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Green and non-Green Recruitment Practices for Attracting Job Applicants:

Exploring Independent and Interactive Effects

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ABSTRACT

The study is based on the reactions of a sample of Italian graduate students to the websites of seven companies operating in Italy. It addresses two specific issues in the literature about green recruiting practices, namely (i) the distinct and direct effects of green recruiting practices on attracting applicants, and (ii) the interactive effect of "green" and "non-green" recruitment practices on attracting applicants. With regard to the first issue, the study compares the effects on attracting applicants of two green recruitment practices, i.e. the green reputation of a company, and the amount of information provided on the recruitment website about the company's environmental policies and practices. With regard to the second issue, the study examines the substitution effect on attracting applicants between the two green recruitment practices, and additive effects on attracting applicants between them and two non-green recruitment practices (i.e. company reputation, and the amount of company and job information provided by the company recruitment website). In terms of direct effects, the findings support the impact of a green reputation on attracting applicants, but no impact of information on the recruitment website about company environmental policies and practices. In terms of interactive effects, the findings do not confirm the substitution effects between green recruitment practices, but indicate additive effects between green and non-green recruitment practices. Overall, the paper extends knowledge on green recruitment by contributing to the literature on organizational reputation, and the literature on interactive effects among HR practices. The implications of these two extensions of knowledge for HRM research and practice are discussed.

KEYWORDS: applicant attraction, web-based recruitment, corporate reputation, green HRM, environmental management

1. INTRODUCTION

The environmental performance of firms is an emerging issue on the agenda of global business leaders, and effective environmental management is thus a priority for many CEOs in different regions of the world (BCG & MIT, 2009; McKinsey, 2013). For many companies, environmental performance seems to lead to several positive outcomes such as higher profitability, better financial performance, and higher stock prices (e.g. Flammer, 2012). Since the relationship between environmental performance and these positive outcomes has been found to be mediated by intangible resources such as human capital and culture (Surroca et al., 2010), HRM research (e.g. Willness and Jones, 2013; Bauer et al., 2012) and practice (e.g. CIPD, 2012; SHRM 2011; 2013) have paid increasing attention to the relation between HRM practices and environmental management. In doing so, both HRM practice and research have highlighted the importance of attracting and recruiting highly qualified employees who share the green values of the organization as a means to sustain organizational effectiveness. In line with this reasoning, several empirical studies have investigated how green-related messages affect the attractiveness of the organization as an employer (e.g. Bauer and Aiman-Smith, 1996; Turban and Greening, 1997), demonstrating that providing information on environmental performance and environmental management in vacancy notices improves the chances of attracting and recruiting competent employees (e.g., Gully et al., 2013).

Despite the growing interest in this topic, research on the relation between environmental management and recruitment practices has not yet investigated two specific issues. The first issue concerns the distinct and direct effects that may be achieved by green recruitment practices, i.e. the recruitment practices adopted by an organization to attract prospective applicants by means of environmental sustainability-related messages. The second issue concerns the extent to which these green recruitment practices have interactive effects in attracting applicants.

In addressing these two issues, this paper seeks to contribute to the research in two distinct ways. With regard to the first issue identified above (i.e. distinct and direct effects of different green recruitment practices on attracting applicants), we enrich the literature on green recruitment by establishing a link with

the literature on organizational reputation. This study examines the distinct and direct effects on attracting applicants of two specific green recruitment practices (the reputation of a company, and web-based recruitment), exploring in particular the extent to which the green reputation of a company and a key feature of web-based recruitment (i.e. the amount of information posted on a recruitment website about company environmental policies and practices) are associated with attracting applicants. We argue this to be a key contribution to extant literature which, while recognizing that company reputation has a signal effect on job applicants (Williamson et al., 2003), has paid limited attention to the link between recruitment practices and company reputation (Williamson et al., 2010).

In addressing the second issue by testing for interactive effects between green and non-green recruitment practices, our second contribution concerns the examination of extant research on green recruitment practices – that tend to focus on individual practices – in a systemic perspective, aligning the literature with the general trend characterizing HR research today. We integrate the literature on green recruitment with recent HR studies with a shift of focus from individual practices to bundles of practices, assuming that the HR practices included in an HR system affect organizational performance beyond the sum of their individual effects (Jiang et al., 2012; Kepes and Delery, 2008). In particular, these studies assume that HR practices can have three types of effect on organizational performance: *additive effects*, when they do not interact (represented by the formula: 2+2=4); *substitution effects*, when they present equifinality (i.e. 2+2=3); and *synergistic effects*, when they reinforce each other (i.e. 2+2=5) (Chadwick, 2010). In line with this literature, the study is intended to make two specific contributions. First, it tests a specific model of interaction between two green recruitment practices (i.e. green reputation and amount of green information), considering whether, because of their equifinality, they give rise to substitutive effects. Second, the study explores the interactive effects between the two green recruitment practices and the two non-green recruitment practices, namely employer reputation and the amount of company and job information provided on the company recruitment website, developing and testing two specific hypotheses about their additive effects on applicant attraction.

In addition to examining these two issues, we argue that an additional contribution of the study concerns the specific national context in which it was developed. The Italian context appears to be particularly significant

for studying the effects of green and non-green recruitment practices due to its intrinsic duality. The Italian institutional context is said to enhance awareness of social, environmental and sustainability issues (Perrini et al. 2006), while promoting a common culture of responsibility within the industrial system (Albareda et al. 2006; Albareda et al. 2008; Habisch et al. 2010), supporting the idea that job applicants are likely to see green recruitment as important. At the same time, over the past 20 years the Italian economy has been characterized by slow growth and, since 2008, by a major recession, that may have encouraged job applicants to favour non-green recruitment practices, attributing more importance to employment conditions than to sustainability. As a result, there seems to be good reason to test the direct and interactive effects of green and non-green recruitment practices in a context of this type.

The article is structured as follows. The first section examines the theoretical background to the study and presents the research hypotheses, differentiating between the direct and interactive effects of recruitment practices. The second section presents the research methodology, while the third section presents the results. The fourth section discusses the main findings, providing some recommendations for HRM practices, an outline of the limitations of the study, and an indication of possible avenues for future research.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESES

In accordance with Buller and McEvoy (2012, p. 52), HRM practices can be conceived as "essential organizational mechanisms for generating, reinforcing, and sustaining employee actions in line with organizational capabilities/culture, group level job competencies/norms, and individual KSAs/motivation/opportunity". Among the various types of HRM practices, recruitment practices concern the practices that organizations adopt to attract applicants and increase the number of qualified applicants (e.g., Jiang et al. 2012; Delery 1998).

Organizations usually adopt a range of different recruitment practices (e.g., Kang and Shen 2013; Sparrow 2007; Taylor and Collins 2000). We can cluster them along two main dimensions: the kind of organizational mechanisms that a practice involves, and the purpose of a given practice (Jiang et al. 2012). As far as this latter dimension is concerned, in this paper we focus on two recruitment purposes: enhancing the

attractiveness of the employment conditions that a company offers to prospective employees (i.e. non-green recruitment practices), and enhancing the attractiveness of a company's environmental management (green recruitment practices). In examining the mechanisms that organizations adopt to communicate with and influence potential jobseekers (Jiang et al. 2012), we will compare two practices with different timeframes: web-based recruitment and company reputation. Whereas web-based recruitment has a short-term timeframe, limited to the posting of the information on company websites and the effects on potential applicants, reputation has a longer-term timeframe, relating to the time and resources required to improve or change reputation (Lange et al., 2011). Since companies usually seek to balance different time orientations (i.e. short-term *vs* long term), it may be argued that a comparison of such practices could provide interesting insights for academic research and practice.

Considering both the recruitment purposes and the mechanisms described above, in this paper we analyze four recruitment practices, summarized in Figure 1.

Insert Figure 1 about here

More specifically, we consider the amount of green information provided on the company website and the company's green reputation as means to increase the attractiveness of the company in terms of environmental management (green recruitment practices). In addition, in terms of web-based recruitment practices aimed at increasing the attractiveness of the employment conditions in a company (i.e. non-green recruitment issues), we consider the amount of company and job information provided on the company website, and the company reputation.

In the following, we address both the direct and the interactive effects of the four identified recruitment practices on applicant attraction, developing a series of hypotheses about both types of effect.

2.1 Direct effects of green recruitment practices on applicant attraction

As far as web recruitment practices are concerned, a number of scholars have investigated the role of company websites, concluding that they are effective and efficient recruitment tools for organizations to use to recruit qualified applicants (e.g., Lievens & Harris 2003; Perry & Wilson 2009; Walker et al. 2011). However, companies need to make a sufficient effort to design their websites to exploit all the potential advantages. Previous studies have highlighted the important role played by the content of company websites in attracting prospective job applicants and in reducing uncertainty about the vacancies posted online (e.g., Baum and Kabst 2014; Williamson et al. 2010; Breaugh 2012). According to Signalling Theory (e.g., Thompson et al. 2008; Celani and Singh 2011), when a "virtual meeting" between an employer and a prospective job applicant takes place on a website, there is significant information asymmetry between the two parties. The information available on a company website can contribute to reducing this asymmetry by providing details of the job vacancies and the employment conditions in an organization. For example, in one of the first studies on this issue, Rynes and Miller (1983, in Allen et al. 2007) modified the quantity of information while ensuring that the attractiveness of jobs offered remained constant, and they found that there was a relationship between the amount of information and the applicants' willingness to apply for the jobs. Similarly, job applicants can take the amount of information on company websites as a signal of the company's trustworthiness and quality as an employer (e.g., Yuce and Highhouse 1998). Prospective job applicants often see a lack of information as an indirect message from companies about their lack of interest in recruiting talented or highly qualified workers (Barker and King 1993). For all these reasons, companies need to pay adequate attention to the amount of information provided on their websites in order to attract qualified prospective employees (Dineen et al. 2007; Dineen and Noe 2009; Chen et al. 2012; Gregory et al. 2013).

On this basis of this line of reasoning, the amount of information provided on a company website may be expected to have an impact in attracting applicants. According to recent developments in studies in the Green HRM strand of research (e.g., Aiman-Smith et al. 2001; Greening and Turban 2000; Zhang and Gowan 2012; Jones et al. 2013), potential applicants may be expected to take into consideration the amount of green information provided on the company website. Previous research on the effects of environmental management has demonstrated that companies with clear environmental policies and practices are more

attractive to prospective job applicants and are more able to attract the most qualified candidates (Bauer and Aiman-Smith 1996; Albinger and Freeman 2000; Backhaus et al. 2002; Behrend et al. 2009). More specifically, several studies investigating the role played by company websites as providers of green information to job applicants (e.g., Behrend et al. 2009; Gully et al. 2013) support the idea that the amount of information about environmental policies and practices on the company website has a positive effect in attracting applicants. Therefore, we advance our first hypothesis about the direct effects of green recruitment practices on applicant attraction:

- HP1: The amount of green information provided on a company website has a positive and direct influence on applicant attraction.

Before starting their job search, applicants usually have pre-existing beliefs about an organization (e.g., Allen et al. 2007). Thus, a company's reputation – that is, the emotive views or other opinions held by stakeholders and the public about a company in comparison with other organizations (Fombrun and Shanley 1990; Cable and Graham 2000) – can exert an influence on applicant attraction (e.g. Cable and Turban 2001; Turban and Cable 2003). In line with these considerations, we expect that also with regard to recruitment practices aimed at enhancing the company's environmental management reputation, the pre-existing beliefs that applicants may have about the organization might affect their choices. In particular, the applicants might be influenced by a company's green reputation, particularly when an organization is widely recognized as sensitive towards the environment (Chen 2008; Richbell and Minchin 2012; Wang 2013 in press; Rupp et al. 2013 in press; Gully et al. 2013). As a result, we advance our second hypothesis about the direct effects of green recruitment practices on applicant attraction:

- HP2: The green reputation of a company has a positive and direct effect on applicant attraction.

2.2 Interactive effects between green recruitment practices on applicant attraction

In recent years, HRM research has supported the idea that HRM practices work in concert, and that a company HRM system consists not merely in a number of isolated practices but in a set of integrated,

coherent and consistent practices designed to support organizational strategy (Wright & Boswell, 2002). More specifically, it is argued that HRM practices can have additive effects (represented by the formula 2+2=4), substitution effects (represented by the formula 2+2=3), or interactive effects (represented by the formula 2+2=5) (Delery, 1998). Specifically, practices A and B have additive effects when they have independent and non-overlapping effects on organizational outcomes; practices A and B have substitution effects when they lead to identical outcomes and adding one practice does not improve the desired outcome; and practices A and B have interactive effects when their interaction leads to a result substantially superior than the sum of the individual and independent effects (Chadwich, 2010; Delery, 1998).

Drawing on this idea, a company's green reputation may be expected to have an influence on the effectiveness of green recruitment in several ways. In general, HRM research has postulated that in cases in which the specific goal of a set of HRM practices was not divisible, the practices associated with that goal would be interchangeable and their net impact – because of the equifinality of those practices – would be that they function as substitutes (Jiang et al. 2012). Since we consider the amount of green information and a green reputation to be recruitment practices having the same purpose (i.e. to increase the attractiveness of company environmental management for potential applicants), it may be argued that they have a substitution effect on applicant attraction. This means that following the arguments of Williamson et al. (2010), when a company has a good green reputation, potential applicants already have positive beliefs about the company, and they expect the green information on the website to project a positive image of the company's environmental policies and practices. Thus, the amount of information on the website is likely to have a minimal effect on potential applicants, since they may see this information as redundant. On the other hand, when a company has a poor or weak green reputation, the amount of green information on the website can play a key role in attracting potential applicants. In this case, potential applicants might appreciate websites providing large amounts of positive information about a company's green policies and practices, since this information can affect pre-existing negative beliefs and provide credible reasons to apply for employment. On the basis of this line of reasoning, we formulate the following hypothesis:

- HP3: The amount of green information provided on the company website and the company's green reputation have substitution effects on applicant attraction.

2.3 Interactive effects between green and non-green recruitment practices on applicant attraction

As noted above, in this study we focus not only on green but also on non-green recruitment practices (i.e. practices aimed at enhancing the attractiveness for potential applicants of the employment conditions offered by a company). In particular, as in the case of green recruitment practices, we focus on two specific non-green recruitment practices: the amount of company and job information, that is the information provided on the company website about its mission and values, job vacancies and career opportunities, and the company's reputation as an employer, that is the positive beliefs and expectations that prospective employees have about a company as a good place to work (Ahlrichs, 2000).

Following Jiang et al. (2012) who claimed that HRM practices designed for supporting distinct goals are independent and non-overlapping, we argue that the two different kinds of information (i.e. company / job information, and information about green policies) posted on a company website tend to work in isolation, with additive effects on prospective job applicants. Since the amount of green information has the aim of attracting applicants by presenting company environmental policies and practices, and the amount of company and job information has the aim of attracting applicants by increasing the attractiveness of employment conditions in the company, we argue that these two practices are not interchangeable and because of their different goals they tend not to function as substitutes. In this connection, we formulate the following hypothesis:

- HP4: The amount of green information and the amount of company and job information provided on a company website have additive effects on applicant attraction.

As widely acknowledged in the literature on company reputation (for a review, see Lange at al. 2011), a company can have multiple reputations depending on its different attributes and characteristics that may be relevant for different stakeholder groups (Rindova et al., 2005; Pfarrer et al. 2010). For instance, "a firm may be seen as having a reputation for high-quality products, poor labour relations, or questionable environmental practices" (Deutsch and Ross 2003, p. 1004). Furthermore, since different individuals may have different

perceptions of various dimensions of the reputation of the same organization, depending on the extent to which the organization meets their specific expectations, it is possible for a company's reputation in relation to a specific dimension (e.g., product quality) not to play any role at all in satisfying the expectations of individuals who are not interested in that dimension but who have an interest in other dimensions (e.g., environmental management). In line with these considerations, we believe that different dimensions of company reputation play a specific and non-overlapping role in attracting prospective job applicants. Indeed, green reputation is more likely to attract those individuals who are interested in a company's environmental management, whereas the company's reputation as a good employer is more likely to attract those applicants who are more interested in the employment conditions that a company offers than in its environmental practices. As a result, we expect these different types of reputation to have an additive effect on prospective job applicants rather than an interactive one. In more formal terms, we formulate the following hypothesis:

- HP5: The green reputation and the reputation of the company as an employer have an additive effect on applicant attraction.

To sum up, we formulated a series of hypotheses about the direct effects of the green recruitment practices on applicant attraction (HP1 and HP2), the interaction between the considered green recruitment practices (HP3), and their interactions with the considered non-green recruitment practices (HP4 and HP5). The overall model is shown in Figure 2.

Insert Figure 2 about here

3. METHODS

3.1 Sample and procedure

The sample consisted of seven companies selected from a sampling frame of 16 companies that were recruiting at three public universities located in Northern Italy. Among the 16 companies, we considered companies included at least once in the "Great Place to Work" ranking for Italy between 2002 and 2012, on

the assumption that inclusion in such a ranking would signal the importance given by a company to progressive HRM practices. This reduced the list of companies from 16 to ten. Then, we selected seven companies using the following criteria: (i) we chose B2C companies as it was more likely that students would know about these companies; (ii) we chose companies with a website in Italian. Five of the seven selected companies are local subsidiaries of global companies, and two are based in Italy. They employ on average 1,445 people.

In order to collect data, we used a sample of 180 students attending the final year of a Master's in Business Administration at three universities in Northern Italy. This procedure consisted of three steps. In the first step, each student was given a printed questionnaire consisting of questions about one of the companies in the selected sample. More specifically, the questionnaire contained the following sections: demographic information, perception of the company's green reputation and reputation as an employer, assessment of control variables such as brand awareness, personal opinions on environmental issues and whether the Internet was seen as an effective job search tool. In the second step, each student was asked to visit the website of the allocated company. The students spent at least 20 minutes on the website, gathering information about the company (e.g., job vacancies, values, missions) and its green policies and practices. In the third step, each student was asked to fill out a second printed questionnaire assessing the degree of attractiveness of the allocated company as a prospective employer. This experiment was administered in computer labs at the three universities and involved small groups of students (maximum 12-15 persons per group), supervised by three of the authors and one research assistant. This controlled situation ensured that the questionnaires were filled in correctly, that the students visited the company websites, and that the environmental conditions were consistent (for similar procedures, see for example Williamson et al., 2010).

We collected a total of 174 usable questionnaires. Each company was evaluated on average by 24.9 students, ranging from a minimum of 20 students to a maximum of 26. No significant differences emerged among the different groups of students in terms of demographic variables. Of the student sample, 60.3% were women, and 67.6% had previous work experience.

While collecting questionnaires, we analyzed the company websites, gathering data on the amount of information about a company and the job vacancies, as well as information about the company's green

policies and practices. At the end of this process, opinions on data collected were exchanged and discussed until an agreement was reached by all four authors on the scores to assign.

3.2 Measures

Applicant attraction. In line with previous research (Ehrhart and Ziegert 2005, Williamson et al. 2010), we measured the attraction of the company for prospective job applicants along two dimensions: "perceived desirability", that is, whether a company is seen as a desirable employer, and "job pursuit", that is the extent to which a prospective job applicant is willing to make an effort to take up employment with an organization. We assessed desirability through a set of six items taken from Highhouse and colleagues (2003), and job pursuit using five items previously used by Williamson and colleagues (2010). For each item, we asked for the respondent's opinion on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). Along similar lines to Williamson et al. (2010), we conducted an exploratory factor analysis, and the results showed that the items loaded into one factor. Because of this result and because the correlation between the desirability and job pursuit subscales was .83, we combined the two subscales to construct one overall applicant attraction scale. The 11 applicant attraction items were found to have an overall Cronbach's alpha of .95.

Amount of company and job information. In line with Williamson et al. (2010), we measured the amount of information about a company's job opportunities and workplace characteristics by considering whether the website contained a section or an entire webpage dealing with any of the following issues: company culture, organizational structure, training opportunities, benefits, career opportunities, information provided by people working in the company, and current job vacancies. Each company was awarded one point for each of the seven topics covered on the website. This variable results in values between zero and seven.

Amount of green information. In line with Jose and Lee (2007), we measured the amount of information about the company's green policies and practices available on the website by considering whether the website contained a section or an entire webpage dealing with any of the following topics: environmental planning, senior management commitment to making environmental practices an institution-wide concern, environmentally-related structure, leadership-led environmental activities, environmental control, externally

validated environmental certifications, and awareness raising of environmental issues. Each company was assigned one point for each of the seven topics covered on its website. This variable produced values between zero and seven.

Employer Reputation. The reputation of a company as an employer was measured by combining four items used by Williamson et al. (2010) and five items from Walsh and Beatty (2007). Respondents were asked to evaluate each item on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .86.

Green Reputation. We measured the company green reputation using seven items from Chen (2008). Respondents were asked to evaluate each item on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The scale had on overall Cronbach's alpha of .94.

3.3 Control Variables

Internet outcome expectancy. Since previous research has demonstrated that the beliefs of prospective job applicants about the usefulness of the Internet as a job search tool provide a significant prediction of a company's attractiveness, we controlled for these aspects using four items taken from Williamson et al. (2003). For each item, we asked the respondent's opinion on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .86.

Brand awareness and pre-existing information. Since the prospective job applicants' awareness of a brand may affect their perception of a company's reputation as an employer and their attraction to the company, we controlled for this factor by using five items derived from Aaker (1996). We evaluated each item on a seven-point scale (1 = strongly disagree; 7 = strongly agree). The overall Cronbach's alpha for this scale was .87.

Moreover, since a job seeker's pre-existing information about a company or prior exposure to the website could affect his/her attraction to the company (Williamson et al. 2010), we asked students whether (1) they had previous work experience in the allocated company, (2) they had attended a job interview with the allocated company, and (3) they had previously visited the company website.

Green orientation. Since a company's green reputation could play a significant role, especially for job applicants concerned about environmental issues, we measured their individual green orientation, i.e. the level of concern, attitude and awareness of each respondent for the environment. We used the New Ecological Paradigm Scale (NEP) created and validated by Dunlap et al. (2000), assessed on a seven-point scale, where 1 = strongly disagree and 7 = strongly agree. The scale had on overall Cronbach's alpha of .78.

Demographic information. Since previous studies found that gender and age affect how individuals utilize information technology (Gilroy et al. 1986), we controlled for the effect of these variables.

In addition, we controlled for variations among groups of students from different Universities, and we did not find any significant variation in the main analysis and findings of the study.

4. RESULTS

Before testing our research hypotheses, we examined the construct validity of the measurements. Specifically, we conducted an exploratory factor analysis on the six self-reported scales, namely applicant attraction, employer reputation, green reputation, internet outcome expectancy, brand awareness, and green orientation. We performed a Principal Components Analysis with Varimax rotation. Parallel Analysis, a technique recommended for determining the number of factors to retain under a variety of conditions (Zwick and Velicer 1986; Hayton et al. 2004), was conducted for this study using a statistical program developed by Patil et al. (2007). Based on parameters provided by the researcher, this program calculates eigenvalues from randomly generated correlation matrices that can then be compared with eigenvalues extracted from the research dataset (using Principal Components Analysis). The number of factors to retain will be the number of eigenvalues that are larger than the corresponding random eigenvalues (Horn 1965). The program utilizes an SAS-based code written by O'Connor (2000).

Parallel Analysis suggested retaining six factors. Because three items of the employer reputation scale and four items of the green orientation scale had factor loadings of less than .40, we decided to delete them from our measures. The final solution, obtained after item deletion, explains 63.2% of total item variance. The results of factor analysis are shown in Table I, which clearly shows how all the items loaded satisfactorily onto the latent factor.

Insert Table I about here

The means, standard deviations and correlations among all the variables are presented in Table II. All correlations are below 0.7 suggesting that multi-collinearity does not occur (Anderson, Sweeney, & Williams, 1996). We checked for multi-collinearity by calculating also the variance inflation factor (VIF), which has values below 10 (VIF ≤ 2), thus confirming that there is no multi-collinearity among the variables (Aiken and West, 1991).

Table III shows the results of the regression analyses. In line with the recommendation of Aiken and West (1991), we used mean-centred variables for the main and interactive terms in the regression analysis.

Model 1 shows the results of the basic regression model, which includes the control variables. This model explains 8.4% of the variance and shows that only the respondents' Internet outcome expectancy has a significant positive effect on the dependent variable. This result is also supported in the final model (Model 9), suggesting that the stronger the beliefs of prospective job applicants about the Internet as an effective job search tool, the stronger their perception of a company's attractiveness. It is interesting to note that the information collected about a company from other sources (such as previous work experience in the allocated company, attending a job interview, and previous visits to the company website) do not have any significant effect on the dependent variable.

Insert Tables II and III about here

Hypothesis 1 predicts that the amount of green information available on a company's website is positively related to applicant attraction. As Model 2 illustrates, the coefficient for the amount-of-green-information variable is not significant and thus Hypothesis 1 is not supported. Hypothesis 2 predicts that a company's green reputation has a positive and direct influence on applicant attraction. Results show that green reputation has a positive and significant effect on the dependent variable (β=.436, p$\leq$ .001 in Model 3 and β=.257, p$\leq$ .01 in Model 8). Moreover, the introduction of the green reputation variable in Model 3 significantly increases the prediction of applicant attraction (ΔR^2=.177, p$\leq$ .01). Thus, hypothesis 2 is supported.

As regards the interactive effects between green recruitment practices, Model 4 tests the presence of a substitution effect between the amount of green information provided on the company website and its green reputation (HP3). Following the literature on the measurement of interaction effects between organizational practices (e.g., Chadwick 2010; Delery, 1998), we tested this effect by introducing a multiplicative index. Since we hypothesized substitution effects between the two green practices, we expected to find the higher the effect of one practice, the lower the effect of the other, and thus that the multiplicative index would be negative. The results show that the interactive term was not statistically significant. Thus, Hypothesis 3 could not be supported. Moreover, since the results show that one of the two practices, specifically the amount of green information provided on the company website, does not significantly influence the dependent variable, we can also exclude the presence of additive effects between the two green practices.

To test the hypothesized additive effects between the amount of company and job information and the amount of green information provided on the company website (HP4), we introduced into the regression the amount of company and job information variable (Model 5) and then the interactive term (Model 6). Results show neither a significant direct effect nor a significant interactive effect on the dependent variable. Thus, Hypothesis 4 could not be supported.

Finally, we tested the additive effects between the green reputation and employer reputation on applicant attraction (Hypothesis 5) by introducing in the regression the employer reputation variable (Model 7) and the interactive term between green and employer reputation (Model 8). The results show a significant direct effect of employer reputation on applicant attraction (β= .235, p$\leq$ .001 in Model 7 and β = .318, p$\leq$ .001 in

Model 8) but no significant interactive effect (because the interaction term is not significant). Thus, we can support our prediction of an additive and non-overlapping effect of employer and green reputation on applicant attraction (i.e. Hypothesis 5 is supported).

5. DISCUSSION

This section presents and discusses the main findings as well as their implications for management, and the limits of the study.

5.1 Main findings

Our analysis highlights three main clusters of findings, relating to the effects of the control variables and to the two specific contributions that this paper was intended to provide.

As far as the effect of control variables on applicant attraction is concerned, we found that the attractiveness of a company for students is influenced by their expectations about the effectiveness of the Internet as a job search tool. This result is in line with previous research (e.g., Williamson et al. 2003, Williamson et al. 2010) and shows that, also for Italian prospective job applicants, there is a positive relationship between Internet outcome expectancy and the attractiveness of companies. Furthermore, the results suggest that important aspects of company reputation, such as brand awareness, do not influence the attractiveness of the organization for students, such as their green orientation.

The first contribution is related to the need to explore the distinct and direct effects that may be achieved by means of various green recruitment practices. In this connection, our second cluster of findings concerns the direct impact of the recruitment practices on applicant attraction. In particular, this study offers contrasting evidence about green recruitment practices, since it does not support the predicted relationship between the amount of green information and applicant attraction (Hypothesis 1), whereas green reputation is shown to be significantly associated with applicant attraction (Hypothesis 2). Similarly, results regarding non green recruitment practices show that the amount of company and job information provided on a website does not have any direct influence on applicant attraction, whereas company reputation as an employer is significantly

associated with it. On the basis of these results, we could advance an initial consideration regarding the unsupported impact of information quantity (both green and non-green) provided by company websites on applicant attraction, that is not consistent with prior research (e.g., Allen et al. 2007; Saks and Uggerslev 2010; Williamson et al. 2010). This counterintuitive result can be explained by the specificity of the Italian national context, where comparative HRM studies have identified a widespread tendency towards internal recruitment and a strong use of informal networks rather than formal processes in external recruitment (Due et al. 1991; Filella 1991; Sparrow et al. 1994; Ignjatovic and Sveltic 2003). In particular, we speculate that prospective job applicants may be more likely to acquire information about company practices (both green and non-green) from sources other than the website, since they could be perceived to have a greater level of independence and therefore be more trustworthy. For instance, the wide range of information available on a company website regarding the implemented green policies can be considered by prospective job applicants more as a potential form of "green-washing" (Parguel et al. 2011). In addition, the significant association between green reputation and applicant attraction confirms that, even in the Italian economy that has been in a major recession for several years, prospective job applicants still value green-related issues in their career choices. This result seems to be consistent with the Italian institutional context which is widely recognized for the importance attributed to social, environmental and sustainability issues (Perrini et al. 2006; Albareda et al. 2006; Albareda et al. 2008; Habisch at al. 2010).

The second contribution of the paper concerns the interactive effects among green and non-green recruitment practices. In this connection, our third cluster of findings supports neither the substitution effects between the amount of green information and green reputation (Hypothesis 3), nor the additive effects between the amount of green information and the amount of company and job information (Hypothesis 4). On the contrary, the findings support the additive effects between employer reputation and green reputation (Hypothesis 5). On the basis of these findings, we could speculate that although recent HRM studies have shifted the focus of analysis from individual practices to bundles of practices, especially when exploring the effects on organizational outcomes such as turnover, productivity, and employee performance, there is a lack of empirical work providing convincing evidence of the existence of synergies and their effects on organizational performances (Kepes and Delery 2008). With reference to High-Performance Work Practices

(HPWP), for example, Gerhart (2012, 158) argued that "in general, the literature uses the term HPWP system widely, but often seems unaware or uninterested in what the system actually implies and rarely is any relevant evidence reported to evaluate whether a system of HPWP is necessary and/or useful". In this regard, our findings support the idea that HRM practices – even when adopted for the same purpose – do not always have synergistic effects on performance. As a result, we support scholars who advance the idea that interactions among HRM practices are contingent on the performance pursued and on the specificities of each practice, and who warned HRM scholars about overstating the claim that all interactions would be significant and positive (e.g., Chadwick 2010; Jiang et al. 2012). For example, Macky and Boxall (2007) found that interactions between the components of an HRM system were not always positive, and supported Cappelli and Neumark's (2001) conclusion that "implementing practice A in conjunction with practice B is better than introducing practice A in isolation […] but this does not necessarily mean that the joint implementation of the bundle of work practices A and B is beneficial on the net" (759-760). As a result, on the basis of the results of the present study, we share this perspective and suggest a more sophisticated and perhaps less optimistic view of the interaction between HRM practices, arguing that performance synergies should not be expected *a priori*, on every occasion and from every domain.

5.2 Management implications

This study offers two management implications for companies operating in Italy, regarding how to prioritize investment in recruitment practices and how to design and manage those practices.

With regard to the first implication, our findings support the idea that companies should focus their investments on the development of their employer and green reputation rather than relying on the amount of information provided on their websites. Even if we recognize that developing an organizational reputation is a long-term process, requiring time and resources, and is also highly risky and uncertain, the findings suggest that companies intending to attract highly qualified applicants in the Italian labour market should aim

investment in that direction, because neither the amount of company and job information nor the amount of green information on their websites seems to affect applicant attraction.

The second management implication of this study concerns how to design and manage green and non-green recruitment practices. In line with the literature, our results suggest that the decision to seek synergies among different HRM practices is significant for organizations, since it entails a trade-off between the prospects for higher performance levels and losses in efficiency and flexibility (Chadwick, 2010). In particular, while designing a system of coherent HRM practices results in higher performance, it gives rise to higher coordination costs due to the need for a central coordinating actor with responsibility for the coherence of the HRM system. However, since our findings, in the specific case of employer reputation and green reputation, prove the existence of additive effects, we suggest that companies design and manage those practices as independent. In doing so, companies do not lose any opportunity for synergistic performance effects (which our evidence disconfirms), while they minimize coordination costs (since a central coordinator is not required) and maximize flexibility (since the various practices can be designed and managed independently).

5.3 Limitations and implications for future research

Our research presents some limitations that point to avenues for future research.

First of all, the study does not take into consideration the main factors that initially influence the likelihood of prospective job applicants visiting a company website. In other words, we did not examine the initial stage of the recruitment process, specifically the stage of generating job applicants (Barber, 1998). Future research would therefore benefit from an analysis of these factors, contributing to a better understanding of why jobseekers visit the website of one company rather than of another. Furthermore, it would be interesting to verify whether a company's green reputation, policies and practices become more (or less) relevant at different stages of the recruitment process (e.g., in attracting prospective job applicants or in influencing job choices). In addition, future research might benefit from studies taking into consideration recruitment practices other than those examined in this paper, such as campus visits, printed materials, and internal posting, or web-based recruitment that does not rely on the overall amount of information provided on

websites, such as content, design, and communication features of the recruitment websites (see for example Allen et al. 2013) or the use of social media.

Another avenue for future research relates to the sources of information used by prospective job applicants. As discussed above, potential applicants acquire information, especially about a company's green policies and practices, from a range of sources. In this perspective, simultaneously investigating the effects on applicant attraction of information acquired by job applicants from a wide range of possible sources seems to be a promising line of research.

A third limitation of our study relates to sampling, as we tested our hypotheses on a group of students. Future research would benefit from testing the same model on larger samples or on samples that include prospective job applicants of different ages and at different stages of their career. By comparing results, it would be interesting to consider whether prospective early career job applicants change their perception about different recruitment practices, with green-related issues possibly becoming more important and influential in later career stages. Similarly, research could be conducted on individuals in different employment situations, such as those who have lost their job or are looking for alternative employment.

Finally, since this study investigated the Italian national context, due to its peculiarities in terms of recruitment dynamics, institutional settings, and economic trends, further investigations could explore other national contexts with different socio-economic conditions. Thus, a cross-country analysis focused on specific industries could also provide useful results.

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