

Social Media Profile Pictures Expressing One's Level of Trustworthiness

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Abstract

Researchers conducted a study on Facebook profile pictures. Participants were asked to view profile pictures in which the individuals displayed both casual and business attire. The participants were then asked to rate each profile picture on several items relating to trustworthiness. Researchers hypothesized that a person in business attire would be viewed as more trustworthy compared to individuals in casual attire. This study found that was no significant difference in trustworthiness based on style of dress.

Introduction

- People judge others based on the looks of ones profile picture, the setting of the pictures, the clothes they wear, and the expression on one's face (Correa, Hindsley, & Zuniga, 2009).
- Facebook users utilize certain profile pictures to reflect a more positive impression on their viewers; the viewers often end up using the same types of pictures to also reflect a good impression on others (Wu, Chang, & Yuan, 2015).
- The objective for this study was to determine if attire in profile pictures would influence ratings of trustworthiness.

Methods

Participants

The participants consisted of a total number of 344 Old Dominion University students (286 females, 52 males, and 6 who preferred not to state their gender) Ages ranged from 18 to 52, and the average age of the participants was 25.44.

Materials

We collected images of five people from free online photo image galleries. Each person had one photo where they were dressed in business attire and one picture where they were dressed in casual attire.



Example business attire photo



Example casual attire photo

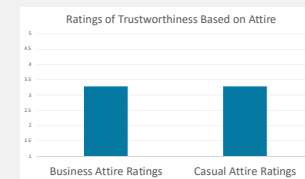
We also developed a five item measure of trustworthiness. Each item used a 1 – 5 response scale, with 1 = strongly disagree and 5 = strongly agree. For example: *This person is honest.*

Procedure

Participants were shown one image of each person in either business or casual attire and asked to complete the trustworthiness measure for each image. Participants were shown a total of five images. Responses were collected anonymously using an online survey.

Results

A paired samples t-test was run to test the hypothesis that profile pictures of individuals who wore business attire would be viewed as more trustworthy than profile pictures of individuals who wore casual attire. The results did not support the hypothesis, $t(343) = -.058, p = .477$.



Conclusions

The results showed that ratings of trustworthiness did not differ based on whether a profile picture showed an individual wearing business clothing or casual clothing. The hypothesis in this study was not supported by the data. Therefore, impressions of trustworthiness can not be determined based on clothing worn in a profile picture.

References

- Correa, T., Hindsley, A. W., & de Zuniga, H. G. (2009). Who interacts on the web?: The interactions on users' personality and social media use. *Computers and Human Behavior*, 26, 247-253.
- Wu, Y. J., Chang, W., & Yuan, C. (2015). Do Facebook profile pictures reflect user's personality? *Computers in Human behavior*, 51, 880-889.