

Running head: RTC and Organizational Attraction.

Assessing the Impact of Dispositional Resistance to Change on Organizational Attraction

Luis M. Arciniega and Adriana Maldonado-Torres

Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM)

This is the pre-peer-reviewed version of the article.

Corresponding author:

Dr. Luis M. Arciniega

Department of Business Administration

Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM)

Rio Hondo 1. San Ángel

Mexico City, 01080, D.F.

Phone +52 55 56 28 40 00

Fax +52 55 56 28 40 49

Email: larciniega@itam.mx

Authors' notes: This article used data from the second author's Master Thesis. The participation of the first author was supported by the Asociación Mexicana de Cultura A.C. while he was in a sabbatical leave at the Department of Psychology at the University of Western Ontario, Canada.

Assessing the Impact of Dispositional Resistance to Change on Organizational Attraction

Abstract

Although organizational attraction is, in many cases, the initial driver for a potential candidate to seek a job in a particular firm, few studies have concentrated on investigating the psychological variables that could influence these perceptions of attractiveness in applicants' minds. This study extends the existing research by analyzing the effects of the recently conceptualized personality trait named *dispositional resistance to change* on university students' impressions of a firm's attractiveness as an employer. Using a sample of 245 students from Business-related majors from two universities in Mexico, it was demonstrated that this narrow trait of personality could be considered a good predictor of this general affect towards a conservative or innovative firm.

Key words: Resistance to change; organizational attraction; organization personality.

Around the world college recruitment is a key source for multinational organizations to attract talented and well educated candidates. In recent years there has been an increasing interest among researchers and practitioners to analyze what makes a firm attractive in the eyes of university students, and if individual differences such as personality traits (e.g. Lievens, Decaestecker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001; Schein & Diamante, 1988; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009) or values (e.g. Arciniega & González, 2002; Cable & Judge, 1994; Rentsch & McEwen, 2002), have an impact on this general affect towards a particular organization. The early attraction to a firm, that is not a consequence of formal recruitment practices, is a key driver for potential candidates to approach a company, and apply for a job.

The main goal of the present research is to demonstrate that a recently conceptualized narrow trait of personality named *dispositional resistance to change* (RTC), that is, the inherent tendency of individuals to avoid and oppose changes (Oreg, 2003), can predict organizational attraction of university students to firms that are perceived as innovative or conservative. To the best of our knowledge this is the first study in the organizational attraction literature that uses a sample outside of the U.S. and the European Union, and that investigates the attraction to leading Latin American organizations.

Organization personality perceptions and the signaling theory

Over the last two decades an important amount of studies investigating the impact of some job and organizational characteristics on applicants' attraction to organizations have been conducted. Some of the most widely studied characteristics have been: work environment, compensation, opportunities for development, and type of work. According to a recent meta analysis (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005), this set of variables has a robust relationship with organizational attraction experienced by individuals who have initiated a

formal process of recruitment with an organization, and as a consequence, have had some contact with the companies' processes, recruiters or systems. Even when these findings are consistent, they can't be transferred to potential candidates because most of them have not had these interactions.

Commonly, members of a target population that is considered a source of candidates for a particular organization, only have scarce information about the firm, and based on these pieces of information they develop a personal image about that specific organization. It has been proposed that these perceptions are developed prior to any formal recruitment activity (Cable & Turban, 2001), and are importantly related to early organizational attraction (Cable & Yu, 2006; Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998).

These observed and non observed facts, feelings, and pieces of information that create a general impression of an organization in the minds of potentials candidates before being exposed to formal recruitment activities is conceptualized as *organizational image* in the recruiting literature (Barber, 1998; Cable & Turban, 2001; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009). A particular element of this puzzle has attracted the attention of researchers in the last years, namely organization personality perceptions.

A group of authors has adopted some ideas from the Marketing literature, specifically from brand personality (Aaker, 1997) to analyze how individuals ascribe personality traits to organizations and feel attracted to them (e.g. Cable & Turban, 2001; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009). In this study, we also adopted this framework.

Brand personality refers to the set of human characteristics associated with a brand (Aaker, 1997, p. 347). The core idea behind this definition, is that beyond the tangible, instrumental or functional attributes of a brand, there is also a set of symbolic meanings

associated with it, that allow consumers to differentiate that particular brand among other products or services with equivalent, or even identical, functional characteristics (e.g. Pepsi vs. Coca-Cola). Under the same rationale, it has been proposed that potential candidates ascribe human characteristics to organizations (e.g. Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004). That way, they can perceive a company as innovative (e.g. Nike), or as thrifty (e.g. Walt-Mart). In a study conducted in Belgium using five banks as the targets of attraction (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), personality traits associated with the banks were better predictors than job and organizational characteristics, concerning the differentiation between the five firms.

Paraphrasing Aaker's definition of brand personality, Slaughter and collaborators (2004) conceptualized *organization personality perceptions* as the set of human personality characteristics that is perceived from individuals and associated with a company. In this sense, personality is conceptualized as the public and verifiable characteristics perceived by external observers about a firm image. There have been some efforts towards proposing some dimensions for the construct, as Lievens and Highhouse (2003) used an adaptation of the five factors proposed by Aaker (1997) for brand personality (i.e. *sincerity, innovativeness, competence, sophistication, and robustness*), and Slaughter and collaborators (2004) developed a set of five specific factors for the organization personality construct (i.e. *boy scout, innovativeness, dominance, thrift, and style*). The findings regarding the construct structure for the second proposal are promising, but demand cross-cultural validation (Slaughter et al., 2004; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009). Concerning the brand personality factors, these are robust across cultures (Aaker, Benet-Martinez, & Garolera, 2001), but based on the results of Lievens and Highhouse (2003) the proposed construct structure seems to be inadequate for analyzing organization

perceived personality. Innovativeness and sophistication-style were the only two common dimensions in both studies, however, innovativeness was the only factor that discriminated among the organizational images of five Belgian banks, and seven U.S. companies from different sectors.

One interesting issue around the concept of organization perceived personality deals with the processes involved in the development of those perceptions about a particular company, in other words, how do college students ascribe characteristics such as innovativeness, thrift, or dominance towards a specific organization? A plausible explanation for these processes can be supported on the *signaling theory*.

Spence (1973), a laureate Nobel prize in Economics, proposed that many of the things we would like to know about an entity (e.g. candidate, organization) are not directly observable, that is why we must rely on *signals* to develop an image about it. Signals are perceivable indicators of those not directly observable qualities of the entity. Whereas some signals are reliable, some others no are not. Hence, the observer needs to discriminate among a set of signals to form an image of the entity.

Based on the seminal ideas of Spence (1973), it could be said that many of the things a potential candidate would like to know about a potential employer, are not directly perceivable by him or her (e.g. organizational climate and culture, real opportunities for promotion). That is why, potential candidates rely upon signals to develop an image about the firm, and ascribe personality traits to that image. Informal conversations with friends or family members, notes or comments in the media, companies' web pages, examples given in classes, and brief notes in text books, are examples of signals that allow college students to ascribe personality traits to organizations' images.

Even when it has been suggested that potential candidates may hold different perceptions of the same organization based on which signals they attend to, and how they process information about these (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005), it is also possible to expect that if signals emitted by an organization are consistent (Slaughter et al., 2004), common perceptions about an organization's personality traits could be identified. This proposal will be our first hypothesis to evaluate.

Organizational attraction & the similarity-attraction theories

At this point, it has been explained based on previous research and theoretical backgrounds that individuals ascribe personality traits to organizations. It also has been suggested how potential candidates could ascribe personality traits to organizational images. The next step is to propose why individuals feel attracted to certain types of companies based on their perceived organization personalities.

Considering the existence of different conceptualizations for the construct of organizational attraction, we decided to adopt Aiman-Smith and collaborators' definition (Aiman-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001, p. 21). This conceptualization goes beyond the simple scope of seeing the construct as a desirable place to work (Rynes, 1991) and conceives it as the *general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the organization as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship*. For the same authors, job pursuit is a different but related variable, and is defined as *the intention to take action to find out more information about an organization, to contact the organization, and to try to secure an interview with the organization* (Aiman-Smith, et al., 2001, p. 221). Whereas organizational attraction is conceived as a general attitude, job pursuit is seen as a set of action-oriented variables.

Expectations regarding how the alignment of self-rated- and organization-perceived- personality impact organizational attraction stem from the similarity-attraction paradigm (Byrne, 1971; Tziner, 1985) and social identity theory (Tajfel, 1978). Social attraction theory posits that similarity in values, personalities, and attitudes increases interpersonal attraction, and when individuals like each other, their values, personalities, and attitudes become more aligned. Together, attraction and similarity build reciprocally on one another, facilitating a pull toward symmetry and an avoidance of the strain produced by dissimilarity (Rosenbaum, 1986). Furthermore, people tend to categorize themselves relative to similar others and in an effort to maintain their social identities, they will demonstrate a bias toward those whom they believe share similar characteristics (Tajfel & Turner, 1986). Byrne's (1971) early attraction-similarity research supports the perspective that individuals are drawn toward others who they think share similar attitudes to themselves and report that these individuals are smarter and better adjusted than others. These propositions also underlie Schneider's (1987) well-known attraction, selection, attrition (ASA) theory, which supports the notion that this similarity-attraction process naturally produces increasingly homogenous work environments (Giberson, Resick, & Dickson, 2005). In general these theories suggest that individuals will feel more attracted to social entities they perceive similar to them.

Dispositional resistance to change: A narrow personality trait

Among the few studies that have assessed the influence of the personality traits of potential recruits on organizational attraction, most of them have used the Big Five personality factors as their framework (e.g. Lievens et al, 2001; Slaughter & Greguras, 2009). The Big Five framework has been vastly criticized in the last few years. The range of the criticisms is wide, whereas on one extreme Schneider and collaborators (1996) say that the Big Five will sink

science, on the other, in a more moderate perspective, Rothstein and Goffin (2006) suggest that narrow traits do as good a job as the Big Five in predicting behavior. In general, two of the main criticisms pointed out that they are so broad and heterogeneous, that their accuracy of prediction is low, and also, that they combine constructs that are better left separate (Hough & Oswald, 2008). For instance, in a recent publication in the organizational attraction literature (Slaughter & Greguras, 2009), the authors could not demonstrate that individuals high in openness to experience would feel attracted to organizations seen as innovative or trendy. Hough and Oswald (2008) have noted the potential diluting prediction of openness to experience as a consequence of its broadness.

As a collateral goal of this article, we wanted to extend the nomological network of the new conceptualized narrow personality trait named dispositional resistance to change. Instead of using broader variables like the Big Five, we consider whether this narrower trait could do a good job of predicting organizational attraction.

Drawing from the large body of research on resistance to change, Oreg (2003) proposed the existence of a multidimensional construct that he called dispositional resistance to change. The concept taps individuals' inherent tendency to resist changes: while some people openly accept and adapt to changes, others show an inclination to avoid and oppose them. According to Oreg (2003), those who are dispositionally resistant to change are less likely to voluntarily initiate changes in their lives, and are more likely to form negative attitudes towards specific changes they encounter.

Dispositional resistance to change comprises four oblique dimensions: routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus, and cognitive rigidity. *Routine seeking* involves the extent to which individuals prefer conventional and highly predictable tasks, procedures, and

environments. *Emotional reaction* is focused on the extent to which individuals experience discomfort, lack of enthusiasm, and anxiety when changes are imposed upon them. *Short-term focus* addresses the degree to which individuals worry about all inconveniences and discomfort that change brings about, instead of focusing on the potential benefits and comfort that it could bring in the long term. Finally, *cognitive rigidity* involves individuals' inflexibility in thinking and difficulty in accepting alternative ideas, perspectives, and methods.

A series of studies (Oreg, 2003) suggests that even when the construct is related to other personality traits such as openness to experience (Digman, 1990), intolerance for ambiguity (Budner, 1962), or risk aversion (Slovic, 1972), dispositional resistance is distinct from them, and is a good predictor of behaviors associated with change situations in the context of organizations. The cross-cultural validity of the construct has been demonstrated recently using a sample of 4,201 university students from 17 different countries (Oreg, et al., 2008), from almost every corner of the planet (e.g. Australia, China, Mexico, Norway, Turkey).

The influence of dispositional resistance to change is not context specific and is expected to exert influence on individuals' reactions to change across contexts and over time (Oreg, 2003). It has been shown that RTC not only impacts on specific behaviors related to change, such as new technology adoption (Oreg, 2003: Study 6), it also affects more general variables such as occupational interest and choice (Oreg, Nevo, Metzger, Leder & Castro, In Press). Based on these ideas, and on the similarity-attraction paradigm and the social identity theory, described earlier, we propose that this narrow personality trait could influence the attraction experienced by potential candidates towards an organization that is perceived as conservative or innovative. In specific, we propose that:

Hypothesis 2: Individuals scoring higher on dispositional resistance to change will feel more attracted towards a firm that is perceived as conservative.

Hypothesis 3: Individuals scoring lower on dispositional resistance to change will feel more attracted towards a firm that is perceived as innovative.

Study 1

The main goal of this study was to evaluate hypothesis 1, that is, to identify the name of two organizations operating in Mexico that were clearly associated as innovative and conservative on the *top-of-mind* of potential candidates that would be initiating a formal process of job search in the short term.

Method

Participants

The sample for this study consisted of 65 undergraduate students from a private university in Mexico City. The Business Administration undergraduate program of this institution has been a preferred target of multinational organizations to recruit potential candidates (e.g. Procter & Gamble, Deloitte, L'Oreal) in the last decades. All students were enrolled in intermediate courses on Management related majors (i.e. Business Administration, Business Engineering, & Public Accountancy). The mean age of the sample was of 21.8, 54% were female.

Measure

Scenarios used in other studies (Arciniega & González, 2002; Schein & Diamante, 1988) served as the models to develop two questions requesting participants to write the names of four organizations operating in Mexico that would be representative of two different organization perceived personalities: innovative and conservative. According to Miller (1956) individuals are

able to receive, process, and remember a maximum of seven, plus-or-minus two, pieces of information. For this reason we decided to ask participants to list the names of four companies for each description. These were the scenario and the two descriptions used:

Based on the global information received through the different means of communication (written as well as electronic, chats with friends and family, comments made by professors in class), write the names of four established organizations that operate in Mexico and whose philosophies fit the following descriptions:

It is an avant-gardist, always leading its field. It is innovative and the one who imposes change. It is very dynamic and is always changing.

It is a traditionalist and does not normally take risks. It cares about maintaining the status quo. It responds to the actions of its competitors but never leads change in its field.

Results

Once all the names of the organizations given by the participants of this study were obtained, the total number of mentions as well as the amount of specific mentions for each category were counted for each of them. That is, how many times an organization was mentioned, regardless the category; and how many times it was mentioned under each category (i.e. conservative vs. innovative).

Despite the fact that there was enough space to write down the names of four organizations under each category; there were a few cases in which the subjects gave fewer names for one or both of the categories. Consequently, from the 520 possible global mentions, there were 65 omissions and 455 effective mentions.

From these (455 mentions), 249 were made for the innovative category and 206 for the conservative. However, the total amount of different names (organizations) mentioned for the innovative category was 61; compared to 71 for the conservative category.

Out of the total number of organizations mentioned by the participants, a group of 25 was mentioned under both categories with different frequencies. The five organizations with the highest frequency of mentions in each category are shown in table 1.

As observed in the table, the two organizations obtaining the largest number of mentions under each category, Bimbo and Coca Cola, are also located among the top five organizations most frequently mentioned under the opposite category. It was due to this, that the two organizations taking the second place regarding the amount of mentions for each profile, were determined as the ones most clearly associated by the participants as innovative or conservative: Cemex for the conservative profile and Televisa for the innovative profile.

It is worth mentioning, that both organizations were also part of the group that was mentioned under both categories. Nevertheless, both were mentioned less than three times under the opposing profile to the one they were representative of. That is, Cemex was mentioned once in the innovative category; and Televisa was mentioned twice in the conservative category.

Taking these findings into consideration, it was concluded that the chosen organizations met two criteria which supported their mention in the second study: they represented a clear distinction among the participants with respect to the perception of the organization's personality profile as innovative or conservative; secondly, these companies were "top of mind" in the group sampled. As a result, these company names were used as representations of innovative and conservative companies in the second study.

Discussion

As expected in hypothesis 1, potential candidates may hold different perceptions of the same organization when signals emitted by that company are dual or inconsistent, an example of this case is Bimbo, a holding organization based in Mexico City, with 20 mentions as conservative and 16 as innovative (see table 1). This company is one of the most important bakeries in the world with more than 108,000 employees working in its 105 production plants located in Latin America, the United States, China, and the Czech Republic. While the firm is widely recognized for using state-of-the-art technology in its manufacturing and distribution processes, it is also known for promoting the values of the social Christian doctrine in the day-to-day life of the organization. These two core concerns are reflected in its motto: *highly productive and completely humane company*. This duality of signals must be responsible for the hybrid image between conservative and innovative firm among the participants in this study. As a proxy measure of the power of the image of this firm, it must be said that its leading brand, *Bimbo*, occupies the 20th position in Latin America, and the 8th in Mexico among the 50 most valuable local brands in the region (Interbrand, 2008).

Concerning the most representative company under the description of conservative, Cemex is one of the three largest producers of cement in the world. This organization based in Monterrey, Mexico, started its process of globalization in the early 1990's by acquiring companies overseas (e.g. Spain, The Philippines, Egypt). The ability of Cemex to integrate its acquisitions, known as the *Cemex way*, has been documented in many cases from leading Business Schools (e.g. Harvard, IMD, Sloan). When the firm acquires a new cement company, its processes and practices are audited, the best are maintained, and most of the time they are exported to other operations where appropriate. Meanwhile a set of global practices compiled at the headquarters is implemented in the new member of the Group (Fuentes-Berain, 2007;

Lessard & Reavis, 2009). This set of global standardized business processes, technologies, and organizational structure across all countries where Cemex operates is an icon of the organization, a signal that could be perceived by potential candidates as a good example of knowledge management, but also of routine seeking in terms of Oreg's RTC model. It is possible that one of the main signals perceived from this company in the eyes of potential candidates, deals with the global standardized practices and processes, something that could be interpreted as a rigid environment where ideas for change and innovation are limited to those at the headquarters. According to the Interbrand (2008) study previously mentioned, Cemex is the most valuable brand in Mexico and the fourth in Latin America.

With respect to the company perceived as innovative, Televisa is the largest Spanish-language media corporation in the world. Some of its programs are dubbed or subtitled into different languages. That is the case for its soap operas, which are exported to more than 60 countries.

Its story that dates from the early 1950's, broadcasting through most of the Mexican television channels and expanding its ownership to radio stations as well as other numerous enterprises related to the media and entertainment. Televisa was regarded for many years as a monopolistic company, holding strong ties to the political party that dominated Mexico's governance for around seventy years.

The economic crisis that hit Mexico in 1994 caused a considerable negative impact on the financial structure of the company. Additionally, they had lost 20% of their market share on local open television and were still had a negative image with the general audience. The company brought in a new directing team, and several action plans were enacted in a short period of time

with impressive results (Casanova & Gradillas, 2004). One of these strategies was related to a change of brand image that the new CEO considered imperative.

Televisa's new CEO, among other courses of action, launched an annual program targeted to college students, in which they would be given the opportunity to have direct, hands-on experience with the operating staff of the company, their executives, actors, producers, and creative staff. Any undergraduate attending this event would be able to talk with employees of the company, and even try out their skills as a news reporter, floor staff, cameraman, etc.

It seems reasonable to think that this program along with the rest of the measures taken by the company to change their public image since 1997, have provided young audiences with specific *signals* over the last decade, that would help determine the consistent way in which the participants of this study associated the organization to an innovative profile.

According to the study of the 50 most valuable brands in Latin America, Televisa occupies the fourth in Mexico and the 12TH in the region.

Study 2

Participants

The sample group was 245 college students from Business-related majors from two universities in Mexico, including the one used for the first study. All students were enrolled in intermediate courses on Management-related majors (i.e. Business Administration, Business Engineering, & Public Accountancy). The mean age of the sample was of 22.9 ($SD = 1.84$), 53% were female.

Measures

To assess organizational attraction for each of two companies we used a single item measure based on previous studies (Arciniega & González, 2002; Rentsch & McEwen, 2002;

Schein & Diamante, 1988). The items were preceded by the following scenario: *Suppose that the two organizations listed below, were offering you an opportunity to work for them through a long term contract and with an equivalent compensation package. In both companies you will have the chance to perform activities according to your academic concentration, and to advance in your career.* As stated before, previous research in organizational attraction has shown that factors such as compensation, promotional opportunities and type of job have an important influence on this attitude (e.g. Cable & Judge, 1994; Chapman, et al., 2005), which is why we decided to control for these key variables by fixing them in the described scenario. This allowed us to measure organizational attraction in the purest possible way.

Once respondents read the scenario, they had to answer the following questions: *To what extent would you feel attracted to work for Cemex ?, item 1, and for Televisa ?, item 2,* using in both cases a seven-point Likert-type scale ranging from 1 (*very low interested*) to 7 (*highly interested*).

To measure dispositional resistance to change we used the Spanish language version of Oreg's scale (2003). This version has been previously used in samples of undergraduate students in Mexico and in Spain, reporting adequate psychometric properties (Arciniega & González, 2009; Oreg, et al 2008). The RTC scale consists of 17 items. Respondents are asked to rate the extent to which they agree with each of the items using a six-point, Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha for the full scale was of .77, and the alphas for the subscales were .71 for routine seeking, .70 for emotional reaction, .73 for short-term focus, and .78 for cognitive rigidity.

Analysis and Results

Table 2 shows the means, standard deviations and intercorrelations for Study 2 variables. All correlations between the four dimensions of RTC and organizational attraction to the firm perceived as conservative were positive and significant, and the mean of the coefficients was .37. On the contrary, the coefficients between these dimensions and organizational attraction towards the firm perceived as innovative were negative, as three out of four correlations were significant with a mean of -.31. Concerning the correlations among the four dimension of RTC, these ranged from -.03 to .55. In line with previous studies, including a cross-cultural validation of the RTC scale in 17 countries (Oreg et al., 2008), the highest correlation among the four dimensions was between short-term-focus and emotional reaction, the two affective dimensions of the construct.

In order to validate hypotheses 2 and 3, two regression models were computed. One having organizational attraction towards Cemex (i.e. the firm perceived as conservative) as the dependent variable, and the other having Televisa (i.e. the company perceived as innovative) as the dependent variable.

The regression model for the company perceived as conservative (i.e. Cemex) explained 33% of the variance in the data. As can be seen in table 3, the four standardized betas were significant, with a minimum variation in the weights of the coefficients, ranging only from .18 to .27.

On the other hand, the variance explained for the model having the firm perceived as innovative as the dependent variable was 29%. Despite the fact that the four standardized betas for the model were negative, as expected, only two of them were significant with weights being almost identical: -.29 for routine seeking and -.28 for short-term-focus.

Discussion

Consistent with hypotheses 2 and 3, dispositional resistance to change showed a considerable impact on organizational attraction in the group of participants.

Thus, the impact of the perceptions formed by the individuals regarding the personality of a specific firm is not only significant, but has proved to be worth investigating, especially when it comes to organizational attractiveness.

The inferences formed by the signals that the applicants receive from the companies can be the key to identifying and understanding the possible differences (perceived by the applicants) in the attractiveness of organizations in the same industry. These perceived differences may persist even when the direct competitors of these companies offer very similar positions to applicants, with job characteristics that are almost the same (e.g., type of job, compensation, potential for promotion).

This becomes particularly important in the case of high skilled applicants, who are expected to have more alternatives to choose from when looking for a position. It is likely that when they look for a job, they will target companies that are very similar in terms of recognition, size and economic benefits offered to their employees.

This study adds to the empirical evidence of the nomological network of the dispositional resistance to change construct. It also demonstrates that this personality trait has an impact on general attitudes, as shown in the case of organizational attraction.

Meanwhile Slaughter and Greguras (2009) were unable to demonstrate some intuitive relations between the broad Big Five and organizational attraction to firms perceived as conservative, this study did it, but using a narrow trait as the independent variable. Slaughter and Greguras (2009) proposed a set of hypotheses suggesting specific moderating effects of individuals' personality traits (i.e. the Big Five) between organizational personality dimensions

and organizational attraction. For instance they hypothesized a strong relation between perceived innovativeness and organizational attraction for those individuals high in openness to experience. In a similar vein they proposed that highly neurotic individuals tend to be rigid and unadaptable, having difficulties with short-term and long-term changes. Because of this they would feel more attracted to organizations having a centralized decision making style, and who are more stable and well established (i.e. Dominant according to their organizational personality traits definitions). In our opinion, one of the main reasons why they could not validate these hypotheses is because of the use of broad personality traits instead of narrow ones. It is important to recall that for instance, openness to experience covers a wide range of traits including being imaginative, cultured, curious, original, broad-minded, intelligent, and artistically sensitive. It is hard to believe that a curious, an imaginative, and a an artistically sensitive student, will all feel attracted to work for the same organization perceived as innovative (e.g. Pepsico, 3M).

General Discussion

The final ideas derived from this investigation can be summarized using two perspectives. On the one hand, these results are relevant for practitioners, and on the other these findings have important value to researchers.

For Human Resources departments, specifically in recruitment processes, reflecting on the organizational image that their company transmits to potential candidates, and which may attract them or not is of the utmost importance.

Needless to say that this department is not the only one responsible for the creation and transmission of the signals that will help the audience build an image of the company. Other areas, such as Marketing, invest a great amount of time and resources to investigate and manage the images of their different brands, including their firm's own brand.

Based on studies on organizational attractiveness, the one course of action that should be considered by organizations is to send consistent signals that convey the image they want to transmit, when making direct or indirect contacts with potential recruitment candidates. A first suggested step for many organizations would be investigating the organizational personality traits with which their target recruitment candidates associate the firm most frequently. This type of knowledge can be of great help to the Board when designing growth strategies that transmit the image of the organization.

It was evident in the case of Televisa, that an organizational communication strategy can bring favorable changes to the organizational image, especially among young college students.

For every company that wants to attract a specific undergraduate candidate profile (e.g. the most talented, the best educated, the most creative, etc) there are some questions worth asking: What is the image that college students have about our company? What are the traits that they associate it with? Is this image congruent with what the company wants to convey? If not, what actions can we take to change or improve our current image?

Organizations should not underestimate the power of their firm's perceived personality. This study focuses on organizational attractiveness prior to a recruitment process, and the impact of a narrowed psychological variable in the applicants. However, just as brand personality has an impact on consumer behavior, the firm's personality might have an impact on employee behavior (e.g. loyalty), which is another argument for the relevance of the findings of an investigation like this in the everyday business management.

For the researchers, the findings of this study highlight the relevance of carrying out future investigations that evaluate the impact of the product brands and services of a company on

their image and perceived personality. For example, there may be an independent effect of the image – personality of the company on the image-personality of its brands.

Even when all signals transmitted by the company to the general public have an impact on both consumers and potential employees, it is reasonable to think that some signals are more important than others in different moments of the relationship of the individual with the organization.

A logical research path could be identifying a set of “signals” that college students pay attention to when it comes to forming an organizational image, and associating individuals’ personality traits to that image formation process. Individual psychological variables could have an impact on the processes that differentiate among and choose between the signals used to model the perception of organizational personality.

References

- Aaker, J.L. (1997). Dimensions of brand personality. *Journal of Marketing Research*, 34, 347-356.
- Aaker, J.L., Benet-Martinez, V., & Garolera, J. (2001). Consumption symbols as carriers of culture: A study of Japanese and Spanish brand personality constructs. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 81, 492-508.
- Aiman-Smith, L., Bauer, T. N., & Cable, D. M. 2001. Are you attracted? Do you intend to pursue? A recruiting policy capturing study. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 16, 219-237.
- Arciniega, L.M. & González, L. (2002). Individual values and perceived corporate values: An empirical approach. *Revista de Psicología Social Aplicada*, 12 , 41-59.

- Arciniega, L.M. & González, L. (2009). Validation of the Spanish-language version of the resistance to change scale. *Personality and Individual Differences, 42*, 178-182.
- Barber, A. E. (1998). *Recruiting employees: Individual and organizational perspectives*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Budner, S. (1962). Intolerance of ambiguity as a personality variable. *Journal of Personality, 30*, 29-50.
- Byrne, D. E. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.
- Cable, D. M., & Judge, T. A. (1994). Pay preferences and job search decisions: A person–organization fit perspective. *Personnel Psychology, 47*, 317–348.
- Cable, D. M., & Turban, D. (2001). Recruitment image equity: Establishing the dimensions, sources and value of job seekers' organizational beliefs. In G. R. Ferris (Ed.), *Research in personnel and human resources management* (Vol. 20, pp. 115–163). Greenwich, CT: JAI Press.
- Cable, D.M., & Yu, K.Y.T. (2006). Managing job seekers' organizational image beliefs: The role of media richness and media credibility. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 91*, 828-840.
- Chapman, D.S., Uggerslev, K.L., Carroll, S.A., Piasentin, K.A., & Jones, D.A. (2005). Applicant attraction to organizations and job choice: A meta-analytic review of the correlates of recruiting outcomes. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 90*, 928–944
- Casanova, L. & Gradillas, M. (2004). Televisa: The comeback of a media giant. *INSEAD*, case No. 304-267-1
- Digman, J. M. (1990). Personality structure: Emergence of the five-factor model. *Annual Review of Psychology, 41*, 417-440.

- Ehrhart, K.H., & Ziegert, J.C. (2005). Why are individuals attracted to organizations? *Journal of Management*, *31*, 901-919.
- Fuentes-Berain, R. (2007). *Oro gris: Zambrano, la gesta de Cemex y la globalización en México* [Grey gold: Zambrano, the gest of Cemex and the globalization in Mexico]. Mexico City: Aguilar.
- Giberson, T. R., Resick, C. J., & Dickson, M. W. (2005). Embedding leader characteristics: An examination of homogeneity of personality and values in organizations. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *90*(5), 1002-1010.
- Hough, L.M. & Oswald, F.L. (2008). Personality testing and industrial–organizational psychology: Reflections, progress, and prospects. *Industrial and Organizational Psychology*, *1*, 272–290.
- Interbrand, (2008, September 30). Las marcas mas valiosas de America Latina 2008. [The most valuable brands in Latin America 2008]. Retrieved April 16, 2009, from: <http://www.interbrand.com/images/studies/AmericaLatina2008.pdf>
- Lessard, D.R. & Reavis, C. (2009). Cemex: Globalization “the Cemex way”. *MIT Sloan School of Management*, case No. 09-039.
- Lievens, F., Decaestecker, C., Coetsier, P., & Geirnaert, J. (2001). Organizational attractiveness for prospective applicants: A person-organisation fit perspective. *Applied Psychology: An International Review*, *50*, 30-51.
- Lievens, F., & Highhouse, S. (2003). The relation of instrumental and symbolic attributes to a company's attractiveness as an employer. *Personnel Psychology*, *56*, 75-102.
- Miller, G. A. (1956). The magical number seven, plus-or-minus two: Some limits on our capacity of processing information. *Psychological Review*, *63*, 81-97

- Oreg, S. (2003). Resistance to change: Developing an individual differences measure. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 88*, 680-693.
- Oreg, S., Bayazit, M., Vakola, M., Arciniega, L., Armenakis, A. A., Barkauskiene, R., et al. (2008). Dispositional resistance to change: measurement equivalence and the link to personal values across 17 Nations. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 93*(4), 935-944.
- Oreg, S., Nevo, O., Metzger, H., Leder, N., & Castro, D. (In Press). Dispositional resistance to change and occupational interests and choices. *Journal of Career Assessment*,
- Rentsch, J.R., & McEwen, A.H. (2002). Comparing personality characteristics, values, and goals as antecedents of organizational attractiveness. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 10*, 225-234.
- Rothstein, M.G., & Goffin, R.D. (2006). The use of personality measures in personnel selection: What does current research support? *Human Resource Management Review, 16*, 155–180.
- Rosenbaum, M. E. (1986). The repulsion hypothesis: On the non-development of relationships. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 51*, 1156-1166
- Rynes, S. L. (1991). Recruitment, job choice, and post-hire consequences. In M. D. Dunnette (Ed.) *Handbook of industrial and organizational psychology* (2nd ed.): 399-444. Palo Alto, CA: Consulting Psychologists Press.
- Slovic, P. (1972). Information processing, situation specificity, and the generality of risk taking behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 22*, 128-134.
- Schein, V.E., & Diamante, T. (1988). Organizational attraction and the person-environment fit. *Psychological Reports, 62*, 167-173.
- Schneider, B. (1987). The people make the place. *Personnel Psychology, 40*, 437-454.

- Schneider, R. J., Hough, L. M., & Dunnette, M. D. (1996). Broadsided by broad traits: How to sink science in five dimensions or less. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 17*, 639–655.
- Slaughter, J.E. & Greguras, G.J. (2009). Organizations: The influence of trait inferences. *International Journal of Selection and Assessment, 17*, 1-18.
- Slaughter, J.E., Zickar, M. J., Highhouse, S. & Mohr, D.C. (2004). Personality trait inferences about organizations: Development of a measure and assessment of construct validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 89*, 85-103
- Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling. *The Quarterly Journal of Economics, 87*, 355-374
- Tajfel, H. (1978). *Differentiation between social groups: studies in the social psychology of intergroup relations*. New York: Academic Press.
- Tajfel, H., & Turner, J. (1986). The social identity theory of intergroup behavior. In S. Worchel, & W. G. Austin (Eds.), *The social psychology of intergroup relations* (pp. 7-24). Chicago: Nelson-Hall.
- Turban, D. B., Forret, M. L., & Hendrickson, C. L. (1998). Applicant attraction to firms: influences of organizational reputation, job and organizational attributes and recruiter behaviors. *Journal of Vocational Behavior, 52*, 24–44.
- Tziner, A. (1985). How team composition affects task performance: Some theoretical insights. *Psychological Reports, 57*, 1111-1119.

Table 1.- *Company name and number of mentions as innovative or conservative*

Company name	Sector	Innovative	Conservative
Apple	Computing	12	1
Bimbo	Food	16	20
Cemex	Construction	1	16
Coca Cola	Food & Beverage	31	9
Pascual Boing	Food & Beverage	1	9
Procter & Gamble	Personal care	10	0
Telcel	Telecommunication	9	9
Televisa	Entertainment	19	2

Table 2. Means, standard deviations and intercorrelations among variables of Study 2

Variable	Mean	S.D.	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.-Attraction to conservative firm	4.19	1.63	---					
2.-Attraction to innovative firm	5.71	1.33	-.23**	---				
3.-Routine Seeking	2.09	.71	.40**	-.43**	(.71)			
4.-Emotional reaction	3.14	.94	.39**	-.30**	.26*	(.70)		
5.-Short-term focus	2.48	.92	.46**	-.45**	.43*	.55**	(.73)	
6.-Cognitive rigidity	3.71	1.01	.23**	-.08	.03	.01	-.03	(.78)

Notes: Conservative firm= *Cemex*, innovative firm= *Televisa*.

** Correlation is significant at the .01 level (two-tailed).

The Cronbach's alphas for the four scales measured are reported on the diagonal.

Table 3.

Regression analyses for the conservative and the innovative companies

RTC Dimension	Standardized Betas	
	Conservative: <i>Cemex</i>	Innovative: <i>Televisa</i>
Routine seeking	.23**	-.29**
Emotional reaction	.18*	-.07
Short-term focus	.27**	-.28**
Cognitive rigidity	.23**	-.08
<i>Adjusted R²</i>	.33	.27

* $p < .01$; ** $p < .001$.