Employer attractiveness and corporate reputation as brand signals: A dual-stage inspiration pathway to job pursuit intention

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Abstract: This study examines how employer brand signals influence job pursuit intention among Generation Z job seekers in a developing-country context. The purpose is to clarify how corporate reputation and employer attractiveness evoke and sustain inspiration that motivates application behavior. Drawing on Signaling Theory, Person–Organization Fit, and Social Identity perspectives, the study proposes a dual-stage inspiration mechanism in which an evoked ("inspired-by") state precedes a motivational ("inspired-to") state. Data were collected from 420 respondents in Ho Chi Minh City and analyzed using partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The results indicate that both corporate reputation and employer attractiveness positively influence evoked inspiration, which strongly predicts motivational inspiration, leading to higher job pursuit intention. The model explains 42 percent of the variance in motivational inspiration and 51 percent in job pursuit intention. The findings confirm that employer brand signals inspire rather than merely inform potential applicants. Practically, organizations should design reputation and attractiveness strategies that evoke both admiration and motivation, thereby strengthening employer appeal and converting positive perceptions into concrete application intentions.

Keywords: Corporate reputation, Employer attractiveness, Generation Z, Inspiration, Job pursuit intention, Signaling theory.

1. Introduction

In many developing-country labor markets, Generation Z (born 1997–2012 [1]) is rapidly becoming the largest cohort of new entrants. Employers face growing pressure to convert interest into applications in urban hubs such as Ho Chi Minh City, where competition for early-career talent is intense and digital channels shape how organizations are judged [2]. These conditions heighten the need to understand how employer brand signals influence young people's intentions to apply for jobs.

Two externally visible signals are central to applicant evaluation. Corporate reputation reflects collective judgments about a firm's overall standing among stakeholders [3], and employer attractiveness reflects the anticipated benefits of working for the firm [4]. Signaling theory explains how such cues reduce information asymmetry by allowing job seekers to infer otherwise unobservable qualities [5]. Reviews of employer image and employer branding underscore the importance of these signals for evaluations and intentions in the recruitment context [2]. Person–Organization fit and social identity perspectives further suggest that applicants interpret such cues in terms of perceived compatibility and identity-relevant prestige [6, 7].

Several gaps remain. Much of the empirical base is Western and organization-centered, with comparatively fewer applicant-side studies in developing-country contexts [2]. Work linking employer signals to intention often treats the intervening psychology as a black box. Foundational research conceptualizes inspiration as a sequence from evoked ("inspired by") to motivational ("inspired to")

states [8] and branding research validates this two-state structure in market settings [9]. Yet, this sequential specification has received limited examination on the applicant side in developing-country contexts. Meta-analytic evidence further positions intention as a key precursor to application behavior in recruitment models [10], reinforcing the value of clarifying how inspiration connects signals to intention. Consistent with Person–Organization fit and social identity theory, such inspiration is expected when applicants appraise identity-relevant prestige and perceive the organization as a compatible affiliation [6, 7].

This study specifies and tests a two-stage inspiration process within an employer-branding model through four path hypotheses (H1–H4), without advancing mediation hypotheses. Using Ho Chi Minh City as an illustrative case of an urban developing-country labor market, the analysis surveys Generation Z respondents and applies PLS-SEM. The contribution is to clarify inspiration as a sequential state linking employer signals to application intentions and to provide guidance for organizations in comparable developing-economy settings.

2. Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1. Employer Brand Signals: Employer Attractiveness and Corporate Reputation

Recruitment involves information asymmetry; applicants, therefore, rely on observable organizational cues to infer otherwise unobservable qualities of employers [5]. Employer-branding research consistently identifies corporate reputation and employer attractiveness as two dominant external signals shaping these inferences [2, 4, 11]. Both constructs communicate information about organizational credibility and value alignment that guide early applicant evaluations.

Corporate reputation refers to collective judgments about a firm's overall standing among stakeholders, encompassing trustworthiness, legitimacy, and social responsibility [3, 12]. Recent studies show that reputation signals extend beyond competence to include ethical integrity and sustainability, attributes that strongly influence Generation Z job seekers [13, 14]. Empirical evidence demonstrates that firms with socially responsible reputations attract more applicants because such reputations enhance perceived person–organization fit and motivational engagement [10, 15].

Employer attractiveness denotes the perceived desirability of working for an organization, combining instrumental attributes such as compensation and advancement opportunities with symbolic values such as prestige, culture, and purpose [4, 16]. Contemporary work emphasizes that digital employer value propositions and authentic social-media storytelling strengthen attractiveness among younger cohorts [13, 14]. Inclusive workplace practices and cultural alignment further reinforce perceived attractiveness by signaling compatibility and identity relevance [17].

From a theoretical standpoint, these two signals operate jointly through the interpretive mechanisms of signaling theory, person–organization fit, and social identity theory [5-7]. Signaling theory explains how external cues reduce uncertainty by revealing organizational quality; Person–Organization fit clarifies how value congruence fosters compatibility; and Social identity theory describes how prestige and belonging transform perception into identification [7, 17]. Integrating these lenses, meta-analytical and review evidence conclude that corporate reputation and employer attractiveness function as dual signals, the former conveying institutional credibility and the latter expressing personal meaning that jointly influence early inspiration and job-pursuit intentions [11, 12].

H_1: Corporate reputation is positively associated with evoked inspiration.

H_2: Employer attractiveness is positively associated with evoked inspiration.

2.2. Inspiration as a Two-Stage Mechanism

Inspiration is a motivational construct that unfolds through two consecutive phases: an evoked state that follows the appraisal of an external stimulus and a motivational state that directs effort toward acting on that appraisal [8]. Conceptualizing inspiration as a process rather than a feeling clarifies how external cues transform attention into goal-directed energy. Early psychological research distinguished these two stages, showing that inspiration arises when a person experiences admiration or elevation

that subsequently leads to purposeful behavior [8]. Later studies in marketing and organizational behavior confirmed this dual-phase structure, finding that the evoked component precedes the motivational component, which predicts creativity, engagement, and behavioral intention beyond general affect [9, 18].

Recent evidence continues to support this sequential mechanism. Thrash et al. [18] demonstrated that inspiration serves as a transmission channel linking external stimuli to approach motivation through perceptions of value and transcendence. Böttger et al. [9] found in consumer research that inspiration mediates the influence of brand-related stimuli on engagement and loyalty. Similar patterns are reported in organizational contexts, where inspirational leadership and branding cues elicit admiration that evolves into motivation and subsequent behavioral outcomes [19]. Collectively, these findings suggest that inspiration functions as a bridge between perception and action.

Applied to recruitment, employer-related cues such as corporate reputation and perceived attractiveness can first trigger an evoked sense of inspiration when job seekers perceive the organization as reputable, trustworthy, and personally meaningful [3, 4, 7]. This evoked state may then develop into motivational inspiration, which channels cognitive and emotional energy toward job-related behaviors, including information search, preparation to apply, or expressing intent to pursue employment [8, 19]. Prior meta-analytic work has consistently shown that job pursuit intention is a key predictor of actual application behavior in recruitment models [10]. It follows that the motivational stage of inspiration should correspond with higher job-pursuit intention. Based on this reasoning, two hypotheses are formulated:

H_3: *Evoked inspiration is positively associated with motivational inspiration.*
H_4: *Motivational inspiration is positively associated with job pursuit intention.*

2.3. Research Framework

This study develops a conceptual framework that explains how employer brand signals influence job pursuit intention among Generation Z job seekers. Ho Chi Minh City is used as an illustrative setting representing an urban labor market in a developing economy. The framework integrates three complementary perspectives: Signaling theory, which explains how observable cues reduce information asymmetry and guide applicant inference under uncertainty [5] Person–Organization fit theory, which emphasizes perceived compatibility between individual values and organizational attributes [6, 20] and social identity theory, which highlights the importance of identity-relevant prestige and belonging associated with organizational affiliation [7].

The model focuses on two visible employer brand signals: corporate reputation and employer attractiveness. Corporate reputation represents the collective assessment of an organization's credibility, integrity, and social responsibility among stakeholders [3, 11, 12]. Employer attractiveness refers to the anticipated instrumental and symbolic benefits of employment [4, 16]. Consistent with recent findings [13, 14], these signals act as complementary cues, reputation providing institutional legitimacy and attractiveness conveying personal relevance, that jointly shape early applicant perceptions in recruitment contexts.

Their effects are examined through a two-stage inspiration process derived from motivational psychology and extended in branding and organizational research [8, 9, 18, 19]. The process begins with an evoked, or "inspired-by," state triggered by the appraisal of employer cues, followed by a motivational, or "inspired-to," state that channels energy toward goal-directed behavior. Together, these stages explain how positive impressions evolve into a concrete intention to act [8, 19].

The outcome variable, job pursuit intention, reflects an individual's willingness to apply for a position and has been validated as a reliable predictor of actual application behavior [10]. The framework, therefore, links applicants' cognitive and affective appraisals of employer signals, such as perceived credibility, attractiveness, and identity relevance, with the dual stages of inspiration that convert perception into intention. In this way, it connects established theories of employer signaling

with emerging motivational mechanisms that describe how organizational cues inspire purposeful action among young job seekers.
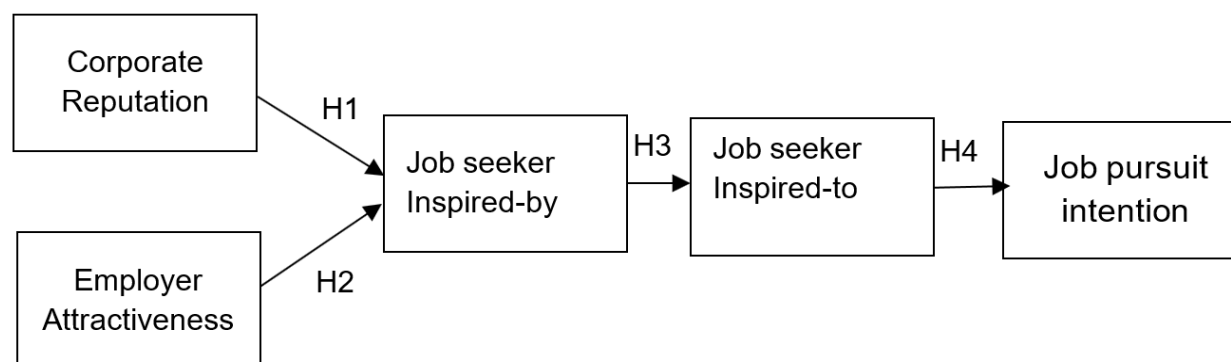
Figure 1.
Proposed research model.

As shown in Figure 1, corporate reputation and employer attractiveness serve as the two primary employer brand signals that initiate the inspiration process. Both signals represent externally observable cues that reduce information asymmetry during early-stage recruitment evaluation. When job seekers perceive a firm as reputable and attractive, these cues first evoke an inspired-by response, reflecting admiration and attention toward the organization. This evoked state then transitions into an inspired-to response, characterized by motivation and goal-directed energy to pursue employment opportunities. The model thus depicts a sequential pathway in which external brand signals trigger internal motivational states, ultimately leading to job pursuit intention. This structure aligns with signaling theory and the dual-stage conceptualization of inspiration, demonstrating how employer cues move applicants from perception to purposeful action.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Design and Sampling

This study adopts a cross-sectional survey design focusing on Generation Z job seekers in an urban developing-country context, using Ho Chi Minh City as the illustrative case. The target population comprises individuals born between 1997 and 2012 who are entering or preparing to enter the workforce. A non-probability convenience sampling approach yielded 420 valid responses, meeting the commonly used minimums for SEM-based analyses and ensuring adequate statistical power. Participation was voluntary and anonymous; respondents provided informed consent before completing the survey.

3.2. Data Collection

Data were collected through an online questionnaire distributed across multiple digital channels. The survey link was circulated via university mailing lists and student associations, faculty and program groups, alumni networks, and public social-media communities used by students and early-career job seekers in Ho Chi Minh City. Recruitment messages targeted multiple universities and faculties to increase variation by gender, institution, field of study/major, and status (current student, recent graduate, early-career job seeker). Eligibility required belonging to Generation Z (born 1997–2012) and residing or studying in Ho Chi Minh City at the time of the survey.

3.3. Measures

All key constructs were measured with multi-item, five-point Likert-type scales adapted from established sources. Corporate reputation (CR) was measured using items adapted from Cable and

Turban [3], capturing perceptions of a firm's overall standing among stakeholders. Employer attractiveness (EA) was assessed using items from Berthon et al. [4] reflecting anticipated instrumental and symbolic benefits of working for the firm.

Evoked inspiration or Job Inspired-by (JSIB) and motivational inspiration or Job Inspired-to (JSIT) were measured using items derived from Thrash and Elliot [8] and Böttger et al. [9] representing the "inspired-by" and "inspired-to" components of inspiration, respectively. These scales capture both the initial feeling of admiration and the subsequent motivational drive to act.

Job pursuit intention (JPI) was measured using items from Highhouse et al. [21] and Uggerslev et al. [10], which assess the individual's willingness and intention to apply for a position with the organization. All items were contextually refined to the recruitment setting of Generation Z job seekers and administered within a single questionnaire using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 5 ("strongly agree").

3.4. Measurement Model Evaluation

Following PLS-SEM guidelines, the measurement model was assessed prior to structural testing. Indicator reliability was examined via outer loadings, with items < .40 removed and items in the .40–.70 range considered for removal only when doing so improved composite reliability or AVE. Internal consistency was assessed using Cronbach's alpha (α) and composite reliability (CR). Convergent validity was evaluated with average variance extracted (AVE ≥ .50). Discriminant validity was examined using HTMT and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. Collinearity was checked using variance inflation factors (VIF). To assess potential common method bias, a single-factor test and VIF diagnostics were inspected. Summary statistics (outer loadings, Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), AVE, HTMT, VIF) are presented in the measurement table below.

Table 1.
Measurement model summary.

Construct	k	Cronbach's alpha (α)	CR	AVE	Min. loading	Max. loading
Corporate Reputation (CR)	4	0.898	0.928	0.763	0.806	0.902
Employer Attractiveness (EA)	5	0.899	0.925	0.712	0.798	0.877
Job Seeker Inspired By (JSIB)	5	0.875	0.909	0.667	0.776	0.846
Job Seeker Inspired To (JSIT)	5	0.883	0.915	0.683	0.803	0.845
Job Pursuit Intention (JPI)	4	0.874	0.913	0.725	0.830	0.871

Note: All loadings ≥ 0.70; α = Cronbach's alpha; CR = Composite reliability; AVE = Average variance extracted.

All outer loadings exceeded 0.70 (range = 0.776–0.902), confirming indicator reliability. Cronbach's alpha (α) values ranged from 0.874 to 0.899, and Composite Reliability (CR) values from 0.909 to 0.928, exceeding the 0.7 threshold and indicating strong internal consistency [22]. Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values were all greater than or equal to 0.5, confirming convergent validity [23]. All HTMT ratios were below 0.85, indicating satisfactory discriminant validity [24]. VIF values were below 2.0 (Table 3), confirming the absence of multicollinearity [25].

Table 2.
Discriminant validity (HTMT).

	CR	EA	JPI	JSIB	JSIT
CR	-				
EA	0.084	-			
JPI	0.104	0.050	-		
JSIB	0.164	0.203	0.270	-	
JSIT	0.125	0.078	0.565	0.534	-

Note: All HTMT ratios < 0.85, indicating discriminant validity.

Table 3.
Collinearity diagnostics (inner VIF).

Endogenous	Predictor	VIF
JSIB	CR	1.005
JSIB	EA	1.005
JSIT	JSIB	1.000
JPI	JSIT	1.000

Note: All VIF values < 2.0, indicating no multicollinearity.

3.5. Structural Model Evaluation

After establishing measurement adequacy, structural relationships were estimated using PLS-SEM in SmartPLS 4 with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. Hypotheses H1–H4 were evaluated using standardized path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values. Explanatory power for endogenous constructs was summarized with R^2. Model diagnostics are reported alongside the path estimates in the results tables.

4. Research Results

4.1. Descriptive Statistics of the Research Sample

A structured questionnaire survey was conducted among members of Generation Z (born between 1997 and 2012) [1] who were either entering or preparing to enter the labor market. After data screening, 420 valid responses were retained for analysis. This exceeds the minimum sample size required for PLS-SEM, as recommended by Hair et al. [22]. The demographic profile of respondents is summarized in Table 4 below:

Table 4.
Descriptive statistics.

Categories		n	Proportion (%)
Age	16 – 18	158	37.6
	19 – 22	180	42.9
	23 – 28	82	19.5
Gender	Male	164	39.0
	Female	202	48.1
	Others	54	12.9
Occupation	High school student	158	37.6
	University student	166	39.5
	Office worker	45	10.7
	Freelancer	13	3.1
	Others	38	9.1
Preferred employment field	Technology	62	14.8
	Fashion – Garment	33	7.9
	Finance – Banking	84	20.0
	Construction	20	4.8
	Media – Marketing – PR	100	23.8
	Tourism – Hospitality	56	13.3
	Education	44	10.5
	Others	21	5.0

Most respondents were aged 19–22 (42.9 percent) and were currently university students (39.5 percent), while 37.6 percent were high school pupils. This composition reflects the early-career segment of Generation Z, those who are preparing to enter or have just entered the workforce. The gender distribution is balanced (48.1 percent female, 39 percent male). The fields most frequently selected for future employment include media–marketing, public relations, finance–banking, and technology, suggesting Generation Z's inclination toward dynamic and creative sectors. Although the data were collected in Vietnam, the country serves as a representative example of developing economies where

rapid digitalization and youth-driven labor market transformation are shaping similar trends across emerging markets.

4.2. Structural Model Results and Hypothesis Testing

After examining the sample characteristics, the structural model was analyzed to test the hypothesized relationships. Structural relationships among the latent constructs were estimated using the partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM) technique in SmartPLS 4, based on 5,000 bootstrap resamples. The analysis generated standardized path coefficients (β), t-values, and p-values for testing the hypothesized relationships.

Table 5.
Structural path coefficients and hypothesis testing.

Hypothesis	Path	β	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	Corporate Reputation → Job Seeker Inspired By	0.143	3.261	0.001	Supported
H2	Employer Attractiveness → Job Seeker Inspired By	0.175	3.793	0.000	Supported
H3	Job Seeker Inspired By → Job Seeker Inspired To	0.473	13.002	0.000	Supported
H4	Job Seeker Inspired To → Job Pursuit Intention	0.502	12.138	0.000	Supported

Note: Model explanatory power
R^2 (Job Seeker Inspired To) = 0.42
R^2 (Job Pursuit Intention) = 0.51.

All hypothesized paths were statistically significant at the 95 percent confidence level. Corporate reputation ($\beta = 0.143$, $p = 0.001$) and employer attractiveness ($\beta = 0.175$, $p < 0.001$) both positively affected Job Seeker Inspired By, supporting H1 and H2. The subsequent relationships showed a strong two-stage inspiration process: Job Seeker Inspired By significantly enhanced Job Seeker Inspired To ($\beta = 0.473$, $p < 0.001$), which in turn exerted the strongest influence on Job Pursuit Intention ($\beta = 0.502$, $p < 0.001$). The model demonstrated moderate to high explanatory power, with $R^2 = 0.42$ for Job Seeker Inspired To and $R^2 = 0.51$ for Job Pursuit Intention. These values exceed recommended minimum thresholds for substantial explanatory relevance in behavioral research [22, 26].

The empirical results confirm that positive employer signals, particularly corporate reputation and perceived attractiveness, play a key role in inspiring potential job seekers. The process unfolds in two stages: an evoked stage, where organizational cues trigger admiration and attention (JSIB), and a motivational stage, where inspiration energizes intention (JSIT). This two-step mechanism provides robust support for the study's conceptual model, demonstrating that Generation Z's job pursuit behavior is driven not only by cognitive evaluations but also by affective and motivational responses.

5. Discussion, Implications, and Conclusion

5.1. Theoretical Interpretation

This study develops and empirically validates an integrated model explaining job pursuit intention among Generation Z job seekers through the combined lenses of Signaling theory, Person–Organization fit theory, and Social Identity theory. The results confirm that corporate reputation and employer attractiveness operate as key external signals under conditions of information asymmetry, consistent with the signaling view of recruitment [5, 12]. Both signals positively influence the evoked component of inspiration, showing that early employer evaluations are not only cognitive but also affective in nature. A reputable and attractive employer conveys both instrumental and symbolic benefits and evokes admiration as well as aspirational identification, consistent with the social identity perspective that individuals strengthen their self-concept through affiliation with prestigious organizations [7, 17].

A central theoretical contribution is the validation of inspiration as a two-stage process that connects employer perception with behavioral intention. The findings demonstrate that admiration (inspired-by) evolves into motivation (inspired-to), which in turn drives job pursuit intention. This

sequential mechanism extends current employer-branding and recruitment models by showing how affective appraisals are transformed into purposeful action. It bridges the conceptual gap between brand perception and behavioral intention and positions inspiration as a motivational link between reputation-based cues and applicant engagement [8, 9, 18, 19].

5.2. Theoretical Contributions

This study makes four related contributions to employer branding research and to the broader fields of organizational psychology and marketing.

First, it introduces and empirically supports a tri-theory framework that integrates Signaling theory, Person–Organization fit, and social identity perspectives. This integration provides a multistage explanation of how employer signals are interpreted, internalized, and transformed into behavioral intention. It enhances the conceptual coherence of employer-branding research by moving beyond isolated theoretical models and demonstrating how perceptions of reputation and attractiveness jointly influence applicant motivation [2, 5-7, 12].

Second, the study extends the construct of inspiration from consumer and brand psychology [8, 9, 18, 19] into the recruitment context. It demonstrates the dual-phase nature of inspiration, evoked and motivational, and its mediating role in linking employer brand signals with job pursuit intention. In doing so, the research advances existing models from static representations of employer image toward dynamic, process-oriented explanations of applicant behavior.

Third, the study reframes employer branding as a marketing-driven rather than purely HR-driven construct. By conceptualizing job seekers as active consumers of employer brands, it aligns recruitment theory with mainstream marketing perspectives on symbolic consumption, emotional attachment, and identity-based choice. This cross-disciplinary integration enriches both recruitment and branding literatures by identifying shared psychological mechanisms that underlie attraction and commitment.

Finally, while Vietnam serves as the empirical setting, the study's insights are relevant to other developing and digitally transforming labor markets. The cross-context findings strengthen theoretical generalizability and suggest that core constructs such as corporate reputation, employer attractiveness, and inspiration retain explanatory power across diverse economic environments.

5.3. Practical Implications

The findings offer several actionable implications for practitioners aiming to attract and engage Generation Z talent in competitive labor markets. First, employers should view inspiration as the central psychological mechanism that translates employer signals into application intention. Branding strategies should therefore be designed not only to inform but also to inspire, evoking both admiration and motivation by combining organizational credibility with aspirational storytelling [8, 9]. Second, corporate reputation and employer attractiveness should be managed as complementary rather than separate signals. Reputation establishes trust, legitimacy, and a sense of security, while attractiveness communicates personal relevance, opportunities for growth, and alignment with individual values [3, 4]. When coordinated, these two dimensions reinforce each other and create stronger emotional engagement among potential applicants. Third, organizations should integrate human resource and marketing functions to develop coherent, emotionally resonant employer brands across digital and social platforms. Unified communication and consistent imagery help transform employer branding into a holistic experience that appeals to both the rational and emotional dimensions of job seekers. Finally, in developing economies where digitalization and youth-driven labor market change are accelerating, an inspiration-based branding approach may be particularly effective in differentiating employers. By connecting credibility with aspiration, organizations can build lasting engagement with young job seekers and strengthen their competitive position in attracting the next generation of talent.

5.4. Limitations and Future Research

This study has several limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal interpretation, and non-probability sampling limits representativeness. Although diagnostics indicate no serious common-method bias, self-report data may inflate observed relationships. Future research should adopt longitudinal designs, behavioral measures, and cross-cultural comparisons to test the robustness of the dual-process model. Additional moderators, such as media exposure, organizational trust, or post-hire experiences, could extend understanding of how inspiration unfolds across the broader employment journey.

5.5. Conclusion

This study examined how corporate reputation and employer attractiveness influence job pursuit intention among Generation Z job seekers through a two-stage inspiration mechanism. Drawing on Signaling theory, Person–Organization fit theory, and social identity theory, the research developed and empirically validated an integrated model that explains how employer signals are interpreted and transformed into motivation to apply. Using Ho Chi Minh City as an illustrative case of an urban labor market in a developing economy, the analysis of 420 valid responses using PLS-SEM confirmed that both corporate reputation and employer attractiveness evoke admiration ("inspired-by"), which subsequently develops into motivation ("inspired-to") and leads to job pursuit intention.

Theoretically, the findings advance employer-branding research by moving beyond static evaluations of employer image toward dynamic psychological processes. The validated dual-process model of inspiration adds a motivational link between brand-related signals and behavioral intention, enriching recruitment theory with perspectives from marketing and psychology [8, 9, 18, 19]. By integrating signaling, fit, and identity perspectives [5-7, 12, 20] the study provides a comprehensive explanation of how external cues elicit affective engagement and goal-directed action. It contributes to a unified conceptual framework connecting employer branding with broader theories of consumer inspiration, organizational identity, and symbolic meaning.

From a managerial standpoint, the results suggest that effective employer branding requires more than providing factual information about job attributes. Corporate reputation and attractiveness should be communicated in ways that elicit both admiration and motivation. Employers should craft engagement strategies that use authentic narratives, credible reputation cues, and aspirational value propositions to transform positive perceptions into genuine application intentions. Coordinating human-resource and marketing functions, and investing in emotionally resonant digital communication, can further strengthen applicant motivation and brand differentiation in competitive labor markets.

Overall, this study identifies inspiration as a central psychological mechanism through which employer signals shape job-pursuit behavior. The dual-process model offers a transferable theoretical lens for understanding how young job seekers in emerging economies respond to organizational cues in an increasingly digital context. By viewing employer branding as a strategic, psychologically grounded, and globally adaptable process, organizations can build more meaningful and enduring connections with the next generation of talent.

Transparency:

The authors confirm that the manuscript is an honest, accurate, and transparent account of the study; that no vital features of the study have been omitted; and that any discrepancies from the study as planned have been explained. This study followed all ethical practices during writing.

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