

## Employer Image and Job Pursuit Intention in the New S-Curve Industries in Thailand: The Mediating Role of Organizational Attractiveness

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### Abstract

This study examines the mechanism through which organizational attractiveness links the association between employer image and job pursuit intention in Thailand's new S-curve industries. It makes a significant contribution to research that examines how the pool of possible and young applicants in the developing economies of newly emerging industries can be enhanced. Structural equation modeling is used for data analysis. The findings, based on 520 third- and fourth-year undergraduate students from 20 public universities across Thailand, show that employer image is positively associated with job pursuit intention. Additionally, the association between employer image and job pursuit intention is partially mediated by organizational attractiveness. This is demonstrated using signaling theory and the theory of reasoned action as the overarching framework. Our findings have practical business implications. Specifically, recruiters should give job seekers information about their organizations, especially in the areas of training, job opportunities, and career development. This action can have two effects: it increases the attraction of job seekers to particular organizations; and it can encourage them to apply for jobs at the same organizations.

**Keywords:** Employer image, Organizational attractiveness, Job pursuit intention, New S-curve industries.

## Introduction

The previous decade has seen a great deal of change in the world economy, and across the globe, many industries have evolved because of the disruption that technology has brought to the nature of work in organizations. Numerous industries, such as customer service, education, banking, food services, and manufacturing, are under pressure due to the enormous amount of new technology that has been established (Deloitte, 2017). For instance, technology has enabled virtual customer experiences in the field of customer service through interactive artificial intelligence (AI) products and cloud contact centers (Shaw, 2022). During the COVID-19 pandemic, the market for contactless alternatives led to the broad adoption of digital technology and increased the number of businesses that offer branchless banking, customizable insurance, and other contactless payment systems (Kosse & Szemere, 2021). The manufacturing industry has also seen the growth of businesses that focus on industrial automation, 3D printing, and robots, all of which aim to improve the industry's adaptability and innovativeness (Schlaepfer et al., 2017).

In Thailand, a developing country in Southeast Asia, digital technology has had a similarly transformative impact, giving rise to several new technology organizations in a range of diverse industries. The value of Thailand's digital sector as a whole reached USD 20.6 billion in 2020, an increase of more than 10 percent from the previous year (*The Next Digital Behemoth*, 2021). It is now widely recognized that the digital sector is a vital driver of the Thai economy. As a result of the implementation of the digital economy development plan initiated in 2016, the concept of "new S-curve industries" has evolved in the Thai digital environment. It specifically refers to the industries of the economy that are anticipated to drive the country in the future, including robotics, aviation and logistics, biofuels and biochemicals, the medical hub, and digital industries (Ministry of Industry, 2016).

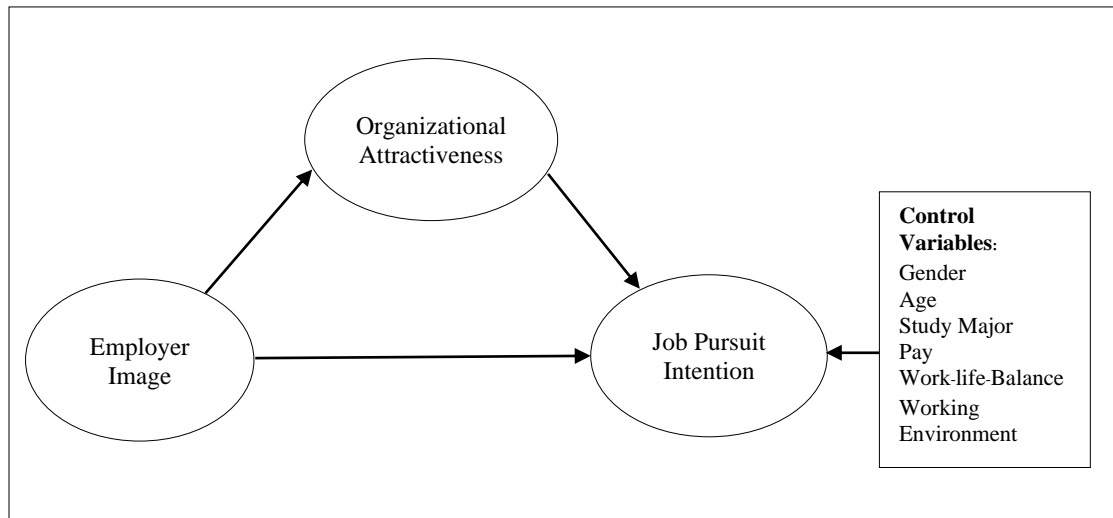
New S-curve industries in Thailand are still in their infancy, but the demand for employees in these industries is expected to soar in the coming years (Banmairuroy et al., 2022; M Report, 2020). Therefore, organizations in these industries must plan to attract more candidates to fill job vacancies. Organizations generally can benefit greatly from understanding the HR strategies and practices that are utilized to increase applicants' intention to apply for a job. Recruitment is one of the key HR practices used to draw in valuable talent and keep the organization competitive (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Van Hoyer & Saks, 2011). The recruitment process is a sequential one that enables the organization to target potential employees with certain skills, develop job specifications and prospect profiles, and then attempt to attract candidates to apply for job openings (Gomes & Neves, 2011; Van Hoyer & Saks, 2011). Over the previous few decades, researchers have continued to call for more empirical studies of recruitment (Roberson et al., 2005). According to Boudreau and Rynes (1985), the economic value of recruiting efforts depends on an organization's pre-interview information capacity to encourage candidates to find out more about organizational offerings. Although recruiting is important, little is known about the factors and processes that during the recruitment process influence an applicant's decision to apply for a job (Barber, 1998; Barber & Roehling, 1993; Collins, 2007; Roberson et al., 2005).

Previous studies have offered some information about the factors that influence an individual's intention to apply for a job. For instance, that intention is influenced by general perceptions of job characteristics, such as job duties, salary, benefits, and employment stability (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Barber & Roehling, 1993; Gomes & Neves, 2011); organizational attributes, such as an organization's policies, procedures, and working conditions (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Barber & Roehling, 1993; Gomes & Neves, 2011); and organizational attractiveness (i.e., an individual's feeling of attraction to an organization; Allen et al., 2007; Bednarska, 2016; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Saks et al., 1995). Effective recruitment requires an understanding of these factors (Lievens et al., 2001).

Consequently, the goal of this study is to ascertain whether a relationship exists between job seekers' perceptions of employer image, defined as their knowledge about the organization, and their intention to pursue a job in one of Thailand's new S-curve industries. This study also examines the factors that lead applicants to form intentions to apply for a job, especially in new and emerging industries. Additionally, we investigate the way in which organizational attractiveness—a measure of how favorably a person regards an organization as a place to work (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Bednarska, 2016)—can serve as a potential mediating factor between employer image and job pursuit intention. In other words, we examine whether applicants' knowledge of the new S-curve industries affects their decision to apply for a job in organizations within these industries and whether the new S-curve industry's attractiveness as an employer mediates the relationship. Given the rapid growth of new S-curve industries in Thailand and the need for efficient recruiting strategies, identifying the arguments that organizations should use to increase applications for jobs in these industries has significant practical value.

This study makes several significant contributions to the literature in the fields of job choice and recruitment. First, previous studies have shown that employer image is associated with employee and organizational outcomes, such as employee commitment (Schwaiger & Zehrer, 2021), employee identification (Rho et al., 2015), employees' recommendation intention (Van Hoyer, 2008), and organizational performance (Kashive & Khanna, 2017). Research that links employer image and job pursuit intention is still relatively scarce (Gomes & Neves, 2011; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). This study, which conceptually and empirically evaluates the relationship between employer image and job pursuit intention, fills this gap. Second, very little research examines the mechanism through which employer image influences applicant intention to apply (Wei et al., 2016), suggesting that empirical support for this mechanism is lacking. By demonstrating that organizational attractiveness is a mediating factor in the relationship between employer image and job pursuit intention, this study contributes to this under-developed body of literature. Third, this study contributes to burgeoning research on employer image and job pursuit intention in Thailand's rapidly developing industries. Moreover, because most previous studies of job choice process have focused on Western contexts (Gomes & Neves, 2011), this study makes an important contribution to research that examines how the pool of possible and young applicants in the developing economies of newly emerging industries can be enhanced. Figure 1 illustrates this study's conceptual framework.

**Figure 1: Conceptual Framework**



The rest of the study is organized as follows. First, the background of Thailand’s new S-curve industries is presented. Then we review of the literature that examines relevant variables and discuss the development of our hypotheses. Next, the methodologies used in the study, including methods of data collection, are described. Thereafter, the empirical results are presented. The final section discusses the main findings, their theoretical and practical implications, and recommendations for future research.

### Background of Thailand’s New S-Curve Industries

To promote an innovative value-based economy, the Thai government has committed to the so-called “Thailand 4.0 Model,” which, in contrast to the traditional approach, places more emphasis on accomplishing sustainable development goals and the local economy (Banmairuoy, et al., 2022). Thus, this approach strikes a balance between the local economy and the global economy. Through the adoption of the Thailand 4.0 Model and the digital economy development plan, the “new S-curve industries,” which include the sectors of robotics, aviation and logistics, biofuels and biochemicals, medical hub, and digital technology, have emerged in the Thai digital environment (Banmairuoy, et al., 2022). These industries are expected to significantly impact the country’s economy in the coming years (Apisitniran, 2018).

In the early phases of the adoption of the new S-curve, the Thai government implemented a variety of supporting policies to encourage new business owners to start new businesses (Sorat, 2016). However, given that technically skilled workers frequently have in-depth and specialized knowledge (Davenport & Redman, 2020; Toner, 2011), which is crucial to meet the new S-curve demands, the present situation poses a serious problem for traditional organizations in terms of human resources. The growing need for skilled workers has led to a decrease in the pool of applicants for many other businesses, and this has forced these businesses to turn to technology to fill their job openings. Organizations in the new S-curve industries are encountering the same challenges when they try to recruit qualified applicants for their workforces because competition to attract good employees has increased.

## Literature Review

### The Relationship between Employer Image and Job Pursuit Intention

Job pursuit intention is defined as an “individual’s intention to take action to find out more information about an organization, to contact the organization, and to try to secure an interview with the organization” (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001, p.221). This study focuses on job pursuit intention because the prior literature demonstrates that it is a strong predictor of actual applications for job positions (Barber & Roehling, 1993; Cable & Judge, 1996; Turban et al., 1995). Additionally, the intention of applicants to pursue a job is among the most thoroughly researched outcomes of the recruitment processes (Chapman et al., 2005; Gomes & Neves, 2011). Given Thailand’s current labor shortages and its need for an effective recruiting process, especially in the new S-curve industries, its organizations would benefit greatly from a deeper knowledge of the factors that influence individuals’ job pursuit intentions.

When choosing where to apply for a job, job seekers base their decisions on a variety of beliefs (Rynes et al., 1991), including their beliefs about and knowledge of an organization, also known as employer image (Lievens et al., 2005; Wei et al., 2016). This term refers to individual’s perceptions of what is distinctive, central, and enduring about an organization, including organizational and job characteristics (Cable & Turban, 2001; Dutton et al., 1994; Van Hoye, 2008; Van Hoye & Saks, 2011) as well as the potential employee’s general impression of the organization (Barber, 1998). Three main components of employer image are vital to job seekers: *employer information*, *job information*, and *people information* (Cable & Turban, 2001). According to Cable and Turban (2001), potential applicants hold beliefs about an organization’s objective facts, such as employer information, which might range from an organization’s past to its current policies. Examples of employer information include size, location, degree of centralization, and geographic dispersion (Lievens et al., 2005). Cable and Turban (2001) noted that potential applicants are knowledgeable about the requirements for a particular position at the organization to which they may consider applying, such as job information. Pay and benefits, kind of work to be performed, and opportunities for career progression are a few examples of job information. People information describes the types of individuals who comprise an organization and who a job seeker might work with in the future.

Signaling theory (Spence, 1973) might explain the relationship between employer image and job pursuit intention. According to signaling theory, job seekers interpret and assess information provided by an organization to its employees, including working conditions and environment (Rynes et al., 1991). When the recruiting process starts, candidates are unfamiliar with potential employers and hope to acquire information about working conditions from recruiting organizations. Job seekers may assess their compatibility through employer advertisements that detail their working environment (Elving et al., 2013). This information can serve as a basis for establishing a relationship between an organization and potential employees because it attracts the attention of candidates and persuades them to apply for a job (Backhaus, 2004). Additionally, signaling theory postulates that favorable perceptions of an organization, such as employer image, are likely to be interpreted by potential employees as signals about otherwise unknown organizational and job characteristics. Thus, potential employees may be more likely to draw positive conclusions about

these unidentified characteristics and take action to learn more about the recruiting organization, such as achieving a higher level of job pursuit intention (Allen et al., 2007).

Research also suggests that employer image influences the outcomes of job seekers, including their job pursuit intentions (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Allen et al., 2007; Collins, 2007; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Gatewood et al., 1993; Lemmink et al., 2003; Wei et al., 2016). For example, Allen et al. (2007) found that employer image based on information provided on organizations' websites is positively related to intention to pursue employment among students. Based on data gathered from 123 recruiting organizations and 456 university students in the US, Collins (2007) concluded that employer image significantly and positively influences students' intention and decision to apply for a job. Furthermore, Wei et al. (2016) used hierarchical linear modeling to examine the relationship between employer image and intention to pursue a job among graduates at one university in Taiwan. They found that employer image and job pursuit intention are positively related and that the person-organization fit acts as a mediator in this relationship.

The research and theory discussed above lead us to propose the following hypothesis:

- H1** Employer image is positively related to job pursuit intention in the new S-curve industries.

### **The Relationship between Employer Image and Organizational Attractiveness**

Scholars and practitioners have been interested in job choice because the motivating attributes that attract candidates to a certain organization need to be understood (Vatankhah & Ilkhanizadeh, 2021). The main goal of job choice research is to understand the procedure through which applicants decide about open job positions (Gatewood et al., 1993). Organizational attractiveness, the degree to which a prospective employee regards an organization as a desirable place to work and values collaborating with it (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001), is widely used to measure an applicant's overall attraction to a job and an organization (Chapman et al., 2005).

Previous studies have examined variables that could affect job seekers' perceptions of organizational attractiveness during the initial stages of recruitment (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Chapman et al., 2005; Lievens et al., 2005; Ployhart, 2006; Turban, 2001; Turban & Keon, 1993). For instance, in a meta-analysis, Chapman et al. (2005) posited that organizational characteristics, such as work environment, organizational size, geographical dispersion, organizational policies, and strategies in attracting job seekers, and job characteristics, such as type of work, flexibility, pay/salary, opportunities for advancement, quality of mentoring program, recruiting behaviors, and procedural justice, are the key determinants of organizational attractiveness. Turban and Keon (1993), too, found a significant association between job seekers' attraction to an organization and organizational attributes, particularly reward structure and degree of centralization. Furthermore, Kausel and Slaughter (2011) found that organizational characteristics and the narrow facets of applicants' personality characteristics, including trust, assertiveness, and imagination, have a significant interactive effect on organizational attractiveness.

In addition to the aforementioned factors that determine organizational attractiveness, employer image is an important attribute that potentially influences a job seeker's attraction to an organization (Lievens et al., 2005, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Van Hove & Saks, 2011; Younis & Hammad, 2020). Job seekers appear to be more attracted to organizations that have more favorable images (Highhouse et al., 1999; Van Hove & Saks, 2011). As they learn more about an organization, job seekers are exposed to additional information, at which point their acquisition of more knowledge about and their increasing familiarity with the organization can favorably affect their attraction to it.

Previous theoretical and empirical studies across student, actual applicant, and employee samples have revealed a strong positive association between employer image and organizational attractiveness (Bankins & Waterhouse, 2019; Cable & Turban, 2001; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Kashive & Khanna, 2017; Lievens, 2007; Lievens et al., 2005, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Myrden & Kelloway, 2015; Van Hove & Saks, 2011; Younis & Hammad, 2020). For example, Van Hove and Saks (2011) investigated the perceptions of employer image and organizational attractiveness among 200 potential applicants targeted by the Belgian military. The results demonstrated that among potential applicants, image attributes predict perceived organizational attractiveness. Younis and Hammad's (2020) analysis of data from 382 fourth-year undergraduate students at Egyptian universities demonstrated that employer image (as well as corporate image) is positively related to organizational attractiveness. Anticipating that the findings from these studies apply to our study, in which job seekers' perceptions of employer image will significantly increase applicants' attraction to organizations in the new S-curve industries, we hypothesize that:

**H2** Employer image is positively related to organizational attractiveness in the new S-curve industries.

### **The Relationship between Organizational Attractiveness and Job Pursuit Intention**

The fact that an individual is attracted to a certain organization does not necessarily indicate that he/she intends to pursue a job with that organization (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Chapman et al., 2005). Organizational attractiveness, according to Barber (1998), is the initial stage of recruitment. During this period the organization attempts to build a pool of potential candidates. Simultaneously, individuals evaluate how desirable it would be to work with the organization. Job pursuit intention is the second stage of an intensive search, when potential candidates start making efforts to secure at least a job interview with an organization. Previous research indicates that organizational attractiveness is an important predictor of whether job seekers intend to pursue job at an organization (Allen et al., 2007; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Saks et al., 1995). For example, Gomes and Neves (2011) found that organizational and job attributes are positively related to organizational attractiveness, which, in turn, positively influences job pursuit intention. Similarly, the examination by Allen et al. (2007) of the willingness of a sample of 814 randomly allocated student participants to search for an organizational website demonstrated that organizational attractiveness is positively related to job pursuit intention.

This study uses Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) theory of reasoned action, which describes a causal sequence that starts with beliefs and then moves to attitude, intention, and actual behavior to demonstrate a relationship between organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intention. Their theory states that an individual's beliefs will influence his/her attitude toward a behavior, and that attitude is anticipated to affect his/her intention to engage in a particular behavior (Carless, 2005). When applied to the recruiting context, the theory predicts that applicants' attitudes toward the organization, such as organizational attractiveness in this context, will influence their intention to pursue jobs in the new S-curve industries. In response to the empirical and theoretical evidence just summarized, we hypothesize that:

**H3** Perceived organizational attractiveness is positively related to job pursuit intention in the new S-curve industries.

### **Organizational Attractiveness as a Mediator in the Relationship between Employer Image and Job Pursuit Intention**

A small but growing body of research studies organizational attractiveness as a mediator that influences job pursuit intention (e.g., Allen et al., 2007; Bednarska, 2016; Chapman et al., 2005; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Roberson et al., 2005). For instance, Gomes and Neves (2011) have proposed that organizational attributes, such as pay, benefits, and opportunities for training and development, and job characteristics, such as knowledge of results, serve as its predictors, while organizational attractiveness serves as its mediator when applicants develop the intention to apply for a vacant job. The findings demonstrate that the decision to apply for a job is the outcome of a process that begins with organizational attributes and job characteristics and is completely mediated by organizational attractiveness. Using data from students and recent graduates who majored in tourism and hospitality at one Polish institution, Bednarska (2016) found that organizational attractiveness fully mediates the relationship between the person-environment fit and job pursuit intention. These studies suggest that organizational attractiveness is a potential mediating mechanism in the association between employer image and intent to pursue a job. In other words, a prospective applicants' level of attraction to an organization can be influenced by his/her increased knowledge of the organization, which can simultaneously increase his/her desire to pursue employment there.

According to the signaling theory applied to this relationship, a strong employer image increases job seekers' familiarity with and eventually their knowledge of an employer. Consequently, it fosters favorable signals, impressions, and attitudes toward that organization (Collins, 2007). In other words, prospective candidates perceive a positive employer image as a signal of familiarity and credibility, which then strengthens their attraction to that organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Collins, 2007). This, in turn, increases their intention to pursue a job there. Therefore, we would anticipate that employer image, through organizational attractiveness, favorably affects job pursuit intention. The theory of reasoned action can also be used to explain this mediating relationship. That is, the degree of organizational attractiveness (attitude toward a behavior), which is initially generated by the job seekers' perception of the employer image (an individual's belief), shapes an individual's job pursuit intention (behavioral intention).



Taking into consideration the empirical and theoretical discussions posed above, we propose the following hypothesis:

- H4** Organizational attractiveness mediates the positive relationship between employer image and job pursuit intention in the new S-curve industries.

## Methodology

### Sample and Procedure

Through an online questionnaire survey, third- and fourth-year undergraduate students from 20 public universities located in 4 distinct regions of Thailand were selected for non-probabilistic convenience samples. We reached out to instructors at these universities and sent them the link and QR code for the questionnaire; they then distributed the questionnaires to their students. We relied on this set of students because they were most likely to join the workforce soon, making them potential employees for the emerging S-curve industry's organizations and a key target for organizational recruiting efforts. Additionally, these undergraduate students have been used as a sample in other research on job choice decisions (e.g., Allen et al., 2007; Bednarska, 2016; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Lievens et al., 2001; Saks et al., 1995). The participants were asked to respond to an online survey that included descriptions of new S-curve industries as well as questions about the perceived employer image of new S-curve industries, organizational attractiveness, job pursuit intention, and demographic characteristics. Participants were informed that participating in the survey was completely optional and anonymous and that results would not be disclosed. Our study also received an ethical review and approval from the authors' institution.

Missing data on key variables were removed from our observations, and the final sample consisted of 520 students. According to Table 1, the sample had a 73 percent female composition<sup>1</sup> and an average age of 21 years. About 60 percent of these students were pursuing studies in the social sciences, such as business and management, psychology, and economics, while 40 percent were pursuing studies in the sciences and technologies. Of these, 20 percent attended universities in the South, 20 percent attended universities in the Northeast, and 52 percent attended universities in the Central and North.

### Measures

Since the study's original scales of measures were based on the English language, we translated the scales into Thai, the students' native language, using the backward translation method proposed by Brislin (1980). Before finalizing the survey questionnaire, we conducted a pilot study to ensure the questionnaire design was appropriate for the study's context. A five-point Likert scale, which ranges from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree, was used to measure every item in this study.

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<sup>1</sup> According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, the proportion of female students enrolled in tertiary education in Thailand was approximately 78 percent in 2021 (World Bank, 2021). For this reason, the percentage of female undergraduate students in our sample (73 percent) is comparable to its percentage in the national student population.

To measure employer image in the new S-curve industries, we modified the three-item scale of perceived knowledge about organizations developed by Bonifaz et al. (2010). These items, which closely resemble the concept of employee image proposed by Lievens (2007) and Lemmink et al. (2003), included: “I know enough about job opportunities at organizations in the new S-curve industries”; “I know enough about career paths at organizations in the new S-curve industries”; and “I know enough about training opportunities available at organizations in the new S-curve industries.” Cronbach’s alpha for employer image was 0.89.

Our organizational attractiveness measure is based on Aiman-Smith et al.’s (2001) five items. Sample items included: “I would like to work for an organization in the new S-curve industries”; and “I would want an organization like this in my community.” Cronbach’s alpha for organizational attractiveness was 0.92.

To measure employee job pursuit intention, we also applied the scales developed by Aiman-Smith et al. (2001). Six items in the survey measured employee desire to apply for a job in the new S-curve industries. Sample items included: “I would attempt to gain an interview with an organization in the new S-curve industries”; and “I would actively pursue obtaining a position with an organization in the new S-curve industries.” Cronbach’s alpha for job pursuit intention was 0.94.

To lessen the possibility of omitted variable bias, we also included a few individual and job characteristics as control variables. Gender, age, and study major are examples of individual characteristics variables, while pay, work-life-balance policy, and working environment are examples of job characteristics. We asked participants to rate the importance of these job characteristics when they consider applying for a job in the S-curve industries; the scale ranges from 1 = definitely not important to 5 = definitely important. These variables are consistent with those used in earlier studies of job choice decisions (e.g., Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Bednarska, 2016).

## **Results**

We analyzed our data using the statistical software SPSS and AMOS version 22.0. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was employed to evaluate the measurement model, including convergent and discriminant validity, while the covariance-based structural equation modelling (CB-SEM) was used to test all the proposed hypotheses.

### **Common Method Bias**

Because this study used a self-report survey to collect data, there is a strong possibility that our findings are affected by a common method bias. To alleviate this concern, we adopted the following advice from Podsakoff et al. (2003). First, we promised participants that their data would be treated as confidential and used only for academic purposes. This assurance encouraged participants to accurately answer our questions. Second, to check for common method bias, we also carried out the Harman’s statistical test. We anticipated that if the data contain a significant amount of common method bias, a factor analysis of all the model’s variables would produce a single factor that accounts for most of the variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Our results demonstrate that the variance explained by the first single factor was 48

percent, which is less than 50 percent of the total variance (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Thus, it is possible that common method bias is not a significant problem in our study.

### Convergent and Discriminant Validity

Before testing our hypotheses, we evaluated the discriminant validity of employer image, organizational attractiveness, and job pursuit intention by conducting a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) that examines whether these variables were empirically separated and captured independent constructs. The results reveal that when all items were loaded onto their latent factors, the proposed three-factor model—i.e., employer image, organizational attractiveness, and job pursuit intention—demonstrated a good fit with the data ( $\lambda^2 = 196.16$ ,  $df = 72$ ,  $CFI = 0.98$ ,  $TLI = 0.97$ ,  $GFI = 0.95$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.05$ ). The fit of a single-factor model in which all measures were loaded on one general construct is poor ( $\lambda^2 = 1151.84$ ,  $df = 77$ ,  $CFI = 0.82$ ,  $TLI = 0.79$ ,  $GFI = 0.73$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.16$ ). In addition, the fit is better than in both a two-factor model, in which items of employer image and organizational attractiveness were set to load on a single construct ( $\lambda^2 = 867.93$ ,  $df = 76$ ,  $CFI = 0.87$ ,  $TLI = 0.84$ ,  $GFI = 0.79$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.14$ ), and the model in which items of organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intention were loaded on a single construct<sup>2</sup> ( $\lambda^2 = 634.79$ ,  $df = 76$ ,  $CFI = 0.90$ ,  $TLI = 0.88$ ,  $GFI = 0.81$ ,  $RMSEA = 0.12$ ). Therefore, these results indicate that perceived employer image, organizational attractiveness, and job pursuit intention demonstrate sufficient discriminant validity to evaluate our hypotheses.

The convergent validity was also satisfied because all the relevant items loaded highly and significantly on their own constructs—that is, all standardized coefficients of the items into their own construct are statistically significant ( $p < 0.01$ ), ranging from 0.76 to 0.90. Moreover, the average variance extracted (AVE) from each construct was above 0.50 (AVE of employer image = 0.73, AVE of organizational attractiveness = 0.67, and AVE of job pursuit intention = 0.71), indicating that the constructs establish the convergent validity (Hair et al., 2019).

### Empirical Results

Table 1 provides the correlations among the key variables. Employee perception of employer image is positively and significantly correlated with job pursuit intention ( $r = 0.62$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), providing preliminary support for Hypothesis 1. It is also positively correlated with organizational attractiveness ( $r = 0.53$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ). Organizational attractiveness is positively correlated with job pursuit intention ( $r = 0.78$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ), which is consistent with the results of Gomes and Neves's (2011) study ( $r = 0.71$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ).

To test the proposed mediation model, and on the basis of maximum likelihood estimation conducted in AMOS, the data were analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM), which allows the modeling of structural relationships and yields to fit indices, and it estimates mediational relationships. Overall, the goodness-of-fit analysis of the proposed model shows a very good fit to the data ( $\lambda^2 = 324.17$ ,  $df =$

<sup>2</sup> Gomes and Neves (2011) established both conceptually and empirically the evidence of discriminant validity for organizational attractiveness and job pursuit intention.

143, CFI = 0.97, GFI = 0.95, TLI = 0.97, RMSEA = 0.05). Table 2 documents four principal results. First, employer image is significantly and positively associated with job pursuit intention ( $\beta = 0.30, p < 0.01$ ). In other words, Hypothesis 1 is supported. Second, employer image is significantly and positively related to organizational attractiveness ( $\beta = 0.66, p < 0.01$ ), which supports Hypothesis 2. Third, the result shows that organizational attractiveness is positively related to job pursuit intention ( $\beta = 0.70, p < 0.01$ ), which supports Hypothesis 3. Fourth, to test Hypothesis 4, we analyzed the indirect effect of employer image on job pursuit intention through organizational attractiveness using 5000 bootstrapping 95 percent confidence intervals (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The indirect effect of employer image on job pursuit intention is statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.46, p < 0.05$ ), with a confidence interval between 0.36 and 0.60. The direct effect of employer image, too, is statistically significant. Hypothesis 4 is supported by partial mediation.

**Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations**

	Mean	S.D.	EI	OA	JPI
<b>Student Sample (N = 520)</b>					
Gender (1= female, 0 = male)	0.73	0.44			
Age (years)	21.22	1.03			
Central	0.26	0.44			
North	0.27	0.44			
Northeast	0.27	0.44			
South	0.20	0.40			
Social Science Major	0.59	0.49			
Sciences and Technologies Major	0.42	0.49			
Employer Image (EI)	3.27	0.71	(0.89)		
Organizational Attractiveness (OA)	3.54	0.74	0.53**	(0.92)	
Job Pursuit Intention (JPI)	3.59	0.75	0.62**	0.78**	(0.94)

Note: \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01; Cronbach’s alpha is in the parentheses.

According to the results for the control variables, age, gender, pay, work-life-balance, and working environment are not significantly related to job pursuit intention. However, field of study is statistically and significantly associated with the intention to pursue a job ( $\beta = 0.12, p < 0.05$ ): students who major in sciences and technologies are more likely than students who major in social sciences to pursue for jobs in the new S-curve industries.

**Table 2: The Direct and Indirect Effect Results**

Structural Path	Path Coefficients		Bias-corrected Confidence Interval (95% CI)	
	(Unstandardized)	(Standardized)	Lower	Upper
EI --> JPI	0.30**	0.29**		
EI --> OA	0.66**	0.61**		
OA --> JPI	0.70**	0.67**		
EI --> OA--> JPI	0.46**	0.41**	0.36	0.60

Note: \*p < 0.05, \*\*p < 0.01; EI= Employer Image, OA= Organizational Attractiveness, JPI= Job Pursuit Intention

## **Discussion**

This study investigates how prospective applicants intend to apply for jobs in Thailand's new S-curve industry organizations. The results support all hypothesized relationships.

First, the results show that employer image (knowledge about new S-curve industry organizations, and especially their job opportunities, training opportunities, and career progressions) directly and positively predicts job pursuit intention. This suggests that applicants' intention to pursue a job at organizations in the new S-curve industries will be influenced by how much they know about these organizations. This result is consistent with previous research that found a positive relationship between employer image and job pursuit intention in several contexts (e.g., Allen et al., 2007; Collins, 2007; Collins & Stevens, 2002; Wei et al., 2016).

Second, the relationship between employer image and job pursuit intention is partially mediated by organizational attractiveness. This finding highlights the importance that organizational attractiveness plays in the recruiting process's attraction stage, and it outlines the path that leads an individual to intend to apply. It also increases our knowledge of the determinants and effects of organizational attractiveness during the job choice process. When the degree of an applicant's knowledge about an organization in the new S-curve industries increases, that applicant will tend to regard organizations in these industries as more attractive as possible employers, and this change in perception enhances the applicant's intention to pursue a job in these industries. This result is in keeping with studies by Gomes and Neves (2011) and Bednarska (2016) that emphasize that organizational attractiveness is a key mediator that illuminates the process that results in job pursuit intention. Finally, we incorporate into the analysis as control variables a few individual and job characteristics. We find that study major is a key indicator, suggesting that particular fields of study, such as, in this case, science and technology, significantly influence whether potential candidates will pursue employment in the new S-curve industries.

## **Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research**

Although this study adds to our understanding of the connection between employer image and job pursuit intention, a few limitations remain to be addressed. First, because this study uses a cross-sectional and self-report survey, our interpretation of a causal relationship cannot be confirmed. Future studies should collect data using a longitudinal approach, repeatedly obtaining data over time to determine whether a causal relationship exists between the variables. Second, the respondents in this survey were college students who were about to graduate, had little-to-no work experience, or were not yet actively looking for jobs. Because student responses might differ from those of job applicants, our results might not apply to job candidates in the workforce. Therefore, future research should apply the framework of this study to actual job seekers and other population segments, such as employees who intend to change jobs (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Third, the results of this study indicate that organizational attractiveness has a partial mediating impact, and this raises the possibility that other mediating factors that concern employer image might also affect job pursuit intention. Future research should explore these other potential mediating

mechanisms, including person-organization (P-O) fit (Carless, 2005; Wei et al., 2016) between employer image and job pursuit intention.

### **Practical Implications for Asian Business**

This study has practical ramifications for enhancing employer image and organizational attractiveness during employee recruiting activities. Our results suggest that these variables play significant roles in job pursuit intention. To add more prospects to an applicant pool, organizations (and particularly human resource managers and recruiters) should focus on promoting employer image and organizational attractiveness.

Recruiters can enhance their organizational recruitment process by providing both more information and more accurate information about organizations, particularly with regards to training, promotion, and career development. Perhaps this could be achieved through advertisements or social media platforms available to the job seekers. Workshops and professional training opportunities could encourage prospective applicants to feel that their careers are growing. Prospective applicants would also pay attention to information about career paths that would broaden their skillsets and opportunities, allowing them to advance to higher positions. Career opportunity information could notify applicants about open positions that fit their qualifications and education background. These activities could attract individuals by giving them positive impressions of particular organizations as workplaces, leading more of them to apply for jobs at these organizations.

Moreover, organizations in the new S-curve industries need to make themselves desirable or attractive to potential applicants, and they can accomplish this by sending signals to prospective applicants about their organizations and job opportunities. This can lead applicants to pursue jobs in these industries. Those not attracted to an organization will not participate in its recruiting processes (Van Hove & Saks, 2011). Thus, HR managers need to focus on the factors that make an organization desirable. Among these are an organization's location. Working for an organization located in a familiar community appeals to job seekers. Numerous career opportunities and a sense of connection to the organization as a whole could result from having an organization in the community. In other words, the new S-curve organizations should help the local community by investing in it, thereby generating jobs and developing local human resources—actions that boost the local economy, raise locals' standards of living, and attract job seekers (Jones et al., 2014).

Theoretically, this study adds value to the existing literature on both the determinants of and the process that leads applicants to apply for jobs. Responding to the call for more research on job choice decisions (Gomes & Neves, 2011; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Roberson et al., 2005), we expand understanding of two variables: employer image as a significant predictor of job pursuit intention; and perceived organizational attractiveness as a mediator that connects employer image to job pursuit intentions in the new S-curve industries. In this study the theoretical justifications for the job pursuit intention mechanism are strengthened through the application of signaling theory and the theory of reasoned action, both of which indicate that individuals can act strategically by using their knowledge about organizations to shape their



attraction. The theories highlight the important role played by organizational attractiveness during the attraction stage of the recruiting process. Our study confirms the universal value of applying both theories in studies of job choice decisions.

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