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Employer attractiveness: a study into the link between demographics of jobseekers and reasons for applying for a position

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on employer attractiveness, namely the attributes that motivate job-seekers to apply for a job and the demographic variables that may affect employer attractiveness. The demographics of age, gender, years worked, and the faculty/study-related variables are examined through a quantitative approach with a sample of 1056 Hungarian students. Some significant differences were found for 'money', opportunities to develop and job conditions. This study also uncovered two new attributes: job (contractual) conditions; and type of work (tasks). These findings imply that employer branding strategies should consider national idiosyncrasies, and not rely on existing empirical findings.

KEY WORDS

employer branding, attributes, demographics, motivators

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1 INTRODUCTION

Employer branding not only involves promoting the organisation as a 'great place to work' in the mind of the jobseeker (McLeod & Waldman, 2011), it also enables organisations to 'pick the cream of the crop'. However, these job seekers also have values and preconceptions which, in turn, may affect what is seen as a great place to work.

Hungarian organizations have similar demands to those their developed nation counterparts in attracting and retaining top talent. At the same time, the need to attract undergraduates from limited areas increases. Moreover, Hungarian labour law changed at the end of 2018 so that the maximum overtime that employers can demand of staff increased from 250 to 400 hours per year. Although the primary instigator is seen as the government, companies enforcing this part of the law are likely to damage the attractiveness of their employer brand. Furthermore, the supply of labour is somewhat restricted in certain areas, due to the change of law on which diploma subjects offer funding possibilities for students, significantly reducing the number of undergraduates in certain areas, such as business and management.

The aim of this study is to examine two key elements impacting upon the employer brand in this context. Firstly, we examine the general motivators for job seekers to apply for a job, i.e. the employer attractiveness (EA) attributes, regardless of organisation or 'what job-seekers want'. Secondly, we examine how these motivators for applying for a job relate to demographic variables.

1.1 DEFINING EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer branding is described as the activities involved in communicating to both existing and prospective staff that the company is a desirable place to work (Lloyd, 2002; Sullivan, 2004). An earlier study by Ambler and Barrow (1996) highlights the content of this communication as a combination of functional, economic and psychological

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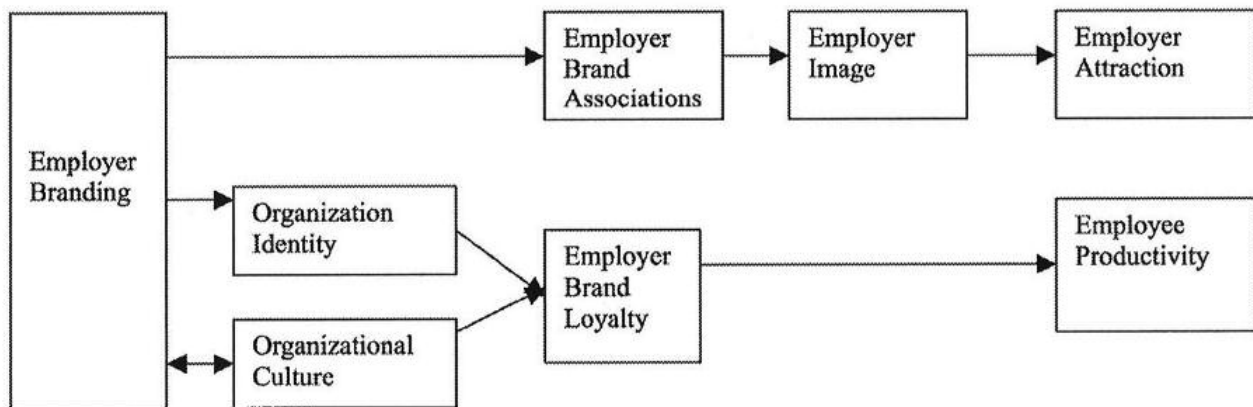
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benefits provided by employment. Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) used the EmpAt scale and extended this perspective from three to five dimensions of benefits: social; development; application; interest; and economic.

When considering the benefits of a workplace, there is a distinction that needs to be made: generally speaking, employer branding is a two edged sword concerned with the perception of potential benefits held by jobseekers contrasted with the actual benefits realized by existing staff, i.e. one side of employer branding concerns building an image in the minds of potential employees (Ewing et al., 2002). The distinction between existing and potential employees is also emphasised in studies by Maxwell and Knox (2009) and Lievens (2007), as current and potential employees were found to perceive an organisation's brand in entirely different ways.

In this section, we have found two key elements in the literature: the importance of the content of the message communicating the employer brand; and the difference between perceptions of job seekers and existing employees. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) combine these elements with others to create a theoretical framework as stepping stones from the initial development of the brand towards a means of achieving employer attraction for jobseekers and employee productivity for existing employers, as indicated in the following figure:

Figure 1. A theoretical framework for employer branding



Source: Backhaus and Tikoo (2004:505)

In this model, our study is concerned with the phase of employer attraction to job seekers indicated in the top-right corner of the model. However, this model assumes that employer attraction stems purely from the employer image and brand associations. In other words, it does not show how jobseekers build up their own concepts of what kind of organisation they wish to work for, even before they consider a specific organisation. The following section examines the concept of employer attractiveness.

1.2 DEFINING EMPLOYER ATTRACTIVENESS (EA)

The level and ability of attraction of potential candidates is key aspect of how companies compete for often scarce skills in the labor market (Collins and Kanar, 2013), as well as the ability to retain staff (Helm, 2013). According to Biswas and Suar (2014), studies into the employer attractiveness dimensions of employer branding are scarce as much of the focus remains on concepts and the results achieved as a result of employing employer branding strategies.

Employer attractiveness refers to the benefits that potential employees perceive as attainable by working in a particular company (Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005; Pingle & Sharma, 2013). Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) define attractiveness as: “an attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the organization as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship” (p. 221).

In studying the employer attractiveness, ‘attractiveness attributes’ are examined as the factors considered by potential candidates as desirable when choosing an employer (Berthon et al., 2005). These attributes may be categorized as instrumental (i.e. what the organization offers and is desirable for the job seeker) or symbolic (i.e. intangible aspects such as prestige, culture, and reputation) (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Cruise O’Brien (1995) classifies attributes into two areas: cognitive/rational (reliability, competence, etc.) and affective/emotional (openness, support, attention, etc.). Berthon et al. (2005) developed the Employer Attractiveness Scale, by integrating dimensions of Ambler and Barrow (1996) and developed the following classification of attributes: 1) Interest Value (IV), such as a challenging and stimulating job, and support for innovation and creativity; 2) Social Value (SV) refers to a positive working environment; 3) Economic Value (EV) refers primarily to the financial aspects, such as competitive salary, compensation package, job security, and promotion opportunities; 4) Development Value (DV)

involves recognition, self-worth, and the development of employees; 5) Application Value (AV) refers to the employer offering the opportunity for employees to apply expertise and convey knowledge to others.

The following section will examine the specific attributes that can be found in these various classifications.

1.3 ATTRACTIVENESS VARIABLES

This section considers the literature that involves job seekers seeing an element or range of elements as attractive for a certain position and how these variables may be affected by demographic variables.

Dyhre and Parment (2009) list a number of the most common attractive employer characteristics. Firstly, they found the attribute 'quality working relationships', which covers a number of elements, such as trust, respect, self-worth and recognition. They also found leadership to be a common attraction in terms of preferred style of both leadership and followership. The decision-making process was also seen as an issue, involving degree of participation and autonomy of employees. When it came to values, they found that, whilst organisational values were important, the clarity of those values was also a factor affecting attraction which was displayed in an awareness and understanding of core values of the organisation, as well as regular feedback. Finally, Dyhre and Parment (2009) make a rather unlikely combination of meaning and fun, in that there should be a clear mission and vision at all levels, whilst there should also be an enjoyment of the job whilst in the workplace.

Cafolla (2008) also examined attributes that attract an employee to apply for a position. The review cites examples of how salary was once the main incentive, but that other elements have since emerged, such as the opportunity to work for a well-branded company with developmental aspects (e.g. training, especially overseas, career growth) and an attractive work environment and social status. Terjesen et al. (2007) found that the five most important organisational attributes were: "invest heavily in the training and development of their employees"; "care about their employees as individuals"; "clear opportunities for long-term career progression"; "variety in daily work"; and "dynamic, forward-looking approach to their business".

Finally, another attribute that can attract a potential employee is due to the increased stress on companies to concern themselves with sustainability and socially responsible practices, as companies heavily involved in such practices have been found to be more attractive (Turban & Greening, 1996).

Attributes vary from one target group to another - attractiveness varies according to age, gender, educational background and cultural characteristics (Hubschmid, 2012). Terjesen et al. (2007) found that differences existed by gender, with female participants having a tendency to prefer attributes the following attributes in comparison with their male counterparts: "really care about their employees as individuals" "variety in your daily work" "friendly, informal culture" "employ people with whom you feel you will have things in common" "use your degree skills" "relatively stress-free working environment" "internationally diverse mix of colleagues" "require you to work standard working hours only". Conversely, males rated just one attribute as more important: "a very high starting salary".

Furthermore, attractiveness itself can be considered an attribute if it is generally held in society or a certain group that a company has a good reputation as a place to work, as it has been found that this increases the attractiveness for other individuals as well (Edwards, 2010), creating a form of 'snowball effect'.

Employer attractiveness does not necessarily entail job seekers selecting the same attributes from organisations in general or, indeed, one specific organisation. Schneider (1987) stated that individuals will be attracted to organizations based on an individual's personality, needs and preferences. Preferences and motivations concerning work may also vary from one generation to another (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Reis & Braga, 2016). Twenge (2010) also highlights how different generations tend to prioritize different aspects of the workplace. As mentioned earlier, this aspect of varying prioritization of attractiveness attributes has also been found to vary according to both cultures and demographic characteristics (Alniaçik et al., 2014; Newbury, Gardberg & Belkin, 2006). Alniaçik and Alniaçik (2012) undertook a study of 600 adults to contrast perceptual differences (if any) regarding the age, gender and current employment status of the respondents. They found that gender led to significant differences between the perceived levels of importance of employer attractiveness dimensions, whereas neither age nor employment status had a significant effect.

The amount of acquired experience of job seekers was examined as a factor affecting employer attractiveness in a study by Arachchige and Robertson (2013). Undergraduate job-seekers were compared to MBA students with varying levels of employment experience. They found that there were some differences in perceived attractiveness of employers, but there were similarities in the two extremes, i.e. those employees that were most and least preferred by respondents.

Many studies focus on the specificities of a particular national culture. Arachchige and Robertson's (2013) study took a sample of job seekers from Sri Lanka. Moreover, Roy (2008) examined the dimensions of attractiveness from an Indian perspective. Tüzüner and Yüksel (2004) examined 475 Turkish students. The national culture is a key consideration in how the employer brand is perceived: a combination of individual motivations and perspectives (Cable & Turban 2001) and cultural differences (Gowan 2004) affect this perception. Moreover, Christians and

Buettgen (2014) found from a sample of over 90,000 students from 18 countries that national culture and economic development had a significant influence on students' rankings of key attributes, such as promotion opportunities and professional development.

In a national context, there have been few studies on the topic of employer attractiveness in Hungary. Baum and Kabst (2013) undertook a cross-national survey of engineering students in China, Germany, India and Hungary as means of examining the facets of employer image. It was found that some facets such as task attractiveness varied between countries, whilst others, such as perceived career opportunities and working atmosphere, did not. However, demographics elements within each country were not examined as factors affecting attractiveness. The following section gives a brief background of the culture and values associated with Hungary as a potentially influencing factor and background context for this study.

1.4 OVERVIEW OF HUNGARIAN CULTURE AND VALUES

As studies have found that national culture is a factor influencing the preferences for EA attributes, we will consider how national values may impact upon our findings in a Hungarian context through the findings of Hofstede (2001), based upon six dimensions: Power Distance; Individualism; Masculinity; Uncertainty Avoidance; Long-term Orientation; and Indulgence.

According to Hofstede (2001), Hungary has a low power distance with a score of 46, which means a desire for independence, management empowering employees and a focus by the leader on coaching and the team. In this case, this may affect EA attributes relating to the freedom and responsibility given to job seekers, a good working environment i.e. team-player colleagues and an approachable and support boss.

Hungary was found by Hofstede (2001) to be an individualist society, with a high score of 80. This results in a concern primarily for oneself and direct family. Crucially, hiring and promotion prospects are expected to be based upon merit. Thus, promotion prospects may not be seen as such a highly regarded attribute of the firm, as it depends more on the individual's performance, rather than what the firm has to offer.

Masculinity is defined as involving ambition, acquisition of wealth, and success, whereas values associated with femininity related to caring for others and quality of life. Hungary also scores highly on this dimension (88), meaning that people 'live to work' rather than 'work to live' and so expect their managers to be assertive and decisive. This may come across in many EA attributes: as part of the working environment, with a preference for a certain type of boss e.g. strict / expert / experienced boss; a competitive salary or compensation package; good promotion prospects; and opportunities for development.

Hungary has a high score of 82 for uncertainty avoidance, there is a preference for conscientiousness, precision and punctuality. This may be reflected in EA attributes, such as a preference for a certain type of task (e.g. requiring rules, precision and hard work), a transparent promotion process, or the job in the form of security, since Hofstede (2001) points to this as a motivator for countries with high uncertainty avoidance.

With regard to the long-term orientation, Hungary has a high score of 58, indicating a pragmatic country. This long-term perspective may be reflected, for example, in a manager's appreciation of the employee's persistence and may see development opportunities as part of a long-term plan for success.

Finally, Hungary has a low score for indulgence, which results in controlled desires and impulses. Thus, EA attributes considered indulgent, such as a benefits package including a list of perks, substantial freedom for the employee (e.g. flexible working hours or a purely results-oriented approach).

2 METHODOLOGY

Choice of sample

Our sample involves undergraduates from a business school in Hungary. Cable and Graham (2000) found a significant gap between the perceptions of attractiveness attributes of undergraduate student job seekers compared to those of corporate executives, in whose interest it is to cater the employer brand to the perceptions of job seekers. Rynes, Heneman and Schwab (1980) claimed that undergraduates were less aware of job and organizational attributes, compared to employees and other job seekers. Thus, as we are seeking to examine the individual's perspective in this study, regardless of organisation and job, a sample of undergraduates suits our purposes.

Instrument

The composition of the data collection instrument was a questionnaire with a combination of both open and closed questions, to measure and draw conclusions about the link between demographics of job seekers and motivators (EA attributes) to apply for a job in general.

For our choice of demographics for this study, the findings of the literature review indicated that gender and work experience may influence attractiveness elements (Hubschmid, 2012; Terjesen et al., 2007) and so these were added.

Furthermore, we decided to include Faculty, course and year of study, with the opportunity to examine significant differences across different Faculties – Arachchige and Robertson (2013) found differences between MBA and undergraduate students, and studies have found differing student perceptions based upon course / subject (e.g. Chan & Fong, 2018; Sarwar & Sarwar, 2012). We also included age as our sample would involve students aged between 18 and 40, as age has been found to be potentially affecting employer attractiveness (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012; Tuzuner & Yuksel, 2009), and found in our review in the example of generational differences (Cennamo & Gardner, 2008; Twenge, 2010). Although further demographics could have been added, concerns during the pilot study (see later part in this section) about preserving the anonymity of the participants led to a limit on the amount of demographic data collected.

The demographic elements listed here are those demographics most extensively covered according to our review of the literature. Our literature review indicated employer attractiveness and prioritization of attractiveness attributes may vary according to the different cultures and demographic characteristics (Alniaçık et al., 2014; Newbury, Gardberg & Belkin, 2006). Although the literature provided a range of attributes attracting job seekers to apply with associated classifications of these attributes, it was found in the literature that research such as Arachchige and Robertson's (2011) Sri Lankan study necessitated the modification of models of attributes to suit the context of the given country. Thus, differences in history, national culture and stage of economic development could feasibly result in the exclusion of attributes if based on a list of attributes from studies that have taken place in other countries. An open question approach was chosen, as it would allow for any new or unusual factors to emerge. Furthermore, this method "enables participants to define their own criteria for discriminating between items and provides a large amount of information about preferences" (Maxwell & Bart, 1995). It is conceded that this method will not distinguish the distance between ranks and the relationship between the ranks, but the aim of our study is to focus on the top-ranking attribute (participant's primary motivator to apply for a job).

In summary, the need for a ranking method was found in the literature as participants tended to prioritize these attributes according to their own needs and expectations (Cable & Turban, 2001). Since the literature has shown varying lists of attributes by country and the range of potential attribute and wording of them is huge, a set list of attributes is seen as a restraining factor, to be avoided. Finally, this method provides rich data on individual preferences.

Distribution

Questionnaires were distributed in hard-copy to assure anonymity and were completed on a voluntary basis. Permission was received from top management of the organisation prior to distributing the questionnaire for both the pilot study and the main study.

2.1 PILOT STUDY

The pilot study was planned to pre-test the questionnaire and ascertain the reliability of the instrument. A random sample of 20 participants was taken from the population planned for the main study (Bless & Higson-Smith, 2000) and those same participants were excluded from the main study (Peat et al., 2002), due to concerns about 'questionnaire fatigue' (Van Teijlingen & Hundley, 2001).

Following completion of the instrument, interviews were conducted with participants (Hudson et al. 2007; Jacobson & Wood, 2006). Semi-structured interviews were based upon the questions recommended by Bell (1999) and Wallace (1998) for a pilot study: Were the instructions clear and easy to follow?; Were any of the questions unclear or ambiguous?; Were you able to answer all of the questions?; Did you object to answering any of the questions?; Did you find any of the questions embarrassing, irrelevant or irritating?; In your point of view, are there any important or concerned issues omitted?; Was the layout of the questionnaire clear?; How long did it take you to complete the questionnaire?.

Each interview lasted approximately 20-40 minutes. One concern from participants arose during the pilot study about being identified through the extensive demographic data and so this had to be modified. The basis for modification involved a reassessment of those demographic variables and only including those that were most extensively covered in the literature. Namely, some students were uneasy about giving their precise age, again for anonymity concerns, and so date of birth was amended to birth year. The course and current year of study were also claimed by participants to raise concerns of identification and so these were deleted, with the very general dimension of 'Faculty' remaining. Due to these concerns, the confidentiality of the results and preservation of anonymity was stressed prior to and during distribution of the questionnaires during the main study. As participants rarely gave more than 3-4 motivators (EA attributes) in the pilot, the spaces available to list attributes was limited to five, but addition space was provided for further comments or suggestions. A post-pilot version of the questionnaire can be found in the appendices at the end of this paper (Appendix 1).

2.2 ANALYSIS

A double coding protocol was followed for the list of EA attributes given by participants, as a means of classifying them, i.e. the top-ranking attribute was coded by at least two persons from the research group, to reinforce the validity of the coding process. The first phase of coding was followed by research focus group discussions (Mcperson & Baptista Nunes, 2006), whereby the entire research team worked towards a common classification of the attributes. As a result of these discussions, the coding process was refined, wherever deemed necessary (Saldaña, 2013).

Following the refinements in the coding, a further research focus group discussion was held to reach a common interpretation of the meaning of the coded material and to identify patterns in the groupings. These two research group discussions served to increase the intersubjective or communicative validity (Kvale, 1995) of the analysis phase.

Thus, the primary motivators (attractiveness attributes) were grouped into the following seven areas: working environment (involving references to the boss, working atmosphere, colleagues, physical environment and so on); job conditions (contractual conditions beyond the financial aspect, such as flexitime, length of contract, and so on); money (salary, compensation package etc.); promotion possibilities; type of work (complexity of tasks, interesting work, challenging and so on); reputation; and opportunities to develop. Many of the categories appeared on a par with other classifications found in the literature (Cafolla, 2008; Ng et al., 2010; Terjesen et al., 2007) but the research team gave different headings to those of existing studies, such as 'money' instead of 'economic value'. Further details of the classification of attributes will be covered in the following section.

3 FINDINGS

A total of 1094 completed questionnaires were received, and after deleting missing and invalid questionnaires, a net amount of 1056 completed questionnaires were used in this study. There were 675 female and 381 male participants, which is a similar proportion of gender as found throughout the institution as a whole. For the groupings, according to the empirical studies of motivators found in the literature review, the following frequencies were found:

Table 1. Frequencies of primary motivators in the sample

Motivators	Frequencies
Working environment	204
Money	347
Promotion possibilities	58
Reputation	19
Type of work (task)	246
Job conditions	78
Opportunities to develop	104
Total	1056

Source: Own research

As per the table, there were a number of new categories that arose as they had a significant number of participants, such as job conditions and type of work. For job conditions, these answers related to the contractual conditions of the job, such as 'working hours' or 'flexibility'. Type of work was distinguished from this, as participants referred specifically to the tasks involved in the job (or perceived tasks) as motivating them to apply for a job, with answers referring to interesting work, challenging tasks, and so on. When the group of researchers discussed the groupings, it was decided that contractual conditions and the type of tasks given were sufficient distinguishable to constitute stand-alone categories. Reputation has been used in this study for reference purposes, but it is conceded that such a small sample (relatively) it unlikely to reveal statistically significant results. Participants identified items as motivators with financial elements, such as 'money', 'financial rewards', 'salary' and 'yearly bonus', and all elements referring to this aspect have been grouped under 'Money'. Furthermore, working environment includes responses such as 'good colleagues', 'modern office', 'friendly atmosphere', and so on.

The motivators were then tested against the demographic data, and the significant findings are highlighted in bold in the following tables:

Table 2. Pearson Chi-tests of Gender against Motivators

Motivator	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Working Environment	1.078a	1	.299
Money	2.593a	1	.107
Promotion Possibilities	1.920a	1	.166
Type of work (task)	2.345a	1	.126
Opportunities to develop	1.968a	1	.161
Company reputation	2.298a	1	.130
Job conditions	.001a	1	.972

Source: Own research

Table 3. Pearson Chi-tests of Faculty against Motivators

Motivator	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Working Environment	2.187a	2	.335
Money	8.530a	2	.014
Promotion possibilities	3.428a	2	.180
Type of work (task)	4.639a	2	.098
Opportunities to develop	10.892a	2	.004
Company reputation	2.986a	2	.225
Job conditions	7.708a	2	.021

Source: Own research

Table 4. Pearson Chi-tests of Years Worked against Motivators

Motivator	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Working Environment	24.976a	24	.407
Money	26.462a	24	.330
Promotion possibilities	7.767a	24	.999
Type of work (task)	18.381a	24	.784
Opportunities to develop	43.167a	24	.010
Company reputation	3.044a	24	1.000
Job conditions	8.746a	24	.998

Source: Own research

Table 5. Pearson Chi-tests of Birth year (age) against Motivators

Motivator	Value	df	Asymptotic Significance (2-sided)
Working Environment	21.888a	25	.642
Money	27.812a	25	.317
Promotion possibilities	31.226a	25	.182
Type of work (task)	24.672a	25	.481
Opportunities to develop	26.143a	25	.400
Company reputation	13.569a	25	.969
Job conditions	14.000a	25	.962

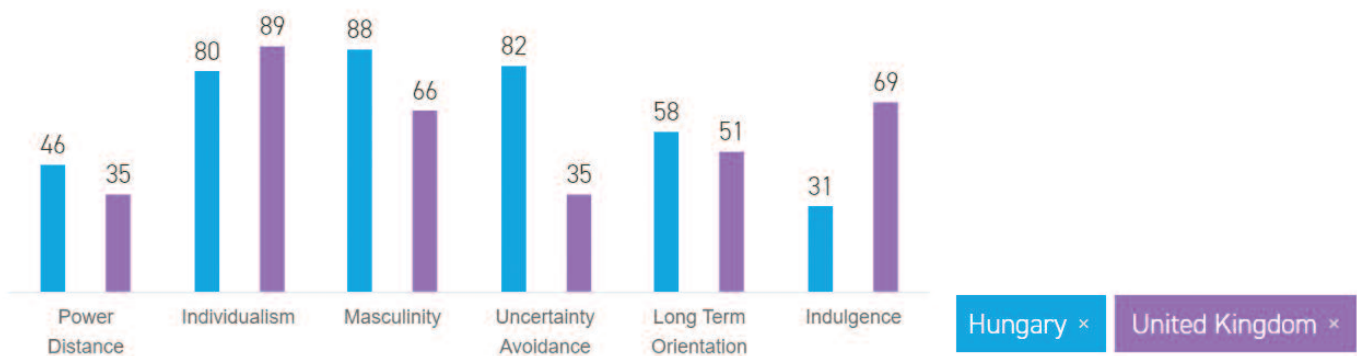
Source: Own research

4 DISCUSSION

In this study we have investigated the relationship between attractiveness attributes (also referred to as motivators to apply for a job) and demographic variables in a Hungarian context, as a means of highlighting the aspects that should focus on in making their organisations attractive to certain demographics as part of an employer branding campaign.

Our findings indicate no significant differences for this sample based upon gender (Table 2), despite this finding in the literature (e.g. Terjesen et al., 2007). The reason for the differing results may be cultural differences between Hungary and the countries of these previous studies. For example, as shown in the literature review, the study of Terjesen et al. (2007) involved students from the UK and found that women rated eight attributes as more important compared to male students involving care and concern for others: “really care about their employees as individuals” “variety in your daily work”; “friendly, informal culture”; “employ people with whom you feel you will have things in common”; and “internationally diverse mix of colleagues”. As shown in the literature review, men rated just one attribute as more important: “a very high starting salary”. These attributes are also related to values concerning masculinity, found in our literature review Hofstede (2001). In the study of Terjesen et al. (2007) we see a clear distinction between masculine and feminine values for a UK sample. Considering a comparison of UK and Hungarian national culture, we can see the different values associated with masculinity and femininity:

Figure 2. Comparison of cultural differences between UK and Hungary



Source: www.hofstedeinsights.com

As can be seen in Figure 2, Hungary scores highly for masculinity – in fact Hungary has one of the highest scores globally. As such, the Hungarians place great value on wealth, ambition and success and this includes Hungarian women. As the literature indicated, national culture influences EA, this may be one reason for this apparent anomaly, although further research would need to be conducted to confirm this. However, one finding that may point to this argument may be found in the fact that the sample involved 675 female and 381 male participants. Thus, the weighting should be, from a cultural perspective, towards the EA attributes relating to masculinity mentioned earlier in this section. However, as shown in the table below, by gender, the proportion of participants that selected money as the primary motivator is similar for both male and female participants:

As can be seen in Figure 2, Hungary scores highly for masculinity – in fact Hungary has one of the highest scores globally. As such, the Hungarians place great value on wealth, ambition and success and this includes Hungarian women. As the literature indicated, national culture influences EA, this may be one reason for this apparent anomaly, although further research would need to be conducted to confirm this. However, one finding that may point to this argument may be found in the fact that the sample involved 675 female and 381 male participants. Thus, the weighting should be, from a cultural perspective, towards the EA attributes relating to masculinity mentioned earlier in this section. However, as shown in the table below, by gender, the proportion of participants that selected money as the primary motivator is similar for both male and female participants:

Table 6. Male and female preferences for money as primary motivator

Gender	Other attributes	Money	Total
female	465	210	675
male	244	137	381
Total	709	347	1056

Source: Own research

As seen in the above Table 6, the similar proportions of male and female preferring money as the primary motivator are shown as approximately 36% of male participants selected money as the primary motivator, and 31% of female participants selected the same attribute as the primary motivator.

With regard to the demographic of 'Faculty', there were three attributes found to have a significant relationship with Faculty: Money; Opportunities to Develop and Job conditions. The organisation is split into three Faculties: Accounting and Finance (FFA), International Management (FIM); and Catering and Tourism (FCT). Each Faculty focusses on BA and MBA courses in its given field, although there is a slight overlap between individual courses, e.g. a three-year BA in Catering and Tourism will also have a semester covering financial management and accounting, a degree in Accounting also has a semester on the fundamentals of management and Human Resource Management. In the literature it was found that educational background influenced preferences for employer attractiveness (Hubschmid, 2012). Likewise, we suggest that Faculty may impact upon student preferences from an employer. The implication here is that employer branding strategies focussed on the financial package may well attract students from Faculties with a more pronounced economic or financial basis.

The significant difference in the attribute 'opportunities to develop' may be based upon certain expectations. The students of the Faculty of Finance and Accountancy often plan to get experience as an accountant, before becoming a chartered accountant and then auditor. Likewise, for students studying a 'Management course', there is an expectation to develop and become a manager one day. Whilst the same could be said in the catering or hotel industry, the career towards an auditor, for example, constitute part of the course materials, building an expectation to develop further once in employment.

The significant difference for job conditions is a surprise as this attribute is not one highlighted in the literature. As mentioned earlier, the attribute 'job conditions' refers to the contractual conditions of the job i.e. flexitime, security, type of contract, benefits, and so on. This preference for security was reflected in Hungarian culture relating to uncertainty avoidance and was found in the literature, to a certain extent under Economic Value (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). However, Ambler and Barrow (1996) grouped 'security' with the financial elements (salary and compensation package) alongside promotion opportunities. From our study, it is clear that these elements should be differentiated in the classification of attributes. 'Security' does not only refer to financial security and relates to a long-term orientation, from a cultural perspective (Hofstede, 2001). Promotion opportunities may be preferred for more than economic gain, such as increased power, prestige or responsibility. This distinction is especially important if the attributes 'Job conditions' and 'Money' were found to be statistically significant in the case of Faculty, but promotion opportunities were not – by lumping them into one category this difference could be overlooked. From a methodological point of view, the implication of this finding is the need for a reassessment of the classification of EA attributes and their usage in empirical studies, especially those studies which examine elements influences on classified groups without any analysis of the individual attributes, such as Reis and Braga (2016).

Our review of the literature also indicated that experience with a firm may influence the choice of EA attributes (Arachchige & Robertson, 2013). Our findings were that only one attribute indicated significant differences based upon years of work experience, namely 'opportunities to develop'. From a sample of a group of students, it would be expected that many would be attracted by opportunities to develop further, however, the distinction likely indicates

that those with more experience are less likely to hunger for opportunities to develop as they feel they have already developed significantly due to years of work experience.

There were no significant differences for age of participants. However, existing studies of age affecting EA were due to large differences in age, such as generational differences. As can be seen in the table below showing the frequencies, 76.3% of the sample are aged between 19 and 22:

Table 7. Distribution of age for the study sample

Age	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
59	1	.1	.1	.1
57	1	.1	.1	.2
55	1	.1	.1	.3
48	1	.1	.1	.4
47	2	.2	.2	.6
40	1	.1	.1	.7
39	2	.2	.2	.9
38	3	.3	.3	1.1
37	1	.1	.1	1.2
35	3	.3	.3	1.5
34	3	.3	.3	1.8
32	2	.2	.2	2.0
31	2	.2	.2	2.2
30	3	.3	.3	2.5
29	5	.5	.5	2.9
28	7	.7	.7	3.6
27	6	.6	.6	4.2
26	15	1.4	1.4	5.6
25	26	2.5	2.5	8.0
24	53	5.0	5.0	13.1
23	80	7.6	7.6	20.6
22	144	13.6	13.6	34.3
21	244	23.1	23.1	57.4
20	256	24.2	24.2	81.6
19	163	15.4	15.4	97.1
18	31	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	1056	100.0	100.0	

Source: Own research

This narrower age range of the bulk of the sample may explain why our findings differ from those of existing studies.

Our finding that money is the primary motivator for 67% of the total sample (see Table 6) confirms existing empirical findings of how economic circumstances influence employer attractiveness, found in our review of the literature (Christiaans & Buettgen, 2014). Alongside money, the highest motivators are type of job and working environment, which may be influenced by characteristics of Hungarian national culture and economic pressures, referred to in the literature review. For example, elements of working environment included colleagues and working atmosphere, which relate to Hungary's low power distance. Type of job may relate to uncertainty avoidance (rules, precision and security) and, to a certain extent, long-term orientation.

Certain attributes found in the literature did not arise in our study, such as 'fun in the workplace' and a clear vision and mission (Dyhré & Parment, 2009). As many of the job seekers in the sample lacked experience, it may be that the importance of such issues has not yet emerged for them. Alternatively, aspects such as having fun in the workplace may not been seen as acceptable i.e. not a cultural norm (see Hofstede, 2009; Plester & Sayers,

2007), which opens up another aspect of the link between national culture and EA attributes as a future research direction.

The methodology employed in this study gives the participants the opportunity to choose attributes that spring to mind rather than from a pre-existing list. Furthermore, the research team undertook classification of these responses without preconceptions of how attributes should be classified. From a large sample of over 1000 students, these groupings highlight how existing classifications should be critically assessed and considered in a national culture context. This is especially noteworthy as we uncovered attributes that had not been covered in the literature, such as job conditions, and type of work (almost 25% of the sample listed type of work (task) as a primary motivator for applying for a job, whereas 78 participants referred to the conditions surrounding the job (e.g. working hours, flexibility and other contractual elements).

From a methodological perspective, this study also highlights the complexity of assessing attributes. For example, it was found in the literature that the attribute 'quality working relationships' is related to individual values of trust, respect, self-worth and recognition (Dyhré & Parment, 2009). The empirical studies found in the literature cover primarily quantitative studies, but underlying values such as these indicate the need for a qualitative study of job seekers to uncover the aspects of an individual that shape preferences for employers.

4.1 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

In the previous section we discussed the findings in relation to existing literature and made some recommendations for researchers in this field. In this section we will consider the implications for HR practitioners and managers in organisational in general, and those involved in employer branding in particular.

This study of EA attractiveness turns the spotlight on the moment when a jobseeker (student) chooses which job to apply for i.e. the prioritization of attributes that are offered by employers, at a particular stage of a person's life. The focus on the link between demographics and these attributes highlights the specific national context. Thus, although the findings of previous studies have served to enable HR practitioners to target and segment jobseekers based upon (for example) gender and age. In a Hungarian context, Money (economic value) is the primary motivator for HR practitioners if they wish to cast the next far and wide i.e. attract a large number of job-seeking students. However, there are limitations. Students such as those from the Faculty of Catering and Tourism would not succumb to this. Thus, the nature of the job (industry, clientele, sector) should be considered before deciding to stress the financial package in a Hungarian context. If targeting certain demographic groups were required as part of an employer branding strategy, then it could be said that the attribute 'opportunities to develop' could be highlighted as a motivator based on the number of years worked of job seekers and in this way, a stress (or lack thereof) of a focus on opportunities to develop could encourage job seekers with a low number of years' experience and dissuade others.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study aimed to examine the link between demographic variables and attributes that motivate a person to apply for a position in a Hungarian context.

The findings of this study confirm those found in the literature concerning the influence of educational background (in our study, Faculty) and national culture on the choice of EA attributes, which in turn provide different findings to those of existing empirical studies. The study also raises the questions concerning whether the classification of EA attributes may result in overlooking the influence of individual attributes. Our findings also confirm that economic background influences employer attractiveness. Moreover, the reason for findings that differ to those of existing studies is attributed to the differences in national culture in general, and the specific social and economic context.

In the scope of employer branding, the relationships found in this study aid HR practitioners in being able to target certain groups based upon specified attributes. However, there is a caveat: none of the demographics had a significant difference across the entire range of attributes and, thus, only some attributes of the 'employer branding package' could be seen as being able to target certain groups, but not all of them.

5.1 LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

In this study we have some conflict with existing studies. Hubschmid (2012) found that attractiveness varies according to age, gender, educational background and cultural characteristics. We cannot confirm that this is the case for age and gender, as there were no significant differences, but the cultural characteristics may explain our conflict with existing studies if we consider culture on a national level i.e. differences between Western and Hungarian culture

results in conflicting findings. However, further research in this area would be needed, specially across the CEE countries to see if there are further differences or similarities.

As mentioned in the methodology section, the amount of demographic data asked from participants had to be limited in order to preserve their anonymity. As such, it is conceded that further demographic data may have uncovered further findings of use in this study and may be seen as a direction for further research. The demographics included in this study comprise those most widely covered in the existing literature.

The sample of this study involves undergraduates. However, on the labour market the majority of job seekers are experienced workers. This study could be extended to gain insight into the link between attractiveness attributes and demographics for this group. The perceptions of the undergraduates are nonetheless irrelevant as they are, in most cases, actively looking for employment, but they are representative of only one sector of job seekers. Finally, one of the assumptions of this study is that employer attractiveness attributes vary between national cultures. On the one hand, this reduces the generalizability of these findings, but on the other, offers the potential for extension of this study to compare national cultures, educational and economic influences across the CEE region, and beyond.

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APPENDIX 1: POST-PILOT QUESTIONNAIRE
(TRANSLATED FROM THE ORIGINAL HUNGARIAN)

I WOULD LIKE TO TAKE THIS OPPORTUNITY TO THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT AND COOPERATION IN THE COMPLETION OF THIS QUESTIONNAIRE. ALL INFORMATION THAT YOU PROVIDE WILL BE TREATED WITH THE STRICTEST CONFIDENTIALITY. IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR REQUIRE FURTHER INFORMATION, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT ME: CHANDLER.NICHOLAS@UNI-BGE.HU. PLEASE NOTE THAT FOR THE QUESTIONNAIRE TO BE USABLE AND VALID, ALL QUESTIONS SHOULD BE COMPLETED.

A. PLEASE TICK THE BOX AND PROVIDE FURTHER INFORMATION ON THE FOLLOWING:

1. BIRTH YEAR:

2. GENDER: MALE FEMALE

3. PLEASE TICK ONE OR BOTH OF THE FOLLOWING, AND PROVIDE THE RELEVANT DETAILS:

STUDENT. FACULTY:

EMPLOYEE FROM..... (YEAR) ASA (JOB TITLE).

B. WHAT ARE THE MAIN REASONS THAT YOU APPLY FOR A JOB AT AN ORGANISATION?
(PLEASE RANK THEM IN ORDER FROM 1-MOST IMPORTANT TO YOU, TO 5-LEAST IMPORTANT)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

PLEASE WRITE HEAR ANY OTHER COMMENTS YOU MAY HAVE ABOUT THIS QUESTIONNAIRE OR THE REASONS FOR APPLYING FOR A JOB:

.....
.....
.....

ALL INFORMATION WILL BE TREATED WITH UTMOST CONFIDENTIALITY
THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME