

Research Article

# How Does Corporate Image Attract Job Seekers – An Empirical Study of Moderated Mediation of Employer Image in Macao Food & Beverage Industry

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## Abstract

While organization image and employer image are two constructs highlighted in the employer attractiveness studies, what relationship between two images is yet unknown. This paper aims to investigate the relationship between two constructs, and further the employer image research from Younis and Hammad in 2019. The empirical study utilized self-administered questionnaires to collect primary data of employees in Macao Food and Beverage industry. From November 2022 to April 2023, 303 valid samples were recruited and organized. Using SPSS and Amos statistical software, the study found that both corporate image and employer image are predictors of organization attraction, and employer image plays as a partial mediator of employer attraction model. Simultaneously, organization attraction predicted job seekers' application intentions and person-organization fit has been significantly affecting the process of mediating and moderating process of hypothetical conceptual model. Findings suggested that an attractive employer brand could help improve the efficiency and effectiveness of recruitment. This study provided marginal contribution to the employer brand research and offers practical implications for the Macao Food and Beverage Industry. Theoretically, the study found effects of image transmitting in predicting organization attraction between corporate image and employer image and person-organization fit role during the transmission. In the practice, managers should consider different images when building organization attractiveness and highlight communication between organization image messages (corporate image and employer image) and recipients (job seekers), and to maximize effects of recruitment. More studies should be conducted to understand how different images are transferred.

## Keywords

Employer Brand, Employer Attractiveness, Person-Organization Fit, Macao Food and Beverage Industry

## 1. Introduction

During the COVID-19 epidemic, the Macao government had imposed travel and business restrictions that led to the closure or limited operation of restaurants to only take-outs [13], despite the gradual lifting of restrictions. However, it is

suggested that resuming sit-down operations and lifting travel restrictions do not necessarily bring tourists and clients back to restaurants shortly, and this process takes time for the business recovery from the recession [30, 31]. In other words,

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business owners suffered economic losses due to these measures (government policies implemented and eased) because they had to cover business operation and labor costs but were not immediately rewarded by the market. Thus, when China's central government reopened international travel at the end of 2022 [64], the Macao government and business owners should quickly receive a large quantity of tourists and resume the business to compensate the economic loss during the COVID-19.

Considering the real situation in Macao, the food and beverage (F&B) industry plays a central role in Macao's economy because it contributes to a large part of the employment and uses a lot of the labor force [47]. In Macao's labor market, the war of talents in the F&B industry determines the competitiveness of restaurants, such as service and product qualities. In recent years, the social and economic environments of Macao have been complex and changeable, and population aging is evident. The population dividends brought to Macao are gradually disappearing, affecting the flow and accumulation of human resources in Macao business [13]. These problems continue to challenge human resource managers in planning and hiring qualified employees to supplement business needs, along with considering the restricted migrant workers' employment policies. Therefore, in the face of fierce talent competition, restaurant management should learn how to attract good employees (such as chefs and qualified service people).

The present research project aims to identify the relationships among the employer image, corporate image, person-organization fit, employer attraction and job vacancy application intention in the Macao Food and Beverage business context. The research questions of the present study including: whether corporate image and employer image can improve employer attractiveness? And whether employer attractiveness can promote job seekers to apply for the job post? Whether the employer image can transmit the effect of corporate image to organization attraction? Does person-organization fit play the moderated role in these various relationships? To answer these questions, the present study has built the inferred theoretical framework and has used the empirical data to test hypotheses.

In terms of the significance of the topic, to the best knowledge of the researcher, few articles discussed the employer brand application and research in Macao F&B context. Extant studies on Macao catering industries are focused on human resource problems, such as labor turnover [35], a shortage of local talents [43], and strict employment policies and regulations [50]. It is contended that using the employer brand theory to address the current employment problem is a good cut [22]. Therefore, understanding employer brand theory in Macao will lead to more identified concept as an attractive employer brand can help restaurants to improve their recruitment efficiency and reduce the cost of recruitment [44]. Thus, this empirical research project aims to enhance the understanding of employer brand theory application in the

Macao business context. From a practical standpoint, it can assist managers in the F&B industry in improving recruitment policies and practices from an employer brand perspective.

The research project seeks to find effective solutions to improve the attractiveness of restaurants from a talent recruitment perspective. As Macao strives to become an international tourism center, the importance of good service quality and business awareness among employees cannot be overstated. Other tourism-related industries, such as hotels and exhibition centers, also require talented employees to maintain competitiveness. Therefore, the findings from the present study can contribute to talents hiring and planning in Macao other industries as well.

## 2. Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

### 2.1. Employer Brand Definition

Employer brand study is regarded as the intersection of branding theory in the marketing and human resource management, and it is deemed that traditional branding theory acts encompasses identical principles that the employee-employer relationship follows [3, 60]. Employer brand is a familiar construct for many job seekers and employees because publications, such as *World's Best Employer of Forbes*, have gained wider attention from employees and job seekers. As an important tool, employer brand has been deemed as psychological, functional, and economic benefits to employees [3]; therefore, it serves to attract job seekers and retain employees [2] and indirectly improving organization performance [32, 58].

### 2.2. Image, Corporate Image, and Employer Image

The image as a significant part of a brand describes the holistic impression an organization makes on people's minds [22-24, 46]. In other words, the image represents how people construct their perception of organizations in their minds. Past studies have been conducted to understand the image. It is argued that an image is comprised of a cognitive type, an affective type, and overall image type [33]. The cognitive image refers to individual beliefs and knowledge toward objects, while the affective image refers to individual feelings and moods toward objects. An overall image is a holistic perception of objects from individuals [33].

In line with Younis and Hammad [63], this research project considers the corporate image is the perception holders from different groups linked to the corporate, which incorporates all the information such as perceptions, inferences, and beliefs [48]. This definition aligns with the second stream of corporate image definitions in marketing research because it highlights the corporate image as seen by the public. Again, this

definition focuses on a general impression and a representation of a firm (or an organization), which is consistent with the previous assumption of a holistic image definition.

### 2.3. Image and Employer Attractiveness

In terms of recruitment studies, employer attractiveness (EA), organization attraction (OA), and organization attractiveness are frequently interchangeable words. For instance, in an empirical study, Backhaus and his coworkers used organization attraction and employer attractiveness interchangeably and did not mention the differences of these terms [5-6]. From a definition perspective, organization attractiveness generally depicts to what extent a job seeker favors a place to work [29, 54]. In comparison, “the projected benefits that a prospective employee can see in working for a specific employer” [7]. This is the definition of employer attractiveness. The organization attractiveness and the employer attractiveness are very similar constructs delineating an excellent place to work among job seekers. In this research project, employer attractiveness refers to an excellent workplace (employer) for job seekers to work and the present work project does not differentiate two constructs used in studies.

Organization management strives to build a favorable image to demonstrate the organization’s ability in a product, services, and other facets. Considering the external audience, employer branding management is an integral part of the corporate brand (image) strategy that attracts talents. Organization as an employer has been deemed a major determinant of early organization attraction [59]. Therefore, firms’ operational practices should work hard to shape organization attraction via its external marketing strategies [1, 52].

Younis and Hammad [63] found a significant and positive influence of corporate image on organization attraction ( $\beta = 0.276, p < 0.05$ ). Based on extant research, in the present empirical study, it is assumed that a good corporate image can boost the attraction of a restaurant toward potential employees in the job market of Macao restaurant recruiting organizations. In other words, if a restaurant or catering group has a good corporate image in the job market, it will gain popularity among prospective employees. Based on organization attraction theory [1, 52, 59], this research project proposes Hypothesis 1.

Hypothesis 1 (H1): corporate image has positively impacted employer attractiveness.

Younis and Hammad [63] tested the correlations between employer and corporate image and found both variables predict employer attractiveness whereas a positive relationship between corporate image and employer image has been confirmed as well. Significant relation has existed between employer image and employer attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.186, p < 0.05$ ) and existed between corporate image and employer image ( $\beta = 0.615, p < 0.05$ ). Three sorts of images have interacted while corporate and product brands are closely related in marketing activities. In a broader multidimensional of construct organ-

ization image or corporate image, organization image consists of at least three images other than employer image, including the organization’s financial image, corporate social performance image, and organization’s product and/or service image [44]. The corporate image has greatly explained the employer brand value [25, 42]. Based on previous studies and theory, we assume that:

Hypothesis 2 (H2): corporate image has positively impacted employer image.

In addition, previous studies found that corporate image has contributed to organization attraction in the recruitment context [33-34, 37, 39, 53, 63]. Because corporate image has been the first impression of the organization in terms of signalling theory [19], thus we assume that H3.

Hypothesis 3 (H3): employer image has positively impacted employer attractiveness.

### 2.4. Job Application Intention and Transmitting the Image in Predicting Employer Attractiveness

Extant research has identified the correlation between employer (organization) attractiveness and applicant intention. Job openings attract job seekers, while their final choices toward employers are derived from three main types of intentions: the apply to a job vacancy intention, accept a job intention, and pursue a job intention [11]. Intention to pursue a job and intention to accept a job is subject to the hiring process. Intention to pursue a job or job pursuit intention (JPI) simply means job seekers’ efforts to pursue a job or remain in the applicant pool [16]. The intention to apply for a job vacancy (IAJV) is critical for understanding the applicant job choice (a strong predictor of actual applications to job vacancies) [29].

Hypothesis 4 (H4): employer attractiveness has positively impacted IAJV.

Job seekers’ perception of an organization is built on both complex and simple association and brand awareness [19]. From building corporate image perspective, the organization tries to send positive corporate information, such as good quality of products/services, toward wide stakeholders, such as suppliers, governmental agencies, customers, and potential job seekers, to gain positive associations from stakeholders. Therefore, receivers stored these information nodes in their brains when they recall experience toward organization. Similarly, as an employer, the firm sends employment information, such as salaries and CSR, to a particular group of stakeholders (job seekers or potential employees). Consequently, job seekers stored these information nodes in their brains as well. As a result, when job seekers consider a corporate as an employer, they will combine the information of the employer (EI: salary and benefits) with the information of the organization (CI: good quality of products/services). Therefore, this research project assumes that the corporate image should be considered as the part of employer image

when job seekers start to appraise employer attractiveness. So, this project proposes Hypothesis 5.

Hypothesis 5 (H5): EI mediates the relationship between CI and EA.

## 2.5. Person-Organization Fit Predicting Employer Attractiveness

Social identity theory asserted that individuals define their identities based on the surrounding environment they live in and similarities with people they get along with [61]. Therefore, talents appreciate those firms with high consistence ratings because they will match this organization with their own identity. For instance, prospective employees will believe there is a match between their expectations and employer (P-O fit), then they will be more attracted by organizations.

Regarding image and P-O fit, it is argued that job seekers prefer to be attracted by employers with a favorable image, and the alignment between job seekers' self-image and employer image is an important element in determining organization attraction [59]. The implicitness of this assumption is that job seekers develop their knowledge of an organization concerning their projected degree of fit with organizations. The extent to which applicants believe that organization identity is consistent with their social identity will affect their perception of organizational attributes [15]. For instance, how individual job seekers perceived value (P-O fit) toward organization image (such as financial aspects) and employer image (such as pay characters) are closely related to organisation attractiveness [9]. In other words, job seekers will

assess corporate image and employer image from the employer attractiveness viewpoint considering their personal subjective P-O fit. Based on social identity theory, this research project regards the P-O fit as a moderator variable in the model of predicting organization attractiveness by interacting with various images. Therefore, this research project presents four hypotheses:

Hypothesis 6 (H6): person-organization fit moderates the relationship between CI and EI.

Hypothesis 7 (H7): person-organization fit moderates the relationship between EI and EA.

Hypothesis 8 (H8): person-organization fit moderates the relationship between CI and EA.

Hypothesis 9 (H9): person-organization fit positively moderates the mediation role of EI toward the relationship between CI and EA.

## 2.6. Conceptual Model of the Present Research

Based on the 9 hypotheses proposed, the concept model of this project is constructed in Figure 1. The conceptual model delineates the relationships among variables. In this model, the employer image is the mediator variable that transmits effects from corporate image to employer attractiveness based on signaling theory. Person-organization fit is the moderator variable that interacts with varying relationships based on social identity theory. In addition, this project also predicts the relationship between employer attractiveness and intention to application.

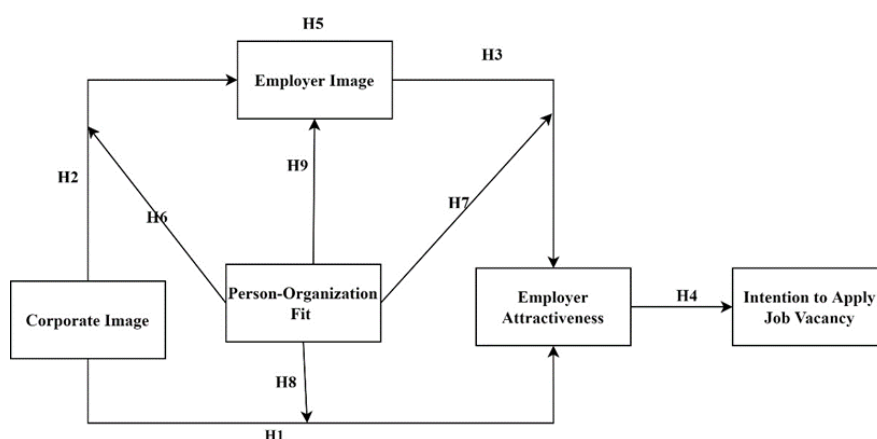


Figure 1. Concept model of hypotheses.

## 3. Methods

### 3.1. Sample

Previous studies regarding employer brands are mainly

using college students, for example, [45, 63], but according to Kissel and Büttgen [39], more empirical research studies should be employed to collect information from experienced employees because veterans are people who have first-hand experience in the job market and important assets toward organization. Given the large population of employees or job seekers in the F&B industry in Macao, it is of a tremendous



difficulty to do a large-scale survey studying the targeted population. Thus, this project uses reflective measurement. In other words, the researcher recruited participants using convenience samples. Convenience sampling simply refers to obtaining samples that are easily available [55]. Besides experienced employees in the Macao F&B industry, a vast majority of interns were recruited to participate in the present research. These people are college degree holders and have limited working experience (normally less than 1 year).

It is important to note that this project directly aims at investigating experienced employees instead of job seekers. Incumbents are passive job seekers in the job market, but once they are attracted by competitors, they will actively seek employment by quitting their current organization. According to Joos [36], active job seekers are those unemployed labor force, which accounts for 10 percent or less of the total work-force in the job market, while passive job seekers are those employees who will not proactively or actively search for new posts, which accounts for 90 percent or above in the job market. Therefore, selecting experienced employees or interns is appropriate as these people are passive job candidates in the job market and important people asset.

### 3.2. Questionnaire Design and Measurement of Variables

The questionnaire is designed with two main parts. The first part comprises demographic information questions and an option for choosing (or providing) an acquainted restaurant. Following the exemplary research from Younis and Hammad [63], Part 1 asked job seekers to choose one employer (a restaurant or a catering group) from a list of reputed restaurants or catering groups in Macao, that participants are familiar with. The second part is comprised of questions using Likert 7-point scale.

The design of the list of Macao catering companies follows a list of membership catering firms provided by the United Association of Food and Beverage Merchants of Macao [57]. The reason why the researcher needs to develop a list of employers is that the employer list can help participants to build simple associations when taking part in this research project. Collins and Kanar [19] pointed out that the simple association has been significant for job seekers in assessing organization attraction. Participants who selected an employer with which he or she has experience or knowledge can recall the employment context, thereby answering questions on basis of this simple association easily.

The questionnaire designed with measurement from existing mature scales. Corporate image (CI) was measured with the 18-item scale adapted from Kissel and Büttgen [39]. For example, “this company offers high-quality products and services”. The Corporate Image scale used a seven-point scale, ranging

from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of this scale reached 0.84, exceeding the threshold, which proved the internal consistency reliability.

Employer attractiveness (EA) was measured with a 9-item scale adapted from Kissel and Büttgen [39] and reused in Kuchеров and Zhiltsova [41]. For instance, “this recruiting organization differentiates itself positively from competitors”. The EI scale used a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value is 0.95 in the study from Kissel and Büttgen [39].

Employer image (EI) was measured with the 8-item scale adapted from Kashive and Khanna [37]. For example, “a job at this firm would provide above-average pay”. The EI scale used a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of this scale is 0.905.

Tanwar and Kumar [56], adapted the scales from [10, 14], and developed a four-items scale. For instance, “my skills and abilities match the skills and abilities this firm search for”. The Cronbach  $\alpha$  value of this scale is 0.866, which was used in measuring P-O fit in the present study. The P-O fit scale used a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree.

Intentions to apply for job vacancy (IAJV) was measured with a 2-item scale from Gomes and Neves [29] and reused in later studies [53, 61]. For instance, “If I were searching for a job, I would apply to this firm”. The P-O fit scale used a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 7 = Strongly agree. The Cronbach's  $\alpha$  value of this scale is 0.92.

## 4. Results

### 4.1. Participants Description

From November 2022 to April 2023, 303 valid samples were recruited and sorted. Via WeChat link, we electronically distributed and collected 346 questionnaires from participants who are currently working for restaurants in Macao F&B industry. We discarded 43 samples because their IP address is not in Macao or their responding time is less than 120 seconds. Therefore, 303 samples are satisfying the statistical analysis of the minimum sample size requirement for structural equation modeling. Among the 303 participants, 96 were male and 207 were female; 30 were local employees and 273 were non-local employees; 259 were employees within one-year working experience and 44 were employees with multiple years working experience; 257 were employees with college or above degree and 46 were employees below college education. As of these samples, it is noted that the majority of participants are interns in Macao F&B industry, so their work experiences are short than one year.

## 4.2. Validity Issues

**Table 1.** CFA Model Fit Indices (N=303).

Measurement Model	CFI	TLI	SRMR	RMSEA
1. Four-factor measurement model	0.923	0.904	0.052	0.056
2. Three-factor measurement model	0.825	0.814	0.089	0.102
3. Three-factor measurement model	0.835	0.825	0.081	0.099
4. Three-factor measurement model	0.841	0.831	0.076	0.084
5. One-factor measurement model	0.664	0.631	0.124	0.138

Notes: Model 2 merges CI and EI, Model 3 merges CI and P-O Fit, Model 4 merges EI and P-O Fit, Model 5 merges all variables (CI, EI, P-O fit, and EA).

The confirmatory factor analysis was conducted using AMOS. The results were presented in the Table 1. The four-factor measurement model has the best fitness compared with other models: CFI = 0.923, TLI = 0.904, SRMR = 0.052, RMSEA = 0.056. All indicators are statistically significant in terms of factor loading. The change of acquisitions does not predict qualified results in the Model 2, Model 3, Model 4, and Model 5. Therefore, the discriminant validity of variables is proved based on statistical computation in the Model 1.

## 4.3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations Among Study Variables

The mean, standard deviation, correlations, and reliability value can be seen from the Table 2. According to Table 2, the positive correlations existed between corporate image and employer attractiveness ( $r = 0.666, p < 0.01$ ); employer image and employer attractiveness ( $r = 0.66, p < 0.01$ ); corporate image and employer image ( $r = 0.604, p < 0.01$ ); and employer attractiveness and P-O fit ( $r = 0.614, p < 0.01$ ). The consistence is reached between expectations and statistic results.

**Table 2.** Mean, Standard Deviation, Reliability, and Correlations among Variables (N=303).

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1 Gender	1.683	0.466									
2 Age	1.337	0.861	-0.114*								
3 Education Attainment	2.974	0.539	-0.091	0.087							
4. Employment Experience	1.353	0.894	-0.083	0.809**	0.009						
5 Employee Type	1.901	0.299	0.202**	-.604**	-.150**	-.678**					
6 Corporate Image	5.083	1.136	-0.109*	0.158**	0.016	0.180**	0.012	(0.979)			
7 Employer Image	4.817	1.158	-0.119*	0.077	-0.052	0.081	0.057	0.604**	(0.951)		
8 Employer Attractiveness	4.941	1.116	-0.079	0.103*	-0.057	0.121*	0.024	0.666**	0.660**	(0.956)	
9 P-O Fit	4.909	1.214	-.134**	0.156**	-0.012	0.189**	-0.019	0.619**	0.719**	0.614**	(0.935)

Notes: N=303. Internal consistency reliability coefficients are reported in parentheses, \* $p < 0.05$ , \*\* $p < 0.01$

## 4.4. Hypotheses Test

### 4.4.1. Mediation Test

Following the approach of Baron and Kenny, the mediation test should be conducted in three steps. In the first step, the independent variable and mediating variable must be associated. In the second step, the independent variable must have an impact on the dependent variable. The third step is to test mediation, which involves regressing the dependent variable on the mediating variable while controlling for the independent variable.

The mediation test of the present research shows the

results of mediator variable employer image. According to Table 3, there is a positive relation between corporate image and employer attractiveness ( $\beta=0.821$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), therefore H1 is supported. In addition, the positive relation also existed when introducing mediator variable employer image ( $\beta=0.359$ ,  $p<0.01$ ), and increases the effect between corporate image and employer attractiveness ( $\beta=0.821$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). This means the employer image plays partial mediator role between corporate image and employer attractiveness. Among this effect, the indirect effect accounts for 43.73%.

**Table 3.** Bootstrap based mediation test results (N=303).

Path	Effect Value	Standardized Error	Boot 95% CI		Effect Ratio
			Lower	Up	
Total Effect: CI-EA	0.821***	0.066	0.691	0.953	
Direct Effect: CI-EA	0.461***	0.062	0.232	0.701	56.15%
Indirect Effect: CI-EI-EA	0.359***	0.068	0.152	0.565	43.73%

Furthermore, the 95% confidence interval for the mediate effect is [0.152, 0.565], which does not contain 0, and the p-value is 0.001. Therefore, the mediate effect of employer image between corporate image and employer attractiveness is significant. The direct path analysis with the 95% confidence interval gets the result [0.232, 0.701], which does not

contain 0, and the p-value is 0.001. The results of the direct impact relationship between corporate image and employer attractiveness reach the significance level. This indicates that the direct effect of corporate image on employer attractiveness is significant. Therefore, H5 is supported.

### 4.4.2. Moderation Test

**Table 4.** Test of the moderating effect of P-O fit.

Equation of regression			Significance of regression coefficient			
Formula	Result variable	Variable of prediction	$\beta$	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	t
F1	EI	Constant	-.868	-1.582	-.154	-2.392**
		Gender	.095	-.024	.213	1.576
		Age	.084	-.016	.183	1.657
		Education Attainment	-.015	-.116	.085	-.298
		Employment Experience	-.013	-.120	.094	-.238
		Employee Type	.305	.045	.565	2.309*
		Corporate Image	.393	.312	.315	10.003***
		P-O Fit	.515	.450	.446	14.575***
		CI $\times$ P-O Fit	.079	.033	.038	3.768***

Equation of regression			Significance of regression coefficient			
Formula	Result variable	Variable of prediction	$\beta$	Boot LLCI	Boot ULCI	t
F2	EA	R <sup>2</sup>	.830			
		F	179.226***			
		Constant	.367	-.359	1.094	.996
		Gender	.014	-.101	.128	.238
		Age	-.011	-.107	.086	-.222
		Education Attainment	-.138	-.235	-.041	-2.800**
		Employment Experience	-.058	-.162	.046	-1.103
		Employee Type	-.029	-.296	.238	-.215
		Corporate Image	.411	.313	.509	8.282***
		Employer Image	.312	.201	.422	5.538***
		P-O Fit	.137	.044	.231	2.896**
		Corporate Image $\times$ P-O Fit	-.028	-.094	.038	-.832
		Employer Image $\times$ P-O Fit	.172	.111	.232	5.577***
		R <sup>2</sup>	.822			
		F	135.215***			

Note: \*p < .05, \*\*p < .01, \*\*\* p < .001

The present study utilizes the SPSS process macro to test the moderated mediator model. In a conceptual model, both mediator variables and moderator variables can occur simultaneously. In the present research, four variables - the independent variable (IV) corporate image, the dependent variable (DV) employer attractiveness, the mediator variable (MeV) employer image, and the moderator variable (MoV) P-O fit - constitute the conceptual model. When the treatment effect of the IV on the DV via the MeV depends on levels of the MoV, this model is named as a moderated mediator model. In other words, this model explains that either the effect of the IV on the MeV, and/or the effect of the MeV on the DV depends on the level of the MoV.

According to Table 4 Formula 1, when introducing the moderator variable P-O fit, CI positively impacts EA ( $\beta=0.393$ ,  $t=10.003$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The result of multiplication (EI\*P-O fit) between EI and P-O fit is positive ( $\beta=0.079$ ,  $t=3.768$ ,  $p<.001$ ), which shows that the interrelationship of CI and P-O fit positively predicts EA. Therefore, P-O fit positively moderates the relationship between corporate image and employer attractiveness in the first half path (please see Table 4). Hence, Hypothesis 6 is statistically supported. According to Table 4 Formula 2, when introducing the moderator variable P-O fit, CI positively impacts EA ( $\beta=.411$ ,  $t=8.282$ ,  $p<.001$ ), and EI positively predicts EA ( $\beta=0.312$ ,  $t=5.538$ ,  $p<.001$ ). The results show that P-O fit can positively moderate the relationship between EI and EA, which

means the second half path of the moderated mediator model is accepted (please see Table 4). Therefore, Hypothesis 7 is statistically supported. The results of multiple between CI and P-O fit are negative ( $\beta=-0.028$ ,  $t=-0.832$ ,  $p>.05$ ). This means that P-O fit cannot moderate the relationship between CI and EA. Therefore, Hypothesis 8 cannot be statistically supported. Combined with the findings, it is noted that P-O fit can moderate the first-half path and second-half path mediator model. Therefore, the model of the moderated mediator can be accepted. Hence, Hypothesis 9 is statistically supported.

Illustrated by Figure 2, left diagram shows the moderating effect of P-O Fit on corporate image and employer image, and right diagram shows the moderating effect of P-O Fit on employer image and employer attractiveness. According to left diagram, for job seekers with low-level P-O fit, CI positively predicts EI (Simple Slope Value = 0.298,  $t=6.877$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). For job seekers with high-level P-O fit, CI positively predicts EI (Simple Slope Value= 0.487,  $t=9.835$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). The results suggest that the higher the level of P-O fit, the stronger the prediction of CI toward EI. According to right diagram, for job seekers with low-level P-O fit, EI does not positively predict EA (Simple Slope Value=0.106,  $t=1.636$ ,  $p>.05$ ). The results indicate that the relationship between CI and EA in the low-level P-O fit group is not statistically significant. By contrast, for job seekers with high-level P-O fit, EI positively predicts EA (Simple Slope Value= 0.507,  $t=7.448$ ,  $p=0.00$ ). This means that the relationship between CI and EA in the



high-level P-O fit group is statistically significant. In other words, when there is a high level of P-O fit, employees' per-

ceived employer image positively predicts the perceived employer attractiveness.

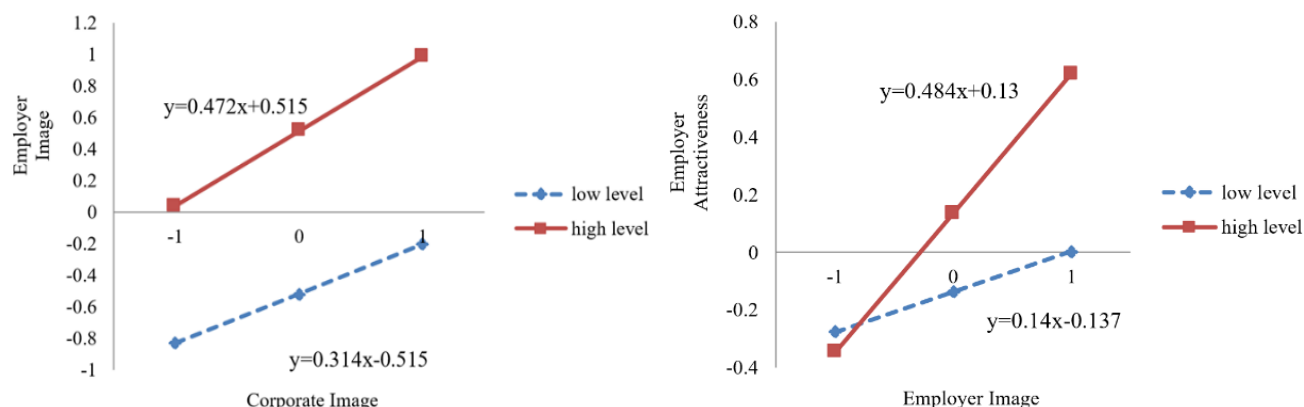


Figure 2. The moderator effect of P-O fit slope.

#### 4.5. Robustness Test

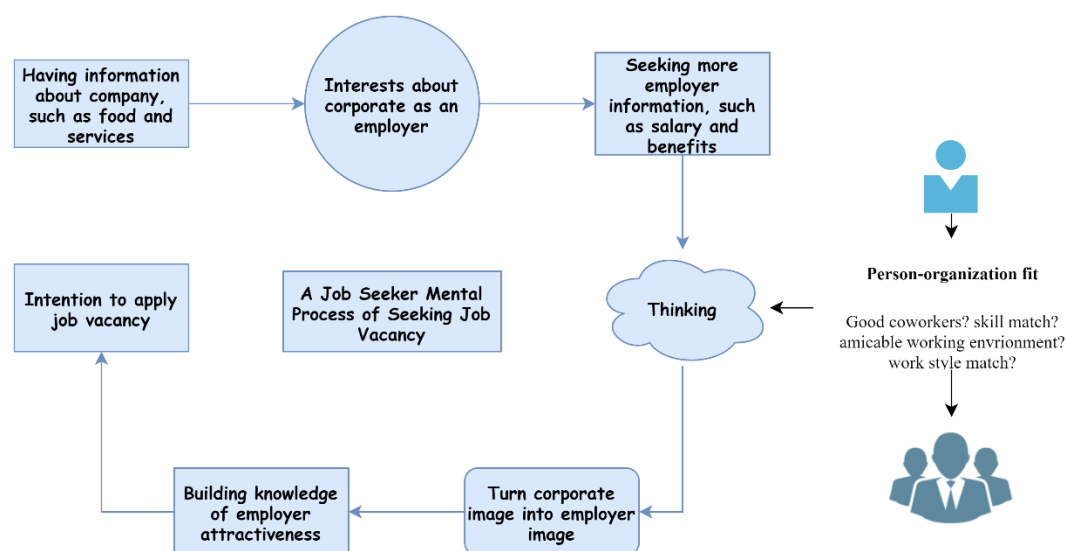
Participants are required to choose a firm with which they are familiar. This process can help participants build simple associations and assist them in completing questions easily. This step is in line with the research design of Younis and Hammad [63]. The simple association can remind participants how attractive a firm is, thereby enabling participants to provide their perceptions toward questions [19]. Based on their selection, most respondents have chosen Wynn Macao as their familiar firm and then answered the questionnaire ( $N=156$ ). Therefore, the possible bias may occur during the uneven sample distribution. To determine the robustness of the model proposed, the present study test sub-group samples which excludes samples from Wynn Macao Limited. Therefore, a 147-sample dataset has been analyzed of moderator and mediator studies ( $N=147$ ). The model fitness test and coefficient path are both appropriate to validate mediator variable using sub-group of samples. The results do not show any significant changes toward previous findings.

### 5. Results Discussion

The present empirical study recalled the relationships tested by Younis and Hammad [63] when assess different image impacts on organization attraction. Younis and Hammad [63] found that both corporate image and employer image are predictors of organization attractiveness. They argued that there are shared identities between corporate image and employer image whereas job seekers can be perceived as potential customers who can be affected by the corporate

image via a plethora of marketing activities. The present study reaffirmed the study of Younis and Hammad [63] and further tested the mediator role of employer image between corporate image and employer attractiveness as well as the moderator role of person-organization fit in predicting organization attraction. Therefore, the hypothetical conceptual model is more inclusive. Furthermore, the intention to apply for job vacancies has been studied as well. The statistical results support eight hypotheses proposed.

As aforementioned, job seekers have both complex and surface brand associations that correlated with information about a company (an employer), while both types of associations are related to the employment decision choice, including intention to apply for the job vacancies or acceptances toward offers [19]. The Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) theory points out that both the central route and peripheral route of information acquiring can affect the information process. While the central route of the information process requires a large demand for resources and time, the peripheral route of the information process does not cost much in searching and scrutinizing information [12]. Based on elaborated likelihood theory, if job seekers attempt to acquire job offers from an organization, they will seek more information (employer image) to know more about a corporate as an employer [17-21]. In this process, ELM and complex association have been used to process information from an employer. For instance, a potential employee will ask interviewers or access Glassdoor, a website for current and former employees to review firms anonymously [28], for more employment information, therefore assisting their decision-making in the hiring process.



**Figure 3.** A job seeker's mental process of seeking a job vacancy.

Based on the empirical study of the present study, the mental process drawn illustrates how a prospective employee constructs their job-applying intention toward a particular recruiting organization in the context of the Macao F&B Industry (Please see Figure 3). However, it is also worth noting that the mental process is not complete because job-seeking is a complex process with multiple factors influencing it [4] this process occurs simultaneously if job seekers do not have information about organizations [17-21].

A job seeker might evaluate the employer image and the employer attractiveness based on their perceived P-O fit. In the present research, P-O fit was measured from four points: skills and abilities match, good coworkers, work style, and personality match. These four items were drawn from the value congruence perspective [10, 14] and are in line with the researcher's propositions. In terms of person-environment theory, people tend to find environments that are congruent with their characteristics, such as personal values. Such environments can be fitting for individuals' values, which marks the reinforcement of individual personal characteristics in a community or a group [27]. P-O fit is then one of the most studied concepts in organizational studies, which focuses on the value congruence between employees and corporations [40], because organizations are places where value congruence exists. For instance, young job seekers might favor a workplace that attracts them with flexibility in working hours and places.

In the present research, P-O fit (value congruence) has been tested as the moderator among relationships of corporate image, employer image, and employer attractiveness. The results support hypotheses and acknowledge the role of P-O fit in processing moderating roles among relationships of CI, EI, and EA. It is understood that when job seekers perceive a high level of value congruence between the perceived employer image and themselves, they are likely to have a high level of effect transmission from CI to EA. In

other words, the perceptions of job seekers towards employer image and employer attractiveness are more positive for the high-level P-O fit group. By contrast, when testing the low-level P-O fit participant group, the moderator role of P-O fit is not statistically significant towards the relationship between CI and EA. In other words, when potential employees perceive a low-level of value congruence, then the fit does not affect their perception of corporate image and employer attractiveness. However, in terms of the relationship between CI and EI, both high-level and low-level participant groups reported a significant positive relationship in the moderation model. In other words, value-congruence has been affecting the perceived level of transmitting between CI and EI. Therefore, based on the findings and analyses, it can be concluded that P-O fit is an important variable that should be considered when assessing perceived organizational attractiveness, as it can interact with other variables and relationships, such as corporate image and employer image.

## 6. Conclusion

### 6.1. Conclusion of the Study

This research project has used the empirical study to test the theoretical relationships among variables. Using theoretical inferences and cross-sectional data, the statistical analyses of the present study have validated that 8 of 9 hypotheses. We found that both Corporate Image and Employer Image can add attraction to Employer Attractiveness while Employer Image plays the mediate role of the effects transmission. In addition, Employer Attractiveness can predict the expansion of job seekers candidate pool as the positive relationship between EA and IAJV. We have also validated the moderated role of Person-Organization Fit among various constructs. By identifying these relationships, we answered

the research questions aforesaid.

## 6.2. Theoretical Contribution

The empirical study followed the exemplary paper from Younis and Hammad [63] who proposed putting signaling theory and social identity theory together to explain organizational attraction. However, they did not test the mediator variable of employer image in their model. Based on findings from [17-21], recruitment activities along with company commercial activities affect potential employees' perception toward organizational attraction, therefore building surface or complex associations that direct the job application decision. In this regard, the corporate image could be seen from different aspects, such as the corporate's brand visuality and job seekers' direct awareness, which are related to employment knowledge.

Moreover, the corporate image (information) can be received by job seekers through the ELM model via the central or peripheral routes [12], thereby affecting job seekers' perceptions of the recruiting organization's employer image [19]. In other words, corporate image information (such as good financial performance) can be transmitted into the employer image information (such as salary level). This empirical study statistically validated the mediator role of employer image between corporate image and organization attraction and mitigated the research gap of Younis and Hammad [63].

Furthermore, the empirical study also validates the moderator variable of P-O fit in the process of corporate image and employer image when perceiving employer attraction. The research design is consistent with Younis & Hammad [63], who incorporated signal theory and social identity theory into a model for elaborating employer attractiveness. The present theoretical model also incorporates job intention. The results showed that increasing employer attractiveness can lead to more application intentions. Thus, the present research, from a theoretical point of view, responds to the scholars' call for more research on social identity role in the hiring process [39] and extends the previous study [63] into job intention stage. The applicant pool quantity is a very important aspect in assessing an organization's attractiveness [18], whereas job intention is a critical step in building a good applicant pool quantity [29]. Thus, bringing the job intention variable into the model can better explain the organization's attractiveness in the real recruitment scenarios.

## 6.3. Management Implications

This research project has provided implications for managers in managing two dimensions of employer brand, the corporate image and employer image. The F&B industry in Macao has a limited size and particularly less-attractive work content, salary, and other attributes compared to the casino industry in the Macao job market. Thus, good employer brand management will add attraction towards these firms in

terms of recruitment. Backhaus [6] argued that for SMEs, employer brand management has good reasons to compete with big organizations from an organizational culture aspect, including ease of management and ease of implementation. For instance, management in SMEs can monitor the employer brand from time to time, whereas executives of SMEs can participate in the hiring process, which can convey employment messages to applicants directly. Considering restaurants, the miniature in operation size can be advantageous in improving organization attraction if flexible management policies adopted. For instance, conventional training interventions can be rescheduled, or virtual training interventions can be applied. Managers can help employees to get rest time in comfortable places and environments, ensuring employees have sufficient time to rejuvenate.

The findings illustrate that organizational image and corporate image are both effective in predicting organizational attraction from employees' views. Employer branding can be an attractor to help the employee hiring process via employer attractiveness and job seekers' application intention. Employer brands are constructed in concert with restaurants' image (dimensions including emotion, product and service, social and environment sustainable development, financial performance, and leadership), and corporate employer image is comprised of a set of human resources practices and policies to create a conducive working environment to attract job seekers [5]. In the present research, it is noted that practices in the Macao F&B industry promote employer brands in few activities; instead, organizations paid a lot in building a corporate brand. Thus, the entangling relationship between corporate image and employer image is seen. For instance, two Macao F&B official websites New Loyal Group [49] and Future Bright Group [26] have demonstrated their value and preferences in human resource management, and these practices and policies are integrated with other corporate information. Thus, it is recognized that in terms of the F&B industry in Macao, both images are connected and inseparable. In other words, a good restaurant group might be attractive to outsiders, either customers or for job seekers, because the restaurant group will advertise itself being a good employer and a good restaurant simultaneously.

The present research also shows implications for managers in the Macao F&B industry from a recruiting the next generation perspective. Since most respondents (80%) are in their early 20s with a college degree, they are Generation Z (anyone born from 1997 onwards) with new characteristics and various expectations. Therefore, understanding their expectations and needs can be critical for organizations to recruit Generation Z employees [51]. The F&B industry is criticized as less competitive to recruit and retain good quality employees, thereby affecting food quality and services [35]. Therefore, it is necessary to consider how to attract and retain talent to improve the competition of restaurants. For instance, Wen et al. [62] found that Chinese

college students in hospitality programs are dissatisfied with promotion opportunities in restaurants, whereas social factors and career development opportunities are the biggest predictors of employer attraction. Therefore, if managers in the Macao F&B industry want to recruit and retain good college graduates, they need to understand expectations and needs from Generation Z's perspective. In this regard, the findings of the present study confirmed the importance of person-organization fit and image in predicting organization attraction and job seekers' behavioral intentions.

Based on previous studies, P-O fit has been positively related to organizational attraction [8-11, 14, 16, 37-38, 44, 61]. In this regard, job seekers or current employees with high P-O fit level are likely to have positive attitudes toward organizational attributes. Therefore, when HR practitioners try to recruit new employees, they need to assess whether candidates are suitable for the organization's environment and industry context. For instance, recruiters should determine whether job seekers have a positive attitude towards the services offered by the organization. By understanding more about job seekers' personalities, recruiters can be proactive and reduce turnover rates while increasing recruitment efficiency and effectiveness.

## Abbreviations

CI	Corporate Image
EI	Employer Image
P-O Fit	Person-Organization Fit
EA	Employer Attractiveness
OA	Organization Attraction
IAJV	Intention to Apply for a Job Vacancy

## Author Contributions

**Hong Wei:** Conceptualization, Data curation, Formal Analysis, Methodology, Resources, Validation, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing

**Cao Chen:** Investigation, Methodology, Resources

## Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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