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The Impact of Employer Branding on the Decision-Making Process of First-Time Job Seekers: A Comprehensive Analysis.

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Master in Marketing

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PhD Ana Maria Vitorino Ferreira Comporta, Invited Associate Professor,
Department of Marketing Operations and Management at Iscte Business School

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BUSINESS
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Department of Marketing, Operations & General Management

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RESUMO

O principal objetivo desta tese é avaliar o impacto do employer branding no processo de tomada de decisão dos jovens à procura do primeiro emprego no mercado de trabalho português. Especificamente, a tese identifica as dimensões do employer branding—como Cultura Organizacional, Salário e Incentivos, Ética e Responsabilidade Social Corporativa (RSC) e Diversidade—que mais influenciam as perceções dos candidatos.

Para alcançar este objetivo, foram recolhidos dados de 207 respondentes através de um questionário online desenvolvido na plataforma Qualtrics.XM, dirigido a indivíduos com idades entre os 18 e os 35 anos, com pelo menos uma licenciatura, que estavam ativamente à procura de emprego ou que recentemente procuraram emprego. Os dados foram analisados utilizando o software SPSS e comparados com a literatura existente.

Os principais resultados revelam que a Cultura Organizacional e o Salário e Incentivos têm a influência positiva mais forte no ajuste Pessoa-Organização, enquanto a Ética e a RSC e a Diversidade contribuem de forma menos significativa. Importa destacar que o ajuste Pessoa-Organização demonstrou ter um forte impacto na perceção de uma empresa como Empregadora de Eleição. Os resultados salientam o papel crucial de estratégias de employer branding personalizadas para atrair e reter jovens talentos num mercado competitivo.

Palavras chave: Employer Branding; Processo de decisão; Candidatos a primeiro emprego

JEL Sistema de Classificação: : M31 – Marketing; J24: Human Capital; Skills; Occupational Choice

ABSTRACT

This thesis's primary objective is to evaluate employer branding's impact on first-time job seekers' decision-making process within the Portuguese job market. Specifically, the thesis identifies the dimensions of employer branding—such as Work Culture, Salary and Incentives, Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), and Diversity—that most significantly influence candidates' perceptions.

To achieve this, data was collected from 207 respondents through an online questionnaire designed on Qualtrics.XM, targeting individuals aged 18-35 with at least a bachelor's degree who were actively seeking or had recently sought employment. The data was analyzed using SPSS and compared against established literature.

Key findings reveal that Work Culture and Salary and Incentives have the strongest positive influence on Person-Organization Fit, while Ethics and CSR and Diversity contribute less significantly. Importantly, Person-Organization Fit was shown to have a strong impact on whether a company is perceived as an Employer of Choice. The findings underscore the critical role of tailored employer branding strategies in attracting and retaining young talent in a competitive market.

Keywords: Employer Branding; First-Time Job Seekers; Decision Making Process

JEL Classification System: M31 – Marketing; J24: Human Capital; Skills; Occupational Choice

Table of contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMNTS.....i

RESUMO..... iii

ABSTRACT.....v

1. Introduction..... 1

2. LITERATURE REVIEW 2

2.1 Employer Branding.....2

2.2 Importance of Consistency and Alignment in Employer Branding… 3

2.3 Benefits of Employer Branding… 3

2.4 Value Proposition of Employer Branding… 5

2.5 Effect of employer branding on candidate preferences.....5

2.6 Social Media in Employer Branding….....7

2.7 The Role of Marketing in Employer Branding… 8

2.8 Person Organization Fit 9

3. Conceptual Framework and Methodology 11

3.1 Conceptual Framework.....11

3.2 Research Hypothesis.....13

3.2.1 Hypothesis related to the impact of Work Culture on the Person Organization Fit 15

3.2.2 Hypothesis related to the impact of Salary and Incentives on the Person Organization Fit 15

3.2.3 Hypothesis related to the impact of Ethics and CSR in the Person Organization Fit 16

3.2.4 Hypothesis related to the impact of Diversity in the Person Organization Fit 16

3.2.5 Hypothesis related to the impact of Person Organization Fit on Employer of Choice 17

4. Methodology.....18

4.1 Methodology Outline 18

4.2 Methodology Procedure.....19

4.3 Questionnaire Design….....20

4.4 Scales 21
4.4.1 Work Culture Scale 22
4.4.2 Salary and Incentives Scale 22
4.4.3 Ethics and CSR Scale 23
4.4.4 Diversity Scale 23
4.4.5 Person Organization-Fit Scale 24
4.4.6 Employer Of-Choice Scale 24
5 Data Analysis 25
5.1 Demographics 25
5.1.1 Age Groups 25
5.1.2 Education Level 26
5.2 Reliability Test 26
5.3 Normality Test 27
5.4 Correlation Test 28
5.5 Hypothesis Testing 31
5.5.1 Hypothesis 1 31
5.5.2 Hypothesis 2 33
5.5.3 Hypothesis 3 35
5.5.4 Hypothesis 4 37
5.5.5 Hypothesis 5 39
6 Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research 41
6.1 Conclusion: Overall Discussion of the Results 41
6.2 Managerial Implications 44
6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research 45
7 . References 47
APPENDIX A – Questionnaire design 57
APPENDIX B - Sample Sociodemographic Frequencies 66
APPENDIX C – Anova Tests 67
APPENDIX D – Hypothesis Testing 69

Table of Figures

Figure 3.1 – Conceptual model.....12

Table of Tables

Table 4.1.....22
Table 4.2.....22
Table 4.3.....23
Table 4.4.....23
Table 4.5.....24
Table 4.6.....24
Table 5.1.....25
Table 5.2.....26
Table 5.3.....27
Table 5.4.....28
Table 5.5.....30
Table 5.6.....31
Table 5.7.....32
Table 5.8.....33
Table 5.9.....34
Table 5.10.....35
Table 5.11.....36
Table 5.12.....37
Table 5.13.....38
Table 5.14.....39
Table 5.15.....40

1. Introduction

The term *"Employer Branding",* was conceived in literature Ambler and Barrow (1996, p.187), and described as *"the set of functional, economic and psychological assistance provided by employment, and recognized with the employing company."*

Even though employer branding can pertain to different perspectives, namely, the internal, which focuses on businesses developing and retaining talent, and the external, which focuses on businesses attracting and acquiring talent Ferreira, Ventura and Oliveira (2014), the main focus of the study in question, to understand how different employer branding factors impact First-Time Job-Seeker's decision-making process, and therefore the focus is mainly related to the external perspective.

In today's information-driven society, employer branding has a major connection, if not the biggest connection, in attracting and retaining talented individuals, Berthon *et al.(* 2005) suggest that the desirability of an organization can be seen as the value of their brand, as perceived by employees. It is therefore essential to explore how various factors influence candidates' decision-making processes when it comes to choosing an employer.

Thanks to several public-private efforts and incentives, a great number of people now have access to several resources, to familiarize themselves with a company and its brand before deciding, as a result, the use of information through said resources has been growing in popularity Bicky and Kwok (2011). With these factors in play, candidates' current choices and their intentions towards joining an organization with a strong employer brand will significantly shape the future of talent acquisition and retention strategies.

Hence, the focus of this study is to characterize if employer branding has any impact on candidate preferences when seeking their first job in their area of expertise.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Employer Branding

Employer branding is a commonly spread, widely used topic, and the subject of many literary studies, considering this, it is possible to understand why this simple term, has so many definitions. Theurer *et al*. (2016).

Over time, extensive research has been conducted on the concept of employer branding, Collings, and Scullion (2019) define the concept as a procedure where organizations create a positive perceived idea of themselves as an employer Moroko & Uncles, (2008); Theurer *et al*., (2016). This definition emphasizes the importance of organizations that create a distinctive and positive reputation to attract talent, while also maintaining the current one. A big reason why this is pertains to the fact that costs related to substituting said employees would be higher than effective employer branding techniques. Biswas and Sauer (2016)

Collings and Scullion (2019) further suggest that creating an effective employer brand requires a strategic approach where different departments such as marketing, human resources, and communications work together to create a consistent image of the organization as an employer.

Literature in this field has evolved while maintaining its connection to marketing strategies, adopting a contemporary approach to address the challenges faced by Human Resources in attracting, retaining, and nurturing talent Backhaus and Tikoo (2004). They emphasize the need for a comprehensive and integrated approach to employer branding that considers the entire employee experience, from onboarding to exit.

Bussin, M., and Mouton (H. 2019, p.6) also suggested that "*employees with a high overall employer branding score were more satisfied with their employers, and employees with low overall employer branding score were less satisfied with their employers*".

2.2 Importance of Consistency and Alignment in Employer Branding~

According to Collings and Scullion (2019), consistency and alignment are critical components of effective employer branding. Collings and Scullion (2019) suggest that organizations should ensure that their employment value proposition is reflected in all employment-related activities and that all aspects of the employment experience are consistent with the brand. This helps create a more coherent portrait and increases its competitiveness in attracting and retaining employees. The authors also emphasize the importance of alignment between employer branding and organizational values and culture. The authors also suggest that to be effective in attracting and retaining employees, an employer brand must align with the company's overall mission and values.

2.3 Benefits of Employer Branding

There are many advantages associated with the implementation of employer branding practices, but two stand out from the rest.

One of the first advantages is associated with the retention of employees, as mentioned by Bussin, M., and Mouton, H. (2019, p.6) "*Employees with a high overall employer branding scores are more satisfied with their employers and employees with low overall employer branding scores are less satisfied with their employers".* Considering this, it is possible to understand that employees with higher overall employer branding are less likely to be unhappy with their organization, and therefore less likely to leave it.

An overview of the effect of employer branding on employee retention by Gilani, H., and Cunningham, L., (2017, p. 251) states that *"A detailed literature review indicates a clear influence of employer branding on employee brand perception and brand image which then leads to brand retention.* "Another fundamental advantage of employer branding, which is also related to the main objective of this study is the importance and the growth of employer branding in one key aspect for every organization, attracting possible employees. Burmann and Zeplin, (2005) Moroko and Uncles (2008) Sengupta, Bamel, and Singh (2015).

According to Alashmawy, A. and Yazdanifard, R (2019, p. 570) *"Talent acquisition is defined as the process of finding and acquiring skilled human labor for organizational needs and to meet any labor requirement."*

In this same article by Alashmawy, A. and Yazdanifard, R., (2019 p. 577), one of their main findings is that *"top talent are searching for a company the same way they would any other purchasing decision, which is why employer branding is so critical to the recruitment of the best talents."*

What this statement implies is that job seekers nowadays have multiple options to choose between, and therefore look more carefully at what companies might have to offer, through employer branding strategies, than ever before.

According to Alashmawy, A.and Yazdanifard, R., (2019, p. 573) it is possible to also understand that the role of employer branding in acquiring talent and having an overall well-balanced employer branding strategy lies within providing potential employees the most amount of possible accurate information *"Providing valuable and relevant information here is crucial to help prospective candidates professionally, build trust and create positive feelings towards the organization, therefore increases the organization's talent acquisition effectiveness."*

With the main advantages of Employer Branding outlined, it is also of extreme importance to understand that other organizational benefits derive from these two factors.

Barrow and Mosley (2005) stated that organizations with strong employer brands lead to multiple organizational benefits, namely current employees' overall improvement in engagement, reduction in expenses, and therefore better overall results organizationwide.

With all of this in mind, *"organizations realized that the appropriate way to become attractive in employment market is by having strong, distinguishable and clear employer brand*." Singh (2021.,p. 105) which according to Thorne (2004) is defined as a mixture of both economic, functional, and psychological advantages related to a particular organization.

Therefore, organizations that strategically implement employer branding strategies can successfully position themselves as the preferred employer within the labour market Taylor (2010).

2.4 Value Proposition of Employer Branding

Deshpande, A. (2019, p. 2) defines EVP as *"Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is the balance of the rewards and benefits that are received by employees in return for their performance at the workplace. Organizations generally develop an EVP to provide a consistent platform for employer brand communication and experience management."*

A company's distinctive perks and advantages that set it apart from rivals and help it draw and keep top personnel are also what can be described as the real value proposition of employer branding Edwards (2010), who also mentioned that organizations utilize the Value proposition of employer branding to enhance employee satisfaction, attract top talent, and increase engagement and productivity, who concluded by saying it is a critical component of human resources management and significantly influences organizational performance.

Bell (2005) mentioned in his research that many others have delved into the value proposition of employer branding, and reached the conclusion that indeed it is a main source advantage for any company, to not only attract but to also retain talent.

2.5 Effect of employer branding on candidate preferences

It is, when addressing this chapter of extreme importance to understand that, while organizations select the desired candidate in the recruitment and selection process, there is also a process of selection for the candidates to identify the most fitting organization for themselves. Most people and organizations recognize that during the recruitment and selection process on college campuses, organizations choose candidates to hire from a pool of applicants. However, it is equally true that candidates also decide which organizations to engage with during the recruitment process. Candidates can participate or not when a company (either in person or virtually) comes to the campus for recruitment. Pavitra, K (2018).

Moreover, Collins and Stevens (2002), stated that brand-related characteristics oftentimes have a higher impact than job-specific details.

It is also referred in said study that while searching for a new job, potential candidates do value strong employer brands. The study demonstrates that branding strategy and a candidate's recruitment preferences are interconnected. A strong employer brand influences a student's recruitment choices. Pavitra, K (2018).

Establishing an effective employer brand takes time, according to Kowalczyk and Pawlish (2002) reputation is a perceptual judgment formed over time based on an organization's past actions.

In an ever-growing competitive job market, to acquire the best talent, it is therefore very important for organizations to employ employer brand tactics, to not fall behind competitors. Applicants are more aware of companies with a strong Corporate Social Position (CSP), making these companies more likely to attract talent and gain a competitive edge over those with a lower CSP. *Pavitra, K; (2018).*

Further literature on the topic by Highhouse *et al* (2003), states that organizations should increasingly apply Employer branding tactics to attract the best possible talent and to distance themselves from other companies also trying to attract the best talent.

Berthon *et al.* (2005) suggest that the main factors that lead to an organization becoming a desirable employer are closely related to the worth of its brand, as perceived by employees, and mentioned that when prospective employees gather promising information about a company, it helps to lower their perceived risk and enhances their expectations of job quality.

Considering the literature mentioned above, it is possible to understand that employer branding tactics do indeed have an influence on potential employees' decision-making process and should, therefore invest in related methods to become an EOC, further literature, not only states this but goes so far as to state that organizations that do not partake in developing successful employer branding strategies, are at a large disadvantage in the job market, when compared to its competitors.

"Thus, organisations that do not recognise the importance of employer branding, and fail to implement it strategically, tend to be at a disadvantage in the market." Dias, H; and Silva, A.; (2022, p. 3)

2.6 Social Media in Employer Branding

Platforms that enable users to create profiles, engage with others, create, and share information, through online means are known as social media. Boyd and Ellison, (2008); Carpentier *et al*., (2017); McFarland and Ployhart,(2015).

The main objective of social media platforms is to connect people worldwide, for various instances, as said by Elefant (2011), it can be described as a group of online resources that make it easier to collaborate and share information with people all over the world.

The context in which we are describing social media in this project is in the employer branding context, and how organizations have been using it worldwide for various instances such as to attract and retain qualified workers. Companies have now fully incorporated social media into their employer brand management strategies in most businesses worldwide and this digital transformation has emerged as a major source of careful consideration. Chanias, Myers and Hessa (2019).

The ever-growing role of such platforms in today´s job market, and more concretely in employer branding strategies, helps improve organizational appeal and encourage job seekers to apply. Idrissi M., Lissaneddine Z. and Manzani Y. (2021).

Social media provides organizations with opportunities, that not so long ago were not possible to communicate so easily to new prospects, they may also help said organizations gain an advantage in acquiring talent over competitors, by making easily available tools that allow job applicants to get to know organizations better than ever before. El Zoghbi and Aoun, (2016); Turban and Cable (2003).

As previously mentioned, besides attracting potential employees, social media platforms are also very useful for internal employer branding tactics, such as empowerment and loyalty. Businesses do confront the challenging issue of balancing internal values with the external messaging of the brand that is spread via social media. Edwards (2009).

Another important aspect of employer branding on social media for internal employees is related to the fact that said employees can also gather a sense of what stances, beliefs, and social causes the company stands by; therefore, their views and ideals can be combined with the organization's values strengthening their sense of allegiance to it. Brunetto and Farr-Wharton (2002).

Therefore, it´s easy to understand that in today´s world, social media has a very important role both internally and externally, because as said previously, it is probably today´s biggest enabler in companies communicating their organization structure and culture.

2.7 The role of Marketing in Employer Branding

When addressing the role of Marketing in employer branding, it is of extreme importance to understand that Marketing departments are not necessarily responsible for creating it and ensuring it, even though it is advised that they work together with HR to define it but are the channel through which a company's Employer Branding policies are communicated. "*Successful employer brands were seen as being accurately portrayed through marketing communications and as consistently delivering on the inherent promise of the brand*." Moroko and Uncles (2008, p. 1690).

Despite this, both Human Resources and Marketing departments must be aligned, to effectively create strategies that are both attractive and that can be communicated. "The marketing and Human Resources Management departments need to blend strategically for effective Employer Branding". Ambler and Barrow (1996); Barrow and Mosley (2005); Edwards (2010); Moroko and Uncles (2008).

In the Employer Branding subject, Marketing plays a huge role, both externally, where the main goal is to recruit the right talent, from a huge pool of possibilities, "*External marketing of the employer brand is designed primarily to attract the target population but is also designed to support and enhance the product or corporate brands. It is fundamental to employer branding that the employer brand be consistent with all other branding efforts of the firm"* Sullivan (1999) cited by Sharma, N. (2016, p.50), while internally the main goal is to uphold the company and its employees to the standards set by the company Employer Branding strategies, *"The goal of internal marketing, also known as internal branding, is to develop a workforce that is committed*

to the set of values and organizational goals established by the firm. Employer branding is thus basically how an organization markets what it has to offer to both potential and existing employees." Walker (2007) cited by Sharma, N. (2016, p.50). This means both work together with different intentions, and different roles but towards the same companywide goal.

Once aligned, Marketing departments perform their roles in communicating, both internally and externally, according to the set strategies, said strategies portray both the channels of communicating the message but also the content of the message itself, which serve both the purpose of attracting talent but also maintain brand loyalty within the company.

"Once the strategies are formulated, the communication channels for internal and external marketing are identified for positioning the brand propositions in the minds of the prospective and existing employees. This leads to employer attractiveness for the potential employees and employer brand loyalty for the current employees." Sharma, N. (2016, p.50)

2.8 Person Organization Fit

"Person-organization fit is broadly defined as the compatibility between people and organizations" Ronshu, O; (2004, Vol.54 No.6, p.182), meaning that although there are many definitions and discussions regarding this topic, the broad definition for this topic is defined as the perceived identification between employees and the company in which they work in.

Considering the definition of the topic and the extent to which it has been studied, we can understand that its importance is tremendous since it drives like-minded individuals to organizations where they feel identified with and provides companies with employees with a lot of positive behaviors toward the company, not only on a professional context but also on a social one, which in turn is beneficial to said organization and society as a whole.

"People and organizations are attracted to one another based on their similarity. This influences the applicant's job choice behavior and organization's hiring decisions. Empirical evidence has shown that a high level of Person Organization Fit is related to a number of positive outcomes. It was found to be correlated with work attitudes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment it was also found to predict intention of quit and turnover and was related to prosocial behaviors such as organizational citizenship behavior, self-reported teamwork, and contextual performance." Ronshu, O (2004, Vol.54 No.6, p.182).

3. Conceptual framework and Methodology

The theoretical framework for the impact of employer branding on first-time job seekers is presented in the following chapter, along with the research hypothesis that were tested in this study. Following a discussion of the data-gathering procedures and associated analysis methodologies, the chosen object of study is also provided and justified.

3.1 Conceptual framework

According to the literature review the current study examines how employer branding affects the choices that first-time job seekers, specifically those who have just graduated from college, make. It also determines which of the tested hypotheses has the greatest influence on these job seekers' choices. To understand what can be done to benefit both sides, it is necessary to take a deeper look at the measures that attract potential employees the most. Employer branding is crucial for businesses looking to get the best talent.

The theoretical underpinnings of the impact of employer branding on first-time job seekers, particularly those just out of college, have been investigated and assessed, along with the corresponding hypotheses and scales developed, according to the literature review. The study by Kumar and Tanwar (2018), "*Employer brand, personorganization fit and employer of choice: Investigating the moderating effect of social media*," was chosen as a reference model to support the empirical analysis of this investigation in the Portuguese job market because it focused on understanding how employer branding policies influence first-time job seekers' decisions.

Because of their research in the field of employer branding, Kumar and Tanwar (2018) modified and validated the employer attractiveness scale (EmpAt) Berthon *et al*. (2005), which according to Kumar and Tanwar (2018) *"is the most implemented scale in the context of the employer brand and has been employed by various authors to measure the effectiveness of the employer brand."*

It is important to research these hypotheses within the Portuguese job market according to the authors citing Berthon *et al. (2005)*, "*because of cross-cultural differences, the EmpAt scale cannot be extended cross-nationally without further psychometric testing."*

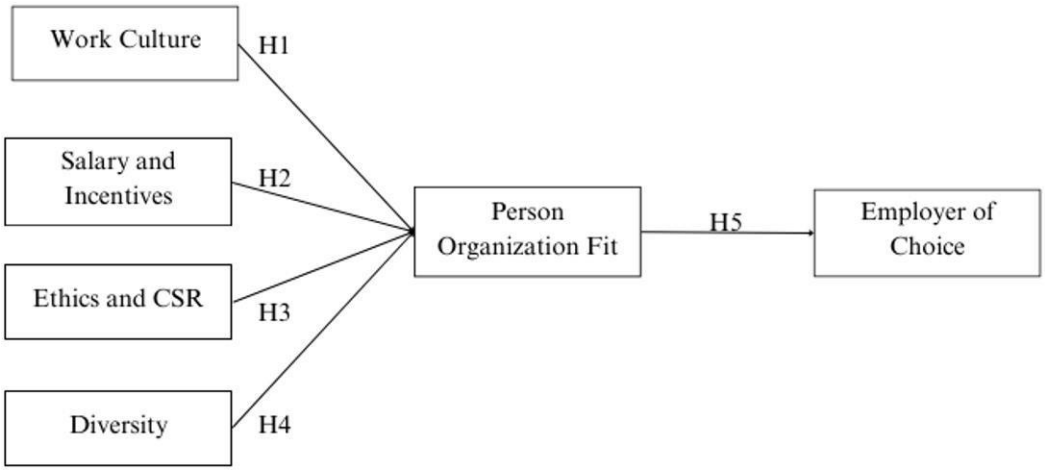
With all of this in mind, the main objective of testing "*the moderating role of social media in the relationship between Person-Organization-Fit and Employer-Of-Choice*" Kumar and Tanwar (2018), seven main factors were tested: *"Work culture, Ethics and CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility), Diversity, Salary and incentives, Person Organization Fit (POF), social media and Employer of choice (EOC)."*

The analysis conducted by Kumar and Tanwar (2018), helps support the present thesis by analyzing the impact of said factors, to understand how much the Employer Branding dimensions impact first-time job seekers' decisions when they apply for their jobs.

Conceptual Model

Employer Brand Dimensions

Figure 3.1 – Conceptual Framework with Hypothesis



3.2 Research Hypothesis

As stated, the present research focuses on studying the impact of Employer Branding on the decision-making process of first-time job seekers. In their study, Kumar and Tanwar (2018) conducted this analysis to understand what *"the moderating role of social media in the relationship between and Person Organization Fit Employer of Choice"* was, also defended by other researchers Madera, (2012); Sivertzen *et al*. (2013)

The factors to assess employer branding were the same ones identified by Kumar and Tanwar (2018). This choice was made with the understanding that to carry out a truly accurate replication of the authors' methodology, the variables under analysis should remain the same, providing a legitimate corroboration of the influence of employer branding on candidates' decision-making process and which factors have the greatest impact on candidates' decisions.

It is, therefore, possible to understand what factors of employer brand have the most impact on an employer becoming an EOC, considering this we can understand which factors of employer branding are the most influential for the group under analysis.

The variables used Kumar and Tanwar (2018) are consistent with the goal of this study, which is to understand the impact of employer branding on first-time job seekers' decision-making processes and is consequently related to the goal of Kumar and Tanwar´s (2018).

According to Lauver and Kristof-Brown (2001), the person-organization fit is the alignment of an employee's views, values, and culture with the employer's reputation.

(2004) Backhaus and Tikoo made the case that potential employees should compare the company brand to their own beliefs and characteristics.

Additionally, research reveals that the employer brand serves as a tool for the company to communicate its values to its constituents, enabling the employees to make sure they mesh with the corporate culture Parmar (2014).

According to the investigation model, employees who are analyzing or seeking to find a job opening, can look through their employer branding policies to determine whether there would be a good Person Organization Fit.

3.2.1 Hypothesis related to the impact of Work Culture on the Person Organization Fit.

Work Culture

According to research Boon *et al*., (2011); Harinck *et al*., (2000), people are more willing to work for an organization that offers an atmosphere that matches their personal traits. According to Firfiray and Mayo (2017), organizations with flexible work schedules and strong work-life balance policies are perceived as having a high level of person- organization fit by job seekers.

Considering this, we can assert that our first hypothesis is:

H1 – Work culture impacts Person Organization Fit.

3.2.2 Hypothesis related to the impact of Salary and Incentives on the Person Organization Fit.

Salary and Incentives

Research indicates that workers have a positive relationship with companies that provide competitive pay and benefit packages. Employees enjoy working for a company that prioritizes their wage requirements Cable and DeRue (2002). This is because if their demands are met by monetary or non-monetary incentives, they will believe that the company values their work.

Considering this, we can assert that our second hypothesis is:

H2 – Salary and Incentives Impact the Person Organization Fit

3.2.3 Hypothesis related to the impact of Ethics and CSR in the Person Organization Fit.

Ethics and CSR

According to a study by Ambrose *et al*. (2008), potential employees are more likely to feel a person-organization fit if they are compatible with the company's CSR objectives. Additionally, fostering an ethical workplace and developing an ethical setting improves the person-organization fit since employees are more likely to join a business that upholds specific moral principles, particularly principles that coincide with those they adhere to in their personal lives Valentine *et al*. (2002).

Considering this, we can assert that our third hypothesis is:

H3 – Ethics and CSR impact the Person Organization Fit

3.2.4 Hypothesis related to the impact of Diversity in the Person Organization Fit.

Diversity

According to Makraiova *et al*. (2014), cultural diversity in the workplace is crucial for fostering a good match between the workforce and the organization. High achievers and individuals with a high level of abilities are more likely to favor organizations that offer a variety of different and challenging tasks. Trank et al. (2002).

Considering this, we can assert that our fourth hypothesis is:

H4 – Diversity Impacts the Person Organization Fit

3.2.5 Hypothesis related to the impact of Person Organization Fit on Employer of Choice.

Rampl (2014) looked at the connection between first-choice brand/EOC and employer brand variables. The impact of employer brand-related emotions was found to be a mediating variable between employer brand determinants and employee experience.

According to Rampl (2014), the prediction of an EOC can also be influenced by other mediating variables. The study claims that one of the results of employer branding, the Person Organization Fit, a fit between employee values and the organization is an antecedent of an EOC.

This study, in accordance with Kumar and Tanwar´s study, is, therefore, a step forward since it makes the case that employer brand factors. which are important for an organization to become an Employer of Choice, must produce a Person Organization Fit, which would then result in the establishment of Employer of Choice status. Therefore, this thesis, hypothesizes that the Person Organization has an impact in a company becoming an Employer of Choice.

Therefore, the fifth and final hypothesis of this research is:

H5 – The impact of Person Organization Fit on Employer of Choice

4. Methodology

In the following section, the methodology selected for the questionnaire, as well as the data collected, and analysis will be explained in further detail.

4.1 Methodology Outline

In the current study, the quantitative study involved the replication of the scale developed by Kumar and Tanwar (2018), to examine the moderating effect of social media on Person Organization Fit and Employer of Choice.

This scale was adapted from Berthon et al. (2005) as it is the most used scale in the context of employer branding and has also been utilized by numerous other authors such as Arachchige and Robertson (2011) to measure the efficacy of the employer brand,

The original items were created and tested in English; however, the main goal of the study is its application in the Portuguese job market.

To remain faithful to the previous study scale, the same scales were maintained and each of the questionnaire's items was scored using a Likert scale of 5 points (1 being strongly disagreed with and 5 being strongly agreed with).

Furthermore, four filter questions were applied in the questionnaire to gather the respondents with the necessary criteria to effectively test the research´s hypothesis.

It is also important to state that the present study is a quantitative research approach, and it is an explanatory analysis since there is previously supported evidence to explain the methods and constructs used.

The method employed to gather the respondents necessary for this analysis is an online questionnaire, which consists of several questions regarding the below-mentioned dimensions, it is also important to note that due to time restrictions, the sample gathered is a convenience sample.

4.2 Methodology Procedure

In accordance with the objective of the study to analyse the impact of employer branding in the decision-making process of first-time job seekers, the questionnaire was applied to respondents between the ages of 18-35, with at least a bachelor´s degree as their highest level of education, who are seeking for a job or have searched for one in their area of expertise within the last two year and who can understand English, since this survey was created and released in English.

It is important to understand that the purpose of the study was not to understand what the respondents deemed as important, but instead what parameters they valued when seeking out their first job within their area of expertise.

The aimed respondents were addressed through several social media platforms such as (WhatsApp, Instagram, etc.) the aim of the study was detailed in the introduction as well as the necessary criteria to qualify. The questionnaire was shared through an online link, that would direct the respondents to Qualtrics XM, which is a platform often used for data collection and analysis. The final pool of respondents came up to 207, even though many were screened out due to not fitting criteria or incomplete responses.

Before said questionnaire was released to a wider audience, a pre-test was conducted with 15 respondents, minor changes were applied, and the study was then shared through the mentioned platforms. It was feasible to gather a total of 207 responses after the collection period, during which the questionnaire was consistently shared.

4.3 Questionnaire Design

In the first phase, there was an introductory page, that explained the objective of the study, as well as the requirements to qualify for the study, to avoid unnecessary responses.

The questionnaire, which was distributed solely in English, was divided into several sections and it took around 2-5 minutes to answer in its totality.

1st section: Introduction to the research purpose, as well as the requirements to qualify for the study. (Appendix A)

2nd section. This was composed of four different screener questions, to gather sociodemographic data about the respondents, and to filter out relevant respondents, the questions pertained to the Level of English, Age group, Education level, and finally, whether the respondent was actively or had searched for a job in the past two years.

3rd section: Once the respondents with the necessary criteria, were selected, they were questioned about their level of agreeance, on a scale from 1 through 5, about several employer branding factors, and which ones they valued most when searching for their job.

The four factors of employer branding tested were, “Work Culture”, “Salary and Incentives”, “Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility” and “Diversity”.

4th section: In the fourth section, the respondents were asked, once again related to their previous or current job search experience, how they felt about “Person Organization

Fit” and if the employer in question was an “Employer of Choice”.

5th section: Finally, an acknowledgment section was shown to the respondents, informing them that their responses had been recorded.

Each of the factors questioned related to the validated scales, presented in the study were measured on a 5-point Likert scale, where one "1- Strongly Disagree" and "5- Strongly Agree".

Each of the items related to the validated scales of "Work Culture", "Salary and Incentives", "Ethics and CSR", "Diversity", "Person Organization-Fit" and "Employer of Choice" presented in the questionnaire were measured using a 5-point Likert scale, where 1 corresponds to "Strongly disagree" and 5 to "Strongly agree":

The data was then collected, processed, and analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics.

4.4 Scales

The present study is an adaption of (Kumar and Tanwar, 2018) study, which was conducted in the Indian context, where their aim was to understand the opinion of students who were all seeking full-time jobs, about 10 attractive employers and how they felt about the constructs mentioned above, while the present study aims to understand what graduated students seeking for a job, or who sought for a job in the past two years, felt about what constructs mentioned, had the most weight in their decision-making process, as well as how they felt about how if they would fit in the company and if it was an employer of choice.

Considering this, since both studies have similar objectives, the same scales developed in Kumar and Tanwar (2018) study, were used in this study.

4.4.1 Work Culture Scale

Table 4.1

Scale and Author	Work Culture	Type of Scale
Work Culture Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)	***Work Culture Items*** 1. The organization offers good internal training opportunities. 2. Friendly relationships among individual co-workers. 3. The organization provides opportunity to work from home. 4. The organization offers job security. 5. The organization provides flexible working hours.	5-point Likert Rating Scale

Work Culture Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)

4.4.2 Salary and Incentives Scale

Table 4.2

Scale and Author	Salary and Incentives	Type of Scale
Salary and Incentives Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)	***Salary and Incentives Items*** 1. The organization provides good health benefits. 2. Additional benefits are offered to motivate employees. 3. The organization offers an attractive overall compensation package. 4. The organization offers above average compensation and perks.	5-point Likert Rating Scale

Salary and Incentives Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)

4.4.3 Ethics and CSR Scale

Table 4.3

Scale and Author	Ethics and CSR	Type of Scale
Ethics and CSR Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)	***Ethics and CSR Items*** 1. Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations. 2. The organization has a fair attitude towards employees. 3. The organization is humanitarian, gives back to the society. 4. The organization gives adequate contribution towards charities.	5-point Likert Rating Scale

Ethics and CSR Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)

4.4.4 Diversity Scale

Table 4.4

Scale and Author	Diversity	Type of Scale
Diversity Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)	***Diversity Items*** 1. The organization offers a good variety of work activities. 2. Employees from different cultures are welcomed in this organization. 3. The organization offers challenging tasks. 4. The organization provides opportunities to choose from a wide variety of tasks.	5-point Likert Rating Scale

Diversity Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)

4.4.5 Person-Organization-Fit Scale

Table 4.5

Scale and Author	Person-Organization-Fit	Type of Scale
Person-Organization-Fit Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)	***Person-Organization-Fit Items*** 1. My skills and abilities match the skills and abilities this organization looks for in an employee. 2. I think I will find like-minded colleagues in this organization. 3. I feel that this organization suits my style of working. 4. My personality is well suited to the image of this organization.	5-point Likert Rating Scale

Person-Organization-Fit Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)

4.4.6 Employer-Of-Choice Scale

Table 4.6

Scale and Author	Employer-Of-Choice	Type of Scale
Employer-Of-Choice Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)	***Employer-of-Choice Items*** 1. The organization is one of my first choices as an employer. 2. The organization is the most attractive employer for me. 3. I really want a job with this particular organization.	5-point Likert Rating Scale

Employer-Of-Choice Scale Kumar and Tanwar, (2018)

5. Data Analysis

The purpose of this chapter is to apply a statistical analysis, to reach a better understanding of the hypothesis previously mentioned.

5.1 Demographics

This study had 207 valid responses, out of a total pool of 350 respondents, collected through a Qualtrics XM survey.

For the respondents to be considered valid, the criteria were that they should understand English, they should be between the ages of 15-35, with at least a bachelor´s degree as their level of education and they had to have looked for a job in the past two years.

5.1.1 Age Groups

According to the below table, most respondents of this sample were between the ages of 18-24 with a percentage of 82,1% of the total pool, while the age groups 25-29 and 3035, corresponded to a much smaller pool of respondents with a percentage of 16,9% and 1%, of the total pool, respectively.

Table 5.1 – Age groups

	N	%
18-24	170	82.1%
25-29	35	16.9%
30-35	2	1.0%
Total	**207**	**100%**

5.1.2 Education Level

Regarding the education level of respondents, it´s possible to understand that most respondents, had mostly a Bachelor´s Degree, as their highest level of education, with a percentage of 78.7%, while only 21.3% had a Master´s degree as their highest level of education, which is understandable considering the age groups the respondents fit it.

Table 5.2 – Education Level

	N	%
Bachelor´s Degree	163	78.7%
Master´s Degree	44	21.3%
Total	**207**	**100%**

5.2 Reliability Test

Before analysing the data gathered, it is necessary to understand the Constructs in the study and to validate whether, these same constructs are consistent among themselves. *"Nunnally (1978) recommends reliabilities of 0.70 or better (but not much beyond than 0.80) for basic research and between 0.90 and 0.95 in cases where important decisions are to be made on the basis of the test scores."* Nunnally, cited by Panayides (2013).

While analysing Table 8, is possible to understand that all the constructs within this research are above a 0.7 value, therefore we can conclude that the variance is reliable. It is also important to understand that a higher value of the Alpha´s Cronbach, does not necessarily equate to more consistency and therefore a better analysis, since other factors could be in play such as redundancy, *"The alpha should not be too high (over 0.90 or so). Higher values may reflect unnecessary duplication of content across items and point more to redundancy than to homogeneity."* Streiner, cited by Panayides (2013).

Table 5.3 – Constructs Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach´s Alpha	N of Items
Work Culture	.853	5
Salary and incentives	.892	4
Ethics and CSR	.711	4
Diversity	.812	4
POF	.895	4
EOC	.830	3

Considering the aforementioned, the Cronbach´s Alpha is both higher than 0.7 and lower than 0.90, and it is possible to conclude that these values are an indicator of consistency.

5.3 Normality Test

The importance of normality tests pertains to the fact that it is of extreme importance to identify the normality of data to avoid drawing the wrong conclusions from the gathered data.

> *"It is essential to assess the normality of data before any formal statistical analysis. Otherwise, we might draw erroneous inferences and wrong conclusions. Normality can be assessed both visually and through normality tests. Since graphical tests are very much subjective the use of analytical tests is highly recommended. Among the analytical tests, the Shapiro-Wilk test is provided by the SPSS software and possesses very good power properties."* Das, K., Imon, R. (2016, p.11)

Table 5.4 – Normality Test – Skewness and Kurtosis

	N	Mean	St.Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis
Work Culture	207	3.78	.785	-,828	-.268
Salary and incentives	207	3.85	.912	-.515	-.978
Ethics and CSR	207	3.74	.569	-1.344	1.971
Diversity	207	4.02	.649	-1.197	1.243
POF	207	3.46	.839	.101	-1.291
EOC	207	3.50	.774	-.045	-1.124

It's important to keep in mind that a distribution is considered approximately normal when the skewness and excess kurtosis values lie between −1 and +1 Gupta et al. (2019). Given the sample size of n > 50, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was utilized to verify the normality of the distribution, following the guidelines from Gupta et al. (2019). Moreover, according to the Central Limit Theorem, as the sample size increases, the means of random samples tend to approximate a normal distribution Uttley (2019).

Considering table 10 above, we can affirm that the variables Person Organization Fit and Employer of choice are symmetrical, since the skewness lies between -0.5 and 0.5, the constructs Work culture, Salary and Incentives are moderately skewed since they lie between -1 and 1, while the constructs Ethics and CSR and Diversity are highly skewed since they are greater than either 1 or -1.

5.4 Correlation Test

Correlation test analysis is also among one of the most important analysis, as it is how we can assess the degree of closeness between two related variables.

> *"A simple correlation analysis represents measures the degree of closeness between two related variables. The correlation coefficient (r or R) as a measure provides information about the closeness of the two variables. The purpose of carrying out correlation analysis is almost the same in quantitative analytical studies, a correlation analysis becomes useful to explore the association between independent and dependent variables."* Senthilnathan, S. (2019, p.8)

Table 5.5 – Correlation between variables

		1	2	3	4	5	6
Work Culture	Pearson Correlation	1	,480**	<,001	,026	,074	,653**	,590**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)				,715	,292	<,001	<,001
	N	207	207		207	207	207	207
Salary and Incentives	Pearson Correlation	,480**	1		,160*	,021	,066	,722**	,686**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	<,001					,342	<,001	<,001
	N	207	207		207	207	207	207	207
Ethics and CSR	Pearson Correlation	,026	,160*		1	,533**	,223**	,001	,144*
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	,715	,021			<,001			,038
	N	207	207		207	207	207	207	207
Diversity	Pearson Correlation	,074	,066		,533**	1	,154*		,069
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	,292	,342		<,001		,026		,324
	N	207	207		207	207	207	207	207
POF	Pearson Correlation	,653**	,722**		,223**	,154*	1		,696**
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	<,001	<,001		,001	,026			<,001
	N	207	207		207	207	207	207	207
EOC	Pearson Correlation	,590**	,686**		,144*	,069	,696**		1
	Sig. (2-Tailed)	<,001	<,001		,038	,324	<,001		
	N	207	207		207	207	207	207	207

Considering Table 11 above it is possible to understand that not all variables have a significant relationship with each other as the p-values are not always $p < .05$.

Concerning Work Culture, we can see that the p-value is under < .05, for the Salary and Incentives, POF, and EOC variables, we can also observe that for all these variables the Pearson's R is over 0.4, meaning that they have a positive correlation, thus meaning that for an increase in Work culture, there is also an increase for the aforementioned variables.

When it comes to salary and Incentives, we can also affirm that there is a positive strong correlation between the POF and EOC variables, since both have a Pearson´s R above 0.5, which means that when the respondents identify with the salary and incentives offered by an organization their Person Organization Fit and Employer of Choice also increases. Ethics and CSR also show a positive relationship with the Diversity and POF variables, since the p-value is under 0.5 and both demonstrate a positive Pearson´s R.

Lastly while analyzing Person Organization Fit and Employer of Choice, we can also assert there is a strong positive relationship since (r=0.696).

5.5. Hypothesis Testing

5.5.1 Hypothesis 1

H1) Work culture impacts Person Organization Fit

The first Hypothesis tested in this study, is the impact of Work culture and it´s constructs on the Person Organization Fit construct.

To test the said Hypothesis, a Regression Analysis was conducted to understand the impact of Work culture and it´s constructs (Independent Variables) on Person Organization Fit (Dependent Variables).

Analyzing the below table (12), it´s possible to understand that the Work culture has a significant positive impact on the dependent variable, since we can deduce that Work Culture is responsible for 42,7% of Person Organization Fit.

What this value means is that for each added unit of Work Culture, Person Organization Fit increases by 42,7%

Table 5.6 – Linear regression between Work Culture and Person Organization Fit

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.653[a]	**.427**	.424	.636

Table 5.7 – Multiple linear regression between Work Culture Dimensions and Person Organization Fit

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.132	.211		5.366	<.001
	Good internal training opportunities	**-.148**	.041	-.196	-3.624	**<.001**
	Friendly relationships among coworkers	**.411**	.055	.470	7.470	**<.001**
	Opportunity to work from home	-.053	.068	-.047	-.776	.439
	Job security	**.285**	.057	.353	4.969	**<.001**
	Flexible working hours	.157	.052	.196	3.007	.003

a. Dependent Variable: POF

Considering the Anova table (Appendix Anova) where p-value is lower than < a = 0,05, (<.001), we can therefore reject the Null Hypothesis, and therefore it is possible to understand that Work Culture has an impact in Person Organization Fit, and as mentioned above, it is a significant impact, while analysing table 13, it is possible to understand that the that the Dimensions who positively impact the Person Organization

Fit the most are, “Friendly Relationship among Co-workers” “Job Security” (p = <.001 < a = 0,05), while “Good Internal training Opportunities” (p = <.001 < a = 0,05) impacts it negatively.

5.5.2 Hypothesis 2
H2 –Salary and Incentives impact the Person Organization Fit

Table 5.8 – Linear regression between Salary and Incentives and Person Organization Fit

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
1	.722[a]	**.521**	.518	.582

A linear regression analysis was also the chosen method, to comprehend the hypothesis that states that Salary and Incentives has an impact in the Person Organization Fit. In table 14 it´s possible to understand that the Salary and Incentives Construct is the one that impacts Person Organization Fit the most, with a positive impact of 52,1%. Therefore, it is possible to conclude as it was with the previous construct "Work Culture", that for every unit added of Salary and Incentives there is an increase of 52,1% in the "Person Organization Fit" construct.

Table 5.9 – Multiple linear regression between Salary and Incentives Dimensions and Person Organization Fit

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	.913	.164		5.558	<,001
	Good health benefits	-.129	.048	-.176	-2.659	,008
	Additional benefits are offered to motivate employees	**.244**	.063	.296	3.855	**<,001**
	Attractive overall compensation package	**.247**	.080	.274	3.107	**,002**
	Offers above average compensation and perks	**.317**	.054	.410	5.824	**<,001**

a. Dependent Variable: POF

While analysing the Anova table (Appendix Anova) where p-value is lower than < a = 0,05, (<.001), it is possible reject the Null Hypothesis, and therefore it is possible to understand that the Salary and Incentives construct has a very positive impact in the Person Organization Fit construct, looking at table 15, it is possible to understand that the Dimensions who positively impact the Person Organization Fit the most are "Above average compensation and perks", "Attractive overall compensation package" and "Additional benefits are offered to motivate employees since < a = 0,05, (<.001).

5.5.3 Hypothesis 3
H3 –Ethics and CSR impact Person Organization Fit

Table 5.10 – Linear regression between Ethics and CSR and Person Organization Fit

Model	R	R Square	R quadrado ajustado	Erro padrão da estimativa
1	.223[a]	.050	.045	.820

As in the previous two constructs, a linear regression analysis was conducted to understand the impact of the "Ethics and CSR" construct on Person Organization Fit, and through the R square value it´s possible to understand that indeed, the "Ethics and CSR", construct also has a positive impact on "Person Organization Fit", although said impact is much less significant than the previous two constructs, with a 5% variability on the dependent variable.

What this means is that for every added unit of "Ethics and CSR" there is an increase of 5% in the "Person Organization Fit" construct.

Table 5.11 – Multiple linear regression between Ethics and CSR Dimensions and Person Organization Fit

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2,272	.378		6,018	<,001
	Expected to follow all rules and regulations	-.065	.080	-.064	-.812	.418
	Fair attitude towards employees	**.244**	.079	.230	3.079	**.002**
	The organization gives back to the society	.154	.088	.142	1.753	.081
	Adequate contribution towards charities	.007	.097	.006	.074	.941

a. Dependent Variable: POF

Looking at the above Anova table (Appendix Anova) where p-value is lower than < a = 0,05, (<.001), it is possible reject the Null Hypothesis, and therefore it is possible to understand that the Ethics and CSR construct has a very minimal positive impact in the Person Organization Fit construct, looking at table 17, it is possible to understand that the Dimension who positively impact the Person Organization Fit the most is “Fair attitude towards employees”, since < a = 0,05, (<.001).

5.5.4 Hypothesis 4
H4 –Diversity Impacts Person Organization Fit

Table 5.12 – Linear regression between Diversity and Person Organization Fit

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.154[a]	.024	.019	.831

To analyse the last construct´s relationship with Person Organization Fit, a linear regression analysis was conducted to understand the impact of the "Diversity" construct on Person Organization Fit, and through the R square value it´s possible to understand that the, the "Diversity", construct also has a positive impact on "Person Organization Fit", although the said impact is the least significant of all the constructs, with a 2,4% variability on the dependent variable.

What this means is that for every added unit of "Ethics and CSR" there is an increase of 2,4% in the "Person Organization Fit" construct.

Table 5.13 – Multiple linear regression between Diversity Dimensions and Person Organization Fit

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficents		
		B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	2.083	.361		5.766	<.001
	Good variety of work activities	-.141	.084	-.141	-1.679	.095
	Different cultures are welcomed	**.428**	.094	.341	4.565	**<.001**
	Challenging tasks	**-.292**	.081	-.316	-3.614	**<.001**
	Opportunities to choose from a wide variety of tasks	**.361**	.092	.353	3.906	**<.001**

a. Dependent Variable: POF

While analysing the above Anova table (Appendix Anova) where p-value is lower than < a = 0,05, (<.001), it is possible reject the Null Hypothesis, and therefore it is possible to understand that the Diversity construct has even less of a positive impact in the Person Organization Fit construct, when compared to "Ethics and CSR", looking at table 17, it is possible to understand that the despite this several dimensions positively impact the Person Organization Fit, namely "Different cultures are welcomed",

"Challenging tasks" and "Opportunities to choose from a wide variety of tasks" since < a = 0,05, (<.001),

5.5.5 Hypothesis 5

H5 – Person Organization Fit Impacts Employer of Choice

Table 5.14 – Linear regression between Person Organization Fit and Employer of Choice

Model	R	R Squared	Adjusted R Square	Std.Error of the Estimate
1	.696[a]	.485	.482	.557

To understand the relationship between "Person Organization Fit" and "Employer of Choice", a linear regression analysis was conducted, and through the R square value, it´s possible to understand that the "Person Organization Fit", construct has very a positive impact on "Employer of Choice", with a 48,5% variability on the dependent variable.

What this means is that for every added unit of "Ethics and CSR" there is an increase of 48,5% in the "Person Organization Fit" construct.

Table 5.15 – Multiple linear regression between Person Organization Fit Dimensions and Employer of Choice

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients		
		B	Std.Error	Beta	t	Sig.
1	(Constant)	1.258	.168		7.487	<.001
	Skills and abilities match what the organization looks for	**.203**	.064	.244	3.166	**.002**
	I think I will find like-minded colleagues	.183	.078	.226	2.348	.020
	Suits my style of working	.127	.071	.167	1.785	.076
	Personality is well suited	.133	.062	.161	2.132	.034

a. Dependent Variable: EOC

Going through the above Anova table (Appendix Anova) where the p-value is lower than < a = 0,05, (<.001), it is possible reject the Null Hypothesis, and therefore it is possible to understand that the "Person Organization Fit" construct has a positive impact in the "Employer of Choice" construct, when looking at table 21, it is possible to understand that the despite this one key dimension positively impacts the "Employer of Choice" construct, namely "Skills and abilities match what the organization looks for", since < a = 0,05, (<.001).

6. Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

The objective of this study was to understand the impact of employer branding on the decision-making process of First-Time job seekers decision-making process, within the Portuguese context.

Within this chapter, the main findings as well as a discussion of the results of the analysis will be presented.

Also, within this chapter, possible managerial implications, limitations, and suggestions for further research will be presented.

With this research, the knowledge of employer branding and its possible impacts, can grow and continue to improve.

6.1 Conclusion: Overall Discussion of the Results

To discuss the overall results, of the research purpose, it is first place important to understand what the Hypothesis tested in this study are, since it is through answering them, that a conclusion can be achieved.

Considering this, five main hypotheses were adapted from a previously designed research model, so that a conclusion, on how employer branding affects first-time jobseekers' decision-making process when searching for a first job within their area of expertise.

The first hypothesis formulated was:

H1) Work Culture impacts Person Organization Fit.

Through the research conducted in this study, it is not only possible to understand that indeed, Work Culture impacts Person Organization Fit, but that it has a very positive impact.

Despite this, the Work Culture Construct is comprised of five different dimensions, all of which, have a different impact on the Person Organization Fit construct, namely “Friendly relationships among co-workers” and “Job security”, which have a positive impact, unlike “Good internal training opportunities”, which means that the more the respondent values Friendly relationships among co-workers and job security, the more they feel a Person Organization Fit, whereas in the opposite side of the coin, the more the respondents value Good internal training opportunities, the less

they feel that there is a Person Organization Fit.

It is important to understand that what these findings suggest is not that first-time jobseeker don´t value these dimensions but to understand how these dimensions affected their feelings towards Person-Organization-Fit when searching for their job within their areas of expertise.

The second hypothesis in test in this study is H2) **Salary and Incentives impact Person Organization Fit,** in line with the previous construct through the analysis conducted in this study it is also possible to conclude that the Salary and Incentives construct has a very positive impact in Person Organization Fit.

Considering all Constructs tested in our hypothesis are comprised of several dimensions, Salary and Incentives are no different, and the "Offers above average compensation perks" "Attractive overall compensation package" and "Additional benefits are offered to motivate employees" are the dimensions, in the respective order, which impact the Person Organization Fit the most, out of the four dimensions tested in this construct.

Thus, what we can conclude when analysing this construct is that the greater the salary, incentives to motivate employees, and overall compensation package, the feeling of Person Organization Fit also increases.

The third hypothesis tested is the **H3) Ethics and CSR impact Person Organization Fit**, and the conclusion is that, indeed this construct also has a positive impact on Person Organization Fit, although it is much less significant than the previous two constructs.

The dimension that impacts Person Organization Fit the most is "The organization has a fair attitude toward employees", within the "Ethics and CSR", which means that the greater the respondents feel that the organization treats them fairly, the greater the Person Organization Fit, which does, once again not mean that the other dimensions tested are not relevant for respondents in their work life moving forward, but that while searching for their first job in their area of expertise, within this sample, but instead that it has no positive in their feelings about Person Organization Fit.

The fourth hypothesis tested is, **H4) Diversity impacts Person Organization Fit**, which much like the previous construct, also has a positive impact but is the least significant of all the dimensions tested.

Within the "Ethics and CSR" construct, the dimensions which have the greater impact on Person Organization Fit are, "Different cultures are welcomed", and "Opportunities to choose from a wide variety of tasks", with a positive impact, while the "Challenging Tasks" construct has a negative impact in the Person Organization Fit construct, which may be due to the fact that respondents do not correlate "challenging tasks" in their first job as dimensions that positively impact Person Organization Fit.

Lastly, the most important hypothesis relates to the impact of Person Organization Fit in Employer of choice, it is through this hypothesis that we can understand whether or not the Employer branding dimensions have an impact on an employer becoming one of choice, **H5) Person Organization Fit Impacts Employer of choice**.

The short answer to this question is yes, indeed the Person Organization Fit, which is strongly impacted by the Person Organization Fit dimensions, has an important impact on a company becoming an EOC, therefore the higher the Person Organization Fit perception, the more the candidate perceives the company in question as an EOC.

The dimension under the "Person Organization Fit" construct, which has the highest impact in the "Employer of Choice" construct is "My skills and abilities match what the company looks for in an employee".

With the acceptance of our final hypothesis, we can, therefore, answer our question on the impact of employer branding in a candidate´s decision-making process, when looking for a job within their area of expertise.

What we can understand is that indeed, the tested employer branding dimensions within this thesis, have an impact on first-time job seekers, the decision-making process, of course, within the Portuguese Job Market, since the higher the respondent´s value the employer branding dimensions, the higher the Person Organization Fit, and the higher this construct the greater is the impact on an employer becoming an Employer of Choice.

6.2 Managerial Implications

The attention to Employer Branding has been ever-growing, and its attention and discussion don´t seem to be slowing down it is easy to understand why, even though this research, looks at it through the decision-making process when applying for a first job, it is also very important in the topic of employee retention.

This becomes especially important when one of the main challenges of organizations is acquiring and retaining talent since it is one of the main sources of competitive advantage.

This research highlights the importance of employer branding, within the Portuguese Job Market, employers, and mainly its human research management and marketing departments, "*Employer branding presents a strategic framework consisting both human resource management and marketing"* Ambler & Barrow (1996); Biswas & Suar (2014); Maxwell ans Knox (2009), could be motivated to define clear and concise strategies to acquire and retain said talent, more specifically human resources in defining strategies that target the mentioned constructs and dimensions and Marketing by advertising and communicating said strategies both internally and externally to become an Employer of Choice, meaning an employer who can both acquire and retain talent. This study confirms that the Employer branding dimensions, mentioned, all impact Person Organization Fit, some more than others, namely, "Salary and Incentives", "Work Culture", "Ethics and CSR", and "Diversity", respectively, and that Person Organization Fit, also has a positive impact in an employer becoming an EOC. What this means in practical effects, is that the first-time job seekers who answered this questionnaire, feel they have a higher Person Organization Fit and therefore feel an employer is more of an Employer of Choice, when the aforementioned Employer branding dimensions and constructs are met.

It is therefore possible to conclude that while employer branding has a strong impact on acquiring talent, proper strategies must be taken, to effectively benefit from it, by both Marketing and Human Resources, "*scholars advocate for the joint efforts of HR and marketing professionals to build, nurture, and promote employer branding*" Garavan et al. (2012); Moroko & Uncles (2009); Wilden et al. (2010).

6.3 Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

While very insightful, there are still limitations to it, and therefore, it is possible to outline some suggestions for future research.

The first limitation concerns data sampling, where the method used for gathering respondents, is limited against a completely random share of the questionnaire, the method was shared through social media websites, and reshared through these respondents to acquaintances who might fit the criteria in question, therefore not a completely random method, which can have an implication in future studies regarding this subject.

Due to the necessity of gathering relevant data in a short amount of time, there is a limitation in both demographics analysis, as well as a lack of understanding of the area of expertise of the respondents in question.

Through the first phase of testing, it was possible to understand that there is a possibility for respondent´s confusion in understanding that the questionnaire, was to understand how they felt about what was being asked at the time of applying for their first job within their area of expertise, and not necessarily how these said respondents feel about them at the time of answering.

Last but not least, there is a limitation in nature considering the study is aimed at firsttime job seekers, within their area of expertise and therefore, there is not much of a difference in the respondent´s age and academic level.

Considering the limitations this study presents, there is a path to future research, whether within first-time job seekers or the impact of Employer Branding as a whole. Related to the first suggestion for future research, a study aimed at first-time jobseekers within the same area of expertise, and not at the whole spectrum of first-time job seekers, would be an interesting perspective that could added to the literature on this topic.

Concerning data gathering, a longer period of data collecting as well as a larger number of responses.

Finally, even though Employer Branding plays a very important role in an employer becoming an employer of choice, it would be very interesting to understand what other factors play a role in a company becoming an Employer of Choice.

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APPENDIX A – Questionnaire design

Welcome,

My name is Luís, and I am a student at ISCTE - Business School. This study is being conducted as part of my master's dissertation in Marketing.

The aim of this study is to investigate how Employer branding influences the decisionmaking process of individuals who are either first-time job seekers or have actively pursued job opportunities within the Portuguese employment context in the past two years.

Your participation is essential and greatly appreciated. Your responses will be kept strictly confidential. No personal information will be shared, and your answers will be analysed in an aggregated form.

Participation in this questionnaire is entirely voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from the questionnaire at any time without any consequences.

Please, read and consider each question carefully, and it is expected to take approximately 5 minutes to complete.

Your perspectives are of utmost importance to this study. The questionnaire should be answered only by individuals between the ages of 18-35, who have at least a bachelor's degree and are seeking or have recently sought their first job.

To begin the questionnaire, answer the question below, afterwards click the arrow to move forward.

Thank you for your participation.

CSQ1 Are you able to understand written english?

- Yes, I can understand written english well
- Yes, I can understand written english
- No, I cannot understand written english (Não consigo entender inglês escrito)

CSQ2 Please tell me your age group

- Under 18
- 18-24
- 25-29
- 30-35
- Over 35

CSQ3 What is your education level? (last year of education completed)

- High school or equivalent level
- Bachelor's or equivalent level
- Master's or equivalent level
- Doctoral or equivalent level
- Other

CSQ4 Are you currently seeking your first job/have you had your first job within your area of expertise in the past 2 years?

- ○ Yes
- ○ No

Qre Introduction

For this next section of the questionnaire, please choose the options that best reflect how much you agree or disagree with what you considered most valuable when applying to companies for your first job. Your answers should reflect the company that you chose as your reference.

Work Culture

How do you feel about the importance of these statements when looking for a new job? Use the following scale:

1 - "Strongly disagree"

5 - "Strongly agree"

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neither Agree or Disagree	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
The organization offers good internal training opportunities	○	○	○	○	○
Friendly relationships among individual co-workers	○	○	○	○	○
The organization provides opportunity to work from home	○	○	○	○	○
The organization offers job security	○	○	○	○	○
The organization provides flexible working hours	○	○	○	○	○

Salary & incentives

How do you feel about the significance of these statements when exploring new job opportunities?

Use the following scale:

1 - "Strongly disagree"

5 - "Strongly agree"

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neither Agree or Disagree	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
The organization provides good health benefits	○	○	○	○	○
Additional benefits are offered to motivate employees	○	○	○	○	○
The organization offers an attractive overall compensation package	○	○	○	○	○
The organization offers above average compensation and perks	○	○	○	○	○

Ethics and CSR

How do you feel about the importance of these statements when searching for a new job? Use the following scale:

1 - "Strongly disagree"

5 - "Strongly agree"

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neither Agree or Disagree	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly agree
Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations	○	○	○	○	○
The organization has a fair attitude towards employees	○	○	○	○	○
The organization is humanitarian, gives back to the society	○	○	○	○	○
The organization gives adequate contribution towards charities	○	○	○	○	○

Diversity

When seeking a new job, how do you feel about the importance of these statements? Use the following scale:

1 - "Strongly disagree"

5 - "Strongly agree"

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neither Agree or Disagree	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
The organization offers a good variety of work activities	○	○	○	○	○
Employees from different cultures are welcomed in this organization	○	○	○	○	○
The organization offers challenging tasks	○	○	○	○	○
The organization provides opportunities to choose from a wide variety of tasks	○	○	○	○	○

POF

When evaluating new job prospects, how do you feel about the importance of these statements?

Use the following scale:

1 - "Strongly disagree"

5 - "Strongly agree"

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neither Agree or Disagree	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
My skills and abilities match the skills and abilities this organization looks for in an employee	○	○	○	○	○
I think I will find like-minded colleagues in this organization	○	○	○	○	○
I feel that this organization suits my style of working	○	○	○	○	○
My personality is well suited to the image of this organization	○	○	○	○	○

EOC

How do you feel about the importance of these statements when considering a new job?

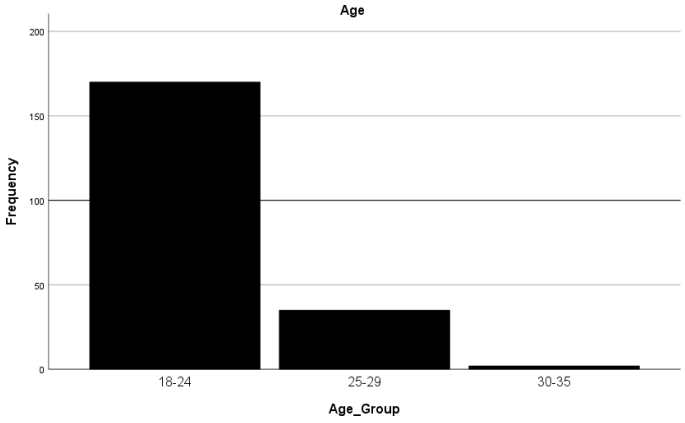
Use the following scale:

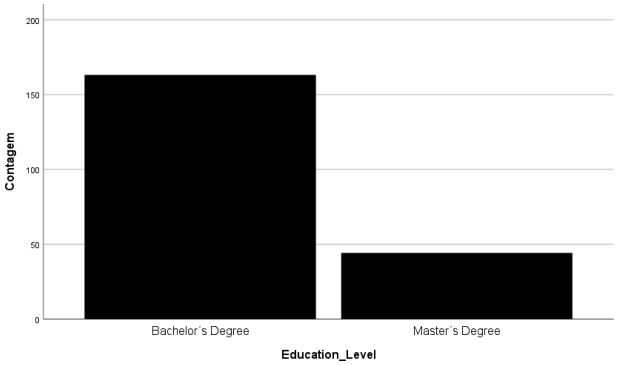
1 - "Strongly disagree"

5 - "Strongly agree"

	1 - Strongly Disagree	2 - Disagree	3 - Neither Agree or Disagree	4 - Agree	5 - Strongly Agree
The organization is one of my first choices as an employer	○	○	○	○	○
The organization is the most attractive employer for me	○	○	○	○	○
I really want a job with this particular organization	○	○	○	○	○

APPENDIX B - Sample Sociodemographic Frequencies





APPENDIX C – Anova Tests

Hypothesis 1:

Multiple Linear Regression between Work Culture and Person Organization Fit

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	90.324	5	18.065	66.482	**<.001[b]**
	Residual	54.617	201	.272		
	Total	144.941	206			

a. Dependent Variable: POF

b. Predictors: (Constant), Work Culture_5, Work Culture_1, Work Culture_2, Work Culture_3, Work Culture_4

Hypothesis 2:

Multiple Linear Regression between Salary and Incentives and Person Organization Fit

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	89.398	4	22.349	81.281	**<.001[b]**
	Residual	55.543	202	.275		
	Total	144.941	206			

a. Dependent Variable: POF

b. Predictors: (Constant), Salary & incentives_4, Salary & incentives_1, Salary & incentives_2, Salary & incentives_3 **Hypothesis 3:**

Multiple Linear Regression between Ethics and CSR and Person Organization Fit

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	12.879	4	3.220	4.925	**<.001[b]**
	Residual	132.062	202	.654		
	Total	144.941	206			

a. Dependent Variable: POF

b. Predictors: (Constant), Ethics and CSR_4, Ethics and CSR_2, Ethics and CSR_1, Ethics and CSR_3

Hypothesis 4:

Multiple Linear Regression between Diversity and Person Organization Fit

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	26.416	4	6.604	11.255	**<.001[b]**
	Residual	118.525	202	.587		
	Total	144.941	206			

a. Dependent Variable: POF

b. Predictors: (Constant), Diversity_4, Diversity_2, Diversity_1, Diversity_3

Hypothesis 5:

Multiple Linear Regression between Person Organization Fit and Employer of Choice

ANOVA[a]

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	60,009	4	15,002	47,878	**<,001[b]**
	Residual	63,296	202	,313		
	Total	123,305	206			

a. Variable Dependent: EOC

b. Predictors: (Constant), POF_4, POF_2, POF_1, POF_3

APPENDIX D – Hypothesis Testing

	Hypothesis	Supported
H1	**H1) Work culture has an impact on Person Organization Fit**	**Yes**
H2	**H2) Salary and Incentives has an impact on Person Organization Fit**	**Yes**
H3	**H3) Ethics and CSR has an impact on Person Organization Fit**	**Yes**
H4	**H4) Diversity has an impact on Person Organization Fit**	**Yes**
H5	**H5) Person Organization Fit has an impact on Employer of Choice**	**Yes**