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## RESEARCH ARTICLE

# Organisational antecedents of employee ambassadorship on social network sites

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## Abstract

Organisations seeking to enhance their reputation increasingly depend on social network messages—for instance, from employees—instead of being able to control this through their formal communications. The present research aimed to examine how employees' willingness to share positive messages about their organisation on their social network sites (SNS) relates to organisational features and activities. Specifically, we examined whether employee ambassadorship on SNS relates to two key dimensions of social evaluation: perceived organisational morality and competence. Results of three studies suggest that organisational features can motivate employees to support their organisation online. Across different samples and measures, employee evaluations of organisational morality were a stronger statistical predictor of online ambassadorship than their evaluations of organisational competence. Organisational identification, not external prestige, mediated the effect of organisational morality on online ambassadorship. This suggests that perceived organisational morality relates to intrinsic motives of employees to support their organisation on SNS.

## KEYWORDS

corporate social responsibility, organisational citizenship behaviour, organisational identification, organisational morality

## 1 | INTRODUCTION

Due to the rise of social network sites (SNS), organisational reputations are increasingly shaped by the informal work-related messages that employees share with their online networks (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Employees are often perceived as a reliable source of information because of their proximity to and expertise on organisational processes (Cober et al., 2000; Fisher et al., 1979). Moreover, organisational control over the content of employees' work-related SNS messages tends to be limited, which further enhances the credibility and the potential impact of the information (Dreher, 2014). Employees can serve as 'online ambassadors' of the organisation when their messages align with the values that the organisation intends to com-

municate to its stakeholders (Cravens & Oliver, 2006; Helm, 2011; Van Zoonen et al., 2018). Thus, employees' online ambassadorship—rather than formal organisational communications—increasingly influences how the organisation is perceived by the public. This impacts, for instance, whether highly qualified job seekers feel attracted to the organisation—a crucial factor in the current 'war on talent' (Dabirian et al., 2017). This raises the key question examined here, namely: Which organisational features contribute to the willingness of employees to support their organisation in SNS messages?

Prior research has extensively addressed antecedents and consequences of other forms of employees' discretionary efforts to support their organisation, such as helping colleagues, courtesy, voice, civic virtue and loyalty (Podsakoff et al., 2014; Van Dyne &

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LePine, 1998). However, relatively little is known about online ambassadorship behaviour, which is likely to represent a distinct form of discretionary effort. For example, as the 'collapsed' audiences of SNS users often consist of a combination of networks from different parts of one's life (Lampinen et al., 2009; Marwick & Boyd, 2010), online ambassadorship behaviour can have a strong impact on an organisational reputation (Dreher, 2014). At the same time, the broader visibility of this behaviour outside of the organisation sets it apart from other forms of organisational citizenship and potentially introduces additional concerns and motives. This makes it important to understand which organisational activities and features contribute to the willingness of employees to engage in online ambassadorship, as this indicates what organisations can do to enhance this form of discretionary effort.

### 1.1 | Organisational impression formation

Our focus on the role of perceived organisational features in motivating employees to express support for the organisation in SNS messages is consistent with recent advances in Stakeholder Theory (Freeman, 1984). According to Stakeholder Theory, organisational success should be measured by the extent to which all stakeholders are satisfied, and joint interests are pursued. Recent research suggests that the support of multiple stakeholders, such as investors, customers and (future) employees, depends on the *perceived qualities of the organisation* (Ellemers & Chopova, 2021). Prior attempts to establish which organisational features are most likely to have such effects, have emphasised that people tend to anthropomorphise organisations (Ashforth et al., 2020). That is, in addition to considering 'what' an organisation is in terms of its size, products, or governance structure, people tend to think of and communicate about organisations in terms of 'who' these are—as they refer to human-like traits, intentions and motives to characterise the organisation. Indeed, research on social impression formation has revealed that individual, group and organisational targets all tend to be evaluated in similar ways (Kervyn et al., 2012; Malone & Fiske, 2013; Van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015).

Different models and research traditions agree that two key dimensions are used to form social impressions. One key dimension refers to the *morality* of social targets—which is indicated by their harmful versus beneficial intentions, while the second key dimension refers to the *competence* of social targets—which is indicated by the likelihood of successful task completion and social achievement (Abele et al., 2021; Koch et al., 2021). For instance, the consistency and sincerity of corporate social responsibility (CSR) engagement can be seen to indicate the organisation's beneficial intentions towards stakeholders, revealing the morality of the organisation (i.e. perceived organisational honesty, reliability; De Roeck & Delobbe, 2012; Ellemers et al., 2011; Farooq et al., 2014). Likewise, the financial performance and competitive success of the organisation can be seen to attest to its achievement potential, indicating its competence (i.e. perceived capability, skilfulness of the organisation; Ellemers et al., 2011; Van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015).

We aim to build on previous studies indicating the relevance of considering organisational morality and competence in corporate evaluations (Brown & Dacin, 1997; Kervyn et al., 2012) and in organisational decision-making (Barraquier, 2011; Clegg et al., 2007; Maclagan & Snell, 1992). Prior research has revealed that the perceived morality of work teams and organisations is a more powerful source of attraction for prospective employees and team members, than perceived competence (Van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015; Van Prooijen, Ellemers, et al., 2018). Here we extend these insights to examine our main expectation that organisational morality is a stronger predictor than organisational competence of the willingness of employees to engage in online ambassadorship. Furthermore, based on Social Identity Theory, we argue that organisational features can promote employees to *identify* with the organisation and subsequently their willingness to communicate about the organisation, as their organisational membership can reflect positively upon the self (Haslam & Ellemers, 2011).

### 1.2 | Organisational identification and the motivation to engage in online ambassadorship

According to Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979), group membership can represent an important part of an individuals' self-concept. People are more inclined to internalise their group membership as a part of their self-concept when a group can provide them with a positive social identity. In turn, individuals who identify more strongly with their group are more inclined to behave in group-serving ways (Ellemers et al., 2004; Haslam & Ellemers, 2011). Accordingly, previous research has shown that organisational identification can promote organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs; Kim et al., 2013) and a higher tendency to talk positively about the organisation among employees (Farooq et al., 2017).

Emerging insights from recent research and further development of theory in the social identity tradition have shown that moral features of groups, work teams and organisations provide a more important source for a positive identity and a more prominent driver of group-relevant behaviours than competent features (Brambilla et al., 2021; Ellemers et al., 2013). Indeed, OCBs have been shown to be influenced by organisational involvement in CSR initiatives (Ong et al., 2018) and by procedural fairness within organisations (Tepper & Taylor, 2003; Van Dijke et al., 2012). Both factors relate to core values that are shared by people across the world, and are considered to be indicators of morality (Ellemers et al., 2011; Leach et al., 2007; Schwartz, 1992).

The insight that organisational morality rather than competence might be the primary driver of displays of OCB is of interest to organisational settings—where the competence of individuals and work teams in terms of their task effectiveness and performance tends to be seen as a primary concern. In theory, competence (high performance) and morality (beneficial intentions) can go together, and may enhance each other in certain organisational settings—for instance, when CSR activities attract additional customers and is a source of competitive advantage (Orlitzky et al., 2003; Vilanova et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2016). Indeed, research on social impression formation revealed that

evaluations about morality can ‘spillover’ on competence evaluations (Landy et al., 2016; Stellar & Willer, 2018). However, organisations may also face trade-offs between the ambition to be moral and the ambition to be competent (Barraquier, 2011; Clegg et al., 2007; MacLagan & Snell, 1992). For instance, when investing in CSR activities precludes commercial success. In practice then, it is not always feasible for organisations to make strategic choices that attest to their morality as well as their competence (Margolis & Walsh, 2003; Vogel, 2005)—often making trade-offs between them inevitable (Devinney, 2009).

When asked to consider this trade-off, prospective employees have been found to be more attracted to organisations that are moral but incompetent than to organisations that are competent but immoral (Van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015). Furthermore, identification with work teams is determined by the perceived morality rather than the perceived competence of its members (Van Prooijen, Ellemers, et al., 2018). When studied in isolation, indicators of organisational morality have been shown to promote organisational identification (Bhattacharya et al., 2009; De Roeck & Delobbe, 2012).

We also examine the role of an organisation’s external prestige in the relation between organisational morality and online ambassadorship, to rule out the possibility that a more extrinsically driven motivation could explain this positive relation. The perceived external prestige of an organisation indicates how employees believe that the organisation is evaluated by outsiders, and thus reflects employees’ perceptions of the organisation’s reputation (Smidts et al., 2001). We therefore consider the alternative possibility that employees prefer to represent a moral organisation mostly out of concern about the organisation’s public image, and how this reflects on their personal reputation. Communicating about one’s membership in a moral organisation could potentially function as a manner to gain reputational benefits and enhance one’s social status outside the organisation (Hardy & Van Vugt, 2006). Research has indicated that perceived morality also plays an important role in evaluations of prestige. For example, when forming an impression of other individuals and groups, perceived moral traits impact whether we respect others and see them in a positive light (Goodwin et al., 2014; Prestwich et al., 2021). Likewise, on an organisational level, higher morality has been associated with positive corporate reputation, while corporate reputation is detrimentally affected when organisations show a lack of moral engagement or have committed moral misdeeds (Rothenhoefer, 2019).

Thus, prior research suggests that organisational morality might enhance organisational identification as well as perceived external prestige. Nevertheless, we argue and anticipate that only organisational identification will subsequently be associated with online ambassadorship. We build on prior work showing that SNS use tends to be driven by the desire to express one’s identity (Nadkarni & Hofmann, 2012). Furthermore, employees were found to have a stronger inclination to integrate their organisational role in other parts of their lives—including in their online presence—when organisational membership represents a central part of the self-concept (Fieseler et al., 2015). We thus expect that employees who identify strongly with their organisation will be more inclined to engage in online ambassadorship

(Sakka & Ahammad, 2020). In contrast, prior research also suggests that extrinsic motives—such as the desire for external prestige—are less salient to predict employees’ discretionary behaviours such as their engagement in online ambassadorship than intrinsic motives relating to their sense of self and identity. For example, the use of SNS for professional purposes tends to be aimed at offering support for the organisation’s collective efforts, rather than construing a favourable image of oneself (Van Zoonen et al., 2014). In addition, employees tend to use realistic rather than idealised self-descriptions on professional social media platforms (Sievers et al., 2015). Thus, we hypothesise the following:

**Hypothesis 1.** Perceived organisational morality is more strongly related to employees’ online ambassadorship than perceived organisational competence.

**Hypothesis 2.** The association between organisational morality and employees’ online ambassadorship is more strongly related to (intrinsic) organisational identification than to (extrinsic) reputational concerns.

### 1.3 | Overview

In Study 1, we asked employees to indicate specific organisational behaviours attesting to its morality and competence. We related their perceptions of the organisation to ambassadorship intentions on SNS, to offer initial evidence for Hypothesis 1. We also assessed their organisational identification and perceived external prestige to examine Hypothesis 2. In Study 2, we used a similar design and measures to cross-validate the results of Study 1. A broader sample of the working population was asked to rate the morality and competence of their organisation as more abstract organisational traits. Study 3 was preregistered ([https://osf.io/8zv5c/?view\\_only=548ad8fab76d4d65a304864b9013a0cc](https://osf.io/8zv5c/?view_only=548ad8fab76d4d65a304864b9013a0cc)), and focused on online ambassadorship behaviours rather than intentions. We asked a sample of the working population to rate the overall perceived morality and competence of their organisation, and we then related these ratings to employees’ engagement in online ambassadorship—to offer further evidence for Hypothesis 1. In each study, we obtained informed consent, and we controlled for individual differences in the analyses. This research was approved by the ESHCC Research Ethics Review Committee of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

## 2 | STUDY 1: ORGANISATIONAL ACTIVITIES INDICATING MORALITY AND COMPETENCE

The aim of Study 1 was to examine our central hypotheses among a group of employees who work for the same organisation. In this study, perceptions of CSR and corporate ability were assessed as concrete indicators of more generalised images of organisational morality and competence.

## 2.1 | Methods

### 2.1.1 | Participants and procedure

The sample consisted of 259 employees (83 female, 164 male, 12 no answer), who all worked for a large international health care company. A link to an online questionnaire was shared with employees who worked in various Dutch offices of the company. Their ages ranged from 18 to 67 years ( $M = 44.87$ ,  $SD = 10.78$ ), and they worked 8–65 h a week ( $M = 38.82$ ,  $SD = 6.36$ ). Participants worked 0–49 years for the company ( $M = 12.69$ ,  $SD = 11.84$ ). Most participants held a permanent contract ( $n = 220$ ). Many employees had a profile on LinkedIn ( $n = 188$ ), and 167 employees had a profile on personal SNS. We made a distinction between online ambassadorship on professional (e.g. LinkedIn) and personal SNS (e.g. Facebook), as the affordances, audiences and behavioural norms on these platforms vary significantly (Van Zoonen et al., 2018).

### 2.1.2 | Measures

**Predictors.** According to Ellemers et al. (2011), CSR is perceived as an indicator of organisational morality by employees. As such, morality was assessed with the following two items ( $M = 5.26$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ): 'My organisation contributes to a better society', and 'My organisation contributes to a cleaner environment'. Competence was also assessed with two items that indicated corporate ability ( $M = 5.66$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ): 'My organisation obtains good financial results', and 'My organisation performs better than its competitors'. For two-item scales, the Spearman–Brown statistic offers a more adequate indicator of reliability than a Pearson correlation or a Cronbach's alpha (Eisinga et al., 2013). The Spearman–Brown correlation coefficient for the morality and competence measures were .69 and .67, respectively<sup>1</sup>.

**Mediator: Organisational identification.** Organisational identification was measured with five items (based on Ellemers et al., 1999; and Leach et al., 2008;  $\alpha = .95$ ;  $M = 5.57$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). An example item is: 'I feel solidarity with my organisation'. Items were measured on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

**Alternative mediator: External prestige.** Four items (based on Mael & Ashforth, 1992) assessed perceived general external prestige of the organisation ( $\alpha = .87$ ;  $M = 5.39$ ,  $SD = 0.83$ ). An example item is: 'My organisation is perceived as a prestigious organisation to work for' (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*). A list of all items of the mediator variables is presented in the [Supporting Information](#).

**Outcome measures: Online ambassadorship intentions.** Online ambassadorship intentions on professional social media platforms

were assessed with four items ( $\alpha = .96$ ;  $M = 2.62$ ,  $SD = 1.67$ ), which were preceded by the sentence: 'How likely would it be that you would...'. An example item is: 'recommend the products or services of your organisation on your professional social media profile (such as LinkedIn)?'. Items were presented at a 7-point Likert scale (1 = *very unlikely*, 7 = *very likely*). These items were modelled after the Net Promotor Score (Reichheld, 2003), and adjusted to capture online recommendations. The four items were adjusted and used to assess online ambassadorship on personal social media platforms ( $\alpha = .97$ ;  $M = 1.98$ ,  $SD = 1.43$ ). An example item is: 'share positive news messages from your organisation on your personal social media profile (such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter)?'. Items of online ambassadorship intentions on professional social media measure are displayed in the Supporting Information.

**Control variables.** Online segmentation preferences—the preference to maintain boundaries between personal and professional audiences on social media—has been shown to relate to the willingness to engage in online ambassadorship (Van Zoonen et al., 2018). We therefore assessed overlap of professional and private contacts on professional ('To what extent do your work-related contacts (colleagues/executives) overlap with your private contacts (friends/family) on LinkedIn') and personal SNS ('To what extent do your private contacts (friends/family) overlap with work-related contacts (colleagues/executives) on Facebook, Twitter and/or Instagram?'; 1 = *completely separated*; 7 = *completely overlapping*) as control variables. Furthermore, we also looked at the role of personal characteristics (gender, age, working hours, employment years, contract), as these can impact SNS use (Correa et al., 2010) and organisational commitment (DeCotiis & Summers, 1987). Table 1 presents the correlations between all study variables.

## 2.2 | Results

### 2.2.1 | Analysis plan

Analyses for ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS only included participants who had a LinkedIn account ( $n = 188$ ), while analyses for ambassadorship intentions for personal SNS were ran only among participants who held a profile on personal SNS ( $n = 167$ ). Path analyses were conducted, using a bootstrapping procedure (5000 iterations) for each outcome variable to examine possible mediation effects. Organisational morality and organisational competence were entered as predictors, and organisational identification and external prestige as parallel mediators. Each analysis included the control variables overlap of contacts, gender, age, working hours, employment years and contract<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> A confirmatory factor analysis showed that the hypothesised six-factor model with each item only loading on the intended factor had an acceptable fit,  $\chi^2(174) = 499$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .94; SRMR = .038; RMSEA = .085. Factor loadings were sizeable and significant ( $>.60$ ,  $p$ 's  $< .001$ ). A five-factor model, with Morality and Competence loading on the same factor, showed poorer fit,  $\chi^2(5) = 67$ ,  $p < .001$ , although fit indices were somewhat comparable, CFI = .93; SRMR = .048; RMSEA = .09. A five-factor model, with Identification and External prestige loading on the same factor, also showed poorer fit,  $\chi^2(5) = 355$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .87; SRMR = .071; RMSEA = .12. A five-factor model, with the two ambassadorship intentions loading on the same factor, also showed poorer fit,  $\chi^2(5) = 613$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .83; SRMR = .059; RMSEA = .14.

<sup>2</sup> For all studies, we conducted additional analyses. First, while we did not predict to find an interaction between organisational features, previous research has shown that morality and competence can have transferring effects (Landy et al., 2016; Stellar & Willer, 2018). Regression analyses were therefore conducted where both organisational feature variables were mean-centred, and an interaction term between these variables was included. However, we found no significant interaction between the organisational features for the outcome variables

**TABLE 1** Correlations between the study variables across the full sample (Study 1).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Ambassadorship professional SNS	-												
2. Ambassadorship personal SNS	.74**	-											
3. Organisational morality	.25**	.26**	-										
4. Organisational competence	.20**	.17**	.31**	-									
5. Organisational identification	.26**	.23**	.59**	.33**	-								
6. External prestige	.24**	.19**	.44**	.42**	.58**	-							
7. Overlap contacts professional SNS	.14	.11	.05	.03	.19**	.05	-						
8. Overlap contacts personal SNS	.27**	.28**	.01	.06	.02	-.05	.37**	-					
9. Working hours	.17**	.11	.06	.11	-.03	.04	-.10	.14	-				
10. Employment years	-.29**	-.19**	-.07	-.01	-.07	-.12	-.14	-.14	-.11	-			
11. Type of contract <sup>a</sup>	-.09	-.04	.03	.04	-.02	-.03	.02	.09	.14**	.25**	-		
12. Age	-.22**	-.15*	.08	.07	.01	-.04	-.21**	-.22**	-.00	.65**	.15*	-	
13. Gender <sup>b</sup>	-.01	-.04	-.14*	-.17**	.01	-.08	.16*	.07	-.37**	-.13	-.02	-.25**	-

<sup>a</sup>1 = permanent, 0 = temporary.

<sup>b</sup>1 = female, 0 = male.

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

## 2.2.2 | Ambassadorship intentions professional SNS

Figure 1a presents the findings of the path analysis of ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS. Morality yielded a significant total effect on ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS,  $b = 0.51$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.26, 0.75], while the total effect of competence was not significant,  $b = 0.22$ ,  $p = .146$ , 95% CI [-0.09, 0.54]. The difference between the total effects of organisational features was significant,  $Z = -1.94$ ,  $p = .026$ , thereby offering support for Hypothesis 1. Indirect effects on ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS through identification were found for both organisational morality,  $b = 0.23$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.41], and organisational competence,  $b = 0.07$ ,  $p = .035$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.19]. No indirect effects of organisational features through external prestige were found on ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS, both  $p$ 's  $\geq .588$ . These findings thus support Hypothesis 2. Of the control variables, only work hours was significantly related to ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS,  $b = 0.06$ ,  $p = .004$ , 95% CI [0.02, 0.09]. We estimated the power for the targeted effects predicted in our hypotheses using the pwrSEM application with 1000 Monte Carlo simulations (Wang & Rhemtulla, 2021). The estimated power was .82 to detect the effect of morality as predicted by Hypothesis 1 and .89 for the indirect effect predicted by Hypothesis 2.

## 2.2.3 | Ambassadorship intentions personal SNS

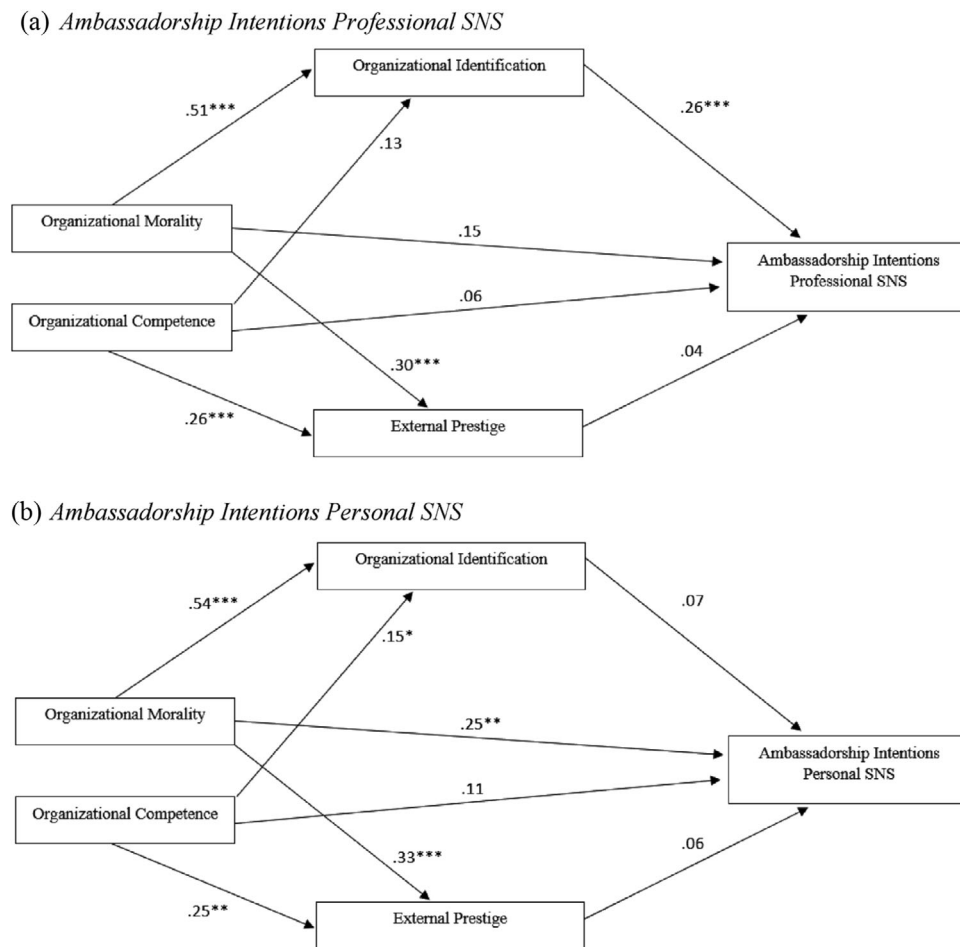
The findings of the path analysis of ambassador intentions for personal SNS are illustrated in Figure 1b. The total effect on ambassador

across the three studies. We also examined the conjoint impact of organisational features on online ambassadorship without the control variables. Findings still supported our hypotheses for all studies.

intentions for personal SNS was significant for both organisational morality,  $b = 0.52$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.30, 0.75], and for organisational competence,  $b = 0.28$ ,  $p = .028$ , 95% CI [0.03, 0.54]. The total effect of organisational morality was stronger than the total effect of organisational competence,  $Z = -1.91$ ,  $p = .028$ , which supports Hypothesis 1. However, no significant indirect effects were found of the organisational features on ambassador intentions for personal SNS through either organisational identification or external prestige, all  $p$ 's  $> .288$ . Hypothesis 2 is thus rejected for ambassadorship intentions for personal SNS. Finally, a significant, positive effect of the control variable overlap between contacts on ambassadorship intentions for personal SNS was found,  $b = 0.25$ ,  $p = .002$ , 95% CI [0.11, 0.40]. The estimated power to detect the effect of morality predicted in Hypothesis 1 was .86, but the subsample was underpowered to detect the indirect effect (.06).

## 2.3 | Discussion

When perceived concrete organisational features were measured among employees who were working for a large company, morality was shown to be a better overall statistical predictor of ambassadorship intentions on both professional and personal SNS compared to competence. Although we did not find support for an indirect relation through organisational identification for ambassadorship intentions on personal SNS, this indirect relation was found for ambassadorship intentions on professional SNS—while this was not the case for external prestige. The findings thus suggest that the relation between perceived organisational morality and ambassadorship intentions is best explained by intrinsic motives, which offers initial support for our predictions.



**FIGURE 1** Study 1: Path analysis of the effects of organisational features on ambassadorship intentions through organisational identification and external prestige. (a) Ambassadorship intentions professional SNS. (b) Ambassadorship intentions personal SNS. \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ . Six control variables (i.e. overlap in contacts, working hours, employment years, type of contract, age and gender) were included in the analysis, but only reported in text for clarity. Standardized estimates are presented.

### 3 | STUDY 2: OVERALL JUDGEMENTS OF ORGANISATIONAL MORALITY AND COMPETENCE

A limitation of Study 1 was that we only approached employees within a single organisation. Organisations differ from each other in terms of, for example, whether they have implemented regulations regarding employees' social media use, the prevalence of using social media for professional purposes among co-workers, or the general reputation of the industry in which the organisation operates in, which in turn can influence the interest of employees to be an online ambassador. Study 2 therefore aimed to examine whether the findings of Study 1 could be extended to observations made in a broader and more general working population sample. Furthermore, our measures to assess organisational features in Study 1 captured a few concrete organisational behaviours that indicate organisational morality and competence. However, both organisational features are more broadly defined than these indicators alone. To address this limitation of Study 1, we have included validated measures of abstract indicators of organ-

isational features in Study 2 to replicate and expand our findings from Study 1.

#### 3.1 | Methods

##### 3.1.1 | Participants and procedure

The recruitment of participants occurred through a convenience (snowball) sampling method. The study was advertised on various SNS and online forums. Participants were asked to participate if they (a) were 18 years or older; (b) if they currently worked for an organisation and (c) held one or more SNS profiles. Participants who filled in the survey but who did not meet the criteria were excluded from the sample. The sample consisted of 261 participants (194 female, 67 male), with an age range of 19–65 years ( $M = 32.58$ ,  $SD = 13.00$ ). The working hours per week ranged from 0 to 75 ( $M = 32.41$ ,  $SD = 13.16$ ), and the number of employment years for their current organisation ranged from 0 to 40 ( $M = 4.64$ ,  $SD = 7.08$ ). Many participants had a permanent

**TABLE 2** Correlations between the study variables across the full sample (Study 2).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Ambassadorship professional SNS	-												
2. Ambassadorship personal SNS	.60**	-											
3. Organisational morality	.31**	.26**	-										
4. Organisational competence	.28**	.20**	.55**	-									
5. Organisational identification	.39**	.34**	.56**	.53**	-								
6. External prestige	.23**	.27**	.44**	.55**	.53**	-							
7. Overlap contacts professional SNS	.21**	.19**	.04	.08	.09	.15*	-						
8. Overlap contacts personal SNS	.20**	.40**	-.01	.06	.15*	.19**	.43**	-					
9. Working hours	.17**	.06	.07	.11	.28*	.13*	.03	.05	-				
10. Employment years	-.08	-.04	-.08	-.08	.14*	-.04	-.23**	-.00	.08	-			
11. Type of contract <sup>a</sup>	.07	-.03	-.08	-.01	.15*	-.08	-.10	.03	.37**	.41**	-		
12. Age	-.04	-.04	-.02	-.03	.18*	-.06	-.22**	-.12	.10	.65**	.47**	-	
13. Gender <sup>b</sup>	-.08	-.07	-.19**	-.03	-.04	.03	-.01	.05	-.25**	.01	-.05	-.02	-

<sup>a</sup>1 = permanent, 0 = temporary.

<sup>b</sup>1 = female, 0 = male.

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

contract ( $n = 146$ ). A LinkedIn profile was held by 222 participants, while 241 participants held a profile on personal SNS (Facebook, Instagram and/or Twitter).

### 3.1.2 | Measures

**Predictors.** Measures of organisational morality and organisational competence were assessed based on research by Leach et al. (2007), who showed that the abstract traits that they used as indicators of morality and competence represented distinct concepts. Three items measured organisational morality ( $\alpha = .89$ ;  $M = 5.38$ ,  $SD = 1.05$ ). Participants were asked about the integrity of their organisation, which was followed by these items: 'My organisation is...': 'honest', 'sincere' and 'trustworthy'. Similarly, participants were asked about the competence of their organisation, which was followed by three items ( $\alpha = .86$ ;  $M = 5.75$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ): 'My organisation is...': 'capable', 'competent' and 'skilled'. All items were presented on a 7-point scale (1 = *strongly disagree*, 7 = *strongly agree*).

**Mediator and outcome variables.** We employed the same measures as in Study 1 to assess organisational identification ( $\alpha = .93$ ;  $M = 5.56$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ), external prestige ( $\alpha = .84$ ;  $M = 5.50$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ), ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS ( $\alpha = .95$ ;  $M = 4.05$ ,  $SD = 1.85$ ) and personal SNS ( $\alpha = .96$ ;  $M = 3.36$ ,  $SD = 1.83$ ), and the control variables. Table 2 shows the correlations between the predictor, mediator and outcome measures<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> A confirmatory factor analysis showed that the hypothesised six-factor model with each item only loading on the intended factor had an acceptable fit,  $\chi^2(215) = 645$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .93; SRMR = .048; RMSEA = .088. Factor loadings were sizeable and significant ( $> .52$ ,  $p$ 's  $< .001$ ).

## 3.2 | Results

### 3.2.1 | Analysis plan

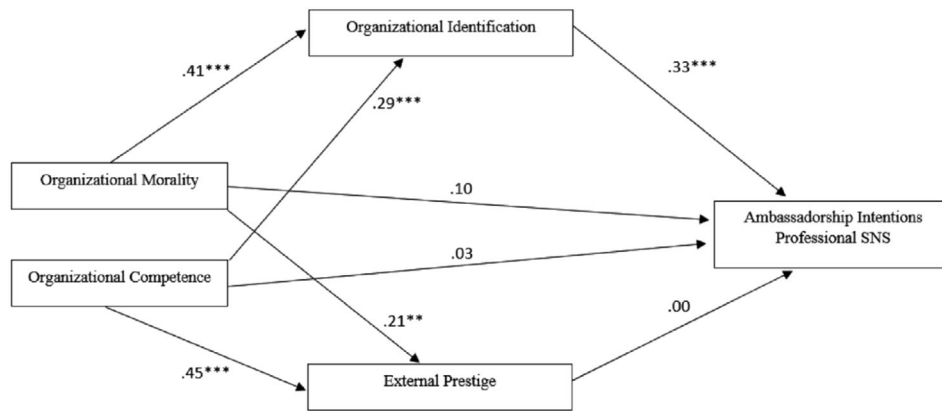
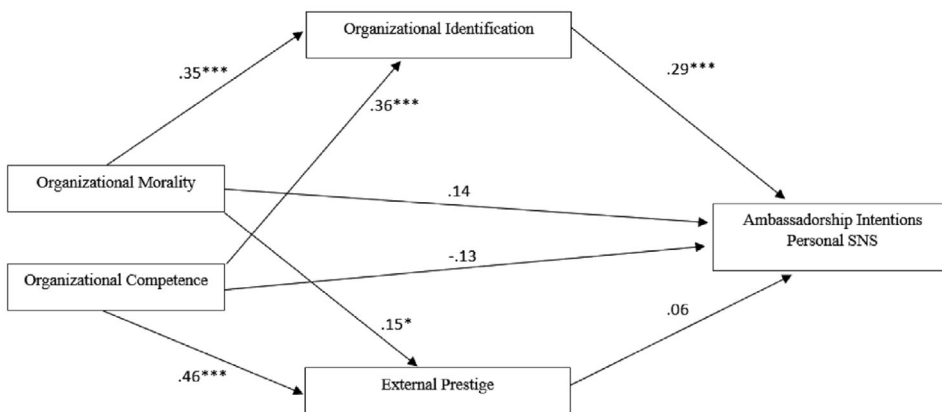
The analysis plan for Study 2 is similar to Study 1. Only participants with a LinkedIn account ( $n = 222$ ) were part of the analyses of ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS, and only participants with a personal SNS profile ( $n = 241$ ) were part of the analyses of ambassadorship intentions for personal SNS. We employed two path analyses with bootstrapping procedures (5000 iterations) to examine possible mediation effects of organisational features on ambassadorship intentions through organisational identification and external prestige. Each analysis controlled for the variables overlap of contacts, gender, age, working hours, employment years and contract.

### 3.2.2 | Ambassadorship intentions professional SNS

The path analysis findings on ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS are presented in Figure 2a. A significant total effect of organisational morality on ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS was observed,  $b = 0.40$ ,  $p = .003$ , 95% CI [0.14, 0.66], while the analysis yielded no significant total effect for organisational

A five-factor model, with Morality and Competence loading on the same factor, showed poorer fit,  $\chi^2(5) = 247$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .88; SRMR = .057; RMSEA = .11. A five-factor model, with Identification and External prestige loading on the same factor, also showed poorer fit,  $\chi^2(5) = 445$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .85; SRMR = .073; RMSEA = .12. A five-factor model, with the two ambassadorship intentions loading on the same factor, also showed poorer fit,  $\chi^2(5) = 779$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .79; SRMR = .09; RMSEA = .15.



(a) *Ambassadorship Intentions Professional SNS*(b) *Ambassadorship Intentions Personal SNS*

**FIGURE 2** Study 2: Path analysis of the effects of organisational features on ambassadorship intentions through organisational identification and external prestige. (a) Ambassadorship intentions professional SNS. (b) Ambassadorship intentions personal SNS. \*\*\* $p < .001$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ . Six control variables (i.e. overlap in contacts, working hours, employment years, type of contract, age and gender) were included in the analysis, but only reported in text for clarity. Standardized estimates are presented.

competence,  $b = 0.27$ ,  $p = .129$ , 95% CI [-0.07, 0.64]. The total effects did not differ significantly,  $Z = -0.95$ ,  $p = .171$ , thus Hypothesis 1 was partially supported. An indirect effect through organisational identification on ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS was found for both organisational morality,  $b = 0.23$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.10, 0.39], and for organisational competence,  $b = 0.20$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.09, 0.16]. No indirect effects of organisational features on ambassadorship intentions for professional SNS emerged through external prestige, both  $p$ 's  $> .931$ . As such, the findings offered support for Hypothesis 2. The control variables type of contract,  $b = 0.58$ ,  $p = .036$ , 95% CI [0.04, 1.13], and overlap between contacts,  $b = 0.20$ ,  $p = .017$ , 95% CI [0.04, 0.36], were significantly related to ambassadorship intentions on professional SNS. We again estimated the power for this subsample for detecting the targeted effects of both hypotheses using the pwrSEM application with 1000 Monte Carlo simulations (Wang & Rhemtulla, 2021). The estimated power for detecting the targeted effect of Hypothesis 1 was .78 and .93 for the targeted effect of Hypothesis 2.

### 3.2.3 | Ambassadorship intentions personal SNS

Figure 2b shows the findings of the path analysis of ambassadorship intentions for personal SNS. While the total effect of organisational morality on ambassadorship intentions for personal SNS was significant,  $b = 0.42$ ,  $p = .001$ , 95% CI [0.18, 0.64], no significant total effect of organisational competence was found,  $b = 0.00$ ,  $p = .994$ , 95% CI [-0.29, 0.29]. In line with Hypothesis 1, there was a significant difference between the strength of the total effects,  $Z = -2.59$ ,  $p = .005$ . The indirect effect of organisational morality on ambassadorship intentions for personal SNS through organisational identification was significant,  $b = 0.17$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.07, 0.31], as well as for organisational competence,  $b = 0.22$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.11, 0.41]. No indirect effects were found through external prestige, both  $p$ 's  $> .234$ . The control variable overlap between contacts significantly related to ambassadorship intentions on personal SNS,  $b = 0.38$ ,  $p < .001$ , 95% CI [0.27, 0.49]. The estimated power was .84 for the targeted effect of Hypothesis 1 and .95 for the targeted effect of Hypothesis 2.

### 3.3 | Discussion

Study 2 sought to cross-validate and extend the findings of Study 1 to a more general working population. The results offer support for our predictions and corroborate the findings of Study 1. Organisational morality was a stronger overall predictor of employees' willingness to be an online ambassador for their organisation than organisational competence. Furthermore, the relation between organisational morality and intentions to share positive organisational information on SNS was explained by organisational identification rather than by concerns about one's social reputation tied to the external prestige of the organisation.

## 4 | STUDY 3: ACTUAL ONLINE AMBASSADORSHIP BEHAVIOURS

Where the previous studies focused on online ambassadorship intentions, Study 3 further expands our examination of effects of organisational features by assessing employees' actual online ambassadorship behaviours. Furthermore, a limitation of the previous studies was that we did not control for the general level of engagement of employees in the use of their SNS profiles. While some SNS users actively post information and interact with others, other SNS users are more inclined to passively observe the activities of the people within their network (i.e. 'lurking'; Muller, 2012) and might thus be less inclined to engage in online ambassadorship. Furthermore, employees have been shown to worry about accidentally violating company policies through online ambassadorship (Skeels & Grudin, 2009). Study 3 therefore also included a measure on SNS use by the organisation, as this might offer a guideline to employees on which information can be shared on SNS, which can promote online ambassadorship.

### 4.1 | Methods

#### 4.1.1 | Participants and procedure

The study was conducted online on a UK sample through Prolific. Participants were pre-selected based on employer type (employees of for-profit organisations, local, state and federal governments) and social media use (active Facebook, Twitter or LinkedIn users). Non-profit organisations were excluded as public associations tend to be more positive than with for-profit organisations (Terwel et al., 2009), which might influence online ambassadorship. The sample ( $N = 244$ ) consisted of 139 female, 105 male and one non-binary participants, with an age range of 20–68 years ( $M = 40.98$ ,  $SD = 11.14$ ). With this sample size, a regression analysis with two predictors and five control variables would be sensitive to an effect size of  $f^2 = 0.04$ , with 80% statistical power ( $\alpha = .05$ ). Participants mostly worked for large companies (250 or more employees; 59%), followed by medium-sized companies (50–249 employees; 24%), small companies (10–49 employees; 13%)

and micro companies (fewer than 10 employees, 4%). The study was preregistered.

#### 4.1.2 | Measures

**Predictors.** Organisational morality and competence measures were based on Leach et al. (2007). Four items were used to assess organisational morality: 'How would you estimate the {sincerity; honesty; trustworthiness; fairness} of your organisation?' ( $\alpha = .95$ ;  $M = 5.04$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ). Organisational competence was also assessed with four items: 'How would you estimate the {skillfulness; intelligence; competence; productivity} of your organisation?' ( $\alpha = .91$ ;  $M = 5.41$ ,  $SD = 1.08$ ). We used a 7-point scale (1 = very low, 7 = very high)<sup>4</sup>.

**Online ambassadorship behaviour.** As Studies 1 and 2 showed relatively similar online ambassadorship effects regardless of the type of platform, Study 3 no longer distinguished between professional and personal SNS. Online ambassadorship behaviour was assessed with three items: 'In general, how often do you {'like'; 'share'} a positive or neutral organisation-related message on social media?' and 'In general, how often do you 'post' a positive or neutral message about your organisation on your social media?',  $\alpha = .86$ . Items were presented on a 10-point scale (1 = several times per hour, 10 = never). The average score ( $M = 8.51$ ,  $SD = 1.75$ ) showed that participants tended to engage in online ambassadorship once a month or less than once a month. An open-ended exploratory question was added as an attention check, in which participants were asked which type of topics they addressed in their organisation-related posts, or—if this did not apply to them—to explain why they never posted organisation-related messages.

**Control variables.** Individual SNS engagement was assessed with three items: 'In general, how often do you {'like'; 'share'; 'post'} messages on social media?',  $\alpha = .85$ , using a 10-point scale (1 = several times per hour, 10 = never). Participants were also asked to estimate how often their organisation posts something on its social media account(s) using an 11-point scale (1 = several times per hour, 10 = never, but my organisation does have a social media account, 11 = never, my organisation has no social media account). An 'I don't know' option was also provided. Table 3 presents the correlations between variables.

### 4.2 | Results

#### 4.2.1 | Organisational features and online ambassadorship behaviour

A regression analysis was conducted, in which individual SNS engagement, organisational SNS engagement, size of the organisation, age

<sup>4</sup> A confirmatory factor analysis showed that the hypothesised three-factor model with each item only loading on the intended factor had a good fit,  $\chi^2(41) = 51$ ,  $p = .12$ ; CFI = .99; SRMR = .025; RMSEA = .033. Factor loadings were strong and significant ( $> .70$ ,  $p$ 's  $< .001$ ). A two-factor model, with Morality and Competence loading on the same factor, showed poor fit,  $\chi^2(2) = 399$ ,  $p < .001$ ; CFI = .82; SRMR = .098; RMSEA = .20.

**TABLE 3** Correlations between the study variables (Study 3).

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1.	Online ambassadorship <sup>a</sup>	-							
2.	Organisational morality	-.33**	-						
3.	Organisational competence	-.27**	.63**	-					
4.	Individual SNS engagement <sup>a</sup>	.51**	-.21**	-.15*	-				
5.	Organisational SNS engagement <sup>a</sup>	.30**	-.01	-.04	.04	-			
6.	Size of organisation	.11	-.16*	-.13*	-.03	-.34**	-		
7.	Age	-.07	.11	.03	-.10	.15*	-.13*	-	
8.	Gender <sup>b</sup>	-.01	.09	.11	-.22**	.07	-.01	-.01	-

<sup>a</sup>Higher scores reflect lower levels of engagement.

<sup>b</sup>1 = female, 0 = male.

\*\* $p < .01$ ; \* $p < .05$ .

and gender were included as control variables. The analysis showed that perceived organisational morality related to online ambassadorship behaviour,  $\beta = -.17$ ,  $p = .017$ , semi-partial  $R^2 = .02$ , 95% CI [-0.46, -0.05]. The negative coefficient is explained by higher online ambassadorship scores reflecting lower engagement. No significant relation between organisational competence and online ambassadorship was found,  $p = .40$ . Furthermore, individual SNS engagement,  $\beta = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ , semi-partial  $R^2 = .23$ , 95% CI [0.32, 0.50], and organisational SNS engagement,  $\beta = .34$ ,  $p < .001$ , semi-partial  $R^2 = .10$ , 95% CI [0.14, 0.28], were also positively associated with online ambassadorship behaviour. Finally, employees working for larger organisations were more likely to engage in online ambassadorship behaviour,  $\beta = .16$ ,  $p = .004$ , semi-partial  $R^2 = .02$ , 95% CI [0.11, 0.55]. No effect was found of age,  $p = .51$ , or gender,  $p = .13$ . This study was adequately powered, as the total effect of the full model ( $R^2 = .45$ ) exceeded the effect of the power sensitivity analysis.

### 4.3 | Discussion

Findings of Study 3 revealed that the relation between organisational morality and online ambassadorship intentions translates to actual SNS behaviour. Organisational competence did not emerge as a significant predictor variable of online ambassadorship. Although higher levels of individual SNS use were linked to higher online ambassadorship engagement, our findings showed that the overall presence of organisations on SNS also functioned as a determinant of this behaviour. This suggests that organisations can motivate employees to support the organisation online by actively using an organisational SNS profile.

## 5 | GENERAL DISCUSSION

With the multiple procedures and samples reported, we showed that employees are more willing to engage in online ambassadorship when they perceive their organisation to be moral—rather than competent, in line with Hypothesis 1. Furthermore, we demonstrated that this

relation can be explained by social identity considerations: Employees are likely to internalise their membership in a moral organisation, and are therefore willing to represent their organisation in their online networks. That is, our results consistently show that online ambassadorship relates to the notion that being a member of a moral organisation contributes to a valued sense of self, as predicted in Hypothesis 2. We did not find evidence for the operation of extrinsic motives in explaining online ambassadorship. That is, in none of our studies was online ambassadorship related to the desire to enhance one's external image by publicly associating with an organisation that is seen as moral. Although the overall effect on online ambassadorship was stronger for organisational morality than for organisational competence, our findings indicated that organisational competence can also contribute to online ambassadorship through enhancing organisational identification. Together, these studies show that organisational characteristics are related to employees' willingness to act as an online ambassador of the organisation. It is likely that these characteristics help to communicate 'who' the organisation is (e.g. personality), rather than 'what' the organisation is (e.g. organisational structure), which can lead to important identity-related outcomes (Ashforth et al., 2020).

### 5.1 | Implications

Our findings on the primacy of morality over competence—even in an organisational context where competence and performance seem key—corroborate and extend previous findings on intergroup relations and membership in social groups (Ellemers et al., 2008; Goodwin et al., 2014; Leach et al., 2007). Few prior studies have addressed the role of morality in a social media setting. Audiences on social media often tend to consist of people that social media users know from various life domains, thereby cutting through a range of group boundaries (Marwick & Boyd, 2010). Consequently, engaging in discussions about one's organisation on SNS might be accompanied by different concerns than conversing in offline contexts, as it becomes more challenging to adhere to all norms that exist in the different groups to which an employee belongs (Lampinen et al., 2009). Values that define morally

responsible behaviours of individuals and groups are broadly shared across groups and cultures (Schwartz, 1992). Thus, the moral values of an organisation are likely to align with the values of employees, and to conform to the norms of the different groups in one's SNS network (Van der Lee et al., 2017; Van Prooijen, Ranzini, et al., 2018).

The current research revealed that the relation between organisational morality on online ambassadorship was mediated by organisational identification, whereas no support was found for the alternative explanation that external prestige might mediate this relation. This has important theoretical implications, because it suggests that the tendency to associate the self with an organisation online relates to intrinsic concerns about self-views and identity rather than more extrinsically driven ambitions for public reputation enhancement. Despite the large body of research on morality and competence, it has thus far not been examined whether the positive associations with morality are more closely tied to intrinsic (self-view concerns) or to extrinsic (external impression management) motives.

The finding that self-identity rather than public image concerns is linked to online ambassadorship is especially interesting since this research focused on a work context. Employees who use social media for professional purposes are likely to carefully assess how to present themselves to maximise the career opportunities that might emerge from their networking activities. As such, establishing a favourable public image on social media is likely to be important, and representing a moral organisation online can be argued to enhance this public image. However, although our findings confirm that being employed by a moral organisation is related to both more organisational identification and to higher levels of perceived external prestige, only organisational identification consistently emerged as a mediator of the relation between organisational morality and online ambassadorship. This supports the suggestion by Sakka and Ahammad (2020) that intrinsic factors relating to employees' attachment to the organisation can contribute to online ambassadorship engagement.

The relative importance of displays of morality compared to displays of competence has received little attention in organisational research. Although people have been shown to value organisational morality more than organisational competence when they seek employment (Van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015), it was unknown whether organisational morality would continue to be a key source of value among employees once they function in an actual business setting. It is likely that the stakes involved in a trade-off between morality and competence are higher in real life employment situations (Van Prooijen, Ellemers, et al., 2018). For example, it is possible that organisations that primarily lean in favour of the pursuit of non-financial social goals might create concerns among employees about the financial stability of the organisation, which can reduce the value that is attached to morality (Moore & Tenbrunsel, 2014). Thus, investing in ethical business conduct can not only help to attract highly qualified employees (Van Prooijen & Ellemers, 2015), the current findings show that it can also contribute to a stronger organisational reputation through the discretionary efforts of employees.

It can be challenging for organisations to effectively communicate about their CSR initiatives to external stakeholders. Although external

stakeholders tend to have relatively little knowledge about an organisation's CSR efforts (Sen et al., 2006), they are nevertheless easily inclined to respond with scepticism when organisations promote their CSR initiatives to increase this awareness (Du et al., 2010). Due to the prevalence of greenwashing (i.e. 'selective disclosure of positive information about a company's environmental or social performance while withholding negative information on these dimensions', Lyon & Maxwell, 2011, p. 5), many people have grown increasingly suspicious about the authenticity of organisational claims about ethical business conduct (Lyon & Montgomery, 2015). Although CSR communication from a corporate source is often inferred to be self-serving (Yoon et al., 2006), it is likely that information that is shared by employees will be more credible (Dreher, 2014). As such, our findings can have important implications for CSR communication. Study 1 showed that when CSR was used as an indicator of organisational morality and corporate ability as an indicator of organisational competence, only CSR promoted the willingness to act as an online ambassador for the organisation among employees. Thus, CSR efforts can not only enhance the job satisfaction and commitment of employees (Ellemers et al., 2011), but it can also lead employees to voluntarily share positive organisational information through their social media networks. In turn, information from employees is likely reduce the scepticism levels regarding CSR efforts among external stakeholders, as the sharing of such information represents a discretionary action on which organisations tend to have limited control, thereby leading to strategic benefits for the organisation.

## 5.2 | Limitations and future directions

We controlled for background variables and individual differences in SNS use. However, we did not take other individual characteristics into account as potential moderators. For example, research has shown that the desire for self-enhancement is a predictor of online ambassadorship (Van Zoonen et al., 2018). People scoring high on such characteristics could be driven by more extrinsic motives, and for them the mediating role of organisational identification might be less important. This also pertains to an employee's goals to engage in online ambassadorship. For example, previous research suggests that managers are likely to favour competence-related traits of a future employee due to their focus on task-completion and achievements (Cislak, 2013). An employee who is interested in obtaining a new position elsewhere might therefore be more inclined to promote their affiliation with their current prestigious organisation on social media to enhance their professional image, thus increasing the value of organisational competence in this context. Furthermore, people might have different opinions about what constitutes moral behaviour in organisations depending on, for example, cultural and political backgrounds (Crotty, 2016; Rai & Fiske, 2011). The overall effects reported here were found regardless of such individual differences. Nevertheless, future studies might further specify which individual level variables influence perceptions of organisational morality and the willingness to engage in online ambassadorship.

An interesting avenue to explore for future research is whether online ambassadorship can indeed lead to actual 'spill-over' effects of organisational morality on outsiders' perceptions of employees. Research has shown that people weigh moral information more heavily than competence information when they form impressions of other individuals and groups (Brambilla et al., 2011; Goodwin et al., 2014). Moreover, in the moral domain in particular, impressions are subject to a negativity effect, such that immoral behaviour tends to be perceived as more diagnostic of the 'true self' than moral behaviour (Martijn et al., 1992; Mende-Siedlecki et al., 2013; Skowronski & Carlston, 1987). Additionally, in interpersonal and intragroup impression formation, compensating for past violations of moral standards is seen as more challenging than compensating for competence failures (Pagliaro et al., 2016; Van der Lee et al., 2016). Likewise, the negative consequences of representing an immoral organisation for an employee's image might therefore be greater than the positive associations that might arise when an employee acts as an online ambassador for a moral organisation. This is a relevant concern for organisations, that is worthy of further investigation.

Finally, we note the possible relevance of insights from prior studies (Allison et al., 1989; Van Lange & Sedikides, 1998) examining individual-level traits indicating competence and morality. This work has revealed biased judgements of these traits, depending on whether these refer to the self or to others. Specifically, different measures and methodologies have documented the so-called 'Muhammad Ali effect', indicating that individuals tend to see themselves as more morally good than others, while they are less inclined to see themselves as more intelligent than others (Allison et al., 1989). Explanations for this phenomenon have argued this is the case because moral behaviour—such as fairness and honesty—is not only more desirable, but also more controllable and less verifiable than intelligent behaviour (Van Lange & Sedikides, 1998). The possibility that people are more inclined to overestimate the morality of their organisation rather than its competence would align both with evidence on the 'Muhammad Ali effect', and with our current analysis.

We note that our current research—and the theoretical analysis we propose—is different in that we explicitly assess *organisational-level* evaluations of competence and morality, and empirically examine how these relate to specific downstream responses of individual organisational employees in promoting their organisation in online messages. Nevertheless, prior research may be relevant to interpret these results, as it suggests that people are generally more inclined to attend to and recall information attesting to the morality rather than the competence of other individuals (De Bruin & Van Lange, 2000), groups and organisations (see Abele et al., 2021; Koch et al., 2021 for overviews). Indeed, the observation that claims of individual level intelligence or task ability are more constrained by objective external standards and hence more verifiable is also likely to apply to organisational-level displays of performance ability (e.g. indicated by legally regulated reports on financial performance) versus moral intentions (e.g. evidenced by a much broader range of indicators attesting to achievement of Environmental, Social and Governance goals; Veenstra & Ellemers, 2020). Importantly, we note that this does not invalidate the news value

of our results on online ambassadorship. However, future research might further examine whether and how cognitive (e.g. enhanced versus impaired attention and recall) as well as motivational (e.g. self- or organisational identity serving) explanations plays a role in causing these effects. For instance, inspired by prior work on the Muhammad Ali effect, future studies might compare biased recall of specific competence- versus morality-related achievements and events pertaining to one's own versus other organisations as a way to pinpoint more specifically which psychological mechanisms contribute to these effects.

## 6 | CONCLUSION

The current research provides insights in employees' online ambassadorship as a relatively new form of discretionary effort. Our studies extend previous findings on the role of morality and competence in intergroup relations and membership in social groups. By demonstrating the relation between perceived organisational morality and employee ambassadorship in an SNS setting, and addressing the role of organisational identification in explaining this relation, we contribute to further theory building on new forms of OCBs and offer insights of practical value to organisations.

### CONFLICT OF INTEREST STATEMENT

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

### ETHICS STATEMENT

This research was approved by the ESHCC Research Ethics Review Committee of Erasmus University Rotterdam.

### TRANSPARENCY STATEMENT

All results are reported honestly, the studies were conducted ethically and the submitted work is original.

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### SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Additional supporting information can be found online in the Supporting Information section at the end of this article.

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