Aalborg University – MSc International Marketing

The Challenge of Attracting Forthcoming Graduates

A Discrete Choice Experiment on the Effect of Employer Branding on Application Intentions

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Preface

This thesis is the culmination of our master's degree in International Marketing at Aalborg University. We carried out this research over an approximately four-month period from February to June 2019 with submission on the 6th of June. The product of this period lies before you and is titled *The Challenge of Attracting Forthcoming Graduates - A Discrete Choice Experiment on the Effect of Employer Branding on Application Intentions*.

The genesis of this thesis has without a doubt been a 'bumpy ride' and we, therefore, wish to dedicate this section to express our gratitude towards those, whom without, this project would not have finalised.

Above all, we want to thank our supervisor Jonas Strømfeldt Eduardsen, who during the entire period have contributed to our thesis both academically and practically, but also with support. Without your guidance and valuable inputs, we would not have succeeded with this thesis.
Furthermore, we want to thank all respondents who took part in our survey and made this study possible due to their cooperation.

Our sincere thanks also go out to both of our families, friends, and fellow students, who have been supportive and helpful, and kept our motivation up. Furthermore, we wish to thank CompanYoung for the opportunity of conducting a study with practical implications.
Lastly, we want to thank each other for great teamwork, which has been the essence of conducting this research.

We hope you will enjoy reading this thesis!

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Abstract

Purpose - Due to the 'War for Talent' and the changing demographics, it is essential to investigate how to attract young talents. Hence, the objective of this research is to examine how employer branding can be used to create application intentions among forthcoming graduates.

Design/Methodology/Approach – This research involves a discrete choice experiment executed through an online self-completion questionnaire. A total of 218 respondents were included in the study.

Findings – Results from this study revealed that the corporate brand is the major influence on the application intentions among forthcoming graduates. More specifically, the odds of choosing a potential employer is 12.2 times higher, when the employer has a positive corporate brand. Additionally, the findings unveiled that forthcoming graduates have a slight preference for symbolic attributes, where a P-O Fit functions as a moderator of the intention to apply.

Practical Implications – The findings of this research have implications for practitioners, as they can provide guidance on how to attract young talents. Specifically, companies should be aware of the vital importance of the corporate brand in establishing application intentions.

Research Limitations – Limitations deriving from this thesis include the generalisability of the findings, the choice of measures for the survey, and personal limitations originating from the researchers' shortage of experience with the research design.

Originality/Value – This research contributes to the current body of literature on employer branding and application intentions among forthcoming graduates. Furthermore, this study expands the literature with a new perspective on employer branding involving the corporate brand.

Keywords – Employer branding, Intention to apply, Corporate brand, Employer attractiveness, Graduates, War for Talent, Discrete choice experiment.

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Introduction

"Superior talent will be tomorrow's prime source of competitive advantage"
(Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels III, 1998, s. 48).

As written above by Chambers et al. (1998), talented employees are essential for the purpose of staying competitive in today's ever-changing markets. However, attracting a talented labour force is no trivial task.

Back in 1997, 'War for Talents' was declared by Steven Hankin from McKinsey & Company. This declaration was a response to the growing challenges related to attracting and retaining the right talent to companies in an increasingly more global and digital world (Mehlsen, 2018). Especially the competitive landscape for recruiting talents all over the world plays a significant role in these challenges, but the 'war' as well seems to be further intensified by the shifting demographics which are encountered all over the globe (Pirić, Masmontet, & Martinović, 2018). This also applies to Denmark, where the number of people in the labour force has decreased by 74,000 between 2008-2015 as a result of more elderly people retiring and less young people entering the job market (Seerup, 2015).

According to McKinsey Quarterly, there will be lack of 40 million college-educated workers by 2020. As a result, the younger labour force who is to supersede the older generations may lack the necessary skills for employment and, thus, it will be even harder to find and attract young candidates with the right competencies (Dobbs, Lund, & Madgavkar, 2012). Combined with the decreasing number of young people in the working age, the competition for young well-educated candidates is fiercer than ever (Pirić, Masmontet, & Martinović, 2018).

Because of the increasing competition in attracting well-educated candidates, many companies choose to adopt different strategies upon which they can ensure the correct young employee pool for their businesses in order to secure the future of the company. One of these strategies and perhaps the most critical for both the acquisition, development and retention of employees is employer branding (Biswas & Suar, 2016).

The term 'branding' is a well-established and well-known term which has been around for centuries in the marketing literature, however, the concept of employer branding is still evolving, and as such, many papers remain solely conceptual (Biswas & Suar, 2016).

Employer branding was first introduced in the year of 1996 by Barrow and Ambler in their work *The Employer Brand*, which sought to apply brand management techniques to human resource management and thereby result in employer branding (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

Nowadays, companies continue to rely on employer branding as a valuable tool for attracting well-educated young candidates (Biswas & Suar, 2016). However, as both the present but also the future will hold fewer well-educated workers and a decline in youths, this remains a challenge for companies in the process of attracting the right candidates with the right competencies.

Therefore, we find it essential to address this issue. In order to accommodate this, our dissertation will look to examine the application intentions from the perspective of forthcoming graduates and how employer branding may influence these. The specific focus on forthcoming graduates, i.e. students who are about to finish their last year on a master's degree at a university, will be placed as graduates are considered to be an important source of competent and qualified human capital for organisations (Pitcher & Purcell, 1998). Furthermore, the topic of attracting particularly forthcoming graduates with a master's degree has, to the best of our knowledge, received only little attention among scholars and researchers and, therefore, this is the contribution which this thesis is looking to make.

In addition, the purpose of our research is to provide CompanYoung with insights for further enhancing their ability to guide their clients in attracting the youth. CompanYoung is a Danish full-service business partner for companies, educational institutions and trade associations, and seeks to deliver complete attraction and recruitment campaigns targeting the young market segment (CompanYoung, n.d.). Naturally, this thesis will therefore first and foremost be written to the firm but also as a collaboration.

Research Aims & Question

This dissertation aims to examine how employer branding can influence the application intentions of forthcoming graduates by analysing how the employer brand attributes of an organisation and the overall corporate brand may influence the intention to apply for a job position in a particular firm. This also entails a focus on employer attractiveness and its impact on the intention to apply.

In order to accommodate the research aims of this thesis, the following research question has been formulated:

Research Question

How can employer branding affect the intentions of forthcoming graduates to apply for a job position?

Prior to conducting the research on how employer branding may impact forthcoming graduates' intention to apply, the establishment of a theoretical background is needed in order to identify the main themes and potential research gaps in the area. As such, the next chapter will be centred around this objective.

In total, this thesis will consist of ten chapters excluding the reference list and appendix. Besides these two already introduced chapters of introduction, and research aims and question, the next chapter will, as already mentioned, deal with the theoretical background and hypotheses development of this paper. The fourth chapter will seek to sum up the theoretical contributions in a conceptual framework. As the fifth chapter, the research methodology will be discussed thoroughly including some thoughts on the philosophy of science, but most importantly the methods and techniques used to conduct the data collection and analysis of this study. Subsequently, the sixth chapter will present the analysis and findings of the study, followed by the seventh chapter comprising a discussion of the findings. The three remaining chapters include a conclusion, a section encompassing the practical and theoretical implications and a chapter of reflections.

Theoretical Background & Hypotheses Development

The following chapter will be used to present the key concepts of the existing literature related to the research problem of this thesis and, thus, provide the reader with a rationale for this paper.

The literature used for the ensuing chapters has been gathered, selected and evaluated thoroughly in order to ensure consistency between the applied studies, and the research area of this thesis. The literature search was primarily based on the keywords *employer branding, attractiveness, application intentions, person-organisation fit, and corporate brand*, however, synonyms and various inflexions were used as well. The main database used for the searches was the University Library search engine Primo since it provides results from various databases such as EBSCOhost and ScienceDirect. A search diary was constructed to create an overview and documentation of the search strings and the number of articles found based on those searches. The search diary is displayed in Appendix 1. To ensure the quality of the articles gathered for the theoretical background, a filter was applied to the searches, so only peer-reviewed articles appeared. Furthermore, an English language filter was used to make sure that the articles could be understood and interpreted correctly by the researchers. Hence, the number of articles displayed in the search diary (Appendix 1) is the result of the specified searches with the two aforementioned filters.

This chapter consists of four headlines that function as the structure of the theoretical background and support for the hypotheses development throughout the chapter.

The first section will provide the reader with an introduction to the key concept of employer branding. For the purpose of understanding how forthcoming graduates can be attracted to an employer, the two subsequent sections will discuss the related term employer attractiveness and the employer brand attributes as characterised by The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework. Furthermore, a connection between the employer attractiveness and the intention to apply will be discussed and justified in the remaining section.

Secondly, attention will be given to discussing the moderating role of person-organisation fit on the impact of the attractiveness attributes on the application intentions. Finally, the last section will explore the possible influence of the corporate brand on the intentions to apply.

As already mentioned, the above structure will support the development of the hypotheses for this dissertation, as the chapter may help in identifying research gaps relevant for our

study. Furthermore, the theoretical background will also be applied as an important tool in the preparatory work for this dissertation's data collection.

The Impact of Employer Branding on Employer Attractiveness

This section will encompass an introduction to the key concept of this thesis, namely employer branding, and will be followed by a discussion of the related term employer attractiveness. In relation to the last-mentioned, the term employer brand attributes will be elaborated and discussed through The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework, in order to examine how forthcoming graduates can be attracted to an employer. The chapter will be finalised by a clarification of the connection between employer attractiveness and intention to apply.

For the purpose of conceptualising the main theoretical aspect, employer branding, we believe it is important to establish knowledge about the underlying concept of the term, namely branding.

Origin of Employer Branding

The concept of branding has been acknowledged for many decades, and "*creating, developing, implementing and maintaining successful brands is frequently at the heart of marketing strategy*" (McEnally & De Chernatony, 1999, p. 1). Branding is a central concept in marketing due to its ability of creating a vast number of benefits for the organisation that will succeed in having a strong brand. An extract of these benefits has by Keller (2009) been defined as enhanced customer attraction and loyalty, an increase in the effectiveness of marketing communications, a better differentiation from competitors and heightened credibility. The core function of a brand is to unify the values of and distinguish a company and its products and services from those of a competitor (Rosenbaum-Elliot, Percy, & Pervan, 2011).

Branding is often associated with the products provided by a firm and is defined as "*[…] a name, symbol, logo, design or image, or any combinations of these, which is designed to identify a product or service and distinguish it from those of their competitors*" (Kotler, Keller, Brady, Goodman, & Hansen, 2012, p. 467). However, besides products and services, branding has also been applied to identify and enhance the value of people, places, firms or even countries, and branding could, therefore, be said to no longer being solely reserved for physical products and services (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Sousa, Ferreira, Arriscado & Quesado, 2016).

Historically, branding has primarily been focused on the external audience of consumers and competitors, but in the recent years, the attention has also been focused on the internal aspects, namely the employees (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

This further development of branding resulted in a combination of brand management and human resource management in the 1990s and it formed the basis of employer branding (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). The line of reasoning is that consumers establish beliefs based on the brands they are presented to, and similarly, job seekers shape their beliefs about potential employers based on their branding. Consequently, these beliefs are the foundation for making decisions on whether to apply for and/or accept a job offer (Agrawal & Swaroop, 2009). Also, branding the company as an employer with the purpose of attracting potential employees is similar to the task of branding targeting the consumers with the purpose of getting them to purchase a product or service (Katiyar & Saini, 2016). Thus, aspects of traditional branding can be applied to fit an employer perspective.

Since employer branding will function as the main theoretical foundation of this thesis, the following section will focus on decomposing the concept as well as discussing the relevance and contributions in addressing the research area of this dissertation.

Employer Branding

The success and survival of today's organisations highly dependent on maintaining a strong workforce with the competencies to face future challenges. Therefore, companies are required to develop adequate strategies for the purpose of attracting skilled candidates and retain their current employees (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). One such strategy is the application of branding to the organisation's HR activities, also called employer branding (Alnıaçıka & Alnıaçıka, 2012).

In recent research by Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpe, and Lievens (2018), the authors criticise how the inherently multidisciplinary nature of the term employer branding has led to a somehow dispersed interpretation of the phenomenon. As such, we find it important to begin this section by distinguishing between two terms in employer branding research, namely employer brand and employer branding.

The term employer brand was originally introduced by Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow back in 1996 and was defined as "*[…] the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company*" (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 187). The employer brand emerged as a new term into the world of marketing and human

resource management as Ambler and Barrow (1996) saw the opportunity of applying brand marketing techniques to the process of attracting employees to the organisation. Furthermore, it was suggested that internal marketing practices could reinforce superior levels of employee motivation and thereby, enhance the customer outcomes (Backhaus, 2016).

Conversely, the term employer branding describes the process of building the employer brand. This is aligned with the definition acquired from Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stating that *"[…] we define employer branding as the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity […]"* (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, p. 502). Throughout this process, marketing principles are applied to handle an organisation's tangible and intangible employment offerings. For example, this could be carried out through a communication campaign with the purpose of raising awareness about the organisation as an employer (Theurer et al., 2018).

Historically, there have been several empirical approaches to and applications of the term employer branding. Since Ambler and Barrow (1996) did the first attempt to examine the synergies between human resource management and branding, multiple authors have studied the term employer branding in relation to different subjects such as person-organisation fit, and intention to apply (e.g. Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Aslam, 2015; Saini, Gopal, & Kumari, 2015; Prasad, 2017). Furthermore, several studies have looked into the advantages and benefits which organisations have the potential of harvesting from employer branding efforts. An extract of these benefits and advantages are among others; enhanced recruitment, retention and employee engagement (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2009; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014), a competitive advantage (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Deepa & Baral, 2017; Theurer et al., 2018), increased quantity and quality of job applicants (Lievens, Van Hoye, & Anseel, 2007), positioning of the organisation as 'a great place to work' in the minds of potential applicants (Sousa et al., 2016; Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen, & Schoonderbeek, 2012) and an increase in employer attractiveness in the job market and, specifically, among potential applicants (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016; Backhaus, 2016). As such, we believe these perceived benefits and advantages substantiate the importance which employer branding have within the field of attracting potential applicants, and thus, for this thesis.

Today, employer branding has become an increasingly important strategic focus for companies all over the world as the competition of attracting the best employees to the organisation has escalated immensely, resulting in the so-called 'War for Talent' (Alnıaçıka et al., 2014). For

the purpose of succeeding in the 'war', employer branding helps a given organisation to differentiate itself as an employer from those other rivals in the market and by some, it has been argued to be the primary organisational driver for the creation of a competitive advantage (Edwards, 2009; Ghadeer Mohamed Badr, 2016, Theurer et al., 2018; Sousa et al., 2016).

As discussed by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), employer branding can be divided into two distinct perspectives, namely internal employer branding and external employer branding. This classification is aligned with the clarification from Lievens (2007) stating that *"Employer branding, or employer brand management, involves internally and externally promoting a clear view of what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer"* (Lievens, 2007, p. 51).

The internal marketing of the employer brand aims to retain the current employees of the firm and to make them committed to the organisational values and goals. According to Ghadeer Mohamed Badr (2016), internal employer branding seeks to enhance employer loyalty and is connected to the current employees' beliefs and thereby, indirectly influences potential external applicants who may be interested in the organisation. Contrary, external employer branding is a strategy applied in companies for the purpose of attracting and recruiting employees and establish the company as the 'employer of choice'.

As the focus of this thesis lies within the field of attracting forthcoming graduates, the research will be delineated to only focus on the external employer branding. To investigate how forthcoming graduates are attracted to companies, the related aspect of employer attractiveness is found to be of importance, since it encompasses the benefits of working in a company as they are perceived by prospective employees (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). Thus, the following section will focus on discussing employer attractiveness and outlining the relevance to this thesis.

Employer Attractiveness

As the competition for the best employees has become almost as fierce as the competition for customers, organisations are striving even more to differentiate themselves and become an attractive employer for both potential future employees and current employees (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005; Alniaçik & Alniaçik, 2012). As such, it is essential for an organisation to know what attracts prospective applicants. Hence, employer attractiveness has received considerable attention among scholars and researchers in recent years (e.g. Lievens, Decaesteker, & Coetsier, 2001; Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005; Gomes &

Neves, 2011; Elving et al., 2012; Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015; Priyadarshini, Kumar, & Jha, 2017).

Employer attractiveness is defined as "*[…] the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organisation"* (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005, p. 155). These benefits are one thing which is sought to be promoted in the employer branding efforts in order to attract potential future employees (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). However, worth noticing is that some authors define and use the term employer attractiveness and organisational attractiveness identically, i.e. the definition applied above from Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) is used to define organisational attractiveness as well (e.g. Joseph, Sahu & Khan, 2013; Alnıaçıka et al., 2014). We propose a critique of the uniform use of the two terms. Though the two terms have similarities, we still believe them to differ from each other. As defined by Edwards (2009), corporate branding efforts are focused on presenting the organisation as a whole to an external audience, and in connection to this, we argue that organisational attractiveness, contrary to employer attractiveness, not only partially will influence potential and current employees, but also stakeholders and consumers. A further outline and discussion of corporate branding in relation to employer attractiveness will be introduced later on in this thesis.
In relation to the previous argument, we will persist to use the term employer attractiveness throughout this study in order to create consistency for the reader.

In 2005, Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) developed the Employer Attractiveness Scale (EmpAt Scale). The EmpAt Scale comprises 25 items divided into a five-factor structure, which is a refinement of the three dimensions proposed by Ambler and Barrow (1996) as the functional, psychological and economic aspects. The five attractiveness factors of the EmpAt Scale comprise *interest value, social value, economic value, development value,* and *application value* (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). These five factors assess to what extent an organisation can offer: (1) interest value: creative products and services, and a stimulating job with an innovative working environment and practices; (2) social value: a positive, social and interpersonal environment; (3): economic value: e.g. wages above average, job security and promotion opportunities; (4) development value: the development of skills, recognition and career-enhancing experiences; and (5) application value: the opportunity of conveying knowledge and expertise to other co-workers or customers (Reis & Braga, 2016).

As already mentioned, the field of employer attractiveness has received significant attention from several authors, and thus, Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) are not the only ones who have sought to classify the attributes related to employer attractiveness. Through time, researchers have proposed different classifications of the attractiveness factors or attributes which attract potential future employees to an organisation (Reis & Braga, 2016). In a study by Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012), the authors proposed four groups of factors in relation to the employer attractiveness. These four groups where: (1) economic attributes: e.g. a high salary, employment safety, rewards and bonuses and fair working schedules; (2) psychological factors: e.g. teamwork, a supportive and healthy corporate culture and positive relationships with co-workers; (3) functional factors: e.g. career-enhancing opportunities, training, work content and the ability to utilise knowledge and skills fully; and (4) organisational factors: e.g. the company's history, scope of international activities, consumer brand reputation and style and reputation of the top-management (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012). Contrary, O'Brien (1995) found that the attributes should be divided into cognitive (assessment of consistency, fairness, competence and reliability) and affective (faith in support, openness, concern and care). However, worth mentioning is, that this study was conducted on the basis of what attributes were found as being the basis for trust building in a firm (O'Brien, 1995). But, as discussed by O'Brien, trust is seen as an unquestioned asset in many firms. This is problematic, as people do not want to apply for an untrustworthy organisation, and low trust will concurrently lead to poor motivation and an insufficient working contribution among current employees, which may decrease the competitiveness of the organisation (O'Brien, 1995).

A third view on the classification of attributes related to employer attractiveness comes from Chambers et al. (1998), who classified the attributes into four groups based on the attraction and retention of potential and current employees. In this context, Chambers et al. (1998) posit that both potential and current employees are attracted and retained to the organisation on the basis of the benefits they may receive from the employer. The four groups are: (1) emotional benefits: the soft employment offer in the sense of culture, teamwork and empowerment; (2) rational benefits: standard employment elements such as working hours, location, development potential and training; (3) tangible associations: the products and services and the company's overall success; and (4) intangible associations: the mission, vision and values of the organisation (Chambers et al., 1998).

Lastly, in a more recent study compared to the above-mentioned, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) divide the employer attributes into instrumental and symbolic attributes, where the

former relates to the objective offers from the organisation, i.e. salary, compensation packages, location, working schedule etc. The symbolic attributes, in turn, is the subjective offers which an employee may personally gain from working at the organisation (e.g. prestige and innovativeness).

As previously mentioned, some authors have criticised the vast number of different definitions and discussions of terms related to the field of employer branding which has evolved as a result of the inherently multidisciplinary nature of the phenomenon (Theurer et al., 2018). We believe, this critique is substantiated by the various distinct classifications as seen above. However, in this cornucopia of literature focusing on classifying the attributes related to employer attractiveness, we see a common thread throughout the classifications, and that is distinguishing between 'hard' and 'soft' attributes.

Of the above-mentioned classifications, the most commonly applied scale of measuring attractiveness is the EmpAt scale proposed by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) (e.g. Alniaçik & Alniaçik, 2012; Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013; Reis & Braga, 2016). The common use of the scale suggests a convergence in the classification of the overall attractiveness factors. Hence, we choose to apply the EmpAt Scale for this thesis. A deliberation on the measure will be presented in the methodology section.

However, as a supplementary tool for this scale we choose to apply the classification by Lievens and Highhouse (2003), also called The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework, since we wish to further examine the difference between these 'hard' and 'soft' attributes, that are reiterated through the different classifications. In this relation, we find the framework by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) appropriate, as we believe it can contribute to examine what type of attributes forthcoming graduates value the most in an organisation, and thus, perhaps which aspect (the hard or soft) should be predominant in campaigns levelled at attracting graduates.

Accordingly, the ensuing section will explain and discuss The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework by Lievens and Highhouse (2003).

The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework

Over time, research has confirmed that prospective applicants' early impressions of an organisation's image as an employer are strong predictors of whether the applicants are attracted to the organisation (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, 2007; Van Hoye, Bas, Cromheecke, & Lievens, 2013). Consequently, organisations need to differentiate themselves

from competitors, and may face challenges in doing so, particularly if those competitors are within the same industry, since similarities may then occur (Maurer, Howe, & Lee, 1992; Thomas & Wise, 1999; Taylor & Collins, 2000). As such, it is important for organisations as employers to highlight the correct employer brand attributes in order to stand out from the competitors in the minds of potential applicants (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

As already discussed in previous sections, there have been numerous attempts to classify which attributes are related to the attractiveness of an organisation as an employer and, thus, the attraction of and intention to apply by potential applicants (O'Brien, 1995; Chambers et al., 1998; Kucherov and Zavyalova, 2012). Lievens and Highhouse (2003) also attempted to do this, where they found the literature of that time to be bounded solely to the tangible attributes of an employer, i.e. salary, location, career opportunities and organisational structure (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). In relation to this, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) criticised the sole focus on the tangible employer attributes, as they believed that those were less useful for the purpose of differentiating the organisation from its competitors, as prospective applicants would probably not perceive them as distinctive. Thus, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) posited that the attraction of prospective applicants could not entirely be explained on the basis of tangible employer attributes, but also had to encompass intangible attributes.

Today, this view is supported by several authors who have explored both tangible and intangible employer attributes as equal contributors to the attraction and retention of talent (e.g. Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens, 2007; Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2010; Van Hoye et al., 2013). According to Reis and Braga (2016), the intangible attributes should be the centre of any attraction-retention strategy, as such attributes are difficult for competitors to copy, and thus makes an organisation stand out, making it easier for current and prospective employees to identify with the employer.

In continuation of this, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) also emphasise the power which lies within the use of employer branding, especially in the case of symbolic meanings and attributes. The symbolic associations or meanings of an employer brand are said to play a significant role in the effort of resonating with potential applicants in order to match the personal values and enhance the chance of attracting the applicants (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Therefore, it is relevant to take a closer look at what is distinguished between as the instrumental attributes and symbolic attributes of an employer brand.

For the purpose of defining the instrumental and symbolic attributes of an employer brand, we will apply The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework by Lievens & Highhouse (2003). The framework has its foundation in marketing literature, specifically originating from the term brand image (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). As defined by Keller (1993), a brand image consists of perceptions associated with both product-related and non-product-related attributes, and functional and symbolic benefits as mirrored in the brand associations held in the consumers' memory. Expressed in a simpler way, consumers could be said to associate both instrumental and symbolic attributes with a product brand (Keller, 1993). In a corresponding vein, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) proposed, as some of the first authors, that the same classification could be applied to a recruitment context, i.e. the employer brand, hence, The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework was developed (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

In their study, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) propose several implications of The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework to the area of applicants' initial attraction to employers. The authors propose that the instrumental attributes of an employer partially explain why applicants are initially attracted to an organisation (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The instrumental attributes are defined as the objective and factual attributes, or the characteristics of the job in terms of salary, bonuses, working hours, location and benefits. These characteristics may enhance the application intentions among applicants primarily due to their utility, meaning their possibility of minimising the costs and maximising the benefits for a potential employee (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

Contrary to the above, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) posit in their framework that a prospective applicant's initial attraction to an employer cannot be explained entirely by instrumental job attributes. The symbolic attributes are of equal importance (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). These attributes are the subjective and intangible traits that the employer may have succeeded in creating through e.g. advertising or public campaigns. These could be traits such as innovativeness, environmental awareness and prestige, which potential applicants may assign to an organisation (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). According to Slaughter et al. (2001), these traits or symbolic attributes were related to the attractiveness of an employer, and this attractiveness would be enhanced for a potential applicant if the symbolic traits assigned to the employer were similar to the traits of the applicant. More recent studies have also discussed the importance of symbolic attributes and argued that these are what differentiates an organisation from competitors and, thus, enhances the attractiveness (Srivastava and Bhatnagar, 2010; Reis & Braga, 2016).

In relation to the view of Slaughter et al. (2001), it has by some researchers been argued that the prioritisation and perceived attractiveness of employer attributes may vary among job seekers if they are from different nationalities. This is due to the diverse cultures and demographic characteristics (Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016). Additionally, according to Cable and Turban (2001), the employer attributes may also be prioritised differently by potential applicants, due to their different needs and expectations which they may have in relation to a job. Some applicants may have the need of receiving a high salary due to personal economic conditions, while others may value the good workplace relationships above all (Reis & Braga, 2016).

Thus, the importance of understanding the attractiveness aspect in relation to different nationalities and personal characteristics should be emphasised. Therefore, we propose that the personal characteristics will play a role in determining the importance of the instrumental and symbolic attributes (Slaughter et al., 2001; Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016).

Based on the arguments above, we hypothesise that:

H_1: *The importance of instrumental and symbolic attributes is influenced by personal characteristics.*

The Connection Between Employer Attractiveness & Intentions to Apply

Based on extant literature employer attractiveness seems to be connected to the prospective candidates' intentions to apply (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Wei et al., 2016; Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Terjesen, Vinnicombe, & Freeman, 2007). Thus, this section seeks to further clarify the relationship between the two.

The goal of employer branding is concerned with creating application intentions among potential candidates. According to Sharma and Prasad (2018), the intent to join an organisation "*[…] is a decision any candidate takes to pursue an organisation as its employer*" (p. 537). Furthermore, it has been argued that determining the application intentions of prospective candidates is an essential resource for companies since it will affect the effectiveness of recruitment (Gomes & Neves, 2010). Gomes and Neves (2011) argue that the effectiveness is enhanced when the companies understand the application intentions because then the companies are better suited to target the potential applicants.

Application intentions is a widely discussed topic that has been researched in different fields, whereof employer branding is one of those. Various studies have underlined the relationship

between employer branding and intentions to apply (e.g. Prasad, 2017; Aslam, 2015; Agrawal & Swaroop, 2009), and the literature on the subject, provides diverse aspects as explanations for the connection. Some highlight the perceived attributes related to the employer brand as antecedents of establishing application intentions (Agrawal & Swaroop, 2009; Prasad, 2017; Saini, Gopal & Kumari, 2015), and especially in the early recruitment stage, the perceived attributes are functioning as a mediator of the intentions (Agrawal & Swaroop, 2009). Furthermore, the employer attractiveness is argued to be related to the establishment of application intentions among potential candidates, thus, indicating a positive relationship between the two constructs (Aslam, 2015; Saini, Rai, & Chaudhary, 2014). This argument has further been supported in different studies throughout time by authors such as Lemmink, Schuijf, and Streukens (2003), Gomes and Neves (2010), Gomes and Neves (2011), Saini, Rai, and Chaudhary (2014), Saini, Gopal, and Kumari (2015), Prasad (2017), Kumari and Saini (2018), and Sharma and Prasad (2018).

In a simple manner, Gomes and Neves (2010) stated that the employer attractiveness from a potential applicant's point of view is a developed attitude expressing desirability or favourability towards the firm as an employer. In a more recent study by the same authors, this viewpoint was stressed once again but this time emphasising that there may be different individual perceptions of the employer attractiveness (Gomes & Neves, 2011). These individual differences occur just as in a consumer-related context, where each consumer possesses different needs, goals and wants, resulting in different perceptions of what products or services are the most attractive, or in this context; employers. The aforementioned desirability and, therefore, employer attractiveness will enhance the intentions to apply and, thus, this connects the two concepts (Gomes & Neves, 2010).

Another modern way of assessing the attractiveness of an employer is the worldwide employer attractiveness surveys. An example of the application of these surveys to scholarly research is seen in a study by Aslam (2015) where the surveys showed that several of the world's most well-known companies, such as Google, EY, PWC and Deloitte, was placed in the top as the most attractive employers among 117.000 students and job seekers in Asia and Europe. What Aslam (2015) argues by this, is that the employer attractiveness and the intentions to apply are enhanced to a superior level when familiarity with the organisation is present. So, not said that a small company is not suited to achieve the attractiveness as an employer, but the bigger and more internationally well-known companies will be a step ahead because of their familiarity (Saini, Rai, & Chaudhary, 2014; Aslam, 2015).

As stressed by Wei et al. (2016), the attractiveness of an employer cannot solely explain job applicants' intentions to apply, since choices related to employment are often decisions influencing the individual on a long-term basis. Especially related to career development, the decision-making processes involve several explanatory concepts and, thus, this is what makes the employment decisions stand out from consumer decisions related to buying behaviour (Wei, Chang, Lin, & Liang, 2016). Regarding the explanatory concepts involved in the employment decisions, we draw a connection to our previous section regarding The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework. To briefly sum up, the instrumental and symbolic attributes have been argued to influence the employer attractiveness and, thus, the intention to apply (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). However, as indicated by Slaughter et al. (2001), a concordance between the traits of the applicant and the attributes of the employer might enhance the perceived attractiveness of the employer. Hence, to further examine the effect that these attributes have on the intention to apply, we wish to apply the Person-Organisation Fit Theory, which will be elaborated further on in the subsequent section.

As already indicated throughout the previous theoretical section, a connection between the employer attractiveness of a company and the application intentions of prospective candidates seems fairly justified. Therefore, the employer attractiveness will be investigated implicitly through the application intentions. This is due to the assumption that if a prospective applicant has the intention to apply for an open job position, they will also find the potential employer attractive.

The Moderating Role of P-O Fit

The Person-Organisation (P-O) Fit Theory can provide useful insights, since it encompasses that the employer attractiveness, hence, the intentions to apply are dependent on the fit between the personal values of potential applicants and the organisation (Kristof, 1996). Thus, the following section will focus on explaining the P-O Fit Theory and how it can contribute to the research of this dissertation.

The Person-Organisation Fit Theory

The P-O Fit Theory was originally advocated by Amy L. Kristof (1996), however, the use of P-O Fit Theory in recruitment practices originates from the *Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) model* developed by Schneider (1987). The essence of the ASA model is that when an individual

is attracted to, selected into and stays within an organisation, the progress in each step is determined by the perceived similarities between the individual and the organisation (Kristof, 1996). By this, it is theorised that the better the applicant's personal values match those of the company, the more likely it is that the applicant sees the employer as attractive.

Originally, P-O Fit has been defined as "*[…] the compatibility between people and organizations that occurs when: (a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or (b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or (c) both*" (Kristof, 1996, pp. 4-5). In connection with the definition, Kristof (1996) recognised the distinction between *supplementary* and *complementary fit*. A supplementary fit happens when the individual has similar characteristics, values, etc. to the organisation, whereas the complementary fit occurs when the characteristics of the individual add something that was missing from the environment (Kristof, 1996).
Especially three parts of the employment experience are argued to affect or be affected by the P-O congruence; (1) organisational entry, (2) socialisation, and (3) long-term outcomes. Regarding *organisational entry*, the perceived P-O Fit in particular (as opposed to actual fit) is seen as an influential factor during the selection process, since the individual and organisation have only little ground for capturing the values, goals and personalities of each other. The *socialisation* aspect of the employment experience is concerned with both organisational socialisations (such as mentorships) and individual socialisation attempts (e.g. attendance at social activities), and it is argued that socialisation can increase the P-O Fit. Finally, there are *long-term outcomes* of P-O Fit as for example turnover, work attitudes, pro-social behaviour, work performance and organisational outcomes (Kristof, 1996). Of these three, the most relevant to focus on in relation to this dissertation is the organisational entry, since we wish to investigate what attracts the forthcoming graduates. Thus, following the view presented by Kristof (1996), the perceived P-O Fit (contrary to actual P-O Fit) is an important aspect to focus on for our research. This view is further supported by the study of Carless (2005), who found that prior to and during selection, the P-O Fit perceptions function as predictors of the individuals' attraction to organisations. However, the actual job choice was not found to be influenced by perceived P-O Fit (Carless, 2005). The study by Judge and Cable (1997) had some years earlier found that P-O Fit was related to the attraction to the organisation, however, contrary to the findings of Carless (2005), they pointed out, that this attraction was related to decisions on whether to accept or decline an actual job offer (Judge & Cable, 1997). Thus, there is incongruence in the literature on whether it affects the actual job choices. Though, for this thesis, the divergence is not seen as an obstacle since the purpose is to

investigate how employer branding can establish intentions to apply among forthcoming graduates. Consequently, we are primarily interested in determining how the prospective candidates can be attracted and not whether these intentions are related to actual job choices.

The theoretical perspective of P-O Fit has been investigated by various scholars (e.g. Judge & Cable, 1997; Lievens, Decaesteker, Coetsier, & Geimaert, 2001; Terjesen, Vinnicombe, & Freeman, 2007; Wei et al., 2016). Among other things, the perspective has been applied to investigate the relationship between an organisation's corporate image and application intentions (Wei et al., 2016). Findings from the study showed that a corporate image, or brand, has the ability to raise a perceived fit between job seekers and a company, by inducing a perception of having similar values to the applicant, and, thus, positively influence the intention to apply. Therefore, P-O Fit was found to be a full mediator of a positive relationship between corporate image and intention to apply. In another study, carried out by Carless (2005), the P-O Fit perspective was applied in connection to examining how the theory could help in predicting organisational attractiveness and intentions to accept a job offer. Most importantly, the author found that P-O Fit perceptions would predict the organisational attraction, meaning that the applicants' perceived match between their own needs, values, and goals to those of the company, positively influenced their perception of the organisation as an attractive place to work (Carless, 2005). However, worth mentioning is, that P-O Fit was not found to influence the intention to accept a job offer (Carless, 2005). Though, as already mentioned previously in this section, the focus of this thesis is towards the intentions to apply among forthcoming graduates and, therefore, we do not see this as a limitation for further noticing.

Another aspect of researching P-O Fit has been presented by Lievens et al. (2001) and Terjesen, Vinnicombe, and Freeman (2007) who focused on determining what graduates are attracted to from a P-O Fit perspective. They investigated this aspect by looking at what the samples of graduates perceive as important factors.
The study by Lievens et al. (2001) researched final-year students in Belgium, and the findings revealed a stronger attraction towards multinational, medium-sized and large-sized organisations and organisations with a decentralised structure (Lievens et al., 2001). The authors emphasise that even though the study was carried out among a relatively homogeneous sample, variance among the students were found. This means that some organisations will experience more difficulty in recruiting their desired applicants, as for

example, national organisations will find it harder to attract open, creative and independent individuals, because these would be more attracted towards multinational companies (Lievens et al., 2001).

A different study by Terjesen, Vinnicombe, and Freeman (2007) was carried out among university students from various schools in the United Kingdom. They found that the students were especially attracted to five organisational attributes; (1) heavy investment in training and development of employees, (2) care for employees as individuals, (3) opportunities for career progression on a long term, (4) variety in daily work and (5) a business approach that is dynamic and forward-looking. They also studied the diversity between sex where they found differences between the importance of organisational attributes and the extent to whether they are present in organisations. When the respondents were asked to describe their ideal employer, women rated eight attributes higher. Of those eight were for example friendly, informal culture and requirement of only working standard hours. Contrasting, the men only rated one attribute as more important, which was a high starting salary. Based on the thoughts from P-O Fit, these attributes highlighted by the respondents are individual values and opinions of the prospective candidates that they search for in an employer. Finally, the authors found a relationship between these attributes and whether the candidates would have intentions to apply (Terjesen, Vinnicombe, & Freeman, 2007).

Consequently, it will be relevant for our study to focus on which attributes that attract forthcoming graduates to a potential employer since these attributes will most likely be determinants of whether they establish application intentions based on a perceived fit with the organisation. It should be further noted that the studies mentioned above have been carried out in two different countries, so taking their findings and applying them directly to the research sample of our study would potentially be misleading, since cultural differences might occur between populations living in different countries (Lievens et al., 2001). Therefore, only the main conclusions (and not the specific attributes) of the studies will be used for guiding our research.

Concluding, the perceived P-O Fit is argued to be affecting the employer attractiveness, where the greater match between personal values, opinions, etc. with those of the organisation, will lead to increased application intentions among prospective applicants (Kristof, 1996). Assuming that the attractiveness encompasses the attributes which, as argued earlier, are divided into instrumental and symbolic attributes, the P-O Fit would be a moderator of those and, therefore, the intention to apply.

Hence, we posit that:

H_{2A}: *The impact of instrumental attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*
H_{2B}: *The impact of symbolic attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*

The Impact of the Corporate Brand on the Intention to Apply

In the process of building a strong employer brand, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) emphasise that it is crucial that the employer branding efforts are also practised for supporting and amplifying both the product brand and corporate brand. By this, it is implied that the employer brand should be consistent with those (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).
In relation to the above, we believe it is appropriate to wonder whether the corporate brand and employer brand, may either fortify or actually deteriorate each other. The argument for this derives from the thought that our research segment, namely graduates, not only should be seen as potential employees but also consumers.
Thus, the ensuing section will define the differences and similarities between the product brand, corporate brand and employer brand, and discuss the contributions, or potential gaps, in the literature concerning the potential impact of the corporate brand on the employer brand. We find this relevant, as the discussion may contribute with important insights into what may possibly affect the application intentions of forthcoming graduates.

The employer brand, product brand and corporate brand share some similarities, among others that all three are focused on creating and sustaining a positive image in the minds of consumers, stakeholders, employees, etc. (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). However, two key differences should be emphasised. The first is, that the employer brand characterises the organisation's identity as an employer, thus making it employment specific. Secondly, the employer branding is targeted at both the internal (e.g. current employees) and external (e.g. potential applicants) audiences whereas the product and corporate branding efforts mainly focus on the external audience (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).
However, though product branding is focused on how a product is presented to the consumers, and corporate branding considers how the organisation as a whole is presented to the external audience, and employer branding is targeted at current and potential employees (Edwards, 2009), we believe it to be highly relevant, as already stated, to discuss how these may influence each other.

As previously mentioned, forthcoming graduates are not only potential future employees but also consumers. As such, it could be presumed that the product and/or corporate brand could have a spillover effect on the employer brand and, thus, the choice of employer, if the graduates associate the employer with e.g. inferior products or unethical business conduct. As argued by Agrawal and Swaroop (2009), the attractiveness of an employer is highly influenced by the perceptions a prospective applicant holds about a company when considering it as a potential employer. Therefore, if the applicant perceives the company as having a negative overall corporate brand, we assume, that this probably will be reflected in the company's brand as an employer. Thus, the corporate brand may potentially influence the employer attractiveness and, consequently, the application intentions of potential applicants.
However, in relation to this, only few researchers have studied the influence of the product and corporate brand on the employer brand and, thus, the employer attractiveness (Lemmink, Schuijf & Streukens, 2003; Mokina, 2014). From the two studies, however, the results emphasise the relevance of understanding the synergy between the three types of branding and backs up our presumption, that both the product and/or corporate brand may influence the employer brand (Lemmink, Schuijf & Streukens, 2003; Mokina, 2014). Lemmink, Schuijf, and Streukens (2003) conclude in their study, that a positive corporate image will form the basis for a positive employer image, meaning that companies are not capable of creating an employer brand without a corporate brand as the foundation. However, both the corporate brand and the employer brand are strong antecedents of the choice of employer and, consequently, the intention to apply for graduate business students (Lemmink, Schuijf, & Streukens, 2003). Thus, the findings deriving from this study suggests that the corporate brand actually influences the application intentions of graduate business students to a stronger degree than the employer brand (Lemmink, Schuijf, & Streukens, 2003). In a more recent study by Mokina (2014), the relationship between the employer brand, the product brand, and the corporate brand, and how they affect each other has been examined. The results yield that the product brand has the strongest influence on the employer brand, meaning that the stronger the product brand is, the more attractive the company will be as an employer (Mokina, 2014).
As such, these two studies contribute with some knowledge and confirmation to our assumptions but to the best of our knowledge, we believe it is adequate to state that the research in the area is insufficient.

This presumption is also found in two studies from 2004 and 2016 (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Backhaus, 2016). In the study by Backhaus and Tikoo from 2004, they propose a future research agenda which includes the question of how employer branding, product branding and corporate branding either enhance or detract from the other (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Similarly, in the more recent research by Backhaus (2016), the suggestions for future research in the area of employer branding encompasses the question of to what extent corporate branding may influence employer branding and vice versa.

In relation to the above suggestions for future research, we wish to examine how the corporate brand may enhance or detract from the employer brand. The product brand is disregarded in this context, as we believe it would simply be too complex to include. This is due to the fact that there is an endless amount of different product types, and that we believe the product type itself would affect the perception of the product brand. As a result, the focus will only be directed towards the corporate brand in the rest of this thesis.

Based on the arguments presented above, we propose that the corporate brand is connected to the employer brand and, thus, also affects the perceived employer attractiveness. As a result, we hypothesise the following:

H_3: *The corporate brand influences the intention to apply.*

In relation to the above discussion about the influence of the corporate brand and as discussed earlier, the personal characteristics of prospective applicants may influence the importance of the attributes of a potential employer (Slaughter et al., 2001; Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016). Therefore, in relation to the section above, we argue that the personal characteristics can also influence the intention to apply through the preferences related to the employer attractiveness attributes and corporate brand. This leads to the fourth hypothesis:

H_4: *The impact of employer attractiveness attributes and corporate brand on the intention to apply is influenced by personal characteristics.*

Conceptual Framework

For the purpose of creating a complete overview and synthesis of the theoretical contributions and the developed hypotheses, we present the following conceptual framework. The aim of the conceptual framework is to present the key variables of our study and show how they are interrelated. In addition, the framework serves as guidance for our research.

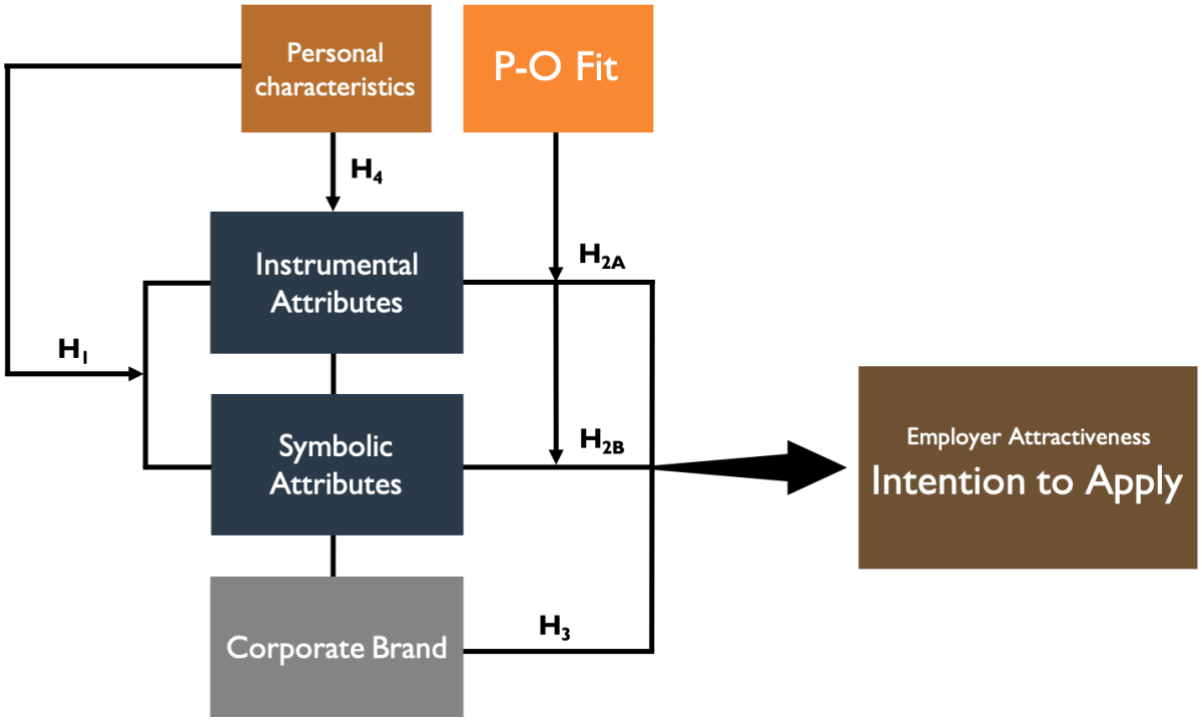

Figure 1 *- Conceptual Framework*

As the first variables to explain in the framework, we have the three boxes containing the instrumental attributes, the symbolic attributes and the personal characteristics. These were through The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) defined and discussed according to their potential influence on gaining a competitive advantage and enhancing the employer attractiveness, hence, the intention to apply. However, as emphasised the personal characteristics may influence the relative importance of these attributes (Slaughter et al., 2001; Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016).

Thus, the related hypothesis H_1 posited that:

H_1: *The importance of instrumental and symbolic attributes is influenced by personal characteristics.*

When discussing the influence and importance of the instrumental attributes and symbolic attributes of an employer, the theoretical contributions of this topic, turned towards focusing

on how significant this impact would be. In relation to this, we adopted the Person-Organisation Fit Theory and, therefore, this is the next variable in our conceptual framework. As emphasised in the chapter of P-O Fit, the perceived P-O Fit between a prospective applicant and an employer is argued to affect the employer attractiveness, hence, the intentions to apply. Depending on the fit, the effect can be both positive and negative (Kristof, 1996). Therefore, following the assumption that the application intentions consists of employer attractiveness encompassing the instrumental and symbolic attributes, the P-O Fit will function as a moderator. This resulted in the following hypotheses:

H_{2A}: *The impact of instrumental attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*
H_{2B}: *The impact of symbolic attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*

Moving along the framework, the next box of focus is the one featuring the corporate brand. Despite insufficient research in the area, findings in the literature indicated that the corporate brand can possibly affect the perceived attractiveness of an employer, as potential applicants may already have experienced the company from a consumer context. The third hypothesis was, therefore, formulated as:

H_3: *The corporate brand influences the intention to apply.*

Finally, the last hypothesis displayed through the arrow named H_4 is to be explained. In relation to the corporate brand and P-O Fit, the personal characteristics of prospective applicants are hypothesised to influence the importance of the attributes of a potential employer (Slaughter et al., 2001; Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016). Hence, it is argued that personal characteristics can influence the intention to apply through the preferences related to the employer attractiveness attributes and corporate brand. This leads to the fourth hypothesis:

H_4: *The impact of employer attractiveness attributes and corporate brand on the intention to apply is influenced by personal characteristics.*

In order to apply the conceptual framework and examine the research question, a thorough discussion of the research methodology and techniques is needed. This discussion will be conducted in the next chapter.

Research Methodology

In the ensuing chapter, the methodological design of this research will be presented. The purpose of this is to familiarise the reader with the methodological views and ultimate presumptions of us as researchers. The chapter will initially hold a section encompassing the methodological deliberations. Next, the methods and techniques used in this thesis will be defined. This includes an explanation of the research design, the survey design and the techniques that will be used for the data analysis of this dissertation as well as a clarification of the parameters used for assessing the quality of the research.

Philosophy of Science

As a fundamental part of conducting a research, scholars from the philosophy of science have argued that whether or not a researcher is aware of it, prior underlying assumptions will play a significant role in designing a study (Kuada, 2012). Adopting the classification from Kuada (2012), these assumptions are related to ontology, epistemology and methodological decisions which will be discussed later on in this section. Specifically, these assumptions will help us as researchers reflect upon our work and assist our reader in understanding the thesis even better.

Within the philosophy of science, a general distinction is made between the two overall approaches to research, namely the *objective approach* and the *subjective approach* (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). These two approaches are among some scholars also defined as the positivistic paradigm and the interpretive paradigm (Kuada, 2012). Depending on what type of approach you take as a researcher, it will entail a certain methodological view which to a large extent will determine the direction of the study, as it for example might influence the method of data collection. Hence, the view will function as *"[...] a guide for the creator of knowledge"* (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009, p. 6).

When focusing on the two distinct approaches a further explanation is needed. The objective approach is generally considered as a quantitative research approach, emphasising quantification in the collection and analysis of the data (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Furthermore, the objective approach often takes a deductive orientation to the role of theory in relation to the research, meaning that the goal is to test theories. This approach, therefore, entails methods of natural science and embodies the view that social reality is external and objective. Contrasting, Bryman and Bell (2011) define the subjective approach as being focused towards

the individual and words rather than statistics and quantification. This approach, therefore, rejects natural science and emphasises social science, as it adopts the view that reality is an emergent property of the individual's creation. The principal orientation to the role of theory in research is inductive, meaning that the focus is on generating theory (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For this thesis, the objective approach, i.e. the positivistic paradigm, will be applied and guide the research, giving this study a deductive orientation. As defined by Burrell and Morgan (1979) the positivistic paradigm *"[…] seeks to explain and predict what happens in the social world by searching for regularities and causal relationships between its constituent elements"* (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 5). Additionally, the approach also focuses on generalisation and often entails hypotheses and existing theory as the basis for a conclusion (Kuada, 2012), which, therefore, supports the use of existing theories and the development of the hypotheses in the earlier chapters. The approach is suitable for this dissertation, due to our research question asking how employer branding may affect application intentions. In order to answer this, our research seeks to search for causal relationships between these two constructs, and their underlying concepts through a quantitative study.

The purpose of the next three sections is to explain the assumptions related to the ontology, epistemology and methodological decisions, and which considerations we have given to each of the three.

Ontology

The assumptions related to ontology are concerned with the nature of reality and are by Burrell and Morgan (1979) defined as *"[…] assumptions which concern the very essence of the phenomena under investigation"* (Burrell & Morgan, 1979, p. 1). The ontological assumptions also classified into an objective viewpoint and a subjective viewpoint, meaning the assumptions are decisive. Possessing assumptions involving that the social world is external to the individual, entails an objective view, while the contrary, assuming the social world to be a property of individual cognition means having a subjective view (Kuada, 2012).

Aligned with the objective approach, we have chosen for this thesis, we presume the social world to be external and separate from the individual. We believe this view supports our study, as it encompasses that our key concepts, i.e. employer branding and application intentions, can be observed and measured. Indeed, it also entails that different underlying factors may play a role in determining whether a company may succeed with their employer branding and, preferably, create application intentions. These underlying factors are among

others P-O Fit and The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework, and we believe that more could be uncovered through an objective and quantitative research.

Epistemology

"Epistemology is a term that describes the nature of knowledge and the means of knowing (i.e., "how we know what we know" or what we conceive as a truth)" (Kuada, 2012, p. 59). By this definition, Kuada (2012) states that the assumptions related to the epistemology interfere with how we as researchers acquire our knowledge, processes it and conveys it to others. Burrell and Morgan (1979) distinguish between knowledge as being either tangible or intangible. Tangible knowledge can be acquired as an external researcher while intangible knowledge has to be experienced, i.e. person to person, meaning acquired in an intersubjective process (Burrell & Morgan, 1979).

In line with our objective approach, our epistemological assumptions entail that our knowledge can be acquired externally. This view, therefore, supports the use of quantitative methods. Furthermore, the background knowledge for this study is acquired through already existing theories. Altogether, we believe these sources of knowledge can contribute to answering the research question of this thesis.

Methodological Decisions

Arbnor and Bjerke (2009) suggest three different methodological approaches for the overall strategy of the entire research. The methodological decisions related to this will help in uncovering the necessary knowledge for this dissertation. The three methodological approaches are named *the analytical approach, the systems approach* and *the actors approach* (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). These will be explained in the subsequent section.

The analytical, systems and actors approach are three distinct approaches to research. First, according to Arbnor and Bjerke (2009), the analytical approach is the most 'formal' approach of the three. Here, the researcher deals with the factual and ascertainable, meaning there is more to 'hold on to'. The reality is viewed as having a summative character which often signifies a degradation of the research question(s) giving a number of subproblems, which in the end is analysed, solved and unified into a new whole (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). As stated by Kuada (2012), this approach allows the researcher to study reality in an objective way.

The systems view holds a different set of ultimate presumptions about reality. Here, reality is assumed to be consisting of several systems which each consists of related components (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009). The purpose of the systems approach is to examine how changes in those components may affect its system or perhaps create synergies. Moreover, reality is seen as being full of both objective and subjective facts (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009).
Lastly, the actors approach is the most subjective approach of the three. Reality is assumed to build upon human beings and, therefore, functions as a social construction. As a result, the emphasis in this approach is on the individual meanings and personal understandings related to the research area (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009).

The aim of this thesis is to answer the research question of this study, namely; *how can employer branding affect the intentions of forthcoming graduates to apply for a job position?* In order to examine this, we have, as already stated, chosen an objective approach for the study. Thus, this excludes the actors approach due to its highly subjective nature. Furthermore, as variables or causes in a research conducted with the analytical approach often are treated *ceteris paribus*, usually rendered as "all other things being equal" (Arbnor & Bjerke, 2009), we preclude this approach as well and choose the systems approach for this dissertation. The reasoning behind this choice is illustrated in our conceptual framework, where the concepts, or variables, of our study, is seen as connected, meaning that e.g. instrumental and symbolic attributes may have an influence on the employer attractiveness, but the personal characteristics may affect this influence as well. Thus, we look at the interlinkages between the concepts and how synergies may emerge from here and, thereby, influence the establishment of application intentions among forthcoming graduates.

Methods & Techniques

The ensuing chapter will provide an overview of the methods and techniques used for this study. These include the choice of research design with the purpose of clarifying the approach to answering the research question and a further decomposing of the method for data collection. Additionally, this section will elaborate on how the data analysis is approached in terms of justifying the measures for analysing the hypotheses of the research. Finally, a presentation on how to assess the quality of the study will be outlined to specify the quality criteria to focus on during the data collection and the analysis.

The overall objective of this chapter is to make the research transparent to the reader and clarify the approach of the study. Also, the procedures presented will be brought along to the analysis, so, the views presented justify the angle for addressing the collected data.

Research Design

Prior to initiating the research process, it is essential to determine what research design will be used. The research design is *"[…] a framework for the collection and analysis of data*" (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 40). So, the choice of design impacts how the research question is approached, and it functions as a guide on how the data is collected and analysed in order to reach the right conclusions.

Numerous types of research designs exist, however, some of the most common ones are experimental, cross-sectional, longitudinal, case study and comparative design (Bryman & Bell, 2011). For our research, the overall type of design is an *experimental design.* This design is appropriate for research where independent variables are manipulated or varied in controlled environments with the purpose of observing the effect on dependent variables (Bryman & Bell, 2011). When the experiment involves two or more independent variables, and the researcher is concerned with not only the effect each variable has but also the interaction between the variables, it would be appropriate to consider the type of experimental design called *factorial designs*. This design allows the researcher to test both the main effects and interaction effects equally. For this dissertation, it is appropriate to use a factorial design, since we wish to investigate the relationship between the variables of employer attractiveness (in the shape of instrumental and symbolic attributes) and the corporate brand along with the mediating role of P-O Fit and influence of personal characteristics, and their effect on the intentions to apply. Thus, the objective is to investigate both the main effects of each variable and the interactions between them.

Often, factorial designs are associated with experimental studies where the independent variables are manipulated or allowed to vary by the researcher (Powers, Knapp, Dr & Edd, 2010; London & Wright, 2011; Kuhfeld, 2011). In factorial design terminology, the independent variables are named factors, and the different values of each factor are called levels. The combination of factors and levels comprise the number of different groups that exists. So, if a study has two factors each consisting of three levels, the number of possible groups would be 3 x 3 = 9 groups. Should the case not be as simple as two factors with three

levels, the number of groups could get enormous. Thus, the researcher should decide whether to conduct a full or fractional factorial study. A full factorial design includes all groups, whereas a fractional factorial design only takes parts of the groups into account (London & Wright, 2011; Kuhfeld, 2011).

The specific type of factorial design used for this thesis is the *discrete choice experiment design*. This experimental design is especially appropriate for uncovering individual preferences, and it seeks to outline how individuals value specific attributes by asking them to choose between hypothetical alternatives. The design is based on utility theory, thus, the underlying assumption is that the individual will choose the alternative that provides the highest utility (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009). Therefore, it is possible to investigate which factors influence the decision making, and how individuals are willing to make trade-offs based on different attributes (Fields, Bell, Bigbee, Thurston, & Spetz, 2018).

Traditionally, discrete choice experiments have been used in consumer research to investigate consumer preferences among products and services (Prosser & Payne, 2009; Kuhfeld, 2011; Mazzocchi, 2011), however, the design is not limited to this area of research. Several authors have used it to investigate employment preferences (e.g. Scott, 2001; Ubach, Scott, French, Awramenko, & Needham, 2003; Wordsworth, Skåtun, Scott & French, 2004; Winter & Thaler, 2016; Fields et al., 2018). Hence, in a similar vein, we find the design suitable for investigating the perceived employer attractiveness, corporate branding, and application intentions of forthcoming graduates.

One of the advantages of the discrete choice experiments is that the way individuals are asked to choose between different alternatives is a straightforward task, and it comes close to reflect a real-world decision (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009).

The most common research instrument for a discrete choice experiment is a survey, which also is the applied research instrument for this study. Specifically, an online self-completion survey will be applied. According to Bethlehem (2009) online surveys, or web surveys, are one of the simplest means to get access to a large group of respondents. Additionally, online surveys are both easy and cost-efficient to launch, making them an advantageous tool (Bethlehem, 2009). We, in addition, find the web survey beneficial due to its accessibility and convenience, as a web survey can be distributed through a variety of channels, allowing respondents to answer the survey on their computer, tablet or phone whenever they have

the time. These are factors which in the end can influence the engagement and response rate, hopefully in a positive way (Bethlehem, 2009).

Among the different scholars using the discrete choice experiment design, there is an overall agreement about the process of carrying out these experiments (e.g. Scott, 2001; Honda & Vio, 2015; Fields et al., 2018). This means that most researchers follow the same process, starting with establishing attributes and assigning attribute levels, followed by designing the choice sets, generating the questionnaire and concluded by the data analysis (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009). The first stage is about establishing which attributes are relevant to the research question. There is not a limit of how many attributes can be included in the discrete choice experiment, but typically, studies will not contain more than 10 attributes, if all attributes should be considered in the study. Also, too many attributes might encourage the participants to make up a simple rule for decision making, where they only base their choice on some of the attributes. When stipulating the attributes, it is important to note that the definitions are appropriate and does not seem ambiguous (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009). It is also relevant to consider which types of attributes are included. Overall, there is a distinction between generic attributes and alternative specific attributes. A generic attribute is an attribute where the utility or benefit is not expected to change when it is connected to different brands (or in the perspective of this study, it would be different potential employers). Contrary, an alternative specific attribute is something, where the utility or benefit is expected to change when it is associated with different potential employers. When it is a study with no brands or specific companies, it is common that all attributes will be generic (Kuhfeld, 2011). Once the attributes are outlined, levels should be assigned to them. The levels will typically reflect the different situations that the participants would actually expect to experience. Thus, it is appropriate to consider that each level is realistic and meaningful (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009).

When the attributes have been established and levels have been assigned, the design of choice sets must take place. These choice sets represent hypothetical alternatives that the participants are asked to choose between. In a well-designed study, every choice set will add more information. The number of choice sets presented to the participants should be considered since the quality of the answers often decline concurrently as more choice sets are presented (Kuhfeld, 2011). Thus, as briefly described in connection to the factorial designs, a discrete choice experiment design involves making a decision on whether to present a full factorial design or a fractional factorial design. A full factorial design will then include all

possible combination of levels and attributes, whereas the fractional factorial design will only include some. If the number of attributes and levels is quite high, it might be impossible to carry out a full factorial design, which is why fractional factorial designs are often used. Should a fractional factorial design be chosen, it is recommended to strive for creating an orthogonal array in order to assure the best outcome. Thus, the design is both balanced and orthogonal. The balance of the design is concerned about whether the attribute levels are occurring equally often, and the design is orthogonal if each pair of attributes and levels occur equally (Mangham, Hanson & McPake, 2009; Kuhfeld, 2011).

As the choice sets are created, the questionnaire should be developed. If a fractional factorial design is used, it is common to include up to 18 choice sets, since it is considered as the practical limit of comparisons that can be completed before boredom sets in. Another consideration when creating the questionnaire is whether or not to include a "choose neither" option (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009; Honda & Vio, 2015). The primary argument for including this option is, that it better simulates a real-world situation because the participant has the opportunity not to pursue any of the jobs. Also, it can limit some of the biases that might occur when respondents are forced to choose. However, the opposing argument is that this option might be used as a way out of making a hard choice. Thus, it might not reflect the actual utility. Furthermore, when respondents choose this option, it does not provide much information about the preferences for attributes (Honda & Vio, 2015). A final consideration of the content of the questionnaire is whether to include personal questions about the participants. It is common practice to include such questions because it makes it possible to analyse the effect of individual characteristics on the choices made. Thus, the analysis can reveal whether preferences exist as a result of certain personal factors (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009; Honda & Vio, 2015; Fields et al., 2018).

When the questionnaire is finished, it is distributed to the target audience and data is collected. As the desired amount of data is achieved, the analysis can take place. This design involves a survey, so naturally, a quantitative approach to both data collection and data analysis is taken (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009).

The following section will outline the quantitative approach and the concepts to be aware of when carrying out quantitative research. A deliberation of the analysis of data will be presented in the section *Data Analysis*.

Quantitative Research

Generally speaking, quantitative research is about quantification in terms of data collection and analysis. Most often, this type of research involves a deductive approach to the relationship between theory and research. This means that existing theory function as the basis for conducting research, which is the case in our research. Furthermore, quantitative research is commonly associated with a positivistic epistemological orientation and an objective perception of reality, which corresponds with the chosen methodology of this research. The main preoccupations of quantitative researchers involves measurement (measuring various concepts), causality (providing explanations for why things are the way they are), generalisation (being able to convert the results to a broader range of people than those involved in the study), and replication (the research should be able to be replicated by others, and thus, have minimal bias) (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The general process of quantitative research begins with elaborating the theory that is functioning as the basis of the study (due to the often-used deductive approach), whereupon, hypotheses are developed (Bryman & Bell, 2011). These steps are followed in this thesis, and they form the section *Theoretical Background & Hypotheses Development*. The next stages in the process of quantitative research involve selecting a research design, research site(s) and subjects/respondents and outlining the measures of concepts (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The research design has been described in the previous section, and the selection of research sites and respondents will be described in the section *Sample*. The measures will be devised in the following section called *Survey Design*. Afterwards, the data collection and analysis of the data are carried out. Finally, the findings and conclusions are developed and formulated (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The last stages of the process will be included in our sections called *Analysis & Findings* and *Conclusion*.

Before digging into the design of the survey, some general terms of quantitative research must be introduced. These include concepts, measures and indicators. The *concepts* of qualitative research comprise the building blocks of theory, i.e. the topics that the research is centralised around (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The concepts of this thesis are employer attractiveness, attributes of attractiveness, P-O Fit, personal characteristics, and corporate branding.

For these concepts to be deployed in research, they must be *measurable*. When they can be measured, concepts can function as independent or dependent variables. Thus, the measures of concepts must be carefully thought through. Furthermore, measurement makes it possible to draw finer distinctions between people, because they form a consistent instrument for

assessing differences. Also, great measures allow for more precise estimates of relationships between concepts. Sometimes, measures might be relatively unambiguously counted (i.e. less directly quantifiable), thus, *indicators* are used to operationalise them. Indicators are either developed by the researcher or something that already exists, and they are used as if they are measures (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The measures and indicators of this study will be decomposed in the subsequent section involving the design of the survey.

Survey Design

Besides outlining the measures and indicators, the following section will encompass the structure of the questionnaire including justification of the questions in relation to measures, indicators and the research design.

Operationalisation of Concepts

In this thesis, it is mostly indicators that are used to measure the concepts. Only the personal characteristics are measured through measurements, which in this research are gender, age, nationality, region of residence (if nationality is Danish), faculty of study, and current semester of study. Gender and age have been chosen as measurements since they are commonly found in similar studies and are basic characteristics used to describe the sample (Scott, 2001; Wordsworth et al., 2004; Winter & Thaler, 2016). Nationality and region of residence have been included due to the international perspective of the thesis, thus, allowing us to investigate potential cultural differences. Faculty of study has been chosen in order to determine whether the findings are applicable for all graduates regardless of their educational background. Finally, the current semester of the respondents is included as a qualification criterion to make sure that only the appropriate participants fulfil the survey.

The concept of employer attractiveness is measured through the 25 factors proposed by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) (see Appendix 2 to find the list of the factors), which have been described previously. The attributes of attractiveness are based on those 25 factors as well, however, they are divided into symbolic and instrumental attributes based on The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003), because we wish to carry out a full factorial design, and it is impossible for the participants to respond to 25 levels of attractiveness, since it would involve too many choice sets. Practically, the division has been carried out based on the definitions of instrumental and symbolic attributes (see Appendix 3 for division based on definitions). As the description of both instrumental and symbolic

attributes was needed for the hypothetical scenarios of the discrete choice experiments, we chose three of the attributes assigned for instrumental attributes and symbolic attributes, respectively. The symbolic attributes were described through; (1) An exciting working environment, (2) Supportive and encouraging colleagues and (3) The opportunity of applying your educational knowledge in practice. The instrumental attributes were described through; (1) An above average salary, (2) An attractive compensation package (bonuses, pension, insurance, vacation etc.), and (3) Great opportunities for promotion.

The corporate brand is measured through positive and negative corporate brands. The positive and negative corporate brands have been defined by researching what people associate with positively perceived brands and similarly, what people associate with negatively perceived brands (Angelovska & Klingemann, 2019; Stebbins, Comen, Sauter, & Stockdale, 2018; RT, 2018). This research of perceptions only contained secondary data obtained through desk research.
The positive corporate brand is described as: *The company is well-known to the public especially for its environmental awareness and ethical business behaviour. In addition, the company is associated with having great working conditions*. The negative corporate brand is defined as: *The company is well-known to the public, especially for using cheap labour from developing countries, and for its use of environmentally damaging chemicals in the production of their products*. Further explanation on how the concepts of employer attractiveness attributes and corporate branding have been incorporated into the survey will follow in the next section.

The P-O Fit is measured through a combination of the respondents' evaluation of the 25 employer attractiveness factors and their choice of companies in the choice sets. Thus, if the 25 factors are evaluated in a way that the respondent can be categorised as e.g. primarily instrumental and then prioritise the companies focusing on instrumental attributes, i.e. a pattern in attractiveness factors is reflected in the choice of company, a P-O Fit would be evaluated to be of importance in establishing application intentions. Oppositely, should a pattern not be found, the P-O Fit would not be found to be of any importance.

Survey Creation

The following section will decompose the different elements of the survey with arguments for the connections to the research design and theoretical aspects in terms of the proposed

hypotheses. Also, an argumentation for the structure of the survey and elements included will be provided.

The survey has been formulated in English since we wish to gain answers from both Danish and international students. We assume that since the target group of the survey is students on their final year of a master's degree in Denmark (hence, they are studying on a high educational level in a highly developed country), a great amount of the focus group will understand the language English. Also, looking at a country-level perspective, the Danes have a very high English proficiency, where they are positioned as the fourth best in Europe in the English Proficiency Index by EF (Education First, n.d.). Thus, it seems reasonable to assume that most people from our target group will understand the survey in English.

When creating questionnaires, one of the issues to overcome is the respondent's inability and/or unwillingness to answer. This inability or unwillingness might originate from different things, however, there are some recommendations on which aspects to take into account while building the survey. These involve considerations like how well the respondent is informed about the topic of investigation, whether the respondent can remember the given situation, whether the context of the question is appropriate, and whether the information asked for is perceived as sensitive (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). The recommendations have been taken into consideration while building the survey, so the probability of the respondents being unable or unwilling to answer is as minimised as possible.

Another issue to notice while building a survey is question-wording. It could be classified as one of the most important aspects since a poorly worded question might result in misleading answers. Some guidelines for avoiding this issue are, among others, to use ordinary and unambiguous words, to avoid biased questions and to avoid implicit assumptions (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). While formulating the questions of this survey, these guidelines have been taken into account. For example, the question connected to the evaluation of the 25 employer attractiveness factors are formulated as *When considering your ideal future employer, how important are the following factors to you?*, followed by the explanation *Please evaluate each factor from highly unimportant to highly important*. The issue of employer attractiveness has been formulated in ordinary words accompanied by an explanation on how to answer. Hence, an effort has been put into all questions to ensure that the questions are answered correctly by the respondents.

Furthermore, the form and layout of the survey have an influence on the respondent's way of answering the survey. Generally speaking, it is considered good practice to divide the questionnaire into multiple sections (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). Thus, the questionnaire has been divided into logical sections, where the cover letter comprises the first section. This is followed by a section with the qualification criteria, a section about the 25 attractiveness factors, a section for each choice set, and a section containing the personal characteristics. The questionnaire is finalised by a section with a thank you note (Appendix 4).

The following paragraphs will elaborate on the different sections of the survey.

Qualification Criteria for The Survey

Advisably, the opening questions of a survey should establish confidence and cooperation of the respondents, thus, they should be interesting, simple and non-threatening. So-called classification questions (e.g. demographic issues) might be perceived as sensitive areas to the respondent, so it is recommended that these questions are saved for the last part of the survey. However, it might sometimes be necessary to include qualifying questions in the beginning to make sure that only the appropriate respondents fulfil the survey. In such situations, classification questions might be necessary to place at the beginning (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). For this survey, we only wish to involve respondents who are on their final year of a master's degree, so if the respondents are not in that stage of their education, they should not answer the questionnaire. Therefore, the first questions of the survey involve classification questions about the respondent's faculty of study and the semester of the education they are currently enrolled in (see Appendix 4 to find the survey). Basically, only the current semester of study is relevant as a qualification criterion, however, to ensure the logical order of the survey (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012), both questions concerning education are introduced in the beginning.

The questions are structured as multiple-choice questions because the respondent should only have the option of choosing between the stated options (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). As the questions are qualification questions, it means, that if the respondents choose the option *I am not on the final year of my master's degree*, they will be directed to a closing section thanking for the interest and explaining that they do not fit the focus group of the study. However, if they choose either of the two other options (*9th semester* or *10th semester*), they will be introduced to the rest of the survey (see Appendix 4).

Importance of Attractiveness Attributes

When the respondents are qualified to answer the survey, they will be directed to the first part of the survey, where they are asked to rate the importance of the 25 attractiveness factors (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).

The question connected to this part of the survey was formulated as: *When considering your ideal future employer, how important are the following factors to you?*. The first half of the sentence has been included to make sure, that the respondents view the 25 factors from an employment perspective and thereby avoid incorrect answers (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012).

Instead of grouping the factors based on whether they have been categorised as symbolic or instrumental, the factors were presented to the respondents in the same order as Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) used in their study. This approach was chosen because the sequence of the factors might influence the responses (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012), so should the factors be grouped by symbolic and instrumental attributes, the respondents might perceive them in a different manner.

To measure the importance of each factor, the response options of the structured question involves a scaled measure. For this question, the Likert scale has been incorporated. The Likert scale is useful for measuring attitudes, and the scale posits that respondents should indicate the degree of agreement or disagreement with various statements. The typical number of response categories is 5, where it might range from *strongly disagree* to *strongly agree* (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). For this survey, we wish to measure the importance of each attribute, i.e. the respondent's attitudes towards the different attributes, which is why this scale is found to be appropriate. Since it is the perceived importance that is to be measured, the five response categories are; (1) Highly unimportant, (2) Unimportant, (3) neither nor, (4) Important, and (5) Highly important.

Choice Sets for The Discrete Choice Experiment

After evaluating the importance of the attractiveness factors, the respondents are presented with the choice sets comprised by hypothetical companies.

The concepts of employer attractiveness attributes and corporate branding function as the main attributes in forming the hypothetical alternatives. Both attributes are categorised as generic since the study will not include specific companies in the hypothetical alternatives.

Thus, the benefit/utility of each attribute is not expected to change, because it will not be connected to specific companies.

The employer attractiveness attributes are represented by two levels, namely the symbolic and instrumental attributes, and likewise, the corporate brand is comprised of two levels, namely a positive and negative corporate brand.

To illustrate the possible combinations of choice sets, the following matrix has been created.

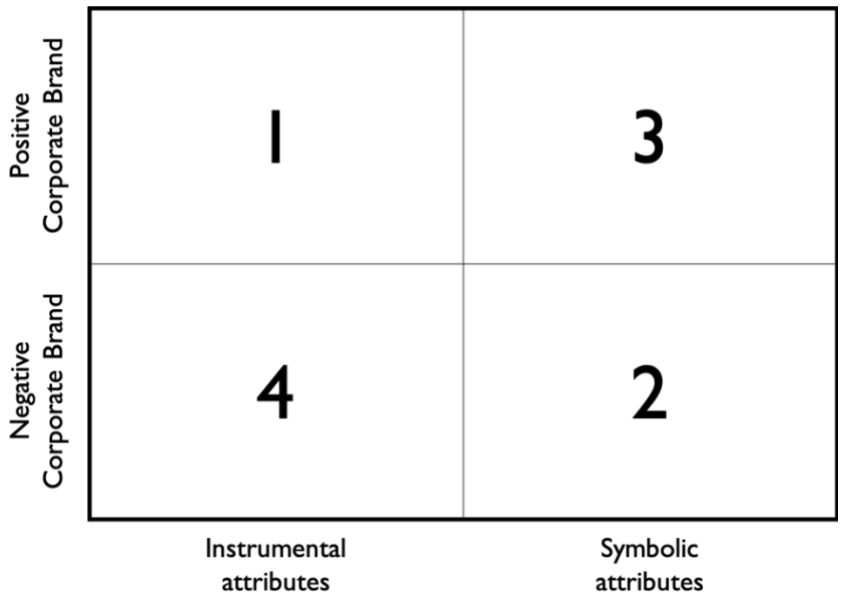

Figure 2 *- Concept Matrix for Hypothetical Scenarios*

The matrix displays four different combinations in terms of the type of attributes and corporate brand. Thus, when constructing the choice sets involving the choice between hypothetical company A or B, the full factorial design of the study holds 8 (2 x 2 x 2 = 8) combinations. However, to avoid creating an overlap between choice sets, only 6 sets have been included in the questionnaire.

Number	Choice A	Choice B
1	Symbolic + Positive	Instrumental + Positive
2	Symbolic + Positive	Symbolic + Negative
3	Symbolic + Positive	Instrumental + Negative
4	Instrumental + Positive	Symbolic + Negative
5	Instrumental + Positive	Instrumental + Negative
6	Symbolic + Negative	Instrumental + Negative

Table 1 *- Choice Sets*

The formulation of the hypothetical alternatives is based on the definitions mentioned in the section *Operationalisation of concepts*, so, for example, the hypothetical company that focuses on symbolic attributes and has a positive corporate brand would be described as:
The company is well-known to the public especially for its environmental awareness and ethical business behaviour. In addition, the company is associated with having great working conditions. The company can offer you: An exciting working environment, supportive and encouraging colleagues, and the opportunity of applying your educational knowledge in practice (Appendix 4). The same descriptions of symbolic attributes, instrumental attributes, a positive corporate brand and a negative corporate brand were used through every choice set to create consistency and avoid bias from different perceptions of different factors.

Each choice set was initiated with an explanation to make sure, that the respondents would think of the company descriptions in the right manner. The description used to initiate every choice set was: *Consider the following company descriptions and characteristics. Imagine that you are looking for a job, and the companies have open job positions. Besides the characteristics mentioned below, you should assume that all other characteristics are the same*. Following the description, the choice set of two hypothetical alternatives (i.e. companies) was presented, and in the end, the respondents were introduced to the structured dichotomous question *In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?*, where they were given the response options *Company A* and *Company B*. The *Choose neither* option (as mentioned previously) was ruled out from this survey, even though it represents a more realistic choice (Honda & Vio, 2015), because it would give the respondents the opportunity to get an easy way out of making a hard choice, and choosing this option would result in a lack of information about the respondents' preferences (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009). Thus, it is assumed that when a full factorial design is used, the respondent evaluates every choice set possible, so should there be an alternative, where the respondent would not even consider applying, the overall preferences would be expressed in the other choice sets.

When constructing a questionnaire, it is recommended to visually divide it into several sections, making it easier to cope with (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). This recommendation is taken into account in this survey, where each choice set is represented on its own page. Besides making the survey more visually manageable, the intention was also to minimise confusion and ensure that the respondent is answering the question in relation to the right choice set.

Before distributing the survey, the sequence of choice sets has been randomised to minimise biased responses (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009).

Personal Characteristics

As mentioned earlier, the classification questions might be regarded as sensitive questions, which is why, it is advisable to save them for the end of the survey (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012). The personal characteristics valued as important for this research are considered as classification questions, which is why, only the necessary qualification questions (about educational issues) are stated in the beginning, and the rest is included as the final part of the questionnaire.

The question about the gender of the respondent is stated as a multiple-choice structured question, where the respondent can choose between *Female*, *Male*, or *Other* (Appendix 4). The option *Other* has been included because of the recent debate about gender identification where some might be offended by only being given the option of male and female (Kerrn-Jespersen, 2016; Meyer, 2019), hence, we do not wish for any respondents to exit the survey due to lacking response options in relation to gender identification.

The respondents are asked to state their age in numerical values as an unstructured question because we assume that most respondents (given that they have to be students at their final year of a master's degree) will belong to the same pretty narrow age group. Thus, when the respondents are to state their age in numerical values, we are not narrowed down to specific ages or age groups, and should our assumption be wrong, with some respondents being much older, they still have the opportunity to state their exact age.

When asking the respondents about their nationality, a structured question is formulated as: *What country are you from?* The question has the dichotomous response options *Denmark* and *Other country*. If the option *Denmark* is chosen, the respondent is directed to a structured multiple-choice question, where they are asked to state which region of Denmark, they live in. If the respondent chooses the option *Other country*, they are directed to the unstructured question, where they are asked to write the name of the country. An unstructured question is chosen so every country in the world should not be given as a response option.

General Information

The survey is initiated by a cover letter (Appendix 4) explaining the purpose and duration of the study. Furthermore, it emphasises that the questionnaire is anonymous and that the answers will be treated confidentially. This is done as an attempt to establish trust with the respondents, so they feel safe answering the survey. Also, the cover letter includes contact information on the researchers, so the respondents have the opportunity to get answers to any questions they might have (Malhotra, Birks, & Wills, 2012).

The survey is finalised with a thank you note, thanking the respondents for their time and willingness to participate (Appendix 4).

Hypotheses Answers

The following table provides an overview of the hypotheses of the study and the related survey questions. Furthermore, the purpose of the table is to ensure that all hypotheses can be investigated by the data collected from the survey.

Hypotheses		Questions
H_1	*The importance of instrumental and symbolic attributes is influenced by personal characteristics.*	q_3_{a-z}: When considering your ideal future employer, how important are the following factors to you? q_1: Which faculty are you enrolled in? q_10: Gender q_11: Age q_12: What country are you from?
H_{2A}	*The impact of instrumental attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*	q_3_{a-z}: When considering your ideal future employer, how important are the following factors to you? q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9: In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
H_{2B}	*The impact of symbolic attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*	q_3_{a-z}: When considering your ideal future employer, how important are the following factors to you? q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9: In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
H_3	*The corporate brand influences the intention to apply.*	q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9: In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
H_4	*The impact of employer attractiveness attributes and corporate brand on the*	q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9: In which company would you prefer to apply for a job? q_1: Which faculty are you enrolled in? q_10: Gender

	intention to apply is influenced by personal characteristics.	q_11: Age q_12: What country are you from?

***Table 2** - Connection Between Hypotheses and Survey Questions*

Sampling

This section seeks to outline the sample of this study by explaining how we have reached our sample and which considerations that underlie the outcome. Additionally, the purpose is to anticipate possible critique by clarifying the potential errors and biases related to the sampling method.

For the quantitative study of this thesis, involving a questionnaire, the population is students enrolled on a master's degree programme at a university, currently studying on their 9th or 10th semester (i.e. the last year of their master's degree). The objective of having this population is to ensure that the survey only targets forthcoming graduates, namely young people who are about to acquire their first full-time job after graduation.

As already stated, the research instrument of this study is a questionnaire, constructed as an online self-completion survey. The distribution of the survey has been conducted based on two strategies. First, a link to the survey was attached and sent out by e-mail to the study secretaries of each master's degree programme on Aalborg University. The total count of study secretaries which the link was sent to was 52, where some of these were administering more than one master's degree programme. Out of the 52 secretaries, 27 responded that they had distributed the survey to the students of their respective master's degree programmes – again by attaching the link in an e-mail along with a message from us, showing our gratitude for the help of answering the survey and stating the purpose of the survey.
Secondly, we used our own network and distributed the survey link on our personal LinkedIn profiles and shared it among our friends.

Due to the chosen type of survey and distribution method, we have employed a convenience sample, or in more detail, what is called a self-selected sample. A self-selected sample is a branch of non-probability sampling, which is an umbrella term covering all types of samples which has not been selected through the use of a random selection method (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

According to Sterba and Foster (2011), "*A sample is self-selected when the inclusion or exclusion of sampling units is determined by whether the units themselves agree or decline to participate in the sample, either explicitly or implicitly"* (Sterba & Foster, 2011, p. 807). As our survey has been distributed via e-mail and through our personal networks, the students receiving it could determine on their own whether they would participate in the survey or not. Thus, this gives us a self-selected sample.

One of the main critiques of using self-selected samples is the high possibility of getting biased data (Olsen, 2011). This derives from the so-called self-selection bias, which happens when respondents are allowed to decide for themselves whether they wish to participate in a survey or not (Olsen, 2011). For example, if a study was to examine the income level of a particular city, one could assume that those with a very low income might be embarrassed to answer a survey regarding the topic and, therefore, opt out. Furthermore, self-selection bias may occur if the group of respondents who chooses to participate in the survey, is not equivalent to the group which opts out. In connection to this, some of those who choose to participate in the survey may also choose not to answer particular questions causing non-response to the survey and, therefore, a non-sampling error (Sterba & Foster, 2011).

According to Bryman and Bell (2011), a non-sampling error occurs when there is a difference in the population and the sample, e.g. as a result of an insufficient sampling frame, non-response (as mentioned), poor wording in the survey questions or a flawed data processing.

In general, another common error found in sampling is sampling error, which is often present at most researches as it is almost impossible to get a truly representative sample (Bryman & Bell, 2011). In relation to this, it is important to determine the representativity of a study's sample. Following the definition of Bryman and Bell (2011), having a representative sample means having *"[…] a sample that reflects the population accurately so that it is a microcosm of the population"* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 176).

In the later chapter *Analysis & Findings*, we will elaborate further on the potential biases and errors related to our sample. Furthermore, the representativity of the final sample of our study will be tested.

Analytical Techniques for Data Analysis

The following section will outline the analysis process, including research activities and analytical techniques used to investigate each hypothesis.

To analyse the data derived from the survey, the software SPSS and Stata are used. The data is extracted as an Excel document from SurveyXact, where the collection of data has been carried out. Hence, the data can be transformed into the right format in SPSS and Stata, when the Excel document is imported to the software.

Analysis Schedule

The table below illustrates the research process, encompassing the analytical techniques used for each step/hypothesis and the variables related to the questionnaire that are used for that specific analysis. Following, an explanation and justification for each technique will be presented.

Research activity		Analytical Techniques	Applied Variables (See Appendix 5)
Cleaning the data		Frequency tables	All variables
Sample characterisation		Frequency tables Crosstabulations	q_1, q_10, q_11, q_12, q_12_a, q_12_b
Test for representativity in terms of faculty of study		Goodness-of-fit (chi-square test)	q_1
Hypotheses			
H_1	*The importance of instrumental and symbolic attributes is influenced by personal characteristics.*	One-Way ANOVA	q_1, q_3_{a-z}, q_10, q_11, q_12
H_{2A}	*The impact of instrumental attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*	Conditional logistic regression	q_3_{a-z}, q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9
H_{2B}	*The impact of symbolic attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*	Conditional logistic regression	q_3_{a-z}, q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9
H_3	*The corporate brand influences the intention to apply.*	Conditional logistic regression	q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9
H_4	*The impact of employer attractiveness attributes and corporate brand on the intention to apply is influenced by personal characteristics.*	Conditional logistic regression	q_1, q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, q_9, q_10, q_11, q_12

Table 3 *- Analysis Schedule*

Cleaning of the Data

The preliminary step of data processing is cleaning the data in terms of investigating outliers and missing values.

Outliers are responses that either do not fit the scales or deviate significantly from the rest of the data values. However, when using electronically administered surveys, it is possible to define the scales, thus, the issue of responses that do not fit the scales will not appear. For this thesis, the survey has been created in SurveyXact, where the questions involving scales have been created as fixed scales, hence, the respondents are forced to choose between the options presented. Outliers can also appear within a single variable, where unique responses are recorded. An example could be if the age of the respondents is mostly situated around 20-30 years, and one respondent has typed their age as 108 years. Outliers are commonly identified through frequency tables where variables with the possibility of having outliers can be investigated. Before initiating the analysis, an assessment of the outliers and whether to include them or not should be carried out (Jensen & Knudsen, 2014).

Missing values occur as blank answers of the respondents. In general, one could distinguish between intended and unintended missing values. The intended missing values are, as the name implies, the result of active choices made in the design process, where missing values are expected. This type of missing values might appear if some of the questions are only relevant to certain respondents. The unintended missing values might occur as a result of the respondents failing to answer some questions, and it is rarely possible to determine the reason for these values being blank (Bryman & Bell, 2011; Jensen & Knudsen, 2014). Commonly, frequency tables are used to discover missing values, as they will count the number of missing values along with the number of valid responses (Jensen & Knudsen, 2014).

For this thesis, frequency tables are created for every variable (see Appendix 6). These identified the variables with missing values. For this thesis, every respondent with missing values in some of the variables was excluded from the analysis. However, the variables *q_12a* and *q_12b* involve intended missing values since the questions are not shown to all respondents. Thus, these variables were investigated manually when removing the respondents with unintended missing values.

Most questions involved fixed scales and were therefore not exposed to the risk of creating outliers related to scales. However, the variables concerning age (*q_11*) and which country the international respondents were from (*q_12a*) required the respondents to type in their answers. Thus, the frequency tables of these variables were investigated with the purpose of

identifying outliers. Only two outliers were identified within the two variables. In relation to the age variable, one respondent was found to have the age *9* (see Appendix 7), which seems unrealistic since every respondent reaching this point of the survey stated that they were on their final year of a master's degree. Hence, this respondent was removed. In relation to the country variable, one respondent had stated their country of origin as *old* (see Appendix 7), which is not a country. Thus, this respondent was removed as well.

Sample Characterisation

The initiating section of the analysis will contain a characterisation of the survey sample. This characterisation is based on frequency tables and crosstabulations of the variables related to the personal characteristics, namely gender, age, nationality, and faculty of study.

The purpose of presenting the characterisation as an initiating stage of the analysis is to create an overview of the sample and establish background information about the respondents. Furthermore, the personal characteristics of the sample will be applied as variables in the analysis as part of investigating our research hypotheses.

Test for Representativity

For the analysis, we wish to investigate whether our sample matches the population, i.e. the distribution of forthcoming graduates between the different faculties. Hence, a test for representativity will be conducted. The sample is perceived as representative when the distribution does not deviate significantly from the population. A test for representativity can be carried out through a chi-square test. The test requires a test variable upon which the observations of the sample are compared to the distribution of the population (Jensen & Knudsen, 2014). For this dissertation, the test variable is the respondents' faculty of study (q_1), since the population consists of all forthcoming graduates. Thus, the distribution of students between the different faculties is evaluated as a relevant measure for representativity. The chi-square test will compare the distribution of full-time students currently enrolled on a master's degree in Denmark to the number of respondents enrolled in the different faculties presented in the survey.

In the table below an overview of the number of full-time students currently enrolled on a master's degree is displayed. The table is, therefore, not only restricted to students in the last year of their master's degree, since it was not possible to obtain information solely about the

final-year students. However, the optimal population would have been students on their 9th or 10th semester.

Faculty	Number of Students 2018	%
Business and Social Science	24,155	38.1
Humanities	14,429	22.8
Medicine/Health Sciences	9,074	14.3
IT and Design + Engineering and Science	15,704	24.8
Total	**63,362**	**100.0%**

Table 4 *- Number of Full-time Students on a Master's Degree in DK (Danske Universiteter, n.d.)*

The table is divided according to the five types of faculties which we have applied in our survey. However, to be able to test the representativity of the five faculties applied in our survey, namely; Faculty of Business and Social Science, Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Medicine/Health Sciences, Faculty of IT and Design, and Faculty of Engineering and Science, we have aggregated the two last mentioned. The reason for doing so is that the statistics from Danske Universiteter only apply four different faculties, where the fourth faculty is 'Faculty of Science'. The numbers deriving from this faculty are applied to the aggregated faculty of 'IT and Design + Engineering and Science'.

The chi-square test will then determine whether there is a significant fit between the distribution presented above and the distribution observed through the survey.

<u>One-Way ANOVA</u>

Concerning the analysis of our first hypothesis, H_1, we apply the one-way Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), in order to establish whether the importance of the instrumental and symbolic attributes is determined by personal characteristics.

The one-way ANOVA is an analysis used to determine whether the mean of one dependent variable is the same in two or more independent groups (Lærd Statistics, n.d.). However, when only two independent groups are used in the analysis, some would argue that the independent-samples t-test would be the more common choice (Lærd Statistics, n.d.). Though, a pre-test run in Stata of the t-test and the one-way ANOVA with the same variables showed identical results and, therefore, we chose to apply the one-way ANOVA to provide

consistency, since this analysis is also applicable when our independent variable consists of more than two groups (as it does with the variable faculty).

In order to carry out this analysis, the dependent variable will be the calculated mean of each respondent's rating of the attributes related to instrumental and symbolic attributes, respectively, deriving from the 25-item EmpAt Scale. The variables gender, nationality and faculty of study will then serve as the independent variables that are separately compared to the dependent variable. By doing so, it will be possible to determine whether there is a difference in the perceived importance (i.e. rating of the attributes) due to the personal characteristics.

Conditional Logistic Regression

For the analysis of the choice sets and, thereby, the rest of the hypotheses, conditional logistic regression is evaluated to be the most appropriate analysis technique. In general, logistic regression is based on the estimation of maximum likelihood, which provides values for the unknown parameters that will maximise the probability of obtaining the observed data. Hence, the likelihood function of logistic regression will express the probability of the observed data as a function of the unknown parameters (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000). Related to the research of this thesis, we will, for example, be able to investigate the probability that graduates will choose a positive corporate brand over a negative corporate brand.

As mentioned, the analysis technique to investigate the choice sets will be conditional logistic regression. The conditional logistic regression is similar to the ordinary logistic regression; however, the difference is found in the grouping of the data. Hence, conditional logistic regression requires the data to occur in groups, and the aim of this technique is to determine the number of positive outcomes within a group. In relation to an economic perspective, this conditional logistic regression is compared to McFadden's (1973) choice model, where an individual is faced with various choices and are required to choose one (Stata, n.d.; McFadden, 1973). Related to our research, the groups should be understood as the choice sets presented to the respondents, where they have two options to choose from and they must choose one of those, hence, the choice is the positive outcome. Thus, the aim is to fit a model that can explain why observations have a positive outcome in different groups (Stata, n.d.).

In order to create the conditional logistic regression model based on the data from a discrete choice experiment, the data needs to be restructured and recoded to fit the analysis method.

Hence, the data should be structured in a so-called "long format", where each choice set including the choice alternatives are displayed along with the choice made (the value 1 represents the choice (the positive outcome) and the value 0 represents the deselection) and the attributes involved in the choice (Long & Freese, 2001). To illustrate what is meant, the following example has been created for two hypothetical respondents based on the choice sets of this dissertation.

ID	Obs. ID	Choice set	Alternative	Choice	Symbolic	Positive CB
1	1	1	1	1	1	1
1	1	1	2	0	1	0
1	2	2	1	1	0	1
1	2	2	2	0	1	0
1	3	3	1	1	0	1
1	3	3	2	0	0	0
1	4	4	1	1	1	1
1	4	4	2	0	0	0
1	5	5	1	1	1	1
1	5	5	2	0	0	1
1	6	6	1	1	1	0
1	6	6	2	0	0	0
2	7	1	1	1	1	1
2	7	1	2	0	1	0
2	8	2	1	1	0	1
2	8	2	2	0	1	0
2	9	3	1	1	0	1
2	9	3	2	0	0	0
2	10	4	1	1	1	1
2	10	4	2	0	0	0
2	11	5	1	1	1	1
2	11	5	2	0	0	1
2	12	6	1	1	1	0
2	12	6	2	0	0	0
…	…	…	….	…	…	…

Table 5 *- Long Format Data for Hypothetical Respondent*

The variable *Obs. ID* is added to the data set because the software Stata requires a variable that displays the choices made as unique events. This variable is needed because it functions as a group variable in the conditional logistic regression. Hence, each choice set will be numbered uniquely, where the values begin at 1 and increase successively (Long & Freese, 2001; CapacityPlus, World Health Organization, & The World Bank, 2012).

Some dummy variables are set up to display the choices made by the respondents. Generally speaking, one should build *J – 1* dummy variables (where J is the number of levels), to display what the choice involves (Long & Freese, 2001). Hence, the value for *Symbolic* will be 1, if the choice involves symbolic attributes, and 0 otherwise. In these choice sets, the 0 represented in relation to Symbolic will then indicate that the choice is related to instrumental attributes. The same goes for the variable *Positive CB*, where 1 indicates that the choice involves a positive corporate brand, and 0 indicates a negative corporate brand.

Dependent and Independent Variables

The dependent variable of the conditional logistic regression is the one called *Choice* in Table 5, where, as mentioned before, the value 1 indicates the positive outcome (i.e. the choice), and 0 displays the deselection.

The independent variables will depend on the hypothesis tested but for example when analysing hypothesis 3, the independent variable will be the variable displayed in Table 5 as "*Positive CB*", because the goal of the analysis is to determine the probability of respondents choosing a hypothetical job where the employer has a positive corporate brand over a negative corporate brand.

Testing for Significance of the Independent Variables

One of the first things to assess in relation to the output of the regression model is the significance of the independent variables. The significance of a variable is evaluated based on the question "*Does the model that includes the variable in question tell us more about the outcome (or response) variable than a model that does not include that variable?*" (Hosmer & Lemeshow, 2000, p. 11).

In Stata, where the conditional logistic regression analysis is carried out, the significance of the variables is represented through the 2-tailed p-value that is displayed along with each variable. The p-value is compared to the alpha value that has been selected beforehand. For this analysis, the alpha value is 0.05, meaning that the results with a 95% certainty have not occurred by accident. Hence, when the p-value is 0.05 or less, the variable can be evaluated as significant, which means that the model including the variable tells more about the outcome than if it was not included (UCLA (a), n.d.).

Besides the p-value of the variables, Stata also provides a p-value for the regression model as a whole. This is presented through the "*Prob > chi2*". Similarly, the p-value must be below the alpha value of 0.05 for the model to be evaluated as significant.

Odds Ratio

Along with the conditional logistic regression output from Stata, the Odds Ratio (OR) can be displayed for each variable. OR is measuring probability; hence, the value shows the ratio of the probability of success and the probability of failure. If the value of OR is above 1, the value displays the probability of success and vice versa. To clarify the explanation, the following example is presented. The probability of females choosing organic food (compared to men), can be expressed through the OR. Hypothetically, let us say that the OR is 1.69, then the probability of females purchasing organic food is 1.69 times higher than males (UCLA (b), n.d.)

After the above sections clarifying the analysis techniques, the ensuing paragraph will feature a clarification of the parameters which will be used to assess the quality of our study. These include the well-known matters relating to reliability, replicability and validity.

Parameters for Quality Assessment

As mentioned above, this section will provide the reader with the chosen measures for the assessment of the quality of this research. Below the different sections will define and explain these measures in detail.

Reliability

Applying the definition by Bryman and Bell (2011), reliability is *"[…] fundamentally concerned with issues of consistency of measures"* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 157). There are three prominent factors constituting the reliability of a measure. The first is *stability*, which involves the examining of whether a measure is stable over time. However, as stability is highly complex to measure (Bryman & Bell, 2011), and due to the nature of our research, we do not have the possibility of carrying out tests of stability on our measures.

The second factor is *inter-observer consistency* and it deals with the possible subjective judgement of researchers which can arise during a study. When a research involves subjective judgement there might be a lack of consistency in the researchers' decisions (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

The last factor of reliability is the internal reliability, where the key issue is whether there is consistency among the measures making up a scale or index. The most commonly used test for internal reliability is the Cronbach's Alpha test, which calculates the average of all the potential split-half reliability coefficients, on which the aim is to determine whether respondents that score high in one group also score high in the other groups of the measure (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The computed alpha coefficient will always be between 0 and 1, and as a rule of thumb an alpha indicating good internal reliability is somewhere between 0.7 and 0.8 (Jensen & Knudsen, 2014; Bryman & Bell, 2011).

We apply Cronbach's Alpha for our two compounded scales related to the symbolic and instrumental attributes comprised of the 25-item EmpAt Scale (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).

Validity

The parameter of validity is concerned with *"[…] the issue of whether or not an indicator (or set of indicators) that is devised to gauge a concept really measures that concept"* (Bryman & Bell, 2011, p. 159). Different types of validity can be distinguished between, however, the most applied is the type *face validity*, where the measure is judged upon whether or not, on the face of it, it reflects the concept of interest. Face validity can be established by asking other people to judge your measures. Hence, assessing face validity is an intuitive process (Bryman & Bell, 2011).

In continuation of the previous section, validity is connected to reliability despite their analytical distinguishability. If reliability is not achieved, validity cannot be obtained either (Bryman & Bell, 2011). The reliability is assessed according to the previously mentioned factors.

Replicability

The factor replicability is concerned with the ability to replicate a study (Bryman & Bell, 2011). That means, if one researcher conducts a study, another researcher should be able to conduct the same study and achieve the same results. Replicability is established when the research is unaffected by the researcher's subjective opinions and characteristics (Bryman & Bell, 2011). Thus, in order to achieve replicability, we as researchers should seek to outline our research process and procedures in a highly explicit way, so others can conduct the study in the exact same manner.

Analysis & Findings

The ensuing chapter comprises the analysis and findings of this research. Hence, the purpose of the chapter is to investigate each hypothesis, that was developed in the theoretical chapter of this thesis. This will be accomplished by combining the derived data from our survey with the essentials from the theoretical background.

The content of the chapter will take its starting point in a section encompassing the characteristics of our final sample. This will be followed by a section investigating whether our sample is representative compared to our population. The remaining part of this chapter will be structured around the hypotheses.

Sample

As already discussed in the section *Sampling,* our population is students enrolled on a master's degree programme at a university, currently studying on their 9th or 10th semester i.e. the last year of their master's degree. In this section, we seek to outline the final sample of our study and test the representativity.

The final sample derived from our online self-completion questionnaire was 218 students. The final sample was deduced from a total of 475 respondents. Out of the 475 respondents, 94 (19.8%) only opened the questionnaire, and 121 (25.5%) partially completed the questionnaire, hence, these respondents were removed from the sample. Out of the remaining 260 respondents, 38 respondents were discarded as they did not meet the qualification criteria (student on 9th or 10th semester). Therefore, this left us with 222 respondents who completed the full survey. Afterwards, 4 respondents were removed from the data set due to a discrepancy in some of their answers, leaving us with 218 respondents. Thus, from the initial 475 respondents, 45.9% of the responses were applicable to the analysis.

In the table below, we present an overview of the final sample. The table divides the sample according to gender, age groups, nationality and faculty of study.

Sample Characteristics

		Count	Column N %	Cumulative N %
Gender	Female	100	45.9%	45.9%
	Male	116	53.2%	99.1%
	Other	2	0.9%	100.0%

Age groups	22-24	61	28.0%	28.0%
	25-27	118	54.1%	82.1%
	28-30	27	12.4%	94.5%
	31+	12	5.5%	100,0%
What country are you from?	Denmark	136	62.4%	62.4%
	Other country	82	37.6%	100.0%
Which faculty are you enrolled in?	Faculty of Business and Social Science	89	40.8%	40.8%
	Faculty of Humanities	35	16.0%	56.8%
	Faculty of Medicine/Health Sciences	6	2.8%	59.6%
	Technical Faculty of IT and Design	23	10.6%	70.2%
	Faculty of Engineering and Science	60	27.5%	97.7%
	Other	5	2.3%	100.0%

Table 6 *- Sample Characteristics*

As seen in the table above (Table 6), there is a fairly equal distribution of female and male respondents in the sample. In relation to the age groups, the majority of the respondents are in the ages between 22-27 (82.1%), which fits our previously mentioned assumption that most of the respondents would belong to the same narrow age group. As seen in Appendix 8, the division of female and male respondents in the age groups 22-24 and 25-27 is approximately equal. However, in the age groups 28-30 and 31+ there is a majority of male respondents (Appendix 8).

Regarding the native country of the respondents, not surprisingly, most of the respondents are from Denmark (62.4%). Though, almost 38% of the respondents are from a foreign country. Focusing on the distribution of gender in relation to the country of origin, there is a completely equal division of female and male respondents (49.3% each), with the last remaining 1,4% assigned to the gender *Other*. Further information on the specific foreign countries can be found below in Table 7, which will be followed by a short elaboration.

The most represented faculties of study are the Faculty of Business and Social Science (40.8%), and the Faculty of Engineering and Science (27.5%). There is a small majority of female respondents among those enrolled on the Faculty of Business and Social Science (53.9%), while the male respondents are the predominant gender on the Faculty of Engineering and Science (73.3%) (Appendix 8).

Sample Characteristics

Native Country

	Count	Column N %

What country are you from? Please write the name of the country in the text box below.	"BLANK"	138	63.3%
	"Bangladesh"	1	0.5%
	"Brazil"	1	0.5%
	"Bulgaria"	1	0.5%
	"Cameroon"	1	0.5%
	"Croatia"	2	0.9%
	"Czech Republic"	2	0.9%
	"England"	1	0.5%
	"Estonia"	2	0.9%
	"Ethiopian"	1	0.5%
	"Faroe Islands"	1	0.5%
	"France"	1	0.5%
	"Germany"	12	5.5%
	"Ghana"	1	0.5%
	"Greece"	3	1.4%
	"Hungary"	2	0.9%
	"Iceland"	3	1.4%
	"India"	2	0.9%
	"Iran"	1	0.5%
	"Italy"	8	3.7%
	"Latvia"	1	0.5%
	"Lithuania"	2	0.9%
	"Luxembourg"	1	0.5%
	"Moldova"	1	0.5%
	"Morocco"	1	0.5%
	"Nigeria"	1	0.5%
	"Norway"	2	0.9%
	"Poland"	5	2.3%
	"Portugal"	1	0.5%
	"Romania"	5	2.3%
	"Slovakia"	6	2.8%
	"Spain"	4	1.8%
	"Syria"	1	0.5%
	"The Netherlands"	2	0.9%
	"Venezuela"	1	0.5%

Table 7 *- Sample Characteristics (Native Country)*

When the respondents were asked to state their native country, the choice was between *Denmark* or *Other*. When the option *Other* was chosen, the respondents were asked to write their native country. The outcome of this is presented in Table 7 above. The most represented foreign countries are Germany (5.5%), Italy (3.7%) and Slovakia (2.8%), however, most of the countries are only represented by a few respondents. Consequently, it will be difficult to derive any conclusions based on specific foreign countries.
In terms of gender distribution, there is a majority of male international respondents, representing 59.8% (Appendix 8), which leaves us with a larger proportion of male international respondents.

The Danish respondents were asked to state which region they currently live in and, consequently, the table below presents an overview of their answers.

Sample Characteristics
Region, DK

		Count	Column N %
What region do you currently live in?	Zealand (Region Sjælland)	0	0.0%
	Northern Jutland (Region Nordjylland)	96	70.6%
	Central Jutland (Region Midtjylland)	16	11.8%
	Southern Denmark (Region Syddanmark)	16	11.8%
	Capital (Region Hovedstaden)	8	5.9%

Table 8 *- Sample Characteristics (Region, DK)*

As the survey for this thesis was distributed primarily through the study secretaries of Aalborg University, we expected the majority of the respondents to be from Northern Jutland which was also the case, as 70.6% of the Danish respondents are situated in Northern Jutland. Hence, it might be difficult to project our conclusions directly to all regions. However, it might be assumed that some of the respondents living in Northern Jutland, may originate from other regions in Denmark, but this can only be conjectured about.
Focusing on the gender distribution again, there is a reasonably equal division of female and male respondents in the regions of Northern Jutland and Southern Denmark. In Central Jutland and the Capital, there is a clear majority of female respondents (Appendix 9).

Test for Representativity

In the following section, a test for representativity will be carried out. As mentioned earlier, the test is conducted through a chi-square test (χ^2) to measure the distribution of the respondents compared to the population. The variable to test for representativity is the respondents' faculty of study since the population is characterised by being graduate students. The ensuing two tables comprise the output of the test which was performed in the software SPSS.

Test for Representativity Based on Faculty

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Faculty of Business and Social Science	89	81.2	7.8
Faculty of Humanities	35	48.5	-13.5
Faculty of Medicine/Health Science	6	30.5	-24.5
Faculty of IT and Design + Faculty of Engineering and Science	83	52.8	30.2
Total	213		

Table 9 *- Test for Representativity Based on Faculty*

The *Observed N* represents the answers of the respondents, and the *Expected N* represents the expected number of respondents based on the distribution of the population. The distribution of the population has been outlined earlier in Table 4. The numbers in the column *Residual* are the calculated difference between the observed and expected number of respondents.

From the residuals in Table 9, it can be derived that especially Faculty of Humanities, Faculty of Medicine/Health Science and Faculty of IT and Design + Engineering and Science deviate from the Expected N. The two first-mentioned faculties are under-represented, where the latter is over-represented. Only the Faculty of Business and Social Science is close to the expected number of respondents, where the residual is substantially smaller compared to the three other faculties. Table 10 will further elaborate on the match between the two distributions.

In the small table presented to the right, the test statistics of the χ^2 test are found. As seen in the table, the χ^2 value is 41.480, the degrees of freedom are 3 and the p-value (Asymp. Sig) is 0.000. Given these results, our p-value is smaller than our significance

Test Statistics

	Faculty
Chi-Square	41,480[a]
df	3
Asymp. Sig.	,000

Table 10 *- Chi-Square Test*

level of 0.05, meaning that the Observed N and Expected N is not a match. Therefore, our sample is not representative.

If our sample should have been representative for our population, the χ^2 value should have been 7.81 or below, because the degrees of freedom are 3 and the significance level is 0.05 (Sirkin, 2006). As the χ^2 value of our test is 41.480 it is clearly seen that our sample is far from representative.

One of the main reasons for the lack of representativity in our sample could be ascribed to the chosen sampling method (convenience sampling). As already mentioned, the respondents derived from a convenience sampling are simply a part of the sample due to their availability and willingness to participate in the study. Therefore, with this method, we did not have any influence on who the individual respondents were, but merely that they were within our chosen population.

The poor fit between the population and the sample might also be due to the distribution method where the study secretaries were approached to distribute the questionnaire. In this process, most of the secretaries affiliated with the Faculty of Medicine/Health Science was not willing to distribute the survey to the students. Oppositely, most of the secretaries affiliated with the Faculty of IT and Design + Engineering and Science and the Faculty of Business and Social Science happily distributed the survey among the students. Hence, the survey has not been evenly distributed among the different faculties, which might be the explanation for the sample not being representative. Furthermore, as mentioned earlier, our sample's representativity has been tested on the basis of the numbers in Table 4, which not only includes students on the last year of their master's degree, but also students on the first year, or for some Master's, third year of their degree. This has, therefore, resulted in a substantially bigger number in comparison to if we had only tested the representativity on students in the last year of their master's degree. Hence, this might have influenced the test for representativity negatively, as we did not include the actual numbers of the population

Sample Preferences

The following section encompasses a range of descriptive statistics which is provided in order to show, describe and summarise parts of our data. The intention with this is to create a simple overview of the most important variables applied in the analysis, with the purpose of helping to identify possible patterns in the data.

Attribute Preferences

As noted earlier in the section *Conditional Logistic Regression* about the restructuring of our data, each of the 218 respondents is represented by 12 rows due to the long format. This has resulted in a total of 2616 observations (12 * 218 = 2616 observations).

Symbolic Attributes

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
2. A fun working environment	2616	1	5	4.10	.810
7. Having a good relationship with your superiors	2616	1	5	4.19	.740
8. Having a good relationship with your colleagues	2616	1	5	4.46	.717
9. Supportive and encouraging colleagues	2616	1	5	4.17	.841
10. Working in an exciting environment	2616	1	5	4.05	.797
11. Having an innovative employer	2616	1	5	3.61	.977
12. The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity	2616	1	5	3.97	.798
16. The organisation has a humanitarian focus (i.e. gives back to society)	2616	1	5	3.33	1.117
17. Opportunity to apply what you have learned throughout your education	2616	1	5	3.86	.919
18. Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	2616	1	5	3.06	1.016
19. A feeling of acceptance and belonging	2616	1	5	4.22	.759
20. The organisation is customer-orientated	2616	1	5	3.29	1.078
23. A happy work environment	2616	1	5	4.31	.673
Valid N (listwise)	**2616**				

Table 11 *- Symbolic Attributes (Descriptive Statistics)*

In the above presented Table 11, the descriptive output consists of the 13 symbolic attributes derived from the 25-item EmpAt Scale by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005). The division of the 25 items can also be found in Appendix 3.

Table 11 provides an overview of the minimum and maximum rating, the mean and the standard deviation (std. deviation) of the respective attribute. All attributes have been assigned a minimum rating of 1 and a maximum rating of 5. Regarding the mean, we can derive from the statistics, that attribute no. 8 on average scores the highest among the respondents, while attribute 18 on average scores the lowest. Focusing on the std. deviation, this measure shows

how dispersed the data is from the mean. Overall, there is a small dispersion of the data around each respective mean, however, given that our minimum and maximum rating only ranges from 1-5, some of the std. deviations are noticeable. The below-presented histograms show the two symbolic attributes with the lowest and the highest std. deviation respectively.

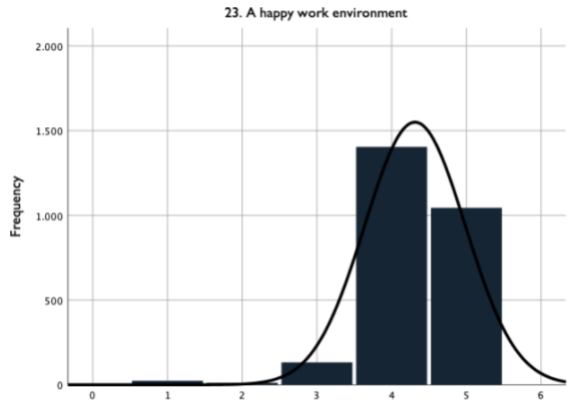

Figure 3 *- Histogram of Attribute 23*

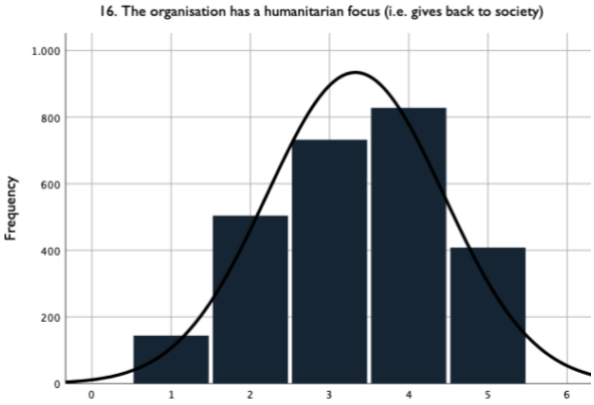

Figure 4 *- Histogram of Attribute 16*

Referring back to Table 11, the std. deviation for attribute 23 is 0.673, hence, being the lowest, while the std. deviation for attribute 16 is 1.117, thus, having the widest dispersion of the respondents' rating on that particular attribute. This means, that there is a bigger dispute between the respondents regarding the importance of the attribute involving the humanitarian focus of the organisation (Figure 4). On the opposite, Figure 3 clearly shows that the respondents are more similar in their ratings concerning the importance of a happy working environment.

Below, Table 12 provides an overview of the 12 instrumental attributes also derived from the 25-item EmpAt Scale by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) (Appendix 3), similar to the outline of the symbolic attributes above.

Instrumental Attributes

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Receiving recognition/appreciation from the management	2616	1	5	4.07	.736
3. Having a springboard for future employment	2616	2	5	3.94	.822
4. Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation	2616	1	5	4.01	.901

5. Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organisation	2616	1	5	3.78	.911
6. Gaining career-enhancing experience	2616	1	5	4.40	.706
13. The organisation produces high-quality products and services	2616	1	5	3.74	.918
14. The organisation produces innovative products and services	2616	1	5	3.39	.933
15. Good promotion opportunities within the organisation	2616	1	5	3.79	.845
21. Job security within the organisation	2616	1	5	3.94	.822
22. Gaining hands-on experience from different departments in the organisation	2616	1	5	3.57	.961
24. Receiving an above average basic salary	2616	1	5	3.63	.931
25. An attractive overall compensation package (salary, bonuses, insurance, pension plans, vacations etc.)	2616	1	5	3.88	.872
Valid N (listwise)	**2616**				

Table 12 *- Instrumental Attributes (Descriptive Statistics)*

To summarise Table 12 briefly, the minimum and maximum rating from 1-5, the mean and the std. deviation of each attribute are displayed similarly to Table 11. What is different in Table 12, compared to Table 11, is that one of the instrumental attributes (no. 3) has a minimum rating of 2, meaning that no respondent assigned the rating of 1 to this attribute.
The instrumental attribute achieving the highest mean is no. 6 (4.40) compared to no. 14 which has the lowest mean (3.39). Worth mentioning is that, in general, the means for the 12 instrumental attributes are a bit more similar to each other, than the ones for the 13 symbolic attributes. Furthermore, the std. deviations among the instrumental attributes are also more even in comparison to the ones for the symbolic attributes, where three std. deviations were above 1.000. Hence, it could be argued that the respondents are more similar in their ratings of the instrumental attributes, where the ratings tend to be more dispersed for the symbolic attributes. However, it should be noted, that the differences are small.

Based on the above division of the 25 attributes between symbolic and instrumental attributes, a mean for each respondent was calculated on the basis of their rating of each attribute. An example of this calculation is seen in Appendix 10. If the mean of the respondent's rating of the symbolic attributes where >= 4, and the mean of the instrumental attributes where < 4, the respondent would be assigned to the category *Symbolic person*. The opposite applies to

the category *Instrumental person*. If the mean of the respondent's rating on both types of attributes were >= 4, that respondent would be assigned to the category *Symbolic + instrumental person*. Lastly, if both of the mean values (symbolic and instrumental rating) of the respondent were < 4, that respondent would be categorised as a *Neutral person*.

A table has been created beneath to display the grouping of the respondents based on the beforementioned calculation.

Groups According to Attribute Preferences

	Count	Actual Count	Percent %
Symbolic person	504	42	19.3%
Instrumental person	288	24	11.0%
Symbolic + instrumental person	732	61	28.0%
Neutral Person	1092	91	41.7%
Total	**2616**	**218**	**100%**

Table 13 *- Groups According to Attribute Preferences*

Looking at Table 13, the grouping of the respondents has yielded the following; 504 symbolic observations, 288 instrumental observations, 732 symbolic + instrumental observations and 1092 neutral observations. As already mentioned, the total number of observations in our data set is 2616 due to the long format structure of the data. Hence, when dividing the number of observations with 12, the actual number of respondents within each group is calculated, as seen in the column *Actual Count* in Table 13.

Table 13 shows that 19,3% of the 218 respondents are symbolic persons, 11% are instrumental, 28% are symbolic + instrumental, while the remaining 41.7% are neutral. The large number of neutral respondents was expected based on the mean calculation of Table 11 and Table 12, where the mean values are generally centred around the value three (which corresponds to the option "neither nor"). Since the grouping of symbolic and instrumental persons is disassembled by the mean value four (i.e. the option "important"), and the neutral group is then defined by values below four, the large amount of mean values below four indicates a high level of respondents with no prevalent opinions towards either of the two types of attributes.

Choice Preferences

In the following section, the characteristics of the respondents' choices will be discussed briefly. Table 14 shows the six choice sets formed (q_4, q_5, q_6, q_7, q_8, and q_9), and the two alternatives for each set (alternative a and alternative b). Next to the alternatives, a column characterising each alternative according to attributes and corporate brand is found. The last column of the table reveals the count for each choice of alternative.

Choice Characteristics

Alternative

				Choice of alternative
				Count
Choice set	q_4	Alternative_a	Symbolic + positive CB	216
		Alternative_b	Symbolic + negative CB	2
	q_5	Alternative_a	Instrumental + positive CB	200
		Alternative_b	Symbolic + negative CB	18
	q_6	Alternative_a	Instrumental + positive CB	212
		Alternative_b	Instrumental + negative CB	6
	q_7	Alternative_a	Symbolic + positive CB	178
		Alternative_b	Instrumental + negative CB	40
	q_8	Alternative_a	Symbolic + positive CB	142
		Alternative_b	Instrumental + positive CB	76
	q_9	Alternative_a	Symbolic + negative CB	121
		Alternative_b	Instrumental + negative CB	97

Table 14 *- Choice Characteristics (Alternative)*

As it can be seen in the table above, the choice of Alternative_a is close to being equal in the first three choice sets (q_4, q_5, and q_6). In the remaining three choice sets (q_7, q_8, and q_9) the choices are more split. In general, there is a clear connection between the choices and the alternatives involving symbolic attributes. However, when looking at q_5, Alternative_a including the instrumental attributes is the most chosen, relative to Alternative_b with the symbolic attributes. Furthermore, in the choice sets q_8 and q_9, where the corporate brand is the same, there is a bigger dispersion of the choices between the two alternatives in each set. Thus, from the above, it is indicated that the corporate brand influences the choice. Further discussion on this possible influence can be found in the next chapter in relation to the analysis of Hypothesis 3.

Hypotheses Analysis

The succeeding sections aim at investigating the proposed hypotheses; hence, the analysis will be structured around the hypotheses. As displayed in the analysis schedule (Table 3), the hypotheses will primarily be analysed through the analytical technique of conditional logistic regression supplemented by crosstabulations, and as already mentioned, with contributions from the theoretical background.

Hypothesis 1

This analysis takes its starting point in hypothesis 1. As discussed earlier in the theoretical chapter, it has by some researchers been argued that the prioritisation and perceived attractiveness of employer attributes may vary among job seekers due to personal characteristics (Cable & Turban, 2001; Slaughter et al., 2001; Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016). Therefore, we proposed the first hypothesis as stated below:

H_1: *The importance of instrumental and symbolic attributes is influenced by personal characteristics.*

The ensuing analysis for this hypothesis will involve one-way ANOVA which, as already defined, will help in identifying the potential differences in the mean rating of the two types of attributes (i.e. instrumental and symbolic). This is conducted upon the different personal characteristics which the respondents from our survey were asked to state. In this way, it will, hopefully, be possible to identify whether or not the relative importance of the two types of attributes is influenced by the personal characteristics, namely gender, nationality and faculty.

Due to a disequilibrium in the number of answers across the three gender categories, the third category named *Other* has been excluded in the analysis, as well as the rest of this chapter, since the category only counted 2 respondents. Furthermore, we have chosen not to apply age as a variable for personal characteristics in this analysis, as the age among the respondents is rather concentrated and, therefore, the differences based on age would be somewhat vapid.

As the first personal characteristic to focus on, *gender* has been applied as the factor variable to the one-way ANOVA. The response variable is the *pref_inst* i.e. the mean of the respondents' rating of the 12 items belonging to the instrumental attributes.

One-Way ANOVA

Gender (Instrumental Attributes)

female	Summary of pref_inst Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
0	3.835452	.51439375	1,416
1	3.8608333	.43528277	1,200
Total	3.8470948	.47980421	2,616

Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	.418443196	1	.418443196	1.82	0.1776
Within groups	601.586143	2614	.23014007		
Total	602.004586	2615	.230212079		

Table 15 *- One-Way ANOVA (Gender & Instrumental Attributes)*

Focusing on the first output of the one-way ANOVA, the *Summary of pref_inst*, only a slight difference in the means between males (= 0) and females (= 1) is seen. On average, females only rate instrumental attributes 0.03 higher than males. Both mean values are close to the total mean of 3.847 as well.

When directing the attention to the std. deviation, it can be seen that the female respondents tend to agree a bit more in their rating of the instrumental attributes compared to males. However, as stated, the differences are negligible, which is also reflected in the next model *Analysis of Variance*. As the p-value is 0.1776 > 0.05 there is no significant difference in the mean between the two groups, i.e. males and females. Thus, it could be said that there is almost no difference in the importance of the instrumental attributes between males and females.

Interestingly, a small difference was discovered among the two gender groups in relation to the instrumental attributes. The same one-way ANOVA has now been conducted with a new response variable, namely *pref_symb* (i.e. the mean of the respondents' rating of the 13 items belonging to the group of symbolic attributes).

One-Way ANOVA

Gender (Symbolic Attributes)

female	Summary of pref_symb Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
0	3.7868318	.58177398	1,416
1	4.0192308	.36799934	1,200
Total	3.8934368	.50857891	2,616

Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	35.0812524	1	35.0812524	143.00	0.0000
Within groups	641.295053	2614	.245330931		
Total	676.376306	2615	.258652507		

Table 16 *- One-Way ANOVA (Gender & Symbolic Attributes)*

Compared to the one-way ANOVA output of the instrumental attributes (Table 15), the symbolic attributes seem to divide the two gender groups more. In Table 16, it can be seen that the mean for females is 0.23 higher than males. The overall mean is 3.893, which is close to the overall mean in the previous output (Table 15), indicating that the instrumental and symbolic attributes on total average are valued equally, despite the differences found between males and females related to the symbolic attributes. The std. deviation also shows a bigger difference, where especially males vary in their ratings with a std. deviation of 0.5818. In comparison to the std. deviation from the *Analysis of Variance* in Table 15, this std. deviation is larger, showing a slightly bigger difference in the male respondents' ratings of the symbolic attributes relative to the instrumental. On the opposite, females are actually a bit more unanimous in the rating of the symbolic attributes (std. deviation of 0.368) compared to their rating of the instrumental attributes (std. deviation of 0.435).

Yet, the differences above are not substantial. The importance lies within the model *Analysis of Variance*, which this time shows a significant difference between the groups due to a p-value of 0.0000 < 0.05. Hence, this indicates that the importance of symbolic attributes is influenced by gender.

The second personal characteristic applied as a factor variable to the one-way ANOVA is *nationality*. First, the factor variable is analysed with the response variable *pref_inst*.

One-Way ANOVA

Nationality (Instrumental Attributes)

danish	Summary of pref_inst Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
0	3.949187	.53398508	984
1	3.7855392	.43262992	1,632
Total	3.8470948	.47980421	2,616

Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	16.4398456	1	16.4398456	73.39	0.0000
Within groups	585.564741	2614	.224010995		
Total	602.004586	2615	.230212079		

Table 17 *- One-Way ANOVA (Nationality & Instrumental Attributes)*

The variable *nationality* consists of two groups divided between Danish respondents and foreign respondents (i.e. *Other*). In the first table above, the *Summary of pref_inst*, the number 0 in the column to the left is equal to *Other* while 1 is equal to *Danish*. A summary of the first table, tells us that the foreign respondents rate instrumental attributes a little higher (mean = 3.945) compared to the Danish respondents (mean = 3.786). However, worth mentioning is that the std. deviation of the foreign respondents is 0.534, which is higher than the std. deviation for the Danish respondents (0.433). We could conjecture that the bigger disagreement in the rating of the attributes among the foreign graduates, could be due to the many different nationalities which lie within the category (Table 7). This conjecturing is supported by authors such as Alniaçik et al. (2014) and Reis and Braga (2016), who argue that the prioritisation of the employer attributes can vary among job seekers if they are from distinct nationalities, hence, implying diverse cultures and other different demographic characteristics.

As already indicated, there is a difference between the two groups *Danish* and *Other*. This is also supported by the *Analysis of Variance* of Table 17, where the p-value is 0.0000 < 0.05. Therefore, it can be derived from the above, that the importance of instrumental attributes varies according to nationality.

Just as performed with *gender*, the same one-way ANOVA is now conducted on *nationality* with a new response variable, namely *pref_symb* (i.e. the mean of the respondents' rating of the 13 items belonging to the symbolic attributes).

One-Way ANOVA

Nationality (Symbolic Attributes)

danish	Summary of pref_symb Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
0	3.8780488	.61074443	984
1	3.9027149	.43549953	1,632
Total	3.8934368	.50857891	2,616

Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	.373491211	1	.373491211	1.44	0.2296
Within groups	676.002815	2614	.258608575		
Total	676.376306	2615	.258652507		

Table 18 *- One-Way ANOVA (Nationality & Symbolic Attributes)*

According to the above means of the ratings of symbolic attributes among Danish respondents (3.90) and foreign respondents (3.88), there is almost no difference to see. However, again, there is an evident difference in the std. deviation across the two groups. Just as in Table 17, the Danish respondents have a minor degree of variation in their rating of the symbolic attributes, compared to the foreign respondents whose std. deviation is 0.611. Referring back to the previous assumption, this reiterated difference indicates that there may be differences across nationalities regarding the importance of employer attributes (Alnıaçıka et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016). As our sample of foreign respondents consists of 34 different nationalities (excluding Denmark) (Table 7), this argument could seem fairly justified.

Though, when interpreting the model *Analysis of Variance*, we learn that the variance between the groups is not significant, as the p-value is 0.2296 > 0.05. Thus, there is no significant difference in the mean between Danish and foreign respondents, consequently, indicating no difference in the importance of the symbolic attributes between Danes and foreigners. However, we believe there may be some evidence that the importance differs between nationalities, namely, due to the higher std. deviation between the foreign respondents.

Faculty is the third and final personal characteristic which is applied as a factor variable in the one-way ANOVA. In the following table, the response variable is the *pref_inst* (i.e. the mean of the respondents' rating of the 12 items belonging to the instrumental attributes).

One-Way ANOVA

Faculty (Instrumental Attributes)

q_1	Summary of pref_inst Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
1	3.8838951	.50930394	1,068
2	3.7619047	.41316003	420
3	3.8611111	.1582375	72
4	3.6956522	.5072855	276
5	3.8930556	.48196295	720
6	3.9166667	.15944813	60
Total	3.8470948	.47980421	2,616

Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	12.6499483	5	2.52998967	11.20	0.0000
Within groups	589.354638	2610	.225806375		
Total	602.004586	2615	.230212079		

Table 19 *- One-Way ANOVA (Faculty & Instrumental Attributes)*

In Table 19, all six groups of faculties are applied to the model, however, for the subsequent interpretation of the data we exclude faculty no. 3 (Medicine/Health Sciences) and faculty no. 6 (Other), due to the small number of respondents.

Summarising the first model, it can be seen that faculty no. 1 (Business and Social Science), and faculty no. 5 (Engineering and Science) are the faculties which rate instrumental attributes the highest with means of 3.88 and 3.89, respectively. Yet, these are also among the faculties with the highest std. deviations (0.509 and 0.481). In the subsequent model, *Analysis of Variance*, a significant p-value of 0.0000 < 0.05 is found. Therefore, we can infer that a difference in the means between the faculties is found, but in order to understand where the differences are found, a pairwise comparison of the means is necessary.

Pairwise Comparison of Means

Faculty (Instrumental Attributes)

pref_inst	Contrast	Std. Err.	Tukey t	Tukey P>|t|	Tukey [95% Conf.	Interval]
q_1						
2 vs 1	-.1219904	.027369	-4.46	0.000	-.2000421	-.0439386
3 vs 1	-.022784	.0578587	-0.39	0.999	-.1877871	.142219
4 vs 1	-.188243	.0320869	-5.87	0.000	-.2797493	-.0967367
5 vs 1	.0091604	.022914	0.40	0.999	-.0561862	.0745071
6 vs 1	.0327716	.0630466	0.52	0.995	-.1470264	.2125695
3 vs 2	.0992063	.0606122	1.64	0.574	-.0736491	.2720618
4 vs 2	-.0662526	.0368208	-1.80	0.466	-.1712593	.0387541
5 vs 2	.1311508	.0291763	4.50	0.000	.0479452	.2143565
6 vs 2	.154762	.0655826	2.36	0.171	-.0322683	.3417922
4 vs 3	-.1654589	.0628835	-2.63	0.090	-.344792	.0138741
5 vs 3	.0319445	.0587352	0.54	0.994	-.1355581	.1994471
6 vs 3	.0555556	.0830641	0.67	0.985	-.1813288	.2924401
5 vs 4	.1974034	.0336416	5.87	0.000	.1014633	.2933436
6 vs 4	.2210145	.0676874	3.27	0.014	.0279818	.4140473
6 vs 5	.0236111	.0638519	0.37	0.999	-.1584834	.2057056

Table 20 *- Pairwise Comparison (Faculty & Instrumental Attributes)*

Again, all pairwise comparisons including faculty no. 3 and no. 6 are excluded from the analysis due to the same reasons as before. Thus, we can infer that the following comparisons are significant (based on the p-values being < 0.05); no. 2 vs no. 1, no. 4 vs no. 1, no. 5 vs no. 2, and no. 5 vs no. 4. The comparison, therefore, shows that there is a difference in the rating of the instrumental attributes between:

- No. 2, Faculty of Humanities vs No. 1, Faculty of Business and Social Science.
- No. 4, Faculty of IT and Design vs No. 1, Faculty of Business and Social Science.
- No. 5, Faculty of Engineering and Science vs No. 2, Faculty of Humanities.
- No. 5, Faculty of Engineering and Science vs No. 4, Faculty of IT and Design.

When interpreting these differences between the faculties, it can be confirmed that faculty no. 1 and faculty no. 5, which were the faculties that rated instrumental attributes highest, is very similar to each other, as they had a p-value of 0.999 in the pairwise comparison (Table 20). The differences are instead found in the above four comparisons. When looking at the overall sample characteristics from Appendix 8, faculty no. 1 is actually the faculty with the evenest distribution between gender (41 males and 48 females). What is then interesting, is that the remaining three faculties (no. 2, no. 4, and no. 5) are rather uneven in this distribution. At faculty no. 4 and no. 5, there is a clear overweight of male respondents (21 females and 44 males), where, on the opposite, faculty no. 2 has a majority of female respondents (28). So,

we could conjecture about whether these differences seen above is due to the gender distribution. However, going back to Table 11, the ANOVA actually showed that there was no significant difference between males and females in the rating of instrumental attributes. Thus, it could be a possibility that the nature of each faculty and, hence, the values associated with each respective type of education could be the decisive factor in proportion to the above differences. However, this presumption is only something we can conjecture about.

Comprising the last outputs for the analysis of hypothesis 1, we have the one-way ANOVA with the factor variable *faculty* and the response variable *pref_symb* (i.e. the mean of the respondents' rating of the 13 items belonging to the symbolic attributes).

One-Way ANOVA

Faculty (Symbolic Attributes)

	Summary of pref_symb		
q_1	Mean	Std. Dev.	Freq.
1	3.9152982	.5486946	1,068
2	3.9076923	.37313886	420
3	4.2051281	.23094968	72
4	3.7826087	.55275048	276
5	3.8615384	.52242074	720
6	3.9230768	.12980309	60
Total	3.8934368	.50857891	2,616

Analysis of Variance

Source	SS	df	MS	F	Prob > F
Between groups	11.7660642	5	2.35321284	9.24	0.0000
Within groups	664.610242	2610	.254639939		
Total	676.376306	2615	.258652507		

Table 21 *- One-Way ANOVA (Faculty & Symbolic Attributes)*

Just as earlier, faculty no. 3 and no. 6 are ruled out. In general, the means across the four other faculties are close to being identical, with only the mean of faculty no. 4 being slightly lower. Interestingly, it is also faculty no. 4 (IT and Design) which has the highest std. deviation of 0.553, however closely followed by faculty no. 1 (Business and Social Science). The respondents of faculty no. 2 (Humanities) are more alike in their average rating of the symbolic attributes, as their std. deviation is the lowest (0.373). In the *Analysis of Variance,* the p-value is significant with the value of 0.0000 < 0.05. This suggests a difference in the mean of the

rating of symbolic attributes across the faculties. Once again, a pairwise comparison of the groups is necessary in order to identify the differences.

Pairwise Comparison of Means
Faculty (Symbolic Attributes)

pref_symb	Contrast	Std. Err.	Tukey t	Tukey P>|t|	Tukey [95% Conf.	Interval]
q_1						
2 vs 1	-.0076059	.0290639	-0.26	1.000	-.0904912	.0752795
3 vs 1	.2898299	.0614418	4.72	0.000	.1146085	.4650513
4 vs 1	-.1326895	.034074	-3.89	0.001	-.2298626	-.0355164
5 vs 1	-.0537597	.024333	-2.21	0.234	-.1231532	.0156337
6 vs 1	.0077786	.0669509	0.12	1.000	-.1831539	.1987112
3 vs 2	.2974358	.0643658	4.62	0.000	.1138757	.4809959
4 vs 2	-.1250836	.0391011	-3.20	0.018	-.2365932	-.0135741
5 vs 2	-.0461539	.0309831	-1.49	0.671	-.1345123	.0422046
6 vs 2	.0153845	.069644	0.22	1.000	-.1832282	.2139972
4 vs 3	-.4225194	.0667778	-6.33	0.000	-.6129582	-.2320806
5 vs 3	-.3435897	.0623725	-5.51	0.000	-.5214654	-.1657139
6 vs 3	-.2820513	.0882081	-3.20	0.018	-.5336056	-.030497
5 vs 4	.0789298	.035725	2.21	0.234	-.0229518	.1808113
6 vs 4	.1404681	.0718791	1.95	0.369	-.0645188	.345455
6 vs 5	.0615384	.0678061	0.91	0.945	-.1318329	.2549097

Table 22 *- Pairwise Comparison (Faculty & Symbolic Attributes)*

Again, all pairwise comparisons including faculty no. 3 and no. 6 are ruled out. Consequently, the following comparisons are significant (based on their p-values being < 0.05); no. 4 vs no. 1, and no. 4 vs no. 2. Thus, a difference in the rating of the symbolic attributes is found between:

- No. 4, Faculty of IT and Design vs No. 1, Faculty of Business and Social Science.
- No. 4, Faculty of IT and Design vs No. 2, Faculty of Humanities.

As inferred from the previous table (Table 21), faculty no. 4 was slightly lower in the mean, i.e. the rating of the symbolic attributes, as seen in relation to the other faculties. Thus, this could justify the above differences, as faculty no. 4 recurs in both of the above pairwise comparisons where a difference was identified.

In comparison to Table 20, where the pairwise comparison was made in relation to the average ratings of the instrumental attributes, Table 22 shows that in general faculty 1, 2, 4 and 5 are more similar in the overall rating of the symbolic attributes, as fewer differences were significant. However, as already mentioned earlier, the overall means of each faculty

regarding the symbolic attributes were also more similar to each other, hence, possibly explaining the fewer differences.

Due to the presented results, the preliminary conclusion for this section is divided between the two types of attributes. First, in relation to the instrumental attributes, we can infer, that only the personal characteristics of nationality and faculty among our respondents, influence the perceived importance of these, as the ANOVA on gender did not show significant results. Secondly, the results show that the importance of symbolic attributes is influenced by the personal characteristics of gender and faculty.

Generally speaking, we can partly confirm our H_1 due to the above conclusions, meaning that the importance of instrumental and symbolic attributes is influenced by personal characteristics, to some extent. In relation to the three personal characteristics applied in our study, it could be discussed whether the choice of these particular characteristics (gender, nationality, and faculty) are the most eloquent in this case. Another personal characteristic, we potentially could have applied, is family circumstances. This could for example entail the marital status of the respondents, the respondents' housing conditions or whether the respondents have any kids. This could be useful in relation to the view by Cable and Turban (2001), who theorise that employer attributes may be prioritised differently among prospective applicants, as a result of the different individual needs and expectations they may possess in relation to an employer. Further supported by Reis and Braga (2016), the influence of these could, for instance, be due to an applicant's family circumstances, which could require the applicant to attain a certain salary in order to make life go around.
Though, with the current applied personal characteristics, as mentioned above, we still believe that there is sufficient evidence to confirm H_1 partially.

Hypothesis 2A & 2B

To briefly sum up, hypothesis 2A and 2B were proposed on the basis of the sections discussing The Instrumental-Symbolic Framework and the Person-Organisation Fit Theory. As argued by Kristof (1996), the perceived P-O Fit will affect the employer attractiveness, since a personal match with the organisation will lead to increased application intentions. When assumed, that the employer attractiveness encompasses the instrumental and symbolic attributes, the P-O Fit would function as a moderator. Therefore, the following was posited:

H_{2A}: *The impact of instrumental attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*
H_{2B}: *The impact of symbolic attributes on the intention to apply is moderated by P-O Fit.*

As an initial stage to testing the hypotheses, a cross-tabulation of the groups created in Table 13 and the choice of job in relation to symbolic and instrumental attributes is created (Table 23A+B). The variables *Choice Symbolic Job* and *Choice Instrumental Job* are created based on the chosen alternatives of the respondents, and whether they are symbolic or instrumental, hence, the count of e.g. 155 (*Symbolic Person* and *Choice Symbolic Job*) shows how many respondents belonging to the group *Symbolic Person* that have chosen the alternative including symbolic attributes. The table functions as a descriptive background for the conditional logistic regression models, which are presented subsequently.

Choice in Comparison to Person Type (Part 1)

	Symbolic Person			Instrumental Person		
	Count	Row N %	Column N %	Count	Row N %	Column N %
Choice Symbolic Job	155	36.5%	61.5%	56	17.2%	38.9%
Choice Instrumental Job	97	26.0%	38.5%	88	24.2%	61.1%

Choice in Comparison to Person Type (Part 2)

	Inst. + Symb. Person			Neutral Person		
	Count	Row N %	Column N %	Count	Row N %	Column N %
Choice Symbolic Job	196	29.0%	53.6%	270	39.9%	49.5%
Choice Instrumental Job	170	26.9%	46.4%	276	43.7%	50.5%

Table 23A+B *- Choice in Comparison to Person Type*

The table shows that 61.5% of the symbolic respondents have chosen the options involving symbolic job attributes, giving a slight indication of correspondence with the P-O Fit theory. Similarly, among the instrumental respondents, 61.1% have chosen the options with instrumental job attributes, indicating that a P-O Fit has an influence. However, the groups of symbolic and instrumental respondents are the smallest in numbers, thus, making it difficult to conclude on this basis. Lastly, the instrumental + symbolic and the neutral groups are quite equally distributed among instrumental and symbolic job attributes, which was expected, since they do not have prevailing preferences of either type of attributes.

In order to determine whether P-O Fit functions as a moderator, two conditional logistic regression models that focus on the instrumental and symbolic P-O Fit, respectively, are created. The variable of respondent preferences originates from the respondents' ratings of the 25 attributes, but since these variables are not connected to the choice sets, they cannot be directly incorporated in the regression model. Thus, the direct effect of the attribute preferences on the intention to apply cannot be measured. However, this is not the aim, since we wish to investigate the moderating effect. In order to do so, the preferences are included as interaction terms. This is done by multiplying the preferences with the type of job attributes, they should be tested as moderators of. Hence, the interaction term of the instrumental P-O Fit is the instrumental preferences (the mean of the respondents' rating of the items belonging to instrumental attributes) multiplied with the instrumental job variable (that indicates which alternatives involve instrumental attributes), giving the new variable *pref_inst_instrumental*. Similarly, the interaction term of symbolic P-O Fit is the symbolic preferences multiplied by the symbolic job variable, constituting the new variable *pref_symb_symbolic*. These interaction terms can help to explain why some respondents weigh e.g. symbolic attributes higher.

The following table displays the output of the conditional logistic regression model investigating the P-O Fit related to instrumental attributes.

P-O Fit – Instrumental

```
                                                Number of obs     =      2,616
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =       3.63
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.1632
Log pseudolikelihood = -904.82393               Pseudo R2         =     0.0020

                                  (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
```

choice	Odds Ratio	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
instrumental	.4954376	.2719287	-1.28	0.201	.1689638	1.452728
pref_inst_i~l	1.167734	.1653197	1.10	0.273	.8847833	1.541172

***Table 24** - Conditional Logistic Regression (P-O Fit - Instrumental)*

As seen in the table above, the overall regression model is not significant since the value in Prob > chi2 is 0.1632, which is larger than the alpha value of 0.05. This means, that the model cannot be used to display a connection between the dependent and independent variables. Additionally, both the instrumental variable and the interaction variable *pref_inst_instrumental* are insignificant with p-values of 0.201 and 0.273, respectively. This further confirms that there is no link between the variables.

This lack of significance is supported by Table 23A+B, where it is displayed that the number of decidedly instrumental respondents is quite small compared to the other groups. Also, 38.9% of the instrumental group has chosen the alternatives involving symbolic job attributes, which indicates an inconsistency in the choices. Furthermore, the large groups containing instrumental + symbolic and neutral have an almost equal distribution of instrumental and symbolic job choices.

Since the results above reveal no connection between the choice of instrumental job attributes and the instrumental preferences of the respondents, the H_{2A} is rejected, meaning that P-O Fit is not a moderator of the impact of instrumental attributes on the intention to apply.

The following table (Table 25) is the output of the conditional logistic regression model which is used for the analysis of P-O Fit in relation to symbolic attributes. As explained earlier, the variables used for this regression is the created interaction variable *pref_sym_symbolic* and the job-related symbolic attributes.

P-O Fit – Symbolic

```
                                                Number of obs     =      2,616
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =      25.05
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -891.39951               Pseudo R2         =     0.0168

                                          (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
```

choice	Odds Ratio	Robust Std. Err.	z	P>|z|	[95% Conf.	Interval]
symbolic	.061461	.0378221	-4.53	0.000	.0183985	.2053127
pref_sym_sy~c	2.103016	.3296957	4.74	0.000	1.546668	2.859484

Table 25 *- Conditional Logistic Regression (P-O Fit – Symbolic)*

Looking at the overall significance of the model (Prob > chi2), the conditional logistic regression is determined to be significant, since the p-value is < 0.05. Hence, it seems like an appropriate model to explain the connection between the variables.

Each of the independent variables (*symbolic* and *pref_sym_symbolic*) are significant as the P>|z| is smaller than 0.05, which confirms the above conclusion of the whole model being highly significant.

Looking at the value represented in the odds ratio, the number displayed for *pref_sym_symbolic* cannot be interpreted directly as a regular odds ratio, since it is an interaction variable, which requires a more complex interpretation. However, since the value is above 1, a positive link between the variables is found. This means that it can be derived that the higher mean value (of *pref_symb*), the more likely the respondents are to choose the symbolic job attributes over the instrumental.

Following the results that have just been presented, there is evidence to support the confirmation of H_{2B}, meaning that a connection between the respondents' preferences and their choice of job attributes regarding symbolic attributes. This means that in relation to the symbolic attribute, P-O Fit functions as a moderator of the intention to apply.

As presented in the theoretical background, the P-O Fit is ought to affect the employer attractiveness and the intention to apply, where a match between the personal values and those of the organisation will result in an increase of application intentions among prospective applicants (Kristof, 1996). Our findings somehow contradict these findings, since H_{2A} has been rejected, and H_{2B} has been confirmed. This means that only a P-

O Fit between certain types of personal values (the symbolic values) will moderate the intention to apply.

This contradiction with the theory might be related to the large number of respondents that either value both instrumental and symbolic attributes or does not value any of the presented attractiveness attributes particularly high. Hence, most of the respondents do not have explicit preferences towards a specific type of attributes.

This could suggest that when companies want to attract potential applicants, it might not be of importance, whether they weigh either type of attributes. This is due to the fact that most of the graduates do not have prevailing preferences, and they are not attracted to a firm based on their expression of a certain type of attributes.

Hypothesis 3

The theoretical foundation for hypothesis 3 was found in the argument, that the chosen focus group for this thesis, namely forthcoming graduates, not only are potential future employees but also consumers. As such, we presumed that the product and/or corporate brand could have an effect on the employer brand and, thus, the application intentions, if the graduates associate an employer with e.g. an unethical use of cheap labour or a lack of environmental awareness. Hence, the third hypothesis posited was:

H_3: *The corporate brand influences the intention to apply.*

The ensuing frequency table (Table 26) has been computed on the basis of each of the six choice sets, as presented in the survey. The table accentuates which type of corporate brand, the respondents have chosen in each alternative with *Count* specifying the total number. For example, in the first choice set (*q_4*), 216 respondents have chosen the job alternative including a positive corporate brand, where only 2 have chosen the negative. However, worth mentioning is that the last two choice sets differed from the others, as *q_8* only comprised alternatives with a positive corporate brand and *q_9* only involved negative corporate brands. Thus, naturally, all 218 respondents chose the same type of corporate brand in those alternatives.

Choice Characteristics

Corporate Brand

				Choice
				Count
Choice set	q_4	Corporate brand	Negative	2
			Positive	216
	q_5	Corporate brand	Negative	18
			Positive	200
	q_6	Corporate brand	Negative	6
			Positive	212
	q_7	Corporate brand	Negative	40
			Positive	178
	q_8	Corporate brand	Negative	0
			Positive	218
	q_9	Corporate brand	Negative	218
			Positive	0

Table 26 *- Choice Characteristics (Corporate Brand)*

From the above choice characteristics, it is clear that the positive corporate brand is the most preferred among the respondents, except choice set *q_9* where only job alternatives including negative corporate brands were presented. Hence, this frequency table could indicate, that the corporate brand does have an influence on the choice of employer. This assumption, which is streamlined with H_3, is further tested below through a conditional logistic regression model.

Choice & Corporate Brand

```
                                                Number of obs     =      2,616
                                                Wald chi2(1)      =     381.73
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -536.00384               Pseudo R2         =     0.4088

                                  (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
       image |   12.21212   1.564141    19.54   0.000     9.500978     15.6969
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Table 27 *- Conditional Logistic Regression (Corporate Brand)*

In the interpretation of the above model, the first element to focus on is the Prob > chi2 = 0.0000. As this number is < 0.05 our model is significant, hence, already now indicating a connection between the two applied variables. At the same time, the variable image (i.e. corporate brand), where the "success" (the value 1) represents a positive corporate brand, and the value 0 illustrates a negative corporate brand, is significant (0.0000 < 0.05). Thus, the corporate brand does have an influence on the choice of job/employer, hence, the intention to apply. To be more specific, the odds ratio value for image shows us, that a positive corporate brand increases the odds of having intentions to apply for a job at an employer by 12.212, in comparison to an employer with a negative corporate brand.

In the theoretical chapter of this study, and more specifically the section discussing the impact of the corporate brand on the intention to apply, we found it appropriate to wonder whether the corporate brand could actually deteriorate the employer brand. As seen in the results of Table 27, we found that a positive corporate brand significantly increases the odds of choosing an employer, in comparison to one with a negative corporate brand. These results, therefore, substantiates the assumption that the corporate brand actually can deteriorate the employer brand. What is important to derive from this is that if a company is perceived as having a

negative corporate brand, the employer branding efforts are trivial. Hence, the focus should initially be directed towards amplifying the corporate brand.

The above results are supported by the researchers Lemmink, Schuijf, and Streukens (2003) who in their research concluded that a positive corporate image would form a strong basis for a positive employer image as well. Hence, again indicating that once a perceived negative corporate brand is established in the minds of prospective applicants, the employer image is impaired. By this, Lemmink, Schuijf, and Streukens (2003) also emphasised, that an employer brand cannot be built without a corporate brand, again referring back to our previous note, that all branding efforts should be directed towards the corporate brand before the employer brand. Lemmink, Schuijf, and Streukens (2003), therefore, also concluded that the corporate brand did influence the application intentions of, in their case, graduate business students, which thereby supports our results, also inferred from a study among graduates (or forthcoming graduates).

One of the reasons for the impairing effect a negative corporate brand can have on the intentions to apply has also been highlighted by Agrawal and Swaroop (2009). As mentioned in our theoretical chapter, they argue that the attractiveness of an employer is highly impacted by the perceptions an applicant holds about a company when considering it as a possible employer. As such, if an applicant knows the company from a consumer perspective and associates it with e.g. unethical business conduct or a lack of environmental awareness, this could have a spillover effect on the employer brand and, therefore, the intention to apply (Agrawal & Swaroop, 2009; Mokina, 2014). As all respondents in our study were exposed to company descriptions, as seen from a consumer perspective, entailing either a negative or positive corporate brand, this thought could help explain the results.

To sum up, the results derived from this hypothesis has shown that a negative corporate brand will deteriorate the employer brand, as the application intentions are seen to be affected negatively due to the former. Therefore, the corporate brand does influence the intention to apply, and we can confirm H_3.

Due to, the already mentioned, insufficient amount of studies within the area of the influence of the corporate brand on the employer brand, the above findings contribute to this area. The theory indicated that the corporate brand determines the attractiveness of an employer, thus, the intention to apply, and this is confirmed through this study. However, there are still questions to answer, and as such, this will be further addressed in the chapter of *Future Research*.

Hypothesis 4

The premise upon which the fourth hypothesis is based derived from discussions relating back to the previously noted hypotheses and the theoretical background. More specifically, it was argued that the personal characteristics not only may influence the perceived importance of employer attractiveness attributes but also the corporate brand, hence the choice of employer (i.e. the application intentions). Consequently, hypothesis 4 was posited as:

H_4: *The impact of employer attractiveness attributes and corporate brand on the intention to apply is influenced by personal characteristics.*

For the analysis of this hypothesis, the personal characteristics which were also introduced in H_1 are used. Hence, age is not considered, and the gender option *Other* has been removed for the same reasons. Furthermore, as it can be seen in Table 6 concerning the sample characteristics, the variable *Faculty* involves the two faculties *Medicine* and *Other*, with only a few respondents (6 and 5 respondents, respectively). These faculty categories are excluded due to the disequilibrium in the number of respondents belonging to these, hence, if they were included in the regression model, the results would not be useful.

The table below (Table 28) displays a cross-tabulation of the choices related to attractiveness attributes and corporate and personal characteristics of the respondents.

Choice Characteristics

	Employer Attractiveness Attributes						Corporate Brand					
	Instrumental			Symbolic			Negative			Positive		
	Count	Column N %	Row N %	Count	Column N %	Row N %	Count	Column N %	Row N %	Count	Column N %	Row N %
Gender												
Female	270	43.1%	45.0%	330	49.3%	55.0%	115	40.8%	19.2%	485	47.8%	80.8%
Male	356	56.9%	51.1%	340	50.7%	48.9%	167	59.2%	24.0%	529	52.2%	76.0%
Nationality												
Danish	378	59.9%	46.3%	438	64.7%	53.7%	179	63.0%	21.9%	637	62.2%	78.1%
Other	253	40.1%	51.4%	239	35.3%	48.6%	105	37.0%	21.3%	387	37.8%	78.7%
Faculty of Study												
Faculty of Business and Social Science	263	42.6%	49.3%	271	41.0%	50.7%	111	40.1%	20.8%	423	42.3%	79.2%
Faculty of Humanities	94	15.2%	44.8%	116	17.5%	55.2%	40	14.4%	19.0%	170	17.0%	81.0%
Faculty of Medicine/Health Science	13	2.1%	36.1%	23	3.5%	63.9%	6	2.2%	16.7%	30	3.0%	83.3%
Technical Faculty of IT and Design	64	10.4%	46.4%	74	11.2%	53.6%	39	14.1%	28.3%	99	9.9%	71.7%
Faculty of Engineering and Science	183	29.7%	50.8%	177	26.8%	49.2%	81	29.2%	22.5%	279	27.9%	77.5%

Table 28 *- Choice Characteristics, Personal Characteristics*

Table 28 illustrates the distribution of choices divided by the employer attractiveness attributes and the types of corporate brand. For example, it is displayed that the choices related to gender are rather equally distributed among males and females.
At the moment, further description of the table above will not be outlined, since the table will primarily function as a frame of reference for the results of the conditional logistic regression below.

As an initial stage of analysing this hypothesis, a conditional logistic regression model including *choice* as the dependent variable and *symbolic* and *corporate brand* as independent variables has been created. The binary variable *Symbolic* illustrates the choice of job attributes, where the "success" (the value 1) represents a choice including symbolic job attributes, and the value 0 represents a choice involving instrumental attributes. Somehow similar, the variable *Corporate Brand* is constructed where the "success" represents a choice involving a positive corporate brand, while the value 0 concerns a choice involving a negative corporate brand.

Furthermore, interaction terms of the personal characteristics have been built, using the same procedure as explained in the analysis of H_{2A} and H_{2B}, where the personal characteristic is multiplied with the independent variable. This gives the six interaction terms; *symbolic_female, image_female, symbolic_danish, image_danish, symbolic_faculty,* and *image_faculty*. The personal characteristic gender is represented through the variable *female*, where the value 1 is representing females, and 0 represents males. Similarly, the nationality is expressed through the variable *danish*, where 1 = Danes, and 0 = foreigners. The variable *faculty* is a categorical variable where the numbers express the different faculties of study.

The table below is the Stata output of the described conditional logistic regression model.

```
                                                Number of obs     =      2,616
                                                Wald chi2(8)      =     362.75
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -515.35577               Pseudo R2         =     0.4316

                                  (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |   .6403574   .1603651    -1.78   0.075     .3919725    1.046139
       image |   12.61343   4.559818     7.01   0.000     6.210402     25.6181
symbolic_fem~e |   1.869098   .3847303     3.04   0.002     1.248599    2.797958
  image_female |   3.094449   1.088319     3.21   0.001     1.553157    6.165259
symbolic_dan~h |   1.559737   .2967791     2.34   0.019     1.074209    2.264716
  image_danish |   .7992355   .2153793    -0.83   0.406     .4712937     1.35537
symbolic_fac~y |   1.028707   .0574533     0.51   0.612      .922045    1.147708
 image_faculty |   .9208385   .0734542    -1.03   0.301     .7875609     1.07667
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

***Table 29** - Conditional Logistic Regression, Personal Characteristics (Interaction Terms)*

As seen above, the overall model is significant (Prob>chi2 = 0.000 < 0.05). Looking at the interaction terms, gender seems to be connected to the choice, as both *symbolic_female* and *image_female* are significant with the p-values 0.002 and 0.001, respectively. The nationality seems to influence the choice of symbolic and instrumental attributes, as the p-value of *symbolic_danish* is 0.019 < 0.05. However, the variable *image_danish* is insignificant, indicating that the choice in relation to the corporate brand is not influenced by the nationality of the respondent. Finally, the interaction terms related to faculty are both insignificant, which indicates that neither choice of attractiveness attributes nor corporate brand is connected to which faculty the respondents study within. In order to comment further on the connections

related to the interaction terms, subgroup analyses of each personal characteristic will be performed in the subsequent section.

Hence, the following table presents the combined outputs of the conditional logistic regression subgroup analyses based on gender, nationality and faculty (the Stata outputs can be found in Appendix 11, 12 and 13, respectively). The values represented in the columns *Symbolic* and *Image* are the odds ratios related to those variables and the *P>|z|* represents the p-values on which the significance of the variable is determined.

	Symbolic	P>|z|	Corporate Brand	P>|z|
Gender				
Male	0.918	0.477	8.267	0.000
Female	1.711	0.000	27.414	0.000
Nationality				
Danish	1.412	0.003	11.945	0.000
Other	0.873	0.367	13.313	0.000
Faculty				
1. Business and Social Science	1.076	0.620	15.199	0.000
2. Humanities	1.763	0.024	29.065	0.000
4. IT and Design	1.320	0.270	4.810	0.000
5. Engineering and Science	0.927	0.660	10.441	0.000

Table 30 *- Conditional Logistic Regression, Subgroup Analysis of Gender, Nationality, and Faculty*

Gender

In relation to gender and the preferences for symbolic and instrumental attributes, a significant relationship is only found regarding the female respondents ($p = 0.000 < 0.05$). The odds ratio of 1.711 implies a positive relationship with the variable symbolic, hence, it indicates that females are more likely to choose symbolic job attributes over instrumental attributes. This connection was also indicated in Table 28, where the choice of symbolic job attributes compared to instrumental job attributes is slightly higher for females. The insignificance of the relationship between job attributes and males would be expected based on the numbers displayed in Table 28, where there were no substantial differences between the choices of instrumental and symbolic attributes.

Regarding the corporate brand of the potential employer, a significant relationship is found for both males and females. The odds ratio of males (8.267) shows that males are more likely to choose an employer with a positive corporate brand over an employer with a negative

brand. This is also the case for females; however, the odds ratio is substantially higher, revealing a higher likelihood of choosing an employer with a positive corporate brand. Hence, both males and females prefer a positive corporate brand over a negative corporate brand, and for females, the corporate brand is even more crucial in the creation of application intentions. This corresponds with the numbers displayed in Table 28, where the majority of both males and females choose the positive corporate brand. However, the number of females choosing a positive corporate brand is slightly higher than males (80.8% females and 76,0% males), indicating that the positive corporate brand is a little more important to females.
Furthermore, the results are aligned with the findings of Table 29, where significant relationships between the interaction terms *symbolic_female* and *image_female* and the choice of alternative were found.

Nationality

From Table 30, it can be concluded that only a connection between the Danish nationality and preferences for symbolic and instrumental job attributes is found since the p-value of *Other* is larger than the alpha value (0.367 > 0.05). The odds ratio related to the Danish respondents is 1.412, meaning that the Danes are slightly more likely to choose an employer that is associated with symbolic job attributes over instrumental job attributes. This is confirmed in Table 28, where 53.7% of the Danish respondents have chosen the options involving symbolic job attributes, and only 46.3% have chosen the instrumental job attributes. Furthermore, the insignificance related to the foreign respondents as indicated in Table 28, where the choices of instrumental and symbolic job attributes are almost equal.
In relation to the nationality and choice of corporate brand, there is a connection between the choice and both Danish respondents and foreigners, as the values for both groups of nationalities are significant (0.000 < 0.05). The odds ratio of the Danes is found to be 11.945, and the value of foreign respondents is 13.313, hence, they are quite similar. The odds ratio values express that both Danes and foreign respondents are more likely to choose an employer that has a positive corporate brand. This connection was also indicated in Table 28, where both the majority of Danes and foreign respondents have chosen the positive corporate brand over the negative corporate brand.
The findings related to nationality seem to be aligned with the outcome of Table 29, where *symbolic_danish* was found to be significant, which is confirmed in terms of Danish respondents where a significant relationship was found. Furthermore, the interaction term *image_danish*

was initially found insignificant (Table 29), however, the findings of Table 30 suggest, that there is a significant relationship between nationality and corporate brand. Both Danes and foreigners are quite equal in their odds ratio, indicating that both Danes and foreigners are in agreement about the importance of the positive corporate brand. This explains the prior insignificance found in Table 29 where no difference between the two groups (Danes and foreigners) was found.

Faculty of Study

Regarding the respondents' faculty of study and the choice of symbolic and instrumental attributes, a significant relationship is only found with the Faculty of Humanities (p-value = 0.024 < 0.05). Hence, other faculties do not influence the choice of job attributes. The odds ratio of Humanities is 1.763, indicating that the respondents studying within the Faculty of Humanities are more likely to choose symbolic attributes over instrumental attributes. However, as can be seen in Appendix 8, 80% of the respondents within the Faculty of Humanities are females. Hence, the significance of this faculty might be due to the relationship between the females and their choice of job attributes as found earlier, rather than the choice being related to the faculty of study.

Focusing on the faculty of study and choice of corporate brand, values of the four faculties are significant (0.000 < 0.05), indicating that there is a clear connection between the faculty and the importance of the corporate brand. All odds ratios show that graduates of the four faculties are more likely to choose a job position where the employer has a positive corporate brand rather than a negative corporate brand. This is also indicated in Table 28, where most choices in all faculties are related to a positive corporate brand. Even though all faculties prefer a positive corporate brand, the odds ratios vary quite a lot. The smallest odds ratio is related to the Faculty of IT and Design (4.810), and the largest odds ratio is related to the Faculty of Humanities (29.065), showing a greater importance of the corporate brand among the forthcoming graduates within the Faculty of Humanities.

However, despite the differences, all faculties are more likely to choose a job position at a potential employer if the corporate brand is positive.

Overall, the faculty of study does not seem to influence the choice of employer attractiveness attributes or corporate brand, hence, this corresponds with the initial conditional logistic regression model with the interaction terms, where neither *symbolic_faculty* nor *image_faculty* was found to be significant.

Based on the findings of the above three subgroup analyses, the overall conclusion to our fourth hypothesis is that the impact of both the employer attractiveness attributes and the corporate brand is influenced by personal characteristics, hence, H_4 is confirmed.
Regarding the employer attractiveness attributes, the personal characteristics seem to play a role in relation to Gender and Nationality, since differences between males and females and Danes and foreigners were found.
Concerning the corporate brand, all subgroups are more likely to choose an option involving a positive corporate brand rather than a negative corporate brand. This is also in correspondence with the findings of H_3, where the odds calculated based on all respondents showed that a positive corporate brand increases the likelihood of having intentions to apply. However, a difference is found in the level of increased probability (due to the different odds ratios), where especially the likelihood differs in the subgroups *Gender* and *Faculty*.

Going back to the theories presented in the theoretical background, the findings related to this hypothesis substantiate the arguments presented, where personal characteristics and nationality, in particular, are outlined as factors that influence the choices made by potential applicants (Slaughter, et al., 2001; Alnıaçıka & Alnıaçıka, 2012; Reis & Braga, 2016).

Discussion

Upon the preceding chapter encompassing the analysis and findings of this research, the following paragraph will discuss the most important and distinctive findings in relation to our research question phrased as: *How can employer branding affect the intentions of forthcoming graduates to apply for a job position?*

In relation to our findings derived from the analysis of H_3 and H_4, the corporate brand seems to be the crucial factor influencing the choice of a potential employer. More specifically, a positive corporate brand increases the likelihood of establishing application intentions among forthcoming graduates, while a negative corporate brand will decrease the likelihood. Hence, this indicates that the employer branding efforts might not have an impact on the intentions to apply if the company has a negative corporate brand.

Based on the theoretical background, we found indications that the corporate brand would be connected to the employer brand, however, we did not expect the influence to be that strong, since the population of this study, i.e. forthcoming graduates, are facing the labour market as fairly inexperienced workers searching for their first full-time job. Thus, we did not expect them to be as critical about potential employers and their public reputation. Though, we expected a more distinct difference between which employer attractiveness attributes the respondents would attach importance to. This was somehow contradicted in our findings since we only found little evidence that some of the subgroups (based on personal characteristics) differed in their preferences. Also, most of the respondents either found both types of attributes equally important or did not assign any particular importance to either type (Table 13). In relation to this, our findings contradict the theoretical background related to the attractiveness attributes (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). According to Lievens and Highhouse (2003), the employer attractiveness attributes are part of the essential matters in the goal of standing out from the competitors in relation to potential applicants. However, our findings with an evident majority of the respondents either emphasising the employer brand attributes equally or not at all, disprove this argument. This is due to the large number of respondents who do not have distinct preferences for either type of attributes, and with no distinct preferences being present within the target audience, the employer attractiveness attributes cannot function as a competitive advantage for employers. Furthermore, based on our findings, the employer attractiveness attributes cannot function as a competitive advantage if the corporate brand is associated with negatively perceived factors since the corporate

brand is a predominant element when application intentions are established among forthcoming graduates.

Due to the nature of this study and our educational background, the international aspect is a highly relevant perspective to address in this discussion. From Table 7, it can be seen that the survey involves respondents from a total of 35 different countries (including Denmark). The predominant country is naturally Denmark, where 62.4% of the respondents originate from. Therefore, the remaining 37.6% of the respondents are from foreign countries. Since there is a small number of respondents representing each foreign country (mainly 1-2 respondents per country), it has not been possible to analyse each country individually. Hence, the foreign respondents have been examined as one unified group throughout the analysis. Some indications can be seen in the findings, but due to the many different nationalities spread across the world, cultural differences are expected (Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016), and thus, also different perceptions of attractive employers. This might be the reason why there is a lack of consistency within the group of foreigners, making it impossible to find a significant relationship with the application intentions.

Should it have been possible to investigate differences between nationalities and infer more applicable results in terms of the group of foreigners, the sampling should have been targeted more specifically at foreign students to increase the number of respondents representing each country. By doing that, the foreign group of the sample might have been more eloquent and representative for other nationalities.

Hence, our study mainly provides insights applicable to Danish forthcoming graduates. According to the literature (Alniaçik et al., 2014; Reis & Braga, 2016), these findings would most likely be different when investigating other nationalities, and especially those where the culture differs quite a lot from the Danish culture.

In compliance with the above discussion and based on the results of our study, we propose a revised conceptual framework.

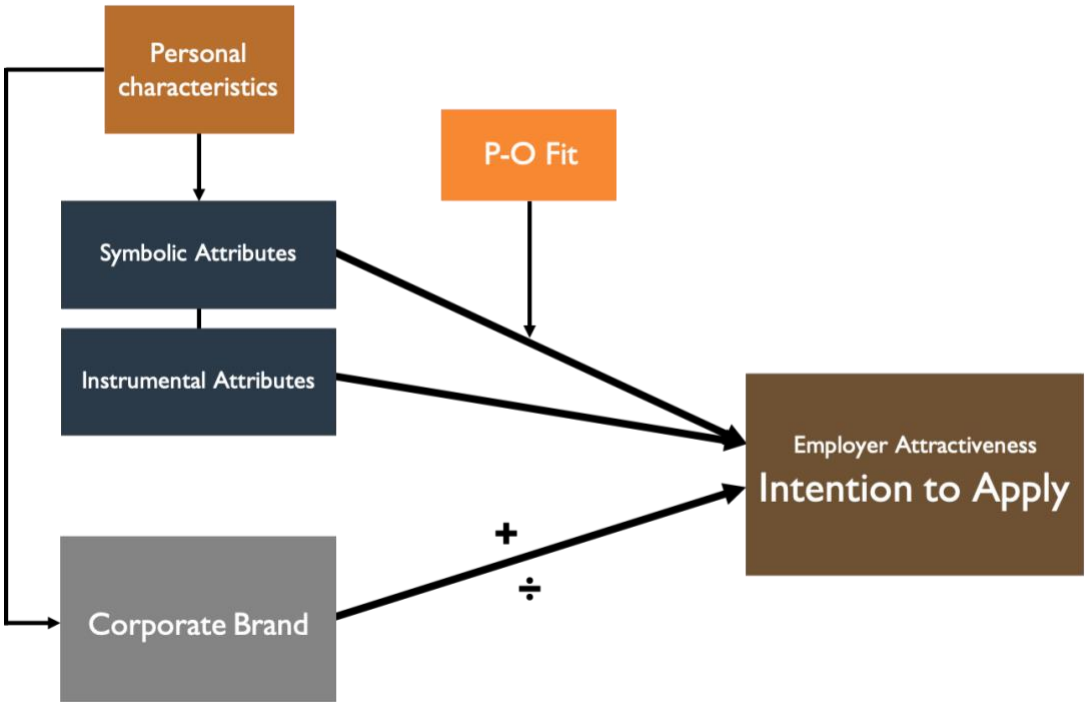

Figure 5 *- Revised Conceptual Framework*

The new, revised conceptual framework is designed upon the results derived from the analysis and has the purpose of visualising the connection between the findings.

As can be seen, the corporate brand has a direct influence on the employer attractiveness and thereby also the intention to apply. Depending on whether the corporate brand is perceived as positive or negative, it will influence the employer attractiveness and intention to apply accordingly.

Furthermore, the influence of the attractiveness attributes (symbolic and instrumental attributes) and the corporate brand are affected by personal characteristics, which primarily comprise gender and nationality. The symbolic and instrumental attractiveness attributes influence the employer attractiveness and intention to apply directly, however, the influence of symbolic attributes is moderated by the perceived P-O Fit. Hence, if the values and opinions of the forthcoming graduates related to symbolic attributes correspond with those expressed by the potential employer, the forthcoming graduate will be more likely to establish application intentions and vice versa.

Conclusion

The aim of this dissertation was to examine the research question asking: *How can employer branding affect the intentions of forthcoming graduates to apply for a job position?* More specifically, the objective of our study was to test and answer the hypotheses proposed during the chapter encompassing the theoretical background. Consequently, this section wraps up the research process by presenting the conclusions.

The overall answer to the research question is, that employer branding cannot affect the intentions to apply if the employer has a negative corporate brand. This was expressed in our results, which showed that in every choice set where the option of choosing a positive brand was available, the majority of the respondents chose that option over the negative corporate brand, despite the employer attractiveness attributes presented. More specifically, the influence of the corporate brand was illustrated in the findings of hypothesis 3, where the conditional logistic regression model showed, that the odds ratio of choosing a potential employer is 12.212 times higher when the potential employer has a positive corporate brand. Hence, the initial stage of adjusting the employer branding efforts involves dealing with the corporate brand.

If the corporate brand is positive, the employer branding efforts can be initiated. Worth mentioning is that the employer attractiveness attributes (symbolic and instrumental attributes) have not been found to play an essential role in the perceived employer attractiveness. However, a slight majority of the forthcoming graduates prefer the symbolic attributes over the instrumental attributes. Consequently, the respondents who hold preferences for the symbolic attributes are also more attracted to potential employers offering these attributes, meaning, that a P-O Fit related to the symbolic attributes functions as a moderator of the application intentions. Contrary, since there are no distinct preferences for instrumental attributes, a P-O Fit related to those attributes could not be found to increase the application intentions.

Lastly, the personal characteristics of the forthcoming graduates are found to influence the importance of the symbolic and instrumental attributes to some degree. However, not all of the personal characteristics included in the study were found to influence the importance, since only gender and nationality yielded significant relationships. As neither of the personal characteristics provided us with particularly strong results, this have left us with a discussion of whether the chosen characteristics were the most relevant and suitable for this study.

Theoretical & Practical Implications

In the succeeding paragraphs, the theoretical and practical implications in relation to this thesis will be outlined. The theoretical implications comprise the contributions which our research may provide to the current body of literature within the research area. The practical implications involve a discussion on how the results of this study can be used by practitioners.

Theoretical Implications

The theoretical aspect of employer branding has been researched by several authors through time, and as a result, countless conclusions have been derived from these studies, emphasising the importance of employer branding in relation to the field of human resource management (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Deepa & Baral, 2017). More specifically, the concept of the employer brand has been applied in several settings examining it in relation to the attraction of prospective applicants and the intention to apply (Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Gomes & Neves, 2011; Sharma & Prasad, 2018).

Our current study has examined how employer branding can affect the application intentions of forthcoming graduates through a discrete choice experiment involving a combination of the employer attractiveness attributes and the corporate brand of the potential employer. As our findings illustrated, the intention to apply among forthcoming graduates depends highly on the corporate brand of the prospective employer, while the analysis of the importance of the employer attractiveness attributes only revealed a slight preference for symbolic attributes.

As several researchers have solely focused on the employer attractiveness attributes in their studies (e.g. Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens, 2007; Reis & Braga, 2016), and due to the already stated insufficient amount of research combining the corporate brand and employer brand, this study contributes with a new perspective on the employer brand involving the corporate brand as well. As stated above, our findings clearly showed that the presence of the corporate brand in our discrete choice experiment was the predominant factor influencing the intention to apply. Hence, the branding efforts should be directed towards the corporate brand before benefits of a strong employer brand can be harvested, which we believe to be an important finding within the field.

This study, therefore, makes a significant contribution to the existing body of literature within the area of employer branding and the intention to apply with the new perspective including the corporate brand.

Practical Implications

As previously mentioned, this thesis is written primarily to CompanYoung, thus, first and foremost the practical implications concern this particular firm. As CompanYoung is a full-service business partner delivering complete attraction and recruitment campaigns specifically targeting the young target segment, they can apply the results of this study when guiding their customers. However, the implications presented in the following section also applies to companies in general, who want to improve their employer brand and attract forthcoming graduates.

As already stated in the theoretical implications, this study has contributed with and expanded the current literature within the area of employer branding, corporate branding, employer attributes and application intentions. Following, these results also have a set of practical implications.

The findings of our study can help companies, and in particular, HR managers in understanding what forthcoming graduates are attracted by and what influence their application intentions. From the findings of the study, it can be derived that there is a slight preference for symbolic attributes, and together with a positive corporate brand, this combination composes the most attractive option. Hence, it would be the optimal solution for employers to communicate these characteristics when targeting forthcoming graduates.

Nonetheless, the predominant factor influencing the application intentions of forthcoming graduates is the corporate brand. Thus, if an employer does not possess a desirable corporate brand, the presence of the employer brand might be of no importance in the process of establishing the impression of being an attractive employer. Equipped with this understanding, companies should focus on performing well on the corporate brand before directing the attention towards the employer brand, since merely focusing on the employer brand may be effortless.

In light of the above, it should be clear to CompanYoung as well as other organisations that the corporate brand is of utmost importance in the attraction of the youth.

In congruence with the initial motivation for this study (i.e. the 'War for Talent' and the changing demographics), it is essential for companies to explore new paths to attracting talented employees. Especially the competitive landscape for recruiting talent has induced a shift in the bargaining power, which is transferred from the employers to the employees (Saini,

Rai, & Chaudhary, 2014). Hence, it is important that the companies are receptive and able to adjust to the situation, where they need to adapt to the preferences of potential employees in order to attract the talents (Lemmink, Schuijf, & Streukens, 2003; Saini, Rai, & Chaudhary, 2014). Based on the findings of this study, we suggest that the companies adjust to the preferences of forthcoming graduates first and foremost by building or maintaining a positive corporate brand.

Reflections

The reflections serve as the last chapter of this thesis with the purpose of focusing on the dissertation as a whole. Consequently, the following sections will feature an assessment of the quality of our study, followed by a discussion of the possible shortcomings and suggestions for future research.

Assessment of the Quality of the Study

The successive sections concerning the *reliability, replicability* and *validity* will function as parameters for the estimation of the quality of our study. The background for these sections is found in the chapter *Parameters for Quality Assessment* where each parameter has been defined and discussed in relation to its applicability for this dissertation.

Reliability

For the purpose of assessing the reliability of our study, the internal reliability is the most important factor to consider. Hence, this will be assessed below.

Internal Reliability

The internal reliability is assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and is computed on the symbolic attributes and instrumental attributes, respectively. The first statistics for the reliability tests are found below.

Reliability Statistics (Symbolic)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.836	.846	13

Table 31 *- Reliability Statistics (Symbolic Attributes)*

In the above Cronbach's Alpha test on the internal reliability, we have applied the 13 attributes which from the 25-item EmpAt Scale has been classified as symbolic (Appendix 3). As a result, the table consists of 13 items (*N of Items*). As mentioned earlier, the criteria for good internal reliability is an alpha value from 0.7 and up. The alpha value for our 13 symbolic attributes is 0.836, hence, indicating good internal reliability, since the alpha value of 0.836 also tells us that our 13 symbolic attributes explain 83.6% of the variance within the overall term of symbolic

attributes. The alpha based on standardised items (0.846) is very close to the alpha (0.836), meaning, that there is no great difference between means and variance of the individual variables.

Reliability Statistics (Instrumental)

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.794	.794	12

Table 32 *- Reliability Statistics (Instrumental Attributes)*

Just as the previous table, the Cronbach's Alpha test is computed upon the 12 instrumental attributes, hence the number of items is 12. Again, the alpha value indicates good internal reliability of the measure, and the 12 instrumental attributes are able to explain 79.4% of the variance within the term instrumental attributes. The alpha based on the standardised items is equal to the alpha value, hence, there is no significant difference between means and variance of the individual variables.

Inter-Observer Consistency

The inter-observer consistency is concerned with subjective judgements, which may jeopardise the reliability of a study. Therefore, we are primarily concerned with efforts where such judgements have been involved. First and foremost, we want to emphasise the division made between the 25 items from the EmpAt Scale by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005). Referring to Appendix 3, the division of the items was carried out entirely based on the definitions of instrumental and symbolic attributes and, therefore, without a further theoretical foundation. This could have jeopardised the reliability of our study, due to the subjective interference made in the division of the attributes. However, as tested through the Cronbach's Alpha, the two compounded scales are reliable.

Another judgmental interference is related to the definitions of positive and negative corporate brands. The definitions used in the discrete choice experiment were created based on articles of good and evil brands, where we chose some of those characteristics that seemed most appropriate. However, we have no evidence that the characteristics chosen are what the population would associate with positive and negative corporate brands. This compromises the reliability of the concept of the corporate brand used in this study.

The reliability of this concept might have been improved, if the study contained a qualitative research of the population to investigate what they perceive as positive and negative corporate brands (Mangham, Hanson, & McPake, 2009).
Similarly, the selected attributes representing symbolic and instrumental attributes in the choice sets were chosen based on the subjective opinion of the researchers. This compromises the reliability as well. Conducting a prior research investigating the importance of the individual attributes within each group of attributes (symbolic and instrumental) would have given a better foundation to choose which attributes to display in the choice sets.

Overall, we assess the reliability of our study as satisfying, since the measurement of the main aspect, employer attractiveness, seems reliable. However, the definitions of the corporate brand could be substantiated by additional research.

Validity

As mentioned earlier, validity is concerned about whether the measures actually capture the essence of the concept. For this study, face validity is used at the tool for assessing the validity. The operationalisation of the concepts has been presented to fellow students and the supervisor of this thesis for the purpose of receiving feedback. This was carried out to obtain insights regarding the understanding of the concepts and whether the perception was consistent. By this, we learned that our measures seemed to describe the concepts.

Replicability

The replicability of the study involves an assessment of whether the study can presumably be replicated by other researchers.
Throughout this dissertation, there has been a great deal of focus on making sure that the process was transparent. Hence, we have thoroughly stated our theoretical and methodological standpoint. Furthermore, a search diary has been created (Appendix 1), to document the searches from where the theoretical foundation was built. Additionally, the entire process of preparing the data collection, setting up the survey, distributing the survey and analysing the data has been documented comprehensively.
However, as the sampling method used was convenience sampling, it would be difficult to reach the same respondents in a replication study.

Overall, we evaluate the replicability to be adequate for this study, when bearing in mind that the exact same respondents may not be possible to reach.

Research Limitations

Research limitations are often found in research projects, despite strong efforts of trying to minimise them throughout the process. Therefore, it is vital to reflect and be aware of the possible shortcomings and address them in order to understand how they may have influenced the research process (Dudovskiy, 2018). Accordingly, the succeeding section will seek to reflect on the limitations of the research undertaken for this dissertation.

The first limitation to address is the generalisability of the findings. As it could be seen in the test for representativity, the sample of this study is not representative of the population, which means, that the findings cannot be generalised to the whole population. However, this was not the objective of the study, because we did not have the resources nor the time to collect representative data within the scope of this thesis.

Besides the generalisability, we would like to focus on the international perspective of this thesis. Since we are studying on an international master's degree, we would have wished for a greater international perspective, where we would have been able to conclude more on the international differences. However, this was not possible due to the small number of international respondents originating from the same countries, giving us a poor foundation for comparisons with the Danish respondents. As already mentioned, we might have been able to improve this aspect, if we had carried out a more targeted sampling.

Another area that constitutes the limitations of this study is the measure for employer attractiveness. For our thesis, we have used the division of symbolic and instrumental attributes based on the 25 factors proposed by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) to measure employer attractiveness and consequently also the application intentions. However, no distinct preferences for instrumental attributes and only vague preferences for symbolic attributes were present among the respondents. This might indicate a poor measure of employer attractiveness, where another type of measure might have provided more definite results.

Somehow similar, the measures of positive and negative corporate brands are quite extreme, since they are based on some of the characteristics of the best and worst corporate brands

of the world (Stebbins et al., 2018; RT, 2018; Angelovska & Klingemann, 2019). As already mentioned, this subjective creation of the measures could have been strengthened through a qualitative study involving members of the target population, where the perception of positive and negative corporate brands could have been studied. Due to the extreme characteristics of the different types of corporate brands, the measures might have functioned as leading questions, where the respondents were partial to choosing the positive corporate brand. However, it is not possible to determine whether it is a poor formulation of the measures or because the respondents actually value a positive corporate brand as high as the findings suggest. It might be the case that the forthcoming graduates are well-aware of the War for Talents, and due to the competition for talents, they are more critical and have higher demands for their future employer. Though, we can only respond to the collected data and merely conjecture about the underlying explanations for their choices.

The final thought about research limitations is concerned about us as researchers. It is our first time to administer a research of this size involving a primary data collection through an online survey. Furthermore, prior to conducting this dissertation, we were not familiar with the research design of discrete choice experiments and the analysis technique of conditional logistic regression. Therefore, we cannot rule out the possibility that minor mistakes have been perpetrated throughout the data collection and/or analysis. Consequently, if there are mistakes, these might also have affected the results of the study.

Future Research

This thesis has added to the existing body of knowledge within the emerging field of employer branding, yet, several questions have surfaced as well and, thus, given rising to different suggestions for future research. Hence, this section will address these suggestions.

As the most evident finding in our study, the corporate brand was seen to have a crucial influence of the forthcoming graduates' intentions to apply. However, referring to the theoretical background, arguments from the literature suggested that not only the corporate brand but also the product brand could have a potential influence on the employer brand and in the end the intention to apply. Especially a study by Mokina (2014) yielded, that the product brand had the strongest influence on the employer brand. Nonetheless, we chose to delineate our study from this perspective, due to the complex scope it would be to examine this aspect

as well. Hence, we suggest this as a relevant perspective for future research within the field of employer branding.

As mentioned in the former chapter addressing the research limitations of our study, our results have not contributed with any specific findings regarding the foreign respondents. Thus, for future research, we find it appropriate, due to the nature of our research design, to suggest that our study could be applied to other countries. Similar to our research process, an online survey could be distributed in other countries as well, and on the basis of this, the results could be used to collate whether cultural differences would exist between e.g. two distinct countries. Hence, further knowledge would be added to the field within employer branding, and how companies should attract prospective applicants of different nationalities.

Our last suggestion for future research partly stems from our research limitations as well. Due to our prior discussion about whether the applied personal characteristics and the chosen factor-structure for the employer attributes, were the right ones, we propose that future research could apply new factors within these two areas. As already mentioned, other relevant personal characteristics could be family circumstances in relation to housing conditions or circumstances regarding children, as these may also have an influence on what type of employer attributes is perceived as most important. Thus, perhaps new connections could be derived with other personal characteristics.
In relation to the factor-structure applied for the definition of the employer attractiveness attributes, the chosen one for our study was Berthon, Ewing, and Hah's (2005) 25-Item EmpAt Scale followed by the framework by Lievens and Highhouse (2003) for the division of the attributes. As our results did not yield any strong preferences for either of the 25-items individually or the combined scales of symbolic and instrumental attributes, we would suggest that future research could benefit from applying a new characterisation and/or classification of the employer attributes (e.g. O'Brien, 1995; Chambers et al., 1998, Kucherov and Zavyalova, 2012). A further elaboration on these authors' classifications can be found in the theoretical chapter.

Hence, the above suggestions for future research will wrap up this thesis on the subject of employer branding and the attraction of forthcoming graduates.

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Appendix

Appendix 1 – Search Diary

Search string	Database	Date of search	Number of articles
Employer branding	Primo	04-02-2019	6.060
"Employer branding"	Primo	04-02-2019	1.054
Employer branding graduate	Primo	04-02-2019	1.223
"Employer branding" AND graduate*	Primo	04-02-2019	285
Employer attractiveness	Primo	20-02-2019	13.362
"Employer attractiveness"	Primo	20-02-2019	444
"Employer branding" AND attractiveness	Primo	20-02-2019	419
"Employer branding" AND (job applica*)	Primo	06-03-2019	576
"Employer branding" AND application	Primo	06-03-2019	482
"Employer branding" AND (application intentions)	Primo	06-03-2019	191
"Employer branding" AND "application intentions"	Primo	06-03-2019	32
"Employer branding" AND (job seek*)	Primo	06-03-2019	517
Employer branding intention to apply graduates	Primo	06-03-2019	138
Employer branding AND intention to apply	Primo	06-03-2019	788
"Employer branding" AND (intention to apply)	Primo	06-03-2019	9
"Employer branding" AND "intention to apply"	Primo	06-03-2019	6
"Employer branding" AND "attraction" AND "graduates"	Primo	06-03-2019	106
"Employer branding" AND "P-O fit"	Primo	20-03-2019	19
"Employer branding" AND person-organisation	Primo	20-03-2019	36
"Employer branding" AND person-organization	Primo	20-03-2019	142
(Employer brand*) AND (corporate brand*)	Primo	23-03-2019	22.533
"Employer branding" AND (corporate brand*)	Primo	23-03-2019	775
Employer AND (application intention*) AND (corporate brand*)	Primo	23-03-2019	7.512
(Employer brand*) AND (application intention*) AND (corporate brand*)	Primo	23-03-2019	7.512
"Employer branding" AND (product brand*)	Primo	23-03-2019	539

Appendix 2 – Employer Attractiveness Scale

Adopted from Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) p. 158

Table 1: Reliability analysis of purified 25-item Employer Attractiveness (EmpAt) scale

Item	Item mean (seven-point Likert scale)	Corrected item–total correlation	Alpha if item deleted
How important are the following to you when considering potential employers?			
1. Recognition/appreciation from management	5.58	0.63	0.95
4. A fun working environment	5.75	0.64	0.95
5. A springboard for future employment	5.62	0.63	0.95
6. Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation	5.69	0.70	0.95
7. Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organisation	5.72	0.68	0.95
8. Gaining career-enhancing experience	5.83	0.68	0.95
10. Having a good relationship with your superiors	5.66	0.67	0.95
11. Having a good relationship with your colleagues	5.92	0.71	0.95
12. Supportive and encouraging colleagues	5.65	0.71	0.95
14. Working in an exciting environment	5.37	0.65	0.95
15. Innovative employer – novel work practices/forward-thinking	5.31	0.67	0.95
16. The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity	5.45	0.69	0.95
17. The organisation produces high-quality products and services	5.41	0.70	0.95
18. The organisation produces innovative products and services	5.22	0.66	0.95
19. Good promotion opportunities within the organisation	5.82	0.70	0.95
20. Humanitarian organisation – gives back to society	5.00	0.59	0.95
24. Opportunity to *apply* what was learned at a tertiary institution	5.19	0.61	0.95
25. Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	4.85	0.59	0.95
26. Acceptance and belonging	5.63	0.72	0.95
27. The organisation is customer-orientated	5.24	0.62	0.95
28. Job security within the organisation	5.75	0.67	0.95
29. Hands-on inter-departmental experience	5.43	0.64	0.95
30. Happy work environment	6.01	0.73	0.95
31. An above average basic salary	5.97	0.66	0.95
32. An attractive *overall* compensation package	5.94	0.69	0.95

Appendix 3 – Division of Symbolic & Instrumental Attributes

The numbers in front of each attribute are noted according to the sequence (not number) they have in the original EmpAt Scale by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) as in Appendix 2.

Symbolic Attributes *These attributes are the subjective and intangible traits that the employer may have succeeded in creating, such as innovativeness, environmental awareness, or prestige, which potential applicants may assign to the organisation.*	**Instrumental Attributes** *The instrumental attributes are defined as the objective and factual attributes, or the characteristics of the job in terms of salary, bonuses, working hours, location, or benefits.*
2. A fun working environment 7. Having a good relationship with your superiors 8. Having a good relationship with your colleagues 9. Supportive and encouraging colleagues 10. Working in an exciting environment 11. Having an innovative employer 12. The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity 16. The organisation has a humanitarian focus (i.e. gives back to society) 17. Opportunity to apply what you have learned throughout your education 18. Opportunity to teach others what you have learned 19. A feeling of acceptance and belonging 20. The organisation is customer-orientated 23. A happy work environment	1. Receiving recognition/appreciation from the management 3. Having a springboard for future employment 4. Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation 5. Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organisation 6. Gaining career-enhancing experience 13. The organisation produces high-quality products and services 14. The organisation produces innovative products and services 15. Good promotion opportunities within the organisation 21. Job security within the organisation 22. Gaining hands-on experience from different departments in the organisation 24. Receiving an above average basic salary 25. An attractive overall compensation package (salary, bonuses, insurance, pension plans, vacations etc.)

Appendix 4 – Research Survey

Dear participant,

Thank you for taking the time to answer our survey.

The survey is carried out as a part of our master's thesis at Aalborg University, and it is targeted at students who are currently on their final year of a master's degree.
The duration of answering the survey is approximately 5 minutes.

All questions can be answered anonymously, and the answers will be treated confidentially.

Should you have any questions about the survey, please do not hesitate to contact us on either tran14@student.aau.dk or mandre17@student.aau.dk.

Thank you in advance!

Regards,

Trine and Maria

Which faculty are you enrolled in?

(1) ❑ Faculty of Business and Social Science

(2) ❑ Faculty of Humanities

(3) ❑ Faculty of Medicine/Health Sciences

(4) ❑ Technical Faculty of IT and Design

(5) ❑ Faculty of Engineering and Science

(6) ❑ Other

Which semester are you currently on?

Please note that the below stated options concern the last year of the master's degree.

(3) ❑ 9th semester

(4) ❑ 10th semester

(5) ❑ I am not on the last year of my master's degree

If the respondent ticked box 5 ("I am not on the last year of my master's degree"), they would not be shown the rest of the questions, since they are not qualified to answer the questionnaire. Thus, they would be sent to the final page thanking for the interest.

When considering your ideal future employer, how important are the following factors to you?
Please evaluate each factor from highly unimportant to highly important.

	Highly unimportant	Unimportant	Neither nor	Important	Highly important
1. Receiving recognition/appreciation from the management	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
2. A fun working environment	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
3. Having a springboard for future employment	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
4. Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
5. Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organisation	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
6. Gaining career-enhancing experience	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
7. Having a good relationship with your superiors	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
8. Having a good relationship with your colleagues	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
9. Supportive and encouraging colleagues	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑

	Highly unimportant	Unimportant	Neither nor	Important	Highly important
10. Working in an exciting environment	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
11. Having an innovative employer	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
12. The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑

When considering your ideal future employer, how important are the following factors to you?

Please evaluate each factor from highly unimportant to highly important.

	Highly unimportant	Unimportant	Neither nor	Important	Highly important
13. The organisation produces high-quality products and services	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
14. The organisation produces innovative products and services	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
15. Good promotion opportunities within the organisation	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
16. The organisation has a humanitarian focus (i.e. gives back to society)	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
17. Opportunity to apply what you have learned throughout your education	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
18. Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
19. A feeling of acceptance and belonging	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
20. The organisation is customer-orientated	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑

	Highly unimportant	Unimportant	Neither nor	Important	Highly important
21. Job security within the organisation	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
22. Gaining hands-on experience from different departments in the organisation	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
23. A happy work environment	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
24. Receiving an above average basic salary	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑
25. An attractive overall compensation package (salary, bonuses, insurance, pension plans, vacations etc.)	(1) ❑	(2) ❑	(3) ❑	(4) ❑	(5) ❑

Consider the following company descriptions and characteristics. Imagine that you are looking for a job, and the companies have open job positions. Besides the characteristics mentioned below, you should assume that all other characteristics are the same.

Company A

The company is well-known to the public especially for its environmental awareness and ethical business behaviour. In addition, the company is associated with having great working conditions.

The company can offer you:

- An exciting working environment
- Supportive and encouraging colleagues
- The opportunity of applying your educational knowledge in practice

Company B

The company is well-known to the public, especially for using cheap labour from developing countries, and for its use of environmentally damaging chemicals in the production of their products.

The company can offer you:

- An exciting working environment

- Supportive and encouraging colleagues
- The opportunity of applying your educational knowledge in practice

In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?

(1) ❑ Company A

(2) ❑ Company B

Consider the following company descriptions and characteristics. Imagine that you are looking for a job, and the companies have open job positions. Besides the characteristics mentioned below, you should assume that all other characteristics are the same.

Company A

The company is well-known to the public especially for its environmental awareness and ethical business behaviour. In addition, the company is associated with having great working conditions.

The company can offer you:

- An above average salary
- An attractive compensation package (bonuses, pension, insurance, vacation etc.)
- Great opportunities for promotion

Company B

The company is well-known to the public, especially for using cheap labour from developing countries, and for its use of environmentally damaging chemicals in the production of their products.

The company can offer you:

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Company A

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The company can offer you:

- An above average salary
- An attractive compensation package (bonuses, pension, insurance, vacation etc.)
- Great opportunities for promotion

Company B

The company is well-known to the public, especially for using cheap labour from developing countries, and for its use of environmentally damaging chemicals in the production of their products.

The company can offer you:

- An above average salary
- An attractive compensation package (bonuses, pension, insurance, vacation etc.)
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In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?

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(2) ❑ Company B

Consider the following company descriptions and characteristics. Imagine that you are looking for a job, and the companies have open job positions. Besides the characteristics mentioned below, you should assume that all other characteristics are the same.

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- Supportive and encouraging colleagues
- The opportunity of applying your educational knowledge in practice

Company B

The company is well-known to the public, especially for using cheap labour from developing countries, and for its use of environmentally damaging chemicals in the production of their products.

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The company can offer you:

- An exciting working environment

- Supportive and encouraging colleagues
- The opportunity of applying your educational knowledge in practice

Company B

The company is well-known to the public especially for its environmental awareness and ethical business behaviour. In addition, the company is associated with having great working conditions.

The company can offer you:

- An above average salary
- An attractive compensation package (bonuses, pension, insurance, vacation etc.)
- Great opportunities for promotion

In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?

(1) ❑ Company A

(2) ❑ Company B

Consider the following company descriptions and characteristics. Imagine that you are looking for a job, and the companies have open job positions. Besides the characteristics mentioned below, you should assume that all other characteristics are the same.

Company A

The company is well-known to the public, especially for using cheap labour from developing countries, and for its use of environmentally damaging chemicals in the production of their products.

The company can offer you:

- An exciting working environment
- Supportive and encouraging colleagues
- The opportunity of applying your educational knowledge in practice

Company B

The company is well-known to the public, especially for using cheap labour from developing countries, and for its use of environmentally damaging chemicals in the

production of their products.

The company can offer you:

- An above average salary
- An attractive compensation package (bonuses, pension, insurance, vacation etc.)
- Great opportunities for promotion

In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?

(1) ❑ Company A

(2) ❑ Company B

Gender

(1) ❑ Female

(3) ❑ Male

(4) ❑ Other

Age

Please state your age in numerical values.

Example of a 24 year old: 24

_____

What country are you from?

(1) ❑ Denmark

(2) ❑ Other country

If the respondent chose "Denmark", they were sent to the question "What region do you currently live in?". If the respondent chose "Other country", they were sent to "What country are you from?".

What country are you from?

Please write the name of the country in the text box below.

_____

What region do you currently live in?

(2) ❑ Northern Jutland (Region Nordjylland)

(3) ❑ Central Jutland (Region Midtjylland)

(4) ❑ Southern Denmark (Region Syddanmark)

(1) ❑ Zealand (Region Sjælland)

(5) ❑ Capital (Region Hovedstaden)

Text to finalise the respondents who participated in the whole survey.

Once again, thank you for your participation in this survey.

Have a great day!

Regards,

Trine and Maria

Text shown for respondents who were not on their final year of their master's degree.

Unfortunately, your profile does not match the focus group of our survey, which is students on their final year of a master's degree.

Thank you for your interest.

Have a great day!

Regards,

Trine and Maria

Appendix 5 – Variable Overview

Variable Name	Variable Description
q_1	Which faculty are you enrolled in?
q_2	Which semester are you currently on?
q_3a	1. Receiving recognition/appreciation from the management
q_3b	2. A fun working environment
q_3c	3. Having a springboard for future employment
q_3d	4. Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation
q_3e	5. Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organisation
q_3f	6. Gaining career-enhancing experience
q_3g	7. Having a good relationship with your superiors
q_3h	8. Having a good relationship with your colleagues
q_3i	9. Supportive and encouraging colleagues
q_3j	10. Working in an exciting environment
q_3k	11. Having an innovative employer
q_3l	12. The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity
q_3m	13. The organisation produces high-quality products and services
q_3n	14. The organisation produces innovative products and services
q_3o	15. Good promotion opportunities within the organisation
q_3p	16. The organisation has a humanitarian focus (i.e. gives back to society)
q_3q	17. Opportunity to apply what you have learned throughout your education
q_3r	18. Opportunity to teach others what you have learned
q_3s	19. A feeling of acceptance and belonging
q_3t	20. The organisation is customer-orientated
q_3u	21. Job security within the organisation
q_3v	22. Gaining hands-on experience from different departments in the organisation
q_3x	23. A happy work environment
q_3y	24. Receiving an above average basic salary
q_3z	25. An attractive overall compensation package (salary, bonuses, insurance, pension plans, vacations etc.)
q_4	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
q_5	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
q_6	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
q_7	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
q_8	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
q_9	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
q_10	Gender
q_11	Age
q_12	What country are you from?
q_12a	What country are you from? Please write the name of the country in the text box below.
q_12b	What region do you currently live in?

Appendix 6 – Identification of Missing Values

Statistics

		Which faculty are you enrolled in?	Which semester are you currently on?	1. Receiving recognition/ appreciation from the management	2. A fun working environment	3. Having a springboard for future employment	4. Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organisation	5. Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organisation
N	Valid	379	379	279	279	279	279	277
	Missing	92	92	192	192	192	192	194

Statistics

		6. Gaining career-enhancing experience	7. Having a good relationship with your superiors	8. Having a good relationship with your colleagues	9. Supportive and encouraging colleagues	10. Working in an exciting environment	11. Having an innovative employer	12. The organisation both values and makes use of your creativity
N	Valid	277	277	277	276	277	277	277
	Missing	194	194	194	195	194	194	194

Statistics

		13. The organisation produces high-quality products and services	14. The organisation produces innovative products and services	15. Good promotion opportunities within the organisation	16. The organisation has a humanitarian focus (i.e. gives back to society)	17. Opportunity to apply what you have learned throughout your education	18. Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	19. A feeling of acceptance and belonging
N	Valid	247	245	245	245	245	244	244
	Missing	224	226	226	226	226	227	227

Statistics

		20. The organisation is customer-orientated	21. Job security within the organisation	22. Gaining hands-on experience from different departments in the organisation	23. A happy work environment	24. Receiving an above average basic salary	25. An attractive overall compensation package (salary, bonuses, insurance, pension plans, vacations etc.)
N	Valid	244	244	244	244	244	244
	Missing	227	227	227	227	227	227

Statistics

		In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?	In which company would you prefer to apply for a job?
N	Valid	236	233	231	228	224	221
	Missing	235	238	240	243	247	250

Statistics

		Gender	Age	What country are you from?	What country are you from?	What region do you currently live in?
N	Valid	220	471	219	471	138
	Missing	251	0	252	0	333

Appendix 7 – Identification of Outliers

Age

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	""	251	53,3	53,3	53,3
	"22"	2	0,4	0,4	53,7
	"23"	24	5,1	5,1	58,8
	"24"	35	7,4	7,4	66,2
	"25.1"	1	0,2	0,2	66,5
	"25"	66	14,0	14,0	80,5
	"26	1	0,2	0,2	80,7
	"26"	36	7,6	7,6	88,3
	"27"	15	3,2	3,2	91,5
	"28"	10	2,1	2,1	93,6
	"29"	8	1,7	1,7	95,3
	"30"	9	1,9	1,9	97,2
	"31"	2	0,4	0,4	97,7
	"32"	4	0,8	0,8	98,5
	"33"	3	0,6	0,6	99,2
	"37"	2	0,4	0,4	99,6
	"44"	1	0,2	0,2	99,8
	"9"	1	0,2	0,2	100,0
	Total	471	100,0	100,0	

What country are you from? Please write the name of the country in the text box below.

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	""	390	82,8	82,8	82,8
	"Bangladesh"	1	0,2	0,2	83,0
	"Brazil"	1	0,2	0,2	83,2
	"Bulgaria"	1	0,2	0,2	83,4
	"Cameroon"	1	0,2	0,2	83,7
	"Croatia"	2	0,4	0,4	84,1
	"Czech Republic"	2	0,4	0,4	84,5
	"England"	1	0,2	0,2	84,7
	"Estonia"	2	0,4	0,4	85,1
	"Ethiopia"	1	0,2	0,2	85,4
	"Faroe Islands"	1	0,2	0,2	85,6
	"France"	1	0,2	0,2	85,8
	"Germany"	11	2,3	2,3	88,1
	"Ghana"	1	0,2	0,2	88,3
	"Greece"	3	0,6	0,6	89,0
	"Hungary"	2	0,4	0,4	89,4
	"Iceland"	3	0,6	0,6	90,0
	"India"	2	0,4	0,4	90,4
	"Iran"	1	0,2	0,2	90,7
	"Italy"	8	1,7	1,7	92,4
	"Latvia"	1	0,2	0,2	92,6
	"Lithuania"	2	0,4	0,4	93,0
	"Luxembourg"	1	0,2	0,2	93,2
	"Moldova"	1	0,2	0,2	93,4
	"Morocco"	1	0,2	0,2	93,6
	"Nigeria"	1	0,2	0,2	93,8
	"Norway"	2	0,4	0,4	94,3
	"Poland"	5	1,1	1,1	95,3
	"Portugal"	1	0,2	0,2	95,5
	"Romania"	5	1,1	1,1	96,6
	"Slovakia"	6	1,3	1,3	97,9
	"Spain"	4	0,8	0,8	98,7
	"Syria"	1	0,2	0,2	98,9
	"The Netherlands"	2	0,4	0,4	99,4

	"Tyskland"	1	0,2	0,2	99,6
	"Venezuela"	1	0,2	0,2	99,8
	old"	1	0,2	0,2	100,0
	Total	471	100,0	100,0	

Appendix 8 – Sample Characteristics, Crosstabulation

		Gender								
		Female			Male			Other		
		Count	Column N %	Row N %	Count	Column N %	Row N %	Count	Column N %	Row N %
Age groups	22-24	26	26,0%	42,6%	35	30,2%	57,4%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	25-27	60	60,0%	50,8%	58	50,0%	49,2%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	28-30	10	10,0%	37,0%	15	12,9%	55,6%	2	100,0%	7,4%
	31+	4	4,0%	33,3%	8	6,9%	66,7%	0	0,0%	0,0%
What country are you from?	Denmark	67	67,0%	49,3%	67	57,8%	49,3%	2	100,0%	1,4%
	Other country	33	33,0%	40,2%	49	42,2%	59,8%	0	0,0%	0,0%
Which faculty are you enrolled in?	Faculty of Business and Social Science	48	48,0%	53,9%	41	35,3%	46,1%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	Faculty of Humanities	28	28,0%	80,0%	7	6,0%	20,0%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	Faculty of Medicine/Health Sciences	5	5,0%	83,3%	1	0,9%	16,7%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	Technical Faculty of IT and Design	2	2,0%	8,7%	21	18,1%	91,3%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	Faculty of Engineering and Science	14	14,0%	23,3%	44	37,9%	73,3%	2	100,0%	3,3%
	Other	3	3,0%	60,0%	2	1,7%	40,0%	0	0,0%	0,0%

Appendix 9 – Sample Characteristics (Regions), Crosstabulation

		Gender								
		Female			Male			Other		
		Count	Column N %	Row N %	Count	Column N %	Row N %	Count	Column N %	Row N %
What region do you currently live in?	Zealand (Region Sjælland)	0	0,0%	0,0%	0	0,0%	0,0%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	Northern Jutland (Region Nordjylland)	42	62,7%	43,8%	53	79,1%	55,2%	1	50,0%	1,0%
	Central Jutland (Region Midtjylland)	10	14,9%	62,5%	6	9,0%	37,5%	0	0,0%	0,0%
	Southern Denmark (Region Syddanmark)	8	11,9%	50,0%	7	10,4%	43,8%	1	50,0%	6,3%
	Capital (Region Hovedstaden)	7	10,4%	87,5%	1	1,5%	12,5%	0	0,0%	0,0%

Appendix 10 – Example of Respondent Mean Calculation

Symbolic Attribute no.	Rating
2	4
7	5
8	3
9	4
10	5
11	4
12	4
16	5
17	3
18	5
19	4
20	3
23	4
Mean	**4,08**

Instrumental Attribute no.	Rating
1	2
3	3
4	3
5	3
6	1
13	3
14	2
15	3
21	4
22	3
24	4
25	3
Mean	**2,62**

Appendix 11 – Conditional Logistic Regression, Gender

Male

```
-> female = 0

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood = -325.85944
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood =  -324.9135
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood = -324.90548
Iteration 3:   log pseudolikelihood = -324.90548

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =      1,416
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =     211.36
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -324.90548               Pseudo R2         =     0.3379

                                (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |   .9178835   .1106008    -0.71   0.477     .7248057    1.162394
       image |   8.266784   1.219153    14.32   0.000     6.191626    11.03744
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Female

```
-> female = 1

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood = -196.31228
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood = -194.64584
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood = -194.63866
Iteration 3:   log pseudolikelihood = -194.63866

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =      1,200
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =     141.70
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -194.63866               Pseudo R2         =     0.5320

                                (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |   1.710567   .2497489     3.68   0.000     1.284877    2.277291
       image |   27.41405   7.716203    11.76   0.000     15.79016    47.59485
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Appendix 12 – Conditional Logistic Regression, Nationality

Other than Danish

```
-> danish = 0

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood = -196.53387
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood = -196.49884
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood = -196.49883

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =        984
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =     165.66
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -196.49883               Pseudo R2         =     0.4238

                                  (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |   .8731737   .1313957    -0.90   0.367     .6501467    1.172708
       image |   13.31336   2.834257    12.16   0.000     8.771558    20.20684
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Danish

```
-> danish = 1

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood =  -334.1839
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood = -333.76317
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood =  -333.7627
Iteration 3:   log pseudolikelihood =  -333.7627

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =      1,632
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =     229.05
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood =  -333.7627               Pseudo R2         =     0.4099

                                  (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |    1.41208   .1649048     2.95   0.003     1.123194    1.775268
       image |   11.94538   1.970464    15.04   0.000     8.645479    16.50482
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Appendix 13 – Conditional Logistic Regression, Faculty

Faculty of Business and Social Science

```
-> q_1 = 1

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood = -205.81562
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood = -205.78556
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood = -205.78555

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =      1,068
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =     159.48
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -205.78555               Pseudo R2         =     0.4440

                                (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |   1.075729   .1581766     0.50   0.620     .8063821    1.435042
       image |   15.19954   3.375387    12.25   0.000     9.835646    23.48866
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Faculty of Humanities

```
-> q_1 = 2

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood = -67.682797
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood = -67.016223
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood = -67.012543
Iteration 3:   log pseudolikelihood = -67.012542

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =        420
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =      49.46
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -67.012542               Pseudo R2         =     0.5396

                                (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |   1.763299   .4418654     2.26   0.024     1.079004    2.881567
       image |    29.0653   13.93199     7.03   0.000     11.35965    74.36775
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Faculty of IT and Design

```
-> q_1 = 4

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood = -74.303309
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood = -73.708592
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood = -73.699683
Iteration 3:   log pseudolikelihood = -73.699682

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =        276
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =      30.86
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -73.699682               Pseudo R2         =     0.2295

                                  (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |   1.320331   .3324649     1.10   0.270     .8060218    2.162813
       image |   4.809987   1.360019     5.56   0.000     2.763551    8.371829
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```

Faculty of Engineering and Science

```
-> q_1 = 5

Iteration 0:   log pseudolikelihood = -154.43566
Iteration 1:   log pseudolikelihood = -154.27612
Iteration 2:   log pseudolikelihood = -154.27561
Iteration 3:   log pseudolikelihood = -154.27561

Conditional (fixed-effects) logistic regression

                                                Number of obs     =        720
                                                Wald chi2(2)      =     113.54
                                                Prob > chi2       =     0.0000
Log pseudolikelihood = -154.27561               Pseudo R2         =     0.3817

                                  (Std. Err. adjusted for clustering on obsid)
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
             |               Robust
      choice | Odds Ratio   Std. Err.      z    P>|z|     [95% Conf. Interval]
-------------+----------------------------------------------------------------
    symbolic |    .926974     .15984    -0.44   0.660     .6611395    1.299697
       image |   10.44094   2.370173    10.33   0.000     6.691301     16.2918
------------------------------------------------------------------------------
```