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Unique... like everyone else: effects and mechanisms of personalization appeals in recruitment advertising

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ABSTRACT

Recruiters are faced with the challenge of replacing departing skillsets as older workers retire. To tackle this task of attracting new employees, recruiters often use advertising. Various employment platforms offer the option to personalize such employment ads by integrating individuals' names and photographs in their ads. This research examines recruitment ad personalization effects on individuals' responses under consideration of the mediating roles of perceived considerate treatment and reactance to the advertisement between ad personalization and organizational attractiveness, the latter being a means to increase job-pursuit intention and click intention. Across three between-subjects online experiments, we show that personalized job advertisements increase organizational attractiveness *via* a perception of being treated considerately by an organization. Perceived considerate treatment furthermore mitigates reactance effects on recipient responses and leads to increased click and job pursuit intentions. For some types of personalization, individuals' sense of uniqueness reinforces the positive effect of personalization on perceived considerate treatment.

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Personalized advertising; perceived considerate treatment; reactance to the advertisement; organizational attractiveness; sense of uniqueness

1. Introduction

As older employees retire, employers are faced with the challenge of replacing departing skillsets. Advertising plays a key role in recruiting new employees (Wei et al. 2016), and recruitment advertising has consequently gained the attention of practitioners and scholars alike. As organizations compete for future employees from a limited pool of qualified applicants, organizations' attractiveness to potential applicants has become a major concern for employers as well as advertising and marketing scholars (Viot & Benraiss-Noailles, 2019). Employers have responded to these challenges by increasingly using advertising on social media and recruitment platforms to increase

their organization's attractiveness (Pffiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). An increasingly popular strategy on these platforms is to employ an identification-based ad personalization tactic (Hawkins et al. 2008) by embedding users' names and profile pictures into the advertisements (Pffiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020).

Overall, research on the topic of ad personalization has found personalization to render ads more noticeable and more persuasive (e.g. Bang et al. 2019; Bang and Wojdyski 2016; Hawkins et al. 2008; Pffiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). While the majority of studies have focused on the consumer responses of ad personalization, only a few studies have investigated influencing factors and mechanisms of such effects (Winter, Maslowska, and Vos 2021). Specifically, personalization effects on desirable consumer responses, such as attitude toward the brand, attitude toward the ad, click intention, or job-pursuit intention, have been attributed to the self-referencing effect (Ahn et al. 2017; De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a; Pffiffelmann and Soulez 2021) or perceived entertainment (De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022b; Pffiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020; Setyani et al. 2019), while adverse effects, including negative attitude toward the ad, ad avoidance, or lower click intention, have been attributed to perceived intrusiveness (Pffiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020), ad skepticism (Baek and Morimoto 2012), or psychological reactance (White et al. 2008).

Although organizations are increasingly using personalization in their recruitment ads to remain competitive (Soulez and Poujol 2020) by increasing their organization's attractiveness to potential applicants (Pffiffelmann and Soulez 2021), research on personalized recruitment advertising has been slow to develop. The existing research on personalized advertising in general, furthermore, shows mixed findings regarding the effects and effectiveness of ad personalization. While some research has identified favorable consumer responses to ad personalization, such as increased visual attention (Pffiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020), brand attitude (De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a), or click-through rates and sales (e.g. Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta 2018), other studies did not find any ad personalization effects (e.g. Yu, Hudders, and Cauberghe 2016), or showed a negative impact on consumer responses (e.g. Wattal et al. 2012). Research on personalized advertising has studied various types of personalization (e.g. De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022b). For example, personalization can occur based on socio-demographic characteristics such as gender and age (De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a) or by using recipients' names in online advertisements (e.g. Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016) or email marketing (e.g. Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta 2018). Yet, research on including recipients' photographs as a means of personalization is still limited.

Additional research in the specific context of recruitment ads is necessary, as insights on personalized advertisements of products or services may not be easily translatable to the recruitment advertising context. This is because recruitment ads substantially differ from product or service ads in three specific ways. First, the persuasive intent is less pronounced in recruitment ads than in commercial ads (Pffiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020), which may lead to a more favorable view of the organization in response to the ad. Second, recipient responses to commercial ads and recruitment ads are likely to be different; recipients may experience a positive reaction to an advertised brand because the product is relevant, the price is attractive,

or the message is visually pleasing, while they may view the same organization unsuitable as an employer due to their reputation, the expected salary, or the nature of the work. Finally, it would seem more logical that potential employees feel flattered to be personally recruited for a vacant position than if they were personally targeted in a commercial advertisement, as the former may be perceived as a favorable evaluation of their professional skills.

The unique characteristics and limited understanding of recruitment advertising in combination with employers' challenges recruiting job applicants to fill vacancies highlights the need for additional research on the effects of personalized recruitment ads but also the mechanisms and factors that facilitate and influence these effects on potential applicants' attractiveness and responses. To address the dearth of research on this topic, the current research conducts three experimental studies to examine the effects of different types of ad personalization in recruitment advertising: First, Study 1 examines the effects of recruitment ad personalization using individuals' names. Subsequently, Study 2 explores the effects of personalization using individuals' names in comparison to using both their names and photographs. Both Studies 1 and 2 draw on the self-serving bias literature to explore a proposed mediating role of perceived considerate treatment as well as a potential moderating role of applicant's sense of uniqueness to account for differences in recipients' receptiveness to personalization (Bang et al. 2019; Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011). Finally, guided by literature on Reactance Theory (Brehm 1966), Study 3 examines the effects of recruitment ad personalization using individuals' names and photographs either on their own or in combination while additionally exploring the role of recipients' reactance in their responses to recruitment ad personalization.

This research holds the potential to contribute to the understanding of online recruitment advertising by exploring how ad personalization effects are facilitated and by examining factors that may influence personalized advertising effectiveness, thus providing a potential explanation for inconsistent findings in existing literature (Li and Liu 2017; Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). The insights of this research may also contribute valuable implications for employers as well as social media and recruitment platforms to design more effective advertising solutions using personalization.

2. Conceptual background and hypotheses development

2.1. Identification-based personalization in advertising

The term personalization describes a variety of concepts, leading to potential confusion among advertising scholars and practitioners (Vesonen 2007). In the advertising context, personalization can draw on individuals' interests, preferences, and past behaviors (Baek and Morimoto 2012; Bleier and Eisenbeiss 2015) or integrate personally identifiable information (e.g. one's name, photograph) (Dijkstra 2008; Malheiros et al. 2012; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). While there is a more substantial body of research on personalization based on individuals' interests, preferences, and behaviors (e.g. Baek and Morimoto 2012; Bleier and Eisenbeiss 2015; Boerman, Kruijkemeier, and Zuiderveen Borgesius 2017), insights from this research may not necessarily accurately

translate into the context of ad personalization using personally identifiable information, as it is not based on online behavior. The present research draws on the latter conceptualization, that is to say a personalization strategy that identifies the recipient by name or photograph (Hawkins et al. 2008). These personalized items constitute personally identifiable information (Malheiros et al. 2012; Markos, Labrecque, and Milne 2018) and are considered sensitive information, particularly when used by marketers (Markos, Labrecque, and Milne 2018). Personally Identifiable Information (PII) is defined as any representation of information that permits the identity of an individual to whom the information applies to be reasonably inferred by either direct or indirect means (NIST 2023). Ad personalization using personally identifiable information is most often used in email marketing (Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta 2018) or mobile advertising contexts (Chen, Su, and Yen 2014), and some major social media platforms, including Facebook and Instagram, currently prohibit assertions or assumptions of personal attributes in ads, including name, age, race, or gender (Meta 2022a). However, social media and recruitment platforms have the technical capability to personalize their advertising in this manner as long as a user owns an account and has consented to this personalization tactic (e.g. when creating their account), and LinkedIn currently offers automatic personalization of ads with users' names and profile pictures (LinkedIn 2022).

While advertising research generally indicates positive effects of personalization (Liu-Thompkins 2019), consumer responses to personalization can be nuanced and may not universally lead to favorable outcomes. A thorough review of relevant literature identified 32 research articles and conference papers that specifically focus on the use of recipients' names and photographs in persuasive communication (Table 1). As shown in the table, previous research largely conducted online experiments and focused on the integration of recipients' names in the ad (e.g. Sahni et al. 2008; Wattal et al. 2012). Only a few studies investigated the use of recipients' photographs, and those that did mainly focused on the integration of both recipients' names and photographs in the ad. In addition, the studies addressed different persuasive purposes; most studies focused on selling products or services (e.g. Koch and Benlian 2015), but research also addressed other contexts including employee recruitment (e.g. Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020), informing about a students' sports center (e.g. Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016), donation requests (e.g. Bartsch and Kloß 2019), or health interventions (e.g. Webb, Simmons, and Brandon 2005). Finally, existing research investigated a variety of ad formats and platforms, such as TV spots (e.g. Bartsch and Kloß 2019), emailing (e.g. Howard and Kerin 2004), mobile ads (e.g. Chen, Su, and Yen 2014), display ads (e.g. Bang and Wojdyski 2016), social media ads (e.g. Ahn et al. 2017), native ads (Malheiros et al. 2012), interstitial mobile ads (Hsu and Fu 2018), online service platforms (Koch and Benlian 2015), or brochures (e.g. Dijkstra 2005).

Personalization is frequently discussed as a tactic to generate attention (Hawkins et al. 2008). In the digital space, where audiences are increasingly fragmented and where ads must often compete with other ads and the editorial content in which they are embedded, sometimes on multiple screens, generating attention is important for advertising effectiveness (Koslow and Stewart 2022). Eye-tracking research has consistently shown that ad personalization increases visual attention devoted to the

Table 1. Existing literature on identification-based personalization tactics (name and photograph) and main results.

Author(s)	Sample size (Country)	Method	Ad purpose	Ad format (Platform)	Direct effect(s)	Interaction effect(s)
Ahn and Bailenson (2011)	S ₁ : 80 (USA)	Online experiment	Selling	Display ad (Not indicated)	PHOTO → AB** (+) PHOTO → PI* (+)	—
Ahn et al. (2017)	S ₁ : 63 (USA)	Online experiment	Recruitment	Social media ad (LinkedIn)	COMBI → AB** (+) NAME → AB* (+)	—
Ahn et al. (2017)	S ₂ : 75 (USA)	Online experiment	Recruitment	Display ad (News websites)	PHOTO vs. NAME → AB ^{ns} COMBI vs. PHOTO → SR** (+) COMBI → SBC*** (+) COMBI → SR** (+) COMBI → AB ^{ns}	—
Bang et al. (2019)	130 (USA)	Lab experiment	Selling	Display ad (News website)	—	COMBI×NAR → VA* (+) COMBI×NAR → AAD*** (+) COMBI×NAR → AB** (+) NAME×TCD → VA* (+) NAME×TCD → PGI ^{ns} NAME×TCD → AAD ^{ns}
Bang and Wojdyski (2016)	93 (USA)	Lab experiment	Selling	Display ad (Health-related website)	NAME → VA*** (+)	—
Bartsch and Klotz (2019)	150 (Germany)	Online experiment	Donations	Video spot (TV)	NAME → EMP ^{ns} NAME → SR*** (+) NAME → PR* (+) NAME → PSO ^{ns}	—
Chen, Su, and Yen (2014)	464 (Mongolia)	Online experiment	Selling	Mobile ad	NAME → AAD*** (-) NAME → AB** (-)	—
Dijkstra (2005)	202 (Netherlands)	Lab experiment	Health intervention	Brochure	NAME → AFF* (-) NAME → COG* (-) NAME → AQS* (+) NAME → ADR*** (+)	—
Howard and Kerin (2004)	S ₃ : 4,000 (USA)	Online field experiment	Selling	Emailing	NAME → AAD* (+) NAME → REC* (+)	—
Hsu and Fu (2018)	296 (Taiwan)	Online experiment	Selling	Interstitial mobile ad (News website)	NAME → RP** (+) NAME → GRA*** (+) NAME → AAD*** (+) NAME → PI*** (+)	NAME×LOC → AAD ^{ns} NAME×LOC → REC ^{ns} NAME×INV → AAD* (+) NAME×INV → REC ^{ns} NAME×SCA → Rp** (-)
Koch and Benlian (2015)	119 (Germany)	Online field experiment	Selling	Online platform (Shopping service)	NAME → RP** (+) NAME → AAD*** (+)	—
Li (2016)	S ₂ : 142 (USA)	Lab experiment	Selling	Display ad (News website)	NAME → PI*** (+)	—
Li and Liu (2017)	163 (USA)	Online experiment	Selling	Display ad (E-commerce website)	NAME → AAD*** (+) NAME → PI*** (+)	NAME×INV → AAD* (+) NAME×INV → PI ^{ns}

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Author(s)	Sample size (Country)	Method	Ad purpose	Ad format (Platform)	Direct effect(s)	Interaction effect(s)
Liang, Li, and Turban (2009)	463 (Taiwan)	Online experiment	Selling	Emailing	NAME → IE*** (+) NAME → AR ^{ns} NAME → AAD ^{ns}	—
Ma, Suntopmiphug, and Karaatli (2009)	239 (USA)	Online survey	Selling	Mobile ad	COMBI vs. NAME → VA** (+) NAME → SRA ^{ns} NAME → AAD* (+) NAME → BA ^{ns} NAME → BI ^{ns} NAME → CA ^{ns}	NAME × NFU → SRA ^{ns} NAME × NFU → AAD* (+) NAME × NFU → BA ^{ns} NAME × NFU → BI ^{ns} NAME × NFU → CA ^{ns} NAME × PC → SRA ^{ns} NAME × PC → AAD ^{ns} NAME × PC → BA ^{ns} NAME × PC → BI* (+) NAME × PC → CA ^{ns} NAME × BT → SRA ^{ns} NAME × BT → AAD ^{ns} NAME × BT → BA ^{ns} NAME × BT → BI ^{ns} NAME × BT → CA ^{ns}
Malheiros et al. (2012)	30 (UK)	Lab experiment	Selling	Native ad (Travel website)		
Maslowska, Putte, and Smit (2011)	109 (Netherlands)	Online experiment	University newsletter	Emailing		
Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte (2016)	285 (Netherlands)	Online experiment	University newsletter	Emailing	NAME → PP*** (+)	—
Perez and Steinhart (2014)	S ₁ : 90 (Israel)	Online experiment	Selling	Display ad (Not indicated)	NAME → PC*** (+) NAME → SRA ^{ns}	NAME × ACT → PC ^{ns} NAME × ACT → SRA ^{ns}
Perez and Steinhart (2014)	S ₂ : 115 (Israel)	Online experiment	Selling	Display ad (Not indicated)	NAME → PC*** (+)	NAME × ACT → PE ^{ns}
Pffelfmann, (2020)	240 (France)	Online experiment	Recruitment	Social media ad (Facebook; LinkedIn)	NAME → ENT ^{ns} COMBI → ENT ^{ns} NAME → INT ^{ns}	NAME × TP → ENT* (-) COMBI × TP → ENT** (+) NAME × TP → INT ^{ns} COMBI × TP → INT ^{ns}
Pffelfmann, Dens, and Soulez (2020)	72 (Belgium)	Lab experiment	Recruitment	Social media ad (LinkedIn)	COMBI → VA*** (+) COMBI → INT ^{ns} COMBI → APK ^{ns} COMBI → AAD ^{ns}	VA × PC → INT ^{ns} VA × PC → APK* (-)

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Author(s)	Sample size (Country)	Method	Ad purpose	Ad format (Platform)	Direct effect(s)	Interaction effect(s)
Pfffelmann and Pfeuffer (2022)	196 (France)	Online experiment	Recruitment	Social media ad	NAME → OA ^{ns} COMBI → OA ** NAME → IRR ^{ns} COMBI → IRR ^{ns} NAME → CI ^{ns} COMBI → CI ^{ns} NAME → JPI ^{ns} COMBI → JPI ^{ns}	NAME × INV → OA ^{ns} COMBI × INV → OA* (-) NAME × INV → IRR ^{ns} COMBI × INV → IRR ^{ns}
Pfffelmann and Soulez (2021)	236 (France)	Online experiment	Recruitment	Social media ad (Facebook)	COMBI → SR*** (+) COMBI → AAD* (-) COMBI → CI* (-) COMBI → JPI** (-) NAME → CTR ^{ns} NAME → SRR ^{ns} NAME → Opens/Sent*** (+) NAME → Leads/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Leads/Opens ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Opens**	COMBI × ADT → SR* (+) COMBI × ADT → AAD ^{ns} COMBI × ADT → CI ^{ns} COMBI × ADT → JPI ^{ns}
Porter and Whitcomb (2003)	S ₁ : 12,433 (USA)	Online experiment	Survey recruitment	Emailing	NAME → SRR ^{ns}	—
Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta (2018)	S ₁ : 68,088 (Australia)	Online field experiment	Selling	Emailing	NAME → Opens/Sent*** (+) NAME → Leads/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Leads/Opens ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Opens**	—
Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta (2018)	S ₂ : 1.1 M (Argentina)	Online field experiment	Selling	Emailing	(-) NAME → Opens/Sent** (+) NAME → Clicks/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Clicks/Opens ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Opens ^{ns} NAME → Opens/Sent** (+) NAME → Clicks/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Clicks/Opens ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Opens ^{ns}	—
Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta (2018)	S ₃ : 5,000 (USA)	Online field experiment	Selling	Emailing	NAME → Opens/Sent** (+) NAME → Clicks/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Clicks/Opens ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Opens ^{ns}	—
Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta (2018)	S ₄ : 1.4 M (Australia)	Online field experiment	Selling	Emailing	NAME → Opens/Sent** (+) NAME → Clicks/Sent ^{ns} NAME → Clicks/Opens ^{ns} NAME → Unsubscribes/Opens ^{ns}	NAME × DIS → Leads* (+)
Smurkupt, Krairit, and Khang (2011)	196 (Thailand)	Online experiment	Selling	Mobile ad	NAME → BA*** (+) NAME → AB ^{ns}	—

(Continued)

Table 1. Continued.

Author(s)	Sample size (Country)	Method	Ad purpose	Ad format (Platform)	Direct effect(s)	Interaction effect(s)
Steinmann, Mau, and Schramm-Klein (2015)	108 (Germany)	Online experiment	Selling	Social media ad (Facebook)	NAME → BA* (-) NAME → SC ^{ns} NAME → WOM ^{ns} NAME → PI ^{ns}	—
Van Doorn and Hoekstra (2013)	S ₁ : 233 (Netherlands)	Online experiment	Selling	Display ad (Bank website)	NAME → INT* (+) NAME → PI ^{ns}	—
Van Doorn and Hoekstra (2013)	S ₂ : 467 (Netherlands)	Online experiment	Selling	Display ad (Telecommunication website)	NAME → INT** (+) NAME → PI ⁿⁿ	—
Wattal et al. (2012)	19,661 (USA)	Retail data	Selling	Emailing	NAME → CR** (-)	NAME × FAM → CR** (+)
Webb, Simmons, and Brandon (2005)	240 (USA)	Experiment	Health intervention	Brochure	NAME → RQS*** (+)	—
White et al. (2008)	S ₁ : 86 (USA)	Online experiment	Selling	Emailing	—	NAME × JUS → CI* (+) NAME × JUS → PR* (-) NAME × JUS × PU → CI* (+)
White et al. (2008)	S ₂ : 354 (USA)	Online experiment	Selling	Emailing	—	(+) NAME × FAM → AB*** (+) NAME × IND → SR ^{sig.} (+) NAME × IND → PD ^{ns}
Wong and Guan (2018)	100 (Singapore)	Online experiment	Selling	Mobile ad	NAME → AB* (+)	—
Yu, Hudders, and Cauberghe (2016)	240 (China & Netherlands)	Online experiment	Selling	Emailing	NAME → PI ^{ns}	—

Note: Abbreviation used: ^{ns}-Not significant, **p* < 0.05, ***p* < 0.01, ****p* < 0.001, S₁-Study 1, S₂-Study 2, S₃-Study 3, S₄-Study 4, (+)-positive effect, (-)-negative effect, AAD-Attitude toward the advertisement, AB-Attitude toward the brand, ACT-Activation, ADR-Ad responsiveness, ADT-Ad targeting, AFF-Affective attitude, APK-Attitudinal persuasion knowledge, AQS-Attempt to quit smoking, AR-Attitude toward recommendation, ADR-Ad responsiveness, ADR-Ad responsiveness, ADT-Ad targeting, AFF-Affective attitude, APK-Attitudinal persuasion knowledge, attitude, COMBI-Personalization with the name and photograph, CR-Consumer response, CTR-Click-through rate, DIS-Discount, EMP-Empathy, ENT-Perceived entertainment, FAM-Brand familiarity, GRA-Gratitude, IE-Intimate experience, IND-Individualism, INT-Perceived intrusiveness, INV-Involvement, IRR-Ad Irritation, JPI-Job-pursuit intention, JUS-Justification, LOC-Ad location, NAME-Personalization with the name only, NAR-Narcissism, NFU-Need for uniqueness, OA-Organizational attractiveness, PD-Privacy concerns, PE-Product evaluation, PGI-Perceived goal impediment, PHOTO-Personalization with the photograph only, PI-Purchase intention, PR-Perceived personalization, PR-Personalization reactance, PSO-Prosocial outcomes, PU-Perceived utility, REC-Ad recall, RP-Referral propensity, RQS-Readiness to quit smoking, SC-Satisfaction with community, SBC-Self-brand connection, SCA-Scarcity, SR-Self-referencing, SRA-Self-reported attention, SRR-Survey response rate, TCD-Task cognitive demand, TP-Type of platform, VA-Visual attention (eye-tracking measure), WOM-Word-of-mouth intention.

ad (Bang et al. 2019; Bang and Wojdyski 2016; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). However, such visual attention can be temporary (Krugman, Cameron, and White 1995; Jayasinghe and Ritson 2013) and does not necessarily guarantee further processing of ad messages as ads compete for consumers' cognitive attention, particularly in lower involvement contexts (Koslow and Stewart 2022). Research that has focused on the effects of advertising personalization on self-reported cognitive attention has sometimes failed to show any significant effect (Perez and Steinhart 2014; Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011).

In terms of other types of personalization effectiveness, empirical research has also reported mixed findings. On the one hand, in email marketing, personalization was shown to increase ad responsiveness (Howard and Kerin 2004), intimate experience (Liang, Li, and Turban 2009), attitude toward the ad (Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011), self-referencing (Yu, Hudders, and Cauberghe 2016), perceived personalization (Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016), click-through rates, and sales (Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta 2018). However, other studies have failed to show significant effects of personalization on outcomes such as attitude toward recommendations (Liang, Li, and Turban 2009), brand awareness, behavioral intentions, or cognitive activity (Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011), as well as click-through rate (Porter and Whitcomb 2003), survey response rate (Porter and Whitcomb 2003), purchase intention (Yu, Hudders, and Cauberghe 2016), or psychological distance (Yu, Hudders, and Cauberghe 2016). Notably, a few studies have found that personalization may lead to less favorable consumer responses (Wattal et al. 2012) and could increase reactance to the ad (White et al. 2008).

These findings suggest that personalization effects may be nuanced and dependent on other factors, such as persuasive intent, ad format, or personalization tactic; several moderators have been identified, such as personalization justification (White et al. 2008), presence of a discount (Sahni, Wheeler, and Chintagunta 2018), narcissism (Bang et al. 2019), task cognitive demand (Bang and Wojdyski 2016), product involvement (Hsu and Fu 2018; Li and Liu 2017), scarcity (Koch and Benlian 2015), need for uniqueness (Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011), privacy concerns (Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020), brand trust (Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011), type of platform (Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020), ad targeting (Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021), brand familiarity (Wattal et al. 2012), or individualism (Yu, Hudders, and Cauberghe 2016).

Overall, the current state of research on ad personalization using personally identifiable information suggests that such personalization can increase ad effectiveness. A common finding is that ad personalization using personally identifiable information holds the potential to generate visual attention to the ad; however, less agreement exists on other measures of ad effectiveness, particularly in terms of consumers' attitudinal responses. It is possible that mixed findings in the form of insignificant or inconsistent study results may be due to examined/omitted mediators and moderators, participant characteristics, or the context in which ad personalization is examined.

The present research seeks to provide an explanation for some of these varied findings by exploring potential mechanisms and factors involved in ad personalization effects in the context of personalized recruitment advertising. Specifically, this research investigates the effect of different types of ad personalization on a positive outcome

(i.e. perceived considerate treatment) and a negative outcome (i.e. reactance to the advertisement), considering sense of uniqueness as a moderator, and examines their roles in subsequent potential candidate responses to personalized ads.

2.2. Ad personalization effects on perceptions of considerate treatment

In the domain of recruitment advertising, previous research has argued that favorable recipient responses to personalization might be explained by their perception of considerate treatment by an organization (Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021). Considerate treatment can be defined as the perception of being valued and considered by someone (Pfiffelmann, Soulez, and Dens 2019). This perception can be elicited by personalized advertising since the personalized items convey, explicitly or implicitly, that the message is designed specifically for the viewer of the ad (Hawkins et al. 2008). When recipients notice the personalized items in the ads, they would interpret this as an effort from companies to address them as unique individuals. Moreover, they may believe that the company would only exert such effort for candidates that they truly want. This prediction is supported by self-serving bias literature.

Self-serving bias is the tendency to perceive oneself in a favorable light, often by assuming personal responsibility for desirable outcomes and attributing undesirable or neutral outcomes to situational factors (Myers 1987; Zuckerman 1979). Individuals tend to make self-serving attributions across a wide range of occurrences (Howard, Gengler, and Jain 1995). For instance, name remembrance facilitates self-serving attributions by the person remembered and is perceived as a compliment because individuals believe that they are essential to the person who remembered and used the name (Howard, Gengler, and Jain 1995). The authors also found that remembering one's name facilitated a flattery effect, making the person feel treated considerately, that is to say, feel more liked, important, and valued by the person remembering the name. More recent research in an education context found that the memorization of student names by an instructor increases student evaluations of teaching because this tactic connotes flattery (Allred, King, and Amos 2022). Consistent with these insights, individuals would likely perceive ad personalization as considerate treatment. Such interpretations would be congruent with studies showing individuals' tendency to perceive themselves to play a causal role in events (Fenigstein 1984; Langer and Roth 1975), especially when such beliefs are consistent with a favorable view of themselves (Ross and Sicoly 1979).

More recent research in the domain of recruitment advertising is consistent with this prediction and shows that personalized ads may be perceived as considerate treatment by the person to whom the personalized ad is directed. Specifically, recruitment ads integrating potential candidates' names and photographs are perceived as more credible and trustworthy (Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020) and improve job-pursuit intention through a self-referencing effect (Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021). After viewing these personalized ads, potential candidates feel flattered to see their names and photographs depicted and believe that the companies truly want to hire them. Based on these insights, the following hypothesis is proposed.

H1: Personalized recruitment ads will be perceived as more considerate treatment than non-personalized recruitment ads.

2.3. The moderating role of individuals' sense of uniqueness

Sense of uniqueness is a stable disposition that varies across individuals and denotes individuals' general belief regarding how unique they are (Veazie and Cai 2007). Different approaches to this construct have been pursued in the abundant literature devoted to uniqueness (Brewer 1991; Maslach, Stapp, and Santee 1985; Şimşek and Yalınçetin 2010; Snyder and Fromkin 1977). According to Fromkin and Snyder (1980) Theory on Uniqueness, people find high levels of both similarity and dissimilarity unpleasant and, therefore, seek to be moderately distinct from others to maintain one's separate identity.

Consumer behavior research has often drawn on 'need for uniqueness' to understand the role of these perceptions in the context of personalized communication (Maslowska, Putte, and Smit 2011; Stiglbauer and Kovacs 2019). Consumers who specifically aim to differentiate themselves from others appreciate a genuinely unique product more than consumers who aim for conformity (Franke and Schreier 2008). For this study, the construct of sense of uniqueness is more appropriate than need for uniqueness. Sense of uniqueness describes a stable personal sense of self that acknowledges oneself as having distinctive features with the feeling of worthiness (Şimşek and Yalınçetin 2010). Stronger sense of uniqueness has been linked with feelings of being a valuable individual just because of who one is (Demir, Şimşek, and Procsal 2013). The perception of being unique, thus, might not be equal or reducible to simply being different from others as indicated by the concept of need for uniqueness (Demir, Şimşek, and Procsal 2013).

Research related to sense of uniqueness may hold valuable insights into how this characteristic may affect personalized recruitment ad effects. Bang et al. (2019), for example, highlighted that sense of uniqueness is likely to influence individual responses to different levels of ad personalization. Individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness have also been found to be more prone to exhibit self-serving bias. Self-serving bias has been examined in the fields of social psychology (e.g. Pyszczynski and Greenberg 1987; Shepperd, Malone, and Sweeny 2008), health communication (Veazie and Cai 2007), accounting (Keusch, Bollen, and Hassink 2012), or organizational psychology (Cucina et al. 2012). For instance, in the domain of health communication, patients have been found to show a bias rooted in their sense of uniqueness to either accept or reject statistics-based information regarding the consequences of illness and treatment (Veazie and Cai 2007). In the domain of social psychology, it has been argued that individuals who consider themselves as independent, original, self-reliant, or unique make more self-serving attributions (Shepperd, Malone, and Sweeny 2008).

When applying insights of the sense of uniqueness and self-serving bias literature in the context of personalized recruitment advertising, it is conceivable that individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness would be more likely to perceive personalization as a considerate treatment than those with a weaker sense of uniqueness. This is because individuals with a strong sense of uniqueness may make the self-serving

attribution that an organization made additional effort specifically for them, resulting in a perception of considerate treatment. Therefore, this study posits:

H2: The positive effects of ad personalization on perceived considerate treatment are greater for individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness than individuals with a weaker sense of uniqueness.

2.4. Personalization effects on organizational attractiveness and behavioral intentions

Organizational attractiveness is a positive affective attitude toward an organization that makes it desirable as an employer (Gomes and Neves 2010). This concept aims to assess companies' attractiveness to potential employees (Guillot-Soulez, Saint-Onge, and Soulez 2019). This research argues that the more individuals perceive an ad as considerate treatment by an organization, the more favorable their attitude toward that organization would be.

This proposed relationship can be explained by the theoretical construct of liking in the persuasive communication context (Cialdini 2001). The principle of liking states that individuals can be easily influenced or persuaded by those they like (Cialdini 2001). One of the ways to induce liking is by paying compliments or offering genuine praises (Cialdini 2001). Ample literature also exists evidencing the reciprocity of liking, which describes that when we discover that another person likes us and treats us with consideration, we tend to like them in return. Research on the principle of liking has, for example, shown that the belief of being liked (Curtis and Miller 1986) or positive remarks about another person's traits, attitude, or performance (Berscheid and Walster 1974) reliably generate liking in return.

We expect that social media users would be flattered by being personally addressed by a potential employer, much like they would by a compliment or praise. Such personalization may, therefore, induce liking for the employer. Consistent with the reciprocity-of-liking rule, potential employees may also interpret their inclusion in a recruitment ad as a positive evaluation of their profile or skills, which would induce liking for the employer in return. Finally, a relationship that is perceived to be based on mutual liking would make an organization more attractive as an employer to potential employees. Indeed, 68% of employees believe their experience as job candidates reflects how the company treats its employees (CareerBuilder 2018). Thus, based on the liking literature, when potential employees perceive a considerate treatment resulting from the recruitment ad personalization, they may feel a form of reciprocal liking that translates into more organizational attractiveness. Therefore, the following hypothesis is posited:

H3: Perceived considerate treatment will mediate personalized ad effects on perceived organizational attractiveness.

An individual's perception of another's positive regard can also increase compliance behaviors. Berscheid and Walster (1974), for example, found that positive remarks not only generated reciprocal liking but also increased the willingness to comply with the wishes of the person offering the compliment. In the same vein, Howard, Gengler, and Jain (1995) demonstrated that name remembrance from a teacher is perceived

as a compliment by the student remembered, which mediates compliance with a cookie purchase request. Additionally, individuals who are treated kinder and more considerate in the workplace than their fellow workers experience more self-worth and positive affect and are more likely to comply with norms or engage in tasks (Thau et al. 2013). Predictions may also be built on the existing literature on reactions to flattery in general, with the most widely supported rationale drawing on a self-enhancement motive (Chan and Sengupta 2013). Previous research suggests that flattery places a bias on recipients because they want to believe the positive message about themselves and, thus, respond positively to the flatterer (Chan and Sengupta 2013).

Overall, the existing literature outlines that individuals tend to like those who like them and engage in reciprocal behaviors. When applying these insights in the personalized recruitment advertising context, it stands to reason that perceived considerate treatment should not only positively influence organizational attractiveness but that organizational attractiveness should also act as a mediator between perceived considerate treatment and potential employees' behaviors (e.g. 'If they like me, I like them; I will look for more information about this company and click on the job ad to see more').

H4: Organizational attractiveness exerts a positive influence on potential employees' job-pursuit intention and intention to click on the ad.

In sum, personalized recruitment ads would likely be perceived as considerate treatment from an organization because previous research has suggested that individuals may experience such feelings in response to personalized recruitment ads (Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021). Additionally, it has been demonstrated that individuals are subject to self-serving bias (Myers 1987). However, based on the finding that the more individuals feel unique, the more prone they may be to perpetrate self-serving attributions (Shepperd, Malone, and Sweeny 2008), individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness would likely perceive a personalized recruitment ad as considerate treatment. Finally, according to the 'reciprocity-of-liking' rule (Cialdini 2001), this perception of considerate treatment should, in turn, influence organizational attractiveness, which would benefit recruitment effectiveness (i.e. individuals' job-pursuit intention) and ad effectiveness (i.e. individuals' click intention). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

H5: Personalized recruitment ads lead to more perceived considerate treatment for individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness than for individuals with a weaker sense of uniqueness, increasing organizational attractiveness and, subsequently, job-pursuit intention and click intention.

2.5. Reactance to personalized ads

While potential positive outcomes of personalization are well-documented, it is also conceivable that recipients would perceive thorough knowledge about them as inappropriate. This is because personalization in the advertising context goes beyond friendly recognition (White et al. 2008) but may be perceived as an invasion of privacy (Van Doorn and Hoekstra 2013) or manipulative intent (De Keyser, Dens, and De

Pelsmacker 2022a). Such perceptions could, in turn, result in a negative attitude toward the ad (Tsang, Ho, and Liang 2004), ad avoidance (Ham 2017; Youn and Kim 2019), and lowered purchase and click intentions (Van Doorn and Hoekstra 2013; White et al. 2008). This negative response can be explained by Reactance Theory (Brehm 1966).

Reactance Theory posits that people respond to attempts to control their behavior and threats to their freedom of choice by taking a position of withdrawal or rejection (Brehm 1966). In the advertising context, reactance refers to a negative psychological response that recipients experience when exposed to ads they consider intrusive and threatening their freedom of choice (De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a; White et al. 2008). Reactance is likely to occur when exposed to personalized ads (De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a; White et al. 2008; Youn and Kim 2019) where recipients can feel excessively scrutinized and manipulated (White et al. 2008). In line with previous research evidencing that recipients may try to resist personalized advertisements and respond negatively to them, we expect the following:

H6: Personalized recruitment ads will induce more reactance to the advertisement than non-personalized recruitment ads.

White et al. (2008) argued that when recipients perceive the advertisements as appropriate, ad reactance might be alleviated and, thus, lead to more favorable ad responses. By investigating the cognitive road exclusively, previous research found that ad avoidance decreases when recipients perceive personalized ads as useful or relevant (De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a; Van Doorn and Hoekstra 2013; White et al. 2008). This research argues that this trade-off effect also occurs through the affective assessment of perceived considerate treatment. When ad personalization leads recipients to feel valued or flattered, this perception of considerate treatment should reduce the reactance to the personalized ads and improve recipients' positive responses. Accordingly, this study posits the following hypothesis:

H7: Reactance to the advertisement will be reduced by perceived considerate treatment.

Figure 1 represents the conceptual framework that illustrates our hypotheses.

2.6. Personalized items: differences between the name and photograph effect

While most of the previous studies on personalized advertising have compared the effects of personalized versus non-personalized ads, it has been suggested that different types of ad personalization could help to better understand the mechanisms of personalization effects (Bang et al. 2019; Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020; White et al. 2008). For instance, eye-tracking research shows that recipients devote more visual attention to their photographs than their names (Malheiros et al. 2012; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). It is important to note that attention is a fundamental process for personalization effects (Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). A recent qualitative study has also suggested that the personalization using the

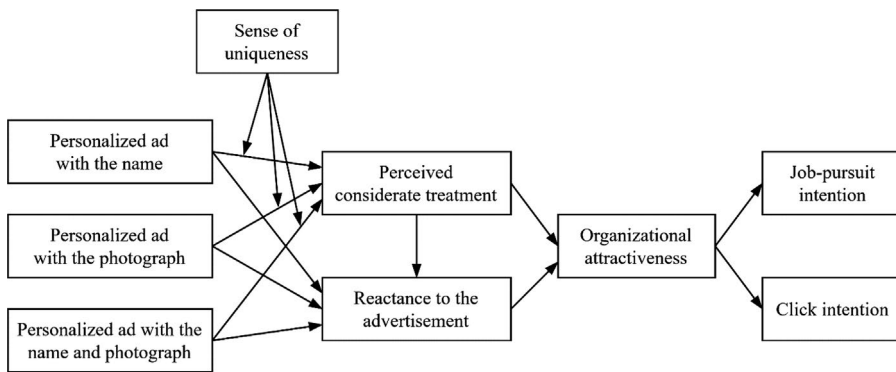


Figure 1. Proposed moderated mediation model: Effect of ad personalization on job-pursuit intention and click intention through the perception of considerate treatment, reactance to the advertisement, and organizational attractiveness, moderated by individuals' sense of uniqueness.

photograph is perceived as more intrusive than the integration of the name (Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021), but Pfiffelmann and Pfeuffer (2022) failed to evidence such difference empirically in terms of perceived irritation, which is conceptually related to perceived intrusiveness (De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a). The present study, therefore, seeks to examine how the type of personalization employed may affect individuals' responses to a personalized ad.

On the one hand, it appears that the inclusion of visual information in addition to text may be more likely to elicit intended responses to a personalized ad, as the superiority of visuals (i.e. pictures) over verbal (i.e. text) information in advertising effectiveness is well-documented (e.g. Childers and Houston 1984). According to the picture-superiority effect, pictorial images enhance consumer recall and preference for products and brands (Childers and Houston 1984). However, Ahn et al. (2017) did not find a more positive effect of personalization using the photograph in comparison with personalization using the name on the attitude toward the brand. In addition, combining pictures with names may activate a dual encoding process, wherein both the path of the visual imagery process and the path of the verbal process are activated (Rossiter and Percy 1980). Pfiffelmann (2020) further argued that the association between the advertisement and oneself would be more salient when the ad is composed of several personalized elements, especially when a visual element (i.e. photograph) is integrated. It was found that the integration of recipients' name and photograph in combination had a stronger effect than no personalization on attitude toward the brand (Ahn et al. 2017), self-brand connection (Ahn et al. 2017), self-referencing (Ahn et al. 2017; Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021), and organizational attractiveness (Pfiffelmann and Pfeuffer 2022). However, Pfiffelmann and Soulez (2021) found a negative direct effect on the attitude toward the ad, click intention, and job-pursuit intention. Furthermore, it was found that the combination of name and photograph increases self-referencing over the integration of the photograph only (Ahn et al. 2017). These earlier findings suggest that the integration of the combination of potential employees' names and photographs in recruitment ads would likely

result in an increased perception of considerate treatment than the integration of names or photographs alone.

On the other hand, Ahn et al. (2017) found that the integration of the name and the photograph does not generate more self-referencing than the inclusion of the name alone, suggesting that the ad is already sufficiently linked to oneself when it contains only the recipients' names. To the authors' knowledge, no other research has tested this comparison. Given the limited research on this issue, it is difficult to accurately predict the type of individual-level ad personalization that would maximize individuals' perceived considerate treatment, perceived organizational attractiveness, and, in turn, intent to click on the ad or pursue the job. Therefore, the final goal of the present research is to address the following research question:

RQ: How does the moderated serial mediation process of recruitment ad personalization differ between ads personalized with individuals' names and those personalized with individuals' photographs?

3. Research methodology and results

To address the posed hypotheses and research question, three online experiments were conducted. Hypotheses 1-5, which posited a moderated mediation model implicating perceived consideration treatment, organizational attractiveness, and individuals' sense of uniqueness, were addressed by all three studies, while hypotheses 6 and 7, which aimed to test the mediating role of ad reactance in these relationships, were addressed by Study 3. The research question was addressed by Studies 2 and 3.

First, in Study 1, the effects of ad personalization using an individual's name in the ad were examined. In Study 2, the effects of personalization using both an individual's name and photograph were tested. All three studies examined the roles of perceived considerate treatment, organizational attractiveness, and sense of uniqueness. Finally, in Study 3, the effects of ad personalization using names and photographs were tested in isolation as well as in combination and the additional proposed mediator of ad reactance was explored.

3.1. Study 1

3.1.1. Participants

Participants ($N=95$, 46.3% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.51$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 1.48$) were recruited at eight universities in France to participate in the experiment as part of their course requirements. The sample is composed of undergraduate students in the last year of their professional bachelor's degree in the field of marketing and sales. This sample was chosen for two reasons. First, the sample was easily accessible and constituted an efficient way of collecting data for the study. Second, the sample is appropriate to the scope of the study because undergraduate students who are nearing graduation represent a strategic target for recruiters, as recruiters heavily depend on attracting young talent who will soon enter the job market (Guillot-Soulez, Saint-Onge, and Soulez 2019; Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021). Post-hoc power analysis using G*Power showed that the sample size was sufficient ($f^2 = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$, statistical power = 0.82).

3.1.2. Design and procedure

An online experiment was set up using Qualtrics survey software. Participants were randomly assigned to an ad personalization condition (control: no ad personalization [$N=38$] vs. personalized ad: ad personalized using an applicant's name [$N=57$]) and exposed to an online job advertisement corresponding to their condition. The stimuli advertisements (see [Appendix A](#)) contained a fictitious organization, Swish, to avoid potential bias due to any pre-existing attitudes toward an organization (Geuens and De Pelsmacker 2017). The ads in the two conditions were identical except for the presence or absence of participants' names in the ad copy.

After informing participants of the requirement of owning a Facebook account for participation as well as the confidentiality of their information, participants were asked to access Qualtrics using their Facebook login to authorize the collection of public personally identifiable information for each participant. This procedure was necessary to allow the researchers to retrieve participants' first names, which were automatically inserted into the advertisement for the participants who were assigned to the personalized ad condition.

Facebook was chosen as the study's context for the following reasons. Facebook is the largest social media platform (Statista 2022) and is also heavily used for both recruiting and job search. A 2021 survey (Jobvite 2021) revealed that 68% of recruiters use Facebook for hiring, followed by LinkedIn (65%) and Twitter (48%). Facebook also allows to recruit so-called 'passive' candidates, which is the main reason why organizations are using social media to recruit job prospects (Gawande 2019). Finally, Facebook's API (Application Programming Interface) was the only option among major social media networks, which offered the capability to dynamically create personalized ad stimuli by integrating participants' information (collected a priori via Qualtrics).

While Facebook does not currently offer job recruitment ad personalization using users' names or photographs, it has the technical capability to do so since Facebook's Quiz app uses a similar design for personalized content. The potential threat to ecological validity was deemed acceptable to boost ecological validity in three specific ways: First, Facebook heavily uses other forms of personalization in its advertising, meaning Facebook users have come to expect personalized advertising on this platform. Second, Facebook routinely conducts feature testing, which exposes a portion of its users to new features (e.g. Smith 2022). Since LinkedIn, for example, already uses personalized job advertisements, it is conceivable that Facebook would also implement a similar feature in the future. Third, Facebook has recently discontinued its job marketplace outside of the United States and Canada (Meta 2021); this means employers would need to rely more heavily on job recruitment ads and explore methods to increase their ads' effectiveness.

Participants were asked to read a short article on a Facebook page, which discusses career and study options for students who have graduated with a bachelor's degree. The article was designed to mimic Facebook's Instant Article format, which allows brands to distribute articles natively within the social media platform (Meta 2022b). These articles can also include interactive elements, such as advertisements. The reading goal for a Facebook Instant Article tailored to the participants was implemented to increase the ecological validity of the experiment, as users may encounter

similar content on Facebook and use Facebook for other motivations than actively looking for jobs. The advertisement was displayed within the online article. The instructions did not explicitly mention the ad to, again, enhance the ecological validity of the study.

3.1.3. Measures

All constructs were measured by means of 7-point Likert scales (see [Appendix B](#) for the measures' scale items). Before exposing participants to the stimuli, their sense of uniqueness was measured using Şimşek and Yalınçetin (2010) five-item scale ($M=4.74$, $SD=1.15$, $\alpha=0.865$). After exposure to the stimuli, participants answered the questionnaire with the remaining measurement scales; job-pursuit intention was assessed with Cable and Turban's four-item measure (2003) ($M=3.04$, $SD=1.26$, $\alpha=0.873$), click intention with a two-item scale (e.g. I would like to click on the ad to learn more) ($M=2.81$, $SD=1.67$, $r=0.786$), and organizational attractiveness with Gomes and Neves (2010) three-item measurement scale ($M=3.19$, $SD=1.25$, $\alpha=0.936$). Perceived considered treatment was measured using a three-item scale that had previously been verified in an instrument pretest ($N=46$; $M=1.92$, $SD=1.22$, $\alpha=0.920$). In the main experiment, these items were also found to consistently measure the same underlying construct ($M=2.56$, $SD=1.45$, $\alpha=0.953$). Since the recruiting organization was fictitious, employer familiarity was measured as a familiarity check using Cable and Turban (2003) three-item scale ($M=1.62$, $SD=1.10$, $\alpha=0.955$). Moreover, because Facebook does not currently allow for personalization using first names, perceived realism of the advertisement was measured as a potential confounding factor using a two-item scale adapted from Bechwati and Morrin (2003) ($M=3.54$, $SD=1.48$, $r=0.801$). Finally, as a manipulation check, participants were asked to indicate whether the advertisement showed their names (Yes, No).

3.1.4. Controls and manipulation check

As expected, the majority of participants indicated that they were not familiar with the fictitious employer ($M=1.62$, $SD=1.10$). Also, an independent-samples t -test revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceived ad realism between the two conditions ($M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 3.46$, $M_{\text{personalized}} = 3.59$, $t=-0.407$, $p=0.685$), suggesting that ad realism was unlikely to be a confounding factor with the personalization manipulation. Finally, a chi-square test of independence comparing the manipulation check question with the personalization manipulation variable yielded a significant association ($\chi^2(1) = 10.819$, $p < 0.001$, $p < 0.001$), indicating successful manipulation.

3.1.5. Hypotheses testing

The hypotheses were tested using a customized model in the PROCESS macro V3.5 for SPSS (Hayes 2018). Results were tested with 5,000 bootstrap samples to estimate the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for inferences regarding indirect effects and conditional effects. Two separate analyses were conducted for the two dependent variables, job-pursuit intention and click intention. In these two models, personalization was specified as a dichotomous independent variable

(0=Non-personalized, 1=Personalized), perceived considerate treatment and organizational attractiveness as serial continuous mediator variables, and sense of uniqueness as a continuous moderator variable in the relationship between personalization and perceived considerate treatment. The variables were mean-centered.

The results showed no significant direct effect of personalization on perceived considerate treatment ($b=0.388$, $SE=0.296$, $p=0.193$, 95% CI = [-0.200; 0.976]), organizational attractiveness ($b=0.213$, $SE=0.225$, $p=0.346$, 95% CI = [-0.234; 0.660]), job-pursuit intention ($b=0.012$, $SE=0.229$, $p=0.959$, 95% CI = [-0.443; 0.466]), and click intention ($b=0.379$, $SE=0.341$, $p=0.270$, 95% CI = [-0.300; 1.057]) (Table 1). Thus, H1 was not supported in the case of personalized ads with the integration of participants' names only.

However, the results revealed a significant interaction effect between personalization and sense of uniqueness on perceived considerate treatment ($b=0.557$, $SE=0.266$, $p=0.039$, 95% CI = [0.029; 1.085]). Figure 2 visualizes the conditional direct effect of personalization on perceived considerate treatment at different levels of sense of uniqueness. As shown in Figure 2 and descriptive statistics (Figure 3), the effect of personalization on perceived considerate treatment was higher for individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness than for individuals with a weaker sense of uniqueness. The moderator value defining Johnson-Neyman significance regions was 5.16 (% below = 63.16; % above = 36.84). This means that personalization did not influence perceived considerate treatment for individuals scoring less than 5.16 on sense of uniqueness. As individuals' sense of uniqueness moderated ad personalization effects on perceived considerate treatment, H2 was supported.

In addition, a significant positive effect of perceived considerate treatment on organizational attractiveness ($b=0.447$, $SE=0.076$, $p=0.001$, 95% CI = [0.295; 0.598]) was found. Organizational attractiveness, in turn, exerted a positive influence on job-pursuit intention ($b=0.321$, $SE=0.105$, $p=0.003$, 95% CI = [0.112; 0.531]), but its influence on click intention was not significant ($b=0.185$, $SE=0.157$, $p=0.243$, 95% CI = [-0.128; 0.497]). Thus, H3 was supported, and H4 was partially supported.

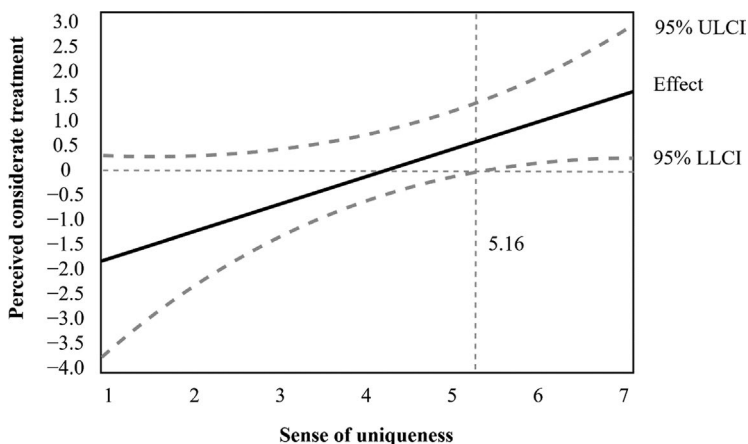


Figure 2. Study 1: Conditional effect of personalization (with the name only) on perceived considerate treatment at different levels of sense of uniqueness. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

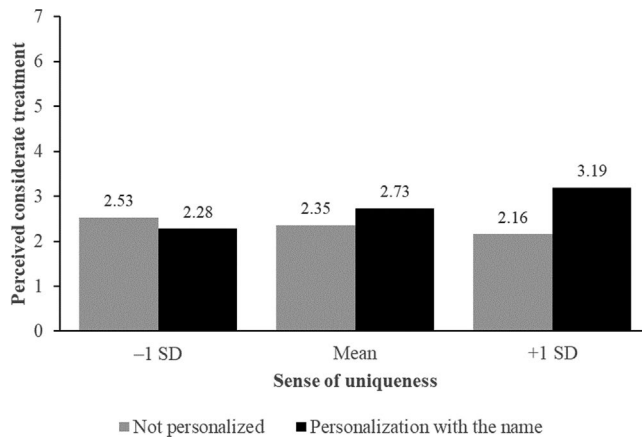


Figure 3. Study 1: Means of perceived considerate treatment by experimental conditions at levels of sense of uniqueness.

Findings indicate that the more recipients perceived the ad as considerate treatment, the more they viewed the organization as attractive. The positive feelings toward the employer predicted job-pursuit intention but not the intention to click on the ad. The index of moderated mediation was significant when job-pursuit intention was specified as the dependent variable ($b=0.080$, $SE=0.052$, 95% CI = [0.004; 0.202]), but the index was not significant when click intention was the dependent variable ($b=0.046$, $SE=0.047$, 95% CI = [-0.021; 0.159]). The conditional effects demonstrated that the indirect effect of personalization on job-pursuit intention *via* perceived considerate treatment and organizational attractiveness was significant only when individuals had a strong sense of uniqueness (≥ 5.16). Hence, recruitment ads that were personalized with recipients' names exerted a positive influence on perceived considerate treatment for individuals with a strong sense of uniqueness, which resulted in greater organizational attractiveness and, ultimately, increased job-pursuit intention. As this mechanism predicted job pursuit intention but not click intention, H5 was partially supported.

Finally, the total effects of personalization on job-pursuit intention ($b=0.235$, $SE=0.265$, $p=0.378$, 95% CI = [-0.291; 0.761]) and click intention ($b=0.531$, $SE=0.348$, $p=0.130$, 95% CI = [-0.160; 1.222]) were not significant.

3.1.6. Discussion

The results of this experiment showed that individuals with a strong sense of uniqueness appear to perceive the personalized ad as considerate treatment, increasing their perceived organizational attractiveness and prompting them to pursue the job. Nevertheless, this conditional process did not predict their intention to click on the ad. These first results evidenced that individuals must have a particularly high sense of uniqueness for this mechanism to operate when an ad is personalized with individuals' names only. To examine the potential positive direct effects of personalization using individuals' names and photographs, a second experimental study was conducted.

3.2. Study 2

Study 2's purpose was twofold. First, Study 2 aimed to increase the confidence in Study 1's findings regarding personalized recruitment advertising effects and mechanisms. Second, Study 2 explored how the effects of ad personalization may differ when a more sophisticated form of personalization is employed, particularly by integrating individuals' names and photographs in recruitment ads.

3.2.1. Participants

For Study 2, 95 undergraduate students in the last year of their professional bachelor's degree (46.3% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 21.93$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.32$) were recruited at ten universities in France to participate in the experiment as part of their course requirements. None of the participants had taken part in Study 1. Again, a post-hoc power analysis with G*Power revealed that the sample size was adequate ($f^2 = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$, statistical power = 0.82).

3.2.2. Design and procedure

Participants were, again, randomly assigned to an ad personalization condition (control: no ad personalization [$N=45$] vs. personalized ad: ad personalized using an applicant's name and photograph [$N=50$]) and exposed to the corresponding online job advertisement. The advertisements promoted a vacancy for a sales manager at a fictitious organization, which was again called Swish (See [Appendix C](#)). The stimuli advertisements only differed in terms of the presence or absence of ad personalization. As in Study 1, participants were informed of the study's inclusion criteria (adult undergraduate students who own a Facebook account) and data confidentiality and were then asked to log into Qualtrics using Facebook, which would later allow the researchers to obtain participants' first names and Facebook profile pictures needed for the personalized ad stimuli.

3.2.3. Measures

The same measurement scales as in the first study were used in this second study (see [Appendix B](#)). Participants' sense of uniqueness ($M=2.98$, $SD=1.46$, $\alpha=0.906$) was assessed before exposure to the stimuli corresponding to their randomly assigned condition. Then, job-pursuit intention ($M=2.83$, $SD=1.26$, $\alpha=0.917$), click intention ($M=2.63$, $SD=1.59$, $r=0.855$), organizational attractiveness ($M=3.24$, $SD=1.42$, $\alpha=0.953$), perceived considerate treatment ($M=2.65$, $SD=1.64$, $\alpha=0.953$), employer familiarity ($M=1.88$, $SD=1.34$, $\alpha=0.883$), and perceived ad realism ($M=3.82$, $SD=1.49$, $r=0.756$) were measured. Finally, as a manipulation check, participants answered the question, 'Did the advertisement contain your name and photograph?' (Yes, No).

3.2.4. Controls and manipulation check

Participants indicated that they were not familiar with the fictitious employer ($M=1.88$, $SD=1.34$), and an independent-samples t -test revealed that there was no significant difference in the perceived ad realism between the two conditions ($M_{\text{non-personalized}} = 3.67$, $M_{\text{personalized}} = 3.96$, $t=-0.956$, $p=0.342$). This suggested that perceived realism

did not act as a confounding factor. Finally, a chi-square test of independence comparing the answers to the manipulation check question and the personalization condition yielded a significant association ($\chi^2(1) = 30.901, p < 0.001, p < 0.001$), and manipulation was, therefore, considered successful.

3.2.5. Hypotheses testing

The hypotheses were tested using conditional process analysis as in the first study. Consistent with Study 1, the results showed that personalization did not exert a significant influence on organizational attractiveness ($b = -0.027, SE = 0.264, p = 0.919, 95\% CI = [-0.552; 0.498]$), job-pursuit intention ($b = -0.156, SE = 0.214, p = 0.469, 95\% CI = [-0.581; 0.270]$) and click intention ($b = 0.077, SE = 0.278, p = 0.783, 95\% CI = [-0.475; 0.628]$) (Table 2). However, personalization had a positive influence on perceived considerate treatment ($b = 0.713, SE = 0.319, p = 0.028, 95\% CI = [0.079; 1.346]$). Contrary to Study 1, this study found support for H1.

Additionally, a significant interaction effect between personalization and sense of uniqueness on perceived considerate treatment ($b = 0.650, SE = 0.224, p = 0.005, 95\% CI = [0.204; 1.095]$) was found. As can be seen in Figure 4, the conditional effects reveal that the effect of personalization on perceived considerate treatment is higher for individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness. The moderator value defining the Johnson-Neyman region of significance is 2.86 (% below = 48.42; % above = 51.58), indicating that personalization only influences perceived considerate treatment for individuals scoring more than 2.86 on sense of uniqueness. These results and descriptive statistics (Figure 5) illustrate that personalization with the integration of recipients' photographs next to their names was likely perceived as a considerate treatment overall and that only individuals with a particularly weak sense of uniqueness did not perceive personalization as a considerate treatment. H2 was, therefore, supported.

Perceived considerate treatment positively influenced organizational attractiveness ($b = 0.427, SE = 0.081, p = 0.001, 95\% CI = [0.266; 0.587]$), which had a positive influence on job-pursuit intention ($b = 0.389, SE = 0.084, p = 0.001, 95\% CI = [0.221; 0.557]$) and click intention ($b = 0.264, SE = 0.109, p = 0.018, 95\% CI = [0.046; 0.481]$). H3 and H4 were both supported.

The index of moderated mediation was significant with job-pursuit intention ($b = 0.108, SE = 0.054, 95\% CI = [0.028; 0.232]$) and with click intention ($b = 0.073, SE = 0.045, 95\% CI = [0.001; 0.117]$) as the dependent variables. Therefore, H5 was supported.

Finally, the total effects of personalization on job-pursuit intention ($b = 0.097, SE = 0.260, p = 0.711, 95\% CI = [-0.419; 0.613]$) and click intention ($b = 0.440, SE = 0.326, p = 0.180, 95\% CI = [-0.207; 1.087]$) were not significant (Table 3).

3.2.6. Discussion

Study 2 featured ad personalization using individuals' names and photographs and found a direct effect of recruitment ad personalization on individuals' perceptions of considerate treatment, which subsequently affected their perceived attractiveness of

Table 2. Output from the PROCESS procedure for SPSS for the conditional process analysis of Study 1.

Antecedent	Consequent											
	Perceived considerate treatment (M_1)			Organizational attractiveness (M_2)			Job-pursuit intention (Y_1)			Click intention (Y_2)		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>
Constant	2.579	0.145	17.785***	2.042	0.224	9.112***	1.346	0.313	4.307***	1.669	0.466	3.578***
Personalization (X)	0.388	0.296	1.310 ^{ns}	0.213	0.225	0.947 ^{ns}	0.012	0.229	0.052 ^{ns}	0.379	0.341	1.109 ^{ns}
Sense of uniqueness (W)	0.172	0.127	1.353 ^{ns}									
Interaction (XW)	0.557	0.266	2.097*	0.447	0.076	5.850***	0.262	0.090	2.900**	0.214	0.135	1.584 ^{ns}
Perceived considerate treatment (M_1)							0.321	0.105	3.048**	0.185	0.157	1.175 ^{ns}
Organizational attractiveness (M_2)				0.288, $F(2, 92) = 18.584$ ***			0.295, $F(3, 91) = 12.667$ ***			0.103, $F(3, 91) = 3.493$ *		
R^2				0.086, $F(3, 91) = 2.869$ *								

Note: ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$; ^{ns}: non significant.

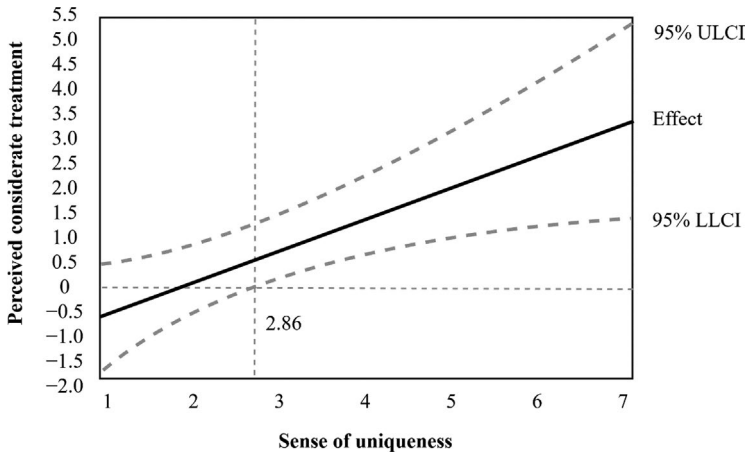


Figure 4. Study 2: Conditional effect of personalization (with the name and photograph) on perceived considerate treatment at different levels of sense of uniqueness. LLCI = lower limit confidence interval; ULCI = upper limit confidence interval.

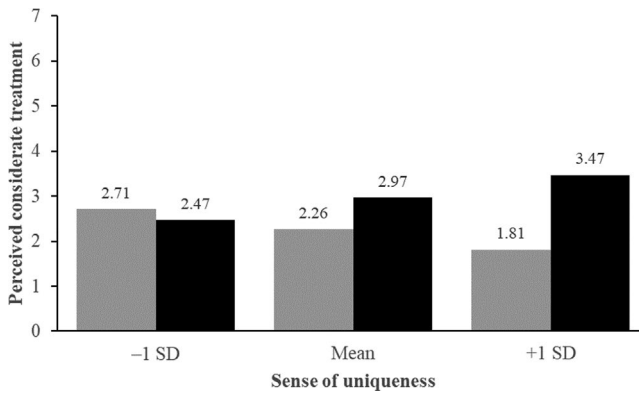


Figure 5. Study 2: Means of perceived considerate treatment by experimental conditions at levels of sense of uniqueness.

an organization and, finally, their intentions of clicking on an ad and pursuing the job. These effects were found to be stronger for individuals who had a strong sense of uniqueness.

3.3. Study 3

A third study was conducted to test the proposed mechanisms with more ad personalization settings and to further validate the model. The study examined ad personalization that integrated either recipients' names only, their photographs only, or the combination of their names and photographs. For Study 3, a more realistic Facebook mock ad was designed and the measure of reactance to the advertisement was added to the model.

Table 3. Output from the PROCESS procedure for SPSS for the conditional process analysis of Study 2.

Antecedent	Perceived considerate treatment (M_1)			Organizational attractiveness (M_2)			Job-pursuit intention (Y_1)			Click intention (Y_2)		
	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>	<i>b</i>	SE	<i>t</i>
Constant	2.634	0.159	16.529***	2.111	0.250	8.444***	1.036	0.270	3.842***	0.697	0.350	1.992*
Personalization (X)	0.713	0.319	2.233*	-0.027	0.264	-0.103 ^{ns}	-0.156	0.214	-0.727 ^{ns}	0.077	0.278	0.276 ^{ns}
Sense of uniqueness (W)	0.035	0.111	0.315 ^{ns}									
Interaction (XW)	0.650	0.224	2.894**	0.427	0.081	5.276***	0.203	0.075	2.712**	0.407	0.097	4.201***
Perceived considerate treatment (M_1)							0.389	0.084	4.609***	0.264	0.109	2.410*
Organizational attractiveness (M_2)				0.240, $F(2, 92) = 14.496^{***}$			0.369, $F(3, 91) = 17.721^{***}$			0.335, $F(3, 91) = 15.302^{***}$		
R^2	0.133, $F(3, 91) = 4.667^{**}$											

Note: ***: $p < 0.001$; **: $p < 0.01$; *: $p < 0.05$; ^{ns}: non significant.

3.3.1. Participants

A total of 320 French students (64.4% female, $M_{\text{age}} = 22.78$, $SD_{\text{age}} = 3.74$) were recruited to participate in an online experiment. The majority of participants (72.2%) held at least a bachelor's degree, and 66.3% of the participants were currently looking for a job or internship. Post-hoc power analysis using G*Power indicated that the sample size achieved an adequate statistical power ($f^2 = 0.15$, $p < 0.05$, statistical power = 0.99).

3.3.2. Design and procedure

Participants were randomly assigned to one of four ad personalization conditions (control: no ad personalization [$N=80$] vs. personalized ad integrating recipient's name [$N=80$] vs. personalized ad integrating recipient's photograph [$N=80$] vs. personalized ad integrating both the recipient's name and photograph [$N=80$]). The advertisements (see [Appendix D](#)) were placed within a mock Facebook news feed and designed to adhere to the Facebook image ad specifications (Meta 2022c), further enhancing the ecological validity of this study compared to the first two. Specifically, the created ads were placed in the middle of a mock Facebook home page and adhered to up-to-date image ad specifications at the time of the study to fully resemble an in-feed post from an advertiser that users would encounter on Facebook.

The ads contained the same fictitious organization as in the previous studies, Swish, and the ads in the four conditions were identical except for the presence or absence of participants' names and/or photographs in the ad copy. Participants were, again, informed of data confidentiality; however, contrary to the previous studies, participants were asked to provide links to their Facebook profiles in an initial short questionnaire. This procedure allowed the researchers to obtain participants' first names and Facebook profile pictures needed for the creation of personalized ad stimuli. Then, the researchers customized and sent an individual survey URL to each of the participants (9.2% retention rate). Participants were instructed to attentively look at the mock Facebook newsfeed (containing one of the four stimulus advertisements) as if it were their own.

3.3.3. Measures

The same measurement scales as in the previous studies were used (see [Appendix B](#)). Participants' sense of uniqueness ($M=5.32$, $SD = .94$, $\alpha=0.810$) was assessed before exposure to a randomly assigned ad stimulus. Then, job-pursuit intention ($M=4.07$, $SD=1.23$, $\alpha=0.871$), click intention ($M=4.14$, $SD=1.66$, $r=0.773$), organizational attractiveness ($M=4.02$, $SD=0.94$, $\alpha=0.890$), perceived considerate treatment ($M=3.77$, $SD=1.47$, $\alpha=0.929$), employer familiarity ($M=1.57$, $SD=1.18$, $\alpha=0.943$), and perceived ad realism ($M=5.45$, $SD=1.49$, $r=0.721$) were measured. One additional measure was assessed—Reactance to the advertisement with three items taken from Bleier and Eisenbeiss (2015) ($M=3.86$, $SD=1.55$, $\alpha=0.894$). Finally, as a manipulation check, participants were asked to select the personalized elements integrated in the ad (1=No personal information, 2=My name only, 3=My photograph only, 4=My name and my photograph).

3.3.4. Controls and manipulation check

Again, the majority of participants indicated that they were not familiar with the fictitious employer ($M=1.57$, $SD=1.18$). The results of an ANOVA revealed that the ad

with the name was perceived as significantly less realistic than the ad with the photograph ($p=0.002$) and the non-personalized ad ($p=0.005$). The ad with the combination of the name and the photograph was perceived as equally realistic as the other personalization conditions (all $p>0.05$). Finally, a chi-square test of independence comparing the manipulation check question with the personalization manipulation variable yielded a significant association ($\chi^2(9) = 557.894, p<0.001$), indicating successful manipulation. Participants correctly identified the experimental condition to which they were assigned.

3.3.5. Hypotheses testing

The hypotheses were tested using a customized model in the PROCESS macro V3.5 for SPSS (Hayes 2018). Results were tested with 5,000 bootstrap samples to estimate the 95% bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals for inferences regarding indirect effects and conditional effects. Personalization was specified as a multicategorical independent variable (1=No personalization, 2=Name personalization, 3=Photograph personalization, 4=Name and photograph personalization) with two different coding systems, an indicator coding system and a sequential coding system. These analyses were conducted for each of the two dependent variables, job-pursuit intention and click intention. Perceived considerate treatment, reactance to the advertisement, and organizational attractiveness were specified as the first, second, and third continuous serial mediator variables. Sense of uniqueness was defined as a continuous moderator variable in the relationship between personalization and perceived considerate treatment. The variables were mean-centered.

The results showed that none of the personalized ad configurations directly influenced job-pursuit intention or click intention (all $p>0.10$). However, the analysis demonstrated that, in comparison with the non-personalized ad condition, personalization with the name ($b=0.743, SE=0.208, p<0.001, 95\% CI = [0.334; 1.151]$), personalization with the photograph ($b=0.590, SE=0.207, p=0.005, 95\% CI = [0.183; 0.997]$), and personalization with the name and photograph ($b=1.018, SE=0.207, p<0.001, 95\% CI = [0.610; 1.425]$) positively influenced perceived considerate treatment, supporting H1. While personalization with the name and photograph exerted more perceived considerate treatment than the personalization with the photograph only ($b=0.428, SE=0.207, p=0.040, 95\% CI = [0.021; 0.835]$), the latter did not exert a significant influence on perceived considerate treatment compared to personalization with the name only ($b=0.428, SE=0.207, p=0.462, 95\% CI = [-0.561; 0.256]$).

Importantly, the results indicated a significant interaction effect between personalization and sense of uniqueness on perceived considerate treatment for personalization with the name ($b=0.805, SE=0.243, p=0.001, 95\% CI = [0.328; 1.283]$) and personalization with the photograph ($b=0.512, SE=0.241, p=0.034, 95\% CI = [0.039; 0.986]$) (Figure 6). However, the interaction for personalization with both the name and photograph was not significant ($b=0.169, SE=0.230, p=0.463, 95\% CI = [-0.283; 0.620]$). Figure 6 and descriptive statistics (Figure 7) show that personalization by either their name or their photograph benefits recipients' perceived considerate treatment more strongly when they have a greater sense of uniqueness than when their sense of uniqueness is lower. Thus, H2 was partially supported.

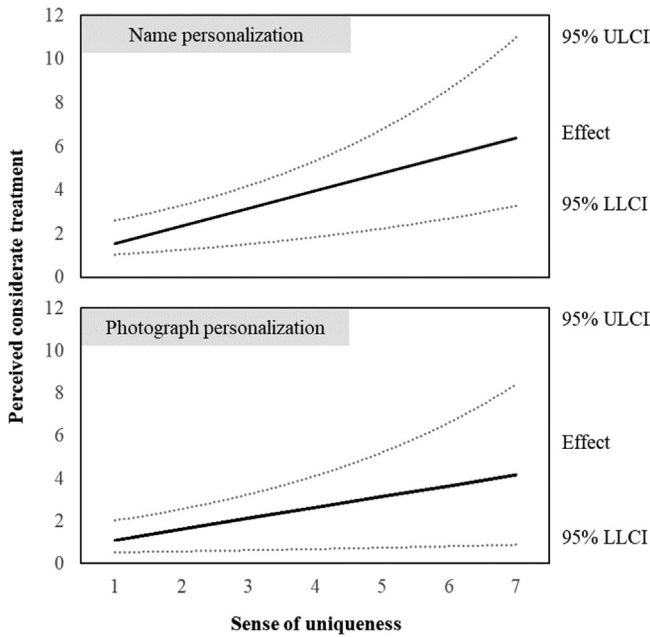


Figure 6. Study 3: Conditional effect of personalization on perceived considerate treatment at different levels of sense of uniqueness. LLCI= lower limit confidence interval; ULCI= upper limit confidence interval.

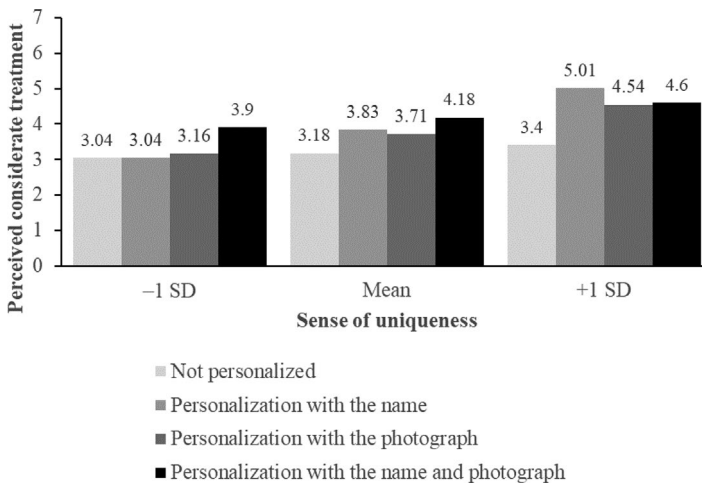


Figure 7. Study 3: Means of perceived considerate treatment by experimental conditions at levels of sense of uniqueness.

The results further showed that perceived considerate treatment positively influenced organizational attractiveness ($b=0.344, SE=0.032, p<0.001, 95\% CI = [0.280; 0.407]$), job-pursuit intention ($b=0.103, SE=0.041, p<0.005, 95\% CI = [0.022; 0.185]$), and click intention ($b=0.356, SE=0.058, p<0.001, 95\% CI = [0.242; 0.470]$). Organizational attractiveness, in turn, positively influenced job-pursuit intention ($b=0.775, SE=0.059,$

$p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.659; 0.891]) and click intention ($b = 0.684$, $SE = 0.083$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [0.521; 0.847]). Thus, H3, H4, and H5 were supported.

Furthermore, the analysis revealed that, in comparison to the non-personalized ad condition, personalization with the name ($b = 0.678$, $SE = 0.234$, $p = 0.004$, 95% CI = [0.217; 1.138]), personalization with the photograph ($b = 0.731$, $SE = 0.231$, $p = 0.002$, 95% CI = [0.276; 1.187]), and personalization with the name and photograph ($b = 0.690$, $SE = 0.238$, $p < 0.004$, 95% CI = [0.222; 1.157]) positively impacted the reactance to the advertisement. H6 was, therefore, supported. However, personalization with name only and photograph only did not significantly differ in their effects on ad reactance ($b = 0.054$, $SE = 0.230$, $p = 0.815$, 95% CI = [-0.398; 0.506]). In addition, personalization with the photograph only and both the name and photograph also did not differ in their impact on ad reactance ($b = -0.042$, $SE = 0.230$, $p = 0.857$, 95% CI = [-0.495; 0.412]).

The results further showed that perceived considerate treatment reduced reactance to the advertisement ($b = -0.378$, $SE = 0.063$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [-0.501; -0.255]). H7 was, therefore, supported. While reactance to the advertisement did not significantly impact organizational attractiveness ($b = 0.023$, $SE = 0.031$, $p = 0.455$, 95% CI = [-0.037; 0.083]), it decreased job-pursuit intention ($b = -0.126$, $SE = 0.033$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [-0.190; -0.061]) and click intention ($b = -0.252$, $SE = 0.046$, $p < 0.001$, 95% CI = [-0.343; -0.161]).

Finally, the total effects of all personalized ad conditions on job-pursuit intention and click intention were not significant (all $p > 0.5$). A summary of experimental studies' findings as well as their theoretical and managerial implications are discussed in the following general discussion section.

4. General discussion

4.1. Summary of findings

This research examined the effects of recruitment ad personalization by integration of individuals' names only, photographs only, or the combination of names and photographs in the ads. In Study 1, personalization with recipients' names did not find a direct effect on perceived considerate treatment. Rather, the indirect effect of personalization on job-pursuit intention occurred *via* perceived considerate treatment and organizational attractiveness and only for individuals who had a strong sense of uniqueness. Studies 2 and 3 tested a more extensive ad personalization by the integration of the combination of individuals' names and photographs. Results of Studies 2 and 3 revealed that personalization directly affected individuals' perception of considerate treatment by the organization. In Study 3, personalization with recipients' names only and personalization with recipients' photographs only were shown to exert a direct effect on perceived considerate treatment and individuals' sense of uniqueness reinforces this perception.

Overall, the three experimental studies showed that ad personalization can, at least under certain circumstances, generate the perception of considerate treatment by an organization and influence individuals' perception of an organization and their behavior. While a less extensive personalization (i.e. using a recipient's name) only increased perceptions of considerate treatment and organizational attractiveness for individuals

who exhibited a strong sense of uniqueness, prompting them to pursue the job, more extensive personalization (i.e. using both a recipient's name and photograph) reproducibly made recipients feel treated considerately, reducing their reactance to the ad and increasing their perception of organizational attractiveness and likelihood of clicking on the ad to learn more and applying for the job.

4.2. Theoretical implications

The research findings are consistent with past research on online personalized advertising in demonstrating the constructive effects of ad personalization (e.g. Ahn et al. 2017; De Keyser, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a; Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020) and expand upon the knowledge on such effects in three ways: First, this research examined ad personalization in the context of recruitment advertising, which conceptually differs from product or service advertising and on which insights remain limited. Second, this research explores the effects of different types of ad personalization and highlights that these effects may depend on the type of personalization recruiters employ in their advertising and the type of person recruiters target. Finally, the moderated serial mediation model tested in this research sheds light on different variables that may facilitate or impact personalized recruitment advertising effectiveness.

Only a few studies have investigated personalization in a recruitment context (e.g. Ahn et al. 2017; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020; Pfiffelmann and Soulez 2021). While organizational attractiveness is one of the most popular outcomes for recruitment-related activities (Cable and Turban 2003), none of the research conducted in personalized advertising had previously tested the effect of personalization on organizational attractiveness or considered it as one of the mediators in the persuasive process of ad personalization.

The moderating influence of individuals' sense of uniqueness on personalized advertising effects identified in this research is consistent with the idea that individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness experience more feelings of being valuable individuals just because of who they are (Demir, Şimşek, and Procsal 2013). They may be more likely to perceive ad personalization as considerate treatment by an organization because they attribute the personalization to their perception of being different from others. Individuals with a stronger sense of uniqueness are more likely to make such self-serving attributions (Veazie and Cai 2007) that ad personalization constitutes an additional effort made by an organization especially for them, resulting in a perception of considerate treatment and, subsequently, more favorable responses to the ad.

Results are also consistent with previous research that identified the mediating role of organizational attractiveness between recruitment-related activities and potential employees' behaviors (e.g. Cable and Turban 2003; Gomes and Neves 2010). This research helps to further explain the process of personalized recruitment ad effects by showing that individuals initially experience a feeling of considerate treatment by an organization, which may lead to reciprocal feelings (Cialdini 2001), resulting in a perception of an organization's attractiveness. This organizational attractiveness, in turn, increases potential employees' job-pursuit intention and intention to click on the ad.

Finally, this research evidences that the three types of personalization tested increase reactance to the advertisement. Reactance Theory (Brehm 1966) suggests that individuals do not want to be manipulated and seek to maintain their freedom of choice. In line with the theory and previous research, recipients try to resist persuasive attempts, such as advertising, when confronted with them (Boerman & Kruikeimer, 2016). They may ignore the personalized ads, reject the ads, or even try to find ways to block advertisements (Brinson, Eastin, and Cicchirillo 2018). Interestingly, the research shows that perceived considerate treatment decreases ad reactance. Previous research exclusively investigated a cognitive trade-off between ad personalization and ad intrusiveness or reactance by investigating the mediating role of ad relevance or utility (e.g. De Keyzer, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a; White et al. 2008). This research highlights an affective trade-off between ad personalization and ad reactance by explicating the mediating role of perceived considerate treatment, contributing to the understanding of ad personalization effects.

4.3. Managerial implications

From a managerial standpoint, these research insights may provide guidance to managers of any account-based platforms as well as advertisers and recruiters. Personalization embedding users' profile information in the online ad is currently feasible but still rarely implemented. Account-based platforms do not yet provide many possibilities for advertisers to personalize their online ads. In allowing advertisers to embed users' names and photographs in their ads, LinkedIn is one of the most innovative platforms for ad personalization. Although personalization with users' names and photographs (i.e. profile picture) is only possible on account-based platforms (e.g. social media, account-based websites, mobile apps), the majority of recruitment websites fall into this category and would, thus, technically allow for such personalization.

This research may help managers of account-based platforms design effective ads using personalization in the recruitment context. Users typically provide their first names and profile pictures upon registration, so this personalization tactic is easy to use and low-cost. Account-based platforms could also maximize their profits by charging advertisers or recruiters more if they could provide evidence that the personalization tactic was effective. For instance, they could increase the cost per click or develop a sales pitch around personalization to increase their ad sales, which would allow them to more effectively subsidize services for consumers. Previous research has already shown that personalization increases attention to ads (Bang et al. 2019; Pfiffelmann, Dens, and Soulez 2020). This research contributed to the insight that personalization increases organizational attractiveness by means of perceived considerate treatment. Because recruiters aim to increase their organization's attractiveness to potential employees, they may be interested in using ad personalization for this purpose, and account-based platforms may benefit from offering recruitment ad personalization. The insight that personalization may also increase individuals' intention to apply for a position or click on an ad to learn more about an organization may further increase the appeal of ad personalization to both platform managers and recruiters.

Insights on ad personalization effects, factors, and mechanisms may also help recruiters make strategic decisions on whether they should take advantage of a personalization strategy. Specifically, recruiters should exercise some caution when employing ad personalization, as personalization has been shown to generate ad reactance. Nevertheless, recruiters may want to use ad personalization using both individuals' names and photographs, as this strategy does not induce stronger reactance over less extensive ad personalization using either a recipient's name or photograph only, while more effectively improving their perceptions of considerate treatment by organization, mitigating reactance effects and increasing the likelihood of favorable responses to the ad.

Personalization using individuals' names only or photographs only especially induced more perceived considerate treatment for individuals with a strong sense of uniqueness. Although specifically targeting those individuals who maintain a strong sense of uniqueness may be challenging, recruiters may rely on indirect indicators of a strong sense of uniqueness that may manifest in observable attributes of individuals, including a large number of connections on social media platforms (Kim and Lee 2011) or high activity on social media (Davenport et al. 2014), such as frequently posting selfies (Sung et al. 2016).

4.4. Limitations and further research

Limitations of this research include threats to external and ecological validity. External validity may be influenced by the studies' samples, which were made up of students. Although the sample is highly relevant for online job ads, it may be difficult to generalize results to other populations of potential employees. The studies' dependent variables, furthermore, assessed behavioral intent, specifically individuals' intent to click on an ad or pursue a job opportunity, which does not perfectly predict actual behavior (Morwitz, Johnson, and Schmittlein 1993). For instance, in the research conducted by Kim and Hu (2017), 10% of the participants reported that they would click on a personalized ad, while the online advertising industry average statistic on standard banner click-through rates is closer to 0.1%. In the future, researchers could assess other potential outcomes of advertising personalization than job-pursuit intention or click intention. They may, for example, conduct field research or collect online behavioral data to assess actual behavior resulting from personalized ad exposure, such as clicking on an ad, completing a job application for a specific position, or engaging in electronic word-of-mouth.

Second, the stimuli used in this research may pose a threat to ecological validity. The usage of a fictitious employer was chosen to avoid potential bias due to prior familiarity. As a result, the role of an employer's existing reputation could not be considered in the studies. Since such reputation may affect individuals' perceptions of an employer (Cable and Turban 2003) and may impact the effects of recruitment-related activities on job seekers' behaviors (Gomes and Neves 2010), future research may investigate the role of the corporate reputation or attitude toward the employer in determining ad personalization effects.

Facebook, unlike LinkedIn, only provides advertisers with the option to integrate users' names and photographs in a few types of ads (e.g. quiz app). Though ad realism

between personalized conditions was controlled, participants' responses may be affected by the novelty of this type of ad personalization on Facebook, since Facebook's job ads do not currently offer recruitment ad personalization using recipients' names or photographs. To address this potential limitation, researchers may create stimuli that more closely resemble the current format and practices of Facebook or other recruitment platforms. Because each social media platform has its own advertising practices (Buzeta, De Pelsmacker, and Dens 2020; Voorveld et al. 2018), it may also be advised to conduct a field experiment to examine the impact different advertising platforms may have on the advertisement's effects.

Finally, this research addressed a variety of factors that mediate ad personalization effects; however, other factors may play a role in these effects. It is conceivable, for example, that consumers' perceptions of how personalized an ad appears to them could also influence ad personalization effects (e.g. Bleier and Eisenbeiss 2015; De Keyser, Dens, and De Pelsmacker 2022a; Maslowska, Smit, and van den Putte 2016). Future research could aim to manipulate the extent of perceived personalization to assess how ad personalization affects potential employees' responses. Additionally, the mechanism of individuals' perception of considerate treatment addressed in this research is specific to the recruitment context and may not apply to personalized advertising for products or services, in which there is a clear selling intent. Further research is, therefore, encouraged on whether the effects, factors, and mechanisms of personalized recruitment ads generalize to other contexts, such as advertising for products or services.

Disclosure statement

The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Data availability statement

Data available upon request from the first author.

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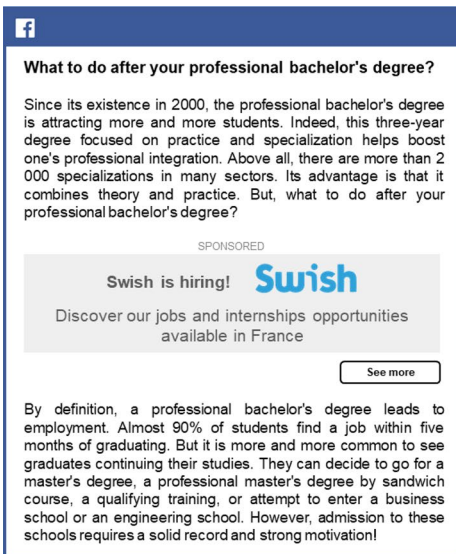
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Appendix A: Experimental conditions and stimulus examples (study 1)

a) Non-personalized



f

What to do after your professional bachelor's degree?

Since its existence in 2000, the professional bachelor's degree is attracting more and more students. Indeed, this three-year degree focused on practice and specialization helps boost one's professional integration. Above all, there are more than 2 000 specializations in many sectors. Its advantage is that it combines theory and practice. But, what to do after your professional bachelor's degree?

SPONSORED

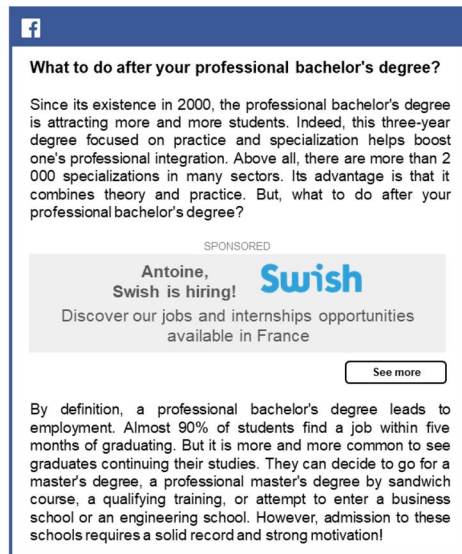
Swish is hiring! **Swish**

Discover our jobs and internships opportunities available in France

[See more](#)

By definition, a professional bachelor's degree leads to employment. Almost 90% of students find a job within five months of graduating. But it is more and more common to see graduates continuing their studies. They can decide to go for a master's degree, a professional master's degree by sandwich course, a qualifying training, or attempt to enter a business school or an engineering school. However, admission to these schools requires a solid record and strong motivation!

b) Personalized (example)



f

What to do after your professional bachelor's degree?

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SPONSORED

Antoine,
Swish is hiring! **Swish**

Discover our jobs and internships opportunities available in France

[See more](#)

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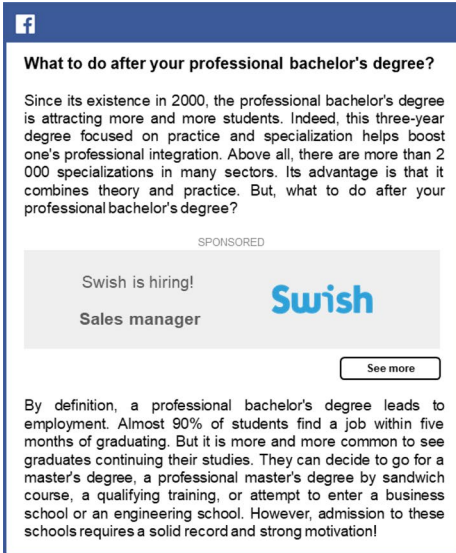
Note: Translated from French language.

Appendix B: Measurement scales and reliability statistics

Constructs, scale sources, and items	Cronbach's α or Pearson's r and factor loadings		
	Study 1	Study 2	Study 3
Sense of uniqueness (Şimşek and Yalınçetin 2010)	$\alpha=0.865$	$\alpha=0.906$	$\alpha=0.810$
• As people get to know me more, they begin to recognize my special features	0.594	0.901	0.707
• I feel unique	0.844	0.914	0.745
• I can think of many special characteristics that distinguish me from others	0.792	0.840	0.857
• I think that the characteristics that make me up are different from others'	0.848	0.776	0.763
• I feel that some of my characteristics are completely unique to me	0.886	0.814	0.720
Job-pursuit intention (Cable and Turban 2003)	$\alpha=0.873$	$\alpha=0.917$	$\alpha=0.871$
• I would exert a great deal of effort to work for this company	0.735	0.839	0.859
• I would like to work for this company	0.718	0.825	0.882
• I would be interested in gathering more information about this job opening	0.762	0.770	0.794
• I would be willing to attend an information session about this job	0.859	0.792	0.875
Click intention	$r=0.786$	$r=0.855$	$r=0.773$
• I would like to click on the ad to learn more	0.853	0.787	0.941
• It is likely that I click on this advertisement	0.896	0.723	0.941
Organizational attractiveness (Gomes and Neves 2010)	$\alpha=0.936$	$\alpha=0.953$	$\alpha=0.890$
• I find Swish a very attractive company	0.879	0.874	0.913
• Swish would be a good company to work for	0.866	0.860	0.915
• A job at Swish would be very attractive to me	0.862	0.863	0.894
Perceived considerate treatment	$\alpha=0.953$	$\alpha=0.953$	$\alpha=0.929$
• When I saw the ad, I felt flattered	0.845	0.893	0.861
• When I saw the ad, I felt valued	0.901	0.897	0.901
• When I saw the ad, I felt considered	0.879	0.880	0.865
Employer familiarity (Cable and Turban 2003)	$\alpha=0.955$	$\alpha=0.883$	$\alpha=0.943$
• Before this survey, I knew quite a bit about the company Swish	0.933	0.770	0.834
• Before this survey, I was very familiar with the company Swish	0.905	0.905	0.837
• Before this survey, I was familiar with Swish's products or services	0.906	0.916	0.800
Advertising realism (Bechwati and Morrin 2003)	$r=0.801$	$r=0.756$	$r=0.721$
• The advertisement is not realistic / is realistic	0.881	0.929	0.928
• The advertisement could exist unlikely in real life / likely in real life	0.889	0.919	0.928
Reactance to the advertisement (Bleier and Eisenbeiss 2015)			$\alpha=0.894$
• I want to resist the advertisement			0.723
• I want to dismiss the content of this advertisement			0.873
• I want to avoid this kind of advertisement			0.880

Appendix C: Experimental conditions and stimulus examples (study 2)

a) Non-personalized



What to do after your professional bachelor's degree?

Since its existence in 2000, the professional bachelor's degree is attracting more and more students. Indeed, this three-year degree focused on practice and specialization helps boost one's professional integration. Above all, there are more than 2 000 specializations in many sectors. Its advantage is that it combines theory and practice. But, what to do after your professional bachelor's degree?

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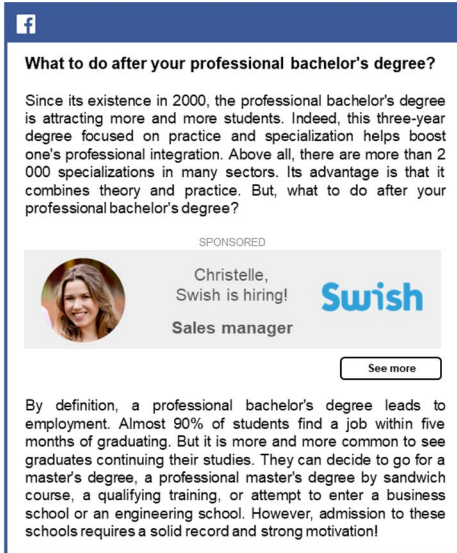
Swish is hiring!
Sales manager

Swish

[See more](#)

By definition, a professional bachelor's degree leads to employment. Almost 90% of students find a job within five months of graduating. But it is more and more common to see graduates continuing their studies. They can decide to go for a master's degree, a professional master's degree by sandwich course, a qualifying training, or attempt to enter a business school or an engineering school. However, admission to these schools requires a solid record and strong motivation!


b) Personalized (example)



What to do after your professional bachelor's degree?

Since its existence in 2000, the professional bachelor's degree is attracting more and more students. Indeed, this three-year degree focused on practice and specialization helps boost one's professional integration. Above all, there are more than 2 000 specializations in many sectors. Its advantage is that it combines theory and practice. But, what to do after your professional bachelor's degree?

SPONSORED

 Christelle,
Swish is hiring!
Sales manager

Swish

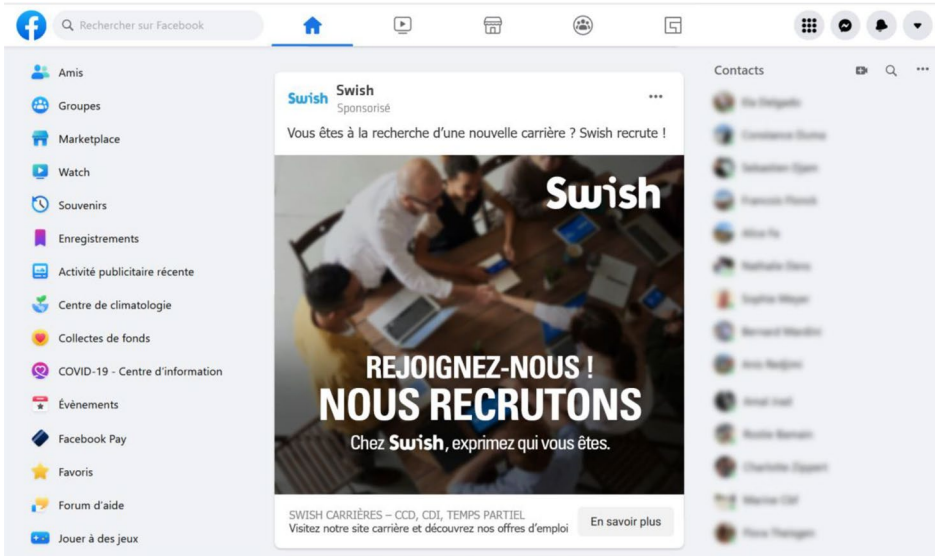
[See more](#)

By definition, a professional bachelor's degree leads to employment. Almost 90% of students find a job within five months of graduating. But it is more and more common to see graduates continuing their studies. They can decide to go for a master's degree, a professional master's degree by sandwich course, a qualifying training, or attempt to enter a business school or an engineering school. However, admission to these schools requires a solid record and strong motivation!

Note: Translated from French.

Appendix D: Experimental conditions and stimulus examples (study 3) (in french)

a) Non-personalized ad



Rechercher sur Facebook

Amis
Groupes
Marketplace
Watch
Souvenirs
Enregistrements
Activité publicitaire récente
Centre de climatologie
Collectes de fonds
COVID-19 - Centre d'information
Évènements
Facebook Pay
Favoris
Forum d'aide
Jouer à des jeux

Swish
Sponsorisé

Vous êtes à la recherche d'une nouvelle carrière ? Swish recrute !

Swish

**REJOIGNEZ-NOUS !
NOUS RECRUTONS**

Chez **Swish**, exprimez qui vous êtes.

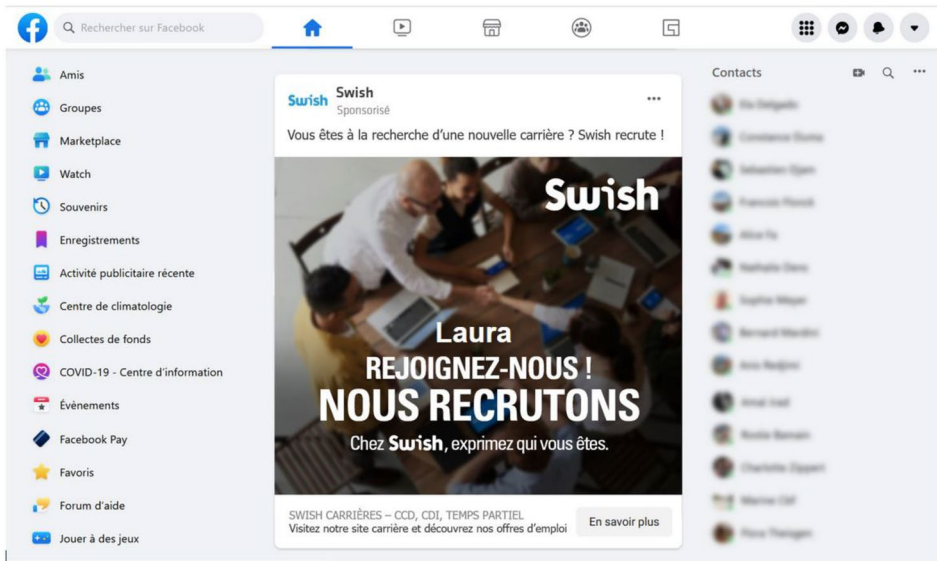
SWISH CARRIÈRES - CCD, CDI, TEMPS PARTIEL
Visitez notre site carrière et découvrez nos offres d'emploi

[En savoir plus](#)

Contacts

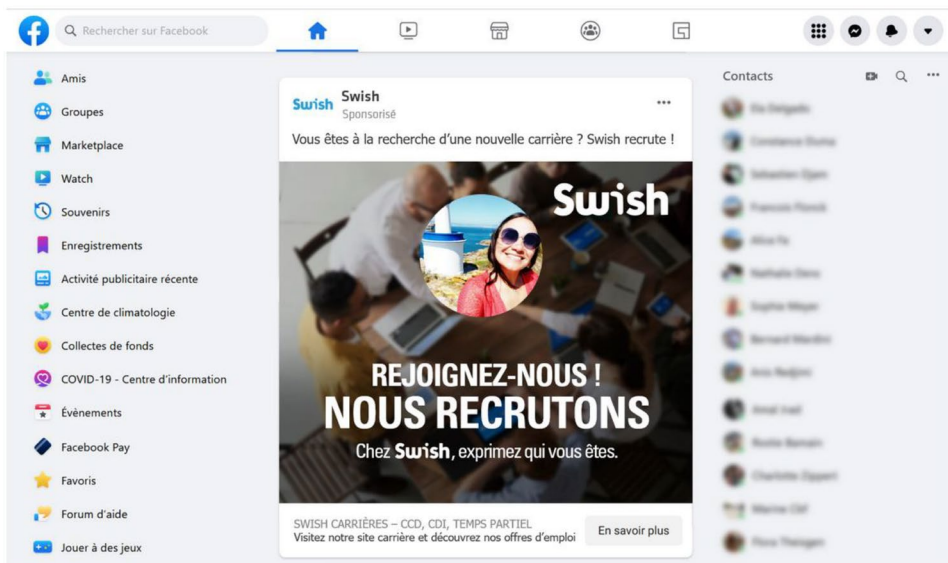
Note: Text in the ad: Are you looking for a new career? Swish is hiring. JOIN US! WE ARE HIRING. At Swish, express who you are. SWISH CAREER, PERMANENT CONTRACT, FIXED-TERM CONTRACT, PART-TIME. Visit our career website and discover our job offers. Learn more.

b) Personalized ad with recipient's name only (example)



The screenshot shows a Facebook interface with a sponsored advertisement for Swish. The ad features a background image of a group of people in a meeting. The text on the ad reads: "Swish", "Sponsorisé", "Vous êtes à la recherche d'une nouvelle carrière ? Swish recrute !", "Laura REJOIGNEZ-NOUS ! NOUS RECRUTONS", "Chez Swish, exprimez qui vous êtes.", and "SWISH CARRIÈRES – CCD, CDI, TEMPS PARTIEL. Visitez notre site carrière et découvrez nos offres d'emploi". A button labeled "En savoir plus" is visible at the bottom right of the ad. The left sidebar shows navigation options like "Amis", "Groupes", and "Marketplace". The right sidebar shows a "Contacts" list.

c) Personalized ad with recipient's photograph only (example)



The screenshot shows a Facebook interface with a sponsored advertisement for Swish. The ad features a background image of a group of people in a meeting. A circular inset in the top left of the ad shows a photograph of a woman wearing sunglasses. The text on the ad reads: "Swish", "Sponsorisé", "Vous êtes à la recherche d'une nouvelle carrière ? Swish recrute !", "REJOIGNEZ-NOUS ! NOUS RECRUTONS", "Chez Swish, exprimez qui vous êtes.", and "SWISH CARRIÈRES – CCD, CDI, TEMPS PARTIEL. Visitez notre site carrière et découvrez nos offres d'emploi". A button labeled "En savoir plus" is visible at the bottom right of the ad. The left sidebar shows navigation options like "Amis", "Groupes", and "Marketplace". The right sidebar shows a "Contacts" list.

d) Personalized ad with recipient's name and photograph (example)

The image shows a Facebook interface with a sponsored advertisement for Swish. The ad is personalized with the name 'Laura' and her profile picture. The text in the ad reads: 'Vous êtes à la recherche d'une nouvelle carrière ? Swish recrute !', 'Swish', 'Laura', 'REJOIGNEZ-NOUS !', 'NOUS RECRUTONS', and 'Chez Swish, exprimez qui vous êtes.' Below the ad, there is a small text box: 'SWISH CARRIÈRES – CCD, CDI, TEMPS PARTIEL. Visitez notre site carrière et découvrez nos offres d'emploi' and a button 'En savoir plus'.

Amis
Groupes
Marketplace
Watch
Souvenirs
Enregistrements
Activité publicitaire récente
Centre de climatologie
Collectes de fonds
COVID-19 - Centre d'information
Événements
Facebook Pay
Favoris
Forum d'aide
Jouer à des jeux

Rechercher sur Facebook

Swish
Sponsorisé

Vous êtes à la recherche d'une nouvelle carrière ? Swish recrute !

Swish

Laura

REJOIGNEZ-NOUS !
NOUS RECRUTONS

Chez Swish, exprimez qui vous êtes.

SWISH CARRIÈRES – CCD, CDI, TEMPS PARTIEL
Visitez notre site carrière et découvrez nos offres d'emploi

En savoir plus

Contacts