video RJP of a sport job will impact job seekers' levels of attraction to the job.

Research Design

Study 1 was orchestrated in the following manner. First, as part of an internship course credit in the Sport Management major at one University, graduate students each produced a 25-min video overview of their unique internship experiences. Most of the footage was recorded by another person, rather than individually by the actual intern. These videos were then used in future academic terms as a RJP for particular sport industry jobs in various segments. The enrolled students were directed to design his/her video in such a way that it provided action footage detailing the work itself and completing work-related duties throughout the internship period. For Study 1, a video from an internship in Game Day Operations within the context of the American Intercollegiate Athletics system was selected. This RJP shows the intern performing typical day-to-day tasks, including: preparation of an athletic facility before a specific event (bleachers/scoreboard setup, locker room setup, team bench area setup, media table/press box preparation), crowd control

during sports events, and weekly duties related to the use of athletic facilities for team practice.

Past research has investigated the impact of recruiter characteristics and behaviors and found some meaningful correlations with applicant attraction and intention to accept a job (Carless & Imber, 2007; Harris & Fink, 1987; Schmitt & Coyle, 1976). Thus, to control for the effects of a single “recruiter or actor” two different student videos were developed from the identical internship, but in different time periods (same site, same tasks, same supervisor, but different academic terms). These videos were not developed during the same academic terms and the students involved in the production of the videos did not know each other. Further, the subjects participating in the study were unfamiliar with the interns involved in the production of the videos.

A reliability check was conducted to ensure the two videos, despite involving different presenters (student actors), were sufficiently similar. The two videos were shown to a sample of 62 undergraduate students not involved in Study 1. After watching both videos, these students used a Likert-type scale from 1 (*very little*) to 4 (*very much alike*) to evaluate the similarity of two videos on each of the six dimensions of presenter friendliness, presenter personality, presenter personableness, the job competence of the presenter, the presence of positive information about the job, and the presence of negative information about the job (dimensions taken from Goltz & Giannantonio, 1995 and Harris & Fink, 1987). The means of all six items were averaged to arrive at a grand mean of 2.81. Thus, a contamination effect between videos was unlikely to be a significant issue.

Next, three graduate research assistants with training in qualitative and experimental research methods and two sport management faculty members independently watched the two video RJP and developed written job descriptions for the job tasks highlighted in the videos. This was done so that the written job descriptions conveyed the same general information as the video, but in textual form (see Appendix). The format of the job description followed what is typically seen in job announcements inside the sport industry: Title of position, location, summary of the organization, occupational summary, and specific work performed. Even so, actual job descriptions in the sport industry may have far fewer exact details of the work itself compared with the job description used in this research, thus, creating another type of control in the current research context.¹

Finally, a survey instrument was used that consisted of two Job Acceptance items (Harris & Fink, 1987) scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “*definitely not*” to “*definitely*,” four Person Job Fit items (Saks & Ashforth, 1997) scored on a 4-point Likert-type scale ranging from “*not at all*” to “*very much*,” and three Applicant Attraction items from Rau and Hyland (2002) and scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale ranging from “*strongly disagree*” to “*strongly agree*.” The exact items that were reported in each of the cited articles were used in this study.

Procedures and Methods

The study procedures were as follows. First, groups of students taking similar entry-level undergraduate sport management classes were identified at two Universities. On a particular day of class, and unknown to the students, the course instructor entered classrooms at each University and presented the participants with the written RJP (which was a typical job announcement). The participants were asked to read the job description carefully, think about that specified job, and then complete the survey items representing the three dependent variables previously described. The course instructor then played the video RJP and afterward, the participants once more completed survey items involving the aforementioned dependent variables. The pre- and postsets of completed surveys were then collected and collated.

Overall, three separate groups of students from a total of two Universities took part in Study 1. Each group was a class of University students enrolled in a Sport Management class. Group 1 ($n = 44$) was at University A and watched Video A. Groups 2 ($n = 48$) and 3 ($n = 53$) were from University B and watched Video B.²

Results

Intrascale reliability for job acceptance, person–job fit, and applicant attraction were all acceptable ($\alpha = .78, .81, .76$). A significant (intra-student) change occurred in job seeker attraction ($t = 4.57, p < .001$) and acceptance intentions ($t = 5.22, p < .001$) from data collection time 1 to data collection time 2, providing support for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 3. Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Figures 1 and 2 are visual displays of the changes that occurred in each participant after watching the video

RJP of the job that was presented in a written job description first. The data were coded such that a positive score on Figure 1 and/or Figure 2 reflects an increase in the construct following the presentation of the video RJP (coded T2 minus T1). Lines to the left of center represent postvideo scores that were lower than prevideo scores; or, a job seeker encountered the realistic images and material in the video and his/her scores on the assessment dropped compared with just reading the written job description. Lines to the right of center show the opposite effect. A visual inspection of both Figures 1 and 2 reveals changes in perspectives following the video RJP.

Discussion

The results of Study 1 yield several interesting observations. For instance, one noteworthy finding is that individual perspectives about a sport job changed following a video RJP in comparison with perspectives taken in reference to the same position earlier (but presented in written job description form). Individuals first read a detailed (350 word) job description which included information about the location of the job, size and scope of the University, the general occupation qualifications, and specific duties performed in the job as well as specific expectations required in that job. Next, they physically watched a video of an intern performing the tasks described in the written description form. After watching the video job preview many of the job seekers' perspectives changed. Specifically, after the video RJP, significant changes in the sample were seen in (1) overall attraction to Game Day Operations job and (2) the likelihood of accepting the Game Day Operations job. Yet, as seen in Figure 1, not all changes were in the same direction.

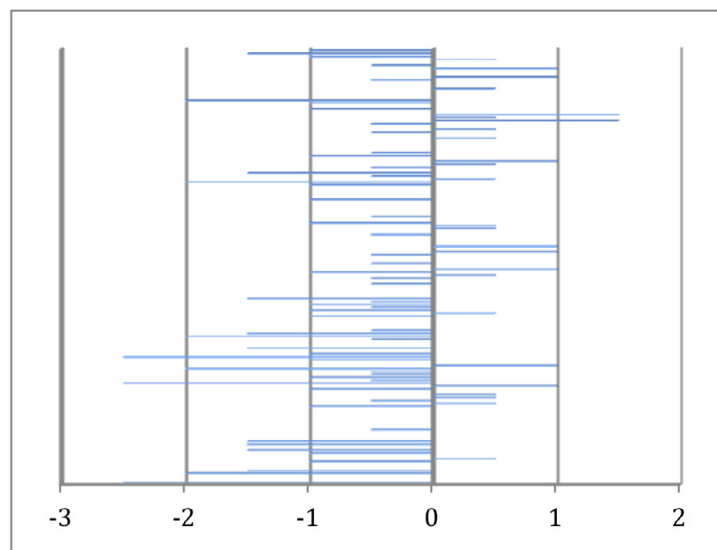


Figure 1 — Change in sport job seeker acceptance intentions.

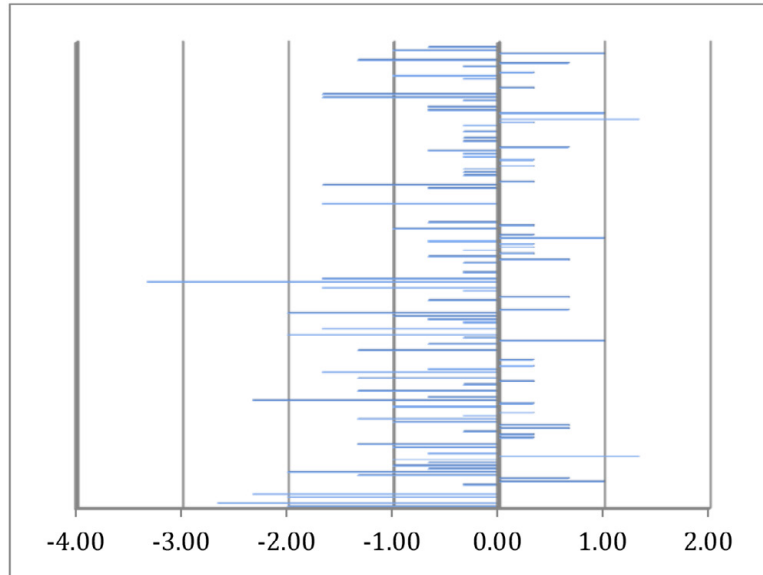


Figure 2 — Change in sport job seeker job attraction levels.

Several participants changed their perspectives in a positive direction upon watching the video RJP. As such, these students initially expressed lower levels of attraction to the job position and/or were less likely to accept the job; however, after the video RJP, they were compelled to be more attracted to the position and/or more likely to accept it. For others, the effect was the opposite. After the video RJP, some students were less attracted to the position and/or less likely to accept it.

The changes, both positive and negative, support the theoretical grounding of this study in the ELM. When higher levels of elaboration about a sport job opportunity was presented via a video RJP, the participants may have used central processing more so than peripheral processing to gauge the extent to which they were attracted to the job and/or would accept the job if made available to them. That is, upon reading the written job description (or paper form RJP), some students may have formed attitudes about the Game Day Operations job from peripheral cues such as the message source (e.g., impersonal, paper form RJP) and the presentation style (e.g., bullet points, or font of text). However, after the video RJP, participants likely used central processing to form perceptions of the job opportunity because, unlike the paper form RJP, the video version of the job preview brought the career opportunity to life. As a result, the students appeared to gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of the job, which likely contributed to changes in their perspectives.

Evident from Study 1 is that *written information about a job* does not have the same effect on individuals as a *video presentation illustrating the actual tasks performed in the job*. As previously noted, applicants seeking sport industry jobs may have attitudes and

thought-processes that are different than individuals seeking nonsport industry employment (Todd & Harris, 2009). Indeed, as a result of the societal adoration surrounding certain segments of the sport industry, sport job seekers may employ heuristics that are atypical to job seekers in fields with less social veneration when they evaluate whether a career path or job opportunity is desirable (Cunningham et al., 2005; Kjeldsen, 1990; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Mensch & Mitchell, 2008; Todd & Andrew, 2008). Given this potential that job seekers in sport often do connect heightened societal veneration of a brand to their career search, a worthwhile course of action is to evaluate its potential impact. For instance, when discussing how social prestige can impact how potential and existing employees view a sport organization, Todd and Kent (2009) commented, “it is easy to imagine the situation where employees of a highly recognized organization may realize instant social gratifying opportunities every time someone new asks about his/her profession or employer” (p. 178). Therefore, the potential exists for this assessment of prestige to impact one’s attraction to jobs in sport and as such, Study 2 was designed as an initial test.

Study 2

Hypotheses Development

Several scholars (e.g., Andrew et al., 2006; Magnusen, Mondello, Kim, & Ferris, 2011; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Todd & Kent, 2009) in the sport management discipline have conceptualized as well as explored empirically the connection between areas such as identification, social veneration, job seeker or recruit attraction to a career

opportunity, and human resource management (HRM) processes in the sport industry. Notably, findings have suggested a profound influence that judgments of prestige play in the perceptions of current employees in sport and job seekers in sport. Over 20 years ago, for example, Kjeldsen (1990) observed that sport management students were most attracted to careers in either professional or American college sports despite the fact the reality of the employment picture was many of them would take their first jobs in less glamorous sport subfields (e.g., YMCAs or American high school athletic departments).

More recently, Andrew et al. (2006) compared employees working within American intercollegiate athletic departments and found those affiliated with prestigious institutions acknowledged their institution to be more prestigious than their counterparts working for other, lesser-known institutions. The researchers also noted that this sense of being connected to a prestigious institution, in line with social identity theory (SIT; Tajfel & Turner, 1986), could have meaningful impacts on other organizationally relevant employee attitudes and behaviors such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and even affective well-being at work.

Todd and Andrew (2008) later discovered that job seekers of sport jobs tend to assess their fit to a potential job in sport based upon an assessment of how prestigious it is to work within that particular segment of the sport industry (i.e., intercollegiate, Olympic, professional, community). Relatedly, Mathner and Martin (2012) and Mensch and Mitchell (2008) both reported students' decisions to pursue either a career in sports or a specific job opportunity was strongly influenced by the opportunity to be viewed by others as someone affiliated with a specific sport property. Thus, following previous work, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Following a video RJP, job seekers will be more likely to accept a position when it is within a prestigious sport organization, compared with the same position otherwise.

H2: Following a video RJP, job seekers' perceptions of fit will be higher when the job is within a prestigious sport organization, compared with the same position otherwise.

H3: Following a video RJP, job seekers will be more attracted to a position when it is within a prestigious sport organization, compared with the same position otherwise.

Procedures and Methods

Study 2 revolved around another RJP in video form, but from a different job and setting: Corporate Partnerships Intern for a NBA team. The tasks of this particular job required the staff member to work with the Partnership Services Office to execute special promotions and events where corporate partners were featured, manage game day promotions in fulfillment of partner (or sponsor)

contracts, manage sponsors interests at coaching clinics, hospitality parties, and other special events, and write promotions scripts and in-game announcements related to the partners. The intent of Study 2 was to examine the impact of prestige on the job perceptions of the applicants. The student video was coded to a written job description in the same manner as Study 1, then the written form manipulated so that it appeared to be the same job as seen in the video, but set within an organization with inherently lower prestige (as assessed in the pilot study described next). Hence, the written job description was set within a Minor League Basketball team (NBA Development League team or D-League team) to test the impact of team prestige upon the items of interest. A NBA D-League organization was the only logical setting for the prestige comparison given the specific job tasks seen in the video obviously pertain to professional basketball.

A pilot study was conducted in the following manner to select the "low prestige" setting for Study 2 (the "high prestige setting was considered the NBA team internship, presented in the video). First, a sample of 70 sport management students at 2 schools (this sample was independent of both Study 1 and Study 2) evaluated the perceived organizational prestige (Mael & Ashforth, 1992) for the Fort Wayne Mad Ants ($n = 17$), Canton Charge ($n = 17$), Maine Red Claws ($n = 13$), and Tulsa 66ers ($n = 23$). Each participant was only presented one scenario for a single D-League team. The survey was conducted via electronic survey design software. These teams were selected because they were not located geographically close to the students in the pilot study sample nor were they geographically proximal to the prospective student subjects in the Study 2 sample.

Each student was randomly presented the following scenario: "You just noticed a job on TeamWorkOnline.com for the <INSERT ORGANIZATION> and you are so excited. The job itself is exactly what you want your first job to be out of a sport management program. The <INSERT ORGANIZATION> is one of 16 NBA Development League Teams and is located in <INSERT LOCATION OF ORGANIZATION>." The NBA D-League organization (or D-League team) scoring the lowest on the prestige scale was used as the setting for the written job description of Study 2.

Next, Study 2 was conducted following the same method used in Study 1; however, in this case, the written job description was designed so that it appeared to be from the D-League team following the pilot study just described. Undergraduate students ($n = 58$) in an entry-level sport management course read the job description and responded to a series of written questions pertaining to their thoughts about that particular job within the D-League organization. After those data were collected, the students immediately watched a 20-min video of this exact job (i.e., corporate partnership internship), but it was in the context of the nearest NBA team to the participants in Study 2. Thus, the video realistic job preview included footage of the intern performing the job

in the context of the corporate offices of the NBA team, corporate suites inside the arena, and “tents” for official partners of the NBA organization.

Results

Intrascale reliability for job acceptance, person-job fit, and applicant attraction were all acceptable ($\alpha = .84, .88, .73$). A significant (intrastudent) change occurred in

acceptance intentions ($t = 3.89, p < .01$) and person–job fit ($t = 2.19, p < .05$) from time 1 to time 2, thus lending support for Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2. Hypothesis 3 was not supported.

The results are displayed in Figures 3 and 4. The data were coded such that a positive score reflects an increase in the construct following the presentation of the job preview in video form (coded post video minus pre video). Said differently, a positive score on Figure 3 or

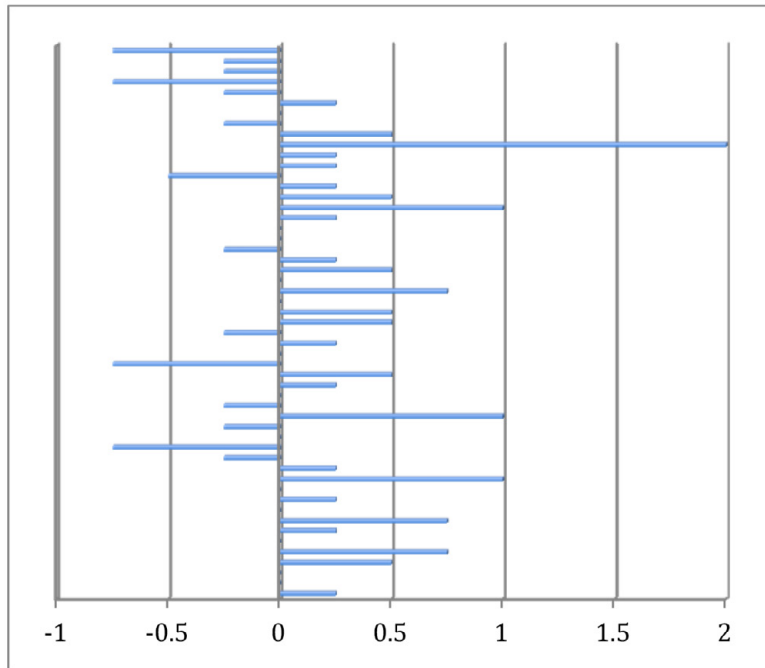


Figure 3 — Change in sport job seeker person-job fit perceptions.

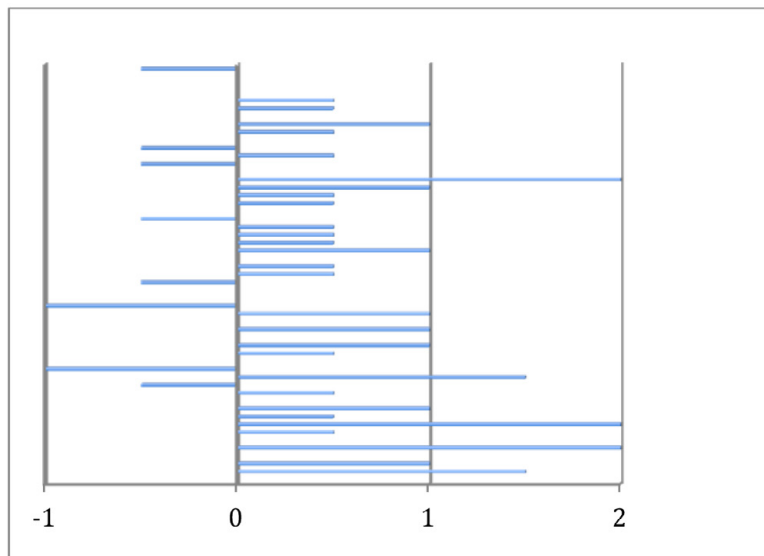


Figure 4 — Change in sport job seeker acceptance intentions.

Figure 4 reflects the case where the perspective of a job seeker positively changed following the video RJP of the written job that he/she just encountered before watching the video. Hence, a visual inspection of both Figures 3 and 4 reveals the changes in applicant perspectives after being presented with a video RJP.

Discussion

In both Study 1 and Study 2, the written job descriptions accurately matched the work tasks of the job presented in the video job descriptions. However, in Study 1, the written RJP as well as the video RJP matched in terms of internship type and context. (i.e., the context of the internship in the written RJP was not more or less prestigious than the context of the internship presented in the video RJP). By comparison, in Study 2, though the video RJP showed the exact work that was described in the written RJP, it was performed in the context of a more prestigious sport organization. Namely, the written RJP was for a D-League team whereas the video RJP was for a NBA team.

Study 2 yielded many more positive directional changes compared with Study 1. Namely, numerous participants reported much higher levels of perceived organizational fit following the video content from the NBA team compared with the same tasks in the context of a D-League team. As was the case with the results of Study 1, these changes support the theoretical underpinnings of this study in the ELM. The findings also provide evidence of how the concepts of prestige and social veneration may temper job seekers' usage of peripheral and central processing to evaluate possible career opportunities in the sport industry.

In line with the ELM, it is probable that the participants read the job description for the Corporate Partnership internship and used peripheral processing to evaluate whether they were attracted to the internship with the D-League team, viewed the opportunity as a good fit, and would accept the internship if it was offered to them. Then, after watching the video RJP of the exact same information, it is plausible that the participants used central processing to form viewpoints on the career opportunity because the video RJP breathed life into what was previously a piece of paper with a job description typed onto it. Also likely is that the extent to which the job seekers' perspectives progressed was due to more than just their gaining a profounder and more comprehensive understanding of the internship.

Indeed, another contributing factor may lie in the variable of prestige because it appears that when the participants encountered the video content of Study 2, which featured corporate offices in a downtown setting, the pageantry of an NBA arena, corporate suites and national sponsors, they were exposed to prestigious elements that tapped into their underlying social admiration of an internship with a NBA team. In short, after students watched the video RJP, their changes in perceptions of

the internship may have stemmed from central processing as well as the combination of prestige and being part of a nearby NBA team. This possible interpretation of the research findings, though requiring more extensive empirical testing in the future, is highly plausible when weighed against the results of past efforts that examined student expectations and perceptions of sport industry careers.

Andrew et al. (2006), for example, noted that sport industry employees are cognizant of whether their organization is prestigious. Along those research lines, Todd and Andrew (2008) later noted that most students attending a sport management conference were targeting what would be regarded as more prestigious firms in the sport industry as their first job choice. Likewise, the collective results of studies conducted by Kjeldsen (1990), Mathner and Martin (2012), and Mensch and Mitchell (2008) reinforce the notion that students in a sport-related discipline tend to be attracted to the highest levels of sports (e.g., professional sports and top tier American intercollegiate athletics) and that passion for and identification with sports in general or a sport team in particular may override more salient factors, such as actual work duties and career development prospects, when they evaluate sport industry careers and seek job opportunities in sport.³

In particular, Mathner and Martin (2012) reported that undergraduate and graduate sport management students placed a high degree of emphasis on pursuing high profile sport careers while simultaneously possessing an ill-formed understanding of such careers and their corresponding career development processes. Thus, opposite the rule quoted from Dickens in the opening to this study, it appears sport job seekers may be susceptible to more strongly evaluating career opportunities on looks rather than evidence of what the job will really entail. If that is the case, then the results of this two study, quasi-experimental research design may be of great interest and value to both HRM personnel in the sport industry and scholars looking to better understand essential HRM processes in a sport context.

Practical Implications

A key take-home message from both Study 1 and Study 2 is that presentation of realistic job information differentially activates job seekers' usage of peripheral and central processing, which impacts the extent to which a job opening is viewed as attractive, acceptable, and a good fit. The importance of these areas to sport industry human resources personnel also may be heightened because of the manner in which love of sport, and love of particular sport teams influences job seekers attractions to sport jobs. Excessive demand for sport job openings combined with the possibility that many job seekers have unrealistic expectations for the actual work can cause significant challenges to HRM personnel. Sport industry job seekers may have conscious beliefs and

implicit assumptions about jobs in the sport industry that are inaccurate, which, if hired in those jobs, are likely to result in unproductive employee-employer work relationship. Accordingly, in terms of business education and career development training, sport management faculty and program administrators should develop strategies for helping sport management students develop accurate and realistic interpretations of the variety of career paths present in the sport industry. Such strategies could include:

- Requiring students enrolled in internship classes to create video accounts of their internship experience that program faculty could use in future sport management classes.
- Assigning students class projects where they interview a sport industry professional and produce a video of the conversation, which is later shared with future students in the program.
- Encouraging students to attend sport management networking events/conferences in their areas of interest to acquire realistic previews of industry mechanics.

As for HRM personnel within sport organizations, providing sport job seekers with elaborative, video-based RJP may be one practice worth implementing. For instance, a growing number of colleges and universities have been doing just that for academic courses with course trailers, which are mini-movies that describe, thematically summarize, and advertise a particular course to students. Course trailers benefit both faculty and students by presenting realistic information regarding the content, delivery, and expectations in the particular course. In the same way, we suggest video-form RJP for sport organizations, similar to course trailers for college and university instructors, may be one way in which these organizations can “lift the veil,” and give those individuals interested in working in the sport industry a realistic, inside glimpse of what the job actually entails. In doing so, sport organizations may be able to improve the efficiency their HRM processes, reduce the number of unqualified or nuisance applications that are currently discarded, and ultimately reduce organizational turnover. While much more work in area of job preview information should be done before strong applications can be drawn from the discoveries of this quasi-experimental study, the underlying implications of the research findings still hold great value for sport organizations and the sport personnel responsible for recruiting and hiring new employees.

Limitations

The data in this study were collected from University students enrolled in sport management classes. While this is a relevant population for studying sport industry job preview information, the global sport marketplace attracts applicants from a variety of academic backgrounds. Thus, there is the possibility that the effects of Study

1 and Study 2 could be different in a sample where the academic backgrounds were more diverse.

Another limitation pertains to the order we used in the quasi-experimental research design. In both studies, the participants were exposed to a written job description first followed by a video RJP of that job. A benefit of the approach employed in this study is that it allowed variables to be manipulated for an accurate test of our hypotheses. In addition, given our theoretical framework, it was essential that the video RJP be presented after the written job description as it represents a more superior elaboration of job details. But in actual practice, the job searches of applicants and information they encounter may not perfectly conform to the structure of our design. Thus, there is the possibility that utilizing the video RJP after the written job description created an effect that may not be replicated in the actual job search of an applicant.

Future Research

A potentially fruitful area for future research, given the present findings, would be to explore the changes in job seeker perceptions of sports jobs from a generational perspective. Sport marketing scholars well know the changes in consumer behavior that have arisen due to the cultural differences between Generations Y and X (e.g., Bennett, Henson, & Zhang, 2003; Bennett, Sagas, & Dees, 2006), and equally so, the job searching behaviors and career interests of the millennial generation (those born between 1979 and 1994) may be of practical and theoretical significance to sport management (Kellison, Kim, & Magnusen, 2013). Therefore, given the heuristics of career selection in the sport industry which seem rather unique (Mathner & Martin, 2012; Todd & Andrew, 2008), integrating generational effects, job preview information, and technology into research projects has the potential to greatly improve the execution and study of HRM processes in a sport industry context.

In addition, in what would amount to a radical step forward, scholars may incorporate eye-tracking technology to better understand intergenerational differences in how sport industry job seekers process visual information. Once more, given that sport job seekers' career pursuits may be driven by heightened levels of social identity and heuristics (Kjeldsen, 1990; Mathner & Martin, 2012; Todd & Andrew, 2008), exploring job applicants' web browsing experiences and then analyzing the experience in a meaningful way (i.e., determine where the job candidates looked, how long they looked, and the order in which they looked at information on each web page) would be of great value to sport managers and scholars alike.

In closing, RJP research improves the transition between science and practice for sport industry professionals. Results from these two studies demonstrated that job seekers of sports jobs are impacted by having a realistic preview of the work itself and moreover, often influenced by their perceptions of prestige surrounding

the sport brand (or organization) and a corresponding desire to be socially identifiable with the sport brand. These findings, joined with past evidence and the aforementioned suggestions for future RJP studies, collectively help to advance this salient area of sport management research.

Notes

1. We need to ensure the written job description used in the study exactly matches the video information that followed to minimize the impact of nuisance variables, though in sport industry practice, that is not always the case when it comes to job announcements.
2. For this initial exploratory study, the effect of demographic variables on our dependent variables is not of interest. Moreover, the sport management classes used in this study were 90% male, so measuring the impact of gender was not an option due to insufficient cell sizes.
3. We note that this mechanism for targeting jobs in the sport industry is qualitatively different from the typical process seen in other industries. If a job seeker is interested in the banking industry, for example, it is not normal for him/her to only target openings in elite institutions, rather than explore opportunities in local or smaller institutions. The same argument would be consistent for many industries (e.g., insurance, manufacturing, service, and healthcare).

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Appendix: Written Job Preview



Job Description—Corporate Partnerships Intern, Canton Charge

The Canton Charge is the Minor League Basketball affiliate of the Cleveland Cavaliers and located in Canton, Ohio. The home arena for the Charge is the Canton Memorial Civic Center in downtown Canton. Each year, the Canton Charge attempts to hire individuals from around the nation with diverse backgrounds who are ambitious, intelligent and creative to work in various departments from November to June. This internship provides students with valuable experience in the day-to-day operations of a minor league basketball environment and creates opportunities to build a network of sport industry contacts.

Occupational Summary

- Working in the Partnership Services Office, this internship position reports to the Director of Corporate Sales
- Provides assistance with management of all areas including service fulfillment and execution of special events and promotions
- Provides support with the following Corporate Partnership functions as they pertain to the interests of active corporate sponsors:
 - manages inventory for VIP Fan Favorite Experience, plans in-game presentations, serves as lead for sponsors' ticket requests,
 - plans and executes in-game recognition of sponsors,
 - manages game-day/season-long promotions in fulfillment of sponsor contract, plans community affairs events in concert with sponsor contract, plans player autograph sessions to secure inventory used in sponsor promotions
 - manages sponsor interests at coaches clinics, hospitality parties, sponsor special events
 - designs and drafts Power Point presentations for sponsors
 - writes and manages promotions scripts, in-game announcement scripts
 - manages MS Access database of sponsor contacts
- Design, prepare and presents Year End Reports—keep detailed records of all partner elements and activations during season.
- Design, prepare and presents comprehensive reports *for each* of 21 corporate sponsors detailing and highlighting all elements included in their contract as well as any extra exposure throughout the season

Qualifications

- College degree with emphasis in Business, Marketing and/or Sport Management
- Demonstrated flexibility and ability to multitask
- Outstanding personality and able to work with a wide variety of individuals
- Strong verbal and written communication skills
- Excellent organizational skills
- Proficient in MS Access, Word, Excel and PowerPoint
- Must be able to work a flexible schedule to include nights, weekends and holidays