Is anybody watching me? Effects of information about evaluators on applicants' use of impression management in asynchronous video interviews

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Abstract

Asynchronous video interviews (AVIs) are widely used in hiring, but the lack of social presence (e.g., uncertainty about the identity of evaluators) may hinder effective impression management (IM) for applicants. This study examined whether providing information about evaluators facilitates applicant IM use in AVIs, specifically ingratiation or self-promotion. It also explored the experience involved in applicants' response generation. In a mock AVI, 160 participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions (with or without information about the evaluator). They reported their thoughts after watching their interview recordings. Providing information about the evaluator enhanced ingratiation but did not affect self-promotion. Qualitative analyses revealed that participants with evaluator information were more likely to reference organizational values and align themselves with the evaluator, whereas those without it concentrated more on demonstrating their job-relevant skills. Participants' reported thoughts and emotions suggested that formulating suitable answers and interacting with a computer represent major concerns.

Keywords: Asynchronous video interviews; impression management; behavior elicitation

Practitioner Points:

- Asynchronous video interview questions (AVIs) are often text-based, and the evaluator is unknown.
- Applicants experience discomfort or challenges completing AVIs, such as interacting with a computer instead of a person.
- Providing information about the evaluator in AVIs can create opportunities for honest impression management, particularly through ingratiation.
- Providing information about the evaluator can reduce the prevalence of faking thoughts.
- Organizations should be cautious about using evaluator information too early in the selection process.

Is anybody watching me? Effects of information about evaluators on applicants' use of impression management in asynchronous video interviews

In recent years, asynchronous video interviews (AVIs) have gained popularity as a screening tool (Hirevue, 2022). AVIs are a web-based method where job applicants record themselves answering predetermined questions, which can be asked in written form, in a video, or by an avatar, without direct interaction with interviewers (Lukacik et al., 2022). AVIs provide greater flexibility for applicants and interviewers while reducing time and costs associated with traditional in-person interviews (Brenner et al., 2016). They also allow deferred evaluation by interviewers or even automatic evaluation via computer algorithms (Blacksmith et al., 2016; Chamorro-Premuzic et al., 2017). However, applicants tend to accept AVIs less than face-to-face and synchronous technology-mediated interviews, especially when they know that their answers will be evaluated automatically (Langer et al., 2019; Suen et al., 2019). Their lack of acceptance may be due to the lack of social presence conveyed by the medium (Guchait et al., 2014), potentially inhibiting impression management (IM) — actions aimed at making a favorable impression on recruiters (Basch et al., 2020).

IM has been widely studied in traditional, in-person interviews. Yet it is still under-researched in AVIs, and little is known about how AVI design can impact the use of IM (e.g., Basch et al., 2021; Roulin et al., 2023). Unlike face-to-face interviews, in an AVI with text-based questions, the evaluator is not always clearly identified, significantly reducing the opportunities for IM (Lukacik et al., 2022). Thus, the availability of information about the evaluator may influence the use of IM in AVIs. Information about the evaluator, such as their background, expertise, and values, could enable applicants to tailor their responses, highlight relevant skills, and adjust their communication style to create a positive impression. To address this research gap, our study investigates how providing information about the evaluator influences applicants' use of self-promotion and ingratiation, two common IM tactics in interview settings.

Additionally, we further explore how applicants experience AVIs and plan their IM strategies when answering AVI-based questions by asking them to report on their thought processes related to their responses. We thus contribute to a better understanding of applicants' experience of AVIs specific to the question-answering process. This adds granularity to existing findings on applicant reactions to AVIs (Basch et al., 2020). This research also holds practical implications for using AVIs in selection. By understanding the impact of evaluator information on applicant IM and on applicants' experience of answering questions, organizations can improve their evaluation of the person-job (PJ) fit and person-organization (PO) fit of applicants and potentially improve applicants' experiences and reduce negative reactions. Indeed, applicant IM is associated with both PJ fit and PO fit perceptions (Kristof-Brown, 2000; Peck & Levashina, 2017) and hireability ratings (Proost et al., 2010; Roulin et al., 2014), highlighting its importance for selection decisions.

Applicant Impression Management in Selection Interviews

IM is a social influence process where applicants attempt to shape the image conveyed to interviewers (Bolino et al., 2016). In selection interviews, most applicants use IM, consciously or unconsciously, to influence how interviewers view them and improve their hirability (Barrick et al., 2009; Peck & Levashina, 2017; Proost et al., 2010; Roulin et al., 2014). Importantly, applicants can use both honest and deceptive IM. They opt for honest IM when they can genuinely showcase their skills and experiences in response to questions (Bourdage et al., 2018). On the other hand, when they find it challenging to answer, they might resort to deceptive IM (or "faking"), which involves using slight exaggerations, insincere flattery, or creating false impressions (Levashina & Campion, 2007).

Prior research suggests a positive correlation between IM and interview ratings (Kleinmann & Klehe, 2010; Peck & Levashina, 2017), and between honest IM and hirability ratings (Bourdage et al., 2018). However, the effectiveness of honest IM for interview performance is limited to a

certain threshold, beyond which it becomes counterproductive (Robie et al., 2020). On the other hand, faking hinders interviewers' capacity to thoroughly evaluate applicants' skills and make accurate job performance predictions (Melchers et al., 2020). Furthermore, detecting faking is difficult for interviewers (Roulin et al., 2015), potentially impacting interview validity (Huffcutt et al., 2004; Roulin et al., 2016). Notably, Buehl et al. (2019) found that the impact of faking on interview validity varies depending on the type of performance being predicted. In contrast, Ingold et al. (2015) found a nonsignificant correlation between self-reported faking and ratings of work performance. Concerning interview outcomes, recent meta-analytic findings reveal a near-zero correlation between faking and interview ratings (Ho, Powell, et al., 2021). However, this relationship is moderated by evaluators' experience and the presence of multiple interviewers: Faking is more impactful with novice interviewers or when more interviewers are involved.

IM tactics can be other-focused (e.g., ingratiation) or self-focused (e.g., self-promotion; Kacmar & Carlson, 1999; Levashina et al., 2014; Proost et al., 2010). Applicants use other-focused tactics, such as expressing interest in the company, to emphasize similarities with the interviewer and evoke liking, thereby demonstrating a good fit with the organization's values (i.e., PO fit). Ingratiation can take the form of highlighting organizational fit, opinion conformity, or other-enhancement (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Applicants use self-focused tactics to draw attention to their strengths, skills, and achievements (e.g., telling interviewers how good they were at their previous job; Ellis et al., 2002; Kacmar & Carlson, 1999). Applicants thus aim to convince interviewers that they are a good fit for the position based on their personal qualifications (i.e., PJ fit). This can be done via self-enhancement, entitlements, exemplification, and self-promotion (Ellis et al., 2002; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Self-focused IM is more positively related to higher interview ratings than other-focused tactics, which, while beneficial for social interaction, have less impact on interview success (Peck & Levashina, 2017; Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Further IM aimed directly at the evaluator significantly improves interview ratings and perceived fit, while

IM directed at a third-party observer has a reduced impact, as the observer is less influenced by these tactics (Peck & Levashina, 2017).

In selection interviews, applicants use self-promotion and ingratiation differently. For instance, when answering past-behavior questions like “Can you tell me about a time you had to deal with an angry client?”, applicants use more self-promotion tactics. Conversely, when answering situational questions like “Imagine you were dealing with an angry client. What would you do to manage the situation?", they tend to rely more on ingratiation tactics (Ellis et al., 2002). While both tactics can enhance interviewers’ evaluations and lead to positive outcomes, their combination is even more effective (Proost et al., 2010). Importantly, interviewers’ perceptions play a key role in the effectiveness of IM. Specifically, interviewers' positive perception of honest self-promotion is associated with better interview outcomes (Roulin et al., 2014). Moreover, interviewers’ perception of applicants' competences mediates the relationship between honest self-promotion use and interview ratings, while honest ingratiation use is positively associated with warmth perceptions (Amaral et al., 2019).

Applicant Impression Management in AVIs

To engage in IM behavior (honest or deceptive), applicants need to have the willingness, capacity, and opportunity to do so (Bourdage et al., 2018; Levashina & Campion, 2006). Specifically, situational factors, like interview format or organizational characteristics, provide varying opportunities for IM. Likewise, target-related factors like interviewer characteristics influence both the willingness and opportunities to engage in IM.

The unique characteristics of AVIs make engaging in IM a tricky task. Indeed, applicants report lower intentions to use IM in AVIs compared to face-to-face or videoconference interviews, likely because they perceive lower social presence in AVIs (Basch et al., 2020). However, AVIs can be designed in different ways, which could impact applicants’ use of IM tactics (Lukacik et

al., 2022). For instance, allowing applicants more preparation time leads them to produce more honest IM (Basch, Brenner, et al., 2021), but this effect might not be very robust (Roulin et al., 2023). Also, when given the possibility to re-record their answers, applicants who do so fake less (Roulin et al., 2023). Applicants may also be aware that AVIs may use algorithms to analyze their behavior and detect faking. The prospect of automated assessment can influence how applicants engage in IM. Indeed, applicants who think a computer will automatically evaluate their responses, use less faking, respond more succinctly, and feel they have fewer opportunities to perform (Langer et al., 2020).

Previous research on IM in AVIs has mainly explored honest IM versus faking, but less self-focused versus other-focused IM. Yet IM is a goal-directed behavior and talking to a computer webcam (vs. a person) makes it more difficult for applicants to engage in other-oriented IM tactics such as ingratiation (Lukacik et al., 2022). Indeed, to engage in other-focused IM, applicants need a target whose characteristics are known to them. Specifically, they need information on their evaluators' personal characteristics. This information can enhance the opportunities and willingness for applicants to engage in honest IM (Bourdage et al., 2018). In traditional synchronous interviews, this information becomes easily accessible through prior knowledge (e.g., LinkedIn profiles of evaluators), social interaction (e.g., evaluators introducing themselves and the organization), or visual cues in the office environment (e.g., framed pictures on the evaluator's desk). When applicants have access to such cues, it can help them better understand the interviewer and thus engage in more targeted IM, potentially resulting in improved interview ratings (Bolino et al., 2008; Delery & Kacmar, 1998; Wilhelmy et al., 2021). In contrast, in AVIs there is no interaction and often no target. Applicants cannot observe and respond to an evaluators' nonverbal and verbal cues, making it difficult to build rapport with them. The lack of target and social interaction should result in fewer opportunities to use other-focused IM tactics (Lukacik et al., 2022).

Providing information about the evaluator can potentially compensate for the absence of visual cues and help applicants tailor their IM strategies. For instance, if applicants have access to information about the evaluator's identity, preferences, or even their position within the company, these cues can help them design and implement ingratiation tactics. With such knowledge in hand, applicants may thus have more opportunities and willingness to employ ingratiation tactics and effectively establish rapport with the evaluator (Bourdage et al., 2018; Lukacik et al., 2022).

In this study, we focused on honest IM because it is more prevalent, effective, and encouraged when used with moderation (Bourdage et al., 2018; Robie et al., 2020; Roulin, 2022). We thus manipulated the information provided to participants about the evaluator, with the expectation that those who received such information would use more honest ingratiation compared to those who did not.

Hypothesis 1. Applicants with information about their evaluator will use more honest ingratiation tactics than those without information.[1]

The potential impact of providing information about the evaluator on the use of self-focused tactics like self-promotion is less clear. One could argue that providing information to applicants about the evaluator would not alter their use of self-promotion in AVIs. This is because applicants do not need a target to talk about themselves and highlight their responsibilities in positive events, their skills, or their relevant experiences (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Therefore, regardless of the information available about the evaluator, applicants have the opportunity to produce the same amount of self-promotion. Alternatively, one could argue that in the absence of information about the evaluator (i.e., target) during AVIs, applicants might try to compensate the inability to use other-focused tactics by engaging in more self-promotion (Lukacik et al., 2022).

Research Question 1. What is the effect of having information about an evaluator on applicants' honest self-promotion?

Applicants' experiences of question-answering in AVIs

A review of studies on applicant reactions to structured interviews (Levashina et al., 2014) suggests they may foster negative affective reactions (Conway & Peneno, 1999), decrease satisfaction (Chapman & Rowe, 2002), decrease perceptions of procedural justice, and decrease intentions to accept a job offer (Chapman & Zweig, 2005). However, it is unclear which dimensions of interview structure drive these reactions (Levashina et al., 2014). This has implications for AVIs, because they incorporate several structure elements by default (e.g., same questions asked in in a consistent way to all applicants; Lukacik et al., 2022). Notably, applicants find structured interviews to be more difficult than less structured interviews (Chapman & Zweig, 2005), suggesting that structured interview questions, such as past-behavior questions, may be partly responsible for negative applicant reactions. Recent studies in face-to-face interviews highlight the difficulties applicants experience in promptly finding relevant examples and formulating responses to past-behavior questions (Brosy et al., 2016; Brosy et al., 2020). This impacts response quality, contributes to negative emotional reactions, and leads to potential faking (Brosy et al., 2020). These results are in line with a qualitative study that explored the reasons applicants engage in deceptive IM in interviews (Ho, Perossa, et al., 2021): to compensate for their limited relevant work experience, to handle the expectations associated with prestigious organizations or the pressure to secure employment, or to align themselves with what they perceive to be the interviewer's values, interests, or personality.

AVIs also suffer from negative applicant reactions. Applicants often find them creepy, less personal, less fair and offering less opportunity to perform (Basch, Melchers, et al., 2021; Griswold et al., 2022; Langer et al., 2017; Langer et al., 2019). However, a more granular understanding of the drivers of these negative reactions is missing. As with face-to-face interviews, the question-answering experience may constitute such a driver, perhaps even more so because AVIs are often much more selection-focused than face-to-face interviews, which are also recruitment-focused

(Wingate & Bourdage, 2024). Given that AVIs represent a novel technology, we know very little about how applicants experience the question-answering process. This invites speculation about whether similar question-answering experiences occur in AVIs and how providing information about the evaluator could also influence applicants' experience of the interview. Examining applicants' experiences related to the question-answering process in AVIs can improve our understanding of why AVIs are less accepted and why applicants react more negatively to them.

Research Question 2. How do applicants experience responding to questions in AVIs? Particularly, do applicants' IM-related experiences differ when provided with information about the evaluator?

Method

Sample

We recruited students from a subject pool in a Swiss university. A power analysis using G*Power (Faul et al., 2009), assuming an effect size of $d = 0.40$ (Langer et al., 2020), using independent *t*-tests, and assuming a power of $1\text{-}\beta = 0.80$, determined that $N = 156$ participants would be necessary. We thus recruited a sample of 160 participants with 50% of women. Participants had a mean age of 21.48 years ($SD = 3.91$) and had on average taken part in 2.77 ($SD = 5.37$) job interviews. Around 60% of participants had a high school diploma, while 40% held a university degree (30% with a bachelor's degree and 10% with a master's degree).

Study Design

Participants were equally split and randomly assigned to one of two conditions: one half received details about the evaluator, while the other half did not. In the no-information condition, they were only told the evaluator's name (i.e., Dominique Müller). We selected a gender-neutral first name and the most common last name in Switzerland to ensure no unintended information was conveyed to participants. Participants in the information condition had access to a screenshot

of the evaluator's LinkedIn page (presented on the AVI platform). On this page, they could find the evaluator's name, pictures (i.e., profile picture and banner), their job title, and a post they recently reshared (about wind turbines). The LinkedIn profile was intended to show that environmentalism and sustainability were important to the evaluator, thus offering participants information to engage in other-focused IM.

Procedure

Overview

Participants provided informed consent and received instructions on how to use the AVI platform. They were instructed to act exactly as they would in a real interview when seeking employment. Then, they were given 5 minutes to read a job description for a portfolio manager position in a sustainability-oriented company (APPENDIX 1) and prepare for the interview. Participants were allowed to take notes, which could be used during the interview. Those with information about their evaluator also had access to a screenshot of the evaluator's LinkedIn profile. Then, they all took part in an AVI comprising five questions. Participants had 20 seconds to read each question and prepare their response before starting their recording. For each question, they were limited to a single recording attempt, with a maximum response duration of three minutes. After the interview, participants watched the video-recordings of their responses and wrote down their thoughts and feelings. They paused the video whenever they remembered a thought or feeling they experienced during the interview and wrote it down (they were instructed to *not* write down thoughts or feelings experienced while watching the video). This method has been previously used to access participants' thoughts and feelings at specific moments (Hall & Schmid Mast, 2007). Then, participants completed measures of honest IM use (Bourdage et al., 2018), and demographic questions. Finally, they were debriefed and received a monetary compensation of 20 CHF (USD $22.80) for their participation for a 50-minute session, which is

more than the minimum hourly rate (20 CHF/60minutes) determined by the university. This also corresponds to the average hourly wage of students working part-time jobs in Switzerland.

Job interview questions

The interview consisted of five questions: A question inviting participants to introduce themselves (i.e., "Could you please introduce yourself and briefly summarize your background?"), two past-behavior questions (i.e., "Describe a situation where you were dealing with people who were angry about a particular work situation. How did you react to this?" and "Tell me about a situation where you were working as a team on a project that had to be completed within a limited time frame. How did you manage to lead your team to complete this project on time?"), a question about their values (i.e., "What values are important to you at work?") and a question about PJ fit (i.e., "Why do you think you would be the right person for this job?"). The last two questions were designed to give participants more opportunities for IM (Barrick et al., 2009; Langer et al., 2020).

Measures

Honest impression management

Honest IM was measured with a 32-item scale of the HIIM (Honest Interview Impression Management; Bourdage et al., 2018), slightly adjusted for the AVI context. The scale was translated from English to French and checked by backtranslation. It included fourteen items measuring honest self-promotion IM (Cronbach's α = 0.83, e.g., "I talked about the accomplishments I'd had at my previous job"), eight items measuring honest ingratiation IM (α = 0.88, e.g., "I talked about the values the hiring organization and I shared"), and ten items measuring honest defensive IM (α = 0.89, e.g., "I gave reasons why I felt benefited positively from a negative event I was responsible for"). We also computed an overall honest IM score (α = 0.88). All responses were on a 1-5 scale (1 = *completely disagree*, and 5 = *completely agree*).

Table 1

Categories of Applicants' Thoughts and Feelings

	Category	Definition	Example	Frequency		Mention (%)		Proportion (%)	
				No Info	With Info	No Info	With Info	No Info	With Info
1	Negative emotion	Negative emotional state, e.g., stress, hesitation, disappointment	*I'm hesitating a lot*	250	167	77.50	70.00	11.99	9.85
2	Discourse production	Difficulties in finding words, speaking, speech rate, tone of voice	*I could hardly find my words*	194	209	76.25	66.25	10.54	9.62
3	Finding an answer	Difficulties in finding an appropriate response to the question asked	*I don't know what to say*	194	202	76.25	75.00	10.35	13.92
4	Self-promotion	Highlighting abilities, skills, or professional experience	*I wanted to highlight my open-mindedness*	205	156	65.00	66.25	12.63	11.15
5	Response quality concerns	Concern on response characteristics, e.g., vocabulary, detail level	*Using "yeah" is not very professional*	203	139	75.00	63.75	10.64	7.31
6	Irrelevant response	Response considered too general or produced just to say something.	*I was not specific in my answer*	156	171	70.00	68.75	8.23	10.92
7	Positive emotion	Positive emotional state, e.g., joy, relief, satisfaction	*I feel very relieved*	120	90	56.25	47.50	6.61	5.07
8	Ingratiation	Noting evaluator or company traits, e.g., flattery or conformity	*I share the same values as the company*	64	106	41.25	51.25	3.64	7.45
9	Digital device	Device-related experiences e.g., lack of real-time interaction	*The timer disturbs me*	70	63	38.75	38.75	3.76	3.80
10	Faking	Making up examples or embellishing the situation	*I'm making things up*	91	42	37.50	20.00	4.20	2.51
11	Questions asked	Apprehension of the type of question	*I think that it's a tricky question*	72	60	37.50	36.25	2.97	4.04
12	Relevant response	Response deemed good and easy to find	*I think that it's a good experience*	64	63	41.25	38.75	3.25	3.63
13	Other	Miscellaneous comments	*I was recalling the angry customer scene*	58	68	41.25	40.00	2.96	3.96
14	Non-verbal behavior	Mentioning elements e.g., camera eye contact, body language	*I'm touching my head*	63	42	25.00	25.00	2.24	2.01
15	Repetition	Review of speech repetition instances	*I am repeating my words too many times*	50	47	37.50	32.50	2.95	2.58
16	Bad image	Concerns about the evaluator's (or other) perception	*I don't want to appear egocentric*	34	21	30.00	18.75	1.58	1.18
17	Job information	Reflection on the requirements previously read in the job advertisement	*I forgot the name of the job description*	21	15	15.00	17.50	0.85	1.00

Note. N=3,570 utterances (No info = 1909. With info = 1661); Mention (%): Percentage of participants mentioning the category at least once; Proportion: proportion of category utterances related to the total number of utterances in the condition; No Info = No information about the evaluator, With Info = With information about the evaluator.

Thoughts and feelings experienced while answering questions

We employed quantitative content analysis following Crano et al. (2014) to analyze participants' written comments. Quantitative content analysis specifies that each unit of analysis (or coding unit) of a text should receive one code. Because comments could sometimes be quite complex, this would potentially result in multiple potential codes applying to a given coding unit. To address this, we segmented comments into utterances, typically consisting of a clause with a single subject, verb, and object, as coding units (Brosy et al., 2020). The entire comment was treated as the context unit (Crano et al., 2014), guiding the interpretation and code assignment. For example, the comment "I have the impression that the interview went well, which removes all the pressure from me, and I say everything I think, even some more personal elements" would be segmented into three utterances: (1) "I have the impression that the interview went well", (2) "which removes all the pressure from me", (3) "and I say everything I think, even some more personal elements".

We created a category system using Brosy et al.'s (2020) categories and adapting them to better fit our dataset. Specifically, we excluded categories related to face-to-face interactions, such as temporization (e.g., speaking to gain time) and turn management, and introduced new categories pertinent to IM (i.e. *Self-promotion* and *Ingratiation*), and AVIs (i.e. *Digital device*). Also, two other categories related to participants' perceptions of their own image (i.e. *Bad image)* and their interpretation of job information (i.e. *Job information*) were created based on an initial inspection of the data. We coded each of the 3,570 utterances obtained into one of 17 categories we created for the study (Table 1, for further examples see APPENDIX 2). Interrater agreement was high (k = .93) based on double coding of 20% of the comments by the first author and a graduate student who received training.

Manipulation check

We created two items (i.e., "Dominique Müller shared a publication on wind turbines" and "Dominique Müller has a picture of a dog on her profile banner") to check if the information manipulation was perceived by participants. Indeed, Dominique Müller shared a

publication on wind turbine and had a dog picture on her profile banner. Participants had three options to respond to those questions: *Yes, No, I don't know*. We expected participants with evaluator information to answer *Yes* to both items, while those without it were expected to answer *I don't know*. Among participants without information, 75% responded as expected to at least one question. For those with information, the rate was 82.5%. This exceeds the chance rate of 55.55% ($\chi^2_{\text{NoInfo}}(1, 80) = 12.32$, $p < .01$; $\chi^2_{\text{WithInfo}}(1, 80) = 23.61$, $p < .01$) and confirms that our manipulation was successful. Also, we tested H1 and RQ1 both with our full sample and excluding participants who failed the manipulation check. The two sets of analyses yielded the same results.[2] We report the results with all participants below.

Results

Ingratiation (H1) and Self-Promotion (RQ1) by Condition

Means, standard deviations and correlations among the study variables are provided in Table 2. For the purposes of testing H1 and RQ1, we excluded six participants from the analysis due to incomplete data, resulting in a sample size of 154 participants. Participants with information about the evaluator reported using significantly more ingratiation than those without information, $M_{noinfo} = 3.48$ ($SD = .84$), $M_{withinfo} = 3.74$ ($SD = .75$), $t(152) = -2.03$, $p < .05$, Cohen's $d = -0.33$, 95% CI [-.64; -.01]. These results support H1. Regarding RQ1, there was no significant difference in the reported use of self-promotion between conditions, $M_{noinfo} = 3.23$ ($SD = .59$), $M_{withinfo} = 3.21$ ($SD = .71$), $t(152) = 0.18$, $p = .85$, Cohen's $d = 0.03$, 95% CI [-.29; .35]. Note that self-promotion correlates significantly and positively with other IM types (Table 2).

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Pearson's Correlations Between Study Variables.

		M	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1	Gender	0.50	0.50							
2	Age	21.48	3.91	-.03						
3	Condition	0.50	0.50	.00	.07					
4	Interview experience	2.77	5.37	.07	.55**	.16*				
5	Honest self-promotion	3.22	0.65	-.15	.15	-.02	.18*			
6	Honest ingratiation	3.61	0.81	.06	.03	.16*	-.02	.26*		
7	Honest defensive IM	2.41	0.86	-.24**	.18*	.09	.22**	.37**	.09	
8	Overall Honest IM	3.08	0.54	-.15	.17*	.12	.18*	.73**	.65**	.73**

Note: N = 154. Gender: 0 = Male; 1 = Female; Condition: 0 = No information about the evaluator; 1 = With information about the evaluator; Interview experience = Number of prior interviews; All IM responses were on a 1-5 scale. * $p < .05$; ** $p < .01$

Experiences reported during answering questions (RQ2)

Table 1 presents the frequencies of categories of thoughts reported by participants. The most frequent categories were *Negative emotion*, *Discourse production*, and *Finding an answer*, accounting for 34% of all mentions. These results indicate that one of the interviewees' primary concerns was to find a suitable response, which might be associated with experiencing negative emotions. Also, 38.7% of participants reported having trouble completing the interview with a computer rather than interacting with a human.

Categories related to IM, including *Ingratiation*, *Self-Promotion*, and *Faking*, comprised 18.60% of all mentions. *Self-Promotion* was the most prevalent, making up 54.4% of IM-related comments, with participants highlighting their skills (e.g., "I want to show my openness to dialogue and my willingness to find solutions"). *Ingratiation* represented 25.6% of IM-related comments, with participants who had information about the recruiter more often appealing to the recruiter's personal preferences (e.g., "I'm trying to connect with the recruiter by discussing the environment based on what I've read on her LinkedIn"). Finally, *Faking* comprised 20% of IM-related comments, as illustrated by statements such as, "I wanted to impress, so I lied." Notably, *Faking* showed the largest difference between conditions. Among participants without information about the evaluator, 37.5% mentioned faking at least once, compared to 20% of participants with evaluator information.

Finally, we conducted a Spearman's rank correlation analysis (Table 3) to examine the relationships between the experimental conditions and categories of applicants' thoughts and feelings, while controlling for the number of utterances. Here, we report the key variables (IM-related categories and the experimental condition). The experimental condition was negatively related to response quality concerns (r = -.17, p = .03) and faking (r = -.20, p = .01), but showed no significant relationship with self-promotion (r = -.03, p = .70) or ingratiation (r = .14, p = .07 – though the direction of that relationship is consistent with self-reports).

Table 3

Spearman's Rank Correlation Between Categories of Applicants' Thoughts and Feelings, and Condition

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1	Condition	-																
2	Negative emotion	-.09	-															
3	Discourse production	-.08	.14	-														
4	Finding an answer	.11	-.06	-.11	-													
5	Self-promotion	-.03	-.21**	-.25**	-.33**	-												
6	Response quality concerns	-.17*	.00	.09	.01	-.14	-											
7	Irrelevant response	.07	-.13	-.03	.14	-.15	-.02	-										
8	Positive emotion	-.09	.19*	.11	-.17*	-.12	.02	-.10	-									
9	Ingratiation	.14	-.05	-.20*	-.23**	.27**	-.06	-.18*	-.15	-								
10	Digital device	.03	.02	.06	.03	-.17*	-.04	-.20*	-.03	.04	-							
11	Faking	-.20*	-.05	-.02	-.11	-.05	-.03	-.07	.00	.03	.08	-						
12	Questions asked	.02	.02	.00	.13	-.07	-.09	-.09	.01	-.01	.26**	.04	-					
13	Relevant response	.01	.04	-.05	-.07	-.14	.00	-.11	.32**	-.03	.02	.09	.12	-				
14	Other	.04	-.08	-.07	-.02	.04	-.02	-.08	.00	.03	.00	-.01	.12	.16*	-			
15	Non-verbal behavior	.01	-.07	.16*	-.10	-.12	-.02	-.04	.04	-.03	.15	.04	-.05	.07	.12	-		
16	Repetition	-.05	.01	.10	.05	-.20*	.01	-.05	-.03	-.11	.08	.05	.05	-.10	-.04	.12	-	
17	Bad image	-.12	-.02	-.03	-.03	.03	.15	.05	.05	-.07	.07	.15	-.04	.06	.11	.16*	.05	-
18	Job information	.04	.02	-.12	.02	.07	.08	-.03	-.13	.09	.00	.07	.00	-.09	.00	.07	.06	.15

Note: N = 160. Condition: 0 = No information about the evaluator; 1 = With information about the evaluator; * p < .05; ** p < .01

Participants with information about the evaluator had less thoughts about response quality concerns and faking. Also, self-promotion was negatively related to negative emotion (r = -.21, p < .01), discourse production (r = -.25, p < .01), finding an answer (r = -.33, p < .01), digital device (r = -.17, p = .03), and repetition (r = -.20, p = .01). Ingratiation was negatively related to discourse production (r = -.20, p = .01), finding an answer (r = -.23, p < .01), and irrelevant responses (r = -.18, p = .02).

Exploratory Analyses – IM goals

To gain a deeper understanding of how applicants' IM-related experiences differ when provided with information about the evaluator [3], we explored participants' IM goals, focusing on utterances categorized as *Self-promotion* and *Ingratiation* in Table 1. IM goals are mentioned in explanations for the use of IM tactics (e.g., "I'm sharing my personal life in Europe to please the recruiter who shares positions about Europe"). In order to preserve the connections participants spontaneously create between IM tactics and their goals, this analysis was conducted on participants' comments in context (i.e., *without* dividing them into utterances).

We thus coded each comment related to *Self-promotion* and *Ingratiation* into five categories (Table 4). In the *PJ fit* category, participants aimed to align their characteristics with the job requirements, while in the *PO fit* category, participants aimed to align their characteristics with those of the organization or the recruiter (Bourdage et al., 2018; Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). The third and fourth categories involve defensive IM goals. The third category, *Repairing negative image*, involved participants addressing perceived shortcomings or previous negative experiences (Tsai et al., 2010). The fourth category, based on Robie et al. (2020), focused on why participants might refrain from engaging in IM. Termed *Fear of overdoing*, it reflected participants' concerns about appearing too eager or going too far. Finally, comments that did not mention an IM goal were categorized under *No goal*. Interrater-agreement was high (k = .88) based on double coding of 20% of the comments.

Table 4
Self-promotion and ingratiation goals by condition

	Category	Self-Promotion		Ingratiation	
		No Info	With Info	No Info	With Info
1	**PJ Fit**	70.1%	55.2%	0%	0%
2	**PO Fit**	0%	0%	42.4%	64.7%
3	**Repairing negative image**	6.8%	2.9%	12.1%	0%
4	**Fear of overdoing**	4.1%	2.9%	3.1%	2.0%
5	**No goal**	19%	39%	42.4%	33.3%

N=336 comments; No Info = No information about the evaluator, With Info = With information about the evaluator.

The goal most strongly associated with *self-promotion* comments is demonstrating PJ fit, and the goal most strongly associated with *ingratiation* comments is demonstrating PO fit. Both *self-promotion* and *ingratiation* are infrequently associated with repairing negative images and fear of overdoing. Giving participants information about the evaluator has the effect of shifting participants' goals in several ways. First, it reduces self-promotion-related comments featuring goals (147 comments to 105) overall, reduces their association with PJ fit (70.1% to 55.2%) and almost doubles the proportion of those comments that are not associated with a goal (19% to 39%). Second, having interviewer information increases ingratiation-related comments featuring explanations (33 to 51), increases their association with PO fit (42.4% to 64.7%) and decreases the proportion of those comments that are not associated with a goal (42.4% to 33.3%). Finally, providing information decreases defensive IM goals for both self-promotion and ingratiation comments. The results of the Fisher's exact test for self-promotion ($p < .01$) and ingratiation ($p = .02$) indicate a significant association between participants with and without information. This pattern suggests that providing

information about their evaluator increases the salience and clarity of PO fit goals. That is, participants with information about their evaluator were more aware of the link between ingratiation and PO fit goals and focused on them more consistently. This may have had the added effect of boosting participants' confidence (as evidenced by the decrease in defensive IM goals).

Discussion

Main Findings and Theoretical Implications

This study had two main goals. The first was to investigate the effects of information about the evaluator on other-focused (ingratiation, H1) and self-focused (self-promotion, RQ1) honest applicant IM during AVIs. The second (RQ2) was to gain a deeper insight into interviewees' experience of answering questions in AVIs. We hypothesized, and found evidence, that interviewees with information about the evaluator report using more other-focused honest IM than those without such information. For self-focused tactics, we explored two competing premises: (1) that the level of self-promotion would stay the same, no matter the information available about the evaluator, because these tactics do not require a specific target; or (2) that interviewees might resort to employing more self-promotion to compensate for the limited opportunity to use other-focused tactics in the absence of a target (Lukacik et al., 2022). Our results supported the first alternative. Providing information about the evaluator had no impact on interviewees' use of self-focused tactics. Overall, our results show that providing information about the evaluator represents an easy way to overcome the limitations associated with the one-way communication of AVIs, at least in terms of creating opportunities for other-focused tactics. Moreover, self-reported ingratiation was more prevalent than self-reported self-promotion in our study, an interesting result as the typical pattern is the reverse (e.g., Peck & Levashina, 2017; Rizi & Roulin, 2023). This could be attributed to our choice of

a sustainability-oriented portfolio manager role, which invited interviewees to use ingratiation to better align with the sustainability values and standards of the hiring organization.

Regarding interviewees' experience of the question-answering process, the most frequent thoughts were associated with response production (*Negative emotion*, *Discourse production*, *Finding an answer and Response quality concerns*). Our findings align with Brosy et al.'s (2020) study on traditional in-person interviews, where the most frequent categories were also related to response production. Specifically, *Finding an answer* and *Negative emotion* ranked highest, while *Discourse production* and *Response quality concerns* were among the 6 most frequent categories. However, our analyses also uncovered challenges unique to AVIs. Interviewees reported difficulties associated with interacting with a computer rather than a human interviewer (i.e., *Digital device* category, mentioned by 39% of interviewees). They commented on the awkwardness of being filmed or the presence of a timer (e.g., *"*Not having someone in front of me (even on video) is disturbing to me*"*). This may explain earlier findings on applicant reactions indicating that applicants perceive AVIs as creepy and less personal and affording less opportunity to perform (Basch, Melchers, et al., 2021; Langer et al., 2017). Furthermore, we observed that only a few participants mentioned faking, and this was even rarer in the condition with evaluator information. Without such information, applicants may find it difficult to engage in honest IM. In an attempt to overcome the challenge of creating a positive impression, they might resort to using deceptive strategies (Ho, Perossa, et al., 2021). To our surprise, there was no significant correlation between the experimental condition and ingratiation thoughts, although the relationship was in the expected direction. Given the previous findings from self-reported IM scales, we had expected a stronger link. However, the *p*-value was close to the .05 threshold and fell below .10 ($p = .07$), suggesting a potential trend that may not have reached significance, possibly due to variability in coding responses.

Finally, an exploratory analysis of goals interviewees associated with self-promotion and ingratiation revealed that giving participants information about their evaluator had the effect of shifting their goal focus, reducing the salience of PJ fit goals, increasing the salience of PO fit goals, and possibly boosting their confidence by reducing defensive IM goals. This is consistent with the foundation of PO fit research, since PO fit is defined as "the compatibility between people and organizations" and is partly based on perceptions that a person (i.e., an applicant) and an organization (i.e., represented by the evaluator here) "share similar fundamental characteristics" (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4-5). Moreover, engaging in other-focused tactics IM like ingratiation is an effective way for interviewees to influence evaluators' perceptions of PO fit (Chen et al., 2008). Our findings also confirm theoretical propositions (Lukacik et al., 2022) and preliminary findings (Rizi & Roulin, 2023), suggesting that media-richer AVIs can facilitate ingratiation. These effects may also potentially explain why applicants feel AVIs (in general) do not give them the opportunity to perform (Langer et al., 2020).

Practical Implications

When designing an AVI, organizations should consider providing applicants with information about the hiring team (and particularly who will evaluate their recordings). This can create opportunities for applicants to use honest IM, especially honest ingratiation, which could ensure that can they truly demonstrate their level of fit, and indirectly provide evaluators with more job-relevant information to assess their potential future work performance (Bourdage et al., 2018; Peck & Levashina, 2017).

However, our analysis showed that providing evaluator information led applicants to trade off self-promotion (P-J fit) in favor of ingratiation (P-O fit) - a potential drawback in early selection stages when employers need to assess job-relevant skills. To balance this, organizations might consider sharing evaluator details later in the process or tailoring the type

of information shared based on its cultural relevance. This approach can help applicants demonstrate both their fit for the job and the organization at the right stage.

Finally, providing information about the evaluator can also help reduce faking in AVIs, which might help alleviate concerns about the negative repercussions of deceptive IM on interview validity.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

The main limitation of this study is the use of experimentally manipulated mock interviews with students. These may not accurately represent the high-stakes situation of an AVI with actual applicants who are genuinely interested in the job offer and possess a profile suitable for the position. In a laboratory experiment featuring a job offer that provided only sufficient information about the company, the stakes are low, potentially resulting in lower motivation among participants to manage impressions. However, our findings suggest that participants engaged in honest IM quite extensively. Further, we anticipate that differences between the two conditions would likely be larger in real application scenarios. Moreover, a laboratory study was necessary to examine the causal effect of providing information about the evaluator on IM and thoughts. Indeed, it would have been ethically problematic to conduct an experimental study using random attribution to conditions with real applicants.

Another limitation is the approach used to assess participants' thought processes. While this approach has been previously employed (Brosy et al., 2020; Hall & Schmid Mast, 2007), we cannot always distinguish between thoughts that arose while watching the video and those that occurred during the response to questions. To address this limitation, future research could explore alternative methodologies or incorporate additional measures to better disentangle these distinct components of participants' experiences. For instance, participants could engage in a post-interview debriefing session with a semi-structured discussion guide. This would allow researchers to probe participants' retrospective reflections on their thoughts and experiences

during the AVI, facilitating a more nuanced and guided understanding of the thought processes involved.

A third limitation is that our study only presented a single evaluator profile, which limits generalizability to the population of potential stimuli (Highhouse, 2009). We chose to use a single profile because this was the first study of the phenomenon. Future research on the effects of providing information about evaluators on applicant IM should use multiple evaluator profiles to better sample the stimulus variability inherent in actual hiring situations. Perhaps the type of evaluator (e.g., depending on age, gender, race, professional role, or experience) or the type of information provided (e.g., level of details, professional vs. personal information) also plays a role.

Further research should also include additional constructs like perceived social presence, AVI performance, and deceptive IM using a scale like the Interview Faking Behavior scale (Levashina & Campion, 2007) to investigate if providing information about the evaluator could influence these outcomes. Furthermore, future research should explore other ways of providing evaluator's information to applicants. While in this study, participants had access to a screenshot of the evaluator's LinkedIn page, there are other potential approaches to consider. For instance, Rizi and Roulin (2023) recently examined the effectiveness of using videos where the hiring managers introduce themselves at the beginning of the AVIs, and then record themselves asking the interview questions. One could extend this by comparing various methods of presenting evaluator information, such as text, a virtual interviewer/avatar, or a video of a real interviewer. It is possible that richer information media would facilitate IM more than a (text-based) LinkedIn page. Also, investigating how interviewees' IM behaviors differ based on the AVI evaluator's role and future work relationship would be beneficial. For instance, interviewees may be more likely to engage in ingratiation (regardless of the presentation format) if the evaluator is their future manager, and they want to create a personal

connection with them already in the AVI. Conversely, if the evaluator is an individual they will not directly work with (e.g., a human resource employee), interviewees' responses and IM use may depend on the format of the evaluator information (i.e., more ingratiation with a video presentation than with an avatar and even more than with text).

Conclusion

AVIs are on the rise and are likely here to stay. This study offers empirical evidence that AVI design influences applicants' experiences and behavior (Lukacik et al., 2022) and emphasizes the importance of providing information about the evaluator to encourage honest IM, particularly ingratiation. Moreover, our findings suggest that applicants' main concern during AVIs remains finding a suitable answer, just like in face-to-face interviews. This concern might be exacerbated by interacting with a computer instead of a human, which is unique to AVIs.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are openly available in OSF: https://osf.io/xtaqr/?view_only=e18f8bed7ab6450b9dc789d737dcae29.

Endnotes

[1] https://aspredicted.org/4FL_K82

[2] Results excluding respondents who failed the manipulation check also support H1. Participants with information about the evaluator reported using significantly more ingratiation than those without information, M_{noinfo} = 3.47 (*SD* = .88), $M_{withinfo}$ = 3.81 (*SD* = .72), *t*(107) = -2.09, *p* =.04, Cohen's *d* = -0.41, 95% CI [-.80; -.02]. Regarding RQ1, there was no significant difference in the use of self-promotion between the two conditions, similar to the results including participants who failed the manipulation check, M_{noinfo} = 3.14(*SD* = .59), $M_{withinfo}$ = 3.14 (*SD* = .72), *t*(107) = 0.86, *p* = .39, Cohen's *d* = 0.17, 95% CI [-.22; .56].

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APPENDIX 1: Job Description

Green Project

Client Portfolio Manager - 60%

Company Description:

Green Project is a Geneva-based company with the primary mission of assisting other businesses in reducing their carbon footprint. We offer innovative tools to drive change in responsible production and consumption.

Your Mission:

- Act as the direct representative of the company to clients.
- Develop a set of activities and projects.
- Manage and motivate a team while ensuring communication between management and employees.
- Evaluate the team members.

Your Profile:

- Proficient in computer tools (Word, Excel).
- Demonstrates a sense of responsibility and excellent priority management.
- A people person who enjoys daily interactions with partners.

What We Offer:

- A dynamic and multidisciplinary work environment.
- Access to continuous training opportunities.
- Flexible working hours.
- Option for telecommuting.

Application:

If you are interested in this opportunity, please submit a complete application including your CV, cover letter, work certificates, and other relevant documents.

The position is available as soon as possible.

APPENDIX 2: Additional Examples for Thought Categories

Category		Definition	Examples
1	Negative emotion	Negative emotional state, e.g., stress, hesitation, disappointment	*I'm hesitating a lot; I was embarrassed; I'm a bit stressed*
2	Discourse production	Difficulties in finding words, speaking, speech rate, tone of voice	*I could hardly find my words; I have a stutter; I couldn't find the word "promotion"*
3	Finding an answer	Difficulties in finding an appropriate response to the question asked	*I don't know what to say; I had no idea what I was going to come up with; I don't know where to begin*
4	Self-promotion	Highlighting abilities, skills, or professional experience	*I wanted to highlight my open-mindedness; I wanted to present my academic background; I am capable of working in a team*
5	Response quality concerns	Concern on response characteristics, e.g., vocabulary, detail level	*Using « yeah »is not very professional; "I realize that starting a sentence with a negative is a bad idea.; This phrase was very cliché*
6	Irrelevant response	Response considered too general or produced just to say something.	*I was not specific in my answer; I thought that maybe the employer didn't really want to hear that; I was telling myself that I was talking nonsense while talking about investments*
7	Positive emotion	Positive emotional state, e.g., joy, relief, satisfaction	*I feel very relieved, I am comfortable; I felt very confident about this question*
8	Ingratiation	Noting evaluator or company traits, e.g., flattery or conformity	*I wanted to show interest in this company; I say what I believe the employer wants to hear; I wanted to prove that I shared the same values*
9	Digital device	Device-related experiences e.g., lack of real-time interaction	*The timer disturbs me; I hadn't realized at all that I had already reached the end of the allotted time; I just remembered that I'm being filmed*
10	Faking	Making up examples or embellishing the situation	*I'm making things up; I had to make up a story; I'm bluffing*
11	Questions asked	Apprehension of the type of question	*I think that it's a tricky question; This question surprised me; The question put me in a difficult position*
12	Relevant response	Response deemed good and easy to find	*I think that it's a good experience; I knew exactly what I was going to answer; I found myself quite relevant there*
13	Other	Miscellaneous comments	*I was recalling the angry customer scene; The last project dates back to college; No idea what I had in mind at that moment*
14	Non-verbal behavior	Mentioning elements e.g., eye contact with the camera, body language	*I'm touching my head; I felt like I wasn't smiling enough; I'm moving a lot*
15	Repetition	Review of speech repetition instances	*I am repeating my words too many times; As usual, I'm repeating myself; I realize that I'm repeating myself*
16	Bad image	Concerns about the evaluator's (or other) perception	*I don't want to appear egocentric; I feel too preachy; I'm afraid talking about secondary school makes me feel a bit childish.*
17	Job information	Reflection on the requirements previously read in the job advertisement.	*I forgot the name of the job description; I'm trying to remember the job in general; I can't remember if the team has already been formed.*