Hiring manager's evaluations of asynchronous video interviews: The role of candidate competencies, aesthetics, and resume placement

Edwin N. Torres*, Amy Gregory

University of Central Florida, 9907 Universal Blvd., Orlando, FL 32819, United States

ABSTRACT

Asynchronous video interviews (AVI) occur when an employment candidate records responses to pre-selected interview questions and an employer reviews them afterwards. This study examined the influence of the review process, the effect of aesthetics, and hard and soft skills on hiring managers' reviews of AVIs. The results from 517 observations reveal that the order of the interview (i.e., interview first versus resume first) had an impact on the hiring managers' decisions. Additionally, candidate aesthetics in the AVI context were found to play a role (though not primarily) in the decision to advance a candidate to the following stage of the screening process. However, communications and problem-solving skills remained the predominant predictors of advancing a candidate regardless of aesthetics or the procedural order of the review. Contributing to an emerging body of research on AVIs, this study offers suggestions for future inquiry and recommendations for managerial practice.

1. Introduction

The employment interview is one of the most popular methods of employee selection. As technology and human resource practices have evolved over the past several decades, this method has undergone a transformation. Traditionally, interviews have taken place face-to-face between an employer and prospective employee. As technology evolved, however, firms sought to improve the efficiency of their hiring processes by conducting telephone interviews. In response to this development, early research on interview modalities sought to compare telephone interviews with their face-to-face alternative (Blackman, 2002; Fletcher, 1997; Funder, 1995). This research revealed that interviewees expressed a greater level of distrust in telephone modality than in traditional ones.

With the emergence of the internet, new communication methods became available for employers to quickly adopt as part of their hiring practices. Web conferences, a synchronous means of internet-based communication, began to be utilized by many employers as a means to conduct interviews remotely using both audio and video features. Current software platforms that allow for web conferencing include Skype, Adobe Connect, and GoToMeeting. As this interview modality became popular, researchers explored its relative impact compared to face-to-face and telephone alternatives (Chapman and Rowe, 2001; Chapman et al., 2003; Sears et al., 2013).

More recently, asynchronous video interviews (AVI), or one-way interviews, have emerged as a method of employee selection.

Employers conduct AVIs by sending a web link to an applicant that connects him or her to a proprietary software platform through which an interview is conducted independently using a webcam. Questions contained in the platform can be written in text-based format or be pre-recorded in a video file. Prospective employees then record their answers and send the information back to the hiring manager(s), who are able to access and evaluate a candidate's interview at a time and place of their convenience. Furthermore, AVIs offer the additional benefit of allowing organizations to share an interview with different managers.

Current third-party software companies that allow for AVIs include HireVue, InterviewStream, Vidrecruiter, and Interview Rocket. These providers claim that AVIs will save time, reduce travel costs, and improve the efficiency of the hiring process. However, little research has been conducted as to the effectiveness and potential drawbacks of this new interview modality. Indeed, Parry and Tyson (2011) argue that despite increased interest in electronic human resource management (eHRM), limited research exists concerning its impact on the achievement of business goals. Studies of AVIs, such as Brenner et al. (2016), have explored interviewees' perceptions of this new interview form. Toldi (2011) conducted similar research and found that most individuals were open to AVIs and considered them both fair and technologically progressive. Research by Rasipuram et al. (2016) demonstrated that AVIs can be analyzed using additional technologies such as facial recognition software, transcription software, and similar tools. In this regard, this new interview modality facilitates the recording of data which could be analyzed by humans, machine, or both.

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* Corresponding author.
E-mail addresses: Edwin.torres@ucf.edu (E.N. Torres), Amy.gregory@ucf.edu (A. Gregory).

Guchait et al. (2014) explored the potential of AVIs for usage by hospitality employers. They found the benefits to include convenience and saving time, while the drawbacks included lack of feedback and technological challenges. More recently, Torres and Mejia (2017) developed a conceptual model for the use of AVI along with a series of recommendations for future research. Their model includes several likely electronic human resource management (eHRM) outcomes from AVIs, including cost reduction, incremental predictive validity for candidate job performance, and increased impact of labor aesthetics in the final hiring decision. The model highlights the role of human resource policy, industry environment, and eHRM goals in AVIs, including the improved capacity to serve candidates.

Despite the exploratory research conducted on the perceptions of both interviewee and interviewer concerning AVIs, the impact of AVIs on the hiring process remains relatively unexplored. Furthermore, as AVIs represent merely one of many potential hiring tools, it would appear important to determine their ability to capture specific information, such as that contained in an applicant's resume. Another important issue regarding AVIs is their specific placement within the employee selection process. Indeed, research by Silvester et al. (2000) revealed significant differences of evaluation when the order of two employee selection criteria (face-to-face interview and telephone interview) was reversed. Compared to telephone interviews, in which one's appearance remains unknown, AVIs also allow a recruiter to scrutinize the aesthetic traits of an applicant at an early stage in the selection process. Given the literature on the impact of aesthetic labor (Quinn, 2007; Warhurst et al., 2000), it would appear pertinent to determine the impact (or lack thereof) of aesthetics in the selection process when using AVI.

The present research has potentially significant managerial implications. First, this study can assist managers in making decisions concerning whether or not to adopt AVIs and how to fit them within their overall selection processes (i.e., before resume vs. after resume; first interview vs. second interview). Second, the study illustrates several managerial competencies that are highly sought after by hiring managers, which helps to make important decisions regarding the development of interview questions for AVIs. Third, the study sheds light on potential biases during the interview process using technology, and thus can help hiring managers to devise strategies to minimize such biases during the selection process.

Drawing on prior knowledge of AVIs and looking to expand upon the scholarly literature, the authors conducted research on AVIs with the aim of assessing the role of evaluation order, analyzing the differences between resumes and AVI ratings, exploring the potential impact of candidate aesthetics, and understanding the value of different employment competencies from a hiring manager's perspective.

2. Theory

2.1. Interview modality

A small amount of research has compared the impact of interview modality on interviewer ratings and interviewee perceptions. The results of these studies revealed a general distrust in terms of procedure and fairness among interviewees who underwent a telephone interview compared to face-to-face interviews (Blackman, 2002; Fletcher, 1997; Funder, 1995; Silvester et al., 2000). In a study by Silvester et al. (2000), one group of participants was given an initial face-to-face interview followed by a telephone interview, while another received an initial phone screening followed by a face-to-face interview. The results of this experiment revealed that job applicants received overall lower ratings on the phone interviews compared to the face-to-face interviews.

Chapman et al. (2003) examined perceptions of interview difficulty, fairness, intentions to accept an offer, and perceived interview outcomes across three different types of interviews: videoconferencing,

face-to-face, and telephone. The authors concluded that face-to-face interviews were deemed the fairest among all three interview modalities. The participants felt that they would receive lower interview ratings by a hiring manager when using videoconferencing. Another study on the impact of interview modality (Bauer et al., 2004) compared telephone, face-to-face, and IVR technology interviewing. The authors concluded that the best applicants (i.e., those with the highest levels of conscientiousness and cognitive ability) did not report a significant difference in their propensity to pursue employment based on the different interview modalities. More recently, Rasipuram et al. (2016) studied differences in ratings between face-to-face and Asynchronous video interviews. Data was analyzed in an automatic manner by extracting audio-visual features and manual ground truth rating. The aforementioned authors utilized software (i.e. facial recognition, voice recognition, data transcription, etc.) to further analyze the data obtained from the interviews. Results demonstrated that 55% of interviewees received better scores on the face-to-face interview, 40% received the same rating, and 5% performed worse in face-to-face as compared to AVI with regards to communication skills. These results indicate that participants were perceived as better communicators in the face-to-face setting. Importantly in Rasipuram et al. (2016) research is the extraction of behavioral measures (i.e. speaking activity, visual features, prosodic features, and lexical features) via computer software following the administration of an Asynchronous Video Interview.

A study by Sears et al. (2013) investigated the perceptions of prospective employees and hiring managers concerning the use of videoconferencing. Drawing on media richness theory, the authors argued that a traditional in-person interview modality was richer and could provide greater opportunities for the observation of nonverbal cues compared to web conferencing applications. The study found that prospective employees were likely to perceive lower procedural fairness when using videoconferencing as opposed to traditional face-to-face interviewing.

Beyond media richness theory, the consideration of reciprocal and nonreciprocal communication is relevant in the examination of AVIs. Reciprocal communication refers to two-way communication whereby the sender and receiver can exchange information. In contrast, nonreciprocal communication is the result of one-way interactions. Powell and O'neal (1976) found that accuracy, confidence, and differentiation increased at higher rates when individuals received feedback from a target (reciprocal conditions), compared to situations in which they did not (nonreciprocal conditions). A study by Walther (1995) compared computer-mediated communication with face-to-face interactions, and found computer-mediated communications to be no less social or intimate compared to live interaction. Research by Berry (2006) compared face-to-face communication with technology-mediated synchronous and asynchronous communication, and found asynchronous means to provide greater flexibility and opportunity for reflection.

While a certain amount of research on synchronous video interviewing exists, research on asynchronous video interviewing is quite scant. Within this emerging stream of research, Yellowlees et al. (2010) explored the feasibility of AVIs for tele-psychiatry. Toldi (2011) was among the first researchers to examine AVIs for employment purposes concerning the perceptions of job applicants. In a similar vein, Guchait et al. (2014) explored the benefits and drawbacks of AVIs among prospective job applicants. The proposed benefits include convenience and saving time, while the proposed drawbacks include lack of feedback and technological challenges. More recently, Brenner et al. (2016) assessed employment candidates' attitudes toward AVIs.

Despite the existing literature on AVIs, little is known as to how these interviews capture accurate applicant information as compared to other recruitment and selection criteria, such as resumes. Based on the literature concerning the sequence of resumes versus interviews (Silvester et al., 2000), the scholarly work on AVIs (Guchait et al., 2014; Toldi, 2011; Torres and Mejia, 2017), and studies concerning the relative importance of reciprocal versus nonreciprocal communication