

## **Social enterprise as a good employer brand? Impact of recruitment information from the perspective of signal theory**

**社會企業就是良好雇主品牌嗎？從訊號理論探討招募訊息的效果**

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**Abstract:** With growing awareness of social responsibility and sustainability, more and more young jobseekers are considering whether a prospective employer engages in relevant social responsibility actions. Therefore, in the context of employment, it is worth investigating whether the background, content, and methods of recruitment advertisements affect jobseekers' subjective judgment. This study adopts a new social enterprise as the research context to examine whether the employer brand influences the organization's attractiveness to jobseekers. Additionally, it explores the moderating effect of information cues, presentation styles, and aesthetics on this relationship. It applies a between-subjects design in which information cues, presentation styles, and aesthetics are manipulated in 3 pretests and 12 scenarios involving 157 young potential jobseekers. From the perspective of signaling theory, this study confirms not only the positive impact of employer brands on organizational attractiveness but also the important moderating role of information presentation styles. Practical implications of the findings and future research directions are discussed.

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**Keywords:** Recruitment information cues, presentation styles and aesthetics, employer brand, organizational attractiveness, signaling theory.

**摘要：**在社會責任和永續發展的浪潮下，年輕求職者在求職時，越來越會考慮未來雇主是否有參與相關社會責任的作為。因此，在聘僱的脈絡下，招募廣告的相關背景和內容、方式是否影響求職者的主觀判斷是值得探究的。本研究以一間新創的社會企業為研究背景，探討雇主品牌是否影響求職者主觀評價之組織吸引力，並進一步探討了招募訊息線索、招募訊息呈現風格、以及招募訊息美感在上述關係中所扮演的調節角色。依此，本研究為驗證假設，採用量化研究的受試者間設計，以 157 名年輕潛在求職者為受試者，於 3 個前測及 12 個模擬之求職情境中，操弄招募訊息線索、招募訊息呈現風格和招募訊息美感。結果發現，由信號理論的角度來看，本研究不僅驗證了雇主品牌對組織吸引力具有正向影響，也同時驗證信息呈現方式的重要調節作用。最後也討論了實務上的貢獻、本研究的限制與未來的研究方向。

**關鍵詞：**招募訊息線索、呈現風格與美感、雇主品牌、組織吸引力、信號理論

## 1. Introduction

Scholarly interest in whether enterprises can effectively address the needs of different stakeholders from the perspective of social responsibility has been growing (Aguinis and Glavas, 2012; Vishwanathan *et al.*, 2020). This has emerged as a key area of focus in both academic and practical fields. A company's ability to interact well with internal employees, govern itself effectively, address external environmental concerns, engage with the community, and satisfy customers can be significant competitive advantages, especially for attracting jobseekers (Crane and Glozer, 2016; Du *et al.*, 2010). Given the aging workforce and the ongoing war for talent, enterprises need to prioritize this issue (Greening and Turban, 2000; Wilden *et al.*, 2010). Research has demonstrated that the extent to which a company's values, beliefs, and practices consider different stakeholders is a strong predictor of how well it treats its employees (Greening and Turban, 2000; Jones

and Murrell, 2001). As a result, jobseekers are drawn to companies that prioritize values and display a culture of caring (Jones *et al.*, 2014; Kim and Park, 2011).

This study was motivated by a real business case for Spread the Love Social Enterprise Co., Ltd. (hereinafter referred to as Spread the Love), established in 2018. Spread the Love is the first social enterprise in Taiwan to transform from a non-profit organization; it is focused on sustainable solutions to social issues such as long-term care for the elderly and food waste management. Despite its compelling founding philosophy, the enterprise is facing challenges in attracting talent as it expands. While the enterprise's values may attract jobseekers interested in social issues, the pace of talent supply has lagged the enterprise's growth, leading to a widening talent gap. Employer brands have been proven to influence recruitment effectiveness and organizational attractiveness for jobseekers (Knox and Freeman, 2006), making it crucial for enterprises to compete effectively for talent (Allen *et al.*, 2004; Williamson *et al.*, 2003). Therefore, it is necessary to investigate whether the term “social enterprise” is a useful recruitment cue for potential applicants.

The job market is characterized by significant information asymmetry between recruiters and jobseekers (Chen *et al.*, 2020). When a jobseeker receives recruitment information, they must decide whether to submit a resume, participate in an interview, or accept an offer, often with limited information cues. The presentation of recruitment information and its aesthetic appeal can significantly affect jobseekers' decision-making (Turban, 2001). According to signal theory (Spence, 1973), information asymmetries can significantly impact both organizational and individual decision-making in recruitment (Celani and Singh, 2011). Therefore, the presentation of recruitment information can influence jobseekers' perceptions of the managerial aspects of an enterprise. Previous studies have found that if recruitment information reveals a company's strong CSR track record, jobseekers are more likely to believe that the company treats its employees well, even if the CSR efforts are directed externally (Newman *et al.*, 2015; Tymon *et al.*, 2010). Thus, jobseekers use limited information in recruitment advertisements to assess whether a company is a good employer (Jakob *et al.*,

2022).

This study aims to address the gaps in previous research and extend the background of social enterprises by exploring the impact of recruitment information on jobseekers in three directions. First, this study examines how jobseekers interpret and deduce the characteristics of the enterprise based on the limited clues released during recruitment, such as organizational image, salary, and benefits and use this information to decide on organizational attractiveness (Turban *et al.*, 1995). Due to information asymmetry and limited information (Spence, 1973), jobseekers tend to use information that is easier for the company to observe or obtain to form an employer brand, which in turn affects the recruitment effect (Henderson and Evans, 2000). Therefore, the study divides recruitment information cues into two categories—emphasizing corporate philosophy, and emphasizing industry prospects and career development—and explores their moderating effects on the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness.

Second, the study explores how the content and style of recruitment information affect the effectiveness of recruitment (Redman and Mathews, 1992). Based on the elaboration likelihood model (Cacioppo *et al.*, 1986; Larsen and Phillips, 2001), it divides recruitment information into central and peripheral cues. Central cues refer to information directly related to job vacancies, such as salary or promotion, while peripheral cues refer to indirectly related clues, such as the aesthetics of recruitment advertisements (Lievens and Harris, 2003). The study posits that different recruitment information cues affect jobseekers' subjective assessments of vacancies (Chen, *et al.*, 2020). Therefore, the study extends the styles and aesthetics of information presentation and explores how the content of recruitment information affects the relationship between the employer brand and organizational attractiveness.

Finally, the study adopts a between-subject experimental design to verify the research issues. It manipulates three information cues (emphasizing corporate philosophy, industry prospect, career development, and control group), two information presentation styles (plain text and text with pictures), and aesthetics

(yes and no) to design 12 recruitment advertisements with the aim to examine the boundaries of the effects of the employer brand on organizational attractiveness. Overall, this study contributes to the literature on social enterprises and recruitment by providing insights into the impact of recruitment information on jobseekers and the moderating effects of different cues on the relationship between the employer brand and organizational attractiveness.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Employer brand**

Brand is defined by Aaker (1990) as consumers' thoughts, feelings, and needs for the enterprise. However, when the concept extends to the context of recruitment, according to Collins (2002), the employer brand is an easily identifiable feature in the tangibility and intangibility of an employer. The employer brand represents an enterprise's culture and values for jobseekers. Regarding talent attraction, employer brands are essential in determining whether an enterprise can effectively attract potential job applicants under industrial competition. Therefore, it is a process of establishing the recognizability and uniqueness of an enterprise, which makes it different from its competitors (Kristin and Surinder, 2005). Furthermore, employer brands are particularly important to jobseekers because when jobseekers are looking for future employers, they are looking for prospective work partners as well (Herman and Gioia, 2000). As jobseekers collect relevant information about the enterprise during the recruitment process, the latter must disclose the information that jobseekers need, thus indirectly conveying its reputation and image (Tsai *et al.*, 2008).

### **2.2 Impact of employer brand on organizational attractiveness**

In terms of attracting talent, differences in employer brands are the core of talent battles (Chambers *et al.*, 1998). Jobseekers try to collect relevant information about employers during the job search process. However, the labor market is highly asymmetrical in information. Jobseekers, who are receivers of

enterprise- or vacancy-related information, rely heavily on the information cues released in recruitment advertisements by employers (senders). This limited signal (recruitment information) forms the basis for applicants to gauge the working conditions and organizational characteristics of the role (Jones *et al.*, 2014; Spence, 1973), which include enterprise value, belief, and evaluation of organizational attractiveness (Baum *et al.*, 2016; Connelly *et al.*, 2010). Employer brands are relatively more distinctive in social enterprises. The services or products they provide are purchased by consumers who agree with their enterprise philosophy to indirectly meet their own expectation of returning to society. Thus, strategic corporate public welfare behaviors positively affect the corporate image (Ko, 2010).

According to signal theory (Spence, 1973), jobseekers are more likely to be attracted to organizations that provide clear cues in recruitment information about their management philosophy, strategic goals, working conditions, and overall working environment. The increased organizational attractiveness can lead to a larger pool of high-quality candidates submitting resumes, lower recruitment costs, and a greater likelihood of top candidates accepting job offers (Herman and Gioia, 2000; Lievens and Harris, 2003). As a result, employer brands have a positive impact on organizational attractiveness, also known as job-seeking attractiveness (Rynes, 1991). Thus, the first hypothesis is proposed.

*Hypothesis 1:* Employer brand is positively related to organizational attractiveness.

### **2.3 Moderating effect of information cues**

Different recruit information cues affect the strength of the relationship between employer brands and organizational attractiveness. An enterprise's social performance often attracts more jobseekers with better conditions (Fombrun and Shanley, 1990; Greening and Turban, 2000; Turban and Greening, 1996). Therefore, when recruitment information emphasizes business philosophy and value, jobseekers provide one of the criteria for judging whether an employer's brand is attractive to the organization. According to a previous study, although

some stakeholders (e.g., jobseekers) have no actual contact experience with an enterprise, they have a predetermined impression of it because of the limited signals they receive (Chun, 2005). Using this study as an example, social issues such as “elderly care” and “leftover food delivery” are emphasized in manipulated recruitment information scripts.

However, jobseekers mainly consider the most relevant recruitment information, such as industry development prospects, salary, and career developmental potential. Barber (1998) indicated that most jobseekers prioritize information cues related to future development. In addition to salary and benefits, job development, including career and industry prospects, is the most critical factor, prompting jobseekers to make decisions at different staffing stages, such as whether to submit a resume or accept an offer. Therefore, compared to recruitment information cues focusing on corporate philosophy and value, this study argues that jobseekers with limited job signals are more interested in recruitment information that is more relevant to their development (Spence, 1973), such as industry prospects and personal career growth, which has a different impact on the overall job search process. Specifically, when the recruitment information cue is more relevant to the individual, it substantially moderates the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness. Based on this discussion, this study proposes the second hypothesis.

*Hypothesis 2:* Information cues moderate the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness. The relationship is stronger in reference to individual-relevant cues (such as industry prospects and career development) than corporate-relevant philosophy cues.

## **2.4 Moderating effect of the information presentation style**

Vision is an essential element of print advertising (Mirzoeff, 1998). Consumers pay as much as 70% of their attention to pictures in print advertisements, far more than words, and have a longer memory of them (Rosbergen *et al.*, 1995). Moriarty (1991) found that pictures are far more attractive than text in terms of the visual performance of print advertisements, and

the importance of visual performance in advertising is key. Whether an advertisement can effectively convey information depends on its visual performance. Edell and Staelin (1983) proved that among the information cues of advertisements, pictures are more likely than text to attract readers' attention, trigger positive attitudes, and complete information processing. While there are various styles of advertisements on the market and many ways of presentation, for social enterprises, the kind of presentation styles that can effectively attract talent is worth investigating. This study explores two styles of presenting recruitment information: plain text, and text with pictures.

Pictures are easier for information-receivers to remember than plain text (Ashcraft, 1993; Messaris, 1997). Studies have shown that individuals' ability to remember and recall pictures is better than that of text, which not only makes the individual more impressive but also promotes a longer-lasting learning effect (Childers and Houston, 1984; Edell and Staelin, 1983). Pictures can provide individuals with more diverse sensory stimuli than text cues and allow them to perform deeper cognitive processing. In addition to a higher level of information transmission ability, pictures can generate positive brand preferences and attitudes (Edell and Staelin, 1983; Taylor, 2002). The information presented in recruitment advertisements becomes the basis for jobseekers to assess whether the employer brand is amenable to organizational attractiveness with limited signals (Spence, 1973); therefore, when some information cues are visualized as pictures in addition to text, compared to plain text, they can have a strong moderating effect. Accordingly, the third hypothesis is proposed.

*Hypothesis 3:* Information presentation styles moderate the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness, and the relationship is stronger for text with pictures than plain text.

## **2.5 Moderating effect of information aesthetics**

The style of enterprise websites, such as their aesthetics and user-friendliness, has proven to be an essential factor that affects the attractiveness of organizations (Cober *et al.*, 2001; Cober *et al.*, 2003). When information cues on the enterprise



website are passed on to jobseekers, they positively impact organizational attractiveness. Research has confirmed the importance of website content and style in online recruitment, including the aesthetics of presenting recruitment information. For example, Cober *et al.* (2004) found that the aesthetics of a website, salary information, organizational culture, and future planning and development are linked to organizational attractiveness. Moreover, not only should the information provided meet jobseekers' needs but the aesthetics of the overall design are also vital (Braddy *et al.*, 2005; Dineen *et al.*, 2007). The aesthetics of recruiting information stoke jobseekers' positive feelings and make them prefer the enterprise (Mattila and Enz, 2002; Pugh, 2001). According to signal theory (Spence, 1973), the more limited the information, the more it can arouse jobseekers' attention, memory, and even favors; it also results in a stronger relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness. Accordingly, this final hypothesis is proposed.

*Hypothesis 4:* Information aesthetics moderate the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness, and the relationship is stronger with aesthetics than without aesthetics.

### **3 Methodology**

#### **3.1 Participants and procedure**

The study explores how the presentation content and methods of recruitment information by social enterprises strengthen the relationship between their brands and organizational attractiveness. It developed a three-factor experimental design to test the hypotheses to explore the influence of different content and methods for presenting recruitment information: three information cues (individual-relevant cues, corporate-relevant philosophy cues, and control group), × two information presentation styles (text with pictures and plain text), and × two information aesthetics (yes and no), consisting of 12 scenarios in total. The experimental scenarios used in this study are listed in Table 1. The experimental

**Table 1**  
**12 experimental scenarios in the study**

Information Cues	Aesthetics Styles	Yes (A)	No (N)
Corporate Cues (C)	Text (T) With Pics (P)	CTA CPA	CTN CPN
Control Group (G)	Text (T) With Pics (P)	GTA GPA	GTN GPN
Individual Cues (I)	Text (T) With Pics (P)	ITA IPA	ITN IPN

script was presented in the form of recruitment advertisements. To reduce the impact of job vacancies on the participants' professional backgrounds, virtual vacancies were designed for an online marketing specialist, a project administrator, and an IT technician to cover a diverse range of openings attractive to young jobseekers.

The invited respondents were mostly young jobseekers because the concept and brand image of social enterprises are relatively more popular among younger groups and the recruitment vacancies used in the experimental script are entry-level. Therefore, the participants were either recent graduates with a bachelor's degree and looking for employment or were current jobholders seeking a job change. In addition, a subgroup of participants were potential future applicants who were either seniors (in their final year) in an undergraduate degree program or in the second year of a graduate program.

The research procedure consisted of four steps. First, this study revised 12 experimental scenarios according to the results of three pretests and then, explained the purpose and procedure of the experiment to the participants. The consenting participants were randomly assigned to one of the 12 designed scenarios and instructed to watch the assigned recruitment advertisement carefully. After reading the relevant information, the participants completed a web-based

questionnaire.

### **3.2 Experimental scenarios and pretest**

This study adopted rigorous verification standards before the formal implementation of the experiment. The participants of each pre-test were samples from different groups of undergraduate students (first-year students to juniors). Three pretests were conducted to ensure the formal experiment had successfully manipulated the information cues, presentation styles, and aesthetics.

The first pre-test involved 67 invited participants (mean age, 19.8, 46 males). Among them, the two groups for information cues and aesthetics were found to have significant differences between groups by ANOVA test ( $F [2,66] = 31.79, p < .01$ ;  $F [2,66] = 16.78, p < .01$ ), but information presentation styles did not show any differences between groups, indicating that the manipulation of the information presentation style was not successful. As a result, the scenario script was revised. After internal inspection, discussion, and interviews with several participants, the amount of textual information in recruitment advertisements was found to be too high, which confused the participants and caused answering fatigue. Therefore, some words were deleted, leaving out only the positions, salaries, and key points of information attributes. The font size for keywords was increased to strengthen participants' attention to these essential information cues.

The second pre-test had 50 participants (mean age, 20.0, 19 males). Although there were differences in the three information cues between groups ( $F [2,49] = 10.283$ ;  $F [2,49] = 9.547$ ), when comparing the means of the two manipulation cues with those of the control group, there was no significant difference (individual-relevant cues vs. control group; corporate-relevant philosophy cues vs. control group) in post-test. Therefore, the information cues needed to be adjusted again. Additionally, information styles and aesthetics were successfully manipulated. Based on these manipulation results, this study made further corrections to the information cues. For example, for situation "5. Corporate philosophy cues\*plain text\*Not Aesthetics," the corporate philosophy cue information is: "Love Spread aims to promote social care and solve social

problems. Through commercial operations, it fulfills the purpose of social welfare. Love Spread not only continues the purpose of the Good Shepherd Association, but also hopes to exert social influence and provide job vacancies for the disadvantaged. Ethnic groups, increasing their employment opportunities, can serve the elderly and weak groups and make a profit, maintain the operation of their enterprises and associations, and if there is any surplus, it can be used for public welfare purposes.” Similarly, for situation “9. Individual-relevant cues\*plain text\*Not Aesthetics,” the relevant information is: “Good industrial development, high growth potential, good career development potential.” In addition to highlighting the industry’s prospects, keywords were strengthened in all recruitment information. The workplace reference in all recruitment information was removed to avoid participants being more concerned about the workplace, as this was not the focus of this study.

In the last pre-test, the study used data from 52 participants (mean age, 21.0, 20 males) to check the manipulations. The results of the pre-test showed that the manipulation was successful. Tables 2 and 3 present the mean scores and related test results among the groups and, the final experimental recruitment scenarios.

**Table 2**  
**Mean scores and related test results among groups (3rd pretest)**

Moderators	Scenarios	Mean	SD	F value/T value
Corporate philosophy cues	Control group	2.67	1.45	
	Corporate philosophy cues	4.30	0.86	10.53**
	Individual-relevant cues	3.20	1.46	
Individual-relevant cues	Control group	2.20	1.15	
	Corporate philosophy cues	3.10	1.25	19.38**
	Individual-relevant cues	4.53	0.72	
Plain text	Plain text	4.33	0.88	
	Text with pictures	2.76	1.26	5.24**
Text with pictures	Plain text	2.26	1.32	
	Text with pictures	4.48	0.82	-7.34**
Information aesthetics	Aesthetics	3.50	1.11	
	Not aesthetics	1.91	1.48	4.44**

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 3**  
**Experimental recruitment scenarios**

<p>1. Control group * plain text * Not Aesthetics</p>	<p>2. Control group * text with pictures * Not Aesthetics</p>
	
<p>3. Control group * plain text * Aesthetics</p>	<p>4. Control group * text with pictures * Aesthetics</p>
	
<p>5. Corporate philosophy cues * plain text * Not Aesthetics</p>	<p>6. Corporate philosophy cues * text with pictures * Not Aesthetics</p>
<p>Aesthetics</p> 	<p>Aesthetics</p> 
<p>7. Corporate philosophy cues * plain text * Aesthetics</p>	<p>8. Corporate philosophy cues * text with pictures * Aesthetics</p>
	<p>Aesthetics</p> 
<p>9. Individual-relevant cues * plain text * Not Aesthetics</p>	<p>10. Individual-relevant cues * text with pictures * Not Aesthetics</p>
	<p>Aesthetics</p>

	
<p>11. Individual-relevant cues * plain text * Aesthetics</p>	<p>12. Individual-relevant cues *text with pictures * Aesthetics</p>
	

### 3.3 Measures

Table 4 summarizes the measurements used in this study. Employer brand was the independent variable, organizational attractiveness was the dependent variable, and positive and negative moods were used as control variables (because of the manipulation of aesthetics in study stimuli). The table also presents the number of measurement items, measurement sources, and reliability values (Cronbach’s  $\alpha$ ).

### 3.4 Final sample for hypotheses testing

A total of 182 usable questionnaires were returned, including 18 participants who did not want to switch jobs and 7 who did not want to apply for these job vacancies. The final sample comprised 157 participants. The sample’s mean age was 24.6 years; 43 were male (27.39% of the sample), 83.4% students, and 4.5% unemployed. Table 5 summarizes the gender distribution in each group. To ensure that the final samples were manipulated correctly in different experimental scenarios, the manipulation check results of “Information Cues,” “Information Presentation Styles,” and “Information Aesthetics” are presented in Table 6, all of

**Table 4**  
**Sources and reliability of measures for independent variables, dependent variables, and control variables**

	Variables	Source	Years	Items	Cronbach's $\alpha$
<b>Independent variable</b>	Employer brand	Berthon,	2005	25	.87 \ .84 \ .90 \ .88 \ .82
		Ewing, and Hah			
<b>Dependent variable</b>	Organizational attractiveness	Highhouse,	2003	5	.88
		Lievens, and Sinar			
<b>Control variables</b>	Positive mood	Bono,	2007	3	.87
	Negative mood	Foldes, Vinson, and Muros		3	.85

**Table 5**  
**Distributions of gender in 12 Experimental Scenarios**

Group													Total
	CTA	CTN	CPA	CPN	GTA	GTN	GPA	GPN	ITA	ITN	IPA	IPN	
Gender													
Male	2	2	2	5	6	8	3	2	2	6	3	3	43
Female	11	10	11	9	7	6	9	11	11	9	9	10	144
Group Size	13	12	13	14	13	14	12	13	13	15	12	13	157

which were successfully manipulated.

## 4 Results

Table 7 presents the variables' means, standard deviations, and correlations. The results reveal that employer brand and organizational attractiveness are

**Table 6**  
**Mean scores and related test results among groups (final sample)**

Moderators	Scenarios	Mean	SD	F value/ T value
	Control group	2.79	1.419	
Corporate philosophy cues	Corporate philosophy cues	4.88	1.003	39.398**
	Individual-relevant cues	3.32	1.298	
Individual-relevant cues	Control group	2.75	1.399	
	Corporate philosophy cues	3.37	1.387	34.783**
	Individual-relevant cues	4.75	0.959	
Plain text	Plain text	5.20	0.877	12.759**
	Text with pictures	2.91	1.320	
Text with pictures	Plain text	2.40	1.346	-11.683**
	Text with pictures	4.64	1.038	
Information aesthetics	Aesthetics	1.79	1.252	-10.112**
	Not aesthetics	3.86	1.303	

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 7**  
**Means, standard deviations and correlation coefficients of variables**

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1.Positive mood	.12	.82						
2.Negative mood	.52	.69	.42**					
3.Employer brand	.39	.86	.66**	.43**				
4.Information cues	.01	.82	.04	.067	.27**			
5.Information presentation styles	.49	.52	.30**	.13	.32**	.01		
6.Information aesthetics	.48	.50	.43**	.30**	.42**	.01	.01	
7.Organizational attractiveness	2.64	.96	.59**	.38**	.76**	.13	.44**	.36**

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$



positively correlated ( $r=.76, p<.01$ ), and the two control variables (positive and negative moods) are positively related to employer brands ( $r=.66, p<.01$ ;  $r=.43, p<.01$ ) and organizational attractiveness ( $r=.59, p<.01$ ;  $r=.38, p<.01$ ); thus, this study controls for their impact on hypotheses testing.

Apart from being seen as two ends of the same continuum, positive and negative moods are positively correlated ( $r=.42, p<.01$ ) in this study. Positive and negative moods are not necessarily mutually exclusive and can co-occur in individuals. For example, an individual may feel happy about one aspect of their job but simultaneously feel sad or anxious about another aspect. For example, a study by Diener and Emmons (1985) found a positive correlation between positive affect and negative affect among a sample of college students.

A 3 (information cues)  $\times$  2 (information presentation styles)  $\times$  2 (information aesthetics) ANCOVA was conducted with gender, positive mood, and negative mood controlled. The results indicate a positive relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness,  $F [1,157] = 39.47, p < .01$ , as shown in Table 8. These results support Hypothesis 1.

This study used three types of information cues, two information presentation styles, and information aesthetics as moderators to test their effects. It explicitly explored the conditions in the relationship between employer brands and organizational attractiveness. When information cues are used as moderators, as

**Table 8**  
**ANCOVA Results for Hypothesis 1 Test**

Hypothesized effect	df	F
Variables		
Gender	1	.66*
Positive mood	1	17.10**
Negative mood	1	1.96
Main effect		
Employer brand	1	39.47**

\* $p<.05$ ; \*\* $p<.01$

shown in Table 9, the interaction term between employer brand and information cues has no significant effect on applicants' organizational attractiveness,  $F [2,157] = .118, p > .05$ . Therefore, H2 is not supported.

For Hypothesis 3, as shown in Table 10, the employer brand  $\times$  information presentation style was significant,  $F [1,157] = 4.15, p < .05$ . To examine the interaction pattern, this study followed Cohen and Cohen's (1983) suggestion and plotted Figure 1, which indicates that the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness is strengthened when the recruitment information includes text and pictures. Thus, the results support Hypothesis 3.

When this study uses information aesthetics as a moderator, as shown in Table 11, the interaction term between employer brand and information aesthetics has no significant effect on applicants' organizational attractiveness,  $F [1,157] = 1.151, p > .05$ . Therefore, Hypothesis 4 is not supported.

## **5 Discussion**

### **5.1 Conclusion**

This study explores the role of employer brand in attracting jobseekers, using social enterprise "Spread the Love" as the research context, and investigates the moderating effects of information cues, presentation styles, and aesthetics on the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness. To this end, 12 experimental scenarios were designed, and data from 157 young potential job applicants were collected using a between-subjects design after three pre-tests to ensure the correct identification of cues.

From the perspective of signal theory (Spence, 1973), the study argues that due to information asymmetry between recruiters and jobseekers, limited information is available for jobseekers to make inferences about the enterprise or the vacancy. It confirms the positive impact of the employer brand on the attractiveness of jobseekers to the enterprise, which is consistent with previous research. A good employer brand can attract more and superior talents, reduce recruitment costs, and enhance jobseekers' willingness to accept job offers

**Table 9**  
**ANCOVA Results for Hypothesis 2 Test**

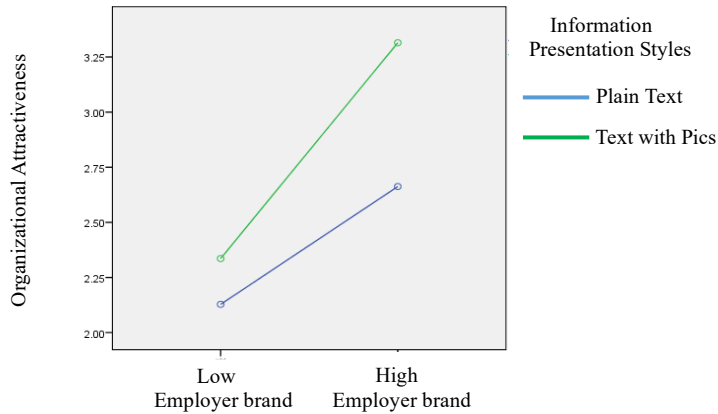
Hypothesized effect	df	F
Variables		
Gender	1	.492
Positive mood	1	15.562**
Negative mood	1	1.540
Main effect		
Employer brand	1	35.858**
Information cues	2	.282
Moderating effect		
Employer brand × Information cues	2	.118

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 10**  
**ANCOVA Results for Hypothesis 3 Test**

Hypothesized effect	df	F
Variables		
Gender	1	.11
Positive mood	1	12.92**
Negative mood	1	3.23
Main effect		
Employer brand	1	33.79**
Information presentation styles	1	15.03**
Moderating effect		
Employer brand × Information presentation styles	1	4.15*

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$



**Figure 1**  
**The moderating effect of information presentation styles**

**Table 11**  
**ANCOVA Results for Hypothesis 4 Test**

Hypothesized effect	df	F
<b>Variables</b>		
Gender	1	.66
Positive mood	1	13.90**
Negative mood	1	1.93
<b>Main effect</b>		
Employer brand	1	37.55**
Information cues	1	1.18
<b>Moderating effect</b>		
Employer brand × Information cues	1	1.51

\* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$

(Herman and Gioia, 2000; Lievens and Harris, 2003). The study employs organizational identification theory to explore the underlying mechanism. Individuals have self-enhancement needs and will select social cues

that conform to the criteria for inclusion in their self-concept and thereby positively evaluate themselves (Dutton *et al.*, 1994). Thus, a good employer brand can positively define jobseekers, increasing their attractiveness to the employer.

The study also examines the moderating effect of information presentation styles on the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness. Research has shown that individuals' attention, memory, information processing, and preference for pictures are higher than those for plain text, and the former can result in more positive attitudes (Edell and Staelin, 1983; Rosbergen *et al.*, 1995; Taylor, 2002). Therefore, the study recommends the use of pictures in recruitment advertisements to reinforce the positive impact of employer brand on organizational attractiveness, and even videos as they can generate a higher positive attitude and have a stronger brand effect than matching text with pictures (Spalding *et al.*, 2009; Vaughan, 1993; Whittle and Xue, 2018). To capture jobseekers' attention and trigger their follow-up interest and desire to join the enterprise, the study adopts a single-page recruitment advertisement and an online questionnaire targeting young jobseekers, who are part of the digital native generation. Furthermore, it recommends utilizing social media platforms, including creating short videos or stories, to interact with potential talents and enhance brand familiarity and identity.

## **5.2 Empirical implications**

The study confirms the importance of employer brand and its positive impact on organizational attractiveness for jobseekers, which provides practical implications for enterprise recruiters to determine the future direction of implementing the staffing process. It recommends the use of pictures and videos in recruitment advertisements to reinforce the positive impact of employer brand on organizational attractiveness, and suggests utilizing social media platforms for a greater degree of brand familiarity and identity.

The results suggest that jobseekers emphasize corporate public welfare concepts or future industry developments when evaluating the suitability of an organization. This is consistent with previous research that has identified job

attributes, such as enterprise philosophy and opportunities for promotion, as key factors influencing potential jobseekers. However, brand recognition may be low for start-up social enterprises, which could impact their ability to attract young talent. Additionally, the long-term care industry may not be the first choice for young jobseekers, resulting in a relatively low influence on organizational attractiveness.

### **5.3 Limitations and future research**

The study has some limitations. A small sample size in each cell of a 3x2x2 between-subjects design can limit the study's statistical power, increase the risk of Type I errors, limit generalizability, and make it difficult to interpret the results, all of which can compromise the reliability and validity of the findings (Cohen, 1992; Field, 2013). Therefore, it is crucial to ensure an adequate sample size in each cell to obtain accurate and meaningful results. Future research may increase the overall sample size or increase the sample size in each cell to improve the quality and validity of research findings.

Furthermore, future research could explore ways to match potential jobseekers with relevant professional backgrounds or focus on social issues that the general public is more concerned about and willing to engage with, such as environmental protection. However, this study's design may be applicable to incumbents with more work experience and seniority, or even older middle-aged and senior talents in different life stages, resulting in different recruitment information preferences.

The overall aesthetics of recruitment information can impact the organization's attractiveness to jobseekers, regardless of whether the information is presented in an advertisement or on its official website. Advanced research could be conducted on the aesthetics of recruitment information despite the difficulty in confirming the moderating effect of information aesthetics. Additionally, aesthetics should be used in conjunction with web design, and more attention should be paid to the overall presentation of recruitment information, including stories or short videos, which could become a popular way to present recruitment

information in the future.

Although the study adopted an experimental design to simulate recruitment advertisements, differences from real-world situations exist. For instance, only three types of job vacancies were used, and cues such as salary and work location were omitted to avoid interference with other information. Additionally, to effectively manipulate the scenarios, some recruitment information was presented in more detail. Therefore, researchers should consider presenting recruitment advertisements with more detailed information, including videos and in multiple pages.

In summary, the study explored the impact of different information content and presentation on the relationship between employer brand and organizational attractiveness. The findings suggest that general enterprises, social enterprises, or startups emphasizing corporate social responsibility can operate their employer brand and build organizational attractiveness by utilizing social media channels. These findings have implications for organizations seeking to attract young talent aligned with their business philosophy.

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