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**Mirror on the wall, am I attracting people as beautiful as me?**

**The effects of corporate image on the capacity of attracting new employees**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This paper analyzes whether a company's image affects its capability of attracting young employees. To do so, the process that leads to the creation of a company's image by young professionals and the relevance they attribute to companies' websites were addressed. By using the websites of 20 companies and conducting 12 semi structured interviews near recent graduates, it was possible to conclude that companies and young professionals seek different sources when it comes to form an image of a company and hence, what is perceived by companies as relevant to be communicated, is disregarded by young professionals given its indistinctiveness.

Key words: image, attracting talent, websites and in person contact.

## **Introduction**

Competition among firms is strongly felt in the market of human resources, where companies see the “attraction of high quality applicants” as a critical factor to their good performance (Williamson, King Jr., Lepack and Sarma, 2010: 669). In order to get access to the best employees companies strive to attract them at colleges and universities (Gioia and Thomas, 1996). They do so through formal recruitment processes but also making use of less explicit processes, such as identity and image (Cable, Aiman-Smith and Edwards, 2000). These two processes need to be aligned for companies to sustain a consistent message and thus to be able to attract the best human resources.

Existing literature has already studied the link between the effectiveness of a company’s website attributes in attracting applicants and its reputation (Williamson, King Jr., Lepack and Sarma, 2010). Furthermore, the link between organizational website content and stylistic features with organizational attraction (Chien-Cheng Chen, Mei-Mei Lin & Chang-Ming Chen, 2012) and the study of which attributes influence graduate applicant’s preferences at the beginning of their first job search (Herrbach and Mignonac, 2004) have also been analyzed. Additionally, how different sources of information accessed before the initial contact with companies influence the applicants’ judgment on the companies’ cultural values (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey and Edwards, 2000) has been explored as well. However, the study on the capacity of companies to attract new employees via the image they communicate through their websites has been less studied. In order to address this gap, I have selected and analyzed the 10 largest Portuguese companies (Transnationale, 2012) and the 10 best to

work for in Portugal (Great Place to Work, 2012) and conducted 12 semi-structured interviews next to recent graduates.

The purpose of this paper is to study if companies are correctly using their websites as a tool of communication that allows establishing a positive connection with possible young professionals and thus enables them to be able to attract. For this reason, this article is structured as follows. First I will conduct a brief literature review and in second place I will present the method that allowed me to elaborate this investigation. Then, before drawing the conclusions, I will develop the findings and discussion, which will allow me to answer to my research question: whether companies' image affects their capability of attracting new employees.

### **Literature review**

**Organizational Identity.** According to Albert and Whetten (1985), identity represents “what is central, enduring and distinctive about an organization’s character” (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000: 63). Identity is what allows one to distinguish a company from other, it transmits the perceptions and beliefs from the insider but also gives “the foundation for presenting the organization to external audiences”, (Hatch and Schultz, 2002). Furthermore, past scholars have linked identity with image, stating that identity is not a fixed concept mainly due “to its ongoing interrelationships with organizational image” (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000: 64). Therefore, when studying the capacity that a company has to attract young candidates via its image, it is mandatory to take into consideration identity. This because, even though it helps people “answering the question “what a company stands for”” (Dukerich, Golden and Shortell, 2002), it is the different interpretations that change and mean different things to a different group of individuals at different times (Gioia, Shultz and Corley, 2000), that are relevant to my

study and that will help me understand if in fact a company's image, which in turn is linked to identity, can influence its capacity to attract.

**Image.** Organizational image is “a wide-ranging concept connoting perceptions that are both internal and external to the organization”, as well as “perceptions that are both projected and received” (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000: 66). Hence the possibility of the existence of a link between a company's image and its capacity to attract is worth exploring, given that image has also been defined as the “way organization members believe others see the organization” (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991). In their literature review on organizational identity, image and adaptive instability, Gioia, Shultz and Corley (2000) found four categories of image that are relevant to my study to the extent that they explore the quality of the relationship between firms and outsiders. These are: construed external image, projected image, desired future image and reputation. Table 1 (see exhibit 1) presents these four types of image.

**Hiring practices.** The hiring component is of huge relevance to a company and is very much associated with attracting techniques given that, “in order to be effective, the hiring practices must accomplish at least two objectives: capture the attention of prospective applicants and compel them to gather information about employment opportunities and must reduce uncertainty about particular job opportunities” (Williamson, King Jr., Lepak and Sarma, 2010: 671). This because, the hiring process is influenced by a company's ability to capture possible candidates' attention, i.e. attract them and also that these same hiring decisions are not isolated actions but rather likely “affected by environmental factors, organizational characteristics and institutional norms” (Williamson and Cable, 2003: 349).

**Attracting talent.** People are attracted to organizations they perceive “having values and norms they deem important” (Turban and Greening, 1997: 660). This attraction is established when possible candidates “view an organization as a positive place to work” (Rynes, 1991). The complexity and importance of attracting has turned it into the “most pressing concern other than the overall economic climate” (Branham, 2005: 57). It is also singled as “the most important managerial preoccupation for the rest of this decade” (Guthridge, Lawson & Komm, 2008: 49). Being able to attract applicants is central to recruiting as “firms establish a pool of applicants who are both attractive to the organization and attracted to the organization” (Terjesen et al, 2007: 505)

**Integrating the four literatures** The four literatures have already been individually studied by scholars and some have even been connected. Gioia et al demonstrated that organizational identity and image are related (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000); a company’s capacity to attract applicants was explained by its reputation and its hiring practices (Williamson, King Jr., Lepak & Sharma, 2010); reputation was also said to be the reason behind applicants’ beliefs about organizational culture (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey, Edwards, 2000); and even a link was made between organizational image and employees attitudes. However, the integration between a company’s image and its attracting techniques, which in turn are influenced by a company’s image and its hiring techniques, seems to be less studied.

### **Method**

In order to investigate the research question, I selected 20 companies and conducted 12 semi-structured interviews. This allowed me to adopt a reflexive analysis, making me “view the subject matter from different angles” (Alvesson, 2003: 25).

The 10 largest Portuguese companies were selected based on a ranking that arranges companies by their annual sales. The reason behind this selection was that to continue growing and develop [big companies] “have to be able to attract the best employees” (Williamson and Cable, 2003). In order to do so they feel tempted to communicate a “desirable image to applicants”, rather than the real one (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey and Edwards, 2000). On the other hand, regarding the 10 best companies to work for in Portugal, the Great Place to Work® Institute states that working in a pleasant environment leads to a better quality of life to employees but also to a better financial performance of the organization. Indeed, in order to be the best place to work for, a company needs to have good HR practices and those need to be aligned with both “job seekers’ and company executives’ beliefs about company culture” (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Mulvey and Edwards, 2000: 1076). Therefore, I consider that the 20 selected companies are the basis for studying if what companies’ project to outsiders is in fact aligned with their reputation; to what extend the attracting techniques are influenced by their image and if this varies between the world of the biggest and the best. Table 2 (see exhibit 2) presents the 20 companies selected.

Concerning the interviews, I selected 12 recent graduates based on age, gender, number of years since graduation, their previous work experience and current working/studying situation. Table 3 (see exhibit 3) illustrates basic information on the 12 selected candidates.

**Data collection** First, I analyzed the websites of the 20 companies in order to understand how much impact the image of a company has in its hiring process. I chose websites as the main source of information because of their ability to reach a large number of people simultaneously (Bernstein *et al.*, 1996) but also because they allow

the company to create a link with its stakeholders, making them one of the best types of media available (Williamson, King Jr., Lepack and Sarma, 2010). Once in the websites, I searched for topics relating with “*about us*”, “*company’s values*”, “*the company’s mission and vision*”, “*who we are*”, “*working at company X*”, “*company’s profile*”, “*the life at company X*”. The data collected served the purpose of exploring how identity, image and culture were expressed and articulated by each of the 20 companies.

Second, I searched the websites for information on the hiring process. The research was divided in two phases: how the company attracts new employees and how their jobs descriptions are. The first phase consisted in searching through the topics “*people*”, “*come work with us*”, “*careers*”, “*careers opportunities*”, “*jobs*”, “*opportunities at company X*”, “*applications*”, “*professionals*”, “*first job*”, “*recruitment process*”, “*working at company X*”, “*students and graduates*”, “*graduate jobs and internships*”, “*recruitment*”, “*join our team*”, “*join us*”, “*open opportunities*”, “*colleges*”, “*who are we*”, “*human resources*”, in the company’s website and collect what was written there. The second phase was to open several work offers posted in their websites and analyze them concerning skills required; words used to describe the position; and job characteristics.

Third, to complement the companies’ perspective with that of outsiders, I conducted 12 semi-structured interviews. The interviewees were free to state their opinion regarding the 20 companies’ culture, image, recruiting and attracting practices. The position of the companies in the rankings was always concealed, in order not to influence their answers. The interviews, which were recorded with the permission of the candidates with the purpose of being transcribed afterwards, ranged from 15 to 30 minutes. Some were conducted face-to-face while others were via *Skype*.

**Data analysis.** Bearing in mind the process suggested by Alvesson and Karreman (2007), I used an interactive approach to explore the available data (Alvesson & Karreman, 2007), which allowed me to go back and forth between the data and the literature and therefore build a stronger base for the upcoming findings. These data were imported into *ATLAS.ti*, a qualitative analysis software, as soon as it was collected.

Coding was done in three stages. In the first one, I coded the data according to four categories that I called *categories level 1* and which emerged from the interactive analysis: *identity-self*, *image*, *HR – hiring practices* and *HR – attracting*. *Identity – self* was used whenever companies defined what they did, who they were or whenever respondents described what companies did. The category *image* was used whenever companies stated what insiders/outsideers perceived them to be, or whenever they used adjectives to describe themselves, rather than facts. The same category was used when asking interviewees to describe what they perceived to be the companies' image. Regarding the hiring and attracting part, the categories *HR – hiring practices* and *HR – attracting* were used whenever companies described their work place, the possibilities and opportunities they offer and every time they described themselves as a good place to work. These categories were also used each time respondents describe the companies as potential places to work in.

Then, several codes called *categories level 2*, were allocated to these four categories. Using *image* as an example: it was subdivided in thirteen codes, taking into consideration the afore mentioned multiple forms of image presented by Gioia and colleagues (2000) and also characteristics mentioned by the interviewees, like *Crisis*, *Marketing or Word-of-mouth*. Adding to those above, and in order to cover the images or links or even videos that the companies post in their websites, the codes *Tool* were

allocated to the categories of level 1 whenever appropriated. Table 1, presented in the second volume, explains the meaning behind the categories of level 2.

Finally, the third and last stage of this process was carried out with the help of the software, using the *Query Tool*. The purpose was to establish an association between the codes of the categories that had emerged from the previous stages. For instance, when selecting the codes *Image - projected* and *HR - attracting* and choosing the relation *and: all terms match*, it was possible to prove that in fact these two codes were associated given that multiple quotes in common that would appear. By doing the same process over again, paring two codes, it was possible to create a network that would express all the relations existing between the data collected.

### Findings

The data structure of the findings is shown in Figure 1 (see exhibit 6). In order to understand if companies' image affects their capability of attracting new employees, I focused in three specific relations that are presented in Figure 2 below. Table 4 (see exhibit 4) shows quotations I collected from the data, which support these three relations.

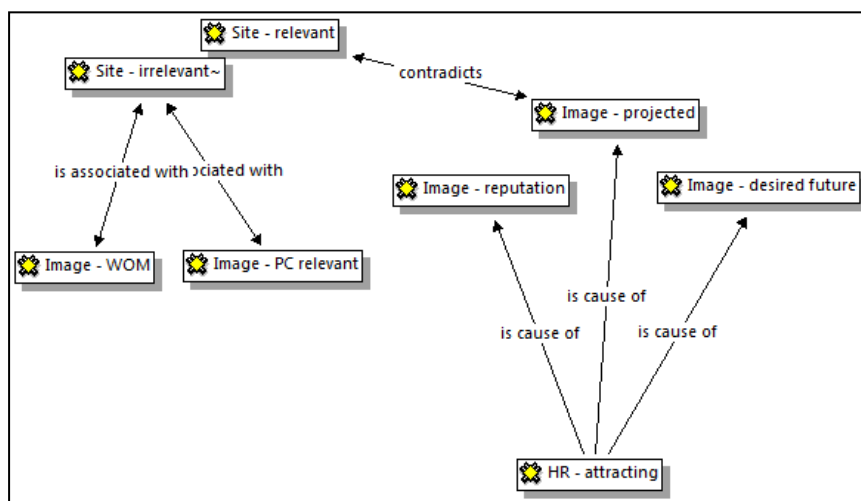


Figure 2 – Zoom in on the network, revealing the three associations.

**Attracting talent is a consequence of Image.** The data I gathered from the websites revealed that companies tend to attract possible candidates via the communication of good images: “In Medtronic you can contribute to changing the meaning of living with a chronic illness. We develop technologies that treat these pathologies and allow patients to live longer and better” (Medtronic, 2012). Next to the recent graduates I verified once again this relation of consequence by their affirmative answer to my question: “Would you like to work for any of these companies?” Furthermore, when I asked them why, all respondents justified being attracted based on the image that companies pass: “The awareness I have is that... I think JM, Sonae and EDP are those companies that, while we are in university, we hear talk about them so much like reference companies to work for that, well... I think that makes me want to work in them more than in other companies” (Interviewee 5). Hence, by using the image they want to project to possible candidates, these companies become more effective in their attracting techniques.

Adding to this, it was also possible to verify a difference between the image projected by the 10 biggest Portuguese companies and the 10 best to work for in Portugal. This biggest take advantage of their dimension: “Working at Galp Energia is being part of one of the largest Portuguese companies, present in several national and international markets.” (Galp Energia, 2012). While the best make their employees the main issue when projecting an image: “Our 90,000 employees drive our business, and we have a responsibility to create a respectful and rewarding work environment for them. Health, well-being, satisfaction, and diversity of our employees differentiate Microsoft and help us succeed.” (Microsoft, 2012). This difference was also confirmed near the graduates when talking about the 10 biggest: “I think that most of them convey

the image that they are reliable employers. That is, they have plenty to offer (...) I think that the image, if I had to define it in a word, it would be safety. They give us safety” (Interviewee 8). And the 10 best: “they are renowned companies, with big worldwide recognition and are companies that give large growth perspectives inside the company.” (Interviewee 4).

**Website relevance does not confirm Image projected.** The website relevance is associated with the importance attributed to it, either by companies or the interviewees. As I showed in the previous connection, the data confirms that companies value websites and tend to use them as a tool to transmit a good image: “At Cisco we are changing the way the world works, lives, plays, and learns. Together we are changing the way we experience life” (About Us, Cisco. 2012). However, on the respondents’ side, I did not find a connection between what is communicated in the websites and the creation of a good image. In fact, quite the opposite, as all interviewees strongly sustained that it is not via websites that they form an image of the companies, neither feel attracted to them: “No, I never go by what they say there. Because what they say in the websites is always equal, everybody says that they are the best and they do this and that (...) It does not change much from company to company because they all want to be sustainable (...) they all want to be green, they all want to be whatever and it comes a point where you do not read anymore, right?” (Interviewee 7). For these reasons the websites of the companies fail to be a good tool in the communication of a distinctive image for the respondents selected.

**Website irrelevance is associated with Image WOM/PC<sup>1</sup>.** Besides the rejection of websites as the main tool for building an image of the companies, the data I gathered

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<sup>1</sup> Word-of mouth/ Personal connection

near the group of graduates also established a link between the irrelevance of websites and image WOM/PC. What the data revealed was that sites are not completely disregarded: “I go to companies’ websites whenever I need very specific information or when I am applying to any position they might be offering” (Interviewee 9). However, when it comes to form an opinion, the data I collected reveals that it is the hearsay, i.e. the word-of-mouth and even the personal connections created with previous or current employees of the firm in question that prevail over everything else: “To form an opinion you need to know specific things and companies, describing themselves it is easy, they are all great. Listening to those who are inside, who work there, now that is different.” (Interviewee 9); Therefore, the selected respondents do not ignore completely the websites’ information; however, a personal connection with someone who knows the inside of the company seems to be extremely appreciated and sometimes even essential to the collection of truthful information.

The previous associations will allow me to answer my proposed research question. Moreover, they will serve as the basis to further the existing knowledge about the phenomenon of why young professionals embrace the image they establish of companies as its identity, but when it comes to accept the image described in companies' websites they do not feel attracted to it and prefer to resort to personal connection. In fact, the selected young professionals defend that: “everything that is there [companies’ websites], because it is the same for all companies and because they all say the same thing, it is common sense (...) That is why I think that people do not even go there anymore, because they are not differentiating.” (Interviewee 8).

## Discussion

The image of a company is what “does the work in guiding moment-to-moment interaction” (Burke, 1980: 21) which means that companies have high incentives “to communicate a desirable image to applicants rather than the cultural values that actually operate in the organization” (Cable, Aiman-Smith and Edwards, 2000: 1076) and by doing so, they become more attractive. However, as mentioned before, the communication of an image that is inaccurate, if discovered by applicants leads to “dissatisfaction and can even encourage them to quit (Cable, Aiman-Smith and Edwards, 2000: 1076). Nonetheless, companies prefer to take their chances and “overstate their positive cultural attributes and understate unfavorable attributes” (Cable, Aiman-Smith and Edwards, 2000: 1076) in order to become more attractive. This, combined with the findings, enables me to conclude that companies develop their techniques to attract new employees based on the “image they create to communicate to constituents” (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000: 67) i.e. when communicating their good projected image that “might or might not represent ostensible reality” (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000: 67), companies are consequently luring possible candidates. To finalize, it is still possible to say that the 20 studied companies enter as yet another confirmation of these findings, since they use attracting techniques that go towards the projected image that benefits them more: the biggest companies use their loftiness, while the best use their employees as the main key factor. From these, I introduce my first proposition:

*P<sub>1</sub>: Companies develop their attracting techniques for young professionals based on the image they project.*

Regarding the effectiveness of the website as a recruitment tool, this is a much explored and proven topic. In fact, its ability to reach a “wider and more immediate

scope of communication between companies and prospective job applicants than print media” (Williamson, King Jr., Lepack and Sarma, 2010: 670) is a known advantage that “goes along with lower costs than traditional recruitment mediums” (Williamson, King Jr., Lepack and Sarma, 2010: 670). Nonetheless, the data I collected points to a different path. It confirms that websites are relevant when the goal is to collect specific information during a recruitment process or others such; however, when creating an image, they are not even considered. Therefore the data shows a pattern which is an investment of firms in the attracting/recruitment area of their websites that is revealed to be a waste, given that potential young candidates perceived that information as mandatory, repetitive and indistinctive; quite the opposite of what companies want to communicate. As a consequence, my second proposition is:

*P<sub>2a</sub>: Young professionals perceive websites to be only a helping tool in gathering specific information.*

However, websites are “a primary tool used by organizations to attract applicants” (Williamson, King Jr., Lepack and Sarma, 2010: 669) and they use it to transmit what they “deem central, distinctive, and enduring” (Albert and Whetten, 1985) about them hence, based on the data, I can conclude that the relevance that applicants attribute to the company’s websites does not confirm the image companies aim to project. The website has a negative effect on the image that possible young candidates built for each company because those words that are used by companies to describe the internal and construed external perception, in the candidates’ opinion end up being a constant in all websites. This in turn enables me to conclude that companies and possible applicants have opposite interpretations of what is relevant to be exposed in a company’s website, since companies believe that their mission, vision, values and others such are essential to define who they are and what they defend, while young professionals deem that

information as trivial and even common sense, therefore making them disregard completely the image projected in companies' websites. Hence, it is therefore possible to extend the second proposition:

*P<sub>2b</sub>: Young professionals are not attracted by the image projected in companies' websites.*

The third relation appears as a complement to the second and it is aligned with existing literature, as the data I collected state that while applicants disregard company's websites due to its possible bias, they believe the gathering of information about a company can come "from sources that are not a part of a firm's recruitment efforts" (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Edwards, 2000: 1076) and thus are less likely to be manipulated. It is accepted that the beliefs about a company may come from "discussions with peers, career office directors and professors" (Cable, Aiman-Smith, Edwards, 2000: 1076), nonetheless the data collected in the present study allows me to suggest that personal contacts with previous or current workers of the corporation are more relevant to the development of the image of a given company. Thus, even though both the website and previous/current workers are part of the company, the data gathered supports that potential young candidates tend to believe more in an in-person contact. It is the physical contact and the sharing of experiences, ideas and internal knowledge by people who are/were somehow part of the company's community that have the ability of shaping the image in the mind of potential young candidates and consequently increase the probability of attraction. And as such, the third proposition becomes:

*P<sub>3</sub>: Young professionals are influenced by the image projected through former/current workers of a company, becoming more likely attracted to it.*

Doing an adaptation of the figure previously presented, I was able to combine the three propositions near the associations they represent, showed in Figure 3 below.

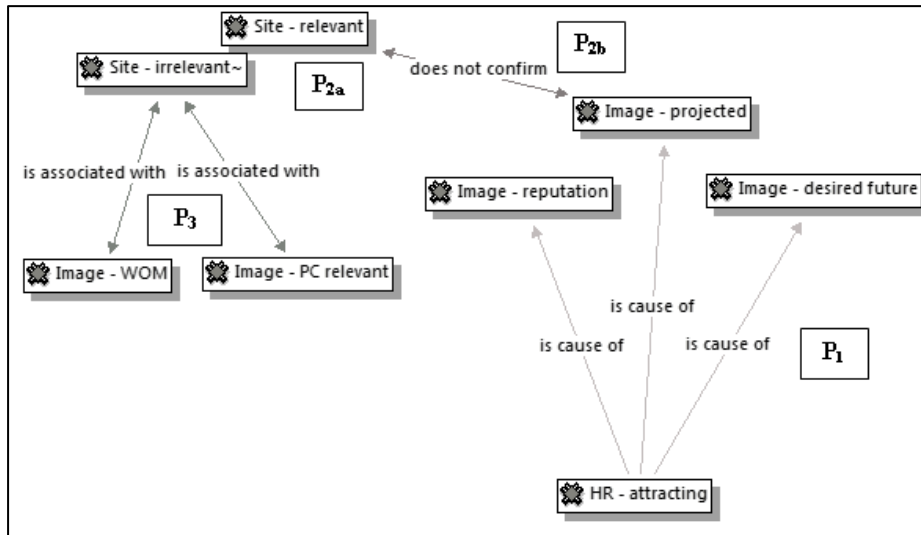


Figure 3 – Zoom in on the network, revealing the propositions

As a result, it is possible to say that companies and young professionals have different preferences, when it comes to choose the basis to form an image. Hence, if a company wants to attract the best, it needs to align its methods with the preferences of these young professionals and, as a consequence, it will become more attractive.

### Conclusion

By gathering information about 20 companies and collecting the insights about them near 12 recent-graduates, multiple relations were found.

The combination of the existing literature with all the patterns found and the outputs provided by the analysis of the data collected allows me to conclude that the attracting techniques of a company are a consequence of the image they project to the outsiders, given that they are developed based on this image. The potential candidates are unconsciously influenced by this projection and adopt it as their own, using it to define who the company is.

Furthermore, the data revealed that companies are not taking advantage of the valuable tools they have to attract. The websites, which are the main tool considered by companies, are disregarded by the candidates due to their biases; while the physical contact with current or previous works and the word-of-mouth are highly valued.

As a result, taking into consideration the data gathered and the existing literature, companies' image can indeed affect their capability of attracting new employees. Young professionals consider a company's image as a significant concept, however they form their image of a company differently from what the company itself communicates in their websites; they do it by having a personal contact with companies' workers or via word-of-mouth from previous workers. It is their belief that this is the only way to create an unbiased image about them since most companies' websites are seen as a gather of clichés that add nothing to the common-sense.

Thus, in order to become more attractive, companies need to shift their attracting techniques to those that young professionals value the most. There is a need to not only change what is communicated in the websites but also pay attention to the actions and ideas that are shared by anyone who is somehow part of their community.

For these reasons, image has an imperative place in the company's battle to attract within the market of human resources.

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## Exhibits

**Exhibit 1 – Table 1 – The different forms of image.**

Type of image	Definition
Construed external image	“Organization members’ perceptions of how outsiders perceive the organization” (Dutton and Dukerich, 1991; Dutton, Dukerich and Harquail, 1994).
Projected image	“Image created by an organization to be communicated to constituents; might or might not represent ostensible reality” (Alvesson, 1990; Bernstein, 1996)
Desired future image	“Visionary perception the organization would like external others and internal members to have of the organization sometime in the future.” (Gioia and Chittipeddi, 1991; Gioia and Thomas, 1996)
Reputation	“Relatively stable, long-term, collective judgments by outsiders of an organization’s actions and achievements”. (Fombrun, 1996; Fombrun and Shaley, 1990).

*Table 1 – Different forms of image – Adapted from Gioia, Shultz and Corley, 2000*

**Exhibit 2 - Table 2 – Main facts of the 20 selected companies.**

10 Biggest Portuguese Companies	10 Best Companies to work for in Portugal
<p><b>1. EDP SA</b> - 7.189 workers - Operates in 10 countries</p> <p><b>2. Sonae SGPS:</b> - More than 40.000 workers - Operates in 65 countries</p> <p><b>3. Galp Energia:</b> - 7.381 workers - Operates in 13 countries</p> <p><b>4. PT:</b> - 7.000 workers - Operates in 7 countries</p> <p><b>5. BCP SA:</b> - 7.000 workers - Operates in 7 countries</p> <p><b>6. Jerónimo Martins:</b> - 66.270 workers - Operates in Portugal and Poland</p> <p><b>7. CIMPOR:</b> - Nr of workers not available - Operates in 9 countries</p> <p><b>8. BES:</b> - More than 9.800 workers - Operates in 25 countries</p> <p><b>9. Portucel SGPS:</b> - More than 7.000 workers - Operates in more than 100 countries</p> <p><b>10. BPI:</b> - Nr of workers not available - Operates in 12 countries</p>	<p><b>1. Cisco Systems Portugal:</b> - 70,000 employees worldwide - Operates in 93 countries</p> <p><b>2. Microsoft:</b> - 291 workers in Portugal - Operates in more than 100 countries</p> <p><b>3. Everis:</b> - 232 workers in Portugal - Operates in 13 countries</p> <p><b>4. Roff:</b> - 483 workers - Operates in 6 countries</p> <p><b>5. Chep:</b> - 32 workers in Portugal - Operas in 49 countries</p> <p><b>6. Mind Source:</b> - 72 workers in Portugal - Countries where operates not available</p> <p><b>7. SAS Institute:</b> - 69 workers in Portugal - Operates in 56 countries</p> <p><b>8. Maksen:</b> - 163 workers in Portugal - Operates in 4 countries</p> <p><b>9. CH Consulting:</b> - 75 workers in Portugal - Operates in Portugal and Spain</p> <p><b>10. Medtronic:</b> - 75 workers in Portugal - Operates in 120 countries</p>

Figure 2 – Tables adapted from (Transnationale, 2012) and (Great Place to work, 2012)

**Exhibit 3 - Table 3** – Basic information on the 12 selected interviewees.

	AGE	GENDER	CURRENT SITUATION	YEARS SINCE GRADUATION
<b>1</b>	26	F	Worker	5
<b>2</b>	26	M	Master student-worker	1
<b>3</b>	24	M	Master student-worker	3
<b>4</b>	24	M	Master student	1
<b>5</b>	23	F	Worker	1,5
<b>6</b>	24	F	Master student	0,5
<b>7</b>	25	F	Master student – worker	3
<b>8</b>	23	F	Worker	2
<b>9</b>	24	M	Worker	2,5
<b>10</b>	27	M	Worker	2
<b>11</b>	23	M	Worker	2
<b>12</b>	21	F	Master student	1

**Exhibit 4 - Table 4** – Data collected from the companies’ websites and interviews, to support the findings

Associations	Data supporting Associations
<b>Attracting talent is a consequence of Image</b>	“The policy of HR goes alongside with the business strategy, with its ambition and speed. It firmly contributes to its mission of sustainable value creation. Through years of growth and creation of opportunities, we have been an employer of reference. We want our world to be part of your future” (Sonae, 2012);
	“The administration wants the employees to grow professionally and that opportunity is given to everyone. ROFF is known for its diversity, tolerance and multiculturalism” (Roff, 2012).
	“Cisco is an equal employment opportunity employer. Consistent with applicable law, Cisco provides access and opportunities to those with disabilities.” (Cisco, 2012).
	“Come join the company that helps organizations reach their success, by producing innovative solutions that help making decisions, all over the world. For the seventh consecutive year, SAS was selected to the list of The 100 best companies to work for, by Fortune, and in Portugal, it was considered as one of the 20 best companies to work for, by the Great Place to Work.” (SAS, 2012).
	“We value each person as a unique human being in a global family named ROFF. The environment is informal. It is given the autonomy, freedom and responsibility for each person to evolve and grow professionally and personally. We are different, we like to work hard, but we also like to celebrate and commemorate with maximum intensity.” (ROFF, 2012)
	“I was saying that if you are lucky enough to stay, to be able to do a job that you like and to win a good position inside, it’s a huge asset for the society we live in, right? To have a contract in one of these companies, having guaranteed work in any of these companies is amazing, their conditions are amazing”. (Interviewee 1, 2012).
	“Yes, I would go work there, without a doubt. Because allegedly they are the biggest companies in Portugal and it is by working in them that you can make a difference.” (Interviewee 2, 2012).
“They are renowned companies, with big worldwide recognitions and as I mentioned before, they are companies that give you big growing perspectives inside.” (Interviewee 4, 2012).	

	<p>“Because they are large companies with excellent working conditions and higher salaries. If you want to change something, how Portugal works or how the business works, these are the companies, in my opinion, that give the best opportunities to do so” (Interviewee 2).</p> <p>“Throughout its history, BES always prized very much its contribution to the economic, cultural and social development of Portugal.” (BES, 2012); “Portucel currently holds the European leadership in the production of paper” (Portucel, 2012).</p> <p>“I would like to work for them, I don’t know why... Because they are growing companies and the chance of me being fired would be less and I could evolve more quickly.” (Interviewee 6);</p> <p>”By providing a highly connected workplace, an inclusive and diverse environment, comprehensive health and wellness programs, robust professional development opportunities, and competitive compensation and benefits, we help more than 70,000 Cisco employees worldwide multiply impact both on the job and in their personal lives.” (Cisco, 2012);</p> <p>“The MindSource staff is motivated by generating and maintaining long-term relationships with both colleagues and clients. We value working with the best, and continue to do so, over and over again.” (Mind Source, 2012).</p> <p>“Oh it’s a growing business, it is usually known as a great place to work for, where they have a great team spirit and usually employees like to work there because the company is very focused on them and gives non-monetary compensations.” (Interviewee 6).</p>
<p><b>Website relevance does not confirm Image projected</b></p>	<p>“Our Team is a broad network of individuals collaborating to change the way we work, live, play and learn. From every country and every background, we choose talent that not only mirrors our customers, but also brings new ideas to the table.” (Cisco, 2012).</p> <p>Come as you are. DO WHAT YOU LOVE. You have unique experiences, skills and passions-and we believe you can bring them all to Microsoft for a rich, rewarding career and lifestyle that will surprise you with its breadth and potential. Just imagine the excitement and satisfaction of what you can do, where you can go, and the difference you can make with the resources of Microsoft behind you. (Microsoft, 2012).</p> <p>The professional path at Everis has a wide horizon that integrates multiple and differentiated alternatives, allowing the worker to decide his progress based on his interests. Everis allows a flexible model of career progression, adapted to the professional and personal needs of each employee (Everis, 2012).</p> <p>“I mean... I always try to follow more or less, but I never believe 100% what is written there because no company is going to say bad things about itself...” (Interviewee 6).</p> <p>“So the fact that they say: we are the best, come work with us... They all got to say that, right?” (Interviewee 1).</p> <p>“Obviously that it is always the same thing. It is: “Oh come work with us, here we have everything and even more...”. Obviously that I filter a little bit what I see in the websites, because I know that what they want is to attract people.” (Interviewee 5).</p> <p>“Because, to be honest, I think that that of the <i>about us</i> is a little bit <i>blah blah</i>. It does not mean it is a lie, I mean, I don’t think companies would put on their websites something that is not true. But is a little bit of <i>blah blah</i> and it ends up being the same for all companies and it is the values and the mission...” (Interviewee 8).</p> <p>“In fact, the websites have a rather partial vision, so you cannot believe them (...) usually I ignore it. I believe that what is written in the companies’ websites is rubbish.” (Interviewee 4).</p>
<p><b>Website relevance is associated with Image WOM</b></p>	<p>“Yes, I go to the websites if, by any reason, that company arouses a deeper interest in me, an interest that I want to enhance. In that case I go to the websites” (Interviewee 8);</p> <p>“So, I think you can never base your opinion only in the description without going through your own experience.” (Interviewee 1)</p> <p>“Hum, no. Usually my opinion is created with tools exterior to the company. In the market place I think it is a bit different. The website gains some influence, but it is still the exterior tools that identify and characterize a company. In fact, the websites have a rather partial vision, so you cannot believe them. In questions of information about the mentality of the company and their perspective about the world, usually I ignore it. I believe that what is written in the companies’ websites is rubbish.” (Interviewee 4).</p> <p>“I know they always go... It does not change much from company to company because they all want to be sustainable, they all want... I don’t know, how do you say it? I don’t know, help the disable. They all want to be green, they all want to be whatever and it comes a point where you do not read</p>

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	<p>anymore, right?” (Interviewee 8).</p> <p>“I like to talk to people who have worked or who work there because they give a ... If they worked there, they can actually say how it is and therefore it is not those fine words that are on the websites and such things” (Interviewee 5);</p> <p>“What influences my opinion? Is going to the space, going to a interview in person. Is being in the space and reading it and trying to understand what it is...” (Interviewee 1).</p> <p>“Companies can attract me... I go search for information near people who work there.” (Interviewee 8).</p> <p>“Yes, I believe it to be the best source, I don’t know, it is the best way of... to form an opinion you need to know specific things and companies, describing themselves it is easy, they are all great. Listening to those who are inside, who work there, now that is different.” (Interviewee 9).</p> <p>“(...) but for a person to really know what it is to work for a company, the information has to come from other people. Basically it is via friends, family, (...)” (Interviewee 6).</p>
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