Recruitment Information Source, Content and Organisational Attractiveness: 
The Role of Jobseekers’ Decision-Making Style

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Yu-Lun Liu

Alliance Manchester Business School
CONTENTS

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................. 5
LIST OF TABLES .................................................................................................................. 6
ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................... 7
DECLARATION ..................................................................................................................... 9
COPYRIGHT STATEMENT ................................................................................................. 10
AKNOWLEDGEMENT ....................................................................................................... 10
PREFACE ............................................................................................................................ 11
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION ............................................................................................. 12
  1.1 Background and scope of the study .............................................................................. 12
  1.2 Research objectives ................................................................................................... 19
  1.3 Research questions, studies and expected implications .............................................. 20
  1.4 Delimitations of scope ............................................................................................. 27
  1.5 Structure of the thesis ............................................................................................... 27

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK ............... 30
  2.1 Chapter overview ....................................................................................................... 30
  2.2 Response (the pre-hire outcomes) .............................................................................. 34
    2.2.1 Recruitment pre-hire outcomes and organisational attractiveness (OA) ............ 34
    2.2.2 Satisfaction with the information provided and willingness to search for more job-
        related vacancy information ..................................................................................... 35
  2.3 Stimulus (the recruitment information content) .......................................................... 36
    2.3.1 Message valence (negative vs. positive), OA and the willingness to search for
        more information ........................................................................................................ 36
    2.3.2 Message type (hard information content vs. soft information content), RJPs and
        the willingness to search for more information ............................................................ 40
    2.3.3 Message specificity/length (short vs. long/detailed), OA, and the willingness to
        search for more information ...................................................................................... 42
  2.4 Communicator (the recruitment information provider) .............................................. 43
    2.4.1 Recruitment information sources and OA ............................................................. 43
    2.4.2 (Receiver-perceived) credibility and OA ............................................................... 55
  2.5 Receiver’s (jobseeker’s) profile ................................................................................... 58
    2.5.1 Individual differences (receiver’s profile) and decision-making style ................ 58
    2.5.2 Maximisers vs. satisficers .................................................................................... 61
    2.5.3 Receiver’s aim: job type (grassroots jobs vs. management jobs) and
        communicator/source credibility ............................................................................... 66
  2.6 Summary ..................................................................................................................... 67

CHAPTER 3 PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE AND RESEARCH METHODS ............... 71
  3.1 Chapter overview ....................................................................................................... 71
  3.2 Social sciences studies and paradigms .................................................................... 71
  3.3 The present study: the adoption of the post-positivism paradigm ............................. 77
  3.4 Post-positivism paradigm and research methods ....................................................... 78
    3.4.1 The use of surveys and scenario-based experiments ............................................ 80
    3.4.2 The use of semi-structured, open-ended surveys ................................................ 84
  3.5 Overview of the methodology and study/questionnaire design for each study ... .... 85
  3.6 Sampling ...................................................................................................................... 87
  3.7 Measurements of key variables ................................................................................. 91
    3.7.1 Jobseekers’ decision-making style (maximising tendency) ................................. 91
    3.7.2 Jobseekers’ perceived OA .................................................................................. 94
  3.8 Summary ..................................................................................................................... 95
LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1.1 the research design and overall methodology of the work ................................................. 21
Figure 2.1: Structure of Chapter 2 ........................................................................................................... 32
Figure 2.2: Research variables (Classified based on the social communication theory) ......................... 33
Figure 2.3: Jobseeker sources of information with examples ................................................................. 44
Figure 2.4: Conceptual and operational positioning of SWOM .............................................................. 51
Figure 2.5: General/online WOM vs. SWOM vs. employee referral ...................................................... 52
Figure 2.6: The mediation effect of receivers’ perceived credibility between stimulus and responses .......... 58
Figure 3.1: Deduction versus induction .................................................................................................. 73
Figure 3.2: Linear pattern of quantitative studies .................................................................................... 79
Figure 4.1: (Study1, Q1) ............................................................................................................................ 102
Figure 4.2: (Study1, Q2) ............................................................................................................................ 104
Figure 4.3: (Study1, Q3) ............................................................................................................................ 107
Figure 4.4: (Study1, Q4) ............................................................................................................................ 109
Figure 4.5: (Study1, Q5) ............................................................................................................................ 114
Figure 4.6: (Study1, Q6) ............................................................................................................................ 114
Figure 4.7 (Study1, Q7) ............................................................................................................................ 116
Figure 4.8-1: (Study1, Q8-1) .................................................................................................................... 121
Figure 4.8-2: (Study1, Q8-2) .................................................................................................................... 122
Figure 4.9: (Study1, Q9) ............................................................................................................................ 125
Figure 4.10: Job satisfaction by level of ME and decision-making style ..................................................... 140
Figure 4.11: Intentions to quit by level of ME and decision-making style .................................................... 141
Figure 4.12: Company commitment by level of ME and decision-making style .......................................... 142
Figure 5.1: Decision-making style (maximiser): interaction between tie strength and SWOM message valence ................................................................................................................................................. 163
Figure 5.2: Decision-making style (satisficer): interaction between tie strength and SWOM message valence ................................................................................................................................................. 164
Figure 6.1: The interaction effect between decision-making style and RJP message format .......................................................... 192
Figure 6.2: The interaction of job position*provider background information at decision-making style = maximiser (non-significant) .......................................................................................................................... 201
Figure 6.3: The interaction of job position*provider background information at decision-making style = satisficer (significant) .......................................................................................................................... 202
Figure 6.4: The effectiveness (satisfying jobseekers’ information needs) of recruitment information .......................................................... 215
**LIST OF TABLES**

Table 2.1: The research on maximisers and satisficers (journal papers published between 2002 and 2014) ................................................................. 68
Table 3.1: Beliefs of the leading paradigms ................................................................. 77
Table 3.2: Samples recruited via AMT ....................................................................... 89
Table 4.1: Demographics of Study 1 sample ............................................................... 100
Table 4.2: Participants’ background information ........................................................... 101
Table 4.3: Demographics (Study 2 sample) ................................................................. 135
Table 4.4: Decision-making style (maximising tendency) and other variables (Pearson correlations) .......................................................... 139
Table 4.5: Sources that have been used to get retail-trade job-related information previously (within six months) ........................................... 143
Table 4.6: The sources that were used to get job-related information for the present job/work (within six months) ......................................................... 144
Table 5.1: Maximiser and satisficer need for further information after reading a typical retail job advertisement .................................................... 162
Table 5.2: Differences in organisation attractiveness by decision-making style, tie strength and message valence .................................................... 164
Table 5.3: Maximisers’ and satisficers’ information search intentions after receiving a SWOM message .............................................................. 165
Table 5.4: Results for the question: Based on your previous jobseeking experience, what is your attitude towards the job information from an advertisement like the one above? ...... 174
Table 6.1: What information would they want to know more about and what source(s) would they prefer to get this information from (for participants who answered that they would prefer to spend further time and effort searching for more information)? ............................................. 186
Table 6.2: Treatments of Study 5.1 .......................................................................... 189
Table 6.3: Demographics (Study 5.1 sample) ............................................................. 191
Table 6.4: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Study 5.1) ........................................... 192
Table 6.5: Treatments of Study 5.2 .......................................................................... 198
Table 6.6: Demographics (Study 5.2 sample) ............................................................. 199
Table 6.7: Overall provider credibility (scale 1–7) ....................................................... 203
Table 6.8: Scenario design of Study 5.3 .................................................................... 208
Table 6.9: Demographics (sample of Study 5.3) ......................................................... 210
Table 6.10: Post-hoc test (Duncan): maximisers ......................................................... 211
Table 6.11: Post-hoc test (Duncan): satisficers ......................................................... 212
Table 6.12: OA of each group .................................................................................. 212
Table 6.13: Post-hoc test (Duncan): overall ............................................................... 212
Table 6.14: Would you want to search for more information? .................................... 214
Table 7.1: Background information of Study 6 participants ................................... 222
Table 7.2: Demographics (Study 6 sample) ............................................................... 223
Table 8.1: Maximiser vs. satisficer jobseekers in the retail trade ............................. 234
Table 8.2: Research questions, findings, and implications ....................................... 240
Recruitment is a mission-critical process for human resources management. Companies invest heavily in recruitment initiatives to ensure that they attract qualified candidates. Due to the high turnover rate and lack of specific skill requirements, the retail sector has an acute need to hire new employees to fill vacancies. Therefore, recruiting a relatively large number of new employees in a limited period of time is crucial for companies in the retail industry. Existing studies have suggested that by designing recruitment activities and utilising appropriate recruitment sources to promote and announce a job, employers are able to attract jobseekers to apply for jobs and join the organisation. The social communication theory highlights four major elements involved in any information communication: the information communicator (source), the information receiver (audience/jobseeker), the response (the receiver’s attitude towards the information received and the decision taken to apply or not) and the stimulus (the message/information content that is transmitted by the communicator). An individual’s ‘attitude’ towards the recruitment information can significantly affect their ‘intention’ of making a job application decision, and this intention can significantly influence their actual decision-making ‘behaviour’, such as accepting a job offer. Consequently, most of these studies focus on the effectiveness of the stimulus (e.g., how the design of the recruitment information content can attract more jobseekers).

However, there are divergent results in the literature. For instance, numerous researchers have attempted to investigate how different recruitment information sources can impact jobseekers’ application and recruitment decisions. Some researchers claim that the formal, company-controlled, recruitment information sources, such as advertising and corporate websites, are less effective than informal. By contrast, other researchers indicate that formal sources are used and accepted more often by jobseekers because this information is regarded as considered to be more objective and reliable than the experience-based route (e.g., word-of-mouth). Some researchers suggest that employers should provide objective, hard information (confirmable information such as salary and location) and provide the message in the employer’s tone’ using company-controlled sources; thereby not to convey too much soft, experience-based information from employees. On the other hand, some researchers argue that soft information content provided by formal sources can actually have a positive effect and increase a jobseeker’s intentions to join an organisation. Moreover, some researchers suggest that organisations should only show the advantages of the job vacancy (positive information), because negative information can easily reduce jobseekers’ applying intention; some researchers find that negative information can positively increase jobseekers’ attitude towards the organisation as well as the job because this negative information makes them aware of what they may face if they accept the job offer.

Only very limited research has considered the influences of receiver’s differences (individual differences) on the stimulus (content) and communications (source) as a moderator. The receivers’ differences could be the essential information that can be used to interpret the divergent findings in the literature. Psychologists have demonstrated that individual differences will influence personal values and will be translated into personal preferences. Decision-making research suggests that every decision-making process involves individuals’ decision habits and preferences. People tend to keep their decision habits and preferences throughout different decisions. Therefore, individual traits should be considered when seeking to understand how jobseekers evaluate information to make decisions. A well-known classification of individual differences that has been shown to affect decision-making preference is an individual’s decision-making style: maximisers (those who always try to find the best possible result and carefully evaluate all types of information from different sources) and satisficers (who aim for good-enough results and tend to save time resources).

The present study aims to address the gap in the existing literature by exploring the possible reactions of different decision-making styles (maximiser vs. satisficer) in response to
recruitment messages with different lengths, valences, forms and provider backgrounds that are provided from various sources.

Study 1 and Study 2 are employed as groundwork studies (Chapter 4 Groundwork Studies) to provide a deeper understanding of maximiser-style and satisficer-style retail-trade jobseekers’ traits. The results illustrate retail trade jobseekers’ job-information-seeking preferences and the relationship between an individual’s maximising tendency and other cognitive-based individual characteristics. The results suggest that employers should not exclude either maximiser-style or satisficer-style jobseekers because the current maximiser-style and satisficer-style employees demonstrated the same levels of job satisfaction with no particular group showed a higher or lower turnover intention.

Based on the findings of Study 1 and Study 2, Chapter 5 (Chapter 5 Exploratory Studies) starts with a scenario-based experiment (Study 3). This experiment assesses whether, when presented with a realistic job-information-searching scenario of receiving basic job information from a typical formal short job advertisement, maximisers and satisficers differ in their need for further information. It also explores whether further evaluation is required from informal information sources in relation to valence and tie strength.

Study 3 leads to the reflection that staff ‘word-of-mouth’ (SWOM) messages were influential but could not be controlled by organisations. An intuitive and easy solution is that employers can satisfy more jobseekers’ information needs by providing more detail about the job. Study 4 expands the findings of Study 3 and tests whether employers can satisfy more maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ information needs to encourage their perceived organisational attractiveness (OA) by providing more detailed formal job advertisement messages. The findings highlight that more details of hard information could effectively satisfy jobseekers’ information needs, even though a group of jobseekers still wanted to search for more experience-based information. However, the findings also show that more detailed messages only slightly increase maximisers’ perceived OA and do not increase satisficers’ perceived OA.

By extending the findings of Study 3 and Study 4, three scenario-based experiments (Study 5.1, Study 5.2 and Study 5.3, presented in Chapter 6 Development Studies: Expanding the job advertisement with soft information) are designed to test how employers can attract more maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers by tailoring their recruitment messages. The results demonstrate that the SWOM-formed realistic job preview (RJP) messages with some negative information could best increase jobseekers’ perception of source credibility and OA. Furthermore, when maximisers and satisficers looked for different job positions they would perceive the source credibility differently if the background information of the information provider as different.

A qualitative-based supplementary study (Study 6, presented in Chapter 7 Supplementary Study) is further conducted to delineate three issues that are not directly measured or not sufficiently clarified in the above-mentioned five studies. This complements Studies 3, 4 and 5 and theoretically enhances the understanding of how jobseekers refer to job recruitment messages and how they evaluate the job information.

The results contribute to decision-making theory and social communication theory by demonstrating that the notion of maximisers and satisficers represents a significant and central individual trait in job-application information searching and decision-making in the retail trade. Furthermore, the findings suggest that an individual’s decision-making style is an influential moderator for the effectiveness of communication elements. This research also provides a fundamental basis for further studies to apply individual-differences in human resource management field.
DECLARATION

This is to declare that:

- I am responsible for the work submitted in this thesis.
- The work has been written by me.
- All verbatim extracts have been distinguished and the sources specifically acknowledged.
- During the preparation of this thesis, some papers were prepared listed below. The remaining parts of the thesis have not been published.

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Someone has told me lately that a PhD study has really only one beginning and one end; the rest is just a whole lot of middle. My second supervisor Nadia also once told me that ‘you only do one PhD in your life; you should enjoy what you’re doing and what you learn from here’. I think this is very true, and I believe that when you get there, you feel it has been so much fun.
When I was doing my undergraduate studies, I had two very good friends. One of them – [A] – always considered things very carefully and evaluated choices with diligence; she studied hard and was one of the best-performing students of the graduating year. However, she always worried about things that were outside of her control, and fretted that she might miss chances or that she may not have made the best decisions. During our four-year undergraduate study, she told me many times that she struggled with some very simple decisions, such as whether she should spend two hours swimming in the afternoon, or use this time to write a class essay. She would spend time on tiny things; for instance, I remember one time we were together in a Carrefour supermarket, and she spent over 30 minutes choosing the best price and quality toilet rolls among a large number of brands.

Another close friend of mine – [B] – was a very outgoing girl; she never made things too complex and did not think about things that were yet to happen. Her academic performance was not as good as [A], but she did not regret having made decisions that kept her from getting ahead. For example, although she knew that she had not prepared for an exam perfectly, she had no regrets about spending a memorable night out before the exam with someone she cherished. Going shopping with her is easy and quick. She simply finds a product that she thinks is affordable and that meets her needs and then pays for it on the spot.

After graduation, most of my classmates and I faced the daunting task of having to find our first full-time jobs. During the jobseeking period, my friend [A] spent time collecting job information and comparing the differences between opportunities, and even debated with herself over whether she should apply for a job vacancy or not. She joined the campus employment fair with me, searched for jobs on the Internet, asked her uncle who worked in the IT industry and frequently sent me WhatsApp messages asking for my input on which job was the better of several she was contemplating applying for. As far as I know, she never really adopted any of my advice anyway, at least not without talking to her other friends before actually completing an application. Eventually, she got a job as a systems engineer in IBM, which she considered the best of the many offers she received. [B], on the other hand, accepted a job as a data conversion software engineer in a small local software company, a job vacancy she thought fitted her needs. She spent around two weeks sifting through information about possible vacancies and spent a day writing her online application. After spending one day attending an interview, she took the offer. She asked me only once whether the job was right for her and then applied for it.

A year later, both my friends, [A] and [B], got a similar pay rise; however, [A] sometimes still wondered if her life might be different if she had studied harder in school. [B], conversely, invited me out for lunch to tell me she was quite satisfied with her job.
CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Recruitment is one of the most important activities for an HRM department.

- Collins and Clark (2003)

Increasing the number of applicants in the application pool is the most useful strategy to increase the number of qualified and suitable candidates.

- Breaugh (2013)

We need more research on the early stages of the recruitment process, and we need more research on pre-hire outcomes.

- Barber and Roehling (1993)

Individual differences are the variations from one person to another on variables; study into individual differences helps us to understand not only what makes humans similar to one another, but also what makes them different ... By considering the variations that can occur from one person to another, we can best understand the full range of human behavior.

- Bruine de Bruin, Parker and Fischhoff (2007)

1.1 Background and scope of the study

Recruitment is a mission-critical process for human resources management (Collins and Clark, 2003). According to Milkovich and Boudreau (1997), recruitment refers to the overall process of attracting, selecting and appointing eligible candidates for jobs within organisations. By designing recruitment activities and utilising appropriate recruitment sources to promote and announce job vacancies, employers are able to attract jobseekers and encourage them to apply for these jobs and join the organisation (Ulrich, Brockbank, Brockbank, Johnson, Sandholtz and Younger, 2008).

Recruiting a relatively large number of new employees in a limited period is especially important for companies in the retail industry. The retail-trade sector comprises establishments engaged in retailing merchandise, generally without
transformation, and rendering services incidental to the sale of merchandise (Mitchell, 2008). In its 2013 annual report, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) describes the retail industry as one of the most labour-intensive industries in the US. Similarly, the US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) reported that despite the 550,000 job openings in July 2014, many vacancies were waiting to be filled in the retail sector. Due to the high turnover rate and lack of any specific skill requirements, the retail sector has an acute need to hire stable and fast-learning new employees to fill vacancies (Keeling, McGoldrick and Henna, 2013).

To this end, Breaugh (2008) proposes that increasing the number of applicants in the application pool is one of the most useful strategies to improve the number of qualified and suitable candidates. This proposal may seem self-evident, but for the past six decades the theory and practice of how to attract qualified candidates and to maximise the candidate pool has become a challenge, with practitioners and researchers devoted to finding the best solutions (e.g., Rynes and Barber, 1990), and is no less of a challenge at present.

Numerous researchers have attempted to investigate how different recruitment information sources can impact jobseekers’ application and recruitment decisions, but with somewhat ambiguous results; the proposed suggestions from the existing research do not reach a consensus (Breaugh, 2013). Some researchers, such as Hill (1970), claim that the formal, particularly company-controlled, recruitment information sources, such as advertising and corporate websites, are less effective than informal, especially non-company-controlled, sources, such as friends and family. These authors explain that because the latter sources contain more personal- and experience-based information, they can help jobseekers understand the reality of the actual work environment. The literature (Breaugh, 2013) also presents evidence that newly hired employees who received recruiting information via informal networks had significantly better job-performance outcomes than those who received their vacancy information through formal sources.

By contrast, other researchers, such as Cable and Turban (2001), indicate that formal sources are used and accepted more often by jobseekers, especially when the information is released officially by the organisation, because this information is regarded as being more objective and reliable than the experience-based word-of-
mouth (WOM) route. They found that the recruitment information source did not affect employee post-hire behaviours. However, they did find that source and content might influence a jobseeker’s pre-hire behaviours (i.e., their willingness to apply for a job vacancy and their willingness to join the company when issued with an offer).

Central to this debate seem to be differences in perception of credibility. Indeed, the conclusion to be drawn from several strands of research is that credibility is one of the important factors mediating the link between the reception of recruitment information and jobseekers’ willingness to join an organisation. Social communication theory (McKenna and Beech, 1995) indicates that the intention of pursuing an object will be influenced only when an information recipient trusts both the content of the message and the information provider. Credibility is defined as ‘believability’ (Fogg and Tseng, 1999), or the extent of expertise, likeability and trustworthiness of the communicator in the area of concern as perceived by the individual receiving the communication (Freedman et al., 1981).

Low information credibility is one of the factors that could adversely affect a jobseeker’s willingness to join a company. However, research in the area of information content and source has again produced inconsistent results in the literature. Some researchers (e.g., Judge and Bretz, 1992; Stone, 1998) suggest that employers should mainly provide objective hard information (confirmable information such as salary and location) and provide the message in the employer’s tone from formal (aka company-controlled) sources, and not convey too much soft, experience-based information from employees. The reasoning behind this is that the employer controls both the source and content, and the credibility of the experience-based message is relatively low. This lack of credibility of a part of the message can decrease the overall trustworthiness of the recruitment message. On the other hand, Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) demonstrate that soft information content provided by formal sources (e.g., company-controlled advertisements) actually has a positive effect, such as increasing jobseekers’ intentions to join an organisation. Their study suggests that employers should provide more experience-based soft information content, also known as word of mouth (WOM), via their controllable formal sources instead of showing only the hard, confirmable information content.
Moreover, Rieh and Belkin (1998) indicate that different message formats (framing) affect information recipients’ perception of the credibility of the information. Some framings and display styles achieve significantly higher credibility compared to others. However, Kuhn’s study (2000) shows that message formats do not have a direct effect on information recipients’ perceived credibility and trust in, and perceived risk towards, the information provider. In addition, Cable and Yu (2006) reveal that the richness of information is associated with correspondence between jobseekers’ beliefs about the image of the employer. Yüce and Highhouse’s study (1998) also illustrates that more detailed information can increase the credibility of the ad and can induce more jobseekers to apply for the job. However, Friedrich, Fetherstonhaugh, Casey and Gallagher’s research (1996) demonstrates that an informative message is not necessarily more persuasive and attractive than a simple and short one. On the other hand, Wright (2000) shows that jobseekers make job decisions based on the expertise and background of the information provider. Therefore, jobseekers are likely to perceive information providers who have different backgrounds as having different levels of credibility when they apply for different types of positions. Nevertheless, Cable and Turban (2001) propose that the information source has a relatively weak effect on credibility; instead, the content, such as message valence, is the key that causes jobseekers to perceive the credibility of the information differently.

This contradiction in results extends to negative information as well. Richey et al. (1975) claim that negative information has a significant negative impact on the perceptions of those in receipt of information about a product or job. Therefore, they suggest that most organisations should try to avoid presenting negative information and encourage the sharing of positive information. That is, the negative aspects of a job vacancy can reduce the willingness of jobseekers to join an organisation. More recent research by Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) suggests that this might not necessarily be the case. They found that receiving negative WOM messages did not inevitably affect jobseekers’ willingness to apply for a job. Therefore, they demonstrate that negative information does not always lead to negative results, such as decreasing jobseekers’ intention to apply. Another strand of research around the concept of realistic job previews (RJPs) also suggests that employers should provide some negative information that accurately describes the real working environment of
the organisation, since every job has at least some drawbacks. This can actually increase jobseekers’ confidence that an employer is being honest with them, which can positively affect their intention to join the company (Shore and Tetrick, 1994).

Such debates and uncertainties are not only theoretically unsatisfactory, but also give little help or guidance to practitioners seeking to maximise recruitment outcomes. This thesis seeks to examine a possible underlying theoretical explanation for these divergent results and build on this to produce practical implications for practitioners.

One issue, which has been found to be important in other domains and was highlighted by Judge and Cable (1997), is that there is a paucity of research concerning individual differences between jobseekers. Individuals have different preferences and decision-making styles while searching for job information. They also have different considerations with regard to the information content (Judge and Cable, 1997). Driver and Mock (1975) explain that people possess different values, and motives. Therefore, researchers need to look at individual differences to understand how people use information to make decisions. The term ‘individual differences’ is used to refer to the psychological differences between people and their similarities. This in turn leads to the assertion that individual differences could be considered as potential moderators.

Judge and Cable’s (1997) research provides an important clue. There is good reason to believe that some of the discrepancies in the research findings may stem from the focus of the research. The recruitment activities that include the job information delivery and job information exchange construct the core of social communication theory. The social communication theory schema suggests that there are four components: stimulus, communicator, receiver and response. In recruitment research, stimuli refer to the recruitment information content, communicators are the information providers and sources, receivers are jobseekers, and responses are receivers’ (jobseekers’) perceived willingness to join the organisation. However, most of the recruitment studies focus on the communicator and stimulus variables; only a few studies (e.g., Iyengar, Wells and Schwartz, 2006) have considered receivers’ differences or the moderating effects on responses from the receivers’ view. That is to
say, individual differences (jobseekers’ differences) could be the missing pieces of the puzzle underlying these inconsistent results in the recruitment literature.

According to cognitive perception theory, individual differences are formed based on personal cognitive perceptions that affect an individual’s attitudes towards resolving problems and also their behaviours, such as making choices and decisions (Treisman and Gelade, 1980). In psychology, decision-making style is an individual trait that explains differences and variations in decision-making process (Chowdhury, Ratneshwar and Mohanty, 2009). It affects an individual’s information search and process preferences. Different decision-making style adopters have different decision-making patterns (Scott and Bruce, 1995). It is an individual characteristic based on personal cognitive perception (Thunholm, 2004). Henderson and Nutt (1980) indicate that a personal decision-making style not only involves personal traits and preferences, but also includes individuals’ attitude when evaluating information. By aggregating the definitions of these existing studies, in the present study, decision-making style is defined as a habitual pattern of information search and evaluation. This individual trait (decision-making style) affects an individual’s thought, attitude, and consideration when facing and making decisions.

Initially proposed by Herbert Simon in 1955, one widely adopted classification of decision-making style is that of maximising and satisficing. This approach to problem solving describes the depth of an individual’s information search, their evaluation of the information and their application choices. Maximisers prefer extensive comparisons and search for information about an object, such as a product or a job, evaluating and analysing information carefully to make the best choice. In contrast, satisficers prefer to seize opportunities and possibilities, as they tend to make a ‘good enough’ decision rather than necessarily the ‘best decision’. The notion of maximisers and satisficers is considered to represent human information seeking/searching preference (Schwartz et al., 2002). The concept of a maximising tendency has also been verified throughout a range of research areas (e.g., Lai, 2011; Nenkov et al., 2008; Schwartz et al., 2002; Schwartz and Ward, 2004; Sparks et al., 2012; Turner et al., 2012).

As highlighted before, increasing the number of applicants in the candidate pool by attracting jobseekers and encouraging them to apply for the vacancy is one of
the most efficient strategies to fill the large number of vacancies in a labour-intensive industry such as the retail trade (Breaugh, 2008). Some job-matching websites have started including simple questions on individual traits, such as personal preferences, when a new user begins registering a new account. This is used for customising and pushing the filtered and selected job information to the registered website members (jobseekers). It is obvious that if the employer-provided job information content (e.g., job descriptions) is not enough to satisfy jobseekers’ information needs, potential candidates may be being lost. Therefore, understanding maximisers and satisficers empowers employers to design their recruitment information. Employers can attract more candidates by taking into account the different information needs of maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers, providing them with appropriate information content.

Even though no existing research has specifically demonstrated the differences between maximisers and satisficers in the context of their retail-trade job-information needs and information-seeking preferences, based on their defined nature, maximisers are more likely to spend more effort on searching for job-related information and consider more criteria in order to make the best job decision, compared to satisficers. Recruiters may therefore need to put more effort into designing recruitment information content to meet maximiser-style jobseekers’ needs if they want to encourage more maximisers to join the candidate pool.

However, some research indirectly suggests that certain characteristics of maximisers might result in negative post-hire outcomes. For instance, these studies reveal that maximisers are generally dissatisfied with their choices because they experience higher post-purchase regret (Polman, 2012). Maximisers are found to have lower commitment to a brand and continue to look for the ‘perfect’ option (Lai, 2011). Being indecisive sometimes causes them to make spontaneous decisions when deadlines come (Parker et al., 2007). Rapid turnover of staff increases costs, and unhappy staff are unlikely to perform well. This poses the foundation question: what strategy should employers adopt? Should they widen the pool by attracting more satisficers and maximisers and make the effort to design recruitment information content carefully in order to satisfy both groups’ (especially the harder-to-satisfy maximisers’) information needs, or should these maximiser-style jobseekers be
avoided when retail companies recruit new employees who will be content at work and stay with them?

Few investigators, with the notable exception of Iyengar et al. (2006), have applied these ideas to recruitment and human resources management. Further investigation of job-information-searching and preferential differences between maximisers and satisficers should help companies to decide whether it makes sense to make the effort to recruit more maximisers and thus to customise their recruitment information content to attract more jobseekers, while simultaneously enhancing our understanding of how decision-making styles affect jobseekers’ information search preferences and the way they may perceive and respond to recruitment information (e.g., content and message valence).

1.2 Research objectives

This study aims to fill the gap identified in the literature of individual differences in decision-making styles in recruitment research, with an exploration of whether such individual differences moderate jobseekers’ information search preferences (in terms of recruitment information sources and content) and increase organisational attractiveness alongside their intentions to respond to job-related applications. The main research objectives of this study are:

Objective 1:

To provide a deeper understanding of maximiser-style and satisficer-style retail-trade jobseekers’ characteristics.

Objective 2:

To examine the consequences for job information searches of the decision-making style of jobseekers, as this has rarely been explored and tested in recruitment studies, especially providing information on how the characteristics of these two styles might result in divergence in:

- The use of and importance of different recruitment information sources.
- The need for and importance of different recruitment information content.
Objective 3:
To examine how the individual difference perspective may explain the inconsistent conclusions of previous studies regarding how jobseekers perceive the credibility of different recruitment information sources and the effectiveness of job information content.

It will achieve this by testing how decision-making style could have a moderating effect on jobseekers’ perceived source credibility and applying decisions in relation to: message valence, message length, information provider–receiver relationship, information provider’s background information and job type.

Objective 4:
(Theoretically) To contribute to social communication theory by investigating and demonstrating how the four components of communications (information provider, stimuli, information receiver and receivers’ responses) are related in recruitment research.

Objective 5:
(Practically) To provide employers with practical implications and recommendations when designing and customising recruitment messages in terms of information content and message form to satisfy maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ job-/company-related information needs and preferences.

1.3 Research questions, studies and expected implications
To examine the research objectives in depth, a series of studies have been designed and employed to explore and illustrate these objectives. Sub-research questions are proposed based on the results of each study. The present research focuses on the US retail trade. Participants were all recruited via Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT), which has been demonstrated to be a reliable data collection panel; the quality of the data from this source has been shown to be as good as traditional data collection channels/methods (e.g., Buhrmester, Kwang and Gosling, 2011).
Figure 1.1 the research design and overall methodology of the work.

Study 1 [Semi-structured questionnaire]
An overview of jobseekers’ attitudes towards recruitment information sources, content and the influence of their decision-making style
(50 participants)

Study 2 [Structured questionnaire survey]
Should retail-trade organisations avoid recruiting maximisers/satisficers?
(140 participants)

Study 3 [Scenario-based experiment]
The interactions among and impact of jobseekers’ decision-making style, message valence and recruitment information sources on jobseekers’ willingness to join the organisation
(280 participants)

Study 4 [Scenario-based experiment]
Does providing more (hard, confirmable) detail in company-controlled sources stop jobseekers from searching for further information?
(81 participants)

Study 5.1 [Scenario-based experiment]
Jobseekers’ perceived information credibility of recruitment messages: (valence), form and decision-making style
(746 participants)

Study 5.2 [Scenario-based experiment]
Information provider’s background, job position and the moderating effect from jobseeker’s decision-making style
(480 participants)

Study 5.3 [Scenario-based experiment]
Form, valence, decision-making style, perceived OA and willingness to search for further job-related information
(446 participants)

Study 6 [Semi-structured questionnaire survey]
Supplementary study
(30 participants)

*All participants reported having work experience in the retail trade in the US.
Firstly, even though attracting jobseekers by carefully designing recruitment information content is considered a conceptually simple and practical method to attract more and different types of jobseekers, as discussed previously, making the distinction between maximisers and satisficers leads to a foundation question: should retail-trade employers adopt the strategy by attracting both maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers, or should they exclude recruiting maximisers, since some research has demonstrated that their characteristics may lead to some negative outcomes? Study 1 and Study 2 were employed as groundwork studies to explore the first and second research objectives by seeking to answer the following three main questions:

- Should retail-trade companies consider recruiting more/fewer maximisers or satisficers?
- What are the relations between an individual’s maximising tendency and other cognitive-based individual characteristics? In other words, what characteristics typify maximiser style and satisficer style in the retail trade?
- Do maximiser and satisficer jobseekers prefer to use different information sources to get job-related information when looking for a retail-trade job?

Study 1 used an open-ended questionnaire to get an overview of the differences between jobseekers who adopt a maximiser style and a satisficer style. This also included their different preferences for job-information-searching while looking for a new job vacancy in the retail trade. A structured questionnaire (Study 2) was designed to test the relationships between retail-trade employees’ maximising tendency and other cognitive-based variables, and their attitudes towards their present retail-trade job.

The results of these two studies direct the focus of the rest of the research. That is, the results of Study 1 and Study 2 will provide insights into the consequences of recruiting maximisers and satisficers, and the studies that follow will be established based on the most appropriate employer strategy: should they design recruitment
messages to recruit/attract both maximisers and satisficers, or should either maximisers or satisficers be excluded from/avoided during the recruitment?

*Study 3: Objective 3*

The two groundwork studies enhanced our understanding of the characteristics of people who work in the retail trade who adopt maximiser style and satisficer style. The evidence suggests that employers should not exclude either maximiser-style or satisficer-style jobseekers, because the current maximiser-style and satisficer-style employees showed the same levels of job satisfaction, and no group showed a higher or lower turnover intention. On the other hand, the results also indicated that, overall, retail-trade jobseekers frequently adopt job information from formal, company-controlled (FCC) sources such as job advertisements and informal, non-company-controlled (INCC) sources, especially WOM information from current employees (aka SWOM), in order to get more soft, experience-based job-related information. These form the two questions that need further exploration, which illustrate the third research objective:

- In a common situation, how do maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers react to a typical formal job advertisement (from the employer) in terms of their perceptions of organisational attractiveness (OA), and what is their willingness to search for further information before deciding to apply for the position?
- What are the effects of SWOM messages on maximisers and satisficers who cannot be satisfied by a typical formal job advertisement? More specifically, do maximisers and satisficers differ in their reaction to SWOM messages that vary in terms of their valence (positive/negative) and tie strength with the information provider (strong tie/weak tie)?

*Study 3* employed a scenario-based experiment to explore these questions. The results demonstrated the potential double-edged sword of SWOM: it might decrease further information searches, but negative SWOM information could lower a jobseeker’s willingness to join the company (aka organisational attractiveness, OA), especially when the message came from a weak relationship.
Study 4 and Study 5 series: Objective 3, Objective 4 and Objective 5

The results of Study 3 led to the reflection that generally SWOM messages were influential but could not be controlled by organisations; therefore, companies should carefully design job advertisement messages to reduce jobseekers’ need to seek information from other company controllable sources. However, a typical vacancy advertisement in the retail trade only briefly introduced the job requirements and simple attributes, such as the salary, hours and work location. An intuitive and easy solution was that whether employers can satisfy more jobseekers’ information needs by simply providing more detail about the job:

- Can more hard/confirmable information content in recruiting advertisements (company-controlled sources) satisfy more jobseekers’ (maximisers’ and satisficers’) job-position information needs? Also, can this information increase jobseekers’ willingness to apply for the job vacancy (OA)?

Study 4, a simple scenario-based experiment, was used to investigate whether providing more ‘hard, verifiable information’, like salary information, in the job advertisement could prevent more jobseekers from searching for further information about the position, and increase their perceived OA.

The results of Study 4 showed that more details of hard information could effectively satisfy more jobseekers’ information needs, even though a group of jobseekers still wanted to search for more experience-based information. However, the findings showed that more detailed messages only slightly increased maximisers’ OA, and did not increase satisficers’ OA at all. Study 4 revealed that more informative messages could not effectively increase jobseekers’ OA overall.

The results of Study 3 provided another possible issue to explore – whether providing experience-based information content via FCC sources could increase jobseekers’ (maximisers’ and satisficers’) OA:

- If employers use SWOM-like realistic job preview (RJP) messages in their controllable sources with positive, or a mixture of positive and negative, information content, does this increase jobseekers’
How do maximisers and satisficers react differently to this (experience-based) information (that is provided in FCC sources)?

In Study 5, seven job attributes were selected from a pre-study. The pre-study asked participants to select what other information they would want to know more about and search for after reading the more detailed information that was used in Study 4. They were also asked where (what sources) they would like to approach to get this information before making the applying decision or even after they had made the applying decision (submitted the application). These job attributes were then manipulated and provided in the advertisement messages in three independent scenario-based experiments (Study 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) to see if this ‘company-controlled-format personal-experience-based information’ from current employees could prevent more jobseekers from searching for more information from sources that cannot be controlled by the company.

Study 5.1 tested maximisers’ and satisficers’ perceived information source credibility in relation to the combinations of RJP forms (the messages were in the employer’s tone vs. SWOM formed) and message valence (positive and weakly negative vs. only positive). The results of Study 5.1 showed that the SWOM-formed RJP messages with some negative information could best increase jobseekers’ perception of source credibility. Study 5.2 therefore found that when maximisers and satisficers looked for different job positions (management vs. worker at grassroots level) they would perceive the source (provider) credibility differently if the background information (expertise background vs. personal background) of the current employees of the ‘company-controlled-format SWOM-formed RJP message’ was different.

Linking Study 3, Study 4, Study 5.1 and Study 5.2, Study 5.3 provided more soft information in the experiment scenarios by combining the background information of the SWOM provider, message valence, WOM information that was provided directly from the company or quotes from a current employee (form of RJP message). This was done to examine which combination(s) could increase maximiser-
style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ OA most, and could prevent jobseekers from searching for more information from non-company-controlled sources.

Study 4, Study 5.1 and Study 5.2 are linked to Objective 4 by theoretically demonstrating the relationships among the four components of social communication theory. The results demonstrated that maximisers and satisficers perceived a message and provider/source differently; the findings helped to address Objective 3 by showing that the effectiveness of recruitment information sources and content is significantly moderated by an individual’s decision-making style. Study 5.3 is linked to Objective 5, which provides employers with practical suggestions on how they could design and customise recruitment messages to satisfy maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ information needs.

The research results can help retail-trade employers identify what information jobseekers are looking for, thereby enabling them to emphasise the advantages of these attributes in attracting more jobseekers to the organisation. This was also seen to satisfy the information needs of more jobseekers. As well as this, it has explored the practitioner problem of widening the applicant pool and the attractiveness of various decision-making types in the retail trade. The results empirically demonstrate that these can be achieved by satisfying the information needs of jobseekers.

Last, a qualitative-based supplementary study (Study 6) was conducted to delineate three issues that were not directly measured or sufficiently clarified in the above-mentioned five studies. These three issues were suggested by anonymous reviewers of the journals Management Decision, Personnel Review and the International Journal of Human Resource Management (see Chapter 7). The results show that most of the jobseekers are satisfied by the specificity per se of the information; however, some jobseekers (especially satisficers) still employ the numerosity heuristic when evaluating job information. The findings also confirm the accuracy of the measure of the single item which asks whether the participant wants to search for more information after reading the provided messages in Study 3, 4, 5. The participants in Study 6 report that they will not search for more information are thus interested in the vacancy and will apply for the job. Furthermore, corresponding with the findings in Study 1, many participants reported a very positive attitude towards advertisement messages. Thus, carefully designing the job recruitment information and providing genuine content is implied to be an effective method to
increase the candidate pool. Details regarding the research methods, sampling and studies will be presented in Chapters 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7.

1.4 Delimitations of scope

This study is mainly concerned with retail-trade jobseekers’ pre-hire outcomes, such as their job choices, intention to apply for the vacancy and job-information-seeking preference. The study does not attempt to explore the post-hire outcomes, such as what job types (positions) may fit maximisers or satisficers better in the retail trade.

Additionally, as highlighted in the previous paragraph, the retail industry is one of the most labour-intensive industries in the US, and it is an industry requiring a large number of new employees to fill vacancies. Therefore, it is considered appropriate to focus on those jobseekers looking for a job in the US retail sector. Nevertheless, sector issues and cultural differences are not discussed; although decision-making style is proposed as a universal individual characteristic, it could be generalised across different sectors and countries. Nevertheless, jobseekers from different industries and cultural backgrounds may exhibit different preferences during the jobseeking applications or have different job criteria considerations. This issue may be explored in future studies.

1.5 Structure of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The outlines are as follows:

Chapter 1 Introduction

- The first chapter has provided an overview of the background to this study, discussed the purposes of the research and stated the research aims, objectives, importance of the research and research scope. Brief summaries of the methodologies, expected contributions and study process were also provided.
Chapter 2 Literature Review and Conceptual Framework

- A review of the existing literature concerning social communication theory is undertaken. Four key components to social communication theory are reviewed: response (main effect), stimulus (content), communicator (source) and receiver (audience). An overview of the research concerning recruitment information sources and recruitment information content is also provided. Forming the theoretical basis for this study, these topics will be expanded upon in Chapter 4.

Chapter 3 Philosophical Stance and Research Methods

- This chapter begins with a definition of the four leading philosophical paradigms, leading towards the paradigm that forms the basis of the present study. The research methods, sampling methods and data analysis techniques used throughout this study are also outlined in this chapter.

Chapter 4 Groundwork Studies (Study 1 and Study 2)

- This chapter contains two foundation studies, which depict jobseekers’ job-information-seeking preferences and the differences between maximiser-style jobseekers and satisficer-style jobseekers in the retail trade.

Chapter 5 Exploratory Studies (Study 3 and Study 4)

- Based on the findings of Study 1 and Study 2, this chapter starts with a scenario-based experiment, which assesses whether, when presented with a realistic job-information-searching scenario of receiving basic job information from a typical formal short job advertisement, maximisers and satisficers differ on a) the need for further information and b) evaluation of further information from informal information sources in relation to valence and tie strength.

- A second study is performed to test whether employers can satisfy more maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ information needs and encourage their OA by providing more detailed formal job advertisement messages.
Chapter 6 Development Studies: Expanding the job advertisement with soft information (Study 5)

- By extending the findings of Study 3 and Study 4, three scenario-based experiments were designed to test how employers can attract more maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers by tailoring their recruitment messages.

Chapter 7 Supplementary Study (Study 6)

- This chapter contains a supplementary study (Study 6), which complements Studies 3, 4 and 5 and theoretically enhances the understanding of how jobseekers refer to job recruitment messages and how they evaluate the job information.

Chapter 8 Discussion, Conclusion, Research Limitations and Future Research Suggestions

- This final chapter summarises the results of this study, and outlines the contributions of this study in terms of its theoretical and practical implications. The limitations of this study are discussed and suggestions made with respect to future research.

Appendix

Definitions of key terms and abbreviation, research materials, including experimental scenarios, output of statistical analysis (i.e. tables) and measures (i.e. scales), are located in the appendix.
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Chapter overview

In Chapter 1, the research questions and research scope of the present study were introduced. This chapter aims to provide a review of the salient studies in the recruitment research area. These existing studies construct the foundation and the conceptual framework of the present study.

A considerable amount of research into recruitment has been conducted over the past six decades. McKenna and Beech (1995) indicate that recruitment is one of the most important processes for human resources management. Milkovich and Boudreau (1997) define recruitment as the overall process of attracting, selecting and appointing eligible candidates for jobs within an organisation, either permanent or temporary. By designing recruitment activities and utilising recruitment sources to promote and announce job vacancies, employers are able to attract jobseekers and encourage them to apply for the job vacancies and join the organisation.

As highlighted in Chapter 1, previous research (e.g., Breaugh, 2013) shows that increasing the number of applicants in the pool is one of the most useful strategies to improve the recruitment of more qualified employees. Recruitment research has demonstrated that many factors will influence and moderate a jobseeker’s willingness to apply for a job vacancy and join the organisation. Such variables include message valence, the length of the recruitment messages and source credibility (these variables and studies will be presented in this chapter). These factors involve the use of social communications to deliver job-vacancy and company information and to encourage more applicants to apply for the position.

Hovland (1948), the founding father of social communication theory, defined social communication as ‘the process by which an individual (the communicator) transmits stimuli to modify the behaviour of other individuals (the receivers)’ (p. 317). Recruitment activities, which include the job information delivery and job information exchange, form the core of the social communication theory schema, which includes four major elements:
- The *response* (main effect) is made to the communicator by the receiver

- The *stimulus* (content) refers to the message/information transmitted by the communicator

- The *communicator* (source) is the information provider who transmits the communication

- The *receiver* (audience) refers to the individual who responds to the communication

Communicator factors (e.g., source of the recruitment information) and the stimulus factors (e.g., the content of the communication) have been shown in most of the existing recruitment studies to play a crucial role in encouraging potential candidates to apply for a position (*responses*). However, only a few recruitment studies have considered receivers’ differences, such as jobseekers’ decision-making preferences and habits. This, therefore, can be considered to be an underexplored corner of the social communication theory schema in recruitment research. The objective of the present study is to understand how the communicator can attract more jobseekers and increase their willingness to make an application and to take the job if offered by manipulating the stimulus variables to *satisfy different characteristics of receivers’ information needs*.

In the following paragraphs, based on the framework of social communication theory, studies about recruitment information sources and contents that may change jobseekers’ attitudes towards a job and may influence their job-information-searching preferences are reviewed. Information receivers’ decision-making types, which may moderate the perception of the recruitment information sources and contents, are then introduced. The structure of Chapter 2 is shown in Figure 2.1.
Background:

1. Retail-trade companies need more new employees.
2. Increasing the number of candidates in the pool (attract more jobseekers) is one of the best methods to recruit better-quality employees.
3. All the recruitment activities include the (job) information exchange (information delivery, sharing, etc.) and communications (e.g., employers and jobseekers, employees and jobseekers).
4. In social communication theory, there are four components (response, stimulus, communicator and receiver).

Based on the existing recruitment studies:

**Response (employer’s goal)**

1) OA, 2) Satisfaction with the information provided and willingness to search for more job-related vacancy information

**Stimulus (the recruitment information content)**

- Jobseekers’ responses are affected by recruitment information content: employers can attract more candidates by designing the content.
  1) Message valence (positive/negative), 2) Message type (soft/hard), 3) Message length (aka more detailed message)

**Communicator (the recruitment information provider)**

- Jobseekers’ responses are also affected by different recruitment information sources: employers can attract more candidates by using the sources.
  1) Formal vs. informal sources 2) Source credibility - information provider’s background, information provider’s relationship with the receiver; information/source credibility

Inconsistent results were found in the existing studies, and receivers’ differences could be the moderating variable that leads to these results.

However, most of the existing studies in the recruitment research focus on the recruitment content and recruitment sources; only a few studies discuss the fact that receivers (jobseekers) are different in decision process/preference/habit and that this will have a moderating effect.

**Receiver (the jobseeker)**

1) Individual difference – maximiser vs. satisficer 2) Jobseekers and the job type they aim for

The possible moderation effects from receivers (jobseekers) (to stimulus and communicator factors on responses) are discussed in Chapter 4, 5 and 6 (with hypotheses).

Figure 2.1: Structure of Chapter 2
Figure 2.2: Research variables (Classified based on the social communication theory)
2.2 Response (the pre-hire outcomes)

2.2.1 Recruitment pre-hire outcomes and organisational attractiveness (OA)

The effect of job-vacancy communications on individual propensity to apply for a position and take the position if offered comes under the designation of pre-hire outcome. The recruitment pre-hire outcomes of recruitment activities include the number of candidates attracted (the number who applied) and the likelihood that they will accept the job if it is offered to them (Breaugh and Starke, 2000). Breaugh et al. (2003) emphasise that pre-hire outcome research should focus on jobseekers who consider applying for a job but have not submitted an application. Organisational attractiveness (OA) is one important pre-hire outcome indicator that measures a jobseeker’s attraction to and intention to join an organisation. OA is defined by Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) as ‘an attitude or expressed general positive affect towards an organisation and towards viewing the organisation as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship’.

Based on the theory of reasoned action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), Highhouse et al.’s (2003) research suggests that evaluating individuals’ attitudes towards working for a company can illuminate their actual decision when pursuing a job vacancy. They proposed three dimensions that comprised OA: company attractiveness, the degree of liking the organisation; intention towards the company, a jobseeker’s intention to apply for a position in the organisation and willingness to work for it; and company prestige, a jobseeker’s impression about the reputation of the organisation.

Gomes and Neves’ (2011) research indicates that OA fully mediates the relations between job characteristics, organisational attributes and (jobseeker’s) intention to apply for a job vacancy. Jobseekers who self-report higher OA are likely to have a higher intention of pursuing a job vacancy within a company (e.g., Gomes and Neves, 2011). Increasing OA, therefore, increases the candidate application pool and chances for organisations to filter and hire appropriate new employees (Thomas and Wise, 1999; Cable and Turban, 2001).

Jobseekers usually cannot know the actual work environment in the organisation until they receive the job offer and go to work; thus, they can only
consider their intention to pursue a position by evaluating information they receive about the organisation from different recruitment information sources (Highhouse et al., 2003). Thus, OA is an appropriate measure for the present research when evaluating how employers can use their communications (sources) to increase pre-hire outcomes, such as a jobseeker’s OA, by providing job information (stimulus).

2.2.2 Satisfaction with the information provided and willingness to search for more job-related vacancy information

On the other hand, the search theory indicates that when the information receiver receives enough information to make a decision, the receiver will stop the information searching. Receiving enough information in the early information gathering stage will accelerate the decision-maker’s decision process (Danforth, 1979). Thus, another important component of this research is to investigate whether the provided job information is able to satisfy jobseekers’ information needs. That is, what informational components of a job-vacancy advertisement are sufficient to raise OA to a level at which an individual will make the decision to apply for the job vacancy?

This is important for two reasons. First, it increases the efficiency of the job-vacancy communication process from the point of view of the company. Providing sufficient information ought to optimise the number of applicants from a minimum number of advertisements and other communications, saving time and money in the applicant attraction process. Accelerating jobseekers’ job-application and organisation-joining decisions is crucial, especially for retail-trade companies. Recruiting new employees to fill the large number of job vacancies is a task that needs no delays (Breaugh, 2013).

Second, when the company-provided information does not satisfy jobseekers’ information needs, it is likely that jobseekers will search for further information about the organisation and the job position from other sources (Mortensen, 1986). The risk of exposing jobseekers to organisation information or job-vacancy information from sources not controlled by the company is that some untruthful information or exaggerated information from these non-company-controlled sources (e.g., online
discussion forums) may decrease a jobseeker’s OA and discourage the jobseeker’s company-joining intention (Liu and Keng, 2014).

Therefore, the second response that is tested in the present research is whether the (employer-/communicator-) designed and provided job information is able to meet jobseekers’ information needs, thereby accelerating jobseekers’ decision (e.g., applying) process (which accelerates the recruiting process) and also preventing them from searching for information from non-company-controlled sources, which may mislead jobseekers’ impressions about the vacancy, and consequently increase or decrease their OA.

2.3 Stimulus (the recruitment information content)

2.3.1 Message valence (negative vs. positive), OA and the willingness to search for more information

Message valence issues have been widely discussed, especially in the field of marketing research. Scholars demonstrate that negative information usually reduces potential buyers’ intention to purchase a product, whereas positive information gives potential buyers more confidence in their shopping behaviour. Thus, most organisations try to avoid sending negative messages, and encourage the sharing of positive experiences (East et al., 2007). Based on the concept of attribution theory, Weinberger et al. (1981) explain that negative information has a stronger impact because it stands out more than positive information, and this distinction makes negative messages more influential. This is apparently because there are more positive cues in the individual’s social environment. Richey et al. (1975) suggest that negative information is more likely to draw information receivers’ attention, and also affects an organisation’s reputation more effectively, compared to positive information.

However, more recent recruitment research results bring these early conclusions into question. Based on the accessibility–diagnosticity framework, Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) discuss the influence of time spent on actively searching for and receiving positive and negative WOM messages on jobseekers’ perception of OA and jobseekers’ application decisions. Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) also explore the effects of participants’ (jobseekers’) two personality characteristics – the level of
conscientiousness (conscientiousness reflects dependability (e.g., being thorough, responsible and organised) and having a high will to achieve (i.e., being hardworking, achievement-oriented and persevering; Digman, 1990), and the level of extraversion (extraversion refers to the extent to which a person is sociable, gregarious, assertive, talkative and active; Barrick and Mount, 1991) – on their WOM information-searching preferences. Their research utilised an online survey, which was embedded into the official website of Belgian Defence. After website users browsed the recruitment page, the message was shown, and then potential respondents were invited to join the survey. The participants were thus potential applicants targeted by Belgian Defence, but they were not all making the final decision to apply for the vacancies at this stage. The survey guided the participants to recall and self-evaluate their time spent on actively searching for positive and negative WOM information about working for Belgian Defence, and from whom (mostly strong-tie or weak-tie providers). Participants’ levels of conscientiousness and extraversion were also measured.

The results showed that jobseekers spending more time searching for and receiving positive WOM has been seen to positively affect jobseekers’ perceived OA and job application decision. However, the opposite was not found to be the case; that is, the assumption that more time spent enquiring about and receiving negative WOM information would negatively affect participants’ perception of OA was not supported. Nor would it negatively affect their decision to apply for the job. This finding provides the insight that it is possible that not all negative information leads to a negative result, such as decreasing jobseekers’ application intentions.

Further than that, Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) also found that participants with a more conscientious personality spend significantly more time searching for both positive and negative WOM information than those who are less conscientious. This demonstrates that personality and individual differences could be a factor that moderates the effectiveness of positive and negative recruitment information. Unfortunately their research did not provide further tests to support the likelihood of individual differences that may further modify the effects of message valence. Moreover, Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) only asked participants to report the time that they spent on searching for and receiving positive and negative WOM
information; they did not evaluate the exact positive and negative WOM information that their participants received from the WOM providers.

Previous research also indicates that there are boundaries to receiver reliance on positive information. Thorsteinson et al. (2004) propose the idea ‘too good to be true’. The authors demonstrate that when information receivers receive only positive information, they will start to doubt it, thinking that there may have been some hidden information behind these positive aspects and that the actual situation could be worse than the received positive descriptions. Thus, Thorsteinson et al. (2004) indicate that when information receivers receive only positive information on an object without any negative aspects, some of them will doubt the truthfulness of this positive information and actively search for further information from other sources. So people will look for information from trusted sources, or at least from sources whose trustworthiness they are in a position to judge. Fisher, Ilgen and Hoyer's (1979) research compares the credibility of different recruitment information sources, and the results reveal that some recruitment information sources (e.g., messages from a friend) generally elicit greater credibility than the other recruitment sources (e.g., messages from a job interviewer), and this directly affects a jobseeker’s perception towards the organisation and their willingness to join the organisation.

The Thorsteinson et al. (2004) findings perhaps also explain why negative information seems able to increase an information receiver’s impression towards an information source (communicator) (Fisher et al., 1979). This implies that the provision of some negative information can enhance the credibility of the information source. These findings support the concept of the realistic job preview (RJP) in recruitment research, which suggests employers should provide some negative information that describes the real situation of working in the organisation (e.g., the need to work on some weekends), as this should also increase jobseekers’ belief that the employer is being honest with them (Shore and Tetrick, 1994) (see also section 2.3.2 for further discussion of RJP).

In addition, the content of the communication may also moderate valence effects. Keeling et al. (2013) demonstrate that jobseekers’ perceived influence from positive and negative information is moderated by the jobseeker’s relationship with the information provider and the message type. In their experiment, Keeling et al.
(2013) take the content of the message type (tangible, intangible) and the relationship between information providers and recipients/jobseekers (strong relationship/tie, weak relationship/tie) into account. The results demonstrate that when messages contain more soft, intangible job experience (experience-based) content, negative information received from a close relation (e.g., friends and family) has a stronger influence on OA than the same information from a weak relationship source; in contrast, when the message contains more hard, tangible (confirmable) job information, information received from a weak relationship is more influential than that received from a strong one.

Therefore, even though the general rule is that positive information increases an individual’s willingness to pursue the object, and negative information decreases the willingness, there is evidence that not all the negative information brings negative outcomes, as, in some circumstances, influence is diminished or discounted. It is likely that in recruitment studies, some negative information does not pull the jobseekers back from applying for a job position and might actually prevent some jobseekers from searching for more information about the company (e.g., as part of an RJP).

To conclude, message valence does influence jobseekers’ OA, but the literature also indicates moderation of this influence in some circumstances. In addition, Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) offer evidence that individuals could perceive positive information and negative information differently. Individual differences, such as personality and decision-making habits/preferences, could be the factor that leads to the inconclusive results in the literature. For instance, some individuals may value negative information more highly than positive information. In this case, negative information could decrease their willingness to go for the objective (e.g., a job vacancy). On the other hand, some individuals may be prepared to accept possible negatives associated with an objective; therefore, they are not affected by negative information as easily, and may even actively search for the negative side of the objective, such as a job vacancy, to lower the potential decision risks. Nevertheless, drawbacks exist in nearly all job vacancies; there is no ‘perfect job’ in the real world (Breaugh, 2013). Therefore, the range of other stimuli and jobseekers’ interactions
with the characteristics of the communicator and receiver need to be further investigated.

2.3.2 Message type (hard information content vs. soft information content), RJP's and the willingness to search for more information

The two main types of recruitment information content about job vacancies and organisations that may affect jobseeker OA are ‘hard (confirmable)’ content and ‘soft (experience-based)’ content. Bertomeu and Marinovic (2015) identifies that hard information content is quantitative in nature and generally consists of facts, statistics and other formally published information. This type of information – such as salary, work location, paid annual leave days and working hours – can usually be confirmed and verified objectively. Soft information content is essentially qualitative in nature and consists of ideas, suggestions, opinions, gossip, rumours, feedback, speculation, anecdotes and tips. Soft information is relatively subjective, and involves personal experience. It includes feelings, perceptions and opinions, for example one’s personal work experience in the organisation and assessments of the organisational climate; soft information contents are usually not controlled by the employers (Breaugh, 2013).

Breaugh (2013) indicates that jobseekers usually firstly acquire basic, confirmable (hard) job-vacancy information from information sources that are controlled by the employers, such as local newspaper advertisements and local wanted boards. However, this basic job information usually does not describe the actual environment of working in the company (Zottoli and Wanous, 2010). Therefore, some jobseekers decide to seek more experience-based soft information from sources that are not controlled by the employers, such as their family/friends and even online sources such as work experience sharing discussion forums, in order to know more about the actual feelings about and experiences of working for the company (soft information), before making an application or offer acceptance decision (Highhouse et al., 2003). When jobseekers are not satisfied with receiving only hard information content from the employer, they will keep searching for more soft information content, such as ‘personal experience-based information’, until they know enough about the organisation and the job vacancy to make a decision.
As introduced in the previous paragraph, some jobseekers cannot be satisfied by the hard information content because they want to get more information about the actual working conditions in the organisation. Therefore, some researchers recommend providing experience-based information and work situation information in the company-controlled sources to show jobseekers what situations they may have to deal with after they have taken the issued offer and started work. This idea was named ‘RJP’ and was widely studied by researchers (e.g., Premack and Wanous, 1985) and adopted by practitioners.

Premack and Wanous (1985) identify RJP as devices used in the early stages of personnel selection to provide potential applicants with accurate information. An RJP message provides potential applicants with information content on positive, or a mixture of positive and negative, aspects of the job, including more experience-based aspects. Compared to confirmable information (more objective information, e.g. salary, hours, location), which is considered more concrete, experience-based information (more subjective information) is intangible (Keeling et al., 2013). This experience-based information helps jobseekers to be aware of what the organisation offers if they accept the role (e.g., organisational culture, office climate and manager’s leading style) and what the organisation expects from them (e.g., late hours, stress, customer interaction, urgency, degree of physical risk) (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Shore and Tetrick (1994) identify that RJP messages have different formats: the description is displayed as employer sourced, which is presented in the employer’s tone (e.g., ‘Working hours in Company A are very flexible’), and in the form of employee testimonials; and the message is demonstrated as current employee sourced, where the content is in an employee’s tone and therefore is more personal (e.g., ‘Based on my experience, I think the working hours in Company A are very flexible’).

Researchers have found evidence that adopting RJP may lead to benefits in relation to post-hire recruitment outcomes. For instance, RJP help new employees to better meet organisational expectations. Jobseekers who are better informed and who continue the application process are more likely to be a good fit for the position. RJP may also contribute to reducing the voluntary turnover of employees. Rapid turnover...
of new recruits can occur as a result of employees being unpleasantly surprised by an aspect of their job. By providing accurate information before employees start, employers can prevent negative surprises and lower new employees’ desire to leave an organisation (Ilgen and Seely, 1974; Premack and Wanous, 1985). Suszko and Breaugh’s (1986) research also shows that RJP are associated with pre-hire outcomes such as jobseekers’ favourability towards the employer.

However, on the contrary, as highlighted in the introduction (Chapter 1), some researchers (e.g., Jadge and Bretz, 1992; Stone, 1998) advise that employers should not convey too much soft, experience-based information, and should mainly provide objective hard information from company-controlled sources. These researchers indicate that the employer controls both the information source and content, and that the credibility of the experience-based message is low. This lack of credibility of a part of the message can decrease the overall trustworthiness of the recruitment message, and may lead to negative effects (such as increasing jobseekers’ suspicion and encouraging them to search for more information from other sources, and even decreasing jobseekers’ impressions of the organisation).

Further investigations are needed to explore whether retail trade employers should provide soft information in their controllable sources.

2.3.3 Message specificity/length (short vs. long/detailed), OA, and the willingness to search for more information

Decision-making literatures (e.g., Bickart and Schindler, 2001) indicate that receivers are more likely to be convinced by information content with detailed information containing clear, unambiguous descriptions. When a message contains an unclear description and insufficient information to raise an information receiver’s knowledge about the object to the desired level, the information receiver will tend to delay decision making.

Barber and Roehling (1993) used a verbal protocol analysis to test jobseekers’ reactions to job advertisement messages. Their findings demonstrate that participants frequently comment on the adequacy of the provided information, and more negative comments were given on job postings that did not have enough detail in the opinion of the reader. Bickart and Schindler (2001) show a positive relationship between the
amount of detail and clarity of expression of an online WOM message and information receiver ratings of trust in the information provider, even if the information comes from a stranger (Internet user) whom the information receiver does not know/has no relationship with at all. The provider’s perceived credibility increases with the length and details of the message (Chatterjee, 2001). Of specific interest to this thesis, Yüce and Highhouse (1998) show that providing more specific pay information in a ‘help wanted’ advertisement makes the advertisement itself more attractive to jobseekers.

Nevertheless, Friedrich, Fetherstonhaugh, Casey and Gallagher (1996) find evidence that an informative and more detailed message is not necessarily more persuasive and attractive than a simple and short one. They demonstrate that a short message which clearly expresses the key information performs as well as a long and detailed message.

The inconsistent findings encourage researchers to consider that, in addition to the type of information, the length/specificity of the message is also a variable that influences jobseekers’ satisfaction with the information given and their consequent decisions regarding whether to search for more information or not.

2.4 Communicator (the recruitment information provider)

2.4.1 Recruitment information sources and OA

Ullman (1966) distinguishes between two types of recruitment information sources: formal and informal. This is the major divide between sources that have been officially released or authorised by the company, such as job advertisements and information given to job centres (which could form part of an official contract between company and employee), and the (mostly unplanned) job information spread by or obtained from unofficial sources, such as friends and family, face to face or through online forums such as LinkedIn groups. Both formal and informal sources can be further divided. For instance, a formal source might be company-controlled advertisements or non-company-controlled recruitment agencies. Informal sources might be non-company-controlled word-of-mouth informants within offline or online social networks, or the more company-controlled informal sources when members of staff attend job fairs, or staff quotations are included in realistic job previews (see
Figure 2.3. Consequently, informal sources can be friends and family (known as strong ties) or acquaintances and relative strangers (known as weak ties).

![Diagram of Jobseeker sources of information with examples](image)

**Figure 2.3: Jobseeker sources of information with examples**

### 2.4.1.1 Formal sources

Many formal recruitment information sources have been identified by researchers (e.g., Swaroff, Barclay, and Bass, 1985, Taylor and Schmidt, 1983) and applied by employers in the recruitment process. Practitioners (e.g., human resource managers) design the content of the recruiting messages and use these sources to promote job vacancies and encourage qualified jobseekers to apply for the job. The most common formal, company-controlled recruitment information sources include newspaper/magazine/radio/TV advertisements, job postings, companies’ official websites, job searching websites (engines), job centres, governments’ job-listing websites, job fairs and placement/search firms (e.g., Kirnan, Farley and Geisinger, 1989; Milkovich and Boudreau, 1997; Stone, 1998).

*Newspapers, magazines, radio and television advertisements, and job postings (FCC source)*

The most traditional and widely used recruitment information source is the advertisement. Advertisements have the advantage of high exposure and have the power to reach a large number of jobseekers (Stone, 1998). They generally provide basic position information and can be used to announce any kind of job position. Some retail employers post their recruiting advertisements in the windows or on the advertisement boards of their stores. The contents of job recruiting ads are fully designed by the employers, and fees are paid to the third party, such as newspapers and television companies.
**Companies’ official websites (FCC source)**

As a development from traditional advertisements, employers are now able to establish their own official website and post the job-vacancy information on the site. There are fewer content limitations, and although this method is not cost free, no fee will need to be paid to third parties. Employers can show their recruiting messages on the web page and provide contact information and online application services. Jobseekers can submit their applications via the website. However, the main disadvantage of this source is that jobseekers will need to find the company independently. Hence, this practice is widely adopted and useful for well-known companies, but is not easily applied by small companies that do not have a very high notability and awareness. Jobseekers may not be aware of these small firms and so will not search for the firms’ websites (Chien, 2002).

**Job-searching websites (FNCC source)**

By establishing a large database, a third party provides job-matching services to jobseekers and employers. Employers pay to post their vacancy information and requirements on the job-search websites, and jobseekers can filter the jobs based on their needs and attributes, such as work location and salary. The job-search website systems will match and provide suitable vacancy information to the jobseekers. Jobseekers also need to upload their CV to the database; this allows employers to search for qualified jobseekers via the website and send them interview invitations. In the US, job-match websites such as Monster.com and indeed.com are popular due to the complete infrastructure establishment of the Internet environment. However, personal information security has also become an issue that employers need to be aware of. Jobseekers might decide not to share their personal information with the website if they believe that it will be used for other purposes. Furthermore, the matching results might not be fully accurate. Most employers do not rely on job-search websites as the only source to promote their job vacancies (Chien, 2002).

**Job centres (FNCC source)**

Job centres are bricks and mortar based, and are also run by a third party. Job coordinators in job centres provide professional guidance and one-to-one, face-to-face
advice to jobseekers. Employers generally pay the job centres and the job centres feed the job information and suggestions on suitable job vacancies to the jobseekers. Some job centres also charge jobseekers for the services (Stone, 1998).

Government co-op programmes, community groups and agencies, and educational institutions (FNCC source)

Unlike job centres, these institutions are non-profit. Employers and jobseekers usually do not pay for the services. However, job information that is provided by these non-profit organisations is relatively limited; Stone (1998) indicates that most of the vacancies are mainly for local jobs in the US. Jobseekers may not be able to receive job information from other groups/programmes, especially outside their local region, from this source (Stone, 1998).

Job/career fairs (FCC source)

Job fairs are expositions that enable employers and recruiters to meet with jobseekers. Jobseekers are able to talk to the employers and recruiters face to face at the event. Job fairs usually focus on one sector; thus, jobseekers can get specific job-vacancy information from attending the fairs. However, most of these job fairs do not have a routine schedule and the time is not flexible. Only a relatively limited number of employers attend the fair, which also makes this recruitment source restricted (Stone, 1998).

Placement or search firms (FNCC source)

The purpose of placement/search firms is to find managerial, hard-to-find and specialised talents (Chien, 2002). Usually, these agencies seek out candidates who are already employed and not looking for employment. They are able to contact employed candidates directly to determine if they would be interested in the job. Compared to other recruitment sources, this is relatively active recruiting as opposed to the passive recruiting of most other advertising and posting activities. The services that search firms provide can be very expensive; sometimes the fee is over 30% of the employee’s starting salary. It is not usually applied in most general job positions.
As mentioned in the previous paragraph, the recruitment information from these formal sources is controlled and designed by the employers and the job information is mainly hard and confirmable information. In other words, the basic job-related information (e.g., workplace, hours and location) contained in the messages from these sources is considered to be relatively objective (Cable and Turban, 2001).

2.4.1.2 Informal sources and WOM

The concept of word of mouth (WOM) is the core of informal sources. WOM communication is a direct way of delivering information (Laczniaik et al., 2001; Lim and Chung, 2011). Informal sources are company independent and the contents are not fully controlled by organisations. The following section takes a closer look at three types of WOM: employee referral, staff word of mouth (SWOM) and general WOM.

Internal job postings and employee referrals (ICC source)

Unlike the other recruitment sources, an employee referral scheme encourages the company’s existing employees to select and recruit suitable candidates from their social network (Zottoli and Wanous, 2000; Breauagh, 2000; Ryan et al., 2005). In other words, jobseekers passively receive job (vacancy) information from employees of the company in their social networks. As a reward, the employer typically pays the referring employee a referral bonus. Finneran and Kelly (2003) indicate that in some sectors (e.g., the IT industry), nearly half of all job openings are filled from personal contact networks, and there is no doubt that using employee referral as the recruitment source provides employers with certain benefits. Applicants can acquire better information about the value of being an employee from current employees, and referral also reduces recruitment and training costs and lowers monitoring costs, since, generally, the recommenders/incumbents will monitor the newly hired employees who have been recommended by them because they think it is their duty to do so. Thus, recruitment research (e.g., Rynes and Barber, 1990) indicates that although employee referral is one of the most traditional methods, it is still considered to be a very useful method of internal recruitment, which is employed by organisations to identify potential candidates from their existing pool of employees.
However, employee referral is limited to jobseekers within the present employees’ personal social networks. Not every jobseeker has a chance to receive such internal-based job-posting information, which causes employers to miss other qualified candidates (e.g., Finneran and Kelly, 2003) and can lead to a restriction in the variability of the workforce, as employees tend to choose people who are like themselves. That tendency leads to a further criticism, which is that referral contributes to the exclusion of some sectors of society.

*General WOM (INCC source)*

Apart from employee referral, using general WOM messages as a recruitment source is increasingly drawing the attention of researchers and recruiters. Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) categorise WOM as an informal recruitment source and discuss the influence of positive and negative WOM messages on jobseekers’ perception of organisational attractiveness. When seeking a new job, some jobseekers not only receive information from official recruitment activities (formal sources), but also ask their friends and family for suggestions (Van Hoye and Lievens, 2007a).

Today, because of the development of Internet technology, sharing experiences has become easier and faster than ever before. The Internet is like a huge, invisible relationship net, and Internet users can receive a considerable amount of information via search engine services or through social media sources. Hennig-Thurau *et al.* (2004) define ‘eWOM’ as real people sharing positive or negative experiences about a company or a product or job via the Internet. In most circumstances, Internet users may not really know who these information providers are, what they look like, or their real identities. Thus, information seekers have to determine which information is worth adopting (Liu and Keng, 2014). On the Internet, WOM messages are not always synchronised; for instance, in an online discussion forum, information receivers/seekers cannot usually get information providers’ responses immediately after they ask a question. Sometimes information providers do not reply to information receivers’ questions due to technical problems or simply because they do not notice the questions. However, these are still more accessible than traditional WOM messages – particularly when it comes to face-to-face meetings, during which questions can be received immediately from the provider. People write about their emotions and daily events on their public blogs.
These experiences are easily accessed by key words via online search engines such as Google and influence information recipients’ opinion of an object (e.g., a product or a company). Information providers are no longer limited to providing information to information seekers with whom they have a close relationship. In other words, online WOM information providers may have only a very weak relationship with the information seeker, or even no relationship at all.

Online WOM message websites (e.g., Yahoo! Knowledge) provide platforms that allow users to share their experiences and interact with other users. Some online job groups, such as LinkedIn, are free to join; however, members of groups can be bound by strict provisions. Some LinkedIn groups have established strict rules around this process; for instance, some engineer LinkedIn groups request that new joiners upload their certifications in software development. This is to ensure that they have enough knowledge to contribute to the community or discussion. Members of these online groups have more reason to trust each other, because a well-organised system has been established before an online user applies to join the group and becomes a group member. The contents of these WOM messages can vary in negativity and positivity. Such varied information may help employers to accelerate their recruiting speed, because potential applicants can access more relevant information, rather like a realistic job preview, but there are also likely negative outcomes. For example, sufficiently negative information can decrease company reputation and lose potential suitable candidates. There is no doubt that because of the characteristics of fast information circulation and convenience, companies should carefully monitor those general WOM messages and respond to the untruthful statements when necessary (Liu and Keng, 2014).

Online social media websites (INCC source)

Another recruiting source that has become popular recently is online social media websites such as Facebook and Twitter. They are free for Internet users and are able to link users together and form a virtual personal network. These social media sites were not built for recruitment purposes; however, because of the numbers of people joining and using the services on these sites, researchers and practitioners have taken advantage of the chance to publish work opportunities via these social media web pages. For instance, according to Facebook, half of employers in the US use
social networks during their hiring process. Of those companies already using Facebook to engage with customers, 54 per cent anticipate they will use it more heavily to promote their future recruitment activities. Some practitioners claim that social media will be the next generation of recruitment on the Internet. The main difference between general WOM and WOM on these social media websites is that people generally know these users and at least have a relationship with them (no need to be very close, but at least acquaintances). However, these social media sites and what users discuss on the sites is outside of employer control. Employers also need to evaluate the pros and cons of utilising such sites as a recruitment information source and carefully manage the messages on the sites.

**SWOM (INCC source)**

Keeling *et al.* (2013) first proposed the notion of SWOM and applied it to the retailing industry. Although SWOM is a relatively new term, it has long been in practical use. Jobseekers obtain SWOM by contacting a current employee (e.g., drop into the store and ask the staff/clerk about their work experience as a staff/clerk in that organisation, or ask a friend or an acquaintance who works at the company). Unlike employee referral, jobseekers do not passively wait for the members in their social network to come to them; instead, jobseekers take the initiative and contact people who have work experience in the target organisation. Those contacted people do not necessarily need to be in the jobseeker’s social network; jobseekers may or may not know the information provider(s) very well, but unlike eWOM, they can ensure that these information providers are the real staff of the company to which they are interested in applying for a job. SWOM is a concept somewhere between employee referral (where information provision is narrowed to people who generally have a strong relationship with the incumbent) and eWOM (where any Internet user can easily access the shared information on working experiences).

Research by Keeling *et al.* (2013) demonstrates that the use of SWOM as a recruitment information source is positively associated with jobseekers’ perception of organisational attractiveness and indicates that although there is scant research on SWOM, it can be positively considered by employers as an influential recruitment information source in practice.
Even though it is proposed that employers can consider designing a SWOM scheme to promote job vacancies and encourage more jobseekers to apply and join the organisation (Keeling et al., 2013), SWOM can only be considered as a part-company-controlled (but still informal) source. Employers cannot fully control what their employees tell or don’t tell jobseekers. The communication (content) is not directly controlled or monitored by employers. Nevertheless, if employers treat their employees well, and take good care of their employees, it is highly possible that their employees will provide positive comments about their work experience when jobseekers come to them, and help increase potential candidates’ OA. Therefore, it is important for employers to listen to the current employees’ opinions/needs, and carefully deal with their thoughts and any negative experiences.

Figure 2.4: Conceptual and operational positioning of SWOM (source: Keeling et al., 2013)
Other informal recruitment sources: rehires and walk-ins

Rehires and walk-ins are two special informal sources that are different from the other WOM-based recruitment sources. In some cases, employers rehire an individual. Employers may rehire an individual whom they ceased to employ due to an unavoidable circumstance – for example, if the company was in a financial crisis and had to reduce its headcount; this is not unusual in some sectors that have high turnover rates. Occasionally it is because financial problems led to the closure of branches, and once the problems have been solved, employers start adding more shops and new vacancies need to be refilled. The advantages of rehire include that these employees have enough knowledge about the job and the culture of the organisation to save on training, and rehired employees can start working in a relatively short time. Nonetheless, there are potential problems in rehiring a staff member who was let go due to reasons such as bad performance; they may still have a negative attitude and habits, which may affect other employees (Landry, Mahesh and Hartman, 2005).

Walk-in is also an informal recruitment method. With walk-ins, recruitment is initiated by the applicant. One advantage to this source is that only jobseekers who are seriously interested in a job vacancy and try to initiate interviews (Gannon, 1971). There is usually no lead-time between a jobseeker viewing a job advertisement and when they can be interviewed. Employers could keep résumés on file for future positions if there is no position available at the time of the walk-in.
Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) suggest that informal sources are company independent and the content is not controlled by the organisation. Therefore, information from informal sources is less likely to show an exclusively positive view of the job/company, especially when it is provided from a trusted provider, when compared to formal sources. Judge and Bretz (1992) also indicate that informal sources contain more ‘soft’ information, such as company culture, which can help jobseekers to evaluate the job and the company before the application.

In their research, Breaugh and his colleagues (2003) compare five recruitment sources, including formal sources (newspaper advertisements, college placement offices and job fairs) and informal sources (employee referrals and direct applicants – jobseekers who recommend themselves to the employers actively before the job-vacancy information is released), to discuss whether or not employers can encourage a higher percentage of applicants to accept an issued offer via the five different recruitment sources mentioned above. The results show that qualified applicants who are recruited directly or via employee referral are more likely to accept a job offer and consequently work for the company than jobseekers who acquire information about the vacancy from a newspaper or a college placement office.

Ryan et al. (2005) use a database recording the recruitment data of firefighters in the US. They also find evidence that different sources of recruitment information have distinctive effects on jobseekers’ application and job offer acceptance intention. Significantly higher numbers of candidates who received job-vacancy information from present or recent incumbents (especially current employees or jobseekers’ family or friends who used to work as firefighters) were found to have applied for a position. Furthermore, female candidates and disadvantaged group members were more likely to acquire job information via less popular sources, such as advertisements in churches. This stream of research therefore supports the contention that different recruitment information sources result in significantly different pre-hire outcomes.

However, in contrast to these studies, some researchers (e.g., Cable and Turban, 2001) claim that jobseekers may consider that formal recruitment information
sources contain a higher level of expertise and accuracy because the messages are officially released by the employer. They argue that information from formal sources is generally less ambiguous than subjective informal sources such as general WOM messages, which may contain too many personal views. Attribution theory (e.g., Jaspars, Fincham and Hewstone, 1985) can provide one explanation as to why jobseekers might think formal information sources are more accurate. Attribution theory argues that individuals attribute a phenomenon to the object based on their observation and experience. For instance, when people share negative personal feelings about their work and life, it may not actually directly change the information recipients’ attitude towards the company or job negatively depending on how the receiver attributes the motives of the informant. If the information recipient attributes the negative information to the provider’s personal issues, this information may be (at least partially) discounted. Thus, from this perspective, the influence of WOM information on jobs is bounded, due to potential evaluation of this information as ambiguous, subjective and emotion based, and thus potentially less accurate. In contrast, formal source information is provided by the organisation and is more easily verifiable. (However, this is not to say that informal information is not heeded, just that it may be received more cautiously and be subject to more deliberation and further information seeking for verification.

An additional caution about relying too heavily on informal recruitment sources such as employee referral as the main recruitment source is that employers may miss the chance of recruiting talented and qualified jobseekers who are not included in the referral network (Finneran and Kelly, 2003). Research by Finneran and Kelly (2003) simulates the employees’ social network and calculates the extent that employee referral can reach. These statistical simulations show that jobseekers outside the employee network have almost zero opportunities to acquire a job by means of current employee referral. Finneran and Kelly (2003) also argue that some social issues concerning exclusion may arise, as being isolated from the referral network leads workers to be disadvantaged when searching for jobs.

In summary, the pre-hire recruitment outcome studies show that different recruitment sources have significantly different effects on a jobseeker’s pre-application decisions. However, no conclusion can be drawn regarding which source
is more effective than others, as some research results show informal sources are better, while others claim that formal sources are more effective.

Credibility is a variable that may lead to inconclusive results. Breaugh (2013) proposes that an individual’s perception of the credibility of the sources/providers could be a mediator that affects the effectiveness of the sources. That is to say, the formal or informal source does not directly affect the information receiver’s willingness to use that source. As long as the individual trusts the source, they are more likely to consider the information that they receive from the source to be valid. The next section will review studies in information receiver perceived credibility.

2.4.2 (Receiver-perceived) credibility and OA

2.4.2.1 Source credibility

Hovland and Weiss (1951) propose that people tend to discount the effect of information that they subjectively consider to be less trustworthy. Early research in the area of recruitment supports this supposition, in that the source credibility of the information provider can be a full mediator that affects a jobseeker’s decision as to whether to adopt the advice from a source or not, and has an indirect effect on a jobseeker’s OA. In other words, even though the content is true, receivers will still not consider a suggestion if they deem the information provider to be untrustworthy (e.g., Hass, 1981). In contrast, when the information provider (communicator) is considered to be trustworthy, the information content is more likely to be considered by the receiver, and then changes the receiver’s attitude towards the object (e.g., a product, a job vacancy) (Hovland and Weiss, 1951).

Hovland et al. (1953) propose that the credibility of the information source consists of three components, namely trust, expertise and liking the source. Rarick (1963) extends this concept and finds evidence that perception of the credibility of the information source can be divided into two core notions: cognitive and affective. The cognitive component is constructed of power, prestige and competence, while the affective component comprises trustworthiness and likability. In these definitions, we can see links to and further explanations of the effects of receiver attributions about source motivations and expertise (see next paragraph, 2.3.2.1.1, on page 56). Berlo et al. (1969) include safety (e.g., trustworthiness and friendliness), qualification (i.e.,
competence and experience) and dynamism (e.g., energy and aggressiveness) in their classification system. The similarity and overlap of these classification systems illustrate that the components of trustworthiness, likeability and expertise appear in some form in all of them.

2.4.2.1.1 Source credibility and communicator’s background (expertise vs. personal)

The information provider’s background information, such as qualifications and details about the provider’s experience and personal habits, is an important criterion that information receivers utilise as a heuristic cue to evaluate the communicator’s trustworthiness and credibility (e.g., Pattanaphanchai et al., 2013). Wathen and Burkell (2002) conclude that the information provider’s expertise/knowledge, credentials, likeability/goodwill/dynamism and attractiveness are the key factors that influence the information provider/source credibility. These factors can be classified into two categories: expertise background and personal background of the information provider. The professional/expertise background includes a provider’s knowledge, work experience, special training in the area and relevant certifications or degrees issued from an impartial and reputable institution. The personal background includes the provider’s personality, personal characteristics, attractiveness and habits. These two aspects of provider backgrounds are equally important. When the information recipients evaluate the information provider as having high professional expertise and think the provider’s personal background is likeable, the receiver will perceive that the communicator has positive and higher credibility (Wathen and Burkell, 2002).

2.4.2.1.2 Source credibility and tie strength (strong tie versus weak tie)

Research into source credibility (e.g., Fireworker and Friedman, 1977; Hovland and Weiss, 1951) reveals that people believe that an information provider who presents a higher degree of trust and has a closer relationship with the information receiver is more credible. Information from a ‘strong tie’, such as a close friend or family member, is considered more credible and persuasive than information from ‘weak ties’, such as acquaintances. The explanation for this is that people know more about these strong relationships than the weak relationships, and thus consider the strong ties to have higher credibility. In general, this leads people to be more
likely to adopt advice from a strong tie rather than a weak tie. Fisher et al.’s (1979) study demonstrates that people tend to evaluate information providers who have the closest relationship with them (family, close friend) as having the highest source credibility; those who have not that close a relationship (a university professor) as having moderate credibility; and recruiters (the weakest relationship in their study) as having the lowest credibility. Keeling et al.’s (2013) research result also shows that SWOM information from a strong tie (a close friend) receives higher source credibility from participants than the same information provided by a weak tie (an acquaintance). Therefore, tie strength is a variable that significantly influences the jobseeker’s (receiver’s) perceived trust (credibility) of an information provider (communicator), and is also a heuristic cue that information receivers use to evaluate credibility.

2.4.2.2 Information credibility

Some researchers (e.g., Flanagin and Metzger, 2013) concentrate on ‘information credibility’ to indicate more specifically the credibility of the information content. Nevertheless, information credibility is highly related and linked to source credibility. As introduced in the previous paragraph, when a source is trusted by the receivers, the receivers are more likely to accept and adopt the information content from the source (communicator), which means the credibility of the information (the content) also increases. When the information contains more realistic information (as mentioned in the message valence paragraph, some negative information can actually increase the credibility of a source), then the source credibility gets strengthened as well (Castillo et al., 2013). Therefore, source credibility and information credibility are connected.

The credibility of the source and the information plays a crucial mediation role between the stimulus and the receivers’ responses (e.g., a jobseeker’s perceived OA (see Figure 2.6). Employers therefore firstly need to convince jobseekers to believe that the job information provider has high credibility; the designed information is then able to convince the jobseekers.
Figure 2.6: The mediation effect of receivers’ perceived credibility between stimulus and responses

As discussed previously, existing studies have demonstrated that the effectiveness of recruitment information sources can be moderated by stimulus (e.g., message valence, message length) and communicator factors (e.g., information providers’ background, their relationships with the information receivers). This influences information receivers’ different responses (e.g., OA, intention to search for more information). These studies are conducted based on the employers’ view, and provide suggestions to employers about how to manipulate the stimulus, and how to use the communicators’ characteristics to get better responses from jobseekers.

On the other hand, research such as that of Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) also provides clues that individuals (information receivers) have their own decision considerations, decision preferences and habits. They could perceive stimulus and communicator factors differently, which may affect their perceived OA. Therefore, considerations from the view of information receivers’ differences should not be ignored. Unfortunately, as mentioned previously, the fourth component (receiver differences) in the social communication theory schema is a corner of the recruitment research that has not been fully studied. Only a few studies have considered and investigated the idea that possible moderation effects could arise from the differences in jobseekers’ responses (Judge and Cable, 1997). The present research will explore and investigate the moderation effects that may be caused by individual differences. In the next section, variables from the receiver’s view are introduced and reviewed.

2.5 Receiver’s (jobseeker’s) profile

2.5.1 Individual differences (receiver’s profile) and decision-making style

Individual differences have been studied most often in the field of personality and psychology. Psychologists have collected ample amounts of data on how people differ from one another in terms of characteristics. A survey of individual differences helps consider not only what makes humans similar, but also what makes them different. A wider range of human behaviour can be explained and understood by
considering the variations that can occur from one person to another (Schreurs et al., 2009).

In recruitment research, Judge and Cable (1997) indicate that individual differences will influence personal values and personal values will be translated into personal preferences. They state that although previous research has investigated the effects of different recruitment sources/activities on jobseekers’ pre-hire attitude/intention (e.g., OA), only a limited number of researchers have conducted studies on jobseekers’ individual differences and personal preferences. Therefore, they postulate that researchers need to consider individual traits in seeking to understand how people use information to make decisions.

Researchers have proposed many classifications of individual differences. Decision-making research (e.g., Scott and Bruce, 1995) suggests that every decision-making process involves individuals’ decision habits and preferences. People tend to keep their decision habits and preferences throughout different decisions. Scott and Bruce (1995) propose that individuals can be categorised as different types of decision-makers based on their habitual choice-making attitude when making decisions across situations. Individuals who are classified as having the same decision-making style have similar decision considerations and decision modes. Henderson and Nutt (1980) indicate that a personal decision-making style not only involves personal characteristics and preferences, but also includes how individuals process and evaluate information. They also show that decision-making styles have a direct influence on individuals’ information searching and processing preferences and that they can be isolated as a variable when explaining the information evaluating preference of decision-makers. Therefore, individual differences within information preference indicate a link between decision-making styles.

In the context of recruitment research, jobseekers with different decision-making styles may make their job-application decisions differently because of their evaluation consideration modes. In other words, when facing a recruitment message about a position, different evaluation consideration modes can lead to different choices and decisions. This suggests that jobseekers’ decision-making style could be the missing puzzle that explains the inconsistent results in the existing recruitment studies.
The dual-process theory and the concept of ‘satisficing’

The traditional dual-process theory concludes that people operate using two separate information-processing systems when making decisions and responses: analytical–rational and intuitive–experiential. The analytical–rational system is deliberate, slow and logical. The intuitive–experiential system is fast, automatic and emotionally driven (Norris and Epstein, 2011). By extending the traditional dual-process theory and rational theory, Evans (2008) proposes that individuals process information by means of two parallel interactive systems: heuristic-based processing (system 1) and analytic-based processing (system 2). Individuals react to (respond to) an event (e.g., make a choice) by adopting one of these two systems. The attributes for systems 1 and 2 all reflect the differences between the cognitive unconscious and the cognitive conscious. System 1 is supported by unconscious processes that deliver perceptions and memories. When system 1 is adopted for making choices, individuals tend to use instinct and spontaneity and make the choices quickly. Behaviours considered to be unconscious, implicit, automatic, irrational and rapid are categorised in system 1. On the other hand, system 2 is a form of thinking under deliberately intentional control. Individuals adopting system 2 to respond to an activity will try their best to find the best solution rationally. It therefore takes time acquiring and analysing information. That is to say, the traditional dual-process theory posits that when people use system 1 for making decisions, they are completely irrational; when people use system 2 for making decisions, they are perfectly rational.

Herbert Simon (1955), an awardee of the Nobel Prize in economics, strongly criticised this view of human rationality. He argued that there should exist a bounded rationality. Simon indicates that individuals seldom make a decision or react to an event fully unconsciously or irrationally. Many people do not ‘maximise (perfect rational)’; instead they ‘satisfice (bounded rational)’. Individuals have an adequacy criterion to decide whether an alternative is satisfactory, and many people choose the first option that fulfils this criterion. Hence, those people do not evaluate all the available options and they do not carry out a full cost–benefit analysis of the possible options. The boundary rationality – the concept of not being extremely rational – does not imply that these individuals are irrationally or unconsciously responding to the
choices and decisions. Instead, they value the time and resources, and compromise with an acceptable solution (Campitelli and Gobet, 2010).

The idea of ‘satisficing’ is more likely in between the two systems in the traditional dual-process theory. The concept is categorised in system 2; not to evaluate all the information and choose a good-enough option is not unconscious, and neither is it an irrational behaviour. However, these individuals adopt the approach from system 1 – to save effort and resources. ‘Satisfice’-orientated individuals rely more on heuristic paths instead of systematically analysing all the possibilities and details to accelerate the decision process. In other words, the satisfice approach covers system 1, which is a more fast and frugal heuristic processing, but in the dual-process view, satisfice belongs more to system 2, which is conscious, but a bounded analytic processing.

2.5.2 Maximisers vs. satisficers

Based on Simon’s ‘bounded rationality’ notion, two decision-making styles are constructed by Schwartz et al. (2002): maximiser and satisficer. Schwartz et al. (2002) define maximisers as a group of people who generally put a great deal of effort into searching for information, and evaluate and analyse information very carefully. They are known to hold high standards and to have more criteria regarding the outcomes of the decisions that they make, but also find it more challenging than satisficers to make a ‘final’ decision. In contrast, satisficers prefer to seize chances and possibilities when they arise instead of spending time on acquiring information. Satisficers do not strive to make the ‘best decision’ and will settle for a ‘good-enough’ decision.

Instead of adopting other decision-making style classifications that are strictly developed based on the traditional dual-processing theory, there are several reasons for adopting these two information-seeking strategies to investigate a jobseeker’s recruitment information-seeking preferences and reactions in the present research. Firstly, searching for a job is not an unconscious behaviour. Finding a job is not a simple activity; it is not like reacting to some simple events. It takes time and effort to search for job information. Individuals (jobseekers) also have to take risks if their decision is not satisfying (the job is actually not good). Secondly, even though
jobseeking behaviours are generally conscious, individuals may adopt different information-searching strategies – either a more heuristic approach which saves time and effort and simply settles for a good-enough choice, or a more analytic approach that tries to search for as much information and as many opportunities as possible – and rationally evaluate the information to find the best choice. Thus, the idea of maximisers (an analytic-oriented approach) and satisficers (a fast and frugal heuristic-oriented approach) not only refines the dual-process theory, but also more closely represents jobseekers’ information-seeking and evaluation preferences.

It is worth noting that in relation to the use of heuristics and rational analytics when making decisions, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) and the Heuristic–Systematic Model (HSM) offer further explanations of how individuals receive and process persuasive messages. Cacioppo et al. (1983) propose the ELM, and define two major routes of persuasion: the central route and the peripheral route. In the central route, persuasion results from an individual’s thoughtful and careful consideration and analysis of the information and collected data in support of an advocacy. The resulting attitude change will therefore need a long time, and will be enduring and resistant. On the other hand, in the peripheral route, persuasion generally results from an individual’s association with cues in the stimulus or an inference the individual has made about the merits of the advocated position. Decision-makers do not focus on analysing the information content; instead, they rely on heuristics and shortcuts, such as the credibility or attractiveness of the sources of the message, to make relatively fast decisions. The resulting attitude change is therefore quicker. The HSM is similar to the ELM; Chaiken and Trope (1999) state that individuals process messages in one of two ways: heuristically or systematically. The systematic approach is based on the rational theory that individuals try to maximise the results and therefore systematically analyse the gathered information. On the other hand, when individuals make more attempts to minimise the use of cognitive resources, they are likely to take the heuristic approach to reduce the search for and processing of information.

Maximisers and satisficers also illustrate two well-known early theories extant in the social psychology literature. Heider (1958) proposes the theory of the ‘naive scientist’, which posits that people naturally act like scientists who carefully search
for information, weigh costs, evaluate benefits and attempt to match their expectations. In contrast to this view, Fiske and Taylor (1984) propose that people act as ‘cognitive misers’, utilising mental shortcuts to make assessments and decisions. Acting as a cognitive miser is a means to protect mental processing resources that finds different ways to save time and effort when negotiating the numerous choices faced in daily living.

The dual-processing theory, ELM, HSM, and naive scientist and cognitive miser theories illustrate that individuals are acting differently while evaluating information and making choices and decisions. For any individual, information processing approaches may be employed as befits circumstances and contexts; for instance additional searching and evaluation for more important decisions. However, people will differ in their experience and learning of the efficacy of applying each approach. Consequently, people may come to rely on a single approach more consistently than the other, along with any other cognitive strategies and habits that have become associated with it. Individual related theories could be applied in information design and help the communication to be more efficient. Persuasion is part of every aspect of our lives; understanding how people perceive information differently helps information providers efficiently persuade information receivers who adopt different approaches to evaluate information messages by designing and delivering customised content. In practice, recruiters are able to design recruitment messages that fit jobseekers’ habitual information preferences and decision-making style. Well-designed recruitment information messages not only save the promoting fees (e.g., advertising fees), but also more effectively attract jobseekers and increase the applicant pool.

Differences between maximisers and satisficers

The classification of maximiser and satisficer has been widely adopted by a variety of researchers and studies (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2002; Schwartz and Ward, 2004; Nenkov et al., 2008; Lai, 2011; Turner et al., 2012; Sparks et al., 2012). Logically, the more careful, information-collecting, perfect rational-orientated maximisers should perform better than satisficers in decision-making activities because of these positive traits and be more content with their choices. Hence,
considering these characteristics for recruitment practitioners, attracting more maximisers could have beneficial effects on staff retention and performance.

Nevertheless, there is some research indicating this may not be the case. Dar-Nimrod et al. (2009) indicate that even though maximisers spend a great deal of time finding information and their final choice is logically evaluated, they are still unhappier than satisficers and are generally disappointed with their final decision. In contrast, satisficers do not care whether or not they have made the perfect decision and prefer not to worry about issues such as sunk costs. Iyengar et al. (2006) test 548 new graduates recruited from 11 colleges in the US, and find that new graduates adopting a maximiser approach to career choice receive approximately 20% more in their starting salary than satisficers; however, these maximiser-style graduates report significantly lower career-choice satisfaction and believe other, better choices could be made.

Moreover, Misuraca and Teuscher (2013) show that maximisers and satisficers perceive time differently. When searching and evaluating information, maximisers ignore the time input and focus on what they are dealing with. Even faced with deadlines, some maximisers still avoid making a decision (Parker et al., 2007). Satisficers do not have such high standards and ambitions about their decisions and outcomes; compared to maximisers, they consider fewer criteria in making a decision and do not like to waste time acquiring too much information (Iyengar et al., 2006; Schwartz et al., 2002).

Maximisers are not only found to be more willing to sacrifice resources, such as time to attain a larger choice array than satisficers (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2009), but also spend more time going back and forth considering the choices before they make the final decision (Besharat et al., 2013; Ma and Roese, 2014). For instance, Chowdhury et al. (2009) perform an online gift-purchasing experiment; participants are asked to select a gift on the Internet for their friend under a time constraint. The results show that maximisers engage in more pre-purchase browsing behaviour and perceive more decision-time pressure. They also have a higher intention to change their initial time-constrained choices when given the opportunity to change their choice. Lai (2011) surveys 1,978 TV service users (customers) in Norway, and finds that maximisers had significantly higher intentions to switch (from their current TV
service provider) to another TV service provider than satisficers. Sparks et al.’s (2012) study also supports this; their results reveal that maximisers report a stronger preference than satisficers for retaining the possibility to revise their choices, both when reporting preferences in their own life and when choosing between options in experimental (hypothetical) situations. This diligence can also lead to maximisers spending too much time on evaluating information, and delaying the decision making process.

Hastie and Dawes (2001) propose that this is because the presumed goal of maximisation is virtually always unrealisable in real life, owing both to the complexity of the human environment and the limitations of human information processing. Therefore, maximisers paradoxically are prevented from making that best decision by the amount of searching and time delays and the need to protect the self as best they can when pressed for a decision. Maximisers thus use this paradoxical consideration as the base when facing a decision – so they are always scanning, as this decision fulfils a short-term need to protect the self. Nonetheless, although maximisers have tried their best to carefully analyse the information that they received, and outcomes (their final decision) also have positive elements, the thought of ‘I should have searched for more information’ leads these maximisers to experience a higher level of post-decisional regret (Lai, 2011; Besharat et al., 2013).

Other interesting findings (e.g., Jain et al., 2013) demonstrate that maximisers do not estimate future task demands accurately, because they associate strong feelings of regret with their previous choices and dismiss them as poor decisions. Jain et al. (2013) performed a series of studies to compare maximisers’ and satisficers’ forecasting abilities. The prediction tasks in their research are about the forecasting of the outcomes of the 2010 FIFA World Cup (football matches). The results show that maximisers forecast generally more poorly than satisficers. One of their studies invites participants to play a betting task, where the participants could choose between safe and uncertain gambles linked to World Cup outcomes. As expected, maximisers did more poorly and earned less. Yang and Chiou (2010) test maximisers’ and satisficers’ responses when searching for a partner via dating websites. Their study shows that maximisers spend more effort on browsing the matching profiles, but having more search options triggers excessive searching, leading to poorer decision-
making and reduced selectivity. They find that the more matching profiles the participants read, the less satisfaction they experienced in the final dating choice (lower goodness-of-match score); this is especially true for maximisers. Studies (2002 - 2014) on maximisers and satisficers are summarised in Table 2.1.

In the context of recruitment, it is likely that a maximiser-style jobseeker will evaluate job information more carefully. Evidence also suggests that they cannot be convinced easily before making the final decision to apply. They are likely to spend more time on searching for job-/company-related information. That is to say, maximiser-style jobseekers could be more difficult to satisfy with one piece of recruitment information from one source, compared to satisficer-style jobseekers. Maximisers and satisficers could possibly perceive source credibility differently as well. Moreover, since maximisers spend more time gathering information from different sources, they are more likely to have a deeper understanding of the industry that they aim to work in. It is possible that maximisers are more likely to understand the truth that in the retail trade, it is difficult to find a ‘perfect’ job (Breaugh, 2013). Therefore, they may be more likely to compromise and make an imperfect job decision due to the time pressure. They are also more likely to experience post-decisional regret, because they will feel that the decision that they made is not the best one.

These assumptions cause decision-making style, such as maximiser and satisficer, to become a possible moderator. Moreover, as maximisers are careful decision-makers, and thus have certain negative characteristics, whether employers should avoid recruiting maximisers is a question that is worth exploring. These gaps within recruitment research are unanswered questions and need to be investigated further.

2.5.3 Receiver’s aim: job type (grassroots jobs vs. management jobs) and communicator/source credibility

In addition, receivers’ (jobseekers’) aim in relation to job type is a factor that may indirectly affect information receivers’ responses. Different job positions have different skill requirements. In the retail trade, management-level jobs, such as a marketing manager, usually require jobseekers to have professional knowledge and
experience. Basic-level employees (e.g., shop assistant) have fewer specific knowledge requirements (Foster et al., 2006). Wathen and Burkell (2002) propose that when information recipients perceive that the information content and the provider background have a higher similarity to them (e.g., same job position, similar personality), recipients will consider the provider to have higher credibility. In other words, jobseekers evaluate information provider/communicator credibility differently based on who (in this case, the background of the communicator) provides the information to them. Therefore, job type is aligned to an individual’s perception of communicator credibility where it is evident whether or not there is a match/mismatch in similarity of background between communicator and receiver, which then affects the adoption of recruitment information and influences the jobseeker’s OA. Jobseekers’ aim in terms of job type will also be further considered and tested in the present study.

2.6 Summary

In this chapter, relevant studies and variables in recruitment information sources and contents have been reviewed based on the social communication theory schema. Recruiting eligible employees to join the organisation is one of the most important issues for employers, especially in the retail trade, which has a large number of job vacancies waiting to be filled. Previous research has investigated the effects of different recruitment sources or activities on jobseekers. However, research on individual difference and jobseekers’ recruitment information-searching preference is scant in the recruitment research field. The present research takes the aspect of jobseekers’ (information receivers’) decision-making styles and examines the influences of different communicator (information-provider) factors (recruitment source, source/information credibility, information provider’s background and the tie strength/relationship) and recruitment message content (stimuli) (message valence, job type, message type and message length) on jobseekers’ pre-hire outcomes (responses) (OA and willingness to search for more job-/company-related information). This study aims to determine maximisers’ and satisficers’ preferences in relation to job-information needs and sources and use that to fill the gap in the decision-making and recruitment research. In order to test the moderating effect of an individual’s decision-making style and the interaction between these variables, a series of studies was designed and conducted. These possible moderating effects and hypotheses will be established and introduced in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.
Table 2.1: The research on maximisers and satisficers (journal papers published between 2002 and 2014)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Author(s)</th>
<th>Sample(s)</th>
<th>Method(s)</th>
<th>Key findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>Schwartz, Ward, Monterosso, Lyubomirsky, White and Lehman</td>
<td>1,747 general population (Study 1)/ 401* students (Study 2)/ 54* students (Study 3)/ 84* students (Study 4) in the US</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Structured questionnaire and factorial design experiment</td>
<td>The authors established a scale (MS) for measuring an individual’s maximising tendency. The scale comprised three dimensions: <em>alternative search, decision difficulty</em> and <em>high standards</em> of their decisions. Maximisers self-reported lower levels of life satisfaction, optimism and self-esteem, which suggested a tendency for downward self-evaluations. Maximisers also tended to set the highest standards for themselves, so they also increased perceptions of relative standing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>Iyengar, Wells and Schwartz</td>
<td>548 new graduates recruited from 11 colleges in the US</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Structured questionnaire</td>
<td>New graduates adopting the maximiser approach to career choice received approximately 20% more in their starting salary than satisficers. These maximiser-style new graduates reported lower career-choice satisfaction and believed other, better choices could have been made.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>Parker, Bruine de Bruin and Fischhoff</td>
<td>360 participants (general population) in Pittsburgh</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Structured questionnaire</td>
<td>Maximisers were more likely to show problematic decision-making styles, less behavioural coping, greater dependence on others when making decisions, more avoidance of decision-making and a greater tendency to experience regret. Maximisers were more likely to make spontaneous decisions, especially when the deadline came, but they still could not make the final decision.</td>
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<td>2008</td>
<td>Nenkov, Morrin, Ward, Schwartz and Hulland</td>
<td>4,430 participants (general population) from the US and Canada, 605 participants (general population) from China, and 1,023 (general population) from Italy</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Structured questionnaire</td>
<td>After testing and comparing the three-item, six-item and nine-item versions of MS based on Schwartz et al.’s (2002) 13-item MS, the authors concluded that the six-item scale had the best explanatory power to evaluate maximising and satisficing characteristics. Therefore, they suggested that researchers should adopt the six-item version as a maximising and satisficing measurement in future research.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Diab, Gillespie and Highhouse</td>
<td>210* students in the US</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Structured questionnaire</td>
<td>The authors proposed an alternative scale (named Maximising Tendency Scale, MTS) that contained nine items (three items were selected from the 13-item MS).</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Chowdhury, Ratneshwar and Mohanty</td>
<td>224* undergraduates in the US</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Factorial design experiment</td>
<td>Maximisers engaged in more pre-purchase browsing behaviour and perceived more decision-time pressure. Maximisers also had a higher intention to change their initial time-constrained choices when given the opportunity to change their choice.</td>
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<td>2009</td>
<td>Dar-Nimrod, Rawn, Lehman and Schwartz</td>
<td>101 (Study 1)/ 96 (Study 2)/ 124* (Study 3) students in the US (samples were mainly female, approx. 68%)</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Factorial design experiment</td>
<td>Maximisers were more likely to spend time on obtaining more options. Even though maximisers spent more time finding information and their final choice was logically evaluated, they were still unhappier than satisficers and were generally disappointed with their final decision.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Authors</td>
<td>Sample Description</td>
<td>Methodology</td>
<td>Findings</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Yang and Chiou</td>
<td>112 teenagers (aged 15 to 23 years) from southern Taiwan</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Maximisers reported more pronounced searching (for a dating partner online) than satisficers. The negative effect of excessive searching on decision-making was more prominent for maximisers than for satisficers in terms of final choices and selectivity. The main effect of number of available options indicates that more options led to worse choices (lower goodness-of-match score); this was more obvious for maximisers. The goodness-of-match of each target option was determined by measuring the differences between the scores of each participant’s most desired characteristics and the characteristics of the selected option.</td>
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<td>2010</td>
<td>Lai</td>
<td>3,757 participants (general population) who lived in Norway</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>The author proposed an eight-item modified maximising scale. This alternative scale did not include the component ‘decision difficulty’. The author also tested the correlations between this alternative scale and the other maximising-related variables, such as post-decisional regret, and obtained the same results as the results that were evaluated by the 13-item MS in Schwartz et al.’s study (2002).</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Lai</td>
<td>1,978 TV service users (customers) in Norway</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Maximisers had significantly higher intentions to switch (from their current TV service provider) to another TV service provider than satisficers, showing maximiser adopters had a lower loyalty to the service provider. Maximisers reported higher proneness to regret, increased desire to discuss relevant choices with others, higher levels of perceived knowledge of alternatives and higher ego involvement in the end product, compared to satisficers.</td>
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<td>2011</td>
<td>Purvis, Howell and Iyer</td>
<td>1,858* participants from San Francisco State University and popular websites</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>The author tested whether personality characteristics (the Big Five) play a role in explaining the negative association between maximising tendency and an individual’s perceived well-being. The results showed that neuroticism was the only strong predictor that drives one’s tendency to maximise. After controlling for personality characteristics, the negative relations between maximising tendency and well-being variables were significantly attenuated. The authors proposed that the maximising tendency might not be an affective component that leads to decision-related distress. The maximising tendency might actually just reflect a preference for planned, and painstaking, searches for the ‘best solution’. There might be other cognitive components that need to be considered and lead to the negative outcomes.</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Turner, Bin Rim, Betz and Nygren</td>
<td>828* undergraduates in the US</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>The authors proposed an alternative 34-item scale, named the Maximisation Inventory (MI). The item design was based on the 13-item MS. Two experiments were employed. Experiment 1 showed maximisers reported a stronger preference than satisficers for retaining the possibility to revise choices, both when reporting preferences in their own life and when choosing between options. Study 2 revealed that satisficers showed a higher level of dissonance reduction after making a choice. Maximisers were less likely to change their impressions of the selected choice, leaving them less satisfied with their previous selected result.</td>
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<td>2012</td>
<td>Sparks, Ehrlinger and Eibach</td>
<td>86 (Study 1) (general population)/ 42* (Study 2) undergraduates in the US</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>Two experiments were employed. Experiment 1 showed maximisers reported a stronger preference than satisficers for retaining the possibility to revise choices, both when reporting preferences in their own life and when choosing between options. Study 2 revealed that satisficers showed a higher level of dissonance reduction after making a choice. Maximisers were less likely to change their impressions of the selected choice, leaving them less satisfied with their previous selected result.</td>
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<td>2013</td>
<td>Haran, Kitov and Mellers</td>
<td>183 (Study 1)/ 220 (Study 2)/ 200 (Study 3) participants (general population) in the US</td>
<td>Quantitative</td>
<td>The authors reckoned that prediction abilities are not directly relevant to an individual’s maximising tendency. Instead, making a good prediction relies on actively open-minded thinking (AOT). The results showed no significant relationship between predicting ability (estimating performance) and maximising tendency, but a significant relationship between an individual’s AOT and predicting ability was found, supporting the authors’ statement. The results also provided evidence that AOT predicted the tendency to collect information, and information acquisition predicted performance. To the extent that available information is predictive of future outcomes, actively open-minded thinkers are more likely than others to make accurate forecasts.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Author(s)</td>
<td>Sample Size/Participants</td>
<td>Study Design</td>
<td>Experiment</td>
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<tr>
<td>------</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Jain, Bearden and Filipowicz</td>
<td>1,110 participants (general population) from Singapore (mainly male, 81%)</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Factorial design experiment</td>
<td>The authors designed experiments about the forecasting of the outcomes of the 2010 FIFA World Cup. The results showed that maximisers forecast generally more poorly than satisficers. One of their studies invited participants to play a betting task, where the participants could choose between safe and uncertain gambles linked to World Cup outcomes. As they expected, maximisers did more poorly and earned less.</td>
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<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Misuraca and Teuscher</td>
<td>39 (Study 1)/ 49 (Study 2)/ 59* (Study 3) undergraduates in the US</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Factorial design experiment</td>
<td>Maximisers and satisficers perceived time differently when evaluating and processing information. Maximisers generally tended to underestimate time for most of the choosing situations, and satisficers only tended to underestimate time when the task requirements were more complex and challenging. Maximisers and satisficers differ in cognitive loads and thus in time perception. The research also revealed that satisficers adopt a more flexible and malleable path for dealing with different cases, while maximisers focus on almost all the problems and ignore the time lost.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>Besharat, Ladik and Carrillat</td>
<td>522 participants (general population) in the US</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Structured questionnaire</td>
<td>The authors tested whether maximisers' quests for the best solution reduce their consideration of the future. The results showed that the maximising tendency diminishes an individual’s ability to look to the future. The feeling of post-decisional regret was demonstrated as mediating the relationship between maximisation tendency and consideration of the future. Maximising tendency leads to less polychronicity (multitasking), and polychronicity significantly mediates the relationship between the maximising tendency and consideration of the future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014</td>
<td>Ma and Roese</td>
<td>76 (Study 1a)/ 62 (Study 1b)/ 515 (Study 2)/ 273 (Study 3)/ 354 (Study 6) participants were recruited via Amazon MTurk/ 262 (Study 4)/ 156* (Study 5) undergraduates</td>
<td>(Quantitative) Factorial design experiment</td>
<td>The maximising tendency actually constitutes a mindset, which amplifies post-decisional regret and dissatisfaction. The boundary condition of this maximising tendency mindset is that it occurs only when an individual learns that s/he has not got the best, but not when they do in fact get the best. In other words, when an individual has learned that s/he has got the best (result/solution), the effect of regret on dissatisfaction disappears. The maximising tendency mindset significantly encouraged individuals to do upward social comparisons.</td>
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* Student samples
CHAPTER 3 PHILOSOPHICAL STANCE AND RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 Chapter overview

Kuper and Kuper (2003) propose that the core value and substance of social science research is to observe, reflect and describe social activities and behaviours. The philosophical perspective forms the foundation of research, ensuring its reliability and attesting that the research results obtained are coherent and persuasive (Slife and Williams, 1995).

Social science researchers have their individual scientific beliefs and adopt the philosophical paradigm that fits their scientific beliefs when conducting studies and investigations (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). A philosophical paradigm is a distinct concept and thought pattern. It is the world view that reflects an individual’s beliefs and values, thus affecting the way the individual perceives reality and responds to that perception (Kuhn, 1970). Researchers who adopt the same paradigm share the same beliefs in ontology, epistemology and methodology. Therefore, a paradigm can also be seen as a common language and a process that is followed by all who adopt it.

The revolution of the past ten decades has strengthened paradigms. In social sciences today, paradigms coexist. Researchers adopt the paradigm that they believe in, following the rules and requirements it prescribes when undertaking research. This chapter begins by defining the leading philosophical paradigms in social sciences, including the one that forms the basis of this research. In line with the principle of the adopted philosophical paradigm, the research methods, sampling method and data analysis techniques employed in this research are then introduced.

3.2 Social sciences studies and paradigms

Habermas (1968) proposed three different generic, cognitive areas in which human interest generates knowledge: the ladder of materialistic inquiry,
The circle of constructive inquiry and the global eye of critical/ecological inquiry. These form the main paradigms adopted by social sciences researchers today.

The ladder of materialistic inquiry is the basis of the traditional positivism paradigm and the post-positivism paradigm; it emphasises a linear research pattern. Researchers follow the research steps strictly and deduce reality step by step. The circle of constructive inquiry is the foundation of the interpretivism/constructivism paradigm. Its advocates do not believe that reality has only one form; they believe that divergences exist between different events. Researchers find clues during the interaction of such events, and use their experience to interpret the data and induce theories. The global eye of critical theory and ecological inquiry is the foundation of the critical realism paradigm. It emphasises the ramifications for politics and practical actions. Researchers review the historical data, abstract the problems beneath the phenomena, uncover the false consciousness, solve the problems and change the form of society.

These formed paradigms are different in ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology is the philosophical study of the nature of the existence of reality. How the researcher believes a social reality exists, and the form of the reality, involves deduction from observed findings. Believers in singularism claim the universe is derived from a single principle, while advocates of pluralism take the view that some of the phenomena observed in science require multiple explanations to illustrate its nature.

Epistemology refers to what knowledge is and how it can be acquired, and the extent to which knowledge pertaining to any given subject or entity can be acquired. Idealists claim that reality, as we can know it, is fundamentally mental or mentally constructed, and otherwise immaterial. In contrast, realists believe that reality exists independently of observers. In other words, different epistemological standpoints reflect different beliefs in the relation between the observer (researcher) and the observed subject (reality).

Methodology is the systematic, theoretical analysis of the methods applied to a field of study (Berg, 2009). The adoption of methodology is fundamentally based on the observer’s (researcher’s) standpoint in regard to
ontology and epistemology. Usually, advocates of singularism tend to utilise statistical evidence and quantitative methods, such as experimental design and questionnaires, to support research findings and deduce theories. It is their belief that numbers can more objectively demonstrate the single reality. On the other hand, those who adopt pluralism prefer to use qualitative methods, such as interviews, to induct the phenomena. They regard reality as having many different forms, and its appearance can only be described through communication with members sharing experiences of the same event (see Figure 3.1).

(Deduction)

Theory → Hypothesis → Confirmation → Observation

(Induction)

Observation → Pattern → Tentative Hypothesis → Theory

Figure 3.1: Deduction versus induction

Traditional positivism

1. Ontology: naive realism. Traditional positivists believe a single reality exists. This reality is apprehendable, and all phenomena follow the law of nature. The deduction of phenomena relies on completely objective observations. However, this approach was criticised in the late 1950s. Some researchers (e.g., Hesse, 1980) considered the naive realism process of deduction to be too simple and determinism oriented.

2. Epistemology: dualist/objectivist. Traditional positivists firmly believe that the observer (researcher) and the observed subjects (research participants) are independent individuals and that there is no relationship between them (Blaikie, 2000). Researchers conduct research objectively, and their personal sentiments and values should never influence the
participants’ thinking and behaviour in the study. Results should therefore be prevented from being biased by the researchers’ personal cognition.

3. **Methodology:** experimental/manipulative. All the research questions need to be in hypothesis form and the involved variables need to be measurable. Any possible bias has to be strictly controlled. By designing experiments and surveys, researchers manipulate the variables that they want to test. Therefore, in their methodology, traditional positivists consider mainly quantitative methods; statistical analyses and quantitative evidence are the most important supports for the research findings.

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**Post-positivism**

1. **Ontology:** critical realism. Similar to traditional positivists, post-positivists also have the belief that a single and unique reality exists, and that it is possible to describe it via objective observation. However, limited to human knowledge and apperception, a phenomenon can be difficult to trace back to its nature. Post-positivists therefore consider that reality cannot be simply captured and described. Every theory and observed phenomenon needs to be strictly examined and tested critically to enhance the understanding of the reality.

2. **Epistemology:** modified dualist/objectivist. Compared to traditional positivists, post-positivists stop emphasising the idea that the observers (researchers) and the observed subjects (participants) are completely independent individuals. Objectivity is still the core idea for post-positivism, and maintaining the objective standards and strict methods of examination is also important to post-positivists; however, post-positivists evaluate the responses of the participants, and adjust the design of their study based on participants’ advice and suggestions. Moreover, in view of post-positivists’ ontological belief that human knowledge is limited, to achieve a deeper and more precise understanding of the phenomena and theory, the research process, tools (measurements) and results must be verified and judged by professional groups, such as
academic journal editors, referees and peers, to minimise the deficiency or bias that may affect the research results.

3. Methodology: experimental/manipulative. Experiments, surveys and statistical data analyses are the key methods that post-positivists adopt. In spite of this, compared to traditional positivists who generally adopt verification inspection, post-positivists use the falsifying standpoint when deducing phenomena. In its methodology, post-positivism complements the defect of traditional positivism, not only in using quantitative methods, but also in admitting qualitative approaches such as using empirical data. The views and opinions of the observed subjects (study participants) are also considered. Therefore, post-positivists accept the use of mixed methods, which combine the results of quantitative and qualitative studies (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990).

Interpretivism/constructivism

1. Ontology: relativism. Interpretivists do not think that a fixed reality exists. They consider that events, cases and participants are different in complexity and vary because of different event backgrounds and scenarios. Therefore, different cases/events will have different results and stories. With a non-existing single reality concept for describing and capturing the phenomena, a theory is then the result of a process of construction; it is established and constructed via social events, experiences, individual perceptions and personal thoughts. Consequently, constructed and interpreted findings/theories have the nature/characteristics of local and specific.

2. Epistemology: transactional/subjectivist. Interpretivists believe that the observers and the observed subjects are strongly connected. Therefore, they exchange ideas and values with the research participants, trying to understand and illustrate what participants feel, and adjust their research reports and interpretations according to the participants’ opinions. Interaction with participants is therefore crucial for interpretivists. Their personal feelings and emotions are involved in the research process, which is also shown in the reports on findings. Furthermore, because they
do not believe in a single existing reality, the findings and theories created by researchers are based on a deep understanding/interpretation of the collected interactive data.

3. **Methodology: hermeneutical/dialogic.** Hermeneutics and dialogics are the fundamental methods that are adopted by interpretivists. Interpretivists use a process of induction to form, adjust, re-form and readjust the observed results, and then to construct the theories. Thus, dialogic methods such as interviews and focus group methods are applied. The collected data then needs to be interpreted by hermeneutical methods – compared and re-compared, eventually forming the consensus of the construction.

**Critical realism**

1. **Ontology: historical realism.** Critical realism is a term that is assembled with other doctrines (e.g., feminism, materialism) (Guba, 1990; Guba and Lincoln, 1994). Its advocates consider reality to exist in a virtual form, and that this virtual reality is dynamically shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, ethical and gender values. Even though the reality may look real, it changes over time (Guba and Lincoln, 1994).

2. **Epistemology: transactional/subjectivist.** Similar to interpretivism/constructivism, the epistemological standpoint of critical realism tends to take the view that researchers and participants are connected (Burrell and Morgan, 1979). Therefore, the findings contain the researchers’ personal opinions and thoughts. Hence, in epistemology, critical realism adopters are also subjectivism worshippers (Guba and Lincoln, 1994). However, their standpoint is different from that of interpretivism/constructivism because their belief is in an existing virtual reality, and so personal values mediate the findings and also mediate descriptions of the (virtual) reality. Therefore, Benton and Craib (2001) propose that ‘the world functions as a multi-dimensional open system’. It generative mechanisms remain latent until they are activated in specific circumstances (McEvoy and Richards, 2003).
3. Methodology: dialogic/dialectical. The researchers’ values influence the findings, meaning that the researchers talk with the participants, exchanging and discussing their values and ideas about the topic. Thus, qualitative methods are mainly used. The process of these talks needs to be dialectical in order to illustrate and understand the virtual reality in its form and with its problems. Unlike interpretivists, critical realists believe it is important to relate discourses to the social structures (Williams, 2003). The final objective of the critical realism adopters is to change the form of the virtual reality and hence to change the structure of the society, solve problems and shape society and its virtual reality into something new.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3.1: Beliefs of the leading paradigms</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional positivism</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Ontology</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
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3.3 The present study: the adoption of the post-positivism paradigm

The present research adopts the post-positivism paradigm as its philosophical stance. It is believed that human behaviour follows a natural rule, and that behaviour can be demonstrated and explained by objective observations and examination. The goal of this research is to understand the differences between jobseekers who adopt different decision-making styles, and to attract
more jobseekers to the candidate pool by satisfying their job-vacancy information needs by providing information that jobseekers want via company-controllable sources. To achieve this aim, it is important and necessary to investigate relationships between recruitment information sources, message contents and jobseekers’ characteristics (differences) (see Chapter 2 on page 58). It is also necessary to demonstrate the observed phenomena, which are jobseekers’ reactions to the recruitment information, including their information adoption preference and their job-application intentions. To deduce the phenomena and show how these factors influence jobseekers’ job-application behaviour, relevant literatures and theories are reviewed, with hypotheses developed and then tested in an attempt to generalise for the wider population and broader situations.

Moreover, unlike traditional positivism, it is deemed appropriate that researchers and participants (jobseekers) should not be completely independent individuals. Researchers need to evaluate and consider adopting the observed participants’ opinions and adjust the design of the research accordingly where necessary. This precaution can produce a better, more accurate deduction of the phenomena. Consequently, although quantitative data are mainly collected in this research, text-based data are also utilised in order to provide a rich and meaningful narrative that more accurately reflects the situation being studied and allows insight into issues raised, but not answered, by the quantitative data analyses. A series of studies is designed; after the first study, each subsequent study is redesigned and adjusted based on the findings of the studies that have already been conducted.

3.4 Post-positivism paradigm and research methods

Spradley (1980) used an example to illustrate the relations between research paradigms and research methods. He described (post-)positivism adopters as being like ‘oil explorers’. These oil explorers have an obvious and clear goal, which is to exploit the oil underground. To achieve this goal, they review previous studies on topography, environmental conditions and regional specialties, conduct investigations and use standardised tools such as scales and statistical analyses to provide evidence that the places and locations contain oil.
On the other hand, adopters of interpretivism/constructivism are more like ‘earth-seekers’. They visit different places and use notes to record what they have observed. Earth-seekers use scientific tools such as compasses to locate where they are. They also talk to local residents, exchange findings and record what the local residents tell them about their observed topographies and phenomena. Eventually, earth-seekers may find a lake, some underground caverns or an oil well, but their job is just to record what they find. In the end, after gathering enough records and descriptions of different topographies, earth-seekers conclude their empirical work and induce the findings based on the collected (descriptive) data. This example illustrates that qualitative study researchers and quantitative study researchers have fundamentally different job orientations, and adopt different approaches to fulfilling the task of research.

The present study is similar to the oil-exploration plan. Despite the fact that finding the locations of underground oil wells is not an easy job, two beliefs hold. Firstly, it is believed that there is a natural rule predicting that the oil actually exists in some places. Secondly, by using different measures, standardising the investigation process, controlling the moderating factors, using the appropriate data analysis techniques, carefully considering the clues and opinions that are provided by the local residents and adjusting the plan accordingly, the prediction of drilling locations can be enhanced to a high degree of accuracy.

![Figure 3.2: Linear pattern of quantitative studies](image)

Source: LeCompte and Goetz (1982)
A linear pattern of study process (Figure 3.2) proposed by LeCompte and Goetz (1982) is adopted in this research. The process features five main stages: a review of existing theories, hypotheses development, data collection, data analysis and report findings. After the last stage, the findings will enhance the existing theories and the human understanding of the reality.

3.4.1 The use of surveys and scenario-based experiments

In line with the post-positivism paradigm, the present research mainly applies quantitative methods. Howitt and Cramer (2014) state that quantitative methods are the systematic empirical investigation of observable phenomena via statistical and numerical data, which provide the fundamental connection between empirical observations and mathematical expressions of quantitative relationships. The objective of quantitative studies is to develop and employ hypotheses pertaining to phenomena. Research that adopts quantitative methods usually investigates a specific, narrow topic and collects numerical data from observable phenomena or from study participants with measurable scales (Heiman, 2001).

Surveying and experimentation are the two most important and widely used quantitative methods in social studies; these two methods are particularly suitable for studying psychological processes, human behaviours and sociological issues (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). A (structured, fixed response) survey consists of a predetermined set of questions given to a representative sample that can describe the attitudes of the population from which the sample was drawn. Surveys also provide a high level of general capability in representing a large population. Moreover, the survey method can be administered to the participants in a variety of ways. For instance, the questionnaires can be sent via email and can be administered through the Internet. As questions in the survey should be subjected to careful scrutiny and standardisation, surveys are ideal for science research and appropriate for multiple-variable statistical analysis, because all the participants are provided with a standardised stimulus. Furthermore, compared to other methods (e.g., focus group), the cost of conducting the survey method can be relatively lower (Heiman, 2001).
On the other hand, Howitt and Cramer (2014) suggest that when the research questions involve the testing of relationships among variables, and the causality needs further examination through the manipulation of these variables, experimentation is the best method for clarifying the cause and effect among the manipulated variables. There are different forms of experiments; scenario-based experimental design is one of the most efficient and useful forms that is used in marketing and psychology studies (Kirk, 1995; Kim and Jang, 2014). Researchers create scenarios based on the manipulated variables, provide the stories in these experimental scenarios, and ask participants to imagine or recall their previous experiences of facing situations of this kind, including how they would react to or deal with the cases (Carroll, 2000). Scenario-based experiments not only involve good scenario design, but also rely heavily on the appropriate manipulation of experimental treatments and the control of irrelevant variables that may bias the research findings. These measures are used to reduce deviations and errors, and find salience in the relationships among the testing treatments/variables (Heiman, 2001). Experiments in which different participants take part in different conditions are known variously as between-subjects/independent-groups design, and designs in which the same participants take part in all of the various conditions are called within-subjects/dependent-groups design (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). The present research adopts the between-subjects design. Using between-subjects experiments reduces the experimental demand effect, because participants are not exposed to different levels of the independent variable (Krauth, 2000).

One of the advantages of using (especially online) scenario-based experimental design is that it controls for such demand characteristics, because the experimenter basically has no contact with the participants. Participants are only guided to read scenarios and respond to the designed questions (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). It helps preclude the possible bias concerning social nature issues that the experimental method may initiate – for example, participants react to the social meaning of the situations, picking up subtle cues from the experimenter (Singleton and Scharacteristics, 2009).
Surveys (Study 2 and the pre-study for Study 5) and scenario-based between-subjects experiments (Studies 3, 4, 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3) are employed to illustrate and answer the research questions (Chapter 1, on page 20). The designs of experimental scenarios are checked by pre-studies and manipulation check items. Furthermore, all the measurements (scales) that are used in the surveys and experiments of this research are adopted from studies that have been published in well-known journals with a good reputation (e.g., CABS, JCR indexed), and the scales have been widely tested and adopted in other published works, meaning these scales should have reached a satisfactory quality. The reliability and validity of the measurements are further checked using statistical techniques (e.g., Cronbach’s alpha to check internal reliability, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and principal component analysis (PCA) to check validity) to make sure the measurements fit the research purpose.

**Analysis techniques for quantitative data**

IBM SPSS Statistics is a professional software package used in statistical analysis. In this research, SPSS version 20 for Mac OS X is used. The data analysis techniques adopted in this study are set out below.

The *Pearson correlation coefficient* \( (r) \) defines the covariance of two continuous variables, and provides a measure of the strength and direction (positive/negative) of the linear relationship between the two variables. In Study 2, the Pearson correlation coefficient tests the relationship between participants’ maximising tendency and other cognition-based variables and participants’ attitudes towards their present retail-trade jobs.

*Pearson’s chi-squared* \( (\chi^2) \) *test* is used to determine whether there is a significant difference between the observed frequencies and the expected frequencies in one or more categories according to a specific distribution. In the present research, the chi-squared test analyses to what extent maximisers and satisficers have different preferences when it comes to seeking more detailed information to make a decision on applying for a job vacancy. Chi-squared tests are also utilised to examine whether maximisers and satisficers have different
preferences on the adoption of different recruitment information sources in Studies 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5.

The independent samples t-test is used to determine whether the means of two sets of independent samples are statistically different (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). In this study, it is used to measure differences between the dependent variables for maximisers and satisficers, such as a participant’s OA in Studies 2, 3, 4 and 5.

Analysis of variance (ANOVA) is the technique that is used to test the dependent variable (DV) differences among the independent variable (IV) combined groups/scenarios. One-way ANOVA (one-way, as in one IV and one DV) is similar to the independent-samples t-test, but it provides a comparison of the means of more than two sets of samples (using the F-distribution). In a factorial design experiment (with at least two IVs), interactions occur when two or more treatments (IVs) have an effect on one another, as opposed to just a one-way main effect (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). Three-way interaction means that there is a two-way interaction that varies across levels of a third variable (Kirk, 1995). When the result reveals a significant three-way interaction, the simple main effects are further tested. In Study 3 and Study 5.2, three-way ANOVA tests (with three IVs and one DV) are used and the results of interactions are discussed.

Analysis of covariance (ANCOVA) is a general linear model (GLM) that tests whether population means of a DV are equal across levels of an IV, while providing a statistical control for measuring the effects of other variables (covariates) that are not of primary interest. It is a measure of how much two variables change together when the covariate influence is accounted for (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). In this study, the ANCOVA test was used in a follow-up test (Study 2) and Study 5.1.

Duncan’s multiple range test (MRT) is a post-hoc, multiple comparison test. Used after finding significant results from the ANOVA test, it employs comparisons of groups in pairs. Duncan’s MRT is superior to other post-hoc tests with uneven group sizes (Heiman, 2001). The experiments of the present
research were designed and distributed via online questionnaire software (Qualtrics). Although the software distributes the experimental scenarios/groups randomly and evenly to the participants, the distributed participants in each scenario/group are not exactly equal (close, but not exactly the same). In addition, Duncan’s MRT is especially protective against false negative (Type II) error; therefore, it is widely applied in social research and behavioural studies (e.g., Milliken and Johnson, 1984). Therefore, Duncan’s MRT is adopted and mainly used in Study 5 with the ANOVA tests.

Principal component analysis (PCA) and Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) PCA is a variable reduction technique. It is applied when, having obtained measures on a number of observed variables, there is a need to develop a smaller number of underlying constructs that will account for most of the variance in these observed variables (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). CFA is a form of factor analysis, which is used to verify the factor structure of a set of observed variables. The results of CFA are utilised to test whether the measures/scales of a construct are consistent with the researcher’s design of the construct (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). The measures/scales used in the present research are adopted from published works, and have been used widely, indicating content validity in many other published works with different datasets. Nevertheless, in the present study, PCA and CFA are further used to confirm whether the agglomerations of the components in these study data are in line with the concept/notion that the studies aim to evaluate.

3.4.2 The use of semi-structured, open-ended surveys

In contrast to the majority of the studies in this thesis, a semi-structured, open-ended survey design is adopted in the groundwork study (Study 1) and the supplementary study (Study 6). Adejimi et al. (2010) suggest that open-ended questions in the questionnaire provide flexibility for participants to share their ideas. Without direct contact, a semi-structured questionnaire design helps reduce the possible bias whereby participants may be affected by the researcher’s behaviour (e.g., during face-to-face interviews), particularly in social desirability responding. Participants also experience less pressure when answering the questions compared to face-to-face interviews. Open-ended design questions are
appropriate to use when the research questions are relatively structured, but still allow participants to share their opinions.

In Study 1, the results provide an overview of retail-trade employees’ thoughts and opinions, and elements of the findings are used as the foundation and materials for designing the follow-up scenario-based experiments. Study 6 provides support for the findings and further information on points arising from the other studies.

**Analysis technique for text-based data**

To analyse the text-based data (Study 1 and Study 6), a conventional content analysis approach is adopted. In conventional content analysis, coding categories are derived directly from the text data. Content analysis is defined as a systematic, replicable technique for compressing many words of text into fewer content categories based on explicit rules of coding (Mayring, 2000). The assumption made is that the words mentioned most often are the words that reflect the greatest concerns. The term frequency counts can also be used to identify words of potential interest (Howitt and Cramer, 2014). Hsieh and Shannon (2005) indicate that content analysis is a widely used text-based data analysis technique.

**3.5 Overview of the methodology and study/questionnaire design for each study**

As introduced in Chapter 1, in total six studies were conducted to achieve the research objectives. Study 1 used a questionnaire with nine semi-structured open-ended questions. The questionnaire contained three main sections, including jobseekers’ general attitude towards a job in the retail trade and the recruitment information sources that they used, jobseekers’ opinions about the recruitment sources, and jobseekers’ job-information search preferences. The findings serve as the foundations for the follow-up studies. The collected qualitative text-based data were analysed by conventional content analysis approach.
Study 2 employed a structured questionnaire with eight-five items that covered ten main individual differences and cognitive related variables (including maximising tendency, uncertainty avoidance, self-efficacy, post-decisional regret, and need for cognition) and work experience related variables (including effort invested into researching job related information, met expectations, job satisfaction, company commitment, and intention to quit). Person correlation coefficient and ANCOVA test were used to analyse the quantitative data.

Study 3, Study 4, and three sub-studies in Study 5 (Study 5.1, Study 5.2, Study 5.3) utilised scenario-based experiments that manipulated tie (relationship), message valence (Study 3 & 5.3), message length (Study 4), message format (Study 5.1 & 5.3), and provider’s background information (Study 5.2 & 5.3). The experimental scenarios were designed with reference to US online newspapers recruitment columns/advertisements (e.g., USA Today) and adapted from published journal articles. In order to further explore this information, credibility and organisational attractiveness were employed as dependent variables. ANOVA, independent-samples t-test, Chi-square test, ANCOVA, PCA and CFA were adopted to analyse the qualitative data.

Study 6 was conducted to delineate three issues that were not sufficiently clarified in the above-mentioned five studies. Participants were firstly guided to read two scenarios that were used in Study 3 and Study 4. They then answered semi-structured open-ended questions about how they evaluate the given message information. Conventional content analysis approach was also applied to analyse the qualitative text-based data.

Demographic variables including gender, age, work experience, income, and education were asked in all six studies before the participants submitted their responses. More details about the studies were presented in Chapter 4 (Study 1 & 2), Chapter 5 (Study 3 & 4), Chapter 6 (Study 5.1, 5.2, 5.3), and Chapter 7 (Study 6).
3.6 Sampling

The post-positivism framework advocates that the research findings should generate new knowledge that other people can learn from and even base decisions on. Therefore, carefully selecting samples that are representative of the targeted population is an important issue.

Study context

The targeted sector of the present research is the retail industry. Recruiting a relatively large number of new employees in a limited period is especially important for companies in the retail trade. Due to the high turnover rate and lack of specific skill requirements, the retail sector is in acute need of attracting and hiring stable and fast-learning new employees to fill vacancies (Keeling et al., 2013). Many large retail-trade companies (e.g., Kmart) exist in the US, and a large number of job opportunities in this sector are waiting to be filled. In its 2013 annual report, the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM) describes the retail industry as one of the most labour-intensive industries in the US. The US Bureau of Labor Statistics (2014) also reported that, despite the 550,000 job openings in July 2014, many vacancies were still waiting to be filled in the retail sector. Therefore, US samples are considered relevant and suitable for the present research context.

Data collection panel

Although the evidence shows that nearly 70% of human-behaviour-related studies before 2010 adopted student samples (Henrich, Heine and Norenzayan, 2010), student samples have received some critiques in recent years. Henrich et al. (2010) suggest that American students may be particularly unsuitable for research about general human behaviour. The reason is that these students are often outliers in their behaviour, especially for this generation. Scientists in most fields typically look for randomised samples that reflect the population at large. Students do not fit this description for the population of retail employees because most of the student samples lack job-hunting experience. It is hard to ask student participants who do not have work experience to imagine the
situations that are manipulated in the scenario-based experiments, which are related to jobs and job-related information-searching decisions. Therefore, although student samples are traditional and widely used in much of the recruitment research, and the cost of recruiting student samples is relatively low, for the present research this is not appropriate.

Instead, the participants of the present research are recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT), which covers a varied population (Buhrmester et al., 2011). The collected data also reflect that the participants are near to the general population of interest (retail trade), such as having a lower salary and not having high educational qualifications (high school is the highest level of education for many of the participants). AMT (https://www.mturk.com/mturk/) is one of the sites of Amazon Web Services, which is a coordinating Internet marketplace that enables individuals and businesses to offer a small reward to potential respondents for taking part in surveys and experiments. The method is similar to the more common process of collecting data from a commercial online research panel; however, the researcher has more direct contact with, and control over, the respondents. Requesters set the level of reward for each participant and pay Amazon 10% commission on the price of successfully completed tasks. The panel allows researchers to set their own criteria for filtering specific participants to take part in the survey; only those qualified to join the study can view the study posts. These include characteristics not normally under the control of the researcher, such as the frequency of previous survey completions and previous researchers’ ratings of the quality of the data provided by potential participants. AMT members are known as ‘workers’ but are not employed by Amazon, although Amazon runs a strict censoring system to manage its panel members so that they ensure the quality of their participant database. All Amazon workers need to provide their social security number to Amazon, which ensures all the qualified members are US citizens, and Amazon checks the details of each member before the member is allowed to take part in any survey. Each participant (worker) is only paid after the survey is completed and survey requesters are satisfied with the data quality. Recent research demonstrates that AMT is a reliable data collection source, and the data quality is as good as the
data collected via traditional methods, such as a paper-based questionnaire and lab-based experiments (e.g., Buhrmester et al., 2011).

The present study aimed to explore maximisers’ and satisficers’ characteristics, preferences and experiences in the retailing industry. Only participants who had work experience in the retail trade were invited to join the studies. Participants had to agree to show proof of a job when necessary. Moreover, participants were limited to those who had reached the ‘Master level’ (the top level of Amazon’s membership system) to ensure they had a history of valid survey completion. Between $0.50 and $12 was given to each participant via AMT as an incentive after finishing the survey (see Table 3.2), depending on the length of the survey and the work expected of the respondents. Data were collected between May 2013 and May 2015. The data were anonymised, and participants could only be identified and contacted by their AMT IDs.

Table 3.2: Samples recruited via AMT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 1</th>
<th>Study 2</th>
<th>Study 3</th>
<th>Study 4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>140$^1$</td>
<td>280</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive (USD)</td>
<td>$12.00</td>
<td>$10.00</td>
<td>$3.00</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Study 5.1</th>
<th>Study 5.2</th>
<th>Study 5.3</th>
<th>Study 6</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>346$^1$</td>
<td>746</td>
<td>480</td>
<td>446</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Incentive (USD)</td>
<td>$0.50</td>
<td>$1.00</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
<td>$1.50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>time period</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>12 – 19 May (2015)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

$^1$ Current employees who accepted a retail-trade job offer in the last six months. The others are people who have work experience in the retail trade (not limited to current employees).

Potential ethical issues of collecting electronic data

An Internet-based survey, or an online laboratory study, is less likely to raise health or safety concerns and decreases experimental biases, such as examiner bias. The convenience also provides opportunities for researchers to collect high quality data in a shorter period of time compared to traditional data collection methods. Nevertheless, some possible ethical issues (such as breaches of personal data) when collecting online data are worth careful considerations. Steve (1998) proposes the following points in regard to electronic data collecting principles for maintaining the public trust in science:
Openness: The existence of the data based or data collection panel should be publicly known. The present study adopts AMT as the panel for data collection. AMT is a public and open access platform for researchers to collect reliable data. Participants are volunteers and agree to the AMT’s participation policies before starting any survey participation.

Collection limitation and relevance: Personal data should be collected for one specific, legitimate purpose. AMT checks the details of each member before the member is allowed to participate in any survey. Therefore, for the present study, participants do not need to provide personal data such as name, address, or valid ID number (e.g., drivers licence number). The data is collected anonymously. AMT provides user ID information to the researchers and each participant has a unique user ID. Researchers are able to contact a participant by sending a message to the user ID or filter the user ID to prevent them from taking the same survey more than once (though the AMT system has already designed to prevent this situation). Researchers can also use the filter functions to limit certain participants to attend their surveys. For instance, Study 3 and Study 4 of the present research are related. For controlling experimental biases, by filtering user IDs, participants who have attended Study 3 are not allowed to see the post (to attend) Study 4.

Use Limitations: Information should be used only for purposes specified at the time of collection. For all six studies, it is explained to participants before they begin the research purposes and agreed with them that they understand the study data and that the findings will only be used for academic purposes.

Disclosure limitation and security: Personal data is not to be communicated externally without consent of the subject who supplied the data, and personal data should be reasonably guarded against risks such as loss, unauthorised access, modification, or disclosure. The collected data is stored securely with no public cloud service being used. The data is not supplied to any other users.
3.7 Measurements of key variables

3.7.1 Jobseekers’ decision-making style (maximising tendency)

An individual’s decision-making style is the main moderator of the effectiveness of recruitment information sources and recruitment information content that the present study intends to explore and test. Schwartz et al. (2002) first developed a 13-item scale (Maximisation Scale, MS) based on Simon’s (1955) concept of maximising and satisficing. The scale comprised three dimensions: alternative search, which is an individual’s willingness to spend time searching for more potential choices; decision difficulty, which is how easy it is for an individual to make up his/her mind during the decision process; and the high standards of their decisions. They use these three characteristics to evaluate an individual’s maximising tendency. The scale tests individuals’ attitude when facing several daily choices, such as choosing a gift for a friend (hard to decide which product is the best one to buy) or finding the best radio station to listen to in the car, in order to distinguish the characteristics of maximising and satisficing.

In 2008, Nenkov and his colleagues considered the original 13-item MS to be too long. As a result, Nenkov et al. (2008) tested three-item, six-item and nine-item versions of MS based on Schwartz et al.’s (2002) 13-item MS and concluded that the six-item scale has the best explanatory power to evaluate maximising and satisficing characteristics. Therefore, they proposed that researchers should adopt the six-item version as a maximising and satisficing measurement in future research. This reduced scale has been most widely adopted in a variety of maximising and satisficing research (e.g., Turner et al., 2012).

In the same year, Diab et al. (2008) tested the 13-item MS with a 210-student sample, and found the component ‘high standard’ was negatively correlated with the other two components (alternative search and decision difficulty). Therefore, they proposed an alternative scale (named Maximising Tendency Scale, MTS) that contained nine items (three items are selected from the 13-item MS), which also covered the three maximising characteristic
components. However, the drawback of MTS is that the designs of some items lack explanations, which makes the scale ambiguous. For instance, one of the items is ‘I am a maximiser’. The participants may not know what the term ‘maximiser’ means, which makes it difficult to answer the question. The overlapping design, such as ‘I never settle for second best’ and ‘I never settle’, is another problem. Furthermore, this alternative scale has not been tested in many studies; most of the existing research still adopts the MS or the short MS. On the other hand, Oishi et al. (2014) surveyed local residents’ satisfaction and happiness with life in Japan and in the US. They used both MS and MTS to evaluate the Japanese and the US participants’ maximising tendency. The results were consistent when the maximising tendency was assessed by the MS, but inconsistent when using the MTS. This indicates that the results that are evaluated by the MTS can possibly be moderated by nationality or cultural factors, but those that are evaluated by the MS scale can’t be. Considering maximising and satisficing is developed as a universal classification of decision-making style, the MTS may be relatively unstable.

Lai (2010) adopted some items from the MS and the MTS, and proposed an eight-item modified maximising scale. This version of the scale did not include the component ‘decision difficulty’. Lai (2010) found that the designed maximising characteristic items were not loaded in the decision difficulty component ideally. Only two (extensive alternative search and high standards) of the three dimensions of maximising were outlined and extracted from the author’s designed question pool. The EFA resulted in none of the items on the scale reflecting the difficulty dimension of decision-making. Nor did results from EFA indicate a unique dimension that reflected decision difficulty in the final extracted factors. Lai (2010) claims that the quality of this alternative scale is as good as the original 13-item MS. However, firstly, this study was conducted with a fairly large sample (3,757 participants living in Norway); therefore, it might increase the likelihood of a Type I error when referring to the significance of correlation coefficients. Secondly, this is a relatively new measure (Google Scholar, cited by 14 articles). To establish a stable measurement, this scale should ideally be examined by different studies with different datasets (DeVellis, 1991).
Turner et al. (2012) also proposed an alternative 34-item scale, named the Maximisation Inventory (MI). The item design of the three components was based on the 13-item MS. The authors claimed that this alternative MI scale was statistically stable, and the model-fit of Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) was satisfying. However, as with Lai’s (2010) modified maximising scale, this measure is relatively new, and has been adopted only in a limited number of studies (Google Scholar, cited by 13 articles). Moreover, a 34-item scale is fairly long and easily increases respondents’ fatigue when answering the questions (Heiman, 2001).

Therefore, considering the above-mentioned issues, the present research adopts the six-item MS (Nenkov et al., 2008) (see Appendix B, on page 262) to measure an individual’s maximising tendency.

The adoption of dichotomisation (median split for classifying maximisers and satisficers)

An issue that is worth mentioning is the adoption of dichotomisation. Dichotomising a predictor at a change point (e.g., median) is frequently used in data analysis, especially in psychology and individual differences research (Dawson and Weiss, 2012). On average, splitting a predictor variable at its median is equivalent in correlation and regression to replacing all the values with the mean value for either the low group or the high group (Weinberg and Abramowitz, 2008). Therefore, dichotomisation is also considered appropriate by some for factorial design experiments (e.g., Jetten, Postmes and McAuliffe, 2002).

The main concerns for dichotomisation include that dichotomisation of continuous variables may result in loss of information of the variable, and reduced effect size and power in the case of bivariate relationships. These may affect the results of statistical analyses involving those variables (McCallum, Zhang, Preacher and Rucker, 2002), and create spurious effects (DeCoster, Gallucci and Iselin, 2011). However, McCallum et al. (2002) allow the use of dichotomisation when there is substantial theoretical and empirical support for the existence of the classification (‘clear support for the existence of two types’
but ‘the existence of types must be supported … and must not be assumed’, p. 38). McCallum et al. (2002) also indicate that for a single independent variable, statistical tests will tend to be more conservative after dichotomisation.

The present study adopts a median split to classify maximisers and satisficers for several reasons. Firstly, there is substantial theoretical and empirical support for the existence of this individual difference in decision-making. In particular, we must consider that the Schwartz et al. (2002) definition of maximiser and satisficer is based on a dichotomisation concept, and this is the way it is utilised in the existing literature (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2002; Iyengar et al., 2006; Misuraca and Teuscher, 2013). Furthermore, in line with the existing studies, the present study applies dichotomisation to just one variable, maximising tendency, so a more conservative test is hoped for.

A series of cluster analyses were conducted on the MS items to assess support in the data for the dichotomisation. Chi-square analyses of both a hierarchical and k-means two-cluster solution show these closely reproduced the median split groups. For instance, just 8 and 2 cases misclassified respectively in the Study 3 dataset (see Appendix J, on page 284). A two-step cluster analysis (that automatically selects the number of clusters) also produced two clusters; these perfectly reproduced the median split result.

Therefore, on these grounds, although there is some criticism of the dichotomisation of quantitative variables, it is trusted that adopting the original scale and following the steps of the existing studies is acceptable in the present study.

3.7.2 Jobseekers’ perceived OA

As reviewed in Chapter 2 (on page 34), Highhouse et al. (2003) propose three dimensions (company attractiveness, intentions toward the company, and company prestige) that represent a jobseeker’s intention to apply for a job position and willingness to join the organisation. The studies reported in this thesis adopt the Highhouse et al. (2003) OA scale (15 items, see Appendix C, on page 263) to evaluate jobseeker willingness to apply for the job vacancy, and
willingness to join the organisation. This scale has been adopted widely in pre-hire recruitment studies (e.g., Van Hoye and Lievens, 2009), which endorses the validity of the measure (Google Scholar, cited by 240 articles).

These two variables are key variables throughout this research. Other scales that are used in the pre-study will be introduced in Chapters 4, 5 and 6.

3.8 Summary

This chapter presented the philosophical stance and paradigm of this research, and introduced the methods that are applied to answer the research questions. The present research adopts the post-positivism paradigm. The qualitative method is used for exploratory purposes, which provides an overview of the targeted sector. The results of the early qualitative study also inform the design of the experimental scenarios. A series of quantitative methods, including survey and scenario-based experiments, are then designed and conducted. In Chapter 4, Chapter 5 and Chapter 6, details of the experimental scenario/questionnaire design of the study, the establishing and testing of the hypotheses, and the research findings will be presented.
CHAPTER 4 GROUNDWORK STUDIES

4.1 Chapter overview

An examination of the literature revealed research gaps and fundamental questions (see Chapter 1, on page 12, Chapter 2, on page 58). Firstly, the inconsistent results of the existing studies (e.g., some studies claim that informal sources are better at attracting jobseekers than formal ones, while some research proposes the opposite; see Chapter 2, on page 44) strongly suggested that researchers should consider information receivers’ views and the effects of individual differences in decision-making. This leads to questions concerning which sources are frequently used and adopted by jobseekers who have different decision-making habits and styles. Furthermore, how could differences in decision-making style lead to differences in source evaluation between jobseekers; what job information content are they looking for; and how might the recruitment information sources satisfy the job-information needs of different styles of jobseekers?

To proceed with this research, some fundamental questions also need to be answered. Due to the lack of recruitment research investigating the differences in information receivers’ views, the first question is to establish whether individuals with different decision-making styles do indeed have different preferences for the amount of information needed, or differences in perceiving job information (stimulus) and sources (communicator). This investigation is also helpful in providing clues about the potential of taking individuals’ decision-making styles (receivers’ differences/profiles) as a moderator in recruitment studies.

Secondly, recruiting and attracting the right people is another perspective that needs to be considered. As highlighted in the introduction (on page 16), logically speaking, maximisers, who are more careful and collect more information, should perform better than satisficers in decision-making activities because of these characteristics. It would also be assumed that they would be more content with their choices. Hence, attracting and recruiting maximisers could have beneficial effects on staff retention and even performance.
Nevertheless, as reviewed in Chapter 2 (see 2.5.2, on page 61), there is research that indicates that this may not be the case and that there could be shortcomings in employing maximisers. For example, recent research shows that maximisers display higher post-purchase regret than satisficers and feel unhappy and dissatisfied with their choices (Lai, 2011; Polman, 2012). As a consequence, maximisers favour retaining the possibility to revise their choices and continue to look for the ‘perfect’ option (Sparks et al., 2012). Unhappy employees are unlikely to perform well, and a rapid turnover of staff increases recruiting and training costs (Breaugh, 2008).

While much of the existing research reveals that maximisers are a group who can be difficult to satisfy, and are more likely to be unhappy and regret their choices, this poses the question: should recruitment managers adopt the strategy to widen the pool by attracting both maximisers and satisficers, or should maximiser-style jobseekers be avoided when retail companies need to recruit new employees? Furthermore, do satisficers have higher levels of job satisfaction, or a higher level of loyalty to the company, than maximisers?

Unfortunately, characteristics of maximisers and satisficers within specific domains in the retail trade, such as whether maximisers can or cannot make satisfying job choices compared to satisficers, remain underexplored areas in recruitment and decision-making research. These guide the direction of this research to investigate whether maximiser and satisficer decision-making styles affect jobseekers who want to work in the retail trade and whether they have different attitudes towards their applying decisions and their experience of the retail-trade job. This will help employers to establish their recruitment strategy – whether to attract both maximisers and satisficers, or focus on attracting just one type of decision-maker.

Study 1 and Study 2 are employed to explore the above-mentioned issues, which formed the first and the second research objective of this research (see Chapter 1, on page 19). Study 1 is an initial exploratory investigation (semi-structured questionnaire) to give an overview of maximiser- and satisficer-style jobseekers’ experience and better understand the use of recruitment information by people with these two styles when looking for vacancies in the retail trade.
Study 2 investigates whether decision-making styles affect retail-trade jobseekers’ attitudes towards their job-application decisions and their experiences of (e.g., satisfaction with) their current job. A follow-up question to Study 2 is whether maximisers and satisficers have different recruitment information source preferences when they research a job vacancy in the retail trade. The results will also provide statistical support for the qualitative (text-based data) findings in Study 1.

4.2 Study 1: An overview of jobseekers’ attitudes towards recruitment information sources, content and the influence of their decision-making style

4.2.1 The semi-structured questionnaire design

Nine open-ended questions were divided into three sections (see Appendix A, on page 261). The participants were informed that there is no right or wrong answer, but they were instructed to answer the questions based on their previous retail-trade jobseeking experience. In the first section, two questions were employed to explore jobseekers’ general attitude towards a job in the retail trade and the recruitment information sources that they used. The first question (Q1) was designed to find the most important job attribute for jobseekers in the retail trade; companies should emphasise on these attributes to attract more potential candidates. (Q2) results revealed the sources most popular with jobseekers in this sector.

The second section concerned jobseekers’ opinions about the recruitment sources: formal sources, such as advertisements, and informal, word-of-mouth (WOM)-based sources, such as SWOM and online WOM. The first question (Q3) was employed to explore participants’ opinions of information from formal, company-controlled (FCC) sources. (Q4) was about respondents’ experience of and views about adopting SWOM (see 2.4.1.2 Informal sources and WOM messages as an informal, non-company-controlled information source. The third question (Q5) evaluated participants’ attitudes towards WOM information from unfamiliar information providers (e.g., an unknown Internet user). A
follow-up question (Q6) was designed to find which (offline/online) WOM sources respondents would prefer to adopt when they need to get job information/advice and what their reasons for this are. In the last question of this section (Q7), the results illustrated participants’ consideration of recruitment information source credibility.

The third section concerned jobseekers’ job-information search preferences and considerations. The participants were instructed to recall whether, after they had received a piece of vacancy information from any formal, company-controlled source such as a newspaper advertisement, they still tried to get further information about the vacancy from other source(s) before they made the decision to apply for the vacancy. The results of (Q8) listed the sources that participants used to obtain the further details. The last question (Q9) investigated what (key) information is missing from the first source (e.g., get job information via staff referral) that participants use to receive job information will absolutely keep them from doing further information searching (from other sources).

4.2.2 Conduct of the study

Sample

Fifty participants were recruited and invited to join the survey via AMT. The system recorded that on average, participants spent 33 minutes and 9 seconds on filling out the questionnaire (the longest time was 44 minutes 21 seconds, and the shortest was 29 minutes 49 seconds). As an incentive, each participant was offered $12 on completion of the survey via AMT.

Table 4.1 presents the demographic composition of this first sample (n = 50). There is a roughly even gender split, with respondents generally having a good range of experience. Only one participant reported having less than one year of work experience in the retail trade, and circa 20% of the participants had over five years’ experience. Over 65% of the respondents were employed full-time in the retailing industry when joining the survey; 80% of the participants had a monthly wage of less than $3,000. 10% had a postgraduate degree, indicating that working in the retail trade does not require a high education
qualification. In total, 1,892 lines (18,066 words) of comments were generated. Details of participants’ background information are displayed in Table 4.2.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Maximiser/satisficer (Split point = 4.23)</th>
<th>Maximiser</th>
<th>Satisficer</th>
<th>Work experience in the retail trade</th>
<th>Less than 1 year</th>
<th>1–2 years</th>
<th>2–3 years</th>
<th>3–4 years</th>
<th>4–5 years</th>
<th>Over 5 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Work experience in the retail trade</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Split point = 4.23)</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Split point = 4.23)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Work experience in the retail trade</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Split point = 4.23)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Work experience in the retail trade</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Split point = 4.23)</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Work experience in the retail trade</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Split point = 4.23)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Work experience in the retail trade</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Split point = 4.23)</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Work experience in the retail trade</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The six-item MS (see Chapter 3, on page 91) provided the evaluation for the individual participants’ decision-making style; 24 (48%) were categorised as maximisers by using a median split (Mdn = 4.23), which was close to that in previous research (e.g., 4.20 in Schwartz et al.’s (2002) dataset; 4.15 in Love’s (2009) dataset).

Data analysis

For the present study, the conventional content analysis approach was adopted (see Chapter 3, on page 84). Following Hsieh and Shannon’s (2005) proposed steps, the researcher first read through all the answers to the questions, then marked the key words of each sentence, counted the frequency of each word and interpreted the respondents’ expressions. The frequencies of key words and summaries of key information are provided in the following paragraphs.
Table 4.2: Participants’ background information
ID

Sex

Age

Education

Nationality

Experience
in
retailing industry

Working status

Income

Decisionmaking style

Current job title (if employed); last
job title (if unemployed)

01
02
03

F
M
F

36
21
45

College/University
College/University
Postgraduate

American
American
American

3–4 years
1–2 years
Over 5 years

Unemployed, looking for a job
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time

$3,001–$5,000
$1,001–$3,000
$3,001–$5,000

Satisficer
Maximiser
Satisficer

Manager
Sales Associate
Manager

04

F

25

College/University

American

4–5 years

Unemployed, looking for a job

$1,001–$3,000

Maximiser

Overnight Support Manager

05
06
07
08
09
10

M
M
F
M
M
M

24
25
23
31
28
44

High School
College/University
College/University
High School
College/University
College/University

American
American
American
American
American
American

3–4 years
4–5 years
3–4 years
3–4 years
3–4 years
2–3 years

Employed, part-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time

Under $1,000
$1,001–$3,000
$3,001–$5,000
$1,001–$3,000
$3,001–$5,000
$3,001–$5,000

Maximiser
Satisficer
Maximiser
Maximiser
Satisficer
Maximiser

Entry Level
Customer Service Rep
Insurance Underwriter
Sales
Manager
Manager

11

M

46

College/University

American

4–5 years

Employed, full-time

$1,001–$3,000

Maximiser

Cashier

12

M

33

College/University

American

2–3 years

Employed, full-time

$1,001–$3,000

Satisficer

Clerk/cashier

13

M

26

High School

Caucasian

2–3 years

Employed, part-time

Under $1,000

Maximiser

Associate

14

M

27

High School

American

4–5 years

Employed, part-time

$1,001–$3,000

Satisficer

Customer service representative

15

F

45

High School

American

4–5 years

Employed, full-time

Under $1,000

Satisficer

Employed, full-time

16

F

51

Postgraduate

American

Over 5 years

Employed, part-time

$1,001–$3,000

Maximiser

Sales Associate

17
18

F
M

36
31

High School
High School

2–3 years
4–5 years

Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time

$1,001–$3,000
$3,001–$5,000

Satisficer
Maximiser

Clerk
In home installer

19

M

45

College/University

Over 5 years

Employed, full-time

$3,001–$5,000

Satisficer

Assistant Manager

Clothing store, furniture store, home improvement store.

20
21
22

F
F
F

44
45
32

High School
College/University
College/University

American
American
HispanicAmerican
American
American
American

I was the manager of a sally beauty supply.
Salesman at an electronic store.
Abercrombie & Fitch.
I worked at Wal-Mart for 4 years and was promoted a bunch of times and did a lot of different jobs. Customer
service desk at Wal-Mart, Cashier at Wal-Mart, Customer Service Manager at Wal-Mart, Overnight Manager at
Wal-Mart. I also was a buyer’s assistant/shop girl at a high-end brand boutique in NYC for a year. Very different
retail experience, but still retail.
Stocker at Grocery Store. Cashier at Target.
CSR at a major department store in the mall.
Ice Cream Shop & Wal-Mart.
A variety, from stockroom to sales to cashier.
Clerk of clothing, cell phone companies and shoe companies.
Sales and manager of three computer shops.
Cashier at a supermarket, Manager of a supermarket, Cashier at a gas station, Cashier at Costco (big box retailer),
Shift Supervisor at a clothing store.
Clothing, music, cashier, stock.
I have been a cashier in a large retail chain store (Wal-Mart). I have also been an associate working in the shoe
section, lawn and garden area and soft-lines area (clothing).
Cashier, stockman, sales assistant and customer service representative.
I have been a clerk at a clothing shop, a shop that sold music and a convenience type shop that sold food and
beverages.
I have worked as a sales clerk in fine jewellery and books. At the bookstore, I also trained new employees and did
displays and inventory restocking. I also owned a small sporting goods store for 5 years.
Clerk, stocking, displays.
Associate of an electronics retailer, technician of an electronics retailer, in home installer of an electronics retailer.

4–5 years
1–2 years
Over 5 years

Employed, full-time
Employed, part-time
Employed, full-time

Under $1,000
$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000

Satisficer
Satisficer
Maximiser

Clerk/Cashier
Customer Service Rep
Shift Manager

23

M

31

College/University

American

4–5 years

Employed, full-time

Under $1,000

Maximiser

Sales Clerk

24
25
26
27
28
29
30
31
32
33
34
35

F
M
F
M
F
F
F
F
F
M
F
F

20
53
51
24
21
46
27
33
25
40
55
26

College/University
High School
College/University
High School
College/University
High School
College/University
College/University
College/University
Postgraduate
College/University
College/University

1–2 years
1–2 years
Over 5 years
1–2 years
Less than 1 year
Over 5 years
2–3 years
1–2 years
4–5 years
Over 5 years
Over 5 years
1–2 years

Employed, full-time
Employed, full time
Unemployed, looking for a job
Employed, part-time
Unemployed, looking for a job
Employed, full-time
Unemployed, looking for a job
Unemployed, looking for a job
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, part-time
Employed, part-time

$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000
Under $1,000
$1,001–$3,000
Under $1,000
Under $1,000
$3,001–$5,000
$1,001–$3,000
Under $1,000
$1,001–$3,000

Maximiser
Satisficer
Maximiser
Satisficer
Satisficer
Satisficer
Satisficer
Maximiser
Satisficer
Satisficer
Maximiser
Maximiser

Research scientist
I am now an independent contractor
Sales Associate
Consulting
Associate
CSR (customer service rep)
Sales associate
Customer service
Insurance Underwriter
I’m self-employed now
Cashier
Clerical

36

F

42

College/University

Over 5 years

Employed, full-time

$1,001–$3,000

Maximiser

Asst. manager

Cashier, stock room, clerk in clothing, clerk in home goods.

37
38
39
40
41
42
43
44
45

M
F
M
M
M
F
F
M
M

46
52
33
45
19
27
27
20
21

College/University
Postgraduate
College/University
College/University
College/University
High School
College/University
College/University
College/University

Over 5 years
2–3 years
1–2 years
4–5 years
2–3 years
3–4 years
3–4 years
1–2 years
3–4 years

Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, part-time
Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time

$5,001–$7,000
$5,001–$7,000
$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000
Under $1,000
$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000

Satisficer
Satisficer
Satisficer
Satisficer
Maximiser
Maximiser
Maximiser
Maximiser
Satisficer

Salesman
Clerk
Manager
Associate
Sales associate
Sales associate
Bank teller
Clerk
Sales associate.

Used to be a cashier. Now I sell high-end cars.
Clerk in Department Store / Clerk in a Dry Cleaning Store.
Night stock, retail for Meijer, I also managed (p-t) a U-Haul store and worked there for a little over a year.
Sales clerk at household goods and clothing store.
Clerk of a clothing store / sales associate of a video game store / Clerk of a food store.
Sales associate/clerk at clothing/accessories/grocery stores.
Clerk at a Walgreens drug store / clerk at a Dress Barn clothing store at the mall.
Clerk at a couple mall outlet-clothing stores.
I have worked as a sales associate of an electronics store.

46

M

34

College/University

1–2 years

Employed, full-time

$1,001–$3,000

Maximiser

I was an entry-level associate

In the retail industry, I worked as a Sales Associate in the Electronics Department of a major retail chain.

47
48

F
F

49
30

College/University
Postgraduate

4–5 years
3–4 years

Employed, full-time
Employed, full-time

$1,001–$3,000
$1,001–$3,000

Satisficer
Satisficer

Customer service
Manager

49

F

31

College/University

3–4 years

Employed, part-time

$1,001–$3,000

Satisficer

Makeup Artist/Sales Associate

50

F

35

High School

American
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
ArabAmerican
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
American
AsianAmerican
American
American
EuropeanAmerican
American

Clerk at record store called Record town.
I have worked as a clerk, stock person, customer service and lawn and garden worker.
Clerk, Cashier, Stock, Manager.
Customer Service Rep at a Blockbuster Video, Assistant Store Manager at a Dollar Store, Sales Clerk at a Paper
Warehouse.
I was a sales associate at Hollister clothing co. between the ages of 17-19.
Sales person and clerk.
Sales associate in a department store. Sales associate in a jewellery store.
Cashier etc.
Associate at a Video Game Store.
Cashier and customer service at a department store.
Sales associate at beauty store.
Clerk of small mall store, also I had an overnight stocking job at a bigger store.
Clerk of ice cream store, clerk of pizza shop.
I’ve been a clerk, a sales associate, an assistant manager and a store manager.
Cashier, bookkeeping, sales clerk.
Clerk at a clothing store, clerk at the front desk of a hair salon.

3–4 years

Employed, full-time

$1,001–$3,000

Maximiser

Sales associate

Shoe store, clothing store, book store.
Clerk home goods store, stock high end retail store, cashier natural foods store.
Sales Associate at a Clothing store, Makeup Artist/Sales Associate at a Makeup Store/Counter, Sales
Associate/Customer Service at a Bath and Body Product Store.
I work as a sales associate for Wal-Mart.

Descriptions of (previous) retail trade work experience

101


4.2.3 Findings

4.2.3.1 Important job attributes in the retail trade (Q1)

The results of the first question showed that in total, ten main job attributes reported by the participants could be classified (see Figure 4.1). The results revealed the essential attributes that jobseekers care about when searching for a retail-trade job: working hours (50%), pay/salary (50%), location (40%), job requirements (36%), extra benefits (26%), holiday/paid leave (16%), management treatment (18%), working environment/atmosphere (14%), company reputation (10%) and possibility to advance in the store (6%). For this question, no obvious difference was observed between maximisers and satisficers; in other words, these job attributes could be applied to most of the jobseekers in the retail trade.

Figure 4.1: (Study1, Q1) Please list the job attributes that are important to you when considering a job in the retailing industry

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attribute</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Working hours, flexible schedule</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pay</td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location</td>
<td>40%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job detail, type of products sold, and job requirements</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Extra benefits</td>
<td>26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer management and treatment</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working environment/atmosphere, and what possible customers to deal with</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holiday, paid leave</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company reputation</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Possibility to advance in the store</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

4.2.3.2 Most preferable information sources to use for getting retail-trade job information (Q2)

The results of the second question showed that nine main information sources could be categorised as the most preferable sources in the retail trade (see Figure 4.2). Newspaper advertisements (42%), a formal, company-controlled (FCC) source, were one of the most highly adopted sources in this sector. Mall bills, board advertisements and in-store signs (10%) were other forms of advertisements that were mentioned by participants. Furthermore, many
Jobseekers search for retail-trade job information on the company’s official website (12%) and the company’s official social media sites, such as a Facebook fan page (6%); these two are also fully company-controlled sources. This reveals that even though some of the existing studies (e.g., Breaugh et al., 2003) claim that informal sources are more effective than formal ones, the traditional formal recruiting channel (e.g., an advertisement) was seen here in the context of retail job information as a very common and helpful way to deliver job-vacancy information, since over half of the participants preferred to access job information via traditional advertisements.

Offline WOM communications (family, friends and personal network) had a very high proportion of use; nearly 40% of the jobseekers actively consulted their friends/family who had experience in the sector for advice. Online WOM-based sources, such as LinkedIn (16%), unknown Internet users and online blogs (8%), and other online job discussion forums (8%), were also sourced, though compared to offline WOM-based sources, these had a relatively low proportion of use.

Other traditional methods of finding job information were still relatively well used: 14% of the participants preferred to use job centres, career centres and agencies to find job information. Growing in popularity for many participants were online job-searching websites, including Glassdoor.com (2%), Craigslist.com (28%), Monster.com (12%), Careerlink.com (2%), Careerbuilder.com (6%) and Indeed.com (10%). Respondents reported that these are useful to search, especially due to their ability to filter appropriate job vacancies, which suggests that there is an advantage for many organisations in publishing their advertisements on a job-searching website.

However, fewer participants mentioned online social media websites, such as personal Facebook/Twitter (4%) as their preferred sources.

Approximately 10% of the participants indicated that they had accepted an invitation to join the company from a current employee. This suggested that only a limited number of jobseekers would be recruited via an employee referral scheme; the percentage was lower than the company-controlled advertisements and the personal network.
The listed information sources were used and adopted by both maximisers and satisficers, showing that these were the major sources that jobseekers will use to find a retail-trade job. However, it can be roughly seen that maximisers have used or referred to more sources (81 sources in total; 81/24 (maximisers) = 3.38 sources for each maximiser on average) than satisficers (55 sources in total; 55/26 (satisficers) = 2.12 sources for each satisficer on average).

**Figure 4.2: (Study 1, Q2) Please list what information source(s) you prefer to use and have used to find job-related information – e.g., social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook, newspaper advertisements, job centres, job information from friends/family, etc. Please be specific.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information Source</th>
<th>Number of Sources</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Direct (employer) referral</td>
<td>2% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online discussions forums</td>
<td>2% 4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LinkedIn</td>
<td>16% 8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family/friends/personal network</td>
<td>38% 7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job center, career center, agency</td>
<td>14% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Facebook/Twitter, social media</td>
<td>14% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employer's Twitter/Facebook</td>
<td>14% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online blogs, unknown Internet users (e.g., Yahoo Answer)</td>
<td>14% 2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General Internet search</td>
<td>10% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company's official social networking account (Facebook, Twitter)</td>
<td>10% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company's official website</td>
<td>12% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other job searching sites, government employee websites and online advertisements</td>
<td>22% 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indeed.com</td>
<td>10% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careerbuilder.com</td>
<td>10% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Careerlink.com</td>
<td>10% 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monster.com</td>
<td>10% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigslist.com</td>
<td>10% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassdoor.com</td>
<td>10% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-in inquiries</td>
<td>10% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Local newspaper advertisements</td>
<td>10% 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mall bill, board advertisements, in-store signs</td>
<td>10% 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walk-in inquiries (after seeing the advertisements outside the store)</td>
<td>10% 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Glassdoor.com</td>
<td>10% 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigslist.com</td>
<td>10% 6</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10% 6</td>
</tr>
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<tr>
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<td>10% 6</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Craigslist.com</td>
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<tr>
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</tr>
<tr>
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<td>10% 6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Craigslist.com</td>
<td>10% 6</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.2.3.3 Attitude towards formal sources (Q3)

In the third question, a clear majority (72%) of the participants reported a positive attitude towards formal sources, such as newspaper advertisements and the company’s official website (see Figure 4.3). These participants indicated that the sources were helpful to them while searching for a retail job. The participants reported that they had no specific concerns about the formal sources and were willing to use such sources to receive job-related information.

‘When looking for the retailing job, I visited the official company website and researched that they were in fact hiring before applying for the job. On the website, they would list the current job openings and the qualifications necessary ... also listed the location where I would be working if offered the job and what would be expected of me in terms of job duties. I basically found all the necessary information I needed in order to make an informed decision as to whether or not I wanted the job and what I needed to do to apply for the job. The official company website was the main place I visited and also the place I first started the whole job-finding process.’ – 46 (male, maximiser).

‘They [some stores] had billboards all over town at bus stops and on the highway, as well as newspaper ads, and that led me to their website where they had specific information about what positions they were hiring for.’ – 40 (male, satisficer).

‘I noticed signs in the stores’ windows and listings on the stores’ websites and local classifieds as well as the employment department site. I pay attention to whether the hours (full or part time) are listed in the help wanted signs/ads, as well as whether or not the store is hiring for seasonal employees.’ – 43 (female, maximiser).

28% of the participants had concerns about trusting the information listed in the advertisements, as they only show positive messages and not the negative side of working for the company:

‘Ads only do what they can to display the best aspects of what they are advertising for. They are not to be completely trusted. ... I have some concern referring to them.’ – 24 (female, maximiser).

Some participants worried that job vacancies posted in formal sources may decrease their chances of getting a job offer because the vacancies may attract too many candidates.
'I am concerned about limited positions due to numerous other candidates applying for the job.' – 20 (female, satisficer).

'I think they cause lots of people to go for them, so I prefer to stick to more lucrative ways.' – 45 (male, satisficer).

A few mentioned that these advertisements did not show whether the vacancy has been filled or not; some companies may post ads, but actually these ads are used for collecting applications and potential candidates’ personal information.

'I do wonder sometimes if certain companies post ads saying that they are hiring when all they are really doing is collecting résumés and applications.' – 11 (male, maximiser).

Several participants emphasised that they would not use services from a third party, such as recruiters and agencies, as these services may cost fees and the participants said they do not tend to get a job via these recruiters/agencies.

'I don’t like recruiters. It’s best to eliminate the third party. I’ve never gotten a job through a recruiter.' – 03 (female, satisficer).

'I am concerned about the fees associated with many recruitment companies. Sometimes the employer does not pay the fees and the person looking for a job ends up paying a high price when they get the job.' – 08 (male, maximiser).

'I find some ads and recruiters to involve paying fees, and I don’t think it’s necessary to get a job by using these services.' – 34 (female, maximiser).

'I don’t like agencies. Usually these job-related advertisements do not do much good and are usually only out there to make money.' – 06 (male, satisficer).

Slightly more maximisers than satisficers (19/24 [79%] vs. 17/26 [65%]) considered formal sources to be useful and were willing to approach these sources to obtain job information \( \chi^2(1, \ N = 50) = 1.53, \ p < .1 \). Marginally more satisficers (9/26 [35%] vs. 5/24 [21%]) showed their concerns about these formal sources \( \chi^2(1, \ N = 50) = 1.18, \ p < .1 \). The results revealed that maximisers might be more open to formal information sources, such as advertisements, than satisficers and have fewer limits in trying to get information from these channels (see Figure 4.5).
Like these formal sources and are willing to use (36, 72%):
02, 04, 05, 07, 10, 13, 16, 18, 22, 23, 26, 31, 35, 36, 41, 42, 43, 46, 50,
09, 12, 14, 15, 17, 21, 25, 27, 28, 29, 30, 33, 37, 39, 40, 48, 49

Having concerns about these formal sources (14, 28%):
08, 11, 24, 34, 44,
01, 03, 06, 19, 20, 32, 38, 45, 47

*Note: maximisers are marked in **Bold**; satisficers are marked in *Italic*.

### 4.2.3.4 Use of SWOM and employee referral (Q4)

The fourth question asked about the participants’ attitude towards WOM-based informal sources, especially SWOM. A majority (62%) of the participants had experience contacting a current employee or a previous employee of the company that they wanted to work/had considered working for (see Figure 4.4). These participants thought they accepted the current or past employees’ advice mainly because they trusted the information provider. Moreover, these participants indicated that WOM messages contained information, such as the internal environment and descriptions of what the work would actually be like, that was helpful to them in making a decision about whether or not to apply.

‘That’s how I found my last job in the retail industry, from a friend. Based on the information from my friend, I applied for and was hired for the same company that she worked for. I trusted what she told me about the company ... Since my friend was also a cashier, she told me about the training program, how things were run in general, and she told me who to talk to when I went to apply, so I could address this person by name. She told me the hourly wage as well and general policies of the company.’ – **11 (male, maximiser).**

‘She [my friend] told me her starting salary and hours and also let me know that the managers were good people to work for, which is important information to have before applying.’ – **30 (female, satisficer).**

‘I have had friends that were former employees that recommended the job to me. They gave me first-hand knowledge of what it is like to work there. The advice was very helpful.’ – **42 (female, maximiser).**

‘In one case, the person told me about the work environment, the hiring process and her connection with the manager in charge of hiring.’ – **44 (male, maximiser).**
36% of the participants reported that they did not try to obtain any SWOM and did not have any personal contacts who had work experience in the retail trade either. Some participants mentioned that working with someone they knew would be a problem, and they tried to avoid working for the same company/organisation as their friends or family.

’I’ve never worked among relatives or friends referrals. I’ve always sought my own employment. Mixing employment with friends and family is like sharing money – it doesn’t work.’ – 03 (female, satisficer).

16% of the participants had been invited to join the organisation by their friends or family.

’That did occur once for me [employee referral]. I accepted the information because they made the company sound great and inviting. They gave me virtually every detail.’ – 19 (male, satisficer).

’I accepted her [my friend’s] referral because I believed it increased my chances of getting hired and also provided her with a bit of extra cash through a company incentive. She told me exactly which location to apply to, explained the online application procedure, the company’s policies regarding pay and scheduling, and also gave tips about which department I might be happiest working at and which to avoid.’ – 40 (male, satisficer).

Most of the participants (84%) had not been invited to join the organisation via an employee referral.

’I do not have any friends or family at the organisation I work at. Had no connections at all. Just went in there and got the job based on my record.’ – 37 (male, satisficer).

In this question, both maximisers and satisficers showed a positive attitude towards the SWOM information and thought the SWOM messages were useful. However, slightly more satisficers had never tried to get SWOM (11/26 [42%] vs. 7/24 [29%]) [χ²(1, N = 50) = 1.26, p < .1], showing that more maximisers than satisficers were likely to be searching for WOM information from both formal (question 3) and informal sources. Moreover, only approximately 16% of the participants had been invited via an employee referral, supporting Finneran and Kelly’s (2003) proposition that companies relying too much on employee referrals might miss out on talented potential candidates.
Figure 4.4: (Study1, Q4) In your previous experience, have you consulted any friends/family who are current/past employees to get details of the company/position? What do you think of these sources?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Have SWOM experience and consider the information useful (32, 64%)</th>
<th>Have SWOM experience and consider the information useful (32, 64%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>07, 08, 10, 11, 13, 16, 18, 22, 23, 24, 31, 34, 35, 42, 44, 46, 50, 09, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 25, 27, 29, 30, 38, 39, 40, 47, 48</td>
<td>Never tried to get SWOM (18, 36%): 02, 04, 05, 26, 36, 41, 43, 01, 03, 06, 20, 21, 28, 32, 33, 37, 45, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never tried to get SWOM (18, 36%): 02, 04, 05, 26, 36, 41, 43, 01, 03, 06, 20, 21, 28, 32, 33, 37, 45, 49</td>
<td>Have employee referral experience (9, 16%): 18, 22, 23, 09, 14, 19, 25, 40, 47</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Do not have employee referral experience (41, 84%)

*Note: maximisers are marked in **Bold**; satisficers are marked in *Italic*

4.2.3.5 Use of WOM job information from online (Internet) sources vs. offline (traditional) sources (Q5 & Q6)

**Attitude towards job information from online WOM-based sources**

The results of Q5 showed that most of the participants (68%) reported that they did not adopt advice from online WOM sources; they considered these unfamiliar or unknown Internet users to be less trustworthy, showing the importance of credibility in jobseeker source use/adoption (see Figure 4.5). Some online WOM providers might have a hidden motive, such as receiving a bonus from the company for saying positive things about working for them:

‘I would not consider this because they feel more like scams than actual references or job advertisements.’ – **06 (male, satisficer).**

‘I didn’t use this type of information and I’d say that the two main reasons were the lack of trust that I have in that sort of information as well as the generally poor quality that I perceive this information to have. Word of mouth from a complete stranger online just isn’t very trustworthy in my opinion and I wouldn’t want to waste my time acting on a job posting in an online forum or someplace like that.’ – **11 (male, maximiser).**

‘I don’t really trust word-of-mouth information online by people who I don’t know personally because I feel they may have ulterior motives. They may be directly working for the company, may give misleading information because they have some incentive to do so like a bonus, or may be former employees who hold a grudge. I just don’t think word-of-mouth info is trustworthy unless you directly know the source.’ – **40 (male, satisficer).**

‘I typically don’t trust WOM unless it’s coming directly from a close friend or family who is a current employee. Otherwise I do not trust any kind of WOM from random people online or off.’ – **28 (female, satisficer).**
Furthermore, some participants mentioned that it is easy for people to say something negative or complain about the company online; these extreme cases might not reflect the actual situation of the working environment.

‘I have used online forums many times and you can’t always trust what is being said – the employee or former employee could be lazy and/or disgruntled, so you have to take the information as a whole, seek out some positive info as well. If there is no positive info to be found then that also informs your decision.’ – 36 (female, maximiser).

‘Online is good for general research, reading customer reviews, news articles, company information, etc. … but not for taking first-hand suggestions from strangers online.’ – 12 (male, satisficer).

In Q6, only 26% of participants indicated that they preferred online searches and online information (see Figure 4.6). Convenience was an important factor that encouraged the participants to use online sources. The Internet provides an easy platform for jobseekers to acquire more and wider information, for instance through online job-discussion forums. Jobseekers might not have personal contacts in the retail trade, but the relationships could be easily made via the Internet.

‘I think information is more widely available online. I can also read information about national chains and how employees feel about the company not just locally, but on a national level. My primary preferred sources are blogs, forums and the company website.’ – 16 (female, maximiser).

‘I like to go to the store’s actual forums. I prefer these because they generally have people that actually work in the store. A lot of places get a bad rep in other places based on things that may have happened in a different store in the same company. When going to the forums, you can look at just the store you are applying to and see what they think of their bosses, schedule and just an overall attitude at the store. You can also read about what people from all the stores think of company policies and general things.’ – 13 (male, maximiser).

Those who did use online WOM sources said that the current employees might post something negative or vent their frustrations about their work. They do not dismiss the information out of hand, but weigh the information to see if it is valuable to know what might happen when joining the organisation.

‘I do try and find word-of-mouth postings about working for a company, but when I find it, I do take the information with a grain of salt. People are much more vocal when they are unhappy so that is always something to consider.’ – 30 (female, satisficer).
‘I did consider word of mouth from sites like Twitter, but I took everything I read with some cautiousness, as you can never trust word of mouth completely.’ – 05 (male, maximiser).

An example of this evaluation of information is believing Internet WOM would be more real when the content contains real cases, everyday mundane cases or multiple cases of the same information.

‘I have looked online at retail-focused forums that talked about different employee experiences, most recently Old Navy. I did trust what I read. Many of the experiences seemed similar, as far as being really pushed to meet credit card application goals, and I didn’t think that many people would lie about something like that.’ – 43 (female, maximiser).

‘I used online WOM information that I received through employee forums and Facebook pages. I trust these unfamiliar online people because they are speaking without an agenda. They are just talking about their day, their accomplishments and their frustrations.’ – 18 (male, maximiser).

‘I search the company name and try to find out if anyone has posted anything anywhere about them. Usually I just do a normal Internet search and look at whatever online message boards it brings up. Since it is the Internet you can’t really trust it, but you can get an idea sometimes if multiple people are saying the same thing in multiple places.’ – 31 (female, maximiser).

‘I always look for blogs or forums to find out what employees are saying about the company they work for. As far as reliability, it has to be carefully analysed. If I find many comments from different sources stating that the company is unfair or doesn’t treat their employees right, I will reconsider applying.’ – 16 (female, maximiser).

Some respondents stated that they only used online sources that they thought were trustworthy, such as information on social media websites (the information providers were their friends/family):

‘If it was a friend on Facebook, that would be different, but just a random blog, or other social media from someone I don’t know, no. This is because people have different opinions of what they like and I can trust my friends or people I associate with better than a stranger.’ – 12 (male, satisficer).

‘For one job that I had, I had a friend who made a posting about it on a private online community I post on. She was leaving the job and wanted to give it to someone she knew in some way. I wasn’t working at the time, or looking for work, but I pursued the lead and ended up getting the job. I trusted the girl posting though I did not know her personally. The community is not that large and related to a very specific interest. I would not trust WOM information from a random stranger on Twitter or someone who I had no connection to at all.’ – 04 (female, maximiser).
'I reached word of mouth vacancies through Facebook. Many friends would post randomly about retail openings. I trusted these postings because it was for retail and they would have little incentive to lie.' – 48 (female, satisficer).

Attitude towards job information from offline WOM-based sources

Offline WOM-based sources were utilised by nearly half of the participants (48%) (Q6). These participants indicated that they preferred using offline WOM-based advice, especially from family or close friends.

‘Information from family, friends or personal contacts. I can trust these people to give me an honest answer and not have to second guess their judgment.’ – 10 (male, maximiser).

‘I prefer getting my information offline. I’d much rather talk to someone I know, or at least a real person instead of a stranger online. I would trust a friend or family member to tell me the truth about a job opening much more than I would someone I did not know and had not met. Even just talking to someone in Human Resources for the company that I want to work for would be better than someone online, who I did not know.’ – 11 (male, maximiser).

‘I prefer offline job-related sources, like my friends, because I can ask questions and get answers. Talking to someone offline, it is easier to figure out if they are exaggerating, being sarcastic, or being deceptive.’ – 18 (male, maximiser).

‘I think I very much prefer the traditional way of gathering job information and that is basically offline through my network of friends. I’ve found that networking is immensely helpful when trying to gather job information, as you can talk to the people who are currently working and would know if there are any vacancies available. Also, they would be most helpful in providing me with information as to what employers are looking for and what they want. This is because they themselves have gone through the whole process and know precisely what to expect.’ – 47 (female, satisficer).

Face-to-face communication was considered to be trustworthy, especially in the retail trade.

‘I prefer offline. I like communicating with real people, especially about a retail job.’ – 35 (female, maximiser).

Some participants stated that from a non-Internet contact, they only utilised information that was provided by people with whom they had a strong relationship (e.g., close friends).

‘I only take advice from close friends and family because I trust them.’ – 02 (male, maximiser).
'I like using friends but not acquaintances for job-related information sources offline.' – 09 (male, satisficer).

Around a third (26%) of the participants referred to both online and offline WOM information. They mentioned that online sources were good as a start and to get basic position information at any time; offline sources were good for more reassuring and experience-based information about the job.

'I prefer a combination of both. Online is a good place to start, but one usually has to go offline to fill in the blanks about the job, especially for a small business or local business. Either go in person or call to get all the information after getting a lead online. But, for a chain retailer, you pretty much have to do everything online until they contact you.' – 04 (female, maximiser).

'I like a combination of online and offline, personally. The online sources give me the opportunity to do research anytime I want, unlike offline where it might be restricted to business hours. Then I can follow up offline.' – 39 (male, satisficer).

'When I want to get fast information about a particular job, I search online for it. After I have a general idea of what I want, I ask my friends and family for advice. I feel like they always give good advice and I trust them. Talking to people face to face is more reassuring than talking/looking for information online.' – 43 (female, maximiser).

In Q5, significantly more maximisers (11/24 [46%] vs. 5/26 [19%]) [$\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 4.06, p < .05$] reported a willingness to consider getting WOM via the Internet (see Figure 4.7). More satisficers (21/26 [81%] vs. 13/24 [54%]) [$\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 5.51, p < .01$] reported that they would not adopt online WOM advice. The same result was found for Q6 (see Figure 4.8): more maximisers (9/24 [28%] vs. 4/26 [15%]) [$\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 3.17, p < .05$] are willing to use online WOM sources, and many satisficers (15/26 [58%] vs. 9/24 [38%]) [$\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 2.98, p < .05$] revealed a preference for offline communications (see Figure 4.8). Corresponding with question three (Q3), the results revealed that maximisers were open to different sources of job information, and many satisficers did not prefer to use information from sources that they did not like.

However, overall, retail-trade jobseekers showed a fairly low adoption of WOM from unknown providers online. Most of the participants still preferred the traditional way of getting job-related advice (WOM), or to adopt a combination of both online and offline platforms rather than using only the Internet as the major WOM job-information source.
Figure 4.5: (Study1, Q5) In your experience, have you ever tried to refer to any online (Internet-based) word of mouth about a vacancy before you decide to apply for it? What do you think about online WOM in general?

Would consider adopting online WOM messages (16, 32%):
02, 04, 05, 13, 16, 18, 22, 31, 36, 43, 44, 30, 37, 45, 48, 49

Would NOT adopt online WOM messages (34, 68%):
07, 08, 10, 11, 23, 24, 26, 34, 35, 41, 42, 46, 50,
01, 03, 06, 09, 12, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 25,
27, 28, 29, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 47

*Note: maximisers are marked in **Bold**; satisficers are marked in *Italic*

Figure 4.6: (Study1, Q6) Compared to the offline (non-Internet-based) WOM-based job-related information sources, which (offline/online WOM based) do you personally prefer to approach/adopt when you need to get job information? Why?

Online (13, 26%):
04, 13, 16, 22, 23, 24, 34, 41, 42,
14, 15, 19, 30

Offline (24, 48%):
02, 10, 05, 07, 11, 18, 26, 35, 46,
01, 03, 06, 09, 12, 20, 29, 32, 33, 37, 38, 45, 47,
48, 49

Combine online and offline sources (13, 26%):
08, 31, 36, 43, 44, 50,
17, 21, 25, 27, 28, 39, 40

*Note: maximisers are marked in **Bold**; satisficers are marked in *Italic*

4.2.3.6 The consideration of credibility – formal sources vs. informal sources (Q7)

78% of the participants reported that they evaluated the credibility of information sources differently, indicating that source credibility played an important role when jobseekers were seeking job-related information. 44% of the participants believed that formal sources generally had a higher credibility (see Figure 4.7).

‘Official website of a retailer is more credible. Newspaper is somewhat more credible. Craigslist and Monster and similar websites are much less credible.’ – 04 (female, maximiser).

‘I think the newspaper advertisements are the most credible because these are usually posted from the HR department from each job. They know exactly what they are looking for and who.’ – 06 (male, satisficer).

‘I check the company’s website directly.’ – 49 (female, satisficer).
A substantial minority (30%) of participants considered the informal sources to be more credible and would prefer to consult and get more information from close relationships, such as family or friends, or someone they knew working in store, such as a current employee who can depict the real working situation for the organisation:

‘I would rank family/friends first, then co-workers, then Internet followed by newspaper classifieds, then Internet classifieds, then at the bottom social media. The last two, social media and Internet classifieds (Craigslist), I would say are the least credible out of all of them.’ – 08 (male, maximiser).

‘Yes, the credibility of the information is higher for me if I personally know someone who tells me about a job opening and has information about the job.’ – 11 (male, maximiser).

‘Friends and family and walk-in inquiries are often more credible than online listings. A lot of retail positions around here aren’t even posted online, and if they are, they don’t get taken down after the position is filled.’ – 39 (male, satisficer).

‘I put the most weight on the current employees that I chat with in store – I can make a decision about what kind of worker I’m talking with and can then better understand how to take their opinions and feedback.’ – 36 (female, maximiser).

Approximately 4% of the participants preferred job agencies, as they thought the agencies were not biased and could save time filtering spam while collecting job information.

‘A job center is the most credible, because they are not biased. Friends and family mean well, but they allow emotion to enter into their advice, opinions and suggestions. Newspaper ads are okay, but they usually have just a snippet of the information that is needed.’ – 29 (female, satisficer).

‘You have to sort through the sites to find legit job offers because a lot of them are spam and trying to collect information. A lot of time can be wasted. If you find a job that you like through a site, call the company first to see if it’s legit and they do actually have an opening. All sites are about the same when it comes to the scenario. The best way to get away from it is to use a head-hunter or a temp (job) agency.’ – 37 (male, satisficer).

16% of the respondents stated that they had no specific preference. Two participants who were categorised as maximisers stated that more details about the job would be considered more credible, while some always took the credibility of a source with a grain of salt and used more than one source to verify whether the information itself was trustworthy.
‘The more specific and detailed the job description is, the more likely I will regard
it as credible.’ – 44 (male, maximiser).

‘I always take information with a grain of salt. If I find one negative comment, I
don’t consider it as fact until I have looked for other information from other sources
to verify it.’ – 16 (female, maximiser).

Some of the participants, particularly satisficers, reported that formal
sources and informal sources had no difference to them:

‘I think the credibility is actually the same. I used to see scummy ads in the
newspaper, but I also see them in online listings, and even some useless information
from friends though.’ – 33 (male, satisficer).

Furthermore, differences were found between maximisers and satisficers.
Significantly more maximisers (10/24 [42%] vs. 5/26 [19%]) [χ²(1, N = 50) =
2.99, p < .05] evaluated informal sources to be more credible. More satisficers
(8/26 [31%] vs. 4/24 [17%]) [χ²(1, N = 50) = 1.36, p < .1] than maximisers
reported that they had no preference or no comments about the source evaluation,
showing that more satisficers may be likely not to have a complete strategy when
using information sources compared to maximisers.

**Figure 4.7 (Study1, Q7)** Do you evaluate formal sources and informal sources
differently in credibility? What sources do you think are more credible than the others
and to what extent?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Type</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal, company-controlled sources</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>04, 07, 10, 13, 22, 23, 24, 26, 43, 50, 03, 06, 09, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 28, 30, 38, 49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job agencies (a third party)</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>29, 37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal, WOM-based sources</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>02, 08, 11, 18, 31, 35, 36, 41, 42, 46, 25, 39, 40, 47, 48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No preference</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>16, 34, 44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No idea/no comments</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>12, 27, 32, 33, 45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: maximisers are marked in **Bold**; satisficers are marked in *Italic*
4.2.3.7 Job-related information-searching preference (Q8)

Nearly 60% of the participants reported that they had experience searching for more information after they received an official company-provided advertisement message about the job vacancy (see Figure 4.8). Over half of these participants contacted a WOM-based source, for instance asking friends or family who had work experience in the sector for advice. A few of them searched for WOM via online communities (e.g., job discussion forum, Facebook).

‘After I had read the advertisement I asked my friends if they knew anyone who worked at the company and if they had any insight into what kind of work the job entails. The advertisement from the company is obviously biased and will leave out any negative aspects of the job. My friends and information from employees’ Facebook pages provide me with a more detailed picture of what the job would be like. I applied for the vacancy because I thought the job would be enjoyable and it would be a good fit for me.’ – 18 (male, maximiser).

‘I reached out to friends on my social network as well as common acquaintances … I wanted to know if anyone had any experience with this company or knew anyone with experience so I could get a first-hand account of just what it’s like to work for this company. The information I was provided with was positive, so I did apply and get the position.’ – 04 (female, maximiser).

‘I did look for more information because I wanted to make sure what I was applying for. Although the advertisement was pretty detailed, I sometimes don’t personally trust these companies to be completely honest when it comes to trying to recruit someone. I believed that they probably left out a few important details about the job that wouldn’t be appealing to most people. I did eventually apply to the store, as the information that was excluded from the ad wasn’t that terrible.’ – 05 (male, maximiser).

‘If I was initially relying on an advertisement about a job opening, I would certainly want to get more information about the specifics of the job and the company in general.’ – 11 (male, maximiser).

‘I think the advertisement basically satisfied most of my questions; I did however still go onto the forums of the store and see what the workers thought of their jobs. I also asked a few of my friends who had worked in retail before how they liked it. I thought about what they said, although they had actually worked in different stores than the one I was applying to. I did end up applying though, even though there was a lot of mixed information about the store.’ – 13 (male, maximiser).

‘This seems really bad of me. But sometimes when I am interested in learning more about a position, I will ask someone on LinkedIn, about how the work atmosphere is? I also try to do my own investigations by looking on Facebook or Googling how people feel about the company. I also like to see how big the company is and how many HR staff they have. Usually if the company has a lot of HR that means there is
a higher turnover rate and that gives me a warning that the position may be high stress, which is what I try to avoid.’ – 50 (female, maximiser).

Some participants mentioned that they would actively search for negative comments, because they believed that company-controlled sources usually only provide the positive side of a job vacancy.

‘Job postings themselves are not really an objective source, because the company has written the information and will paint themselves in a positive light. I would search negative comments from other sources. If I find one negative comment, I don’t consider it as fact until I have looked for other information to verify it.’ – 16 (female, maximiser).

‘I will not believe the company will show its negative sides in its ads. Therefore I will do more searches. Ask friends if they have heard off know anyone who worked there. Also search the internet and see if anyone has posted anything positive or especially negative about them.’ – 31 (female, maximiser).

Some participants indicated that they would use a strategy that is rather unique to retailing: they would walk into the store that they were interested in applying to, observe the working environment and talk to some of the employees in store in order to get to know how they felt about working there.

‘I did a couple of times. I walked into the store and literally asked store employees who were working about the company and the job. It wasn’t that I didn’t believe the ad, but rather that it’s often instructive to talk to someone who actually does the job. You can learn a lot about any problematic situations you might run into should they hire you. I did apply for those positions and, in one of them, talking to the employee helped land the job because he told his boss to hire me.’ – 33 (male, satisficer).

‘I have visited the store to see how busy it is and to speak with current employees. I have also visited chat rooms and forums to see what others have said about working there.’ – 36 (female, maximiser).

Many of the quotes above are implicitly saying that the advertisements did not provide the information that they needed; others are also explicit about not being satisfied with the limited information in the advertisements and choosing to get more details, such as the work atmosphere and employee feelings about working for the company, from WOM-based sources.

‘I definitely tried to get more information before applying for the jobs. I talked to the employees in the store and, in some cases, talked to the manager. I think the “hiring” sign in the window was definitely not sufficient information for me to decide whether or not to apply. It would have been helpful if the hiring signs had more information. I eventually did apply for two of the jobs after I talked to the
employees and the manager about the job, benefits and scheduling.’ – 35 (female, maximiser).

‘The advertisement itself did not give great detail about what positions they were hiring for.’ – 23 (male, maximiser).

‘I thought the content of the advertisement did not provide enough information. I thought information on base wages and hours was limited. I eventually applied for the vacancy because of desperation for any kind of work.’ – 42 (female, maximiser).

Due to insufficient information in a traditional advertisement message, participants also tended to look for more details on the company’s official website if the company had one.

‘Normally I will go online to the retailer’s website and look for their jobs page to confirm the listing is something I am interested in. I will use this page to search for additional details about the job. I do this because usually a hiring sign does not provide enough information for me to know whether I will like the job or whether it will be a good fit for me.’ – 44 (male, maximiser).

‘The official company website pretty much offered all the information I needed to make an informed decision. I found all the information necessary and found pretty much the answers to all my questions. The information presented was very detailed and informative. I didn’t think it was necessary to visit any other website to find the information I needed. Perhaps the only other source of information area I looked for was questioning my friends who had prior knowledge of the whole experience.’ – 46 (male, maximiser).

‘I would look for more information on the company’s official website, if they had one. I would probably find more information there, since there isn’t much space available in a newspaper ad.’ – 08 (male, maximiser).

Asking the human resource department was another way that participants used to obtain further information. These participants contacted the organisation directly by email or by phone to obtain further details.

‘I’m sure the ad did not explain the full reason for the vacancy. I ended up emailing the person who was in charge of the vacancy. We discussed the position and while it seems that there were indeed some things left off the advertisement … they were a good company. However, after speaking with this person I realized that this would not be a good job for me as their management style did not seem to fit what I was looking for. I did not end up applying for this vacancy for that very reason.’ – 24 (female, maximiser).

‘If I were to look for additional information, I would probably call the employer directly to get that information.’ – 32 (female, satisficer).
‘I may make a phone call or email to the employer if I feel [it is] necessary. If I get the information I want and am satisfied with it, I will then apply for the position.’ – 07 (female, maximiser).

A substantial minority of 21 participants (42%) indicated that they preferred not to spend extra time searching for more information after they received a piece of job-vacancy information from a company-controlled source (e.g., an advertisement). Some participants said they applied for the job based on the information they received at first and would only consider doing some further searching work if there was some important information missing. Some participants stated that usually all the information that they needed could be acquired during the interview; thus, they just applied without too much hesitation.

‘I really did not. I feel that if I wanted more information, I would ask during the interview or ask the HR manager prior to making the final decision on the job.’ – 06 (male, satisficer).

‘Not usually. I like to apply as soon as I see the advertisement and then collect more information if I thought [there was] something important that I wanted to know before following up.’ – 49 (female, satisficer).

‘Usually I would not seek additional information. I make a decision based on the information provided to see if I would be a good fit. Unless I felt there was information missing, such as the location, from the ad that was important to me, I would keep searching.’ – 47 (female, satisficer).

‘I applied for the job first and then asked questions on the phone when I got called back and asked more questions in the interview. Corporate double talk and written word can be hard to parse or hard to believe and a lot of times the information is nor coordinated or accurate, so it is easier to just ask an actual human that works at the store/organisation.’ – 12 (male, satisficer).

‘I usually will just apply if the position name sounds good and the store is good (good location and I like/know the store). This is because the person looking to hire me will explain all the details I need during the interview. After the interview, if they are willing to hire me, I can always back out if I do not like the requirements of the job.’ – 38 (female, satisficer).

Some participants claimed that the official advertisement messages basically provided sufficient and reliable-enough information for them to make a decision to apply. Thus, they did not search for more.

‘I believe that the advertisement met all the expectations and told me all of the information that I wanted to know.’ – 14 (male, satisficer).
‘No. I did not seek further information. I found the content of the advertisement to be reliable enough.’ – 09 (male, satisficer).

‘I would just apply if I thought what was listed in the ad would fit what I had in mind.’ – 01 (female, satisficer).

‘Generally, the advertisement information is enough to know whether or not I would be interested in the opportunity.’ – 17 (female, satisficer).

‘No. Usually the flyers are satisfying enough. I would just go straight to filling an application and/or giving them my résumé.’ – 19 (male, satisficer).

Figure 4.8-1: (Study1, Q8) In your experience, after you have read job information from a formal source such as a newspaper job advertisement, would you still try to get further information about the vacancy from other source(s) before you make the decision to apply for it? If yes, what source(s) have you used to find further information?

Overall
Yes (29, 58%):
WOM-based sources (15, 52%):
Friends/family who have work experience in the sector: 04, 10, 16, 31, 34, 03, 40
Current employees: 35, 36, 13, 18, 30, 33
Social media (e.g., Facebook): 41, 50
Online job forums (e.g., LinkedIn): 13, 50

Company-controlled sources (8, 28%):
Contact the HR department: 07, 24, 32
Company’s website: 08, 41, 44, 03, 21

Other (general search) (13, 45%):
Internet (online) general search: 15, 16, 18, 41, 50, 15, 29
Other search (not indicating the platform): 05, 11, 23, 42, 43, 47

No (21, 42%):
02, 22, 26, 46, 01, 06, 09, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 25, 27, 28, 37, 38, 39, 45, 48, 49

*Note: maximisers are marked in Bold; satisficers are marked in Italic

As mentioned in the previous paragraph, approximately 60% of the participants had not been entirely satisfied with a typical company-controlled advertisement and had experience of searching for more information. By having a closer look at the participants’ decision-making style, it can be seen that significantly more maximisers reported that they would do further searching
work (20/24 [83%] vs. 9/26 [35%]) [$\chi^2(1, N = 50) = 12.16, p < .01$]; in contrast, more satisficers preferred not to look for other sources after they had received an advertisement message (17/26 [65%] vs. 4/24 [17%]). The results supported the assumption that decision-making style plays a moderating role in the use of recruitment information. Maximisers generally preferred to get information from more than one source about one job vacancy, and they were less easy to satisfy with a job advertisement. Satisficers tended to decide whether to apply for the job without too much waiting. The findings reflect the nature of maximisers and satisficers, and also demonstrate that different decision-making styles have different job-information needs and information search preferences.

Figure 4.8-2: (Study1, Q8)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximiser</th>
<th>Satisficer</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>YES (20, 83%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>YES (9, 35%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05, 11, 23, 42, 43 (general search, did not specify)</td>
<td>Company's website: 03, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet (online) general search: 16, 18, 41, 50</td>
<td>Internet (online) general search: 15, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friends (stronger relationship): 04, 10, 16, 31, 34</td>
<td>Employees: 33, 30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employees (weaker relationship): 13, 18, 35, 36</td>
<td>Friends: 40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social media (e.g., Facebook) 41, 50</td>
<td>Contact the HR department: 32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact the HR department: 07, 24</td>
<td>Depends (usually not, but if something important is missing then will do more searching): 47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company website: 08, 41, 44</td>
<td>Company's website: 03, 21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Online job forums: 13</td>
<td>Internet (online) general search: 15, 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>NO (4, 17%)</strong></td>
<td><strong>NO (17, 65%)</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02, 22, 26, 46</td>
<td>01, 06, 09, 12, 14, 17, 19, 20, 25, 27, 28, 37, 38, 39, 45, 48, 49</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: maximisers are marked in **Bold**; satisficers are marked in *Italic*
4.2.3.8 The missing key information that makes jobseekers keep searching (Q9)

The results of the last question revealed the information that was most important to jobseekers in the retail trade; when this information was missing in the formal source (advertisement) that provides jobseekers with the vacancy information, jobseekers would search for more information from other sources (see Figure 4.9).

Location (26%), pay (16%), job requirements (16%) and hours (12%) were the most commonly mentioned pieces of information, indicating that this information was crucial to jobseekers in the retail trade. Compared to the results of question one (Q1), fewer participants indicated that they looked for this information after they received the job information from the formal source, meaning that such information was provided in most of the formal sources. However, this question still supported the results of the first question, which indicated that many retail-trade jobseekers needed to know such information and cared about these job attributes most.

‘A full listing of the duties and requirements for applying for the job, including any experience needed. I prefer when the actual location of the job is given. It’s a plus when salary is listed, but this is very rarely seen.’ – 26 (female, maximiser).

‘Pay rate and reasonable expectations.’ – 39 (male, satisficer).

‘A good salary is a definite draw. So the salary information is important to me.’ – 50 (female, maximiser).

‘I needed to know if I meet the required level of education and experience to be considered for the position.’ – 14 (male, satisficer).

‘In talking to the people in the stores when I went in and asked if they had openings, it helped me to ask them about job flexibility with scheduling and whether or not I could fit my school schedule in. That was important information for me to know. If a place had rigid scheduling practices, I knew I shouldn’t apply there because of my need for flexibility.’ – 35 (female, maximiser).

Other job attributes that were mentioned by the participants included the extra benefits and opportunities for advancement.

‘Extra benefits such as if health benefits are offered. Opportunities for advancement are important to me as well.’ – 38 (female, satisficer).
14% of the participants searched for more about the background, history, reputation and vision of the company. Before they applied for the job, these participants wanted to know if the company that they were interested in working for had a positive reputation.

‘I looked up information about the business if I wasn’t familiar with them. I would then determine how well I would fit in at that job and how much I stand to earn.’ – 10 (male, maximiser).

‘I searched for information about the company’s reputation online.’ – 24 (female, maximiser).

‘I searched the treatment of employees, overall retailer view. It’s a good way to see if the company cares about their employees.’ – 45 (male, satisficer).

One participant mentioned that he searched for information on how long the jobs that he was interested in had been available.

‘I Googled how long the jobs have been available.’ – 06 (male, satisficer).

Two participants mentioned that convenience in relation to applying for the job was important to them. This factor was not included in the present research, but it serves as a reminder that companies should provide clear job-application instructions, as they may miss out on potential candidates because of an unclear application process.

‘If the website is official and if the entire application can be easily done online, I will directly apply.’ – 04 (female, maximiser).

‘I once searched the Internet just for knowing how to apply for the job. It would be helpful if the company has a clear guide on how to apply for the job.’ – 41 (male, maximiser).

Moreover, 30% of the participants were keen to know about the general inside environment, showing that a good proportion of jobseekers wanted to know what the job would actually be like. Participants indicated that the work atmosphere information could mainly be obtained from current employees or past employees (SWOM).

‘I like to know that the company has a recruit-from-within environment. Also that they are women friendly and promotions are regular along with good benefits.’ – 03 (female, satisficer).
‘... how the general atmosphere usually is at the store and how much they require of you. Those pretty much cement my idea on whether to apply or not.’ – 05 (male, maximiser).

‘The most important information that I was looking for and wanted to know was whether the company has a good work environment. A good work environment means that the employees are happy, not overworked and overstressed. By looking at employees’ Facebook pages and employees’ forums, I was able to figure out which companies had the best work environment.’ – 18 (male, maximiser).

‘I really like to know what current employees think about the company and the location; it won’t be the only factor in my decision, but it will certainly help me to decide which store I apply to. So I put the most weight on the current employees that I chat with in store and then the online forums next and of course I always take friends/acquaintances’ experience into consideration.’ – 36 (female, maximiser).

‘Employee experiences. Employee experiences on forums really helped me decide whether or not I wanted to apply at certain stores. For example, when I was considering applying at Old Navy, I decided not to after reading about former and present employees who had had bad experiences as far as being pushed to meet credit card sign-up quotas. I knew I wouldn’t be good at that or feel comfortable with it.’ – 43 (female, maximiser).

The results revealed that information about the inside environment is important to jobseekers and will push them to keep searching in the retail trade. Other basic, hard information – such as pay, hours and location – is key information that companies should not neglect when designing recruitment messages.

Figure 4.9: (Study1, Q9) Based on your experience, have you encountered a situation where some important information (to you) was missing from the first source that you got job information from, and you then kept searching for that information from other sources? What was this information? If you did not have this experience, what missing information might push you to search for that information from other sources?

| Inside environment | 32% |
| Location           | 26% |
| Job requirements   | 16% |
| Pay                | 16% |
| Details about the company | 14% |
| Hours              | 12% |
| Family’s/friends’ advice | 6% |
| Extra benefits     | 6% |
| Applying methods   | 4% |
| Opportunities for advancement | 2% |
| How long the jobs have been available | 2% |
| Start date         | 1% |

Family’s/friends’ advice (3): 02, 36, 47
Inside environment (16): 05, 08, 16, 18, 31, 34, 36, 42, 43, 03, 13, 27, 38, 40, 45, 48
Extra benefits (3): 15, 20, 38
Opportunities for advancement (1): 38
How to apply (2): 04, 41
Job requirements (8): 23, 26, 46, 50, 14, 19, 21, 49
How long the jobs have been available (1): 06
Background, history, reputation and vision of the company (3): 07, 10, 22, 24, 09, 28, 45
Start date (1): 37
Location (13): 26, 36, 50, 44, 01, 12, 17, 20, 29, 30, 33, 37, 39
Pay (8): 24, 50, 12, 15, 30, 33, 37, 39
Hours (6): 35, 12, 20, 30, 32, 38
N/A (employee referral) (2): 11, 25
*Note: maximisers are marked in **Bold**; satisficers are marked in *Italic*

4.2.4 Conclusions and implications

As a simple foundation study, Study 1 asked jobseekers about what retail-trade job attributes were important to them and where they preferred to search for job-related information. The study explored jobseekers’ attitudes towards formal sources and informal sources (online and offline WOM-based sources), and how they decide to adopt a source. The study questions also covered the jobseekers’ actual information-seeking experiences.

Several findings are worth addressing: firstly, although many existing studies (e.g., Ryan et al., 2005; see Chapter 2, on page 44) suggest that informal sources are more effective and influential compared to formal sources, the results of the present study contradict this statement and show that, when compared to the use of informal sources, more jobseekers consider formal sources to be their main source for acquiring retail-trade job information. These jobseekers claim that the information from formal sources, such as recruitment advertisements or a company website, is helpful and reliable. The findings also reveal that the individual’s belief in source credibility is an important mediator. This indicates that whether the source is effective or not does not only depend on the nature of the source, namely whether it is formal or informal. Also, when the source is considered to be reliable to the jobseeker, jobseekers are more likely to adopt the advice/information provided by the source. Therefore, source credibility affects the effectiveness of the source.

Secondly, the results suggest that a jobseeker’s decision-making style (maximiser vs. satisficer) may moderate the adoption of an information source and its content. Both maximisers and satisficers show cautious consideration
when evaluating job-related information, but maximisers are proven to be more likely to accept and consider advice from a weak relationship, such as from a stranger on the Internet. This demonstrates that they have a wider range of source acceptance. On the other hand, more satisficers prefer only to accept information from sources that they trust, such as a formal, official, company-controlled source, like a recruitment advertisement, or a close relationship, like a friend. They generally have a lower willingness to adopt information from sources that they have apprehensions about.

Thirdly, while more maximisers use informal online sources to get retail-trade job information, significantly fewer jobseekers adopt online WOM (around 30% in total). This is because these information providers have relatively weak relationships with the jobseekers and the jobseekers cannot recognise whether the online information providers are telling the truth, or are just complaining about the extreme cases. It must also be considered that the company might pay them to say something positive. Compared to the marketing research (Milliman and Decker, 1990), online job-related WOM is not as influential as online WOM in the form of product reviews. After all, getting a job is not like buying a simple product. It takes time to search for and evaluate a job, fill out and submit the application, wait and prepare for the interview; as an information source, online WOM messages seem not to be as effective as traditional sources, at least in the retail trade.

In addition to this, when job information that is published by the company does not satisfy a jobseeker’s information needs, the jobseeker is more likely to search for more information from other sources. This happens frequently to maximisers, and SWOM is the source that has been indicated by participants to be the most frequently searched source. The participants justify this decision by stating that they want to know what the internal environment of the company is like, but the formal sources usually lack this information. SWOM is a source that offers this information to jobseekers.

The results of Study 1 provide useful information which indicates that retail-trade companies should not overlook the content of their job information. Formal, company-controlled (FCC) sources are widely adopted by retail-trade jobseekers. The results also indicate that maximisers and satisficers do have
different job-searching habits and preferences. For instance, maximisers seem to be more difficult to satisfy with typical information from a formal, company-controlled (FCC) source. This implies that companies may need to invest more effort into attracting maximiser-style jobseekers by providing additional information that meets their needs. As discussed in Chapter 2 (on page 61), in the literature maximisers are found to have characteristics that may lead them to be easily distressed. Increasing the candidate pool does not just mean attracting as many candidates as possible; filtering out some possible unstable candidates (such as those who are always thinking of leaving their current job for a better one, or people who are unhappy with their work because the job does not fulfil their expectations) is an important task that can save a lot of time at the selection/interview stage. Therefore, the question remains: is it worth the effort to attract and recruit more maximiser-style jobseekers?

Study 2 aims to find an answer to the following question: should maximisers, who are not easy to satisfy, be attracted to the candidate pool – by carefully designing and providing more information that will meet their needs – or should retail companies exclude maximisers and attract more satisficers to their candidate pool?

4.3 Study 2: Should retail-trade organisations avoid recruiting maximisers?

As highlighted previously, existing studies indicate that maximisers have some negative characteristics (e.g., a tendency to experience deep post-decisional regret), and these may lead maximisers to have a relatively high turnover intention, because they always feel that there is a better option (e.g., a job opportunity) than the one they currently hold (Chapter 2, on page 61). Unfortunately, no existing study has investigated these decision-making characteristics for maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers in the retail trade, and whether maximisers have a significantly lower job satisfaction, and a higher intention to leave their present retail-trade job, compared to satisficers.
Gruszka, Matthews and Szymura (2010) indicate that individual differences and personal characteristics have their basis in human cognitive functioning, and will influence individual attitudes and behaviours. Therefore, the first objective of this study is to test the differences in cognitive-based characteristics between maximisers and satisficers in the retail trade. The first session examines the relationships between cognition-based variables, including uncertainty avoidance, post-decisional regret (PDR), need for cognition (NFC), self-efficacy, effort invested in (job-information) researching, and an individual’s maximising tendency. These variables are widely adopted and tested in individual-differences and cognitive-psychology studies (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1983).

In the second section, the study investigates current retail-trade employees’ attitudes towards their present job and their previous job-searching experience (met expectations (ME), job satisfaction, company commitment and intention to quit). The results provide evidence as to whether retail-trade maximiser jobseekers have a higher intention to quit their job compared to satisficer jobseekers, and provide employers with advice when recruiting and filtering candidates.

4.3.1 Conceptual development and hypotheses

Applying the concepts of the naive scientist and the cognitive miser (see Chapter 2, on page 62) to maximising and satisficing, it is likely that maximisers tend to adopt the approach of naive scientists; they do not make decisions easily based on only one piece of information from one source. Satisficers could be considered to be cognitive misers. They prefer not to put too much effort into decisions if the results cannot be easily predicted. Lai’s (2011) study offers evidence that maximisers are more willing to spend time on receiving information about new services. They are prepared to use resources such as time to establish a larger number of alternatives (Dar-Nimrod et al., 2011). Therefore, it is expected that self-reported maximisers will put more effort into searching for retail-trade job-related information than satisficers.

**H2-1. Maximisers will report more effort in searching for retail-trade job-related information than satisficers.**
Hofstede (1994) defines uncertainty avoidance as the extent to which people are threatened by uncertain or unknown situations. Driver and Mock (1975) indicate that individuals are different in their approach to risk-taking when making decisions. Decision-makers who tend to avoid uncontrolled situations are more willing to put effort into the decision process (Driver and Streufert, 1969). In the face of uncertain gambles, maximisers have been shown to perform less well (Jain et al., 2013). With the characteristics of trying to research as much as possible before committing to a final choice so that they do not make a poor decision, analysing information rationally and comparing choices carefully (Schwartz et al., 2002), it is anticipated that maximisers may prefer to avoid uncertainty.

**H2-2.** *Compared with satisficers, maximisers will report a higher preference for avoiding uncertainty when searching for retail job information.*

Schwartz et al.’s (2002) research finds a significant positive relationship between maximising tendency and post-decisional regret (PDR), showing that maximisers generally have a higher degree of regret over the decisions they make. Maximisers always believe that there may have been better choices than the one that they made which resulted in the current position that they hold, and feel regret about what they might have missed. In the retail trade, many vacancies are waiting to be filled; finding a job is not that difficult compared to other sectors that might have higher skill requirements (Ryan, Horvath and Kriska, 2005). Time is obviously an important factor that may push jobseekers to make choices. Compared with satisficers, who will settle for a ‘good-enough’ decision, those striving to make the ‘best decision’, maximisers, are more likely to need to compromise on decisions to meet the required deadlines (Parker et al., 2007). Within the limited time, it is not possible to get all vacancy choices and details. At the same time, especially in the retail trade, many job opportunities provide similar offers to new employees (Breaugh, 2013), making it difficult to separate them on choice criteria. Hence, it can be expected that maximisers will report higher job-decision regret behaviour than satisficers.

**H2-3.** *In the retail trade, maximisers will report higher PDR behaviour than satisficers.*
Bandura (1977) posits that individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to show higher confidence to fulfil the tasks they face. As discussed in the previous paragraph, maximisers may tend to spend more effort on information searching and do more information comparisons. However, they are more likely to feel regret about their choices. This suggests that, generally, maximisers may actually have less confidence about their choices because they cannot make up their minds easily, even though much effort has been devoted to the process. On the other hand, satisficers may feel more self-efficacy than maximisers, since they experience less conflict about decision-making. This means that they feel a good-enough decision can satisfy their needs, and so they are not searching for the elusive ‘perfect’ decision (Schwartz et al., 2002). Moreover, they are not driven to make compromise decisions because they run out of time (Parker et al., 2007).

H2-4. In the retail trade, satisficers will feel more self-efficacy than maximisers.

Cacioppo et al. (1983: 197) define the need for cognition (NFC) as ‘a need to structure relevant situations in meaningful, integrated ways’ and ‘an individual’s tendencies to seek and engage in effortful cognitive activity’. Higher NFC is associated with complex problem-solving. Higher-NFC individuals show higher intentions towards elaboration. Lower-NFC individuals may display opposite tendencies and be more likely to process information heuristically (Escalas, 2007). By considering the theories of naive scientists and cognitive misers, the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) suggests that cognitive misers – those who tend to shorten decisions and use the peripheral path while facing problems – will have a lower NFC because they simplify the received information and choices. Naive scientists, who follow the central path to deal with decisions, have a higher NFC, since they generally evaluate information in more depth and make simple choices complex (Griffin, 2006). Thus, it is anticipated that maximisers will have a higher NFC compared to satisficers. Thus, in our sample of people in the retail sector:

H2-5. Maximisers will have a higher NFC than satisficers when seeking job information.
In relation to investigating current employees’ attitudes towards their retail-trade jobs, it is expected that maximisers are more likely to report that their present job has met their expectations because they are liable to spend more time and effort on searching for job-related information. The more information they obtain, the more it will enhance their knowledge of the job position and the company, and so their expectations should be more accurate (Wotruba and Tyagi, 1991). Therefore, maximisers are more likely than satisficers to find the job meets their expectations.

**H2-6. In the retail trade, maximiser-style jobseekers will report a higher level of job expectations being met than satisficers.**

Wotruba and Tyagi (1991) argue that met expectations (ME) do not directly play a complete mediating role in job satisfaction. In other words, ME are not the only or main factors that lead to a higher level of job satisfaction. A characteristic of maximisers is the tendency to PDR; thus, no matter the level of ME, they are more inclined to feel dissatisfied with their present job because they may believe that a better one is available. Their tendency to use time resources to establish a larger set of options makes them less satisfied with their final choices (Dar-Nimrod et al. 2009). Given the opportunity, they are more likely to reconsider their selected options (Chowdhury et al., 2009). In these circumstances, satisficers might experience a higher level of job satisfaction than maximisers.

**H2-7a. In the retail trade, satisficers will report a higher level of job satisfaction than maximisers.**

Further, job satisfaction is positively correlated with company commitment and negatively correlated with the intention to leave the present job (Raymond and Mjoli, 2013; Cook et al., 1981). Company commitment measures an employee’s loyalty to the organisation for which they work. Reasonably, when an employee experiences satisfaction in their work, they have higher commitment to the company they work for and are more inclined to remain in that job. Hence, it is anticipated that satisficers will have a higher commitment to
the company and a lower intention to leave their present retail job. Therefore, regarding their present retail-trade job, compared to maximisers:

**H2-7b. Satisficers will have higher commitment to the retail-trade company that they currently work for.**

**H2-7c. Satisficers will have a lower intention to quit their present retail-trade job.**

Moreover, even though increasing the number of applicants in the application pool is a useful strategy to increase the number of qualified and suitable candidates (Breaugh, 2013), and many researchers have attempted to investigate how different recruitment information sources can have a different impact on jobseekers’ job decisions, as reviewed in Chapter 2 (on page 30) the proposed suggestions do not reach a consensus. Some researchers (e.g., Hill, 1970) claim that formal (company-dependent) sources, such as newspaper advertisements, are less effective than informal (company-independent) sources (e.g., word of mouth from family/friends), as the latter contain more personal and experience-based information and can assist jobseekers in understanding the reality of the actual work environment. In contrast, Cable and Turban (2001) indicate that company-controlled recruitment sources have high adoption by jobseekers, particularly when the information is officially released by the employers, and this information is more objective than experience-based word-of-mouth messages.

Judge and Cable (1997) propose that although previous research has investigated the effects of different recruitment sources or activities on jobseekers, few researchers have considered the aspect of jobseekers’ individual differences and personal preferences. Results of Study 1 (text-based data) also provide evidence that jobseekers may have different preferences in adopting information sources while searching for job information and have different considerations of the information content. Thus, it is expected that maximisers and satisficers differ in recruitment information source preferences when they research a job vacancy in the retail trade, which moderates the effectiveness of different recruitment information sources.
**H2-8: Maximisers and satisficers will have different preferences for their use of recruitment information sources while researching job-vacancy information in the retail trade.**

### 4.3.2 Method

**Samples**

One hundred and forty (140) participants were recruited from AMT. For the present study, we aimed to explore maximisers’ and satisficers’ characteristics, preferences and experiences in the retailing industry. Only participants who had accepted a job offer in the retail trade in the past six months in the US were selected to join the survey; six months is considered critical for a newly hired employee in terms of whether they choose to stay in the organisation or leave (e.g., O’Reilly *et al.*, 1989). Participants agreed to show proof of a job when necessary. Participants were limited to those who had reached the ‘Master level’. As an incentive, $10 was given to each participant via AMT on completion of the survey.

Table 4.3 presents the sample demographics; there is a good gender split and the age ranges were all well represented. 43% of the participants had a high-school degree. Over 91% of the participants had over one year’s past work experience in the retail trade. 67% received a monthly wage of below $3,000, which corresponds with the salary level in the retailing industry and also reflects the amount of part-time work. Moreover, participants reported working in a variety of stores, including clothing (e.g., H&M, Abercrombie & Fitch), shoes (e.g., Vans), PC games and computers (e.g., Best Buy, ComputerCity), jewellery (e.g., Fine Jewellery), fast food (e.g., Domino’s, Ample Hills Creamery), beauty (e.g., Sally Beauty), gas (e.g., Shell), spectacles (e.g., LensCrafters), groceries (e.g., Wal-Mart, Target, Costco), cars (e.g., Ford), cafes (e.g., Starbucks), furniture (e.g., IKEA), telecommunications (e.g., AT&T), books (e.g., Bookstone) and music (e.g., Record Town). Thus, the sample covers a wide variety of employers in the retailing industry. This allows for a heterogeneous set of experiences that makes it less likely that there will be any systematic bias from a specific set of employees with particular experiences, which may affect the perception of job satisfaction of those with different decision-making styles.
Table 4.3: Demographics (Study 2 sample, N=140)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Work experience in the retail trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Mdn = 4.18)</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
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<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>26–32</td>
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<td></td>
<td>33–39</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>40–46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Over 46</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>College/University</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

4.3.3 Variables and measurements

Self-reported maximising tendency. The six-item short Maximisation Scale (MS) provided the evaluation for the individual participants’ decision-making style (see Chapter 3, on page 91).

Effort invested into researching job-related information. To explore whether maximisers put a higher degree of effort into researching job options and information than satisficers, four adapted items measured job-search intensity based on Blau’s (1993) research (7-point scale: 1 as ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 as ‘strongly agree’).

Uncertainty avoidance. Five items proposed by Quintal et al. (2006) provided a scale to evaluate the degree of participants’ uncertainty avoidance when solving problems and making decisions (7-point scale, anchored at 1 as ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 as ‘strongly agree’).

Self-efficacy. Schwarzer and Jerusalem’s (1995) 10-item scale provided an evaluation of participants’ self-efficacy (7-point scale anchored from 1, ‘strongly disagree’, to 7, ‘strongly agree’).

Post-decisional regret. Schwartz et al.’s (2002) five-item scale that identifies levels of post-decisional regret (PDR) was adopted to evaluate an individual’s level of regret about the job-choice decisions made. These five items (7-point
scale: 1 as ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 as ‘strongly agree’) were adopted to test the participants’ attitudes about whether they thought there may have been better job choices than the one that they had chosen.

Need for cognition. The 18-item NFC scale developed by Cacioppo et al. (1983) was used to evaluate an individual’s level of NFC (7-point scale anchored from 1, ‘extremely uncharacteristic’, to 7, ‘extremely characteristic’).

About present job – met expectations. The Wotruba and Tyagi (1991) 25-item scale provided the evaluation of participants’ perceptions of ME. Items that were included covered getting special awards or recognition, any individual effort required, the opportunity to make friends, respect from fellow colleagues, success related directly to initiative, attention and appreciation from supervisors, and development of work-required skills. Participants were instructed to think about their present job (the one they had accepted within the last six months) and the expectations that they had had about the job before they took the offer. They then compared their actual experiences with what they had expected before the offer had been accepted (7-point scale anchored from ‘My experience with this aspect (of my present job in the retail trade) is very much less than I expected’ to a similar phrase ending with ‘very much more than I expected’).

About present job – job satisfaction. Participants also evaluated their satisfaction with their present job using five items adopted from Brayfield and Rothe (1951) (7-point scale, anchored from 1, ‘strongly disagree’, to 7, ‘strongly agree’).

About present job – company commitment. To measure the commitment of maximisers and satisficers to their present retail employment, the four items developed by Blau and Boal’s (1987) study were adopted (7-point scale: 1, ‘strongly disagree’, to 7, ‘strongly agree’).

About present job – intention to quit. Three items from Giacopelli et al. (2013) were used; the items were initially developed by Cook et al. (1981) to evaluate respondents’ intention to leave their present job (7-point scale, anchored from 1, ‘strongly disagree’, to 7, ‘strongly agree’).

Full scales are shown in Appendix B, on page 262.
Procedure

After participants had agreed with the ethical terms of the survey, instructions presented on the website helped guide them to answer the questions in section one regarding their opinions and attitudes towards their present job.

In the second section, participants indicated which job information source(s) they had used to search for retail-trade job-related information in the past from eight recruitment information sources. These included online job-discussion forums such as LinkedIn; online social media websites such as Facebook; searchable-online blogs; online job-searching sites such as Indeed.com; the company’s official website; family or friends who have experience working in the sector or the company; recruiters; and newspaper advertisements. Participants were then instructed to indicate if they had ever received job invitations from a friend or family member who was an employee of the company. Also known as employee referral, this is considered different from the other eight sources listed because it is a source where jobseekers are approached with the information rather than searching for it. The information source list was derived from the results of Study 1, in which jobseekers indicated that these were the primary information sources (see page 101) they used most frequently to find job-related information in the retail trade. The second question asked participants to select from the same nine-item list about the information sources they used for searching for or getting job information related to their present job.

4.3.4 Data analysis and results

Internal consistency of the scales

All of the 10 variables displayed good internal consistency. The Cronbach’s alphas were all greater than .70 (see Table 4.12 below). The median self-reported maximising tendency score was 4.18, which is very close to the median (Mdn = 4.20) of the Schwartz et al. (2002) dataset. It is worth noting that the mean score of uncertainty avoidance was below the median point, suggesting that this sample of employees in the retail trade display the characteristics of not avoiding uncertainty situations. A possible reason for this is that retail-trade
employees need to interact with customers, and they cannot fully anticipate what type of customers they may meet. Thus, people who work in this sector need to accept uncertainty situations and try to solve customers’ problems (Breaugh, 2013). Previous research has characterised the US as a society that has a higher tolerance for uncertainty than other cultures (Hofstede, 1994); the below midpoint score (M = 3.78) in this study could simply reflect this.

No significant relationships between demographic characteristics were found, except a positive relationship between work experience and wage level, an unsurprising and expected result. Notably, there were no relationships between maximising tendency and any socio-demographic measure, strongly suggesting that, in this sector, socio-demographic variables, particularly work experience, are not related to this decision-making style.

Testing hypotheses

Table 4.4 presents the Pearson correlations between the 10 variables. As expected, **supporting H2-1, H2-2, H2-3, H2-5 and H2-6**, the self-reported maximising tendency was positively correlated with the effort put into searching for job-related information \( r(138) = .21, p < .01 \), uncertainty avoidance \( r(138) = .22, p < .01 \), PDR \( r(138) = .26, p < .01 \), NFC \( r(138) = .17, p < .01 \) and ME \( r(138) = .18, p < .05 \).

However, the statistics show that maximising tendency was *not* significantly correlated with self-efficacy \( r(138) = .06, p > .05 \), job satisfaction \( r(138) = -.07, p > .05 \), company commitment \( r(138) = -.04, p > .05 \), or intention to quit \( r(138) = .01, p > .05 \); **therefore, H2-4, H2-7a, H2-7b and H2-7c were not supported.**

By median splitting (Mdn = 4.18) the maximising tendency, results of independent-samples t-tests were consistent with the results of Pearson correlation coefficients, which not only confirmed the hypothesis testing results, but also demonstrated that the median splitting method is an appropriate technique to use for factorial design experiments.
Table 4.4: Decision-making style (maximising tendency) and other variables (Pearson correlations)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Maximiser</th>
<th>Satisficer</th>
<th>Sig. 1-tailed</th>
<th>(1)</th>
<th>(2)</th>
<th>(3)</th>
<th>(4)</th>
<th>(5)</th>
<th>(6)</th>
<th>(7)</th>
<th>(8)</th>
<th>(9)</th>
<th>(10)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(1) Maximising Tendency</td>
<td>4.18</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>.80</td>
<td>.21**</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.02</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>-13</td>
<td>.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Effort</td>
<td>4.60</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>4.39</td>
<td>1.94*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Uncertainty Avoidance</td>
<td>3.78</td>
<td>4.17</td>
<td>3.45</td>
<td>3.02**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Post-Decision Regret</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>4.31</td>
<td>3.88</td>
<td>1.92*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Need for Cognition</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.83</td>
<td>4.54</td>
<td>2.06*</td>
<td>.17**</td>
<td>.77**</td>
<td>.41**</td>
<td>-11</td>
<td>.74</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Self Efficacy</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>4.67</td>
<td>4.45</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.13</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.32**</td>
<td>-22**</td>
<td>.39**</td>
<td>.95</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Met Expectation</td>
<td>4.76</td>
<td>4.97</td>
<td>4.58</td>
<td>2.01*</td>
<td>.18**</td>
<td>.91**</td>
<td>-.02</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>.78**</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.94</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Job Satisfaction</td>
<td>4.79</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-.07</td>
<td>.22**</td>
<td>.07</td>
<td>-.17</td>
<td>.34**</td>
<td>.26**</td>
<td>.25**</td>
<td>.92</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) Company Commitment</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.25</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>-.04</td>
<td>.42**</td>
<td>-.05</td>
<td>-.10</td>
<td>.45**</td>
<td>.27**</td>
<td>.40**</td>
<td>.61**</td>
<td>.89</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(10) Intention to quit</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>4.28</td>
<td>4.27</td>
<td>n.s.</td>
<td>.01</td>
<td>-.18*</td>
<td>-.16</td>
<td>.30**</td>
<td>-.40**</td>
<td>-.53**</td>
<td>-.19</td>
<td>-.29**</td>
<td>-.35**</td>
<td>.82</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Internal consistency reliabilities (Cronbach’s alpha) for each measure are reported in the diagonals, *italics*

Pearson Correlations (N = 140) *p < .05 **p < .01
Follow-up analyses

The predicted overall differences between maximisers and satisficers for job satisfaction, company commitment and intentions to quit were not supported. Previous research indicates positive outcomes for employee satisfaction and retention when employees have more realistic job expectations and/or higher met job expectations. With this in mind, a series of follow-up ANCOVA tests considered the joint effects of decision-making style and ME (split at mean into lower and higher met expectations or into three ascending groups at 33 and 66 percentiles), while controlling for PDR.

For job satisfaction, the role of ME was investigated by partitioning at low, medium and high levels of ME by percentiles. A 2 x 3 ANCOVA test showed a significant interaction between decision-making style and level of ME \(F(1, 133) = 3.14, p < .05\) (see Figure 4.10). Satisficers do have higher levels of job satisfaction, but only at higher levels of ME \(M_{\text{maximiser}} = 4.95; M_{\text{satisficer}} = 5.93, t(43) = 2.51, p < .05\). Lower levels of ME are associated with lower levels of job satisfaction for both groups, but satisficer job-satisfaction levels rise with stronger ME, while maximiser levels do not continue to rise past moderate ME.

![Figure 4.10: Job satisfaction by level of ME and decision-making style](image-url)
For intention to quit, a 2 x 2 ANCOVA showed a significant interaction at 95% confidence level between decision-making style and level of ME [$F(1, 135) = 5.05, p < .05$]. At lower ME, maximisers are more likely to report intentions to quit than satisficers [$M_{\text{maximiser}} = 4.73, M_{\text{satisficer}} = 4.37, t(24) = 2.04, p < .05$, one-tailed]; at higher ME there is no significant difference [$M_{\text{maximiser}} = 3.94, M_{\text{satisficer}} = 4.12, t(35) = .17, p > .05$, one-tailed] (see Figure 4.11). Thus, satisficers do have lower intentions to quit than maximisers, but only at lower ME (note that satisficers show no significant difference in leaving intentions between low and high ME and that all reported intentions to quit are near or above the midpoint).

![Figure 4.11: Intentions to quit by level of ME and decision-making style](image)

For company commitment, the 2 x 2 ANCOVA results, although following the trend in the latter two analyses towards differences by levels of ME, do not show a significant interaction [$F(1, 135) = .27, p > .05$]. However, at lower ME, a one-sample t-test shows a significantly lower level of company commitment for maximisers than for satisficers [$M_{\text{maximiser}} = 3.56; M_{\text{satisficer}} = 3.98, t(27) = 1.98, p < .05$, one-tailed] (see Figure 4.12).
Overall, the pattern emerges that, although there is moderation of direct job-outcome variables by level of ME in the direction of H7a, H7b and H7c, the most negative effects are confined to the group of maximisers that have lower ME for intention to quit and company commitment. For job satisfaction, the lower job satisfaction for maximisers compared to satisficers is restricted to high levels of ME and may be a reflection of the accuracy of (low) maximiser expectations of retail work. This also provides insight that employers should carefully design and provide genuine information that helps jobseeker to meet their expectations.

*The use of job-related information sources*

To test H2-8, a median split was used to differentiate between maximisers and satisficers. The median of 4.18 is close to that in previous research (e.g., 4.20 in Schwartz et al.’s (2002) dataset). Fisher’s exact test was adopted because some cells had an expected count of less than five (Fisher, 1935). The results revealed that, compared to satisficers, significantly more maximisers used online blogs (41% vs. 22%) \(p < .05\), online job discussion forums (55% vs. 42%) \(p < .1\) and online job-searching sites (91% vs. 82%) \(p < .1\) to find job-related information. More satisficers made enquiries through their families or friends (97% vs. 91%) \(p < .1\); therefore, **H2-8 was supported**.
Moreover, the results suggest that the traditional advertisement is still a high-frequency source of job information even if viewed in digital rather than newspaper format on job-search websites or company websites. Informal sources through friends and family also remain extremely popular, with over 90% of respondents reporting using these sources. Other information sources, such as discussion forums, blogs and social media, are popular, but have not superseded the more traditional formats as yet, even informal information from friends and family. Many jobseekers consulted their friends and families if they had work experience in the sector. This may be because friends and family represent the more trusted ‘close tie’ source of job information (Granovetter, 1983), and formats such as discussion forums are more likely to be sources of, to some extent, less credible ‘weak tie’ information. However, taken together, the use of various social networks indicates that personal social networking is becoming an important information source for jobseekers that is facilitated by digital media during the jobseeking process.

Approximately 27% of the jobseekers in this sector had been invited at least once by incumbents in their social networks (see Table 4.5), indicating that, although employee referral is considered to be an effective source for initial alerting of prospective retail employees to job openings (Breaugh, 2013), it is not the norm for jobseekers in this study, and they are still heavily using/combining this with other sources of information. We could be observing the effects of the online nature of the sample, in that they have easier, faster access to more sources of information and may be proactive job-information seekers, whilst employee referral is a more passive undertaking.

Table 4.5: Sources that have been used to get retail-trade job-related information previously

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source Description</th>
<th>Maximisers (total N = 64)</th>
<th>Satisfiers (total N = 76)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>N (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) Online job discussion forums</td>
<td>35 (55)</td>
<td>32 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) Online social media websites</td>
<td>32 (50)</td>
<td>43 (57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3) Online blogs</td>
<td>26 (41)</td>
<td>17 (22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4) Online job-searching sites</td>
<td>58 (91)</td>
<td>62 (82)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5) Online company’s official website</td>
<td>61 (95)</td>
<td>67 (88)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6) Family/friends who have experience in working in the sector</td>
<td>58 (91)</td>
<td>74 (97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7) Recruiters</td>
<td>31 (48)</td>
<td>36 (47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8) Newspapers/Advertisement</td>
<td>47 (73)</td>
<td>59 (78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9) My friends/family came to me and invited me to join the company (work with them) - employee referral</td>
<td>17 (27)</td>
<td>22 (29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(1) Online job discussion forums, (2) Online social media websites, (3) Online blogs, (4) Online job-searching sites, (5) Online company’s official website, (6) Family/friends who have experience in working in the sector, (7) Recruiters, (8) Newspapers/Advertisement, (9) My friends/family came to me and invited me to join the company (work with them) – employee referral
In the second question, participants were asked to point out the sources that they had used to search for job-related information about their present job. On average, maximisers utilised 4.7 job-related information sources and satisficers used approximately 2.2 sources; maximisers clearly put more effort into finding information sources than satisficers. Online job-searching sites, the company’s website, family/friends and newspapers were still the most popular and frequently used sources that jobseekers reported, thereby supporting the results of the first question (see Table 4.6).

Table 4.6: The sources that were used to get job-related information for the present job/work (within six months)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Maximisers (total N = 64)</th>
<th>Satisficers (total N = 76)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N (%)</td>
<td>N (%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1)</td>
<td>26 (41)</td>
<td>7 (9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>22 (34)</td>
<td>24 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(3)</td>
<td>18 (28)</td>
<td>2 (3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(4)</td>
<td>55 (86)</td>
<td>25 (33)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(5)</td>
<td>58 (91)</td>
<td>23 (30)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(6)</td>
<td>57 (89)</td>
<td>32 (42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>22 (34)</td>
<td>11 (14)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(8)</td>
<td>44 (69)</td>
<td>40 (53)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(9)</td>
<td>7 (11)</td>
<td>6 (8)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes for serial numbers – see Table 4.5

4.3.5 Conclusions and implications

Study 2 focused on job decisions in the retail trade, finding no simple overall difference between maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers in terms of their satisfaction with the job choice they had made within the last six months. For these respondents, who all work in retail, initially it appeared that maximisers do not have a higher intention to quit than satisficers. Consequently, retail-trade companies need not worry on these grounds about jobseekers who adopt a maximising approach when making decisions.

Moreover, maximisers report higher ME than satisficers; this might be credited to the effort that they put into searching for job-related information from more sources. Indeed, the follow-up analysis revealed that a majority of maximisers had their expectations met in this sample. The expectations do not have to be high; it is the confirmation of those expectations that is important. Low expectations met will result in less disappointment than high expectations not met. The results support this view; when maximisers’ reactions to ME are considered, those with low ME are more
likely to consider leaving than those with higher ME. However, satisficers show no significant difference in leaving intentions between low and high ME. So, to the extent that maximisers put in more effort and form more accurate expectations, likelihood to quit is a function of a difference between maximisers and satisficers on reactions to ME. Effort in building expectations may make these cognitions more accurate, or may increase the salience, or both, but whatever the cognitive underpinnings, if maximisers have accurate expectations about the job, they seem to show higher company commitment and are less likely to intend to leave than if their expectations are not met. The danger lies in less accurate and unmet expectations, where they have lower company commitment and are more likely to consider leaving than satisficers. Maximisers report significantly lower job-satisfaction ratings at high levels of met expectations than satisficers, but the previous results for intentions to quit indicate that this lower satisfaction is not turned into higher intentions to quit than satisficers at this level. This is probably due to the nature of jobs in the retail trade, in that most jobs have some drawbacks (Rhoads et al., 2002). Perhaps maximisers and satisficers who work in this sector understand that they will have to compromise on job choice, especially if they have geographical or other restrictions on where they can work. Paradoxically, restrictions on choice and time-pressured decisions may actually allow people to reduce any cognitive dissonance arising from the contradiction between PDR and their decision to take, or stay in, their present job. Attributions of external forces beyond their control being in some way responsible for the decision allow people to rationalise decisions and reduce dissonance (Gosling, Denizeau and Oberl, 2006). This makes it possible for maximisers to hold the contradictory condition of still scanning for the ‘perfect’ position, even if they are relatively satisfied with and have no greater intentions than satisficers to leave their present job.

Contrary to the expectation, satisficers actually showed no significantly higher levels of self-efficacy than maximisers. However, the mean self-efficacy score was above the midpoint (M_{self-efficacy} = 4.48). This suggests that most employees who decided to specialise in the retailing industry show confidence in dealing with all kinds of unexpected situations, and not just those that are work related. This may be because employees in the retail trade have to face a variety of customers and need to solve unexpected problems (Tyagi, 1999). Therefore, self-efficacy is high among
employees in the retail trade, whether they are a maximiser or a satisficer. From these responses, most jobseekers in this sample seemed ready to take the challenge when they decided to join this sector.

Statistically supporting the result of Study 1, the results of Study 2 show that maximisers and satisficers have different preferences for using recruitment information sources to obtain job-related information. Maximisers are more open to approach information sources where weaker relationships might be expected (weak ties), such as searchable-online blogs, whereas satisficers acquire job-related information from close relationship (strong-tie) sources such as close friends and family. Consequently, if they wish to optimise the candidate pool, companies need to carefully manage information sources to attract both maximisers and satisficers, especially with a view to providing realistic expectations. For instance, they should monitor and reply to discussion topics, as this may help provide maximisers with the information they need. Furthermore, adding recruitment activities on Facebook fan pages may encourage more satisficers and their friends to join the activities and enable them to know more about the company.

In addition, advertisements still seem to be a frequently used information source for both maximisers and satisficers in this sector (supporting the findings of Study 1). This result strongly suggests that, by carefully designing the content of an advertisement, companies can better attract and sustain jobseekers’ interest in the job vacancy and promote realistic expectations. Further, relatively few in this sample of online participants reported receiving job invitations passively from people they knew as employees of the company. Relying on employee (staff) referral as the main recruitment source could lead employers to miss out on the chance to recruit talented and qualified jobseekers who are not included in the referral network (Finneran and Kelly, 2003).

4.4 Summary

Based on the results of Study 1 and Study 2, it can be concluded that, overall, formal, company-controlled sources – such as job advertisements in newspapers, the company’s official website and advertisements on job-searching websites – are the most frequently used sources for jobseekers to get retail-trade job-related information.
These sources are considered to be reliable and the contents are helpful in the retail-trade job-application process. Moreover, the most frequently adopted informal, non-company-controlled source is advice from friends/family who have work experience in the retail trade (aka SWOM). Whilst some maximisers reported that they would consider using online WOM information, most of these jobseekers prefer the use of traditional (face-to-face) communication. Therefore, while some research suggests that online WOM messages could be influential (e.g., Huang et al., 2012), these had lower perceived credibility, based on the evidence found in Study 1 and Study 2 (retail trade samples). Thus, discussing and comparing differences between jobseekers’ perceptions of online WOM and offline (traditional) WOM is not a priority for the studies that follow.

Study 1 shows that maximisers have more job-information needs and that they are generally more difficult to satisfy. Study 2 finds no evidence that retail-trade companies should avoid recruiting maximisers (or satisficers), and jobseekers frequently use formal, company-controlled sources to get basic job information. They then ask their family/friends who have experience in the sector for advice (informal, non-company-controlled sources). These form the two questions that need to be further explored and tested. The first question is: how do maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers react to a piece of typical recruitment information from a formal, company-controlled source? This looks at whether they would be interested in applying for the job vacancy and whether they would still search for more information before making the decision to apply. The second question is: what influence would a SWOM message – with positive or negative information from a weak or strong relationship – have on maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ willingness to join the company, or would they still keep searching for more information? A scenario-based experiment featuring a realistic job-information-searching scenario (Study 3) was thus designed to investigate these questions. The study design, hypotheses and analysis results will be presented in Chapter 5.
CHAPTER 5 EXPLORATORY STUDIES

5.1 Chapter overview

The results of the groundwork studies (Study 1 and Study 2) suggest a pattern whereby a majority of retail-trade jobseekers usually use formal, company-controlled (FCC) sources (see Figure 2.3, on page 44), such as recruitment advertisements provided by employers, to get basic job-vacancy information. When the provided information does not satisfy their information needs, they are likely to talk to family/friends/acquaintances who have experience in the sector for advice (informal, non-company-controlled (INCC) WOM-based sources; Figure 2.3, on page 44).

However, individual differences moderate the effects of recruitment information sources due to individual differences in preferences for the type and source/provider of the information. Maximisers and satisficers may have different perceptions about both an information source and the content. The results of Study 2 demonstrate that employers should not avoid recruiting maximisers; although there has been some criticism of the characteristics of maximisers, maximiser-style employees are found to be potentially just as valuable as satisficer-style employees in the retail trade. Thus, it is suggested instead that employers should consider adopting the strategy of satisfying both maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ information needs to maximise the possible candidate pool. Organisations that understand the different needs and preferences of maximisers and satisficers have the opportunity to attract more candidates to the application pool.

Consequently, Study 3 features a real job-information-searching situation (scenario) in which basic job information is received from a typical formal short job advertisement to explore two issues. First, the study statistically tests the effect of differences in decision-making style (between maximisers and satisficers) on reactions to a typical formal job advertisement from an FCC source, in terms of a) perceptions of OA and b) the need to seek further information regarding the vacancy.

In addition, Study 3 tests the proposition suggested by Study 1 that this further information is likely to come from INCC WOM sources (rather than FCC sources), often from past/current members of staff of the organisation. Here, a further divide can be made between sources of informal information that have a strong tie (e.g., a
close friend or family) and those that have a weak tie (e.g., an acquaintance such as a staff member at the store) with the information seeker (jobseeker).

An important further issue is that informal sources can expose people to both negative and positive information, carrying the risk that searching for WOM messages may result in jobseekers being unwilling to apply for the vacancy (e.g., Van Hoye and Lievens, 2009). This is not inevitable, as people vary in the trust and weight they assign to different providers (ties/relationships) and to positive and negative information content (Fisher et al., 1979). Thus, the second issue is the effect of a single follow-up WOM message from members of staff of the organisation (SWOM) on those who want further job-vacancy information. To achieve the research objective (see Chapter 1, on page 19, the third objective), Study 3 attempts to examine the inconsistent conclusions (see Chapter 1, on page 12, Chapter 2, on page 58) of previous studies. This includes analysing the effectiveness of different recruitment information providers and information content from the viewpoint of individual differences. Specifically, do maximisers and satisficers differ in their reactions to SWOM messages varying in valence (positive or negative) and source/provider tie strength (strong tie or weak tie)? For this second issue, an interaction among decision-making style, information valence and the type of source of the informal information – that is, the information provider’s relationship with the jobseeker (tie strength) – is expected.

On the other hand, the likelihood of applicants encountering uncontrolled negative WOM information suggests that companies should try to maximise the number of potential applicants who are satisfied with the amount and type of information provided within the initial advertisement. Decision-making literatures (e.g., Bickart and Schindler, 2001) indicate that receivers are more likely to be convinced by information content with detailed information. Arguably, providing more information (i.e., a longer, more detailed advertisement) should reduce the number of potential applicants seeking further information before making the application decision – that is, increase the number of people finding the initial information satisfactory – and thus increase the number of applicants. Therefore, a further study (Study 4) explores the potential effects for maximisers and satisficers of providing longer, more informative job adverts.
5.2 Study 3: an actual scenario of the job-information-seeking process. The interactions among jobseeker’s decision-making style, message valance and recruitment information sources and their influence on jobseekers’ willingness to join the organisation

5.2.1 Conceptual development

As discussed in Chapter 2, Breaugh and Starke (2000) conclude that there are two dimensions for pre-hire recruitment outcomes: i) a jobseeker’s intention to apply for the position and ii) the likelihood that they will accept the job if it is offered to them. Both of these can be linked to organisational attractiveness (see Chapter 2, on page 34). Highhouse et al. (2003) conceptualise three dimensions for organisational attractiveness (OA): company attractiveness, intention toward the company and company prestige (see Chapter 3, on page 94). As introduced in Chapter 3, jobseekers who self-report higher OA are likely to have a higher intention of pursuing a job vacancy within a company and higher likelihood of accepting a job offer. Increasing OA, therefore, should increase the candidate application pool and the chances for organisations to filter and hire appropriate new employees (Thomas and Wise, 1999; Cable and Turban, 2001).

The two main types of recruitment information content about job vacancies and organisations that may affect jobseeker OA are ‘hard’ content and ‘soft’ content (see Chapter 2, on page 40). Hard, confirmable information content usually includes verifiable facts such as salary and work location. In contrast to this, soft, personal experience-based information content includes feelings, perceptions and opinions – for example, personal experience or reports of work experience in the organisation and assessments of the organisational climate (Breaugh, 2013).

Supporting suggestions from the existing studies (Breaugh, 2013; Zottoli and Wanous, 2001), Study 1 reveals that retail-trade jobseekers usually first acquire job-vacancy information, especially basic hard information content, from FCC information sources such as local newspaper advertisements and job websites. Such sources provide jobseekers with more ‘concrete’ aspects of employment with a particular company. Moreover, participants of Study 1 also indicated that a typical job-vacancy advertisement in the retail trade only tends to very briefly introduce the job requirements and simple attributes, such as the salary, hours and work location.
Some of the Study 1 participants stated that they want to know more details about the job/company, and they are also especially concerned about more ‘intangible’ issues (soft, experience-based information), such as the organisational climate (Ioannides and Loury, 2004), which they cannot accurately predict until they experience it themselves (Breaugh, 2013). To bridge this gap, potential job applicants often seek soft information content from job incumbents about the more intangible aspects of the job and the incumbents’ personal experiences in addition to the formal information. This corresponds to informal, WOM-based information from non-company-controlled (INCC) sources. At the same time, the veracity of such information is difficult to establish prior to gaining personal experience. As a result, before making application or acceptance decisions, potential applicants may gather and evaluate the information they receive about the organisation/vacancy from a number of different job-related information sources (Highhouse et al., 2003). Part of this assessment is the credibility of the information. For ‘hard’ information content, FCC sources may be considered more objective and reliable than INCC sources (Cable and Turban, 2001); for ‘soft’ information content, INCC sources individuals know well (strong ties) are usually considered more credible than those from strangers and acquaintances (weak ties), though not always (see Keeling et al., 2013).

5.2.1.1 Effect of decision-making style – maximisers and satisficers

Notwithstanding this propensity to gather information from a variety of sources, our contention is that jobseekers vary in their pre-hire behaviours, such as the depth of information searching needed to make job decisions, and that this variation is a result of their individual decision-making styles.

The differences in the depth of information searching and the subsequent difference in time involved in decision-making suggest that, at the most basic level, when maximisers and satisficers read a typical short recruitment advertisement from an FCC recruitment source such as a newspaper or a job website, satisficers will be more likely to regard the message as sufficient information to make the job-application decision. This is also suggested by the results of Study 1. Thus,
**H3-1:** *After reading typical job-vacancy information that contains mainly hard, confirmable information content from an FCC recruitment source (e.g., an advertisement), maximisers are more likely than satisficers to choose to search for further information about the company/job vacancy.*

As an exploratory study, at this stage, the purpose was to establish the general principle of whether maximisers and satisficers react differently to typical formal recruitment information by seeking further information. It is necessary to establish this, as no existing research has demonstrated whether these two decision-making styles might be different in their reactions to a typical (short and simple) job advertisement.

After receiving hard, confirmable information content from an FCC recruitment source, those finding the typical vacancy advertisement insufficient will seek further information about the vacancy before they make a decision, and this is likely to be obtained from informal, non-company-controlled (INCC) sources (Brown and Reingen, 1987). The dimensions of OA cover company attractiveness and company prestige (Breaugh, 2013), suggesting that the informal information sought could cover any aspect of the vacancy or, indeed, the organisation and may be positively or negatively valenced. Valence is not the only consideration, however; the relationship with the information provider is also influential in assessing the information. Prior research on the effectiveness of recruitment information sources and pre-hire outcomes (e.g., Van Hoye and Lievens, 2009) suggests that jobseeker application decisions are influenced by both tie strength and message valence. The findings of the groundwork (Study 1) also support this premise.

### 5.2.1.2 Staff word of mouth (SWOM)

As a recruitment strategy, employee referrals have previously been reported to be an efficient INCC WOM-based recruitment source (Breaugh, 2013). However, the findings of Study 1 and Study 2 suggest that only a very limited number of retail-trade jobseekers receive referral invitations from a current employee. More of them initiate conversations with their family/friends who have experience in the sector to ask for advice and job-vacancy/company information.
By distinguishing between employee referrals (a company-initiated and positively valenced WOM form of recruitment) and the other types of WOM sought from job incumbents by prospective employees, Keeling et al. (2013) devise the term ‘staff word of mouth (SWOM)’, and apply it to the retailing industry. The concept of SWOM is that after reviewing basic job-vacancy information from a company-controlled source (e.g., job advertisements), jobseekers obtain SWOM information by contacting current employees, past employees or someone who has work experience in the sector (Keeling et al., 2013) (see Chapter 2, on page 50). Hence, SWOM is especially relevant to this study of the effect of informal information sources (more specifically, an INCC source) in retail recruitment.

5.2.1.3 Tie strength, message valence and decision-making style

Even though jobseekers have a relatively high level of willingness to obtain SWOM, as mentioned previously, acceptance of the message varies depending on the information provider–recipient relationship and the message valence.

Tie strength (the relationship between the information provider and the recipient) affects the information receiver’s perception of the credibility of the information provider (Kim et al., 2008). Jobseekers often choose to accept job information from a strong tie because they believe that those in close relationships will understand their information needs and feel more obligated to give them a credible and truthful description of the job and the organisation (Hovland and Weiss, 1951; Rhoads et al., 2002; Breaugh, 2013). Correspondingly, people tend to discount information and be more sceptical when it is more difficult to judge the trustworthiness of the source (Hovland and Weiss, 1951).

Additionally, as reviewed in Chapter 2, scholars demonstrate that negative information usually reduces an individual’s intention to pursue an object such as a product, whereas positive information gives the individual more confidence in pursuit behaviour. Weinberger et al. (1981) explain that negative information has a stronger impact because it stands out from the greater number of positive cues in the individual’s social environment, and this distinction makes negative messages more influential. Richey et al. (1975) suggest that negative information is more likely to draw information receivers’ attention, and so has a greater effect on an organisation’s reputation, compared to positive information. Thus, most organisations try to avoid
sending negative messages and encourage the sharing of positive experiences (e.g., East et al., 2007). However, this is not entirely true for recruitment information in the retail trade. Booth and Hamer (2007) indicate that usually jobs in the retail trade have common disadvantages, such as low wages and long, variable hours, of which most prospective employees are aware. Therefore, research involving the realistic job preview (RJP) suggests that some negative information actually increases a jobseeker’s willingness to apply for a vacancy, as these types of messages are considered more credible and give insight into the reality of working for that company (e.g., Shore and Tetrick, 1994).

Thus, both positive information and negative information potentially increase jobseeker willingness to join the organisation, but only when the jobseeker trusts the information source/provider. In the absence of a credible relationship, information may be treated with considerable caution. Although objectively the content might be true, the information recipient will not fully accept information if he or she does not perceive the information source to be trustworthy enough (Hass, 1981). When only positive information is provided by a weak tie, jobseekers are likely to consider whether the work is really as good as the weak tie describes it, especially in the retail sector. For negative information, Fisher et al. (1979) show that when job applicants are given negative information from a weak tie, their intentions to accept a job offer significantly decrease. This is for two reasons. First, compared to positive information, negative information has a stronger effect on jobseekers’ decisions: negative messages are more distinctive and persist longer than positive information (Weinberger et al., 1981), especially when an individual is in the beginning stage of a process and has limited knowledge about it. Second, regarding the source, the recipient of information may doubt whether, given the social expectations of interaction content between people who do not know each other well, the weak-tie information source would tell the whole story; the actual work could possibly be worse than the weak tie reports. Therefore, information from weak ties can reduce job-pursuit intentions, and, in this regard, the effect of negative information is even stronger than the effect of positive information from weak ties.

Accordingly, when a message source is a strong tie, jobseekers are likely to perceive higher OA than when the message comes from a weak tie. When a message source is a weak tie, jobseekers’ perceived OA is likely to be lower when the message
contains negative information, compared to positive information. Organisations risk losing potential applicants if job-advertisement information is found to be inadequate, and so jobseekers source additional information by informal WOM, which increases the risk of receiving messages from weak ties, especially negative information.

On the other hand, a consideration of the attributes of maximising and satisficing decision-making styles suggests that decision-making style may moderate the effects of message valence and tie strength. Maximisers are more careful decision-makers (Schwartz et al., 2002); they put a lot of effort into searching for, checking and comparing job information, tending to adopt a central processing route, which leads them to cautiously weigh and evaluate the information. From a risk-aversion viewpoint (Pratt, 1964), compared to satisficers, maximisers have a significantly higher level of uncertainty avoidance (see Study 2, on page 137). Maximisers work hard to lower the risk of making a bad decision by comparing all information and options (Polman, 2012). In comparison, satisficers tend to use instinct and feelings and to adopt peripheral processing routes when making choices. Peripheral route adopters are more likely to be attracted by peripheral cues, and they are inclined to evaluate a message by relying on their first and general impressions, such as their relationship with the source and the form of the message (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984).

As a result, maximisers are more likely than satisficers to accept information from weak-tie sources, since they wish to evaluate all information, and to focus more on evaluating the content of the message, instead of relying on making a judgment based on their relationship with the provider and discarding the advice from the message easily. Therefore, it is expected that maximisers will be influenced more than satisficers in terms of OA when they receive positive/negative information from a weak-tie source. In contrast, it can be assumed that satisficers may be more easily satisfied with the information from a strong-tie source than maximisers, because a) such information is more readily available, particularly when the peripheral route is used, since message recipients tend to rely on their previous knowledge of the information source, such as their impression of and relationship with the source, and b) they tend not to wish to expend much effort on getting information or on evaluating information from different sources. Accepting information from trusted information sources can save them time and effort. Thus, in terms of their willingness to join the
organisation, satisficers will be influenced more than maximisers when they receive positive/negative information from a strong-tie source.

Hence, the joint effects of tie strength and information valence on OA will differ, depending on the jobseeker’s decision-making style:

**H3-2a:** Maximisers’ perceived OA is more likely to be affected by the valence of a (SWOM) message originating from a weak relationship (tie), such that maximisers’ perceived OA is higher when they receive a positive (SWOM) message from a weak-tie source compared to receiving a negative (SWOM) message.

**H3-2b:** Satisficers’ perceived OA is more likely to be affected by the valence of a SWOM message originating from a strong relationship (tie), such that satisficers’ perceived OA is higher when they receive a positive (SWOM) message from a strong-tie source compared to receiving a negative (SWOM) message.

Moreover, WOM messages influence individual decisions through changing the information recipients’ evaluation of attributes (Cheung and Thadani, 2012), so we expect the number of jobseekers who report that they would stop searching for further information to increase under these circumstances. Nonetheless, this is just one piece and one source of further information. The characteristics of maximisers lead us to anticipate that, even though SWOM messages are influential compared to other recruitment information sources, maximisers will still display a tendency to be less satisfied than satisficers and will be more inclined to search for yet further information before they make their decision (Schwartz et al., 2002). In contrast, the characteristics of satisficers suggest that those who want additional information to that given in the vacancy advertisement are more likely to be satisfied by even this small amount of additional information and stop the information search at that point. Therefore,

**H3-3:** After receiving SWOM source messages, satisficers maximisers are more/less likely to stop the information search about the vacancy/company.
5.2.2 Method

A scenario-based experiment provided the data to examine, for different recruitment information sources, the moderation effects of decision-making style, message valence and tie strength on a jobseeker’s perceived OA and their intention to search for further information.

A three-part pre-test was conducted to verify the experimental manipulations and other material for the scenario design. These were: tie strength with the source (weaker ties vs. stronger ties), SWOM message valence (positive vs. negative) and positive advertisement messages. A total of 30 participants experienced in the US retail industry were recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT). A reward of $3 was given to each participant via AMT.

*Tie strength* The descriptions of the supposed relationship of the participant with the information source (strong tie vs. weak tie) were adopted from Keeling et al. (2013). Participants were randomly assigned to read the description of a strong tie or a weak tie and evaluate these on a 7-point scale, with the anchors ‘1 – the person has a very weak relationship with me’, and ‘7 – the person has a very strong relationship with me’. The manipulation was successful: those reading the strong-tie source description \([M = 5.47, SD = .99]\) reported a significantly higher mean rating for the strength of the relationship than those reading the weak-tie source description \([M = 3.20, SD = .94, t(28) = 6.43, p < .01]\).

*Advertisement message* 21 simple and short advertisement messages were developed and piloted based on seven attributes (containing ‘hard’ information content, including 1) remuneration, 2) location, 3) hours, 4) promotion opportunities, 5) training courses, 6) annual bonuses and 7) basic job skill requirements) found in typical advertisements observed in newspapers (the National Ad Search and the National Business Employment Weekly) and on job websites for retail jobs (including craigslist.com, monster.com, careerbuilder.com and indeed.com; these were indicated in Study 1 by participants who have work experience in the retail trade as the most widely used job-searching sources in the US).

These developed sentences did not mention an exact rate of pay or a salary range; instead, they stated that ‘the salary that Company A would offer is close to the average salary level’. The degree of favourability of the job attribute was different in
each of the developed and piloted sentences. The respondents rated each statement about the job on a 7-point scale (from 1 as ‘very unfavourable’ to 7 as ‘very favourable’). Mackintosh (1971) indicates that a strong stimulus may overshadow a weaker one, and one component may block an individual’s perception about a second component. Researchers should consider and account for the shadowing effect in experimental design (Krauth, 2000). Therefore, selection by these criteria follows the Fisher et al. (1979) experimental design; extremely positive ratings between 5.5 and 7, and extremely negative ratings between 1 and 2.5, were not used to avoid the overshadowing effect.

For example, for the attribute ‘location’, the two developed and tested sentences were: the advertisement shows the workplace is fairly close to your home and it is convenient for public transport so that you can get to work either by car or by bus (mean rating = 5.21); or the advertisement shows the workplace is very close to your home and you can get to work by walking (mean rating = 6.56). As companies generally only provide positive information content in advertisements, the statements/sentences that were chosen (containing information on each attribute above) had a mean rating of between 4.5 and 5.5. The first sentence/statement was selected for the experimental scenario.

**SWOM message valence** A total of 24 statement descriptions concerning the personal experience of the source (two positive descriptions and two negative descriptions for each of the six aspects) were developed and piloted. These descriptions related to the intrinsic job facets of variety, autonomy and opportunity to use learned skills, plus the extrinsic aspects of pay, promotion and working conditions (based on Fisher et al., 1979). Fisher et al. (1979) adopted these aspects in their experimental scenarios and suggested that jobseekers are concerned about these important aspects when seeking and evaluating job information from WOM-based sources (e.g., friends, incumbents).

The pilot-study participants rated the favourability of each message about the job on a 7-point scale (from 1, ‘very unfavourable’, to 7, ‘very favourable’). Adopting the criteria of Fisher et al. (1979), the statement classification was positive if the mean rating was between 4.5 and 5.5; it was negative if the mean rating was between 2.5 and 3.5. The descriptions (six for the positive scenario and six for the negative scenario) used in the experiment came from piloted statements falling into these
ranges. For instance, regarding the possibilities of promotions and pay rises, the pre-tested descriptions included: *in my experience, I personally think it is probably not that easy to get a promotion or a pay rise, but if you work very hard, you shall be able to get what you deserve at the end* (mean rating = 3.34); *in my experience, I personally think it is hard to get a promotion or a pay rise, even if you work very hard* (mean rating = 1.78); *in my experience, I personally think it is possible to get a promotion, and if you work hard, you are likely to get a generous pay rise* (mean rating = 5.24); and *in my experience, I personally think it is not too difficult to get a promotion – you just need to do your work and you will get a generous pay rise* (mean rating = 6.20). In this case, the first and third descriptions were adopted.

**Main study measures**

The 15-item, Highhouse et al. (2003) proposed scale was employed to evaluate participants’ perceived OA (see Chapter 3, on page 94). The short (six-item) MS (Nenkov et al., 2008) was used to evaluate participants’ maximising tendency (see Chapter 3, on page 91).

Further, two items were used for manipulation checks: ‘I think the person has a strong/weak relationship with me’ (for tie strength), and ‘I think the message is unfavourable/favourable’ (for message valence). All items were measured using a 7-point scale, and the scale items were anchored at 1 as ‘strongly disagree’ and 7 as ‘strongly agree’.

**Procedure**

After reading the participant information and the ethical terms of the study, participants read one piece of the pre-tested positive job-vacancy advertisement message. This contained seven job attributes (remuneration, location, hours, promotion opportunities, training courses, annual bonuses and basic job-skill requirements) on the experiment website, with instructions to read the messages carefully. The participants were then divided into two groups based on their preference for one of the following statements: A. not enough for me to decide whether to apply for that vacancy or not. Before I go to the application process, I prefer to spend some more time to get to know more about the job until I feel satisfied
I know enough; or B. has provided enough information for me to decide whether to apply for the vacancy. Thus, I prefer not to spend time looking for further information about that vacancy. Group B then completed the OA scale to evaluate their attitudes towards working for the company.

Group A proceeded to a further stage involving random assignment to one of five groups (four groups were given further information, purporting to be from a member of staff, differing in combinations of positive vs. negative valence and strong-tie vs. weak-tie source; one control group was given no further information). Participants in the control group in Group A were not assigned to a treatment group and so completed the OA scale at this point. The other Group A participants read the description of one of the four randomly assigned scenarios, and were then asked to answer the two manipulation check questions and complete the OA scale. All four ‘treatment’ groups were also asked to say whether, after receiving this extra communication about the position, they still wanted to seek more information before making a decision. All respondents provided demographic information and completed the six-item MS (see Appendix, B on page 262).

The MS was appraised at the end of the study for a combination of two reasons. Although we necessarily designed the study in two stages, we were unable to separate these by time. The participants in the present study were recruited via AMT (see Chapter 3, on page 85); these anonymous participants had passed Amazon’s censorship, which confirmed that they had met specific data collection requirements (e.g., have work experience in the retail trade in the US and are aged over 19). However, based on practical experience, conducting a longitudinal study over two time points loses around 70% of the sample (data mortality) even over relatively short periods. A return rate of less than 30% is low and has other implications for the study outcomes. Due to the lack of separation, the MS measure was introduced after the scenarios to avoid distracting participants from the experimental task with irrelevant items. On the other hand, it can be judged that this lack of direct relevance meant that MS answers after the manipulations were unlikely to be biased by those manipulations.

The design was further influenced by the need for external validity and to control potential memory confound in an exploratory study. The first part of this
study is necessary to produce the reduced sample of people not satisfied with the formal advertisement information. Separating the two parts of the study brings into question potential confounds, such as memory effects, in addition to the loss of respondents. As an exploratory study, we chose to test and set the baseline effects of minimal time delay between the receipts of the two messages.

5.2.3 Data analysis and results

Recruitment via AMT produced 146 male and 134 female US participants, aged over 19, working in the retail trade ($3 incentive). Matching user IDs ensured no participant had also responded to the pre-test. This was an experienced sample: 91% had more than a year of retail work experience. Over half of the participants (58%) received a wage of below $3,000 per month, which corresponds with standard retail-industry salary levels. There were no significant differences among the randomly assigned groups in terms of demographic variables, indicating successful sample random assignment.

The responses to the six items on the MS showed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .81). Combining and averaging provided a single composite score. In line with other research using this scale, a median split differentiated maximisers and satisficers (see Chapter 3, on page 90). The median of 4.14 is close to that in previous research (e.g., 4.23 in Study 1; 4.18 in Study 2).

Principal component analysis extracted one component for OA (eigenvalue 10.87; 72.5% of variance), with all loadings over .70, supporting Keeling et al.’s (2013) argument that the three components of the OA scale comprise a single, second-order factor. Hence, the 15 item responses (Cronbach’s alpha = .91) were combined to make a single mean score. Manipulation checks showed that the scenarios of SWOM message valence ($M_{positive} = 5.32$ vs. $M_{negative} = 2.89$) and tie strength ($M_{strong\_tie} = 5.62$ vs. $M_{weak\_tie} = 3.20$) were successful.

Testing hypothesis 3-1

After reading the advertisement messages, 96 participants reported that they preferred not to search for further information, while 184 indicated they would like more position and company-related information. Supporting H3-1, the participants’ preference for more information differed according to their decision-making style
\[ \chi^2(1, \ N=280) = 19.72, \ p < .01 \]. Satisficers comprised nearly 70% of the 96 participants who were satisfied by the advertisement information and decided not to search for further information (see Table 5.1). This also supports the findings of Study 1.

Note, however, that this short – but typical – advertisement was not particularly effective in meeting applicant needs: overall, 184 (66%) of the total of 280 respondents wanted further information, including 53% of the total number of satisficers.

Table 5.1: Maximiser and satisficer need for further information after reading a typical retail job advertisement

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Want more information?</th>
<th>Maximisers</th>
<th>Satisficers</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>No*</td>
<td>29 (30%)</td>
<td>67 (70%)</td>
<td>96</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes**</td>
<td>107 (58%)</td>
<td>77 (42%)</td>
<td>184</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*NO: After reading the information in the advertisement, the information in the advertisement shown is NOT ENOUGH for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR that vacancy or not. Before I go to the application process, I prefer to SPEND SOME MORE TIME getting to know more about the job until I feel satisfied I know enough.

**YES: After reading the information in the advertisement, the information in the advertisement shown has provided ENOUGH information for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR the vacancy. Thus, I prefer NOT TO SPEND TIME looking for further information about that vacancy.

Testing hypothesis 3-2

A 2 (maximiser/satisficer) by 2 (positive/negative SWOM) by 2 (strong/weak tie) ANOVA test showed a significant three-way interaction \[ F(1, 142) = 42.77, \ p < .01 \]. A significant three-way interaction means that there is a two-way interaction that varies across the levels of a third variable (Kirk, 1995). In order to explain clearly the results of the significant three-way interaction in H3-2, the dataset was split by the variable decision-making style to test the simple main effects. A pair of two-way ANOVA then tested the two-way interaction (between message valence and tie strength of the source) for each of the two decision-making styles (maximiser/satisficer).

The first two-way ANOVA examined the two-way interaction between message valence and tie strength for maximisers. The result showed that the interaction effect was significant \[ F(1, 83) = 34.24, \ p < .01 \]. A Duncan post-hoc test with 95% confidence level compared the four combined scenario groups (positive + strong tie, positive + weak tie, negative + strong tie, negative + weak tie) and revealed
that when the SWOM message was provided by a weak-tie provider, maximisers reported significantly higher OA when the information content was positive, compared to the negative information content \[ M_{(maximiser) \text{ positive + weak tie}} = 3.78 \text{ vs. } M_{(maximiser) \text{ negative + weak tie}} = 2.82, p < .01 \]. No difference was found when the SWOM message provider had a strong relationship with the maximiser-style jobseeker \[ M_{(maximiser) \text{ negative + strong tie}} = 5.81 \text{ vs. } M_{(maximiser) \text{ positive + strong tie}} = 5.42, p = .14 \] (see Figure 5.1 and Table 5.2). Therefore, H3-2a was supported.

![Image](image.png)

**Figure 5.1: Decision-making style (maximiser): interaction between tie strength and SWOM message valence**

The second two-way ANOVA tested the interaction for satisficers. The result showed that the interaction between message valence and tie strength had a significant effect on the OA \[ F(1, 63) = 13.25, p < .01 \]. The Scheffe post-hoc test with 95% confidence level demonstrated that when the SWOM message was provided by a strong tie, satisficers perceived significantly higher OA when the information content was positive compared to negative information content \[ M_{(satisficer) \text{ positive + strong tie}} = 6.09 \text{ vs. } M_{(satisficer) \text{ negative + strong tie}} = 5.45, p < .01 \]. Furthermore, satisficers reported no significant difference in their evaluation of positive and negative SWOM information content that was provided by a weak tie \[ M_{(satisficer) \text{ negative + weak tie}} = 3.57 \text{ vs. } M_{(satisficer) \text{ positive + weak tie}} = 3.34, p = .62 \] (see Figure 5.2 and Table 5.2). Thus, H3-2b was supported.
Overall, after reading SWOM messages, 86 of the Group B participants stated that the information (advertisement + SWOM) satisfied their information needs and was enough for them to make a decision. This was an increase of 27% on the number from the first phase, showing that SWOM messages are influential and effective and can accelerate jobseeker decisions. (Note, however, that some of these decisions were likely to be negative, based on the OA scores.) Supporting H3-3, over half (45/87, 52%) of the maximisers who wanted more information after reading the initial advertisement still found the additional SWOM message insufficient information and preferred to search for more information, compared to 30% (19/63) of satisficers.
Interestingly, the percentage of maximisers requesting further information after receiving SWOM messages differed according to the source tie strength and the message valence scenario \(\chi^2(3, N = 87) = 10.20, p < .05\). When the SWOM messages were negative and provided by a strong-tie source, the maximisers were less likely to search for further information (just 23% wanted more information), indicating a differential weighting for this combination (see Table 5.3).

For the satisficers, overall there was no significant difference in the likelihood that they would request further information after receiving SWOM messages according to source tie strengths and message valences \(\chi^2(3, N = 63) = 5.60, p = .13\). Nevertheless, it is worth mentioning that when the SWOM messages were positive and provided by a weak-tie source, half of the participants (53%) decided to search for further information, again suggesting a differential weighting for a particular combination (see Table 5.3).

### Table 5.3: Maximisers’ and satisficers’ information search intentions after receiving a SWOM message

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Still want more information?</th>
<th>Total (N=87)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No*</td>
<td>Yes**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximisers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive + Strong tie</td>
<td>9 (43%)</td>
<td>12 (57%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive + Weak tie</td>
<td>8 (35%)</td>
<td>15 (65%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative + Strong tie</td>
<td>17 (77%)</td>
<td>5 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative + Weak tie</td>
<td>8 (38%)</td>
<td>13 (62%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>42</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisficers</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive + Strong tie</td>
<td>15 (83%)</td>
<td>3 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive + Weak tie</td>
<td>7 (47%)</td>
<td>8 (53%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative + Strong tie</td>
<td>12 (75%)</td>
<td>4 (25%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Negative + Weak tie</td>
<td>10 (71%)</td>
<td>4 (29%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>44</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*No: After reading the advertisement information and SWOM messages, it is enough for me to decide whether to apply for that vacancy. Therefore, I prefer not to search for further information about the job/company.

**Yes: After reading the advertisement information and SWOM messages, I prefer to search for further information about the job/company.

### 5.2.4 Conclusions and implications

The results of Study 3 provide evidence that maximiser and satisficer decision-making styles of jobseekers exhibit different reactions and preferences when they respond to a) a typical formal job advertisement and b) follow-up SWOM messages from informal sources differing in tie strength and message valence.
The results reveal that about 79% of maximisers reported that they would tend to search for more information about the company/job vacancy before they made the decision to join, or not join, the candidate pool for the organisation. In contrast, 53% of satisficers would search for more information; so 47% of satisficers were likely to make a decision on whether to join the candidate pool after receiving a short and positive advertisement message. Hence, it is confirmed that in a typical job-information search context, maximisers generally require more information than satisficers and actively seek further information before making job-application decisions. To the best of the researcher’s knowledge, this difference in reactions to job advertisements between decision-making styles has not previously been reported in the literature.

Note here that the results of this study strongly suggest that a typical short formal job-vacancy advertisement message for retail jobs is not fit for purpose; the information was insufficient for a majority (66%) of the respondents, especially for maximisers.

The study results also indicate that satisficers are more likely than maximisers to be influenced by strong-tie information sources, such as family and close friends. Most satisficers stop searching for further position-related information after they have received the advertisement information and SWOM messages, especially when the messages come from a strong-tie source. This reflects satisficers’ characteristic of making ‘good-enough’ decisions. Conversely, maximisers do not ignore SWOM messages from a weak-tie source so directly. Indeed, weak ties have a greater influence on the level of OA for maximisers than they do for satisficers.

This may also explain why even when there is a disparity between negative SWOM messages and the positive advertisement message, maximisers’ intentions towards joining the company may be higher than satisficers. This also suggests that maximisers may be more cynical when evaluating job recruitment information and job decisions, but they are also more likely to accept the reality of imperfection, especially in retail-trade job decisions. This indirectly provides a clue that contrary to some existing research which argues that maximisers are more unhappy than satisficers (e.g., Iyengar et al., 2006), the results of this research suggest that maximisers should be no less happy than satisficers in their decisions; maximisers
generally search for as much information as they can about the job and evaluate the information rationally, and it seems from these results that only more balanced information from trusted sources/providers may stop them. They are able to expect (and deal with) any negative situations that they might face when they go to work because they should have accepted the advantages and especially the disadvantages of the job position before making the final decision. This strengthens the finding from Study 1 (Q8) that some maximiser-style jobseekers actively look for negative information about the job, even if the information is not accepted as being completely true or inevitable. This also supports the finding from Study 2 that maximiser-style employees actually report a higher degree of met expectations towards their present retail-trade jobs, compared to satisficer-style employees.

By demonstrating that a jobseeker’s decision-making style is a moderator of the effectiveness of recruitment information sources and content, the results provide an explanation of the inconsistency in the existing research, in that some studies show that formal sources attract more jobseekers than informal sources do, whilst other studies show the opposite results.

Furthermore, the results show that negative information from a strong-tie source actually increased both maximisers’ and satisficers’ willingness to join the company, and positive information from a weak-tie source slightly decreased willingness to join the company. This finding is consistent with the Van Hoye and Lievens (2009) conclusion that not all negative information leads to a negative result, especially in the retail trade, where most of the jobs have some drawbacks (Rhoads et al., 2002). The negative scenarios did not use very extreme negative messages; jobseekers may be prone to accepting what strong-tie sources tell them, and may accept the imperfect and realistic parts of the job (Thorsteinson et al., 2004). On the other hand, when receiving positive SWOM information from a weak-tie source (considered less credible), the credibility of the information provider may decrease. In this case, one group of participants received positive information from the first scenario (company-controlled advertisement) and then received a positive SWOM message from a weak-tie source (considered less credible). This group of people may not have been sure whether they should fully believe the information they received, and may have felt that the information from the two sources was too good to be true.
(Thorsteinson et al., 2004), which thus decreased their OA. It is also this group that had the highest percentage (of both maximisers and satisficers, especially maximisers) reporting that they prefer to keep searching for more information after receiving the SWOM message. This result suggests that as well as having a mediation effect, source credibility could have a moderating effect on jobseekers’ perceived OA. This indirectly supports the results of previous research, which have found that source credibility could be both a mediator and a moderator (e.g., Roy, Jain and Rana, 2013). Namely, when the information provider is more/less credible, jobseekers are more/less willing to accept the advice. Jobseekers will have a generally higher/lower perceived OA when receiving positive/negative content from a credible provider (mediation effect). In other words, when the information is provided from a highly credible provider, information is considered to reflect the truth and jobseekers are more likely to accept the advice. This leads to the result that while the received information content (from a reliable provider) is negative, jobseekers’ perceived OA will be higher than the perceived OA when positive information content is provided by a provider who is not credible (moderation effect).

Study 3 shows the potential double-edged sword of SWOM: it may decrease the amount of further information searching, but negative information from weak ties lowers OA. Since WOM messages from INCC sources are influential but cannot be controlled by organisations and thus could be sources of negative messages, companies should carefully consider designing job advertisements that satisfy jobseekers’ information needs and also reduce the need to seek information from other sources. This implies that companies should try to maximise the pool of applicants who are satisfied with the amount and type of information provided by the initial advertisement. Typical retail-job advertisements are short and contain mainly basic hard job information, and, from the results so far, they lack sufficient information for many jobseekers or, at the very least, send jobseekers in search of confirmation or disconfirmation of the information. At this stage, it is not clear if it is more categorical information or confirmation of the information that these dissatisfied jobseekers are looking for. Nevertheless, more detailed information could satisfy both of these information needs. The investigation will be extended in Chapter 7 (Study 6, a supplementary study, on page 216).
Decision-making studies (e.g., Bickart and Schindler, 2001) propose that information receivers are more likely to be convinced by information content that has more detail. This suggests that providing more information – such as a longer, more detailed advertisement – should reduce the number of potential applicants who seek further information before applying. This will increase the number of applicants. That is, providing more informative information could satisfy those jobseekers who just want to get more information (more details about the job/employer) as well as those who want to search for more information to confirm the information that they have received.

Nevertheless, as considered in Chapter 2, although some recruitment studies show that providing more specific information in job advertisements can help facilitate better recruitment outcomes, several researchers find evidence that an informative and more detailed message is not necessarily more persuasive and attractive than a simple and short one (see Chapter 2, on page 42). Furthermore, no studies have examined how/whether the amount of detail in job advertisements can satisfy maximiser and satisficer information needs and influence application decisions. It is possible that individual differences could be the moderator that leads to the different findings.

Therefore, to bridge this gap, Study 4 explores the potential effects for maximisers and satisficers of providing more informative job adverts. The findings will help to fulfil the fourth and fifth research objectives. Firstly, the results will theoretically enhance the understanding of social communication theory with regard to how jobseekers’ decision-making style affects their responses (OA and willingness to search for more information) based on the stimulus (message length). Secondly, the results will provide employers with advice that can be used when designing recruitment messages.
5.3 Study 4: Does providing more (hard, confirmable) detail in company-controlled sources stop jobseekers from searching for further information? The amount of detail in job advertisements and how it can satisfy maximiser and satisficer information needs and influence their application decisions

5.3.1 Conceptual development

Ariely (2000) shows that controlling information flows, by providing information that fits a recipient’s preferences, can effectively influence the recipient’s choice. On the surface, this appears to be an intuitive and easy solution that does not require empirical confirmation. However, a typical job-vacancy advertisement in the retail sector tends only to briefly introduce very basic job requirements and simple details, such as the salary, hours and location. Study 3 reveals that a job recruitment message that can be argued to be typical, as it was modelled on and derived from those found in a substantial review of sources (see page 185), will fail to satisfy around 66% of jobseekers, who will actively search for further job-vacancy/company-related information. The cost of advertising space typically increases with quantity, but the efficacy of longer advertisements is as yet unknown, especially in relation to decision-making styles.

Building on Study 3, Study 4 explores whether providing more information in the job advertisement can satisfy the information needs of more jobseekers, and increase the perceived OA for both maximiser and satisficer types. In this thesis, to ‘satisfy’ has the meaning: prevent jobseekers from searching for further information from non-company-controlled sources. Such non-controlled sources may increase or decrease a jobseeker’s willingness to join an organisation, as found and mentioned in Study 3. Furthermore, the study provides insights into whether delivering more information is likely to be a viable and cost-effective course of action for companies, in particular with regard to the reduced costs of online advertising.

Bickart and Schindler (2001) indicate that information with more detailed descriptions can significantly increase an information receiver’s willingness to adopt the information contents. When a message contains only a simple description with insufficient information to enhance an information receiver’s knowledge about the object, the information receiver will tend to delay decision-making. Several
recruitment studies show that providing more specific information in job advertisements is able to lead to better recruitment outcomes (see Chapter 2, on page 44). The qualitative data of Study 1 also provides evidence for this issue. Participants pointed out that more detailed information will increase their satisfaction with the information. From the perspective of both naive scientist theory (Heider, 1958) and cognitive miser theory (Fiske and Taylor, 1984) (see Chapter 2, on page 62), the provision of further job details in one source would save jobseekers time, as they would not have to search for other sources and it would also enhance their understanding of the job vacancy. Following Fiske and Taylor (1984), for jobseekers whose orientation could be categorised as ‘cognitive miser’, the likelihood of not seeking out further information would be increased. Therefore, it may also be expected that the results will be modified by decision-making style, in that more satisficers are likely to be satisfied by more detailed recruitment messages.

On the other hand, there are other outcomes beyond decisions to stop information searches. The other important measure for the present research is the effect on OA, and hence the likelihood of applying for the job. With regard to other outcomes, Barber and Roehling (1993) found that information specificity is related to receiver judgments of higher appropriateness, truthfulness and perceived informativeness. Yüce and Highhouse (1998) demonstrate that merely adding relevant job information to recruitment advertisements can lead to the inference that the jobs that are promoted in the ads are more attractive (arguably a parallel judgment to OA) (see Chapter 2, on page 42). However, Friedrich et al. (1996) indicate that a more detailed message is not necessarily better attractive than a short one. They show that a short message which clearly expresses the key information performs as well as a long and detailed message.

Study 3 reveals that maximisers are more active in their search for job-related information, indicating that maximisers may put more weight on the ‘details and informativeness’ of the information. Providing more informative job information is likely to make these ‘naive scientist’-oriented maximisers have a positive impression towards the source. In the present case, the source is the employer. This suggests that, when compared to a typical shorter ad message, a more detailed message from the
employer may increase a maximiser’s attitude towards the organisation and thereby increase their willingness to work for the organisation (OA).

Thus, the length (specificity) of the message may have an influence on jobseekers’ satisfaction with the information provided and their subsequent decisions concerning not only whether they search for more information or not, but also the perceived OA of the organisation:

**H4-1:** Compared to a typical shorter job advertisement, an advertisement with more hard, confirmable information content will result in fewer jobseekers wishing to search for further job-related information; this effect is higher for satisficers than maximisers.

**H4-2:** Compared to a typical shorter job advertisement, an advertisement with more hard, confirmable information content will result in higher organisational attractiveness (OA); this effect is higher for maximisers than satisficers.

### 5.3.2 Method

A scenario-based experiment was employed to test the effects of decision-making style and short (typical) and long (more informative) job recruitment message on a jobseeker’s perceived OA and their intentions to search for further information.

**Measures**

As previously, the six-item MS (Nenkov *et al.*, 2008), the 15-item OA (Highhouse *et al.*, 2003) and further demographic questions were adopted (see Chapter 3, on page 91 - 94).

**Scenarios and procedure**

Participants were randomly assigned to one of two scenarios: long information content vs. short information content. The short version was the one that was designed for and used in Study 3. The long version provided the same job attributes but with extended content. The extended content consisted of longer and more detailed descriptions of the information that would be provided in the advertisement. For example, the short version, provided to the control group, stated: ‘The advertisement
says the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level for this retail job and, as far as you are aware, is a bit higher than some similar roles in other companies.’ For the experimental group, the longer version stated: ‘A full introduction to the salary system of Company A is given in the advertisement (information includes how you may get to the next level of salary, the annual evaluation, etc.), and this indicates that the starting salary will be dictated by your work experience. As far as you are aware, the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level and even a bit higher than similar roles in some other companies.’ As in Study 3, the use of scenarios, rather than job advertisements, avoided the necessity of providing precise details for certain factors, such as salary level, as this could have had an influence on the outcome. After reading the scenarios, the participants stated whether they would seek further information or not, and provided their perceived OA towards the job vacancy/company. The adopted scenarios are shown in Appendix D, on page 268. Demographic questions were asked afterwards on the next page of the questionnaire.

5.3.3 Data analysis and results

Recruitment via AMT (see Chapter 3, on page 85) produced 81 participants (43 males and 38 females), aged over 19, with work experience in the retail industry, and living in the US. Comparing user IDs ensured no participant of Study 4 had participated in Study 3. The sample was, again, well educated with good retail experience: 64% had a university degree; 94% had more than a year of retail work experience; and 69% earned below $3,000 per month. There were no systematic relationships among the randomly assigned groups in terms of demographic variables. The participants were rewarded with an incentive of $1.5 each via AMT.

Testing hypothesis 4-1

The median split method was used to identify maximisers and satisficers (Mdn = 4.13; Cronbach’s alpha .78). For the control group (the short-version scenario), 63% of participants reported needing more information to make the application decision. This is consistent with the Study 3 result of 66%, suggesting the manipulations in Study 3 and Study 4 were not biased, as no participant of Study 4 had participated in Study 3.
Supporting H4-1, participant need for more information differed between the short version and the longer version \[\chi^2(1, N=81) = 5.44, p < .05\]. More participants in the long-positive group (63%) than in the control group (37%, see Table 5.4) reported that the information was enough for them to make the decision, suggesting a 26% advantage to giving more information. Furthermore, participant choice for more information also differed by decision-making style \[\chi^2(1, N=81) = 5.43, p < .05\], with 80% of satisficers, compared to 48% of maximisers, reporting that the information was enough for them to make the decision.

### Table 5.4: Results for the question: Based on your previous jobseeking experience, what is your attitude towards the job information from an advertisement like the one above? (N=81)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Short (control group)</th>
<th>Long (N=41)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(N=40)</td>
<td>N</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximisers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>(77%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO**</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>(23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisficers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>YES</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>(52%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NO</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>(48%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>(63%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*YES: After reading the information in the advertisement, the information in the advertisement shown has provided ENOUGH information for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR the vacancy. Thus, I prefer NOT TO SPEND TIME looking for further information about that vacancy.**NO: After reading the information in the advertisement, the information in the advertisement shown is NOT ENOUGH for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR that vacancy or not. Before I go to the application process, I prefer to SPEND SOME MORE TIME getting to know more about the job until I feel satisfied I know enough.

**Testing hypothesis 4-2**

An independent-samples t-test showed a marginal trend towards significance \[t(36) = 1.67, p = .053 (< .1)] between the two maximiser (short vs. long) groups \[M_{maximiser-short} = 4.70, SD_{maximiser-short} = 1.05 \text{ vs. } M_{maximiser-long} = 5.15, SD_{maximiser-long} = \ .59\]. The Cohen’s d = .56; this represented a medium effect size (Cohen, 1988), suggesting that providing more informative job details in an FCC source could slightly increase maximisers’ perceived OA.

However, a further independent-samples t-test indicated this did not apply to satisficers \[M_{satisficer-short} = 4.83, SD_{satisficer-short} = .82 \text{ vs. } M_{satisficer-long} = 4.82, SD_{satisficer-long} = .70; t(41) = .05, p = .96\]. No evidence was found to suggest that there were differences between satisficers who read a short version and those who read a
long version of an advertisement’s information content. Therefore, hypothesis 4 was only partially supported.

5.3.4 Conclusions and implications

Study 4 illustrates that the provision of additional details regarding a job vacancy, when delivered in an FCC source, can significantly prevent jobseekers from attempting to find information elsewhere. More jobseekers would have their information needs satisfied with this method – particularly jobseekers who adopt a satisficer style of searching for information within the retail sector. Furthermore, providing these additional details increases maximisers’ perceived OA, indicating that added information is important to maximisers when making decisions about whether or not to apply for a job. This can even make them feel more positive about the job vacancy and the company. However, more or less information does not change satisficers’ perceived OA. This demonstrates that the information quantity does not influence their decisions about whether or not to apply. As long as the job attributes fit their personal criteria, no matter what additional details are provided, satisficers consider the job vacancy to have a similar level of attractiveness. This result further explains the different findings in the literature by demonstrating that decision-making style could be a variable that influences the effectiveness of recruitment information content, as in this study not all jobseekers are equally influenced by detailed messages; the results here indicate this only works for maximiser-style jobseekers.

However, even though the findings imply that more informative job details can increase OA, the results also show that half (48%) of the maximisers reported the desire to search for more information. The OA of these ‘keep searching’ maximisers may still decrease due to them receiving information from informal non-company-controlled (INCC) sources. While more informative recruitment messages may marginally affect OA, the findings still suggest that employers should provide additional details when designing recruitment messages. More detailed information significantly prevents jobseekers, especially satisficers, from approaching informal non-company-controlled (INCC) sources, compared to a typical short recruitment message. This significantly lowers the chance that jobseekers may possibly decrease their OA due to receiving negative information from weak ties or untruthful information from non-company-controlled sources. Furthermore, the cost of
providing additional information is not high in the information age. Tools such as company websites are a cheap and effective platform that can be used to display additional job-information content.

5.4 Summary

Study 3 provides statistical evidence that maximisers and satisficers have different job-/company-related information needs and information-searching preferences. The results also show that in terms of the valence and the provider–receiver relationship, they perceive SWOM messages in a different manner: compared to satisficers, maximisers are more willing to accept advice from weak ties. They are also more likely to accept that there could be drawbacks to jobs in the retail trade; therefore they are less likely to decide against applying for the job vacancy when they receive some negative information content. Study 4 reveals that providing more informative messages with detailed job-vacancy descriptions in an FCC source can significantly decrease jobseekers’ intentions to search for further information. Maximisers and satisficers are also affected differently by this ‘more detailed’ long message.

Even though Study 4 shows that in relation to information requirements, employers can satisfy a higher percentage of jobseekers by increasing the amount of detail that is provided in vacancy advertisements, 40% of jobseekers, especially maximisers (70% of these jobseekers were maximisers), still reported wanting to search for further information from other sources. It is possible that this information may differ in type (e.g., notably absent from most job advertisements is information on organisational climate, but Study 1 indicated this was an important issue for many jobseekers), or it may be that jobseekers are looking to judge the veracity of job-attribute claims, such as bonus payments, made within the adverts.

Also, more detailed recruitment messages do not seem to be the most efficient method for increasing OA. In this regard, the findings of Study 3 show the power of SWOM messages, which suggests a possible method that could be adopted to increase recruitment. Given the reasons for further information seeking discussed above, if employers use SWOM-like messages in their controllable sources with positive, or a mixture of positive and negative, information content, does this satisfy more
jobseekers’ job-information needs, and positively affect jobseekers’ attitudes towards the job vacancy (OA)? Do maximisers and satisficers react differently to this information? These issues have been indicated in the results of this research so far, but have not been examined and investigated. A series of follow-up studies (included under Study 5) are employed to explore the answers; these will be presented in Chapter 6.
CHAPTER 6 DEVELOPMENT STUDIES: EXPANDING THE JOB ADVERTISEMENT WITH SOFT INFORMATION

6.1 Chapter overview

In Chapter 5, the results of Study 3 and Study 4 raised a couple of questions about the reasons for further information seeking. It is possible reasons may differ. Potential applicants may want a different type of information to that in a typical job advertisement (e.g., organisational climate – Study 1 indicated this was an important issue for many jobseekers), or they may be looking for evidence to confirm the job-attribute claims that are made in the advertisement (for example, on bonus payments). Related to this, if employers use SWOM-like messages in their controllable sources with positive, or a mixture of positive and negative, information content, which of these satisfy jobseekers’ job-information needs, and positively affect jobseekers’ attitudes towards the job vacancy (OA)? Do maximisers and satisficers react differently to this information? This is related to the practical question of whether employers can therefore prevent more maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers from searching for further job-/company-related information by providing ‘SWOM-like’ messages in their controllable sources – that is to say, by designing and utilising formal company-controlled (FCC) sources which contain information content that is usually provided by informal non-company-controlled (INCC) sources. A series of studies are designed to explore the possible application of this approach and, further, to test whether maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers perceive the SWOM-like messages in a different manner.

Study 5.1 – Jobseekers’ perceptions of the credibility of information in recruitment messages: RJP message form (message source) and decision-making style. Shore and Tetrick (1994) propose that by providing realistic descriptions that contain a limited amount of non-extreme negative information (e.g., relatively low salary or long work hours, but not excessively so), the company can significantly increase the information provider/source credibility and attract more qualified candidates, especially in sectors where jobs usually have well-known common drawbacks. The non-extreme negative information illustrates the concept of realistic job previews (RJP) (see Chapter 2, on page 40). Study 5.1 aims to explore whether jobseekers will perceive FCC sources to have different levels of credibility if the sources are delivered in distinctive forms of
RJP message. These are, for this study, the message is directly provided by the employer (employer sourced, in the employer’s tone) or in SWOM form (SWOM sourced – the message is sourced from present employees). The study also investigates the moderation effect of maximiser and satisficer decision-making styles.

**Study 5.2 – Information provider’s background, job position and the moderation effect from jobseekers’ decision-making style.** The result of Study 5.1 shows that SWOM-formed RJP messages receive the overall highest credibility rating from jobseekers. Based on this finding, two possible moderators – the information provider’s (the current employee’s) background (expertise background vs. personal background) and the job position (grassroots vs. management-level retail-trade job) – were further investigated. Study 5.2 is employed to examine the influence (the interaction) of these two variables and jobseekers’ decision-making style on the credibility of the SWOM-formed RJP message in company-controlled advertisements.

**Study 5.3 – SWOM form (message source), valence, decision-making style, OA and willingness to search for further job-position/company-related information.** Combining the results of Study 5.1 and Study 5.2, Study 5.3 investigates whether providing a SWOM-formed RJP message with information on the provider’s background and manipulating the message valence of the FCC source can significantly satisfy more maximisers’ and satisficers’ information needs and increase their willingness to apply to and subsequently join a company (perceived OA).

**6.2 Study 5.1: Jobseekers’ perceptions of the credibility of information in recruitment messages: (valence), form and decision-making style**

**6.2.1 Conceptual development**

Van Hoye and Lievens (2007a) apply the use of WOM messages as a recruitment source to the online environment. They discuss the effects of web-based employee testimonials (the message is shown on a company’s official website) and web-based WOM (the message is provided in a non-company-controlled Internet discussion forum) on applicants’ perceptions of the credibility of the information and organisational attractiveness (OA). The results reveal that credibility acts as a positive
mediator for the applicants’ perceived OA. The authors have also found evidence that although applicants evaluate the web-based WOM messages with an overall higher credibility than web-based employee testimonials and rate OA at a higher level when receiving web-based WOM messages, the recruitment message (content) actually moderates the jobseekers’ OA. When the recruitment information is focused on the ‘individual point of view’, no significant credibility and OA difference was found between the web-based testimonial and the web-based WOM. That is, when recruitment messages focus on details that relate to personal experience, testimonials on the organisation’s official website were associated with higher OA and credibility. The research of Van Hoye and Lievens (2007b) demonstrates that even if soft, experience-based information is provided by a company-controlled source, it is possible to have a similar positive effect – for example, increasing jobseekers’ OA – if the company-controlled sources provide additional and credible information from the individual point of view.

Van Hoye and Lievens’ (2007) idea of web-based employee testimonials is similar to the notion of realistic job previews (RJPs), even though the authors do not use this terminology. Premack and Wanous (1985) identify RJPs as devices used in the early stages of personnel selection to provide potential applicants with accurate information. An RJP message provides potential applicants with information content on more experience-based aspects of the job, which can be positive or a mixture of positive and negative. Compared to confirmable information (more objective information, e.g., salary, hours, location), which is considered more concrete, experience-based information (more subjective information) is intangible (Keeling et al., 2013). This experience-based information helps jobseekers to be aware of what the organisation offers if they accept the role (e.g., organisational culture, office climate and manager’s leading style) and what the organisation expects from them (e.g., late hours, stress, customer interaction, urgency, degree of physical risk) (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Premack and Wanous (1985) suggest that while most employers try to sell job openings to jobseekers by providing inflated information, RJPs can make jobseekers feel that employers are being honest with them.
RJP message format and credibility

Research by Fisher et al. (1979) provides evidence that negative information about jobs can moderately increase the information provider’s (source’s) credibility. The purpose of RJP is not to overemphasise the negative part of the job (e.g., a really low salary and very long working hours). Instead, RJP should accurately describe the real situation, which may contain some necessary compromises (e.g., may need to work on weekends during the busy seasons). As highlighted before, Breaugh (2013) indicates that almost all retail-trade jobs have several drawbacks. This is a particular feature of the retail trade. Knowing about possible unpleasant situations in advance could help jobseekers meet expectations and decrease post-decisional regret. Therefore, it is anticipated that jobseekers’ perceived information credibility will be increased by providing both positive and weakly negative information in an FCC source, compared to only emphasising the positive aspects of the job position.

On the other hand, Wathen and Burkell (2002) indicate that the way a message is presented can influence how the source is perceived. The RJP information-providing form is a variable that needs to be considered as a moderator. RJP messages have different formats, including: the description is displayed as employer sourced, which is presented in the employer’s tone (e.g., ‘Working hours in Company A are very flexible’), and in the form of employee testimonials; and the message is demonstrated as staff (current employee) sourced, where the content is in a staff member’s tone and is, therefore, more personal (e.g., ‘Based on my experience, I think the working hours in Company A are very flexible’) (Shore and Tetrick, 1994). Even though employee testimonials and staff word of mouth (SWOM) are different sources (while SWOM is not completely controlled by employers, employee testimonials are technically monitored by employers (Highhouse et al., 2003), in RJP form, employee testimonials can be considered to be similar to SWOM, especially the information content.

As highlighted in Chapter 2 (on page 55), credibility is one of the most important elements that mediate the effectiveness of recruitment information and jobseekers’ willingness towards joining the organisation (Van Hoye and Lievens, 2007). It is the extent of trustworthiness of the communicator as perceived by the individual receiving the communication (Freedman et al., 1981). Buda and Charnov
(2003) indicate that the way a message is presented and framed may influence how the message credibility is perceived. Recruitment messages delivered via different forms significantly influence jobseekers’ perceptions of employers’ features (Rieh and Belkin, 1998; Allen, Scotter and Otondo, 2004). Based on the notion of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (Petty and Cacioppo, 1984), the RJP message format is considered to be a peripheral cue. The nature of the content (e.g., valence, job attributes) in the employer’s message and the current employee’s message can be the same (both are provided in the job advertisement, which is controlled by the employer). The main difference is how the message is worded and framed. Cober et al. (2000) indicate that displaying employees’ testimonials encourages jobseekers to identify with organisations and increases their trust towards the employer, because jobseekers feel that they see ‘the more human side of the organisation’. Van Hoye and Lievens’ (2007) findings suggest that employee testimonials (the soft information content is SWOM formed/the message is SWOM sourced), which are presented in a personal tone, may receive higher credibility than information provided directly by the employer, which uses the organisation’s tone (the message is employer sourced). A possible explanation for this is that jobseekers think that the information provider (the incumbent) has direct experience of the work environment, even though their experimental scenarios provide the same information content.

The moderating effects of decision-making style

As mentioned before, decision-making is a possible moderator leading to different perceptions of or attitudes towards a message, and the concepts of maximiser and satisficer illustrate two theories extant in the psychology literature. Based on the concept of the Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM) (see Chapter 2, on page 62), these ‘naive scientist’-oriented, maximiser-style decision-makers are more likely to adopt a central route (central-route processes involve careful scrutiny of a persuasive communication to determine the merits of the arguments) when making decisions (Petty & Cacioppo, 1986), which leads these information recipients to cautiously weigh up the information content (Cacioppo et al., 1983). That is to say, whether the message that contains soft information is SWOM sourced (formed) or employer sourced (formed), maximisers are more likely to see the ‘content’ of the message
rather than the ‘form’. Therefore, maximisers tend to make minute attitude changes towards information credibility when they receive soft information in different forms.

In comparison, satisficers are orientated as ‘cognitive misers’. They tend to use instinct and heuristics and to adopt peripheral routes when making choices. When the peripheral route is used, message recipients tend to be affected by peripheral cues, which involve an evaluation of the early parts of the message rather than subsequent parts (e.g., Tversky and Kahneman, 1974). They are inclined to evaluate a piece of information as trusted or less trusted by relying on their first and general impressions. This initial response will then affect their perception of the message content. Their attitudes tend to change according to subjective consciousness (Coon and Mitterer, 2014). The message recipients will also maintain their previous attitude towards the subject of the message, and this will affect their perception of the rest of the message (e.g., Cacioppo et al., 1983). Thus, it can be expected that SWOM-formed soft (RJP) information (SWOM-sourced message) with a current employee’s tone will be evaluated as having a higher level of information credibility by satisficers, compared to RJP information provided directly by their employer that has an organisational tone. A two-way interaction between RJP message format and jobseeker’s decision-making style is expected:

**H5-1:** Satisficers will perceive higher information credibility when receiving a RJP message in SWOM format, compared to a RJP message in the employer format, whereas maximisers show no significant difference in credibility ratings across the conditions.

**Pre-study**

For the scenario design of Study 5.1, a pre-study investigated the information search characteristics of jobseekers after reading a longer, more detailed advertisement message (see Study 4). Specifically, for those who still wanted further information, the pre-study investigated what they reported they would search for and from what source(s).

346 participants with work experience in the retail trade were invited via AMT (see Chapter 3, on page 85). 177 participants showed a good gender split (male 52%);
all participants were aged over 19 and lived in the US. Comparing user IDs ensured no participant had taken part in Study 4. The sample was well educated with good retail experience: 57% had a university degree; 85% had more than a year of retail work experience; and 62% earned below $3,000 per month. The participants were rewarded with an incentive of $0.50 each via AMT.

Participants were instructed to read the long (more informative) version of the job-information scenario (the same scenario that was designed and used in Study 4, see Chapter 5, on page 170). After reading the scenario, participants were asked whether they would seek further information or not. In addition, those who answered that they would prefer to spend more time and effort searching for more information were further asked: what information would they want to know more about and what source(s) would they prefer to get this information from.

For this task, respondents were given a list of 20 job attributes. Ten of these were included as they were indicated by participants in Study 1 [see Chapter 4, on page 99] (retail-trade sample): 1) basic remuneration, 2) work location, 3) chance to get promotion, 4) annual bonus and other additional benefits, 5) job skill requirements, 6) holidays, 7) general fairness of treatment of employees by company, 8) social working environment (e.g., friendly colleagues, helpful supervisors), 9) general reputation of the company and 10) family-friendly or flexible working hours. However, to help ensure coverage of relevant issues, ten additional attributes were derived from Schmidt et al.’s (2014) and Hackman and Oldham’s (1976) studies of important general job attributes that can be used to attract jobseekers to an organisation: 1) health care provision/insurance, 2) training courses, 3) store facilities, 4) chance for a mentor, 5) opportunity to use learned skills, 6) staff social events, 7) physical working environment (e.g., cleanliness), 8) company financial position, 9) fit between job and personal skills and values, and 10) company ethical and environmental policies. Although, arguably, there may be some overlap between some of these and the study-generated list, these attributes were not specifically indicated by participants in Study 1, but were held to be important in the literature and so were included for completeness.

Jobseekers were asked to select the source they would actively use to get information on each of the above-mentioned job attributes. Information sources were
provided, including the company itself, e.g., HR department, company website, online or offline employment agency/placement service and online or offline news reports, magazines, etc. (these are company-controlled sources); and family/friends, a current employee who is not family or a friend, such as a visit to a store to talk to staff, online communities and online private blogs (non-company-controlled sources). Employee (staff) referral was not included in the list because employee referral means that incumbents actively recommend a job vacancy to jobseekers; it means jobseekers passively receive job information from the employee. The option of ‘other source’ was also listed. The multiple selection questions allowed participants to choose more than one information type and indicate multiple sources from the list. Demographics were collected on the next page of the survey.

Results of the pre-study

135 (39%) of the 346 participants reported that the long advertisement message about the job could not satisfy their needs and they would still want to search for more position/company-related information. 89 of the 135 (54%) were male; 67% had a university degree; 95% had more than a year of retail work experience; and 70% received a wage of below $3,000 monthly. Corresponding with the result of Study 4 (37% of the participants wanted to search for more information and 63% did not), a more detailed advertisement message (the scenario) could satisfy approximately 60% of the jobseekers’ information needs. This revealed that the manipulation was not biased.

The results showed that many of these unsatisfied jobseekers were willing to get more information from FCC sources, such as the company HR department and the company website. A small portion of participants reported wanting to get further information from FNCC sources such as employment agencies. This confirmed that company-controlled sources are widely adopted by retail-trade jobseekers. Employers should be prepared to receive enquiries about these job attributes and provide satisfactory information in response.

On the other hand, a large number of participants indicated that after receiving the more informative ad message, they would ask a current employee who is or is not family or a close friend for further information, showing that SWOM is an important
Further, more participants reported that they wanted to get more information from these non-company-controlled sources about basic remuneration, the chances for promotion, general fairness of treatment of employees by the company, physical working environment, social working environment, general reputation of the company, and family-friendly or flexible working hours. Aside from the physical working environment, the other job attributes were covered in the original list extracted from Study 1 (see Table 6.1).

Table 6.1: What information would they want to know more about and what source(s) would they prefer to get this information from (for participants who answered that they would prefer to spend further time and effort searching for more information)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Job attribute</th>
<th>Company itself, e.g., HR department (FCC source)</th>
<th>Company website (FCC source)</th>
<th>Online or offline employment agency or placement service (FCC source)</th>
<th>News stories, magazines, etc., online or offline (FCC source)</th>
<th>Formal sources (in total)</th>
<th>Informal sources (in total)</th>
<th>Other source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Basic remuneration</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>125</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health care provision/insurance</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work location</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>67</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>118</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to get promotion</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>91</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training courses</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>126</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual bonus and other additional benefits</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>115</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Store facilities</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>104</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skill requirements</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>111</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Staff social events</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General fairness of treatment of employees by company</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical working environment, e.g., cleanliness</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social working environment, e.g., friendly colleagues, helpful supervisors</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance for a mentor</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit between job and my skills and values</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to use learned skills</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>109</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General reputation of the company</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>79</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family-friendly or flexible working hours</td>
<td>61</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>108</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company financial position</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>58</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company ethical and environmental policies</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>138</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* Note: the shadow-marked attributes were selected for the scenario design in Study 5
**Scenario design of Study 5.1**

Based on the pre-study, the seven job attributes that were most commonly indicated by participants who wanted to search for information from informal sources were selected: 1) general fairness of treatment of employees by the company, 2) physical working environment, 3) social working environment 4) family-friendly or flexible working hours, 5) general reputation of the company, 6) remuneration and 7) chances of promotion. Information relevant to these attributes was designed to be provided through an FCC source (a recruitment advertisement) in each of the scenarios.

Parts of the structure of the scenario design were adapted from the experiments of Bretz and Judge (1998) and Thorsteinson et al. (2004). The nature of RJP messages is that they can contain positive only information or a mixture of positive and some weakly negative aspects. Thus, both positive only information and the mixed valence information scenario were applied. The ‘positive only’ scenarios contained a description about the job attribute with more positive information, and for the ‘less positive and weakly negative’ scenarios, some contradictory descriptions such as risks and possible negative circumstances were emphasised. For instance, for the attribute ‘physical working environment’, the positive-only scenario stated: ‘(I have to say,) the working environment is pleasant, clean and tidy, and the facilities are all like new. The company has investment plans to improve the working facilities in the near future.’ For the mixed valence scenarios, some contradictory descriptions such as risks and possible negative circumstances were emphasised: ‘(I have to say,) although kept clean, the working environment is sometimes quite messy due to the work and not all facilities are new, but the company has plans to invest in a clean-up and to improve the working facilities in the near future’ (see Appendix F for full scenarios, on page 273).

By following Fisher et al.’s (1979) suggestion of experiment design, fourteen positive messages were pre-tested (30 participants who have work experience in the retail trade were recruited via AMT, $3.0 incentive) with a mean rating between 4.5 and 5.5 (from ‘1 – very unfavourable’ to ‘7 – very favourable’). Another fourteen weakly negative messages were pre-tested and had a mean rating of between 2.5 and 3.5. Extreme positive and negative messages were not used in order to avoid
overshadowing the effect of other independent variables. Mackintosh (1971) indicates that a strong stimulus may overshadow a weaker one, and one component may block an individual’s perception about another component. In experimental design, the shadowing effect should therefore be considered (Fisher et al., 1979).

For the SWOM form, the scenarios were presented as ‘see what our current employee says about what is it like working here’, and a more individual/personal tone was used to introduce the attribute information (e.g., I think, I would say). For the information directly provided by the employer scenarios, the instruction pointed out that ‘the advertisement also includes the following information’; and an organisational tone was used (e.g., the company considers/supports, Company A provides).

**Measures**

Three items, adopted from the personal involvement inventory (Zaichkowsk, 1994) (item 1) and the credibility scale (McCroskey and Teven, 1999) (items 2 & 3), were employed to evaluate the information credibility. The items were as follows: 1) I feel this information provider is dishonest/honest, 2) the information from this provider is unreliable/trustworthy, 3) I think this information (message quoted from Employee A’s words) in Company A’s advertisement is realistic, strongly disagree/strongly agree. Nunnally (1978) suggests that 7-point is the ideal scale design; based on evidence that scale reliability increased dramatically from 2-point to 7-point designs. However, the reliability increase became slight and less obvious when the design had more than 7 points. Therefore, Nunnally (1978) indicates that adopting a 9-point scale design is relatively conservative. Although some researchers (e.g., Brown, Widing and Coulter, 1991; Aiken, 1983; Masters, 1974) found evidence that analysis results and research findings are not likely to be much affected across 5-point, 7-point or 9-point scale designs, nevertheless, taking into account the mix of 5-point scale for item 1 (Zaichkowsk, 1994) and 7-point for items 2 and 3 (McCroskey and Teven, 1999), a relatively conservative scale design was used in the present study. Thus, all three items were evaluated on a 9-point scale (anchors 1 as ‘strongly disagree’; 9 as ‘strongly agree’).
One item was employed as the manipulation check for message valence (‘I think this information is …’, evaluated on a nine-point scale anchored at 1 as ‘unfavourable to the company’ and 9 as ‘favourable to the company’). Furthermore, in order to check that the seven selected job attributes were important to the jobseekers in relation to the retail trade, five simple items evaluated the importance of the job-attribute information to the participants (all items were evaluated on a nine-point scale, anchored at 1 as ‘this information is worthless/does not matter/is irrelevant/is non-essential/is useless to me’ and at 9 as ‘this information is valuable/matters/is relevant/is essential/is useful to me’).

The short (six-item) version of MS (Nenkov et al., 2008, see Chapter 3, on page 91) was adopted for identifying maximisers and satisficers, as for the studies conducted previously.

**Procedure**

After the participants had read the participant information and agreed the ethical terms of the study, they were directed to read a short instruction. Participants were then randomly assigned to one of the four treatment groups (see table 6.2), and were asked to imagine that they were seeking a new job in the retail trade, when an advertisement draws their attention; each treatment group was given advertisement content with information and characteristics of the retail job with a different combination of valence and message formats/forms. The four groups then completed the credibility scale and the manipulation check items. All respondents provided demographic information and completed the MS before the submission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Information form</th>
<th>Message valence</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1</td>
<td>Directly from employer (employer-sourced message)</td>
<td>Positive content only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 2</td>
<td>Directly from employer (employer-sourced message)</td>
<td>Positive and weakly negative content</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 3</td>
<td>SWOM formed (SWOM-sourced message)</td>
<td>Positive content only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 4</td>
<td>SWOM formed (SWOM-sourced message)</td>
<td>Positive and weakly negative content</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**6.2.2 Data analysis and results**

A total of 203 male (55%) and 165 female (45%) participants were recruited via AMT. Comparing user IDs ensured no participant had taken part in the pre-study. All participants were requested to be aged over 19 and had work experience in the
retail trade in the US. Each participant was rewarded with a $1 incentive. A total of 60% of the participants had a college or university degree, and 86% had more than one year of retail work experience. In addition, 78% received a salary below $3,000 per month. There were no significant differences among the four randomly assigned groups in terms of demographic variables, showing a successful sample random assignment.

A CFA (AMOS 20) using all items of both constructs indicated a good fit for the two-construct measurement model (CMIN/DF 3.42; GFI .98; RFI .96; CFI .98; RMSEA .057 n.s.; standardized RMR .036) (and an improvement on a one factor model CMIN/DF 58.75). Calculated construct reliabilities were satisfactory, Credibility = 0.90; MS = 0.87. It was thus acceptable to go forward using these scales. For the MS, in line with other research using this scale, a median split differentiated maximisers and satisficers. The median of 4.50 is similar to that in previous studies (e.g., 4.23 in the research by Schwartz et al., 2002). The three credibility construct items were combined into a single new construct.

A one-way ANOVA with Duncan post-hoc test supported the manipulation for message valence \([M_{\text{positive (SWOM-formed)}}] = 7.57, M_{\text{positive (directly from employer)}} = 7.41\) vs. \(M_{\text{positive & weakly negative (SWOM formed)}} = 3.76, M_{\text{positive & weakly negative (directly from employer)}} = 3.83, F(3, 742) = 442.28, p < .001\) successfully. Furthermore, all seven job attribute means were rated above the median point (5.00 on the 9-point scale), suggesting that no selected job attribute was non-essential/useless for jobseekers when making a retail trade job application decision. This supported that the selection of the job attributes, and confirmed the successful and appropriate scenario design.
Table 6.3: Demographics (Study 5.1 sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Work experience in the retail trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>389 52%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>357 48%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Maximiser/satisficer (Mdn = 4.50)

| Maximiser       | 386 52%          | 142 19%   | 106 14%   | 82 11%    | 140 19%   |
| Satisficer      | 360 48%          | 142 19%   | 106 14%   | 82 11%    | 140 19%   |

Age

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Income</th>
<th>207 28%</th>
<th>269 36%</th>
<th>148 20%</th>
<th>66 9%</th>
<th>56 7%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>138 18%</td>
<td>444 60%</td>
<td>132 18%</td>
<td>32 4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>$5,001–$7,000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Education

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>255 34%</th>
<th>442 59%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>49 7%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Testing hypothesis 5-1

A 2 (message in the employer’s tone/in the employee’s tone) by 2 (maximisers/satisficers) two-way ANCOVA test was conducted for Hypothesis 5-1. Message valence was set as a covariate for controlling its effect on credibility. Results revealed a significant two-way interaction between decision-making style and RJP message format \( F(1, 741) = 7.48, p < .01 \) (See table 6.4, figure 6.1). Supporting H1 that maximisers show no difference across conditions. A follow-up independent-samples t-test showed that for maximisers, no significant difference was found when the message is in the SWOM form or in the employer’s tone \( M_{\text{maximiser-SWOM formed}} = 6.64, \ SD_{\text{maximiser-SWOM formed}} = 1.38, M_{\text{maximiser-employer's tone}} = 6.38, \ SD_{\text{maximiser-employer's tone}} = 1.37, t(384) = 1.84, p = .07, \text{Cohen’s d} = .18 \). Therefore, H5-1 was fully supported.

Furthermore, although message valence was controlled as a secondary variable, it is worth noting that the more balanced information content (a mixture of positive and some weekly negative aspects) overall received higher credibility \( M = 7.01, \ SD = 1.38 \), compared to positive only content \( M = 6.08, \ SD = 1.37 \) \( F(1, 741) = 8.57, p < .01 \). This finding corresponds with existing research that information with negative aspect content can increase perceived credibility; providing (at least some) possible drawbacks of a job probably makes jobseekers feel that employers are being more honest with them (Walker et al. 2009).
Table 6.4: Tests of Between-Subjects Effects (Study 5.1)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source</th>
<th>Type III SS</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>MS</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Corrected Model</td>
<td>81.58</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>20.40</td>
<td>10.16</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Message Valence [Covariate]</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.20</td>
<td>8.57</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Decision-Making Style (DMS)</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td>.30</td>
<td>.582</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RJP format (RF)</td>
<td>53.41</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>53.41</td>
<td>26.61</td>
<td>.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DMS * RF</td>
<td>15.02</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15.02</td>
<td>7.48</td>
<td>.006</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Error</td>
<td>1487.51</td>
<td>741</td>
<td>2.01</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>1569.09</td>
<td>745</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Figure 6.1 The interaction effect between decision-making style and RJP message format

Overall

A one-way ANOVA (for four groups/scenarios) \[F(3, 742) = 37.61, p < .01\] illustrated that the four groups/scenarios differed in terms of information credibility (\(M_{SWOM\ formed\ –\ positive\ and\ weakly\ negative} = 7.23\), \(M_{Directly\ from\ employer\ –\ positive\ and\ weakly\ negative} = 6.76\), \(M_{SWOM\ formed\ –\ positive\ only} = 6.34\), \(M_{Directly\ from\ employer\ –\ positive\ only} = 5.83\)). Independent-samples t-tests showed that the SWOM-formed RJP with positive and negative information received the highest information credibility, compared to the second highest mean coming from the group receiving information directly from the employer with positive and weakly negative content \([t(365) = 3.46, p < .01]\). The group of messages (with soft information) that came directly from employers and contained only positive content had the lowest credibility \([t(376) = 3.60, p < .01]\).
This revealed that overall, positive-only information content was not as effective as the positive and weakly negative combination, even if it is given in SWOM form.

6.2.3 Conclusions and implications

Study 1 demonstrates that maximisers and satisficers can show different perceived credibility outcomes depending on message format. For satisficers, when the message is presented in the incumbent’s tone (SWOM-formed), the results suggest they are more willing to trust the information. On the contrary, Maximisers are less likely to be affected by how the message is formed.

Thus, for satisficers, addressing and forming the RJP in the incumbent’s tone can bring efficient results. Consequently, even though this strategy may have little effect on maximiser assessments, the results suggest that employers should design (at least part of) their recruitment messages in SWOM form if the goal is to maximise the candidate pool.

Nonetheless, the finding raises a question whether the SWOM-formed RJP message provider (the incumbent) background such as work experience, or the type of job position being considered may exert an influence on jobseekers’ perceived provider/source credibility (e.g., Wright, 2000). In terms of strengthening the effectiveness of the design of SWOM-formed RJP messages, further questions are raised by the literature. The existing studies suggested that the information provider’s background, such as their work experience, may exert an influence on jobseekers’ perceptions of source credibility (e.g., Wright, 2000). Moreover, different job positions may also change a jobseeker’s attitude towards the information source/provider (Wathen and Burkell, 2002). Study 5.2 therefore further examines the interactions between the information provider’s background information (provider’s characteristics in expertise aspect vs. personal aspect) and the job position (management level vs. grassroots level) and the moderating effect of the jobseeker’s decision-making style. Furthermore, the findings of Study 5.1 suggest that weakly negative information increases jobseekers’ trust of recruitment information. However, does this negative information subsequently prevent them from applying for the job and decrease their intention to work for the organisation (OA)? This question is examined in Study 5.3, and the results are presented after Study 5.2.
6.3 Study 5.2: Information provider’s background, job position and the moderating effect from jobseekers’ decision-making style

6.3.1 Conceptual development

The impact of the interaction between message provider background and job type on credibility

Fiske and Taylor (1991) indicate that the characteristics and background of the information provider heavily influence the process and outcomes of persuasion. Information provider background information – such as qualifications, details about the provider’s experience, recognition and reputation – are among the most important criteria that Internet users utilise to evaluate online information (e.g., electronic word of mouth) providers’ trustworthiness (Pattanaphanchai et al., 2013). Wathen and Burkell (2002) conclude that the information provider’s expertise/knowledge, credentials, likeability/goodwill/dynamism and attractiveness are the key factors that influence the information recipients’ perception of credibility. These factors can be classified into two main categories: professional (expertise) and personal. The professional/expertise factors include an information provider’s special knowledge, experience and training in the area, and relevant certifications or degrees issued from an impartial institution. The personal aspect is about the provider’s personality, characteristics, attractiveness and habits. These two aspects of the information providers are both important. When the information recipients evaluate the information provider as having high professional expertise and perceive the provider’s personal background as likeable, the information receivers will perceive the provider to have more positive and higher credibility (Wathen and Burkell, 2002).

Moreover, when the information receivers perceive that the information provider has a higher similarity to them, recipients will consider the provider to have higher credibility (Wathen and Burkell, 2002). Different job positions have different skill requirements. In the retail trade, management-level jobs, such as marketing managers, usually require the individual to have professional knowledge and experience. Grassroots-level employees (e.g., shop assistant) have fewer specific knowledge requirements (Ryan et al., 2005). Consequently, it is likely that when a jobseeker aims to find a management-level job in the retail trade, the information provider’s professional expertise/background will be considered with more weight,
and the professional background information can better convince a management-level jobseeker to trust the information that they receive from the provider compared to receiving personal background information about the provider. On the other hand, when jobseekers plan to get a grassroots-level job, which usually does not require a higher-education qualification or professional knowledge, receiving more likable personal background information about the information provider is more likely to make these jobseekers feel that the provider is similar to them, and, for instance, shares the same interests; the expertise background information is less relevant to them. Therefore, for these jobseekers, personal background information will lead to a higher perception of credibility.

*The moderation effect of jobseekers’ decision-making style*

Maximisers are demonstrated to be a group of people who are more cautious, who always try to avoid the risk of making the wrong decision, who generally have a higher need for cognition (NFC) and who have a higher level of uncertainty avoidance (see Study 2, on page 137). That is, when the information is not sufficient for them to make judgments, maximisers are less likely to accept or refuse the information from the source and convey their trust in the provider easily because they do not want to miss information that could be true. Moreover, as discussed before, maximisers generally adopt the central route and consider every possible chance of making a reasonable decision. When maximisers only receive the RJP message provider’s expertise or personal background from one source (e.g., advertisement), whether the maximiser aims to find a management level job or a grassroots job, the only aspect background information should be insufficient for them to decide if the information provider is trustworthy enough because the two aspects are both important (Wathen and Burkell, 2002). In other words, maximisers are less likely to trust or mistrust the information from the providers in the first place. This will lead them to evaluate the credibility of the provider on a similar level, especially when they only receive insufficient background information. Their attitude towards the provider is supposed to change only when both expertise and personal background information is provided. Therefore, it is expected that maximisers’ attitude towards the credibility is less likely to be affected by only one aspect of the information.
provider’s background information and the job type choice, no matter what job type (position) they aim to pursue.

On the other hand, satisficers show relatively low NFC, and tend to follow their first impression about the source and adopt peripheral routes when making decisions. The adoption of peripheral routes will be influenced more by the halo effect, which is a cognitive bias that leads individuals to subjectively evaluate the information provider and then make a more subjective judgment instead of spending a protracted amount of time evaluating the options (Leuthesser, Kohli, and Harich, 1995). Thus, when satisficers are looking for a management-level job, the information provider’s expertise background information will help to increase the credibility, because it shows the professional aspect of the provider. On the other hand, when satisficers aim for a grassroots-level job in the retail trade, personal background information will draw their attention because basic-level jobs usually do not require many professional skills, and the personal background information can show that the RJP message provider is likable, increasing satisficers’ attitude towards the credibility. Hence, it is anticipated that different jobseekers who adopt a satisficer decision style will have obvious credibility differences when receiving different background information.

Consequently, a two-way interaction between the information provider’s background information and the job position is expected to have different effects on maximisers’ and satisficers’ perceived credibility (across types of the jobseeker’s decision-making style), in which satisficers are affected by the interaction between the information provider’s background information and their job position, but maximisers are not. This constructs a three-way interaction:

**H5-2:** *There is a three-way interaction between decision-making style, the SWOM-formed RJP message provider background information and job position, such that: Upon receiving a satisficers aiming for a management job receive expertise background information they will perceive higher source credibility than those who aim to search for a grassroots level job, conversely, satisficers aiming for a grassroots level job receiving personal background information will perceive higher source credibility than those seeking a management level job; whereas for maximisers, perceived credibility will not be affected.*
6.3.2 Method

Scenario design

For the management-level job scenario, an instruction asked participants to imagine that they are seeking a new job as a ‘sales manager’ in the retail trade and a job advertisement catches their attention; for the grassroots job scenario, the instruction asked participants to imagine that they are seeking a new job as a ‘shop assistant’ in the retail trade. A brief introduction to the job position was provided by a current employee.

In the expertise background scenario, Wathen and Burkell’s (2002) research suggested that the total work experience in years, special knowledge or ability relevant to the work and level of education are important factors that show an information provider’s expertise in a job position; these factors were adopted for the scenario design. The personal background information included descriptions of the individual’s personality, personal habits and interpersonal relationships (Wathen and Burkell, 2002). Each scenario contained five sentences that covered these characteristics about the information provider (Employee A). See Appendix G for full scenario, on page 276.

Measures

Nine items that evaluated credibility were adapted from research by Fisher et al. (1979). The items were designed in three aspects: trust, expertise and attraction to the provider. The original designed items for the Fisher et al. (1979) measure were evaluated on a 7-point scale (anchored 1 as ‘disagree’ and 7 as ‘agree’), there being no reason for concern about mixing previous scale points, the 7 point was adopted for this study. The six-item MS was adopted, which is the same as in Study 1.

For the manipulation check, one item was used for assessing if the participants perceived the provider’s background information accurately (‘I think the provided background information about Employee A is...’), on a two-sided 9-point scale anchored at (-4) +4 ‘(not) expertise-oriented’, ‘(not) personal-oriented’, 0 as ‘neutral’).
Procedure

After the participants had read the guiding information and agreed to the ethical terms of the study, they were randomly assigned to one of the eight treatment groups (S1–S8). S1 and S2 were the control groups; no provider background information was given. The difference was the job position (sales manager (S1) or shop assistant (S2)). S3 (sales manager, expertise background), S4 (sales manager, personal background), S5 (sales shop assistant, expertise background) and S6 (shop assistant, personal background) were given information that contained a different combination of job position and provider background information. S7 (sales manager) and S8 (shop assistant) were different in terms of job position, and both expertise and personal background information about the information provider were given to these two groups (see Table 6.5). S3, S4, S5 and S6 were additionally asked to evaluate the manipulation check item afterwards. After reading the scenario, all respondents were then guided to complete the credibility scale. All participants provided demographic information and completed the MS before submission.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario</th>
<th>Job position</th>
<th>Provider (current employee) background information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 1</td>
<td>Sales manager</td>
<td>No background (control group a1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 2</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>No background (control group a2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 3</td>
<td>Sales manager</td>
<td>(Only) Expertise background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 4</td>
<td>Sales manager</td>
<td>(Only) Personal background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 5</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>(Only) Expertise background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 6</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>(Only) Personal background</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 7</td>
<td>Sales manager</td>
<td>(Both) Expertise and personal background (control group b1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Scenario 8</td>
<td>Shop assistant</td>
<td>(Both) Expertise and personal background (control group b2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

6.3.3 Data analysis and results

A total of 254 male (53%) and 226 female (47%) participants were recruited via AMT. All participants were aged over 19 and had work experience in the retail trade in the US. Compensation of $1.50 was given to each participant via AMT as an incentive. The population was distributed similarly to the sample in Study 1. A total of 63% of the participants had a college/university degree, 91% had more than one year’s retail work experience, and 71% received a wage of below $3,000 monthly. There were no significant differences among the eight randomly assigned groups in terms of demographic variables, confirming the successful random assignment.
A CFA (AMOS 20) using all items of both constructs indicated a good fit for the two-construct measurement model (CMIN/DF 2.67; GFI .95; RFI .96; CFI .97; RMSEA .059 n.s.; standardized RMR .036) (and an improvement on the one factor model CMIN/DF 16.43). Calculated construct reliabilities were satisfactory, Cronbach’s alpha = 0.91; MS = 0.87. The nine-item responses of source credibility (were combined to make a single mean score. A median split differentiated maximisers and satisficers. The median split point of 4.24 is close to the medians in the previous conducted studies (Study 1 – 5.1).

A one-way ANOVA with Duncan post-hoc test (95% confidence level) showed the manipulation for the provider’s background information was successful \[M_{\text{manager, expertise}} = 2.81, M_{\text{shop assistant, expertise}} = 2.91 \text{ vs. } M_{\text{manager, personal}} = 7.25, M_{\text{shop assistant, personal}} = 7.36, F (3, 223) = 245.86, p < .01\]. The two-sided scale was coded with the anchor 4 of expertise oriented coded as 9, the 0 of neutral as 5, and the 4 of personal oriented as 1, as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Personal oriented</th>
<th>Neutral</th>
<th>Expertise oriented</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Original scale</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coded/scored</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 6.6: Demographics (Study 5.2 sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Work experience in the retail trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximiser/satisficer (Mdn = 4.24)</strong></td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>4–5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–46</td>
<td>$5,001–$7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education</th>
<th>College/University</th>
<th>303</th>
<th>63%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

199
Testing hypothesis 5-2

The data concerning scenarios S3, S4, S5 and S6 (S1, S2, S7 and S8 were designed as control groups, see table 5.2) were selected from the dataset for testing the hypotheses. A 2 (management level/grassroots level) by 2 (expertise/personal background) by 2 (maximiser/satisficer) three-way ANOVA test was conducted. The results showed support for H5-2 in that a significant three-way interaction was observed \[F(1, 219) = 11.39, p < .01\]. As mentioned before, a significant three-way interaction means that there is a two-way interaction that varies across levels of a third variable (Kirk, 2013). After splitting the dataset by the variable decision-making style, two two-way ANOVA tests and independent-samples t-tests were employed to test the simple main effects of the two-way interaction (between job position and provider’s background information) at the two decision-making styles (maximiser/satisficer).

The first two-way ANOVA test was conducted for testing the position*background interaction effect on maximisers. The non-significant result showed maximisers’ attitude towards the source credibility did not show an interaction between position*background \[F(1, 108) = .32, p = .58\]. Furthermore, no evidence was found in a one-way ANOVA that perceived credibility was different among the four conditions. This indicated that the perceived source credibility reported by maximisers who aimed for different job positions was not affected by the information providers’ background either \[M_{S3, Maximiser} = 4.85, M_{S5, Maximiser} = 4.95, M_{S4, Maximiser} = 4.78, M_{S6, Maximiser} = 5.00, F(3, 108) = .32, p = .56\]. The results (see figure 6.2, table 6.7) illustrated that no matter what job type maximisers were aiming for, getting information on either just the expertise background or just the personal background of the information providers was insufficient to affect perceived credibility.
Figure 6.2: The interaction of job position*provider background information at decision-making style = maximiser (non-significant)

On the other hand, for satisficers, another two-way ANOVA examining the position by background interaction effect did illustrate a significant two-way interaction effect between job position and the provider’s background information \[F(1, 111) = 25.99, p < .01\]. Independent-samples t-tests revealed that when satisficers aimed to seek a management-level job, receiving RJP messages in the provider’s expertise background information condition resulted in higher reported perceived credibility of the provider compared to the condition receiving the provider’s personal background information \[M_{S3, Satisficer} = 5.24, M_{S4, Satisficer} = 4.73, t(55) = 3.19, p < .01\]. On the contrary, when satisficers wanted to find a grassroots job, the provider’s personal background information condition showed significantly higher perceived source credibility compared to the provider expertise background information condition \[M_{S6, Satisficer} = 5.44, M_{S5, Satisficer} = 4.81, t(56) = 4.03, p < .01\]. Therefore, H5-2 was fully supported.
Follow-up analyses

By comparing all eight scenarios, a one-way ANOVA \([F(7, 227) = 17.24, p < .01]\) with Bonferroni post-hoc test (95% confidence level) showed that maximisers would increase their perceptions of credibility only when both expertise and personal background information were provided [for management level job: \(M_{S7, Maximiser} = 5.47, M_{S3, Maximiser} = 4.85, p < .01\); for grassroots level job: \(M_{S8, Maximiser} = 5.84, M_{S6, Maximiser} = 5.00, p < .01\)]. That is to say, maximisers are likely to be affected by the information depth and length (informativeness) about the source, and only show increases in their perception of source credibility when the provided information is more complete.

Another one-way ANOVA (also comparing all eight scenarios) \([F(7, 237) = 31.03, p < .01]\) with Bonferroni post-hoc test (95% confidence level) revealed that for those satisficers who aimed for a management level job, they would increase their perception towards a provider when both expertise and personal background information were provided if they aimed for management level jobs [\(M_{S7, Satisficer} = 5.76, M_{S3, Satisficer} = 5.24, p < .05\)]. However, for those who aimed for a grassroots level job, no difference was found between the scenario that provided only personal background and the scenario that provided both expertise and personal background.
information [M_{S8, Satisficer} = 5.84, M_{S6, Satisficer} = 5.44, p = .19]. That is, satisficers are not only likely to be affected by the peripheral cues, but also conditionally affected by the information depth; this demonstrates and is consistent with Simon’s (1956) idea of bounded rationality.

Table 6.7: Overall provider credibility (scale 1–7)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenarios/Groups</th>
<th>D-M style</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>Duncan post-hoc test</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = .05</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.30</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.36</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1. Sales manager, no background</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>4.78</td>
<td>.56</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.73</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2. Shop assistant, no background</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>4.95</td>
<td>.43</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>4.81</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3. Sales manager, expertise background</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>4.85</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>5.24</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4. Sales manager, personal background</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5.00</td>
<td>.62</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.44</td>
<td>.60</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5. Shop assistant, expertise background</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>5.47</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.76</td>
<td>.55</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6. Shop assistant, personal background</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>5.61</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>5.84</td>
<td>.66</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed (based on observed means). Uses harmonic mean sample size = 59.79.

**Overall**

A one-way ANOVA [F(7, 472) = 44.89, p < .001] with a Duncan post-hoc test (95% confidence level) showed that although maximisers and satisficers had different perceptions of credibility when reacting to the job position and the information provider’s background information, providing both expertise and personal background information was capable of significantly increasing their trust in the provider overall (see Table 6.7). The statistics showed that whether the jobseeker was seeking a job position as a manager or a shop assistant, when receiving information, both expertise and personal background information about the information provider received the highest credibility (M_{S8, Overall} = 5.74, M_{S7, Overall} = 5.61). The control groups’ participants, who received no background information, had the lowest provider credibility (M_{S1, Overall} = 4.33, M_{S2, Overall} = 4.40), demonstrating that when designing SWOM-formed RJP messages, employers surely need to consider the impact that an information provider’s background information may have; background information significantly changed the jobseekers’ perceived provider credibility. The
inclusion of both expertise and personal background information should be considered, no matter what type of job position the employer is recruiting for.

6.3.4 Conclusions and implications

Study 5.2 examines the impact of the interaction among job position, information provider’s background information and jobseeker’s decision-making style on jobseekers’ perceived source credibility. The results reveal that maximisers are less likely to be influenced by only receiving one side of the provider’s background information. Their perceived credibility only increases when both expertise and personal aspects of the information provider have been received. Furthermore, their perception of credibility does not change because of different job positions. No significant difference is found when they aim to search for management-level or basic-level jobs in the retail trade, suggesting that maximisers always try to pursue the best option, and the principle does not change because of different job types. The results are in line with the definition of maximisers, in that they tend to evaluate the information carefully and are less easily satisfied when receiving insufficient information. This supports the findings in Study 1 that indicate when maximisers are interested in learning more about a position, they will try to do as many investigations as they can and search for information from different sources.

On the other hand, satisficers who aim to get a management-/grassroots-level job significantly attached higher credibility to information providers (i.e., the current employees) when receiving expert/personal background information about the provider compared to satisficers who tried to find a management-/grassroots-level job but received personal/expertise background information. This result shows that satisficers make fewer information requests and are more likely to adopt a peripheral route using heuristics in their decision-making. Smith (2000) proposes that when individuals use peripheral cues and heuristic information search methods, they are more likely to rely on their affective feelings. Affective consequences depend on the individual feeling either a contrastive effect (e.g., ‘that person is not like me’) or an accumulative effect (e.g., ‘that individual could be me’). Consequently, satisficers’ preferences are evidently more affected by job types/position and the background of the information provider compared to maximisers.
Study 5.2 offers suggestions to retail-trade employers that the SWOM-formed message provider's (current employee's) background information plays an influential role that significantly changed jobseekers’ attitudes towards the perception of trust placed in the provider. Moreover, employers should provide both expertise and personal background information in the message regardless of what type of job position they want to fill. This supports and applies the concepts regarding credibility requiring expertise and also a feeling that ‘I can trust the information from this provider’. A cognitive heuristic in credibility (trust) evaluation refers to how well the individual knows the person. In the absence of this, the evaluation is ‘how similar is this person to me’ (Smith, 2000; Metzger and Flanagin, 2013).

By linking the results and the insights from Study 4, Study 5.1 and Study 5.2, Study 5.3 examines whether the SWOM-formed RJP information with provider background information (both expertise and personal) is able to increase maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers’ OA, and whether this information can satisfy more jobseekers’ job-position information needs and prevent them from searching for more information from FCC sources, which may increase but also decrease jobseekers’ OA (see Study 3, on page 161). The results will be compared with the results from Study 4.

6.4 Study 5.3: Form, valence, decision-making style, perceived OA and willingness to search for further job-related information

6.4.1 Conceptual development

It has been highlighted and evidenced in the existing studies that information receivers’ perceived credibility of the information source plays an influential mediating role in jobseekers’ decision-making (e.g., Van Hoye and Lievens, 2007; Kim et al., 2008). Thus, it is expected that providing SWOM-formed (with both expertise and personal background information of the provider/current employee) RJP messages that contain both weakly negative and positive information content will increase jobseekers’ OA.

In other studies (Studies 4, 5.1, 5.2) of this research, decision-making style has been demonstrated to be a moderator that significantly affects the effectiveness of
recruitment information and sources. Attribution theory literature also indicates that individual differences result in distinctive perceptions regarding both the information content that is received and the information source (e.g., Graham and Folkes, 1990). That is to say, although it is expected that by manipulating the message form, valence and provider’s background information they can reasonably increase jobseekers’ OA, it shall also be expected that maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers will react to these manipulations differently.

For maximisers, Study 5.1 illustrates that the form of RJP messages does not significantly influence their perceived source credibility. Regardless of whether the RJP information is in a SWOM form (SWOM sourced) or directly provided by the employer/in the employer’s tone (employer sourced), maximisers’ perceived credibility is not obviously affected. However, the message valence changes maximisers’ trust (credibility) in a source. Study 2 shows that maximisers are more risk-avoidant oriented; Study 3 reveals that maximisers seem to accept imperfect job information and consider the drawbacks they receive about the job and the organisation. Therefore, when an RJP message contains some weakly negative content, maximisers’ trust in the source is increased compared to a message that only emphasised the positive side of the job/company, because these messages are less likely to exaggerate the real working situations, and help them lower the decision risks.

Therefore, it is anticipated that no matter how the soft information is formed (whether the message is SWOM sourced or employer sourced), if the message is valenced with weakly negative and positive information, maximisers will have a higher OA compared to a message that is only positively valenced. For maximisers, message valence is related to OA, regardless of message source, such that:

**H5-3-1:** For maximisers, message valence is related to OA, regardless of message source (SWOM sourced/formed vs. employer sourced/in employer’s tone).

On the other hand, Studies 5.1 and 5.2 illustrate that, compared to maximisers, satisficers are more peripheral-route orientated. Due to the influence of peripheral cues, their perception of the credibility of the message is an interaction between the form (source) of the RJP message and the amount of source background information.
Satisficers report a higher perception of credibility in relation to the SWOM-formed RJP message compared to information that is directly provided by the employer (in the employer’s tone). Moreover, a SWOM-formed RJP message that provides the background of the provider (current employee) increases their perception of the credibility of the provider. Therefore, when the information (provided by an FCC source) is SWOM formed (the message is SWOM sourced), and both personal and expertise background information of the provider (e.g., current employee) is provided, the OA differences between only-positive information and positive and weakly negative information would be moderated. In other words, regardless of whether the message is only positive or a mixture of positive and weakly negative, satisficers’ perceived OA is likely to be only minimally affected when the information is SWOM formed. Hence,

**H5-3-2:** For satisficers, a SWOM-sourced (SWOM-formed RJP (soft) information) message, regardless of valence, will result in higher OA than an employer-sourced message (in the employer’s tone). This effect is greater when source background (both personal and expertise) information is provided, compared to no background information.

Based on the findings of Study 3, Study 5.1 and Study 5.2, it can be surmised that a SWOM-formed RJP message with both personal and expertise background information, and with content that contains positive and weakly negative information content, can significantly satisfy overall more jobseekers’ (including maximisers’ and satisficers’) information needs and prevent them from searching for more job-vacancy/company-related information.

**H5-3-3** Compared to a job-vacancy message which only provides hard information, the addition of a SWOM-sourced (SWOM-formed RJP (soft) information) message that contains positive and weakly negative content and personal and expertise source (provider) information will result in lower numbers of jobseekers who have further information-seeking preferences.

**6.4.2 Method**

Scenarios
Study 5.3 adopted scenario materials from Study 4, Study 5.1 and Study 5.2 (see Appendix F, on page 272). In all seven scenarios, participants were firstly asked to imagine they were searching for a job in the retail trade and a recruitment advertisement had caught their attention. The description used here was the same as that used in Study 4 (see Appendix D, on page 268). The first group (S1) was the control group. The scenario used in S1 was the long (more informative) version of the recruitment advertisement that was used in Study 4; only hard information was provided. For the remaining six scenarios/groups, this long-version (S1) message was also provided to the participants, but supplemented in S2, S3, S4 and S5 with a SWOM-formed RJP message. Furthermore, the SWOM-formed RJP message provider’s (current employee’s) background information (both personal and expertise) was offered in S2 and S4. No background information about the provider was given in S3 and S5. In S6 and S7, the RJP message was in the employer’s tone (provided directly by the employer). The message valence in S2, S3 and S6 was positive only. Positive and weakly negative information was provided in S4, S5 and S7 (see Table 6.8). The materials in S2, S3, S4, S5, S6 and S7 were the same as those used in Study 5.1 and Study 5.2 (see Appendix F and G, on page 273 and 272).

Table 6.8: Scenario design of Study 5.3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long, more informative message, mainly hard information (from Study 4)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RJP information (with some soft information)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive only (from Study 5.1)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive + weakly negative (from Study 5.1)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOM formed (the message is SWOM sourced)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A. With (provider’s) background information (expertise + personal) (from Study 5.2)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B. No (provider’s) background information</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Measures

Fifteen items that evaluated the OA were adapted from Highhouse et al.’s (2003) study; it was the same scale that was used in Study 3 and Study 4. All items were on a seven-point scale. The six-item MS was used to evaluate the respondent maximising/satisficing tendency (see Chapter 3, on page 91 - 91).

One item was employed to ask whether participants still wished to seek further job information about the position before making the application decision. After reading the information in the advertisement, the information in the advertisement
shown was: Option 1 – not enough for me to decide whether to apply for that vacancy or not. Before I go to the application process, I prefer to spend some more time to get to know more about the job until I feel satisfied I know enough; or Option 2 – has provided enough information for me to decide whether to apply for the vacancy. Thus, I prefer not to spend time looking for further information about that vacancy. This item was the one used in Study 3 and Study 4.

Procedure

After the participants had read the guiding information and agreed the ethical terms of the study, they were randomly assigned to one of the seven scenarios/groups. After reading the scenario, all respondents were then asked to complete the OA scale and the item that asked them whether they wanted to search for more job/company information. All participants were then asked to provide demographic information and to complete the MS.

6.4.3 Data analysis and results

234 male (53%) and 212 female (47%) participants responded via AMT. All participants were aged over 19 and were employed as a retail employee in the US at that moment. Each participant received $1.5 via AMT after they had completed the study. The population was distributed similarly to the samples in the previous studies in this research. 63% of the participants had a college/university degree and 86% had more than one year’s retail work experience. 75% received a wage of below $3,000 monthly (see Table 6.9). The sample random assignment was successful; there were no significant differences among the seven randomly assigned groups in terms of demographic variables.

The responses to the MS again revealed good internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .84). A median split differentiated maximisers and satisficers. The median of 4.17 is close to the medians in the previous studies (e.g., 4.20 in the research by Schwartz et al., 2002). In line with other existing studies (e.g., Highhouse et al., 2003) and Study 3 and Study 4, the 15-item responses of OA (Cronbach’s alpha = .92) were combined to make a single mean score.
Table 6.9: Demographics (sample of Study 5.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Work experience in the retail trade</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>234</td>
<td>61 14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>212</td>
<td>126 28%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Mdn = 4.17)</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>229 51%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>217 49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>136 31%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>167 37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>72 16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–46</td>
<td>38 9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>33 7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$1,000–$3,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>125 28%</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>211 47%</td>
<td>$5,001–$7,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>77 17%</td>
<td>33 8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>College/University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle school</td>
<td>1 1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>160 36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>251 56%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Testing hypothesis H5-3-1

Maximisers in the seven groups/scenarios were selected, and their perceived OAs were compared in a one-way ANOVA test \(F(6, 222) = 9.99, p < .001\). The results of a Duncan’s post-hoc test with 90% confidence level are reported in Table 6.10. The results revealed that the maximiser groups provided with positive and weakly negative RJP information generally reported higher OAs (\(M_{S4} = 5.91, M_{S7} = 5.78\) and \(M_{S5} = 5.74\)) than those groups that received only positive information (\(M_{S2} = 5.37, M_{S3} = 4.93\) and \(M_{S6} = 4.86\)). An independent-samples t-test doubly confirmed that participants in S2 perceived a significantly lower OA than participants who were allocated in S5 \(t(66) = 1.73, p < .05\).

A one-way follow-up ANOVA test, still with maximisers only selected, showed no significant differences in reported OAs between the three groups (S4, S5, S7) that received positive and weakly negative information \(F(2, 99) = .42, p = .66\). That is, for maximisers, message valence is the key variable related to OA, regardless of where the message is sourced from (how the information content is formed).

Therefore, H5-3-1 was supported.

Moreover, it is worth noting that an independent-samples t-test that compared S2 and S3 revealed that when receiving SWOM-formed positive only RJP information, the group/scenario (\(M_{S2} = 5.37\)) with background information (S2) received a significantly higher OA, compared to the group/scenario (\(M_{S3} = 4.93\)) that had no
background information (S3) \[t(67) = 2.03, p < .05\]. In other words, the SWOM-formed RJP message provider’s background information influenced maximisers’ OA, but the difference was only observable and significant when maximisers received only positive valenced messages. This supports the finding, from Study 4, that maximisers are more detail oriented; a more informative positive hard information message slightly increases their perceived OA.

### Table 6.10 Post-hoc test (Duncan): maximisers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent variable: OA</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = .1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>S1. Long version (control group)</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6. S1+ Employee-sourced message with soft info (directly provided by employer), positive only</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), no background information, positive only</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), background information, positive only</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), no background information, positive &amp; weakly negative</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7. S1+ Employee-sourced message with soft info (directly provided by employer), positive &amp; weakly negative</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), background information, positive &amp; weakly negative</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.91</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
a. Uses harmonic mean sample size = 31.788.

* Background information: both expertise and personal background information was provided

**Testing hypothesis H5-3-2**

Another one-way ANOVA test with Duncan post-hoc test (90% confidence level) indicated that satisficers who received a SWOM-formed RJP message (\(M_{S2} = 6.13, M_{S3} = 5.58, M_{S4} = 6.04\) and \(M_{S5} = 5.60\)) had significantly higher OA than those who received the same information in the employer’s tone (\(M_{S6} = 4.84, M_{S7} = 5.20\)) \([F(6, 210) = 15.93, p < .001]\) (see Table 6.11). This was doubly confirmed by an independent-samples t-test (by comparing S3 and S7, \(t(61) = 2.26, p < .05\)).

Furthermore, Table 6.11 showed that satisficers had significantly higher OA when receiving SWOM-formed RJP information with provider background information (\(M_{S2} = 6.13, M_{S4} = 6.04\)), compared to the groups that had no provider background information (\(M_{S3} = 5.58, M_{S5} = 5.60\)). No difference was found between the groups (S2 vs. S4 and S3 vs. S5), showing that when satisficers received a SWOM-sourced message, the weakly negative information did not significantly increase or decrease their willingness to join the organisation. **Therefore, H5-3-2 was fully supported.**
Table 6.11: Post-hoc test (Duncan): satisficers

Dependent variable: OA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = .1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|     | 4.81 | 4.84 | 5.20 |

S1. Long version (control group) 31
S6. S1+ Employer-sourced message with soft info (directly provided by employer), positive only 30
S7. S1+ Employer-sourced message with soft info (directly provided by employer), positive & weakly negative 29
S3. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), no background information, positive only 34
S5. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), no background information, positive & weakly negative 29
S4. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), background information, positive & weakly negative 28
S2. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), background information, positive only 36

Sig. (217) .90 1.00 .92 .62

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
a. Uses harmonic mean sample size = 30.775.

* Background information: both expertise and personal background information was provided

Table 6.12: OA of each group (Study 5.3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Maximisers</th>
<th>Satisficers</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>N</td>
<td>Mean</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1.</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>4.82</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3.</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>4.93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4.</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>5.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5.</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>5.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6.</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7.</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>5.78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>(229)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall OA

A one-way ANOVA \([F(6, 439) = 17.99, p < .01]\) with Duncan’s post-hoc test showed that, overall, the long-version advertisement that contained more confirmable hard information and (plus) a SWOM-formed RJP message regardless of valence with both personal and expertise background information about the provider received the highest OA from jobseekers (S3 & S4, see Table 6.13). This demonstrated that some weakly negative information in the advertisement did not drive jobseekers away. Instead, it increased jobseekers’ perceptions of the credibility of the information and increased their willingness to apply for the vacancy and join the organisation.

Table 6.13: Post-hoc test (Duncan): overall

Dependent variable: OA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>N</th>
<th>Subset for alpha = .1</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

|     | 4.82 | 4.85 | 5.51 | 5.74 |

S1. Long version (control group) 67
S6. S1+ RJP (directly provided by employer), positive only 52
S3. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP, no background information, positive only 66
S7. S1+ RJP (directly provided by employer), positive & weakly negative 63
S5. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP, no background information, positive & weakly negative 60
S2. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP, background information, positive only 73
S4. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP, background information, positive & weakly negative 65

Sig. .82 1.00 .14 .13

Means for groups in homogeneous subsets are displayed.
a. Uses harmonic mean sample size = 63.103.
Testing hypothesis H5-3-3

With regard to the jobseekers’ intentions to search for more information, firstly, comparing the control group (S1) with the results from Study 4, the information-satisfying proportions (the percentages of replying ‘No/do not want to search for more’) were close (Study 4: 48% maximisers and 80% satisficers; Study 5.3: 44% maximisers and 74% satisficers), indicating the scenario manipulation and the sampling were not biased.

Table 6.14 reveals the number of participants that reported they wanted to search for more information (or not) after reading the provided information in each scenario. Supporting H5-3-3, compared to the control group (S1), the scenario S4 prevented an extra 21% [$\chi^2(1, N = 73) = 3.07, p < .05$] of maximisers and an extra 15% [$\chi^2(1, N = 59) = 2.21, p < .10$] of satisficers from searching for more information (overall 23% of jobseekers (58% vs. 75%), $\chi^2(1, N = 132) = 4.38, p < .05$).

When comparing S2 and S4, the results showed that some weakly negative information content (S4) actually prevented more jobseekers from searching for further job-/company-related information, compared to when only positive information content was provided [62% vs. 75%, $\chi^2(1, N = 138) = 2.99, p < .05$]. It was found that some weakly negative information content satisfied more maximiser-style jobseekers’ information needs (40% vs. 65%). Therefore, while there was no significant difference between S2 and S4 in terms of the overall OA (if maximisers and satisficers were not identified), considering the risk of jobseekers searching for non-company-controlled sources (especially INCC sources, see Study 3, on page 150), the results suggest that some weakly negative information content could better satisfy more jobseekers’ information needs, compared to providing only positive information content.
Table 6.14: Group * would you want to search for more information?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Maximiser</th>
<th>Satisficer</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>YES</td>
<td>NO</td>
<td>YES NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S1. Long version (control group)</td>
<td>20 (56%)</td>
<td>16 (44%)</td>
<td>8 (26%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S2. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), background information, positive only</td>
<td>22 (60%)</td>
<td>15 (40%)</td>
<td>6 (17%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S3. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), no background information, positive only</td>
<td>19 (59%)</td>
<td>13 (41%)</td>
<td>7 (21%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S4. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), background information, positive &amp; weakly negative</td>
<td>13 (35%)</td>
<td>24 (65%)</td>
<td>3 (11%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S5. S1+ SWOM-formed RJP (SWOM sourced), no background information, positive &amp; weakly negative</td>
<td>11 (36%)</td>
<td>20 (65%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S6. S1+ Employee-sourced message with soft info (directly provided by employer), positive only</td>
<td>11 (50%)</td>
<td>11 (50%)</td>
<td>7 (23%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S7. S1+ Employee-sourced message with soft info (directly provided by employer), positive &amp; weakly negative</td>
<td>14 (41%)</td>
<td>20 (59%)</td>
<td>7 (24%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>110 (48%)</td>
<td>119 (52%)</td>
<td>45 (21%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The results also illustrated that even by providing more experience-based information in the recruitment advertisement, more maximisers (than satisficers) could not be satisfied, indicating that essentially maximising is a stable tendency, and maximisers are more likely to obtain further job-related information from other sources until they have finally confirmed and decided that they want the job.

The effectiveness of recruitment information (in satisfying jobseekers’ information needs): decision-making style, message valence and message form

A classification and regression tree (CART) analysis was further conducted in order to construct (with 379 participants; 67 participants who were allocated in the control group (S1) were excluded) a prediction tree (see Figure 6.6). This visually displayed the results of participants’ willingness to search for more information after reading the relevant scenario content. The minimum-number criterion was adopted as the stopping rule for control splitting. The splitting continued until all parent/child nodes were pure or contained no more than 100/50 participants (the SPSS 20 suggested default setting; Breiman et al., 1984)

Figure 6.4 showed that the first node (Node 0) was split based on the most important predictor (compared to the other two predictors), an individual’s decision-making style. This suggests that decision-making style plays an important role and significantly affects the effectiveness (whether the jobseeker was satisfied with the information and would search for more information or not) of a recruitment message.
and its source/provider. When the individual was classified as a satisficer, Node 1 was broken down to separate out ‘employer sourced’ and ‘SWOM sourced’ based on the most important predictor, which in this case was information form. This suggests that satisficers were more likely to be satisfied by peripheral cues, such as whether the message is employer sourced or SWOM sourced. The result also showed that message valence did not significantly affect their perceived satisfaction with the message.

On the other hand, when the individual was classified as a maximiser, Node 2 was separated out based on the message valence. This was shown to be the most important predictor. In other words, for maximisers, message valence (central cue) was the most important factor that affected their perceived message satisfaction.

Figure 6.4: The effectiveness (satisfying jobseekers’ information needs) of recruitment information

6.4.4 Conclusions and implications

Study 5.3 combines the results from the previous studies in this research, and tests the reaction differences of maximisers and satisficers when receiving an extra piece of RJP message that contains soft, experience-based information with different valence and in different forms. The results reveal that maximisers are more influenced by the message valence. Their willingness to pursue a job vacancy (OA) increases by
receiving a message that contains some weakly negative facts in an FCC source, compared to only receiving positive content. This supports the results and the assumptions that are made in Study 3 that maximisers are actually looking for the truth to minimise the decision risks (see Study 3, on page 165). Especially in the retail trade, jobs usually have several common drawbacks. Being informed of these disadvantages of working for the company allows maximisers to realise the real situation and helps them accelerate their job-choice decision. Moreover, the more complete (both personal and expertise) the provided background information of the SWOM-formed RJP message provider, the more maximisers will perceive a higher credibility of the message. It does not necessarily reflect on the OA, since the message valence (the content) has a stronger effect on maximisers. However, when the RJP information is only positive and both expertise and personal background information are provided, it is obvious that maximisers evaluate the source as having a higher credibility, and they have significantly increased OA, compared to a message that shows no background information.

Study 5.3 again confirms that satisficers are more likely to be influenced by peripheral cues, such as the message form and the provider’s background information. Their OA does not change much regardless of whether they receive weakly negative information or only positive information from the FCC source. That is to say, when they perceive the source to be reliable enough, some small drawbacks do not make them decrease or increase their willingness to pursue the job vacancy. However, when they evaluate a source as having lower credibility, the message valence then influences their decision. In this situation, weakly negative information increases their perception of the credibility of the source and slightly increases their OA.

Providing this extra soft information in SWOM form can meet most of the satisficers’ job-information requests, especially when the message is formed in a SWOM style. However, although this extra RJP message can also satisfy more maximisers’ information needs and stop them from searching for more job-position/company information from non-company-controlled sources, which may increase but may also decrease jobseekers’ OA (see Study 3, on page 161), over 30% of maximisers still report wanting to search for further information. In other words, employers still need to maintain a positive reputation and ensure their current
employees’ job satisfaction to prevent non-company-controllable WOM information/messages from influencing jobseekers’ final decisions.

Overall, in the retail trade, some weakly negative information does not discourage the jobseekers from applying for a job position. It even satisfies more jobseekers’ job-information needs and prevents them from searching for further information. Both maximisers and satisficers do not significantly decrease their OA because of the weakly negative information. This also provides indirect support to Study 1 and Study 2 in terms of the fact that most jobseekers aiming to work in this sector have prepared themselves for challenges they may have to face. Therefore, employers should not hide the drawbacks or overemphasise the positive sides to attract more jobseekers to the candidate pool. By wrapping the message in SWOM form and providing both positives (advantages) and some negatives (disadvantages) of the actual working situation, the company can show jobseekers the actual picture. This not only helps reassure more jobseekers, but also makes jobseekers feel the employer is being honest with them. It positively changes jobseekers’ willingness to join the organisation.

6.5 Summary

Studies 5.1, 5.2 and 5.3 demonstrate a possible method that could be adopted to increase recruitment. Even though, compared to WOM messages from non-company-controlled sources, the influence of this SWOM-formed RJP message on jobseekers’ OA might be relatively weaker, providing extra information, including some negative valenced information in a SWOM form with both expertise and personal background of the provider (current employees), can have a similar effectiveness. Providing extra information might therefore be worth employers’ consideration when designing job-recruitment messages.

The findings also explain the inconsistent conclusions of previous studies concerned with the effectiveness of different recruitment information sources and information content (see Chapter 1, on page 12 & Chapter 2, on page 36 - 43) by demonstrating that individual differences is an influential factor that leads to different results, but has been missed in the existing studies.
There remain three issues that are not covered sufficiently in Studies 3, 4 and 5 series; these are suggested by anonymous reviewers from the journals *Management Decision, Personnel Review* and the *International Journal of Human Resource Management*. The three issues are discussed and further investigated (Study 6) in Chapter 7.
CHAPTER 7 SUPPLEMENTARY STUDY

7.1 Chapter overview

The studies in the previous chapters have shown that jobseekers with different decision-making styles have different considerations, needs and seeking preferences when processing job-related information. Based on the research findings, anonymous reviewers from the journals Management Decision, Personnel Review and the International Journal of Human Resource Management suggest that there are three issues that are worth delving into more deeply.

The first issue is derived from Study 4 (see Chapter 5, on page 170). Study 4 suggests that a job recruitment message that contains richer and more detailed information contents about the job vacancy is able to significantly satisfy more jobseekers’ information needs and prevent more jobseekers from searching for further information, compared to only providing short and basic job information. This also decreases the risk of jobseekers being influenced by information that is provided by informal, non-company-controlled (INCC) sources (see Chapter 4, on page 117). It can be inferred, therefore, that providing more informative messages is an easy and efficient practice for employers, especially in the Internet age. Nevertheless, theoretically, it remains to be clarified whether it is the specificity per se of the information that leads people to be more satisfied with more information, or the volume rather than the detail of the information. Pelham et al. (1994) propose the numerosity heuristic, which indicates that people are sensitive to the amount of information, and over-infer the quantity from numerosity rather than the actual content. In other words, individuals can make decisions or judgments based on the number of units without fully considering and understanding other important variables. For instance, even though the essences of two options are similar, many people will feel that the one that provides more detail is a better choice. If jobseekers make job decisions based on the numerosity heuristic instead of reading the descriptions carefully, this may directly affect their job-application decisions and could even decrease jobseekers’ met expectations after going to work. Hence, it is useful to enhance understanding of whether the numerosity heuristic exists when individuals process and evaluate job descriptions.
Secondly, the present research has, so far, evaluated participants’ further-information search decision (whether they will want to search for more information after reading the provided message). However, what has not been fully explored is the fact that searching for ‘more information’ could have two perspectives (Elsbach and Elofson, 2000). These perspectives are that an individual may, firstly, want more information about the points that are not mentioned (or not mentioned enough) in the message (e.g., missing information about a job attribute) or, secondly, wish to double-check the veracity/credibility of the received information by using different information sources. For the first perspective, employers are able to strengthen the content design by providing the breadth of job information that jobseekers are interested in. The second perspective is considered to be a limitation of the FCC source. That is, jobseekers will still want to search for confirmative information to confirm the received information, no matter how thoughtful the information is that has been provided by the employer. Study 5 focuses on the first perspective, but whether the motivation that drives jobseekers to search for more information could be the second perspective has not yet been explored.

Furthermore, in line with previous research (e.g., Highhouse et al., 2003), the present research adopts ‘OA’ as the measurement to evaluate jobseekers’ willingness to apply for the vacancy and willingness to join the company. Although research indicates that OA positively mediates a jobseeker’s job-application intention and decision, jobseekers’ actual job-application decisions were not directly evaluated in the studies. For those who reported that they would not search for more information, whether they would apply for the job has also not been clarified. Thus, the last study (Study 6, which is going to be reported in this chapter) adopts a single item – ‘will you apply for the job?’ – to evaluate the application decision. The result will help confirm the findings in Studies 3, 4 and 5, in which jobseekers might have reported that they did not want to search for more information because they did not want to apply for the job, rather than because they were satisfied with the provided information. A supplementary study (Study 6) is conducted to explore these three issues further.
7.2 Conduct of the study

Study process

After the participants had read the participant information sheet and agreed to the ethical terms of the study, in the first session, all participants were guided to read the first scenario. The scenario included the short advertisement message that was used in Study 3 and Study 4. This contained job descriptions with positive hard information content. After reading the given scenario message, participants were asked whether they would apply for this job vacancy (a yes/no question), their reasons (why or why not), and whether they would still want to search for more information and why (open-ended questions). For those who answered that they would search for more information, they were then asked whether it was because there was any information missing (indicating what information they considered missing) or because they wanted to double-check some aspects of the job from different sources and, if so, which information (open-ended questions).

All participants were then instructed to read a second version of the advertisement. This was the long (more informative) version that was used in Study 4. The same process as the first session was repeated. On completion of the first session and the second session, participants were asked which version of the advertisement message they preferred, and why (open-ended questions). All participants provided demographic information and completed the short Maximising Tendency Scale (MS, the same as adopted in the previous studies) before submission. The full questionnaire can be found in appendix I (on page 275).

Sample

Thirty participants, 15 male (50%) and 15 female (50%), who were aged over 19 and worked in the retail trade in the US were recruited to join the survey via AMT (see Chapter 3, on page 85). The population was distributed similarly to the samples in the previous studies reported in this thesis. A total of 60% of the participants had a college/university degree, 90% had more than one year’s retail work experience, and 70% received a wage of below $3,000 monthly (see Tables 7.1 & 7.2). The system recorded that on average, participants spent 24 minutes and 12 seconds on answering the questionnaire (the longest time was 37 minutes 20 seconds and the shortest was 18 minutes 57 seconds). In total, 263 lines (3,132 words) of comment were generated. A $5 reward was offered to each participant via AMT as an incentive.
Table 7.1: Background information of Study 6 participants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>ID</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Nationality</th>
<th>Experience in retailing industry</th>
<th>Income</th>
<th>Decision-making style</th>
<th>Current job description (if employed); last job description (if unemployed)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>01</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Mostly dealing with the cash register, but also assisting customers with finding items and answering their questions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>02</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I’m responsible for stock management, inventory, and product ordering in my store on a daily basis, and oversee the new hires.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>03</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40–46</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I currently work on the Help Desk of a hospital. My retail experience includes working in two grocery stores, a department store and at two different Radio Shacks when I was younger.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>04</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Bake cakes and other baked goods. Use cashier. Clean up.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>05</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Starbucks barista</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>06</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I work for a greeting card company that stocks cards in various stores. I am in charge of restocking the displays and cleaning them up to look nice for consumers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>07</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Right now, I am an administrative assistant for a consulting firm. I perform all the clerical tasks, set up for meetings, handle phone calls, and so on.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>08</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40–46</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I’m a freelance writer and copy editor who is so much better than my old jobs in retail (e.g., clerk jobs).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>09</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I work for a local bookstore.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I work on one with customers on a daily basis at a major retail environment. The work is fast paced and challenging. It demands good customer service skills, patience, and accuracy. I also perform adjustments when needed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>Currently unemployed. I have worked retail though it did not last long. I mostly work construction, landscaping, roofing, other labor intense jobs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I mainly make sales to customers and provide them with any information they might need to make a good purchasing decision. I occasionally do stock taking as well.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>40–46</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Greets customers, directs customers to various departments. Ensure area is safe and presentable. Help customers with financial questions and direct them to a department if they have payment issues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Dairy manager. This means ordering, writing schedules, customer service and stock taking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I interact with customers and help them decide on what they should buy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I sell and maintain computer systems, check and re-stock inventory.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>3–5 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I complete cash reconciliations and accounting-related paperwork at my retail location, as well as coach employees on any cash-related mistakes they have made (such as accepting improperly filled out checks or cash drawer mistakes).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>4–5 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I’m a supervisor at a store where I manage employees. I tell them what needs to be done and I help train new employees as they come. I have to make everyone’s schedule that fits our store timing schedule. I answer to the owner of the shop whenever he needs something. Some of the job responsibilities include getting merchandise from warehouse, making sure we never run out of products, helping customers as needed and taking care of any problem that is escalated by customers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>Currently working as shift supervisor. My role is to supervise the employees and oversee that all operations are going smoothly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Usually clean up around the store and put back stuff in the right areas.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Customer service and retail accounting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Less than 1 year</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I am an administrative assistant (Wal-mart).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>I am self-employed at the moment. I worked in retail for a few years at Blockbuster video before it closed and then at Ross clothing store for a few years. The worst part is dealing with customers. I am not good with people.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>40–46</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Middle management health care support currently. I did retail for 6 years after college working at the Gap among other local places in that time frame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Answer phones, direct calls and assist clients with their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>Local grocery clerk.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>27</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I am currently self-employed at home because I took on the care of my six-year old granddaughter. I do various tasks online. It was a few years ago when I had experience in the retail industry.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>High school</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I currently work as a Manager in the retail industry for a plus size clothing company. I'm responsible for hiring and firing employees, budgeting and making sure that costs are minimized. Oversee that work teams increase sales, manage inventory, consult with buyers and vendors, create some store displays, maximize profits, while controlling budgets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29</td>
<td>F</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I currently work as a Manager in the retail industry for a plus size clothing company. I'm responsible for hiring and firing employees, budgeting and making sure that costs are minimized. Oversee that work teams increase sales, manage inventory, consult with buyers and vendors, create some store displays, maximize profits, while controlling budgets.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>M</td>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>American</td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>$5,001–$7,000</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>I am a supervisor of employers in a clothing related field.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 7.2: Demographics (Study 6 sample)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Gender</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>15</th>
<th>50%</th>
<th>Work experience in the retail trade</th>
<th>Less than 1 year</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>10%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>1–2 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser/satisficer (Mdn = 4.17)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2–3 years</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>3–4 years</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Satisficer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
<td>4–5 years</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Over 5 years</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19–25</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td>Under $1,000</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>20%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26–32</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>37%</td>
<td></td>
<td>$1,001–$3,000</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33–39</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td></td>
<td>$3,001–$5,000</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40–46</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
<td>$5,001–$7,000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over 46</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Postgraduate</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High school</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>College/University</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>47%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses to the MS reveal good internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha = .85). A median split (see Chapter 3, on page 90) differentiated maximisers and satisficers. The median split point of 4.17 is close to that in the previous studies in this thesis.

Data analysis method

The conventional content analysis approach was adopted (see Chapter 3, on page 84). The researcher first read through all the responses to the questions, then marked the key words of each sentence and interpreted the respondents’ expressions. Summaries of the key information are presented in the following sections.

7.3 Results

7.3.1 Processing job recruitment information by using the numerosity heuristic

22 out of the 30 participants reported that they preferred the long, more informative job recruitment message. A majority (17) indicated that the long version was preferred because it satisfied their information needs and the details provided were helpful in making the job-application decision:

‘The longer version told me everything I needed to know to make an informed decision. The shorter version was not detailed enough to encourage me to apply for the position.’ – 01 (male, satisficer).

‘... it gave more in-depth info about the job, which created a more definite and positive impression ...’ – 12 (male, maximiser).
‘The long version provides more detailed information that would allow me to determine if I’m qualified for the position as well as if the company would be a good fit for me. This version was more cohesive and the information would pique my interest.’ – 23 (female, maximiser).

‘I chose the longer version because it told me everything that I needed to know to make a decision.’ – 24 (male, satisficer).

‘I chose this (the long version) description because it mentioned all that was required to do a good job and what will be coming back to the applicant.’ – 21 (female, satisficer).

‘This ad (the long version) was detailed with everything that I could possibly want to know. There is literally no more information I would need between applying and starting the position.’ – 26 (female, satisficer).

Five participants indicated that although the short version and the long version provided information about the same job attributes (this was how the scenarios were designed, see Chapter 5, on page 169), the longer message looked more appealing to them. This demonstrated the concept of the numerosity heuristic, showing that the length of the information can be influential. Although fewer participants showed this tendency compared to the participants who were satisfied with the information details, this did strongly suggest that some jobseekers rely on the numerosity heuristic when processing job recruitment information. Interestingly, more satisficers showed this intention, as 4 out of 5 were classified as satisficers. This is not surprising given the propensity of satisficers to use heuristics and demonstrates that more satisficers decreased their further information search intent just because the provided information was longer.

‘It’s just a better description. It’s not paramount, but it’s a nice perk to have.’ – 13 (female, satisficer).

‘The longer version appeared to be a fuller description, but essentially contained the same information. It was easier to get a feel for the company without doing further research.’ – 07 (female, satisficer).

‘... it’s fuller, although that still might not be enough to guarantee a good experience.’ – 18 (male, satisficer).

‘I think because it looked like a fuller description. Both the long and short lacked a lot of information but not enough to at least put in an application.’ – 28 (female, maximiser).

In addition to this, three participants (all maximisers) mentioned that the advertisement with more information (long version) made them feel that the employer cared about and valued the potential new employees. This might explain the finding,
from Study 4, that the long-version ad message slightly increased maximisers’ perceived OA (see Chapter 5, on page 173).

‘The long version communicated to me more that the company truly cares and values its potential employees because it provided very specific and detailed company information. The information, being as detailed as it was, made me more confident about what working for the company would be like and that I would like it.’ – 02 (male, maximiser).

‘I like that it gave me a lot of information about the job and it looked nicer. It made me think the company really wanted to let you know what you are in for.’ – 10 (female, maximiser).

‘It has more important info ... shows they care about future employees.’ – 15 (female, maximiser).

On the other hand, the preference for the long-version ad/short-version ad reflected the characteristics of maximisers and satisficers. More satisficers reported that they liked the short version. They indicated that they do not like to read too much, which can make application decisions difficult; this revealed their characteristic of being cognitive misers. Furthermore, they expressed that they usually hold certain thresholds, so that once the attributes of the job vacancy pass these thresholds, they are willing to seize the chance and apply for the job. That much detail is not absolutely necessary to them:

‘When I’m applying for something, I just want the basics. I have certain thresholds or ideas of what I’m looking for in a company. If it meets those requirements then I can figure it out later of whether to accept or not IF I get the position. I am probably looking at lots of companies to apply for so the quickest way I can get info that is relevant is fine for me.’ – 05 (female, satisficer).

‘It summed up all the information I was looking for and made my decision easy.’ – 17 (female, satisficer).

‘I do not like to read a lot. I like things to be quick and to the point, so therefore I chose the short version.’ – 25 (female, satisficer).

‘Both of them had similar information and [the] short version took less time to finish.’ – 20 (male, satisficer).

‘The short version stated everything in simpler sentences. The sentences were easy to understand what was being said. All the information was discussed and I got the feel of what exactly the company had to offer.’ – 09 (male, satisficer).

‘The job search process is time-consuming. If I’m applying for many jobs, I’d rather restrict information to the most relevant details, then research companies who contacted me in more depth.’ – 27 (female, maximiser).
Two participants (both maximisers) indicated that the shorter version was better because it was more efficient in delivering information. Nevertheless, they emphasised that they would still want to get more information about the role, such as experience-based WOM from their friends.

‘They say the same thing. The long version gives more details on some aspects and more of a breakdown of things. The added information is nice but I don’t feel it’s needed to know if I would want to apply. I would ask my friends about their work experience.’ – 30 (male, maximiser).

‘It was more to the point and provided the same attribute information. I prefer the more efficient one, and I’ll do more information search anyway.’ – 22 (female, maximiser).

7.3.2 Seeking for categorical information or confirmative information?

10 participants (34%) reported that they would still search for more information even after reading the longer version. Approximately 30% (3 out of 10) of them expressed that they wanted to search for confirmative information from different sources.

‘I’d like to check who the company is, what it’s like working for them, if the work benefits/etc. they claim are true or not from other sources, etc. Just generally suspicious about things that sound too good.’ – 30 (male, maximiser).

‘I would want to double check the job functions, prospective earnings, as well as training. The request for further information would allow me to make an informed decision as to whether or not this company would be a good fit for me.’ – 11 (male, maximiser).

The other seven participants mentioned that they wanted to know more details about different job attributes (additional information), such as bonus, salary and hours. Moreover, participants also indicated that they would want to get employees’ work experiences, such as what it is like working in the organisation.

‘I think the most important thing to me is salary when I’m looking for a job. I want to find something that pays well and then worry if the peripheries make it worth it. Therefore I will want to find out details about the salary such as the range of the pay increase and how I can get a promotion, etc. I don’t really care about training courses.’ – 14 (male, maximiser).

‘I need to know more about bonus and salary.’ – 20 (male, satisficer).

‘I like the hours as they are flexible. Will want to know more about how flexible [it] is working for the company. That’s important in a retail job.’ – 08 (male, satisficer).
‘More like I just want to know the nature of the job before I dive in.’ – 22 (female, maximiser).

‘Although the advertisement provided some information about the job, I felt it lacked a number of information that would allow me to make an informed decision … the company does not provide any details making them stand out from the competition such as employee experience.’ – 28 (female, maximiser).

‘I’d like to find out who the company is, what it’s like working for them.’ – 02 (male, maximiser).

‘I think a job advertisement should be fun, cohesive, and presents the necessary information jobseekers need to make them want to apply. The ad did not provide how much an employee would earn in this role. The company could have provided a rough estimate of what a prospective employee can potentially earn. Also, how much is the subsidy the company is willing to offer for the more expensive training courses, etc.’ – 27 (female, maximiser).

It is worth noting that several participants mentioned that they wanted information about the actual salary – this was something that was specifically omitted when designing the scenarios. It could potentially be expected that even more of the respondents would have been satisfied if actual (specific) salary information had been provided. This element of the studies might show that the results could be seen as conservative and the actual power of providing extra information could be even more influential and effective.

The results revealed that some jobseekers want to search for confirmative information, but the proportion is lower compared to those who aim for more job attribute details (categorical information).

7.3.3 If no further information search is needed, will the jobseeker apply for the job?

All 20 participants who reported that the long-version advertisement message had satisfied their information needs and they would not search for more information reported that they ‘would apply for the job’:

‘The description states everything I would need to know in just enough information. There are good incentives the company offers. The company seems to like their employees and offer nice additions to the job.’ – 01 (male, satisficer).

‘Seems good enough. I am not that picky.’ – 24 (male, satisficer).

‘Information provided in this advertisement is more than sufficient to know what I’ll have to do once I get the job. I think it’s very helpful.’ – 21 (female, satisficer).
‘This advertisement provides enough information for me to make an informed decision as to whether or not I would apply. The advertisement provides salary information. It provides information on promotion, annual bonuses, and provides details of the job skills and work experience required.’ – 26 (female, satisficer).

‘This advertisement provided detailed information on salary, bonuses, and the job skill requirement of the job. The information provided would be enough to pique my interest and encourage me to apply for the job. The information was cohesive and concise and it was clearly presented.’ – 29 (female, maximiser).

‘This seems like a close-to-ideal job for someone in the retail business.’ – 16 (male, maximiser).

The eight participants who reported that they would do more information seeking also said that they would not apply for the job at this stage because they needed more information to support their decision. Furthermore, these participants also mentioned that the ideal situation is to compare more job vacancies before making the decision to apply.

(Chose would not apply for the job at this stage) ‘Would want to know more about the bonus and salary information (before applying for the job).’ – 20 (male, satisficer).

(Chose would not apply for the job at this stage) ‘I need to know how the salary and stuff work, how they will plan to pay for me if transport is too far, etc.’ – 14 (male, maximiser).

(Chose would not apply for the job at this stage) ‘I want to see what kind of company it is and whether or not their claims are true at all like the whole paying for transport thing. I also want to learn about the kind of work and the annual bonus before I decide to apply.’ – 22 (female, maximiser).

(Chose would not apply for the job at this stage) ‘I want to have options. This job meets my basic criteria. When I’ve applied to all the companies I’m interested in and received multiple offers (hopefully) then I can compare them to each other. No sense wasting time delving into specifics when I’m not sure I’d even be hired AND the company at least looks like it meets my initial criteria.’ – 27 (female, maximiser).

Two participants emphasised that the provided information was not thorough enough and that they would still search for more information. Despite this, they showed high intention to apply for the job.

‘It’s one of those things where it sounds alright or pretty good and I may be getting suckered in but for now, it doesn’t hurt to just apply and then find out more info later.’ – 09 (male, satisficer).
'I will still want to apply although I think the information was not extremely thorough. Of course, it doesn’t give you every detail but that’s what job interviews are for. You can ask questions later. I will also search for more details about the job before I go for an interview’ – 30 (male, maximiser).

7.4 Summary and conclusion

Study 6 complements the previous studies in this thesis and enhances the understanding of how jobseekers refer to job recruitment messages and how they process the information. The results show that although most of the jobseekers are satisfied by the specificity per se of the information, some jobseekers (especially satisficers) may employ the numerosity heuristic when processing job information. Further, more detailed information provided a signal to some respondents that the prospective employer cared about their employees. Therefore, it is suggested that employers should provide more job details to jobseekers as, even if the recruitment message simply contains more details on the usual aspects covered in job adverts for that company, rather than covering more aspects, some jobseekers will perceive the message positively and feel the employer is being sincere.

Furthermore, the findings confirm that the jobseekers who report that they will not search for more information are thus interested in the vacancy and will apply for the job. However, the findings also reveal that no matter how comprehensive the information provided in FCC sources, there are still a group of participants (especially maximisers) who will want to search for more confirmative information via different sources. This will allow them to double-check the credibility/veracity of the information that they have received. As highlighted, this could be a limit to FCC sources. Corresponding with the findings in Study 1, many participants reported a very positive attitude towards advertisement messages (FCC sources). Thus, carefully designing the job recruitment information and providing genuine content is demonstrated to be a good method to help jobseekers understand the organisation and to encourage them to join the organisation.

Overall discussions, research implications, research limitations and future research suggestions will be provided in Chapter 8.
8.1 Chapter overview

The results of the six studies of the present research were presented and discussed in Chapters 4, 5, 6 and 7. In this final chapter, a summary of the dissertation will be presented. The discussion will highlight the key findings of the research, including aspects of information seeking, needs and use. The theoretical implications and potential practical applications of this research are also discussed. Research limitations are explained and suggestions for future studies are proposed.

8.2 Research objectives, findings and implications

The research objectives specified in Chapter 1 have been addressed in the findings of the six studies. Summaries of the differences between maximisers and satisficers are presented in Table 8.1. These demonstrate the findings of the present study on the first three research objectives.

Objective 1: To provide a deeper understanding of maximiser-style and satisficer-style retail-trade jobseekers’ characteristics.

Objective 2: To examine the consequences for job-information searches of the decision-making style of jobseekers, especially providing information on how the characteristics of these two styles might result in divergence in: 1) The use of and importance of different recruitment information sources. 2) The need for and importance of different recruitment information content. 3) Pre- and some post-hire outcomes.

The findings of Study 1 and Study 2 illustrate the nature of maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers in the retail trade. Maximisers report a higher need for cognition (NFC) with a higher intention to avoid uncertainty when making decisions. They also experience deeper post-decisional regrets, compared to satisficers (Chapter 4, on page 137).

In addition, maximisers are demonstrated to be more willing to use and adopt different sources – both formal and informal (Studies 1 and 3). In the context of job-
information searching, maximisers show their naive-scientist and central-route orientation; they generally require more information than satisficers and actively seek more information about different job attributes before making job-application decisions. Providing more details about the company and the vacancy in the job advertisement message has been found to be a simple method that effectively satisfies more jobseekers’ job-information needs (Study 4). Jobseekers are less likely to seek information beyond the advertisement if the advertisement is inherently information rich. However, this more informative advertisement does not seem to change satisficers’ perceived organisational attractiveness (OA); it only increases maximisers’ OA. This also supports the view that ‘content-rich’ advertisements are more important to maximisers, and may even slightly enhance their favourable impressions of the information provider (the employer).

With regard to jobseekers’ perceptions of informal non-company-controlled (INCC) (WOM-based) sources/providers, satisficers are more likely than maximisers to be influenced by close ties, such as family and close friends. Most satisficers reported they would stop searching for further job-position-related information after they had received staff word-of-mouth (SWOM) messages, especially when such messages came from a strong-tie provider. Satisficers rely on ‘good enough’ decisions and show a preference for searching for sources that they trust. They thereby generally have a lower intention to use or to spend effort on seeking information from sources about which they are apprehensive. Maximisers, on the other hand, do not ignore or underestimate WOM messages from a weak-tie source. They generally adopt a wider range of sources and are more willing to consider advice from weak relationships, such as from a stranger on the Internet, suggesting that they do not use credibility as a heuristic, but gather sufficient information to make a judgment about the credibility of individual pieces of information. Therefore, weak ties have a greater influence on maximisers’ perceived OA, compared to their influence on satisficers (Studies 1 and 3).

Evidence also suggests that maximisers may actively search for more balanced (positive and negative) information. Maximisers are less likely to take risks and to accept uncertainty before making important decisions, such as accepting a job offer (Study 1 and Study 2). Thus, maximisers are persistent in considering the negative
aspects of a decision, which entails making the best choice among the options available to them. Compared to satisficers, they are more cynical when evaluating job recruitment information and job decisions, especially in relation to jobs in the retail sector.

On the other hand, an important contribution to the maximiser-satisficer research is that contrary to the negative appraisals of maximisers in the existing research (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2002, see Chapter 2, on page 61), Study 2 reveals that maximisers will not be less satisfied with their current job, at least in this sample of people with experience of the retail trade. They will also not have a higher turnover intention. Maximisers also show the same level of commitment to the organisation as satisficers. This suggests that it would be worthwhile for retail employers to go to the trouble of trying to meet maximiser needs and that retail employers should not exclude maximisers or satisficers from the recruitment process.

**Objective 3:** To examine how the individual-difference perspective may explain the inconsistent conclusions of previous studies regarding how jobseekers perceive the credibility of different recruitment information sources and the effectiveness of job-information content.

Another important contribution to knowledge is that Study 3, Study 4 and Study 5 not only demonstrate the differences between maximisers and satisficers, but also show that decision-making style plays a moderating role among message valence, information provider–receiver relationship, information provider’s background information and job type on jobseekers’ perceived source credibility and application decisions. This builds evidence to show that the divergent findings in the existing recruitment studies may be due to lack of consideration of jobseekers’ decision-making style (individual differences).

For instance, when the information is provided by a strong tie, which is considered to be a more reliable source, negative information receives the highest perceived OA from maximisers (compared to receiving positive information); in contrast, positive information from the same strong tie receives the highest perceived OA from satisficers (compared to receiving negative information) (Study 3). Moreover, the research findings also show that jobseekers are not all equally influenced by detailed and more informative messages; the results indicate that only
maximiser-style jobseekers increase their perceived OA towards the organisation (Study 4).

These provide evidence that decision-making styles moderate the influence of a recruitment message, and shows that the inconsistency in the literature in relation to the effectiveness of recruitment information sources could result from jobseekers’ decision-making style.

Another finding is that satisficers show a greater preference for using peripheral route information and maximisers adopt a central route (Study 5.2). Satisficers are affected by job type and information providers’ background information. When they look for management-level jobs, expertise background information on the provider increases their perceived provider credibility; but if they look for grassroots-level jobs, their perceived provider credibility increases only when personal background information is provided. Conversely, maximisers adopt central-route information, focusing more on the content of the information. Maximisers are not affected by different job-type decisions and are not influenced by receiving only one side (either personal or expertise) of the provider’s background information. Their perceived source credibility increase is discernible only when they are provided with both expertise and personal background information about the provider. Moreover, satisficers also report significantly higher source credibility when soft, experience-based information messages are SWOM formed, compared to when such messages are provided in the employer’s tone. Yet maximisers’ perceptions of the credibility of the source are not affected by the message form (Study 5.1). No statistical difference is found between SWOM-formed RJP messages and messages in the employer’s tone. These results not only indirectly support the notion of maximisers being careful decision makers who do not accept or discard a message until sufficient information has been collected to support or reject the message, but also offer an explanation for the divergent results in the literature on the effectiveness and influence of information formats.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 8.1: Maximiser vs. satisficer jobseekers in the retail trade</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>(Cognitive-based) profile</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Uncertainty avoidance (UA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Post-decisional regret (PDR)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Need for cognition (NFC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| - Effort put in when searching for job-related information    | Spend more effort; use more sources; want more job/company-related information | Spend less effort; use fewer sources; want less job/company-related information |
| - Attitude towards formal sources                             | Both maximisers and satisficers use information that is provided by formal, company-controlled (FCC) sources, but not many maximisers and satisficers use formal, non-company-controlled (FNCC) sources (e.g., agencies) |  |
| - Attitude towards informal sources                           | Use informal sources, adopt advice from both close relationships and weak relationships | Use informal sources, but prefer to adopt advice only from close relationships |
| - Informativeness (length)                                    | OA is increased when a more informative information message is provided | OA is not affected when a more informative information message is provided |
| - Provider background information * job type                  | Perceived source credibility is not affected by job type and receiving only one aspect of provider background information. Perceived source credibility is increased only when both personal and expertise background information is provided | Perceived source credibility is positively affected (increased) when aiming for a management/grassroots-level job and receiving expertise/personal aspect of provider’s background information |
| - Message valence * Tie strength of informal source provider (SWOM) | - Compared to satisfiers, more likely to be affected by weak-tie SWOM providers - Evaluate weakly negative information that is provided by a strong-tie source with the highest OA | - Compared to maximisers, more likely to be affected by strong-tie SWOM providers - Evaluate positive information that is provided by a strong-tie source with the highest OA |
| - Message valence * RJP message form                          | Some weakly negative information content that is provided by an FCC source is capable of increasing both maximisers’ and satisfiers’ perceived information credibility, compared to when only positive information is provided - Perceived information credibility is not affected by message form | - Perceived information credibility is affected by message form. SWOM-formed RJP message receives higher perceived information credibility compared to when the message is in the employer’s tone |

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Pre-hire outcomes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Maximiser-style jobseeker</strong></th>
<th><strong>Satisficer-style jobseeker</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Information source/provider * information content</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Message valence * RJP message form</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Met expectations</td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>No difference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Job satisfaction (with the present job)</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Company commitment (to the present job)</td>
<td>No difference</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>- Intention to quit (the present job)</td>
<td>No difference</td>
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<tr>
<th><strong>Post-hire outcomes</strong></th>
<th><strong>Maximiser-style (current) employee</strong></th>
<th><strong>Satisficer-style (current) employee</strong></th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Higher</td>
<td>Lower</td>
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Study 2
Study 1 & Study 2
Study 1 & Study 3
Study 4
Study 5.2
Study 3
Study 5.1
Study 2

Objective 4: (Theoretically) To contribute to social communication theory by investigating and demonstrating how the four components of communication process (information provider, stimuli, information receiver and receivers’ responses) are related in recruitment research.

The findings of the present study contribute to decision-making theory by demonstrating that the notion of maximisers and satisficers represents a significant and central individual difference in job-application information searching and decision-making. Maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers show consistent choices and decisions throughout the series of studies. The findings also clarify the influences of individual decision-making styles in pre- and some post-hire recruitment outcomes. The results show that although it might be true that maximisers generally experience negative feelings (e.g., post-decisional regret) after making a choice, not all decisions necessarily lead them to actively seek change (e.g., leave the present job), at least not in the context of retail-trade job-application decisions. That is to say, the nature and characteristics of maximisers and satisficers influence the pre-hire outcomes, but do not necessarily cause them to have different post-hire outcomes.

The results of the present study also contribute to the body of knowledge concerning social communication theory, and posit that recruitment information sources (information providers) and information content (stimuli) have different effects (receivers’ responses) on different types of decision makers (information receivers). For instance, although the general rule is that receiving positive/negative information increases/decreases information receiver’s willingness to pursue the target (e.g., apply for a job), research results illustrate that maximisers and satisficers have differential weightings for positive/negative recruitment information from strong-tie/weak-tie sources. Corresponding with the defined characteristics of maximisers, who always want to search for more information, when the SWOM message was provided from weak-tie sources (positive or negative information), or the message was provided from a strong-tie source with positive information, over 60% of maximisers still preferred to search for more information. However, negative information from a strong-tie (trusted) source is more effective than positive information from the same source in reducing the number of maximisers wanting more information. This suggests that maximisers may use a differential weighting for
trusted negative information. Researchers define maximisers as people who always pursue the best solutions. When looking at this characteristic from another angle, maximisers, compared to satisficers, accept the reality that a flawless solution does not actually exist (Schwartz et al., 2002). It may be surmised that maximisers are persistent in considering the defective parts of a decision, which entails choosing the best (or perhaps the least worst) option amongst those that are available to them. Therefore, they are likely to search for more balanced information (both positive and negative information). It is thus likely that maximisers are not only relatively conservative and risk averse when making decisions, but also relatively pessimistic. This might explain why maximisers forecast generally more poorly than satisficers (Jain et al., 2013, see Chapter 2, on page 65). On the other hand, after receiving SWOM messages, most of the satisficers reported that the information is sufficient for them to make the application decision, and they preferred not to search for further information. There is one exception to this: when the received information is from a weak-tie source and it is positive. This condition encourages around 50% of the satisficers to keep searching. A possible explanation is that weak-tie sources are considered less trustworthy, and receiving only positive information from such sources makes satisficers feel suspicious about whether the situation is as flawless as the weak-tie source describes it.

Besides, as highlighted before, maximisers and satisficers have different considerations in relation to recruitment information length, forms, provider background information and retail-trade job types, showing that receivers’ differences should not be ignored and need to be carefully considered when conducting/designing recruitment activities.

**Objective 5:** (Practically) To provide employers with practical implications and recommendations when designing and customising recruitment messages in terms of information content and message form to satisfy maximiser-style and satisficer-style jobseekers' job-/company-related information needs and preferences.

About the practical implications and contributions, firstly, although existing research (e.g., Highhouse et al., 2003) proposes that informal non-company-controlled (INCC) sources, such as employee referral, are more efficient at attracting jobseekers and encouraging them to apply for job vacancies and to accept the issued
offer than formal company-controlled (FCC) sources (e.g., recruitment advertisements, company’s official website), the research results indicate that FCC sources, such as advertisements, are still the most preferred source of job-vacancy information among retail jobseekers. In the past, the information content of recruitment advertisements was limited by the cost and size of newspaper columns. However, the Internet allows companies to post a larger amount of information online, including both on a company’s official website and on job recruitment (matching) websites. Therefore, employers are strongly advised to provide clear and informative job and company information to satisfy jobseekers’ information needs.

Understanding maximisers and satisficers empowers employers to customise their recruitment information. Employers can attract more candidates by taking into account the different preferences of maximisers and satisficers, providing them with appropriate types of information. There may be circumstances when job-matching website designers could simply ask a few questions to identify a jobseeker’s decision-making style when registering a new account, for example when gathering similar personality or work-orientation information. Employers can then provide recruitment advertisements via the website that are tailored to the specific decision-making needs of users. For example, should a jobseeker be categorised as a maximiser, the website may provide more moderately negative/balanced information. The site might also provide specific named contact information should applicants wish to inquire further about the organisation or the position. For satisficers, the balance should be towards providing a greater number of positive messages.

Another concern is how to make information recipients (jobseekers) believe the posted information is trustworthy and that the employers are being honest with them before they make the decision to apply (Walker et al., 2009). The results of the present study provide suggestions for employers about how they can increase the credibility of job-related messages when they are designing recruitment information. To satisfy jobseekers with different decision-making styles, employers should consider providing experience-based (WOM-based, SWOM-like/formed) information to jobseekers in their job recruitment messages. The findings provide evidence that experience-based information in a company-controlled source (e.g., advertisement) receives high overall credibility. Jobseekers cannot usually gain this type of
knowledge before they have accepted an offer and started work (Breaugh, 2008). Experience-based information provided by official recruitment channels not only improves a jobseeker’s perception of the credibility of the information provided, but also gives them insight into working for an organisation.

It is important to note that this information could be negative, describing the reality of working in the organisation, but might still be highly efficacious in achieving its desired goal of increasing job applications, especially from maximisers. That is to say, employers do not need to deliberately hide the shortcomings of the position. The relationship between employees and employers should ultimately be built on trust, and being honest with potential employees is a first step (Green, 2012). Being transparent by providing weakly negative internal reviews of the organisation and of the job in the recruitment message not only increases jobseekers’ perceptions of the credibility of the message, but also increases jobseekers’ perceived OA.

In addition, even though the message form does not change maximisers’ perceptions of the credibility of the information (that is, does not increase or decrease the perceived credibility), SWOM-formed messages significantly increase satisficers’ perceptions of credibility. Therefore, adopting SWOM-formed messages by using current employees’ experiences of work in recruitment messages should help maximise the candidate pool. On the other hand, when providing these current employees’ experiences, the provider’s (i.e., current employee’s) background information should not be ignored. Employers should choose appropriate employees to represent the company and provide both their expertise and personal background information in the message. This is particularly helpful in satisfying the information needs of jobseekers who are maximisers.

The research results also suggest that (non-company-controlled) SWOM messages affect jobseekers’ attitudes towards a job vacancy and a company. SWOM messages can significantly increase or decrease jobseekers’ willingness to join an organisation. If recruiting new employees, employers are advised to listen carefully to their current employees. In effect, a satisfied current employee could be the company’s best recruiter, as the employee shares their experiences with a potential candidate.
The present research provides a fundamental basis for further studies to apply individual-differences in human resource management field. For example, Jackson, Brett, Sessa, Cooper, Julin and Peyronnin (1991) indicate that individual dissimilarity is an important element that affects recruitment outcomes. Applying individual decision-making in the human resource management field enhances the understanding of the way in which individuals may perceive and evaluate the same information differently. It also assists in the understanding of how these differences may affect the effectiveness of recruitment information design elements. The present study extends previous recruitment research and applied psychology research and provides evidence and explanation to help clarify inconsistent findings among the existing studies of recruitment-message design.

In today’s job marketplace, applicants receive recruitment messages from various sources. Recruiters are increasingly concerned with the effectiveness of their job recruitment messages (Buda and Charnov, 2003). Zottoli and Wanous (2001) emphasise that researchers must consider the differences that exist within a recruitment source and not just across different source categories. The study results shed light on corporate practices for the information that the employers can control. Understanding maximisers and satisficers interests helps to empower employers to customise their recruitment information appropriately. Employers can attract more candidates by taking into account the differences between maximisers and satisficers so as to increase their perceived credibility and, therefore, convincing (increase perceived credibility) them with appropriate types and forms of information. The findings also provide suggestions for employers about how they could increase the credibility of job-related messages when they are designing recruitment information.

On the other hand, although the present study does not directly demonstrate whether maximisers and satisficers may fit better in particular job types/sectors, it is likely that employers could use the ‘always looking for the best’, low-risk-taking characteristics of maximisers for jobs such as controlling stock and shipment. For satisficers, the ‘good enough’ characteristics may fit better with work such as purchasing, which requires flexibility and sometimes the need to take risks and seize chances in order to remain competitive in the fast-changing retail market. Therefore, employers that aim to recruit more maximisers or satisficers for specific job types can attract them by appealing to their different information preferences.

Research questions that are specified in Chapter 1, research findings, and implications are summarised in Table 8.2 below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Research questions</th>
<th>Why the question is important to be studied</th>
<th>Results/findings from the study</th>
<th>Implications</th>
<th>Theoretical implication</th>
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<tr>
<td>[1] What recruitment information sources do maximiser and satisficer jobseekers prefer to use (for getting job-related information) in the retail trade?</td>
<td>Some of the existing research (e.g., Werbel and Landau, 1996) suggests that formal (company-controlled) sources (e.g., recruiting advertisements) provide more objective recruitment information and are more effective at attracting jobseekers to apply for the job vacancy. However, other research (i.e., Judge and Cable, 1997) indicates that recruitment information that is provided from informal (non-company-controlled) sources (e.g., employee referral) is more effective and influential, because these sources not only convey recruitment information but also contain experience-based recruitment information that helps jobseekers to know the actual working environment in the organisation. Recent research has started noticing and suggesting that 'individual differences' may be a moderator, which leads to the research inconsistency. Nevertheless, full research on individual differences in recruitment is still limited. Understanding different individuals’ preferences and uses of recruitment information sources is able to help employers utilise different sources to attract more candidates (with different preferences), which increases the candidate pool, and increases the chance of recruiting possible qualified employees.</td>
<td>Research results reveal that maximisers not only adopt information from formal sources such as recruitment ads and company’s official website (they also report less doubt regarding these sources), but also more willing to accept recruitment information from sources/providers that are considered to have relatively weaker relationships with them (e.g., members of online job discussion forums). Satisficers also use formal sources (e.g., job ads), but they are more likely to accept recruitment information that is provided from informal sources that have strong/close relationships with them, such as family and close friends. Statistics show that compared to satisficers, significantly more maximisers used online blogs, online job discussion forums, and online job-searching sites to find job-related information. More satisficers made enquiries through their families or friends. Results suggest that although satisficers prefer to get information from these strong ties, company-controlled recruiting advertisement is still a source that both maximisers and satisficers frequently use for getting job position information, and it is much more approachable compared to employee referral. That is to say, in the retail trade, job advertisement is influential and effective.</td>
<td>Theory provides evidence that an individual’s decision-making style (maximizer vs. satisficer) is a moderator that moderates the effectiveness of recruitment information sources. Furthermore, the results also suggest that in the retail industry, company-controlled sources are widely adopted by jobseekers, although some studies suggest that the information from formal sources is relatively biased because the employers control the content. Most of the retail trade jobseekers report no specific doubt regarding these sources. Also, although employee referral is suggested to be effective in the literature, however, results of the present study show that only relatively few (not many) jobseekers actually get jobs via employee referral in this sector (retail trade).</td>
<td>Practical implication Retail trade employers should carefully design the content of their recruiting advertisements. Furthermore, it is suggested not to rely too much on an employee referral programme (may lose potential good employees). Employers need to hear their current employees’ needs and avoid untruthful/twisted information that may pull jobseekers (especially those satisficers who only approach relatively few sources) off. Online social media (e.g., Facebook) is a new approach that has been noticed, and the information has been adopted by some (but not that widely adopted, compared to the other sources) jobseekers (especially maximisers). Employers could consider trying these new sources to attract more candidates.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>[2] Are maximisers and satisficers differently satisfied with their current retail jobs? Are maximisers more willing to change their current job, compared to satisficers? Should retail trade companies consider recruiting more/less maximisers or satisficers?</td>
<td>Many studies (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2002) indicate that because of maximisers’ ‘pursuing the best choice’ characteristic, maximisers are more likely to delay the decision-making. Maximisers are also found feeling regret easily after making a decision, because they always consider that there is a better option than the present decided one. Therefore, it is important to investigate whether maximisers’ characteristics will lead them to have a lower job satisfaction, which may lead them to actively look for new jobs that increase employers’ recruiting and training costs. If yes, employers could avoid recruiting maximisers (or not to attract more maximisers) while doing recruitment activities. If no, jobseekers should design recruitment messages to meet maximisers’ information needs.</td>
<td>Evidence found in [Study 2] Results show that in the retail trade, maximisers and satisficers have no difference in job satisfaction (of their present retail job), and no intention difference in leaving/quitting their current jobs.</td>
<td>Theoretical implication Results provide insight that although maximisers are found having characteristics such as perceiving higher degree of post-decisional regrets, but this will not directly affect their retail trade job satisfaction and working attitude. Therefore, decision-making style is not a moderator that moderates retail trade jobseekers’ job satisfaction/turnover intention (post recruitment outcomes). Practical implication Retail trade employers should not exclude recruiting maximisers. Instead, they should attract both maximisers and satisficers to join the candidate pool.</td>
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[3] What are the relations between an individual’s maximising tendency and other cognitive-based individual characteristics, particularly for people with a career in the retail industry? (What characteristics typify maximiser and satisficer jobseekers?)

Previous research has tested the general characteristics of maximisers and satisficers, but no study has tested the characteristics of maximiser/satisficer jobseekers in the retail trade. Understanding these two types of jobseekers not only contributes to the knowledge of decision-making style theory but also provides employers suggestions when assigning jobs to maximiser-type and satisficer-type new employees.

Evidence found in [Study 2]

Results reveal that in the retail trade, maximisers significantly experience a higher degree of post-decisional regret, have high need for cognition, put more efforts before making the final decision, and have overall high certainty avoidance, which makes them avoid taking risks. Satisficers feel less regret about their made-decisions and more willing to take a chance and take risks.

Theoretical implication

The results are generally consistent with the defined characteristics of maximisers and satisficers. It also confirmed that maximiser/satisficer is a universal classification that can be applied in the recruitment research, especially in the retail trade.

Practical implication

Employers can consider assigning different works to newly hired employees who adopt a maximiser/satisficer style when making decisions. For instance, maximisers may fit the job of controlling stock and shipment, which allows low risks for keeping the supply chain works smoothly. Satisficers may fit purchasing works, which requires flexibility and sometimes the need to take risks and seize chances for complying with the fast-changing retail market.

[4] How do maximisers and satisficers react to a typical formal job advertisement in terms of their perceptions of organisational attractiveness and their willingness to search for further information before deciding to apply for the position?

Even though Study 1 shows that recruiting advertisement is still a widely adopted recruiting source in the retail trade, however, the typical recruiting advertisements usually provide only limited information. This information mainly contains hard/confirmable information. To understand whether maximiser and satisficer jobseekers react to typical recruitment information differently helps employers to consider adjusting the content of their ads for recruiting more potential candidates.

Evidence found in [Study 3]

Results provide evidence that most of the maximisers cannot be satisfied by information that is provided in a typical recruiting ad. Maximisers also report that they will actively search for more job-position-related information after reading a piece of typical recruitment ad. Relatively more satisficers consider the information in the ad is enough for them to make a decision about applying, but still some of the satisficers want to know more about the job vacancy.

Theoretical implication

No previous research has tested whether maximisers and satisficers react to a job recruitment ad differently. The present study demonstrates that maximisers are significantly more challenged to be satisfied by a typical recruiting ad, compared to satisficers. The findings also support that decision-making style is a moderator that moderates the content of the recruitment ad. Decision-making style needs to be further considered and tested in pre-hire recruitment studies.

Practical implication

Employers need to be aware that the typical recruitment ad does not provide enough information for jobseekers, especially for most of the maximiser jobseekers. Therefore, for attracting more jobseekers to apply for the vacancy, employers need to consider re-designing their typical recruitment messages.

[5] Can more positive hard/confirmable information in recruiting advertisement (company-controlled sources) simply satisfy more jobseekers’ (maximisers’ and satisficers’) job position information needs? Can this information increase jobseekers’ OA and willingness to apply for/take the job vacancy?

Study 3 shows that over half of the maximisers are not satisfied by a piece of typical (short) positive recruiting advertisement message. If employers can satisfy more jobseekers’ job information needs by simply providing more detailed hard/confirmable information, it will prevent more jobseekers from approaching information from (company) uncontrollable sources. It is also worth to know whether this more detailed information can increase jobseekers’ OA and willingness to apply for/take the job vacancy.

Evidence found in [Study 4]

Research result illustrates that the provision of additional details about a job vacancy (delivered in company-controlled information), can prevent jobseekers, especially more satisficers (compared to maximisers) from attempting to find information from elsewhere. However, providing more hard/confirmable job details did not effectively improve the OA for jobseekers. Statistics show that more detailed message only slightly increased maximisers’ OA, but did not affect satisficers’ OA.

Theoretical implication

Supporting the decision-making literature, results reveal that more informative information can significantly satisfy information receivers’ information needs. However, in contrast to the existing research, this piece of more detailed information is only able to slightly encourage maximiser-style jobseekers’ willingness to apply for/take the job (OA); satisficer-style jobseekers’ perceived OA is not affected, meaning more detailed hard information can prevent jobseekers’ information-searching intentions, but is not the best idea to attract jobseekers to join the organisation. Variables of ad design that might be of use to increase the job attractiveness should be further tested.

Practical implication

Employers should provide more detailed confirmable information when designing recruiting messages. It is an easy move that can not only satisfy more jobseekers’ job information needs but also lower the chance that these jobseekers who were not satisfied by a typical ad jobseekers to get information from not company-controlled source which may decrease their applying intention. An official website is a relatively low-cost platform. On the other hand, this detailed information cannot increase jobseekers’ intentions to join (for both maximisers and satisficers); therefore, employers will have to find other ways to encourage jobseekers’ applying willingness.
Back to question 5, knowing what job-related information those who are not satisfied by a more detailed recruiting ad message need can help employers provide this information, and possibly satisfy these jobseekers’ information needs. Evidence found in [Study 5, pre-study]

Overall, jobseekers were more willing to get information about basic remuneration, health-care provision/insurance, work location, training courses, annual bonus, other additional benefits, store facilities, job-skill requirements, holidays, fit between job and my skills and values, general reputation of the company, family-friendly or flexible working hours, company financial position, and company ethical and environmental policies information from company-controlled sources.

Moreover, participants reported that they wanted to get more information about general fairness of treatment of employees by company, physical working environment, social working environment, and family friendly or flexible working hours from partly company-controlled sources. Participants also indicated that they would search for more information about basic remuneration, opportunities for promotion, general fairness and treatment of employees by company, physical working environment, social working environment, and the general reputation of the company from non-company-controlled sources.

Evidence found in [Study 3]

Results show that first, not all negative SWOM messages lead to negative results (decrease jobseekers’ applying intention). However, it is affected by who provides the negative information. When the information is provided by a close tie, some negative information actually increases jobseekers’ applying intentions, especially maximiser jobseekers in the retail trade who understand that working in this sector may require a need to compromise for some drawbacks. Some negative SWOM information from a close tie (trusted relationship) not only increases jobseekers’ job applying willingness but also significantly decreases maximisers’ job-related information searching intention. On the other hand, when the SWOM message comes from a weak tie, which is considered as having a relatively lower credibility, negative information significantly decreases jobseekers’ applying intention, especially for satisficers. Negative SWOM information from the weak tie even pushes significantly more satisficers to search for more job-related information.

Theoretical implication
Study results demonstrate that decision-making style, information provider-receiver relationships, and SWOM message valence are moderators that significantly affect an individual’s perception towards job information from informal non-company-controlled recruitment sources. A significant three-way interaction is detected among these three variables on jobseeker’s perceived organisational attractiveness (OA).

Practical implication
Information from informal non-company-controlled sources such as SWOM is like a double-edged sword, which could either increase or decrease a jobseeker’s OA. Therefore, employers could consider A) Carefully designing the recruiting ad messages, and may provide some experience-based, SWOM-like messages in the recruiting ad to satisfy maximisers’ and satisficers’ information needs, and prevent them from searching information from uncontrollable sources. B) Listening carefully to the needs from current employees, and satisfy their needs. This will prevent the exposure of negative information from the current employees especially when the employee has a weak relationship with the jobseeker.

[6] What information those who are ‘not satisfied by more detailed information from a single company-controlled source’ jobseekers require and from what source(s) they will seek this information from?

[7] What are the effects of SWOM messages on maximisers and satisficers that cannot be satisfied by a typical formal job advertisement? Do maximisers and satisficers differ in their reaction to SWOM messages that vary in terms of their valence (positive/negative) and tie strength with the information provider (strong tie/weak tie)?

Theoretical implication
Study result provides information about what sources jobseekers still want information from after receiving a piece of more detailed information from a single advertisement, a company-controlled source. The result is consistent with the result of Study 1. It shows that company-controlled information sources are the most frequently used. These generally offer objective and confirmable information in regards to the job vacancy. The result also reveals and supports Study 3, indicating that dissatisfied jobseekers would search for additional personal and experience-based information (soft information) in regards to the company/job.

Practical implication
Despite previous research (e.g., Breuweg et al., 2003; Ryan et al., 2005) proposing that informal non-company-controlled information sources were more effective than formal company-controlled sources, the results indicate that controlled sources are still widely adopted by jobseekers in the retail trade. Therefore, employers should be prepared to receive enquiries about these listed job attributes and provide satisfactory information in response.
Can providing experience-based information in a company-controlled source (e.g., advertisement) increase jobseekers' (maximisers and satisficers) perceived information credibility? Can this information increase maximiser and satisficer jobseekers' applying intention? How?

Previous research indicates that recruitment information credibility is critical to mediating a jobseeker's willingness to join an organisation. Some researchers claim that company-controlled sources should avoid soft/experience-based, and should provide mainly hard, confirmable information, which is perceived as objective, to increase credibility. Other researchers claim that providing soft/experience-based information from company-controlled sources can increase credibility by making jobseekers perceive their potential employer as friendly and honest. Decision-making style could possibly explain such equivocal results.

Evidence found in [Study 5.1] [Study 5.2] [Study 5.3]

Study 5.1 shows that satisficers are affected by the message form, but not maximisers. Some negative experience-based information in the recruiting ad (company-controlled) also increases jobseekers' perceived credibility, which is more evident for maximisers. Study 5.2 reveals that the job type and provider's background moderate jobseekers' perceived credibility, especially those who are satisficers. Satisficers are more likely to increase their perceived credibility when they aim for a grassroots-level job and the information provider's background is more personal. They also increase the perceived credibility when aiming for management-level jobs and the provider's background is expertise oriented. Maximisers' perceived credibility only increase when both the expertise aspect and personal aspect of the information provider background is received, and job type does not significantly change their perceived credibility.

Study 5.3 further shows that this weakly negative information does not decrease jobseekers' OA. Instead, when employers design the recruiting ad with genuine information, jobseekers, especially maximisers, increase their OA and decrease their further information searching intention after receiving the information from the company (the company-controlled source). This finding is also consistent with the result in Study 3.

Theoretical implication

The findings again clearly demonstrate that decision-making style is a moderator that moderates the effectiveness of the recruitment information. Message valence, message form, job type, and information provider background all showed having effects on jobseekers' perceived information credibility and OA. Therefore, decision-making style is necessarily needed to be considered in recruitment studies.

Practical implication

1) SWOM-formed information (with experience-based information from current employees) can overall increase jobseekers' perceived credibility (especially satisficers). Employers should consider adopting this form instead of providing information in the employer's tone. 2) Employers should provide the information provider's (current employee) background information (including expertise and personal), which is also able to increase jobseekers' perceived credibility. 3) When designing messages in the company-controlled sources, some weakly negative information that describe the possible drawbacks of working in the organisation can increase jobseekers' perceived credibility, and also satisfy more jobseekers, especially maximisers' information needs.
8.3 Findings beyond the proposed research objectives

Some issues have arisen during the research that were not covered as such in the proposed objectives. Firstly, Study 4 demonstrates that a job recruitment message which contains more detailed information about the job vacancy can satisfy more jobseekers’ information needs and prevent them from searching for further information, compared to only providing short and simple job descriptions. However, what is not further investigated in Study 4 is whether jobseekers are satisfied by the detail and specificity per se of the information, or, rather, by the volume/length. A supplementary study (Study 6) reveals that most (over 70% of) jobseekers stop searching for further information because the detailed information genuinely satisfies their information needs. Approximately 25% of jobseekers appear to adopt the numerosity heuristic (Pelham et al., 1994); they prefer the more text-rich job advertisement simply because the message is longer. This finding indicates that studies in the numerosity heuristic should carefully consider individual differences as a moderator, which may significantly affect the study findings. Practically, regardless of whether the jobseeker is satisfied by the information detail or by the message length, employers should provide more text-rich information rather than showing only short job information messages in their controllable (FCC) sources. This small improvement can actually make a big difference to pre-hire recruitment outcomes.

Secondly, for those jobseekers who were not satisfied with the more text-rich job advertisement, the designed experiments (Studies 3, 4 and 5) only asked if the participants’ intention was to search for more job information (yes/no). The studies did not evaluate whether this group of participants intended to find out about job attributes that were not mentioned in the job ad description (categorical information), or were seeking to confirm the information that they had received (from the advertisement) using different information sources (confirmative information). The results of Study 6 show that most of these unsatisfied jobseekers actively look for categorical information instead of confirmative information. In other words, employers should carefully design and provide a sufficient amount of job information containing attributes that jobseekers want to know, which would prevent jobseekers from searching for more information (specifically categorical information) from informal non-company-controlled (INCC) sources. Fewer jobseekers, who are mostly
maximisers, actively search for confirmative information. Although employers may not be able to control the information that is provided by non-official sources, as highlighted before, it is important for employers to listen carefully to their current employees’ needs. Employers could even encourage their current employees to share their actual work experience with potential candidates.

Another issue is that previous studies (e.g., Highhouse et al., 2003) propose that a jobseeker’s perceived organisational attractiveness (OA) has a strong positive relationship with the job-application decision. Nevertheless, the scale items of OA do not directly evaluate jobseekers’ job-application decision (whether they would apply for the job vacancy or not). Study 6 further reveals that the participants who reported that the more detailed advertisement message had satisfied their information needs and that they would not search for more information all indicated that they would apply for the job, supporting the notion that OA could reflect a jobseeker’s job-application decision.

Methodological contributions

As reviewed in Chapter 3 (on page 91), even though several researchers are devoted to establishing new scale items to identify an individual’s maximiser and satisficer orientation, the present study applies the short version of the original maximising tendency scale (short MS), and illustrates consistent results throughout the designed studies. The findings suggest that the use of the short MS is reliable and valid.

Moreover, although there have been some criticisms of the dichotomisation of quantitative variables (see Chapter 3, on page 90), the datasets of the present study support Schwartz et al.’s (2002) definition of maximisers and satisficers, which is based on a dichotomisation concept. A series of cluster analyses demonstrates that the use of a median split for classifying maximisers and satisficers is appropriate and acceptable (see Chapter 3, on page 90). Future studies in maximisers and satisficers that adopt factorial design experiments could consider following the steps of the present study.
8.4 Limitations, future research suggestions and conclusions

This study is not without its limitations. Firstly, in Studies 3, 4 and 5, although the scenario-based experimental method is identified as one of the most useful methods for allowing researchers to control potential biases and establish the effects and relationships between variables (Howitt and Cramer, 2014), it is acknowledged that the artificiality of the setting may produce unnatural behaviour that may not reflect real life. For instance, although the design of the scenario advertisement was based on real recruitment messages, the use of the word ‘briefly’ in the scenario content might have had some influence on the respondents with respect to the question on whether they want to search for more information after reading the job information. Nevertheless, the study results obviously demonstrate that significantly fewer satisficers are willing to search for more job-related information than maximisers. Future studies are encouraged not only to replicate the present study and to retest or further test the relationships between the variables in the same or different sectors, but also to adopt other research methods, such as using qualitative data, to frame the effects of individual differences on the perceptions of recruitment information content.

Another potential limitation of the use of the experimental method is that the respondents of the present study all came from different types of (retail) stores. Even though the random assignments were successful, one might argue that the inclusion of such a diverse sample spreads the influence of different treatments, such as salary and health care, over different styles of decision-makers’ perceived attitudes towards their jobs. However, some companies provide relatively generous benefits to their employees. The present study did not test for these different benefits, and so cannot make any assertions with respect to their effects on adopters of different decision-making styles. Future studies might consider comparing whether ‘company’ and ‘benefit’ are potential moderators of maximiser or satisficer perceptions of their present jobs.

In addition, in Study 2, the variance in work-related outcomes to those expected and nuanced response to met expectations (ME) raises the possibility that, although decision-making styles may be chronically engaged, outcomes may vary with context. That is to say, although the basic notion of the classification remains the
same (e.g., maximisers still put more effort into information search and show high post-decisional regret (PDR) when faced with compromising deadlines), in a specific group of people or situation, the two decision-making style groups may react differently. Future research should investigate whether there are boundary conditions on decision-making style.

The present study mainly focuses on jobseekers’ pre-hire outcomes; only three hypotheses were designed to test current retail trade employees’ post-hire outcomes. These post-hire outcomes include levels of met expectation, satisfaction, commitment (to the company), and intention to quit (see page 132-133). However, the findings reveal that satisficers, overall, do not report significant higher levels in these post-hire outcomes, which is different from the proposed hypotheses. A follow-up test on pages 140-142 provides a possible explanation. The results demonstrate that the most negative effects are confined to the group of maximisers that have lower met expectation (ME) for intention to quit and company commitment. For job satisfaction, the lower job satisfaction for maximisers compared to satisficers is restricted to high levels of ME and may be a reflection of the accuracy of (low) maximiser expectations of retail work. That is to say, ME is a key factor that significantly affects jobseekers’ post-hire outcomes, especially for maximiser-style jobseekers. The extent that maximisers put in more effort and form more accurate expectations, the likelihood to quit is a function of a difference between maximisers and satisficers on reactions to ME. Future post-hire related research should carefully test or control ME as an important variable; especially as the level of ME might significantly influence the research findings. Furthermore, more post-hire outcomes could be investigated in future studies. For instance, future studies could explore whether the recruited maximisers and satisficers differ in their actual job performances.

Moreover, the research findings reveal that only a small proportion of jobseekers actively use online social media as a source for getting job-related information. This illustrates that although social media websites are popular and widely used, not many jobseekers use them as a platform for searching for job information. A well-known social media website, Facebook, announced in 2014 that it is looking to release more job recruitment services. It is expected that social media might be a good platform for attracting talented potential candidates in the future.
Future studies may consider the application of social media in the recruitment process, and investigate whether maximisers and satisficers have different attitudes towards these services. In terms of credibility, further research could also investigate differences between online and offline job-related information sources and within online sources.

Furthermore, although the sample shows representativeness on features of the retail trade, it was an online sample in a trade where there may be groups with less or no Internet experience or exposure. Therefore, future research might focus on a sample that includes groups that are less Internet savvy. On the other hand, the most rapidly growing and most widely available digital access is via mobile phones, and future research might explore the effect of this platform on recruitment information sources.

Returning to the problem of median splits, Schwartz et al. (2002) defined maximisers and satisficers based on a median split concept and proposed the MS scale, and many existing maximiser and satisficer studies have used median splits in their data analysis (e.g., Schwartz et al., 2002; Iyengar et al., 2006; Misuraca and Teuscher, 2013). However, custom and practice are not sufficient arguments for the use of dichotomisation (McCallum et al., 2002). Although a series of cluster analyses and independent-sample t-tests produced support for the median split groupings for the data in this study, future research could use different research designs and compare the results of analysing the scale as a continuous variable and as a categorical variable, thus demonstrating the usability and/or the limitations of the use of MS.

Finally, as mentioned in Chapter 1, considering the nature and job requirements of different sectors, the job sector could also be a potential moderator. Future research could examine the variables used in this study in a highly skilled sector, such as the health care and nursing industry, and test whether maximisers and satisficers react differently to the recruitment information and sources. Other variables, such as cultural differences and the economic and social conditions of a country, are important and interesting topics that could be considered in future studies.

Staff recruitment is an integral part of any business. Despite extensive research on recruitment over the last six decades, the research literature concerning individual
differences in decision-making styles in relation to job applications is scant. The present exploratory research is a starting point and foundation for further study. It is intended that this study of decision-making styles in recruitment will attract further attention from researchers and practitioners alike.

POSTSCRIPT

Having completed this study, finalised the data analysis and written up the results, I made Skype calls to my friends, [A] and [B]. I wanted to tell them that I had mentioned some of their characteristics and behaviours in my thesis. Neither of them had changed their jobs – after four years. [B] was optimistic about my thesis and said that she was happy to have played a small part in my work. She asked me to take some time to briefly explain my thesis to her when I am back in Taiwan. [A] seriously told me that she really wanted to read my thesis carefully before I submit it, to make sure that her characteristics were perfectly and accurately described.

20 July 2015
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APPENDIX A: Questions - Study 1

Part 1 General attitude towards recruitment information sources and the content

1. Please list the job attributes that are important to you when considering a job in the retailing industry. (Q1)
2. Please list what information source(s) you prefer to use and have used to find job-related information – e.g., social media such as LinkedIn and Facebook, newspaper advertisements, job centres, job information from friends/family, etc. Please be specific. (Q2)

Part 2 Attitude towards recruitment sources

1. What do you think about formal sources (the information is published by the company, e.g., job advertisements)? Do you have any concerns about these sources? (Q3)
2. In your previous experience, have you consulted any friends/family who are current/past employees to get details of the company/position? What do you think of these sources? (Q4)
3. In your experience, have you ever tried to refer to any online (Internet-based) word of mouth about a vacancy before you decide to apply for it? What do you think about online WOM in general? (Q5)
4. Compared to the offline (non-Internet-based) WOM-based job-related information sources, which (offline/online WOM based) do you personally prefer to approach/adopt when you need to get job information? Why? (Q6)
5. Do you evaluate formal sources and informal sources differently in credibility? What sources do you think are more credible than the others and to what extent? (Q7)

Part 3 Job information searching behaviours

1. In your experience, after you have read job information from a formal source such as a newspaper job advertisement, would you still try to get further information about the vacancy from other source(s) before you make the decision to apply for it? If yes, what source(s) have you used to find further information? (Q8)
2. Based on your experience, have you encountered a situation where some important information (to you) was missing from the first source that you got job information from, and you then kept searching for that information from other sources? What was this information? If you did not have this experience, what missing information might push you to search for that information from other sources? (Q9)
### APPENDIX B: Questions - Study 2

**Maximising tendency (Nenkov et al. 2008)**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>When I am in the car listening to the radio, I often check other stations to see if something better is playing, even if I am relatively satisfied with what I’m listening to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>No matter how satisfied I am with my job, it’s only right for me to be on the lookout for better opportunities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I often find it difficult to shop for a gift for a friend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Renting videos is really difficult. I’m always struggling to pick the best one.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>No matter what I do, I have the highest standards for myself.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I never settle for second best.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Effort invested into researching job related information (Blau, 1993)**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I spent a lot of time looking for a job alternative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>I devoted much effort to looking for other job options.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>I focused my time and effort on job search activities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I gave best effort to find a job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Uncertainty avoidance (Quintal et al., 2006)**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>It is important to have instructions spelled out in detail so that I always know what I am expected to do.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>It is important to closely follow instructions and procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Rules and regulations are important because they inform me of what is expected of me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Instructions for operations are important.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Standardised work procedures are helpful.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Self-efficacy (Schwarzer and Jerusalem, 1995)**

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Thanks to my resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>I can usually handle whatever comes my way.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Post-decisional regret (Schwartz et al., 2002)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. Whenever I make a choice, I’m curious about what would have happened if I had chosen differently.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Whenever I make a choice, I try to get information about how the other alternatives turned out.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. If I make a choice and it turns out well, I still feel like something of a failure if I find out that another choice would have turned out better.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. When I think about how I’m doing in life, I often assess opportunities I have passed up.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Once I make a decision, I don’t look back.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Need for cognition (NFC) (Cacioppo et al., 1983)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I would prefer complex to simple problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I like to have the responsibility of handling a situation that requires a lot of thinking.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Thinking is not my idea of fun.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I would rather do something that requires little thought than something that is sure to challenge my thinking abilities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I try to anticipate and avoid situations where there is likely a chance I will have to think in depth about something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I find satisfaction in deliberating hard and for long hours.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I only think as hard as I have to.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I prefer to think about small, daily projects to long-term ones.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. I like tasks that require little thought once I’ve learned them.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. The idea of relying on thought to make my way to the top appeals to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. I really enjoy a task that involves coming up with new solutions to problems.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Learning new ways to think doesn’t excite me very much.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. I prefer my life to be filled with puzzles that I must solve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14. The notion of thinking abstractly is appealing to me.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. I would prefer a task that is intellectual, difficult and important to one that is somewhat important but does not require much thought.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. I feel relief rather than satisfaction after completing a task that required a lot of mental effort.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17. It’s enough for me that something gets the job done; I don’t care how or why it works.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. I usually end up deliberating about issues even when they do not affect me personally.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Met Expectations (ME) (Wotruba and Tyagi, 1991)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Getting special awards or bonus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Individual effort required.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Opportunity to make friends.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Respect from fellow colleagues.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Success relates directly to initiative.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Attention and appreciation from supervisors.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Development of work required skills</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Feelings of loyal association with the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Support from supervisors.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Increase my self-esteem.
Advancement opportunities.
Opportunity to work on a team.
Chance to be creative and innovative.
Minimum of rejection by prospects.
Feelings of self-fulfilment.
Opportunity for professional growth.
Feeling of worthwhile accomplishment.
Freedom to do the jobs as I wish.
Making use of the job.
Desirable work hours.
Prestige of the job.
Predictable earnings.
Predictable work content.
Reasonable holidays.

Job satisfaction (Brayfield and Rothe, 1951)
1 I feel fairly satisfied with my present job.
2 Most days I am enthusiastic about my work.
3 Each day at work seems like it will never end. [REVERSE DESIGNED]
4 I find real enjoyment in my work.
5 I consider my job to be rather unpleasant. [REVERSE DESIGNED]

Company commitment (Blau and Boal, 1987)
1 I find that my values and the company/organisation that I currently work for are very similar.
2 I feel myself to be part of this company/organisation.
3 The decisions made by the company/organisation mostly reflect my opinions.
4 I feel as if this company’s (organisation) problems are my own.

Intention to quit (Giacopelli, et al., 2013)
1 I feel that I could leave this job
2 I am actively looking for other jobs.
3 If I was completely free to choose I would leave this job.
**APPENDIX C: Scenarios - Study 3**

**Instruction of Advertisement message:**

Please read the scenario below carefully, and answer the questions based on your previous job seeking preferences and behaviours.

*Imagining that you are seeking a new job in the retailing industry, an advertisement draws your attention. The company (Company A) is a retail trade company that has a positive reputation in the sector.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Remuneration</th>
<th>The advertisement says the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level for this retail job, and it depends on the work hours of the contract per week. As far as you are aware, is a bit higher than some similar roles in other companies.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The location</td>
<td>The advertisement shows the work place is fairly close to your home. It is convenient for public transport. You can get to the work place either by car or by bus. The advertisement indicates that company will subsidize part of your travel costs for you if the distance between your house and the work place is too far.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hours</td>
<td>The advertisement describes that working hours in Company A are generally flexible. The working hours look ok to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to get a promotion</td>
<td>The advertisement states briefly that if the new employee works hard, has the potential for development or is talented, they will get promoted or get a pay rise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Training courses</td>
<td>The advertisement briefly lists some training courses. These training courses are available to improve the employee’s working skills, and some look helpful to you. Almost all the training courses are free. A few courses are expensive; employees will have to pay for these themselves, but they will receive some subsidies from the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Annual bonus</td>
<td>The advertisement also mentions that employees will get an annual bonus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Job skill requirements</td>
<td>The advertisement briefly lists the job skills that are required for the position. Most of the job requirements that are listed are what you have learned at school or from previous work experience. Only a few are new to you, but they seem fairly easy for you to learn in work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Tie Strength** (adopted from Keeling et al., 2013):

**Close tie**: This employee is someone you know very well and have extensive contact with, such as a close friend or family member. S/he has been working at Company A for 3 years.

**Weak tie**: This employee is someone you don’t know particularly well and have limited contact with, such as a passing acquaintance. S/he has been working at Company A for 3 years.

**SWOM Messages:**

**Positive**: Well, I personally feel happy to work for Company A. Colleagues are all nice and friendly. The department manager is reasonable and helpful. You can always talk to him if you have any problems with your work.

The company has grown over recent years, and the annual bonus for last year was quite good. I think the situation will be even better this year.

In terms of paid leave, the number of days of annual leave depends on the number of years you have worked, but I think the system is fair. I took some days off last year, and had a great break.

I am not sure if the work is related to the skills you learned in school. For me, I think my work is highly relevant to what I learned from school. I still learned some new skills last year; the company sometimes arranges workshops for their staff and I think these are useful. Most of the training courses are free, but some are not. The training programmes are different every year. I do not think it is necessary to arrange training outside work by yourself.

The work is challenging; I sometimes face bottlenecks, but the positive thing is, all my colleagues are there and are very willing to help me.

In my experience, I personally think it is possible to get a promotion, and if you work hard, you are likely to get a generous pay rise.

**Negative**: Well, I personally feel that working for Company A is OK. Generally, the colleagues are not too bad, although honestly speaking, some of them are a bit annoying. The department manager is a very serious guy. I mean you need to take things seriously and think very carefully when you talk to him, but the good thing is that he has patience. He usually carefully listens to what we say.

The company is in a little fluctuating situation over recent years, and the annual bonus last year was not that satisfactory, but I think the situation is getting a little better this year.
In terms of paid leave, the number of days of annual leave depends on the number of years you have worked, but I do not think the system is very fair – you know, like some other companies, senior employees usually have priority in terms of arranging their holidays. Compromising holidays is needed here.

I am not sure if the work is related to the skills you learned in school. For me, I think my work is not completely relevant in terms of what I learned from school – But I would say I learned some new skills because I need these skills for my work. The company seldom arranges workshops or training for the employees. Some of the training courses are free, but some are not. I would suggest you to arrange training outside work by yourself if you want to improve yourself.

The work is not very interesting, I mean, not that challenging. I sometimes face bottlenecks - some of my colleagues are helpful. They helped me get through the problems. However some of my colleagues are indifferent and standoffish.

In my experience, I personally think it is probably not that easy to get a promotion. It is not very easy to get a pay rise either. However if you work very hard, you shall be able to get what you deserve at the end.

**Organisational Attractiveness (Highhouse et al. 2003)**

1. For me, this company (Company A) would be a good place to work
2. I would not be interested in this company (Company A) except a last report [REVERSE DESIGNED]
3. This company (Company A) is attractive to me as a place for employment.
4. I am interested in learning more about the company (Company A).
5. A job at this company (Company A) is very appealing to me.
6. I would accept a job offer from this company (Company A).
7. I would make this company (Company A) one of my first choice as an employer.
8. If this company (Company A) invited me for a job interview, I would go.
9. I would exert a great deal of effort to work or this company (Company A).
10. I would recommend this company (Company A) to a friend looking for a job.
11. Employees are probably proud to say they work at this company (Company A).
12. This is reputable company (Company A) to work for.
13. This company (Company A) probably has a reputation as being an excellent employer.
14. I would find this company (Company A) a prestigious place to work.
15. There are probably many who would like to work at this company (Company A).
**APPENDIX D: Scenarios - Study 4**

Please read the scenario below carefully, and answer the questions based on your previous job seeking preferences and behaviours.

*Imagining that you are seeking a new job in the retailing industry, an advertisement draws your attention. The company (Company A) is a retail trade company that has a positive reputation in the sector.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Short – Positive Version (Same as Study 3)</strong></th>
<th><strong>Long – Positive Version</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remuneration</strong></td>
<td>The advertisement says the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level for this retail job, and it depends on the work hours of the contract per week. As far as you are aware, is a bit higher than some similar roles in other companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A full introduction of the salary system of Company A is given in the advertisement (information includes how you may get to the next level of salary, the annual evaluation, etc.), and this indicates that the starting salary will be dictated by your work experience. As far as you know, the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level, and even a bit higher than similar roles in some other companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The location</strong></td>
<td>The advertisement shows the work place is fairly close to your home. It is convenient for public transport. You can get to the work place either by car or by bus. The advertisement indicates that company will subsidize part of your travel costs for you if the distance between your house and the work place is too far.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The company provides information and details about different ways you can get to the work place, information such as what buses or train will be available and the nearest route to the work place by driving, etc. The advertisement indicates that company will subsidize part of your travel costs for you if the distance between your home and the workplace is too far. The work place location is actually fairly close to your home. It is convenient for public transport. You can get to the work place by either car or bus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chance to get a promotion</strong></td>
<td>The advertisement states briefly that if the new employee works hard, has the potential for development or is talented, they will get promoted or get a pay rise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The advertisement gives full information about the criteria for getting promotion and a pay rise. The details of the requirements for achieving the next salary level are listed. The system seems fair to you – it looks like a promotion and pay rise are achievable if you work hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training courses</strong></td>
<td>The advertisement briefly lists some training courses. These training courses are available to improve the employee’s working skills, and some look helpful to you. Almost all the training courses are free. A few courses are expensive; employees will have to pay for these themselves, but they will receive some subsidies from the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual bonus</strong></td>
<td>The advertisement also mentions that employees will get an annual bonus. It provides information about the annual bonus over the past 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours</strong></td>
<td>The advertisement describes that working hours in Company A are generally flexible. The working hours look ok to you. The advertisement describes that working hours in Company A are generally flexible. The advertisement message specifically indicates the time slots. Employees are allowed to arrange their working timetable. The working hours look ok to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job skill requirements</strong></td>
<td>The advertisement briefly lists the job skills that are required for the position. Most of the job requirements that are listed are what you have learned at school or from previous work experience. Only a few are new to you, but they seem fairly easy for you to learn in work. The advertisement lists all the details of the job skills and work experience that are required for the position (for example, work experience as a cashier), and how and why you will need these skills for this vacancy. Most of the job requirements that are listed are what you have learned at school or from previous work experience. Only a few are new to you, but they seem fairly easy for you to learn in work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX E: Pre-study scenarios - Study 5

Please read the scenario below carefully, and answer the questions based on your previous job seeking preferences and behaviours.

*Imagining that you are seeking a new job in the retailing industry, an advertisement draws your attention. The company (Company A) is a retail trade company that has a positive reputation in the sector.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Long – Positive Version (same scenario used in Study 4)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Remuneration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A full introduction of the salary system of Company A is given in the advertisement (information includes how you may get to the next level of salary, the annual evaluation, etc.), and this indicates that the starting salary will be dictated by your work experience. As far as you know, the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level, and even a bit higher than similar roles in some other companies.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>The location</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The company provides information and details about different ways you can get to the work place, information such as what buses or train will be available and the nearest route to the work place by driving, etc. The advertisement indicates that company will subsidize part of your travel costs for you if the distance between your home and the workplace is too far. The work place location is actually fairly close to your home. It is convenient for public transport. You can get to the work place by either car or bus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Chance to get a promotion</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement gives full information about the criteria for getting promotion and a pay rise. The details of the requirements for achieving the next salary level are listed. The system seems fair to you – it looks like a promotion and pay rise are achievable if you work hard.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Training courses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement provides a full list and the details of Company A’s training courses, e.g., how long it takes to finish the course. These training courses are available to improve the employee’s working skills, and some look helpful to you. Almost all the training courses are free. A few courses are expensive; employees will have to pay for these themselves, but they will receive some subsidies from the company.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Annual bonus</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement also mentions that employees will get an annual bonus. It provides information about the annual bonus over the past 5 years.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hours</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement describes that working hours in Company A are generally flexible. The advertisement message specifically indicates the time slots. Employees are allowed to arrange their working timetable. The working hours look ok to you.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Job skill requirements</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement lists all the details of the job skills and work experience that are required for the position (for example, work experience as a cashier), and how and why you will need these skills for this vacancy. Most of the job requirements that are listed are what you have learned at school or from previous work experience. Only a few are new to you, but they seem fairly easy for you to learn in work.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
[OPTION 1] the information in the advertisement showed on the last page is NOT ENOUGH for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR that vacancy or not. Before I go for the application process, I prefer to SPEND SOME MORE TIME to get to know more about the job until I feel satisfied I know enough about the job.

[OPTION 2] the information in the advertisement showed on the last page has provided ENOUGH information for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR the vacancy. Thus, I prefer NOT TO SPEND TIME looking for further information about that vacancy.

(OPTION 1) → You have indicated you would need more information about the vacancy and Company A.

For each type of information, please indicate all the sources you would go for that information.

If you would not need a particular type of information, or source of information, please leave those boxes blank.

Please tick as many sources as you think necessary to you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Basic Remuneration</th>
<th>Compan y itself, e.g., HR departme nt</th>
<th>Current employee who is not family or friend, e.g., visit store to talk to staff</th>
<th>Company website</th>
<th>Online community/discussion forum, or social media</th>
<th>Online private blogs</th>
<th>My family/friends</th>
<th>Online or offline employment agency or placement service</th>
<th>News reports, magazines, etc. (online or offline)</th>
<th>Another source</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Health care provision/insurance</td>
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<tr>
<td>Work location</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to get promotion</td>
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<tr>
<td>Training courses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Annual bonus and other additional benefits</td>
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<tr>
<td>Store facilities</td>
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<tr>
<td>Job skill requirements</td>
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<tr>
<td>Holidays</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Staff social events</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>General fairness of treatment of employees by company</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical working environment, e.g., cleanliness</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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<tr>
<td>Social working environment, e.g., friendly colleagues, helpful supervisors</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance for a mentor</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fit between job and my skills and values</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Opportunity to use learned skills</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General reputation of the company</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family friendly or flexible working hours</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company financial position</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Company ethical and environmental policies</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX F: Scenarios - Study 5.1

Please imagine that you are seeking a new job in the retail trade, when an advertisement draws your attention. The advertisement is provided by Company A and mentions key job attributes, including salary information, a chance of promotion, work location, training opportunities, job skill requirements and so on.

The advertisement also includes the following message:

**SWOM-formed messages:** See what our current employee says about what is it like working here
The messages are provided by our currently employee:
**Employee A:**
I am an employee for Company A and work in the same department as this vacancy. I would say…

Messages directly from company: the instruction pointed out that ‘the advertisement also includes the following information’

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Attributes</th>
<th>SWOM-formed messages (in recruitment advertisement)</th>
<th>Messages directly from company (in recruitment advertisement)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General fairness of treatment of employees by company</td>
<td>[Positive] The company considers employees’ wellbeing and provides support. For example, I find there is ample time to complete tasks before they are due. You will have the opportunity to work on a variety of tasks and develop your skills in many areas. Expectations are high but feedback is constructive and you will be recognized when these expectations are met.</td>
<td>[Positive] The company considers employees’ wellbeing and provides support. For example, we believe in giving ample time to complete tasks before they are due. You will have the opportunity to work on a variety of tasks and develop your skills in many areas. Expectations are high but we aim for constructive feedback and you will be recognized when these expectations are met.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Less Positive - Weakly negative] The company considers employees’ wellbeing and tries to provide support. However, many tasks you will be asked to perform have time deadlines that are difficult but necessary to meet. Though most of the work is fairly routine, you will sometimes have the opportunity to work on a variety of tasks and develop your skills in other areas. Expectations are high, you are expected to meet these and there are consequences.</td>
<td>[Less Positive - Weakly negative] The company considers employees’ wellbeing and tries to provide support. However, many tasks you will be asked to perform have time deadlines that are difficult but necessary to meet. Though most of the work is fairly routine, you will sometimes have the opportunity to work on a variety of tasks and develop your skills in other areas. Expectations are high, you are expected to meet these and there are consequences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical working environment</td>
<td>[Positive] Moreover, I have to say, the working environment is pleasant, clean and tidy, and the facilities are all like new. The company has investment plans to improve the working facilities in the near future.</td>
<td>[Positive] The working environment is pleasant, clean and tidy, and the facilities are all like new. The company has investment plans to improve the working facilities in the near future.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social working environment, e.g., friendly colleagues, helpful supervisors</td>
<td>[Positive] This company supports co-operative teams; we always work together and help each other. You will enjoy meeting with friendly and courteous people and you can make good friends here. We all work together to make this place a success. Our supervisor monitors with a ‘light touch’ and lets you do your job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Positive] This company supports co-operative teams. Employees always work together and help each other. You will enjoy meeting with friendly and courteous people and you can make good friends here. Our employees all work together to make this place a success. Supervisors monitor with a ‘light touch’ and let you do your job.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Family friendly or flexible working hours</td>
<td>[Positive] I would say the working hours in Company A are very flexible. The company tries to be family-friendly and give you the shifts you choose or the vacation times you ask for, so planning is done well in advance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Positive] Working hours in Company A are very flexible. The company tries to be family-friendly and give you the shifts you choose or the vacation times you ask for, so planning is done well in advance.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative] I would say the working hours in Company A are generally flexible. The company tries to be family-friendly and give you the shifts you choose or the vacation times you ask for, but you may need to compromise and you will need to take your turn working on holidays.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative] Working hours in Company A are flexible. The company tries to be family-friendly and give you the shifts you choose or the vacation times you ask for, but you may need to compromise and you will need to take your turn working on holidays.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>General reputation of the company</td>
<td>[Positive] Company A is highly regarded for corporate responsibility and does much good work in the community. It is the leading company in the sector with an excellent reputation for looking after staff and with rising profits. I am very proud to work for this company.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Positive] Company A is highly regarded for corporate responsibility and does much good work in the community. It is also the leading company in the sector with an excellent reputation for looking after staff and with rising profits. Staff are proud to work for us.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative] Company A includes corporate responsibility and community in its mission statement but still has a way to go. But it is a rising company</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative] Our corporate mission for the future aims to progress corporate responsibility and involvement in the community. Company A is a rising company in the sector</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Basic Remuneration</td>
<td>[Positive] I think the pay is good. Company A offers the best salary in the retail trade. I think I earn what I deserve.</td>
<td>[Positive] Pay levels are good. Company A offers the best salary in the retail trade. Employees will earn what they deserve.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative] I think the pay is fair. Company A offers the average salary level in the retail trade.</td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative] Pay levels are fair. Company A offers the average salary level in the retail trade.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chance to get promotion</td>
<td>[Positive] We are given many opportunities for advancement within the organization. It will not take long to get promotion in Company A, if you work hard - you will have a high chance to get promoted (up to twice in four years I think).</td>
<td>[Positive] Employees are given many opportunities for advancement within the organization. It will not take long to get promotion in Company A, if you work hard - you will have a high chance to get promoted (up to twice in four years).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative]. We are given some opportunities for advancement within the organization but you have to earn it. If you work hard, I believe you will have a chance to get promoted after a few years</td>
<td>[Less Positive – Weakly negative]. Employees are given some opportunities for advancement within the organization but you have to earn it. If you work hard, you will have a chance to get promoted after a few years.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX G: Scenarios - Study 5.2

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No background information</th>
<th>Expertise background</th>
<th>Personal background</th>
<th>Expertise background + Personal background</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Imagine that you are seeking a new job as a <strong>sales manager</strong> in the retail trade, when an advertisement draws your attention. The advertisement is provided by Company A and mentions key job attributes, including salary information, a chance of promotion, work location, training opportunities, job skill requirements and so on.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Imagine that you are seeking a new job as a <strong>shop assistant</strong> in the retail trade, when an advertisement draws your attention. The advertisement is provided by Company A and mentions key job attributes, including salary information, a chance of promotion, work location, training opportunities, job skill requirements and so on.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The advertisement also includes the following message:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Employee A:</strong> I am an employee for Company A and work in the same department as this vacancy. I personally believe that Company A provides a good work environment, the salary is fair, the office climate is generally friendly and colleagues here work together to help each other. My current position fits I wanted to do and Company A sometimes offers training courses to help me to learn new skills. Welcome to Company A, I look forward to you joining the team!</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| X | Background of Employee A: |
| X | Employee A has worked in the retail trade for over 5 years; this is his 3rd year of working in our organization. Employee A has rich experience and knowledge in logistics and retail management. He has a MBA degree in business management. Employee A was elected as the ‘most knowledgeable’ employee of the department in 2013. He also took the training as an associate trainee in 2013 and demonstrated good crisis management and leading abilities. |
| X | Background of Employee A: |
| X | Employee A has worked in the retail trade for over 5 years; this is his 3rd year of working in our organization. Employee A has rich experience and knowledge in logistics and retail management. He has a MBA degree in business management. Employee A was elected as the ‘most knowledgeable’ employee of the department in 2013. He also took the training as an associate trainee in 2013 and demonstrated good crisis management and leading abilities. |
| X | X | Background of Employee A: |
| X | Moreover, employee A is outgoing |
Employee A is outgoing and approachable. He loves interacting and communicating with other people. His colleagues like him and he was elected as the ‘most friendly’ employee of the department in 2013. He likes animals, watching movies, listening to music, and writing. He also loves sharing experience and ideas with his friends.
APPENDIX H: Scenarios – Study 5.3

Please read the scenario below carefully, and answer the questions based on your previous job seeking preferences and behaviours.

*Imagining that you are seeking a new job in the retailing industry, an advertisement draws your attention. The company (Company A) is a retail trade company that has a positive reputation in the sector.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scenario Description</th>
<th>S1</th>
<th>S2</th>
<th>S3</th>
<th>S4</th>
<th>S5</th>
<th>S6</th>
<th>S7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Long-Positive, mainly hard information (From Study 4, see APPENDIX D)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>RJP information (with some soft information)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive only (From Study 5.1, see APPENDIX F)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Positive + Weakly negative (From Study 5.1, see APPENDIX F)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOM-formed</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With (provider’s) background information (expertise + personal) (From Study 5.2, see APPENDIX G)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No (provider’s) background information</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In employer’s tone (From Study 5.1, see APPENDIX F)</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
<td>V</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
APPENDIX I: Questions - Study 6

Imagining that you are seeking a new job in the retailing industry, an advertisement draws your attention.

The following is the content of the advertisement:

**Remuneration**
The advertisement says the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level for this retail job, and it depends on the work hours of the contract per week. As far as you are aware, is a bit higher than some similar roles in other companies.

**The location**
The advertisement shows the work place is fairly close to your home. It is convenient for public transport. You can get to the work place either by car or by bus. The advertisement indicates that company will subsidize part of your travel costs for you if the distance between your house and the work place is too far.

**Hours**
The advertisement describes that working hours in Company A are generally flexible. The working hours look ok to you.

**Chance to get a promotion**
The advertisement states briefly that if the new employee works hard, has the potential for development or is talented, they will get promoted or get a pay rise.

**Training courses**
The advertisement briefly lists some training courses. These training courses are available to improve the employee’s working skills, and some look helpful to you. Almost all the training courses are free. A few courses are expensive; employees will have to pay for these themselves, but they will receive some subsidies from the company.

**Annual bonus**
The advertisement also mentions that employees will get an annual bonus.

**Job skill requirements**
The advertisement briefly lists the job skills that are required for the position. Most of the job requirements that are listed are what you have learned at school or from previous work experience. Only a few are new to you, but they seem fairly easy for you to learn in work.

*Based on this information, what would your decision be - apply or not apply?*

[OPTION1] Yes, I'll apply

[OPTION2] No, I'll not apply

Why is this? [Open-ended question]
Based on your previous job seeking experience, what is your attitude towards the job information from an advertisement that provides basic job information like the above one?

[OPTION1] the information in the advertisement showed on the last page is NOT ENOUGH for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR that vacancy or not. Before I go to the application process, I prefer to SPEND SOME MORE TIME to get to know more about the job until I feel satisfied I know enough about the job

You have requested further information.
Is it because some information you need is missing?

[OPTION1] YES

Please explain [Open-ended question]

Do you want to double-check some aspects of the job from different sources and if so, which ones? [Open-ended question]
Please tell us any other reasons for requesting further information [Open-ended question]

[OPTION2] NO

Do you want to double-check some aspects of the job from different sources and if so, which ones? [Open-ended question]
Please tell us any other reasons for requesting further information [Open-ended question]

[OPTION2] the information in the advertisement showed on the last page has provided ENOUGH information for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR the vacancy. Thus, I prefer NOT TO SPEND TIME looking for further information about that vacancy.

You have not requested further information.
Can you tell us why? [Open-ended question]
Now, please read a second version of job advertisement.

Imagining that you are seeking a new job in the retailing industry, an advertisement draws your attention.

The following is the content of the advertisement:

**Remuneration**
A full introduction of the salary system of Company A is given in the advertisement (information includes how you may get to the next level of salary, the annual evaluation, etc.), and this indicates that the starting salary will be dictated by your work experience. As far as you know, the salary that Company A offers is close to the average salary level, and even a bit higher than similar roles in some other companies.

**The location**
The company provides information and details about different ways you can get to the work place, information such as what buses or train will be available and the nearest route to the work place by driving, etc.
The advertisement indicates that company will subsidize part of your travel costs for you if the distance between your home and the workplace is too far.
The work place location is actually fairly close to your home. It is convenient for public transport. You can get to the work place by either car or bus.

**Chance to get a promotion**
The advertisement gives full information about the criteria for getting promotion and a pay rise. The details of the requirements for achieving the next salary level are listed. The system seems fair to you – it looks like a promotion and pay rise are achievable if you work hard.

**Training courses**
The advertisement provides a full list and the details of Company A’s training courses, e.g., how long it takes to finish the course. These training courses are available to improve the employee’s working skills, and some look helpful to you.
Almost all the training courses are free. A few courses are expensive; employees will have to pay for these themselves, but they will receive some subsidies from the company.

**Annual bonus**
The advertisement also mentions that employees will get an annual bonus. It provides information about the annual bonus over the past 5 years.

**Hours**
The advertisement describes that working hours in Company A are generally flexible. The advertisement message specifically indicates the time slots.
Employees are allowed to arrange their working timetable. The working hours look ok to you.

**Job skill requirements**
The advertisement lists all the details of the job skills and work experience that are required for the position (for example, work experience as a cashier), and how and why you will need these skills for this vacancy.
Most of the job requirements that are listed are what you have learned at school or from previous work experience. Only a few are new to you, but they seem fairly easy for you to learn in work.
Based on this information, what would your decision be - apply or not apply?
[OPTION1] Yes, I'll apply

[OPTION2] No, I'll not apply

Why is this? [Open-ended question]

Based on your previous job seeking experience, what is your attitude towards the job information from an advertisement that provides basic job information like the above one?
[OPTION1] the information in the advertisement showed on the last page is NOT ENOUGH for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR that vacancy or not. Before I go to the application process, I prefer to SPEND SOME MORE TIME to get to know more about the job until I feel satisfied I know enough about the job

    You have requested further information.
    Is it because some information you need is missing?
    [OPTION1] YES

        Please explain [Open-ended question]

        Do you want to double-check some aspects of the job from different sources and if so, which ones? [Open-ended question]
        Please tell us any other reasons for requesting further information [Open-ended question]

[OPTION2] NO

    Do you want to double-check some aspects of the job from different sources and if so, which ones? [Open-ended question]
    Please tell us any other reasons for requesting further information [Open-ended question]

[OPTION2] the information in the advertisement showed on the last page has provided ENOUGH information for me to decide whether TO APPLY FOR the vacancy. Thus, I prefer NOT TO SPEND TIME looking for further information about that vacancy.

    You have not requested further information.
    Can you tell us why? [Open-ended question]
After having looked at the two descriptions about the same job:

Which version do you prefer (the short one [the first version] or the long one [the second version])?

[OPTION1] The short version

You chose the short version; please explain why [Open-ended question]

[OPTION2] The long version

You chose the long version; please explain why [Open-ended question]

Overall, did you choose the longer version because it told you everything you needed to know to make a decision or is it because it looks like a fuller description of the job?  [Open-ended question]
APPENDIX J: Cluster analyses

The classifying differences between median split and Hierarchical (2-cluster solution) analysis and K-means cluster analysis

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Hierarchical (2-cluster solution)</th>
<th>K-means (K=2)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Study 1 (N=50)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 2 (N=140)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 3 (N=280)</td>
<td></td>
<td>8</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 4 (N=81)</td>
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<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 5.1 (N=746)</td>
<td></td>
<td>15</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 5.2 (N=480)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 5.3 (N=446)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study 6 (N=30)</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

[Example: Dataset of Study 3]

By using Hierarchical cluster analysis (2-cluster solution)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>DECISION-MAKING STYLE (Mdn-split)</th>
<th>Average Linkage (Between Groups)</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MAXIMISER</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>136</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SATISFICER</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>144</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: 280
### Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
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<tr>
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<td>280</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*(a) 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 66.06.  
(b) Computed only for a 2x2 table*

---

*By using K-means cluster analysis (Number of clusters = 2)*

**DECISION-MAKING STYLE (Mdn-split) * Cluster Number of Case**

Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Cluster Number of Case</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DECISION-MAKING</td>
<td>Maximiser</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STYLE (Mdn-split)</td>
<td>Satisficer</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>142</td>
<td>138</td>
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</table>
### Chi-Square Tests

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<thead>
<tr>
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<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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<td>Continuity Correctionb</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fisher's Exact Test</td>
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<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N of Valid Cases 280

a. 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 67.03.
b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

*By using Two-step cluster analysis*

### Model Summary

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<thead>
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<th>Algorithm</th>
<th>TwoStep</th>
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<tbody>
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<td>Inputs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clusters</td>
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</table>

### Cluster Quality

Silhouette measure of cohesion and separation
### DECISION-MAKING STYLE (Mdn-split) * TwoStep Cluster Number

#### Crosstabulation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<td>Satisficer</td>
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<tr>
<td>STYLE (Mdn-split)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Total</td>
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<td>144</td>
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</table>

#### Chi-Square Tests

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Value</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (2-sided)</th>
<th>Exact Sig. (1-sided)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pearson Chi-Square</td>
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<tr>
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<td>Fisher's Exact Test</td>
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<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Linear-by-Linear Association</td>
<td>279.000</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>.000</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| N of Valid Cases | 280 |

\(^a\) 0 cells (0.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 66.06.

\(^b\) Computed only for a 2x2 table
### APPENDIX K: Definitions of key terms and abbreviations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key terms and abbreviations</th>
<th>Definitions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>The retail industry</strong></td>
<td>The retail industry is a sector that comprises establishments engaged in retailing merchandise - generally without transformation and rendering services incidental to the sale of merchandise.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Individual differences</strong></td>
<td>Individual differences are the psychological nuances between people as well as their similarities. Individual differences are formed based on personal cognitive perceptions that affect an individual’s personal values and attitudes towards resolving problems. It also affects their behaviours, such as making choices and decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Social communication theory</strong></td>
<td>The social communication theory has four components: stimulus, communicator, receiver and response. In recruitment research, stimuli refer to the recruitment information content. Communicators refer to the information providers and sources, receivers are jobseekers, and responses are receivers’ (jobseekers’) perceived willingness to join the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Decision-making style</strong></td>
<td>Decision-making style is defined as a habitual pattern of information search and evaluation. It affects an individual’s thoughts, attitude, information-seeking/search preferences and consideration when facing and making decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Maximiser</strong></td>
<td>Schwartz <em>et al.</em> (2002) define maximisers as a group of people who put a great deal of effort into searching for information and who evaluate and analyse information very carefully. They are known to hold high standards and to require more criteria regarding the outcomes of the decisions that they make. However, they also find it more challenging than satisficers to make a ‘final’ decision.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisficer</strong></td>
<td>Compared to maximisers, satisficers do not strive to make the ‘best decision’ and will settle for a ‘good-enough’ decision. They prefer to seize chances and possibilities when they arise instead of spending time on acquiring information.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Traditional dual-process theory</strong></td>
<td>Traditional dual-process theory proposes that people operate using two separate information-processing systems when making decisions and responses: analytical–rational and intuitive–experiential. The analytical–rational system is deliberate, slow and logical. The intuitive–experiential system is fast, automatic and emotionally driven (Norris and Epstein, 2011).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Elaboration Likelihood Model (ELM)</strong></td>
<td>ELM contains two major routes of persuasion: the central route and the peripheral route. In the central route, persuasion results from an individual’s thoughtful and careful consideration and analysis of the information and collected data in support of an advocacy. The central route involves a high level of message elaboration. The resulting attitude change will therefore need a long time and will be enduring and resistant. On the other hand, in the peripheral route, persuasion generally results from an individual’s association with cues in the stimulus or an inference the individual has made about the merits of the advocated position. Decision-makers do not focus on analysing the information content; instead, they rely on heuristics and shortcuts - such as the credibility or attractiveness of the sources of the message - to make relatively fast decisions. The resulting attitude change is therefore quicker (Cacioppo <em>et al.</em>, 1983).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Heuristic–Systematic Model (HSM)</strong></td>
<td>HSM indicates that individuals process messages in one of two ways: heuristically or systematically. The systematic approach is based on the rational theory that individuals try to maximise the results and, therefore, systematically analyse the gathered information. On the other hand, when individuals make more attempts to minimise the use of cognitive resources they are likely to take the heuristic approach to reduce the search for and processing of information (Chaiken and Trope, 1999).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Naive scientist theory</strong></td>
<td>Naive scientist theory posits that people naturally act like scientists in that they carefully search for information, weigh costs, evaluate benefits and attempt to match their expectations (Heider, 1958).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Cognitive miser</strong></td>
<td>Cognitive miser proposes that people utilise mental shortcuts to make assessments and decisions. Acting as a cognitive miser is a means to protect mental processing resources to find different ways to save time and effort when negotiating the numerous choices faced in daily living (Fiske and Taylor, 1984).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Pre-hire outcomes</strong></td>
<td>The recruitment pre-hire outcomes of recruitment activities include the number of candidates attracted (the number who applied) and the likelihood that they will accept the job if it is offered to them (Breaugh and Starke, 2000).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Organisational attractiveness (OA)</strong></td>
<td>Organisational attractiveness is one important pre-hire outcome indicator that measures a jobseeker’s attraction to and intention to join an organisation. It is a positive attitude expressed towards an organisation as a desirable entity with which to initiate a relationship (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001). Three dimensions that comprised OA include: <em>company attractiveness</em>, the degree of liking the organisation; <em>intention towards the company</em>, a jobseeker’s intention to apply for a position in the organisation and willingness to work for it; and <em>company prestige</em>, a jobseeker’s impression about the reputation of the organisation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Willingness to search for more job-related vacancy information</strong></td>
<td>Willingness to search for more job-related vacancy information is an important pre-hire recruitment outcome. In the present research it refers to whether the (employer-/communicator-) designed and provided job information is able to meet jobseekers’ information needs; thereby accelerating jobseekers’ decision (e.g., applying) process (which accelerates the recruiting process).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message valence</strong></td>
<td>Message valence includes positive messages and negative messages. In the present study, positive messages refer to the advantages of a job while negative messages refer to the disadvantages of a job.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message type</strong></td>
<td>The two main types of recruitment information content about job vacancies and organisations that may affect jobseeker OA include: ‘hard (confirmable)’ content and ‘soft (experience-based)’ content. Hard information content is quantitative in nature and generally consists of facts, statistics and other formally published information. Soft information content is essentially qualitative in nature and consists of ideas, suggestions, opinions, gossip, rumours, feedback, speculation, anecdotes and tips. Soft information is relatively subjective and involves personal experience.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Realistic job previews (RJPs)</strong></td>
<td>An RJP message provides potential applicants with information content on more experience-based aspects of the job. These can be a mixture of positive and negative. Compared to confirmable information (more objective information, e.g., salary, hours, location), which is considered more concrete, experience-based information (more subjective information) is intangible. This experience-based information helps jobseekers to be aware of what the organisation offers if they accept the role (e.g., organisational culture, office climate and manager’s leading style) and what the organisation expects from them (e.g., late hours, stress, customer interaction, urgency, degree of physical risk).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Message specificity/length</strong></td>
<td>Message specificity/length refers to the detail level of a message. Short messages contain basic information and long messages contain more detailed information.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Recruitment information sources

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Formal, company-controlled (FCC) source</td>
<td>Ullman (1966) distinguishes between two types of recruitment information sources: formal and informal. This is the major divide between sources that have been officially released or authorised by the company, such as job advertisements, and the (mostly unplanned) job information spread by or obtained from unofficial sources, such as friends and family, face-to-face or through online forums, such as LinkedIn groups. Both formal and informal sources can be further divided; for instance, a formal source might be company-controlled advertisements or non-company-controlled recruitment agencies. Informal sources might be non-company-controlled word-of-mouth informants within offline or online social networks, or the more company-controlled informal sources when members of staff attend job fairs, or staff quotations are included in realistic job previews.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Formal, non-company-controlled (FNCC) source</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal, company-controlled (ICC) source</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Informal, non-company-controlled (INCC) source</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Staff word of mouth (SWOM)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Staff word of mouth (SWOM) is a concept that exists between employee referral (where information provision is narrowed to people who generally have a strong relationship with the incumbent) and general WOM (such as eWOM, where any Internet user can easily access the shared information on working experiences). Jobseekers obtain SWOM messages by contacting a current employee of the organisation (e.g., drop into the store and ask the staff/clerk about their work experience as a staff/clerk in that organisation, or ask a friend or an acquaintance who works at the company). Unlike employee referral, jobseekers do not passively wait for the members in their social network to come to them; instead, jobseekers take the initiative and contact people who have work experience in the target organisation. Those contacted people do not necessarily need to be in the jobseeker’s social network; jobseekers may or may not know the information provider(s) very well, but unlike eWOM, they can ensure that these information providers are the real staff of the company to which they are interested in applying for a job.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Source credibility refers to the trustworthiness of an information source. People tend to discount the effect of information if they subjectively consider the provider (source) to be less trustworthy. In contrast, when the information provider (communicator) is considered to be trustworthy, the information content is more likely to be considered by the receiver. Hovland et al. (1953) propose that the credibility of the information source consists of three components, namely trust, expertise and liking the source.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Information credibility

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Some researchers (e.g., Flanagin and Metzger, 2013) concentrate on ‘information credibility’ to indicate more specifically the credibility of the information content. Nevertheless, information credibility is highly related and linked to source credibility. When a source is trusted by the receivers, the receivers are more likely to accept and adopt the information content from the source (communicator), which means the credibility of the information (the content) also increases. When the information contains more realistic information (as mentioned in the message valence paragraph, some negative information can actually increase the credibility of a source), then the source credibility gets strengthened as well (Castillo et al., 2013). Therefore, source credibility and information credibility are highly connected.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Communicator’s background

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Wathen and Burkell (2002) propose that the information provider’s expertise/knowledge, credentials, likeability/goodwill/dynamism and attractiveness are the key factors that influence the information provider/source credibility. These factors can be classified into two categories: expertise background and personal background of the information provider. The professional/expertise background includes a provider’s knowledge, work experience, special training in the area and relevant certifications or degrees issued from an impartial and reputable institution. The personal background includes the provider’s personality, personal characteristics, attractiveness and habits.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Tie strength
Strong ties refer to information that is provided from a ‘close relationship’, such as a close friend or family member. Weak ties refer to information that is provided from a ‘weak relationship’, such as acquaintances.

### Job type
Different job positions have different skill requirements. In the retail trade, management-level jobs, such as a marketing manager, usually require jobseekers to have professional knowledge and experience. Basic-level employees (e.g., shop assistant) have fewer specific knowledge requirements (Foster et al., 2006).

### Amazon Mechanical Turk (AMT)
Amazon Mechanical Turk (https://www.mturk.com/mturk/) is one of the sites of Amazon Web Services. This is a coordinating Internet marketplace that enables individuals and businesses to offer a small reward to potential respondents for taking part in surveys and experiments.

### Maximisation Scale (MS)
Schwartz et al. (2002) first developed a 13-item scale (Maximisation Scale, MS) based on Simon’s (1955) concept of maximising and satisficing. The scale comprised three dimensions: alternative search, which is an individual’s willingness to spend time searching for more potential choices; decision difficulty, which is how easy it is for an individual to make up his/her mind during the decision process; and the high standards of their decisions. They use these three characteristics to evaluate an individual’s maximising tendency.

### Post-decisional regret (PDR)
Post-decisional regret refers to the degree of regret over the decisions that have been made. Individuals with high post-decisional regret level believe that there may have been better choices than the one that they made which resulted in the current position that they hold and feel regret about what they might have missed.

### Self-efficacy
Self-efficacy refers to an individual's belief in their capacity to execute behaviours necessary to produce specific performance attainments. Individuals with higher self-efficacy are more likely to show higher confidence to achieve the tasks they face.

### Need for cognition (NFC)
Need for cognition (NFC) is a need to structure relevant situations in meaningful, integrated ways and an individual’s tendencies to seek and engage in effortful cognitive activity. Higher NFC is associated with complex problem-solving.

### Post-hire outcomes
Post-hire outcomes refer to a newly hired employee’s job performance and his or her attitude and impression towards the job position or the organisation.

### Met expectations (ME)
Met expectations is defined as successful as people think someone or something should be. In the present study it is defined as whether the company failed to meet the employee’s expectations.

### Job satisfaction
Job satisfaction is positively correlated with company commitment and negatively correlated with the intention to leave the present job. Company commitment measures an employee’s loyalty to the organisation for which they work. Reasonably, when an employee experiences satisfaction in their work, they have higher commitment to the company they work for and are more inclined to remain in that job (Raymond and Mjoli, 2013; Cook et al., 1981).

### Realistic job preview (RJP) message format
Realistic job preview messages have different formats, including: the description is displayed as employer sourced, which is presented in the employer’s tone (e.g., ‘Working hours in Company A are very flexible’); in the form of employee testimonials; and where the message is demonstrated as staff (current employee) sourced. This is where the content is in a staff member’s tone and is, therefore, more personal (e.g., ‘Based on my experience, I think the working hours in Company A are very flexible’) (Shore and Tetrick, 1994).

### Numerosity heuristic
Numerosity heuristic refers to that people are sensitive to the amount of information, and over-infer the quantity from numerosity rather than the actual content. In other words, individuals can make decisions or judgments based on the number of units without fully considering and understanding other important variables (Pelham et al., 1994).