Greater career progression using Iris Booth headshots on LinkedIn

Research was undertaken in the winter of 2018 which determined that individuals using an Iris Booth headshot as a LinkedIn profile picture experienced greater career progression than those who used a headshot photo from another source. Following is a summary of the research as conducted for Iris Booth.

Many professionals consider career progression to be upwards movement, where they climb the "career ladder" and progressively obtain bigger jobs with greater scope and often greater personal income. This is sometimes referred to as objective career success. Social media is becoming a significant influence in the "war for talent" and the selection and recruitment process. Platforms such as LinkedIn are being used regularly by human resource departments and recruitment firms to find candidates for jobs. Professionals are being more proactive in developing their on-line profile, so they can maximize their job opportunities and achieve objective career success through career progression. But does the source of the profile picture which individuals use on LinkedIn make a difference? This research suggests it does.

Iris Booth is an innovative solution to the problem of acquiring a professional headshot. As an alternative to a studio photograper or an informal "selfie," an Iris Booth headshot is a hybrid. It allows individuals to take (and edit) their own headshot using proprietary photo booth technology. The research explored if www.irisbooth.com headshots were related to career progression, and the results are surprising. Individuals using an Iris Booth headshot for their LinkedIn profile picture experienced greater career progression than those who did not. It seems Iris Booth headshots may offer a career advantage.

Respecting usage permissions, a database of 4,251 headshots was provided by Iris Booth and sorted based on date taken and the photo booth location. Purposeful sampling was used to maximize the timeframe (28 months) for career progression analysis of professionals in a specific community (Halifax, Canada). Since names were not included in the Iris Booth database, email addresses and headshot photos were used to identify 30 LinkedIn profiles using Iris Booth pictures. The LinkedIn algorithm "People Also Viewed" was used to identify 30 non-Iris Booth profiles so that careers across the two groups could be compared following a matched pairs methodology. This approach minimized the influence of other confounding variables in the analysis. The 60 LinkedIn profiles were then loaded into a database and analyzed. A coding and scoring system - a six level career ladder - was iteratively developed and used to code each of the 60 profiles which were assigned a career progression score based on movement up or down the career ladder. A two-tailed, matched pair t-test was applied to the scores. Profiles with an Iris Booth photo achieved greater career progression scores with a mean of 3.633 (n=30, SD=2.484) compared to profiles using a non-Iris Booth photo with a mean score of 2.467 (n=30, SD =2.389). The computed *p* value of .05, indicates that the results are statistically significant with a 95% confidence level.

Although commercially motivated, the research was conducted by a student following a reasonably rigorous scientific approach. Despite the power of a matched pairs methodology, the results are limited since the data demonstrates a (surprising) relationship but does not necessarily demonstrate causality. The analysis is further limited by using social media which is not always a reliable data source. Career progression could have been mis-represented in profiles and/ or mis-interpreted during coding. The research benefited from access to an extensive first-degree LinkedIn network of 3,980 connections and an estimated third-degree network of one billion based on average network sizes of 500 connections. Despite this vast network size, LinkedIn connections are a limitation of the data collection approach. Notwithstanding these limitations the findings are surprising and bode well for Iris Booth and its users.