Hidden Ways to Persuade

A study investigating whether the use of textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values in a recruitment video of Traffic Today could affect the recruitment attitude and intention to apply.

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Abstract

Aim.   This study aims to investigate to what extent the use of textual and visual subliminal primes of organizational values in a recruitment video of marketing agency Traffic Today could influence attitudes about the recruitment video and the intention to apply.

Methodology.   A 2 (textual priming: present vs. absent) X 2 (visual priming: present vs. absent) between-subjects design was conducted. Whilst investigating, the interaction effect of textual and visual priming was also taken into consideration. Also, it was analyzed whether having matching values with the company would have a moderating effect. The participants ($N = 146$) were randomly allocated to one out of four recruitment videos. The recruitment videos included textual primed organizational values, visual primed organizational values, both the primes or no primes. After participants saw the recruitment video, questions measuring the dependent variables 'recruitment attitude – visual aspect', 'recruitment attitude – content aspect' and 'intention to apply' were asked via the questionnaire. To study moderating effects of matching values, the participants were asked to rank organizational values as most important to less important.

Results.   The analysis showed no effects of textual subliminal priming organizational values on recruitment attitude and intention to apply. Also, the implementation of visual subliminal primes of organizational values had no effect on both variables. The interaction of textual and visual subliminal priming was also ineffective. Lastly, the main effects were not moderated by having matching values.

Conclusion.   No significant main or moderating effects were found. This contrasts the expectations based on prior research, in which was shown that priming subliminally can influence attitude or behaviour. This study contributes both in a practical, as well as theoretical way when aiming to deploy recruitment videos to influence one's recruitment attitude or intention to apply. For example, this research provides insights into using priming techniques in recruitment, offers perspective into how recruitment videos can lead to desired effects and elaborates on the use of matching values in recruitment. Furtherly, recommendations for conducting further research into the field of subliminal priming within the recruitment process are provided.

Keywords.   Textual subliminal priming; visual subliminal priming; (matching) organizational values; recruitment attitude; intention to apply.

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Introduction

''2022 was the year of labors shortage and this will remain in 2023 as well'' (NOS Nieuws, 2023); ''Labor market under high stress: tsunami of job openings'' (RTL Nieuws, 2022). The headlines related to staff shortages and labor market tightness have multiplied considerably in recent years. It is suggested that 2022 was a particularly challenging year for finding suitable candidates to fill job openings. Unfortunately, this trend is predicted to continue in 2023. Finding the right candidate for the job is a challenging task for recruiters nowadays, especially since the competition in-between companies is fierce, and availability of potential candidates is low.

Using the right recruitment techniques is more important than ever in order to stand out from competition and attract the right candidate for the job. Nowadays, technology plays a big role within the recruitment and selection process. Using and creating online advertisements via the internet to attract new employees is increasingly popular and can be deployed in numerous methods, such as presenting recruitment videos (Kumar & Kavitha, 2019). These videos often showcase the company culture, work environment and organizational values (Society for Human Resource Management, 2016). Organizational values can be defined as 'individual and collective trans-situational conceptions of desirable behaviors, objectives and ideals that serve to guide or valuate practice'' (Askeland et al., 2020, p. 3). The importance of presenting organizational values within recruitment videos in order to attract the right candidates is stressed by numerous studies into the field of online recruiting (Pryce, 2016; Ravlin & Meglano, 1987; de Cooman & Pepermans, 2012; Judge & Bretz, 1997; Wilden et al., 2010).

These days, researchers approach job advertisements as a form of marketing, in which closing a deal with an actual candidate can be resembled with the process of customers buying products. In this situation, the open vacancy can be reviewed as the 'product', that should satisfy the needs of the 'customer', which regards the applicant (Rodrigues & Martinez, 2020). When aiming to change one's attitude with the use of an advertisement, persuasion and persuasive messages are of great importance (Armstrong, 2010).

A much-debated persuasion technique within advertising is subliminal priming. Subliminal priming involves presenting information to individuals below their conscious awareness, with the intention of influencing their attitude or behaviour. Within the concept subliminal priming, a distinction between visual and auditory subliminal priming can be made (Fornadel, 2017). Visual subliminal can be divided into words or images (Psychology today, 2012). Subliminal priming made its appearance in 1957 due to published research of James Vicary (1957, in Moore, 1982). Within his study, 'Drink Coca-Cola' and 'Eat Popcorn' were flashing through a movie that was shown in the cinema. The two sentences only were flashing quickly, nevertheless Vicary published promising results which turned the marketing and advertising world upside down. According to Vicary, after imprinting the words in the subconscious

minds of the visitors of the cinema, the sales of the Coca Cola went up by nearly 60% and the popcorn sales increased by nearly 20%. At a later period, the research of Vicary turned out to be a publicity hoax; the claims of his research were made up. Nonetheless, the implications of the study of Vicary formed a perfect segue for numerous amounts of research into the field of subliminal priming.

Since 1957, the subliminal priming effects have been investigated in various forms; from subliminally priming with the intention to change drinking behaviour to the attitude one holds towards a product (Difa, 2016; Dijksterhuis, 2004; Murphy & Zajonc, 1993; Varga & Gabrijelçiç Tomc, 2016; Cooper & Cooper, 2002). However, subliminal influencing in terms of recruitment has not been studied and has been left out of theoretical research to date. While it is clear that presenting organizational values in recruitment videos is an effective way to attract the right candidates, it is less clear how subliminal priming could fit into this approach. It is worth considering how subliminal priming in recruitment videos could be incorporated into recruitment practices.

To find out whether using subliminal priming in the field of recruitment would be valuable for a company. Marketing agency Traffic Today will serve as a case study in this research. The company specializes in improving online visibility and findability for businesses. Traffic Today grows rapidly, serving more than 100 clients nowadays. It can be imagined a fast-growing company is looking for new employees, although the current job market is holding back staff growth in this regard. Investigating the use of subliminal priming within recruitment videos could provide valuable insights for Traffic Today's recruitment strategy in this increasingly competitive job market.

Textual and visual organizational values will be implemented as subliminal primes in a recruitment video of Traffic Today, aiming to study the effects on recruitment attitude and intention to apply. The choice of using visual subliminal priming rather than auditory subliminal priming was made because it was found that visual priming effects are stronger than auditory priming effects (Fornadel, 2017). Visual subliminal priming, in this study, is distinguished into words and images, referred to as textual and visual subliminal priming. Additionally, there will be measured whether one having matching organizational values with the organizational values used as primes, would moderate the main effects. Hence, the research question central to this study is:

To what extent can textual and visual subliminally priming organizational values within a recruitment video affect one's recruitment attitude and intention to apply, and does having matching values affect these textual and visual priming effects?

Theoretical framework

Subliminal priming

Researchers think of job advertising and recruiting as a type of marketing. They compare the process of finding a candidate to the process of a customer buying a product. In this case, the job opening is the 'product' that should satisfy the applicant's needs (Rodrigues & Martinez, 2020). Activating people to take action can be done through the use of persuasion (Dainton & Zelley, 2018). A commonly discussed and intriguing persuasion tactic used since 1957 is subliminal priming. Subliminal priming can be divided into two definitions. Firstly, 'subliminal' links to something that has an unconscious influence on the mind Cambridge Dictionary (n.d.). According to Elgendi (1993), the level of consciousness lies at a threshold of 500 MS. Secondly, 'priming' can be explained as a phenomenon where a person's response to a subsequent stimulus is influenced by exposure to an earlier, related stimulus. Typically, these stimuli involve conceptually related words or images (Psychology Today, 2012). Put simply, subliminal priming comes down to influencing someone's attitude or behaviour, by unconsciously flashing texts or visuals for less than 500 MS within a specific video (Elgendi et al., 1993).

Subliminal priming with textual cues

Vicary (1957, in Moore 1982) claimed promising effects of subliminal priming. It turned out to be a publicity hoax, followed by numerous amounts of studies exploring subliminal priming with textual cues. It is found that priming textual cues on a subliminal level has promising effects aiming to change a targeted person its' attitude or behaviour. Chartrand et al. (2008) conducted a study investigating the effect of textual subliminal priming on the product choice of sock-buyers. Chartrand et al. (2008) created a setting in which participants were randomly assigned to subliminal textual primes (stores related to 'prestige' or stores related to 'thrifty'). Within their research it was shown that participants who were exposed to prestige stores choose the more expensive sock option than the participants that were exposed to thrifty stores. With these results, Chartrand et al. (2008) claim that subliminal primes can activate unconscious goals and that these goals eventually influence the preference for a specific product without the participants being aware of this.

Furthermore, an investigation into the effects of subliminal priming with textual cues was conducted by Difa (2016), researching whether the use of textual subliminal priming would influence the activity choice of participants. A questionnaire was distributed to determine the participant's level of sensation seeking. After, participants were asked to pay attention to a commercial video of a bank, in which they were randomly exposed to the textual prime 'adventure' or 'seek adventure' or not primed at all. After watching the commercial video, participants had to choose a leisure-package, ranking from non-sensation seeking activities, to highly-sensation seeking activities. The prime – if present – was shown one time for 20 MS. Difa (2016) found that participants who were primed subliminally regarding

adventure had a higher tendency of choosing the most-sensation seeking activity (skydiving in this case, as was found in the pre-test Difa (2016) conducted). People who were not primed had a higher tendency of choosing the least-sensation seeking activity, which was pre-tested as 'going to the spa'. Additionally, Difa (2016) found that participants who identified as high sensation seekers on forehand (within the questionnaire) were more likely to get influenced by the used primes in comparison with the participants identifying as low sensation seekers. As Difa (2016) describes, this difference might emerge from the *message-person congruence*, which points out that persuasive messages are more likely to reach their intended effect when the message reflects the interests of the targeted person (Hirsh et al., 2012).

Research conducted by Dijksterhuis (2004) goes beyond influencing participants' choices, aiming to impact their implicit self-esteem. The results of the experiments conducted within the study of Dijksterhuis (2004) show that participant's perception of their self-esteem is higher when participants were exposed to textual subliminal primes that show a word related to 'self' in combination with a positive prime.

Subliminal priming with visual cues

Subliminal priming with visual cues is another important concept that turned out to be effective in influencing one's behaviour or attitude as well. Murphy and Zajonc (1993) conducted a study into this field of interest investigating whether priming subliminal visual cues would influence the participants regarding their perception of Chinese ideographs. The people participating in the study were subliminally exposed to happy and angry faces; these primes were chosen since happy and angry faces are universally associated with positivity and negativity. The participants were also exposed to 45 Chinese symbols. Thus, for example, a participant was exposed to a Chinese ideograph together with a subliminal prime of a smiling woman. The participants had to rate the Chinese characters with the use of a Likert-scale (from 1, did not like the ideograph at all – to 5, liked the ideograph). The results eventually led to accepting the hypothesis; the Chinese ideographs shown in combination with the happy face were preferred rather than the Chinese ideographs with angry faces the participants were exposed to.

Additional research in the field of visual subliminal priming was conducted by Varga and Gabrijelčič Tomc (2016). They aimed to find out if the participan's ratings for a specific product could be subliminally primed by the use of visuals. Within their research, there was made use of a cloned website of a web shop. The participants were asked to free browse for 60 seconds at that website. During that minute of free browsing, the experimental group was subliminally exposed to visual cues in the background of the website and the control group was not. Visual cues within the experiment consisted of positive primes including hearts, smiling faces and a happy looking sun and negative primes included the visualization of a skull and sad smiley faces. A third condition was added; participants were exposed

to a combination of both positive as well as negative primes. Remarkably, this research points out that the effect of using a combination of positive and negative primes had a positive impact on the ratings of the products. The implementation of positive primes turned out to be especially effective on the extent of the participant's desire to own the product.

Subliminal priming with textual and visual cues

Kim and Lennon (2008) aimed to investigate whether visual or textual cues within advertising could increase the attitude to the product or the intention to purchase a product. Within this research, an interaction effect on product attitude as well as intention to purchase was found. Kim and Lennon (2008) did not especially used subliminal primes. Nevertheless, their research could still contribute to the current study, as it turned out that the use of visual and textual cues interacts and strengthen each other.

Investigating the use of textual and visual cues in the field of subliminal priming, a study of Cooper and Cooper (2002) was analyzed. Cooper and Cooper (2002) investigated the effects of using both textual as well as visual subliminal primes within an episode of The Simpsons. Within the episode the participants were exposed to twelve times the words 'thirsty' and twelve times a can of a Coca Cola drink. Each frame of subliminal prime was inserted for 30 MS. The feeling of being thirsty on forehand of the episode was measured. After the participants were exposed to the stimuli, their feeling of being thirsty was measured again. Afterwards, tt was found that the participants who saw the subliminal primes felt thirstier, than the participants who did not see the subliminal primes (Cooper & Cooper, 2002).

The use of values within job advertising

According to Dainton and Zelley (2018) there are two perspectives from which to view an organizational culture. To begin with, Deal and Kennedy (1982 in Dainton & Zelley 2018) describe an organizational culture as something a company can adopt. Accordingly, an organizational culture contains four important characteristics, namely the values, the rites and rituals, the cultural network and the heroes. Another approach in defining an organizational culture was introduced by Smirich (1983 in Dainton & Zelley 2018), who considers three main concepts an organizational culture consists of, namely artifacts, values and assumptions. As can be seen, in both perspectives organizational values are important (Dainton & Zelley, 2018). The importance of organizational values was investigated tremendously, and various literature supports the importance of these values (Pryce, 2016; Ravlin & Meglano, 1987; de Cooman & Pepermans, 2012).

An organization consists of individual members all having unique ideas, beliefs, attitudes and perceptions forming collective values. A definition of values has been derived from a report of Askeland et al. (2020, p. 3) who define values as ''individual and collective trans-situational conceptions of desirable behaviours, objectives and ideals that serve to guide or valuate practice''. Askeland et al. (2020) claim that working by focusing on organizational values could be the connecting factor between the daily goals and the purpose of that company. Besides the importance of organizational values within the workplace, communicating organizational values to the outside world can also be considered as important, particularly within job advertisements. As Judge and Bretz (1992) argue, job advertisements contain limited information and therefore job seekers form their opinion about the organizational culture on the used values within the advertisement. Eventually, this opinion will lead to their potential desire to pursue contact or intent to apply at a company. Wilden et al. (2010) found that using values within job advertisements decreases the chance of ambiguity regarding the company and the job position. Thereby, creating and communicating organizational values might decrease possible risks and uncertainties for a potential employee and thus increase the attractiveness of an organization.

Organizational values influencing recruitment attitude

The *Critical Contact Theory of Recruitment* (1968) suggests that potential employees make decisions about job positions based on their perception and experience of the recruitment (Appiah-Padi, 2014). That is because potential applicants are in lack of information and therefore make assumptions based on the characteristics of the recruitment (Harold & Ployhart, 2008). According to Petry et al. (2021) job advertisements are the first source of applicant attraction. In addition, Gatewood et al. (1993) investigated that the first step in the recruitment process starts with the attitude someone holds about the recruitment advertisement. It was found that the recruitment attitude someone holds has a strong correlation with the amount of information presented within the job advertisement (Gatewood et al., 1993). Gatewood et al. (1993) conclude that the amount of information that is communicated will form

the company image which ultimately impacts recruitment attitudes. Thøger Christensen and Askegaard (2001) further assert that the amount of presented information will create the company identity within a job advertisement, which includes organizational values. Within the study of Bin A Halim (2022), it is suggested that by presenting the company identity structured in combination with visual and design elements, the image someone holds against the company will increase. This increase image someone holds will eventually influence the recruitment attitude.

Within studied literature, significant results regarding textual as well as visual subliminal priming can be found. Within this study it aimed to study the effects of both kinds of primes in the recruitment process. The way the recruitment is interpreted is the first step of this process (Gatewood et al., 1993) and it is found that using organizational values within the recruitment positively affect one's recruitment attitude. In this study, it is suggested that subliminally priming organizational values will increase the recruitment attitude someone holds. Besides, taking the study of Cooper and Cooper into consideration (2002), it is suggested that using textual and visual subliminal primes at the same time would create an interaction effect. Accordingly, hypotheses 1a, 1b and 1c are formulated:

H1a: Textual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher recruitment attitude than when those primes are not implemented.

H1b: Visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher recruitment attitude than when those primes are not implemented.

H1c: Textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video causes an interaction effect which results in a higher recruitment attitude than when those primes are not implemented.

Organizational values influencing organizational attitude

Using organizational values within recruitment videos in order to increase organizational attitude has not gone unnoticed within prior research. To begin with, Lale Tüzüner and Arsun Yuksel (2022) propose that companies who aim to attract employees for their company should clearly identify and communicate organizational values within the organizations' marketing. In line with the suggestions of Lale Tüzüner and Arsun Yuksel (2022), Ten Brinke (2021) investigated whether communicating organizational values within recruitment videos would increase the organizational attitude one's holds. Eventually, the results gathered from filled-in surveys show that communicating the values of a company within a recruitment video increase organizational attitude. Additionally, Elving (2012) proposes that communicating the organizational culture, and thus organizational values (Dainton & Zelley, 2018), within a recruitment video will create a stronger employer brand which will lead to a higher organizational attitude.

Based on the studies of Lale Tüzüner and Arsun Yuksel (2022), Ten Brinke (2021) and Elving (2012), organizational attitude is approached as something that can be influenced by organizational values. To present an overall picture of the effects of subliminal primes within recruitment, organizational attitude should be considered. This study suggests that priming organizational values subliminally could affect the attitude one's holds against the organization. Also, it is aimed to find out whether the use of textual and visual cues at the same time would reinforce the effect; Kim and Lennon (2008) found interacting effects between textual and visual cues. Cooper and Cooper (2002) found promising effects of using both the primes as well. Therefore, hypotheses 2a, 2b and 2c are proposed:

H2a: Textual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher organizational attitude than when those primes are not implemented.

H2b: Visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher organizational attitude than when those primes are not implemented.

H2c: Textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video causes an interaction effect which results in a higher organizational attitude than when those primes are not implemented.

Organizational values influencing intention to apply

The importance of exposing organizational values to increase intention to apply was investigated by Ravlin & Meglino (1987). Within their research, the participants were asked to fulfill tasks regarding organizational values. Afterward, 'concern for others', 'fairness', 'achievement' and 'honesty' may be interpreted as the most important organizational values. Accordingly, these four values act as a guide within decision-making regarding companies (Ravlin & Meglino, 1987). Judge and Bretz (1992) conducted research building upon the four important organizational values as introduced by Ravlin and Meglino (1987). Their research aimed to find out whether communicating one of those four values would influence one's decision to accept a job offer from that company. Data within research has been collected by participants filling in surveys in which the participants were exposed to the four organizational values. The results suggest that exposure to organizational values 'concern for others', 'fairness', 'honesty' and 'achievement' significantly affect job choice decisions (Judge & Bretz, 1992).

Within this study, Traffic Today served as a case study. The company's organizational values are partly in line with the four most important organizational values in terms of job decisions found by Ravlin and Meglino (1987) and Judge and Bretz (1992). The organizational values 'fairness' and 'concern for others' are expressed by Traffic Today and in terms of this research it is suggested that implementing those two organizational values as subliminal primes would affect the intention to apply of the

participants (H3a and H3b). Additionally, it is suggested that the use of textual and visual cues at the same time would reinforce the effect of it (H3c). Hypotheses 3a, 3b and 3c are introduced as following:

H3a: Textual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher intention to apply than when those primes are not implemented.

H3b: Visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher intention to apply than when those primes are not implemented.

H3c: Textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video causes an interaction effect which results in a higher intention to apply than when those primes are not implemented.

The moderating effect of matching values

Research claims that a company should communicate its values through recruitment, in order to attract potential employees (Consilium Research and Consultancy Ltd., 2016; Wilden et al., 2010; Piwowar-Sulej & Mroziewski, 2020). It was found that communicating organizational values in the labor market has a positive influence on attracting the right and most of all fitting employees into the company. Subsequently, it was found that communicating an employer brand that includes organizational values (Elving, 2012) would lead to increased perceived attractiveness of the recruitment advertisement (de Beck, 2014). The results of these studies are in consonance with the *Person-Organization Fit Theory*. An overall definition of this theory has been introduced by Kristof (1996), who explains the person-organization fit theory as the congruence that occurs when one's characteristics match the characteristics of an organization. Grobler (2016) argues that a fit between a person and an organization will establish when the organizational and personal values converge. The idea of matching values in order to have a person-organization fit stems from the *Attraction-Selection-Attrition framework* (ASA-framework), presented by Schneider (1987) who suggests that individuals are looking for organizational situations which attract them. This attraction can be founded in terms of attracting values that will lead to a fit with the organization; when that fit is not established, the individual would leave the organization (Sekiguchi, 2004).

Both the theory as well as the framework claim that organizational values play a great part in a potential match between an individual and an organization. Research of Judge and Bretz (1992) is in line with these thoughts. They aimed to find out whether the communication of the organizational values 'concern for others', 'achievement', 'fairness' and 'honesty' would increase one's perception of the attractiveness of an organization and therewith decision for the job if the value orientation of these individuals were in line with the communicated organizational values. Their research led to accepting the hypotheses.

Thus, for example, an individual whose primary orientation is fairness is more likely to choose a job in a company where the organizational value of fairness is emphasized (Judge & Bretz, 1992).

Reviewing the literature, it is suggested that when one has values in line with the organizational values, would affect the recruitment attitude, organizational attitude and one's intention to apply. When it comes to this research, it is suggested that the extent of having matching values would moderate the textual and visual effect subliminal priming on recruitment- and organizational attitude and intention to apply. To support this, hypotheses 4a up until 4c and 5a up until 5c are proposed:

> *H4a: Textual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the recruitment attitude for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.*

> *H4b: Textual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the organizational attitude for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.*

> *H4c: Textual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the intention to apply for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.*

> *H5a: Visual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the recruitment attitude for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.*

> *H5b: Visual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the organizational attitude for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.*

> *H5c: Visual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the intention to apply for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.*
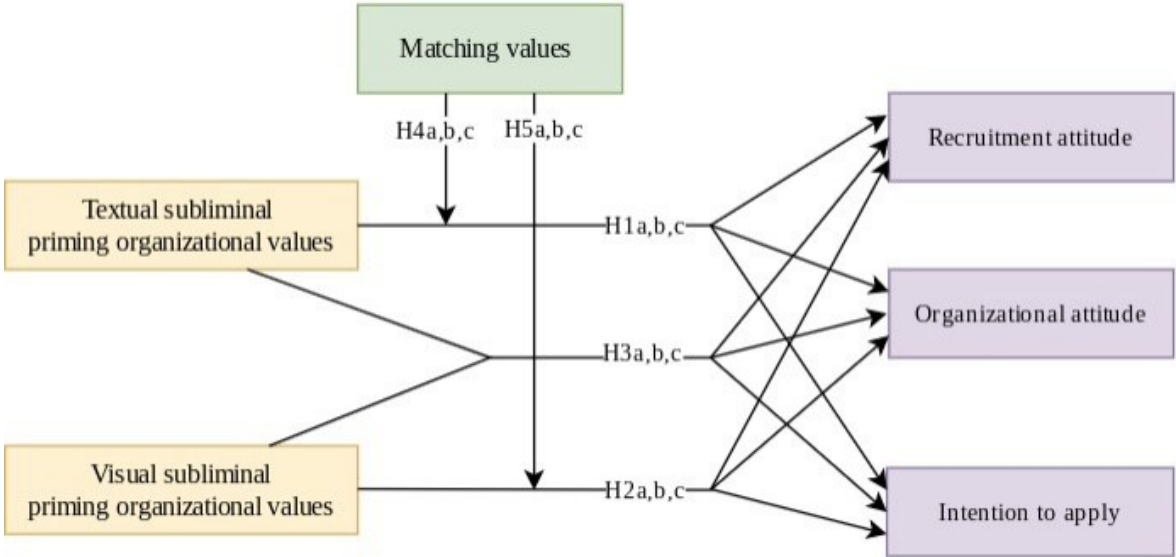
Conceptual model

Below, the hypotheses are schematically visualized and summarized with the use of a conceptual model (Figure 1).

Figure 1

Conceptual model

Method

Before conducting this research, the research has been approved by the Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences Ethics Committee of the University of Twente. Within this chapter, a description of the methodology of the study will be given. There will be elaborated on the research design and the procedure. Additionally, the design of the stimuli will be presented, followed up by an explanation of the measures and participants. Moreover, the validity and reliability of the study will be taken into consideration.

Research design

With this study, the research design as presented in Table 1 was tested by conducting a 2 (textual priming: present vs. absent) X 2 (visual priming: present vs. absent) between-subjects design. Initially, the dependent variables were *recruitment attitude*, *organizational attitude* and *intention to apply*. The independent priming variables were manipulated in order to test the main effects of textual and visual subliminal priming on the dependent variables. Also, the moderating effect of matching values was analyzed.

To gather data, participants were exposed to one of the four recruitment videos containing textual subliminal priming, visual subliminal priming, a combination of both or no priming via a questionnaire. Additionally, the participants had to answer questions measuring the matching values, the recruitment attitude, organizational attitude, and the intention to apply.

Table 1

Research design

Condition	Textual subliminal priming	Visual subliminal priming
Condition 1	Present	Absent
Condition 2	Absent	Present
Condition 3	Present	Present
Condition 4	Absent	Absent

Design of stimuli

To conduct the research and study the effects as proposed in the hypotheses, an already existing recruitment video of Traffic Today was used. This recruitment video was adjusted in order to align with the four conditions. With the use of Adobe Premiere Pro, the subliminal cues were implemented. Eventually, one recruitment video contained textual organizational values subliminal primes, one recruitment video included visual subliminal primes of organizational values, one recruitment video contained both ways of priming and one recruitment video remained original. Examples of the

subliminal cues are given in Figures 4, 5 and 6 in this chapter; the recruitment video itself can be provided upon request.

Traffic Today highlights five organizational values. Two values introduced as most important by Ravlin and Meglino (1987) were implemented, namely 'fairness' and 'concern for others'. These values are in line with two out of the five organizational values that Traffic Today emphasizes (Marlou Voortman, personal communications, September 29, 2022), namely 'fairness' and 'loyalty'. In terms of fairness, the equation is clear. In addition, the comparison between loyalty and concern for others was defined by Oxley and Wittkower (2011), who explained that loyalty within the workplace should be seen as caring for others.

Participants

Via convenience sampling, which is a non-probability sampling method (Verhoeven, 2018), participants were requested to take part in the experiment. The questionnaire was distributed to fellow students and friends via social media platforms such as Facebook and Instagram. By reaching out to friends and peers, the sampling method slightly turned into snowball sampling, since it turned out that participants shared the experiment with fellow friends, peers and colleagues as well.

Within this study, the focus lay on reaching participants in the range of the labor age of The Netherlands, thus between 18 and 67 years (M = 33.59, SD = 14.83). Furthermore – since Traffic Today is a Dutch company – there was focused on participants with Dutch nationality only. Thereby, it was paramount to structure the questionnaire in such a way, that it only could be filled in by adolescents who had the motivation, affinity, or ability to work in the marketing industry. To make sure that all the participants had the aforementioned characteristics, filter questions were inserted at the beginning of the questionnaire. It was found that the majority of the participants filled in the questionnaire via a mobile phone, although within the informed consent it was recommended otherwise. An overview of the participants (N = 146) divided per gender, age, matching values, used device and whether the participants knew Traffic Today can be found in Table 2.

Statistical tests were performed to analyze whether the participants significantly differed among conditions. Age, gender and the type of device that was used to complete the survey were taken into consideration. An Analysis of Variance was performed. There was no significant difference in age between groups found ($F(3,142)$ = .566, p = .638). With the use of a Chi-square test, the gender (X^2 (6, N = 146) = 10.84, p = .09), type of used device (X^2 (3, N = 146) = 2.196, p = .53) and differences in matching values among conditions (X^2 (3, N = 146) = 2.10, p = .55) were analyzed. In all three cases, there was no significant difference among groups.

Table 2

Overview of the participants

Condition		1		2		3		4		Total	
		N	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*	*N*	*%*
Gender											
	Male	8	20.00	14	40.00	13	41.94	9	22.50	44	30.14
	Female	32	80.00	21	60.00	17	54.84	31	77.50	101	69.87
	They					1	3.23			1	0.68
Knowing Traffic Today											
	Yes	11	27.50	3	8.57	8	25.81	10	25.00	32	21.92
	No	29	72.50	32	91.43	23	74.19	30	75.00	114	78.02
Matching values											
	Yes	22	55.00	23	65.71	15	48.39	22	55.00	82	56.16
	No	18	45.00	12	34.29	16	51.61	18	18.00	64	43.84
Device											
	Mobile or tablet	34	85.00	28	80.00	23	74.19	29	72.50	114	78.02
	Laptop or computer	6	15.00	7	20.00	8	25.81	11	27.50	32	21.92
Participants per condition		40	27.40	35	23.97	31	21.23	40	27.40	146	100
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Age in years		33.25	15.00	35.92	16.54	33.25	14.17	35.92	13.77	33.59	14.83

Procedure

Participants first had to agree with the informed consent (Appendix B) before starting the questionnaire. Within the informed consent, the purpose of the study was elaborated on without acknowledging the use of primes. Participants were informed that the study aimed to investigate how adults between the age of 18 and 67 would react to recruitment videos. Within the informed consent it was pointed out that participants could quit the questionnaire whenever they would and that participants would remain anonymous.

The questionnaire started with demographic questions. These questions were mainly introduced to delineate the defined target group. For example, when someone exceeded the maximum age of 67, the questionnaire did not proceed due to the implementation of a filtering question in Qualtrics. Within the first questions of the questionnaire, participants were also asked to rank their personal preferences regarding organizational values. Then, participants were requested to watch the recruitment video with full attention, in which they were assigned to one of the four video conditions. After the participants were exposed to the recruitment video, they received questions regarding their attitude about the recruitment video, their organizational attitude, and their intention to apply. These dependent variables

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were measured by Likert scale questions. A concise overview of the items used to measure the dependent variables can be found in Appendix A. Furthermore, questions related to the participant's openness to change jobs were asked, even as manipulation checks.

Pre-test

On the forehand of distributing the questionnaire, three pre-tests were conducted. First, a pre-test was done to decide upon the use of the visual cues for priming. Three options of visual cues of the two organizational values were shown to 25 participants (Figures 2 and 3). The visual cues implemented in the recruitment video were the most chosen options; option two for loyalty and option three for fairness (Table 3).
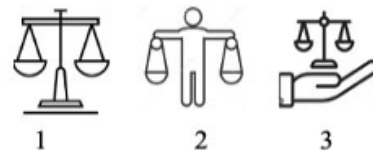
Figure 2

Options visual cue loyalty
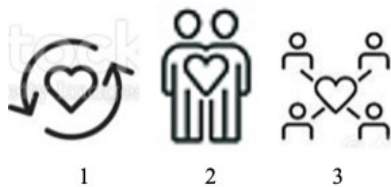
Figure 3

Options visual cue fairness

Table 3

Frequency chosen options visual cues

	Options visual cue loyalty				Options visual cue fairness			
	1	2	3	Total	1	2	3	Total
Frequency chosen	4	13	8	25	2	5	18	25

Secondly, it was paramount to investigate how many milliseconds the textual, as well as the visual primes should be flashed into the recruitment video. This was of great importance to make sure that participants would not be aware of being influenced by accidentally seeing one of the primed cues while watching the recruitment video. One of three videos in which the combination of textual and visual primes (100 MS, 300 MS, or 500 MS) were implemented were shown randomly to twelve participants. Within the video with priming for 100 MS and 300 MS, none of the participants saw textual and visual primes flashing by. Within the video with 500 MS primes, which is the threshold of subconsciousness, one person saw the primes. It was decided beforehand to implement the prime with most milliseconds as possible so that the chances of influences were greatest. Eventually, within the used recruitment video in the questionnaire, the primes of 300MS were implemented. The primes were implemented once per prime, based on the tachistoscope priming technique. This technique is known for flashing a prime in a screen to unnoticeable influence one's attitude or behaviour (Potter & Faulconer, 1975) (Kelly, 1979 in Difa, 2016).

A third pre-test was conducted to find out whether any mistakes in the content of the questionnaire were found and whether the questions were clear for the participants. Also, it was checked whether the recruitment video loaded correctly and had the right size. By analyzing the questionnaire one to one with ten participants, some small spelling mistakes were detected. Also, it was found that some questions should have been set up as required to complete before moving on to the follow-up questions. To be sure, it was checked whether the participants saw any primes (300MS) flashing within the recruitment video. This was not the case. All in all, adjustments were made to finalize the questionnaire before distributing it.

Textual priming organizational values

Since the aim of this study is to find out whether both textual and visual subliminal priming would impact the recruitment attitude, organizational attitude and intention to apply at Traffic Today, textual cues of the words 'loyalty' and 'fairness' were implemented in the recruitment video. To match the layout of the recruitment video, the words within the video were implemented in the color white (Figure 4).

Figure 4

Textual subliminal priming organizational values shot of the recruitment video
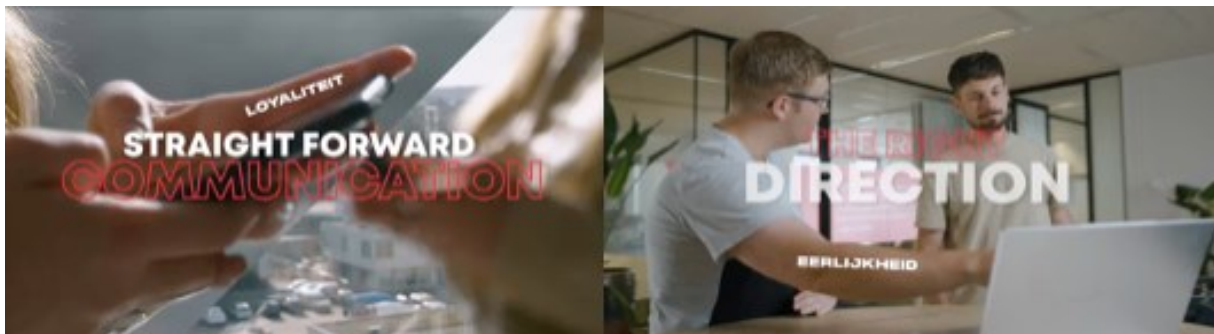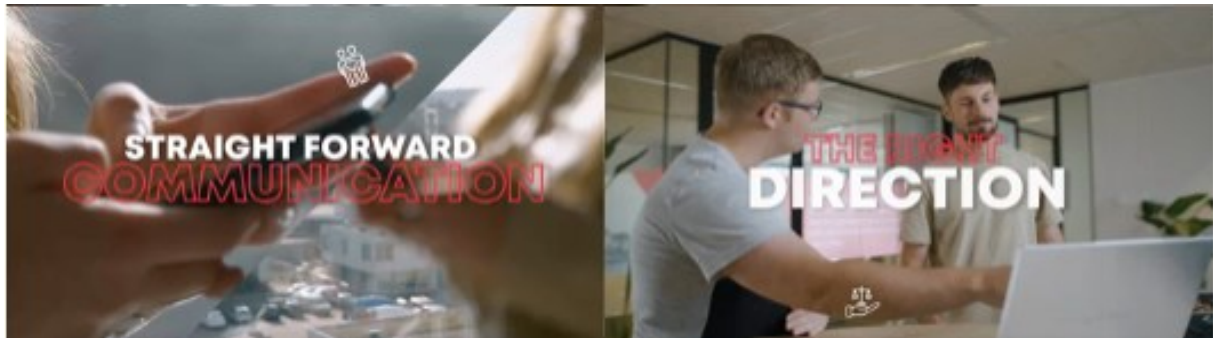

Visual priming organizational values

The pre-test related to the visual cues of organizational values led to two best-fitting options. These options were implemented within the recruitment video. In order to fit the layout of the original recruitment video, the initial, black-outlined visual cues were transformed into the color white (Figure 5 on the following page).

Figure 5

Visual subliminal priming organizational values shot of the recruitment video

Textual and visual priming organizational values

To analyze the interaction effect of textual and visual subliminally priming organizational values, textual as well as visual cues were implemented within the recruitment video. The textual and visual cues were combined, as can be seen in Figure 6.

Figure 6

Textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values shot of the recruitment video
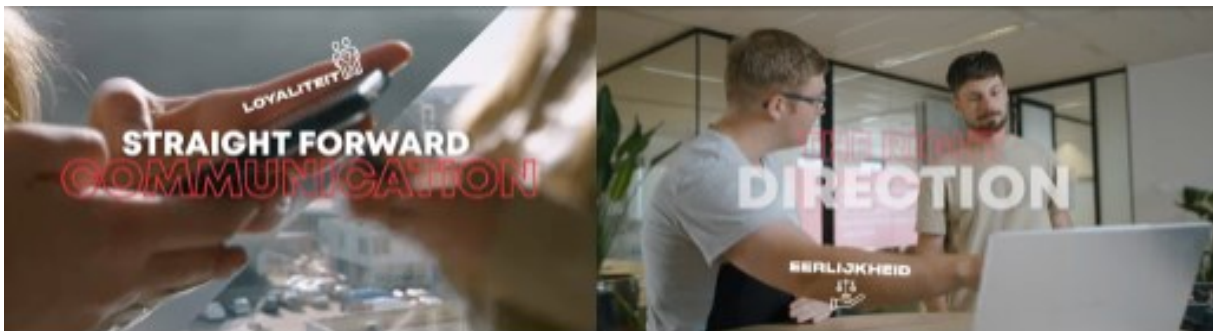
Manipulation check

After measuring the dependent variables, participants were asked manipulation check questions to investigate whether they were aware of the primes of the organizational values. The participants exposed to textual cues were asked if they saw the word 'loyalty' or 'fairness' flashing during the recruitment video, and if so, which color. Participants exposed to visual cues were asked if they saw a visualization corresponding to 'loyalty' or 'fairness' flashing and if so, the participant was given three options to choose from. The participants who correctly identified the textual or visual cue were removed from the dataset. Eventually, four participants stated they saw a white textual cue flashing and twelve participants claimed they saw the correct option of the visual cue flashing. Thus, sixteen participants were not taken into consideration for the final results of this study.

Measures

For the investigation of the proposed effects on the dependent variables, the dependent variables had to be measured with the use of questions in the questionnaire. To create the constructs that could be used for the statistical tests, different questions had to be merged. For the initial dependent variables, a combination of scales that were used in previous literature, as well as additional fitting items was used within the questionnaire. An overview of the establishment of the constructs can be found in Appendix A.

Recruitment attitude

To measure the participant's perception of recruitment attitude, nine statements were introduced within the questionnaire, based on the participant's opinions about the job advertisement video (e.g., 'I find this job advertisement video interesting' and 'I find this job advertisement video informative').

Organizational attitude

The participant's perception of organizational attitude was measured by the use of five items. Three of those items were obtained from a used scale of Aimain-Smith et al. (2001) (e.g., 'This seems to be a good company to work for' and 'I would want a company like Traffic Today in my community'). The remaining two items used to measure organizational attitude were derived from Taylor and Bergmann (1987) (e.g., 'Traffic Today seems attractive enough to be a potential employer').

Intention to apply

To measure the construct intention to apply for a job, eight items were initiated. Two of those items were collected from previous research by Taylor and Bergmann (1987) (e.g., 'I would apply at Traffic Today'). Five of the items were derived from research from Aimain-Smith et al. (2001) (e.g., I would attempt to gain an interview at Traffic Today). Lastly, 'I would like to work for Traffic Today' was added (Turban & Keon, 1993).

Matching values

The extent to which a participant's values matched the organizational values of the company was measured by a ranking question. Participants were asked to rank seven organizational values of Traffic Today (communication, collaboration, reliability, transparency, responsibility, loyalty and fairness). Within this question, the participants had to choose which of the seven presented organizational values was interpreted as personally most important. When 'loyalty' and 'fairness' were ranked as most important (thus placed first and second) it would sum up to a score of 3. If the organizational values 'loyalty' and 'fairness' were ranked as less important (thus placed sixth and seventh), it would sum up to a score of 13. Eventually, a median split was conducted to create a dichotomous variable that stated

'matching values' or 'no matching values'. The median had a score of 8, thus a score less than 8 meant the participant had matching values and a score higher than 8 meant the participants had no matching values. After analyzing the data, it was decided that participants with a score of 8 would be allocated to the group with matching values. This led to a group of participants with matching values ($N = 82$) and a group in which participants had no matching values ($N = 64$). An overview of the division of matching values among the four conditions can be found within Table 2.

Open to change job

The item 'open to change job' was taken into consideration as a covariable. Therefore, it was important to analyze whether participants were currently looking for a job or that they were open to change job at all. To investigate their openness, four questions measuring the openness to change job were implemented within the questionnaire to eventually form one variable which could be used within statistical tests.

Validity and reliability
Factor analysis

A factor analysis was conducted to guarantee that the different constructs for dependent variables measured what they were supposed to measure. The factor analysis led to three factors; the eigenvalues of these three factors were above 1. Although the amount of three factors was as intended, the dependent variable organizational value did not appear as a factor. Instead, recruitment attitude was split up into two factors. After analyzing the rotated component and making necessary adjustments such as removing some items, it was decided to remove the dependent variable organizational value and to put the second recruitment attitude factor in place. Therefore, the dependent variables that were statistically tested through the use of SPSS were: recruitment attitude – visual aspect; recruitment attitude – content aspect and the intention to apply. The division between visual and content has been made by analyzing which items loaded on which factor and eventually umbrella those items with one term. After the factor analysis was conducted, reliability was checked with the use of Cronbach's Alpha, also these values can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4

Overview per factors

Factor		Intention to apply	Recruitment attitude, visual aspect	Recruitment attitude, content aspect
Item				
	IA1, I would apply at Traffic Today	.908		
	IA3, I would try to get an interview at Traffic Today	.895		
	IA4, I would strive to a job at Traffic Today	.844		
	IA8, I would love to work for Traffic Today	.836		
	IA4, I would strive for a job at Traffic Today	.823		
	IA1, If Traffic Today would offer a job, I probably would accept it	.807		
	IA7, I would see this company online, I would be curious to vacancies	.805		
	IA5, I would request more information about Traffic Today	.773		
	OA5, A job offer from Traffic Today looks appealing to me	.690		
	OA4, Traffic Today looks appealing, I would like to work for them	.606		
	RA9, I think this recruitment video is visual appealing		.801	
	RA8, I think this recruitment video is impressive		.752	
	RA6, I think this recruitment video is attractive		.748	
	RA4, I think this recruitment video is nice		.747	
	RA1, I think this recruitment video is informative			.839
	RA2, I think this recruitment video is clear			.800
	RA5, I think this recruitment video is good			.644
	RA7, I think this recruitment video is reliable			.627
Per factor				
	Eigenvalues	8.15	2.75	1.36
	Explained % of variance	45.27	15.27	7.55
	Cronbach's Alpha	.947	.820	.788

Adjusted conceptual model

The factor analysis led to the final constructs used for conducting this research. Therefore, the research design was adapted, and eventually different main effects were tested than was proposed within the hypotheses. To visualize, Figure 7 presents the adjusted conceptual model as eventually studied.

Figure 7

Conceptual model after conducting the factor analysis
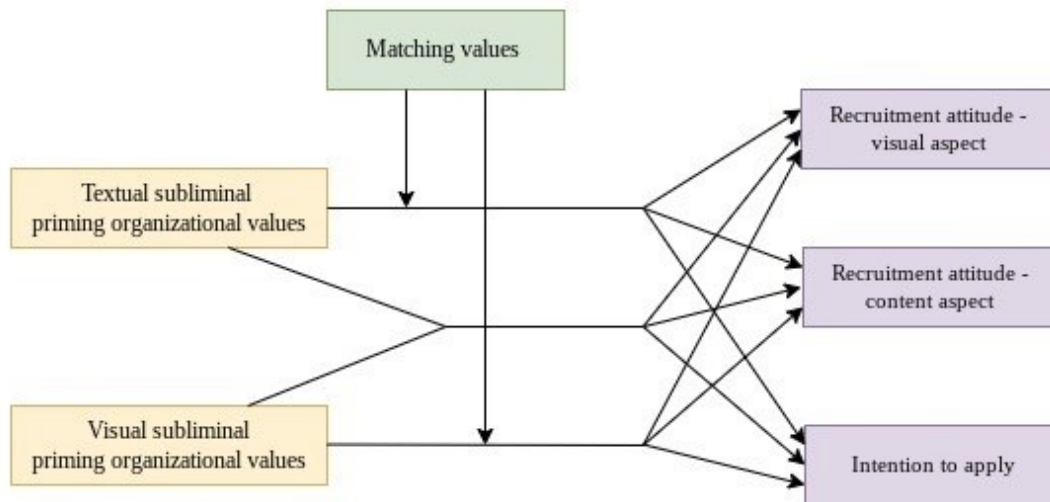
Results

The potential effects of textual subliminal priming, visual subliminal priming, and the interaction of both on recruitment attitude and intention to apply were analyzed. These hypotheses were tested by the use of an Analysis of Variance (furtherly noted as: ANOVA) tests. An ANOVA was also conducted to test the moderating effect of having matching values. Additionally, an Analysis of Covariance (furtherly noted as: ANCOVA) test was carried out in order to find out whether the potential main effects could be explained by the participant's intention to change jobs. It should be noted that the referred hypotheses within this chapter slightly differ than the hypotheses proposed in chapter one, due to the conducted factor analysis. The referred hypotheses can be found in table 11 in this chapter.

Descriptive statistics

The mean scores of the dependent variables per condition are visualized in beneath Table 5. Within the scores, a 1 indicates that the recruitment attitudes and intention to apply is low, conversely a 5 indicates that the attitude one holds about the recruitment and the intention to apply is high. The found means all lie around 3, which was 'neutral' within the scale of Likert. Additionally, the mean scores of the dependent variables divided per matching values are visualized in Table 6.

Table 5

Means dependent variables per condition

Condition	1		2		3		4		Total	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Dependent variable										
Recruitment attitude, visual aspect	3.4	.84	3.45	.66	3.38	.60	3.44	.84	3.42	.75
Recruitment attitude, content aspect	3.09	.68	3.1	.80	2.84	.75	2.89	.74	2.98	.74
Intention to apply	2.70	.93	2.76	.77	2.76	.81	2.68	.84	2.72	.83

Table 6

Means dependent variables matching values

Matching values		Yes		No	
		M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Dependent variable					
	Recruitment attitude, visual aspect	3.48	.76	3.34	.73
	Recruitment attitude, content aspect	3.09	.73	2.85	.74
	Intention to apply	2.75	.82	2.69	.86

Analysis of Variance
Recruitment attitude – visual aspect

The results show that the effect of textual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video did not significantly affect the attitude towards the video with regards to appealing visually ($F(1,142) = .03$, $p = .86$. Hypothesis 1a was rejected. Furthermore, hypothesis 1b could be rejected since no significant effect of visual priming organizational values on recruitment attitude visually appealing could be found ($F(1,138) = .03$, $p = .86$). Besides, analyzing the recruitment attitude regarding visual appealing, there could not be found an interaction effect between textual and visual subliminal priming ($F(1,138) = .001$, $p = .97$). No interaction means that hypothesis 1c could be rejected as well. Analyzing the moderating effects of matching values on the attitude of visual appealing recruitment, the following results emerged: the moderating effect of matching values on the effect of textual subliminal priming on recruitment attitude was not significant ($F(1,138) = 1.51$, $p = .22$). Hypothesis 4a could be rejected, even as hypothesis 5a, since no significant moderating effect of matching values on the effect of visual subliminal priming on recruitment attitude visual appealing could be analyzed ($F(1,138) = .12$, $p = .73$).

Table 7

Analysis of Variance, recruitment attitude – visual aspect

	Test of Between-Subjects Effects	
	F	**Sig.**
Textual priming	.03	.86
Visual priming	.03	.86
Textual priming * Visual priming	.001	.97
Textual priming * Matching values	1.51	.22
Visual priming * Matching values	.12	.73

In order to find out whether the main- and interaction effects could be explained by one's intention or motivation to change jobs, it was of importance to conduct an analysis of covariance. With this statistical test, the covariate 'open to change job' was taken into consideration whilst analyzing the main effect. It was found that open to change job ($F(1,141) = .32$ $p = .57$) did not adjust the association between subliminal priming and recruitment attitude visual.

Recruitment attitude – content aspect

As has been visualized in Table 8, it was found that the use of textual organizational values primes on recruitment attitude content is not significant ($F(1,138) = .09$, $p = .77$). Thus, hypothesis 2a was rejected. Further analysis showed that hypothesis 2b also could be rejected, with $p = .95$, the effect of visual subliminal priming organizational values on recruitment attitude content was not found significant ($F(1,138) = .004$, $p = .95$). Furthermore, the potential interaction effect of textual and visual subliminal priming on recruitment attitude content was investigated ($F(1,138) = 3.76$, $p = .055$). The results show that no interaction effect of textual and visual priming was found, which leads to rejecting hypothesis 2c. In addition, the moderating effects of matching values on textual and visual subliminal priming on recruitment attitude content were analyzed, resulting in rejecting hypothesis 4b ($F(1,138) = .18$, $p = .67$) and hypothesis 5b ($F(1,138) = 1.12$, $p = .29$).

Table 8

Analysis of Variance, recruitment attitude – content aspect

	Test of Between-Subjects Effects	
	F	**Sig.**
Textual priming	.09	.77
Visual priming	.004	.95
Textual priming * Visual priming	3.76	.055
Textual priming * Matching values	.18	.67
Visual priming * Matching values	1.12	.29

As visualized in beneath profile plot (Figure 8) the mean of recruitment attitude content is highest when textual subliminal primes are present while visual subliminal primes are absent. As opposed, when subliminal priming is present in both ways, the mean is the lowest. The means can be found in Table 9. Looking at the values in Table 8 it can be analyzed that the found interaction effect between textual and visual priming organizational values within recruitment video on recruitment attitude content was marginally significant ($p = .055$). However, the interaction effect is contrary to what was hypothesized in hypothesis 2c; it was expected that the use of both cues would strengthen each other in terms of an increased recruitment attitude.

Figure 8

Profile plot textual and visual priming on recruitment attitude – content aspect
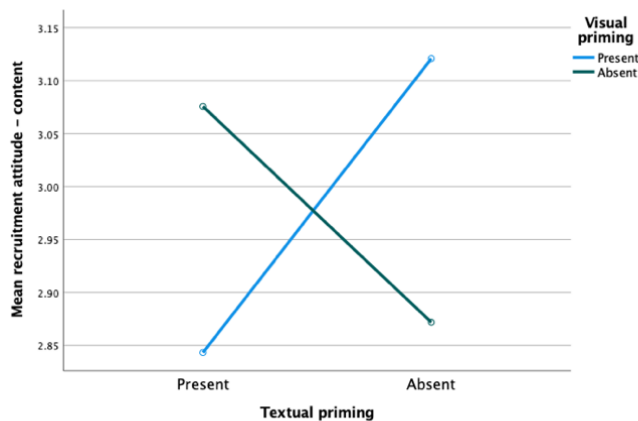
Table 9

Means per condition within recruitment attitude – content aspect

	Textual priming * Visual priming		
Textual priming	**Visual priming**	***M***	***SD***
Present	Present	2.84	.13
Absent	Present	3.12	.13
Present	Absent	3.08	.12
Absent	Absent	2.87	.12

Furtherly, it was analyzed whether the motivation or openness to change jobs interfered the main effect of textual and visual priming on recruitment attitude content. Open to change job was not adjusting the potential effect of textual priming, visual priming or the interaction effect on recruitment attitude content ($F(1,141) = 1.39$, $p = .24$).

Intention to apply

To begin with, it was found that the effect of priming organizational values in a textual way would not increase the intention to apply, thus with an insignificant $p = .96$, hypothesis 3a was rejected ($F(1,138) = .002$, $p = .96$). Hypothesis 3b was also rejected, since the effect of visual priming organizational values to increase applying intention turned out to be not significant ($F(1,138) = .35$, $p = .55$). With $p = .88$, it was not possible to find an interaction effect between textual priming and visual priming on the intention to apply, thus hypothesis 3c could not be rejected ($F(1,138) = .02$, $p = .88$). Textual priming and matching values (H4c) ($F(1,138) = .38$, $p = .54$) and visual priming and matching values (H5c) ($F(1,138) = 1.04$, $p = .31$) were also not significant and should be rejected (Table 10).

Table 10

Analysis of Variance, intention to apply

	Test of Between-Subjects Effects	
	F	**Sig.**
Textual priming	.002	.96
Visual priming	.35	.55
Textual priming * Visual priming	.02	.88
Textual priming * Matching values	.38	.54
Visual priming * Matching values	1.04	.31

Furthermore, open to change job on the potential effects of textual, visual and the interaction effect of both on the intention to apply was analyzed. None of the proposed hypotheses effects were significant, however open to change job was significant ($F(1,141) = 11.20$, $p = .001$). This suggests that, although effects are not significant, openness to change job significantly adjusted the dependent variable intention to apply.

Summary

An overview of the tested hypotheses can be found in Table 11.

Table 11

Overview of tested hypotheses

Hypothesis		Result
H1a	Textual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher recruitment attitude – visual aspect than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H1b	Visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher recruitment attitude – visual aspect than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H1c	Textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video causes an interaction effect which results in a higher recruitment attitude – visual aspect than when those primes are not implemented	Rejected
H2a	Textual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher recruitment attitude – content aspect than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H2b	Visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher recruitment attitude – content aspect than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H2c	Textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video causes an interaction effect which results in a higher recruitment attitude – content aspect than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H3a	Textual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher intention to apply than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H3b	Visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video results in a higher intention to apply than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H3c	Textual and visual subliminal priming organizational values within a recruitment video causes an interaction effect which results in a higher intention to apply than when those primes are not implemented.	Rejected
H4a	Textual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the recruitment attitude – visual aspect for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.	Rejected
H4b	Textual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the recruitment attitude – content aspect for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.	Rejected
H4c	Textual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the intention to apply for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.	Rejected
H5a	Visual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the recruitment attitude – visual aspect for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values	Rejected
H5b	Visual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the recruitment attitude – content aspect for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.	Rejected
H5c	Visual subliminal priming organizational values has a stronger effect on increasing the intention to apply for people whose values matches the organizational values in contrast to people whose values do not match the organizational values.	Rejected

Discussion

Discussion of the findings

Within this study, the effects of textual visual priming organizational values on recruitment attitude and intention to apply were investigated. It was found that subliminal priming textual as well as visual primes did not have an effect on the attitude of recruitment and the intention to apply. The findings in this study are contrary to previous research into the field of subliminal priming (Dijksterhuis, 2004; Murphy & Zajonc, 1993; Varga & Gabrijelčič Tomc, 2016; Cooper & Cooper, 2002). Potential explanations for the lack of effects within this study will be elaborated.

Recruitment attitude and intention to apply

Within this study, textual and visual primes were presented within the recruitment video for 300 MS, once per item. Meaning that the word 'loyalty' as well as the word 'fairness' was present once for 300 MS, even as the visualization of loyalty and fairness. The idea of priming these cues once within the video in this study was derived from the tachistoscope technique. This technique entails flashing a cue one time and led to promising results in prior research, for example in the research of Difa (2016). However, another approach in subliminal priming is showing the cues multiple times. Being exposed to cues repeatedly is called mere exposure which creates the *mere exposure effect*. This effect is an important social-psychological phenomenon (Harisson, 1977). According to Harmon-Jones and Allen (2001), being exposed to a stimulus repeatedly creates a sense of preference. This causes an influencing effect, not only when aiming to influence above the level of consciousness, but also below the awareness of consciousness (Seamon et al., 1983; Bornstein et al., 1987). Elgendi et al. (1993) even propose the *subliminal mere exposure effect*. This effect suggests that participants develop a preference for stimuli after being exposed to them subliminally and repeatedly. That is, if participants are not consciously aware of repeated stimuli, they might still process them resulting in influencing attitudes and behaviour. Within this study, there was chosen to implement cues with the tachistoscope technique. When reviewing this with the mere exposure technique, an explanation can be found why the implemented textual and visual primes did not influence recruitment attitude and intention to apply as proposed on forehand.

The lack of significant effects of subliminal priming on recruitment attitude and intention to apply within this study could furtherly be explained by the setting and layout in which the primes were implemented. For example, in research with promising subliminal priming results of Murphy and Zajonc (1993), there were no distractive happenings, as the video had a white background and showed the to-be-rated ideograph only. Moreover, effecting one on a subliminal level in the study of Huang and Murnighan (2010) happened when the participants saw a video that presented numbers only, without further distractions. Contrasting, within this research, subliminal primes were presented in a recruitment video

that lasted 21 seconds. Within these 21 seconds, the participants were exposed to various video shots on different locations as well as different words related to the company Traffic Today. In addition, background music and a voice-over were played throughout the advertisement. Therefore, it could be suggested that the participants were exposed to too many distracting aspects which might impact the effect of the subliminal primes. This suggestion was made by reviewing *The Limited Capacity Model of Motivated Mediated Message Processing* (furtherly noted as: LC4MP) (Fisher & Weber, 2020). According to the LC4MP, individuals have little cognitive capacity to process information. This capacity can be easily overwhelmed by competing distractions. This can make it difficult for subliminal messages to have a meaningful impact as individuals may not even be aware of the messages shown in an advertisement while there are too many distracting aspects. Reviewing the results of this study, this explanation is in line with the found interaction effect of the textual and visual primes on recruitment attitude – content aspect. As can be reviewed, the means of the dependent variable were highest when only one kind of prime was present, while the other was absent. Thus, the mean was highest when not too many distractions were happening.

Continuing to investigate why the subliminal primes did not reach the proposed effects in this study, it was found that there are two priming techniques that can be used to influence attitude and behaviour. Besides the often-investigated topic of subliminal priming, another proposed technique to influence unconsciously is *supraliminal priming*. Although subliminal and supraliminal priming has similar characteristics, differences in implementation and operation should be noticed. Subliminal primes are perceived below the threshold of perception, but perceiving supraliminal primes occurs above the threshold of perception. Supraliminal primes will be shown longer than 500 MS (Elgendi et al., 1993). Although supraliminal primes can be perceived by the conscious mind, it is suggested that the primes are still able to influence attitude or behaviour unconsciously (Elgendi et al., 1993). As proposed by Cave (1997), the effects of supraliminal priming last longer than those of subliminal messages. Additionally, supraliminal cues have stronger effects on behaviour, compared to subliminal primes (Francken et al., 2011). Reviewing the studies of Cave (1997) and Francken et al. (2011) and comparing them with this current study, it might be that in order to have an actual effect on recruitment attitude or intention to apply, the use of a different priming technique was more desirable. Although a concrete difference can be found between subliminal and supraliminal priming, possibly the use of supraliminal primes within the current recruitment video would have led to the hypothesized effects more than the use of subliminal primes.

Goal motivation

Within investigated literature, several studies imply that the use of subliminal priming has a greater effect when the needs of a targeted person are in line with the prime that has been implemented. Thus, the cue should be aligned with one's goals, needs, or motivation. For instance, Strahan et al. (2002)

conducted a study in which was pointed out that motivation is a critical component of subliminal priming effects. Strahan et al. (2002) found that the effect of subliminal priming drinks was only noticeable when the participant was thirsty. In line with the research of Strahan et al. (2002), Karremans et al. (2006) conducted a study investigating subliminally priming drinking-brands. The results claim that participants had a higher tendency of choosing the primed drink-brand if they felt thirsty on forehand. The prime only had an affect if the need (thirst) was in line with the cue (drink-brand) (Karremans et al., 2006). When reviewing the prior studies, the results of this current study could be explained. If participants did not need a new job and their urge for a new job was relatively small, it might be that there was a lack of goal or motivation for their intention to apply. This suggestion can be supported by the significance of the effect of the covariable open to change job on intention to apply; it was found that although priming did not have effects on the intention to apply, the openness to change job significantly adjusted the dependent variable intention to apply.

Matching values
Based on prior research claiming the promising effects when the values of one match the organizational values (Kristof, 1996; Grobler, 2016; Schneider, 1987; Sekiguchi, 2004, Judge & Bretz, 1992), there was chosen to examine whether participants having matching values would influence the textual, visual and interaction effect on recruitment attitude and intention to apply. In contrast to previously mentioned studies, within the current study matching values appears to not affect recruitment attitude and intention to apply compared to the participants without matching values.

The not significant results can be explained by the age of the participants. When reviewing the participants, it was found that 65.09% of the participants were 22 to 43 years, which means that they can be defined as millennials (Smith & Nicols, 2015). According to Smith and Nicols (2015), a set of differences regarding work ethics can be identified in-between generations; the millennials emphasize different aspects of work as important compared to, for example, baby boomers. When investigating the needs of millennials considering the recruiting and subsequent techniques, it is found that millennials value other things than organizational values within recruitment. As was investigated (MRI Network, 2017; Robert Walters Group, n.d.), a paramount of millennials declare that career pathing has the most impact on the decision to make a job. The analyzed studies suggest that opportunities and pathing for career are most important when attracting millennials. Additionally, it was found that millennials importance flexibility in the workplace (e.g., the chance to work from home) and the salary that is offered (MRI Network, 2017; Robert Walters Group, n.d.). Interestingly, these studies do not point out communicating organizational values as important, contrasting previously mentioned research.

The lack of effect of matching values in this study might have been shaped by this. When millennials find other aspects of jobs more interesting than the organizational values of a company, it could be that

they just were not interested in the organizational values that were primed. Thereby, the lack of the more important aspects within the recruitment video would clarify that there was not found an effect on an increased intention to apply. Also, it has been found that subliminal primes only could affect one, when the primes were liked by participants (Marquis, 2007). When millennials are interested in other aspects when reviewing a recruitment video and not interested in organizational values, chances are great that they did not like the primes enough to be impacted by it. Since 65.09% of the participants were millennials, this could declare the lack of moderating effect on the textual and visual priming on the attitude the participant held against the recruitment video.

Implications

This study aimed to investigate the effectiveness of subliminal priming organizational values in a recruitment video on the recruitment attitude and intention to apply. Although subliminal priming has been shown to affect behaviour and attitudes in other contexts, this study did not support the effectiveness of subliminal priming in the recruitment context. It is suggested to carefully consider the use of subliminal priming within recruiting. If parties are aiming to subconsciously influence potential employees, it is suggested that alternative techniques are taken into consideration, such as supraliminal priming.

When aiming to recruit candidates via the use of a recruitment video, parties should take the layout and setting of the video in combination with the LC4MP theory (Fisher & Weber, 2020) into consideration. The recruitment video in this study included a variety of distracting elements, such as different video shots and locations, background music and a voice-over. This might have impacted the effectiveness of the implemented subliminal primes. The LC4MP theory suggests that individuals have a limited capacity to process information and be easily overwhelmed. Within this study, it has even been found that when textual and visual primes both were added, the effect of it was opposing the strengthening effect that was proposed in the hypotheses. This would again indicate that too many distractions decrease the capacity of processing information. When parties seek ways to influence potential employees with subliminal primes, it is advisable to present a recruitment video in a focused manner where distractions are minimized and not able to prevail. In addition, when introducing a recruitment video, general it is important to take the LC4MP theory (Fisher & Weber, 2020) into consideration so that potential employees have enough capacity to process all information.

This study shows that the extent of being open to change jobs significantly adjusted the intention to apply, regardless of the presence or absence of subliminal primes. Also, research points out the importance of responding to the needs of a target group. When aiming to introduce a recruitment video to respond to one's openness to change jobs and thus increase one's intention to apply, it is suggested to explore what should be add in the recruitment video in order to satisfy the needs of the aimed target

group. For example, for a company like Traffic Today which employs millennials, it is advisable to include rewards such as salary, or career opportunities within the recruitment video. All in all, it is recommended to scrutinize the target group and explore what a target group is looking for in recruitment videos.

As for theoretical implications, this study contributes to existing knowledge in the field of subliminal priming but also provided insights into the context of recruitment videos. It is suggested to furtherly study the effects of subliminal priming in different contexts and investigate where the threshold of subliminal influence lies. For example, would one's attitude about a product be easier to influence than one's attitude about a job? To what extent can subliminal influence be distinguished in this? Furtherly, the results of this study indicate that one's intention to apply is adjusted by one's openness to change jobs. Future research could build on these findings by exploring the underlying concepts that link openness to change and intention to apply. For instance, it would be interesting investigating whether the relationship between these two constructs is mediated by factors, or whether the connection is a stand-alone concept. Furthermore, supraliminal priming in the recruitment context could be taken into consideration when aiming to conduct future research. Accordingly, supraliminal priming turns out to be longer-lasting and more effective and therefore might be a more applicable priming technique in terms of recruitment, however, research should be conducted to potentially support this.

Limitations

It is important to acknowledge that several limitations were encountered during this research and might have influenced the results. To begin with, the aim of this study was to investigate the age group between 18 and 67 years old. However, reviewing the data it was found that the majority of the participants had an age between 20 and 39 years old. It was found that individuals in this age group use the internet the most (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2020) and were therefore most likely to see the questionnaire pass by and actually complete it. Although it was aimed to ensure a diverse sample, the sheer size of the target sample might have limited the extent of representativeness for the entire sample. In order to ensure more representative results over a sample, it is suggested to target a smaller group in future research.

A second limitation regards the way participants completed the survey. Although the informed consent recommended filling in the survey via a computer, the gathered data showed that a major part of the participants completed the questionnaire via their mobile phone or tablet. The use of mobile phones might have impacted the effect of subliminal influencing within the recruitment video and the quality of answers to the survey. It was found that the quality of surveys might decrease when using a mobile device because using a mobile phone often goes hand in hand with multitasking. This means that both the video as well as the survey might not have gotten full attention (Antoun et al., 2017) and the results might be impacted by that. Also, distractions are more likely to occur when using a mobile phone, which

might influence concentration on a task (Banbury & Berry, 2005). For future research, it might be advisable to use a laboratory setting in which all participants could use a similar device in which the video can be fully seen and where distractions are avoided. These assumptions for conducting subliminal priming research were also highlighted by Maureira and Speek (2015).

Thirdly, to provide reliable and valid research, several statistical tests were conducted. A factor analysis was performed, and the level of Cronbach's Alpha was checked. Still, the validity of this research may be questioned. Conducting a factor analysis requires meeting specific assumptions, however, this was not the case. The multicollinearity, as well as the normal distribution assumption were not met, which might have impacted the accuracy and validity of the results.

Conclusion

This research aimed to find out whether the use of textual subliminal primes of organizational values and the use of visual subliminal primes of organizational values within a recruitment video would increase the attitude towards the recruitment video and the intention to apply at Traffic Today. Also, the interaction effect of the textual and visual primes on the dependent variables was a focus point. Besides, it was purposed to find out whether matching values would moderate the effects of subliminal priming organizational values.

The outcomes of this study show that implementing organizational values as textual or visual subliminal primes do not affect recruitment attitude visual as well as content aspect, or the intention to apply. Also, matching values do not moderate the effect of organizational values as subliminal primes. Interestingly, a marginal effect regarding interaction effect of textual and visual subliminal priming on recruitment content attitude was found. Contrasting the hypothesis, the results imply that the attitude is more positive when only one of the two primes is present while the other is not. Furtherly, one's extent of being open to change jobs seem to adjust the dependent variable intention to apply, regardless primes being present or not.

All in all, this research gives opportunity to conclude that using organizational values as subliminal primes cannot be assumed effective in order to influence one's attitude and behaviour in a recruitment process. When aiming to unconsciously influence one via a recruitment video, it is suggested to do more research expanding on the use of subliminal priming within recruitment. On the other hand, other priming techniques could be chosen and adjusting the video in it's lay-out and setting also may contribute substantially in the recruitment attitude and the intention to apply.

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Appendices

Appendix A, measures

Initial measures per construct

Recruitment attractiveness
- Informative – Not informative
- Clear - Vague
- Interesting – Not interesting
- Nice – Not nice
- Good – Bad
- Attractive – Not attractive
- Reliable – Not reliable
- Impressing – Not impressing
- Visually appealing – Not visually appealing

Organizational attitude
(Aimain-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001)
- 'This seems to be a good company to work for'
- 'I would want a company like Traffic Today my community'
- 'I find this an attractive company'

(Taylor & Bergmann, 1987)
- 'Traffic Today seems attractive enough to be a potential employer'
- 'A job offer from Traffic Today would seem attractive to me'

Intention to apply
(Taylor & Bergmann, 1987)
- 'I would apply to Traffic Today'
- 'If Traffic Today offered me a job, I would probably accept it'

(Aimain-Smith, Bauer, & Cable, 2001)
- 'I would attempt to gain an interview with Traffic Today'
- 'I would actively pursue obtaining a position within Traffic Today'
- 'I would request more information about Traffic Today'
- 'I would want to speak with a representative of Traffic Today about the possibilities of working there'
- 'If I would see this company online, I would be interested to look out for their open vacancies'

(Turban & Keon, 1993)
- 'I would like to work for Traffic Today'

Open to change job
- 'I am currently looking for a new job'
- 'I do not have a job right now'
- 'I would want to change my current job'
- 'I am in need of a new job'

Used measures per construct

Intention to apply	Recruitment attitude – visual aspect	Recruitment attitude – content aspect
I would apply at Traffic Today	I think this recruitment video is visual appealing	I think this recruitment video is informative
I would try to get an interview at Traffic Today	I think this recruitment video is impressive	I think this recruitment video is clear
I would strive to a job at Traffic Today	I think this recruitment video is attractive	I think this recruitment video is good
I would love to work for Traffic Today	I think this recruitment video is nice	I think this recruitment video is reliable
I would strive for a job at Traffic Today		
If Traffic Today would offer a job, I probably would accept it		
I would see this company online, I would be curious to vacancies		
I would request more information about Traffic Today		
A job offer from Traffic Today be look appealing to me		
Traffic Today looks so appealing that I would like to work for them		

Appendix B, questionnaire

Informed consent

Beste deelnemer,

Hartelijk bedankt voor het deelnemen in mijn onderzoek. Mijn naam is Martine Gordinou de Gouberville en ik ben momenteel bezig met mijn afstudeeronderzoek voor de master Communication Science aan de Universiteit van Twente.

Tijdens mijn afstudeerproject doe ik onderzoek naar de reactie van volwassenen tussen de 18 en 67 jaar op recruitmentvideo's. Deze enquête wordt uitgevoerd onder de supervisie van de faculteit Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences (BMS) van de Universiteit van Twente.

Het invullen van deze enquête zal ongeveer 4-5 minuten duren. In de vragenlijst komt een (korte) video voor, ik raad u aan deze op uw laptop of computer te bekijken. Kiest u ervoor de video op uw mobiel te bekijken, dan is het verstandig om het scherm van de video groot te maken.

Bij deelname aan deze studie verklaart u 18 jaar of ouder te zijn. Verder is het gegarandeerd dat u volledig anoniem blijft. Het invullen van de vragenlijst is volledig vrijwillig en ingevulde informatie zal alleen worden gebruikt voor onderzoeksdoeleinden. Buiten de resultaten van dit onderzoek om zal geen enkele informatie worden gedeeld met het bedrijf in kwestie. Binnen dit onderzoek bestaan er geen foute of goede antwoorden en tot slot mag u uiteraard op ieder gewenst moment stoppen met het invullen van de vragenlijst, ook zonder reden.

Heeft u vragen of opmerkingen over de vragenlijst of het onderzoek? Stuur mij dan een e-mail via m.h.gordinoudegouberville@student.utwente.nl!

Ik wil u graag bedanken voor het participeren in mijn onderzoek!

Met vriendelijke groet,
Martine Gordinou de Gouberville

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