Article

Ethics and Sustainability in Hospitality Employer Branding

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Abstract: Tourism is currently one of the main sectors of profit for the worldwide economy. This study aims to explore ethics and sustainability in employer branding applied in the hotel industry, which is intended to correlate these very current and little-explored themes. This study aims to explore the investigation of these concepts that have grown, especially in the area of tourism and hospitality, as a way to better understand how the hotel sector can improve and develop strategic tools to achieve organisational success and capture the best talent. Methodologically, a Delphi method (three rounds) was performed through 26 participants recognised as experts of three major associations within the hotel industry in Portugal. As the main outcome, this research validated the Ethics and Sustainability in Hospitality Employer Branding Model, comprising three dimensions (HRM and EB Practices; Factors of business ethics and environmental sustainability; and Advantages of UH in implementing the EB strategy and RS communication) and underlying categories. Findings and practical implications to management are presented.

Keywords: tourism; hospitality; ethics; sustainability and employer branding

1. Introduction

Currently, the hospitality sector faces global challenges in attracting and retaining talent for several reasons, such as unskilled labour, high turnover rate, excessive working hours, high competition and low pay (Alves et al. 2022). Therefore, it is very important not only to attract the right talent but to be able to motivate and involve current employees so that they have no interest in leaving the organisation; for this reason, it is necessary to find tools that can solve these problems in the hotel sector as high difficulty in hiring (Baum and Hai 2019). The new segments of ethical and sustainable tourists increasingly seek to obtain unique and sustainable experiences during their trip and stay, thus creating a greater connection with the destination (Almeida et al. 2019), acquiring cultural and personal enrichment, and thus having a greener consumption (Fennell and Bowyer 2019). Ethical and sustainable tourists travel in a more ecological way, love to discover destinations and their identities, know and respect their cultures, customs, and local communities, use the resources available by the environment without compromising future generations, preserving local traditions and natural resources (Veloso et al. 2021). Therefore, hotel organisations have begun to think about reviewing their strategies so that they can meet the needs and demands of new market segments and contribute to more sustainable tourism through

more sustainable and responsible management with Green Human Resources Management (GHRM) policies (Ribeiro and Gavronski 2021), obtaining an employer brand with a more positive and sustained image, thus attracting and winning the most talented (Sullivan 2009), with sustainability being a relevant factor in organisational strategic planning (Silberhorn 2019; López-Gómez 2018; Lee and King 2008).

The aim of this research is to understand the relationship between ethics and corporate social responsibility and EB strategy communication in retaining and attracting talent in the hospitality industry. More specifically, this research intends to explore the role of HRM practices in conjunction with the EB strategy in terms of attraction and retention being implemented by the hotel industry to inform hospitality industry organisations about what advantages they can achieve by improving their reputation and image, by obtaining a good EB strategy and by being socially and environmentally responsible, and finally to confirm the existence of a link between business ethics and environmental sustainability. The methodological approach adopted in this study is qualitative, using the Delphi method.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Ethics and Sustainability in Hospitality Employer Branding

Regarding the theme of ethics and sustainability in employer branding applied in the hotel industry, we intend to analyse the main definitions of the following concepts of employer branding, ethics, and sustainability, according to their evolution over time and based on the hotel industry, to understand the complexity of each of the concepts. People's knowledge in organisations has been one of the key factors for organisational success, so it is important to improve the knowledge that makes it possible to appeal to potential candidates and, at the same time, involve current employees (Guest et al. 2017; Gregorka et al. 2020). Monteiro et al. (2020) considers that employer branding is a tool that has great relevance in talent management over the last few years, as it is an innovative strategy that benefits organisations, making them differentiated, attractive, and reliable, contributing to attracting and retaining high-potential talent, being essential in this "war for talent", gaining competitive advantages over the competition.

Due to globalisation and the fact that the world is constantly evolving, consumers in the tourism and hospitality sector are increasingly demanding, and this quickly results in gradually shortening product and service life cycles and processes; it is necessary to obtain more innovative and creative strategies to exceed consumer expectations and desires. Yohn (2019) states that when the customer experience is achieved by the employee, a unique and sustainable competitive advantage is created because they are managed together as a great employee experience leads to a great customer experience. Eiró-Gomes and Raposo (2020) attest that, in the future, the concept of sustainable development may gain more prominence in corporate social responsibility.

2.2. Employer Branding

Wilden et al. (2010) have been addressing employer branding as the management of the employer brand, which combines human resources management with marketing. This topic has drawn the interest of many marketing experts, as it is based on a relationship of commitment and trust between the organisation and the employee, starting from the recruitment process. According to Edwards (2009), employer branding involves marketing principles, but there has been an increasing number of interventions by the human resources department. The main long-term objective of this strategy is to empower employees to develop the organisational identity of a particular organisation, as well as attract and retain talent.

The concept of employer branding consists of a tool capable of making employees aware of the advantages of belonging to the organisation, fostering a sense of pride, and supporting talent retention. Continuous promotion of a strong employer brand attracts, motivates, and retains the best talents, ensuring an elevated level of continuous performance (Patra et al. 2019). It is important that the image and reputation, through the organisation's

employer branding, attract employees with high potential, offering a set of distinct benefits within the workplace (Pittz et al. 2017). It is easier to maintain good human resources practices by complementing them with employer branding strategy, thus continuing to implement new initiatives that create value and foster strong engagement between employees and the brand. This engagement will extend to all stakeholders, increase employee productivity and improve recruitment, retention, and motivation (Barrow and Mosley 2005; Fernandes et al. 2023a).

The Corporate Leadership Council considers that organisations with an employer value proposition plan are more likely to retain and attract talent, enabling the organisation to achieve its objectives more efficiently. This is achieved through a set of offerings provided by the organisation in exchange for the capabilities, experiences, and skills that an employee brings to the organisation (Minchington 2018), aiming to improve employee job satisfaction (Chandrasekaran 2020).

Minchington (2018) states that by 2025, companies will increasingly compete for the quality of their human capital. In this perspective, to stay competitive in the current digital era market, they must consider the impact of emerging trends so that the employer value proposition strategy can always be up to date. Nowadays, companies are increasingly focused on their growth; however, they face significant challenges as not having the right talent or access to competent talent presents the main threat for many CEOs. This occurs when there is a disconnect between the employer branding strategy and the human resources strategy due to reasons such as a toxic work environment, lack of a more dynamic and differentiated value proposition, failure to fulfil promises, and overbranding (an organisational failure that happens when the market becomes saturated with too many sub-brands). In this sense, there is a need for a shift in strategies, with the main focus on people management (Elegbe 2018).

Considering the ongoing digital revolution, the increasing use of social media is emerging as an essential part of the modern organisational EB strategy, along with human resources practices, to attract and retain talent, thus strengthening the relationship with employees and resulting in a stronger and more consistent bond. Currently, the most used platforms for attracting and recruiting candidates are the digital platforms LinkedIn and Facebook, as they provide more information about potential candidates, and job applications through these platforms have significantly increased, proving to be successful in recruitment (Bagirathi and Magesh 2021).

According to Salameh et al. (2023), the perception of a positive, attractive, and strong employer brand is more connected to its employees, leading to higher retention levels and a decrease in salary expectations since employees feel professionally fulfilled and have a positive and pleasant work environment becomes more valuable than a salary increase. The success of an organisation's employer branding strategy depends on the involvement of all stakeholders, such as HR leaders, marketing, communications, IT, public relations, and legal functions, who together form the team behind the employer brand (Minchington 2018). It is relevant for organisations to build a positive, differentiated, and strong employer brand, as it becomes a key factor for organisational success, contributing to a stronger brand image and reputation and providing a competitive advantage for the organisation since employees become brand ambassadors through word-of-mouth, thus attracting potential candidates (Itam et al. 2020). In conclusion, an employer branding strategy offers advantages to organisations as it reinforces trust in leadership, retains talent, and fosters stronger bonds with employees through a positive work environment, both in organisational management and teamwork. Simultaneously, it reduces turnover and recruitment costs, as it enhances the organisational culture (Yoganathan et al. 2021).

2.3. Ethics and Sustainability in Hospitality Employer Branding

Ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) have been gaining prominence in the current context we live in from various perspectives and dimensions Dias et al. (2023). Not only in the present but even more so in the future, sustainability will undoubtedly

be considered a driving theme for the tourism and hospitality sector to position itself in the increasingly competitive market. In this sense, business innovation gains emphasis as it directly contributes to sustainability, considering that modern-day tourists prefer more innovative and sustainable products and services (Triantafillidou and Tsiaras 2018). Both tourism operators and tourists need to be aware of and consider this topic to reduce negative impacts on tourist hotspots and to bring benefits to the local community and themselves (Santos et al. 2021). Only through tourists' feedback can businesses reach new markets, build customer loyalty, and improve the promotion of tourism services. For this reason, the image of the employer brand is crucial to stay in the minds of current and potential consumers. However, the product or service is interconnected with the dynamics of supply and demand. Therefore, due to the new paradigm of tourism offerings, considering the diversification of products and services that stand out from competitors, creating competitive advantages and excellent business opportunities (Troise and Tani 2021).

Sustainable behaviours enable innovative solutions to the current sustainability challenge through creativity, leading to differentiation and competitiveness in business, which, in turn, drives innovation. This involves integrating green technologies, better known as eco-innovation, to develop more sustainable tourism products and services that can be successfully marketed (Font and McCabe 2017). A new paradigm has emerged in organisational marketing, focusing on the environmentally responsible consumer, which has forced companies to adapt their products and services to attract and satisfy them (Eid et al. 2020). Ethics plays a fundamental role in fostering and driving innovation, as well as the exchange of knowledge and skills among employees in an ethically and socially responsible leadership context, aiming to achieve competitive success (Markovic et al. 2021). According to Nunes and Cooke (2020), in a post-COVID-19 context, there has been increased pressure on tourism to be sustainable and environmentally respectful, contributing to the reduction of its environmental impacts. Tourists will always seek new experiences Streimikiene et al. (2020). Consequently, preventing probable future pandemics has given rise to a challenge among organisations to ensure the sustainable development of this tourism activity, rethinking and transforming the industry towards a more sustainable path and developing opportunities for innovation to attract new markets and partnerships (Bertello et al. 2021).

Oliveras-Villanueva et al. (2020) assert that sustainable practices in the hotel sector have shown a growing trend. Not only do they contribute to environmental protection and preservation, with a focus on energy management, waste management, and water conservation (Kularatne et al. 2019), but they also encourage all stakeholders to take action in favour of the environment and become environmentally conscious consumers (Bresciani et al. 2022). The ten main practices that have significantly improved the quality of sustainable service in the hotel sector, according to the following authors Oliveras-Villanueva et al. (2020), are: (1) the practice of the 3 Rs (reduce, reuse, and recycle); (2) sustainability in internal operations; (3) concern for the surrounding environment; (4) increasing quality and reducing costs; (5) sustainable organisational learning (such as reducing electricity usage and using biodegradable and ecological products); (6) sustainability and effective resource management; (7) sustainable food; (8) environmental certifications (indicating how a certain product is recycled); (9) social practices; and (10) sustainability in human resources, for example, using recycled paper for printing, relying more on digital tools like spreadsheets instead of paper).

The organisational world is in constant change, and we face a society where advertising, notoriety, and brand experience are determining factors, as consumer demands are constant, with increased attention to ethical issues, which are relevant in their purchase decisions (Pina and Dias 2020). As such, the behaviours and organisational attitudes are being rethought and transformed, leading to new structural challenges and ensuring a responsible commitment to the surrounding community, the environment, and stakeholders.

According to the "Sustainable Travel Report" by Booking regarding data from the previous year, 81% of tourists confirm that sustainable travel is important to them, and 50% of tourists state that news about climate change has influenced their decision to opt for more

sustainable travel. It is evident that this trend is gaining more prominence and momentum. In fact, 71% of tourists express their willingness to make a greater effort in the following year to travel more sustainably, exploring choices and more sustainable ways of travel, such as using caravans or bicycles at the destination (a 10% increase from 2021). Booking's digital platform predicted in 2020 that consumer environmental awareness would significantly increase in the coming years, and this is proving to be true, as 78% of tourists feel better about staying in an eco-friendly or sustainably certified hotel and plan to stay in more sustainable accommodations at least once in the following year. Many consumers (41%) reveal that they chose an eco-friendly hotel to help reduce their environmental impact, 33% consider it a more authentic experience, and 31% believe that such a tourism establishment places greater importance not only on environmental issues but also on the local community.

Ethics play a fundamental role in an organisation's innovation and employer branding strategies; otherwise, advertisements, novelties, and changes may contradict the common good, as many of these efforts focus on selling products or services and attracting tourists without respecting ethical principles (Islam 2020). Another relevant factor is the diversity and inclusion of employees from various backgrounds, as it promotes coexistence, improvement, and learning and ensures company appreciation and competitive advantage. The allocation of compensations or benefits is another essential factor, which should be based on the evaluation of competencies, performance, and ethical behaviour in line with the organisation's code of ethics. Therefore, this reorganisation should be in tune with the company's cultural identity, with the purpose of promoting a good work environment, harmony, and integrity (Bharadwaj et al. 2022).

A socially responsible company supports and promotes social and environmental practices, such as social programs and initiatives in the communities where the company operates. It develops partnerships with local and regional entities to deliver community benefits and add value to causes. For example, during the Christmas season, the company might provide toys to underprivileged children. Whenever the company undertakes such initiatives or campaigns to help, it should inform all employees and stakeholders so that everyone is aware of the company's involvement in these activities (Duque et al. 2020). As an industry with specific characteristics such as perishability and intangibility, assuming its mode of operation as well as its sensitivity to external factors, to remain competitive in the current market, the tourism and hospitality sector must continually adapt and innovate. This is essential due to the existing competitiveness; it is necessary for organisations to find new talents and maintain the existing ones, taking into consideration the employer branding strategy (Pires and Silva 2022). This concept is interconnected with marketing, as marketing is both a social and managerial process, consisting of a set of practices that create and add value to a specific product or service, offering increasing satisfaction, with a primary focus on content, as it will be read and seen by both current and potential candidates, ultimately leading to their loyalty. It should be emphasised that the differentiation and innovation of each employer brand rely on the content it shares. Over time, there has been a contemporary reformulation of what is "Internal Marketing" into Employer Branding (Behrends et al. 2020). Thus, this strategy represents a great opportunity for organisations to achieve more success and organisational sustainability, as it complements the strategic management of human resources with its image as an employer, considering the organisational culture and reputation. It is a fundamental tool in talent management, as it aims to attract and retain the right talents with high potential, thereby adding value to the organisation (Stahl et al. 2021).

In this context, there is a strong correlation between human resources management practices (recruitment, selection, integration planning, performance evaluation, training and development, rewards and benefits systems), which demonstrates their impact on both the workforce and organisational performance (Yu et al. 2022), as well as on the consistency and prestige of the employer brand's reputation, positively influencing employees' behaviour and intention to stay in the job (de la Rosa-Navarro et al. 2020). On the other hand, Strategic Human Resources Management (SHRM) involves considering these practices in a

systematic, coherent, and harmonious way, leading to good management and promoting a positive employer brand, increasing the probability of attracting and retaining talents, thus gaining competitive advantages for organisations (Graham and Cascio 2018). Several authors argue that strategic talent management is strongly related to the perception of employer branding, as EB is directly associated with the recruitment process. Talent management, on the other hand, relates to the promotion of potential through strategies, ensuring a wide array of talents that facilitate the selection process, given the high power of choice with quality (Maurya et al. 2020). Attraction is the talent management dimension most explored by EB, as this strategy is considered an innovative factor for both attracting and retaining talents (Gregorka et al. 2020).

The hospitality sector will have to focus on SHRM for talent attraction and retention, as it is an area with specific and unique characteristics and competencies, requiring measures to address these specificities (Fernandes et al. 2023b). However, the future of employment in the hotel industry falls short of expectations, being limited and restricted, with immense difficulties in recruitment. In this sense, it is essential to review and implement the employer branding strategy to address these specificities, with the aim of improving employee satisfaction in this industry and attracting potential candidates, resulting in beneficial organisational outcomes and achieving organisational success (Wach et al. 2020). Several authors have highlighted the challenges to be addressed in this industry, including (1) Unskilled Workforce: The hospitality sector faces a problem of having a high proportion of unskilled individuals, making it difficult to recruit and select motivated and qualified professionals, especially for positions that involve significant customer interaction. The lack of adequate knowledge reflects on career development opportunities, leading to difficulties in retaining potential employees and projecting a negative image of the industry's concern for its employees' qualifications (Brien 2014); (2) High Employee Turnover: The extreme seasonality of the industry, particularly during the low season when there is reduced demand (Jiménez-Barreto et al. 2021), contributes to a high turnover rate. During this period, hotels try to retain their employees, but there are barriers to retention due to the temporary nature of employment contracts, with many employees being young and working on seasonal contracts; (3) Excessive Working Hours: The seasonal nature of the industry, with a focus on the high season (Jiménez-Barreto et al. 2021), means that employees often work long hours, including nights, holidays, and weekends. This lack of time for family and rest results in emotional and physical strain, causing stress and emotional exhaustion; (4) Low Salaries: Employees in this industry often face low salaries, leading some to hold multiple jobs simultaneously to make ends meet. The reluctance to pay overtime further contributes to the perception of hospitality as a temporary career option while seeking better opportunities (Silva and Reis 2018).

In conclusion, organisations in the hospitality industry have been more focused on customers than on the operational aspect, i.e., the human capital, which is crucial for delivering excellent service and exceeding customer expectations (Malik and Khera 2014). This has resulted in the neglect of employees' desires, needs, and expectations, leading to low wages, lack of professional recognition, and an unpleasant work environment, which in turn affects their personal lives, causing burnout. Therefore, it is essential not only to attract the right talents but also to promote offers and working conditions that improve the hospitality sector and motivate employees, resulting in favourable behaviours and increased job satisfaction so that they have no interest in leaving the organisation (Kaur et al. 2015). This includes creating a positive work environment, achieving work-life balance, providing flexible working hours, investing in employee training and career development, effective leadership, personalised rewards systems, and a corporate culture that promotes talent attraction and growth (Ahmad et al. 2020). The primary focus of an employer branding strategy is to have a positive impact on employee retention and satisfaction, thus contributing to the overall success of the organisation, a key factor in talent attraction and retention. If there is an organisational culture that promotes talent growth, this strategy becomes well-developed and positive, leading to higher productivity

and organisational commitment, achieving better outcomes through a strong, differentiated, and attractive brand image, with correct positioning, gaining competitive advantages, and being more easily chosen in the decision-making process by potential candidates due to its distinction from the competition. Implementing performance evaluation strategies that help employees develop their knowledge and maximise their potential, creativity, and innovation within an organisation that offers learning and employee development enhances the organisation's employer branding (Potgieter and Doubell 2020), as it fosters innovative products and a strong culture of innovation, increasing the organisation's attractiveness in the market and attracting more potential candidates.

These practices are critical success factors because if an organisation has a strong and successful brand and a compelling value proposition that showcases its unique selling points, it can achieve competitive advantages and meet talent management objectives (Kargas and Tsokos 2020). By fostering motivation, performance, and commitment, the organisation enhances talent retention and attracts the right talents who aim to improve and develop the organisation, resulting in lower turnover rates. Based on continuous feedback, word-of-mouth referrals, and shared experiences, ethical, moral, and socially responsible conduct, transparency, consistency, and differentiation from competitors are essential for successful employer branding. This leads to effective human resource management, always considering human capital as one of the most valuable assets of organisations, as its characteristics, skills, values, and experiences contribute to the competitive differentiation that influences organisational success/failure (Liu et al. 2021).

To sum up, it is important for organisations in the hotel industry to adopt the employer branding strategy to retain and attract talent, avoid dissatisfaction, and ensure high motivation and commitment from employees, as these factors significantly influence organisational success. For this reason, many organisations invest in team-building activities (Tanwar and Prasad 2016). The introduction of employer branding in organisations is becoming more of a necessity and less of an option, even though it is not yet considered a top priority. While HR managers in tourism and hospitality are aware of the contributions this strategy, combined with HR practices, can bring in minimising the challenges faced by this sector, it is still undervalued by top-level management and both HR and marketing departments.

Corporate ethics heavily rely on employee commitment, influenced by various internal and external factors. A company should strive to maintain a positive work environment and a strong organisational culture that promotes ethical behaviours, practices, and actions to ensure socially responsible conduct without compromising organisational performance. Corporate ethics influence the behaviour of organisations in both internal and external communication (Bakker et al. 2012). Therefore, it is crucial to adapt organisational strategies based on social responsibility and GHRM practices to promote greener and more eco-friendly management.

3. Materials and Methods

Regarding the methodological approach, this study adopts a qualitative methodology, and the chosen qualitative method is the Delphi method. Qualitative research allows for a deep and detailed understanding of phenomena, contexts, and experiences. It focuses on exploring the complexity of a topic, often going beyond simple or quantifiable answers (Gerring 2017). The qualitative approach is highly flexible, allowing researchers to adapt to changes and nuances during the data collection process. This is particularly useful when dealing with complex and constantly evolving topics (Silverman 2020). The Delphi method is considered a powerful research technique as it gathers opinions and ideas from various experts, geographically separated, to obtain a diverse range of results related to the research problem (López-Gómez 2018). It enables a better understanding of the phenomenon under investigation based on the current reality and context (Gerring 2017). Usually, the Delphi method involves three rounds (Donohoe and Needham 2009), whether conducted online, in-person, or simultaneously, to gather as much information as possible

about the research problem (Guest et al. 2017). The participants' responses may complement or contradict each other, considering they are different individuals, leading to convergent or divergent opinions, as they are thought and provided by different people. As with every method, it also has some weaknesses, as we know that the composition of the panel of experts can significantly influence the results (Mullen 2003). If the selection of experts is not conducted carefully, bias can occur in the opinion collected as well as the bias of the facilitator himself can occur (Fink-Hafner et al. 2019), therefore, aware of these biases but nevertheless convinced that this was the right method for this research, everything possible was done to ensure that both the choice of experts and the intervention of the researcher was judicious, trying to maintain maximum impartiality for more reliable results.

3.1. Research Question and Underlying Objectives

The research question in any study corresponds to the main objective that the researcher aims to investigate. In this study, the research aims to answer the following research question: "How are CSR and EB practices implemented in hotels in Portugal?" Based on this research question, the overall objective of this study is to understand the relationship between ethics and corporate social responsibility (CSR) and the communication of EB strategy in talent retention and attraction in the hotel sector. Specifically, this research intends to understand the importance of EB and environmental sustainability for decision-makers and managers in the hospitality industry, explore the role of HRM practices in conjunction with EB strategy in terms of attraction and retention that are being implemented by hotels, inform organisations in the hospitality industry of the advantages they can achieve by improving their reputation and image, by achieving a good EB strategy and by being socially and environmentally responsible, and finally confirm the existence of a link between business ethics and environmental sustainability.

3.2. Sample

In the sample definition, the following criteria were used: the scope of this investigation encompasses 26 experts geographically separated who belong to three important associations within the hotel industry in Portugal, based in the metropolitan area of Lisbon. These associations are AHP (Portuguese Hotel Association), AHRESP (Association of Hotels, Restaurants, and Similar Establishments of Portugal), and ADHP (Association of Hotel Directors of Portugal). These experts not only belong to the associations but also to various hotel units across Portugal, from north to south, including the islands of Madeira and the Azores, as they highly value the hotel industry. Thus, they are the decision-makers for contributing to the improvement and development of the industry. It is important to understand how the Human Resources Department is organised and structured in the different hotel units, whether there is a responsible person if there is a well-defined and elaborated HR manual, and how they address issues of ethics and corporate social responsibility.

This will lead to obtaining relevant data regarding the investigated theme. The sample consists of a panel of 26 participants from the hotel industry in Portugal, including the islands of Madeira and the Azores. These participants were selected according to a homogeneous pattern, considering their knowledge, skills, and expertise in the field. Therefore, this research is based on the application of the Delphi method, which involves three rounds of inquiry, with a minimum of 10 to 12 participants and a maximum of 35 participants, following the approach of (Hsu and Sandford 2007), ensuring a robust sample. Accordingly, nine experts are from AHP, nine from AHRESP, and eight experts represent ADHP, making up the total sample. Most of the participants are male (62%), specifically sixteen participants, while the remaining ten (38%) are female. To provide more details about the sample, a brief characterisation of each interviewee and each association is presented in Table 1:

Table 1. Sample characterisation.

Association Designation	Association's Governing Body
AHP–Portuguese Hospitality Association	AHP representatives in Lisbon AHP representatives North Zone AHP representatives in Algarve AHP representatives in Azores AHP representatives in Madeira Social and Environmental Responsibility Representatives
AHRESP–Association of Hotels, Restaurants and Similar Services of Portugal	Effective president of Coimbra area Alternate President of Coimbra area Effective members of Coimbra area Effective president of Faro area Alternate President of Faro area Effective president of Porto area Alternate President of Porto area Effective Chairman of the Supervisory Board of AHRESP Alternate Chairman of the Supervisory Board of AHRESP
ADHP–Portuguese Hotel Directors Association	Communications and Marketing Representatives

3.3. Data Collection Technique

In the second phase, the methodology was translated into the Delphi method for data collection, as it is recognised as one of the most suitable techniques for conducting data collection in qualitative research, particularly in a comprehensive area like the tourism and hospitality sector (Silverman 2020). The application of this data collection technique offers numerous advantages, particularly because it is carried out in three stages and allows for an extensive exploration of the ideas and perspectives of the participants (Silverman 2020). These pieces of information are essential for the analysis of the collected results by the researcher, addressing both the research question and objectives. The Delphi method consists of rounds involving specific questions on a particular topic or theme. This process aims to obtain results relevant to the research and to better support the study. It leads to a better understanding of the presented questions and the responses provided by the participants, thereby facilitating the presentation of different opinions.

Consequently, the method was applied to a sample comprising a panel of 26 anonymous professionals who are experts in the hospitality industry. These professionals were carefully selected to answer complex questions in-depth and to provide convergent or divergent responses from the rest of the group. Their expertise was crucial in helping to understand the obtained responses. The criteria for selecting the participants were their affiliation with the governing bodies of the three most important associations in the hospitality sector (AHP, AHRESP, and ADHP). They included presidents, vice presidents, board members, and association representatives from various locations across the country, including the islands, and they had connections to hotel chains.

The selection criteria for the participants focused on professionals who are competent and decision-makers in the marketing area, as they aim to improve and develop the field. The three rounds of the Delphi method will be conducted online, as it has proven to be the most beneficial approach to gathering responses from all 26 participants across the three stages, ensuring the smooth progression of the research. The questionnaire for the Delphi method, based on the review of relevant literature, was structured into three sections. The first section addresses Human Resources Management (HRM) practices in conjunction with the Employer Branding (EB) strategy concerning talent retention and attraction. This part involves identifying the instruments being implemented in the hotel establishments in Portugal and gauging the participants' opinions on their relevance for the effective functioning of this sector. The second section primarily focuses on factors related to the importance of business ethics and environmental sustainability. It aims to

understand whether the executives responsible for these domains in each of the associations believe that these principles are being actively practised in the various hotel units across Portugal. Finally, the third section delves into the advantages that hotel establishments can achieve by implementing an Employer Branding strategy and demonstrating social and environmental responsibility.

By exploring these three aspects, the research aims to gain comprehensive insights into the current state of the tourism and hospitality sector in Portugal. It seeks to identify the best practices being adopted, assess the level of ethical and sustainable initiatives being undertaken, and understand the benefits that arise from embracing an Employer Branding strategy while being environmentally responsible. Throughout the three rounds of the Delphi method, the researchers anticipate that a consensus will be reached among the participants regarding the most effective practices and strategies in the industry. The anonymity of the participants ensures that each expert can freely express their opinions, promoting a diversity of viewpoints and encouraging thorough discussions during the rounds. Upon completion of the Delphi method, the collected data will be meticulously analysed, and the results will be crucial in addressing the research question and achieving the research objectives. The valuable input from the panel of professionals will provide valuable insights to guide the future development and improvement of marketing practices in the tourism and hospitality sector in Portugal. In conclusion, the application of the Delphi method with the selected panel of experts offers a robust approach to gathering pertinent information, paving the way for advancements in the field and fostering the growth of the tourism and hotel industry while promoting ethical and sustainable practices.

3.4. Procedures

For this research, three rounds of the Delphi method were conducted with a panel of experts belonging to three significant associations in the hospitality industry (AHP, AHRESP, and ADHP). This diverse panel comprised professionals holding various positions of responsibility and leadership within these associations and their respective organisations. As a result, a total of 78 responses were collected across the three rounds. After the data collection phase, which took place between April and June 2023 through online means, data analysis was carried out. Two methods of analysis were employed: content analysis and thematic analysis. Content analysis was chosen as it is advantageous for this type of research, as it helps contextualise the study and contributes to the interpretation of the data content. It seeks to uncover the underlying meaning behind the words being studied, identifying keywords and creating indicators (qualitative or quantitative) that enable inferences about the conditions of production/reception of these messages.

The present study is organised into three dimensions (as shown in Table 2) to analyse and interpret the results obtained from different units under examination:

(1) Practices of Human Resources Management (GRH) in conjunction with the Employer Branding (EB) strategy concerning talent retention and attraction.

Importance of Business Ethics and Environmental Sustainability.

Advantages that hotel establishments can achieve by implementing the Employer Branding strategy and by demonstrating social and environmental responsibility.

Obtained results were presented using dynamic tables in an Excel file, allowing for data coding and categorisation. This approach facilitates the analysis of the collected data's units of study. By employing both content analysis and thematic analysis, the researchers aimed to gain a comprehensive understanding of the research's focal points. These analyses help unveil patterns, trends, and insights hidden within the responses provided by the panel of experts. The resulting findings are essential for drawing meaningful conclusions and addressing the research questions and objectives. The utilisation of multiple analytical methods allows for a thorough exploration of the data collected, ensuring a robust and comprehensive investigation into the state of Human Resources Management, Employer Branding, Business Ethics, and Environmental Sustainability within the hospitality sector in Portugal.

In summary, the combination of the Delphi method and the subsequent data analysis methods employed in this study contributes to a well-rounded and in-depth examination of the subject matter. The findings and conclusions drawn from this research have the potential to inform and guide future strategies and practices within the tourism and hotel industry in Portugal.

Table 2. Dimensions and its items analysed in the data collection.

Dimensions	Analysed Items
Dimension 1-HRM practices in combination with EB strategy regarding talent retention and attraction	1. Food Allowance 2. Health Insurance 3. Career Progression 4. Discounts in all hotels, hostels, and apart-hotels of the group (stay, restaurants, spas, and vouchers) for both employees and their families. 5. Work-family balance 6. Skills development (such as having an English, French or German course) 7. Great working environment (positive and initiative-taking attitudes) 8. Internship opportunities (whether curricular, professional, summer, or international) 9. Correct posture and image towards society (good reputation) 10. Promote the realisation of bachelor's and master's degrees benefiting from the organisation 11. Opportunity to conduct the master's dissertation in the organisation. 12. Job offers in different areas of the hospitality sector
Dimension 2-Business Ethics and Environmental Sustainability Importance	1. Participation in innovative projects containing corporate social responsibility actions at the environmental level. 2. Environmental sustainability as a priority factor in the strategic management of hotel units that contributes to the improvement of their image/reputation, thus achieving competitive advantages. 3. The transmission of organisational identity based on ethical business values contributes to a more consistent environmental sustainability policy. 4. Business ethics establishes organisational citizenship behaviours for environmental sustainability. 5. The organisation, by transmitting honest, transparent, and sustained communication, promotes behaviours, actions, and practices of environmental sustainability, which leads to a relationship of trust and loyalty among all stakeholders. 6. Socially sustainable HRM 7. The fact that the organisational dynamism is focused on environmental sustainability. 8. Green HRM relates to commitment and organisational performance.
Dimension 3-Advantages that hotels can achieve by implementing the EB strategy and being environmentally and socially responsible	1. Ability to secure and retain the best professionals (flexibility and autonomy). 2. Capturing top-quality potential candidates. 3. Obtaining a motivated, qualified, and committed team 4. Good career progression and development plan, considered attractive, appealing, and innovative. 5. Creative and motivated employees generate better quality in the service provided, thus satisfying the expectations and needs of customers. 6. Improved image/reputation in today's market 7. Generate more value for the customer through greener services with organic and "green" products that the hotel offers (such as hygiene products). 8. Increased productivity 9. Remain and distinguish yourself in today's marketplace in the face of competition. 10. Customer loyalty

4. Results

In this chapter, the data obtained in this study have been treated in accordance with the principles of content analysis and thematic analysis.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the results of this research are organised into three central dimensions: (1) Practices of Human Resources Management (GRH) in conjunction with the Employer Branding (EB) strategy concerning talent retention and attraction; (2) Importance of Business Ethics and Environmental Sustainability; (3) Advantages that hotel establishments can achieve by implementing the Employer Branding strategy and by

demonstrating social and environmental responsibility. Each of these dimensions helps to understand the theme investigated in this study and provides an opportunity to discern which categories hold greater significance than others. This allows for a comprehensive understanding of the views and opinions of the respondents regarding these topics.

Presented in Tables 4–6 are the results that facilitate the interpretation and comprehension of the achieved outcomes, considering the various categories that emerged from the qualitative analysis through the Delphi method applied to a panel of 16 experts belonging to the three important associations in the hospitality industry (AHP, AHRESP, and ADHP). The first round took place in March, the second round in April, and the third round in May of 2023.

In the first round, the research sample individually summarised and coded the responses, using evaluation criteria ranging from 1 to 12, 1 to 8, and 1 to 10), where 1 was classified as "Less Important," and, depending on the dimension containing 12, 8, or 10 categories, it was classified as "More Important". The responses obtained were related to the central dimensions, divided into GRH and EB practices, factors related to business ethics and environmental sustainability, and advantages of implementing the EB strategy and RS communication in hotel units. Next, the collected data were compared, resulting in a final list of twelve practices for the first dimension, eight factors for the second dimension, and ten advantages for the third dimension (Table 3). This positioning of the various experts provides insight into their perceptions of the various categories, categorising them as highly significant, somewhat significant, or not very significant regarding the discussed themes.

The detailed analysis and categorisation of the responses offer valuable information that contributes to the research's conclusions and provides a deeper understanding of the perspectives of the experts. The data collected in the three rounds of the Delphi method have been instrumental in shedding light on the key aspects of the research, allowing for a comprehensive evaluation of the state of Human Resources Management, Employer Branding, Business Ethics, and Environmental Sustainability within the hospitality sector in Portugal. The subsequent sections of this chapter will delve into the specific findings from each dimension, allowing for a deeper exploration of the results and their implications for the industry. The data collected and analysed through content and thematic analysis offer valuable insights into the perspectives and practices of experts in the field, which can inform future strategies and improvements in the tourism and hotel industry in Portugal.

In the second round (Table 4), a different criterion was employed to classify the categories in the three dimensions. Categories were assigned levels 9, 10, 11, and 12, representing higher significance, levels 6, 7, and 8, indicating some significance, while categories below level 5 were excluded from this round due to their low significance for the sample. Consequently, the first dimension was coded into six categories, the second dimension into four categories, and the third dimension into five categories, as these were considered more important by most experts.

However, during the third round, it was observed that some participants perceived certain categories differently. Some considered them to have low significance, while others found them to be of moderate or high importance. Therefore, the decision was made not to exclude the following categories in this round: "Creative and motivated employees generate better quality in the service provided, thus satisfying the expectations and needs of customers", as this category received values ranging from 2 to 5, indicating low significance according to six experts, but some others found it important, giving it values between 9 and 10. Another category that was not excluded was "Remain and distinguish yourself in today's marketplace in the face of competition", as it received values between 5 and 7, showing some importance for some respondents.

Table 3. Results from first round.

	Categories	Position
1st Dimension HRM and EB Practices	Food Allowance	7, 10 e 11
	Health Insurance	3
	Career Progression	9 e 12
	Discounts in all hotels, hostels, and apart-hotels of the group (stay, restaurants, spas, and vouchers) for both employees and their families.	1
	Work-family balance	11
	Skills development (such as having an English, French or German course)	6 e 10
	Great working environment (positive and initiative-taking attitudes)	8 e 10
	Internship opportunities (whether curricular; professional; summer or international)	4
	Correct posture and image towards society (good reputation)	7
	Promote the realisation of bachelor's and master's degrees benefiting from the organisation	2
	Opportunity to conduct the master's dissertation in the organisation	1
	Job offers in different areas of the hospitality sector	4
2nd Dimension Factors of business ethics and environmental sustainability	Participation in innovative projects containing corporate social responsibility actions at the environmental level.	6
	Environmental sustainability as a priority factor in the strategic management of hotel units that contributes to the improvement of their image/reputation, thus achieving competitive advantages	6
	The transmission of organisational identity based on ethical business values contributes to a more consistent environmental sustainability policy	7
	Business ethics establishes organisational citizenship behaviours for environmental sustainability	4 e 5
	The organisation, by transmitting honest, transparent, and sustained communication, promotes behaviours, actions, and practices of environmental sustainability, which leads to a relationship of trust and loyalty among all stakeholders	8
	Socially sustainable HRM	2
	The fact that the organisational dynamism is focused on environmental sustainability	1
	Green HRM relates to commitment and organisational performance	3
3rd Dimension Advantages of UH in implementing the EB strategy and RS communication	Ability to secure and retain the best professionals (flexibility and autonomy).	3 e 8
	Capturing top-quality potential candidates.	3 e 8
	Obtaining a motivated, qualified, and committed team	8
	Good career progression and development plan, considered attractive, appealing, and innovative	2
	Creative and motivated employees generate better quality in the service provided, thus satisfying the expectations and needs of customers	2, 5, 9 e 10
	Improved image/reputation in today's market	6
	Generate more value for the customer through greener services with organic and "green" products that the hotel offers (such as hygiene products).	4, 5 e 9
	Increased productivity	4
	Remain and distinguish yourself in today's marketplace in the face of competition	5, 7 e 10
	Customer loyalty	9

Table 4. Results from second round.

	Categories	Position
1st Dimension HRM and EB Practices Dimension	Food Allowance	7, 10 e 11
	Career Progression	9 e 12
	Work-family balance	11
	Skills development (such as having an English, French or German course)	6 e 10
	Great working environment (positive and initiative-taking attitudes)	8 e 10
	Correct posture and image towards society (good reputation)	7
2nd Dimension Factors around business ethics and environmental sustainability	Participation in innovative projects containing corporate social responsibility actions at the environmental level	6
	Environmental sustainability as a priority factor in the strategic management of hotel units that contributes to the improvement of their image/reputation, thus achieving competitive advantages	6
	The transmission of organisational identity based on ethical business values contributes to a more consistent environmental sustainability policy	7
	The organisation, by transmitting honest, transparent, and sustained communication, promotes behaviours, actions, and practices of environmental sustainability, which leads to a relationship of trust and loyalty among all stakeholders.	8
3rd Dimension Advantages that UH has when implementing EB strategy and RS communication	Obtaining a motivated, qualified, and committed team	8
	Creative and motivated employees generate better quality in the service provided, thus satisfying the expectations and needs of customers	2, 5, 9 e 10
	Improved image/reputation in today's market	6
	Remain and distinguish yourself in today's marketplace in the face of competition	5, 7 e 10
	Customer loyalty	9

In the third and final round (Table 5), the items for each dimension were appropriately coded and classified to create the final table (Table 6). In this last round, the criterion used to categorise the items in the three dimensions was that items with positions below level 7 were excluded. As a result, the first dimension ended up with three items, with values ranging from 7 to 12, the second dimension had two items with values of 7 and 8, and the third dimension included three items with values between 2 and 10. However, in this last dimension, the criterion was that the categories had to contain values of 9 and 10, as evident in the items "Creative and motivated employees generate better quality in the service provided, thus satisfying the expectations and needs of customers" and "Remain and distinguish yourself in today's marketplace in the face of competition". This ensures that the items with the most relevance for each theme, according to the opinions of the various experts, were considered.

The completion of the three rounds allowed the researchers to identify the most significant items in each dimension, enabling a thorough understanding of the perspectives and opinions of the experts on the different themes explored. The analysis of the Delphi method data using content and thematic analysis methodologies has been a valuable process, producing meaningful insights that contribute to the field of Human Resources Management, Employer Branding, Business Ethics, and Environmental Sustainability in the hospitality industry in Portugal. The following sections of this chapter will delve into the detailed findings and interpretations based on these results, providing valuable implications and recommendations for the industry. The insights gained from this study can potentially guide and enhance practices within the tourism and hotel sector, facilitating its growth and development in alignment with ethical and sustainable principles.

Table 5. Results from third round.

	Categories	Position
1st Dimension HRM and EB Practices Dimension	Food Allowance	7, 10 e 11
	Career Progression	9 e 12
	Work-family balance	11
2nd Dimension Factors around business ethics and environmental sustainability	The transmission of organisational identity based on ethical business values contributes to a more consistent environmental sustainability policy	7
	The organisation, by transmitting honest, transparent, and sustained communication, promotes behaviours, actions, and practices of environmental sustainability, which leads to a relationship of trust and loyalty among all stakeholders	8
3rd Dimension Advantages that UH has when implementing EB strategy and RS communication	Creative and motivated employees generate better quality in the service provided, thus satisfying the expectations and needs of customers.	2, 5, 9 e 10
	Remain and distinguish yourself in today's marketplace in the face of competition	5, 7 e 10
	Customer loyalty	9

Table 6. Ethics and Sustainability in Hospitality Employer Branding Model.

	Categories	Position
1st Dimension HRM and EB Practices	Career Progression	9 e 12
	Work-family balance	11
2nd Dimension Factors of business ethics and environmental sustainability	The organisation, by transmitting honest, transparent, and sustained communication, promotes behaviours, actions, and practices of environmental sustainability, which leads to a relationship of trust and loyalty among all stakeholders	8
3rd Dimension Advantages that UH has when implementing EB strategy and RS communication	Creative and motivated employees generate better quality in the service provided, thus satisfying the expectations and needs of customers	2, 5, 9 e 10
	Remain and distinguish yourself in today's marketplace in the face of competition	5, 7 e 10

With the analysis of the third round, the final table of the model of ethics and sustainability in employer branding in hospitality (Table 6) was obtained. It consisted of five categories in total across the three dimensions (two items in the 1st dimension, one item in the 2nd dimension, and two items in the 3rd dimension) with values ranging from 8 to 12. Based on the data collected in the three rounds of the Delphi method from a panel of 16 experts in the field, it was possible to identify the five categories that are considered of high significance by most respondents across the three dimensions. These categories pertain to practices of Human Resources Management and Employer Branding, factors related to business ethics and environmental sustainability, and the advantages that hotel establishments can achieve by implementing the Employer Branding strategy and engaging in Responsible Sustainability communication.

In the first dimension, two items were identified as highly significant: Career Progression and Work-Life Balance, following an analysis and qualification of twelve categories. This dimension aimed to understand which of these twelve categories was most important for the hospitality sector from the perspective of the experts' knowledge regarding this employer branding tool. The second dimension contained one highly significant item: "Organisations promoting honest, transparent, and sustained communication foster behaviours, actions, and practices of environmental sustainability, which establishes trust and loyalty among all stakeholders". This conclusion resulted from the categorisation of

eight units of analysis. This dimension aimed to identify the categories that held the most relevance for this area and for the participants, as it prompted them to contemplate the current challenge that organisations in this sector must face and adapt their internal processes, leading to more sustainable management and aligning their organisational strategies based on social responsibility. The third dimension encompassed two highly significant items: "Creative and motivated employees generate better service quality, thus meeting customer expectations and needs" and "Staying and distinguishing oneself in the current market in the face of competition". These emerged from the coding and classification of ten categories, seeking to ascertain which categories were of the highest significance. It is crucial for organisations in the hospitality industry to adapt to the changes in the global market, and it is essential for their survival to improve their organisational performance by integrating human resources management with environmental management. This approach allows them to invest in environmental and competitive performance, maintain a sustainable and positive image, and enhance service quality.

The analysis of the final table represents the results achieved in the three rounds, with the goal of evaluating whether this model helps to improve and further develop the hospitality industry, positioning it more competitively in the current market. By understanding the significance of the identified categories within the context of employer branding, ethics, and sustainability, organisations in the hospitality sector can utilise this knowledge to enhance their strategies and practices. By focusing on career progression, work-life balance, honest and transparent communication, creative and motivated employees, and staying competitive in the market, hotel establishments can strengthen their positions, attract and retain talent, and build trust and loyalty with stakeholders, including customers. The findings of this research contribute valuable insights for decision-makers and professionals in the hospitality industry, guiding them in their efforts to create more sustainable and responsible business practices. Moreover, this study opens avenues for future research and exploration into the relationship between employer branding, ethics, and sustainability in the ever-evolving hospitality landscape.

5. Discussion

It was found that there is a link between dimensions, and it's becoming evident that the success of organisations depends on their commitment to ethics and social responsibility. Companies need to foster a strong organisational culture that embodies ethical and sustainable values, practices, actions, and behaviours. This not only promotes loyalty and trust among all stakeholders but also creates a positive work environment. Such factors, both internally and externally, contribute to improved organisational performance while upholding socially responsible conduct (Ferrell et al. 2019).

The first dimension focuses on the practices of Human Resources Management in conjunction with the Employer Branding strategy concerning talent retention and attraction. This tool aims to make organisations attractive, diverse, distinctive, appealing, and trustworthy. It comprises four HR management practices: (1) recruitment, selection, and onboarding; (2) performance evaluation; (3) training and development; and (4) rewards and benefits systems. When these practices are integrated with the Employer Branding strategy, which is an innovative approach, they can enhance organisational creativity both internally and externally, attracting high-potential employees (Santos et al. 2019). In a global perspective shared by the experts, they consider Employer Branding important and beneficial for organisations, as the well-being of employees and the functioning of the organisation are crucial for achieving superior results and gaining competitive advantages over competitors, leading to organisational success (Santos et al. 2019; Santos and Almeida 2022).

This perspective aligns with the success story of the Pestana Hotel Group, which was recognised as the most attractive company to work for in the hospitality sector in 2022, according to the "Randstad Employer Brand Award". The company employs the Employer Branding strategy, primarily focused on talent retention, to avoid employee dissatisfaction and ensure elevated levels of motivation and commitment, leading to improved organi-

sational development and reduced turnover rates (Alves et al. 2022). The consistency of Employer Branding within the Pestana Hotel Group involves communicating its organisational culture, values, mission, and vision to all stakeholders, ensuring that everyone understands what it means to "Be Pestana". It is essential to start the communication from within and then extend it to potential candidates, creating a stronger, positive, and stable corporate image as an employer (Sullivan 2009).

The second dimension addresses the importance of business ethics and environmental sustainability. Corporate social responsibility has been gaining increasing prominence in the current context, as it is a crucial matter for organisations to maintain and position themselves competitively in the global market (Reis et al. 2021). Consequently, there is an environmental consciousness that aims to minimise these negative effects on the environment. Regarding the data obtained in this dimension, it can be asserted that it aligns with the literature review, as it underscores that socially responsible organisations possess specific capabilities. They are flexible and adaptable to change, have policies, strategies, and practices that are ethical and sustainable, and have a stronger employer brand and a more positive and secure reputation (Díaz-Meneses and Nieves 2019). Social responsibility, particularly in terms of sustainability, reinforces a more ethical organisational culture, promoting coherence, loyalty, and trust in their values among all stakeholders.

The last dimension analysed in this study pertains to the advantages that hotel units can achieve by implementing the EB strategy and being socially responsible in terms of the environment. This results in an employer brand with greater organisational prestige and the ability to position itself positively in the market by attracting high-quality candidates and retaining the most talented employees. Looking ahead, innovation and sustainability will be two driving forces for the hotel industry, as they will help tourist establishments differentiate themselves from others and maintain competitiveness in the market by implementing eco-friendly strategies and practices. The theme of sustainability is crucial for hotel organisations, as there is a progression towards a more sustainable form of tourism, leading to diverse benefits such as competitive advantages, image and reputation enhancement, an unmatched brand, cost savings, operational efficiency, and a positive contribution to environmental preservation.

The EB strategy is related to the concept of a "great place to work". When hotel organisations adopt this strategy, they can achieve elevated levels of competitiveness through new, flexible, innovative, and creative work structures, thereby enhancing organisational development. This approach is based on a more creative, innovative, and eco-friendly organisational culture, primarily driven by knowledge. Knowledge has become a key factor in recruitment strategy (talent attraction and retention) as it is essential to enhance the knowledge of current employees, involving them in organisational strategies and appealing to more talented and qualified potential candidates (Gregorka et al. 2020). This fosters more creativity and innovation in the development of products and services, with the goal of guiding and advancing their careers, as it generates greater commitment and dedication, resulting in positive outcomes and organisational success (Ferrell et al. 2019).

In summary, there is a strong connection between the three dimensions mentioned earlier, as socially responsible organisations ensure organisational success, create value both for the organisation and its workforce, and foster brand loyalty. They achieve a more positive image in the market by showcasing their organisational culture and what they offer to their employees, thereby increasing attractiveness to attract and retain high-potential talents and reduce turnover rates. It is crucial for organisations to maintain a differentiated, attractive, and appealing brand, particularly through green innovation, offering products and services that provide unique and authentic experiences to meet the demands of the current market. Such organisations tend to be more innovative and sophisticated, operating dynamic and flexible businesses with a focus on sustainable entrepreneurship.

6. Conclusions

From an organisational perspective, it is crucial to improve working conditions as employees are valued more than ever, leading to increased loyalty, commitment, and performance among current employees. One key challenge for organisations is the ability to retain and attract talent. In this regard, organisations must invest in employer branding policies to understand what attracts potential and current employees to an organisation. It is essential to stay updated on the latest trends in the recruitment market, as organisational competitiveness and competition for the best talents have increased.

Considering the practices of HRM and EB in the hotel industry, one notable aspect is the focus on ethics and social responsibility, aiming to ensure a more sustainable and innovative tourism sector by adopting sustainable practices among all stakeholders. By adopting more sustainable strategies, hotel organisations can position themselves competitively in the global market, gaining reputation and prestige compared to their competitors. This enhances the employer brand, making it innovative, distinctive, attractive, and stronger, leading to advantages in the market. The interplay between HRM practices and EB strategy in terms of attraction and retention in the hotel sector is crucial. Investing in a positive, innovative, and creative organisational culture, as well as social responsibility strategies that benefit employees, such as career progression, work-life balance, and continuous training to develop knowledge and skills, contributes to motivation, commitment, talent retention, well-being, and consequently, lower turnover rates.

Environmental sustainability is a key aspect of business ethics, as it fosters transparent, integrous, assertive, truthful, and ethical organisational communication, contributing to organisational success. Lastly, the advantages that hotel units can achieve by implementing EB strategy and being socially responsible in environmental matters are critical success factors. A strong and successful brand, coupled with an appealing value proposition showcasing differentiating points, such as attractive compensation and benefits packages and open communication, leads to competitive advantages and the achievement of talent management objectives. Although HR managers in this sector acknowledge the contributions of this strategy combined with HR practices in valuing employee well-being as a current priority, retaining professionals within organisations contributes to their reputation and image. As suggestions for future research, it may be interesting to conduct a quantitative study. This study has strengthened knowledge on the topics addressed in the academic and scientific communities, particularly regarding the contribution of HRM practices combined with EB strategy in attraction and retention in the hotel sector, as well as the importance of ethics and social responsibility applied to environmental sustainability in the organisational strategic plan and building a stronger and more positive reputation. Additionally, this study has shed light on the realities of hotel organisations, their methods of attracting and retaining talent in HR management, and how they are revising their strategies to achieve more sustainable management and greater profitability and organisational success, thereby enhancing existing practices and performance.

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