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Exploring the Attractiveness of Companies Branding D&I to Potential Employees in Online Recruitment*

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Concrete action on diversity and inclusion (D&I) is critical to companies' value creation and brand. Companies that intentionally fail to attract and retain a diverse talent pool will struggle to innovate, compete, and prosper. The advantages of a diverse and inclusive workplace include the reduction of homogenous thinking and an increase in novel ideas and perspectives due to the wealth of talent from diverse backgrounds. Previous studies have focused on the benefits of corporate D&I from a corporate perspective; however, there is scant research on the impact of corporate D&I from employees' perspectives. Resultingly, this study, through an online questionnaire, proposes to examine the impact of employer brand D&I on potential employees in online recruitment channels from the perspective of potential employees. The study results indicate that most Chinese companies still exhibit low levels of D&I during recruitment. This study also included an empirical analysis of 267 valid samples, which showed that: (1) the D&I of employer brand perceptions positively impact job search intentions, behaviour, and decision making. (2) Companies' D&I has the most significant influence on job seekers' decision making, followed by behavioural influence and cognitive influence. (3) The type of job seeker plays a moderating role in the relationship between employer brand perception and job search intention, behaviour, and decision making. (4) Online recruitment's increasing popularity amplifies employer branding's effect. Based on the findings, this study suggests how companies can use D&I branding strategies to attract quality talent and increase job seekers' job search intentions.

Keywords: employer branding, diversity and inclusion, decision-making, online recruitment

Introduction

Research Background

Globalisation has intensified competition between enterprises, altered the demographic structure of labour markets, and increased global peoples' mobility, increasing employee diversity in different organisations worldwide. This has led to the professional coexistence of more employees from diverse backgrounds and with

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various knowledge, specialities, and skills. Talent determines a country's ability to compete internationally at the macro level, and talent attraction and retention determine a company's competitive advantage at the micro level. Employers have faced challenges from talent shortages in recent years, exacerbated by the ongoing impact of the Covid-19 pandemic. Such challenges mean enterprises must compete for a dwindling yet diverse range of talents by reshaping their talent-attraction models through a convergent brand development strategy.

Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) has, therefore, undoubtedly become an urgent item on the corporate agenda. Social evolution has resulted in a greater awareness of such issues as gender equality and racial discrimination, meaning that companies, especially multinationals recruiting globally, increasingly face issues of D&I in their human resources management. The pressure to respond to these issues has motivated many multinationals to establish "Diversity and Inclusion" platforms to drive public transparency regarding their efforts in ensuring D&I among their workforces. Additionally, between 2020 and 2021, there was a surge in demand for "D&I" professionals, and more than 60 U.S. companies appointed their first-ever Chief Diversity Officers (CDOs); And leading firms such as McDonald's and Microsoft have pledged to introduce D&I recruiting training in their organisations to optimise their hiring processes.

A survey by PwC showed that the current workforce is increasingly comprised of millennials and Generation Z talents, which is partly why company strategies are shifting. Companies are chiefly embracing diversity due to a change in the skills they require from employees, a more diverse customer base, and the growing emphasis on the self-worth of their increasing number of young talents. Among millennials, 74% of women and 86% of men say that a company has an inclusive attitude that treats all employees equally is a factor in their choice when selecting an employer. Along with its crucial role in attracting talent, the D&I culture also helps managers develop companies' existing talent pools. This is reflected in the research by PwC, which shows that 85% of CEOs who have shaped their companies' D&I have experienced increased efficiency, 77% have seen a corresponding increase in customer satisfaction, and 55% say D&I has helped them develop new business or new markets.

Besides these changes, companies must also be aware of the impending fourth industrial revolution, which will bring more changes to the workplace. Internet technology, especially the popularisation of the mobile internet, has driven easier and more frequent recruitment activity and increased connections and interactions between job seekers, employees, and employers. This increase will be further driven by the effects of the Covid-19 pandemic, which will see the global online recruitment services market grow from $31.75 billion in 2022 to a projected $45.99 billion adjusted by 2028 (Yahoo Finance, 2022). Although online recruiting costs are lower than other channels, they bring additional considerations, including how slight missteps in corporate employer image can be immediately magnified. By contrast, a well-constructed employer image also generates rapid word-of-mouth transmission. Crucially, it is straightforward for corporations' employer image to become sullied due to diversity and inclusiveness issues, and publicising these issues can cause irreparable damage. Online recruitment and telecommuting also typically result in people from different geographic areas submitting their resumes to the same company, making D&I a crucial aspect of corporate employer branding.

Indeed, the restriction above on the labour market and increased information on online job platforms mean that job seekers are demanding more from companies, especially attractive brands. Since more companies are using online platforms for job and brand promotion, this study will provide an in-depth analysis of the factors that shape brand attractiveness in online recruitment channels.

Research Significances

This study's proposed examination of the influence of corporate brand D&I on potential employees has two dimensions of significance.

First, it possesses tremendous theoretical significance due to the current lack of research addressing the relevance of both brands, D&I. While many studies focus on how companies should prioritise building brand D&I and examine the benefits generated, they ignore the possible impact of D&I in pre-recruitment. Therefore, the question of how attractive D&I is to potential job seekers requires further research. This, as well as the needs of commercial companies, all of which is absent in existing research literature, forms the basis of this paper.

Accordingly, a study addressing brand diversity and inclusiveness in companies' pre-recruitment phase would have important theoretical implications for research.

Second, the study's emphasis on the impact of brand diversity and inclusiveness in the online prerecruitment phase and the perception of potential employees has in-depth practical significance since its results and proposed measures to help companies build and implement brand D&I will provide practical guidance to help them navigate the fierce talent competition.

Research Question and Objectives

This study aims to explore the attractiveness of companies' brand D&I to potential employees in online recruitment channels. To complete an in-depth analysis of this topic, the author will focus on the following research objectives:

- O1: To explore the attractiveness of company brand D&I to potential employees in online recruitment channels.
- O2: To better help companies strategically focus, position, and invest in D&I during the recruitment phase through further theoretical dissection and suggested guidance.

This study employs a questionnaire to provide insight into this research topic from a job seeker's perspective. Consequently, the author will answer the following research question:

- How impactful is the branding of D&I for the recruitment process to attract candidates with disparate levels of experience?

Research Structure

The study will follow the following structure to develop a specific expository analysis.

The first chapter will introduce the background of the research topic. Based on this, the author will explain the value of the topic.

The second chapter will provide an overview of the important concepts involved in the article as well as the relevant theories. Based on this, the author will explain any research gaps related to the research topic.

The third chapter will explain the methodology guiding data collection and analysis.

The fourth chapter will provide a systematic analysis of the questionnaire results. The data will be analysed with the help of SPSS software to derive further indicators.

The fifth chapter will further discuss the collected and processed systematic data concerning the theoretical literature. In this chapter, the author will advise on implementing brand diversification and inclusive business strategies for companies based on the discussion results.

The sixth chapter will provide a high-level summary of the conclusions drawn from the study; the author will also present the study's limitations.

Literature Review

Diversity and Inclusion

Conceptual system of diversity. The core of the concept of diversity refers to differences and dissimilarity (Thomas, 1990). There are many definitions of diversity, and the report accepted by most scholars is that individuals differ in certain aspects of attributes, and these different attributes lead to differences in perception between individuals and constitute diversity.

Harrison, Price, Gavin, and Florey (2002) proposed the first classification of diversity based on individual attribute characteristics. They argued that team diversity includes surface diversity and deep diversity. The second classification is Jackson and Schuler's (1995) division into task-oriented diversity, and relationship-oriented diversity based on the relevance of diversity attributes to teamwork. The third classification is Greggs et al.'s (1995) diversity division into primary and secondary dimensions based on primary and secondary dimensions and changeability.

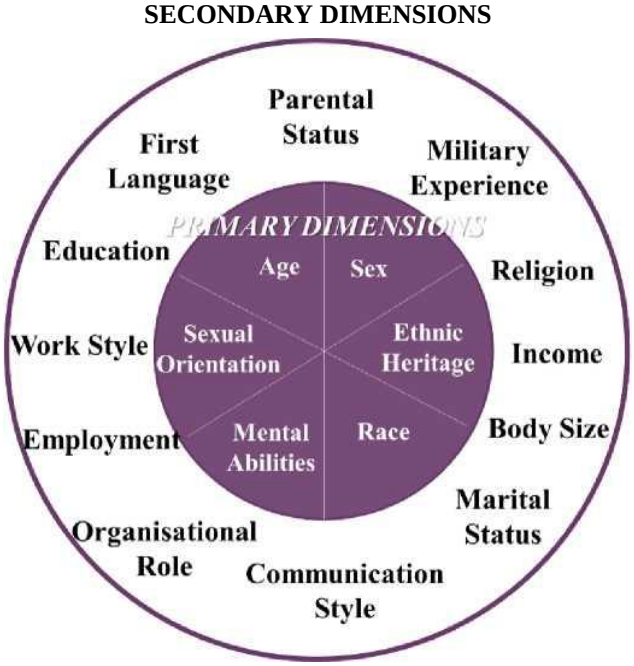

Figure 1. Two-dimensional conceptual model (Greggs et al., 1995).

Among them, the most representative is the two-dimensional conceptual model. Primary dimensions of diversity are visible and generally unchangeable, including age, sex, race, abilities, ethnicity, and sexual preference. Meanwhile, secondary aspects are geographic location, military and job experience, family status, salary, religion, education, first language, role in an agency and level, as well as communication and work style (Northouse, 2018). These are changeable, less visible, and do little to impact the lives of organisations and groups (Pillai, 2000). While the primary aspects of diversity are of extraordinary importance in how individuals integrate and socialise, secondary dimensions are less critical and can be altered as individuals socialise.

Based on the two-dimensional concept, the dual attributes of diversity are further identified. Research on the dual attributes has yielded two negative and positive perspectives and proposed different concepts and strategies to deal with them. The focus of subsequent diversity research has pivoted to how diversity may be

effectively managed. Through this process, inclusion emerged as a strategic choice to balance the dual attributes of diversity and gradually formed another conceptual system.

Conceptual system of inclusion. Inclusion was being discussed in a narrow vein in the 1990s in the fields of social psychology and social work, with Mor Barak, Cherin, and Berkman (1998) defining it as the extent to which individuals felt able to participate in critical organisational processes. At the beginning of the 21st century, inspired by the revival of humanistic philosophical thought and the reflection of Cartesian thinking, diversity management research began to incorporate the concept of inclusion (Roberson, 2006). Subsequent studies gradually abandoned the original separation and opposition perspective. Instead, they tried to adopt an integrated dialectical perspective to explore ways of allowing diverse individuals to coexist in harmony and value (Daya, 2010), gradually forming a conceptual inclusion system.

Roberson (2006) is among an early group of scholars who defined inclusion from a management perspective. Roberson views inclusion as the facilitation of full employee participation in and contribution to the organisation. Avery, McKay, Wilson, and Volpone (2008) posit that inclusion is the degree to which employees believe an organisation is committed to full participation and can value individual talents. Shore et al. (2011) built on this to provide a more comprehensive definition of inclusion based on the optimal distinctiveness theory. They considered inclusion in terms of two opposing needs, belonging and distinctiveness, as the extent to which employees perceive their needs for belonging and distinctiveness are being met.

Around this definition, concepts such as inclusive organisation, inclusive leadership, and inclusive climate have also been derived from the research. The core concept of diversity management research has now evolved from diversity to inclusion, thereby guiding the diversity management paradigm.

Influence of D&I on companies. Organisational management scholars have typically analysed the operational and managerial benefits of organisational D&I at the company level regarding human resource management performance, market performance, and brand value. First, the establishment of an inclusive organisation can reduce the cost of staffing. Cox and Blake (1991) state that employees will stay where they are satisfied and appreciated; and by extension, inclusive organisations that promote a heterogenous culture will reduce employee turnover and absenteeism, increase career satisfaction, and attract and retain diverse or localised talent they require. This will improve the efficiency of talent deployment, reduce deployment costs (Daya, 2010), and create a surplus for the organisation. Additionally, an inclusive HR management system focused on merit and equity can increase employee satisfaction, organisational recognition, job engagement, career development, and rewards; resulting in increased individual productivity and human resource value, which in turn leads to increased organisational productivity, profitability, and competitiveness (Roberson, 2006). In short, organisational D&I can contribute to corporate performance and strategic competitiveness by improving HRM performance.

Second, an organisation with solid D&I recognises and respects the multicultural identity of heterogeneous employees. This results in integrating and using employees' different perspectives, perceptions, knowledge, and skills, which facilitates the transformation of diversity into strategic resources for the organisation. This ultimately improves employees' decision-making, cultural sensitivity, market responsiveness, creativity, and the promotion of original solutions, innovative product ideas, and novel marketing plans. Thus, organisational agility and adaptability are enhanced (Pless & Maak, 2004). Organisational D&I can also promote organisational development by improving organisational agility and adaptability (Cox & Blake, 1991); and may also yield operation benefits by improving the market performance.

Finally, an organisation with strong D&I that recognises, respects, appreciates, and utilises the diversity of its workforce benefits from an enhanced corporate image since inclusive organisations help enhance corporate image, goodwill, and brand effects, including stock prices (Daya, 2010). Companies that promote discriminatory hiring and management policies, have a highly centralised and homogenous management orientation and do not recognise employees' diversity and heterogenous values typically have a poor employer reputation and brand image and struggle to attract and retain the desired talent (Blass & April, 2008). Organisations that embody an inclusive and diverse culture allow them to build strong employer brands and form intangible assets (Celani & Singh, 2011). Demonstrably, organisational inclusion can also be used to gain operational benefits through reputation mechanisms.

Employer Branding

Definition and function of employer branding. The American scholars Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow (1996) were the first to introduce the concept of branding to the field of human resources. They drew on branding theory in marketing and pointed out that employer branding is embodied as a comprehensive set of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by and associated with the employer. The academic community is, however, yet to agree on a unified concept of employer branding, and by combing and analysing the existing literature, the definition of employer branding may be broadly divided into two categories:

The first category is defined according to the target audience of employer branding, which is specifically divided into three subtypes. The first subtype defines employer branding as the internal brand of a company from the perspective of internal marketing, which considers employer branding as a product that acts on the working employees within the company and treats the job, the position, and the set of job treatment provided by the employer as a product (Maurer, Howe, & Lee, 1992). The second subtype defines employer branding as external branding. Employer branding is considered external to the company and targeted at job applicants. The third subtype defines employer brands from a comprehensive perspective as a corporate image that distinguishes the company from other employers in the minds of current employees and potential job seekers (Ruch, 2001).

The second category defines employer branding according to two different types of management perspectives: the first defines employer branding from the perspective of corporate employment commitment as the process of communicating employment values to potential and existing employees. The second defines employer branding from the perspective of job seekers' relational perceptions and associations with employers, arguing that employer branding is ultimately determined by people's perceptions (Mosley, 2014) and that employer branding creates a particular emotional connection between the company and its employees by building their perceptions of the company, which in turn helps the company to attract talent.

In conclusion, although academics do possess a unified view on the conceptualisation of employer branding, careful analysis reveals that whether the concept of employer branding is defined in terms of the target audience or different management perspectives, it remains very much intact: The role of employer branding is to motivate, retain, and attract talents.

Influence of employer branding in attracting candidates. Numerous well-developed studies exist on the single variables of the company brand, product brand, employer brand perception, and job search intention. In studying the relationship between variables, many scholars, including Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and Lievens and Highhouse (2003), have demonstrated the positive effect of job seekers' employer brand perception evaluation on their job search intention. Kim, York, and Lim (2011) showed the relationship between the

company brand, job search intention, product brand, and job search intention. Meanwhile, Banerjee (2018) placed company brand, product brand, employer brand perception, and job search intention in the same research model and found that while employer brand perception played a mediating role in company brand and job search intentions, product brand revealed less about job search intentions as employer brand perception.

Gaddam's (2008) "Employer Branding Model" (Figure 2) demonstrates the positive impact of employer branding on organisations in terms of commitment, retention, performance, satisfaction, attractiveness, and loyalty. Allen, Bryant, and Vardaman (2010) affirm the connection between the aforementioned factors and provide additional support by stating that employer branding can boost employee morale and satisfaction and increase employee retention. In addition, Holbeche and Matthews (2012) demonstrate that employees who enjoy their work will subconsciously become brand advocates, praising and recommending the company to their friends and family, thereby remaining more loyal to the organisation (CIPD, 2015). Employers can also use the aforementioned advantages of Employer Branding to transition from identifying and attracting candidates to providing a unique employment experience, thereby achieving tangible and intangible goals shared by the employee and employer (Mosley, 2014).

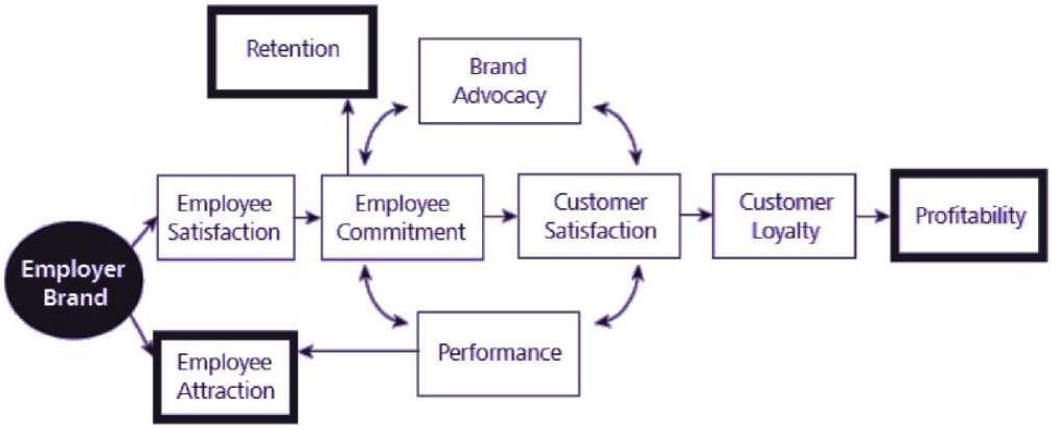

Figure 2. Employer brand model (Gaddam, 2008).

Recruiting

Definition and classification of recruitment. Studying the conceptual definition of recruitment, Gomez-Mejia et al. (1995) indicated that job seekers should be treated as consumers in this new era. Lazear (2018) defines recruitment as a series of activities based on the existing criteria of salary and compensation and talent recruitment to help companies get good employees at the lowest cost.

In classifying recruitment channel sources, the primary classifications are internal and external recruitment; the former means filling new positions with existing staff through promotions and transfers, and the latter hiring new recruits from outside the company. Applicant classification is divided into campus recruitment and social recruitment according to the social work background of the applicant. Recruitment modes are classified as either online or offline recruitment, although the ubiquity of the internet has abstractly reduced the distance between interviewing companies and candidates and facilitated the increasing use of online recruitment. Bhupendra and Swati (2015), define online, or e-recruiting, as the process of finding and hiring the best-qualified candidate in a timely and cost-effective manner. The speed, scale of coverage, and low cost has seen this recruitment method trump other methods. Technological developments such as initial digital assessments for video interviews have

further enhanced the maturity and ubiquity of online recruitment. This approach also gives companies many opportunities to enrich their presentation and image, so it deserves further exploration and reflection.

Online recruitment and factors influencing candidates' considerations. Internet recruitment has become a widely used system and mode of external recruitment, and its scale was increased during the Covid-19 pandemic. Most existing research focuses on aspects of e-recruitment that influence an organisation's attractiveness to employees, such as the types of candidates the organisation attracts, website attributes, and customer-tailored information; but fewer studies have addressed the success and retention rates of e-recruitment (Dineen & Allen, 2013; Dineen & Soltis, 2011).

Several studies have focused on the efficiency of online recruitment. Champman and Webster (2003) and Gallanaki (2002) argue that online recruitment increases the quantity rather than the quality of job applicants compared to traditional recruitment methods. Additionally, administrative and transactional costs have grown along with the number of applicants.

Most studies indicate that online recruitment is ineffective in increasing workforce diversity. One reason for this is that some ethnic groups, such as African Americans and American Gypsies, have lower Internet access rates, and some older individuals and women typically have higher computer anxiety and lower computer self-efficacy than others (Johnson, Stone, & Navas, 2011). It is worth noting that these issues will likely diminish as younger, technologically astute candidates join the job market.

In contrast to studies focusing on job seeker characteristics, other studies of online recruitment have concentrated on technological features such as website attributes and customer customisation as factors influencing candidate satisfaction and organisational attractiveness (Dineen et al., 2011). These studies concluded that the ease of use of the job application website and its perceived quality are positively associated with job applicants' willingness to apply (Sheu, 1999; Zusman & Landis, 2002), but website attractiveness is not related to applicant's motivation to apply (Cober et al., 2003). Other studies have examined the influence of subjective (job search attitude), objective (employer brand, match), and relative effects of important factors (network to medium) on the attractiveness of applicants to the organisation. These studies reveal that organisational image and media richness positively affect website credibility and candidate attitudes toward the organisation (Allen, Mahto, & Otondo, 2007; Badger, Kaminsky, & Behrend, 2014; Lyons & Marler, 2011).

Covid-19 prompted alterations in recruitment. The Covid-19 pandemic has changed key sectors of the workforce in unforeseen ways. Initially, the CDC's work-from-home remits followed by workers' appetite for continuing telecommuting have made remote working the new normal (Max, 2022). Staff are turning living rooms into workspaces, often managing personal obligations simultaneously. Organisations must adapt to this enormous shift, and hiring practices have changed overnight.

Reliable technology already exists to help organisations looking to recruit, and virtual recruiting is the preferred method of maintaining the hiring process while protecting both recruiters and candidates. Many companies are reducing hiring times and addressing fears of losing candidates to competitors by offering candidates the option of immediate video interviews. Video interviewing software not only keeps the hiring pipeline open; it also upgrades the candidate experience and enhances employers' brand. Job seekers understand that by developing security protocols, organisations prioritise their employees.

The post-epidemic era has seen virtual hiring become the new normal, and online interviewing has provided numerous benefits for both recruiters and candidates. Generation-Z candidates especially appreciate tech-savvy

organisations, and recent data suggest that they won't even apply for a job at an organisation with hiring methods they view as outdated. Even during a pandemic-style event, companies seeking top talent must ensure their brand message is cutting-edge technology. Under optimal recruiting conditions, video recruiting is a must for companies. Recruiters may take advantage of the ability to conduct essential on-demand interviews without adjusting interview schedules, and those already using recruiting technology are likely to accelerate hiring times.

Methodology

Based on the literature review, the methodology consists of three parts: Research Philosophy (i.e., hypothesis derivation of the study), Methodology design, distribution, and collection, and Ethical considerations. Furthermore, the author provides an in-depth description of the latter part based on the methodological logic of the research onion proposed by Saunders et al. (2015) (See figure below). Following the research logic proposed by Saunders et al. (2015), the author will provide insight into the study's methodology.

This study was conducted using an electronic questionnaire and analysed using SPSS 22.0. The questionnaires were completed by the subjects and then collected after verification. On this basis, the author will also provide an overview of the measures taken to avoid ethical issues.

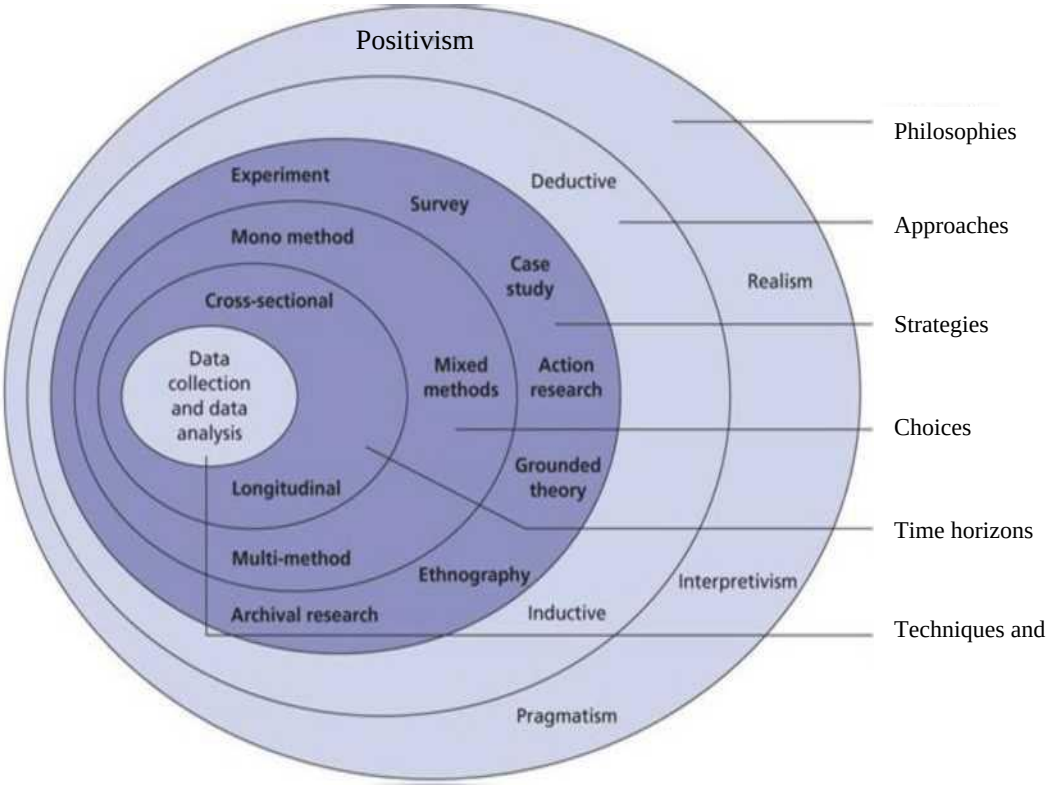

Figure 3. Research onion. Source: Saunders et al., 2015.

Research Philosophy

Research philosophy is crucial to any research since it defines the beliefs that underlie the research. The research philosophy that guided the implementation of this study was positivism. Positivist research assumes that knowledge exists outside of what is being studied. In other words, what is learned can only be done objectively:

researchers do not interpret; they just observe (Weber, 2004). Positivism states that there is only one reality and that all meanings are consistent among subjects. In the positivist view, knowledge can only be obtained through empirical research based on measurement and observation (Hjørland, 2005).

In this study, the author explored in depth the topic of the attractiveness of company brand D&I to potential employees in online recruitment channels, based on many facts and data obtained from observations and experiments, using theories and techniques of statistical inference and rigorous empirical testing.

Moderating effect of different types of candidates. Signalling theory states that in the case of information asymmetry, information users will process information through signals delivered by the brand and form their reasonable judgments. Job seekers' difficulties in gaining personal experience of a company and accurate information about an organisation prior to entering the workplace mean that they will perceive the information they receive about the organisation as a signal from the employer organisation (Brown, 1998). First-time job seekers and repeat job seekers may have different perceptions when faced with the same employer due to differences in other factors such as experience or age, which may lead to differences in job search decision-making. First-time job seekers may rely more on the signals delivered by the organisation due to their lack of work experience, while reapplicants may process and judge the signals twice based on their knowledge and understanding. The company's corporate brand may be more critical to first-time job seekers, which will help their future career path development, while second-time job seekers may be more concerned about the company's employer brand compared to the company's product brand development and company brand development. Therefore, among the effects of employer brands on job search decision-making, this study suggests that job seeker type may play a moderating role. Gender and personal history may influence job seekers' perceptions of corporate employer brands. Resultingly, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1: The type of job seeker plays a moderating role in the effect of different brands on job search decision-making.

Traditional recruitment and internet recruitment. Regarding the differences in people who use traditional recruitment methods compared to Internet recruitment, Internet-based recruitment generally attracts younger, highly educated job seekers. The reach of conventional recruitment is limited by the platform on which the information is published, and advertising through newspapers and magazines generally impacts specific groups. In online recruiting, social networking sites have a broad reach and allow users to participate in the recruiting process while socialising virtually. Through such sites, companies can expand their talent pool by both recruiting highly motivated candidates and locating potential passive candidates through networking.

Internet recruitment offers clear advantages to both enterprises and job seekers. First, the internet has dramatically improved the overall efficiency of recruitment, including significantly shortening the recruitment cycle through rapidly releasing job information online using fewer resources. Second, internet recruitment provides unparalleled information and more choices for job seekers, affording closer connections with potential employers. This places job seekers in a position of power to take the initiative to find suitable positions compared to traditional recruitment, which places job seekers and enterprises in a state of mutual independence.

The rise of virtual HRM and the blurring of organisational boundaries mean HRM is facing more challenges. Traditional recruitment methods still have their place in specific industries and fields, but on the whole, recruitment based on Internet technology is still preeminent. Therefore, the following assumption is made in this paper:

H2: Online recruitment is currently the dominant trend, and the different choices of traditional or online recruitment will impact job search decision-making and the type of job seeker.

The relationship between career values and job search decisions. The relationship between career values and job search behaviour has been a critical research area. According to Super (1969), occupational values are the most important influencing factor in job hunting and have a predictive effect on individual job-hunting behaviour. Occupational values belong to the personality disposition category, job seekers' belief system to treat their careers according to different needs. This both influences job seekers' tendency to choose careers and determines their at-work attitude. Occupational values influence career choices, and job seekers' salary and benefits, hobbies, and self-worth realisation can positively predict their career choice. And the career values of different groups vary.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H3: Occupational values that include prestige status, salary and benefits, and self-actualisation differ among job seekers and will influence job search decision-making by moderating the functionality and symbolism of the employer brand.

The relationship between employer brand perception and job search decisions. Employer branding enables companies to create an image in the recruitment market that communicates the company's superiority as an employer to internal and external employees (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). This matters because job search behaviour in the labour market has similarities with consumer behaviour in the commodity market: Consumers will typically focus on the quality and reputation of their target purchase. Similarly, job seekers focus on the employer brand of the company they are applying to.

Signalling theory tells us that before they enter the workforce, job seekers generally have incomplete information about a particular company and its advertised job, so they must overcome the risks associated with this information asymmetry to make appropriate decisions. In reality, job seekers are more likely to accept and compare the external characteristics of a company's employer brand than its internal characteristics before deciding whether to apply for the job.

In marketing, the black box in consumer behaviour is similar to the process mechanism of branding on consumer behaviour. Similarly, the process mechanism of job search behaviour can also be called the black box in job search behaviour. When consumers buy a product or service, external information such as various "marketing stimuli" and the final purchase choice and decision are visible. Still, the process of how consumers perceive these external stimuli and use this information to make the final decision is not visual. Based on brand perception theory, this paper argues that job seekers in an information-asymmetric job search environment will also perceive the value that employers can provide based on their various external characteristics and ultimately make their job search choices and decisions. On this basis, we propose the following hypothesis:

H4: Job seekers' perceptions of employer branding and job search decisions are positively correlated.

Diversity and inclusive employer branding. The focus of modern candidates goes beyond mere job opportunities. Their emphasis on aspects such as the company's values, identity, D&I, and corporate social responsibility means that employers must be sufficiently appealing.

Generation Z is the most racially, ethnically, and gender diverse generation in history. Its members are more likely than any previous generation to expect diversity, equity, and inclusion, or DE&I programs from employers. In fact, 99% of Gen Z employees believe that D&I in the workplace is important. They evaluate an organisation

in this regard prior to employment: If a company's DE&I program is inadequate or non-existent, the leadership team seems homogenous, or the brand does not seem to celebrate diversity, Gen Z job seekers may not even consider applying there. Concerns about not being accepted because of race, sexual orientation, or gender identity prevent 37% of Gen Z job seekers from applying, and one in five say they choose not to apply because of concerns that the hiring organisation is affecting the ability to disperse individuals. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Corporate D&I affects job search decision-making, and young people, such as student groups, are more concerned about this.

Strategy, Design, and Analysis of the Methodology

Research choices. This study mainly used the mono method to target relevant data, which means that only one type of data—qualitative or quantitative—was used. This choice depended on the nature of the study as well as the purpose and objectives of the study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). The main research objective of the study was to critically analyse the attractiveness of company brand D&I to potential employees in the online recruitment channel. As mentioned earlier, the author mainly followed a positivist research ideology to obtain primary quantitative data. This information is primarily quantitative as well.

Research strategy. The author will use the following research strategies to achieve the objectives outlined in the study and answer the questions raised, including the literature analysis and questionnaire survey methods.

Regarding the literature analysis method, many studies have been done on the impact of employer branding D&I on potential employees. The focus of such research varies according to different periods. Sites, including JSTOR and similar academic websites, were studied to target literature relevant to this study. In searching this literature, the author used the following keywords: employer branding, brand attractiveness, and online recruitment. Scientific research can be divided into qualitative and quantitative research regarding information analysis. Quantitative research focuses on quantitative statistical analysis and is a structured, deductive, prediction-seeking study considered the preferred method of academic research (Mayer, 2015). Compared to qualitative research, quantitative research has certain advantages. First, the advantage of the quantitative survey method is that the results are quantifiable and accurate and less influenced by the subjectivity of the investigator. Second, it is a deductive method based on theory. Third, the bias of quantitative research is relatively small, coming mainly from the study's design, the survey instrument design, and the data interpretation (Queirós, Faria, & Almeida, 2017). There are, however, certain limitations. For example, quantitative surveys lack descriptive detail and depth of excavation. However, combining the research questions posed in this study and the necessary data on which the research on this question was conducted, the author finally chose a quantitative research strategy.

Specifically, the author used a questionnaire strategy to collect a series of primary data related to the research topic in the subject.

Questionnaire design. To ensure the reliability and validity of the questionnaire, a more mature measurement scale was selected as the questionnaire for this study. The questionnaire contains five parts: The first is the introduction, which explains the purpose of the survey and the survey method; the second part aims to understand certain basic information about respondents' situation, including their age, gender, and work status. The third part is the survey of job seekers' knowledge of D&I; the fourth part is the survey of the attractiveness of corporate D&I to job seekers. This section focuses on a five-point Likert scale for understanding job seekers'

satisfaction, recommendation, and judgement of employer D&I. The fifth and final part is an open-ended question, which can be used as a reference for companies seeking to improve their employer's brand image. The detailed questionnaire is shown in Appendix 1.

Questionnaire collection. The respondents of this study are both first-time job seekers with no formal work experience and work experience of less than one year and re-entry job seekers with work experience. The questionnaires were distributed electronically and filled out anonymously. To locate first-time job seekers, the author focused on students, mainly college students at all levels, and distributed questionnaires accordingly via the student WeChat group friends spread and Xiaohongshu APP. To find re-applicants, the author surveyed the parents of colleagues and colleagues from previous internships. Additionally, to avoid the situation of familiar cognition, the author created the research survey by consulting strangers through LinkedIn stranger groups and interpersonal contacts with several graduated HR seniors who often deal with job seekers in their daily work. After eliminating invalid questionnaires, we finally obtained 267 valid questionnaires. Of these, 124 questionnaires were completed by those already employed and 143 by those not employed.

Data analysis. The author used a quantitative analysis method to conduct an in-depth generalisation of the collected quantitative data to derive data indicators with practical academic significance. Specifically, the author unified the data collected from 267 questionnaires with the help of SPSS tools, a statistical program that provides several basic statistical functions. To provide in-depth answers to the questions in this paper, the data were processed using SPSS tools, and the questionnaire results were analysed independently for each question and logically between questions (Verma, 2012). In addition, the overall reliability of the questionnaire results was further examined to ensure the results' validity and reliability, the results of which are presented in the next section.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that this study observes all protocols related to research ethics, the author ensured the following: This study did not involve any ethical issues, and to avoid possible ethical issues, the author will protect the personal information of all participants in the questionnaire in an anonymous manner. In addition, the author will protect the security of the data and handle it appropriately.

Integrity of the researcher. The author focused on the following measures when performing data protection: First, the author gave participants full rights to information and understanding regarding the purpose and use of the information collected and included in the questionnaire. The purpose of the questionnaires was explained at the beginning of each questionnaire. Respondents were fully aware that this questionnaire would only be used for the thesis.

Confidentiality. This academic questionnaire was filled in anonymously, and all information was used only for the purpose of writing the dissertation writing and is kept confidential. The author guarantees that the information and data collected by this questionnaire will be used for academic purposes only and stored securely on the author's personal computer, committed to deleting all information after one year.

Clarity and authenticity. The basis of this paper is sufficient and feasible, and the author has a good understanding of the background and basis of the study. The questionnaire design is scientific and reasonable, and the statistical methods are properly applied. The paper uses data analysis and makes reasonable, logical inferences based on the results.

Research Analysis and Findings

Descriptive Statistics of the Study Sample

Analysis of sample demographic characteristics. The first step of the questionnaire study is to count the background information of the sample to get a detailed picture of the basic characteristics of the study sample. This study was done by using frequency analysis to count the basic characteristics of the model, such as age group, gender, and work status.

Figure 4 was derived through SPSS22.0, of which 267 are valid questionnaires. In terms of age, there are 122 people under 25 years old, accounting for 45.7% of the total sample; 115 people aged 25-50 years old, accounting for 43.1% of the full sample; and 30 people over 50 years old, accounting for 11.2% of the total sample, which shows that the sample size of people under 50 years old in this survey is high. Regarding gender, there were 125 males and 140 females, with a similar sample size for both genders. In terms of working status, there were 143 students, accounting for 53.6% of the total sample, and 124 employed, accounting for 46.4% of the total sample, so it can be seen that the sample of students in this survey is large. The detailed results are shown in Figure 4.

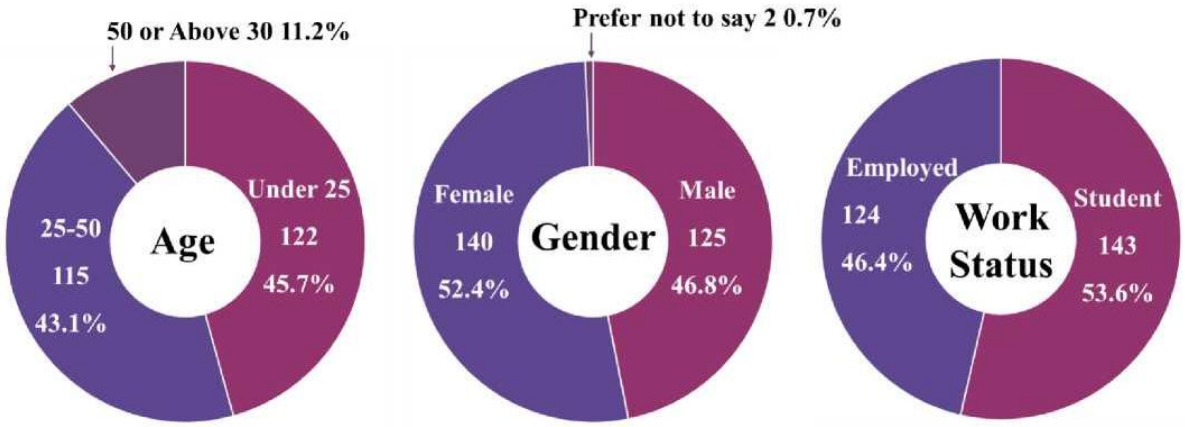

Figure 4. Demographic characteristics of the sample, $N = 267$.

Analysis of enterprise recruitment situation. To further understand the situation of recruitment channels, the following table was derived by understanding how the sample obtained the corporate recruitment information. It can be seen that the largest number of people, 189, or 70.8% of the total sample, got their recruitment information through specialised recruitment platforms. The following largest number of people, 187, accounting for 70% of the sample, got their recruitment information through the company's online website. Meanwhile, the lowest number of people chose to get recruitment information through recruitment posters on offline bulletin boards, showing that online recruitment is now very much the predominant mode.

This paper further presents a pie chart based on the proportion of different recruitment interview methods. It shows that 61.05% of them are online videos, followed by 22.1% of offline interviews, and then 16.85% of telephone interviews. This indicates that 77.9% of the total sample chose online interviews. Most people stated that online video interviews gave them greater time flexibility (59 people, 36.2%), followed by lower costs (57 people, 34.97%).

Table 1

Ways to Get Information About Corporate Recruitment

Option	Response		Percentage of the number of cases
	N	Percentage	
Company online official website	187	33.90%	70.00%
Professional recruitment platform	189	34.20%	70.80%
Referrals from friends and family	124	22.50%	46.40%
Recruitment posters on offline bulletin boards	52	9.40%	19.50%
Total	552	100.00%	206.70%

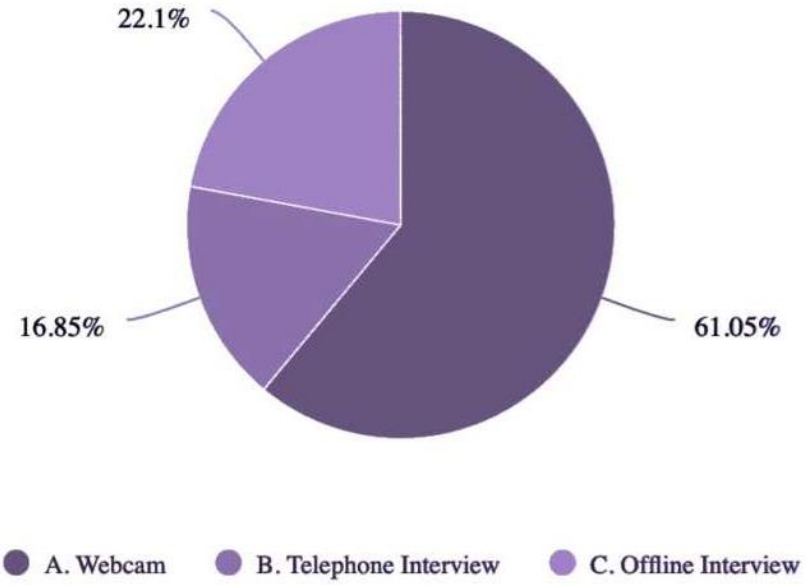

Figure 5. Interview method ratio.

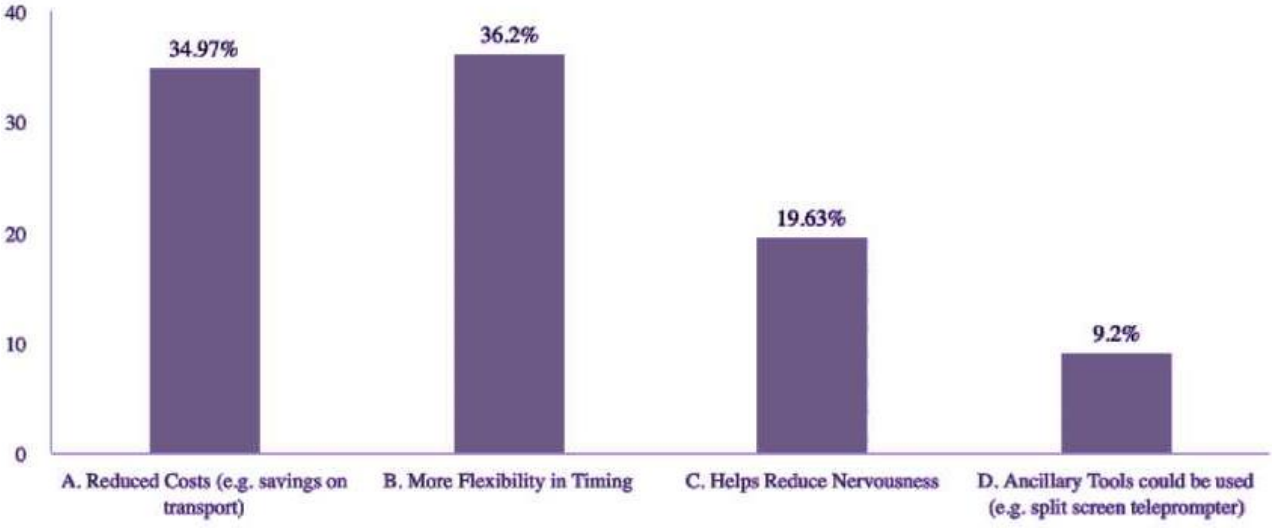

Figure 6. Reasons for choosing an online video interview

Analysis of career choice view. For the entire sample of factors affecting the choice of employers, most people chose the degree of job fit and interest， followed by corporate D&I, and then the opportunity for training and learning.

Table 2

Factors Affecting Job Seekers' Choice of Companies

Option	Response		Percentage of the number of cases
	N	Percentage	
Job salary	102	13.10%	38.20%
Position fit and interest	127	16.30%	7.60%
Promotion possibilities	55	7.10%	20.60%
Corporate diversity and inclusion	112	14.40%	41.90%
Leadership attractiveness	66	8.50%	24.70%
Life and work balance (overtime and strenuous situations)	69	8.90%	25.80%
Size of the business	65	8.40%	24.30%
Corporate reputation	73	9.40%	27.30%
Opportunities for training and learning	109	14.00%	40.80%
Total	778	100%	291.40%

Analysis of corporate D&I understanding and satisfaction. The pie chart shows that 127 people (47.57% of the sample) were somewhat aware of corporate D&I, followed by 76 people (28.5% of the model) who were very knowledgeable. This means that most job seekers have a concept of corporate D&I, but the specific degree of understanding varies.

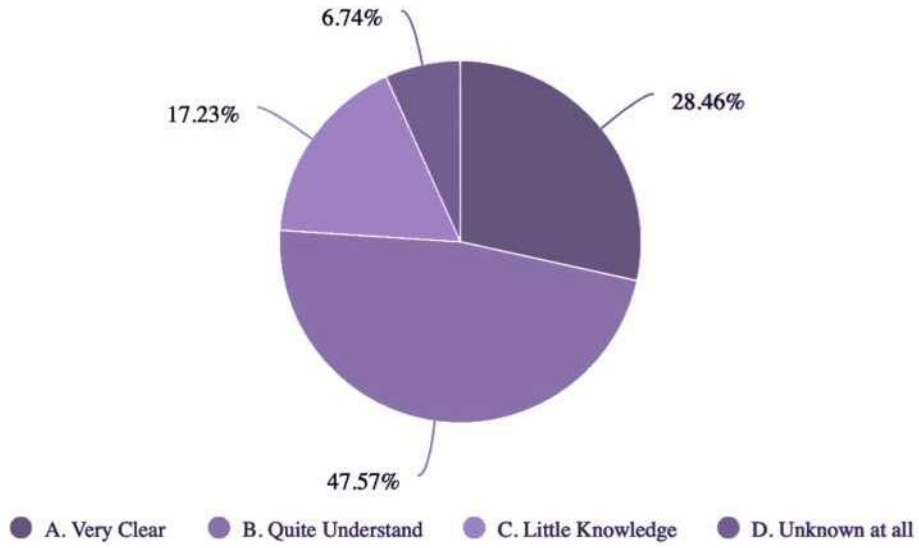

Figure 7. Job seekers' understanding of corporate D&I.

In total, 203 people were either somewhat aware or very aware of D&I. The questionnaire further asked this group of people about the extent to which companies demonstrate D&I in the recruitment process; and 48 people (23.65% of the sample) chose the option of fully demonstrating, 67 people (33% of the sample) chose the

possibility of good demonstration, 66 people (32.51% of the sample) chose the option of less protest, and 22 people (10.84% of the sample) chose the option of no demonstration. This means that among the 203 people who know or are well aware of D&I, 88 respondents indicated that companies displayed less or no D&I. This shows that the degree of D&I in the online recruitment process is still low.

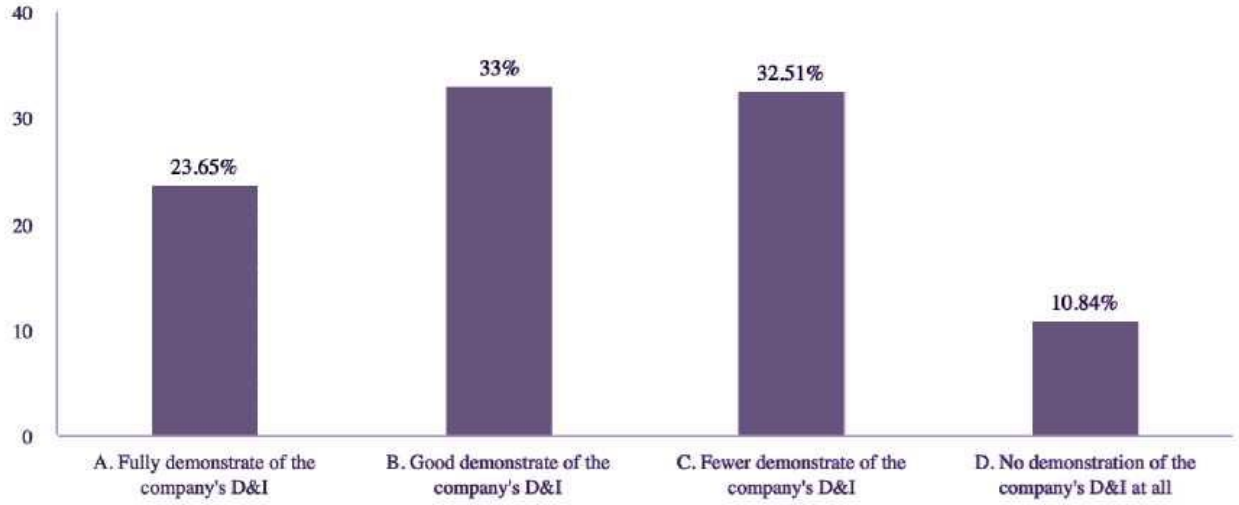

Figure 8. The extent to which companies demonstrate D&I.

Empirical Analysis

Cross-tabulation. The cross-tabulation analysis is the cross-classification of the answers to two or more questions in a chain of frequency columns. The correlation between the questions is analysed, generally choosing the questions with a significant difference from the fundamental frequency analysis data or purposeful analysis. To identify whether there are differences in the understanding of D&I in the corporate sector among people with different work statuses, Table 3, presented below, is derived from the SPSS crosstabulation analysis. It shows a significant difference between the student and employed groups regarding their knowledge of D&I in business ($p = 0.001 < 0.05$). The table also shows that significantly more students chose the option of knowing a lot about D&I than employed people. However, considerably fewer students selected “less known” and “unheard of” than unemployed respondents.

This shows that students are significantly more aware of D&I than those employed.

Table 3

Cross-Tabulation Analysis of Different Work States for Understanding D&I in Business

Question	Option	Work status		Total	Sig.
		Student	Employed		
Do you understand the diversity and inclusiveness of the companies presented?	Very clear	49(64.5%)	27(35.5%)	76	0.001
	Somewhat	72(56.7%)	55(43.3%)	127	
	Not very well	19(41.3%)	27(58.7%)	46	
	Unheard of	3(16.7%)	15(83.3%)	18	

Reliability analysis. Reliability refers to whether consistent results can be obtained after multiple observations of the same measurement subject. The reliability of survey data typically relies on the professionalism of the

surveyor. Still, the surveyor is often influenced by personal factors (emotions, existing perceptions) when filling out the questionnaire, which does not guarantee the objectivity and impartiality of the data. Reliability analysis of survey data is a mandatory procedure for research to ensure that the analysis is accurate and valid.

Reliability test data can ensure the consistency of the survey data, which is the stability requirement and reflects the reliability of measurement data. Reliability analysis theory holds that the measurement contains a random error, but the average error is zero. That is, commeasures have mistaken that make them lower than the accurate score, but other measurements have errors that make them higher than the precise score, and the sum of the final score decrease errors is equal to the sum of the score increase errors. Thus, the random error does not affect the mean of the measurement, but it increases the size variance. The reliability formula tells us that a sizeable significant value variance can better ensure the passing of the reliability analysis. From Table 4 below, we can see that Cronbach's α Coefficient of the cognitive impact, behavioural impact, and decision impact scales is above 0.8, which indicates that the scale has a goal excellent consistency coefficient, meaning that the reliability of this survey is good.

Table 4

Reliability Analysis

Dimension	Number of items	Cronbach's α coefficient
Cognitive influence	4	0.881
Behavioural Influence	4	0.870
Decision-making influence	4	0.816

Validity analysis. Validity refers to the degree to which a measurement instrument can accurately measure the characteristics, and higher validity indicates higher truthfulness. This paper relates to whether the questions for each factor in the text can meet the design requirements and accurately reflect the characteristics. Validity analysis is an indicator to test the usefulness of the questionnaire data, which in this paper indicates the validity of the data. The validity of the data means that it genuinely truly, reliably reflects the correspondence between the independent and dependent variables and can effectively explain the process of changing the dependent variable on the independent variable under the premise of reliable data. The KMO values of the cognitive influence, behavioural influence, and decision influence dimensions are greater than or equal to 0.8, and Bartlett's sphericity test p-value is 0.000, which is less than 0.01, passing the significance test at the 1% level. This indicates that the structural validity of this questionnaire is good and has reference value.

Table 5

Validity Analysis

Dimension	KMO	Bartlett's sphericity test		Significance
		Cardinality	Degree of freedom	
Cognitive influence	0.838	549.452	6	0.000
Behavioural influence	0.833	502.826	6	0.000
Decision-making influence	0.800	352.096	6	0.000

Descriptive statistical analysis of variable dimensions. The descriptive statistics of this study are selected to consider the great and minor values, standard deviations, and means of the data. A five-point Likert scale is

used for each measure in this questionnaire, where one indicates strongly disagree, and five indicates strongly agree. The results are shown in Table 1.

The table below shows that the mean value of cognitive, behavioural, and decision influence are above 3. The mean value of decision influence is 3.67, the mean value of behavioural influence is 3.42, and the lowest mean value is that of cognitive influence at 3.33, showing that the diversity and inclusiveness of the company have the most significant influence on the decision-making of job seekers, followed by behavioural influence and finally cognitive influence.

Table 6

Validity Analysis

Dimension	Number	Minimum (*M*)	Maximum (*X*)	Average (*E*)	Standard deviation
Cognitive influence	267	1	5	3.33	0.999
Behavioural influence	267	1.25	4.75	3.42	1.001
Decision-making influence	267	1.25	4.75	3.67	0.837

Correlation analysis. The purpose of correlation analysis is to examine the dependence of two variables. The Pearson correlation test is usually used to test the correlation between variables using two-sided significance. The degree of correlation between variables and the direction of correlation is judged by the magnitude of the Pearson coefficient, which ranges between -1 and 1. If the Pearson coefficient is greater than 0, it indicates a positive correlation between the variables, and if it is less than 0, it means a negative correlation. The absolute value of the coefficient indicates the strength of the correlation, i.e., the closer the total value of the coefficient is to 1, the stronger the correlation between the two variables. Generally, a low correlation is between 0.1 and 0.3, a moderate correlation is between 0.3 and 0.5, and a high correlation is greater than 0.5.

The table below shows a significant correlation between cognitive influence, behavioural influence, and decision influence ($p < 0.001$), and the Pearson coefficient is greater than 0. This indicates that there is a significant positive influence between cognitive influence, behavioural influence, and decision influence, and also indicates that, for job seekers, the diversity and inclusiveness of companies have a mutual effect on cognition, influence, and decision.

Table 7

Correlation Analysis

	Cognitive influence	Behavioural influence	Decision-making influence
Cognitive influence	1		
Behavioural influence	0.641**	1	
Decision-making influence	0.604**	0.563**	1

** The correlation is significant at a confidence level (double test) of 0.01.

Analysis of variance. This study includes different respondents, and studies show that demographic variables may influence the dependent variable and have some influence on the variables of this study. Therefore, this study analyses whether the demographic variables of each group have different perceptions of different study variables through scattered data; hence ANOVA is employed.

The data in this paper show a normal distribution and is a random sample, so the independent samples *t*-test can be used to compare whether there is a significant difference between the means of two independent subgroups. The two main variables that can be divided into two groups in this study are gender and the presence or absence of work experience in enterprises. These variables can be used in the above validation method. The analysis results allow us to conclude that, in terms of the dimension of gender, there is no significant difference between the means of the two overall. Still, there is a substantial difference between the samples with or without previous employer work experience.

The following table was derived from the SPSS independent sample *t*-test and shows that there is a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in the cognitive impact and decision-making impact by job status, and the mean value indicates that the effect on cognition of students is 3.52 and that of employed people is 3.11. This shows that students' willingness to seek employment is more likely to be influenced by diversity and inclusive employer brands, and there is a statistically significant difference between students and the employed group. Regarding the impact on the decision, the mean value is 3.83 for students and 3.49 for the employed, showing that students are more likely to be influenced in their job search decisions than the employed group. There is no statistically significant difference in the influence of different work statuses on behaviour ($p = 0.843 > 0.05$); However, the mean value of impact on behaviour is 3.41 for students and 3.43 for the employed group. Thus, it can be seen that the employed group's job search behaviour received a slightly more decisive influence than that of students, but there is no significant difference.

The specific independent sample *t*-test structure and significance are shown in Table below:

Table 8

Independent Sample t-Test for Each Dimension by Job Status

Dimension	Work status	Number	Average (*E*)	Standard deviation	*t*	*p*
Cognitive Influence	Student	143	3.52	0.913	3.406	0.00
	Employed	124	3.11	1.051		
Behavioural Influence	Student	143	3.41	1.037	-0.198	0.84
	Employed	124	3.43	0.961		
Decision-making influence	Student	143	3.83	0.761	3.3383	0.00
	Employed	124	3.49	0.885		

Discussion

Responding to the challenges posed by an increasingly diverse applicant pool, this study examines the factors influencing job-seekers' job-seeking behaviour from the perspective of organisational diversity and inclusive employer branding in an online recruitment environment. It constructs a theoretical model with individual characteristics, mainly the availability of work experience, as mediating variables and perceived individual differences as moderating variables. All hypotheses were statistically supported, and the results are discussed below.

Construction and Promotion of D&I Culture in Chinese Companies

The above analysis shows that companies still demonstrate low diversity and inclusiveness during online recruitment. Since the interviews mainly target Chinese respondents, we may conclude that companies in mainland China should improve in this regard.

This assessment is supported by the Hays D&I 2019/2020-Asia Report, which found that China lags behind other key Asian markets in promoting diversity among its workforces. One of the key findings was that companies in mainland China need to do more to train people leaders to support D&I. While Chinese companies and employees are becoming more aware of the importance of D&I in the workplace, Chinese job candidates are becoming increasingly anxious, with 44% of respondents citing age as a significant deterrent to getting hired, the highest number in Asia. Another 25% of respondents cited gender as a reason for not being employed, also the highest in Asia. Additionally, 35% of respondents believe that companies should attract, select, and retain more female employees to reflect modern society better. While 81% of respondents believe their organisations are proactively seeking diverse candidates (up from 61% in 2018), most still believe that the recruitment teams are biased, with 73% of respondents stating that business leaders prefer to hire people who perform, think, or act like themselves, the highest figure in Asia, with 19% strongly agreeing.

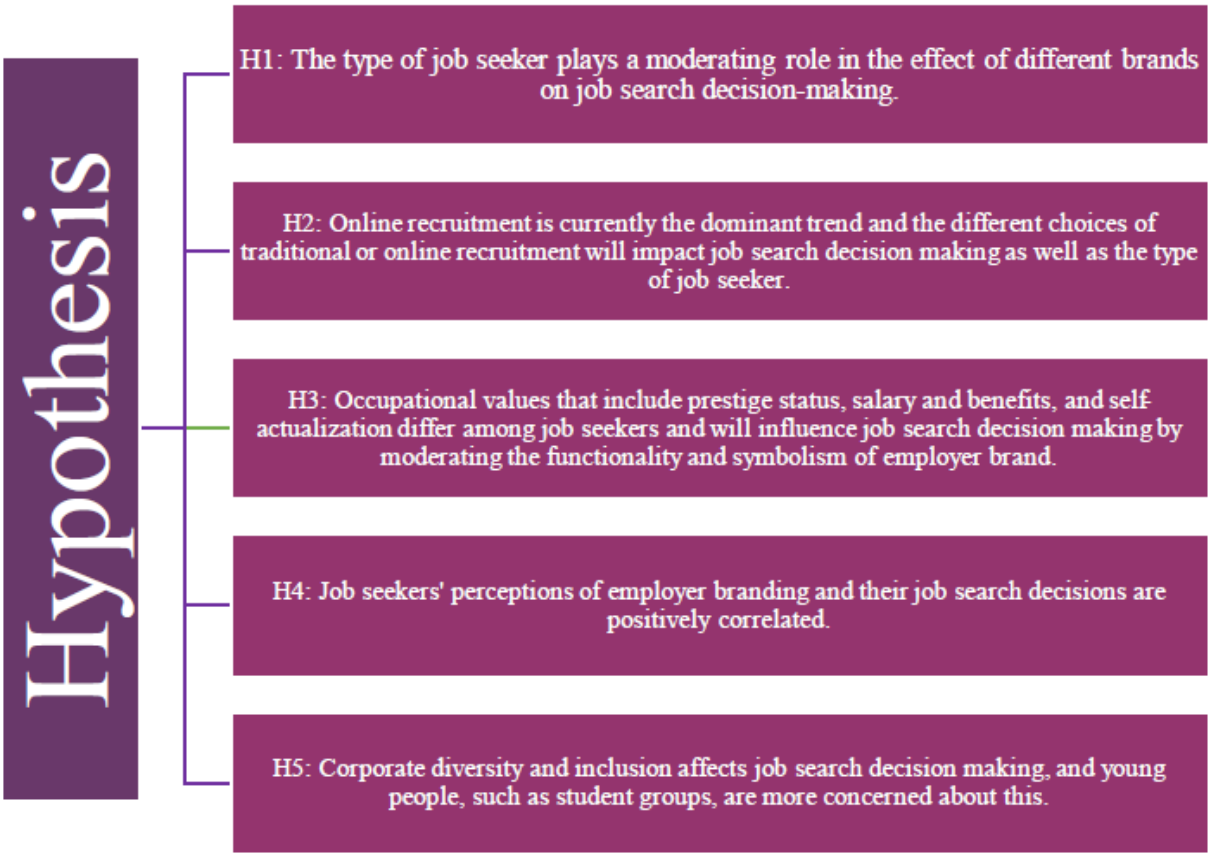

Figure 9. Hypothesis review.

Furthermore, a recent McKinsey study of women in Asia (2018) shows that China leads the world in female labour force participation, with essentially a 50/50 split between men and women in entry-level positions; however, this is not reflected in women's representation in management, with 22% in middle management, 11% in senior management, and 10% on the board. Female CEOs are even rarer, at 2%. The Global Gender Equality Index (GPS) is 0.39, meaning that for every 100 male executives, there are 39 female executives, while in China, the value is 0.2. It is worth noting that compared to European and American companies, Chinese companies are

less concerned with promoting gender equality, making progress much slower. In fact, in Chinese employer branding, the emphasis is more on the company's financial strength, salary levels, and brand awareness than on a more employee-friendly culture of D&I.

Contrastingly, tech companies in Silicon Valley now regard gender equality and D&I as the "standard" of employers with their Diversity & Inclusion initiatives. Facebook added 2% more women in tech in 2016, and women make up 27% of its leadership team; while Apple's annual Diversity & Inclusion report shows that it has narrowed the treatment gap between employees in terms of gender and race over the past year while increasing the number of female managers. The trend toward increased D&I is, naturally, not limited to tech companies and is gaining global momentum.

This article suggests China's reticence in this regard is its deep-rooted culture of state-owned enterprises. Even in the high-tech service sector, Chinese companies still follow SOE-style management philosophies, which typically emphasise consistency in management and include a top-down, opaque decision-making style, making it difficult for diversity to survive. To summarise the conclusions of the *Harvard Business Review*, the benefits of diversity are focused on companies' decision-making and creative output levels. However, in China, the online world is isolated and hierarchical, with corporate policy making and creative aspects being made by companies' and organisations' older employees, while younger male and female employees, both Chinese and foreign, play the role of executors. In this national context, diversity struggles to bring positive results for companies. Although Chinese society has undergone dynamic changes, its power structures generally operate as they always have. And authority is also an essential keyword in Chinese management culture, and defending authority is crucial for managers.

However, Chinese companies' increasingly globalisation makes the need for diversity increasingly urgent, and companies that can efficiently integrate the concept of diversity into their business management will derive clear advantages, while those that resist this trend will likely alienate themselves from overseas consumers.

The Differential Impact of D&I on Job Seekers With Different Levels of Work Experience

Occupational values are closely related to people's objective conditions, cognitive level, and surroundings and reflect their beliefs and attitudes toward their careers. Many studies on occupational values have focused on the relationship between personal factors such as gender, age, educational background, and major and occupational values.

The fact that job seekers have different social and cultural backgrounds, knowledge accumulation, life experience, and workability has a crucial impact on their concept of employment. The above results significant differences in occupational values between job seekers with no work experience and those with work experience, with the latter focusing more on realistic factors when choosing a career and having more difficulty finding their ideal employment. Meanwhile, younger job seekers concentrate more on their professional values and consider their subjective feelings more when choosing a career.

Until recently, the younger student population was reluctant to ask hiring managers about D&I for fear of appearing difficult or seeking special treatment. However, the changing national dialogue has increased student confidence. Since 2008, the National Association of Colleges and Employers (NACE) has asked recent graduates to rank the importance of a diverse workforce. In 2008, diversity ranked 12th out of 15 options. By spring 2020, it had risen to No. 7 out of 19 options, with more than 79 per cent of respondents calling it "very important". This

result was validated by statistical analysis in the study (Washington Post, 2021). As shown earlier, we see that the current student population incorporates the diversity and inclusiveness demonstrated by the company into their specific employment decisions during the job search process.

This article argues that the upbringing of today's mainly Generation Z students gives them a different outlook on job-hunting than older candidates since they grew up in the fast-developing Internet era and have an open and active character in life and the workplace. Additionally, they are generally more educated and have specific theoretical knowledge and practical skills comparatively to their predecessors. Under the influence of cultural and moral pluralism, the values of Generation Z also tend to be diversified. They advocate freedom and equality, emphasise self-centeredness, have high personal expectations, a strong sense of participation, and the ability to cooperate and innovate. These determine that they are no longer just looking for stability in the workplace but more for a sense of spiritual satisfaction.

Deloitte's Generation Z 2022 Survey found that three factors were most important to members of this generation when choosing an employer: work-life balance, learning and development opportunities, and corporate values and inclusive culture. Generation Z values workplace happiness and, having grown up in a more diverse world, demands respect, fairness and inclusion, without which companies will lose their goodwill and, ultimately, their talent.

Meanwhile, those with work experience as relatively older with richer work experience and a greater sense of purpose in their career choice. When faced with career confusion, job seekers with work experience tend to be proactive and rational in job choices, while younger people care more about idealism. With more opportunities to play to their strengths, they are more willing to consider an enterprise's culture, including its D&I. Contrastingly, older people are less confident in employment than younger people.

However, in terms of the difference and extent of D&I's impact, this paper argues that several other reasons may account for the low impact of corporate D&I on job seekers with work experience. One is a lack of awareness and understanding of related concepts and their general linking of corporate D&I with corporate culture, social image, and sustainable development, without refining its implementation to the rights and relationships related to job seekers. Additionally, the pandemic has exacerbated employment pressures and given these pressures; corporate D&I is not a defining factor for pressurised candidates. Second, compared with salary and other factors directly related to their interests, candidates do not directly correlate the attention and recognition of corporate D&I with their choice of enterprises. Many job seekers agree with the concept of corporate D&I but do not directly relate it to themselves. Again, the current corporate D&I, especially the inadequate disclosure mechanism of Chinese companies, prevents job seekers from properly understanding corporate D&I.

Further Discussion of Comparison of D&I Practice Between Chinese and Western Enterprises

In addition, the results of the current research, i.e., the feedback received on the Chinese job search market, are expanded to discuss further comparisons with the contribution of Western companies to D&I.

The term D&I was first coined theoretically by Western scholars and pioneered in the business world by European companies. At the same time, the theory is a guide to real life, especially business development. As a result, Western theoretical refinement and popularity in the practice of D&I are greater than that in China, where it remains a relatively new topic in the corporate environment. This difference is also supported by the answers to the open-ended questions collected in the questionnaire.

Figure 10. The bilingual version of D&I Chinese company from open-question.

The bilingual version of the image reveals that when mentioning or exploring which companies are foremost concerning D&I, the three that appear most frequently are Alibaba, Tencent, and Huawei. Case analysis shows that Tencent's focus on D&I is mainly reflected in two aspects. One is holding regular employee team-building activities in the form of a monthly gaming experience, both on and offline. All employees are welcomed, regardless of their personal background or professional title, to promote internal D&I culture and further employee integration. Second, as a social media giant, Tencent has adopted H5 animation recruitment methods, using animated characters with different characteristics to welcome diverse job seekers and ultimately enhance their sense of belonging. Alibaba's approach to D&I is more caring, offering personalised assistance according to employees' needs and situations. Additionally, Huawei's distributed office and large company area give employees a high degree of freedom and therefore exude an internal welcome for all types of talent, demonstrating the D&I atmosphere within the company.

Strikingly, all three frequently-mentioned companies are closely linked to the Internet: Tencent is a giant in online social networking; Huawei is China's undisputed industry leader in mobile phones, and the cloud, and Alibaba is a pioneering company in e-commerce shopping and e-commerce finance. These companies are able to understand and implement D&I in China before other companies because their internet affiliation allows them to harness technology to learn and then communicate their ideas and beliefs. Interestingly, the Bank of China, a representative of China's old state-owned enterprises, has recently announced its intention to enshrine D&I in its corporate governance and the selection processes of its board members. This represents a gradual increase in the development and cultural penetration and acceptance of D&I within different industries.

Further comparisons with international companies in the West show that Chinese companies currently embrace D&I to a lesser extent. For instance, during Pride Month, as shown below, many western companies changed their corporate logos to rainbow colours to demonstrate their embracing of D&I culture and talent and to define their company culture. Additionally, companies such as Accenture and BCG have created a series of presentations and special recruitment channels for women and minority groups to attract and recruit a more diverse range of talent. Clearly, the D&I culture is gaining global momentum and attention, although the application of this culture in the recruitment environment by both Chinese and foreign companies is currently more limited and is accompanied by industry differences.

Figure 11. Examples of D&I logo.

Recommendations for Companies

(1) Accurate delivery of employer signals and differentiated positioning to attract different types of job seekers

Companies should first assess the current state of D&I in their organisations using key diversity measures such as age and gender, the representation of different minorities in different departments and senior positions, and the distribution of salaries among other groups. Following this, the results should be analysed with powerful analytics tools capable of customising the results and automatically sharing them with stakeholders, allowing strategies to be crafted promptly.

Second, D&I measures and their results should be implemented and, crucially, demonstrated internally and externally. Measures may include the redesigning and presentation of external company logos, an increased social media presence, the construction of internal talent system pools and the design of recruitment links to denote an inclusive, diverse, and exciting workplace, thereby encouraging a more diverse talent pool.

Social media content should be optimised with relevant, diverse, and inclusive content, and segmentation is crucial in targeting potential candidates via content and invitations that are uniquely relevant to them. Such content, such as email campaigns, postings, or job descriptions, should be written in unbiased language to avoid detracting from the business' positive elements. The company's online jobs board and landing page may be customised to drive the company's strategy and culture and inform visitors of the company's plans and D&I metrics. Virtual events are also a great way of linking diverse people and are an excellent method of building a diverse community of talents.

Companies can also enhance their corporate image and influence by including quotes from diversity inclusion strategy officers, minority-group employees, and the CEO in campaigns to article the company's culture and ethos further. CBRE did just this in 2018 with a series of targeted, segmented email campaigns designed to enhance their sourcing efforts, and then tracked those campaigns against their Avature job search site. They did so in the knowledge that the Asia-Pacific region is exceptionally diverse, aiming to have their recruitment practices reflect this diversity. The Avature site also features a diversity section, which encourages candidates to apply for positions by showcasing featured companies' commitments to creating an inclusive workplace and links to their D&I website.

Companies should also differentiate between first-time job seekers and re-applicants. First-time job seekers are not only interested in aspects such as salary, promotion prospects, and other practical benefits; they are also focused on employer brand building. Companies should therefore comprehensively publicise their employer brand information to attract them, especially regarding the D&I of the employer's image. Complete information will likely trigger candidates' job search intentions.

Contrastingly, re-applicants are typically more practically oriented and focused on the company's development prospects and their promotion prospects. Therefore, to attract more experienced reapplicants, companies may need to strengthen their development and the development of their products and services.

(2) Build and promote a comprehensive D&I employer brand

In building a culture of D&I, senior management needs to fully understand the critical impact of D&I on the company's success, demonstrate ownership, and provide support. Dedicated teams should be formed to identify the business impact of D&I and the key dimensions that companies need to focus on.

Companies should redesign their hiring and promotion processes to eliminate limited options from the outset. Leaders may believe that objective data drive their decisions, but most decisions do not follow objective data, the most common example of which is "blind applications" or recruitment processes that do not involve photos, gender, or other demographic information. Furthermore, companies also need to acknowledge and avoid hiring bias in light of the truth that people are biologically aligned with others who appear to be in the same category. The crucial point here is that bias can be overcome by acknowledging its existence and addressing it through such methods as building diverse teams and using new hiring practices such as blind interviews and anonymous applications to limit data visibility (which can hinder inclusive hiring).

Conclusion

Conclusion

Talent shortages have challenged employers recently, and the Covid-19 pandemic exacerbated this ongoing crisis. The organisation must take a broader view of talent attraction and retention, as outlined in this study. This study defines the concept of diverse and inclusive HR practices based on the connotations of diverse inclusion and HR practices in the current context of companies addressing employee diversity.

First, according to the research background and purpose of this paper, the authors define the core concepts of D&I and employer brand attractiveness based on combing and summarising international research results. Second, based on current HR trends, the authors raise the question of the possible impact of employer brand focus on D&I in the recruitment phase on potential employees and aim to explore this impact in depth. From returned, valid questionnaires, the authors analysed the effect of employer brand D&I on potential employees along three dimensions: perceptions, behaviours, and decisions. Finally, based on the analysis of the current state of D&I in Chinese companies and the impact of employer brand D&I on potential employees, the authors propose specific measures to build a culture of D&I in the recruitment stage and other aspects of the company.

The research proposed in this study is innovative regarding the recruitment phase of diverse and inclusive human resources. Based on the results of this study, the authors found that online recruitment is currently the dominant trend. In this context, the authors learned that most Chinese companies are still at a low level of presenting their D&I in the recruitment process. In terms of the questionnaire participants' perceptions of corporate diversity and inclusion, the authors found that students are slightly more aware of corporate inclusion

and diversity than the working population; and corporate inclusiveness and diversity are more influential and attractive to the student population than to the working population. Based on this, the authors propose specific measures aimed at building a corporate meta and inclusive culture, including establishing the most relevant key performance indicators to measure a company's D&I status, demonstrating the results of a company's D&I, and recognising and avoiding hiring bias.

Key Findings and Further Trends

Through various analyses, the following results can be drawn from this study:

First, there is a high regression effect between D&I employer brand and job search intention and behaviour. This effect is positive, i.e., the higher the D&I employer brand, the stronger the job search intention and behaviour.

Second, in the process of acting on job search intention, overall, the D&I of the company has the most significant influence on job seekers' decision-making, followed by behavioural influence, and finally, cognitive influence.

Third, an independent sample *t*-test can test whether having previous work experience affects job seekers' perceptions of different dimensions of employer branding, i.e., inexperienced or younger candidates value D&I more, while experienced or older job seekers also consider salary, life, and work balance and other factors. Individuals also want their skills and knowledge to be trained and promoted in a fair environment.

Fourth, In the context of the Internet era, many job seekers tend to use online channels, especially young job seekers. Market competition has become increasingly fierce, and the employer image of enterprises is more readily promoted. This provides challenges and opportunities for corporate management, with many companies still unaware of building and promoting D&I. Opportunities may be grasped by adapting recruitment systems to meet the new technological era and demands of job seekers and ensuring those systems can attract suitable candidates through a diverse and inclusive employer brand.

Limitations

This study confirms the role relationship and boundaries between diversity and inclusion in employer brand perceptions and job search intention, behaviour, and decision making through empirical analysis and strives to be objective and rigorous. Although it breaks through the existing research framework to a certain extent and obtains some more valuable research findings, due to subjective and objective factors, the current research still has the following shortcomings.

Although this study distinguishes between first-time job seekers and re-seekers in the research group, non-graduating students are not excluded from the student group of first-time job seekers. Compared with graduating students who will be job hunting, non-graduating students may not have a deep understanding of job hunting, so there may be some shortcomings.

On the one hand, this study's findings confirm that first-time job seekers may focus more on a company's brand of D&I, while re-applicants may concentrate more on more practical matters such as salary and promotion. This may be due to sample and geographical differences since this study's sample is mainly in China. Future studies may, then, conduct further in-depth research on this issue to compare the employer brands better that first-time job seekers and repeat job seekers focus on in their job search. On the other hand, the findings of this study show that D&I of employer brands positively influences job search intentions, behaviours, and decisions for first-time and repeat job seekers. The perceived D&I employer brands may have a negative effect on job search intentions due to job seekers' different personal characteristics and matching tendencies. Since this study does

not focus on the matching problem of job seekers, more research may be conducted on the matching issue of job seekers' personal characteristics and employer brands to enrich the existing research.

This study focuses on the initial attraction stage of job seekers in the research process. However, it does not verify in detail whether job seekers eventually made good choices, which may be of most concern to enterprises. Therefore, a follow-up study could investigate the impact of job seekers' job search intentions and decisions at different stages.

It is hoped that the aforementioned limitations will serve as a guide for future researchers and the author's next stage of research direction for further exploration and improvement.

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Appendix 1. Questionnaires

Exploring the Attractiveness of Companies Branding D&I to Potential Employees in Online Recruitment

Dear Questionnaire Participant:

Welcome to participate in this questionnaire. Firstly, thanks very much for taking the time to participate in this survey and for taking approximately 20 minutes to answer the following questions. Due to academic research needs to explore the attractiveness of companies branding diversity and inclusion to potential employees in online recruitment channels, you are invited to share your precious opinions.

Secondly, this questionnaire is a perception questionnaire and there are no right or wrong answers. Your opinion and true feelings will be of great assistance to this study and I would appreciate your support and cooperation. Furthermore, this survey guarantees that the information obtained will be used for academic research purposes only and that your information will be kept absolutely confidential.

Finally, thanks again wholeheartedly for your support! Wish you the best!

Part I. Basic Information Collection

1. What is your age? *
   - ○A. Under 25 years old
   - ○B. 25-50 years old
   - ○C. Over 50 years old
2. What is your gender?*
   - ○A. Male
   - ○B. Female
   - ○C. Prefer not to say
3. What is your current work status? *
   - ○A. Students
   - ○B. Employed
4. In most cases, how do you get your job information from companies? *
   - ○A. Company Official Website
   - ○B. Professionalised Recruitment Platform
   - ○C. Referrals from Friends and Family
   - ○D. Job Posters on Offline Billboards
5. Which of the following types of corporate interviews are you currently experiencing or preferring? *
   - ○A. Webcam
   - ○B. Telephone Interview
   - ○C. Offline Interview

5A. What do you think is the biggest advantage of online interviewing these days? *

- ○A. Reduced Costs (e.g. savings on transport)
- ○B. More Flexibility in Timing
- ○C. Helps Reduce Nervousness
- ○D. Ancillary Tools could be used (e.g. split screen teleprompter)

Dependent on option 1 of question 5

Part II. Questions on the knowledge level of diversity and inclusion in business

Additional Information:

Diversity is any dimension that could be used to distinguish groups and people from one another.

Inclusion is an organisational effort and practice in which different groups or individuals with different backgrounds are culturally and socially accepted and welcomed.

D&I in a company refers to the range of strategies, policies, and missions adopted by a company to create and encourage an inclusive workplace that attracts a diverse pool of talent from different cultural backgrounds.

6. To what extent are you aware of the D&I of the companies presented? *

○A. Very Clear

○B. Quite Understand

○C. Little Knowledge

○D. Unknown at all

6A. How well do you think companies present this aspect in the recruitment process? *

○A. Full demonstration of the company's D&I

○B. Good demonstration of the company's D&I

○C. Fewer demonstration of the company's D&I

○D. No demonstration of the company's D&I at all

Dependent on question 7, option 1;2

7. Below are the factors that influence candidates' choice of companies. Please select the 3 factors that you value most in your job seeking. *

□Job Salary

□Job Fit & Interest

□Promotion Possibilities

□Corporate Diversity and Inclusion □Leadership Attraction

□The Balance of Life and Work (overtime and exertion situations)

□Enterprise Size

□Corporate Recognition

□Training and Learning Opportunities

Part III. Questions about the impact of corporate D&I on the attractiveness to potential employees

This part is based on the five-point Likert scale and describes the various dimensions of diversity and inclusion in companies. Please rate your opinion on these statements based on your true perception of diversity and inclusion in the job search process and tick the box that best represents your opinion.

1. Strongly Disagree; 2. Disagree; 3. Generally Agree; 4. Somewhat Agree; 5. Strongly Agree.

8. The impact of Corporate Diversity and Inclusion on job seekers' perceptions; *

	1	2	3	4	5
I am interested in companies with diversity and inclusion.	o	o	o	o	o
I think companies that are diverse and inclusive value their employees more.	o	o	o	o	o
I think companies that are diverse and inclusive have a better team working atmosphere.	o	o	o	o	o
I would prefer to work in a company with diversity and inclusion.	o	o	o	o	o

9. The impact of corporate diversity and inclusion on the behaviour of job seekers; *

	1	2	3	4	5
I will proactively search and research information on corporate diversity and inclusion in target companies during the job search process.	o	o	o	o	o
Inclusivity and diversity would be something that I would value and would be proactive in answering during a job interview.	o	o	o	o	o
I would recommend companies that I have learned about that are diverse and inclusive to other job seekers around me.	o	o	o	o	o
I will take the initiative to meet people who work in a diverse and inclusive business.	o	o	o	o	o

10. The impact of corporate diversity and inclusion on job seekers' decisions;*

	1	2	3	4	5
I would include consideration of diversity and inclusion in the decision making process for the company I am looking for.	o	o	o	o	o
I would prefer to join a company with diversity and inclusion.	o	o	o	o	o
I would have confidence in a company with diversity and inclusion to work here on a sustainable basis.	o	o	o	o	o
I believe that a company with diversity and inclusiveness is better for my future career.	o	o	o	o	o

Part IV. Open-ended Questions

11. Do you think it is a future trend for companies to showcase diversity and inclusion in recruitment sessions? *

○Yes

○No

12. Please list one company that you remember doing the best job of diversity and inclusion in business and briefly describe what makes it outstanding.

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