

Article

# Strategic Talent Management: The Impact of Employer Branding on the Affective Commitment of Employees

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**Abstract:** In a globalization context, underlined by the speed of technological transformation and increasingly competitive markets, the perspective of human capital, as an asset of strategic importance, stands out in differentiating human resource practices. Under this reality, the employer branding (EB) concept gains more and more importance as a strategic tool to attract, retain, and involve human capital, given that this has become a source of competitive advantage to companies. Within this context, this study aimed to evaluate the relationship between employer branding strategies implemented by organizations, as well as their impact on the employee's affective commitment, evident in certain organizational cultures, which are sustained over time. The methodological framework applied to this study is quantitative, and the data collection was carried out with the application of an employer branding and an affective commitment questionnaire. To achieve a good representation of the active population, the sample of the quantitative study was composed of 172 individuals, working in the public and private sectors in Portugal, exercising different positions in the different sectors of activity. Results obtained with these techniques indicate a high level of affective organizational commitment (AOC) of employees in the organizations surveyed, suggesting that affective commitment develops when the individual becomes involved and identifies with the organization.

**Keywords:** employer branding; affective commitment; talent management; strategy; personal marketing

## 1. Introduction

This research focuses on the role of Human Resource Management strategies applied in the employer branding (EB) process, highlighting their importance in talent retention through affective commitment as a source of competitive advantage for organizations. Talent management is, today, the critical factor for organizational performance, and, according to this, the corporate sector is increasingly applying talent management programs and practices in their day-to-day management [1].

The organization's ability to attract, develop, and retain talent will be its biggest competitive advantage, both in times of turbulence, and stability [2]. The need for employers to be seen differently

has intensified in recent years, mainly due to the increased availability of employment opportunities and the lack of talent in the labor market. Thus, EB has quickly emerged as a tool used not only to communicate to potential employees in the labor market but also to communicate to the internal customer what the employer's value proposition is, as well as in what respect it outweighs competing companies [3].

Albeit, what is true today of organizations is not entirely new, as history has shown us. "They must hear only morally sound stories, which will help them gain the appropriate social attitudes" stated Reference [4] (p. 60), in his interpretation of Plato's *Republic*, a treatise on the "life of a community" [4] (p. xi), which could well be that of a firm. To be sustainable over time, organizations should therefore highlight the unique aspects of the company in job vacancies and, in communication with the external and internal environment, establish the identity of the organization as an employer [5] with the right values [6]. In this sense, an EB strategy aims to create an "employee value proposition", that should combine not only what employees want, but also what is expected of them in return. Again, to be sustainable, firms must adhere to the reciprocity principle—give first so that you may receive later—"people repay in kind" [7] (p. 75). An employee value proposition is defined by the organization's policies, procedures, and culture—the term culture referring to that which endures and is sustainable over time, in terms of the necessary knowledge about how to behave in a community and even in the absence of direct supervision and leadership [6]. Hence, a sense of loyalty will be created among employees which, in turn, will help as a retention factor, while it will also create a positive impact on the attraction, involvement, commitment, and motivation of collaborators [8].

Our study was in effect also about "what remains when that which has been learned is entirely forgotten", as Selma Lagerlof framed the definition of culture [9] (p. 16), a concept which is linked to commitment and which evolves over time and is molded by the firm, including in affective terms.

Affective commitment is considered the most effective approach to measuring organizational commitment [10]. According to Biswas and Suar [11], EB has been gaining importance due to the growing focus on factors, such as the power of branding, the commitment of employees, the fight for talent, and the role of human resource management in business. In this context, a talented workforce with inimitable and sustainable characteristics, contributes to competitive advantage and to organizational success. "The role and impact of employer branding takes on a new statement in talent management and in the career management of employees" [12] (p. 118).

However, there are few empirical studies in the literature that relate the perception of EB strategies to the affective organizational commitment (AOC) of employees. Although branding is a well-developed concept in the marketing literature, perspectives on EB are still evolving [5]. According to Almgren [13], no research was found on the distinct connection between internal branding and its relation to the dimensions of commitment. This makes evident a potential gap in the research literature. It is in this context that the present research aimed to evaluate the impact that EB strategies have on the affective commitment of employees. Another reason for the present investigation comes from the fact that there are many studies that focus on the impact of EB on potential employees, but few have their focus on the impact on current employees, that is, within the internal universe of organizations [8,11]. The present research aimed to fill this gap, while intending to understand the relationship between EB and AOC. The present investigation focused on furthering the conceptualization of Sezões [14], which seeks the integration of human resource management (HRM) and organizational behavior theories. Therefore, it was necessary to review human resource strategies and their application to EB in order to provide a comprehensive picture of antecedents and consequences of EB, more specifically, the consequences towards the creation of AOC. Based on the previous research of Sezões [14], the theoretical basis of this investigation assumes that the employees' perception of the HRM dimensions of an organization is correlated to their AOC to the firm. This causal model makes it possible to move from a mere satisfaction assessment to an effective assessment of emotional connection and commitment. The dimensions of affective commitment were not evidenced in the research of Sezões [14], as they were in the present investigation.

The study follows the general objective of evaluating the impact of EB strategies on the employees' affective commitment, therefore, it only aims at the universe of individuals in the internal environment of organizations. Considering this problem, the following research question was raised: "What is the impact of employer branding strategies, implemented by organizations, on the affective commitment of employees?"

The hypotheses of this investigation are based on previous research [15]. The study by Reference [15] was not able to prove the relationship between the variables, and it did not use a quantitative scale to measure commitment. The role of sociodemographic variables in affective commitment was not studied; neither was the combined effect of EB strategies and sociodemographic variables on AOC, and the study was limited to a small company. Additionally, the inverse relationship of the variables under research was not tested. To address the gaps identified, the present investigation carried out data collection with the application of a questionnaire with sociodemographic questions, an EB scale, and a scale of AOC. Furthermore, it was decided to extend the scope of the field of study to the entire active population of Portugal. As for the approach, quantitative field research was the methodological framework applied in this study.

This study is divided into four parts. The first part corresponds to a literature review on EB, as well as on AOC and on talent management. The second part is the methodological approach presenting the research model developed from the literature review of each variable under investigation. In the third part, we summarize and discuss the results, and, in the last section, the main conclusions are highlighted, which integrate the research and methodological contributions, the implications for management, and the limitations of the research, as well as the suggestions for future research.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1. Employer Branding

EB is a concept defined as a set of economic, functional, and psychological benefits that organizations offer to their employees, establishing a coherent management model with the purpose of focusing on the highest priority objectives, while increasing productivity, improving the recruitment process, developing greater employee loyalty, and reducing the turnover rate [10]. Additionally, both Edwards [16] and Gray and Balmern [17] described EB as a sum of corporate identity and reputation that influences the individual's perception of an organization. Hatch and Schultz [18] defined strong branding as a link between an organization's vision, culture, and image.

Over time, the initial concept of EB has been redefined. Backhaus and Tikoo [5] defined the term EB as a set of several attributes that distinguish the organization from others, so the concept evolved from being just a simple definition of factors that an organization has, to finding what makes the organization unique. EB is the communication of a unique and attractive image of the organization as an employer—involving a distinct employer identity [4].

As EB intends to define the unique attributes of the organization, it can be seen as a long-term strategy, an oriented process, with the objective of ensuring that the best talents remain within organizations [19]. In this communication process, all stakeholders (clients, suppliers, media, the general public) are influenced, and, at the same time, they also shape the employer's brand with their behavior, identification, and attitudes [20].

Currently, EB is concisely described as a strategy to win the "war for talent", which strives to retain current employees and attract potential employees [21]. Considering that EB serves as a communication tool through which an organization presents its offer, its attributes, consequently, trigger in the target individuals the desire to apply themselves more in their work in the organization [22].

The core component of EB, the employer brand, is a valuable resource for an organization and, therefore, its management should be an organizational priority [5,23]. Comparably, Ambler and Barrow [15] believe that an employer brand is like the traditional brand, with a personality and positioning. Personality and brand positioning, together with the differentiating brand, forms what

is called the essence of the brand. The brand's personality is reflected through communication style and authenticity, while the positioning and differentiation are distinguishing factors compared to competing employers [24]. The brand identity is created and designed by an organization to segment an audience through different channels. In comparison, the brand image is the consequence of this projected identity, that is, how it is really perceived by everyone [25]. In conclusion, a strong employer brand has all these characteristics clearly defined [26].

## 2.2. *Affective Organizational Commitment*

Affective commitment is interpreted as the employee's emotional connection, identification, and involvement with the organization where he or she works [27]. This type of organizational commitment refers to the emotional attachment that the individual has with the organization, the identification, and the involvement he or she has with it, with there being an emotional relationship that connects the worker with the organization [28]. Moreover, affective commitment is considered to be the most effective approach for measuring organizational commitment [10].

Affective commitment is driven by positive feelings towards the organization and is believed to be the result of a sharing of feelings between the organization and the employee. The employee develops affective feelings towards the organization in response to the correct way in which he or she is treated, showing a high affective commitment towards the firm [29]. In addition, it can then be said that affective commitment is considered to be high when the employee feels that he or she is a part of the organizational "family". This will create a personal meaning and a sense of belonging, and, when this happens, the employee will be enthusiastic about the work that he or she performs. This, in turn, will contribute to the organization's success [30]. Similarly, in the perspective of Meyer and Allen [31], affective commitment is developed through previous work experiences that mainly satisfy the employee's psychological needs, leading him or her to feel comfortable within the organization and competent in the performance of his/her position.

Gelens et al. [32] studied the relationship between being designated as a talent and affective commitment, as well as the impact of receiving this designation. This differentiated management of employees helps in the allocation of crucial professionals in relevant positions. This will increase the possibility of adaptation between the professional and the organization and, consequently, promotes the employee's emotional commitment. Therefore, they recommend implementing human resource practices focused on affective commitment as the best human resource strategy for employees designated as talents [32].

## 2.3. *Talent Management and the Importance of Employer Branding for Affective Commitment*

For Michaels et al. [2], talent can be conceptualized as the sum of an employee's capacities, namely his/her skills, experience, intelligence, knowledge, character, and intrinsic commitment, as well as his/her capacity for development. In contrast, Ulrich and Smallwood [33] understand that the concept of talent concerns high potential specialists and future leaders, so investing in talent means investing in the next generation. Ulrich and Smallwood [33] describe a profile indicating four characteristics that determine whether a professional has a high potential and can therefore be considered as a talent for the organization: to be ambitious and be willing to invest their energy, dedication, and personal time to succeed in the organization; demonstrating the necessary skills and the ability to learn from past mistakes and experiences; revealing agility at various levels, whether it be mental agility, agility in the face of change, or agility in relating to others; and demonstrating that you have a history of achievements and success, as well as the ability to respond to new challenges.

Schiemann [34] presents a more inclusive concept of talent, presenting a vision of talent as being a collective effort, as opposed to the previous view, of the sum of potential and individual performances; that is, this author considers that all employees have the necessary skills to provide value to the organization. In this sense, Schiemann [34] defines talent as being collective knowledge, combined

with the set of experiences, capacities, skills, values, habits, and behaviors of the entire workforce used to fulfill the organization's mission.

Furthermore, Cappelli [35] defines talent management as the anticipation of human capital needs by organizations and the development of a plan that satisfies those needs. The above is in opposition to Schiemann [34], for whom talent management is seen as a function that encompasses all activities and responsibilities related to the talent life cycle. In contrast, Altememi and Almashhadain [36], in their recent study, concluded that talent management strategies, to be effective, should be created to work proactively instead of being reactive to the market. In this framework, talent management is more and more related to EB models and practices as a tool for retention and proactivity.

Additionally, Tansley and Tietze [37] understand that talent management encompasses the support processes for an organization's strategy, from attraction, recruitment, and selection, to training and development, to resource retention practices that add value to the organization. This is in order to ensure that the right person will be in the right role when the organization needs him/her.

According to Collings and Mellahi [38], strategic talent management must contribute in a sustainable way to the competitive advantage that organizations need to be strategically positioned in the market.

Talent management refers to the process of developing and integrating new employees, retaining the current workforce, while trying to attract new highly qualified talents to the organization [8]. EB is quickly emerging as a long-term human resource management strategy to attract and retain talent [39]. Talents are fundamental elements of an organization. Talent management implies developing the necessary actions to attract new talent, retaining, and developing existing talent, in order to respond to business requirements [40].

The expression "war for talent" was coined in 1997 by McKinsey, an international human resource consultant [41]. Since then, EB has become a priority in the fight to conquer the best talent present in the job market. The increase in demand for highly qualified professionals alongside the ever-smaller talent pool presents a challenge for companies. An effective EB strategy can attract the attention of potential candidates by creating the desire to apply for work in the organization [8].

Once we find ourselves in a knowledge economy, the intellectual capacities of individuals become much more valuable than physical resources, since human resources become assets that contribute to the development and differentiation of organizations [42].

Correspondingly, Holland and Scullion [43] defend that, in a globalization and competitiveness reality, talent retention is one of the biggest challenges in Talent Management, considering that substituting talented and valuable HR has high associated direct and indirect costs. Costs such as inactivity in the position, the period of recruitment and hiring, the training of the new employee, loss of organizational memory, and a decrease of strategic knowledge and productivity.

In order to retain talent in organizations there are factors identified as being critical, including the following: security, location, relationships, recognition, contribution, salary, flexibility, learning, responsibility, and innovation. Albeit, the new generation's demands and the aging of the population is also affecting talent policies, forcing companies to pay more attention to development and engagement, while also focusing on outcomes, such as job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and also on the performance of the firm [44]. Furthermore, we should consider that retention and attracting have a direct relation, that is to say: it is important to hire employees that share the same values of organizational cultures [45].

Fernandez-Lores et al. [46] highlighted that companies are trying to engender affective commitment, defined as the "identification with, involvement in, and emotional attachment to the organization" in their best employees to guarantee talent retention and to ensure sustainable competitive advantage. Similarly, for Thakur and Bhatnagar [47], affective commitment is an important way to retain talent in organizations. When talents are engaged, they are less inclined to leave as work does not feel like "work". On the other hand, internal branding corresponds to an organization's identity, aimed at retaining current employees [48].

The importance of creating a marketing strategy and a brand, as an employer, to communicate the principles, values, and talent management policies of an organization is increasingly evident. This whole process, called EB, materializes in the creation of an assumed and shared brand image that must encompass the attributes that the organization wishes to value as an employer and promoter of excellence policies in terms of human capital management. The employer's brand must promote the global image among the stakeholders, such as, for example, its employees, customers, suppliers, the media, and the public [49].

In addition, the work of Fernandez-Lores et al. [46] demonstrated that affective commitment to the Employer Brand refers to enthusiasm with the employer brand (positive emotions of being energetic, active, and relatively invulnerable to trouble or worry), emotional attachment to the employer brand (emotional component in the employee-employer relationship; affection, belongingness, and support towards the employer brand), and long-term orientation (refers to the employee's implicit intention of maintaining his or her bond with the employer and thus remaining loyal to the brand),

Comparably, Michaels et al. [2] defend that there are five imperatives that must be assumed by the organization in order to win the battle for talent and make human capital a competitive advantage: implement a "talent mindset"; create a winning employer value proposition; redefine the recruitment strategy; implement development strategies; and differentiate your employees.

Based on the list above, many companies are developing EB models as a method to attract and retain talent [50]. Finally, attention has been drawn to affective commitment and employer brand relations as being important factors, as it has been recognized that committed employees to a brand are a decisive matter [46].

#### 2.4. Hypotheses

In carrying out this study, it was intended to understand the relationship between EB and AOC constructs. This study intends to focus on current employees in order to know their perceptions regarding the brand of their employer, with the general objective of evaluating the impact of EB strategies on the employees' affective commitment. Considering this problem, the following research question was raised: "What is the impact of employer branding strategies, implemented by organizations, on the employees' affective commitment?"

Once the research question has been formulated, specific objectives that guide the line of investigation must derive from it: identify the general perception of employees regarding EB strategies; identify the EB strategy with a more positive perception by employees; identify the employer branding strategy with a less positive perception by employees; identify the general perception of employees regarding their level of AOC, that is, if employees feel committed, at an affective level, to the organization; identify which EB strategy has the greatest positive impact on AOC; identify which EB strategy has the least positive impact on AOC; analyze if AOC has a positive impact on EB strategies; analyze if there is a correlation between EB and AOC; and analyze the effect of sociodemographic components on AOC.

The hypotheses of this study are as follows:

**Hypothesis 1(H1).** *EB strategies have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 1a(H1a).** *EB strategies related to the function have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 1b(H1b).** *EB strategies related to compensation and incentives have a positive impact on employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 1c(H1c).** *EB strategies related to the mission, vision and values have a positive impact on employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 1d(H1d).** *EB strategies related to the team have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 1e(H1e).** *EB strategies related to career development have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 1f(H1f).** *EB strategies related to culture and the work environment have a positive impact on the AOC of employees.*

**Hypothesis 1g(H1g).** *EB strategies related to management processes have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 1h(H1h).** *EB strategies related to communication and image have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 2(H2).** *AOC has a positive impact on EB strategies.*

**Hypothesis 3(H3).** *Sociodemographic variables have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 3a(H3a).** *The age group has a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 3b(H3b).** *Gender has a positive impact on employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 3c(H3c).** *Educational qualifications have a positive impact on AOC.*

**Hypothesis 3d(H3d).** *Seniority has a positive impact on employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 3e(H3e).** *The employment relationship has a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 3f(H3f).** *The activity sector has a positive impact on the employees' AOC.*

**Hypothesis 4(H4).** *The combined effect of sociodemographic variables with EB strategies on AOC is positive.*

Therefore, four groups of hypotheses were defined (Figure 1). The first group was formulated to identify the impact of EB strategies on the AOC and then of each EB strategy on the AOC; these results will allow to proceed with the objectives of identifying which EB strategy has the greatest positive impact on AOC and identifying which EB strategy has the least positive impact on AOC. With this purpose, the impact of EB strategies on the affective commitment of individuals was tested. According to Punjaisri and Wilson [51], the various human resource management strategies must be integrated into the EB process, covering all areas of the organization, namely: communication and image, operations management, marketing, culture, mission and values, and training and development, as well as recruitment processes. According to Biswas and Suar [11], EB has been gaining importance due to the growing focus on factors, such as the power of branding, the commitment of employees, the war for talent, and the role of human resource management in business.

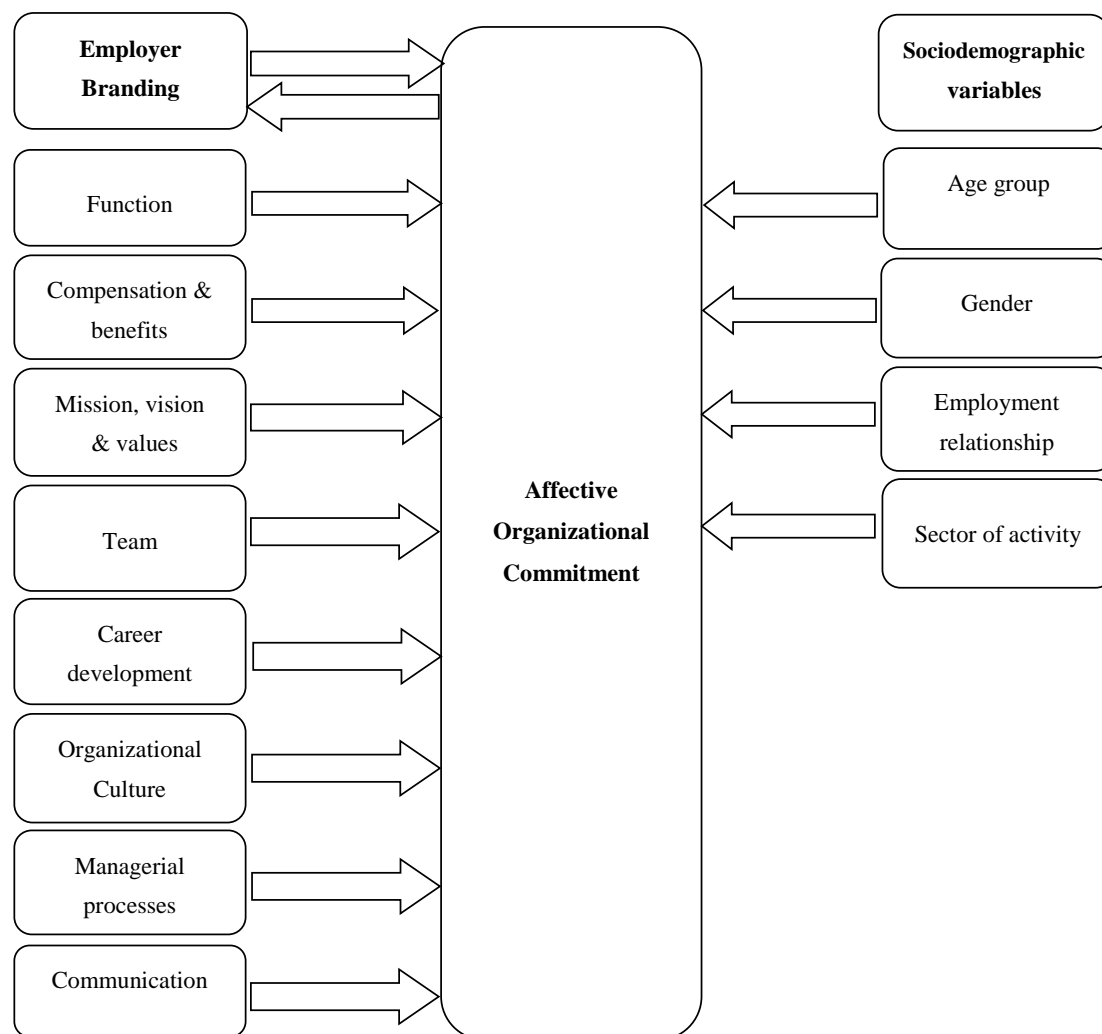


Figure 1. Conceptual model.

In the second group of hypotheses, it is intended to test whether the affective component of organizational commitment has a positive impact on EB strategies in order to achieve another specific objective of the study: to verify whether there is a positive and significant association between the dimensions that measure the EB strategies and the affective component of organizational commitment. In the literature, there is evidence that the perception of organizational commitment in all of its components, including the calculative and normative components, in addition to the affective component, has a positive and significant association with the dimensions of human resource management, such as those applied in EB strategies. According to Across [52], a greater perception of organizational commitment is associated with a greater perception of dimensions, such as: remuneration, career, communication, supervision, and nature of the function.

In the third group of hypotheses, it is intended to verify the effect of sociodemographic and labor components on the AOC, both in its entirety and individually. Meyer et al. [53] claim that certain sociodemographic variables, such as age, seniority, or gender, influence AOC. To test the effect of sociodemographic variables on AOC, Mann–Whitney U non-parametric tests (bilateral significance) and the Wilcoxon test were performed to test the effect of gender on variables. As for the remaining sociodemographic variables, the Kruskal–Wallis non-parametric H test was performed.

In the fourth group, the combined effect of sociodemographic variables, with EB strategies on AOC will be tested. The chi-square test of independence (descriptive analysis with a cross-reference table) will be performed to verify if there is a relationship between the variables EB and SDV (sociodemographic



variable). The results actually indicate that  $p = 0.093$ , therefore, it was not significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). The variables EB and SDV are not dependent on each other, from which we can conclude that they are independent in the way they relate to AOC. Gouldner [54] affirms that there is reciprocity between individuals and the organization and understands that this relationship of reciprocity is related to the valuation and perception that employees have of organizational practices. On the other hand, the association between organizational practices and affective commitment will change with age [55], and the antecedents of AOC differ with sociodemographic variables [56].

### 3. Methodology

Based on the literature review of each variable under investigation: EB and affective commitment, the hypotheses were raised, the research model was developed, and previously validated questionnaires were tested. The present investigation is characterized by being a field research study. As for the approach and the methodological framework applied to this study, it is a quantitative research effort. Data collection was carried out with the application of a questionnaire with sociodemographic questions, an EB scale [9], and a scale of AOC [28]. The sampling process was non-probabilistic. The online questionnaire link was placed using the snowball sampling method.

This study included several sectors from the most diverse areas, existent in Portugal. Anonymity of respondents and organizations was preserved. The sample consisted of employees from medium and large organizations, and from the public and private sectors. The questionnaire was created on a platform specialized in online questionnaires. The sampling process was non-probabilistic and convenient, given that the online questionnaire was distributed to several contacts, who work in organizations from different sectors and dimensions. Initially, a pre-test was carried out on six individuals from different work areas and functions, in order to detect possible gaps. The questionnaire was then perfected and, with nothing to add, it was then applied.

The online questionnaire link was distributed using the snowball sampling method, whereby the link was sent to several people who work in organizations where the concepts of talent management and EB are well-known, among which were: Grupo Nabeiro, Sonae, Altran, Farfetch, CaixaBI, Navigator, BNPParibas, REN, TVI, Philip Morris International, and CUF Saúde. Public sector officials were also contacted in various areas, such as: internal administration, education, health, and justice.

The snowball sample selection is a nonprobability sampling method, where existing study respondents recruit future subjects from among their acquaintances who meet the eligibility criteria and who could potentially contribute to the specific research. To ensure that the questionnaire was well understood and that the individuals in the sample represented similar characteristics, two criteria for inclusion in the sample were created: (1) that the respondent is employed at a national firm and (2) that the respondent is familiar with the concepts of EB, AOC and talent management.

The pool of 35 initial participants were as diverse as possible, in order to represent the active population of Portugal. To ensure that the respondents met the eligibility criteria, they were selected from the pool of companies within "Talent Portugal", a community focused on talent management and EB in Portugal. There is no data available to characterize this community, which has 251 companies as members, representing numerous sectors of activity. For that reason, it was not possible to determine the statistically adequate sample size for this empirical research.

The self-completion questionnaire held no risk of non-response as all questions were marked as mandatory, so 100% of the questionnaires were considered valid. Due to the global pandemic, this research was limited by the availability of time and resources, and the sample size was prone to be affected by these circumstances. As all 172 responses in the time frame were valid, all were accepted.

Questions of a demographic and occupational nature were asked, such as age, gender, educational qualifications, and seniority in the organization, for sample description and characterization purposes. Employees' perception of the EB strategies implemented by the organization was measured by applying the EB questionnaire prepared by Sezões [9], within the scope of his duties as an engagement and employer branding consultant of "Stanton Chase Portugal". The EB questionnaire has been applied in

national and international companies to diagnose improvement needs and was validated in Sezões' master's thesis on human potential management. This questionnaire assesses eight dimensions, namely: function, compensation and benefits, mission, vision and values, team, career development, organizational culture, managerial processes, and communication. Each of the dimensions has four items, adding up to a total of thirty-two items that make up this questionnaire. The questionnaire is rated using a 5-point Likert rating scale (from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree"). Therefore, there are five answer options to each statement, and the results of each dimension result from the sum of the scores of the items that compose it, and, the higher the score, the more positive the employees' perception of the respective dimension.

AOC was measured through the 6 items that make up the affective commitment dimension of the instrument developed by Meyer and Allen [28]. This questionnaire is rated on a 5-point Likert rating scale (from 1 "Strongly disagree" to 5 "Strongly agree"). Therefore, there are five answer options to each statement, and the results of this dimension result from the sum of the scores of the items that compose it, and the higher the score, the more positive the employees' perception of their AOC. The model by Meyer and Allen [28], assumes that the three dimensions that compose it (normative, affective, calculative) are independent of each other, so they can be applied independently. Affective commitment is considered the most effective approach to measuring organizational commitment [10]. According to Meyer and Allen [31], the affective component of organizational commitment is the strongest predictor of the organization's exit intentions, which underlies the option to further study this component in particular, in order to contribute to the talent retention and management literature.

## 4. Results and Discussion

### 4.1. Sample

The sample of the quantitative study was composed of 172 individuals, representing different job positions in different sectors of activity, to achieve a good representation of the active population at the national level. According to the sociodemographic data collected (Table 1), 108 (62.8%) are male, and 64 (37.2%) are female. A large part of the respondents is in the 41 to 54-year-old age group (54.07%), and most individuals hold a bachelor's degree (43.6%). The segment that stands out the most is the one having over 10 years' seniority in the organization, where 35.47% of the respondents are found, followed by the range between 2 and 5 years of seniority (27.9%). Most of the respondents have an open-ended contract (77.33%).

**Table 1.** Sociodemographic profile of the sample.

Gender	Age Group	Education Level	Seniority	Activity Sector
Whole data (n = 172)				
Male (62.8%)	19–29 years old (6.98%)	High school graduate or less (38.95%)	<2 years (14.53%)	Tertiary sector (66.28%),
	30–40 years old (27.33%)	Bachelor's degree (43.6%)	2–5 years (27.91%)	Industry (30.23%)
Female (37.2%)	41–54 years old (54.07%)	Master's degree or higher (17.45%)	6–10 years (22.09%)	Primary sector (3.49%)
	55–67 years old (11.63%)		>10 years (35.47%)	

The data collection was carried out between the months of March and May 2020. After the application of the data collection instruments, the responses of the participants were collected via the online questionnaire, and statistical analysis were subsequently prepared. Regarding the data analysis procedures, SPSS (version 25.0) was used for the statistical analysis. We performed the descriptive analyses regarding the characterization of the sample, the analyses of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin test (KMO) and Bartlett's sphericity test for the instruments and also for the correlations between variables.

In order to determine the final constitution of the variables, Cronbach's alpha analysis was carried out in a first phase, which allows the exclusion of minor items.

To test the effect of sociodemographic variables on AOC, Mann–Whitney U non-parametric tests (bilateral significance) and the Wilcoxon test were performed to test the effect of gender on variables, and for the remaining sociodemographic variables, the Kruskal–Wallis non-parametric H test was performed. The Mann–Whitney U test is a non-parametric test used to compare two independent samples (in this case being male/female). The Kruskal–Wallis non-parametric H test extends the Mann–Whitney U test when there are more than two groups. It is used to compare two or more independent samples of the same or different sizes. The hypotheses tests were also carried out through Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, used for assessing the significance of relations between variables using statistics. This correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of the relationship between the relative movements of two variables. The values range between  $-1.0$  and  $1.0$ . A correlation of  $-1.0$  shows a perfect negative correlation, while a correlation of  $1.0$  shows a perfect positive correlation. A correlation of  $0.0$  shows no linear relationship between the movement of the two variables.

#### 4.2. Reliability and Internal Consistency

The reliability and internal consistency of the questions was measured using Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ ), with a value of  $\alpha = 0.951$  for the EB scale and  $\alpha = 0.883$  for the AOC scale (Tables 2 and 3).

**Table 2.** Reliability and internal consistency for employer branding (EB) and affective organizational commitment (AOC) scales.

Scale	QEB	QAOC
Cronbach's alpha coefficient ( $\alpha$ )	0.951	0.883

**Table 3.** Reliability and internal consistency for EB dimensions.

EB Dimensions	Cronbach's Alpha Coefficient ( $\alpha$ )
Function	0.73
Compensation and Benefits	0.73
Mission, Vision, and Values	0.85
Team	0.85
Career development	0.86
Culture and working environment	0.81
Management processes	0.83
Communication	0.81

According to Hair et al. [56], Cronbach's  $\alpha$  values obtained for the dimensions are greater than  $0.70$ , which confirms a good reliability of the QEB (questionnaire of employer branding) scale globally and for each of the dimensions. As AOC is a unidimensional variable, a reliability and internal consistency table for AOC dimensions was not presented.

#### 4.3. Descriptive Analysis

From the descriptive analysis of the items, the general conclusion is that there is a high appreciation of the "Function" related strategies since the average of responses to all items is  $4.14$  with an agreement of  $86.92\%$  (Table 4). These results make it possible to identify the EB strategy with a more positive perception on the part of employees. The less valued strategy by employees is "Management processes", with a mean of  $3.13$  and an agreement =  $45.93\%$ . These results allow us to identify it as the EB strategy with the least positive perception on the part of employees.

**Table 4.** Descriptive analysis.

EB Strategies	Mean	Agreement (%)
Function	4.14	86.92%
Compensation and Benefits	3.37	51.31%
Mission, Vision, and Values	4.01	79.07%
Team	3.68	67.74%
Career development	3.62	66.13%
Culture and working environment	3.51	60.03%
Management processes	3.13	45.93%
Communication	3.76	66.86%

#### 4.4. Correlation Analysis Parametric Test and Non-Parametric Test

To further solidify this investigation, we applied Spearman's Correlation Test (Table 5). Some non-parametric tests can handle ordinal data, ranked data, and not be seriously affected by outliers. Non-parametric tests were applied to this investigation due to having Likert data and wanting to compare two or more groups. Spearman's correlation coefficient is a statistical measure of the strength of a relationship between paired data. The strength of the correlation can be described as follows:

0.00–0.19 “very weak”;

0.20–0.39 “weak”;

0.40–0.59 “moderate”;

0.60–0.79 “strong”; and

0.80–1.0 “very strong”.

Spearman ( $\rho$ )	Correlation strength
1	Perfect relationship
$\geq 0.70$	very strong relationship
0.40–0.69	strong relationship
0.30–0.39	moderate relationship
0.20–0.29	weak relationship
0.01–0.19	negligible relationship
0	no relationship

According to the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient, a correlation of 0.776 (Table 5) means that there is a *very* strong correlation between EB and AOC.

**Table 5.** Non-parametric test: Spearman's correlation coefficient.

		EB Perception	AOC Perception
Spearman's rank correlation coefficient	Perception of EB	Correlation coefficient	1.000
		Sig.	0.000
	Perception of AOC	Correlation coefficient	0.776 **
		Sig.	0.000
		N	172
		N	172

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

#### 4.5. Measure of Sampling Adequacy

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Test (KMO) as a Measure of Sampling Adequacy was used in the present study (Table 6) to detect multicollinearity in the data to verify the appropriateness of carrying out a factor analysis. More specifically, sampling adequacy predicts if data are likely to factor well, based on correlations and partial correlations. A value above 0.8 is considered excellent. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity is another test of the strength of the relationship among variables.

**Table 6.** Employer branding (EB) Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) Bartlett test.

		Employer Branding	Affective Organizational Commitment
<b>Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy</b>		0.913	0.833
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	$\chi^2$	3345.945	597.362
	df	496	15
	Sig.	0.000	0.000

For our data, KMO was 0.913 for the EB scale and 0.833 (Table 6) for the AOC scale, signaling that a factor analysis of the variables can proceed. The results of our analysis for the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity showed a significance level of 0.00. It can be concluded that the relationship among variables is strong.

#### 4.6. Hypotheses Testing Framework

As for the first group of hypotheses, a Spearman's correlational analysis was run to determine the relationship between each dimension of EB and AOC. It was found that all dimensions of EB have a positive correlation with the affective component of organizational commitment. It appears that the strategies "mission, vision, and values" respond to the specific objective: "Identify which employer branding strategy has the greatest positive impact on affective organizational commitment".

From the results obtained, we can also extract that the EB strategy with less positive impact on AOC corresponds to "compensation and benefits", thus responding to another of the specific objectives of the research.

Regarding the second group, the hypothesis "affective organizational commitment has a positive relation with employer branding strategies", it is confirmed that the affective component has a positive impact on the perception of EB strategies, by employees ( $r_s = 0.180$ ,  $n = 172$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ).

A third group of hypotheses was set to test the effect of sociodemographic variables on AOC. Spearman's correlational analysis was performed, as well as Mann-Whitney U non-parametric tests and the Wilcoxon Test, to test the effect of gender; and Kruskal-Wallis non-parametric test H, for the remaining sociodemographic variables. In relation to the hypothesis: "sociodemographic variables have a positive impact on employees' affective organizational commitment", we have that this hypothesis studies the relationship between sociodemographic variables and the affective component of organizational commitment. The results of the Spearman's correlational analysis indicate that the hypothesis was not validated ( $p > 0.001$ ). Since there was no positive association between the sociodemographic variables, as a whole and the affective commitment, the impact of each sociodemographic variable on the affective component of the organizational commitment was tested individually, in the next step of the statistical treatment of the data, where it was demonstrated that the sociodemographic variables age group, gender, employment relationship, and sector of activity have a positive impact on the AOC of employees, but literacy and seniority do not.

In the fourth group, the hypothesis "The combined effect of sociodemographic variables with employer branding strategies on affective organizational commitment is positive" was tested by performing the chi-square test of independence (descriptive analysis with a cross-reference table). This was done to verify if there is a relationship between the variables EB and SDV. The results indicate that  $\chi^2 = 608.710$  and  $p = 0.093$ ; therefore, the association was not significant ( $p \leq 0.05$ ). The hypothesis was not confirmed. Therefore, EB and sociodemographic variables are not positively related to AOC. As previously verified, EB has a positive relationship with AOC; however, sociodemographic variables, as a whole, have no positive relationship with AOC. In summary, it appears that EB variables and sociodemographic variables do not act in a combined way on AOC, but independently. All the results are summarized in .

Table 7 presents the validated and not validated hypotheses. As for the sociodemographic variables, it was not possible to verify all the hypotheses, so it was necessary to reformulate this part of

the conceptual model. The original conceptual model was redefined, by excluding paths of hypotheses that were not validated—H3, H3c, H3d, and H4. Once all the hypotheses regarding the relationship between EB dimensions and AOC have been proven, this attributes relevance to the conceptual model of this research study, due to the fact that all dimensions related to EB strategies proved to be relevant, even when tested individually.

**Table 7.** Confirmatory data analysis.

Hypotheses	Validated	Results
H1—EB strategies have a positive impact on the employees' affective organizational commitment.	Yes	$r_s = 0.776$ $p = 0.000$
H1a—EB strategies related to the function have a positive impact on the employees' affective organizational commitment.	Yes	$r_s = 0.502$ $p = 0.000$
H1b—EB strategies related to compensation and benefits have a positive impact on employees' AOC.	Yes	$r_s = 0.484$ $p = 0.000$
H1c—EB strategies related to the mission, vision and values have a positive impact on employees' AOC.	Yes	$r_s = 0.727$ $p = 0.000$
H1d—EB strategies related to the team have a positive impact on the employees' affective organizational commitment.	Yes	$r_s = 0.579$ $p = 0.000$
H1e—EB strategies related to career development have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.	Yes	$r_s = 0.591$ $p = 0.000$
H1f—EB strategies related to culture and the work environment have a positive impact on the AOC of employees.	Yes	$r_s = 0.630$ $p = 0.000$
H1g—EB strategies related to management processes have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.	Yes	$r_s = 0.692$ $p = 0.000$
H1h—EB strategies related to communication and image have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.	Yes	$r_s = 0.620$ $p = 0.000$
H2—AOC has a positive impact on EB strategies.	Yes	$r_s = 0.776$ $p = 0.000$
H3—Sociodemographic variables have a positive impact on the employees' AOC.	No	$r_s = 0.017$ $p > 0.001$
H3a—The age group has a positive impact on the employees' AOC.	Yes	$H = 6.384$ $p > 0.05$
H3b—Gender has a positive impact on employees' AOC.	Yes	$U = 3281.000$ $p > 0.05$
H3c—Educational qualifications have a positive Impact on employees' AOC.	No	$H = 9,146$ $p < 0.05$
H3d—Seniority has a positive impact on employees' AOC.	No	$H = 8.232$ $p < 0.05$
H3e—The employment relationship has a positive impact on the employees' AOC.	Yes	$H = 4.630$ $p > 0.05$
H3f—The activity sector has a positive impact on the employees' AOC.	Yes	$H = 0.307$ $p > 0.05$
H4—The combined effect of sociodemographic variables with EB strategies on AOC, is positive.	No	$\chi^2 = 608.710$ $p = 0.093$

This study had as its main objective to answer the following research question: “What is the impact of EB strategies, implemented by organizations, on AOC?”, which was answered through the hypothesis test “H1—EB strategies have a positive impact on the employees' AOC”. In order to deepen the analysis of this relationship, a Spearman's correlational analysis was carried out, the results of which confirmed the existence of a positive and significant correlation between perceived EB strategies

and the AOC of individuals. The constructs showed a strong and significant correlation at the 0.01 level, observing a correlation of 0.776 according to the Spearman table. Thus, results obtained with these techniques empirically support the following objective “to verify if there is a correlation between the EB constructs and AOC”. Thus, we conclude that the perception of EB strategies is significantly correlated to the level of affective commitment of employees, realizing that the better the perception of the employee in relation to the strategies associated with EB, the greater his level of affective commitment, consequently raising your desire to stay in the organization. The various human resource management strategies must be integrated into the EB process, covering all of the areas of the organization, namely: communication and image, operations management, marketing, culture, mission and values, training and development, and recruitment processes [46]. EB has been gaining importance due to the growing focus on factors, such as the power of branding, the commitment of employees, the war for talent, and the role of human resource management in business [11].

A Spearman’s correlational analysis was performed for each of the dimensions of the EB variable, noting the existence of a positive and significant correlation between each of the various dimensions in isolation with AOC, which allowed all of the hypotheses in the first group to be empirically supported. Thus, confirming the theoretical support for each one of the EB dimensions (function, compensation, mission, vision and values, team, career development, culture and work environment, management processes, communication and image) as follows below.

The hypothesis “H1a—EB strategies related to the function have a positive impact on the employees’ AOC”: For Meyer and Allen [31], affective commitment develops when professionals’ work experiences satisfy their needs for autonomy, skills development, and diversity and identification with tasks. Michaels et al. [2] state that talented professionals today want to feel motivated by the role they play, that there are enriching development and career opportunities, and that leaders support and motivate them. Organizations must be able to respond to this rise in expectations.

The hypothesis “H1b—Strategies related to compensation and incentives have a positive impact on the employees’ AOC”: Minchington [57] defines EVP (employee value proposition) as a package of attractive benefits that employers offer to employees, such as salary, bonuses, career development, work environment, possibility of promotion, and flexibility of working hours. In addition, EVP should not be focused only on monetary factors, such as compensation, but on psychological factors because they have greater weight among individuals [58].

The hypothesis “H1c—Strategies related to the mission, vision and values have a positive impact on the AOC of employees”: Mowday et al. [59] present the main characteristics of affective commitment: the belief and acceptance of organizational values and objectives, the desire to maintain the link with the organization and a willingness to defend the organization. According to Fernandez-Lores et al. [46], when the relationship between the employee and the employer brand is established, the affective commitment expresses the attachment that the professional experiences towards the values of the employer’s brand. And this attachment is manifested by the desire to remain in the organization over time and in the affinity of values between both parties.

The hypothesis “H1d—Strategies related to the team have a positive impact on the AOC of employees”: Meyer and Allen [31] stated that the relationship between team behaviors and affective commitment would be difficult to be studied, given that the results in their investigation were contradictory. This fact can be explained by the respondents’ personal characteristics in view of the organization’s relationships and internal environment.

The hypothesis “H1e—Strategies related to career development have a positive impact on the employees’ AOC”: According to Noe and Wilk [60], the training and skills development strategies implemented in career management, result in an increase in the level of AOC of their employees.

The hypothesis “H1f—The strategies related to culture and the work environment have a positive impact on the employees’ AOC”: For Miles and Mangold [25], the way and breadth with which the organizational culture is perceived and accepted by employees has an important impact on their behavior. The most important element of an organizational culture is its charter of principles and

values. Therefore, a correct management of these values facilitates affective commitment since it leads to an approximation between the employee and the employer's brand—when he identifies himself with its values.

The hypothesis “H1g—Strategies related to management processes have a positive impact on employees' AOC”: According to Punjaisri and Wilson [51], the management processes, from the initial moment of recruitment and selection, to the reception and integration phases, to the evaluation and management of performance, all of these management processes must be aligned with the brand values of the employer in order to increase the levels of affective commitment of individuals towards the employer. According to King et al. [61], it is possible to increase the levels of affective commitment of individuals towards the employer through leadership practices when they correctly represent the employer's brand values.

The hypothesis “H1h—Strategies related to communication and image have a positive impact on the employees' AOC”: Results allowed us to conclude that the perception of EB strategies related to communication and image is significantly predictive of the level of affective commitment of employees. For King et al. [61], the values of the employer's brand must be effectively communicated so that they are assumed by employees, raising their levels of commitment to the employer's brand.

As for the specific objective, “EB strategies have a positive perception on the part of employees”, it is possible to verify the results of this in the descriptive analysis of the items that make up the “QEB” scale. The average, as a measure of central tendency, allows knowing how the responses to the questionnaire are distributed, in the sense of knowing which EB strategies are most valued and least valued by the respondents. In this sense, it is possible to observe that all dimensions present  $M > 3.13$ . Since the Likert scale ranges from 1 to 5, this means that all responses are, on average, positive.

The specific objective “the EB strategy with a more positive perception on the part of employees” is verified by the descriptive analysis, where it is observed that there is a high valuation of the “Function” strategy, the same happening in the study by Sezões [14], since the average of responses to all items is  $M = 4.14$  with an agreement of 86.92%. Likewise, the standard deviation of all items is less than 1, which reveals a high concentration around the average value = 5, confirming the homogeneity of the responses, at the highest values of the scale (between 4 “agree” and 5 “agree totally”). The median value (central value in each item) is always 4 or 5, which also reveals a high level of agreement among respondents. “Function” corresponds, therefore, to “the strategy of EB with a more positive perception on the part of employees”.

As for the objective “to identify the EB strategy with a less positive perception on the part of the employees”, it is observed that the strategy perceived in a less positive or that is less valued by the employees is “management processes”, presenting an average value  $M = 3.13$  and agreement = 45.93%. The “compensation and incentives” strategy following, with  $M = 3.37$  and degree of agreement in the respondents' answers of 51.31%, the latter being the least valued strategy in the study by Sezões [14].

In relation to the specific objective “to verify if there is an association and positive and significant correlation between the dimensions that measure the EB strategies and AOC, the Spearman correlation coefficient reveals that the items in the EB variable have a positive and significant correlation with all items in the AOC variable, this correlation being significant at the 0.01 level. All variables have a strong correlation ( $\geq 0.5$ ). These results allow us to respond positively to the objective “to verify if there is a positive and significant association and correlation between the dimensions that measure EB strategies and AOC”.

Regarding the hypothesis “H2—AOC has a positive impact on EB strategies”, a Spearman's correlation was run to determine the relationship between AOC and EB values. Results confirm that this hypothesis is validated ( $r_s = 0.180$ ,  $n = 172$ ,  $p = 0.001$ ). According to Across [52], a greater perception of organizational commitment is associated with a greater perception of dimensions, such as: compensation, career, communication, supervision, and nature of the function.

To assess the specific objective “to verify if employees feel committed, at an affective level with the organization”, according to the results of the descriptive analysis as for the variable AOC,  $M = 3.63$  and



with an agreement greater than 40% in items 1, 2, and 5, respectively: “I would be very happy to spend the rest of my career in this organization”; “I feel the problems of this organization as if they were mine”; and “This organization has great personal significance for me”. Interestingly, there is a high “disagreement”, exceeding 36% in the questions formulated in the negative: “I don’t feel like” being part of the family “in this organization”; “I don’t feel” emotionally attached “to this organization.” From the analysis of these values, it is possible to conclude that, on average, employees are emotionally committed to their organization.

Regarding “H3—SDV have a positive impact on employees’”, a Spearman’s correlation was run to determine the relationship between SDV and AOC values. Results confirm that this hypothesis is not validated ( $r_s = 0.71$ ,  $n = 172$ ,  $p > 0.001$ ).

In this case, we can conclude that the sociodemographic variables, considered as a whole, do not constitute a direct predictor of the level of AOC. Meyer et al. [53] claim that certain sociodemographic variables, such as age, seniority, or gender, influence AOC. Meyer and Allen [31] argue that personal characteristics can be considered as a factor that introduces uncertainty in the percentage of unknown variance, that is, in the variance of AOC that is not explained. Since there was no positive association between the sociodemographic variables, as a whole and the affective commitment, the impact of each sociodemographic variable on the affective component of the organizational commitment was tested individually, in the next step of the statistical treatment of the data.

H4 is not confirmed ( $X^2 = 608.710$  and  $p = 0.093$ ). As previously verified, EB has a positive relationship with AOC; however, SDV, as a whole, have no positive relationship with AOC. In summary, it appears that the variables EB and SDV do not act in a combined way on AOC, but independently. Additionally, there are divergent results when testing each SDV individually. Meyer et al. [53] claim that certain sociodemographic variables, such as age, seniority, or gender, influence AOC. In turn, for Rego and Souto [62], there is no significant correlation between the variable’s seniority and educational qualifications for affective commitment, but it does exist for gender and age.

## 5. Conclusions

The current study allowed us to conclude that all of the EB dimensions have a positive correlation with the affective component of organizational commitment and that there is a positive and significant association in the globality, and between each, of the EB dimensions individually towards affective commitment. As for the inverse relationship, the AOC is a direct predictor of perception of EB strategies, that is to say, the greater the perception of AOC of employees, the greater will be the perception of EB strategies. It appears that the “mission, vision, and values” strategies are the EB strategy with the greatest positive impact on AOC, and the EB strategy with the least positive impact on AOC corresponds to “compensation and benefits”. Sociodemographic variables, considered as a whole, do not constitute a direct predictor of the level of affective commitment. It was shown that the sociodemographic variables age group, gender, employment relationship, and sector of activity have a positive impact on the AOC of employees, but literacy levels and seniority do not. The combined effect of sociodemographic variables and EB strategies on AOC is not verified. EB has a positive relationship with AOC; however, sociodemographic variables, as a whole, have no positive relationship with AOC. In summary, it appears that EB variables and sociodemographic variables do not act in a combined way on AOC, but independently. It can be concluded that this research highlighted the role of human resource management strategies applied in EB processes, focusing on the relevance of talent retention through affective commitment as a competitive advantage.

The results obtained with this research showed that there is a positive association between EB strategies and the employees’ AOC. In terms of research contribution, this investigation allowed us to understand that the variable “compensation and benefits”, presented the lowest Spearman coefficient. This fact demonstrates that “compensation and benefits” is not the greatest factor for retaining talent, through affective commitment, but rather identification with the “mission, vision and values” of the organization, the perception of support and justice/fairness in the “management processes”,

identification with the principles and values of the “organizational culture” and a good “image and communication” of the organization. In addition to the “compensation and benefits” dimension, the “Function” and “Team” variables also had the lowest Spearman coefficients. The results of this study suggest that individuals become emotionally committed to the organization, and that emotional commitment develops when the employee gets involved and identifies with the organization [63]. This affective commitment can be achieved when the employee perceives his employer as fair and supportive, when he identifies with the organization’s values, trusts leaders and managers, feels that his goals and the organization’s goals converge, feels satisfaction in his function, and understands that the organization is socially responsible [62]. These results corroborate with those advocated by Cappelli and Keller [64], due to the fact that this study also shows that professionals show a preference for organizations with an innovative culture, management style and attractive and supportive leadership, oriented towards career and development competencies, with fair management and evaluation processes, whose mission, vision, and values are challenging and inspiring, and with good communication and image. These factors revealed to have an important role in the affective commitment of employees, which, in turn, has an impact on the retention and involvement of talented professionals. The inverse relationship of the variables was also tested, that is, the results obtained with this investigation allowed to verify the existence of a positive association between the perception of organizational commitment and a greater perception of all human resource management strategies applied in EB, as stated by Across [52]. The scale used in this study, applied to EB strategies, had already been used in the study of Sezões [14]. However, in his study it was not possible to prove the relationship between the variables. Furthermore, a quantitative scale was not used to measure organizational commitment, and the role of sociodemographic and labor variables regarding commitment was not studied. The option for the affective component of organizational commitment was reinforced. It was also decided to extend the scope of the study to the entire active population in Portugal, which had not yet been done in studies focusing on these variables. All these elements constitute academic contributions.

This research, as well as other similar research, represent an important contribution to management, both in periods of economic expansion and in more unfavorable periods. In a situation that presents many difficulties to the vast majority of organizations, it is even more important to implement talent management practices capable of retaining and engaging talented professionals, increasing their affective bond with the organization, as they represent a critical element for competitiveness and success. This study allowed us to know which variables better allow for developing the bonds of affective commitment responsible for the retention and involvement of the “talents”, namely the identification with the “mission, vision, and values” of the organization, the perception of support and justice in the “managerial processes”, identification with the principles and values of “organizational culture”, and a good “reputation and communication” of the organization. It is, therefore, on these dimensions that talent management practices should focus, even though they all have associations and positive correlation, indicating that none can be overlooked. On the other hand, this study also demonstrated that the inverse relationship between the variables has statistical importance. The impact of affective organizational commitment on the perception of employer branding strategies is relevant, as the relationship between these variables demonstrated a positive and significant association. Finally, but no less relevant, we have the role of sociodemographic variables in the affective component of organizational commitment, where it is important to retain that, although, when tested as a whole, their influence on the affective commitment of individuals is not proven, when evaluated individually, the results demonstrated that the variables: age group, gender, employment relationship, and sector of activity have a positive impact on the AOC of employees.

Considering that the objectives proposed for this research have been achieved, some limitations in the research are recognized, such as the inclusion of a restricted range of variables. Hence, in future studies, the number of variables under study should be increased, including, for example, marital status, turnover, number of dependents, organizational support, or satisfaction levels. It is noteworthy

that the sample of participants was reduced, which limits the generalization of results. Additionally, because the data collection coincided with the pandemic period, suffering the evident consequences of social isolation, it would also be pertinent to repeat the same study in the post-pandemic period, to determine whether the observed results are maintained or diverge from the current ones. It would also be pertinent to add complementary research methodologies, such as a comparative study between groups of employees from the public and private sectors or a comparative case study between different sectors of activity.

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