

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Does business commitment to sustainability increase job seekers' perceptions of organisational attractiveness? The role of organisational prestige and cultural masculinity

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Abstract

This study analyses how recruiting messages showing commitment to sustainability influence job seekers' perceptions of organisational attractiveness. To address a call from prior research, we propose that organisational prestige mediates the positive relationship between commitment to sustainability and attractiveness. As job seekers from different cultures can have different responses to companies' information, the moderating role of the masculinity dimension of national culture is also examined. In a study of 412 job seekers from four different countries, experimental manipulation was used to assess perceptions of different recruiting messages containing information on business sustainability. Results support the proposed relationships. Theoretical and practical contributions include the integration of signalling and social identity theories to considering a wide variety of mechanisms which show how individuals are attracted to organisations and useful information for helping managers to recruit young talent. Using a sample of young part-time job seekers is a limitation of this work.

KEYWORDS

between subjects, cultural masculinity, job seekers, organisational attractiveness, organisational prestige, recruitment messages, sustainable development

1 | INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, sustainability has become a priority for society and business. The Brundtland sustainability three pillars scheme, including economic, social, and environmental dimensions, has been applied to help organisations to improve their sustainability performance.

Following this scheme, organisational sustainability involves that organisations should focus not only on the economic value but also on the social and environmental value they add or destroy (Elkington, 2013). Although research on sustainability at a business level initially focused on the environmental dimension, more recently, the social dimension of sustainability has received more attention (Ehnert et al., 2013).

List of Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; BCS, business commitment to sustainability; BLLCI, bootstrap lower limit confidence interval; BootSE, bootstrapping standard error; BULCI, bootstrap upper limit confidence interval; CA, Cronbach alpha; CFA, confirmatory factor analysis; CFI, comparative fit index; CMIN/DF, ratio of chi-square minimum and degrees of freedom; CR, composite reliability; DF, degrees of freedom; GDP, gross domestic product; IFI, incremental fit index; LLCI, lower limit of the confidence interval; NFI, normed fit index; NS, not significant; OP, organizational prestige; OA, organizational attractiveness; RFI, relative fit index; RMSEA, root mean square error of approximation; SD, standard deviation; SE, standard error; SEM, structural equation modelling; SFL, standardized factor loadings; SIT, social identity theory; TLI, Tucker–Lewis index; ULCI, upper limit of the confidence interval.

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Even though organisations play a key role in achieving a more sustainable world (Carballo-Penela et al., 2018; Strautmanis, 2008), many companies struggle when incorporating the concept of sustainability into their business core. The transition to sustainability will be easier if addressing environmental and social issues also has a positive economic impact for organisations (Álvarez-Pérez et al., 2020; Paetzold et al., 2022).

Increasing organisational attractiveness, understood as individuals' affective and attitudinal thoughts about particular companies as potential places for employment (Highhouse et al., 2003), can be a way of improving business economic performance (Qiao et al., 2022). Attractive organisations are in a better position to recruit skilled employees, which allows them to keep their competitive advantage.

Researchers have highlighted the role of the human resource function to increase organisational attractiveness by showing commitment to sustainability (Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996; Umrani et al., 2022; Waples & Brachle, 2020), as nowadays, employees are concerned about sustainability issues (Robertson et al., 2023). In particular, prior research has remarked on the role of recruitment messages to communicate companies' commitment to sustainability (e.g., Chaudhary, 2019; Greening & Turban, 2000; Lis, 2012), noting that an organisational reputation for sustainability attracts prospective employees concerned about sustainability issues (Capstick et al., 2022; Guerci et al., 2016). In this regard, companies showing commitment to sustainable behaviours can be more attractive to job seekers (Zhang & Gowan, 2012). However, research examining the relationship between business commitment to sustainability (BCS) and organisational attractiveness is still very scarce. Social aspects in particular are often excluded when analysing the role of sustainability to increase organisational attractiveness.

In addition, it is necessary to shed light on the mechanisms underlying BCS and organisational attractiveness. Scholars have pointed out different psychological mechanisms which influence employees' and job seekers' reactions to sustainability. It has been found that by showing commitment to sustainability, firms send signals to job seekers about their prestige and reputation (Jones et al., 2014, 2016; Jones & Rupp, 2018). Organisational prestige "reflects a social consensus on the degree to which the company's characteristics are regarded as either positive or negative" (Highhouse et al., 2003, p. 789). Prestigious organisations are superior to their competitors, being considered impressive by others (Jones et al., 2014). Prestige involves a normative quality of a firm, different from attractiveness, which collects individual thoughts and attitudes regarding particular firms (Highhouse et al., 2003).

Prior research has noted the relevance of prestige for business success, as it reduces organisations' dependence on their environment and makes it possible to expand and increase organisational power (Perrow, 1961). Organisational prestige has been linked with different positive outcomes, such as enhancing employee commitment or reducing turnover intentions (Rathi & Lee, 2015). Nevertheless, the extant literature has largely ignored the role of organisational prestige based on showing commitment to sustainability to increase perceptions of organisational attractiveness. When this role is examined

(Behrend et al., 2009; Jones et al., 2014, 2016), studies have mainly focused on a single culture and have been conducted in developed countries in North America, such as Canada (Jones et al., 2014) or the United States (Behrend et al., 2009). As job seekers and employees' perceptions can be shaped by cultural beliefs (Mauger & Bryant-Lees, 2022; Saifulina et al., 2023; Zeng et al., 2022), further research is needed to analyse if job seekers from different cultures have similar or different responses to companies' information on business sustainability, including developed and emerging countries (Ushie et al., 2023).

Cultural masculinity is particularly relevant when examining sustainability issues. Masculine societies consider achievements and success to be a priority (Hofstede, 2022). As organisational prestige can be perceived as a sign of organisational success, individuals from masculine cultures could respond to organisational prestige differently than individuals from feminine cultures.

The position of the article is that showing commitment to sustainability is a way of increasing perceptions of organisational attractiveness. Perceptions of prestige formed by showing commitment to sustainability can result in organisational attractiveness. Consequently, this article aims to shed light on the relationship between showing commitment to sustainability and organisational attractiveness, providing knowledge on the mechanisms underlying both constructs and potential contextual moderators. With this objective in mind, the following research questions are proposed:

1. Does BCS increase organisational attractiveness?
2. Do perceptions of organisational prestige mediate the relationship between BCS and organisational attractiveness?
3. Does the masculinity dimension of national culture moderate the relationship between organisational prestige and organisational attractiveness?

By answering these questions, the present work first aims to contribute to the prior literature. Although some studies have examined the relationship between BCS and organisational attractiveness, prior research has approached sustainability by combining different measures related to different dimensions of sustainability (e.g., community relations, goods and services quality, or concern for the environment). Our measure of sustainability is different from the common approach and thus increases the knowledge on what messages regarding sustainability are associated with organisational attractiveness. Second, we provide new knowledge on the role of organisational prestige in the relationship between BCS and organisational attractiveness. Specifically, we examine whether the inclusion of organisational prestige as a mediating factor increases the explanatory power of BCS. Third, most previous research collected data on Western developed countries (e.g., Gully et al., 2013; Huber & Hirsch, 2017). The theoretical understanding of the relationship between commitment to sustainability and organisational attractiveness is built considering Western cultural characteristics; thus, whether this relationship is different when considering different cultures needs to be examined. Finally, we also provide new knowledge on how the masculinity dimension of

national culture shapes the relationship between organisational prestige and attractiveness. The role of cultural masculinity in shaping organisational attractiveness when companies show commitment to sustainability is still scarce, as most studies conduct single-culture analyses, which do not allow for examining the moderating role of national culture. Thus, further research is needed.

2 | RESEARCH FRAMEWORK AND HYPOTHESES

Organisational attractiveness research has adopted different approaches to understanding the factors that make individuals attracted to organisations. Environment processing theories emphasise that how individuals collect and process information regarding the organisational environment contributes to developing perceptions of that environment. Those perceptions can lead to organisational attractiveness. Interactionist theories emphasise that the fit between individual characteristics and the organisational environment characteristics determines attractiveness. Self-processing theories highlight individual views of the self, including, for instance, self-efficacy, social identity, or self-esteem. They are relevant to understanding how the perceptions of fit are related to organisational attractiveness (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005).

Among the environment processing theories, signalling theory (Spence, 1978, 2002) allows for consideration of a wide number of variables when explaining organisational attractiveness, as any observable characteristic can signal organisational features. As we are interested in examining the relationship between BCS and organisational attractiveness, considering different signals included in recruiting messages, this is an adequate theory for this research.

Social identity theory (SIT) (Turner & Tajfel, 1986) reflects both the importance of fit (interactionist theories) and the role of individual views of the self and, particularly, social identity (self-processing theories). The theory underlines that self-concepts are influenced by the evaluation of groups with whom an individual identifies (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). As perceptions of organisational prestige can increase job seekers' identification with potential employers, the theory is useful for understanding the role of prestige in promoting attractiveness.

Signalling theory has been commonly used for understanding the relationship between firms' commitment to sustainability and organisational attractiveness when examining prospective employees' perceptions (Jones et al., 2014). This theory suggests that because job seekers seldom have complete information about future employers, they need to use available information to form perceptions about organisational characteristics they cannot observe (e.g., organisational support).

Recruiting messages have a signalling function that helps prospective employees to form a prehire view of future employers (Rynes et al., 1991; Uggerslev et al., 2012). By gathering relevant information that plays a key role in forming initial perceptions about an organisation, recruiting messages are one of the first sources of information about many firms, especially when they are not popular companies (Gully et al., 2013). According to the theory, recruiting messages can

be signals that provide job seekers with useful information for anticipating how it would be working for a particular company (Rynes et al., 1991; Waples & Brachle, 2020). In particular, showing commitment to business sustainability can influence prospective employees' perceptions of organisational attractiveness (Kim et al., 2019), as nowadays, society is more engaged in sustainability issues than years ago and many job seekers are searching for companies concerned with sustainability issues (Huber & Hirsch, 2017; Turban & Greening, 1997; Umrani et al., 2022). For instance, information regarding the implementation of green practices sends signals regarding the intention to protect the environment. The existence of work-family programmes sends signals about how employees can manage work-family issues. This information could affect job seekers' perceptions of that firm, thereby influencing their perception of organisational attractiveness.

Along this line, scholars have used recruiting messages included in job offers to examine whether showing commitment to sustainability influences organisational attractiveness. For instance, Greening and Turban (2000) showed a positive and direct relationship between organisational practices, including concern for the environment, taking care of minorities, a good reputation for having high-quality products, or having a good relationship with employees, and organisational attractiveness. In a similar study, Carballo-Penela (2019) found a positive relationship between different aspects related to the social dimension of sustainable development (e.g., improving the skills of the workforce, health and safety at work, or work-life balance) and organisational attractiveness. Waples and Brachle (2020) found that communicating about sustainability activities in recruiting messages makes organisations more attractive.

Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1. Business commitment to sustainability is positively related to organisational attractiveness.

SIT (Turner & Tajfel, 1986) links self-concept with the evaluation of the group or groups with whom individuals identifies (Riva et al., 2021; Wayne & Casper, 2012). In a recruiting process, SIT is useful for understanding how recruiting messages showing commitment to sustainability can influence the feelings of pride that prospective employees would experience if they became a member of an organisation and, in turn, their identification with that firm and organisational attractiveness.

SIT underlines that a part of individuals' self-concept is related to their affiliation with social groups, including their present or future organisations (Jones et al., 2017). According to this theory, positive perceptions of organisations will reflect favourably on the employees within it, who get positive outcomes from other individuals (Dang-Van et al., 2022; Wayne & Casper, 2012).

Positive evaluations of the group to which an individual belongs by significant others can enhance their self-worth. Enhancing employees' self-worth results in higher identification with the group (Dutton et al., 1994; Lis, 2012). Thus, individuals are likely to identify with an organisation when that organisation enhances their self-worth (Ashforth et al., 2008; Jones et al., 2014).

Organisations committed to sustainability are often considered prestigious organisations (Jones et al., 2014), as questions related to sustainability, such as protecting the environment, firms' involvement with their community, or treating women and minorities fairly, are socially regarded as positive. Some researchers have argued that perceptions of organisational prestige send information about the feelings of pride that job seekers expect to experience if they become a member of that organisation (Cable & Turban, 2003; Jones et al., 2016). As belonging to a prestigious firm usually improves people's social standing (Umrani et al., 2022), anticipated pride would enhance job seekers' "self-worth to bask in reflected glory" (Smidts et al., 2001, p. 1051), which would increase their identification with the organisation and, in turn, the organisational attractiveness (Lis, 2012).

Prior research has provided some evidence of how businesses send signals about organisational prestige that positively influence job seekers' perceptions of attractiveness and similar outcomes. In a study considering firms' community involvement and pro-environmental practices, Jones et al. (2014) provided evidence of the mediating role of organisational prestige in the relationship between showing commitment to sustainability and organisational attractiveness. In a similar study, Behrend et al. (2009) found that organisations' environmental messages positively influence organisational prestige and, in turn, prospective employees' job pursuit intentions.

According to the above arguments, we hypothesise the following:

Hypothesis 2. The relationship between business commitment to sustainability and organisational attractiveness is positively mediated by organisational prestige.

Individuals can also be identified with a geographical region, such as a country. In line with SIT, self-categorisation processes (Turner & Tajfel, 1986) can make people feel that they are closely attached to their country (national identity), which can influence some of their behaviours regarding the organisational context (Zeng et al., 2022). Nationals of a country share language, beliefs, common norms, values, and even some ethnic characteristics. These shared qualities cause individuals from different countries to have different rules for the evaluation (Capstick et al., 2022; Nisbett & Wilson, 1977) and appraisal of some events (Mesquita & Frijda, 1992). Therefore, national cultures can induce differences between individuals' behaviours from different countries by affecting psychologically based factors and, in some cases, physically based factors (Middleton & Jones, 2000; Zeng et al., 2022).

The dimension of the masculinity of national culture is particularly important in this context. It considers the way sex roles are allocated in a society's culture, paying attention to what motivates people to be their best. Masculine societies are driven by competition, achievement, and success (Hofstede & Hofstede, 1991; Jamali et al., 2020). Individuals from masculine societies consider earnings and achievements a priority (Hofstede, 2022). As organisational prestige can be perceived as a sign of organisational success and working for

prestigious organisations could facilitate earnings and achievements, we propose that the effect of perceptions of organisational prestige on organisational attractiveness will be reinforced when job seekers belong to masculine societies. Based on the previous considerations, the following hypothesis is formulated:

Hypothesis 3. Cultural masculinity positively moderates the relationship between job seekers' perceptions of organisational prestige and organisational attractiveness.

Figure 1 presents a graphic description of the proposed conceptual model.

3 | DESIGN/METHODOLOGICAL APPROACH

3.1 | Data collection

Data were collected from 436 undergraduate business students from four countries: Spain, Germany, Ecuador, and Kazakhstan. The studied countries were selected due to their different economic contexts and national cultures. The selected countries are different in terms of the form of government, dominant religion, GDP, and unemployment rate. Germany and Spain are considered developed countries, while Ecuador and Kazakhstan are developing countries. The unemployment rate is lower than 5.0% in all the countries, with the exception of Spain (12.3%).¹ Cultural differences are also relevant, including hierarchical (e.g., Spain and Kazakhstan), individualistic (e.g., Germany), collectivistic (e.g., Kazakhstan and Ecuador), uncertainty avoidant (e.g., Germany and Spain), and low power distance (e.g., Germany) countries (Hofstede, 2022; Mukazhanova, 2012). Focusing on the masculinity dimension of national culture, we have selected two masculine countries, including one developed country (Germany) and one developing country (Ecuador), and two feminine countries, one developed country (Spain) and a developing country (Kazakhstan) (Hofstede, 2022; Mukazhanova, 2012).

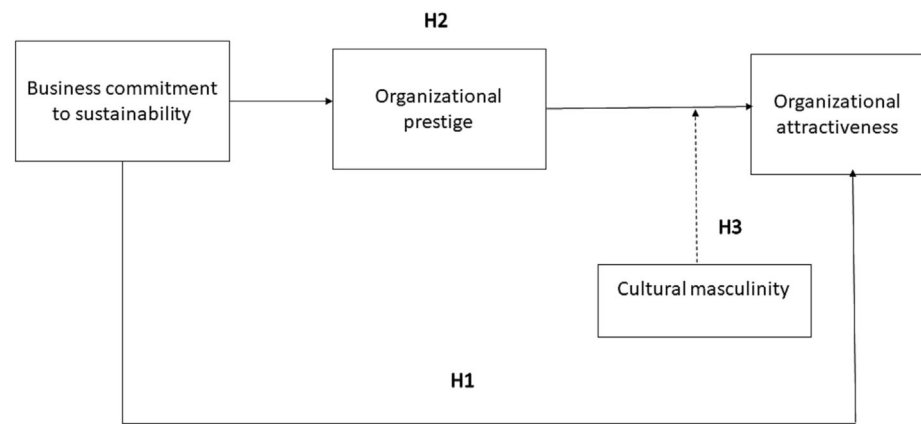
The sustainability context is also different in every studied country. With a score of 70.3/100 points, Germany has the highest score when measuring countries' sustainability characteristics, such as concern about the environment, commitment to climate goals, commitment to social justice, or gender equality (US News Best Country Report, 2023).² Spain scores 47.5/100 (17th), followed by Ecuador 5.6/100 (56th) and Kazakhstan 1.6/100 (79th).

We focused on undergraduate students who were exposed to recruitment messages because of the high number of participants needed to test the scales included in this study. After removing the incomplete questionnaires, the final sample resulted in 412 participants, including 35.7% of total respondents from Ecuador, 29.4% from

¹Source: International Monetary Fund (October 2022).

²Social purpose index.

FIGURE 1 Conceptual model.



Spain, 27.4% from Kazakhstan, and 7.5% from Germany. Data were collected using written questionnaires delivered and collected in students' classrooms.

A convenience sampling procedure was used to ensure cultural variance in selecting participants from the considered countries, which constitutes a strength of this research. Given that results from experimental studies with convenience samples and those with population-based samples provide similar effect estimates (Mullinix et al., 2015) and considering that the objective was not to test the hypotheses in each country or to generalise the findings to the whole population of those countries, minimum size criteria per country or weighting criteria between countries are not adequate in this research. The resulting sample size is comparable with the conventional sample size in experimental studies with a similar design (e.g., Bauer & Aiman-Smith, 1996; Chaudhary, 2019; Gully et al., 2013; and Jones et al., 2014, used samples of size 303, 172, 307, and 180, respectively). The participants' profile is as follows: 60.2% female, 92.7% with no children, with an average age of 22.51 years old ($SD = 2.69$), and an average work experience of 14.05 months ($SD = 25.85$).

Even though experimental designs weaken the social desirability effects often associated with a self-report attribute method by indirectly assessing the importance of cues (Lis, 2012), the experimental design applied included several key procedural controls for limiting the presence of common method bias (Kock et al., 2021; Podsakoff et al., 2003, 2012): a comprehensive survey design for increasing the ability and motivation of respondents (clear instructions, anonymity of responses, and a questionnaire, avoiding length and complex scales), a methodological separation of independent and dependent variables (independent based on manipulation and the dependent based on a survey), and, finally, development of a pretest to ensure the validity and reliability of measures and to test the effectiveness of manipulation.

In addition, to check the existence of common method bias, following the approach of Podsakoff et al. (2003), a new model with all the observed variables loading on one factor was reestimated, and the results were unacceptable (Chi-square = 362.82; $DF = 44$; $CMIN/DF = 8.246$; $RMSEA = 0.133$); thus, these results also suggest that common method bias was not a problem in this study.

3.2 | Design and measures

Sustainability is a multifaceted concept which is related to an immeasurable number of aspects. Hence, operationalising firms' commitment to sustainability is not an easy task. In the following lines, we explain the rationale for the proposed measure for commitment to sustainability.

First, some studies (Jones et al., 2016) have noted that being exposed to messages including social, economic, and environmental information could activate some compensatory psychological processes which influence job seekers' perceptions about the company presented. For instance, this could happen if some information is particularly relevant for the participants, and they make a biased assessment based on this information.

The proposed research model includes organisational prestige, as it is interesting to determine whether showing commitment to social and environmental issues has a positive effect on job seekers' perceptions of organisational prestige and therefore on organisational attractiveness. As the relationship between meeting economic responsibilities and organisational prestige has been underlined previously (Lange et al., 2011; Rindova et al., 2005) and economic responsibilities could have a big influence on prestige and attractiveness, we decided to exclude signals related to economic aspects, focusing only on the analysis of environmental and social issues. In doing so, potential compensatory psychological processes related to economic responsibilities are avoided.

Researchers have noted that social aspects are often excluded from the sustainable development debate (Dempsey et al., 2011; Ukko et al., 2019) and that the social dimension is often overlooked in business research (Carballo-Penela, 2019). In particular, there is a call to find out to what extent different actions related to the quality of life of employees are recognised and valued by prospective employees (Ehnert & Harry, 2012). As social aspects are less examined than environmental issues in the business sustainability literature, the proposed measure of firms' commitment to sustainability considers environmental issues but pays more attention to social aspects and especially to those related to employees' quality of life.

The selected messages showing information about the firms' commitment to sustainability were designed considering prior research suggestions (e.g., Ehnert et al., 2013; Jones & Rupp, 2018). Taking these considerations into account, different job offers were created, including information concerning (1) business responsibility for the environment, (2) promoting women and minorities, (3) improving employees' work-life balance, (4) investing in employees' skills, (5) maintaining the health and safety of employees, and (6) concern for the economic welfare of the workforce.

Following prior research, BCS considers whether the organisation is concerned with minimising its potential negative influence on the environment (Rupp et al., 2013). Promoting women and minorities assesses organisations' interest in hiring women and minorities (Greening & Turban, 2000). Improving employees' work-life balance examines whether organisations implement flexible working hours and work-family balance programmes (Shen & Jiu-hua Zhu, 2011). Investing in employees' skills examines businesses' commitment to provide adequate training and career opportunities to the workforce (Shen & Jiu-hua Zhu, 2011). Maintaining the health and safety of employees takes into account firms' attempts to avoid work-related accidents (Shen & Jiu-hua Zhu, 2011). Finally, concern for the economic welfare of the workforce refers to whether firms pay salaries that are higher than those of competitors in the same industry (Rupp et al., 2013).

Based on similar studies in the prior literature (e.g., Carballo-Penela et al., 2020), an experimental manipulation was used to assess prospective employees' reactions to business commitment to sustainability. The research design includes two levels for six different scenarios, including a message showing information on the firms' commitment to sustainability. Each message was coded as a binary variable considering high and low levels for everyone. The high-level scenario, coded with the value "1," showed organisations' commitment to sustainability (e.g., "This organisation takes precautions to minimise any potential negative influence from its activities on the environment"). Low-level scenarios included information that did not show that commitment, being coded with the value "0" (e.g., "This organisation recently paid significant fines because of damage to the environment").

Following a between-subjects experimental approach, values of every defined variable were fully crossed with the values of the others, resulting in a $2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2 \times 2$ factorial design which produced 64 job offers. The information included in each scenario was used to elaborate 64 separate offers of employment from a fictitious company (LIM&MAR). These offers were randomly distributed among participants in the study, who were asked to imagine that they are in search of a job and LIM&MAR company is recruiting new personnel. They were also asked to read the job offer from LIM&MAR and answer questions about their perceptions of (1) organisational prestige and (2) organisational attractiveness.

For statistical analysis purposes, we created an index which summarises BCS. Manipulation of the binary variables allowed us to create a six-digit code linked to every job offer (e.g., 111100). The created index adds the binary values of every job offer (e.g., $1 + 1 + 1 + 1 + 0 + 0 = 4$), which means the index ranges between "0" and "6."

Organisational prestige was measured using the five items from Highhouse et al.'s (2003) 7-point Likert-type scale. The organisational attractiveness construct was measured through the five-item 7-point Likert-type scale of Highhouse et al. (2003).

Finally, cultural differences between the selected countries can be seen in terms of Hofstede's classification of national cultures (Hofstede, 2022; Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Hofstede's (2022) scores range from 0 to 100. Regarding the dimension of masculinity (Hofstede, 2022) and considering the values provided for these countries based on this classification (Ecuador 63, Spain 42, Kazakhstan 50, and Germany 66), in this study, Ecuador and Germany were considered to be countries with masculine national cultures, whereas Spain and Kazakhstan were considered countries with feminine national cultures.

4 | ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

4.1 | Reliability and validity

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed to assess the reliability and validity of measures. To ensure content validity, a comprehensive literature review was developed, and expert academics in the field reviewed the proposed measures. Guidelines of Gerbing and Anderson (1988), Hu and Bentler (1999), and Hair et al. (2019) were applied to assess discriminant validity, convergent validity, and scale reliability by means of CFA. Table 1 shows results from CFA estimation. The results from the estimation of CFA (Table 1) show that the overall chi-square for this model was 2.375 with 12 DF.

The following measures of fit, namely, the comparative fit index (CFI = 0.993), normed fit index (NFI = 0.986), incremental fit index

TABLE 1 Confirmatory factor analysis: Summary measurement results, validity, and reliability.

	SFL
OP (CR = 0.860; AVE = 0.673; CA = 0.859)	
Employees are probably proud to say they work at this company.	0.827
This is a reputable company to work for.	0.867
This company probably has a reputation as being an excellent employer	0.764
OA (CR = 0.932; AVE = 0.760; CA = 0.904)	
For me, this company would be a good place to work.	0.878
This company is attractive to me as a place for employment.	0.889
A job at this company is very appealing to me.	0.847
Model fit summary	
Chi-square = 2.375, DF = 12 (CMIN/DF = 2.031)	
CFI = 0.993; NFI = 0.986; IFI = 0.993; TLI = 0.988;	
RMSEA = 0.05	

Abbreviations: AVE, average variance extracted; CA, Cronbach alpha; CR, composite reliability; OA, organizational attractiveness; OP, organizational prestige; SFL, standardized factor loadings.

(IFI = 0.993), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI = 0.988), and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA = 0.05), reached values within the required thresholds (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000). Thus, the estimated model was acceptable. To assess convergent validity, we observed individual loadings, and the results show that all observed variables loaded on the corresponding latent variables and that each loading was significant and large, and all latent variables exceeded the recommended level of the average variance extracted (AVE = 0.50), also suggesting convergent validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988; Hair et al., 2019). The constructs also reached acceptable levels of composite reliability (organisational prestige = 0.860 and organisational attractiveness = 0.932), exceeding the threshold of 0.60 recommended by Bagozzi and Yi (1988) for scale reliability.

Finally, the results regarding construct intercorrelations (Table 2) also show that all AVE square root values were greater than the intercorrelation values between constructs, indicating that discriminant validity was adequate for all latent variables (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Hair et al., 2019). Accordingly, based on the above, the results of the measurement model for the latent constructs were adequate.

4.2 | Testing of hypotheses

First, based on structural equation modelling (SEM), several competing models were tested (Table 3): the research base model with partial mediation effects, a first alternative model with full mediation effects (rival model 1), and, finally, a second alternative model with no mediation effects (rival model 2).

As shown above, the first two models (research base model and rival model) demonstrate satisfactory fit, with NFI, RFI, IFI, TLI, and CFI above the 0.90 threshold and RMSEA below the 0.08 threshold (Vandenberg & Lance, 2000), but these measures show that the research base model has a better fit than the rival model. Second, a moderated mediation analysis was performed to test the theoretical hypotheses, following the approach of Hayes (2017). This approach is appropriate when the purpose is to analyse the mediating linkages, through which a specific variable may influence another one, as well as to unveil the underlying situations in which these linkages may happen. In addition, this methodology allows the use of bootstrapping to estimate confidence intervals for hypothesis testing, recommended to avoid problems related to small samples as well as those arising from the nonnormal distribution of data (Preacher

et al., 2007). The variables included in the interaction term were mean-centred to facilitate the interpretability of the coefficients (Hayes, 2017). The unstandardised regression estimates obtained with the moderated mediation model, using model 14 of Hayes (2017), are shown in Table 4.

BCS is positively related to organisational attractiveness (0.220, $p < .001$) (Hypothesis 1). Regarding Hypothesis 2, a mediating effect requires two conditions (Kenny et al., 1998): The independent construct (BCS) must be significantly related to the mediator (organisational prestige), and the mediator must be significantly related to the dependent construct (organisational attractiveness). First, results show that BCS is positively related to organisational prestige (0.583, $p < .001$), and second, organisational prestige is positively related to organisational attractiveness (0.563, $p < .001$), which provides initial support for the indirect effect of BCS on organisational attractiveness through organisational prestige (0.328, $p < .001$) (Hypothesis 2). Regarding Hypothesis 3, the results show that masculinity positively moderates the relationship between organisational prestige and organisational attractiveness since the coefficient of the interaction is significant (0.194, $p < .05$) (Table 4).

The test of unconditional interaction is significant and positive ($F = 6.524$, $p < .05$) (Table 5). In addition, confidence intervals for conditional effects of organisational prestige on organisational attractiveness at different values of masculinity were computed with bootstrapping, giving additional support for the moderation effect. Confidence intervals show that the conditional effects of organisational prestige on organisational attractiveness at different values of masculinity are significant and positive both for masculine cultures (0.757, $p < .05$) and for feminine cultures (0.563, $p < .05$), with this effect being greater for masculine than for feminine countries. Accordingly, the results show that masculinity positively moderates the relationship between organisational prestige and organisational attractiveness, providing additional support for the existence of moderation (Hypothesis 3).

For interpretation purposes, the interaction is plotted in Figure 2, based on the process proposed by Dawson (2014).

Finally, the moderated mediation effects are assessed jointly, examining the conditional indirect effects of BCS through organisational prestige on organisational attractiveness estimated at different values of masculinity. We also estimate the index of moderated mediation (Table 5).

The bootstrapped confidence intervals for the index of moderated mediation (Table 5) do not include zero values (95% CI: 0.031, 0.198), and the index is significant and positive (0.113, $p < .05$). This gives additional support for mediation effects (Hypothesis 2), now together with the moderation effect (Hypothesis 3) confirming a positive moderated mediation through organisational prestige at different values of masculinity. The confidence intervals for the conditional indirect effects of BCS on organisational attractiveness through organisational prestige at different values of masculinity are significant and positive both for masculine cultures (0.442, $p < .05$) and for feminine cultures (0.328, $p < .05$). This indicates that the mediating effect is larger for masculine cultures than for feminine cultures.

TABLE 2 Confirmatory factor analysis: Intercorrelations and average variance extracted.

Construct	1	2	3
1. BCS	1.000		
2. OP	0.481	0.820	
3. OA	0.461	0.773	0.872

Note: Diagonal is the square root of the AVE (bold values). Abbreviations: BCS, business commitment to sustainability; OA, organizational attractiveness; OP, organizational prestige.

TABLE 3 Structural equation modelling: Research and rival models comparison.

Model	Chi-square	CMIN/DF	NFI	RFI	IFI	TLI	CFI	RMSEA
Research base model (partial mediation)	24.375	2.031	0.986	0.976	0.993	0.988	0.993	0.050
Rival model 1 (full mediation)	31.170	2.398	0.982	0.971	0.990	0.983	0.990	0.058
Rival model 2 (no mediation)	211.082	16.237	0.880	0.806	0.887	0.816	0.886	0.193

TABLE 4 Moderated mediation model: Coefficients and summary.

Independent variables	Dependent variable (OP)					Dependent variable (OA)				
	Coeff	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI	Coeff	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
CONSTANT	2.102****	0.185	.000	1.738	2.466	.699***	0.228	.002	0.252	1.147
BCS	.583****	0.057	.000	0.471	0.695	.220****	0.055	.000	0.113	0.327
OP						.563****	0.055	.000	0.456	0.670
MASC						-.560*	0.320	.081	-1.189	0.068
INTERACTION						.194**	0.076	.011	0.045	0.344
Model summary	R ²	F	p			R ²	F	p		
	.204	140.82	.000			.500	101.85	.000		

Note: Coeff, nonstandardized coefficient; INTERACTION, PREST × MASC.

Abbreviations: BCS, business commitment to sustainability; MASC, national culture masculinity (0: femininity; 1: masculinity); NS, not significant; OA, organizational attractiveness; OP, organizational prestige.

*p < .10.

**p < .05.

***p < .01.

****p < .001.

TABLE 5 Moderation-only effects and moderated mediation effects: Conditional effects and test, conditional indirect effects, and index of moderated mediation.

Conditional effects of OP on OA (at values of MASC)	Effect	SE	p	LLCI	ULCI
0 (Femininity)	0.563****	0.055	.000	0.456	0.670
1 (Masculinity)	0.757****	0.059	.000	0.641	0.874
Test of unconditional interaction	Δ R ²	F	p		
Interaction	.008	6.524	.011		
Conditional indirect effects of BCS on OA through OP (at values of MASC)	Effect	BootSE		BLLCI	BULCI
0 (Femininity)	0.328**	0.045		0.241	0.419
1 (Masculinity)	0.442**	0.050		0.347	0.541
Index of moderated mediation	Index	BootSE		BLLCI	BULCI
OP (mediator)	0.113**	0.043		0.031	0.198

Note: Bootstrap confidence intervals derived from 5,000 samples (95% level of confidence).

Abbreviations: BCS, business commitment to sustainability; MASC, national culture masculinity (0: femininity; 1: masculinity); NS, not significant; OA, organizational attractiveness; OP, organizational prestige.

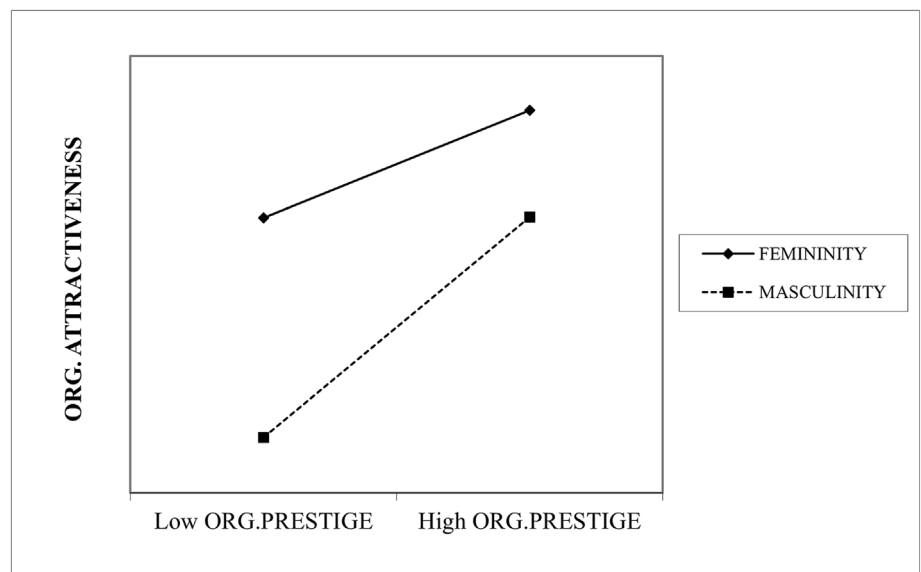
*p < .10.

**p < .05.

***p < .01.

****p < .001.

FIGURE 2 Moderation-only effects: Moderating effect of masculinity on the organisational prestige–organisational attractiveness relationship.



5 | DISCUSSION AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1 | Discussion

This work aims to contribute to the sustainability management literature by examining the relationship between BCS and businesses' attractiveness. It also provides new evidence concerning the mediating mechanisms through which BCS influences perceptions of organisational attractiveness. Moreover, the proposed research model examines the role of cultural masculinity as a moderator in the relationship between organisational prestige and attractiveness.

This research demonstrates that BCS is positively related to organisational attractiveness (Hypothesis 1). In line with prior research (e.g., Greening & Turban, 2000), this result shows that signals included in recruiting messages positively influence job seekers' perceptions of organisational attributes and particularly perceptions of attractiveness (Turban & Greening, 1997). This finding is relevant, as the relationship between BCS and organisational attractiveness has been previously examined in studies including samples of job seekers from just one country, mainly Western developed countries. Results of this study are taken from a sample composed of prospective employees from four different countries and three continents. Two of them, Ecuador and Kazakhstan, have been largely ignored in similar studies. As results are similar from prior studies collecting data in different countries and using other measures of business sustainability, our findings confirm the importance of BCS to enhance organisational attractiveness and increase the generalisability of the findings obtained.

In addition, we contribute to the literature by providing knowledge on the underlying mechanisms through which firms' commitment to sustainability influences organisational attractiveness, highlighting the mediating role of organisational prestige (Hypothesis 2). Considering that all related effects (total, direct, and indirect) are significant, organisational prestige partially mediates the effect of BCS on

organisational attractiveness (Little et al., 2007; MacKinnon et al., 2002). Although results show a direct effect of exhibiting BCS on organisational attractiveness, the indirect effect through organisational prestige is greater than the direct effect. In line with social identity theory, our findings show that expectations of being a member of a prestigious organisation increase the feelings of pride that job seekers would experience if they finally worked for that firm. Anticipated pride would enhance job applicants' self-worth, making the firm more attractive as a future employer (Jones et al., 2016).

Our findings also show that cultural masculinity positively moderates the effect of organisational prestige on business attractiveness (Hypothesis 3). As was expected, results show that organisational prestige can be understood as a sign of a firm's success. Competition and success values embedded in masculine societies cause the positive effect of perceptions of prestige on organisational attractiveness to be stronger for job seekers from masculine societies. Considering that both the main effect and the interaction effect of the masculinity dimension are significant, our results indicate that cultural masculinity is not a pure moderator but a quasi-moderator (Cohen & Cohen, 1975; Sharma et al., 1981).

Previous studies have paid attention to some moderating effects on the path *commitment to sustainability–signal-based inferences–job seekers' attitudes and choices*. These include ethical predispositions (Zhang & Gowan, 2012), the effect of the desire to have a significant impact through work (Gully et al., 2013), a communal orientation and pro-environmental attitudes of job seekers (Jones et al., 2014), one's personal attitude towards corporate sustainability activities (Huber & Hirsch, 2017), attributed sustainability motives (Joo et al., 2016), and the amount of information about the company and job (Guerci et al., 2015). However, the moderating effect of a country's culture is largely ignored, as most of the prior research is based on single-culture samples. In addition, the effect of this moderator is addressed jointly with the mediation influence of organisational prestige, using a moderated mediation analysis. This approach allows for studying

these theoretical relations in a more complex and detailed manner, improving the interpretations of such effects.

5.2 | Research implications

5.2.1 | Theoretical implications

The present article aims to contribute to the literature on business sustainability. While a few studies have paid attention to the relationship between firms' commitment to sustainability and a limited number of organisational and individual outcomes, the scope of BCS is limited to a few aspects. These aspects include, for instance, community relations and environmental sustainability (Rupp et al., 2013), business pro-environmental practices and community involvement (Jones et al., 2014), the environment, diversity, employee relations and products (Lis, 2012), economic performance, legal performance, ethical performance (Zhang & Gowan, 2012) or EBIT, energy efficiency, and employee satisfaction (Huber & Hirsch, 2017).

By proposing a measure of sustainability mainly focused on social aspects, our findings provide researchers and practitioners with a more complete picture of how commitment to sustainability is related to job seekers' perceptions of organisational attractiveness. We provide strong evidence of the positive effect of the social and environmental aspects of sustainability on both attractiveness and organisational prestige. Results also underline the indirect effect of commitment to sustainability on attractiveness through organisational prestige.

This study also provides knowledge to understand the contingent effects of a masculine culture on the relationship between BCS and organisational attractiveness. We have found that cultural masculinity is a quasi-moderator, interacting and also being positively related to organisational attractiveness. This double role increases the relevance of cultural masculinity in enhancing attractiveness.

According to Hofstede (2022), prior research has noted that individuals from masculine societies consider earnings and achievements to be a priority. Similarly, Jamali et al. (2020, p. 364) describe masculine cultures as "less compassionate and more focused on aggressiveness and materialistic gains than feminine cultures." Some studies suggest that cultural values from countries with a feminine culture are more in line with sustainable development principles than with those values from masculine societies (Park et al., 2012). Hence, masculine values could weaken the direct effect of showing commitment to sustainability on some expected outcomes. However, our findings show that masculine values could be positive for promoting some positive consequences of commitment sustainability, such as organisational attractiveness, when considering some mediating mechanisms. In this regard, we suggest that the role of cultural masculinity in strengthening/weakening the relationships around showing commitment to business sustainability and positive outcomes, such as organisational attractiveness issues, depends on the nature of the mediating variable. Feminine cultural values are more aligned with signals from recruiting messages showing commitment to sustainable development principles

than masculine cultural values. Nevertheless, the characteristics of the mediator matter, as they could be in line with masculine values. This is relevant, as most of the effect of showing commitment to business sustainability on a particular outcome can be through a mediator, as our results show.

Finally, the combination of signalling theory and social identity theory provides a solid basis for designing a research model for understanding the relationship between BCS and organisational attractiveness. The integration of both theories offers complementary explanations of our understanding of applicants' attitudes. Taken together, they consider different perspectives to illustrate how individuals are attracted to firms, showing a wide variety of theoretical mechanisms to understand the rationale for the relationships included in our framework, including perceptions of the organisational environment, the fit between individual characteristics and the environment, and, finally, individual views of the self.

5.2.2 | Managerial implications

From a managerial perspective, this research provides organisations with knowledge to understand the processes by which showing commitment to sustainability influences job seekers' perceptions of organisational attractiveness and organisational prestige. In particular, results show that practices showing commitment to the environment, such as promoting women and minorities, improving employees' work-life balance, investing in employees' skills, maintaining the health and safety of employees, and concern for the economic welfare of the workforce, are positively related to both organisational attractiveness and organisational prestige.

Our findings should encourage managers to implement actions related to these practices to attract young talent and increase the reputation of their business. The use of social media and, in particular, professional social networks could be very useful to communicate business commitment to sustainability, particularly to younger generations, who use social networks sites extensively. Collaboration between human resource managers and community managers could play a key role in developing proper communication.

Although several studies point out that firms showing commitment to sustainability could be positive for organisations, some companies may be reluctant to embed sustainability principles into organisational strategies and policies, as this could involve some additional economic costs (Álvarez-Pérez et al., 2020). The positive effect on organisational attractiveness and prestige could compensate for these costs, considering that companies are facing a lack of highly skilled employees and the role of a quality workforce in achieving firm success (Greening & Turban, 2000; Lämsä et al., 2019; Waples & Brachle, 2020).

Results regarding the moderating role of cultural masculinity are particularly interesting for companies operating in different countries, as the relationship between organisational prestige and business attractiveness would be reinforced or weakened depending on the existing masculine or feminine values. Firms interested in using

messages showing commitment to sustainability for increasing firms' attractiveness by achieving more prestige should be aware that the same effort given to showing their commitment to sustainability could produce different results in countries with different masculine/feminine cultural values. The effect of prestige on attractiveness is stronger in masculine societies as masculinity reinforces this relationship. Nevertheless, managers should be aware that the role of masculinity can change depending on the mediator considered. Results can be different if they are interested in commitment to sustainability increasing organisational attractiveness through different mediators than organisational prestige, for instance, affecting perceptions of job seekers' perceived value fit or expected treatment when they join the recruitment company.

Finally, our findings are also interesting for helping managers recruit young talent. This is particularly relevant in a context where global businesses need to cope with the retirement of a high number of older experienced workers (Carballo-Penela et al., 2020; Wayne & Casper, 2012) and new college graduates are a relevant source of talent (Islam et al., 2022; Mulder, 2004). However, many organisations have not adapted their recruitment strategies to attract talent from the younger generations, being necessary to find out what factors are valued by young job seekers in order to emphasise them in job advertisements (Twenge, 2010). By using a sample of young prospective employees from four different countries, this research provides organisations with useful information to adapt recruiting messages to attract young talent.

5.3 | Limitations and future research

This research has some limitations which should be acknowledged. Despite many relevant contributions in this area having used experimental designs based on student samples (e.g., Jones et al., 2014, 2016; Lis, 2012), the use of students entails some limitations. First, our findings could not be generalised to a sample of more experienced employees (Carballo-Penela, 2019). Second, using students instead full-time job seekers could reduce the external validity of the findings (Zhang & Gowan, 2012).

To avoid these problems, we have taken some precautions during the data collection stage. Our sample only includes students taking the final courses of their degrees. Although some of them could not be active job seekers at this moment, most of them will be actively searching for a job in a short period of time, and they are familiar with job advertisements. As Zhang and Gowan (2012) underline, these precautions ensure that students samples are useful to gather the relevant characteristics of young prospective employees. Likewise, new college graduates are a relevant source of talent for organisations. New young workers' computer skills, enthusiasm, motivation, low salaries, and willingness to learn are highly valued by employers (Wayne & Casper, 2012). In order to effectively recruit them, there is a need to understand which factors influence their perceptions of organisational attractiveness. Nevertheless, future research drawing

on a more veteran sample of job seekers is needed to increase the generalisability of our findings.

Including students in the final years of their degrees also helps to minimise external validity issues. All the participants in this study are familiar with job offers, having recruiting experience. Sixty-one per cent of respondents also have previous work experience (12.9 months on average). Although our findings cannot be extrapolated to a veteran work force, taking these precautions ensures that the student sample collects the essential characteristics of full-time young job seekers (Zhang & Gowan, 2012). On the other hand, internal validity is high in studies using experimental designs, which also weakens the social desirability bias, a common concern when using self-reports in sustainability research.

The convenience sampling procedure used provides a multicultural sample, which fits well with the purpose of this research. The small sample from Germany was retained to ensure a multicultural view, considering that the purpose of the study is to test the theoretical hypotheses considering the total sample but not providing separate results per country. To increase the generalisability of our findings, future research should collect additional data from different countries.

Combining different recruiting messages regarding BCS is a strength of this work, as prior research has paid attention to single messages. In order to underline the relevance of the social dimension of sustainable development, our measure of BCS is mainly focused on different actions which show commitment to the quality of life of the workforce. While this increases the novelty of the study, future research could replicate the proposed model, using a different measure of commitment to sustainability.

Finally, future research could analyse in more detail the role of national culture. The findings obtained confirm that masculinity reinforces the positive effect of organisational prestige on organisational attractiveness. We focused on the masculinity dimension of Hofstede's cultural classification scheme because masculinity fits well with the proposed research framework, as Hofstede (2001) derived masculine values from questions related to job characteristics (Hofman & Newman, 2014). Furthermore, individuals from masculine societies consider earnings and achievements a priority, and masculine cultural values are linked to the success of organisational prestige.

Although the masculinity dimension is particularly important in our context, we did not examine the role of other dimensions of national culture. In this line, managerial literature (e.g., Cagliano et al., 2011) has paid some attention to examining how national individualistic/collectivistic values influence organisations' management. For instance, as sustainability values involve taking care of groups which differ from that of the individual, future research could analyse if job seekers from individualistic cultures are less sensitive to sustainability issues than job seekers from collectivistic societies. As Hofstede's approach to national culture has received some criticism, future research could consider complementary approaches to a country's natural culture, such as the GLOBE approach (Javidan et al., 2006).

CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors have no competing interests to declare that are relevant to the content of this article.

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APPENDIX A: AN EXAMPLE OF A JOB OFFER

LIM&MAR is a professional consulting company that provides business solutions across all segments of business all over the world. We are looking for passionate talented people to join to our team in different positions.

LIM&MAR pays salaries that tend to be 40% higher than the average for the same position in the industry. This company provides adequate training and development opportunities to employees and adopts flexible working hours to achieve work-life balance. The firm has received national recognition from groups advocating fair hiring policies for its progress in promoting women and minorities. The number of work-related accidents happening in this company is clearly lower than the average of the industry.

This organization takes precautions to minimize any potential negative influence of its activities on the environment.