



## MASTER'S DISSERTATION

# Perceptions of Employer Branding Dimensions and its Effects on Employee's Intention to Stay

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## **ABSTRACT**

What makes an organisation attractive? What elements define it? The current challenge for organisations is to understand which features can promote a positive perception among employees and potential employees.

Employer branding is increasingly getting attention among practitioners. Although the concept converges on attracting and retaining talent, there are few studies regarding employees' perception on employer branding. In this sense, the aim of this dissertation is to analyse which perceived employer branding dimensions have influence in Portuguese employee's retention, in the *Information and Communication Technologies* sector.

The methodology adopted was the quantitative approach through the application of an online questionnaire. The two main variables of the study were related to employer branding and employee retention. Thus, two instruments were used to analyse it: Employer Branding Measurement Scale developed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017), and part of the proposal in Bussin and Mouton (2019) research.

Findings revealed that the dimensions of employer branding have influence on employee retention. These results contribute to the existent literature on employer branding and its effects on talent retention, as well as assist organisations to acknowledge what elements should be considered when developing its employer brand.

**Keywords:** Employer Branding; Employee Retention; Perception





## RESUMO

O que torna uma organização atrativa? Que elementos a definem? O desafio atual passa por compreender quais as constituintes que podem promover uma perceção positiva entre os atuais e potenciais colaboradores.

O *employer branding* tem sido cada vez mais notório entre os profissionais. Embora o conceito incida sobre a atração e retenção de talento, existem poucos estudos sobre a perceção do *employer branding* por parte dos colaboradores. Neste sentido, o objetivo desta dissertação é analisar a perceção das dimensões *employer branding* que têm influência na retenção dos portugueses, no sector das Tecnologias de Informação e Comunicação.

A metodologia adotada foi a abordagem quantitativa através da aplicação de um questionário *online*. As duas principais variáveis do estudo estão relacionadas com *employer branding* e a retenção do colaborador. Assim, foram utilizados dois instrumentos para a análise: Escala de Medição do *Employer Branding* desenvolvida por Tanwar e Prasad (2017), e parte da proposta da pesquisa de Bussin e Mouton (2019).

Os resultados revelaram que as dimensões do *employer branding* têm influência na retenção. Estes resultados contribuem para a literatura existente sobre o *employer branding* e o seu efeito na retenção de talento, bem como ajudam as organizações a identificar quais os elementos que devem ser considerados no desenvolvimento da sua marca.

**Palavras-Chave:** Employer Branding; Retenção; Perceção



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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS**

AMA - American Marketing Association

EFA - Exploratory Factor Analysis

HR - Human Resources

ICT – Information and Communications Technologies

KMO - Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure

PCA - Principal Component Analysis





## INTRODUCTION

The growing competition between employers to attract and retain the most talented employees, emerges from the labour market's fast-breaking changes that are accompanied by technological developments and economic globalisation (Berthon et al., 2005). Puri (2018) refers to diversity of opportunities, professional and individual factors, qualification requirements, and also gap in demand and supply, as contributory aspects to this competitive labour market.

For organisations to respond to this problem, applying marketing techniques to human resources activities is required (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013b). Therefore, employer branding has emerged.

Over time, advances have been made since the concept of employer branding developed by Ambler & Barrow (1996). The authors indicate three fundamental dimensions in the development of the employer's brand - functional, economic, and psychological benefits. However, despite its expansion and continuous improvement, it appears only to have consensus on the three primary benefits above mentioned.

Employer branding strategies are implemented to organisations maintain its status despite market's evolution and growing competition, which requires the monitoring of labour market's new trends to guarantee the steadiness of the attributes of the employer as a competitive differential in order to attract and retain the desired people (Tanwar, 2016).

The Human Resources' Management of an organisation's has gradually become more complicated to perform, due to the exponential increase of seeking talented employees and, consequently, the intensification of competition among organisations for differentiated human capital (Tanwar, 2016).

The employer's brand allows an organisation to identify which are the preferred attributes between its employees and prospective employees. This helps organisations to be recognised as a "*Great place to work*" or an "*Employer of choice*" (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

### **Relevance of Investigation**

Although the concept of employer branding involves the purpose of attract and retain talent, studies on this matter tend to be substantially explored only from the perspective of potential employees' (Theurer et al., 2016). The researchers Hillebrandt and Ivens (2013) also denote the dilemma and even suggest gathering preferential attributes by segmentation.

Tanwar and Prasad (2017) sought to fill the gap by developing a scale where the dimensions of employer branding are assessed from current employees' perspective. The authors stated the necessity of generalisation results and develop a greater degree of confidence in the scale, through the replication in other countries, contexts, and sectors/industries.

In addition, Bussin and Mouton (2019) already presented their contribution in this measurement. Complementarily, they proposed to analyse its relationship between three components of employee retention.

The present research it is intended to, not only apply the scale measurement proposed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017) and analyse its possible differences considering the individuals characteristics, but also to determine the possible relation between the employer branding dimensions and the employee's retention.

In order to be able to analyse the instrument with a basis for comparison, it was defined to intervene only with employees who are currently working in organisations belonged in the Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) Sector.

In an article of Portugal IN. (2018), it was verified the growth in the visibility of Portugal for the development of ICT, in the recent years. Portugal not only presents characteristics that may potentialize the industries of this sector, but also as become, in 2016, the new home for the Web Summit event which increases, significantly, the attractiveness to the country.

Further in 2016, the ICT sector was characterized as juvenile, where already more than 100 thousand people were working, and with a turnover of more than 15 million euros (Portugal IN., 2018).

The ICT industry has one of the highest turnover rates, corresponding to a total of 13,20% in Technology and 10,80% in Telecommunications (Bridge In, 2020). As a sector with specific characteristics plus with its growing importance and attractiveness, there is an imperative necessity of investing in human capital in this segment (Informa D&B, 2018).

## **Research Objectives**

The main purpose of the present research is to analyse the perceived dimensions of the employer branding that have major influence in employee's intention to stay with their current employer, in the Portuguese ICT sector.

Following the proposal, the research specific objectives can be written as follows:

1. Analyse if there is any relation between variables, such as, gender, age, educational level, gross annual income, job tenure and managerial level, and the employees' perception of employer branding dimensions.
2. Analyse if there is a relation among the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and employee's retention.
3. Analyse the perception of employees towards the employer branding dimensions applied in their specific work context.

## **Dissertation's Structure**

The present research starts with the introduction of the research. The subject is presented through a generic representation of what it consists, along with its pertinence and relevance, as well as the general and specific objectives.

The first chapter corresponds to the literature review. In this section, relevant subjects for the research will be explained, such as, theoretical background of employer branding and its development process, the importance of employee retention, the role of employees in employer branding and the conceptualization of its structural dimensions.

In the next chapter, it was presented and justified the type of approach and the methods applied to the investigation that allowed the analysis to be carried out.

The third section reflects the process of analysing the data collected. To ensure the reliability of data, firstly, it was performed the validation of the instrument. Subsequently, the respective sample characterisation and quantitative data were conducted. At the end of the chapter, the hypotheses initially formulated were tested.

In the following chapter, the results were discussed. Relationships between data were established, as well as the development of connections with the theoretical background.

At the end of the research, it will be outlined the practical implications of the study, consequents limitations, and future research direction.



## **1.LITERATURE REVIEW**

This section aimed to explore the existing literature on the subject of the dissertation, deepening the knowledge on the matter, as well as identifying the main concepts that explain the previously outlined objectives.

A literature review contributes to a better understanding and shaping of the subject, enabling the methodology to be supported with a provided context (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Therefore, the literature review includes an initial framework regarding the context of intervention, followed by a conceptualisation of employer branding, the explanatory process of developing an employer branding strategy, the importance of employee retention, the role of employees in employer branding, and lastly, a conception of the initial employer branding dimensions, which the study was based for proceeding to data collection.

### **1.1.INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGIES SECTOR**

There is no doubt that the digital era has changed the way people think, act and work. Over the years, the use of *Information and Communication Technologies* (ICT) has been increasing to respond more quickly and more efficiently to what is happening in the current days. From anticipating problems to identifying opportunities, ICT's enables an organization to act with more

agility to the rapid changes of the environment and improve its performance (Tallon et al., 2019).

The ICT sector has a transversal nature, which justifies the fact that, simultaneously, it comprehends five dimensions, namely, consulting and computing programming, telecommunications, information services, industry and commerce (Informa D&B, 2018). Since this segment is framed in several subsectors which leads to a more complex way of developing accurate data in this scope (Campos, 2019).

According to Eurostat Report (2018), alluding to 2017, *information and communication* sector corresponds to 3,5% of Portugal's Gross Domestic Product and 2% of Employment Economic Activity. In the year of 2019, as reported by INE (2019), the number of people working in ICT activities resembled to a total of 121 965. The sector is characterised by its growing development, highly competitive and very juvenile (Informa D&B, 2018).

Data from INE (2019b) reveal that, in 2019, practically all sub-sectors are above the average survival rate in the last 2 years (54,22%), except for the sub-sector of *Consulting and Computing Programming and Related Activities* by a very small percentage (54,07%). However, this sub-sector aggregates the highest number of companies (Informa D&B, 2018).

Despite its growth in the national economy, Portugal is still slightly distant from the digitally advanced countries. This requires an acceleration of not only the adoption of technologies in the labour market, but also to promote internationally the organisations from the ICT sector, as well as attracting attention of other countries to bring its business to Portugal (Campos, 2019).



## 1.2.EMPLOYER BRANDING CONCEPTUALIZATION

The constant change in the world of work has led to an increase of the competition among organisations to acquire and preserve the most remarkable talents. In the words of Hadi and Ahmed (2018), people are the primary resource of an organisation, which justifies the necessity to stand out from other organisations by obtaining this resource as a competitive advantage.

Employer branding has captivated increased attention from the literature due to the demand for competent, knowledgeable and skilful employees (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019).

Derived from marketing, the concept of employer branding emerges as an important area for employers, so much that it started to be used and recognised as a strategic tool (Ahmad et al., 2019).

The complementarity between human resources management and brand marketing is becoming increasingly necessary. At the intersection of both, the employer branding concept arises. Nevertheless, even with the concept's growth, it appears not to exist a commonly accepted definition. This conceptualisation is needed to be viewed broader due to its multidisciplinary definition and both theoretical and pragmatic approaches (Kargas & Tsokos, 2020; Theurer et al., 2016).

Using a well-based structured and sustained employer branding strategy, Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) believe in the possibility of attracting and retaining the highest-calibre human capital in organisations.

While in employer branding research there is a consensus on the target audience, which encompasses potential and current employees, there is only a greater focus on the area of attraction (Theurer et al., 2016).

In the beginning, the emphasis was on the development of a differentiating external reputation with little being developed internally to provide employee involvement (Mosley, 2007). However, over the years, there has been a growing concern to invest in the reputation through the application of marketing principles regarding the attraction and retention of employees (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011). As the focus became more comprehensive, there was a bigger demand to align everything defined for potential and current employees, and the consolidation between employer's brand, corporate brand and customer (Mosley, 2007).

According to AMA (2017), a brand is “a name, term, design, symbol, or any other feature that identifies one seller’s goods or service as distinct from those of other sellers”. Ruchika and Prasad (2019) presents brand as a significant value for the organisation, and its management, substantially crucial to its success.

The first attempt to conceptualise employer branding was explored by the authors Ambler and Barrow (1996) who consider the employer brand the set of functional, economic and psychological aspects provided and identified by the employer. It was the first effort in analysing the linking between human resources management and brand marketing (Theurer et al., 2016).

As a facilitator of both attracting and retaining talent, employer branding contributes to the transformation of organisations' management framework, increasing the levels of commitment and, consequently, the levels of productivity

(Ahmad et al., 2019). Furthermore, Fernandez-Lores et al. (2016) argue that parallel to the consumer brand, the employer's brand must create an emotional connection with its employees to foster cooperation and development. By comparing the promotion of an employer brand to a product brand, it is possible to verify a similarity of benefits, namely, with the product's practicality, the reward (in materials or monetary), and the feeling of belonging and purpose aggregate.

Proceeding alongside with what Lee et al. (2018) mention in their study regarding the employer's brand being similar to the consumer brand, if the employer's brand is differentiating and has a good image it may establish a close relationship with its employees.

Despite all the advances made since the first conceptualisation, it is still necessary to support and reinforce the existing research on employer branding.

Following the initial concept, the authors Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), have designed and improved the definition of employer branding stating that it is a development of a unique employer identity, both intern and externally, which differentiates them from other organisations, making it desirable as an employer. For a fact, Berthon et al. (2005) refer to employer brand as a brand with personality and positioning due to its concern with developing an image in potential employees' mind of a great place to work.

Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012), on the other hand, define the employer brand as a set of attractive characteristics to a specific audience. These features result in material and non-material attributes that creates an image perceived as positive leading to a competitive advantage towards other organizations.

Since then, organisations are progressively attracting and retaining talent through employer branding, which leads businesses to have a competitive advantage over others (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). This competitive advantage is achieved by strategically promote, externally and internally, the employer's brand through brand marketing activities to create the looked-for employer image in those that the organisation intends to target (Theurer et al., 2016).

In complementarity, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) believe in enriching the company's performance with the investment in human capital. In this way, the quality in the employees can essentially be considered as the result of a more significant competitive advantage (Myrden & Kelloway, 2012).

According to Biswas and Suar (2014) the competitive advantage acquired from employer branding is strongly align with the resourced-based view theory - the resources must be valuable, rare, original and irreplaceable (Barney, 1991 cited by Biswas & Suar, 2014).

In this sense, it is possible to interpret human capital as a strategic resource for an organisation, leading to a sustainable competitive advantage with the capacity to impact organisational performance (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Tlaiss et al., 2017).

Building a solid employer brand, it develops an organisation to be desirable to attract potential talent and retain existing ones, which results in the establishment of the organisation as an "*Employer of Choice*", which is a workspace where people prefer to carry out their labour activity (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018; Sokro, 2012; Theurer et al., 2016).

### 1.3. DESIGNING EMPLOYER BRANDING STRATEGY

Employer branding is an effort that an organisation forage to attract and retain people who match what the organisation pursues and intends to maintain (Gregorka et al., 2020).

It should involve a combination of intern forces, such as, top management group, business processing group and cross-functional group, more precisely, integrate skills of both Human Resources (HR) and Marketing areas to proceed to develop an employer brand (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Biswas & Suar, 2014).

Additionally, Mlk (2018) mentions that, since employer branding has an interdisciplinary nature, the development and implementation of employer branding strategies must require various group function structures of an organisation involvement.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) explain the employer branding process through three following steps: creating the employee value proposition, marketing the brand internally and, lastly, promoting the brand externally.

Employee value proposition is a set of attributes that attract potential candidates to join the company and the current employees to remain in it (Matongolo et al., 2018). It allows a company to distinguish and differentiate itself from others by delivering a unique value proposition (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Internal marketing of the employer brand contributes to a better perspective of how organisations should see employees. This means, people are the organisations' primary market, which allows to develop a dedicated workforce to achieve the organisational goals, satisfy the necessities of external

customers and to create a team difficult for organisations to replicate (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Ewing & Caruana, 1999; Myrden & Kelloway, 2012).

The external marketing of the employer brand allows the organisation to establish itself as an *Employer of Choice*, enabling to attract the candidates who are beneficial for the organisation and, subsequently, to support and improve the organisation's brand abroad (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Myrden & Kelloway, 2012).

At the close outlining of the employer branding strategy, the process carries on with the communication's planning. In agreement with Gregorka et al. (2020), this phase is crucial to convey the organisation's employee value proposition and brand values.

Simultaneously, it must be well-defined, continuous and reliable to cause an impact on current and potential employees (Gregorka et al., 2020). By incorporating an adaptive language to both target groups, organisations can establish where new and existent employees want to work (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2012).

Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012) emphasize the importance of developing an employer brand, through the contributions of several authors who have identified some of the advantages that employer branding brings to a company, namely, decrease of HR costs, turnover reduction, improvement of organizational culture and labour relationships, as well as the possibility of adopting less competitive wage policies.

## 1.4.EMPLOYEE RETENTION

Employer brand is a fundamental method of retention since it directly impacts the employee's entire experience in an organisation (Suikkanen, 2010 cited by Hadi & Ahmed, 2018).

Employee retention is defined as an approach by organisations to keep human resources right and qualified, aligned with the fulfil of organisational objectives (Matongolo et al., 2018; Rastogi et al., 2020).

Retaining talent requires, to an organisation, the necessity of applying efforts. Organisations to compete with the recogniser's prizes of being an "*Employer of Choice*" or "*Great Place to Work*", are currently benchmarking its practices (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). By developing this positive and attractive external image of the organisation, employees tend to identify themselves with the organisation they are working with (Lievens et al., 2007 cited by Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

Employer branding contributes to employee retention by developing a sufficiently desirable and appealing image that employees do not see in other organisations as attractive (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018). From the moment an employee joins an organisation, the person is exposed to the employer brand (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017). This not only allows organisations to promote the employee experience in a whole but also gives organisations, the possibility of becoming an employer of choice (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017).

Furthermore, the employer's brand dimensions also make it possible to clarify the level of employee retention since its results in different levels of commitment (Tanwar, 2016 cited by Hadi & Ahmed, 2018).

Innovative policies and mechanisms that an organisation applies in the retention area, result in a positive development and improvement of employer branding, leading employees to retribute organisational support (Kashyap & Verma, 2018).

As a matter of fact, organisations, when developing these mechanisms, must take into consideration and analyse the elements that act and interfere, directly and indirectly, in the current scenario of the labour market (such as globalisation, privatizations and technological development), in order to retain the talent and enable the organisation's success (Ahmad et al., 2019).

By establishing an association with the theory of organisational support, Arasanmi and Krishna (2019) highlight the importance of this interchange that occurs between the delivery of positive practices, on the part of employers, with motivation and commitment to work, on the part of employees.

The coalescence of Marketing with HR Management allows to build a strong image of the organisation among its stakeholders, which consequently, motivates current employees to remain loyal to the organisation and develop engagement among employees to increase their job satisfaction (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Rastogi et al., 2020).

Maheshwari et al., (2017) even mention that adopting an HR-Marketing philosophy allows organisations to ascertain priorities, increase productivity levels and improve attraction and retention strategies. Otherwise, it will lead to



a general discouragement and disinterest of employees, which reduce the organisational performance and number of potential employees (Maheshwari et al., 2017).

An organisation perceived as attractive goes beyond what is pre-established in a legal contract (Edwards, 2010). Seeking to understand the perception of employees with regard to what the organisation promises and delivers in terms of benefits, allows for an assessment of the organisation's attractiveness (Edwards, 2010; Sokro, 2012).

This evaluation comes from elements that are not written in a legal contract but in what is called a psychological contract. This contract has been defined as an agreement where there is an exchange of something taking into consideration the perception created by the individual about that same agreement (Rousseau, 1989 cited by Edwards, 2010). In this sense, through employer branding, the organisation advertises the psychological benefits it offers - such as career opportunities, personal growth, training and development - which consequently, develops a positive perception of the organisation and helps to establish better levels of performance, commitment, satisfaction and retention (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017; Sokro, 2012; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

The search for more holistic and comprehensive strategies that accurately reach current and potential employees' is increasingly requested due to the panoply of existing employers who are available to receive new employees, catalysing retention challenges in organisations (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018).

## 1.5.ROLE OF EMPLOYEES

Since employees have a direct experience with their employer, are the ones who know the most about where they work. They have a more accurate perception of its organisational culture and the work routine (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Furthermore, organisations should seek to preserve the brand promise, which enables the creation of its perception as a desirable place to work on current employees (Ready et al., 2008). According to Maxwell and Knox (2009), there are limited studies associated with analysing current employees' perspective regarding an organisation's attractiveness.

To guarantee a continuous positive growth of an organisation's performance, it is critically essential to search for a better comprehension of an organisation's most critical asset, which is its employees (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Employees are the first to cultivate an organisation's image that contributes to the increase of employee retention rate and maximize the target of new talents (Kimpakorn and Tocquer, 2010 cited by Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). By not fulfilling what it promises, the organisation negatively impacts employees and, consequently, on potential employees (Ready et al., 2008).

Foster et al. (2010) denote that seeing employees as the interface between the organisation and customers, creates the necessity of employees to be fully committed to the organisation so that the promise is deliver correctly to other stakeholders.

In Kargas and Tsokos (2020) research, branding techniques, when extended to employees, allow to ascertain an organisation as an excellent place to work by promoting the organisation's advantages and positive characteristics. This dependence is mainly due to the employees themselves have a tendency to end up as ambassadors for the organisation's brand (Kargas & Tsokos, 2020).

The importance of pondering employees also as customers, was increasing during the years. The premise relies on considering the first market of any organisation its internal customers, meaning the employees (Berthon et al., 2005). Afterwards, employers must search for strategies to attract and retain the employees while keeping in great focus the accomplishment of the goals of the organisation (Berthon et al., 2005).

Despite the organisation's efforts, the actual value of employer branding is directly dependent on what the employees perceived about organisation's benefits provided to them (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Martin et al. (2005) also sustain it with the belief that the perception about organisation's identity, comes from employees' experience that each one has with the organisation and the impressions that external stakeholders develop about their current employer.

This progressive role of employees in the development of the brand leads to the necessity of aligning employees' values and attitudes with the brand's outlined values (Berthon et al., 2005).

Maxwell and Knox (2009) also supports this inside-out methodology to the employer brand development. By mirroring employees' interests and the organisation's identity, a general alignment between brand values and people's behavioural standards is endorsed (Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

This congruence leads to an attraction and motivation capable of linking both potential and current employees to the employer, giving rise to what is called organisational identification (Edwards, 2010). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stated that organisational identification corresponds to the organisation's image perceived, developed intrinsically in its employees about the organisation they are currently working.

Directly associated with this phenomenon is the social identity theory - an individual has a specific identification according to his association with a particular group (Tajfel and Turner, 1986 cited by Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

Maxwell and Knox (2009) also refer the researchers who defend the perspective that an organisation is perceived as a social group, which leads to the phenomenon of organisational identification that occurs when the individual incorporates themselves as a group member. For a fact, the same author argues that stakeholder groups somehow have some influence on the organisation's success, providing an explanation on how the perceptions, built by different groups, can influence the perception of the attractiveness of the employer brand. Social identity theory also allows organisations' to comprehend if their employer brand increase the organisations' attraction and retention of current and potential employees (Bussin & Mouton, 2019).

Therefore, it is crucial for organisations guarantee the fulfilment of the brand promise made to its employees, since they allow the increase not only of the retention rate, but also the attraction rate (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). Ahmad et al., (2019) even point out that, the more importance employees feel they have of the organisations where they work, more loyalty they have to it.

## 1.6.EMPLOYER BRANDING DIMENSIONS

The wide-ranging comprehension of the several dimensions of an employer brand is directly linked with the evaluation of its measurements (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

From the time when the primary approach to employer's branding concept was established by the authors Ambler and Barrow (1996), advances in the subject have been made regarding employer branding dimensions. However, all previous studies still present certain limitations leaving to the necessity of developing a more reliable and valid measurement employer branding scale (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Most of research verifies a certain tendency to address the issue of employer branding in the scope of attraction, creating a necessity of providing some attention to how attractive the employer's brand is to the organisations' internal target - its employees (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). Therefore, to perceive and comprehend how the employer brand delivers its promise, it is required to carry out an analysis of the employer's brand through the current employees' perspective (Ready et al., 2008 cited by Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Ambler and Barrow (1996) identified the first three characteristics of employer brand: the functional, economic, and psychological dimensions. The first dimension is related to the activities of career development and other valuable deeds; the second one represents de material and monetary compensations; the last dimension is referring to the sense of belonging, orientation and purpose (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Zhu et al., 2014). However, it

is essential to refer that the authors does not develop a scale to measure employer brand (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013a).

Subsequently, Berthon et al. (2005) developed an extended and improved version of the previous dimensions proposed by Ambler and Barrow (1996), and enhanced into five significant dimensions: development value, social value, interest value, application value, economic value. The functional dimension is captured in both development and application value; the interest and social value are mutually comprised in the psychological dimension; and it is clear to conjointly relate the economic value to the economic dimension (Puri, 2018).

Berthon et al. (2005) primarily studied the employer's branding dimensions through potential employees, more precisely, from students' perspective. It is still one of the major measurements used in the employer branding context despite having a considerable incidence in the potential employees and fewer massive through the current employees' perspective (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Hillebrandt and Ivens (2013b) conducted a research where it identified 12 key elements of the employer brand: culture and communication; team spirit; tasks; international career and environment; benefits; reputation; work-life balance; training and development; diversity; customers; autonomy; and corporate social responsibility. This scale was developed as an extension of studies previously carried out in employer branding extent. It was also the first solution that ended up covering and focusing on employees' perspective concerning employer branding dimensions (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

However, Tanwar and Prasad (2017) acknowledge that the scale designed by Hillebrandt and Ivens (2013b) might present some limitations concerning how employer branding was conceptualised. The authors also refer the absence of validation through the structural equation modelling. It is important to denote that structural equation modelling works as an asset to test theories, meaning it pursues to evaluate the hypotheses based on parameters defined in a theoretical model (Kaplan, 2001).

Consequently, it led the authors, Tanwar and Prasad (2017), to design a proper academic research scale. It is substantially vital for filling the gap regarding employers' brand studies carried out from current employees' perspective. However, it is also equally significant (and necessary) for organisations to better understand how employees perceive their organisation's brand (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Their study's emphasis was on the Indian context, more precisely in the IT's industry, due to being one of the most prominent players worldwide in this specific segment (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

The established scale has five key dimensions that can also be ascended by the three dimensions propositioned by Ambler and Barrow (1996), namely: compensation and benefits, ethics and corporate social responsibility, healthy work atmosphere, training and development and lastly, work life balance.

The scale measure proposed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017) consisted of a five-dimensional structure of the employer branding. Thus, being employer branding an essential method to contribute to organisational productivity and

competitiveness, it must have to be clarified the meaning of the dimensions analysed in the present research (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

### **Compensation and Benefits**

Directly related to high and competitive wages and benefits, this dimension presents what is offered by the organisation from an economic perspective (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). The organisational preoccupations in building an adequate compensation and benefits package results in a direct contribution not only to attract and retain employees but also to become competitive in the current market (Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Conversely, although the company effectively seeks to respond to its employees' needs, it is also essential to consider their expectations. This management of expectations is carried out through the employer's brand and is a crucial factor in creating engagement and reducing resource costs (Bussin & Mouton, 2019).

It is expected that employees' income will be a significant influence factor. Nevertheless, employees also consider the benefits equally important, which may include pensions, health insurance to contractual stability, and other advantages (Dabirian et al., 2017). In this sense, a solid perceived employer brand generates a bigger willingness to labour for lower compensations and benefits in current employees (Bussin & Mouton, 2019).



## **Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility**

Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility has significantly gained importance in the scope of employer branding. Not only for the benefits it presents as a competitive advantage, but it also turns an organisation capable of improving both its financial performance and brand image (Biswas & Suar, 2014; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

Corporate Social Responsibility drives through the organisational commitment to ethical behaviour and sustainable development, both socially and economically (Moir, 2001 cited by Biswas & Suar, 2014). Additionally, Carlini et al. (2019) denote that this organisation's commitment depends on the daily actions and decisions of its employees, thus making them partners in the achievement of success in the organisation's social responsible behaviour. Therefore, Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility are related to the organisation's preoccupations regarding both its employees and society (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). Similarly, Corporate Social Responsibility corresponds to the impact caused on society to find and engage customers. At the same time, ethics relates the organisation's attitude to its employees and law procedures (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

Hence, Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility contribute to improving the employer's brand, leading to an organisation more capable of attracting and retaining human capital (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

### **Healthy Work Atmosphere**

A work environment where the employees feel comfortable and safe is fundamental to ensure that they comply with their responsibilities and functions. This leads to a higher necessity for the organisation to create a healthy and functional environment for the employees to integrate (Carlini et al., 2019).

Tanwar and Prasad (2017) defines this dimension as a space work considered calm, relaxed, and friendly where teamwork and mutual support prevails amongst the employees. As a mere fact, Dabirian et al. (2017) believe that healthy work environments result from the definition of a strategy by organisations to attract and retain employees.

A healthy work atmosphere emerges as a characteristic that varies between organisations, resulting in a distinguishing factor in the competition by being included in the employee value proposition (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). The influence that the work environment causes on employees' attitudes ends up not being controlled by the organisation. Notwithstanding, it is a factor that helps in the construction of the employer's brand (Dabirian et al., 2017; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

### **Training and Development**

It is very frequently for employees to prefer having an organisation invest in their career development more than received a higher recompense, in the current labour market (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Tanwar and Prasad, (2017) states that training and development are related to developing employees' opportunities and skills in their current

organisation or their future careers. There are several types of training and development, such as internal training, tutorship and total payment by the employers for benefit in training (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012 cited by Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

For a fact, according to Rastogi et al., (2020), the employees are currently taking as a priority the possibility of training and development that an organisation provides, in improving their qualifications or even perfecting those they already possess. In this sense, the authors believe the dimension of training and development hold sufficient potential to be a differentiating element of the employer's brand capable of attracting and retaining talent.

In Tanwar and Prasad (2016) research, it was concluded that training and development is a dimension directly related to employer branding, due to their influence on employer image through the proffer's organisation of training opportunities and personal development (Berthon et al., 2005).

### **Work Life Balance**

Employees are considering having work life balance policies as a notable factor in their decision to stay in the organisation, which results in a more significant advantage to organisations that results in the increase of employees' loyalty and retention (Figurska & Matuska, 2013).

Regarding this substance, Dabirian et al. (2017) define it with the possibility of employees' manage their professional sphere with others without directly constrain and interfere with it. Therefore, organisations incorporate a component dedicated to work life balance (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

It is equally important to emphasise that Hillebrandt and Ivens (2013) also denote this dimension's relevance in their research. The culmination of introducing flexible hours and its communication to the employees through their employer value proposition have, as a result, an enhancing of the organisation's employer's brand image (Hillebrandt & Ivens, 2013b).

Employees' commonly relate work-life balance with their aspiration of becoming part of the organisation's identity and not just an ordinary employee (Carroll & Levy, 2010 cited by Dabirian et al., 2017).

## **2.METHODOLOGY**

In the following chapter, the research methods and techniques that enabled the development of the study were analysed and evaluated. The application of these procedures enabled the data collection according to what was proposed.

Prodanov and Freitas (2013) state that, methodology is the application of methods and techniques that must be taken into consideration for the development of a study, in order to prove validation and usefulness in the society.

The research methodology begins with a framework of the context, followed by the main and specific objectives along with the conceptual model developed. Afterwards, the adopted approach was described as well as the applied research technique. In the end, the sample involved in the study was clarified.

### **2.1.RESEARCH SETTING**

The world's constant evolution leads to adaptations of the attributes considered relevant to attract and retain talent, therefore it is essential to comprehend what makes an organisation a preferred choice for people (Ahmad et al., 2019).

As previously mentioned, 3,5% of Portugal's total gross value added, *information and communication* correspond to and 2% of employment economic activity (Eurostat, 2018). In the year of 2019, as reported by INE (2019), the number of people working in ICT sector equals a total of 121 965 people.

In 2016, the ICT's subsector of *Consulting and Computer Programming* gathered the greatest amount of organisations (Campos, 2019). Furthermore, in Country Report of Randstad (2019) it was revealed the list of most attractive sectors in Portugal, being *IT and Consulting* segment the 5<sup>th</sup> top-notch selection to work in Portugal.

The employer branding concept it is, accurately, a critical factor that allows a company to acquire and maintain the best talents in the market (Ahmad et al., 2019). Therefore, the present research proposes to study the Portuguese population, between 18 and 65 years, who labour in the ICT sector.

## 2.2.PURPOSE

As previously stated in the Introduction's chapter, the main objective of the present research is to analyse which perceived dimensions of the employer branding have major influence in Portuguese employee's intention to stay with their current employer, in the ICT sector.

The illustration of this approach is not only concerned with analysing the relationship between employer's brand dimensions and employee retention, but

also in identifying what are the attributes among ICT organisations that are most positively perceived from employees.

### 2.2.1. Research Objectives

Following the proposal, the research specific objectives can be written as follows:

- Analyse if there is any relation between variables, such as, gender, age, educational level, gross annual income, job tenure and managerial level, and the employees' perception of employer branding dimensions.
- Analyse if there is a relation among the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and employee's retention.
- Analyse the perception of employees towards the employer branding dimensions applied in their specific work context.

### 2.3. RESEARCH CONCEPTUAL MODEL

In the present research, it is important to take into consideration that it is intended to analyse the possible relationship between the dimensions of employer branding perceived by employees and the possibility of retaining them in their current employment entity.

The conceptual model of analysis applied to the research was developed considering the researches of the authors Tanwar & Prasad's (2017) and Bussin

& Mouton (2019) regarding the perceptions of the dimensions of employer branding and employee retention, respectively (Figure 1).

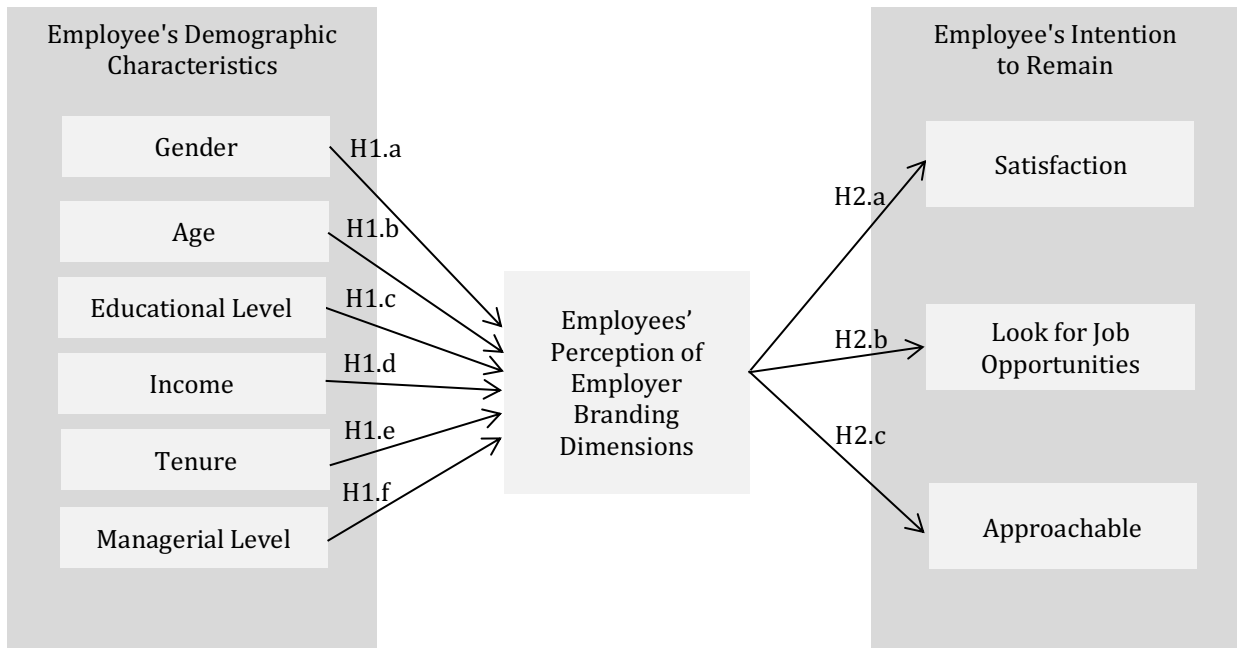


Figure 1 - Research Conceptual Model  
Source: Author

## 2.4. RESEARCH APPROACH

The present study explores not only the measurement of employer branding dimensions, defined in the Tanwar and Prasad's (2017) research, but also the employees' intentions to stay in their current organisations, defined in Bussin and Mouton (2019) study. Its applicability is scrutinised in the Portuguese labour context, more precisely, in the ICT sector.

The primary attention is in the development of an empirical study in current employees' perceptions of employer branding dimensions. Henceforth,



a deductive approach was used to conduct this research. According to Neuman (2014), a deductive approach enables to corroborate or refute results that leads to a maturation of the concepts and generalised premises around the subject in question.

The theory progresses through different research results, improving to a more solid knowledge of it (Neuman, 2014). In this sense, to theory testing, hypotheses will be deduced and data will be analysed to add value to a given subject (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). In the present research, was for a better comprehension of the dimensional structure of the employer brand and its correlation with employees' retention.

The deductive strategy is associated with the use of a quantitative research approach (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Therefore, the quantitative method it was used to assess the previously defined hypotheses and posteriorly refuted through data collection (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

#### 2.4.1. Quantitative Method

Derived from the practices of positivism, quantitative research is a method supported by deduction, which presupposes a relationship between research and theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The theoretical assumptions are tested empirically, from an objective and systematic data collection that allows to create extrapolations from a population's sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Queirós et al., 2017).

Since in quantitative research the purpose is dedicated to test the hypotheses previously developed from theory, it is important to take into consideration how the hypotheses demonstrate what are the independent variables that are expected to be related to a dependent even several variables (Blackstone, 2012).

The present research was intended to verify if there is a relation between the employee's perceptions of the employer branding dimensions and the demographic characteristics of the sample, as well as analysing whether these dimensions influence on employee's intention to remain with their employer.

In this sense, it was formulated the following two groups of hypotheses:

**Hypotheses 1** – Perceptions of employer branding dimensions vary across demographic characteristics.

**H1.a** - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and gender.

**H1.b** - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and age segments.

**H1.c** - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and educational level.

**H1.d** - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and gross annual income.

**H1.e** - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and job tenure.

**H1.f** - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and managerial level.

**Hypotheses 2** – Employer branding dimensions has a positive influence on employee’s intention to remain with the employer.

**H2.a** - There is a positive correlation between the perceptions of the employer branding dimensions and employee satisfaction.

**H2.b** - There is a correlation between the perceptions of the employer branding dimensions and employee’s look for opportunities.

**H2.c** - There is a positive correlation between the perceptions of the employer branding dimensions and the possibility of moving to another organisation.

## 2.5. RESEARCH TECHNIQUE

The data collection method was based on the structural dimension of employer branding proposed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017) and the employees’ retention questions developed by Bussin and Mouton (2019), this study followed a survey research.

A survey research is a cross-sectional design which processes its data collection through a questionnaire or a structured interview that intends to establish connections between two or more variables in order to identify patterns in the collected quantitative or qualitative data. (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

### 2.5.1. Questionnaire

Questionnaires are one of the most used quantitative techniques as it acknowledges to reflect the perspective of the human being regarding their opinion, perception and behaviour concerning a given phenomenon (Dörnyei, 2003; Queirós et al., 2017).

As previously mentioned, the questionnaire used in this research was composed by proposals of Tanwar and Prasad (2017) (related to the employer branding dimensions measurements), plus Bussin and Mouton (2019) (related to the employee retention issue). Therefore, the translation from English to Portuguese was previously carried out by the standards of the conceptual structure of the original parameters of both studies.

To minimize the risk of sampling error, it was developed a screening question, captured through the yes or no answer, where the participants were asked if they were currently working in the ICT sector. Subsequently, the questionnaire was consisted by 5 sections with a series of questions related to the employer brand dimensions measurement from Tanwar and Prasad (2017) research. It was used a 5-Likert scale measure in agreement (1 - strongly disagree; 2 - disagree; 3 - neutral; 4 - agree; 5 - strongly agree).

In the followed part of the questionnaire, it was considered three questions withdrawal from Bussin and Mouton (2019) paper related to employee's retention, where it was used a 5-Likert Scale on likelihood (1 - definitely not; 2 - probably not; 3 - neutral; 4 - probably; 5 - definitely) and affirmative/negative option response.

In the final section, the questionnaire consisted in a set of items related to sociodemographic characteristics that were divided into background information relevant to the study, more specifically, gender, age, age, educational level, gross annual income, job tenure and managerial level.

This information contributes to establish significant differences between the perceptions of the employer branding dimensions among the sample.

## 2.6. POPULATION AND SAMPLE

In the data collection process, it is crucially important to define what is the population of the research. According to Neuman (2014), in order to define the population, it is necessary to outline a specific element that will be studied in the research and its limit regarding geographic, temporal and any others characteristics that may be considered relevant.

However, since it is not possible to include all the elements comprised in the population, it requires to select only a part of that universe to integrate the research - sampling (Dawson, 2002). The main objective of sampling is to focus the investigation on specific characteristics of the population and consolidating it in the sample of that population (Lavrakas, 2008).

For the present research, the target population of the present research is Portuguese people, between 18 and 65 years old, who are currently working in the ICT sector.

Prominently marked with the impossibility of collecting data from the total elements of the population and as a consequence of not only time and cost constraints but also limited access, the sample was determined through a non-probability sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011). This type of sampling does not allow to extrapolate data to the population represented in the research, since it does not guarantee to all the elements of the population an equal probability of being selected to the sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Thus, through the non-probability sample, respondents will be chosen based on their opportunity and accessibility (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

It was used two non-probability sample techniques: purposive and snowball. The purposive sample it is used when the researcher wants to analyse specific criteria, and search for participants whom characteristics are contemplated (Queirós et al., 2017). Referred as a chain of references, in a snowball sample, the researcher establishes contact with people who matches the profile, relevant to the study and they subsequently recruit new participants (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Queirós et al., 2017).

In the first phase, a post was published on the socials network, *LinkedIn* and *Instagram*, where specific collaboration from the target population was requested. Therefore, through like and sharing, of those who engage with the post, it was possible to reach more people. Subsequently, a direct search of profiles on LinkedIn who matched the criteria was carried out and a direct message was sent requesting collaboration. Lastly, people from the researcher's personal network were contacted and it was requested not only to answer the

questionnaire but also to share with colleagues and/or acquaintances who fit the specificities.

The characterization of the sample will be presented afterwards in the chapter correspondent to the findings.





### 3. FINDINGS

After collecting and processing the collected data, the analysis part it follows. As the quantitative results were obtained through a questionnaire, SPSS (*Statistical Package for the Social Science*) program 27<sup>th</sup> version was used as a tool to analyse the descriptive statistics of the data. Since the research instrument was adapted of two studies, the instrument properties were evaluated in two separate techniques: one analysed the employer branding dimensions and the other took into consideration the components related to employee retention.

Additionally, a characterization of both sample and quantitative data will be carried out, as well as the hypotheses will be tested.

#### 3.1. RESEARCH INSTRUMENT VALIDATION

Once the data has been collected, it was necessary to proceed with the assessment of the instrument psychometric properties. For this purpose, the variables related to employer branding dimensions were evaluated through the Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA).

According to Hongyu (2018), EFA is a technique whose purpose is to identify correlations between a varied number of variables and group it into factors, leading to a simplification of data by identifying the most significant

variables or either to create a smaller set of variables (based on the original number of variables).

In the present research, the focus of using the EFA technique was to analyse whether the theoretical structure proposed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017), is replicated in the presented sample.

Similarly to the original study, the adequacy of the data was verified using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure (KMO) test and the Bartlett Sphericity Test. In addition, the Principal Component Analysis (PCA) with Varimax Rotation was performed. Moreover, to attest the reliability of the presented scale, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for all the items that construct the instrument.

The KMO test is a statistical test that analyses whether the proportion of items that can be explained by a variable and consequently indicating how appropriate the EFA application is for the data set. The KMO result can vary from zero to one (Hongyu, 2018):

- values less than 0.5 are considered unacceptable;
- values between 0.5 and 0.7 are considered mediocre;
- values between 0.7 and 0.8 are considered good;
- values greater than 0.8 and 0.9 are considered excellent.

The Bartlett Sphericity test indicates whether there are sufficient correlations between the variables to carry out the factor analysis (Hair et al., 2000). A significance level (sign.) less than 0,05 is expected.

In addition to the EFA, it is intended that the consistency of the proposed entire scale be evaluated, with Cronbach's Alpha being the most widely used

measure (Hair et al., 2000). The generally accepted lower limit for Cronbach's alpha is 0,70, however its reduction to 0,60 is accepted in exploratory research (Hair et al., 2009 cited by Hongyu, 2018).

Before going for a more detailed analysis and looking at the dimensions, when carrying out a general assessment of the 23 items scale measure, both the KMO value (0,908) and the Bartlett Sphericity test (,000) confirm the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis.

To ensure that the factor structure of the original instrument is maintained, the EFA was carried out by forcing the 5 factors proposed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017), although it was not presented in the same order as the proposal. The factors *Compensation & Benefits*, *Training and Development*, *Ethics & Corporate Social Responsibility*, *Work-Life Balance* and *Healthy Work Atmosphere* explain 40,76%, 7,40%, 6,32%, 4,70% and 4,47% total of the variance of 23 items of scale, respectively. The five factors explain 63,65% of total variance.

The employer branding measure was found to have a Cronbach's Alpha reliability score of 0,927 translating into excellent internal consistency.

### **Compensation and Benefits**

Primarily, the adequacy of data was tested through the KMO Test and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity. It was noted that, for the "*Compensation & Benefits*" dimension, both KMO (,667) and Bartlett's Sphericity (,000) values confirm the suitability of the dataset for factor analysis (Table 1).

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		,667
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	87,085
	df	6
	Sig.	,000

Table 1 - KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: "Compensation and Benefits"

Analysing the table below (Table 2), the extraction of the factor "In general, the salary offered by my organisation is high." explains 51,03% of the total variance of the dimension.

When considering the factor loadings, all the variables had communalities values above the minimum acceptable limit (>0,50). It is also possible to conclude that the variable "My organisation provides good health benefits." had the highest factor loading (0,82), meaning, it is the factor who contributed the most to the construction of the "Compensation & Benefits" dimension.

On the other hand, by observing the internal consistency, it appears that the Cronbach Alpha value is considered reasonable and valid (0,67).

	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
In general, the salary offered by my organisation is high.	3,06	1,12	0,69	2,04	51,03	0,67
My organisation provides overtime pay.	2,56	1,38	0,61	0,86	21,47	
My organisation provides good health benefits.	3,74	1,17	0,82	0,67	16,70	
My organisation provides insurance coverage for employees and dependents.	3,77	1,24	0,72	0,43	10,81	

Table 2 - Factor Analysis: "Compensation and Benefits"

## Training and Development

When submitted to KMO test (Table 3), the “*Training and Development*” dimension indicates an excellent adequacy of database (.843). While the Bartlett’s test of Sphericity reveals a significance level that guarantees a correlation between variables (.000).

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		,843
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	412,231
	df	15
	Sig.	,000

Table 3 - KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: "Training and Development"

When analysing the factor loadings (Table 4), all the variables had communalities values above the minimum acceptable limit (>0,50). In a general perspective, it is possible to verify that all the variables had communalities values beyond the reasonable (0,50), notwithstanding with the fact that the variable “My organisation offers opportunities to work on foreign projects.” had a low factor loading (0,57). Only one factor extracted explains 61,90% of the total variance of the “*Training and Development*” dimension.

Attesting the scale's reliability, the Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was calculated for the items that compose the scale, which resulted in a value close to 1 (0,87).

	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
My organisation provides us online training courses.	3,99	1,15	0,78	3,71	61,90	0,87
My organisation organises various conferences, workshops, and training programmes on regular basis.	3,57	1,26	0,77	0,77	12,75	
My organisation offers opportunities to work on foreign projects.	3,77	1,23	0,57	0,61	10,23	
My organisation invests heavily in training and development of its employees.	3,68	1,10	0,90	0,40	6,69	
Skill development is a continuous process in my organisation.	3,85	1,02	0,86	0,34	5,72	
My organisation communicates clear advancement path for its employees.	3,45	1,17	0,80	0,16	2,71	

Table 4 - Factor Analysis "Training and Development"

### Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility

As previously performed, the KMO (,701) and Bartlett's Sphericity (,000) tests were conducted, resulting in an acceptable adequacy and correlation of the "Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility" dimension for proceeding to factor analysis (Table 5).

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		,701
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	64,796
	df	6
	Sig.	,000

Table 5 - Table 3 - KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: "Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility"

Since all the communalities values respect the reference value ( $>0,50$ ), every variable that composed the dimension were subject to factor analysis (Table 6). Two factors were extracted – “My organisation has fair attitude towards employees.” and “Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations.” – which cumulatively explain 69,47% of the total variance.

The internal consistency of the scale was calculated resulting in an acceptable Cronbach Alpha’s value (0,65).

	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
My organisation has fair attitude towards employees.	3,76	1,03	0,69	1,95	48,64	0,65
Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations.	4,20	0,70	0,59	0,83	20,83	
Humanitarian organisation gives back to the society.	3,67	1,03	0,76	0,65	16,17	
There is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work.	3,63	1,04	0,74	0,58	14,37	

Table 6 - Factor Analysis: "Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility"

## Work-Life Balance

Granting the fact that the KMO’s value observed it is considered acceptable, but mediocre (,541), together with the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (,000), it validates the performance of factor analysis for the scale to be evaluated (Table 7).

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		,541
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	76,091
	df	3
	Sig.	,000

Table 7 - KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: "Work-Life Balance"

With the factor analysis conducted (Table 8), it was possible to observe that only the extracted variable "My organisation provides flexible-working hours." explains 58,67% of the total variance.

When analysing the communalities, it was found that one of the variables – "My organisation provides on-site sports facility." - is extremely close to the considered acceptable limit (0,5), despite the lower factor loading (0,49). The reason for not excluding the variable is related to the fact that, on smaller scales is frequently found variables with lower factor loadings (close to 0,5), as verified in the "Work-Life Balance" dimension.

The Cronbach Alpha coefficient reveals intern scale consistency despite its low value (0,61).

	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
My organisation provides flexible-working hours.	3,83	1,25	0,89	1,76	58,67	0,61
My organisation offers opportunity to work from home,	4,34	1,04	0,86	0,89	29,52	
My organisation provides on-site sports facility.	2,02	1,25	0,49	0,35	11,81	

Table 8 - Factor Analysis: "Work-Life Balance"



## Healthy Work Atmosphere

Repeating the previous procedures, the adequacy tests of the database were carried out for the scale that constitutes the dimension “*Healthy Work Atmosphere*” (Table 9).

The KMO test presented a value of ,846 which is considered an excellent indicator, while in the Bartlett’s Test of Sphericity the significance level guarantees correlations between the variables (,000).

<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		,846
<b>Bartlett's Test of Sphericity</b>	Approx. Chi-Square	279,204
	df	15
	Sig.	,000

Table 9 - KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: “*Healthy Work Atmosphere*”

Regarding factor analysis below (Table 10), all variables that composes the “*Healthy Work Atmosphere*” dimension, presented values in accordance with the parameters to be achieved to obtain a positive factor analysis. With communalities values respecting the reference value (>0,5), the factor “My organisation provides autonomy to its employees to take decisions.” whose extraction was made, explained 55,76% of the total variance.

Lastly, the value of Cronbach’s Alpha presents an optimal value (0,83), considering that, the closer to 1, the greater is the internal consistency of the scale.

	Mean	Std. Dev	Factor Loading	Eigenvalue	% Variance Explained	Cronbach Alpha
My organisation provides autonomy to its employees to take decisions.	4,02	0,96	0,68	3,35	55,76	0,83
My organisation offers opportunities to enjoy a group atmosphere.	4,11	0,88	0,80	0,80	13,31	
I have friends at work who are ready to share my responsibility at work in my absence.	4,10	0,84	0,63	0,59	9,84	
My organisation recognises me when I do good work.	3,99	0,98	0,81	0,54	9,05	
My organisation offers a relatively stress-free work environment.	3,42	1,18	0,75	0,39	6,44	
My organisation offers opportunity to work in teams.	4,29	0,79	0,80	0,34	5,61	

Table 10 - Factor Analysis: "Healthy Work Atmosphere"

As previously mentioned, part of the instrument is constituted with 3 variables related to employee retention – 2 ordinal and 1 nominal. In this sense, it is necessary to carry out an analysis towards normality assumption, to understand if the interpretation and inference of the data is valid (Razali & Wah, 2011).

In this sense, several methods were used, one subjective – the analysis of histogram -, one formal - the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test – and 2 numerical methods – Skewness and Kurtosis test.

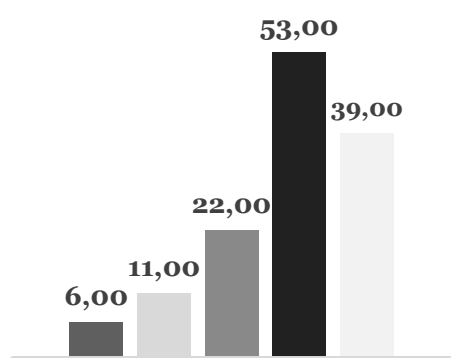
The difference between the methods is that the histogram is more of a visual interpretation, while the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test performs to

understand the adherence of the variable to the normal distribution (Razali & Wah, 2011).

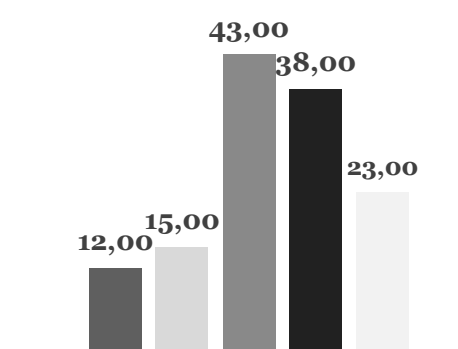
Since the violation of distribution is often due to asymmetries, the Skewness and Kurtosis was used to test whether the data is possible to keep a normal distribution, in case of the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test results in a nonnormal distribution (Razali & Wah, 2011).

It is important to denote that nominal variable are non-normal, which explains the reason for not proceeding to normality tests, thus, only 2 of the 3 variables involving the retention dimension were submitted to normality tests.

Through visual interpretation it is possible to verify that, in both ordinal variables (Graph 1 and Graph 2), the histogram presents a slope to the right side, consequently demonstrating a tail to the left which indicates a negative Skewness distribution. Thus, there is no symmetry that results in a nonnormal distribution (Blanca et al., 2013).



Graph 1 - Histogram of Variable "I am satisfied with my current employer".



Graph 1 - Histogram of Variable "I would consider joining another organisation if it approached me."

When conducting Kolmogorov-Smirnov's test (Table 11), it should be noted that the significance, in both variables, is not bigger than 0,05 which leads to the rejection of the hypothesis that the distribution is normal.

<b>Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test</b>		
<b>I am satisfied with my current employer.</b>	Statistic	,266
	df	131
	Sig.	,000
<b>I would consider joining another organisation if it approached me.</b>	Statistic	,179
	df	131
	Sig.	,000

*Table 11 - Kolmogorov-Smirnov's Test of variables: "I am satisfied with my current employer" and "I would consider joining another organisation if it approached me."*

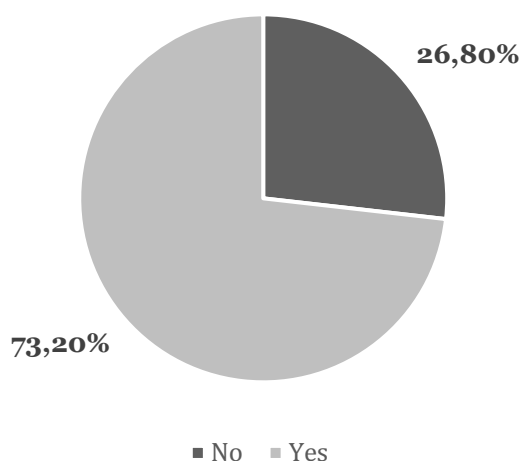
Finally, the Skewness and Kurtosis coefficient was analysed to verify if it is still possible to use parametric tests. According to George & Mallery (2016), the values for both Skewness and Kurtosis, in order to be considered acceptable in a normal distribution, must have to be between -2 and +2. Variables between -1 and +1, are considered excellent for most of parametric purposes (George & Mallery, 2016).

Despite both variables exhibit acceptable values in both Skewness and Kurtosis coefficients are still considered not normal. In this sense, and to ensure homogeneity with the research of Bussin & Mouton (2019), both were pondered to have a non-normal distribution.

### 3.2.SAMPLE CHARACTERIZATION

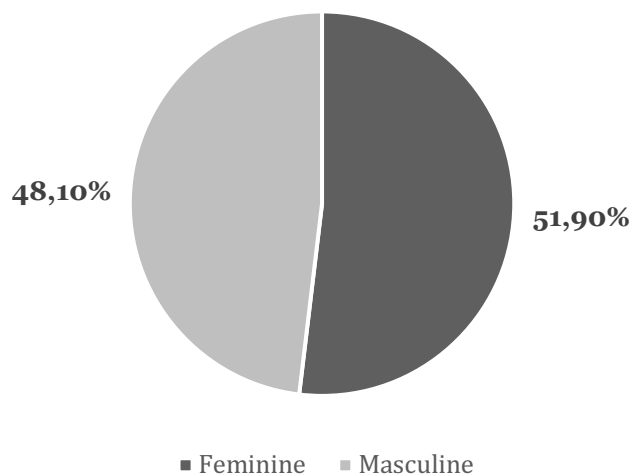
As previously mentioned, it was developed a screening question, where the participants were asked if they are currently working in the ICT sector to validate the target population of the research.

Therefore, it was verified that out of the 178 respondents, only **131 responses** were valid to pursue the research, which corresponds to 73,20% of the total number of responses (Graph 3).



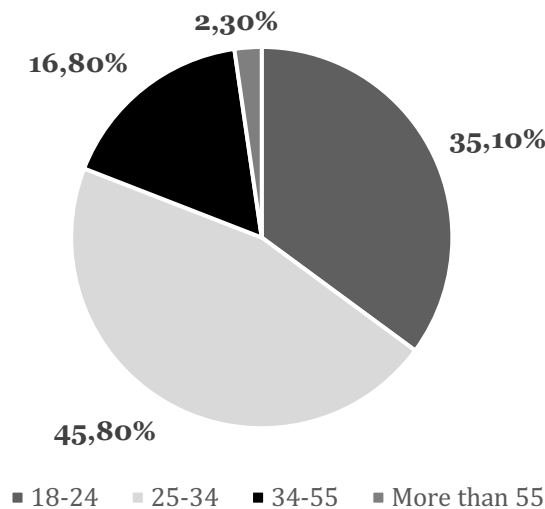
Graph 2 – Distribution by Total Number of Responses regarding working in the ICT sector

Despite presenting a relatively homogeneous result, regarding **gender** there was a majority of 51,90% of female, in comparison to the 48,10% of male (Graph 4).



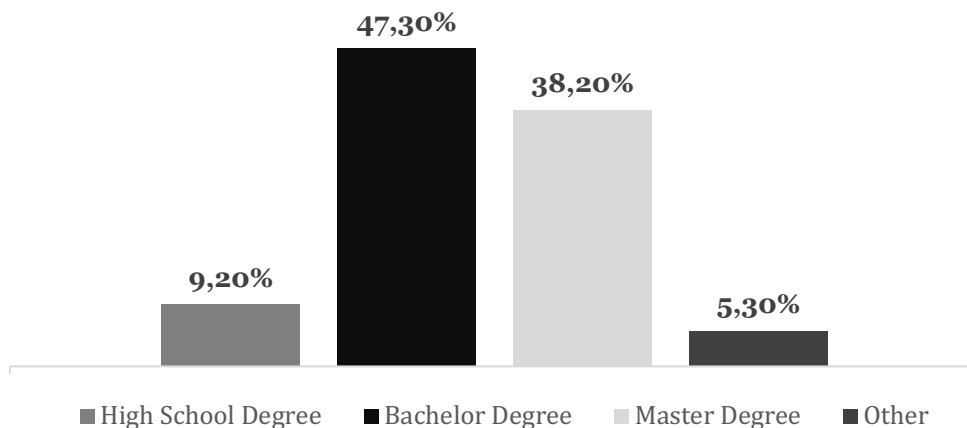
Graph 3 - Distribution by Gender

Concerning the **age segments** of the sample, 35,10% were between the ages of 18 and 24 years old and 16,80% were amid 35 and 54 years (Graph 5). The larger segment corresponds to the ages bounded by 25 and 34 years old, with 45,80%. A small percentage of the sample was more than 55 years old, corresponding only to 2,30%.



Graph 4 - Distribution by Age Segments

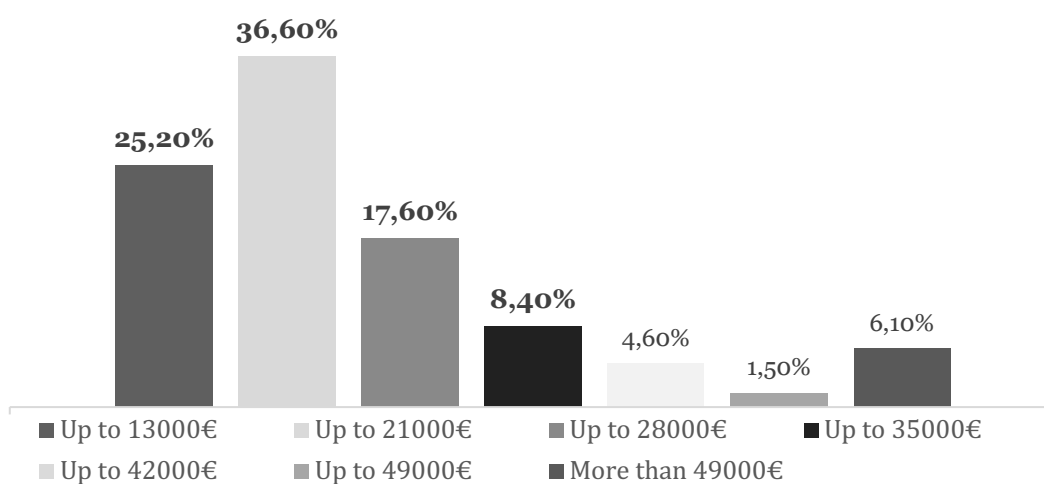
In terms of **educational level**, almost half of the respondents had a Bachelor Degree (47,30%), followed by 38,20% of the participants with a Master Degree (Graph 6). The percentage of respondents with an High School Degree corresponds to 9,20%, and 5,30% of the “others” qualifications consists, in the majority of it, to Higher Professional Technical Courses (Level 5).



Graph 5 - Distribution by Educational Level

As for **gross annual income** (Graph 7), most participants belong to the group that earned up to €21000 (36.60%), followed by the group that earned up to €13000 euros (25,20%). The third largest share corresponds to participants with a gross annual income of up to €28000.

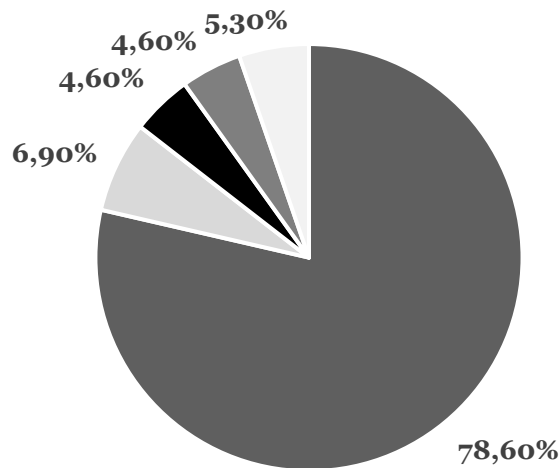
The lowest percentage corresponds to the respondents who received up to €49000 (1,50%), followed by those who reach a annual revenue up to €42000 with 4,60%. With similar weights are participants who obtained an income up to €35000 (8,40%) and more than €49000 (6,10%), respectively.



Graph 6- Distribution by Gross Annual Income

Regarding **job tenure** (Graph 8), the group working up to 3 years with the same employer were the predominant portion of respondents, with a total of 78,60%. Followed by 6,90%, were the participants who work between 3 to 5 years for their current employer.

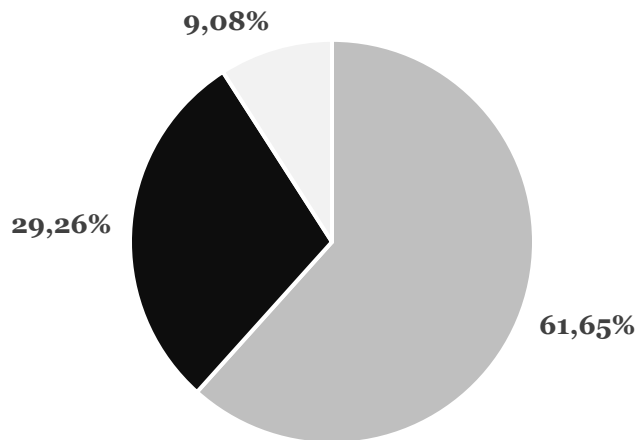
Both groups of 6 to 9 years and 10 to 14 years of length time working in their employer, had the same portion of respondents (4,60%). Those who have been employed for the same organisation for more than 15 years equal a total of 5,30%.



■ Up to 3 years ■ 3 to 5 years ■ 6 to 9 years ■ 10 to 14 years ■ More than 15 years

*Graph 7 - Distribution by Job Tenure*

Lastly, considering the **level of management** exercised (Graph 9), the majority of participants are in Operations, assembly a total of 61,65%. A small percentage of the sample is in top management (9,08%) and 29,26% is in coordination positions.



■ Operations ■ Coordination ■ Top Management

*Graph 8 - Distribution by Managerial Level*



### 3.3. DESCRIPTIVE ANALYSIS OF VARIABLES

After the validation of the instrument and the sample characterization, a descriptive analysis was carried out. Initially, it was observed the descriptive measures on employer branding dimensions, such as, mean, standard deviation, variance and minimum and maximum values (Table 12).

<b>Employer Branding Dimensions</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
Healthy Work Atmosphere	3,99	0,70	0,49	5,00	2,33
Training and Development	3,72	0,90	0,81	5,00	1,33
Work-Life Balance	3,40	0,89	0,79	5,00	1,00
Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	3,81	0,67	0,45	5,00	1,75
Compensation and Benefits	3,28	0,87	0,76	5,00	1,25

*Table 12 - Descriptive Analysis: Employer Branding Dimensions*

The dimensions of the study resulted in a set of variables (23 in total) which constitutes the study. It should be noted that all items were evaluated on a 5-Likert scale that assume values from 1 to 5 in agreement (1 - strongly disagree; 2 - disagree; 3 - neutral; 4 - agree; 5 - strongly agree).

Based on the table demonstrated, it is possible to verify that, in general, all the dimensions reached the maximum value, however, at the minimum value, only the dimension of “*Work-Life Balance*” reached it.

Overall, the dimensions of employer branding meet the neutral values of the scale, highlighting that the highest mean is identified in the “*Healthy Work Atmosphere*” variable, and the lowest in the “*Compensation and Benefits*” dimension.

Before analysing the variables related to retention, it was carried out a more in-depth analysis of the averages resulting from crossing socio-demographic characteristics with the employer branding dimensions.

In general, as with the averages of the dimensions, most of the results indicate a generic neutrality. However, there are some noteworthy data:

- With an average of 4,11, the “*Male Gender*” perceives the Healthy Work Atmosphere dimension more positively compared to the female gender. The remaining dimensions do not present any differentiated and distinct results.
- The segments aged of “*18-24*” and “*More than 55*”, with a mean score above 4 on the 5-Likert scale in agreement, agreed with the perception of the healthy work atmosphere dimension.
- As far as “*Education Level*” is concerned, two employer branding dimensions were highlighted. The Healthy Work Atmosphere and Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility dimensions have an average above 4, which corresponds to a positive perception. It can also be observed that among the levels of qualification, the participants with “*Master's Degree*” and “*Other Qualifications*” (such as Higher Professional Technical Courses - Level 5), mostly agree with the variables in the two dimensions.
- The Healthy Work Atmosphere dimension was considered positively relevant in the “*Gross Annual Income*” variable, being positively

perceived (average of more than 4 on the 5-Likert scale) among employees who receiving up to 21 000€, 28 000€, 35 000€ and more than 49 000€. In addition, the Training and Development dimension also stands out, yet, only among participants with a gross annual income above 49 000€.

- An analysis of the participants' *"Job Tenure"* exhibited that, groups with up to 3 years and between 10 to 14 years of service have agreement values above 4. However, 3 dimensions were highlighted - Healthy Work Atmosphere, Training and Development, and Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility. It should be noted that, employees with up to 3 years of job tenure, only present the Healthy Work Atmosphere as positive perceived.

- Observing the different *"Levels of Management"* on the 5-likert scale, the *"Operations"* group presents an average response of 4 in the Healthy Work Atmosphere dimension while, *"Top Management"* presents values of agreement above 4 in two dimensions - Healthy Work Atmosphere and Training and Development

- None of the sociodemographic variables reached the maximum score on the 5-likert scale of agreement in any of the employer branding dimensions.

Considering the employee's retention, a descriptive analysis was also conducted.

<b>Employee Retention</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Variance</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
Employee's Satisfaction	3,82	1,09	1,19	5,00	1,00
Employee's Search for Job Opportunities	0,30	0,46	0,21	1,00	0,00
Approachable	3,34	1,17	1,37	5,00	1,00

*Table 13 - Descriptive Analysis: Employee Retention*

In this section, two of the three constitute variables were evaluated on a 5-Likert scale that assume values from 1 to 5 in likelihood (1 – definitely not; 2 – probably not; 3 – neutral; 4 – probably; 5 – definitely). The other one was a simple question of yes and no, which correspondents to 1 and 0, respectively.

It is important to refer that, all the variables present its maximum and minimum values in its measurements.

Analysing the mean values, it resembles through negative the majority of responds regarding the variable “*Employee's Search for Job Opportunities*”. The variable “*Employee's Satisfaction*” has the highest mean with a total of 3,82.

### 3.4. TESTING HYPOTHESES

After analysing the research instrument and characterized the sample, the hypotheses were tested, where the validation or rejection was proceeded in what the study proposes.

It has been synthesised into two large groups of hypotheses (H1 and H2), nevertheless, only those which are adjacent (H1.a, H1.b, H1.c, H1.d, H2.a, H2.b, H2.c) will be tested.

**Hypotheses 1 – Perceptions of employer branding dimensions vary across demographic characteristics.**

Using an analysis of variance (ANOVA), it was possible to understand whether demographic characteristics effectively influence the perception of the dimensions of employer branding.

**H1.a – There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and gender.**

Initially, it was necessary to assess whether there is significant variance between variables, this means, analyse if there are substantial differences between the employer branding dimensions and gender (sig.  $\leq 0,05$ ).

It can be observed in the table below (Table 14) that all dimensions have a significance greater than that considered for direct influence, except in the "*Work-Life Balance*" dimension ( $,041$ ). However, since it presents a value closer to  $0,05$ , it was not considered with enough significance and a Post-Hoc analysis was not possible to conduct.

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Healthy Work Atmosphere	1,785	1	1,785	3,710	,056
Training and Development	2,192	1	2,192	2,752	,100
Work-Life Balance	3,260	1	3,260	4,249	,041
Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	,468	1	,468	1,050	,307
Compensation & Benefits	2,254	1	2,254	3,011	,085

Table 14 - ANOVA Analysis: Perceptions of Employer Branding by Gender

According with the previous interpretation, and given the inexistence of significances, the hypothesis under analysis (H1.a) is **rejected**.

**H1.b - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and age segments.**

Once again, the existence of significant variance was analysed. In this instance, it was between the dimensions of Employer Branding and the age segments.

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Healthy Work Atmosphere	,172	3	,057	,115	,951
Training and Development	,389	3	,130	,157	,925
Work-Life Balance	,533	3	,178	,222	,881

Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	1,192	3	,397	,889	,449
Compensation & Benefits	1,362	3	,454	,591	,622

Table 15 - ANOVA Analysis: Perceptions of Employer Branding by Age Segments

Analysing the table above (Table 15) and taking into consideration the use of the Likert scale for the evaluation of the variables, it is possible to notice that all dimensions do not present variance in significance (sig.  $\leq 0,05$ ).

In this way, the analysis performed allows to **reject** the validation of the hypothesis H1.b.

**H1.c - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and educational level.**

As the previously analysis, it was analysed the significant variance between the dimensions of Employer Branding and the level of education.

In the table below (Table 16), it is verified that all the dimensions have a significance greater than the considered to influence directly in its variable.

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Healthy Work Atmosphere	2,190	3	,730	1,503	,217
Training and Development	1,471	3	,490	,602	,615
Work-Life Balance	,870	3	,290	,363	,780

Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	1,330	3	,443	,994	,398
Compensation & Benefits	2,166	3	,722	,949	,419

Table 16 - ANOVA Analysis: Perceptions of Employer Branding by Educational Level

Therefore, given the inexistence of significances, the hypothesis H1.c is **rejected**.

**H1.d - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and gross annual income.**

Proceeding with the analysis of variance through each variable that is part of the employer branding dimensions, together with the gross annual income, there were no significant differences, as it is possible to verify in the table below (Table 17).

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Healthy Work Atmosphere	4,001	6	,667	1,381	,227
Training and Development	3,755	6	,626	,767	,597
Work-Life Balance	8,270	6	1,378	1,819	,101
Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	,416	6	,069	,149	,989
Compensation & Benefits	3,972	6	,662	,865	,523

Table 17 - ANOVA Analysis: Perceptions of Employer Branding by Gross Annual Income



Since all the perceptions of the dimensions present a significance greater than 0,05 it is not possible to validate what the premise in question proposes. Thus, the hypothesis H1.d is **rejected**.

**H1.e - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and job tenure.**

To test the hypothesis H1.e, it was necessary to analyse, once more, the existing variance between variables, which in this case, corresponds to the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and job tenure (Table 18)

<b>ANOVA</b>	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Healthy Work Atmosphere	,458	2	,229	,462	,631
Training and Development	2,889	2	1,445	1,812	,168
Work-Life Balance	2,248	2	1,124	1,439	,241
Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	,519	2	,259	,578	,562
Compensation & Benefits	2,104	2	1,052	1,392	,252

*Table 18 - ANOVA Analysis: Perceptions of Employer Branding by Job Tenure*

Through the analysis of variance, it was not found a significant difference between variables. Therefore, the hypothesis under analysis (H1.e) is **rejected**.

**H1.f - There is a relationship between the perceptions of employer branding dimensions and managerial levels.**

As the previously hypothesis, it was analysed the significant variance between the perceptions of the dimensions of employer branding and the managerial levels.

ANOVA	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Healthy Work Atmosphere	2,992	4	,748	1,548	,192
Training and Development	5,916	4	1,479	1,882	,118
Work-Life Balance	1,682	4	,421	,527	,716
Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility	2,699	4	,675	1,539	,195
Compensation & Benefits	3,065	4	,766	1,008	,406

*Table 19 - ANOVA Analysis: Perceptions of Employer Branding by Managerial Level*

On the table above (Table 19), it is observed that there is no significance variance ( $\leq 0,05$ ) that influences directly in the variables.

Given the fact that all the perceptions of the dimensions present a significance greater than 0,05 the hypothesis H1.f is **rejected**.

**Hypotheses 2 - Employer branding dimensions has a positive influence on employee retention.**

Regarding the analysis of the defined components to assess the relationship between employee retention and the perception of employer branding dimensions, the Spearman Correlation was used. The decision to use a

non-parametric test comes from the fact that normality tests were previously performed and resulted in a nonnormal distribution.

In a primary phase, it is necessary to verify whether the correlation of the variables is statistically significant ( $<0,05$ ).

Once this parameter is confirmed, the analysis of Spearman's coefficient is carried out. It can vary between -1 and 1, depending on whether the correlation is negative or positive respectively. This coefficient indicates the intensity of the relationship between variables, however, the closer it is to the extremes, the stronger the relationship.

**H2.a - There is a positive correlation between the perceptions of the employer branding dimensions and employee satisfaction.**

To test the hypothesis, it is necessary to, firstly, analyse the significance ( $<0,05$ ). By observing the following table (Table 20), it is possible to verify that the correlation between variables has statistical significance.

Therefore, it was proceeded to the analysis of Spearman's Coefficient. It was verified that the correlation between the variables translates into a moderate correlation for all dimensions and the charge of the correlation is positive.

Employee Satisfaction	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Employer Branding Dimensions	,783**	,000

**\*\*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**

*Table 20 - Spearman Correlation: Employee Satisfaction*

The positive correlation between the employer branding dimensions and satisfaction with the current employer translates into the **validation** of hypothesis H2.a.

**H2.b - There is a correlation between the perceptions of the employer branding dimensions and employee’s look for opportunities.**

With the aim of testing the relationship between variables, a significance analysis was carried out.

The table above (Table 21), indicates if the correlation between variables has statistical significance (<0,05). Afterwards, it indicates a moderate negative correlation. Since a Likert scale was used to assess the variables, it is possible to interpret this correlation between the dimensions and the look for opportunities by employees, as negative.

This indicates that, if the employee's objective was to look for a new job opportunity, the perception of employer branding dimensions will increasingly be negative.

<b>Employee’s Search for Job Opportunities</b>	<b>Correlation Coefficient</b>	<b>Sig.</b>
Employer Branding Dimensions	-,435**	,000
<b>**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).</b>		

*Table 21 - Spearman Correlation: Employee’s Search for Job Opportunities*

The negative correlation between the employer branding dimensions and employee's actively looking for opportunities leads to the **rejection** of the hypothesis (H2.b).

**H2.c - There is a positive correlation between the perceptions of the employer branding dimensions and the possibility of moving to another organisation if the employee was approached.**

As in the previous hypotheses, the significance analysis was carried out to verify a dependence between the variables ( $<0.05$ ).

Subsequently, it remains to analyse the Spearman coefficient. The values obtained result, in a general way, in a moderate correlation.

Nevertheless, since the variables were in opposite directions, the scale needed to be analysed in reversed. Meaning, the more positive are the perceptions of employer branding dimensions, the less likely the employees are to leave their current organisation even if approached.

<b>Approachable</b>	Correlation Coefficient	Sig.
Employer Branding Dimensions	-,445**	,000
**Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).		

*Table 22 - Spearman Correlation: Approachable*

As is possible to observed in the table above (Table 22) and given the previous interpretation, the hypothesis H2.c is **accepted**.



## 4. DISCUSSION

The present study aimed to understand which dimension had the greatest impact on the perception of the employer's brand, in the current employees, and how it influences in their retention.

The validation of the research instrument allowed to continue the research and the analysis of what was initially proposed. It is substantially important to denote that the five-dimensional structure proposed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017), "can be considered as an extension and refinement of the theoretical framework proposed by Ambler & Barrow (1996)" (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017, p. 398) - functional, economic and psychological dimensions.

The Compensation and Benefits' dimension can be included in the economic factor. Aspects related to both Healthy Work Atmosphere and Work-Life Balance can be associated with the psychological dimension. Finally, predominant aspects in the areas of Training and Development and with regard to Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility, can be allocated to the functional dimension (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017).

With the intention of understanding the possible existence of any possible relationship between sociodemographic characteristics and the perception of employer branding, the measurement scale for this purpose was applied. Gender, age, education level, gross annual income, job tenure and managerial level were the primary elements of analysis.

The perceptions created by different groups of stakeholders can, in a certain way, influence the attraction of the employer's brand (Maxwell & Knox, 2009). According with the Theory of Social Identity, there is a tendency, from the employees, to have a vision aligned with those who are similar to themselves, which leads to a greater impact of the perception of the employer brand in an organization (Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

Nevertheless, in the quantitative analysis performed, it was concluded that the sample of this study does not seem to corroborate what was previously affirmed, this means, none of the considered characteristics has a sufficient impact to allow a significant different perception between distinctive sociodemographic groups. Overall, the individual characteristics of employees did not influence the perception built on the employer branding.

The obtained results were slightly contrary to the conclusions drawn in the literature. Only Bussin & Mouton (2019) did obtained similar conclusions, except in the perception caused in age group and job tenure, which demonstrated that, in both characteristics, there was a significant difference in the perception of employer branding.

It is important to denote that although there are no significant findings, when analysing the descriptive data, it can be observed a standing out of the Healthy Work Atmosphere dimension with an average response of 4 in the 5-Likert Scale of agreement, in all the sociodemographic characteristics. However, only in some of variables' segments.

Despite the generic results and without significant outstanding characteristics, Maxwell & Knox (2009) can justify it through the belonging to



the same category, which means that groups of employees may actually be different between organisations, however, there is a certain tendency to be assembled into two categories, being one of them, the sector/industry.

Therefore, the nonexistence of major differences between individual characteristics and dimensions of employer branding may be due to their belonging to the same sector, which results in similar perceptions since organisations drive for prominence to gain competitive advantage over others and become an Employer of Choice.

For a fact, not only attracting but also retaining as become fundamental to an organisation maintain in the competition (Ahmad et al., 2019). This is also supported in the research of Berthon et al. (2005), where it was admitted human capital as the major substance of competitive advantage.

In addition to the influence of employees' personal characteristics on the perception of the employer branding dimensions, the relationship between retention and employer branding was also investigated in an attempt to understand whether employees are satisfied, either intend to leave and search for new job opportunities, or even if they would easily go to another organisation, in case of being approached.

The authors, Hadi & Ahmed (2018), validate the effective connection established between the dimensions of employer branding and the level of employee retention which is translated into the development of a perception of the organisation as attractive, leading the employees to prefer to remain in the their current organisation.

The findings endorsed the positive relationship between the dimensions of employer branding and the intention to remain with the same organization. Given the coefficient analysis, it was possible to reach the conclusion that the established relationship was perceived as very strong.

Notwithstanding, it is crucial for organizations to keep an active search for dynamic and innovative mechanisms that act on the perception of the employer's brand in order to ensure that employees maintain or change it to a positive perception (Kashyap & Verma, 2018; Sokro, 2012).

The employee retention component was quantitatively analysed in three aspects separately: satisfaction, looking for a new job opportunity and openness in being approached to move to another company. As previously mentioned, it was possible to conclude the existence of an effective relationship between employee's retention and the employer's brand. In this sense, it was found that, despite presenting vaguely weak results on the overall of the 3 aspects composing employee retention section, employees are satisfied with their current organisations and do not intend to leave.

In this sense, it is possible to confirm what Tanwar and Prasad (2016) mentioned regarding employer branding and retention. The authors state that employer branding has a great impact concerning satisfaction and psychological contract, which, as a result, impacts on retention and subsequently on productivity.

Vasanth and Vinoth (2017) also corroborate this by demonstrating that employer branding influences and increases levels of satisfaction, as well as

improves the perception of employees about organisations, which basically converts it in good place to work.

Additionally, in Kucherov and Samokish (2016) findings, it was confirmed the decrease of workforce turnover through the positive contribute between employer branding and employee retention.

However, it should be noted that the employee retention is highly dependent on how much organisations are determine to retain its employees (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). Promoting the employer brand during the employee cycle, results in more positive perceptions of the organisation and more loyal employees (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017).

By analysing the descriptive characteristics of the results, it was observed the presence of an average of 3,34, in a 1-5 Likert Scale, considering the variable related to the approach by other organisations. Despite the value being consider as mediocre and neutral, it cannot be unheeded since employees do not disregard the possibility of changing their employer if they are contacted by other organisations.

These findings justify the necessity of organisations, in order to ensure steadiness and maintenance of employee retention levels, to periodically analyse the role of employer branding and seek for new strategies to continuously improve the employer brand (Ahmad et al., 2019).

As a final point, it was intended to create a holistic perspective about the employer branding dimensions predominant in the ICT sector. The descriptive analysis highlights three dimensions, namely: Healthy Work Atmosphere (3,99), Training and Development (3,72), and lastly Ethics and Corporate Social

Responsibility (3,81). It should be underlined that, when cross-referencing the employer branding dimensions with the sociodemographic data, results with an agreement response (level 4 in 5-Likert Scale) were only found in these three dimensions. Surely, it was not found in the same proportion in all segments of socio-demographic characteristics.

With regard to the dimension of the Healthy Work Atmosphere, both researches of Eger et al. (2019) and Tanwar and Prasad (2016) found that potential employees consider it crucial when selecting an employer.

When analysing the constructs of the dimension, elements such as, recognition, teamwork, collaborative workspace, and autonomy resulted in above average perceived values. The resulted positive perception contributes to the strength of the employer brand.

The Training and Development dimension exhibits 3 variables above average. These elements are mostly associated with continuous skills development, career opportunities and online course offerings. For a fact, both current and potential employees have a preference to be in an organisation where there is a greater focus on providing career opportunities as well as intellectual development (Rastogi et al., 2020).

This perception about the dimension of Training and Development can be explained by the fact that organisations with an employer brand, are currently dedicated in promoting training and development activities in order to reduce the turnover (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012).

Regarding the Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility dimension, only the variable associated with the expectation of every employee follow the rules and regulations applied in their organisation, was above average.

Carlini et al. (2019) refer that it is possible to positively influence employees' perceptions when the information concerning organisation's policies and practices is communicated in a positive way. Tanwar and Prasad (2016) denote the increasing number of organisations that take in consideration policies associated with corporate social responsibilities in the enhancement of its employer branding. The fact that its implementation is a growing concern, reveals the investment in this dimension, which possibly explain the observed positive perception in the results.

Taking everything to account, an organisation with an employer brand strategy, presents a competitive advantage which helps in the retention of its employees (Ahmad et al., 2019).

Building a solid employer brand allows organisations to attract potential talent and retain the current ones (Hadi & Ahmed, 2018; Theurer et al., 2016). Thus, through employer branding, an organisation can achieve the status of being an employer of choice.

It is interesting to denote that, by analysing the collected data, some of the factors referred in Sokro (2012) research were also identified as helping an organisation to become an employer of choice, namely, learning and development, rewarding work and career progression.

Although some of the findings are relatively different from what is exhibited in the literature, it is possible to verify, through the quantitative data, that the development of an employer brand impacts on current employees' perception in a reasonably and homogeneous way.

## CONCLUSIONS

The war for talent is furiously continue - baby boomers are currently preparing their exit and more expertise and specific skills are a demand (Keller & Meaney, 2017).

As the labour market continues to evolve, finding human capital with a suitable profile, becomes more challenging. These transformations lead the concept of employer branding to shown itself as a key element of organisation's strategy to maintain competitive.

Grounded on the literature review and empirically analysed, a framework on Employer Branding was established. The lay of foundations of employer branding are crucial to set an organisations' image and reputation among its stakeholders.

Management of current and potential employees' expectations is important. When developing an employer branding strategy, organisations need to ensure a congruence between its objectives and what it is intended to transmit. More than ever, despite the importance of attracting the best talents to an organisation, people want to work in a place where the transparency and a reality match is envisioned.

Since employees are the greatest source of information regarding its workplace, turns to be necessary an analysis of their perception about the employers' brand.

For these reasons, one of the main contributions of the present dissertation was to build a greater knowledge regarding employer branding, from employees' perspective, in the ICT Portuguese context.

The purpose of this research was to analyse which perceived dimensions of the employer branding have major influence in Portuguese employee's intention to stay with their current employer, in the ICT sector.

Therefore, to seek and understand what the current perception of the employees is, regarding the employer branding strategy applied in Portuguese ICT organisations, hypotheses were formulated to analyse the possible relation between the dimensions of employer branding and sociodemographic characteristics of employees. On top of this, hypotheses regarding the potential interconnection between employer branding dimensions and employee retention were also expressed as being the further main contribution.

The data analysis was based on a Portuguese adaptation of two following instruments: Employer Branding Measurement Scale, developed by Tanwar and Prasad (2017), and part of the proposal in Bussin and Mouton (2019) research, related to employee retention.

The mixed use of the two research instruments was useful to achieve the proposed objectives, however it can also be beneficial for future interventions in different contexts/sector. The results can help an organisation to better understand what the employees' perceptions regarding the employer's brand dimensions are. Additionally, it contributes to obtain an honest feedback from organisations' first customers - the employees.



Therefore, a quantitative approach was conducted, to validate the hypotheses through the application of a questionnaire focused on the Portuguese employees currently working in ICT sector. A non-probability sample was used, assembling a total of 131 respondents, based on their opportunity and accessibility.

After all the data gathered and analysed, it was possible to observed that the results obtained were somehow not expected, considering what the literature reviews predicts. On the one hand, no major significant differences between sociodemographic characteristics and the dimensions of employer branding were withdraw. On the other hand, a positive assembly amid employer branding dimensions and employee retention was proven.

When discussed the scarcity of employer branding perception attributes highlighted among the individuals' characteristics, it was justified by possibility of being in the same sector, which is already highly competitive for talent. However, it is also important to underline the possibility of the statistical data was not significant enough to extract any precise inference.

While employer branding dimensions, when tested with employee retention, has been proven the existence of a positive impact on employees' intention to stay with their current employer. These findings explain that the higher the perception of employer branding dimensions, the more likely an employee want to stay with their employer.

A descriptive analysis of the employer branding dimensions was also carried out. It was possible to conclude that Healthy Work Atmosphere, Training

and Development and lastly, Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility are the dimensions with the most positive perception among employees.

Employees prefer to work in organisations where there are opportunities to develop their career path, as well as have space to recognise and value personal and professional development. Esteeming social responsibility towards the employee itself and the society, is a value that is progressively taken into consideration by employees' preferences to select and stay in an organisation.

To a certain extent, more sustainable work practices also result in a preference for healthy work environments, where teamwork, cooperation and communication prevail as observed.

Overall, the conducted analysis revealed that organisations should define strategies, within the scope of employer branding, oriented towards employees (and potential employees) but always taking into consideration and ensure, a balance with organisational objectives, values and culture. In this sense, by analysing and using these elements in an integrated approach, it will allow organisations to develop their employer branding towards talent attraction and retention (Botha et al., 2011).

## **LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH**

With the observed results and during the development of the research, as in all investigations, it was possible to identify limitations, improvements, and future contributions to be held. It is important to denote the existence of limitations related to external factors, which constrained the application of both research instrument and techniques, while others focus on some specific aspects regarding the scope of this study.

Firstly, due to the level of resources available of time and cost, the sample size was compromised and lack of statistical representativeness (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Not only, but also not being an equally distributed sample, may have led to different results from those concluded in previous studies. Consequently, the fact that the data collection procedure resorted in a non-probability sample, does not allow for representativeness, which leads to a compromise in the scope of the study (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

Regarding the research instrument and its validation, there were found some limitations either. Although, practically all the questions relevant to the research are represented in a scale (except those associated with the characterization of the sample), there is a particular question that only presents the possibility of answering yes or no. Blackstone (2012) argues that the answers to these questions perhaps can be more complex than a simple yes or no, and there may be insights actually important to proceed with the research.

The fact that an adaptation of two studies were translated to Portuguese, namely, Tanwar & Prasad (2017) and Bussin & Mouton (2019), can also lead to some loss of consistency in the conceptual structure of the questionnaire.

Since the lack of research in this scope, it also should be developed a study solely dedicated to the validation of the instrument, taking into consideration the country's labour culture. This will allow to carry out more longitudinal studies that legitimises the replication of the research in other samples.

As suggested per Tanwar & Prasad (2017), the research instrument should continue to be applied in different countries and industries, as well as being carried out a cross-sectional analysis to develop more reliability in the employer branding structure. With this validation, in the future, the instrument could be applied to attract and retain talent.

Consideration should be given to developing a way to assess its effectiveness in order to enable the possibility of comparing the employer's brand, with other competitive organisations (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). Additionally, to maintain their competitive advantage, organisations could develop evaluation and feedback systems to manage and plan the development of the employer brand (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017).

Further research could also include a development of an extension version of the proposed scale, as well as identify representative sub-dimensions derived from literature. As suggested by Gilani and Cunningham (2017), the core dimensions of the employer brand should be further analysed to enable analysis of which factors effectively attract more potential and current employees.

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## APPENDICES

### **Appendice 1 – Questionnaire:**

#### **The Dimensions of Employer Branding from an Employee Perspective**

This questionnaire is part of a research project within the scope of a Master's dissertation in Global Marketing at the *Instituto Português de Administração de Marketing do Porto* (IPAM Porto).

The aim of the study is to identify the dimensions of the employer brand that employees most value as a factor for remaining in the organisation where they currently are.

The questionnaire is addressed to all the employees working in Information and Communications Technology sector.

For this purpose, I am requesting your participation in completing a brief questionnaire, which will take approximately 5 minutes.

There are no right or wrong answers, what is intended is to obtain an objective, honest and personal perspective.

The answers are completely anonymous and confidential. The data collected serves exclusively for research purposes.

If you have any further questions about this study, please do contact: [peixoto.marianaf@gmail.com](mailto:peixoto.marianaf@gmail.com).

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Are you currently working in the Information and Communication Technology Sector?

- Yes
- No
- 

### **Healthy Work Atmosphere**

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree), please specify which best fits your professional experience:

- My organisation provides autonomy to its employees to take decisions.
  - My organisation offers opportunities to enjoy a group atmosphere.
  - I have friends at work who are ready to share my responsibility at work in my absence.
  - My organisation recognises me when i do good work.
  - My organisation offers a relatively stress-free work environment.
  - My organisation offers opportunity to work in teams.
- 

### **Training and Development**

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree), please specify which best fits your professional experience:

- My organisation provides us online training courses.



- My organisation organises various conferences, workshops and training programmes on regular basis.
  - My organisation offers opportunities to work on foreign projects.
  - My organisation invests heavily in training and development of its employees.
  - Skill development is a continuous process in my organisation.
  - My organisation communicates clear advancement path for its employees.
- 

### **Work Life Balance**

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree), please specify which best fits your professional experience:

- My organisation provides flexible-working hours.
  - My organisation offers opportunity to work from home.
  - My organisation provides on-site sports facility.
- 

### **Ethics and Corporate Social Responsibility**

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree), please specify which best fits your professional experience:

- My organisation has fair attitude towards employees.
  - Employees are expected to follow all rules and regulations.
  - Humanitarian organisation gives back to the society.
  - There is a confidential procedure to report misconduct at work.
-

### **Compensation and Benefits**

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree), please specify which best fits your professional experience:

- In general, the salary offered by my organisation is high.
  - My organisation provides overtime pay.
  - My organisation provides good health benefits.
  - My organisation provides insurance coverage for employees and dependents.
- 

### **Employee Retention**

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree), please specify which best fits your professional experience:

- I am satisfied with my current employer.

Are you currently looking for a new job?

- Yes
- No

On a scale from 1 to 5 (where 1 corresponds to strongly disagree and 5 to strongly agree), please specify which best fits your professional experience:

- I would consider joining another entity if approached.
-

## **Sociodemographic Characterization**

### Gender

- Female
- Male
- I prefer not to answer.

### Age Group:

- 18 - 24
- 25 - 34
- 35 - 54
- More than 55

### Educational Level:

- High School Degree
- Bachelor's Degree
- Master's Degree
- Doctorate Degree
- Other:

### Gross Annual Income:

- Up to 13 000€
- Up to 21 000€
- Up to 28 000 €
- Up to 35 000€
- Up to 42 000€
- Up to 49 000€
- Above 49 000€

Job Tenure:

- Up to 3 years
- 3 to 5 years
- 6 to 9 years
- 10 to 14 years
- More than 15 years

In your organisational structure, please indicate the managerial levels that best fits you:

- Operations
  - Coordination
  - Top Management
- 

Your response has been submitted.

Thank you very much for your collaboration!