

Effects of Font Size and Paper Color on Resume Review Decisions

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Purpose & Hypotheses

This study investigated how font size and paper color would influence the appeal of resumes based solely on appearance, and if that would impact the likelihood that the applicant would be interviewed. Two ways to achieve this goal is use the best font size and paper color. If the resume is not readable, then the employer will not be able to appreciate the applicant's qualifications for the job position or may not decide to look further into the applicant's resume.

Such recruiters prefer clear, large fonts that can easily be read (Nichols, 2001). They do not want to struggle reading a resume when there are several to look through. Job applicants need to look for the right paper color when submitting a resume. According to McMurrey, (n.d.), people should use an off-white color when they turn in their resume. Further, some recruiters specifically do not want colored paper resumes (Nichols, 2001). If the applicant makes a good impression on their resume, it can help them get a future interview (Fee, 2005).

The first hypothesis predicted that participants would rate and rank ivory paper more appealing than white or yellow paper. The second hypothesis predicted that participants would rate and rank yellow paper the least appealing. The third hypothesis predicted that the participants would rate and rank 12-point font size more appealing than 10-point font size.

Methods

Participants

A total of 61 participants, 27 Stephen F. Austin State University staff members and 34 business professionals from the Nacogdoches area, completed a questionnaire for this experiment. The reason they were chosen rather than students was they might have had experience reviewing resumes.

Design

This study used a 2 (font size: 10-point font, 12-point font) x 3 (paper color: white, ivory, yellow) within design. The dependent variables were rating and ranking scores. See Figure 1 to see the various paper colors used for the example resumes during the experiment.

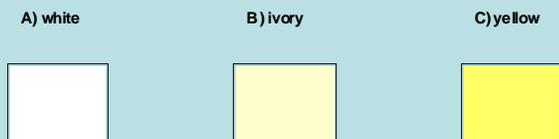
Materials

A consent form was given to all participants prior to the experiment. There were six resumes with the same general content and format. The questionnaire included three rating questions with 5-point Likert scale response choices. For the rating task, the first question asked how likely it would be for the resume to be rejected by a recruiter, based on the style/looks of the resume. The second question asked how likely it would be for someone to get an interview, based on the style/looks of the resume. The final question asked how likely it would be for a recruiter to read further into the application package, based on the style/looks of the resume. The demographic questions that were asked on each questionnaire were age, gender, current job position, and if the participant oversaw hiring.

Procedure

The study took place at Stephen F. Austin State University in the faculty member's office or at Nacogdoches Economic Development Corporation's meeting locations. I introduced myself and asked if they would like to participate in the experiment. If they agreed, I handed them a consent form to keep. I had each participant rate each resume and rank the resumes as part of a group. When the participants got their packet, the materials were counterbalanced to control for sequence effects. The experiment took approximately ten minutes. After the participants did the experiment, I thanked them for volunteering their time to do the study.

Figure 1



Acknowledgements

I want to thank NEDCO for letting me use their facility for conducting surveys.

Results

The Cronbach's alpha = .89 was performed to indicate that all three questions were highly related.

The 2 (font size) x 3 (paper color) within ANOVA for average rating showed a significant main effect for font size, $F(1,60) = 553, p < .05$. The resume with 12-point font ($M = 3.48$) was rated more positively than 10-point font ($M = 3.25$). Paper color had a significant main effect, $F(2,60) = 38.82, p < .01$; the resumes with yellow paper ($M = 3.77$) were rated more negatively than those with white paper ($M = 3.70$) or ivory paper ($M = 3.77$). There was no significant interaction. See Figure 2 for a graph of means for all conditions.

The 2 (font size) x 3 (paper color) within ANOVA for ranking scores showed no significant main effect for font size, $F(1,60) = 201, p > .05$. Paper color had a significant main effect, $F(2,60) = 65.95, p < .01$; the resumes with yellow paper ($M = 4.93$) were ranked more negatively than those with white paper ($M = 2.84$) or ivory paper ($M = 2.73$). There was no significant interaction. See Figure 3 for a graph of means for all conditions.

The demographic questions age and gender did not significantly correlate with the decision the participants made on the questionnaire. However, overseeing hiring showed a positive correlation, $r(59) = 0.255, p < .25$. The participants that did not oversee hiring rated and ranked the resumes more favorably than those who did oversee hiring.

Figure 2

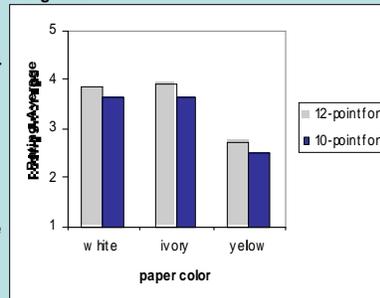
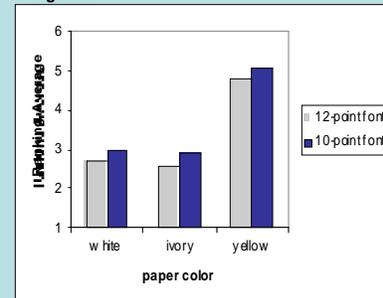


Figure 3



Discussion

A correlation happened with overseeing hiring when participants were looking over the resumes. Participants with a job position dealing with overseeing hiring had been more observant and particular with how a resume should look. The participants with no experience were less familiar with what a resume's appearance should look like.

Contrary to prediction, ivory paper was not the most appealing. For rating and ranking, ivory and white paper were not significantly different. Thus the findings do not support McMurrey (n.d.), as he said that off-white paper would be the best for submitting a resume. Yellow paper, as predicted, was the most unappealing color for resumes, which supports Nichols (2001), who claimed most recruiters did not want colored paper resumes. Also as predicted, the 12-point font was more appealing than 10-point font, although it did not significantly affect the rankings. The font sizes were significantly different, and both should be easily readable by a person with normal vision.

One idea that should be looked into further is how a resume should be formatted and set up. The organization styles would have been on a level having much space on a resume and the second level having little space on a resume. Another future idea to think about is what kind of businesses like more or less creative/colorful resumes. When thinking about making a resume, people should consider the significance in using larger font size and white to off-white resume paper. These two issues might help an individual be a step ahead of someone else's resume just because of some knowledgeable tips.

References

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