A Policy Capturing Exploration of Sport Job Seeker Decision Making: The Relative Influence of Prestige, Segment, Duties, and Location

Samuel Todd, University of South Carolina
Timothy Koba, University of South Carolina
Zeqing Mao, University of South Carolina
Steve Swanson, Loughborough University

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In some sense, the mechanics of job seeker attraction in sport follow typical patterns seen in other industries, but in another, there are distinct differences. For instance, attraction literature has long identified several categories of influential antecedents including: job characteristics (pay, promotion potential), organizational characteristics (reputation, familiarity, brand), recruiter characteristics (personality, etc.) and various types of perceived fit (with organization, job, environment) between the applicant and the opportunity (e.g., Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005). There is some evidence in sport that some of these variables are active and influential as well (Todd & Andrew, 2008; Todd, Magnusen, Andrew, & Lachowetz, 2014). But in another sense, job seeker attraction in sport management may be altogether unique compared to other industries. For instance, the sport environment has heightened levels of passion (e.g., Anagnostopoulos, Winand, & Papadimitriou, 2016; Swanson & Kent, 2015, 2017; Todd & Kent, 2009) which may cause some job seekers to change the way they evaluate opportunities and tradeoff, or substitute, for factors otherwise considered to be normative. In fact, in a study involving interns in the sport industry, Mathner and Martin (2012) noted that passion for the industry tended to interfere with typical career decision components in a way that potentially explained certain applicant choices. Others have noted the similar effects in the work desires of job (or intern) seekers (Hawzen, McLeod, Holden, & Newman, 2018; Odio, Sagas, & Kerwin, 2014). Thus, using a quasi-experimental policy capturing design, we set out to explore the decision-making styles of sport industry job seekers. Specifically, we were interested in the relative importance of industry segment, location, job duties and organizational prestige on intentions to apply. Working alongside an industry leading job board, the 2x2x2x2 design yielded 16 completely crossed scenarios that were programmed into an online survey and randomly presented to actual industry job seekers based upon their unique preferences selected. As a key strength of policy capturing design is the ability to replicate reality in a lab setting, the scenarios were largely worded and based off the actual types of choices job seekers make when using the job board. Data were analyzed to determine the direct impact of each of the four independent variables (segment, job duties, organizational prestige, location) on an applicant’s intent to apply. Then secondly, post hoc explorations were conducted to determine whether job attraction decisions differed based on the level of the job, experience of job seeker, gender, level of sports fandom, and extent of sport-focused career identification. Implications to job attraction theory and human resource practices in the sport industry are reviewed.