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SELF-INITIATED EXPATRIATES:

PERSONALITY TRAITS AND EMPLOYER ATTRACTIVENESS

INÊS VENTURA LOURENÇO MORAIS MONTEIRO

STUDENT NUMBER 2748

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Professor Rita Campos e Cunha

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1. ABSTRACT

The available literature about Self-Initiated Expatriates (SIEs) is still lacking studies focusing on their personality traits and their main ambitions regarding employer branding when looking for a job abroad. The goal of this paper is to explore personality traits and understand main preferences in Employer Attractiveness factors. For this purpose, an online survey with 309 individuals from different nationalities was conducted. Results suggest differences in terms of openness to experience, as well as a new categorization for the attraction factors of employer branding, considering the impact of cultural differences in this selection especially regarding Portuguese SIE attraction preferences.

Key words: Self-Initiated Expatriates, Personality Traits, Employer Attractiveness and Employer Branding

2. INTRODUCTION

In the current competitive labor market, both multinational companies and employees see international work experience as a major part of career advancement (Suutari and Brewster 2000). For that reason, the number of people, especially young graduates, who desire and search for a job abroad is increasing (McDonnell 2011).

Inkson *et al.* (1997) were the first to study the “overseas experience” (OE) as an individual initiative for career development. In the most recent research about international experiences, these individuals are stated as self-initiated expatriates (SIE) (Jokinen, Brewster, and Suutari 2008). SIE describes a person who seeks employment outside their home-country on his/her own initiative and is hired as a local employee (Crowley-Henry 2007). Thus, an SIE freely chooses to expatriate, to which destination and for how long in the host-country (Cao, Hirschi, and Deller 2013). SIEs have also a “high self-confidence, flexibility and adaptability, as well as technical

skills that enable them to obtain appropriate employment in a host-country” (Ceric and Crawford 2016: 136). For that reason, SIEs individually promote their own careers by choosing which company and which country to apply for a job in and which offer to accept (Suutari and Brewster 2000). SIE’s decision to work outside their home-country is totally related to personal motivations in order to learn, explore and achieve self-development rather than corporate goals (Inkson et al. 1997; Andresen, Biemann, and Pattie 2015).

Contrarily to company assigned expatriates (CAE) who are sent abroad by organizations employing them with the majority of expatriation expenses covered, SIEs individually search for a job abroad, covering all the expatriation expenses themselves (Biemann and Andresen 2010). SIEs are also hired under a local contract, taking the control of their own careers (Farndale et al. 2014). Besides, Doherty *et al.* (2013) argue that the temporal condition is also determinant when considering an individual as SIE, the length of time in the host country being the distinguishing factor between SIEs, migrants or those traveling on a short term basis. Thus, when an individual decides to spend a temporary rather than a permanent period of time outside their home country can be considered as an SIE.

SIEs are seen in a more positive light, especially among Multinational Corporations where they are increasingly seen as an alternative to CAE or local employees, due to their accessibility and by being less expensive to employ, bringing the advantage to reducing cross-cultural friction (Tharenou 2013). Furthermore, the ability to attract and recruit these skilled employees can substantially improve a company’s competitive advantage since their ability to be both locally responsive and operate internationally, significantly improves the organizational effectiveness and efficiency (Delery and Shaw 2001).

This study highlights self-initiate expatriates, especially regarding their personality traits and what is more attractive to them in terms of employer branding.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

Few studies have been conducted regarding SIEs' personality traits. The dominant approach representing the personality trait structure is the five-factor model (FFM), also called as Big-Five personality domains. The model proposes that five basic factors describe most personality traits: Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experience (Gosling *et al.*, 2003). Individuals with high Extraversion tend to be more active, sociable and verbose and pursue excitement, novelty and challenge. Agreeableness tends to be related to modest, gentle, and cooperative individuals. High Conscientiousness makes individuals more organized, careful, responsible and methodical and individuals with high Emotional Stability tend to be calm and self-confident. Individuals with high Openness to Experience tend to be more open-minded, more imaginative and have more tolerance to new people and ideas. This dimension is also highly related to self-direction goals (Roccas *et al.* 2002).

Tabor and Milfont (2011) defend that novelty seeking and openness to change are characteristics associated with migrants. Furthermore, self-directed career management tends to be related to proactive personalities who focus on learning and embracing challenges and are more effective in ambiguous career situations (Briscoe, Hall, and Frautschy DeMuth 2006). Tharenou (2008: 195) also found that "employees with a stronger willingness to expatriate are those who have greater personal agency". Moreover, as studied by Briscoe *et al.* (2006), the Openness to Experiences (one of the big-five personality dimensions) was found to be related to independent career management, one of the characteristics attributed to SIEs (Farndale *et al.* 2014).

These studies suggest that SIEs are individuals who score high in Openness to Experiences. For that reason, we put the hypothesis that individuals who desire to have an international job experience have higher openness to experience than individuals who do not, showing no significant differences in the other four personality traits.

H1a: Openness to Experience is higher for individuals who want to work outside their home country (SIE) in contrast with individuals who do not.

H1b: There are no significant differences in the other four personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability) between individuals who want to work outside their home country (SIE) and individuals who do not.

Since self-initiated expatriates (SIEs) also represent a pool of skilled international individuals, companies increasingly develop strategies to attract them (Ceric and Crawford 2016). Employer branding is increasingly gaining importance in attracting and retaining employees but employer branding can only be effective if organizations understand the factors contributing to employer attractiveness and successfully integrate them into their employer brand. Employer Attractiveness consists of the “benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization”. So a strong employer brand is also a result of a high attractiveness perception (Berthon, Ewing, and Hah 2005: 156). Furthermore, an attractive employer brand image considerably improves the likelihood for anyone to apply for a job (Knox and Freeman 2006).

Berthon *et al.* (2005) developed a multi-item scale to evaluate the components of Employer Attractiveness that was previously adapted by Alniaçık and Alniaçık (2012) and comprises six main factors: social value, market value, economic value, application value, cooperation value and working environment. Although the Employer Attractiveness factors were already studied regarding gender, age and cultural differences (Berthon, Ewing, and Hah 2005; Alniaçık and Alniaçık 2012; Alniaçık *et al.* 2014) there is lower evidence regarding SIEs’ preferences in Employer Attractiveness factors.

The literature on organizational choice argues that individuals feel more attracted to companies which have a work environment compatible with their personal characteristics, self-selecting organizations with which they perceive appropriate (Kristof 1996). For that reason, applicants

evaluate the attractiveness of an organization by comparing their personal beliefs with the organizational characteristics (Judge and Cable 1997). Person-Organization Fit Theory thus refers to “employees’ needs which are reflected in their preference for a particular culture and an organization’s ability to supply conditions through its policies and practices that satisfy these needs”(Deniz, Noyan, and Ertosun 2015: 370).

Muchinsky & Monahan (1987) distinguished Organizational Fit in two different ways: Supplementary and Complementary Fit. Supplementary Fit occurs when a “person and an organization possess similar or matching fundamental characteristics”. On the other hand, Complementary Fit exists when “one entity possesses characteristics that the other wants or needs” (Arbour et al. 2014: 43). Thus, Supplementary Fit would be high if the organization and the employee shared the same values and Complementary Fit would be high if the individual had some skills and characteristics highly desired by the organization or if the organization offers an overall compensation, highly desired by the employee (Arbour et al. 2014).

Kristof (1996) states that Person-Organization Fit occurs if at least one entity offers what the other needs or if they share similar characteristics or both. Employees that experience a Person-Organization Fit are also happier and more likely to stay, have a higher organizational commitment, have less job stress and higher job satisfaction (Ostroff, Shin, and Kinicki 2005; Kristof-Brown, Zimmerman, and Johnson 2005; Deniz, Noyan, and Ertosun 2015; Chen, Sparrow, and Cooper 2016). Thus, organizations need to clearly communicate their values in order to provide a correct fit perception act an early stage (Überschaer et al. 2016).

Employer Attractiveness factors are also different for different generation segments (Alniaçık and Alniaçık 2012). Young generations have some particularities that differ from other generations within the workplace, not only their technical knowledge but also their way of thinking, attitude and value system (Bencsik, Horváth-Csikós, and Juhász 2016). The youngest generation in the

workplace is the generation Y, also called the millennial generation. Individuals belonging to this generation were born between 1980 and 2000, are highly educated and digital natives (Sharon 2015). Millennials value work-life balance, are excellent at multitasking and team oriented (Alsop 2008).

Older generations place higher importance on compensation whereas Millennials place higher importance on having a valued contribution to the organization and “see purpose in what they do” (Zaydon 2016: 29). Millennials frequently place their personal values ahead of organizational ambitions and often avoid potential employers who are in conflict with their beliefs. They also believe that organizations should put employees first and an adequate people treatment is one of the values that support long-term business success. Moreover, Millennials believe that organizations should make an effort to be the best possible place to work (Deloitte 2016).

All these findings seem to suggest that SIE, especially the youngest generation, will seek an employer who they perceive as fitting, placing more importance to the sense of belonging and happiness. For that reason, we hypothesize that SIE will feel more attracted to companies in which they perceive a sense of belonging and which makes them feel happy and satisfied.

H2: SIE feel more attracted to companies in which they feel happy and accepted.

Hofstede (1980) argues that individuals’ work values and ambitions are shaped by the country of origin. Studies on Employer Attractiveness across different SIE’s nationalities are also scarce.

National cultures differ in many different ways and Hofstede (1980) defined the main differentiating criteria between countries. The first dimension is Power Distance and indicates the extent to which a “a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede 1980: 45). The second dimension is Uncertainty Avoidance and indicates the extent to which a society fears and avoids uncertain and ambiguous situations by seeking career stability and establishing formal rules. The third dimension is Individualism-

Collectivism and evaluates the extent to which individuals believe they are supposed to take care only of themselves, or its opposite in which individuals are integrated in cohesive groups. The fourth dimension is Masculinity and evaluates the extent to which a society is “masculine” characterized by assertiveness and the high importance of money (Hofstede 1980; Hofstede 2011). Later on, a fifth dimension was added, the Long-Term - Short-Term Orientation that evaluates the extent to which the people’s focus is on the future or the present and past. In more recent studies, Hofstede added the sixth and last dimension Indulgence - Restraint that evaluates “gratification versus control of basic human desires related to enjoying life” (Hofstede 2011: 8).

Portugal is characterized as a country with high Power Distance (by Hofstede) showing a very uneven income distribution with latent conflicts between powerful and powerless individuals and in which corruption is frequent. Uncertainty Avoidance is the strongest dimension observed in Portugal, showing a society with a high urgency in working hard in which time is money. Portuguese individuals are also affected with high levels of stress and anxiety giving a really high importance to security in life. Individualism in Portugal scores 27 and Masculinity 31 showing that Portugal is a more collectivist and feminist society with a strong "we" consciousness that believes that quality of life is important. Portugal is also characterized by a short-term orientation (score of 31 in the Long-Term Orientation dimension) and Restrained, where individuals place higher importance to present and past and there are fewer very happy people.

Portugal also registered high levels of emigration over the years, “temporary emigration” having gained more relevance rather than “permanent emigration” in more recent years (Peixoto 2004). Since 2009, with the beginning of the economic crisis in Portugal, the number of young and highly educated Portuguese that started leaving the country increased considerably (Padilla and Ortiz 2012). Cairns (2016) developed a study among Portuguese students where 35% of the respondents report a desire to leave Portugal, 50% of those with the intention to find a job and

88% with the intention to move to a country not affected by the economic crisis. This study also stresses the desire of Portuguese students to leave a country with very high levels of unemployment among educated young individuals.

Therefore, we believe that due to the high levels of Uncertainty Avoidance scored in Portugal, heightened by the economic uncertainty of the last few years, Portuguese SIEs place higher importance in compensation conditions and job security when looking for a job abroad. For that reason, we propose that Portuguese SIEs give higher importance to companies that provide a good compensation and job security, in our third hypothesis.

H3: Portuguese SIEs have as their first preference the compensation and job security.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Survey

The survey instrument was an online questionnaire including the Big-Five personality domains scale (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann Jr 2003), questions about preferable locations (country and city) and sector (consulting, banking, fast-moving consumer goods, manufacturing, technology, telecommunications, communication, tourism, health, start-up or others). It also included the Reasons to Expatriate scale (Selmer and Luring 2011), the Employer Attractiveness scale (Almıaçık and Almıaçık 2012) and the Perceived Organizational Support scale (Kraimer and Wayne 2004). In the end were included some demographic questions (complete Survey on Appendix 1).

4.2. Sample

A total of 309 individuals participated in this study by voluntarily and anonymously filling in the online survey. The mean age of responders was 24,03 years (range: 20-30; sd.=1,6), 53% were

female and 63% had a post-graduate degree. 57% of the respondents were Portuguese and 60% had a background in Management, Economics or Finance (Appendix 2).

4.3. Measures

Big-Five personality domains scale, the Ten-Item Personality Inventory (TIPI) tested by Gosling *et al.* (2003) was used. Although long instruments tend to have superior psychometric properties, due to practical issues short instruments have a useful application in large-scale surveys. Furthermore, short instruments tend to reduce the item redundancy and also reduce the frustration and exhaustion in answering similar questions repeatedly (Robins, Hendin, and Trzesniewski 2001). Thus, the TIPI scale was constructed to “reduce the length and complexity of the items and to make them easier to understand” (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann Jr 2003: 516). The scale consists of 10 questions, rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The TIPI scale only uses two items per scale, resulting in a lower internal consistency but better content validity considerations (Gosling, Rentfrow, and Swann Jr 2003). This way, the five traits of Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experiences have a Cronbach’s alpha of .64, .31, .49, .65, and .40 respectively (see Appendix 3). The *Employer Attractiveness scale* (Almıaçık *et al.* 2012) consists of 20 questions divided into six factors: social value, market value, economic value, application value, cooperation value and working environment. For the purpose of this study, some non-applicable questions were not considered, resulting in eighteen final questions. Each of the eighteen questions was rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (very important). The Cronbach’s alpha was .76 for social value, .60 for market value, .84 for economic value and .46 for application value. Cooperation value and working environment were measures with only one item question (see Appendix 4).

Nationality - a dummy variable was created to differentiate Portuguese respondents (1) from non-Portuguese (0).

4.4. Analyses and Results

In order to test the first Hypothesis which states that Openness to Experience is higher for individuals who want to work outside their home country (SIE) in contrast with individuals who do not, a One-Way ANOVA was conducted to compare the means in the five personality traits between two groups: individuals who want to work outside their home-country (this group include the individuals that have the desire to work abroad, individuals that are currently working abroad and individuals that already worked abroad and returned to their home-country) (n=274) and individuals who do not want to work outside their home-country (n=35). Thus, the dependent variables are the five personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Emotional Stability and Openness to Experiences) the factor being whether they are SIEs or not. Table 1 shows the results (see Appendix 5 for more detailed analyses).

Table 1 ANOVA for Five Personality Traits

	F	Sig.
Extraversion	2,128	,146
Agreeableness	,023	,879
Conscientiousness	1,336	,249
Emotional Stability	,054	,817
Openness to Experiences	16,994	,000

Results indicated a significant difference in the means of openness to experience dimension ($p = .000$), the remaining four domains not being significantly different ($p > .05$). The mean of Openness to Experience for individuals who want to work outside their home country is 4.06, the mean for individuals who do not being 3.54. This result supports the first hypothesis (a and b) highlighting that individuals who want to work outside their home country have higher Openness

to Experience, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability not being significantly different.

In order to test the following hypotheses, since the internal consistence was not acceptable in the Employer Attractiveness scale used, a factor analysis was carried out with a Varimax rotation, with Kaiser Normalization and a factor extraction according to Eigenvalue greater than 1, explaining 63% of the variance (see Appendix 6 and 7). Three questions were excluded, resulting in fifteen questions, divided into five factors. Factor 1, labeled “Extrinsic Motivations”, assesses the extent to which individual is attracted to an employer who provides opportunities for promotion, job security and a competitive compensation. Factor 2, labeled “Intrinsic Motivations”, assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer who provides career-enhancing experience, good feelings, and acceptance and belonging. Factor 3, labeled “Customer-Orientation”, assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer who is customer-orientated and produces high-quality and innovative products and services. Factor 4, labeled “Knowledge Application”, assesses the extent to which individual is attracted to an employer who provides recognition and allows the application of varied competences. Factor 5, labeled “Working Environment” assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer who provides a fun environment and has supportive colleagues, The Cronbach’s alpha for the new five factors are .79, .65, .62, .65 and .63 respectively (see appendix 8), which are acceptable considering the exploratory nature of this study.

In order to test the second hypothesis which states that SIEs feel more attracted to companies in which they feel happy and accepted, a ranking based on the means of each Employer Attractiveness factor was done considering all the individuals who have the desire to work outside their home country, are already working abroad or were and already returned (n=274). The results are presented in Table 2 (see appendix 9 for more detailed analysis). The most important

factor for SIEs is Intrinsic Motivation with a mean of 4.38, followed by Working Environment factor with a mean of 4.31. Extrinsic Motivation factor appears in the middle of the ranking with a mean of 3.99, followed by Customer-orientation factor with a mean of 3.98. At the bottom of the ranking appears the Knowledge Application factor with a mean of 3.86. This result supports the second hypothesis, in that the factor of Employer Attractiveness more valued by SIE is Intrinsic Motivations that includes acceptance and belonging and feeling good.

Table 2 Ranking for perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors

Ranking	Factors	Mean
1	Intrinsic Motivation	4,3759
2	Working Environment	4,3066
3	Extrinsic Motivations	3,9863
4	Customer-Orientation	3,9854
5	Knowledge Application	3,8613

In order to have a deeper understanding regarding SIEs preferences in Employer Attractiveness components a paired-sample T test was conducted to analyze the mean differences among all the five Employer Attractiveness factors. Thus, we were able to analyze if there are statistically significant differences between all the five Employer Attractiveness factors. Table 3 shows the results of the ten pairs (see appendix 10 and 11 for more detailed analysis).

“Extrinsic Motivations & Customer-Orientation” pair ($p = .986$) and “Intrinsic Motivations & Working Environment” pair ($p = .102$) were found to be not significantly different, but the remaining eight pairs presented statistically significant mean differences ($p < .05$). Thus, Intrinsic Motivations and Working Environment are equally valued by SIEs and dominate the top of the ranking. Both factors are equally valued and we can assume that the Working Environment factor that includes having supportive and encouraging colleagues and working in a fun environment is a motive that enhances the Intrinsic Motivations. Extrinsic Motivations and Customer-

Orientation are also equally valued by SIEs being the second most valued factors. Thus, we can conclude that SIEs value job security and the overall compensation benefits as much as they value an organization with innovative and high-quality products and services. Last, Knowledge Application factor is the least valued one. This means that SIEs consider as their least important factor the opportunity to apply what they have learned in theory or teach other colleagues.

Table 3 Paired-sample T test for perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Extrinsic Motivations & Intrinsic Motivations	-8,896	273	,000
Pair 2	Extrinsic Motivations & Customer-Orientation	,018	273	,986
Pair 3	Extrinsic Motivations & Knowledge Application	2,331	273	,020
Pair 4	Extrinsic Motivations & Working Environment	-6,229	273	,000
Pair 5	Intrinsic Motivations & Customer-orientation	8,476	273	,000
Pair 6	Intrinsic Motivations & Knowledge Application	11,783	273	,000
Pair 7	Intrinsic Motivations & Working Environment	1,642	273	,102
Pair 8	Customer-Orientation & Knowledge Application	2,578	273	,010
Pair 9	Customer-Orientation & Working Environment	-6,653	273	,000
Pair 10	Knowledge Application & Working Environment	-9,519	273	,000

To test the third hypothesis which states that Portuguese SIEs have as their first preference the compensation and job security, it was necessary to divide the sample into Portuguese individuals (57%) and non-Portuguese ones (16% of Individuals from Western Europe, 10% from Southern Europe, 6% from Northern Europe, 2% from Eastern Europe, 4% from Central and South America, 2% from North America and Individuals from Africa, Asia and Oceania) (see appendix 12 and 13). Then a ranking to the Portuguese preferences regarding Employer Attractiveness factors was conducted, including only the Portuguese SIE individuals (n=144). Table 4 shows the results (see appendix 14 for more detailed analysis).

The results suggest that the Portuguese SIEs have the exact same preferences as the whole SIE sample. The most valued factor continues to be the Intrinsic Motivations with a mean of 4.41,

followed by Working Environment factor with a mean of 4.27. Extrinsic Motives appears in third place with a mean of 4.11 and Customer-Orientation appears in fourth with a mean of 4.09. The least valued factor by Portuguese SIE is Knowledge Application with a mean of 3.86. This result does not support the third hypothesis so we cannot say that Portuguese SIE are more attracted by job security and compensation (Extrinsic Motivations).

Table 4 Ranking for perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors for Portuguese SIE

Ranking	Factors	Mean
1	Intrinsic Motivation	4,4097
2	Working Environment	4,2743
3	Extrinsic Motivations	4,1198
4	Customer-orientation	4,0926
5	Knowledge Application	3,8565

In order to understand if Portuguese preferences regarding Employer Attractiveness factors have different perceived levels of importance, a Paired Sample T test for the Portuguese sample was also conducted. Results are shown in Table 5 (see appendix 15 and 16 for more detailed analysis).

Table 5 Paired Sample T test for perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors for Portuguese SIE.

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Extrinsic Motivations & Intrinsic Motivations	-4,927	143	,000
Pair 2	Extrinsic Motivations & Customer-orientation	,388	143	,699
Pair 3	Extrinsic Motivations & Knowledge Application	3,671	143	,000
Pair 4	Extrinsic Motivations & Working Environment	-2,217	143	,028
Pair 5	Intrinsic Motivations & Customer-orientation	4,819	143	,000
Pair 6	Intrinsic Motivations & Knowledge Application	8,695	143	,000
Pair 7	Intrinsic Motivations & Working Environment	2,215	143	,028
Pair 8	Customer-orientation & Knowledge Application	3,196	143	,002
Pair 9	Customer-orientation & Working Environment	-2,825	143	,005
Pair 10	Knowledge Application & Working Environment	-6,157	143	,000

Contrarily to what was seen in the second hypothesis, only the “Extrinsic Motivations & Customer-Orientation” pair ($p = .699$) was shown to not have statistically significant differences. The remaining nine pairs are significantly different ($p < .05$) meaning that these reasons are differently valued. Thus, contrarily to the previous analysis when the whole sample was considered, Portuguese individuals do not equally value the Extrinsic Motivations or the Working Environment, placing higher importance on the first one but Customer-Orientation is not significantly different from Extrinsic Motivations.

Although the third hypothesis was not statistically supported, an ANOVA was computed in order to understand if there are statistically significant differences in the preferences of each Employer Attractiveness factors between Portuguese ($n=144$) and non-Portuguese individuals ($n=130$). Results presented in Table 6 shows statistically significant differences between the two groups regarding “Extrinsic Motivations” ($p = .002$) and “Customer-Orientation” ($p = .004$) factors (see appendix 17 for more detailed analysis).

Table 6 - ANOVA for perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors between Portuguese and non-Portuguese

	F	Sig.
Extrinsic Motivations	9,638	,002
Intrinsic Motivations	1,026	,312
Customer-Orientation	8,224	,004
Knowledge Application	,014	,908
Working Environment	,869	,352

This result shows that although Portuguese individuals do not have Extrinsic Motivations as their first preference, they place higher importance in Extrinsic Motivations when compared to non-Portuguese individuals (mean of 4.1198 vs. 3.8667). The result also shows a significant difference regarding Customer-Orientation factor meaning that Portuguese individuals also have

a higher preference for Customer-Orientation when comparing to non-Portuguese individuals (mean of 4.0926 vs. 3.8667).

To more clearly understand the impact of Portuguese preferences in this analysis, the ranking was conducted, only considering the non-Portuguese sample (n=130). The ranking of perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors are shown in table 7 (see appendix 18 for more detailed analysis).

Table 7 - Ranking for perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors for Non-Portuguese SIE

Ranking	Factors	Mean
1	Working Environment	4,3423
2	Intrinsic Motivation	4,3385
3	Customer-orientation	3,8667
3	Knowledge Application	3,8667
5	Extrinsic Motivations	3,8385

Interestingly, the ranking presents different preferences when Portuguese individuals are not in the sample. Working Environment appears in the first position with a mean of 4.34 followed by Intrinsic Motivations with a mean of 4.33. In third place appear the Customer-Orientation and Knowledge Application factors, both with a mean of 3.86. The least valued factor is now the Extrinsic Motivations.

Paired sample T tests were conducted in order to tests the mean differences among the ten different pair (Table 8; see appendix 19 and 20 for more detailed analysis) and show that two different groups of preferences exist. The first one is Intrinsic Motivations and Working environment meaning that people are more attracted to companies that make them feel good, happy, with a sense of belonging that provide supportive colleagues and have a fun environment. The other three factors (Customer-Orientation; Knowledge Application and Extrinsic Motivations) are equally and less valued. Extrinsic Motivations fall down to the last position.

Table 8 Paired Sample T test for perceived importance levels of Employer Attractiveness factors for Non-Portuguese SIE.

		t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pair 1	Extrinsic Motivations & Intrinsic Motivations	-7,786	129	,000
Pair 2	Extrinsic Motivations & Customer-Orientation	-,386	129	,701
Pair 3	Extrinsic Motivations & Knowledge Application	-,359	129	,720
Pair 4	Extrinsic Motivations & Working Environment	-6,902	129	,000
Pair 5	Intrinsic Motivations & Customer-Orientation	7,412	129	,000
Pair 6	Intrinsic Motivations & Knowledge Application	7,965	129	,000
Pair 7	Intrinsic Motivations & Working Environment	-,067	129	,947
Pair 8	Customer-Orientation & Knowledge Application	,000	129	1,000
Pair 9	Customer-Orientation & Working Environment	-6,754	129	,000
Pair 10	Knowledge Application & Working Environment	-7,436	129	,000

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Main Findings

The main objective of this study was to analyze Self-Initiated Expatriates' personality traits and their most valued Employer Attractiveness factors when looking for a job abroad.

Results suggest that SIEs have a much higher level of Openness to Experiences, following the available literature on migrants (Tabor and Milfont 2011). These individuals tend to have more open-mindedness and imagination, are usually more sensitive and intellectual. SIEs are also more open to new experiences and ideas and have higher autonomy of thought. They have a higher understanding and tolerance for all kinds of people and constantly seek new experiences (Roccas et al. 2002). In the remaining four dimensions of the big-five personality domains (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness and Emotional Stability) there were no significant differences, meaning that SIEs have a wide range of personality characteristics but all have high openness to new experiences in common.

The second focuses of this study were the Employer Attractiveness factors in an organization employer brand. It was found in consonance with the Person-Organization Theory, SIEs feel more attracted to companies in which they feel happy and accepted. According to our scale, SIEs have a higher attraction for Intrinsic Motivations and Working Environment dimensions, characterized by gaining career-enhancing experience, feel good about themselves as a result of working for the organization, acceptance and belonging, having supportive, encouraging colleagues and working in a fun environment. The Extrinsic Motivation and Customer-Orientation dimensions came second meaning that SIE consider an attractive compensation and job security important as well as an organization with innovative and high-quality products and services that are customer-orientated. Lastly, SIEs are less attracted by the Knowledge Application dimension meaning that they give less importance to applying what they have learned in theory or teaching others.

When this analysis is made only with Portuguese SIE, the ranking appears to be exactly the same, with only a slight difference: instead of three different levels of preferences, they have four, valuing Extrinsic Motivations and Customer-Orientation differently. Thus, notwithstanding the higher levels of uncertainty avoidance in Portugal, the Person-Organization Fit Theory applies, also influenced by the characterized collectivism in Portugal which emphasizes emotional dependence of an individual on organizations and institutions and the emphasis is on belonging to organizations (Hofstede 1980). Although Portuguese SIEs do not feel more attracted by Extrinsic Motivations as we expected, they appear to have a much higher preference for them when compared with non-Portuguese SIE. Using the non-Portuguese SIEs sample, they appear to have only two different levels of preferences: first Intrinsic Motivations and Working Environment and second all the other dimensions.

5.2. Implications

Since SIEs were found to have highly diverse personalities, only with a high openness to experience in common, companies should be careful when considering these individuals as “equals”. Organizations can have access to “open-minded” individuals who have an innovative and creative thought but should be aware that all the other personality domains are diverse and nationality can have a large impact on it. Recruitment processes should evaluate personality characteristics and make sure that the SIEs are fulfilling the desired features and have the characteristics to have a successful adjustment to the organization.

Furthermore, SIEs were found to have a higher attraction for Intrinsic Motivations and Working Environment dimensions. This means that when building their Employer Brand, organizations that have the desire to attract SIEs, should focus on transmitting their values clearly. They should publicize their organizational incentives to improve job satisfaction and integrate all the employees in order to create a good environment with cohesive teams in which the employees will feel accepted and happy.

If companies have the desire to attract Portuguese SIEs, they should also give a little more emphasis in highlighting job security and compensation conditions when building their Employer Brand. The mix between the two dimensions will be an important aspect to attract Portuguese SIEs.

5.3. Limitations

Several limitations of the study should be noted. One of the limitations of this study was the characteristic of the sample. Not only due to the high number of Portuguese respondents but also due to the little diversity regarding academic background, with a high number of individuals from management, economics or finance.

The low reliability of the Big-Five personality traits scale (Ten-Item Personality Inventory) was another limitation of this study since due to the high extension of the survey we had to opt for a smaller personality scale.

5.4. Future Research

Next steps in theory development should include a deeper analysis regarding SIE's personality domains and we suggest the inclusion of a higher scale (for instance 44-item Big-Five Inventory; 60-item NEO Five-Factor Inventory or 100 trait descriptive adjectives) or the analysis carried out at two different moments in order to compute a Test-retest reliability that will increase the internal consistency.

We also suggest that a study regarding Employer Attractiveness preferences by nationalities including a more diverse sample should be conducted. Regarding Portuguese SIEs we also suggest the study of the impact of the economic crisis not only in their motivations to expatriate but the attraction dimensions in international organizations.

6. CONCLUSION

Employer branding is increasingly seen as a technique to improve the perception and power of attraction of an organization, including different domains regarding Employer Attractiveness. This study suggest that SIEs are more attracted to companies which make them feel good and accepted and provide not only a good career-enhancing experience but also have a fun environment and supportive colleagues. Not only affected by the economic crisis but also due to the high levels of Uncertainty Avoidance in Portugal, although Portuguese SIEs also show the same preferences in Employer Attraction dimensions, a higher attraction for job security and compensation is visible when comparing to other nationalities.

Finally, we can consider that SIEs present a wide range of personality characteristics with a high Openness to Experience in common, characterized by open-minded and intellectual individuals with higher autonomy of thought.

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