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Employer Attractiveness of Family Businesses in the IT-industry: the Effect of Personality Traits and the Moderating Role of Ownership Communication

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ABSTRACT

Purpose - Employing a qualified workforce is a crucial topic for organizational success. Research on employer branding in family businesses has not come to a clear conclusion of which family business characteristics might be attractive for which potential employees.

Aim(s) - This paper focuses on family businesses in the IT industry to analyze whether they might or might not profit from the communication of family involvement.

Design/methodology/approach - To answer the research question, an online survey was conducted. The participants were divided into two groups, whereby one group was manipulated by the communication of the ownership.

Findings - The results show that family businesses are associated with greater security but fewer development opportunities. In addition, certain personality traits of job applicants influence the perception of organizational attractiveness. However, the communication of ownership had no significant influence on employer attractiveness. Similarly, the varying importance of job security and development opportunities among applicants cannot be clearly explained by personality traits.

Limitation of the Study - The final sample size was relatively small. In addition, in reality the applicants would be provided with more and more detailed information about the company. The representativeness and generalizability of the survey must therefore be questioned.

Practical implications - As the results show a positive correlation between perceived job security, opportunities for further development and attractiveness, it might be valuable for family businesses to support and communicate job security and opportunities for further development for raising increased attractiveness.

Originality/value - The attempt is made to give companies, especially family businesses, a better understanding of the effect of communicating the ownership relationship on potential applicants.

KEY WORDS

employer attractiveness, family businesses, personality traits, ownership communication, employer branding

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1 INTRODUCTION

Finding qualified and talented employees is an ever-present issue for organizations. A shortage of employees has been evident in many industries, especially in recent years (Dornmayr & Rechberger, 2019; Terwey, 2019).

Diekmann (2020) assumes that the struggle to find a suitable workforce will increase in the upcoming years. The retirement of the Babyboomer generation in combination with the gradual economic growth are among other reasons for this development (Dornmayr & Rechberger, 2019). In addition, the job market offers more opportunities, and the tasks are becoming more complex and demanding. A total of 75 percent of companies in Austria stated in a survey by the Institute for Educational Research of the Economy that they were already feeling the shortage of skilled workers strongly or even very strongly (Dornmayr & Rechberger, 2019). Some industries are also experiencing tremendous growth, which is multiplying the demand for qualified workers. This also applies to the IT industry (Gillmann, 2019). The correct use of employer branding and guaranteeing additional services and possibilities are becoming increasingly essential to remain attractive and competitive as an employer.

With Schneider's Attraction-Selection-Attrition model (Schneider, 1987) and the Person-Organization fit model (Chatman, 1991; Kristof, 1996) the importance of research on the topic of employer branding was emphasized already over thirty years ago. Many companies deal intensively with the topic and try to convince suitable applicants for a job with their employer brand (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). In particular, family businesses are strongly challenged by their unique value construct to present themselves as an attractive employer, which has been extensively researched (Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018; Cassia, Massis, & Pizzurno, 2012; Hauswald, Hack, Kellermanns, & Patzelt, 2016; Sageder, Mitter, & Feldbauer-Durstmüller, 2018). According to Hauswald et al. (2016) there are hardly any studies that determine which character traits job seekers have when applying for family-run companies. Recruiting in family businesses is a topic of growing interest; whether or not to communicate the ownership relationship in a recruitment process for example is a question, which cannot easily be answered given the lack of research in the field.

Compared to previous studies on employer branding in family businesses (Astrachan, Botero, Astrachan, & Prügl, 2018; Beck, 2016; Block, Fisch, Lau, Obschonka, & Presse, 2016; Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003) this work focuses on the impact of personality traits on the perceived attractiveness of companies in the technology industry. It examines whether the ownership relationship has a direct or indirect effect on the relationship between personality traits and corporate attractiveness. The instrumental and symbolic attributes of an organization and the Person-Organization fit model also play a central role in the analysis of factors influencing attractiveness from the applicant's point of view. This leads to the following research question: To what extent does the communication of the ownership structure moderate the influence of personality traits on the attractiveness of family businesses from the applicant's point of view? Within the following sections, the respective theoretical background and the research model are described to then introduce the questionnaire survey conducted with 186 potential applicants as well as the respective results and implications.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Family businesses are one of the dominant corporate forms worldwide. Researchers estimate that around sixty percent of companies are under family influence (Kahlert, Botero, & Prügl, 2017). In the literature, family businesses are defined on the basis of innumerable combinations of properties and features. The company and the family are two complex social systems that overlap in family business and thus represent the significant difference to non-family businesses (Habbershon, Williams, & MacMillan, 2003). Hauswald et al. (2016) distinguish family businesses from other companies by four characteristics: (1) ownership (the percentage of ownership by the family), (2) management

(the involvement of family members in the management of the company), (3) experience (the number of generations, who are involved in the company) and (4) culture (the degree of overlap between family and company values).

Research has been going on for multiple years as to how family businesses stand out from non-family businesses both in terms of their organizational composition and their performance. The term *familiness* plays an important role here. Familiness is described as a bundle of idiosyncratic internal resources that exist due to the family's involvement in the company (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Zellweger, Eddleston, & Kellermanns, 2010). In other words, it is the sum of all resources and capabilities of the family business (Habbershon et al., 2003). Familiness can be seen as a unique and inseparable resource and can create a competitive advantage for the company (Habbershon & Williams, 1999; Lattuch, 2019). The fact that family-run companies can offer applicants a special work environment with unique characteristics is called distinctive familiness, as it sets it apart from other forms of companies (Spiess & Zehrer, 2020). If the valuable resource of familiness is not used for the benefit of the company, this is called constrictive familiness (Habbershon & Williams, 1999). These two terms are not opposed to each other but can even be used in combination. According to Habbershon and Williams (1999) family resources and the family's influence on a company's performance or employer brand must be assessed systematically and individually.

To decide for or against a job, applicants rely on various sources of information. Initially, the company has the opportunity to strongly influence the opinion and attitude of potential applicants, as the job seekers still have little information (Kahlert et al., 2017). If the company's characteristics meet the expectations and the personal values largely agree with those of the company, the company appears attractive to the applicants. All of this happens in the subconscious of the job seeker and can be influenced by a strong employer brand (Barber, 1998). As a result of the perceived similarities (which is expressed, for example, in a positive *gut feeling*), the applicant makes the decision to accept the job (Judge & Cable, 1997). Instrumental attributes are concrete characteristics of a company or a workplace that are desirable for every person and that are objectively perceived (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). They are comparable with the product-related characteristics in the consumer market and can be clearly identified even before the start of an employment relationship. These include, for example, salary, social benefits, health insurance, location, and working conditions (Jack Walker, Feild, Giles, Bernerth, & Short, 2011; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Symbolic attributes, on the other hand, are subjectively perceived intangible properties of a company, such as prestige, corporate culture, trustworthiness, or expected social benefits (Jack Walker et al., 2011; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Through subjective perception, the symbolic attributes can satisfy individual needs for social recognition and self-expression (Wallace, Lings, Cameron, & Sheldon, 2014). The combination of functional and symbolic attributes and the correct communication of them can influence the organizational attractiveness and consequently the job decisions of the applicants (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, Hoyer, & Schreurs, 2005). The more the applicants' functional needs are satisfied, the greater the influence of the symbolic attributes becomes (Myrden & Kelloway, 2015). Furthermore, people with more professional experience place more value on symbolic attributes than those with less experience. The significance of symbolic features increases particularly when the functional properties hardly differ between the employers, bring hardly any added value to the applicants and therefore do not constitute a basis for decision-making (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Myrden & Kelloway, 2015). It is all the more important that companies do not focus exclusively on functional attributes in brand communication. The symbolic attributes are perceived subjectively. This subjective perception depends on the values and personality traits of the respective person.

Employer branding and recruiting in family businesses has so far hardly been researched in connection with the values and personality traits of the applicants (Hauswald et al., 2016; Schweiger, Zehrer & Spiess, 2021). It is therefore difficult for companies and recruiters to assess whether the family influence should be communicated in the employer brand or not. Although family businesses

are characterized by special character traits - both strengths and weaknesses - it is sometimes assumed that external stakeholders, e.g. applicants, would rate family influence positively. And it seems likely that applicants who represent certain values would be more likely to apply for a job advertisement if they perceive family influence (Arijs, Botero, Michiels, & Molly, 2018; Block et al., 2016). To attribute the typical characteristics of a family business to a job or a job description, the family influence must be communicated in the employer brand (Hauswald et al., 2016). Because especially at the beginning of the phase of job decisions, the applicant has little information about the company other than the job advertisement (Kahlert et al., 2017). The employer brand is an important tool for setting yourself apart from competitors on the labor market on the basis of special characteristics (e.g. family influence) (Beck, 2016). Due to a lack of research, however, there are different opinions as to how strongly family businesses should weigh the communication of family influence in their employer brand (Barroso Martínez, Sanguino Galván, Botero, González-López, & Buenadicha Mateos, 2019). On the one hand, family influence is often associated with stability, security and trustworthiness (Arijs et al., 2018; Barroso Martínez et al., 2019). This is, along with family businesses' long-term focus (Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018) a reason why fewer employees are given notice or laid off (Bassini, Breda, Caroli, & Rebérioux, 2013). In addition, family-run companies value the preservation of traditions and are very loyal to stakeholders (Block et al., 2016). Solidarity and fairness are also very important in family businesses (Krappe, Goutas, & Schlippe, 2011). On the other hand, inflexibility and resistance to change are also associated with family businesses (Hauswald et al., 2016; Krappe et al., 2011). Especially in terms of globalization, these properties are often seen as a disadvantage (Krappe et al., 2011). Characteristics such as lack of dynamism and high potential for conflict due to the close ties to the owner family and family values (Block et al., 2016) can also be seen as disadvantages. According to Bassini et al. (2013) family businesses pay lower wages on average compared to companies with other ownership structures. Career opportunities are also rated lower due to the *family first* principle (Binz Astrachan & Botero, 2018; Block et al., 2016). The occupation of management positions mainly by people from within the family is a disadvantage according to Lattuch (2019), which might also be another reason for the low level of innovation sometimes attributed to family businesses.

3 HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Research to date shows that communicating the family influence in employer branding can lead to different attributions than for companies in which the ownership structure and the constellation of management are not known. Furthermore the Person-Organization fit model has already shown that the personality traits of the applicants influence perception. Hardly any study has however looked at the recommendation (Boswell, Zimmerman, & Swider, 2012; Lievens et al., 2005; Zimmerman, Boswell, Shipp, Dunford, & Boudreau, 2012) to explicitly include personality traits in research on the attractiveness of family businesses. As an exception Hauswald et al. (2016) have made an important contribution on the attractiveness of family businesses and the applicants' willingness to enter into a long-term employment relationship in connection with personality traits. The above-mentioned recommendation is now also addressed in the present work, with the focus on the attractiveness of employers in the IT / STEM industry. This leads to the following hypotheses:

H0 1a: A high degree of openness to experience has no effect on the attractiveness of family businesses as perceived by applicants.

HA 1a: A high degree of openness to experience has a negative effect on the attractiveness of family businesses as perceived by applicants.

H0 1b: Low extraversion has no effect on the attractiveness of family businesses perceived by applicants. HA 1b: Low extraversion has a positive effect on the attractiveness of family businesses perceived by applicants.

Compared to the work of Block et al. (2016), two company characteristics which are based on the validated scales from Lievens et al. (2005) are taken into account. Job security and opportunities for further development are characteristics that increase the attractiveness of a company (Lievens et al., 2005). Since job security and opportunities for further development do not affect every applicant to the same extent, the focus is specifically on the traits of extraversion and openness to experience. Therefore, the following hypotheses are formed:

H0 2a: Higher job security has no effect on the attractiveness of a company for individuals low in extraversion.

HA 2a: Higher job security has a positive effect on the attractiveness of a company for individuals low in extraversion.

H0 2b: More opportunities for further development have no effect on the attractiveness of a company for individuals high in openness to experience.

HA 2b: More opportunities for further development have a positive effect on the attractiveness of a company for individuals high in openness to experience.

As a result of these hypotheses, in the course of the empirical work, the generally valid change in the attractiveness of a company through the communication of family influence is examined. The third hypothesis is as follows:

H0 3: There is no difference for potential applicants perceived attractiveness of employer if the company is run by a family and if this is communicated in the employer brand.

HA 3: Potential applicants see the company as a more attractive employer if the company is run by a family and if this is communicated in the employer brand.

Figure 1 shows the hypothesized model resulting from the theoretical framework. Different influences on the attractiveness of a company (dependent variable) are measured.

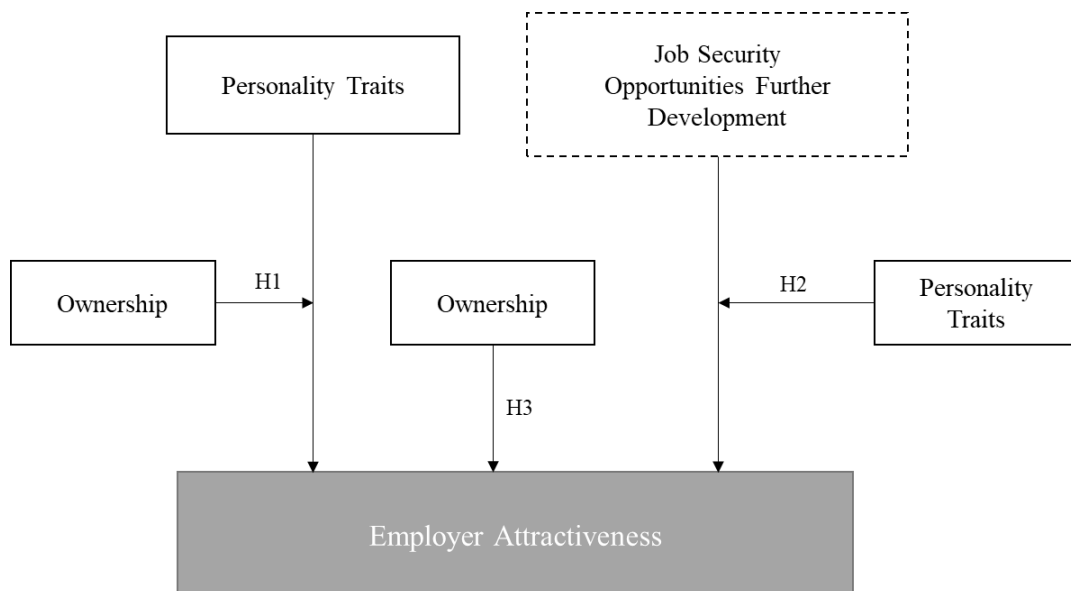


Fig 1. Hypothesized Model

Source: own illustration

4 METHODOLOGY

The hypotheses described in the previous section are examined using an online questionnaire. The questionnaire is distributed via e-mail and via various social media platforms. Participation in

the survey is voluntary and takes between five and ten minutes. Since the scales that relate to the assessment of the company are only available in English, the individual items were translated by the authors and back-translated by a professional translator. A five-point Likert scale is used throughout, which ranges from “fully agree” to “strongly disagree”. The measures used for the survey are described in the following sections.

Big Five Personality. Traits Due to its economic applicability, a shortened version of the NEO Revised Personality Inventory by Costa and McCrae (1992) is used. This Mini IPIP Scale (Donnellan, Oswald, Baird, & Lucas, 2006) summarizes the original 60 items to 20. The measurement of personality is carried out on the basis of subscales, consisting of neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness and openness to experience. The expression of these characteristics is ascertained through 20 randomized questions about personality. Due to the standardization of the Big Five Personality Traits model, reliability can be assumed (Costa & McCrae, 1992). The shortened version contains all subscales of the original scale, which indicates content validity.

Job Advertisement. The survey part related to the personality traits is followed by a job advertisement from a hypothetical company, which serves as a stimulus. The description is based on the company description in the survey of Turban (2001). The test subjects are automatically divided into two groups. Group A sees the job description with the note that the company is owned and run by the family. As a result, this group is manipulated in the subsequent evaluation of the company. Group B sees the same job description with no ownership communication. The automated A / B testing guarantees groups of similar size.

Job Security & Opportunities for Further Development. To measure job security and opportunities for further development, the scale by Lievens et al. (2005) was used. The reliability and validity of the scale for determining job security and opportunities for further development were confirmed by Lievens et al. (2005).

Employer Attractiveness. The attractiveness of the company described is determined using the attractiveness scale of Highhouse, Lievens, and Sinar (2016) including five items. The attractiveness of the company is the dependent variable of the study.

Control Variables. The last section contains demographic information, namely gender, age, country of origin and level of education. In addition, job-specific data (employment relationship, field of study / field of activity and professional experience) are collected.

A convenience sample with the entire DACH region as a target group, and the majority of those surveyed coming from Austria, was formed. In addition, apart from a command of the German language, no previous knowledge is required. Care is taken to ensure that as many diverse answers as possible are collected and to especially include people coming from IT / STEM areas to be able to answer the research question in the context of the IT industry.

The data obtained from the survey were evaluated with the statistics software SPSS from IBM. After the answers are cleaned up by the manipulation check, the authors adhered to the previously created evaluation plan. After the analysis of the demographic characteristics, the personality characteristics and the company characteristics are compared and analyzed with demographic information as well as with the groups A and B created by the targeted manipulation. After the connection between the variables are tested using Pearson's correlation, the hypotheses, were checked using regressions and moderation analyzes. The PROCESS macro from Andrew Hayes was used to carry out the moderation analyzes, as it offers several advantages in the calculations compared to conventional moderated regression analyzes. The interaction terms are automatically calculated by the tool, the values are mean-centered and the effect strengths are displayed immediately in the event of significant moderation (Hayes, 2013).

5 RESULTS

Of the 195 completely completed questionnaires, eight were eliminated because they failed in a manipulation check. This results in a sample size of N = 186. The answers were filtered according to areas of activity or training, as the study focuses on potential applicants in the IT / STEM industry. 114 test subjects are employed or in training in the sectors of business and law, engineering and technology, media and communication, or information technology and IT.

To test for reliability, Cronbach's alpha of the Big Five personality traits is calculated. With values higher than 0.7 it can be ensured that the items are related to one another. All values of the reliability analysis are above 0.7, with the exception of openness to experience. Since this value is also above the value of 0.6 and since the scale has also been used in various sources (Donnellan et al., 2006; McCrae & Costa, 2004), the minimum requirement will be waived. Table 1 shows the internal consistency of the constructs.

Table 1. Internal Consistency

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Standard Deviation
Neuroticism	0.707	2.892	0.835
Extraversion	0.815	3.358	0.912
Openness	0.643	3.636	0.844
Agreeableness	0.783	4.185	0.680
Conscientiousness	0.722	3.633	0.801
Job Security	0.848	3.608	0.913
Opportunities Further Development	0.878	2.683	0.894
Employer Attractiveness	0.883	3.434	0.953

Source: own illustration

An exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is carried out to check whether the present results fit the theoretical structure. The results (see Table 2) confirm the relationships between the factors. One item from each the constructs of neuroticism and openness to experience shows little commonality. However, these only describe the portion of the total variance that is explained by all variables. Since the value is still over 30%, the two factors are not excluded. Furthermore, one item of the construct neuroticism has a factor loadings of only 55%. While this is acceptable, higher values would be desirable. Since the test subjects' neuroticism values will not used in the further analyses, this will be accepted. The contextual relationships of the individual items with which the company characteristics are also confirmed by the unambiguous results of the EFA in Table 2. Thus, variables are formed from the mean values of all constructs.

Table 2. EFA results

	KMO	Communalities	Factor Loadings
Neuroticism	0.662	>0.57*	>0.55
Extraversion	0.72	>0.57	>0.76
Openness	0.72	>0.52*	>0.61
Agreeableness	0.783	>0.51	>0.61
Conscientiousness	0.675	>0.52	>0.71
Job Security	0.793	>0.57	>0.75
Opportunities Further Development	0.821	>0.66	>0.81
Employer Attractiveness	0.867	>0.57	>0.76

Source: own illustration

*Exception for one item

With the hypotheses H1 the effect of personality traits on the perceived attractiveness of companies and the moderating effect of the ownership relationship communication is to be examined. Using a scatter diagrams the linearity and the homoscedasticity of the residuals are graphically demonstrated. Furthermore, the normal distribution of the residuals is checked with the aid of a

histogram, the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test and the Shapiro–Wilk test. Since it is only a recommended requirement (Hayes, 2018), the regression and moderation is carried out despite the missing normal distribution of the residuals. To test the hypotheses, a simple moderation is used. The focus of the analysis is on the interaction term of personality traits and ownership. In addition to the regression analysis of the entire model, a separate linear regression is carried out to test hypothesis H1, where Openness is used as independent variable and attractiveness as dependent variable (H1a). The results show significant relationship between openness (0.031**) as well as extraversion (0.032**) and employer attractiveness. The perceived attractiveness is thus influenced by the personality traits of the potential applicant.

To test whether the communication of ownership moderates the relationship between the variables, a moderation analysis is carried out. To carry out this analysis, the values are z-standardized around the mean value, which leads to better comparability and interpretability of the individual values. The individual coefficients show that the personality traits openness and extraversion have a significant influence on perceived attractiveness. However, the coefficient is not significant, and the two interaction terms also have no significant influence on attractiveness. The personality traits openness and extraversion thus have a positive influence on the perceived attractiveness, but these relationships are not moderated by the communication of the ownership status. Therefore, H1a and H1b must be rejected.

The hypotheses H2 are used to measure whether job security and further development opportunities for people with different personality traits have a different impact on the attractiveness of the company. To be able to carry out the moderation, the influences of the independent variable on the attractiveness of the company must first be measured using a linear regression. In addition to the regression analysis of the entire model, separate regression is carried out for the hypotheses H2a and H2b. These show significant results for job security (0.14***) and opportunities for further development (0.141***). Both company characteristics are positively related to the perceived attractiveness. The personality traits extraversion and openness, which serve as moderators in this calculation, are also significant and thus influence the perceived attractiveness. However, the significance value of the two interaction terms is above 0.05. Thus, the positive effect of job security and opportunities for further development on higher perceived attractiveness are highly significant, but these effects are not clearly moderated by the personality traits. Therefore, both H2a and H2b must be rejected.

With the hypothesis H3, the differently perceived attractiveness of companies is examined on the basis of the hypothetical job description. Potential applicants see the company as a more attractive employer if the company is run by a family and this is communicated in the employer brand. To check H3, the mean values are compared and a T-Test for independent samples is carried out. The reason for this is the nominal data level of the dependent variable and the comparison of two control groups. The mean values of group A and group B in the entire sample $M = 3.51$ (SD 1.03) and $M = 3.35$ (SD 0.84) show that companies that position the family influence in their company brand / job advertisement are perceived as a little more attractive by potential applicants. The result of the Levene test ($p = 0.82$) confirms the equality of variance. The T-Test shows with $T = 1.122$ that the mean value of group A is higher than that of group B. The Cohen effect size $r = 0.165$ corresponds to a very weak effect that is not large enough to clearly attribute the perceived attractiveness to the communication of ownership. The H3 must therefore be rejected in the entire sample. To be able to compare the perceived attractiveness of family businesses by industry, the hypothesis is also checked using data from the STEM industry. The mean values differ slightly ($M = 3.44$ group A and $M = 3.36$ group B) and the Levene test confirms the equality of variance with $p = 0.082$. The T-Test with independent samples, however, gives a two-sided significance of $p = 0.68$, whereupon the null hypothesis is accepted and no connection can be proven. H3 must therefore also be discarded in the STEM industry. The effect size of $r = 0.079$, however, indicates that the communication of the ownership structure in the STEM branch has a weaker influence on the perceived attractiveness than in other branches.

6 DISCUSSION

The present study followed the recommendation by Boswell et al. (2012) and deals with the communication of family influence in combination with the individual personality traits of potential applicants and the attractiveness of the employer. The study by Hauswald et al. (2016) states that communicating family influence in the employer brand can increase the likelihood of entering into a long-term employment relationship, which can also increase the attractiveness of the organization. However, these relationships cannot be confirmed in the present work. The vast majority of the respondents assume that the job description presented was from a family business. This also applies to those for whom the ownership relationship was not communicated in the job description. This might be led back to the high number of family businesses in Austria, where the majority of the test subjects live. Since the job description in the questionnaire contains the text passage "The company has its headquarters very close to you" and the survey was largely carried out in Austria, it can be assumed that the job description is subconsciously linked to family businesses. The regional restriction could therefore, among other things, be a reason for the results. The evaluations could also show that the influence of ownership in the STEM industries is even less than in other industries. The fact that this group makes up over 60 percent of the test persons could be a further factor that contributes to the non-significant result of the total sample. However, it is also important to realize that the communication of ownership seems to play a less important role in the IT industry.

Taking the personality traits into account, the strong correlation between these traits and the perceived attractiveness of family businesses is demonstrated, but no clear differences could be found between job descriptions with communication of family influence and those without. Since Highhouse et al. (2016) already assumed effects in this direction, this might be traced back to the sample size. To achieve a meaningful result and to be able to draw conclusions from it about the general public, a population of at least 500 people should be aimed for. On the other hand, the one-sided perception of the type of company just described and the regional restrictions could also play an important role.

With regard to company characteristics, it was examined whether the participants in this study associate family businesses with higher job security or fewer opportunities for further development, as has already been confirmed in the literature (Arijs et al., 2018; Hauswald et al., 2016). The study results show a link between family businesses and more job security across the sample, and even more so in the STEM sector than in the other sectors. However, the subconscious connection of family businesses with fewer opportunities for further development could only be found in test subjects from the STEM areas as well.

Finally, the results will be summarized to answer the question to what extent the communication of the ownership structure moderates the influence of personality traits on the attractiveness of family businesses from the applicant's point of view. The results of the regressions show a positive relationship between perceived job security, opportunities for further development and attractiveness. The essential influence of personality traits (especially extraversion and openness to experience) on the employer attractiveness could also be demonstrated. Extroverts, as well as people who are very open to experience, are more critical of their potential employer and therefore tend to rate the company as less attractive. As these results are obtained by evaluating the responses from group A (manipulated by communicating family influence) and group B (no communication of ownership structure, but strong reference to family businesses), they apply in particular to family businesses. However, the moderating effect of the communication of ownership or family influence in these relationships could not be proven.

7 CONCLUDING REMARKS

This paper deals with the relationship between ownership, personality traits and employer attractiveness. Research in the field of human resources, in particular recruiting and employer branding, will continue to be a central topic in small and large companies in the years to come. The reason for this is the large labor shortage in the DACH region, which is exacerbated by the increasing need for highly qualified IT specialists. With this study, the authors stimulate research into employer branding in the IT industry and create a basis for it. The attempt is made to give companies, especially family businesses, a better understanding of the effect of communicating the ownership relationship on potential applicants.

In future research in this area, the focus on the IT / STEM industry is particularly important, as there is a gap in research in this regard. The proven influence of personality traits should also not be disregarded when increasing the sample size and carrying out similar studies again. Since the present study only deals with the influence of the characteristics extraversion and openness to experience, it would be exciting to include the other personality characteristics in further studies. The analysis of differences in perception in rural and urban regions would also be important for further research. Differences between large and small companies or known and unknown organizations could also be worked out in the future.

Another field of research is the combination of employer branding in family businesses with communication channels that employers use to communicate with the public, especially potential applicants. These have changed significantly in recent years and have become increasingly digitized. Coupled with the forms of communication, it would be exciting to find out whether there are differences in perception depending on age or professional experience. A comparative study in the generations X and Y would be particularly suitable for this, as the values and preferences of these generations are changing rapidly. The study at hand found that the respondents were, firstly, relatively young and, secondly, often had little or no work experience. The perception and prioritization of job security and opportunities for further development could change with increasing professional experience (Hauswald et al., 2016). Since these features influence the attractiveness of the company, a target group with a lower proportion of young professionals could change the result. It would also be interesting to follow the development of the applicants' perception even after they have joined the company, because matching characteristics and values also lead to more positive work results in day-to-day work (Cable & Judge, 1996).

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