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Willingness to work for multinational enterprises from emerging countries: The case of Chinese multinational enterprises in the Netherlands

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A B S T R A C T

How do perceptions of country-of-origin image (COI) relate to willingness of Western people to work for sub-sidiaries in advanced countries of multinational enterprises from emerging countries (EMNEs)? We seek to shed light on this question by exploring six hypotheses based on environment-processing metatheory. Applying a PLS-SEM analysis of online survey data from the Netherlands, we find that the COI and familiarity with the EMNE's home country are positively associated with willingness to work. Additionally, we reveal a few mediating effects indicating that familiarity and individual difference are indirectly related to willingness to work. This study contributes to our understanding of the inability of EMNEs to attract talent in the Western world by adding a macro perspective to the human resource management literature. Furthermore, we extend environment-processing metatheory by expanding the focus from the perceived internal context (corporate information) to the perceived external environment (country of origin), as well as to the antecedents (familiarity and individual differences) of the perceived environment.

1. Introduction

What influences Western people's willingness to work for sub-sidiaries of multinational enterprises from emerging countries (EMNEs)? Human resource management (HRM) research investigates factors that influence the attractiveness of a firm to applicants. However, this question has not yet been addressed for this specific, and quickly emerging, group of firms. The rapid changes in the global economic landscape, particularly the impressive rise of emerging economies and their EMNEs (Alon, Anderson, Munim, & Ho, 2018; Knox, Agnew, & McCarthy, 2014; Paul & Benito, 2018; Ramamurti & Hillemann, 2018), in tandem with those in demographic structures, such as the aging population in the West (Chand & Tung, 2014), have fueled the labor demand–supply gap in the past decades. Attracting, engaging, and retaining employees, as an important role and respon-sibility of HRM (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016; Welch & Bjorkman, 2015), become more challenging for international businesses. For EMNEs, particularly, the challenge is even more pronounced, especially in ad-vanced countries. Studies have suggested that, given their different background, EMNEs are not like MNEs from advanced countries (AMNEs) in terms of motivation, strategies and processes (Deng, 2012; Guillén & García-Canal, 2009; Ramamurti & Hillemann, 2018; Ramamurti, 2009). EMNEs are facing more challenges than AMNEs due

to the fact that EMNEs need to overcome not only the liability of for-eignness because of their unfamiliarity with local market conditions, but also the liability of emergingness because of the negative percep-tions of their home country (Madhok & Keyhani, 2012; Thite, Wilkinson, & Shah, 2012). For example, according to a recent survey conducted by Pew Research Center, perception of China across Western countries is, overall, negative: A median of 57 % of respondents in Western Europe have an unfavorable opinion of China, while 60 %, 67 % and 57 % respondents in the US, Canada and Australia, respectively, view China unfavorably (Silver, Devlin, & Huang, 2019). However, while the disadvantages of EMNEs are recognized, the challenges that EMNEs' international HRM (IHRM) has to overcome in tandem with the local employees' perception of EMNEs are under-researched, to date. In addition, understanding the impact of individual and institutional-level factors (Newburry & Thakur, 2010) on career benefit and local (po-tential) employees' perception regarding EMNEs will help EMNEs to develop effective strategies to attract local talent. However, we know little about local employees' perception of EMNEs.

One of the most important motivations of EMNEs to invest in ad-vanced countries is to acquire knowledge and capabilities needed to enhance their global competitiveness (Awate, Larsen, & Mudambi, 2015; Deng, 2012; Kedia, Gaffney, & Clampit, 2012; Liu & Giroud, 2016; Rugman, 2009). Local employees and managers in advanced

countries are important sources of such knowledge and capabilities from the perspective of the EMNE headquarters (Amighini, Cozza, Giuliani, Rabellotti, & Scalera, 2015). This applies to EMNEs that choose to enter an advanced country through greenfield investment as well as cross-border acquisition. Therefore, finding and attracting the right human capital to newly established subsidiaries and retaining the talent in acquired companies are especially important for EMNEs, given where they come from and the gap they need to close. However, talent in advanced countries may be reluctant, or even averse, to decide to work for EMNEs' subsidiaries or for the companies that acquired by EMNEs in their countries (Tung, 2016; Zhang, Young, Tan, & Sun, 2018). This inability to attract and retain talent in advanced countries would impede the internationalization of these EMNEs.

Despite the evident importance to EMNEs, the inability to attract local talent and why this is the case have rarely been examined, implying a clear knowledge gap. The lack of such research may be due to two reasons. First, international business has long been dominated by MNEs from advanced countries, with EMNEs being recent newcomers. To develop novel or apply and extend existing theory to explain this new phenomenon takes time. Second, the present scope of human capital research is limited by its focus on the individual, organization or team level (Cascio & Boudreau, 2016; Khilji, Tarique, & Schuler, 2015). Hence, the effect of global and home-country factors on HRM practices has not yet been sufficiently explored (Welch & Bjorkman, 2015). As a result, researchers have not, to date, turned to exploring important macro factors that influence HRM at an EMNE. In the current study, we seek to take a first step toward addressing both gaps.

Essentially, we adopt a multi-level lens, investigating the impact of both macro-level perceptions of the country of origin and micro-level individual differences on potential employee's willingness to work for EMNEs' subsidiaries in advanced countries. We focus only on **potential** employees, given the newcomer status of EMNEs and the very limited experience people tend to have with such enterprises in an advanced host country. We address the following two inter-related research questions: (1) To what extent, and how, do the perception of country-of-origin image (COI) and country familiarity influence Western people's willingness to work for EMNEs' subsidiaries in their advanced countries? and (2) To what extent, and how, do individual differences such as age and international experience directly and indirectly influence Western people's willingness to work for EMNEs in their advanced countries? For the sake of brevity, we use "willingness to work" to refer to the lengthy "willingness of Western people to work for EMNEs' subsidiaries in their advanced countries" phrase, where "Western people" refers to the citizens in an advanced country. Specifically, this study explores these questions in the context of Dutch respondents' perceptions of China and their willingness to work for Chinese firms in the Netherlands.

Theory-wise, this study draws on insights from environment processing metatheory (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005) and the concept of COI from the international marketing literature. Environment processing metatheory is an overarching lens that synthesizes the logic of and rationale behind the relationship between environment and attractiveness (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). By integrating a set of theories, this metatheory explains how characteristics of the actual environment are interpreted and processed by individuals, resulting in perceptions of the environment's characteristics, and explaining how this interpretation ultimately feeds into attractiveness. This theory provides a rationale for integration of multi-level factors (i.e., country and individual). We apply and extend this integrative lens to the new domain of the willingness to work for EMNE subsidiaries.

Specifically, this study extends the literature in following three ways. First, this study contributes to IHRM research by adding a macro perspective. (I)HRM literature revealed that a number of perceived organizational attributes facilitate a firm to attract (talented) job applicants, such as corporate image (Gatewood, Gowan, &

Lautenschlager, 1993; Held & Bader, 2018), corporate social responsibility (Backhaus, Stone, & Heiner, 2002; Branco & Rodrigues, 2006), and reputation (Collings, 2014; Turban & Cable, 2003). However, how country-level factors, such as country-of-origin image, facilitate or impede a firm to attract (talented) job applicants is not yet researched. This is precisely what we do here for the case of EMNEs in a Western country.

Second, this study introduces the country-of-origin image concept from marketing into IHRM research. To date, country-of-origin image research mainly focuses on the country-of-origin effects on consumers' perceptions of product quality and purchase intention (Knight & Calantone, 2000; Peterson & Jolibert, 1995; Verlegh & Steenkamp, 1999; Wang, Luo, Lu, Sun, & Maksimov, 2014) and brand reputation (Anholt, 1998, 2007), basically dealing with the country-of-origin effect on willingness to buy. However, the country of origin could well have a broader effect than only influencing the consumers' product perception. International Business (IB) studies reveal that firms from the same country tend to engage in similar business practices, such as location choice (Tan & Meyer, 2011), strategy (Roth & Romeo, 1992), and human resource policies (Ferner, Quintanilla, & Varul, 2001). International marketing research indicates that country-of-origin information has not only a significant impact on the quality perception of a product/brand, but also the legitimacy of the foreign subsidiaries in a host country (Moeller, Harvey, Griffith, & Richey, 2013). A recent study reveals that COI influences EMNEs' corporate image (Zhang, He, Zhou, & van Gorp, 2019). This implies that a country-of-origin effect may well feed into the perception regarding the attractiveness of (E)MNEs in host countries. Surprisingly, extant research provides, to the best of our knowledge, little insight into the country-of-origin effect on the willingness to work for (E)MNEs.

Third, this study extends the research on EMNEs by investigating the attractiveness of EMNEs to potential job applicants in a Western country, which contributes to our understanding of the internationalization process of EMNEs from the perspective of human resource management. In practice, attracting Western talent is extremely important for EMNEs because most EMNEs invest in Western countries in search for critical strategic assets (Buckley, Elia, & Kafouros, 2014; Luo & Tung, 2007), which are embedded in or implemented by employees. Although the rapid rise of EMNEs has generated greater interest in understanding why and how EMNEs into enter foreign markets and how they compete internationally (e.g., Luo & Tung, 2007; Ramamurti, 2012), human resource management studies into EMNEs are still scarce (Mellahi, Frynas, & Collings, 2015), leaving the issue of willingness to work for EMNEs underexplored.

2. Theories and hypotheses

We refer to the willingness to work for EMNEs as the degree to which an individual would personally consider an EMNE as an employer, and would recommend doing so to others. This concept is similar to the organizational attractiveness defined by Newburry, Gardberg, and Belkin (2006). Indeed, in the HRM literature, attractiveness is a relevant concept that has been widely researched (e.g., Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin, & Jones, 2005; Uggerslev, Fassina, & Kraichy, 2012). However, we believe willingness to work is a more suitable concept for our study than attractiveness. The reason is two-fold. First, attractiveness can be viewed from the perspectives of employees (including existing employees and external applicants), employers, consumers, and investors. However, willingness to work focuses solely on the employee perspective, in particular that of the potential employees. Second, willingness to work has a clearer focus than attractiveness. In reviewing the literature, we conclude that although organizational attractiveness has been widely researched in HRM, the concept is not well defined and measured. Many existing studies do not differentiate attitudes, beliefs, general attractiveness, and intentions regarding an organization. Instead, they consider all these

3

Table 1
Selective overview of empirical studies on organizational attractiveness and willingness to work, and their antecedents.

Focal construct (dependent)	Focal antecedent (independent)	Significant antecedents (variables found significant in the selected literature)	Stages	Level of analysis
Organizational attractiveness	Corporate image	Corporate image and company employment image (Gatewood et al., 1993; Held & Bader, 2018; Highhouse et al., 1999; Lemmink et al., 2003)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm
Organizational attractiveness	Corporate reputation	Corporate reputation (Collins & Han, 2004; Turban & Cable, 2003; Saini et al., 2014)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm
Organizational attractiveness	Corporate's characteristics	Foreign ownership (HQ) and the degree of internationalization (Newburry et al., 2006); firm size (Lievens et al., 2001); organization personality perceptions (Slaughter & Greguras, 2009)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm
Organizational attractiveness	Corporate social responsibility	Corporate social performance(Turban & Greening, 1997); (Backhaus et al., 2002); corporate social orientation (Smith et al., 2004); Corporate social responsibility (Branco & Rodrigues, 2006)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm
Organizational attractiveness and /or intention to apply	Recruitment activities	Characteristics of recruitment websites (Williamson, Lepak, & King, 2003); websites vs printed advertisements (Baum & Kabst, 2014); information provided by a recruiter (Rynes & Miller, 1983); campus activity, recruitment materials, and the recruitment process (Turban, 2001); recruitment advertising and word-of-mouth (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2005); corporate advertising (Collins & Han, 2004); interview practices (Chapman et al., 2003)	Recruitment process	Firm
Organizational attractiveness	Information sources	Job and organizational information on websites (Allen et al., 2004); content and style of organizational websites (Cober et al., 2003); word-of-mouth (Van Hoye & Lievens, 2007)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm
Organizational attractiveness or intention to apply	Familiarity	Familiarity with a firm (Saini et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2005; Turban, 2001; Luce et al., 2001; Turban et al., 2001); familiarity with job and organizational attributes (Lievens et al., 2005)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm and individual
Intention to apply	Recruiters	Recruiter characteristics (Harris and Fink, 1987)	Recruitment process	Firm and individual
Organizational attractiveness	Job attributes	High pay, flexible benefits, individual-based pay, and fixed pay policies (Cable & Judge, 1994); work schedule flexibility (Nadler, Cundiff, Lowery, & Jackson, 2010); job characteristics (Uggerslev et al., 2012)	In and outside of recruitment process	Job
Organizational attractiveness	Demographic characteristics	Gender, race, age, and educational level (Newburry et al., 2006)	Outside of recruitment process	Individual
Organizational attractiveness	Personality characteristics	Big five personalities (moderators) (Lievens et al., 2001)	Outside of recruitment process	Individual
Organizational attractiveness	Person-organization (P-O) fit	P-O fit on personality dimensions, values, and goals (Rentsch & McEwen, 2002; Turban et al., 2001); expected opportunities for value expression and need fulfillment (Yu, 2014); perceived fit (Cable & Judge, 1996)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm and individual
Organizational attractiveness	Management practices	Gender diversity management (Martins & Parsons, 2007); family-friendly practices (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010)	Outside of recruitment process	Firm
Organizational attractiveness	Country image	Country-of-origin image (Held & Bader, 2018)	Outside of recruitment process	Country and individual

concepts as components of the broader construct of organizational attractiveness (e.g., Highhouse & Lievens, 2003; Smith, Wokutch, Harrington, & Dennis, 2004; Thomas & Wise, 1999). In our study, we are particularly interested in a Western individual's openness to the relatively new opportunities provided by EMNEs, implying that the narrower concept of willingness to work is really tailored at what we seek to do here.

Overall, HRM and Organizational Behavior (OB) literatures have made considerable progress in understanding how and why firms attract job applicants, which serves as a steppingstone for the current study. Table 1 outlines the studies that investigated factors that attract job applications. Extant literature has documented that a number of perceived organizational attributes, such as firm image (Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, & Slaughter, 1999; Lemmink, Schuijf, & Streukens, 2003), firm reputation (Collins & Han, 2004; Turban & Cable, 2003), firm characteristics (Lievens, Decaesteker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001; Newburry et al., 2006), corporate social performance (Backhaus et al., 2002; Turban & Greening, 1997), corporate social orientation (Smith et al., 2004), corporate environment responsibility (Dögl & Holtbrügge, 2014), and HRM practices (Bourhis & Mekkaoui, 2010; Martins & Parsons, 2007) all contribute to attracting job applicants.

In addition, HRM literature on recruitment, applicant attraction, organizational attraction, and employer branding have revealed that recruitment activities (Chapman, Uggerslev, & Webster, 2003; Turban, 2001), information sources (Allen, Van Scotter, & Otondo, 2004; Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober, & Keeping, 2003), familiarity with a firm (Ryan, Horvath, & Kriska, 2005; Saini, Rai, & Chaudhary, 2014; Turban, 2001), recruiter characteristics (Harris & Fink, 1987), job attributes (Cable & Judge, 1994; Uggerslev et al., 2012), applicant demographics (Newburry et al., 2006) and personality (Lievens et al., 2001), and perceived fit (Cable & Judge, 1996; Yu, 2014), apart from organizational characteristics, predict applicant attraction to such work opportunities. However, as Table 1 reveals, prior studies mainly focus on factors related to attributes of the focal firm and its activities in the recruitment process, leaving country-level factors, such as country of origin, under-researched.

As an exception to this, however, Held and Bader (2018) link the applicants' image of the organization's country of origin and its corporate image to organizational attractiveness. They address the country-of-origin effect based on cross-country comparisons. Not very surprisingly, they reveal that advanced countries enjoy better country images than their emerging counterparts, implying that advanced MNEs are more attractive to workers than EMNEs. However, they do not elaborate on what engenders different individual perceptions of country image. For example, why people have different perceptions regarding the same country of origin, and how the perceptions in turn influence the organizational attractiveness of enterprises from this country, are not clear. The environment processing metatheory developed by Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) can deepen our understanding of these issues.

Environment processing metatheory can be applied to explain how and why individuals are attracted to organizations by revealing the relationship between the actual and the perceived environment, and the relationship between the perceived environment and organizational attraction. This meta-lens incorporates three theories with a common focus on an individual's processing of information: signaling theory (Spence, 1973), image theory (Beach, 1990), and the heuristic-systematic model (Eagly & Chaiken, 1984). These theories together argue that individuals use information they have about the environment as signals to construct their perception of this environment. Hence, individuals may hold different perceptions of the same actual environment due to the following two reasons. First, the environmental

characteristics to which one individual x attends may be different from those observed by another individual y, implying that the information received differs across individuals. Second, individuals process information about the environment in two ways: through heuristic and systematic processing. Systematic processing is comprehensive and analytic, involving the incorporation of more information, whereas heuristic processing activates less cognitive effort, relying on more limited information (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). This means that the quantity of the information acquired may influence the way in which individuals process this information. Again, individuals may differ in the activation of both information processing systems.

To explain the relationship between the perceived environment and attractiveness, the metatheory includes yet another set of, again, three theories: the exposure-attitude hypothesis (Zajonc, 1968), the expectancy theory (Vroom, 1966), and the generalizable decision-processing model (Soelberg, 1966). These three theories together predict that the richness of the information processed in combination with the perceived favorability and superiority of the environment influence attraction. Specifically, "exposure theory suggests that the more individuals process the perceived characteristics of the environment, the stronger the attraction. Expectancy (VIE) theory suggests that individuals who perceive an environment to be favorable are more attracted to it. The generalizable decision-processing model suggests that individuals compare their perceptions of different environments to influence attraction" (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005, p. 906).

Obviously, the metatheory emphasizes the impact of perceptions on an organization's attractiveness. This view is particularly relevant to the current context, which is a potential employee's attraction to a potential employer. Specifically, this meta-lens explains how the organizational image that is formed based on information received by individuals drives organizational attraction. To further adapt this meta-lens to our non-marketing context, we extend the metatheory in two substantive directions. First, the metatheory basically focuses on the impact of the internal environment (or corporate information) on attractiveness. However, in an international setting, such as the one a multinational enterprise operates in, the global and country-of-origin environments are also important to explain HRM practice and performance (Welch & Bjorkman, 2015). Accordingly, we translate the concept of environment in the metatheory from internal to external. Specifically, we incorporate COI into the research framework.

Second, the metatheory indicates that the perceived environment is closer to the concept of attraction than the actual environment since individuals may hold different perceptions of the same actual environment (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). The metatheory states that these differences occur when people attend to different information and/or when they process information differently (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). However, the metatheory does not predict what factors may cause such differences in attending and processing information. By using the case of Western people's willingness to work for EMNEs, we can extend the metatheory by introducing individual differences into the theoretical framework. We argue that individual characteristics, such as age and international experience, influence the way individuals attend to and process information. For example, international experience enhances individuals' ability to develop cultural sensitivity and adaptability to new cultural contexts (Thomas & Inkson, 2004), motivating them to acquire more information about other countries. Young people are more advanced than old people in adopting new technology to acquire more information (Smith, 2014). Well-educated people have better analytic skills and tend to process information in a more systematic way than less-educated people (Ceci, 1991). These individual differences may explain why people have different perceptions of the same country.

So, we develop our research framework by applying and extending environment processing metatheory's logic. Fig. 1 illustrates the
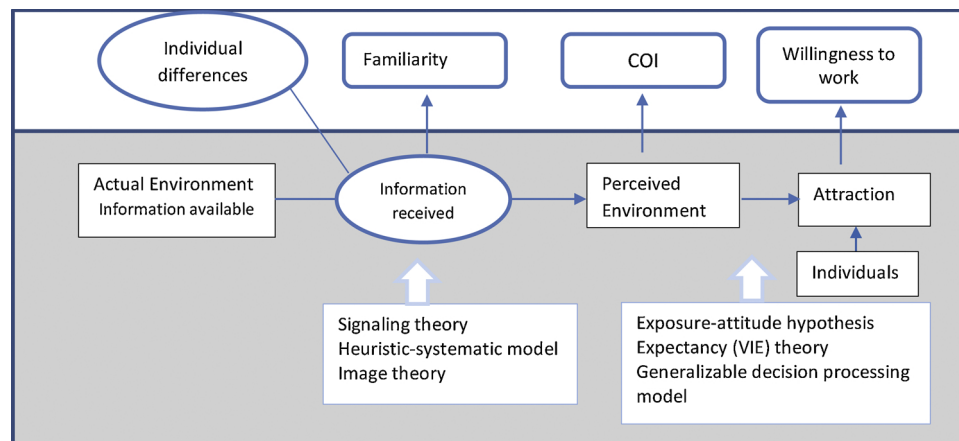
Fig. 1. Conceptual model of attraction and environment processing metatheory.
Note: Own illustration based on Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005).

connections between the factors investigated in this study (the upper panel) and the relevant relationships revealed by environment processing metatheory (the lower panel). The lower panel shows the logic from environment processing metatheory, and the upper panel includes our key variables. Given the scope of this study, we apply a portion of the framework from Ehrhart and Ziegert (2005) and focus on the four sets of constructs: individual differences, (country) familiarity, COI, and willingness to work. We first investigate the relationship between familiarity, COI, and willingness to work. Familiarity represents the information received. Hence, the more information received, the greater the familiarity. COI reflects the perceived environment, which is influenced by familiarity. Willingness to work is the mirror of attraction, which is influenced by COI. Next, we introduce individual differences into the model as antecedents of familiarity.

2.1. Familiarity, COI, and willingness to work

2.1.1. The concepts defined

In our context, familiarity refers to the extent to which an individual is familiar with the EMNE's country of origin, reflecting the quantity of information received (Norton, Frost, & Ariely, 2007). Notwithstanding extensive prior work, there is no consensus in the marketing literature on how to conceptualize and operationalize COI (Laroche, Papadopoulos, Heslop, & Mourali, 2005). Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) categorize the definitions into three groups: country image (the general image of the country), product-country image (the image of a country and its products), and product image (the images of products from a country). Han (1989) develops two alternative causal models to understand COI: the halo model and the summary construct model. The halo model hypothesizes that a country's image acts as a halo in product evaluations. The construct refers to a country's general image, which reflects general consumer knowledge of the country. The summary construct model hypothesizes that a country's image functions as a summary construct. The latter refers to the image related to products, which reflects consumer beliefs about these products. In the current study, we treat country image as a halo construct. We use the definition of Martin and Eroglu (1993, p. 193): "the total of all descriptive, inferential, and informational beliefs one has about a particular country." Specifically, COI refers here to the overall perception of the country where the headquarters of an EMNE are located. Yet, different from previous COI studies, we investigate this image from the perspective of those who may be willing to work for foreign firms as employees, rather than the perspective of consumers who may buy foreign products.

Prior studies document that country image is a multi-dimensional concept. The most widespread conceptualization of country image takes a two-component view that includes cognitive and affective

assessments (Lin, Morais, Kerstetter, & Hou, 2007; Martínez & Alvarez, 2010; Roth & Diamantopoulos, 2009; Wang, Li, Barnes, & Ahn, 2012).[1] Based on extant work (Echtner & Ritchie, 1993; Martin & Eroglu, 1993; Wang et al., 2012), we define cognitive COI as people's beliefs about a country's economic, political, technological and other societal (such as societal stratification) features, and affective COI as people's affective evaluations (e.g., like or dislike, and positive or negative) regarding the country and its citizens. The former focuses on functional (directly observable or measurable) characteristics, such as degree of economic advancement, living standards, industrialization, technological development, and social desirability, and the latter on psychological and ideological (more abstract and feeling-based) characteristics, such as negative sentiments stemming from political, religious or ideological conflicts.

Cognitive information is evaluated on a specific and objective basis (e.g., China is fast developing), while affective information is assessed on a general and subjective basis (e.g., sadness or happiness). Distinguishing between cognitive and affective country images is important because they reflect people's perceptions from different perspectives, and people may often hold inconsistent cognitive vis-à-vis affective evaluations of a particular country (Wang et al., 2012). For example, Guyon (2003) finds that Europeans evaluate American products and businesses positively, but they have negative (affective) feelings about the country due to certain issues, such as the war in Iraq and high inequality. Tung (2007) reveals that Western people tend to have positive cognitive attitudes toward China's economic development and business opportunities, arising from high growth, but may have negative affective feelings regarding key Chinese government policies. These different perceptions of a country's image may have different effects on perceptions of its firms and products. Therefore, we need to investigate the effects of the cognitive and the affective COI separately.

Finally, willingness to work is conceptualized as the extent to which Western people would consider an EMNE's subsidiary as a potential employer or a potential client (in case of freelancing). Willingness to work does not address post-hiring issues directly, or references to specific job positions or individual enterprises. As the concept of willingness to work is rarely discussed in the literature, this study develops

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[1] A few studies document the existence of a third component: the conative component (e.g., Laroche et al., 2005). However, cognitive, affective, and conative facets of attitudes are not independent of each other, but rather causally related. Roth and Diamantopoulos (2009) argue that the conative facet represents an outcome of cognitive and affective components, and is a separate construct. Although cognitive and affective facets may influence each other, they are often evaluated differently. Therefore, this study adopts a two-component view, focusing on cognitive and affective facets.

hypotheses and measurements by adapting relevant arguments regarding country-of-origin image of and willingness to buy foreign products, and organizational attractiveness in the current context (of Dutch citizens and Chinese EMNEs).

2.2. The effect of familiarity on COI

According to environment processing metatheory, information received is associated with an individual's information processing, which in turn determines the individual's perceived environment (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Applying this logic in our context, we expect that familiarity with a country influences the country's image. Although this metatheory does not predict the exact relationship, the effect of familiarity on perception and judgement has been extensively examined in social psychology (Claypool, Hall, Mackie, & Garcia-Marques, 2008; Claypool, Hugenberg, Housley, & Mackie, 2007). The literature on the mere-exposure effect shows that familiar stimuli trigger a variety of positive reactions (Zajonc, 1968, 2001). People tend to develop a preference for objects (or subjects) merely because they are familiar with them, due to processing fluency: processing familiar stimuli is easier than novel stimuli. When people first encounter a particular unknown object, they first must decipher all of its important features to create a new mental representation of the object. In contrast, a familiar stimulus matches with an already-existing mental representation, which facilitates subsequent processing because the already-stored information comes to mind. Thus, familiar stimuli tend to be processed perceptually and cognitively in a more fluent manner than novel stimuli, and the fluency tends to be experienced in relatively positive affective ways (Bornstein & D'Agostino, 1994; Claypool et al., 2007; Reis, Maniaci, Caprariello, Eastwick, & Finkel, 2011; Winkielman & Cacioppo, 2001).

This logic implies the assumption that "familiarity leads to attraction" (Berscheid & Regan, 2005). Attraction here means a positive judgment regarding a perceived object. In line with this theory, Ahmed and d'Astous (2008) find that consumers with high country familiarity tend to be more favorable in the evaluation of this country's products. The positive effect of familiarity on perception has also been documented in HRM. For example, Turban, Lau, Ngo, Chow, and Si (2001) theorize that firm familiarity positively influences perceptions of organizational features because people attribute positive characteristics to familiar firms. Applying this logic to the perception of a country per se, we assume that higher familiarity with a country positively influences the perception of this country's image, including cognitive COI and affective COI

H1$_0$. Familiarity with the EMNE's country of origin is positively related to (a) cognitive and (b) affective COI.

Yet, the opposite argument is that "familiarity breeds contempt", indicating that the more information individuals have about an object, the more likely that evidence of dislike is uncovered, resulting in decreasing positive perception (Norton et al., 2007). The potential downside of familiarity with respect to attractiveness is also suggested by other research (e.g., Brooks, Highhouse, Russell, & Mohr, 2003; Brooks & Highhouse, 2006). In addition, the tone of the information also matters. The more information EMNEs communicate toward potential employees, the more likely the negative information is excluded. This is important, as cognitive studies have found that negative information is more effective than positive information in influencing people's perceptions (Baumeister, Bratslavsky, Finkenauer, & Vohs, 2001; Fiske & Taylor, 1984; Rozin & Royzman, 2001). This confirms the argumentation of "familiarity breeds contempt". The so-called Swiss myth presented by Anholt (1998) well illustrates this logic, as applied to the perception of a country per se. Switzerland is in many respects well-established. Its strength is recognized in North America and Asia, and is helpful to build a good country image there, but not in the neighboring countries where people are familiar with Switzerland and the Swiss. In Anholt's words, "people often argue with their neighbors

over the garden fence" (p. 400). Based on these arguments, we assume that higher familiarity with a country negatively influences the perception of this country's image, including cognitive COI and affective COI.

H1$_1$. Familiarity with the EMNE's country of origin is negatively related to (a) cognitive and (b) affective COI.

2.3. The effect of COI on willingness to work

The environment processing metatheory was basically developed to explain the impact of an organization's perceived image on the attraction of its products or services. Can this metatheory be used to predict the relation between a higher-level image (COI) and willingness to work in a specific type of firm (EMNE subsidiaries)? Given their newness status in the West, EMNEs are little or even unknown to most Western people, and firm images of EMNEs are yet to be formed. Therefore, it is likely that some extrinsic cues such as specific perceived country attributes are used to develop certain images of EMNEs (Held & Bader, 2018; Moeller et al., 2013; Yildiz & Fey, 2012), or as a surrogate from which to infer the EMNEs' working conditions and social identity. Thus, rightly or wrongly, COI may serve as substitutive information for organizational image that, in turn, influences willingness to work.

This would imply that the logic that "individuals who perceive an environment to be favorable are more attracted to it" (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005, p. 906) can be applied to the relationship between COI and willingness to work as well. Although the influence of COI on willingness to work is not specific to EMNEs only, this influence can be more obvious for these companies than for advanced MNEs due to the fact that people in Western countries are more familiar with the latter and, thus, less dependent on extrinsic cues. In marketing research, it is well documented that COI can be considered as an extrinsic cue that consumers use to evaluate products or services (Peterson & Jolibert, 1995), and that consumers are more inclined to use extrinsic cues when intrinsic cues (e.g., experience or performance) are not available or when quality is difficult to judge (Zeithalm, 1988). We apply this logic to the context of job application. We extrapolate environment processing metatheory's prediction, quite straightforwardly, by arguing that both cognitive and affective COI have a positive impact on willingness to work.

H2. *A good (a) cognitive and (b) affective COI are positively related to willingness to work for EMNEs.*

2.4. The effect of familiarity on willingness to work

Based on the exposure-attitude hypothesis that repeated exposure to an object leads to an increasingly positive evaluation (Zajonc, 1968), environment processing metatheory predicts that the relationship between the perceived environment and attraction depends on the richness of the information processed. That is, "the more individuals process the perceived characteristics of the environment, the stronger the attraction" (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005, p. 906). Some studies apply this theory to organizational attractiveness by considering familiarity with a firm. Luce, Barber, and Hillman (2001) find that as familiarity with a firm increases, so does its attractiveness as a (potential) employer. A similar result is reported by Lievens, Van Hoye, and Schreurs (2005), Saini et al. (2014) and Turban et al. (2001). In our study, we assume that when a firm is unknown, people resort to other extrinsic cues, such as the enterprise's country of origin, as alternative evaluative information.

Transferring this theoretical logic to our research context, we argue that familiarity with a home country enables individuals to infer organizational characteristics from enterprises originating from this country. That is, the richness of the country information received by individuals affects the organizational image of this country's

companies, and hence their attractiveness. This argument implies that the attractiveness of a firm, as mirrored in its COI, increases with familiarity with its home country, *ceteris paribus*. The key here is that the effect of repeated exposure to a home country, rather than to this country's firms, determines the ratings of EMNE firms' attractiveness, as repeated exposure to these firms is less likely to occur given their newness in the Western world. Hence, we conjecture that country familiarity directly influences willingness to work.

Despite the direct channel from familiarity to willingness to work, which can be explained by the richness of information received, we expect also an indirect channel between the two. As hypothesized above, familiarity with an emerging country (such as China) influences country images (H1), and these country images, in turn, affect willingness to work (H2). We, therefore, expect that COI plays a mediating role in the relationship between familiarity and willingness to work. In this indirect channel, familiarity (i.e., rich information) first (partly) materializes into a positive country image after which, in turn, this positive country image positively impacts willingness to work.

H3. *(a) Familiarity with the country of origin is positively related to willingness to work for EMNEs; and (b) the relation between familiarity with the country of origin and willingness to work for EMNEs is partially mediated by the cognitive and affective COIs.*

2.5. Individual differences as antecedents

We extend the environment processing metatheory to include factors that may cause individuals to perceive the environment differently even though the actual environment is the same. In line with the metatheory, the perceived environment is formed based on information received, which relates to familiarity in our research context (see Fig. 1). Here, we theorize how individual differences influence familiarity. According to physiological research, personal characteristics are relevant to an individual's intrinsic enjoyment and motivation to engage in the effort of cognitive information processing (e.g., Cacioppo, Petty, Feinstein, & Jarvis, 1996). In line with this, empirical studies confirm the relationship between personal characteristics and information acquisition (Laroche, Cleveland, & Browne, 2004; Schaninger & Sciglimpaglia, 1981). Familiarity as an outcome of information acquisition and processing may also be influenced by personal characteristics. Based on the relevant literature (e.g., Thomas & Inkson, 2004; Zhang, 1997) and data availability, we focus on two frequently investigated personal characteristics: age and experience (Borstorff, Harris, & Feild, 1997).

2.6. Age

People varying in age show differences in terms of their cognitive, psychological, and behavioral states (Sheau-Fen, Sun-May, & Yu-Ghee, 2012). Studies in neurobiology reveal that higher age is associated with lower cognitive ability (Salthouse, 2009). This ability is important in new knowledge acquisition (Beier & Ackerman, 2005). Studies show that younger people are more likely to adopt new technology (e.g., Internet and smartphones) and to acquire information they are interested in (Smith, 2014). Similarly, the attitude toward foreign countries may vary among people of different ages. Younger people are generally more world-minded, and less likely to be nationalistic (Rawwas & Rajendran, 1966; Shimp & Sharma, 1987; Vida & Fairhurst, 1999), and more culturally curious and aware (Newburry et al., 2006).

So, we expect that younger people are more eager to acquire information about foreign countries, and hence become more familiar with them than older people, implying that age will be negatively

related to familiarity with country of origin. Given that country familiarity increases the likelihood of willing to work for EMNEs directly, as proposed in H3a, we expect that the relation between age and willingness to work is partially mediated by familiarity. Moreover, younger people are more likely to work for firms from new cultures, including those from emerging countries, compared to older people because they tend to be less nationalistic. Therefore, we expect that age influence willingness to work through both direct and indirect channels.

H4. *Age is negatively related to (a) familiarity with the country of origin and (b) willingness to work for EMNEs, and (c) the relation between age and willingness to work for EMNEs is partially mediated by familiarity with the country of origin.*

2.7. International experience

International experience is an important personal attribute for working in an international context as, for example, represented by MNEs (e.g., Daily, Certo, & Dalton, 2000; Takeuchi, 2005). Such experience is an important means to increase an individual's ability to develop cultural sensitivity and adaptability (Thomas & Inkson, 2004), and enhance her/his attractiveness in an internationalized labor market (Crossman & Clarke, 2010). International experience helps people to cultivate a global mind-set, and a combination of openness to and awareness of diversity across countries (Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002). A global mind-set enables people to absorb and understand diversity, which increases the individual's possibility of working for a firm from a different culture. Furthermore, openness and cultural awareness motivate people to explore unfamiliar foreign countries.

Hence, we expect that a Western individual's international experience increases her/his familiarity with the country of origin, as well as her/his willingness to work for EMNEs. In addition, previous studies show that international experience can lessen the uncertainty associated with working in a new environment (Borstorff et al., 1997). In turn, this reduced uncertainty can result in greater willingness to work in a new environment such as represented by being employed by an EMNE. So, as the familiarity with the country of origin increases the likelihood of willingness of working for EMNEs, we expect that the relation between international experience and willingness to work for EMNEs is partially mediated by familiarity with the country of origin.

H5. *International experience is positively related to (a) familiarity with country of origin and (b) willingness to work for EMNEs, and (c) the relation between international experience and willingness to work for EMNEs is partially mediated by familiarity with the country of origin.*

We summarize our hypotheses in Fig. 2 below.

3. Methodology

3.1. Empirical setting

Our study focuses on China as the home country, and the Netherlands as the host country. China is a relevant choice for two reasons: (1) China is currently the largest contributor of global FDI outflow in the developing world; and (2) the country went through substantial changes in economic development, including intensified engagement with the Western world. The Netherlands as the host country is convenient as Dutch people are quite direct and frank in expressing different opinions, with large variety of opinions in the country due to multiculturalism in combination with a neo-corporatist
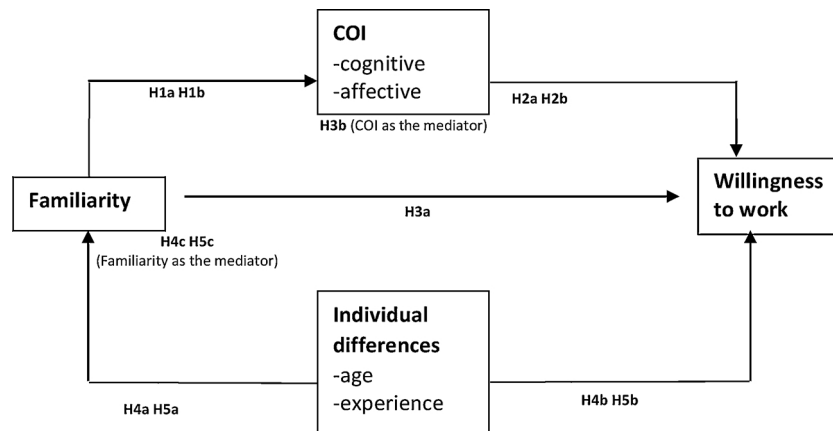
Fig. 2. Overview of hypotheses.

political culture (Berkhout, Sudulich, & van der Brug, 2015; Entzinger, 2014).[2] In addition, according to the survey of UNCTAD (2012), the Netherlands is one of the most important Western host countries for EMNEs. This one-to-one setting implies that we can filter out any interferences of cross-country variance, such as perception differences deriving from variation in economic development, cultural heritage, and degree of ethnocentrism (Ahmed & d'Astous, 2007). Indeed, this one-to-one setting fits our research objective. China and the Netherlands differ considerably from each other in terms of institutional context, economy, culture and technology. China is an emerging country, while the Netherlands is among the most advanced countries in the world in terms of income, technology and institutional quality (Koehler, 2018). The two countries are also different in terms of human resource management (Verburg, Drenth, Koopman, Van Muijen, & Wang, 1999). Regarding culture, the Chinese society features high-power distance, collectivism, masculinity and long-term orientation, whereas the Dutch one is characterized by low-power distance, individualism, femininity and short-term orientation (Hofstede & Bond, 1988; Hofstede, 2001). These differences provide a good context to investigate the country-of-origin effect on the willingness to work.

3.2. Data collection

The data are collected by means of an online survey in the Netherlands in December 2015, all respondents being Dutch citizens. Unlike previous research on attractiveness, with data from university students (Tung, 2007), we draw from the general population to have greater variation in terms of education, age, and experience. Respondents were recruited through a snowball approach. A group of seven people, as the initial seeding, circulated the survey link among their contacts, who then passed the link on to their contacts, and so on. To ensure that the sample was representative, the seven seeds vary in terms of location, age, and profession. They reside in different regions of the country, their age ranges from 22 to 59, their education runs from vocational to university, and they are from different professions (manager, clerk, businessman, executive, teacher, student, and social worker). In total, 421 responses were collected, with 31 removed due to missing data. Another 16 were excluded because their response time

was shorter than the item response time threshold of Wise and Kong (2005), leaving 374 useable questionnaires.

Of the respondents, 44.6 % are female and 55.4 % male. In terms of age, 34.0 % of the respondents are in their 20 s and 30 s, 46.9 % in their 40 s and 50 s, and 19.6 % above 60. Regarding education, 24.0 % have completed high school, 19.1 % vocational education, and 54.4 % university education. In terms of working status, 69.6 % are working, 11.6 % studying, and 18.8 % neither working nor studying (but either unemployed or retired). This is largely in line with the structure of the labor force in the Netherlands. For example, according to the data from the CBS Statline database, among the Dutch population aged between 20–65, 41 % of population is between 20–40 and 59 % is between $40-65.$[3] This compares well with similar ratios in our sample (namely, 39 % and 61 %, respectively). Among the Dutch labor force, the female share accounts for 45.7 %,[4] which is very similar to the ratio of 44.6 % in our sample.

To reduce potential common-method bias, we adopt approaches recommended by Chang, Van Witteloostuijn, and Eden (2010), Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, and Podsakoff (2003), and Podsakoff and Organ (1986). We develop a conceptual model with a combination of fact-based (*Age* and *International experience*) and perception-based independent and dependent variables (*Familiarity, COI,* and *Willingness to work*). In the questionnaire design and administration, we assure anonymity and confidentiality. We place the items related to the two focal constructs first (*Cognitive COI* and *Affective COI*), then the items belonging to the presumed key antecedent (*Familiarity*), and the items regarding the expected outcome at the end (*Willingness to work*). In the empirical model specification, we include a set of mediation relationships, which are very unlikely to be part of the respondent's theory-in-use, reducing the likelihood of a mono-method bias (Siemsen, Roth, & Oliveira, 2010). We conducted the commonly used Harman's single-factor test to identify potential common-method variance. The largest explained percentage of variance is 32.5 %, indicating that no single factor is responsible for most of the variance.

3.3. Measures

We first screened the literature for existing scales. For the constructs without existing scales, we created scales based on comparable ones in relevant literature. We then conducted a test survey with ten people (including graduates, managers, teachers, and social workers), and

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[2] Multiculturalism can be defined as diversity and as tolerance for difference (Aparicio, 1994). The Netherlands is seen as a multicultural society, where immigrants and minority groups have been integrated successfully (Davis & Nencel, 2011). In a neo-corporatist political culture like the Netherlands, interest mediation and horizontal dialogue are emphasized (Hoppe, Arentsen, Mikklia, & Linnanen, 2012), and the state shares the political space with other actors such as labor unions and employer organizations (Kloosterman, 2003). Therefore, in a multicultural and neo-corporatist political society, people tend to be more diversified and explicit in expressing their ideas.

[3] The ratios were calculated by data retrieved in May 2017 from http://statline.cbs.nl/Statweb/selection/?VW=T&DM=SLEN&PA=37296eng&D1=a&D2=0,10,20,30,40,50,60,65-66&LA=EN&HDR=G1&STB=T.
[4] The number was retrieved in May 2017 from http://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.FE.ZS.

adjusted the questions according to the feedback. All of the measures used in this study were based on Likert-type scales with anchors ranging from 1 = "strongly disagree" to 5 = "strongly agree". The detailed items are reproduced in the Appendix A.

Cognitive COI is measured with five items, among which four are adopted from Wang et al. (2012) with minor adjustments. These items reflect perceptions of affluence, living standard, economic development, and technology advancement. However, political factors, such as liberty are ignored (Phillips, Asperin, & Wolfe, 2013; Wang, Gu, Tse, & Yim, 2013). Viewed through an institutional lens, perceived freedom serves as an increasingly crucial component of a country's macroeconomic and institutional environment (Doucouliagos, 2005; Kaufmann, Kraay, & Mastruzzi, 2009). Following Lala, Allred, and Chakraborty (2009), we add one item to reflect freedom. *Affective COI* is measured by four items used by Wang et al. (2012) with minor adjustment, plus one item taken from Laroche et al. (2005).

Familiarity is measured with four items. Previous studies usually measure country familiarity from a country-product perspective with a single item (e.g., Ahmed & d'Astous, 2008; Laroche et al., 2005) in which the context is the respondent's buying behavior. In that context, people are mainly concerned with the value of the product (Sweeney & Soutar, 2001). However, regarding employer and job preference, people pay more attention to whether they fit with the working environment, including the people, culture, and working conditions (Cable & Judge, 1996; Rynes, 1989; Turban & Cable, 2003). Therefore, we need to measure country familiarity in a rather broad sense, covering aspects that range from macro, such as social system and national culture, to micro, such as people, organizations and products. Accordingly, we created four items to measure familiarity with the country (society), organizations, people, and products. The four items reflect overall country familiarity from the job applicant's perspective.

Willingness to work is measured with four items. As we were unable to identify an existing scale, we created the items based on relevant literature in a two-step approach. First, we reviewed the literature on two similar and sufficiently researched constructs: willingness to buy and behavior tendency. Based on this, we identified the basic items that reflected the willingness of doing something and items assessing the tendency of behavior. Subsequently, we adapted these items to our job application context. Second, to ensure the reliability and validity of the measurement (Churchill, 1979; Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994), we searched for alternative phrases that captured the willingness to work in a more specific manner, and incorporated these into our measurement.

We first take two items from a willingness-to-buy scale (e.g., Laroche et al., 2005): "willing to work in a Chinese firm" and "feel proud to work for a Chinese firm". These two items directly indicate the feeling associated with working for a Chinese firm. Behavioral tendency research indicates that "recommending the firm to others" measures favorable behavioral tendency (De Medeiros, Ribeiro, & Cortimiglia, 2016). We include a third item indicating the willingness to recommend Chinese firms to friends. This item is also adopted by Cable and Judge (1996) to measure organizational entry. The fourth item is taken from Moeller et al. (2013), capturing the willingness to enter into a working contract with Chinese firms. This item reflects not only the strength of the willingness to work for a Chinese firm as an employee, but also the strength of the willingness to work for a Chinese firm in a non-employment capacity, such as freelancer or other outsourcing arrangements. The latter is equivalently important for an EMNE, given that the global workplace and talent market are moving "beyond employment" (Boudreau, Jesuthasan, & Creelman, 2015).

Additional to these four perceptual variables, we included the following fact-based variables in our model: *Age*, and *International experience*. *Age* is measured in years at the time of the respondent's participation in the survey. *International experience* is measured by the number of countries visited for longer spells. We asked respondents to indicate the number of countries in which s/he lived studied or worked, following Samiee (1994). Although this is an often-used measure, we

are aware that international experience is a multi-dimensional construct. Scope, length, and intensity are dimensions identified in international business studies (Clarke, Tamaschke, & Liesch, 2013). The scope dimension is reflected in the number of countries visited. The length and the intensity dimensions follow from the duration of these foreign visits. In our study, we focus on the scope dimension only. Scope is less location-bound than length and intensity (Clarke et al., 2013), enabling people to apply their experiences in other potential locations more easily.

Finally, we included four control variables, based on existing studies. A number of HRM studies have found that individual characteristics, such as gender, working status, and education, influence individuals' perception of organizational attractiveness or willingness to work (Alnıaçık & Alnıaçık, 2012; Borstorff et al., 1997; Gupta & Govindarajan, 2002; Held & Bader, 2018; Kyvik, Saris, Bonet, & Felicio, 2013). We expect that these factors may also influence willingness to work for EMNEs. Accordingly, we incorporated the following control variables in our model: *Gender,* a dummy with a value of 1 for male, and 0 for females; *Working status*, a dummy with a value of 1 if the respondent was working, and 0 otherwise; *Education*, measured by the highest level of school the respondent attended and completed, being recorded on an ordinal category scale (1–3) – up to high school (1), vocational education (2), and higher education (college or university) (3). In addition, we expect that some sectors may be more attractive than others as they evidence better career development opportunities and rewards (McDonald, Brown, & Bradley, 2005). We therefore included *Sector*, which recorded in five types of organizations (public, private, self-employed, non-for-profit, or other), with a dummy variable being created for each of the categories.

3.4. Measurement model

We have four latent variables: *Cognitive COI, Affective COI, Familiarity*, and *Willingness to work*. Choosing the correct measurement model, whether reflective or formative, for latent variables is very important (Diamantopoulos & Papadopoulos, 2010). The reflective model hypothesizes that the variance of a set of items can be explained by the latent variables and the individual random error. The formative model assumes that a linear combination of the set of items explains the latent variables (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006; Henseler, Hubona, & Ray, 2016). Due to this fundamental difference, a measurement model misspecification causes misrepresentation of the relationship between items and their constructs, as well as biased parameter estimates of structural relationships (Diamantopoulos & Papadopoulos, 2010; Jarvis, MacKenzie, & Podsakoff, 2003). We identified our constructs' nature by following Jarvis et al. (2003), as exhibited in Table 2.

Prior studies often adopted a reflective model for COI (e.g., Balabanis, Mueller, & Melewar, 2002; Wang et al., 2012). However, recent advances in measurement theory suggest that constructs are not inherently reflective or formative: This depends on the way the construct is conceptualized (Diamantopoulos & Siguaw, 2006; Zeugner-Roth, Diamantopoulos, & Montesinos, 2008). After carefully looking into the definitions and measures of cognitive and affective COI, and reflecting upon the criteria of Jarvis et al. (2003), we concluded that *Cognitive COI* is a formative and *Affective COI* a reflective construct. Using the same approach, we argue that *Familiarity* is formative and *Willingness to work* is reflective.

4. Analyses and findings

4.1. Evaluation of measurement model

Given that formative constructs are part of our structural model, we apply partial least squares structural equation modelling (PLS-SEM) (Hair, Ringle, & Sarstedt, 2011) to estimate the measurement model, and to test the hypotheses. The estimation was done with the new

Table 2
Choice on measurement model: formative vs reflective.

Criteria	Cognitive COI	Affective COI	Familiarity	Willingness to work
Causality between the items and the construct	Causality is from items to the construct. E.g., an improvement in economic development may improve cognitive COI, but an improvement of COI may not necessary increase all the items (such as freedom).	Causality is from the construct to items. A positive affective response to a country induces a friendly, cooperative and attractive feeling.	Causality is from items to the construct. Familiarity has four components; an increase in each component may increase the sum of familiarity, but an increase in general familiarity may not necessarily associate with an increase in each component.	Causality is from the construct to items. With a strong willingness to work for a firm, one would like to enter into a contract, recommend the firm and be proud of the firm.
Interchangeability of the items	Not necessary. E.g, richness and technology are not necessary to share a common theme, taking Qatar as an example.	Yes	Not necessary. E.g., familiarity with products and familiarity with people do not share a common theme. People may use Chinese products every day, but they may not know Chinese people in person.	Yes
Covariation among the indicators	Not necessary. E.g., a change in the perception of economic development is not necessarily associated with a change in the perception of freedom.	Yes	Not necessary. E.g., a change in the perception of products is not necessarily associated with a change in the perception of people.	Yes
Nomological net of the construct indicators	Items do not necessarily have the same antecedents and consequences. E.g., abundant nature resource is an antecedent of richness, but not of advanced technology.	Yes	Items do not necessarily have the same antecedents and consequences. E.g., frequently using a country's products is an antecedent of the familiarity with the products, but not necessarily of the familiarity with society or people.	Yes
Conclusion	Formative model	Reflective model	Formative model	Reflective model

Note: The details of the decision rules (criteria) can be found in Jarvis et al. (2003).

Table 3a
The assessment of reliability of two reflective measurement models.

	Composite Reliability		
	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho	Jöreskog's rho	Cronbach's alpha
Affective COI	0.7753	0.7592	0.7699
Willingness to work	0.9212	0.9176	0.9178

	Indicator reliability: Indicator loading		
Willingness to work 1*	0.7699	Affective COI 1**	0.762
Willingness to work 2	0.8940	Affective COI 2	0.7159
Willingness to work 3	0.8518	Affective COI 3	0.7065
Willingness to work 4	0.9103		

Note: *Willingness to work 1–4 are corresponding to the items 1–4 in the questionnaire; **Affective COI 1–3 are corresponding to the items 2–4 in the questionnaire. The items are presented in the Appendix.

ADANCO software (Henseler & Dijkstra, 2015).

4.2. Reflective measurement model evaluation

For the two reflective constructs, *Affective COI* and *Willingness to work*, the reliability and the validity must be assessed first. Composite reliability, indicator reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity are assessed using PLS-SEM. The criteria presented in Table 3a show that the two criteria for composite reliability – Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρA) and Jöreskog's rho (ρc) – are higher than the .7 threshold (Henseler et al., 2016). Cronbach's alphas are also above .7, indicating sufficient reliability. All indicator loadings[5] are higher than the .7 threshold (Hair et al., 2011), revealing sufficient internal consistency. The results for the validity assessment are shown in Table 3b. For convergent validity, the average variance extracted (AVE) is calculated. They are all above .5. This indicates a sufficient degree of convergent validity, with the latent variable explaining more than half of its indicators' variance. To assess discriminant validity, we compare the cross-loadings and the AVE. The AVE of each latent construct should be greater than the highest squared correlation between a latent construct and any other latent construct (the Fornell-Larcker criterion) (Hair et al., 2011). The AVEs of the two reflective constructs is .52 and 0.74, respectively, as can be seen in Table 3a. Both are higher than all squared correlations.

4.3. Formative measurement model evaluation

For the two formative measures, *Cognitive COI* and *Familiarity*, we assessed the multicollinearity and the contribution of the indicators, following Hair et al. (2011). Regarding the degree of multicollinearity in the formative indicators, the variance inflation factor (VIF) is computed. The result, as reported in Table 4, shows that the VIF of all items is below the cut-off value of 5. Regarding the contribution, we calculated the significance of the weights (relative importance) and the loadings (absolute importance) by bootstrapping. The result reveals that all loadings are significant at the .01 level, confirming the absolute importance of all items. Regarding the weights, not all of the indicators are significant, and one of them shows a negative sign. There is no clear guidance regarding the optimal treatment for formative indicators that are not significant. Several studies indicate that these potential problems do not represent a hazard to the structural model, and that the structural coefficients are not biased (Cenfetelli & Bassellier, 2009; de Carvalho, Patah, & de Souza Bido, 2015). Other studies suggest keeping the insignificant indicators if they are supported by theory-driven conceptualization (Dowling, 2009; Hair et al., 2011). As our intention is

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[5] The two items of affective COI (items 1 and 5) with low loadings were deleted.

Table 3b
The assessment of validity of two reflective measurement models.

Construct	Squared correlation		AVE
	Affective COI	Willingness to work	
Affective COI			0.5167
Willingness to work	0.2554		0.7366
Familiarity_	0.0941	0.0860	
Cognitive COI	0.2171	0.2272	
Age	0.0033	0.0117	
International experience	0.0072	0.0005	
Education	0.0001	0.0041	
Gender	0.0062	0.0057	
Working status	0.0133	0.0017	
Sector	0.0008	0.0236	

Note: The first two columns provide squared correlations between constructs.

Table 4
Evaluation of two formative measurement models.

Indicator	Weight	Loading	VIF
Familiarity			
Familiarity 1	0.5700**	0.8966***	1.5520
Familiarity 2	0.2713	0.7553***	1.9349
Familiarity 3	0.0574	0.7308***	2.6940
Familiarity 4	0.2989	0.8099***	2.4238
Cognitive COI			
Cognitive COI 1	0.1415	0.6175***	1.7693
Cognitive COI 2	0.1769	0.6178***	1.9782
Cognitive COI 3	0.3312	0.5334***	1.4949
Cognitive COI 4	−0.0463	0.7011***	2.1761
Cognitive COI 5	0.7705***	0.8554***	1.7830

Note: *** $p < 0.01$, and ** $p < 0.05$.

to measure cognitive country image and familiarity from multiple dimensions, deleting the indicator would alter the concepts. Thus, we decided to keep all the indicators.

4.4. Structural model

To test our hypotheses, we run PLS by using ADANCO 2.0. Following the suggestion of Henseler, Ringle, and Sinkovics (2009) and Hair et al. (2011), we examine the path coefficients and their respective significance by means of a bootstrapping procedure generating 5000 random samples. We also evaluate the goodness-of-model fit, as suggested by Henseler et al. (2016). The results are reported in the first panel of Table 5. The overall model estimation shows that the three criteria – SRMR, d_{ULS}, and d_G – are all below the corresponding value of Hi99, indicating an acceptable fit.

4.5. Main paths of the model estimation

First, regarding the competing hypotheses $H1_0$ and $H1_1$, the results in the second panel of Table 5 show that *Familiarity* is positively associated with both *Cognitive COI* and *Affective COI*, which rejects $H1_1$. This result indicates that the mere-exposure effect explains the relationships.

Second, regarding the positive effect of *Familiarity*, the result reveals that *Familiarity* is significantly related to *Affective COI*, with path coefficient 0.3056 and p-value 0.0003, which means that a one-standard deviation increase in *Familiarity* is associated with a 0.3056 standard deviation increase in *Affective COI*. This result is in support of $H1_0b$. However, *Familiarity* is not significantly related to *Cognitive COI* ($\beta = 0.0884$, $p = 0.5494$), implying that $H1_0a$ is not supported.

Third, regarding the direct antecedents of *Willingness to work,* *Cognitive COI* and *Affective COI* are both positively and significantly related to *Willingness to work* ($\beta = 0.3285$, $p = 0.0001$; $\beta = 0.3167$, $p = 0.0000$), which means that a one-standard deviation increase in *Cognitive COI* and *Affective COI* is associated with a 0.3285 and 0.3167 standard deviation increase in *Willingness to work*, respectively. This result provides strong evidence in support of H2a and H2b. *Familiarity* is also positively and significantly related to *Willingness to work* ($\beta = 0.1309$, $p = 0.0442$), which means that a one-standard deviation increase in *Familiarity* is associated with a 0.1309 standard deviation increase in *Willingness to work*. Hence, H3a is supported, too. *Age* is negatively related to *Willingness to work*, as expected, but not

Table 5
Results of the structural model estimation.

	1. Overall model fit			
	Value	HI95	HI99	
SRMR	0.0608	0.1776	0.1844	
d_{ULS}	1.3957	11.9197	12.8501	
d_G	0.7301	6.1533	8.1364	
	2. Main paths			
	Direct effect		Total effect	
	Coefficient	*t*-value	Coefficient	*t*-value
Familiarity > Cognitive COI	0.0884	0.6293	0.0884	0.6293
Familiarity > Affective COI	0.3056	3.5496***	0.3056	3.5496***
Familiarity > Willingness to work	0.1309	2.0126**	0.2567	3.8128***
Cognitive COI > Willingness to work	0.3285	3.8741***	0.3285	3.8741***
Affective COI > Willingness to work	0.3167	4.3676***	0.3167	4.3676***
Age > Familiarity	−0.1804	−2.6002***	−0.1804	−2.6002**
Age > Willingness to work	−0.0733	−1.5770	−0.0159	−0.6450
International experience > Familiarity	0.1410	2.1706**	0.1410	2.1706**
International experience > Willingness to work	0.0539	0.7743	0.0901	1.2896
Gender > Willingness to work	−0.0679	−1.4700		
Working status > Willingness to work	0.0524	1.1764		
Education > Willingness to work	−0.0797	−1.8136*		
Sector > Willingness to work	0.1146	1.3350		
	3. Mediating paths			
	Coefficient	*t*-value	VAF	VAF
			1 mediator	2 mediators
Familiarity > COI > Willingness to work	0.1258	2.1783**	49.8 %	
Age > Familiarity > Willingness to work	−0.0551	−2.2878**	54.4 %	64.1 %
International experience > Familiarity > Willingness to work	0.0362	2.0424**	38.3 %	48.2 %

Note: N = 374, *** $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$, and * $p < 0.1$.

significantly so (β = −0.0733, p = 0.1149). Therefore, H4b cannot be accepted. *International experience* is positively linked to *Willingness to work* (β = 0.0539, p = 0.4388), but the coefficient is not significant. Therefore, H5b is not supported.

Fourth, regarding the impact of individual difference on *Familiarity*, *Age* is negatively and significantly associated with *Familiarity* (β = −0.1804, p = 0.0093), which means that a one-unit increase in *Age* is associated with a 0.1804 standard deviation decrease in *Familiarity*. This result supports H4a. *International experience* is positively and significantly associated with *Familiarity* (β = 0.1410, p = 0.0300), which implies that a one-standard deviation increase in *International experience* is associated with a 0.1410 standard deviation increase in *Familiarity*, offering support for H5a.

4.6. Mediation effects

To examine the mediating effect of familiarity and COI, we test the significance of the indirect effect by bootstrapping, and calculate the VAF score to determine the extent to which the mediators account for the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable. The results are reported in the third panel of Table 5. According to Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2017), VAF scores higher than 80 % denote full mediation, scores between 20 % and 80 % partial mediation, and below 20 % no mediation. Table 5 shows that the indirect path coefficient of *Familiarity* to *COI* to *Willingness to work* (with a value of .1258) is significant at the .05 level, and the VAF score is 49.8 %, indicating that *COI* is a robust partial mediator of the relationship between *Familiarity* and *Willingness to work*. This result supports H3b. As stated above, *Familiarity* is significantly related to *Affective COI*, but not to *Cognitive COI*. This result implies that *Affective COI* plays a major role in mediating the relation between *Familiarity* and *Willingness to work*.

The indirect path coefficient (with a value of −.0551) of *Age* to *Willingness to work* is significant at the .05 level, with the VAF score of 54.4 %, indicating that *Familiarity* is a partial mediator of the relationship between *Age* and *Willingness to work*. This finding supports H4c. The indirect path of the coefficient (with a value of −.0362) of *International experience* to *Willingness to work* is significant at the .05 level, and the VAF score is 38.3 %, suggesting that *Familiarity* is a partial mediator of the relationship between *International experience* and *Willingness to work*. This result is in line with H5c. So, *Familiarity* does not mediate the relationship between *Education* and *Willingness to work*, which goes against H6c. Given the existence of mediating serials (antecedents-*Familiarity*-*COI*-*Willingness to work*), we also calculated VAF with two mediators in serials (see the last column of the middle panel of Table 5). The result confirms a partial mediating effect of *Familiarity* and *COI* in two paths: *Age*-*Familiarity*- *COI*-*Willingness to work* (VAF = 64.1 %), and *International experience*- *Familiarity*-*COI*-*Willingness to work* (VAF = 48.2 %).

Regarding the control variables, *Education*'s coefficient is negative, but only marginally significantly so (β = −0.0797, p = 0.0698). The other control variables *Gender, Working status*, and *Sector* are not significant.

4.7. Extra test

To check the robustness of our findings, we performed an extra analysis on business employees by excluding the student sample and the respondents that work for non-profit organizations. In so doing, we test if the hypotheses hold in the business world. The results presented in Table 6 are similar to those in Table 5.

Table 7 summarizes the empirical evidence and the corresponding hypotheses.

5. Discussion

By using the case of China, this study investigates the effect of the perceptions of the EMNE's country-of-origin image and individual differences on the willingness of Western people (i.e., respondents in the Netherlands) to work for EMNEs. The main findings are discussed below.

5.1. COI and willingness to work

From a macro perspective, we examine the relationship between the perception of COI and willingness to work for EMNEs in a Western country. The empirical results confirm this relationship. Specifically, Western people take both the cognitive COI and the affective COI into account when they judge a potential employer from an emerging market. Given that an emerging market like China suffers from a poor COI (Luo & Tung, 2007), this finding implies that in addition to firm-level disadvantages, specifically the liability of foreignness (Zaheer, 1995), and the liability of emergingness, such as the lack of both international experience and managerial competence (e.g. Wang et al., 2013), EMNEs have an extra inherent disadvantage in attracting local employees in Western countries due to a poor COI. With this finding, the study confirms that COI is associated with the willingness to work for EMNEs.

Theoretically, this finding confirms the relatedness of the perceived country-level environment (here, COI) to attractiveness (here, willingness to work). This extends the scope of the perceived environment defined in the environment processing metatheory from the organizational to the macro level. The finding also deepens our understanding of the potential effect of home country factors on HRM practices. Moreover, with this finding, our study responds to the call for more research efforts on macro effects of HRM issues (e.g., Khilji et al., 2015).

5.2. Familiarity and willingness to work

This study examines the relationship between familiarity (another aspect impacting the perception of country-of-origin image) and willingness to work. The empirical finding confirms that familiarity with the country of origin is directly and indirectly associated with willingness to work for EMNEs. Regarding the indirect impact, we developed a set of competing hypotheses (H1$_0$ and H1$_1$) predicting the relationship between familiarity and COI. The result shows that the positive (mere-exposure) effect (H1$_0$) is accepted and the negative effect (H1$_1$) is rejected. This intricate finding can perhaps be explained as follows. China has suffered from both negative affective and cognitive images for many years in the Western world (e.g., Martínez-Robles, 2008) due to ideological conflicts between communist countries and the West, on the one hand, and the fact that they were generally poor, on the other hand. In recent decades, however, the ideological confrontation between communist and capitalist has become less significant (Clark, 2001). Moreover, China has developed from a low to a middle-income country. The more familiar with China individuals become, the more likely their negative stereotypes will diminish.

For the positive relationship between familiarity and COI, the analysis reveals familiarity is significantly associated with affective COI, but not cognitive COI. One explanation of this unexpected result is that, as China is a developing country, it lags behind the Western world in terms of economic development, living standard, technological advancement, and institutional quality. As long as China's developing country status is not upgraded to a developed one, the cognitive perception of China may not be altered even when people are more familiar with the country. This means that high *Familiarity* may not necessarily lead to a positive *Cognitive COI*. However, *Affective COI* reveals a different aspect of the picture. Many people may have negative perceptions of China due to its historical communist regime and the different ideology of China vis-à-vis the West. However, over the past few decades, China has become more open to and cooperative with the Western world. Individuals who are more familiar with China are more likely to realize the fact that China has been shifting away from

Table 6
Robustness test with business sample.

	Direct effect		Total effect	
	Coefficient	t-value	Coefficient	t-value
Main paths				
Familiarity > Cognitive COI	0.1234	0.8220	0.1234	0.8220
Familiarity > Affective COI	0.3200	3.7254***	0.3200	3.7254***
Familiarity > Willingness to work	0.1540	2.1085**	0.2885	4.0081***
Cognitive COI > Willingness to work	0.3222	3.0180***	0.3222	3.0180***
Affective COI > Willingness to work	0.2959	3.4194***	0.2959	3.4194***
Age > Familiarity	−0.2198	−3.3125***	−0.2198	−3.3125***
Age > Willingness to work	−0.0329	−0.5459	−0.0963	−1.5803
International experience > Familiarity	0.1350	1.9725**	0.1350	1.9725**
International experience > Willingness to work	0.0298	0.3721	0.0687	0.8861
Gender > Willingness to work	−0.0798	−1.5246		
Working status > Willingness to work	0.1014	1.6902*		
Education > Willingness to work	−0.0536	−1.0286		
Sector > Willingness to work	0.0593	0.9803		
Mediating paths				
Familiarity > COI > Willingness to work	0.1345	2.1141**		
Age > Familiarity > Willingness to work	−0.0634	−2.5026**		
International experience > Familiarity > Willingness to work	0.0389	1.8400*		

Note: N = 311, *** p < 0.01, ** p < 0.05, and * p < 0.1.

communism to capitalism (Coase & Wang, 2012; Lin, 2011), and hence have less negative affect toward China. Therefore, familiarity reduces misunderstanding, and moderates the bad impressions connected to stereotypes. A similar result has been found in a recent study indicating that country experience significantly associates with affective COI (Zhang et al., 2019).

Due to the insignificance of cognitive COI, the indirect effect is realized mainly through the affective COI, as we hypothesized. This result confirms the positive relationship between familiarity and the perceived environment. It also explains why empirical support for a positive relation between familiarity and perception is thin (Brooks & Highhouse, 2006) if the conditions are not specified. In line with our theoretical framework, this result confirms that familiarity can be counted as an antecedent of perceived environment and attractiveness – i.e., COI and willingness to work, in our context.

5.3. Individual difference and willingness to work

The study investigates the impact of individual differences on familiarity and willingness to work. The empirical analysis confirms that two personal characteristics, age and international experience, are associated with familiarity directly, and willingness to work for EMNEs indirectly. Specifically, age is negatively associated with familiarity and subsequently links to willingness to work. Familiarity is empirically confirmed as a significant mediator of the relationship between age and willingness to work. International experience is positively associated with familiarity, and subsequently links to willingness to work. Familiarity is also empirically identified as a significant mediator of the relationship between international experience and willingness to work.

However, regarding the direct relationships between individual differences and willingness to work, we did not find clear evidence to support the relationships. Age and gender are not significant in both tests. Education is marginally significant in the main test, but not significant in the robustness test, and working status is marginally significant in the robustness test, but not significant in the main test. A possible explanation could be that Western people (in this case, the Dutch) somehow are generally unfamiliar with EMNEs (in this case, Chinese firms), and they still lack the relevant and specific information about EMNEs. The relatively low recognition of Chinese firms among Dutch people magnifies the impact of country-of-origin image, leaving the effect of individual characteristics unobserved. This unexpected result deserves more research effort in the future.

5.4. Academic implications

Willingness to work for EMNEs is an important but under-researched issue in IHRM and International Business (Tung, 2016). With the case of China, this study investigates the possible effect of the perceptions of the EMNE's COI and individual differences on the willingness of Dutch people to work for Chinese EMNEs. In so doing, first, our study enriches IHRM research by adopting a macro perspective. Macro-level perceptions such as home country image and familiarity facilitate the ability of an EMNE to attract prospective employees. Second, our study demonstrates that international marketing's country-of-origin effect can be fruitfully applied in the context of International Management and IHRM. Third, our study contributes to environment processing meta-theory by examining how antecedents (familiarity and individual differences) of the perceived environment (COI) impact attraction (willingness to work), hence shifting the focus from the perceived internal environment (firm level) to the perceived external environment (macro level). In general, the findings of this study help us better understand the factors that may influence local potential employees' willingness to work for EMNEs in a developed country, and the challenges that EMNEs are facing given the emerging status of their home countries.

5.5. Practical implications

Our research has important implications for policymakers and practitioners. From a macro country perspective, our findings imply that improving COI is a solution to increase EMNEs' attractiveness as a potential employer in a host country. Looking at the dimensions of COI, we observe that while cognitive COI is conditional on the level of development, which cannot be changed in a short time, affective COI largely depends on people's emotion, which is somehow manageable (Grandey, 2000; Lively & Heise, 2004). Hence, here we propose a few practical approaches to manage affective COI. Firstly, following earlier work, people's affective perception regarding a country can be changed as a by-product of economic or political events (Amine, 2008), such as sporting tournaments like the Olympics (Finlay & Xin, 2010) and high-level political visits like Nixon's to China (Zhang, Jiang, & Zhou, 2014). Emerging countries could improve their affective COI by hosting and conducting these events and visits.

Secondly, our study finds that familiarity with a country can significantly improve perceived affective COI, which implies that

Table 7
Summary of hypotheses and the empirical evidence.

Hypothesis	Impact of	Impact on	Hypothesis predicted relation	Empirical result	Hypothesis supported or not supported by evidence
H1$_0$(a)	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	Cognitive COI	+	+ (not significant)	Not supported
H1$_0$(b)	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	Affective COI	+	+***	Supported
H1$_1$(a)	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	Cognitive COI	−	+	Not supported
H1$_1$(b)	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	Affective COI	−	+***	Not supported
H2(a)	Cognitive COI	Willingness to work for EMNEs	+	+***	Supported
H2(b)	Affective COI	Willingness to work for EMNEs	+	+***	Supported
H3(a)	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	Willingness to work for EMNEs	+	+**	Supported
H3(b)	COI	Relation between Familiarity and Willingness to work	Partially mediating	Partially mediating**	Supported
H4(a)	Age	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	−	−***	Supported
H4(b)	Age	Willingness to work for EMNEs	−	− (not significant)	Not supported
H4(c)	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	Relation between Age and Willingness to work	Partially mediating	Partially mediating**	Supported
H5(a)	International experience	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	+	+**	Supported
H5(b)	International experience	Willingness to work for EMNEs	+	+ (not significant)	Not supported
H5(c)	Familiarity with EMNE's country of origin	Relation between International experience and Willingness to work	Partially mediating	Partially mediating**	Supported

Note: *** p < 0.01, and ** p < 0.05.

unfamiliarity may be a source of negative sentiment. Governments of emerging countries could invest systematically in their positive image and / or in dismantling long-standing negative images of corruption, inhumanity, and the like, by effectively communicating with the international community about their progress (if any, of course), and by participating actively in global conversations on the topics that are relevant to everyone and everywhere, such as climate change, poverty, education, and terrorism (Anholt, 2013). In addition to these communication strategies, emerging countries could improve their affective COI by promoting themselves as a tourism destination to Western tourists. In line with our findings, studies in tourism have found that travel information and visit experience increase individuals' familiarity with a country, hence improving their affective COI (Chen, Chung, Gao, & Lin, 2017; Milman & Pizam, 1995). Meanwhile, we notice that growing populism, protectionism, and anti-immigration in the Western world (e.g., in the EU and the US) pose bigger challenges to EMNEs. Thus, finding a means to improve their home country images to offset this adverse trend is becoming impendent.

From the micro perspective of an individual EMNE, the poor country image of emerging markets forms a barrier to attract talent. The result of our study provides insights that point to managerial implications for EMNEs as to what they might do to overcome or avoid this barrier. Specifically, the result shows that people's age and international experience influence the willingness to work for firms from emerging markets through the relation with familiarity. Therefore, from a strategic point of view, recruitment managers should take these individual differences systematically into account when they position their organizations in the host country's labor market. They can put more effort into attracting young and internationally oriented people. They can also implement different home country image-promoting activities in combination with their own business to attract different types of candidates. Simply mimicking traditional HR recruitment strategies from MNEs will not do, as EMNEs have to adapt their policies to make them effective, given the specific image of their home country, by (a) targeting potential employees less affected by this image and (b) developing separate strategies aimed at improving their home country's image.

6. Conclusion and future study

Our empirical evidence confirms that people's perceptions of the country of origin and individual differences influence their willingness to work for EMNEs. Specifically, cognitive and affective COIs, and familiarity with the country of origin have a positive and direct impact on willingness to work. Moreover, the effect of familiarity on willingness to work is partially mediated by the affective COI, and the effects of age and international experience on willingness to work are partially mediated by familiarity.

As one of the first studies to attempt to investigate the antecedents of willingness to work for EMNEs, our research is subject to a number of limitations, which provide opportunities for future research. We would like to briefly refer to three such opportunities. First, our study only focuses on one home and one host country. Although this setting has the advantage of isolating the effect of country of origin on willingness to work, this single country pair design leaves many contingencies unaddressed, which may well be important for understanding the relation between COI and willingness to work. Examples of such contingencies are economic and cultural distance, historical economic and political relations, and the activeness of a firm in the host country. Future studies could expand the research context to multiple home and host countries to investigate the effect of such contingencies. In particular, this study only focuses on Dutch individuals, which limits the direct generalization of the results to the more general group of Western people. Future studies could choose individuals from multiple countries to enhance the generalizability of the findings. In addition, since EMNEs are different from AMNEs in many aspects (Luo & Tung, 2007;

Madhok & Keyhani, 2012), a comparative study involving both EMNEs and AMNEs will improve our understanding of potential differences.

Second, this study only focuses on the perceived external environment (COI) and its effect on willingness to work for an EMNE. However, the effect of this perceived external environment may become less salient when people know more about the internal environment (the EMNE's image). Specifically, COI may become less influential on willingness to work when people accumulate sufficient and accurate information about the EMNEs involved. Hence, future work could explore the interaction of the internal and the external environment's image. Such a study would be feasible when people are more familiar with EMNEs. When EMNEs become well known to Western people, the relationship between COI and willingness to work may change. This study provides a baseline for such comparative research in the future.

Third, the current study examines the indirect impact of a few of people's individual surface-level differences on willingness to work. Obviously, deep-level psychological characteristics, such as personality, could be influential, too. Future research could put effort into examining the effects of these deep-level characteristics. Relatedly, the measurement of individual characteristics, both surface and deep-level attributes, can be more fine-grained. For example, experience can be measured through a multi-dimensional lens.

Fourth and finally, this study does not take industry differences into account. Notably, the characteristics of an industry is very likely to influence the attractiveness of EMNEs (and AMNEs, for that matter) that operate in this industry (Zhou, Van Witteloostuijn, & Zhang, 2014). Hence, we can expect that an EMNE's industry will impact the willingness of people from advanced countries to work for that EMNEs, given this industry's image. Hence, future work could explore the impact of the type of industry, and introduce the concept of industry-of-operation image (affective and cognitive), next to COI.

Acknowledgements

Appendix A. Measurement items

Cognitive country image

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly disagree):

1 In your perception, China is a rich country.
2 In your perception, China is economically well developed.
3 In your perception, China has advanced technology.
4 In your perception, China has good living standards.
5 In your perception, Chinese people have a great deal of freedom.

Affective Country image

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly disagree):

1 Based on your feelings, China is peace-loving.
2 Based on your feelings, China is friendly towards the Netherlands.
3 Based on your feelings, China is cooperative with the Netherlands.
4 Based on your feelings, China is an attractive country.
5 Based on your feelings, China is a credible country.

Familiarity

Please indicate your level of familiarity with following aspects of

China (from 1 = not familiar at all to 5 = very familiar):

1 Chinese products
2 Chinese firms
3 Chinese society (system and culture)
4 Chinese people

Willingness to work

Please indicate to what extent you agree with the following statements (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly disagree; *Chinese firm below refers to a Chinese firms in the Netherlands):

1 In your perception, you are willing to work in a Chinese firm.
2 In your perception, you are willing to enter into a working contract with a Chinese firm.
3 In your perception, you would recommend Chinese firms to your friends and family.
4 In your perception, you would feel proud to work for a Chinese firm.

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