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SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGEMENT: A FUTURE EMPLOYEES' PERSPECTIVE

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INTRODUCTION

In 1987 the then President of the World Commission on Environment and Development, shaped the definition of Sustainable Development:" Sustainable development is development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs". From that date there were several actions, reports and Commissions, developed to establish the global actions aimed at increase sustainability. An important moment for the implementation of sustainable development was 2015 with the draft of "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". This Agenda was drawn up in Paris in 2015 during a special UN Summit with the Heads of Government and State and was the outcome of a process started in 2012 during the "Rio+20" Conference on Sustainable Development. During this meeting the necessity of developing sustainable programs and goals, emerged. They established 17 Sustainable Development Goals all aimed to the right implementation, at all levels of the Sustainable Development. This one is the practical declination of the Sustainability concept. It has three spheres within it: economy, environment and society. The 17 SDGs, were designed to bring out the sustainable development affecting these three areas. I have always been attracted by these concepts, recognizing the emergency of common actions that included each of us. During my academic background , I have always wondered which was the role of organizations in this context and eventually how determinant it could be. Many of the 17 SDGs actually see the organization as main players, indeed more generally they are aimed to develop a sustained economic growth, efficient resources allocation, collective prosperity and decent work environments. So it is evident how actually companies, through their activities, have an impact on the successful sustainable development. Indeed the realization of SDGs needs a deep re-design of actions with the involvement of actors coming from public and private sectors. During my studies I have always believed that HR, is a fundamental part of all organizations. Their product is people, who in turn determine the success or failure of each business. For this reason, I wanted to focus my analysis on HRM and Sustainability.

Sustainable Development Goals are related to Human Resources Management because of the focal role of people. Indeed humans' habits, behaviors and beliefs have a huge effect on social and ecological processes. By the union of these two components SHRM arises. Sustainable Human Resources Management concerns the application of SDGs into the organizations through the classic HR processes. Because of the central role of people in the HR field,

SHRM help to enhance and build up all the skills, beliefs and behaviors indispensable for a successful implementation of sustainability in all the three spheres.

In this context the role of SHRM should be of supporting sustainability strategy at the corporate level, through the use of HR processes and tools that help to spread the values of sustainability among the culture, behaviors and business practices. And also, of managing employees according to the standards of sustainability, through the use of HR processes and practices aimed to support and promote the wellness of those who work in the company.

My analysis is concentrated on the role of SHRM but focusing on the future employees' point of view. In particular, I wondered which was the perception of future employees of an organization that applies Sustainable Human Resources Management practices. Will they be more attracted by such company? Which are the characteristics more appreciated by future employees?

In order to ask to these questions I conducted a qualitative analysis, through interviews, on a sample of nearly or freshly graduated students from several disciplines. On the background of my analysis I have always kept the role of Identification. In particular I referred to the Social Identity Theory developed by Tajfel and Turner in '70s. This one was used in order to understand how the students identify toward sustainability values and how this identification can, in turn, be translated into the preference of an organization that applies Sustainable Human Resources Management policies. The interviews were the mean of my qualitative and inductive analysis, with the utilization of iterative process. With this thesis I wanted to help companies to understand the role SHRM as a mean for enhancing their organizational attractiveness. The commitment of companies in SHRM can be a way of representing the company in the labor market and consequently a strong point for the employer brand. Sustainable Human Resources Management can help to create a strong employer brand and hence, to become the employer of choice among future applicants. Indeed in relation to what underlined before, SHRM can help to attract and retain high qualified and motivated employees.

In order to do that my dissertation is divided in four main chapters:

1. Chapter one, focused on the development of the sustainability and sustainable development concept, focusing on its three spheres and then I have analyzed in deep their history with its main historical steps. I have investigated the role of institutions, concentrating on the most important policies currently in force. The next section has been devoted to the role of companies and the consumer perception of Sustainability. Finally I have focused on the main issue of Sustainable Human Resources Management

2. Chapter two, focused on the theoretical framework. As mentioned before on the background of my whole analysis there is the Social Identity Theory. This one plays a crucial role in my research question and for this I dedicated a whole section on the analysis of it, considering all its history and development. Then I focused on the role of SIT in relation to the organization, to end up with the literature review about the role of Social Identity Theory in relation to Sustainable Human Resources Management.

3. Chapter three, focused on the methodology of my analysis. The first part was dedicated to the specific method undertaken: qualitative analysis, with interviews, using an inductive method with the use of iterative process. This one consists on the open coding of candidates' interview using the first and second-order concepts. The second part of the chapter was aimed to describing the questions administered to interviewees, with the two job offers.

4. The fourth chapter, the last one, was instead aimed to developing the results. In this part I showed the results of the analysis through the iterative process: I firstly described all the coding, with the first-order concept and the second-order concepts. Then I focused on the role of identification, and which role has played in the analysis. How ecatly the candidates identified with some specific values and how this determined the preference of a company. Then I developed my final discussion, including all the results above-mentioned.

My thesis will be an interesting journey through the Sustainability concept and the key role of Human Resources in its development. I have always desired to highlight the role of the Human Resources and I hope that this will the right opportunity. Enjoy reading.

A FRAMEWORK ON SUSTAINABILITY AND THE ROLE OF SUSTAINABLE HUMAN RESOURCES MANAGMENT

1.1 Introduction

In the following chapter I am going to analyze the origin of sustainability concept and its three spheres: economic, social and environmental. For the analysis of the three scopes I have mainly used the Istat Bes Report. Then I have investigated the role of Institutions in assuring the sustainable development, in particular the "Agenda 2030" and "The European Green Deal" actions. The next step in my study has been the analysis of consumers' perception toward the sustainability concept. Following this path, I have focused my work on the role of enterprises in the implementation of sustainability. Within entrepreneurial investigation I have figured out the role of Human Resources and how powerful their actions can be in order to vehicle a sustainable change inside the organizations. In this context I have analyzed the Sustainable Human Resources Management concept and role.

1.2 Sustainability Concept

The concept of sustainability nowadays is widely used in many fields. It arises around the '70s after the oil shock, when the world started asking itself for how long they will be able to count on earth's resources. Indeed the year 1972 was crucial for the development of sustainability for two main events:

1. The publishing of the report "The Limits of Development"; in which a group of MIT experts provided data showing that, by continuing this unsustainable development, in a short time man would exceed the natural limits of the production of resources by the planet. It soon became clear how important it was to replace the economic model based on pure and simple growth, where the long-term consequences were not considered.

2. Following these data, the first international conference, the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, was called in Stockholm in 1972 with the aim of dealing

with specific issues such as sustainable development. The representatives of 113 nations met in order to set a plan of action on these issues, from the management of natural resources to the protection of fundamental human rights.

Hence, 1972 was fundamental especially because the public media started to focus the attention on this new concept.

Also 1987 was an important step because during the World Commission on Environment and Development Gro Harlem Brundtland, who presided over it, in the UN report called *"Our Common Future"*, shaped the current definition of sustainability: "sustainable development is the development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" (Brundtland, 1987, p.37).

Many other definitions have been arising over the years, but there are some common traits that can be highlighted: the continued help of human life on the planet, sustainable support of the reserve of organic resources and of the fertility of rural structures, durable human communities, controlled economy gain, sustained excellence in the environment and eco-systems (Brown et al. 1987).

Starting from the definition shaped by Brundtland in 1987 three main components emerged, the three "E": economy, equity and environment.

The first component is the economic one. It refers to the possibility for a productive system both to obtain income and to increase employment by respecting specific economic indicators. To achieve this result, we should set as our main focus the development of the population, while at the same time enhancing its cultural peculiarities and maintaining the integrity of the territory in which they live through the use of eco-friendly and fair-sustainable methods.

We refer to economic sustainability to a specific economy focused on sustainable development, which provides a job system careful to natural resources in order to preserve its usage to future generations as well (Borsa Italiana, 2009).

The second component is the equity component, which encompasses various concepts such as education, democracy or health.

Thus, when defining the social sustainability we should refer to the viability and happiness of the major part of population or allocation of minimum necessities to even the more needful. (Hardin & Baden, 1977).

Stephen McKenzie (2004) in its " Social sustainability: towards some definitions*"* sets some common definitions for Social Sustainability:

- fairness availability of fundamental utilities (for instance health, education, transport)

- fairness between generations, meaning that people who will live in the future should benefit of the same resources as people living today. So present generations should live in the respect of the future ones
- the broader legislative attendance of people, from the electoral point of view and other political procedures as well

The third component is the environmental one, meant as the ability to maintain the properties and the reproducibility of natural resources. In order to implement this third component, it is necessary to understand that the resources present on our planet are not infinite. They are increasingly at risk from seemingly harmless human behavior. To pursue sustainable development, it is first and foremost essential to help the planet through more responsible behavior.

Ecologically defined sustainability, focuses on natural organic procedures and the powerful fertility and performance of ecosystems. Hence, in order to guarantee the protection of earth's ecosystems there should be the protection and conservation of biological diversity. (WildernessSociety,1986). When talking about "environmental sustainability" we should not get confused with the "ecological sustainability". The latter one refers to "meeting human needs without compromising the health of ecosystems" (Callicott & Mumford, 1997, p. 32); so it's more focused on human interaction with the environment. The word "environmental," instead, can be considered a subset of the broader concept of ecological. In particular we may refer to it as "the intersection of human activities and ecological systems"(Morelli, 2011, p.5). Hence, when defining sustainability it's really important to consider all three dimensions. Privileging only two dimensions means to not have a sustainable vision and to have a partial perception of the development in an optical only conservative (environmental development and economic development), ecological (environmental and social development) or socio-economic (economic and social development).

Only pursuing a clear and consistent goal, considering all three dimensions, the humanity will be able to improve its actual deficits. Nature is not an endless source, therefore a conscious economy must pay attention to maintaining the capacity of resources to reproduce continuously, reducing waste and increasing the durability of goods (Morelli, 2011).

1.2.1 Three Spheres of Sustainability

Environmental sphere

Every year the Global Footprint Network estimates the Earth Overshoot Day which signs the limit of earth's resources and services consumption from humanity in a specific year. Over that date mankind is exceeding the ecological supplies. In 2019 the Earth Overshoot Day was on twenty-nine of July. The consequences of this global ecological over-expenditure are becoming increasingly evident through deforestation, soil erosion, biodiversity loss or carbon dioxide accumulation in the atmosphere. The latter one leads to climate change and more frequent extreme weather events (Global Footprint Network, 2019).

According to European Environment Agency (2019) air pollution is one of the main causes of early death and illness and is the solo biggest environmental health risk in Europe sourcing every year approximately 400,000 premature deaths. There are also economic consequences of air pollution; like the reduced labor productivity, additional health expenditure, and crop and forest yield losses. The Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2016 evaluated that the economic costs of environmental air pollution amounted to about EUR 1,100 per capita in 2015; the equivalent of five percent of income of the same year (European Environment Agency, 2016).

Another important issue in this context is the climate change. Climate change is one of the most evident threat and it has got much attention lately from either politicians and scientists (Martine & Alves, 2015).

Just thinking about the high temperature in Siberia and recent events in Australia, these are all consequences of climate change. Wildfires are a significant cause of air pollutants. The frequency and hardness of wildfires seem to have increased in recent decades, and this trend is going to carry on as a result of climate change (Knorr et al. 2017).

According to Legambiente, air pollution and climate change are two sides of the same coin. Indeed some pollutants have a potential impact on short-term climate and global warming term (Legambiente's Malaria di città report, 2020).

Equity Sphere

This second sphere did not get the same attention as the environmental and the economic ones. In this way the widespread indifference led to the crisis of the actual model Welfare State. And the consequences have been up to the citizens; in Italy, for instance, in the last years it was registered a cut of social effort (La Posta, 2016).

There are many initiatives undertaken to pursue this kind of sustainability. This second sphere is aimed to guarantee better life conditions to the majority of the worldwide population.

In 2010 Istat, together with the representative of social parts and civil society, decided to write down the so called *"Bes- Benessere Equo e Sostenibile"*. The aim of this project is to evaluate the progress of a society from several point of view: economic, social and environmental (Istat, 2020).

Bes is measured by Istat on yearly basis following twelve main indicators, on the Italian population:

- Health,
- Safety,
- Education and Training,
- Welfare Subject,
- Work and Reconciliation of Life Times,
- Landscape and Cultural Heritage,
- Economic Welfare,
- Environment,
- Social Relations,
- Innovation, Research and Creativity,
- Politics and Institutions
- Quality of Services

In my analysis I will focus only on some of these indicators: Health, Education and Safety. I decided to consider only these three index because they are the most important aspects of equity sphere and generally they are the first to be searched when checking the progress achieved in this matter.

Health

The analysis of this index embodies several aspects like the child mortality, the excess weight, smoking, alcohol. From 2010 many of these aspects remained stable: healthy life expectancy at birth for the mental health index, road deaths among young people and for 4 of the 5 indicators analyzing health risk factors. There were progress for the life expectancy unrestricted in activities at 65, mortality from cancer, and mortality from dementias and diseases of the nervous system of the elderly. Improvements have also been noted for infant mortality and sedentary behavior.

Worsening was analyzed for two out thirteen indicators: dementia and nervous system mortality and appropriate feeding (Istat, 2019).

Table 1.1: Health indicators

INDICATOR	Latest available year value	% variation (compared with the previous year)	% variation (compared with 2010)
1. Life expectancy at birth *(years, 2018)*	83.0	Stability	Improvement
2. Healthy life expectancy at birth *(years, 2018)*	58.5	Stability	Improvement
3. Mental health index (SF36) (MH) *(mean scores, 2018)*	67.8	Stability	—
4. Infant mortality rate *(per 1,000, 2016)*	2.8	Improvement	Improvement
5. Road accidents mortality rate (15-34 years old) *(per 10,000, 2018)*	0.7	Stability	Improvement
6. Age-standardised cancer mortality rate (20-64 years old) *(per 10,000, 2016)*	8.7	Improvement	Improvement
7. Age-standardised mortality rate for dementia and nervous system diseases (65 years and over) *(per 10,000, 2016)*	31.2	Improvement	Deterioration
8. Life expectancy without activity limitations at 65 years of age *(years, 2018)*	9.9	Improvement	Improvement
9. Overweight or obesity *(%, 2018)*	44.8	Stability	Improvement
10. Smoking *(%, 2018)*	19.4	Stability	Improvement
11. Alcohol consumption *(%, 2018)*	16.7	Stability	Improvement
12. Sedentariness *(%, 2018)*	35.7	Improvement	Improvement
13. Adequate nutrition *(%, 2018)*	19.6	Stability	Deterioration

— Comparison not available   ▪ Improvement   ▪ Stability   ▪ Deterioration

Source: Bes Report 2019, Istat

Education

Indicators show a general rise of education in Italy compared to 2010. Its level display a positive trend both for 25-64 and 30-34 years old people who obtained at least an upper secondary school degree. Also the percentage of people who participated in continuing training increases, even if with less intensity. Despite these positive data, there's a downward trend (compared to 2010) for the following phenomenon: kindergarten participation, early exit from education and training system, young people who don't study nor take part to labor market and cultural participation. Instead for the "inadequate level of literacy and numeracy and for people with high level of IT competences" was not possible to make the comparison (Istat, 2019).

Table 1.2: Education indicators

INDICATOR	Latest available year value	% variation (compared with the previous year)	% variation (compared with 2010)
1. Participation in the school system of children aged 4-5 *(%, 2017/2018) (a)*	94.9	Stability	Deterioration
2. People with at least upper secondary education level (25-64 years) *(%, 2018)*	61.7	Improvement	Improvement
3. People having completed tertiary education (30-34 years) *(%, 2018)*	27.8	Improvement	Improvement
4. First-time entry rate to university by cohort of upper secondary graduates *(%, 2018/2019) (b)*	50.4	Stability	Improvement
5. Early leavers from education and training *(%, 2018)*	14.5	Deterioration	Improvement
6. People not in education, employment, or training (Neet) *(%, 2018)*	23.4	Improvement	Deterioration
7. Participation in life-long learning *(%, 2018)*	8.1	Improvement	Improvement
8. Inadequate level of literacy *(%, 2018/2019)*	30.4	Improvement	Comparison not available
9. Inadequate level of numeracy *(%, 2018/2019)*	37.8	Improvement	Comparison not available
10. People with high level of IT competencies *(%, 2018)*	22.0	Improvement	Comparison not available
11. Syntetic indicator of the level of cultural participation *(%, 2018)*	27.9	Improvement	Deterioration

— Comparison not available   ■ Improvement   ■ Stability   ■ Deterioration

(a) 2010/2011 data not available, variation based on 2012/2013 data
(b) 2010/2011 data not available, variation based on 2013/2014 data

Source: Bes Report, Istat 2019

Safety

There was a general improvement of most of the eleven indicators; seven out eleven were positive compared to 2010 data. So the awareness of areas where people live is increasing because of improvements in terms of safety. There's also an enhancement for the gender-based violence: percentage of women victims of violence has diminished (Istat, 2019).

Table 1.3: Safety indicators

INDICATOR	Latest available year value	% variation (compared with the previous year)	% variation (compared with 2010)
1. Homicide rate (per 100,000, 2018)	0.57	Improvement	Improvement
2. Burglary rate (per 1,000 household, 2018)	11.9	Improvement	Deterioration
3. Pick-pocketing rate (per 1,000, 2018)	5.7	Improvement	Deterioration
4. Robbery rate (per 1,000, 2018)	1.2	Improvement	Deterioration
5. Physical violence against women (%, 2014) (a)	7.0	—	Improvement
6. Sexual violence against women (%, 2014) (a)	6.4	—	Improvement
7. Intimate partnership violence against women (%, 2014) (a)	4.9	—	Improvement
8. Worries of being victim of a sexual violence (%, 2016) (b)	28.7	—	Improvement
9. Feelings of safety when walking alone at night (%, 2016) (b)	60.6	—	Improvement
10. Concrete fear of crime (%, 2016) (b)	6.4	—	Deterioration
11. Social decay (or incivilities) (%, 2016) (b)	12.1	—	Improvement

— Comparison not available   ■ Improvement   ■ Stability   ■ Deterioration

(a) 2010 data not available, variation based on 2006 data;
(b) 2010 data not available, variation based on 2009 data.

Source: Bes Report 2019, Istat

Economy sphere

Despite the high awareness for sustainability, especially in recent years, still it is not a much treated topic. It is only in the past decade that we observe an increase in publications on sustainability and HRM and many HR experts seem to remain critical of the concept (Ehnert & Harry, 2012). Indeed, sustainable entrepreneurship was dealt sixty-two times in 2019 and instead sustainable corporate governance only four times.

Sustainable entrepreneurship might be defined as the matter of "protection of nature, life help, and groups in chasing opportunities to take alive future products, processes and services for benefits concerning economic and non-economic advantages for the whole society"(Shepherd & Patzelt, 2011, p.142).

The role of entrepreneurs who invest their business in sustainability is complex and deals with both social and ecological matters; like climate change, healthcare, education and long-term unemployment (Hoogendoorn, Van der Zwan, and Thurik, 2019).

Indeed the research conducted by Hoogendoorn and Thurik (2017) highlights how sustainable entrepreneurs have to deal with some risks and barriers that "classic" entrepreneurs do not have. For instance the perceived risk attitude and institutional environment in the case of sustainable entrepreneur is pretty different (Hoogendoorn & Thurik, 2017).

Within the sustainable entrepreneurship it's possible to collocate the circular entrepreneurship. We can define it starting from the definition of the circular entrepreneur as the pioneer that initiates the circular economy through the innovation of many fields of the life of a firm: products, services and business models. The circular entrepreneur, through the innovation of these ones, tries to create positive outcomes for the whole society and the planet as well. Through these innovative actions circular entrepreneur encourages institutions and other organizations to pursue this transformation as well (Garcia, 2019).

Following Bes analysis, we can analyze the economic well-being. Istat uses ten indicator (shown in the following table), in order to measure it.

The general overview is not so positive if we compare the actual data to the ones of 2010. Indeed only four out ten show an escalation: per capita disposable income, people living financially vulnerable households, severe housing deprivation and index of economic distress.

All the other indicators instead show a negative trend (Istat, 2019).

Table 1.4: Economic well-being indicators

INDICATOR	Latest available year value	% variation (compared with the previous year)	% variation (compared with 2010)
1. Per capita disposable income *(euro, 2017)*	18,505	🟩	🟩
2. Disposable income inequality *(ratio of income shares, 2017)*	6.1	🟥	🟥
3. People at risk of poverty *(%, 2017)*	20.3	⬜	🟥
4. Per capita net wealth *(euro, 2016) (a)*	87,451	🟥	🟥
5. People living in financially vulnerable households *(% households 2016) (a)*	2.7	🟩	🟩
6. People living in absolute poverty *(%, 2018)*	8.4	⬜	🟥
7. Severe material deprivation rat *(%, 2018)*	8.5	🟩	🟥
8. Severe housing deprivation *(%, 2018)*	5.0	🟩	🟩
9. Index of economic distress *(%, 2018)*	9.7	🟥	🟩
10. Very low work intensity *(%, 2018)*	11.3	🟩	🟥

— Comparison not available   🟩 Improvement   ⬜ Stability   🟥 Deterioration

(a) Previous year = 2014

Source: Bes Report 2019, Istat

1.2.2 The role of Institutions

Agenda 2030

Starting from all these considerations, the outlook that emerges is not so bright. Many aspects need to be improved in order to guarantee a sustainable development in all the three sphere. There are many steps that still need to be done and in order to do that, the role of institutions is fundamental. Despite the Italian situation is not the best under the three aspects analyzed above, the whole Europe made many steps, especially in the last years, to guarantee a change in the actual economic, societal and environmental systems. Indeed an important moment for the implementation of sustainable development was 2015 with the draft of "Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development". This Agenda was drawn up in Paris in 2015 during a special UN Summit with the Heads of Government and State and was the outcome of a process started in 2012 during the "Rio+20" Conference on Sustainable Development. During this meeting the necessity of developing sustainable programs and goals, emerged. Hence, several agreements among states, in collaboration with the biggest organizations and partners started in order to develop a new program (European Commission, n.d).

The 2030 Agenda itself is made of four parts:

1. a constitutional proclamation
2. a group of 17 Sustainable Development Goals and 169 targets (built starting from the report of the OWG)
3. tools for realizing it

4. a plan for ensuring its development and for the revision of the Agenda.

The peculiarity of Agenda 2030 is that, through its implementation it ensures the sustainable development as a whole; including the three "E": economy, equity and environment.

Another feature of Agenda is that it should be implemented as a whole, because all its parts are interconnected and cannot be undertaken separately. For instance goal number twelve (Responsible consumption and production) is related also to goal number one, two, eight, eleven, fourteen and fifteen.

Figure 1.1: The 17 SDGs

Source: European commission

Each goal has its own partnerships, target, publications and events aimed to the implementation of the goal itself. So far all the seventeen goals have been planned (United Nations, n.d):

- 960 Events

- 1205 Publications

- 5132 Partnerships

- 174 Target

The European Green Deal

In this regard the European commission has established on December 2019 the "Green Deal", a set of political initiatives to implement a sustainable economy in order to make Europe climate neutral by 2050. European commission set several actions with some specific goals: zero pollution, affordable and secure energy, smarter transport, high quality food. In order to implement successfully this project the following areas will be renewed: economy, industry, production and consumption, large-scale infrastructure, transport, food and agriculture, construction, taxation and social benefits. This huge plan will be undertaken through a *Just Transition Fund*, that will collect private and public money with the help of European Investment Bank as well. This project, because of its global importance, will request the help of extra European partners.

The several actions can be divided in several main groups: climate initiatives; pure, low-cost and certain energy; modern plan for the development of circular economy; sustainable and agile transports; making more environmental friendly the Common Agricultural Policy; safeguard and conserving biodiversity; integrating at all Europeans levels, sustainable policies sustainability; the EU as a global leader; working together with a European Climate Agreement. Each of these groups include several actions with a timetable that indicates the period of implementation (European Commission, 2019).

1.3 Consumer's perception

So far I have focused mainly on the theoretical concept of Sustainability and on the institutional commitment to increase the impact of sustainable actions. Despite it is necessary to frame the governmental influence on this general issue, my thesis focuses on the role of organizations and in particular of Human Resources Management. But before converging the attention on this specific matter, it might be interesting to analyze another point of view: the consumer's perception.

Stakeholders feel even more dedicated to sustainability, for this reason companies in order to be validated should make it an essential pillar of their strategies. Indeed, only through this commitment they will be able to get an extensive success. (Murphy, et al. 2013) .

Nowadays the possibility for consumers to get access to information is facilitated by the usage of internet. Because of that, transparency is mandatory for companies to communicate their commitment in implementing sustainability; for this purpose, sustainability reports play a key role. Sustainability Report collects all non-financial information and diversity, extracted from its characteristic management, that verifies the attitude of the company to create value over time. It analyzes the social and environmental impact generated by its activities; and if these activities can create a shared value and not disadvantages to society (ConsumerLab, 2017). For this reason, it is important that the company provides a balanced and truthful representation of its sustainability performance in a clear and reasonable report, which includes both positive and negatives impacts generated by its operation (ConsumerLab, 2017).

Consumers can also influence the tendency to invest on a sustainable development. Through their habits in several fields, they can be determining for a societal change from several points of view. In this regard there is a simple concept that describes this phenomenon: the consciousness for sustainable consumption (CSC), that is the intent to consume in a way that

promotes the environmental, social and economic changes to improve several sides of quality of life (Balderjahn, et al. 2013).

According to a survey conducted by ConsumerLab together with consumers' associations Adiconsum, Adoc, Federconsumatori and Comitas even more consumers nowadays prefer companies that offer sustainable products rather than lower price products. Indeed to a sample of 3,500 consumers, already attentive towards sustainability, was asked which were their drivers of purchase among: reputation (sustainability), price and quality of materials. In 2015 16% of them were motivated by reputation, 46% by the price and 38% by quality of materials. Five years later, in 2020, the emphasis on sustainability doubled to 32%, instead only 35% of them are now motivated by the price and 33% by the quality of materials.

Still this survey, highlighted that the consumers believe that sustainability is one of the most important factors of development. Indeed 65% of interviewed believe that, against 56% from 2016.

Despite these positive signals from consumers' side, enterprises are not as careful to sustainability as their customers. Indeed only 20% (out of 1,500 analyzed) draw up a sustainability report and does so in a confusing and difficult to read way, without a future vision and in the absence of policies to protect biodiversity (ConsumerLab, 2020).

Let's try now, to focus on the company's side.

1.4 Company's commitment

In the following section I will refer to circular entrepreneurship and circular economy as synonyms of sustainable entrepreneurship and sustainable economy. As above-specified circularity, in the economic context, is a way of establishing the sustainable development used by several institutions like the European Commission

The current economic system, that surrounds the consumer, can be described in the following way: take, make, dispose (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015). This system creates products that offer certain services and create economic value, but in an unsustainable way. The main problem of this system lies in the last step: dispose. It consists on the destruction of the products' materials through very polluting methods, like incineration. In this way these resources can never be reused. The only solution to this current system is the Circular Economy, that works on the resolution of problems related to the last step of the linear system. Circular Economy can be defined as a system that makes more effective use of resources: "it is an in-

dustrial economy that is restorative by intention and design" (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2013, p. 7).

One of the most important actor in spreading the concept of circular entrepreneurship, is "The Ellen MacArthur Foundation", that since 2010 has been "motivating a generation to reformulate, restructure, and forge a positive future " (Ellen MacArthur Foundation, 2015, p. 02) in order to facilitate the transitioning to a circular economy. Furthermore, the Ellen MacArthur Foundation developed a model to spread the circular economy processes, called the "Butterfly-model". This model identifies two spheres of action: biological and technological. It outlines the belief that old products' waste material becomes the 'food' for a new product. The biological cycle does not allow materials to become compost or other kind of nutrient for the earth; in this way there is not the possibility for be recycled and hence, every product will be created again. The technological cycle instead addresses materials that are not used for the development of a product originally and can be reused into a new product (Braungart & McDonough, 2002).

Starting from these concepts it is possible to highlight the fundamental role of enterprises in pursuing the abovementioned Agenda 2030 established in 2015. Indeed goal number twelve is right about responsible consumption and production, and is related also to goal number one, two, eight, eleven, fourteen and fifteen. So the role of economy and consequently the role of companies is cardinal in guaranteeing a sustainable development.

According to the "Circular Economy in Europe" report developed in 2016 by the European Environment Area, pursuing a circular economy can provide to EU countries some benefits like: reduced environment impact, improved resource security and decreased import dependency, due to reduced demand for primary raw materials. It can also lead to bring social benefits such as, new job creation across all skill levels and also a change in the behavior of the consumer bringing to better health and safety outcomes. And most importantly economic benefits due to new opportunities for growth and innovation (EEA, 2016).

Indeed European Commission with the establishment of "The European Green Deal" in 2019, created also a "Circular Economy Action Plan". This document provides guidelines to ensure sustainability across all levels of production: from the design to the consumption of products. The plan sets measures for some specific goals (European Commission, 2019):

- Make sustainable products the norm in the EU
- Empower consumers and public buyers

- Focus on the sectors that use most resources and where the potential for circularity is high such as: electronics and ICT; batteries and vehicles; packaging; plastics; textiles; construction and buildings; food; water and nutrients;
- Ensure less waste
- Make circularity work for people, regions and cities
- Lead global efforts on circular economy

1.5 Sustainable Human Resources Management

The sustainability commitment of companies can be invested also in other fields, different but correlated to circularity. Indeed this latter concept is mainly referred to the production processes and to environmental sphere of sustainability. My thesis focuses also on the other two spheres of sustainable development. But how exactly can firms develop this sustainability in all the three scopes?

According to Hoogendoorn et al. (2017) sustainable entrepreneurs face more challenges and barriers when approaching to start a new business. One of the challenges is the institutional revolution they have to initiate toward the existing norms, public policy and legislation. Because of that they also have to invest in strong networks; external knowledge, cooperation, and the creation of internal knowledge are fundamental in developing a sustainable change.

But despite this detriment, entrepreneurs play a key role in generating sustainable development, and for this reason they should continue to act in that way.

One of the aim of the Sustainable Development Goals is to set appropriate conditions that enhance the development of sustained economic growth, efficient resource allocation, collective prosperity, and decent work environments. Within this scheme, what should be the role of organizations? They should ensure healthy and well educated workforce, and nurture the awareness and abilities required to create productive employees who at the same time are proactive citizens that contribute to society.

But as Ehnert and Harry (2012, p.225) cite in their study, "sustainability is not about learning *how to fis*h but about realizing *what the fish* itself needs to develop and to ensure that these conditions are sustained in the long run". Hence, sustainability highlights the need to rediscuss the purpose of the organization in the long term (De Woot, 2005).

One of the most influent area inside organizations, that can contribute to reach this goal, is the Human Resources Management. I wanted to focus my analysis on Human Resources field, because I believe that people are the most important resources inside a company. Indeed my

dissertation will be developed considering the role of Human Resources as an effective mean of the sustainable development. But how exactly sustainability is related to Human Resources field? According to Ehnert (2009), there are two main currents of thoughts. The first one analyzes the topic from a macro level and is related to the role of organizations in the environment they are surrounded by, that are the economic and social ones. These ones are strongly related to the sustainable development, indeed they are two of the three spheres of sustainability. In this context Human Resources Management play an important role in pursuing sustainability at the corporate level and should invest more in that sense. The second level (micro/meso) instead is focused on the internal relationships of human resources management system. In particular it highlights how sustainability in HRM can lead to high quality employees. In this context the role of SHRM should be of supporting sustainability strategy at the corporate level, through the use of HR processes and tools that help to spread the values of sustainability among the culture, behaviors and business practices. And also, of managing employees according to the standards of sustainability, through the use of HR processes and practices aimed to support and promote the wellness of those who work in the company.

When discussing about sustainability in relation to Human Resources Management, we refer to Sustainable Human Resources Management (SHRM). Sustainable Human Resources Management concerns the application of SDGs into the organizations through the classic HR processes. Because of the central role of people in the HR field, SHRM help to enhance and build up all the skills, beliefs and behaviors indispensable for a successful implementation of sustainability in all the three spheres.

SHRM focuses on the development of an innovatory work environment with a social repercussion both internally and externally to the firm. It also aims to increase consciousness and liability toward the environmental preservation and consequently the utilization of resources to develop organizational success (Ehnert, 2009).

Instead Gollan (2005, p.7) defined human resources sustainability in terms of " a series of actions and policies pertaining HR field, undertaken by firms in order to generate importance. through these practices the organization demonstrates the ability of regenerate value".

Another important concept is the Green HRM, that can be defined as the part of SHRM that satisfies the conditions of environmental sustainability. GHRM processes are the best way to implement programs of environmental conducts by organizations, aimed to train employees to green practices that let them enjoy and get passionate about environmental issues in the daily company's activities. For instance providing green training, green reward systems and enhancing the companies' human capital (Yusoff, et al. 2020). And in the following thesis I will

refer to Sustainable Human Resources Management and Green Human Resources Management as synonyms.

One of the advantages of pursuing Sustainable Human Resources Management is that, according to a recent research, employees who observe fairness, support and commitment inside the organizations, have an higher predisposition to engage in company's activities that leads, in turn, to higher propensity to cooperate. In this way the performance of the firm will benefit from that as well (Cugueró-Escofet, et al. 2019). All these practices are at the base of a sustainable entrepreneurship and hence, investing in that way will also increase the performance of the company. Indeed a study conducted by Manzoor et al. (2019) reported that SHRM practices, like fair selection criteria or employee empowerment system, boost employees' performances.

But how exactly can Sustainable HRM be implemented? Stankevičiūtė and Svanevičienė (2019) state that it is undertaken through developing employees skills, improving relationship among boss and employee though increasing the care toward employees and environment where they work on.

And the main ways to do that, are the recruitment and training processes. Green recruitment is undertaken by choosing socially responsible employees who not only improve the firm's performance, but also achieve benefits in the overall environment; Green training is pursued through prolonged environmental context and evolution of knowledge, skills and competencies incentivizing socially and eco-friendly behaviors. And the appraisal system is based upon ethical and civic commitment in intra- and inter-organizational activities (Chams & García-Blandón, 2019).

1.6 Improvement of organization's image through SHRM

My analysis will focus on the perception of future employees, in particular nearly or freshly graduated students, in relation to the commitments of companies toward sustainable human resources management. The aim of the following study is to understand how strong the investments on sustainable human resources by enterprises, can influence the decision of future job seekers to apply or not to that organization.

A similar experiment was conducted by Bettina Lis in 2018, on a sample of 111 university students from several disciplines through a written survey. The aim of her study was to understand the organizational attractiveness toward sustainability. The author tested several factors to get the OA and one of these was the corporate social responsibility. The results showed that

not all factors of employer choice have the same relevance for potential employers: CSR is the most important factor, followed in order by remuneration, intellectual challenge, and location.

The concept of organizational attractiveness is related to employer branding matter. Employer branding is defined by Lybrand (2018) as "the market's impression of your organization as an employer, but outlines as well your commitment to employees in exchange for their background, knowledge, network, and competencies". It is a concept becoming more popular because fundamental for companies. Indeed in the recent years the contractual power shifted from companies to people, generating in this way a war for talents. Companies need to create a strong and trustworthy image of themselves, in order to generate a sustainable value.

The commitment of companies in SHRM can be a way of representing the company in the labor market and consequently a strong point for building a powerful employer brand. According to Gully et al. (2013), job seekers' impressions of the organization are controlled also by the communication of the company about social and environmental commitment. This aspect is essential. Indeed, people identify in some specific values and try to improve their image positively, associating themselves with groups or organization that can enhance their figure. For this reason, applying some particular policies, in this case SHRM, will influence the person-organization fit.

According to Cubukcu (2018) getting a trustworthy employer brand is essential for a company's strategy because in turn this will lead to better applicants, lowering hiring and marketing costs and increasing productivity.

In relation to this topic, the "Employer Branding: SHRM as a Competitive Advantage in Market for High-quality employees" by Stefanie App et al. (2012) highlight how SHRM can help to create a strong employer brand and hence, to become the employer of choice among future applicants. Indeed in relation to what underlined before, SHRM can help to attract and retain high qualified and motivated employees.

My study is collocated inside this scheme: it wants to test the role of SHRM as an effective driver for enhancing the image of a company, by proving how appreciated can be by future employees. To do that I will administer two different job offers, following an exploratory interview, to prove the work orientation toward SHRM policies. My results want to highlight the role of companies in the enhancement of sustainable development, focusing in particular on Human Resources field with the SHRM policies. In particular I want to stress the fact that organization as well, can improve their image and in turn their performance, by having a stronger employer brand thanks to the application of SHRM policies.

1.7 Conclusions

In the present chapter I wanted to provide a general framework of the broader concepts on which my thesis is focused on: sustainability and Sustainable Human Resources Management. In order to do that, I firstly focused on the history of sustainability concepts, focusing then on its three main spheres. For each of them I analyzed the Bes Report developed by Istat in 2019. Then I wanted to underline the effort of institutions in conveying the sustainable development globally, focusing on the most recent action undertaken at the governmental level. The following parts instead are focused on the company's point of view and I wanted to start from the consumers' perception to highlight how appreciated it is sustainability from their side. And then I moved forward to the company's commitment in the sustainability field, underlining their focal role in the success of sustainable development. Following that, I focused on the Human Resources, that is the point of view of my entire organizational analysis. I specified the concept of Sustainable Human Resources Management and how this can be implemented. Then I concentrated the draft on the Employer Branding part. Indeed my analysis wants to stress the role of SHRM as an effective way to improve the company's image, analyzing the point of view of future employees.

2. CHAPTER TWO

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In the following chapter I am going to analyze the aim of my study and the theoretical foundation useful for undertaking my analysis. In particular I will investigate the origin and main parts of Social Identity Theory (SIT): the positive social identity, the cognitive process and the negative social identity. Subsequently, I will focus in particular on the role of SIT in the organizations. Continuing this analysis I will explore the literature review regarding Social Identity Theory but in relation to the goal of my study, that is Sustainable Human Resources Management.

2.2 My analysis in relation to SIT

As specified in the previous chapter, the aim of my work is to identify the role of SHRM in attracting future employees to an organization. My analysis will focus on a sample of nearly or freshly graduated students, from several departments, who are close to enter the labor market. I will investigate which are the main characteristics they search for and in particular I will explore how strong is the role of sustainability in the Human Resources Management of a company, for attracting future employees. In particular I will examine how the sample under analysis identifies toward sustainability and if this factor, consequently, leads them to choose an organization with SHRM.

In order to do that I will apply the Social Identity Theory (SIT), developed from 70' s by Henri Tajfel and John C. Turner. Social identity theory is a prosperous theoretical overview, combining group psychology with psychology about the self. The theory has also a huge practical value, and it has been effective when analyzing critical organizations' and society's issues. The theory suggests that people take part of their identity, mainly the social one, from the groups they belong to; for instance, being an "Inter supporter" or "students" or "republican" strengthens their identity because they affirm themselves in relation to belonging to that group.

At the base of Social Identity Theory there is the belief that being member of a group can help to strengthen meaning in the social context as well. Indeed taking part of a group helps people

to delineate who they are and to define their behaviors with other individuals. Social identity theory was developed as a combination of several theories, that is why it is called "integrative theory", because it links cognitive processes and behavioral motivation. Initially, SIT concentrated its analysis on intergroup conflict and intergroup relations more generally. For this reason the theory was initially indicated as "Social identity theory of intergroup relations". Thanks to Tajfel's students, John Turner and his colleagues, the theory centered on the cognitive elements relevant to social identification. Indeed they later focused on how people see their own roles in several social situations and how this influences their impressions of others, in terms of stereotypes, as well as their own attitude in groups (Ellemers, 2019).

What is relevant of having a social identity is that it is simultaneously satisfied the individuals' needs for inclusion and differentiation. Thus, it is even more clear how this theory highlights that people need to belong to a group but at the same time they need to affirm their identity juxtaposing their status to another group to which they do not belong to (Shinnar, 2008). How strong an individual's self-perception is affected by belonging to a specific group, depends on the emotional importance they give to that membership. Being part of a group has the power to influence one's positive self-image, only if the same group is positively evaluated compared to other groups (Tajfel, 1981). This concept is one of the two main parts of Social Identity Theory: the positive social identity. Social Identity Theory, in fact, can be divided in two parts: the first, more focused on the basic psychology, outlines the cognitive processes at the base of social identity definition, and the motivational belief that people look for a positive social identity. The second, more centered on the socio-structure, illustrates how people deal with a negative social identity.

The point of departure for the development of this theory was an experiment conducted by Tajfel in 1970 with "minimal-groups". The experiment was based on the division of a group of students, on the basis of their preference for one of two painters "Klee" or "Kandinsky". This was actually the only information that participants had: that there were two groups, and that they would have been a member of one of them. These were the only available information and there was no kind of interaction among participants, for these reasons the groups were considered minimal. Once students were assigned to one of the two groups, participants were asked to allocate small amounts of money to anonymous members of the "Klee" and "Kandinsky" group, but not to themselves. The results of these resource allocations showed that participants preferred to give money to people of their own group rather than to those of the other group. The results were surprising because people put the well-being of the group before themselves, indeed they would have not gained anything from this. The significance of

results was also due to the detachment from the past theories that put the emphasis on material allocations as source of inter-group conflicts. Instead in this new theory, the social identity theory, the focus was on the immediate identification of people to their own group. In this sense the division of theory in two parties: positive and negative identity. So in absence of further information, in-groups participants preferred their own group rather than out-groups. Tajfel stated that people look for a positive social identity, in the same way as they aspire to have a positive personal identity.

2.2.1 Positive Social Identity

According to social identity theory, the social attitude a person adopts depends on two main factors: the personality and desires of the unique individual (interpersonal behavior), and membership to a specific group. People broadly prefer to preserve a positive image of the group they belong to. Consequently the will look for groups with positive characteristics like valued traits, attitudes and behaviors that influence positively their identity as well. Indeed this is due to the tendency of people, as explained by Social Identity Theory, of affirming their own identity through being part of a specific group. Thus, individuals will look for membership in groups that "have some contribution to make to the positive aspects of their social identity; i.e. to those aspects of it from which they derive some satisfaction" (Tajfel, 1978, p. 64). Therefore, maintaining a connection with the group that has positive opinions, compared to other groups, will be fundamental for individuals in order to strengthen their own identity (Shinnar, 2008).

The strong focus on collecting a positive group opinion leads to low attention toward positive out-group characteristics. Indeed this can cause an unfair judgement of the latter one group, affecting the relationship between in-groups and out-groups. As highlighted in Tajfel's experiment, this can include the unfair allocation of resources, the appraisal of in-group versus out-group products, evaluation of in-group versus out-group outcome and accomplishment, and communications about the conduct of in-group versus out-group members (Ellemers, 2019).

What appears from above is the concept of depersonalization at the base of Social Identity Theory. Indeed it seems clear how people, once they become member of a group, deprive themselves of their unique and peculiar identity for the purpose of adopting the group identity. From this process many phenomena arise: social stereotyping, group cohesiveness, cooperation, emotional contagion (Turner et al. 1987).

Indeed being member of any kind of social group leads to two main processes: first, the identification with that specific category that is even more highlighted with the depersonalization

phenomenon. Second, the whole system of actions and behavior associate to being part of the group (Burke and Stets, 2000). In relation to this second process, Turner et al. (1987) stated that individuals act to increase the evaluation of the in-groups relative to the out-group, with the objective of reinforcing their own self-evaluation as well (Turner et al. 1987).

In this regard it is interesting a study conducted by Greene (2004) that highlights the role of Social Identity Theory in the Party Identification. The results of the analysis revealed how the identity related to being part of a party, is a predictor of political party ratings, ideology, and party activities. Indeed Social identity is a very important element of partisanship, which, when measured, can lead to superior prediction and understanding of related political attitudes and behaviors. For instance the author specifies that once the identification with that party has become strong, for the individual it is psychologically difficult to leave the party if, being part of that partisan group, increase the self -esteem as well, as specified by Social Identity Theory.

Social Identity Theory underlines that the stronger is the identification the individual feels toward a specific group, the partisan one, the more he or she will perceive greater differences between in-group and out-group. For this reason the partisan social identification can largely clarify why most citizen tend to see their own party positively and the other negatively.

2.2.2 Cognitive Process

The evolution of Social Identity Theory has the main focus of describing how individuals collocate themselves in society. According to SIT, indeed, there are three fundamental psychological processes: social categorization, social comparison, and social identification (Ellemers, 2019). Scheepers and Ellemers (2019) in their "Social Identity Theory" formulate an accurate diagram in which main processes at the base of the theory are represented:

Figure 2.1: Three SIT processes
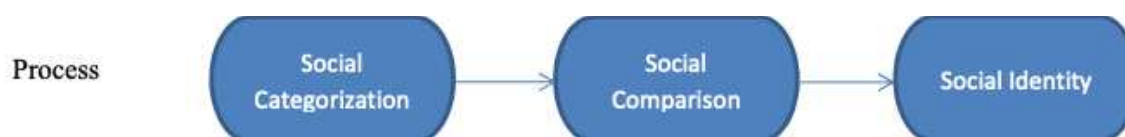
Source: Scheepers and Ellemers, 2019

Social categorization is based on the concept that the world is socially divided in groups. The idea is that you always belong to one of the groups and this is the true basis for social identity.

According to Stets and Burke (2000) there are three main levels to categorize a person: a superordinate level like the more general "human", an intermediate level such as "Italian" and a subordinate level like "Sicilian".

Social categorization points out the tendency of individuals to identify themselves and others in relation to specific social categories. This has the consequence of perceiving people as fixed group members rather than unique individuals (Ellemers, 2019). This phenomenon unavoidably leads to highlight strongly the perceived similarities among the self and the other members of the in-group. And consequently to accentuate the perceived differences with the members of the out-group; hence to detach from the reality. This accentuation is reflected in many aspects such as beliefs and values, behavioral norms but also in other forms related to intergroup categorization (Stets And Burke, 2000).

In the second process, the social comparison, people are incentivized to get a positive social identity through positive inter-group comparisons. In the social comparison phase people develop and mature the awareness of the relative value of the group and of its members. For instance within the sanitary system, being a nurse may be seen as having higher social value than garbage collectors, but compared to doctors, however, nurses can be seen as having lower social standing. The primary consequence of social comparison process is that members of the in-group will stress the classification of in-group and out-group based on factors that lead to a positive judgement of in-groups and a negative evaluation of out-groups. So there will be the tendency of accentuating those dimensions that self-enhance outcomes for the self. And because the individual is not able to see itself as an unique identity but only as part of a group, the positive evaluation will be applied to the group (Stets and Burke, 2000).

The last process is the social identity; after you compared positively to other groups, it is possible to have certainty, self-esteem, and meaning. Social identity highlights how individuals generally are not objective observes of social phenomena. This is due to the fact that they perceive who they are and how they approach to others always with a sort of "group-members filter" that influences the way they see individuals and group around them.

2.2.3 Negative Social Identity

The second part of the Social Identity Theory is focused on the negative social identity. In Social Identity Theory "negative social identity" is described as the consequence of a comparison among in-group and out-group members, resulting in a negative status for one's own

group (the in-group) (Tajfel & Turner, 1986) . Hence this inferior situation of own's group, leads to a "negative social identity" that will lead to actions aimed to enhance one's position. A typical example of "negative social identity" is when people of a minority group notice and interiorize negative stereotypes regarding their group; their social identity is affected as well. According to Tajfel and Turner (1979) individuals, when dealing with this kind of inferiority (the negative social identity), can take three different actions:

1. Individual mobility, where individuals try to enter a higher status group like another football team.
2. Collective action, the whole group committee to improve the status of the team.
3. Socially creative, where the way in which the comparison to other groups is made, changes. For example, the dimension or the group comparison.

These three actions suggest the main role of identification in Social Identity Theory. Indeed according to Mummendey et al. (1999) strategies that individuals apply in order to cope with the negative social identity are directly linked to in-group identification. Authors talk about a sort of "fraternal resentment" due to the in-group identification. This feeling firmly vehicles the cognitive and emotional aspects of the intergroup situation. Again Social Identity Theory highlights the cognitive role of identification,

In conclusion, SIT Is an important mean to highlight the social identification of individuals toward their belonging group. This strong feeling leads to depersonalization that ,in turn, leads to actions consistent with the group identity acquired. This process, above described, can be applied in several fields. Indeed the "group", mentioned many times, actually can be represented in several ways: we could refer to a company, to a football club or an university. In the netx section I will focus on the study of SIT applied to organizations.

2.3 SIT and Organization

The Social Identity Theory since its development has been applied in several fields, besides the societal one: health sectors, public administration but overall organizations. Being part of an organization can be compared to being part of a group, in this way the identification mechanism is set in.

The SIT literature suggests many consequences of relevance to organizations, Ashfort and Mael (1989) suggest that first of all, people tend to choose activities consistent with the most peculiar aspects of their identities, hence they will invest time and effort in institutions em-

bodying those identities. Indeed identification is important when individuals, through socialization, can really perceive the values and beliefs of the group of reference, that is the organization. This identification can lead to commitment and loyalty toward it and observance of attitudes and behavior typical of that group. Covering a specific role in a group is translated into meeting some particular expectations. For instance coordinating and negotiating interaction with role partners, and shaping the environment to manage the resources for which the role has responsibility (Burke and Stets, 2000).

 Another important mechanism is the entering process in a new company that might be hard, especially for the initial assessment of roles and status. Also in this field identification plays a key role because it helps to assess the process of organizationally self-definition: having very clearly who you are and what you are expected to do inside the company. Identification is fundamental because it helps to understand the role expected to be covered in the organization and to be part of the group in a cohesive way. Identification, in this sense, plays a crucial role for newcomers: the more they feel identified with that specific company, the more they will feel committed and engage with it. Scheepers and Ellemers (2019) stated that one of the things that is most appreciated by future employees or actual employees is their organizational identity. This aspects is much more important rather than personal career opportunities, compensation packages, or other employee benefits. This is due to the values of pride related to identification and hence to self-definition. Organizations with high reputation translate this status into a self-appreciation of their own employees. Consequently this self-reputation increases their identification with the company as well. For this reason, employees feel more satisfied and committed when they perceive the integrity of the company toward workers and stakeholders and also when they engage in socially responsible business practices.

An interesting study conducted by Korte in 2006, highlights the role of Social Identification in the efficacy of implementing training in the company. In particular the author states that an aspect that is usually ignored, is the middle orientation of the training orientation, for instance the control exercised by workgroup of people through their social identity.

As said before, social identity is one of the most important factor through which the employees engage and committee to their jobs, it is an important vehicle of how efficiently they can get information and undertake new learning in the company. An efficient training program, whose aim is to improve the overall performance of company, might fail in its goal if it does not deal with the identity issues. For this reason, when the company aims to perform an effective training program, it needs to have a profound knowledge of several elements: psychological, sociological, and organizational. But why is social identity so influent? The reason stands

in the strong need of people to be part of a group, societal or work one, and to feel committed to it.

In conclusion, Social Identity Theory highlights many important factors: first of all self-identification with the organization, which is the group of reference, and that helps to engage employees to the company and to improve their performance because they feel more satisfied and committed. Secondly, it has been highlighted a new way of framing the way of implementing effectively training programs: the middle orientation or the role of group identity.

In my analysis SIT is an effective mean to analyze my research question: which are the most important factors that convey future employees to be attracted to organizations that implement Sustainable Human Resources Practices.

2.4 Literature Review

In the following section I will analyze the literature review about the implementation of Sustainable Human Resources Practices and projects that analyze in a similar way my research question.

As highlighted in the above section, Social Identity Theory explains very well the concept of identity of individuals in relation to belonging to a particular group. Sit clarifies all the mechanism that arise and hide when an individual begins to identify itself with a specific group: depersonalization indeed is the concept at the base of this theory and it explains how a person is so related to the group he or she belong to, that starts to lose the characteristic features of the personality. Consequently the own personality, and everything related to that, will depend on the group itself. The attachment to the group will become so fundamental for the affirmation of themselves, to accept only the positive aspects and to distort the evaluation of the in-group versus out-group.

My analysis will focus on the specific topic of Sustainable Human Resources Management and I will use the Social Identity Theory as basis of my study. This will help me in the development of my research question: investigating, through the administration of two different job offers, how important Sustainable Human Resources Management is in order to attract newly graduates.

SHRM is a new field, born thanks to the recent influences of institution toward sustainability issue. The role of corporations is fundamental in pursuing the sustainable development; indeed also due to the institutional pressure, companies struggle to find ways to reduce their negative impacts on the environment, and at the same time to enhance their sustainable behav-

ior. (Ahmad, 2015). In relation to the role of companies on sustainability, SHRM plays a key role. Indeed human resources department in the companies can be seen as a driving force of many initiatives and administration of policies. In truth the literature about that, suggests that HRM practices influence company outcome through their effect on employees' work behaviors and attitudes (Dumont et al., 2017). Despite the strong impact of Agenda 2030, for instance, or other institutional projects, it is not a much discussed topic yet. SHRM can be seen as a new tendency on the part of companies to be considered successfully managed. In order to support the organizational performance, SHRM blends and incorporates two main matters: environmental management and sustainable performance (Al Kerdawy, 2018). Jackson et al. (2014) outlined GHRM as a process relevant to highlight the links between corporate actions that influence the environment, and the evolution, design and implementation, of HRM fields.

My analysis will also focus, even if transversely, on the concept of Employer Branding. In particular I will try to highlight, from the future employees' perspective, how can be profitable for the companies to invest on Sustainable Human Resources practices in order to be more attractive for future employees. Nowadays employers need to focus on attracting not many people, but the right ones. Indeed their aim should be the creation of the best fit between organizations and people part of it. Only thanks to a good work environment, created through cohesion of people, the organization is able to get the best from its activities. For this reason, organizations should work hard on developing the perfect reputation as an employer of choice, hence enabling the attraction of the best possible workforce, and thereafter holding them.

For the study of this matter, the article "Business Student Perceptions of a Preferred Employer: A Study Identifying Determinants of Employer Branding" by Bhadra J. H. Arachchige and Alan Robertson (2011) was very useful. The abovementioned paper highlights the principal factors that attract Sri Lankan university graduates to potential employees. These elements would help companies to profoundly learn how to strategically enhance their employer brand. The questionnaire was administered to a sample of 221 final year business course students from a Sri Lankan university were surveyed. The students were chosen from the following courses: human resource management (81 students), marketing management (62 students) and finance (78 students). All these students were in the process of graduating, so they had a look at labor market and the characteristics of different types of employers. In the following table the results of the study are shown:

Table 2.1 : Arachchige and Robertson Results

Preferred Employer Attributes	Sri Lankan Graduating Students
Most Preferred Attributes (in descending order)	• Gaining experience to help career • Future opportunities • Promotes self-esteem • Develops confidence • Appreciation from management • Good relationship with superiors • Good relationship with colleagues
Least Preferred Attributes (in ascending order)	• Well-known company • Size of company • Exciting environment • Type of product or service • Fun working environment • Customer-oriented • Opportunity to teach others • Innovative products • High quality products and services

Source: Arachchige, B.J. and Robertson, A. (2011). Business students perceptions of a preferred employer: a study identifying determinants of employer branding. IUP Journal of Brand Management, 8, pp. 25-46.

This study applied the Social Identity Theory as well, and the importance given to reputation by the interviewer, suggests once again the strong link that exists between social identification of individuals and the organization. For students the reputation of the company has an important role because that means identifying with a company that increase self-reputation as well. For my analysis the results shown in this article are useful in relation to the identification of students with the reputation of organizations. In particular I will investigate which are the factors that influence the employer of choice for future employees, focusing mainly on Green Human Resources Management. The role of reputation plays a key role when searching for a job, in particular when the seeker is a newly graduated student. Indeed, a study conducted by Babikova, K., & Bucek, J. (2019) investigated the employer attractiveness basing the survey on five dimensions: interest value, social value, development value, application value, economic value. The authors developed four main hypothesis about the influence on corporate reputation:

1. Potential employees' perception of the five dimensions of employer attractiveness has a positive relation to their perception of a good corporate reputation.

2. Potential employees' perception of employers' use of social media has a positive relation to a good corporate reputation.

3. High corporate reputation has a positive relation to the potential employees' intention to apply for a job.

4. Potential employees' perception of employers' use of social media positively moderates the relationship between corporate reputation and potential employees' intention to apply for a job.

Figure 2. 2: Babikova and Bucek hypothesis
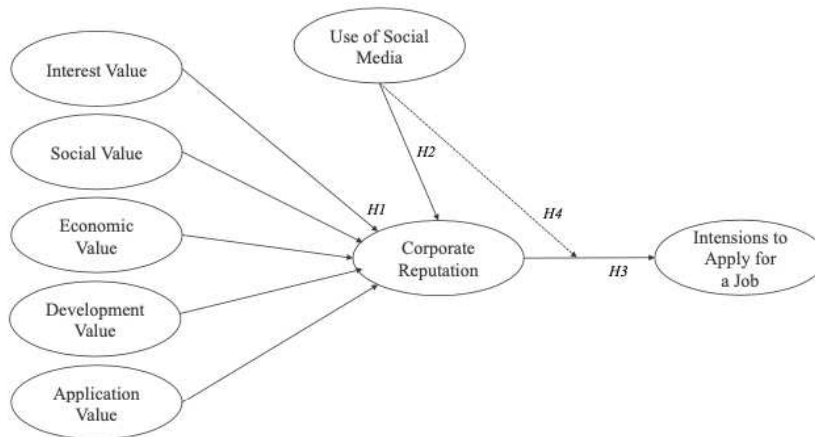
Source: Babikova, K., & Bucek, J. (2019). A Model Replication with an Extension of Students' Perception of Prospective Employer Attractiveness. Journal of Competitiveness, 11(2), 5–21.

The hypothesis were tested through a questionnaire and a quantitative type of analysis on two samples: IT students and Economics students. On the first sample, the It students, all the four hypothesis were confirmed instead, on the second sample the first one was not confirmed and the other three were accepted. These results suggest how important the corporate reputation, that may be influenced by many factors, is when applying for a job. This concept is strongly related to Social Identity Theory because it underlines once again the identification that individuals feel when entering a group, in this case the company. For my analysis this study is interesting because it is highlighted the role of corporate reputation and how this is important when newly graduates look for a job. Indeed the aim of my study is investigating on a sample of 20-27 years old students or freshly graduates from various disciplines, how attracting might be the investment of a company on GHRM. Other studies recently investigated the role of Green Human Resources Management in relation to organizational attractiveness. Indeed the "Effects of green human resource management: testing a moderated mediation model" by

Chaudhary (2019) answers to questions like "Does the adoption of Green HRM practices by the organizations affects prospective employee outcomes?" What are the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions of the afore mentioned relationship?" . Her investigation is similar to what will be my analysis, but the author focused on a sample and through a method different from mine. The sample of students, as above mentioned, represents several backgrounds: economics, politics, veterinary an not only the engineering students. Indeed in order to answer to these question she conducted the analysis on a sample of 172 final-year engineering students enrolled at a four-year undergraduate program in one of the top higher education institutes of India. The author wanted to investigate the role of organizational attractiveness as an intermediary of the relationship between GHRM and job search intention. In addition, to understand what type of people are more subject to be influenced by Green Human Resources Management, job seekers' self-environmental preferences were introduced to mitigate the effect of GHRM on job search intention. Indeed Richa Chaudhary tested three main hypothesis:

1. GHRM is positively connected to organizational attractiveness
2. Organizational attractiveness is positively related to job search intention.
3. The link between perceived GHRM and job pursuit intention is dealt by organizational attractiveness

What the author has found out is that Green Human Resources Management is considered by the students as an important factor in the employer choice. The analysis conducted by Chaudhary has revealed truthful especially for students who were careful towards environmental issues. In this sense the Social identity theory applies very well, because in the study the concept of self-identification brings out: people want to be associated with organizations that respect the same values and which they could feel proud of. My thesis, in fact, wants to investigate some aspects that are similar to the ones analyzed by Chaudhary; in particular, I want to understand in which way future employees identify in relation to Sustainable Human Resources Management and how this factor can vehicle their decision to apply for a company or for another one. Hence, my goal is to go in deep in the analysis of GHRM as element of choice for organizational attractiveness. A previous study focused on Corporate Social Responsibility in relation to organizational attractiveness. The article in question is the "Corporate social responsibility's influence on organizational attractiveness: An investigation in the context of employer choice" by Bettina Lis (2018). What is interesting of this study is that the author tests hypotheses regarding how organizational attractiveness is affected by different job factors such as: corporate social responsibility, remuneration, location, or intellectual

challenge. The research paper focuses on the following question: "What will be the results if Corporate Social Responsibility is compared to other factors when choosing an employer?". Hence, with this study the author investigates how strong Corporate Social Responsibility influences the organizational attractiveness and she highlights the important role of CSR in relation to other elements like the remuneration, location, or intellectual challenge. As Tajfel and Turner (1986) suggested through their study on social identity theory, the decision of entering a specific organization is related to the cognitive process that stands between the identity of a company and the identity that individuals apply to themselves. Therefore, companies work hard to reach the best possible fit between their own identities and those of prospective employees, so they try to attract potential employees and to retain actual ones.

The author tested four hypothesis:

1. The higher that the CSR orientation of a company is, the higher that the OA is
2. The higher that the remuneration of a company is, the higher that the OA is
3. The more attractive that the location of a company is, the higher that the OA is
4. The higher that the intellectual challenge of a company is, the higher that the OA is

Hypotheses were tested empirically through a written survey of 111 university students from various disciplines aged 20-28 years old. The results show that not all factors of employer choice have the same importance for future employees. Indeed corporate social responsibility is the most important factor, followed in order by remuneration, intellectual challenge, and location. Another peculiarity of this study is that there are also connections with SIT in relation to job candidates that put different weights on job factors. Indeed, graduates with lower grades rated remuneration as an important factor, instead graduates with higher grades rated CSR an the most important element in their job decision. What is interesting of this study, in relation to mine, is the preference registered by future employees when choosing toward different factors. Many other aspects have been analyzed that can shed an interesting light on the results, like the grades of people that influence the criteria of choice.

All the above mentioned aspects will be useful for conducting my analysis, because they represent a starting point for the development of theory and results as well. There are some elements similar to mines, like the sample or the focus of analysis but the way the analysis is conducted is pretty different. Indeed, I will administer two different job offers following an explorative interview. The whole analysis is qualitative.

2.5 Conclusions

In conclusion, after a general framework of what Social Identity Theory is and which its main applications are, it is more clear the usage of SIT appropriate for my analysis. Indeed Social Identity Theory is an useful mean to explain the link between people and organizations that apply Green Human Resources practices. In particular the role of self-identification described by SIT is important for explaining how individuals associate themselves to specific values communicated by the company, like pride and self-satisfaction. Eventually this identification becomes a choice of a specific organization. This process is all related to the inner sphere, the more intimate one, that translates the personal values into choices of a specific employer.

3. **CHAPTER THREE**

METHODOLOGY ANALYSIS

3.1 Introduction

In the following chapter I will develop the description of my empirical section. In the first part of the chapter I will explain which kind of analysis I have undertaken. The overall goal of my thesis is to understand which is the propensity of future employees' toward Sustainable Human Resources Management. Hence, my sample of investigation is 20-28 years old nearly or freshly graduated students. Starting from that, I decided to develop my investigation through a qualitative analysis, following an inductive method with the application of iterative process. After making an excursus about what a qualitative analysis, an inductive method and an iterative process are, so reviewing the literature about them, I will describe my specific process of analysis: the interview. This one was composed of 19 questions and two different job offerings. The entire interview was divided in five sections and for each one I provided an analysis. On the background of my entire analysis, there is the Social Identity Theory, explained in the previous chapter. In order to conjugate the findings of my empirical part with the SIT I used the Grounded Theory that starts to develop the theory starting from the data. So when building the findings I will develop a theory that is adherent to SIT as well.

3.2 Methodology

The analysis I developed is based on the collection of qualitative data, following an inductive investigation with the application of iterative process in the second part of analysis. In particular my study consists on elaborating data from interviews conducted on a sample of 20-25 students almost graduated or nearly graduated students from different disciplines.

The qualitative approach underlines what surrounds the understanding, focusing mainly on the personal sphere: behaviors, values and beliefs of the subject under analysis. In order to better capture these aspects, the interviews are the most useful tool in the qualitative field. Indeed the interviewers can deepen specific concepts judged fundamental to them (Yauch & Steudel, 2003).

The inductive analysis is juxtaposed to the deductive one, in particular the latter one follows a pattern that is opposite to the inductive one: firstly the theory, then method and data and final-

ly findings. Instead the inductive research advances from method, data, findings and theory. Furthermore, the inductive analysis is usually associated to a qualitative kind of data collection (Orton, 1997). Hence the main aim of inductive analysis is to start from the data for identifying a pattern in order to advance a theory or a model (Thomas, 2003). Therefore, I will develop my analysis starting from the data following a specific method in order to evolve the findings according to the Social Identity Theory explained in the previous chapter.

This kind of process is at the base of the so called "Grounded Theory" developed in '60s by Glaser and Strauss. Glaser and Strauss (1967) generated the notion of 'grounded theory', which focuses its attention, no longer in search of social phenomena but on the understanding and interpretation of the sense of action for the social actor. Indeed the theory is derived from the observation of the event that it shows (Strauss & Corbin, 1990, p. 23). For this reason "grounded theory", because the theory is explored in the data, and hence the emphasis is all on these ones that generate the theory (Strauss, 1987). The grounded theory in my analysis is used in order to develop a theory starting from the data collected during the interviews. The whole analysis is elaborated considering the Social Identity Theory explained in the previous chapter, indeed when building the findings I will consider their adherence to SIT as well.

A peculiarity of grounded theory is the simultaneous phases of data collection and analysis, by means of theoretical sampling and progressive coding of data, according to a continuous comparison method. This part is called the "iterative process" and it consists on analyzing, through a method of going backward and forward, the data. The latter ones must be reviewed over and over in order to identify the first-order descriptive concepts. Through the constant and deep analysis of these first-order concepts, it is possible to identify a theoretical sequence for developing the second-order concepts. The whole process consists on the simultaneous phases of data collection and analysis, by means of theoretical sampling and progressive coding of data, according to a continuous comparison method (Azungah, 2018). But let's sees what first and second- order concepts are.

The first-order concepts are developed starting straightly from the data collected from the participants to the interview. They are theoretical concepts deducted from the raw data, through the adaptation of descriptive categories into theoretical ones. Vice-versa, the second-order concepts are developed when the first-order analysis is not fully explanatory. In any case, what is communicated by the participants during the interviews is rich of details and potential theoretical answers. For this reason the second-order analysis will develop more in details theoretical concepts, that have already been established with the first-order analysis (Shkedi, 2004).

3.3 Data analysis

The collection of data was built through structured interviews composed of 19 questions and administered in Italian language, because the level of English was not good for all the participants. The choice of undertaking interviews was due to the possibility of exploring in details the point of view of candidates. My goal was to investigate deeply which are the attitudes of respondents in relation to Sustainability and Sustainable Human Resources Management. In order to do this, I adopted the interviews' method in which it was possible to capture in an efficient and detailed way the candidate's point of view on these issues. Indeed according to Shkedi (2004) the role of interviewers (or researchers) is to be a mediator for the interviewees. In particular, they would help the participants to transform the concept they have in mind into clear thoughts to express in words. Hence, through the questions, and any further requests to deepen more in details their answers, I was able to have an accurate picture of their attitudes, knowledge and ideas about labor market, Sustainability and Sustainable Human Resources Management. The overall goal of my analysis is to understand the attitude of future employees, nearly or freshly graduates, toward Sustainable Human Resources Management. To do that, I set the interview with 19 questions divided in five sections, in order to have a complete picture of the subject, and at the end I submitted two different job vacancies. Before starting the analysis of each section, I want to underline that I did not focus the analysis on all of the 19 questions. This is due to the different value, in terms of significance for answering to my research question, that some questions had rather than others.

3.3.1 Academic and personal background

The first part of the interview focused on the academic and personal background and it embodied questions from 1 to 4. In the following table, the results of the first part are shown:

Table 3.1: Results of First part of Interview

Number	Candidate	Gender	Age	Discipline	Average of Marks	Degree Score
1	A.S	M	24	Marine Biology	28/30	100/110
2	A.G	M	24	Medicine	29.4/30	n.d
3	E.F	F	24	Veterinary Medicine	24/30	n.d
4	L.P	F	24	Law	27.3/30	n.d
5	N.M	M	26	Geology	n.d	89/110
6	P.A	F	25	Entrepreneurship&	27.9/30	102/110
7	G.A	M	24	Entrepreneurship&	28/30	95/110
8	J.B	M	25	Business Administra	26.9/30	102/110
9	F.P	F		Entrepreneurship&	28.1/30	102/110
10	M.V	F	23	Entrepreneurship&	29/30	104/110
11	C.T	F	25	Political Science	28.8/30	104/110
12	R.V	M	24	Business Law	27.5/30	105/110
13	L.B	M	22	Entrepreneurship&	28.6/30	110/110
14	G.B	F	24	Entrepreneurship&	26.9/30	94/110
15	A.M	M	28	Political Science	27/30	110/110
16	F.Z	M	24	Veterinary Medicine	24/30	n.d
17	S.T	F	24	Digital Marketing	26/30	105/110
18	E.B	F	24	Entrepreneurship&	28.3/30	103/110
19	A.C	M	24	Business Law	26.1/30	98/110
20	A.V	F	24	Tourism	26/30	107/110
21	M.M	M	25	Business Administra	n.d	84/110
22	C.P	M	24	Veterinary Medicine	25/30	n.d

The sample embodied nearly graduated or almost graduated students from different backgrounds, all aged on a range of 23-28 years old. The face-to-face interviews lasted about 20 minutes and they were recorded, so that I could listen all the answers and reprocess the data more concisely. When it was not possible to set face-to-face interviews, I and the participants organized a Zoom meeting. It is possible to see the questions on the Appendix, at the end of the thesis.

Ten candidates out of the total are female and instead twelve are males. What emerged is that the sample is quiet varied in terms of academic background: 11 up 22 students come from an economic field, 6 up 22 from a scientific field and the others from political science and communication and marketing field. The reason why asking the grades was to identify a sort of correlation with the attention to sustainability. It was not possible to find it, though.

3.3.2 Attitude toward labor market

The other part of interview is focused on the attitude of candidates toward the labor market: when entering it, salary and which kind of contract they would like to enter with. This section embodied questions from 5 to 11. In this part the focus of the interview was to understand which were the propensity of candidates, whether entering the labor market or to continue the academic path. Another question was about the role category they wanted to undertake and in which field. The last part was aimed to catch their ideal entry level contract and the remuneration. In relation to the remuneration I divided the topic in two questions, one about the realis-

tic kind of internship remuneration, considering the average for Veneto region and the other one instead focused on their desired internship salary.

In the following table are shown all the answers of the candidates:

Table 3.2: Results of Working Propensity part of Interview

Propension to enter labor market	Role Category	Considering the average remuneration of an intern, which are their expactions	What is their desire in terms of salary
Yes	Research	500	1300/1400
Yes	Doctor	1300	1500
Yes	Vet inspector	500	900
Yes	Phd	500	600
No	Lab Technician	600/650	750
Yes	Marketing	500	800
Yes	R&D	800	800
Yes	Controller	800	1500
Yes	Consulter	800	1000
Yes	Consulter	700	1000-1500
Yes	Administration	500	1200
Yes	Financial Consulter	600	1200
Yes	Commercial	450	1000
Yes	Consulter	400-600	600
Yes	Public Relations	565	900
Yes	Food Safety	800	1200
Yes	Marketing	500	900
Yes	Administration	600	1000
Yes	Consulter	500-800	1000
Yes	Territory Planning	1000	1200
Yes	Financial Consulter	600	800
No	Clinical veterinary	650	1300

In addition to these features, there were other questions that I did not include in the above table: "In which field/field of work would you like to work in the future? What kind of employment contract would you like to enter the labor market with? Internship, Apprenticeship, Other" and "How do you see yourself working in five years' time in terms of remuneration, position and stability?". These questions were important in order explore more deeply the attitude of candidates toward the labor market. They were not included due to the long answer that could not be reported in the table. The sample is represented by people who are moving their first steps into the labor market, so it was important to capture their inclinations toward salary, stability, and which kind of work environment they had in mind.

The overall aim of analysis was to understand the attitude of the sample toward the Sustainable Human Resources Management; in particular after the first two parts that explored academic background and work propensity, I focused on their attitude toward the concept of Sustainability and Sustainable Human Resources Management. Finally, I gave two different job

offerings with distinct peculiarities, in order to get their real attitude toward the sustainability as a driver of choice.

In relation to the "In which field/field of work would you like to work in the future?" the answers were pretty varied, because of the different academic background the students come from. In relation to "What kind of employment contract would you like to enter the labor market with? Internship, Apprenticeship, Other", instead the majority of answers were similar: internship or apprenticeship. These two are the most common entry level kind of contract, especially the internship one. Indeed when a freshly graduates approaches to the labor market, having no experience, looks for an internship opportunity within the field of interest. The apprenticeship contract is different than the internship one, for two reasons: the experience required, and the salary. Indeed the former one lasts two years and provides a salary above 1,000 Euros. The motivation for choosing this contract, even if the candidates did not have any experience, was the compensation. I was able to investigate the inner inclination of candidates thanks to the explorative interview. Indeed I could explore more deeply the real motivations of candidates, through further questions given to candidates. The last question of this part was "How do you see yourself working in five years' time in terms of remuneration, position and stability?". The majority of respondents stated they wanted a salary exceeding 1500 Euros, with a permanent contract and in a position of "middle-manager"; meaning that they saw themselves to advance in their career, having some responsibilities but not being a senior manager. This question was important to understand which kind of career the subject had in mind, and how this ideal could influence the actual propensity of choosing a job.

3.3.3 Attitude toward Sustainability

The third part of analysis focused on Sustainability and it embodied questions from 12 to 14. In particular I wanted to investigate the candidates' affinity in relation to the concept of sustainability. In order to do that, I provided an brief introduction of the sustainability concept: "The concept of sustainability was born in the '70s as a result of the question on the part of society on the progressive extinction of resources on Earth. Following several conferences and summits, sustainability today declines in terms of Sustainable Development which is defined as what "meets the needs of current generations without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own". Within it, Sustainable Development has three spheres: economic, environmental and social". And then I submitted three questions: "How similar do you think you are to environmental issues? Explain in words exactly how you feel similar", "Do you daily pay attention to the environment in your choices? For example: Prefer the use

of public transport or the bike to the car; do not use plastic bottles" and "How important would it be for you to work in a sustainable environment (in all three spheres)? From 1 to 10 explaining the answer and knowing that 10 means that you would give up a possible job proposal if the company does not invest in sustainability". The first question provided word-response, where the respondents could motivate in details their affinity. Indeed I asked exactly in which way they could consider themselves "similar to sustainability"; whether they inquire about the theme and how exactly: reading articles, newsletter, listening to podcasts. The second one does not appear on the table on the left, because the answers were pretty long and could not be summarized. By the way the majority of answers denoted a propensity to use public transports or to ride a bike, but not for environmental reasons. The last one instead provided a numerical answer from 1 to 10, where 1 meant that the interviewee did not care at all that the company did not apply sustainable policies and hence, they would have accepted the job. On the contrary, 10 indicated that the person would not have accepted the job if the company did not apply any sustainable policy. In relation to this question, in addition to asking why that grade, I administered several sub-questions to understand perfectly their motivations and their point of view about this issue; for instance: "Would a sustainable work environment give you more personal satisfaction rather than one without sustainability?". The aim was to explore in deep the inner reasons of the propensity of choosing a sustainable work environment over the one without it, or vice-versa. Furthermore, how much they were willing to give up in order to have a sustainable work- environment.

Table 3.3: Results of Sustainability part of Interview

Affinity to the sustainability theme	Importance of a sustainable work environment
Much affine	8-
Not much	6
Much affine	8-
Quiet affine	8
Quiet affine	7
Not much	7-
Quiet affine	7
Not much	5
Quiet affine	8
Not much	6
Much affine	10-
Much affine	6
Much affine	7
Quiet affine	5
Much affine	6
Quiet affine	6-
Much affine	7
Not much	8
Much affine	7
Much affine	9
Not much	1
Much affine	8-

3.3.4 Attitude toward Sustainable Human Resources Management

The next part focused on Sustainable Human Resources Management, the true focus of my analysis. For this reason I wanted the candidates to have in mind very clearly the concept, in order to answer to questions comprehensively. Hence, I provided an introductive part where people could get information about it: "The concept of sustainability includes three spheres: economic, environmental and social equity. Within the economic sphere, the role of companies, in addition to the one of public institutions, plays a fundamental role. Within companies, the HR department is seen as the engine of many corporate initiatives and policies. A first aspect inherent to SHRM is the focus on the environment: training employees on ecological practices, which allow them to enjoy and be passionate about environmental issues in the daily activities of the company. But also reducing the use of paper in the working environment. A second sphere is instead inherent in equity; how to pay attention to fairness of treatment in the areas of remuneration, gender inequality and inclusiveness. A work environment where, for instance, there is ethnic diversity, without architectural barriers. Another example of Sustainable Human Resources Management, is the loyalty of employees; how to ensure respect at all levels of hierarchy, job security, equitable benefits and opportunities to use your skills and

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expertise at work. In this way the employees become loyal to their company and will therefore also increase their productivity because of the dedication they will experience". I submitted four questions: "Do you know what the HR department deals with within a company?", "Have you ever heard of Corporate Responsibility?", "Have you ever heard of Sustainable Human Resources before?" and "Following the above-mentioned description of "Sustainable Human Resources", would you like to work in a context that implements these kinds of policies? Would it give you personal satisfaction to work in this kind of context? Explain well". Three out four questions provided a straight answer: yes or no. In the last one, instead, the respondents argued a length motivation of their answer that in several cases was linked to the number 14. What was interesting about question 18, was that everyone answered they would. Meaning that each of them would like prefer to work in a context attentive to their employees and that implements SHRM policies. But, not everyone then, preferred the organization that actually implemented these policies.

In the Table 3.4, the answers of the 15 to 18 questions are shown.

Table 3.4: Results of SHRM part of Interview

Previous knowledge of CSR	Previous jnowledge of SHRM	Would you like to work in a company that applies SHRM?
No	No	Yes
No	No	Yes
No	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
No	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
No	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	yes
Yes	No	Yes
No	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
Yes	No	Yes
No	No	Yes
Yes	Yes	Yes
Yes	No	Yes

3.3.5 Job preference

The last section of interview was about the choice among the two different job vacancies. These ones were completely fictitious; I collected information from real job offerings and applied them to my case. The two job offers vary from each other for the following reasons:

- *Telospiego S.p.a* is more focused on sustainability, in all the three sphere, and it offers sustainability sharpened training experience aimed to increase knowledge about these issues. They focus on the implementation of more sustainable work and life practices. So they care that their employees undertake sustainability at work and also in their personal life. Another important aspect of this company is that they provide team work with a stress on decision-making autonomy for interns. In contrast, it provides a lower remuneration: 600 Euros.

- *SiamoNoi S.p.a* is a big company with a longer history than the other one and its focus is not on sustainability. It offers opportunities abroad for its employees and possibility of trainee experiences with a higher salary, 900 Euros. Being a big company, it can offer the opportunity to learn in a global and well structured context, but it does not provide any sustainability trainee nor decision-making autonomy. So it presents itself as a company where to learn, because they invest on your formation, but not to act proactively.

I gave all the time they needed to read and evaluate their choice. The answers were pretty long and well motivated, so I did not report it on a table. In the next chapter I will explain in details the real motivations of the answers. In any case on a sample of 22 students, 14 chose the Job Offer number 1 and 8 the second one.

3.4 Conclusions

In this chapter I focused the draft on the exact method used for the development of the empirical part. This entire section was focused on the experimental way used to answer to my research question. The qualitative approach, in particular the interviews, revealed to be adapted and useful for my analysis because it allowed to understand in deep the point of view of the interviewees. Indeed I could get a clear picture of the subjects in relations to several aspects: academic background, work propensity, Sustainability and Sustainable Human Resources Management.

Number	Candidate	Gender	Age	Discipline	Average of Marks	Degree Score	Propension to enter labor market	Role Category	Considering the average remuneration of an intern, which are their expactions	What is their desire in terms of salary	Affinity to the sustainability theme	Importance of a sustainable work environment	Previous knowledge of what a HR Department is	Previous knowledge of CSR	Previous jnowledge of SHRM	Would you like to work in a company that applies SHRM?	Job vacancy 1 or 2?
1	A.S	M	24	Marine Biology	28/30	100/110	Yes	Research	500	1300/1400	Much affine	8-	No	No	No	Yes	1
2	A.G	M	24	Medicine	29.4/30	n.d	Yes	Doctor	1300	1500	Not much	6	Yes	No	No	Yes	1
3	E.F	F	24	Veterinary Medicin	24/30	n.d	Yes	Vet inspector	500	900	Much affine	8-	No	No	No	Yes	1
4	L.P	F	24	Law	27.3/30	n.d	Yes	Phd	500	600	Quiet affine	8	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1
5	N.M	M	26	Geology	n.d	89/110	No	Lab Technician	600/650	750	Quiet affine	7	No	No	No	Yes	1
6	P.A	F	25	Entrepreneurship&	27.9/30	102/110	Yes	Marketing	500	800	Not much	7-	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1
7	G.A	M	24	Entrepreneurship&	28/30	95/110	Yes	R&D	800	800	Quiet affine	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1
8	J.B	M	25	Business Administr	26.9/30	102/110	Yes	Controller	800	1500	Not much	5	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	2
9	F.P	F		Entrepreneurship&	28.1/30	102/110	Yes	Consulter	800	1000	Quiet affine	8	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	2
10	M.V	F	23	Entrepreneurship&	29/30	104/110	Yes	Consulter	700	1000-1500	Not much	6	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2
11	C.T	F	25	Political Science	28.8/30	104/110	Yes	Administration	500	1200	Much affine	10-	No	No	No	Yes	1
12	R.V	M	24	Business Law	27.5/30	105/110	Yes	Financial Consulter	600	1200	Much affine	6	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1
13	L.B	M	22	Entrepreneurship&	28.6/30	110/110	Yes	Commercial	450	1000	Much affine	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1
14	G.B	F	24	Entrepreneurship&	26.9/30	94/110	Yes	Consulter	400-600	600	Quiet affine	5	Yes	Yes	No	yes	2
15	A.M	M	28	Political Science	27/30	110/110	Yes	Public Relations	565	900	Much affine	6	No	No	No	Yes	2
16	F.Z	M	24	Veterinary Medicin	24/30	n.d	Yes	Food Safety	800	1200	Quiet affine	6-	Yes	No	No	Yes	2
17	S.T	F	24	Digital Marketing	26/30	105/110	Yes	Marketing	500	900	Much affine	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1
18	E.B	F	24	Entrepreneurship&	28.3/30	103/110	Yes	Administration	600	1000	Not much	8	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	2
19	A.C	M	24	Business Law	26.1/30	98/110	Yes	Consulter	500-800	1000	Much affine	7	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	1
20	A.V	F	24	Tourism	26/30	107/110	Yes	Territory Planning	1000	1200	Much affine	9	Yes	No	No	Yes	1
21	M.M	M	25	Business Administr	n.d	84/110	Yes	Financial Consulter	600	800	Not much	1	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	2
22	C.P	M	24	Veterinary Medicin	25/30	n.d	No	Clinical veterinary	650	1300	Much affine	8-	No	Yes	No	Yes	1

4. CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1   Introduction

In the following chapter I am going to develop my results and discuss about it. The results will be analyzed following the iterative process, based on two main concepts: first and second-order concepts. The first-order concepts are notions obtained from the review of the interviewees, considering the interviewees' point of view. I developed seventeen first-order concepts, they are the outcome of the qualitative analysis I applied, and they have been structured considering my research question. In the next section they are all well described and summarized in the Table 4.1 . Then I developed the second-order concepts that instead are theories built considering the researcher point of view. Indeed they are the later review of the first-order concepts and their establishment consider the focus on answering to the research question as well. The next section is about the identification role. Indeed, my whole analysis has on the background the Social Identity Theory, so applying the grounded theory that consists on developing a theory starting from the observation of data, I developed my conclusions.

4.2   First-order Concepts

After having completed the interviews, I read all the transcriptions and developed the first-order concepts. The development of a first-order concepts analysis is the process of building a theory to explain what has been illustrated by the candidates during the interviews (Shkedi, 2004). For this reason, they are called "informant-centric codes". They are terms translated starting from what has been delineated by the interviewees (Van Maanen, 1979). The analysis concerning the first-order concepts is about building up theories by translating what has been said during the interview.

My analysis started from the lecture of the interviews, trying to capture the meaningful information from what said by interviewees. After a first reading, I decided to focus my analysis only on specific question asked to candidates. This is due to the fact that the most relevant da-

ta came from only specific questions. I firstly decided to focus the analysis on the affinity the candidates feel toward sustainability. The choice of this specific demand was due to its key value; indeed, this is the starting point for the whole analysis. Starting from the personal inclinations of candidates toward sustainability, was the most obvious first step. For this specific question I divided the answers in two parts: yes or no. The division was possible because the responses of candidates were pretty definite. The next question taken into consideration was the " Do you daily pay attention to the environment in your choices? For example: Prefer the use of public transport or the bike to the car; do not use plastic bottles". This was useful to understand how the personal inclination is actually declined on a daily basis. The answers of these question were a little bit more difficult to classify, because each candidate explained on their own way through a well-articulated speech. After the review, I identified four main factors that influence the daily practices: economy, ethic, practice and compulsion. The next question taken into account was the importance given to working in a sustainable environment. This was the first step into Sustainable Human Resources Management field and was also the direct prosecution of the previous two parts. For this section I divided the answers in three units because the answers included a numerical response: from 1 to 10. For this reason I created three categories: low, medium and high. For each section I read all the answers and distinguished the motivation of each candidate. Then I found a common trend among each section and reformulated the motivations to put into the definition of first-order concept. On the detailed analysis I explained each content very precisely.

Finally there is the part about the driver of choice for the two job offers. After reading again all the interviews, I focused on the last part and I wrote down the motivations of each candidate, dividing between those who chose the first one and those who chose the second one. After this step, I identified the main drivers of each candidate, that eventually revealed to be common for several interviewees. Obviously, each of them gave different motivation because the answer is strictly personal and unique. At the end I classified seven drivers, analyzed in details in the next section.

In the following table it is possible to see all the first-order concepts of my analysis:

Table 4.1: First-Order Concepts

FIRST ORDER CONCEPT	DEFINITION
Ethical reason for usage of friendly-environment transports.	Preference of public transport in short distances, exclusively because it is better for the environment.
Practical reasons for usage of non-friendly-environmental transports.	Use of their own car in the city allows to reduce the time to reach a specific destination.
Economic reason for usage of friendly-	Usage of public transports because of the cost of

environmental transports.	gasoline. So for some specific trafficking, it is more cost- effective to use public transports.
Economic reason for usage of non-friendly-environmental transports.	Usage of own vehicles because of the cost of pub-lic- transport pass. So for some specific traffick-ing, it is more cost- effective to use their own car.
Compulsion to use their own vehicles.	Candidates highlighted how they were constricted to use their own cars because the areas where they live are now well connected to urban areas.
Affinity to Sustainability Issues.	The candidates feel conscious to sustainability is-sue: they seek for information through articles, essays, books. Some of them have also developed their thesis on this subject
Non Affinity to Sustainability Issues.	The candidates do not perceive this issue as im-portant as other issues; for this reason they do not document themselves on this theme or even if they do it they still do not consider it crucial.
The importance of working in a sustainable envi-ronment: low.	Candidates do not perceive it important because sustainability is not a priority for them. Others think to not have enough contractual power to have the faculty to reject a non-sustainable firm.
The importance of working in a sustainable envi-ronment: medium.	Candidates state that it is important but not essen-tial, not applying sustainable policies would not represent a reason to reject a job.
The importance of working in a sustainable envi-ronment: high.	Candidates feel personally satisfied about work-ing in sustainable environments, think that the company is innovative if it invests on employees and takes care of them. The appreciation is main-ly referred to the social and economical sustaina-bility.
Sustainability as a driver of choice.	The candidates identify sustainability as the pos-sibility of having a more human and less toxic environment, because there is a focus on employ-ees. This, in turn, led them to choose a certain of-fer.
Training as a driver of choice.	Training is a reason to choose a specific offer be-cause for candidates it seems to ensure the oppor-tunity to develop their career since they invest on their training. In addition, because they have no experience, this assures them to learn.
Decision-making power as a driver of choice.	Many candidates looked at this element in their choice because being part of a team where there is the possibility of being actively involved, gives more value to the job.
Work-Team as a driver of choice.	Working in team is a driver because is rewarding for the exchange of ideas, that can be established between the various members of the group.
Personal satisfaction and loyalty as drivers of choice.	Personal satisfaction is a reason for choice be-cause working in a context attentive to employ-ees, retains and makes employees proud to be part of it.
Compensation as a driver of choice.	Compensation is a driver of choice because en-sures independence or in some cases, it is just im-portant per se.
Possibility of going abroad as a driver of choice.	Working abroad is important in choosing a spe-cific job offer because it ensures the ability to

	work in a multicultural environment, a good re-sume and in turn to develop more likely their ca-reer in future.

4.2.1 First group of First-Order Concepts

The first-order concept related to the "Sustainable daily choices", have been analyzed starting from the interviews of candidates. Indeed, I read all the candidates' answers to question " *Do you daily pay attention to the environment in your choices? For example: Prefer the use of public transport or the bike to the car; do not use plastic bottles*". Starting from this review, I looked for a shared trend in the candidates comments. In this way I was able to identify four main behaviors related to sustainability:

1. Economic reasons, people are pushed to use specific transports because of cost- convenience. Indeed some candidates prefer to use public transports or bikes when the cost of gasoline is too high or vice versa they go for cars when the cost of public transport pass is too high. ("*Yes but I consider economic aspects as well, gasoline is pretty costly.*"or " *To go to my university it was more cost-efficient to use my car rather than SITA*").

2. Practical reasons for usage of non-friendly environment transports, some candidates have manifested the preference of cars usage because the travel time needed when using the car, is less than the time needed with another transportation. ("*If the distances are huger, for example reaching the center of the city, I spend 30 minutes by bike and instead by car 10 minutes, so in that case my interest for environment succumbs*")

3. Ethical reasons, other candidates have stated to choose the means of transport only relying on what is the best for the environment. ("*If I have to go to a nearby place, I use the bike mainly. I could use the car but I do not want to pollute*" or "*The less we use the car, the better it is for everyone*" or "*I have always looked at the public transport as better to car's usage due to the environment*").

4. Constrained by other factors, some candidates have declared to be compelled to use their own cars because the areas where they live are not well connected to urban areas. So even if they could, they cannot choose the most friendly-environmental transport because of this reason. They have also stated that in other situations, for example when they lived for previous period in cities well connected by public transport, they always preferred subways, bus or other similar vehicles. ("*Where I live I use the car because of the inadequacy of public transports. Instead when I lived in Lisbon and Padua, where the public transports were efficient, I did not hesitate to use it.*" Or "*I prefer public transport but only on a mental level because even if I am aware of environmental issues,*

I live in an rea where public transports are absent so I am forces to use the car. But when I have the choice, I do not think at all; I opt for the more friendly-environment for instance trains, bus, subways")

Other candidates have indicated the willingness to be more committed to the environment through the choice of transportations, but at they moment they cannot do a lot because they live with other people, often parents or relatives, that are not aligned in the same way to this theme.

(*"Because I do not live alone, I cannot do everything I would like to. For instance I would increase the efficacy of separate collection, doing the compost" or "Some ecological choices are more costly rather than others and at the moment I could not do it because I live with my parents who manage the financial resources of the family"*).

The question posed was also about the daily use of plastics or the sustainability impact related to the food. Almost all candidates have eliminated the plastic from their habits but they are not as sustainable committed as with plastic in the food preferences.

4.2.2 Second group of First-order Concepts

The second section of first-order concepts is about the affinity of candidates toward sustainability issue. In order to develop this part I have read all the candidates' answers to *"How similar do you think you are to environmental issues? Explain in words exactly how you feel similar"*. Through this question, the goal was to understand how conscious the candidates feel toward sustainability: whether they get information about that through reading articles, books or essays. The candidates' responses can be divided mainly in two sections:

1.   Who can be considered affine to sustainability

2.   Who cannot be considered affine to sustainability.

Candidates who have taken part of the first group are 16 out of a total of 22. Within the group, the majority of them have stated to get informed about sustainability actively through articles, newspaper or books. (" *I Read articles, books, newspaper about it"). Several among them have developed their thesis on sustainability, or it is their subject of study at the University. ("What I am doing right now with my thesis project, is about the environmental sphere of sustainability").* Among them, there is a part who have declared they could improve the way and how much they get informed about that. (" *Despite I care about the theme, I am not so attentive ì, meaning that I do not get information so properly, just the absolute minimum").* Instead, candidates who are member of the second group are 6 up 22. Within this group, there are candidates who learn about sustainability, reading articles, books or newspaper. Despite

that, they do not consider themselves attentive to the theme. (*"I get informed through news or newspaper but I do not do it of my own free will"*). The reason why they document themselves is because sustainability is a strongly discussed topic in today's scenario. Other candidates instead, have stated to not get information because they do not care about sustainability. (*"I do not get informed about it because I do not care at all"*).

In practice, candidates in their daily lives do not directly put sustainability first. In fact, in the choices regarding the means of transport, there are several factors that convey the choice and sustainability is preferred only when all conditions allow it. Thanks to the exploratory interview I was able to effectively understand which were the drivers in this choice: inexpensive drivers, time or because they were forced by the absence of adequate means. Several of those interviewed stated that on equal terms, thus eliminating what prevents them from being little friendly environmental, they would opt for the most sustainable means. Another party, on the other hand, claims to prefer in any case the less sustainable means, that is, their machine because it is more comfortable in any case.

In relation to the affinity to the sustainability issue, most of the candidates have declared that they feel similar and that they are informed about it. Another party, on the other hand, has not, saying that half of them were nonetheless informed and half were not even informed.

Those who have declared that they feel similar to the subject, are also those who prefer the use of less polluting means in their daily choices and in the same way, those who do not feel similar are also those who prefer the use of more polluting means. Finally, there is a part that is considered similar to the sustainable theme but that in their daily choices prefers the use of the machine for pure comfort.

4.2.3 Third group of First-order Concepts

The next section refers to question *"How important would it be for you to work in a sustainable environment (in all three spheres)? From 1 to 10 explaining the answer and knowing that 10 means that you would give up a possible job proposal if the company does not invest in sustainability"*. I divided the answers in relation to the importance given to this theme and I have grouped them in three sections: low, medium and high. Because the candidates have been asked to rank their answer, I have considered low the responses from 5 to 6; medium those from 7 to 8- and high those from 8 to 10.

Low

The first group, composed by respondents who gave little importance to sustainability work environment, motivated differently its response: a part stated that it is not a priority because they do not feel conscious about sustainability ("*I would like to work in such an environment but it is not a priority*"), so it is not something they look for in a work environment. Another share of the group agreed to not have enough bargaining power at the moment to reject a possible job offer that has not sustainable features. (" *Let's say that now it is more important to find a job. Now I have not enough bargaining power to weigh so much the sustainability*"). Finally, one candidate highlighted during the interview an interesting point of view. Indeed the candidate has identified herself with the company, underlining how it is difficult for the company as well to apply sustainable policies and practices. For this reason she does not expect this from a company and hence, it is not important for her when looking for a job. ("*I think that the company is forced to make sustainable choices but also the organization has to contend with its actual resources. So I would be happy if the company would undertake a green path but I am aware of its limits so I would not demand so much*").

Medium

The second group, composed by respondents who gave a medium importance to sustainability in work environment, illustrated their reasons focusing on three main aspects. One of the most expressed reason to give a medium importance is that despite their interest toward sustainability matter, they do not consider it so important to reject a job offer. (" *Working in such environment would motivate me and would make me proud of working in that company, but it would not be binding in the choice*"). In relation to this aspect, another feature highlighted was the personal satisfaction arising from working in a sustainable work environment. ("*Working in this environment would make me personally satisfied because it assumes people open-minded and diversity which brings a value added to the company*"). Hence, candidates appreciate sustainability and thus, companies that apply sustainable policies and practices. Furthermore if they worked in that kind of environment, they would acquire personal satisfaction. But even with this feature, if a company, not attentive to sustainability, offered them a vacancy the candidates do not deem it a reason why to reject a potential job vacancy.("*Because sustainability is an issue to which I am careful, I would focus on this aspect when looking for a job. But at the same time, right now, I would not reject a job offer if the organization does not implement these policies*"). One candidate, belonging to this group, put in evidence that his choice would have depended on the company dimension as well. Meaning

that, if the company were small-medium, the fact that it does not invest on sustainability practices would not represent a reason to reject the job. Instead if the firm were big and it did not provide any sustainability policies, the tolerance would be lower and for this reason they would reject the job. (" *Maybe I would reject the offer if the company is not attentive to sustainability and it is a big one. In the medium companies instead, where the production process may be not sustainable, I would go anyway").*

High

The third group, composed by respondents who gave an high importance to sustainability in work environment, focused mainly on the social and economic sustainability when appreciating this aspect in a company. *("I would choose the first company because of its gender gap policy rather than the environmental behaviors" or "I feel more close to me the social and economic spheres rather than the environmental one").* Indeed candidates during the interview have stated that they recognize worth overall the commitment of company toward employees. ("*I reward a company that invests on its employees and makes me more interested on it").* In fact, a company that invests on its human resources, being careful and respectful with them, creates a work environment where the employees want to invest their time and effort on. As a consequence, this retains employees inside the company as well, increasing the loyalty and reducing the turnover. Candidates, mainly women, appreciate the commitment of companies that invest on women empowerment and on removing the gender gap both in the remuneration field and career opportunities . ("*About the gender equity matter, knowing that there is this kind of policy would make me happy").* For this reason, candidates have manifested the high personal satisfaction they would feel from working in such environment. (" *I strongly believe in equality and meritocracy and I would love to share these beliefs with the company in which I work".)* A very interesting aspect from this last group is that the respondents are all women. This is due probably to the fact they are more sensitive to this type of policies because they perceive to undergo unequal treatments. ("*The focus on women, as a woman, is fundamental and I believe that it would create a better environment where to work").*
What is interesting of this whole section is the link between the importance given to the sustainability in the workplace and which job offer they chose later. The majority of candidates who gave low importance to sustainability, 6 out 8, then chose the second offer that is the one less attentive to sustainability. The majority of high -group respondents, 3 out 5, chose instead the first one. Hence, for both the groups there is a coherence between the two spheres: the importance given to sustainability at work and the job offerings. Otherwise it was for the medium group, composed by interviewees who considered sustainability important as a values but

not so fundamental to refuse a job offering not characterized by it. The interview showed that despite this conviction, when placed in front of the choice of the two different job offerings, all 9 candidates chose the more sustainable one. This is due probably to the choice that is purely fictitious and it is not a real decision. It might have been that in real life, if they had received two similar offering they would be oriented towards a different choice, more similar to the second one.

4.2.4 Fourth Group of First-order Concepts

The other part of analysis is focused on the last question: *Choose among these two job vacancies your favorite one and explain why*. In order to develop the first - order concepts related to this part, I have read all the answers and analyzed them in order to find the drivers of choice. The first one is the Sustainability applied to Human Resources of the company of reference. Indeed the two companies offer different policies about sustainability issue and this, in turn, is perceived differently by the candidates. Candidates who chose the first job vacancy appreciated mainly the sustainability practices undertaken by the company. In particular during the interview they highlighted the kind of environment that these policies would create consequently: more human and inclusive and less toxic because there seem to be a stronger focus on employees. ("*I would give up to 300 Euros but I would work on a more human environment, less toxic*"). This is underlined in the gender gap and women empowerment practices, the focus on inclusivity and diversity and the sustainable training promoted by the first firm. Especially this last aspect, it stresses the fact that the firm wants to create employees more aware of sustainability both at work and during their extra-work life. Hence, this company highlights the value of its own human resource through several interventions. All these aspects are perceived by candidates, who feel conscious about sustainability, and they have considered it when choosing among the two offers. With reference to this driver of choice, what has been manifested by several candidates during the interviews, is the major focus on two out three sustainability's spheres. Indeed, candidates expressly manifested the higher importance of the social and economic sustainability rather than the environmental one. So when choosing one of the two job vacancies they considered mainly these two spheres rather than the environmental one. ("*Among the three spheres, the economic and equity ones, are more important to the environmental one*"). Especially the women, whose majority chose the first offer, they concentrated their motivations around the commitment the first company was investing on the role of women. Thus, they appreciated especially this aspect, that is linked to the equity sphere of

sustainability. Even other candidates, male ones, when expressing their reasons of their choice enjoyed overall the features referable to the equity and economy spheres. Some male interviewees instead have specified that they do not feel affected by this type of policies because concerns women and not men. ("*I, as a man, do not care a lot about the difference In remuneration between man and women. This would be something more important for women. The fact that the first company has more female managers, is not important"*). Hence, the reason why they chose the offer one, is the commitment that the company demonstrates in creating an inclusive environment and free of discrimination and injustice. This would motivate them to invest their time and skills in such a working environment. One candidate, in particular, stated that he perceived the working climate of the first offer as less competitive and this, in turn, would make him more comfortable. ("*The first company gives me the idea of working in a more inclusive environment. In my work ideal, I would like not to feel oppressed. There is more familiarity."*)

Another element that was driver of choice, for both the offers, was the training developed by the firms. In details, candidates appreciated mainly the continuous focus on forming employees, that in turb leads to a dynamic environment. *(" The first choice seems to be more dynamic and with an higher growing prospective")*. This, from the respondents' point of view, is a symbol of commitment to the resource and in the long term can be an investment on it increasing career development as well. *(" The first offer gives me the idea of guaranteeing an higher career development"*). Because this would be one of the first working experiences for applicants, the focus on training is fundamental because it guarantees them to really learn from scratch a profession. Several interviewees have underlined this concept as essential for their choice.(" *When choosing a job offer I mainly look at the possibility of learning new things pr to enter in the labor market and understand well how it works and to be able to apply my studies to the job"*). Some of them, have mainly have preferred training to the enhancement of women. While motivating their choice between the two offers, both those who opted for the first one and those who did it for the second one, they expressed the fact that they preferred the company that trained its employees, rather than enhancing women through the mere election of CEO. ("*I would look at the meritocracy rather than diversity. I would like that people would have same opportunities based on meritocracy" or "inserting the quota rosa is not something I am into, I prefere that everyone had same opportunities"*). From their point of view, it seemed that the company was rewarding women regardless their competencies, promoting them to important positions, not really looking at the merit. For this reason they strongly appreciated the training promoted by both companies. Of the first one, they es-

pecially recognized worth of training in the sustainable environment, because it denotes a real interest that the employees are educated in this regard.

Another element that was significantly recognized of values and thus, has conveyed the choice, was the decision making power. The latter one, ensured in offer number one, was one of the strongest driver for the choice of the first company. Several candidates, through this specific policy, have perceived that the company gave value to its employees, that it cared that its employees had a voice and that they could be listened. ("*Despite I would be paid less, I would feel more reassured because it is a more open-minded company and my opinion counts").* The commitment required seemed to be proactive, aimed at learning and that their role was not a passive learning. For many, because it is their first work experience, want to acquire as much knowledge as possible, through active engagement. (" *To me, it is very important to have the possibility of having influence in what I am doing").* This in turn can help them for future working position as well. In this way, they are able to acquire more autonomy in what they do and how to implement it. *("In my case, where my goal is to have a managerial role in the future, with responsibilities of projects and people, having the possibility of developing this skill is fundamental").* The focus was, once again, on enhancement of employees perceived by interviewees. This one gave an added value to the first offer. Other candidates instead declared to not give importance to decision-making power when choosing. ("*Not having decision-making influence is not required by an intern. So it is not something I look at").* Two out three, of those who stated that, were oriented toward the second offer. This is due to the idea that is not required actually such an active role by mere interns. They prefer to have a more passive role and to learn from experience but just watching. Again, other respondents have stated that decision-making influence was really very important and was the main reason why they chose the first offer. Indeed they declared that if the second company had guaranteed decision-making influence, they would choose that one because at that point it would give them more. This is to demonstrate that sustainability is not such a strong driver of choice and that of the first offer they only selected specific factors not necessarily related to sustainability.

In both companies was required to work in team. All candidates looked at this aspect when they had to opt for a specific offer. The reason why the appreciated this element, was that the work in group is more fulfilling because the ensuing confrontation enriches a lot, especially interns who have to learn from their first work experience. In relation to the above-mentioned decision-making influence, group work is the perfect input to be able to develop that capacity.

An element that is related to all those above-reported, is the personal satisfaction that the candidates have described, even implicitly, when describing their career orientation. In particular interviewees while they were motivating their reason, manifested a sort of proud of working in a context more similar to their values. (" *I would feel prouder to work in a company that respects thee sustainability in the Human Resources field").* This emerged especially from candidates oriented toward the first company. The fact of working in an environment attentive to its own employees and that enhances them through its policies, increases the personal satisfaction of each of them. As highlighted by other candidates, this personal satisfaction becomes, in turn, loyalty of the these ones towards the company. ("*The concept of loyalty is very important for a company. I put myself in a company and I would like that in turn it cared about me. For this reason I would feel more similar, I am willing to give up something of my life in order to work there").* In order to get this information, that are not part of explicit questions of interview, I asked specific sub-questions to understand in deep the inner point of view of interviewees.

All the elements above mentioned relate to the broader concept of sustainability. through my interviews I wanted to understand the career orientation of new candidates with regard to sustainable human resources. In order to do that, I condensed a series of corporate policies that reflected this concept of sustainability in the first offer. What has emerged is that more or less all candidates who chose the first offer, despite all giving different motivations, chose it because of sustainable human resources policies implemented by the first company.

On the contrary, the candidates who have picked the second offer, who are all from an economic academical background, have placed the highest remuneration as the major driver. Thus some of them demonstrated that their personal satisfaction result from factors external to sustainability. Some candidates stated explicitly that they do not care about the theme. *(" I do not care about it at all").* Consequently, when choosing, remuneration was the first factor to have been considered. Other subjects who chose the second offer, care about sustainability: they pay attention on a daily basis, through their actions and they inquire themselves about it. Despite their affinity to the theme, they had to consider other elements and set aside sustainability. Indeed some candidates chose the second company because it ensured an higher economic independence rather than the first ones. ("*The compensation ifference between the two companies define the possibility to be independent and maybe also rent a flat away from my parent Oy it will give the possibility to buy a car and do things that you would not like to ask parents").* In this regard, another candidate stated, while explaining her motivations for choosing the first firm, that if she had not had her parents to financially supporting her she

would have been forced to choose the second offer; even if it stands aside from her values. ("*In my case my parents are still supporting me on the economic side and I choose job offer 1 because I would like to feel involved in the decision making process. But if I had to support myself, I'd go with offer two*"). Hence, it denotes that in some cases there is a sort of collision between values and economic needs. In both two above-mentioned cases, values should be set aside for other primary needs. Another interesting case is demonstrated by a candidate who then chose the first company. She did not consider the remunerative gap so important to allow her to set aside her values. However, she declared that is the contractual period were longer than six months, for instance one year, the compensation would have acquired an heavier weight. And probably, with these conditions she would have chosen the second offer. ("*If the contractual period would have been longer than 6 months I would have chosen the second offer but just because otherwise I can not build a future with that remuneration*").

Once again it is evident how some drivers have to be deeply analyzed, because behind a specific choice there are many factors to be considered.

The hugest choice driver of the second company was the possibility of working abroad. Even if for some other candidates was not a driver, it represented a great cause for indecision. The second company arises as a big company, well-structured and with several locations abroad. These features represent the ideal working environment for the sample under analysis. In fact, many of those who chose the latter, motivated it for the opportunity to travel and work for a period abroad. Going abroad is appealing also for all that is related to that: a company of such dimensions, from interviewees' point of view, represented a competitive and highly stimulating environment, with the possibility to compare with other cultures. ("*I really like travelling and the possibility to move around the world is giving me a thrill. The competition in the second one is quite high and only the best will obtain benefits and bonus. I do like this type of environment because I like challenging myself*"). This was indeed the biggest driver for choosing the second firm. Although many candidates chose the second one for these reasons, they also declared that they opted for this one because of the weight this experience would have on their resumé. Such an high-end company would enrich a lor their personal background and it would give the possibility in the future to choose a company more similar to their own values. (" *The thing that makes the difference is the possibility of going abroad, this would enrich my resume. So that in future I can get a better job in a company more sustainable aware.*" Or " *The internship would allow me to acquire experience and to enrich my resume so that I can look for other companies that are more careful of sustainability*"). Candidates stated that, indeed, they are aware of the importance of sustainability and they also care

about it, but in the trade-off between values and needs, they preferred to choose the company that offers less sustainable policies but more powerful experiences. The second company represented for them the springboard to acquire more bargaining power. So in the future, they can choose something more akin to their own values.

4.3 Second-order Concepts

The second part of analysis focused on the analysis process of interviews, focusing on the second-order concepts. Second-order concepts are those concepts developed to illustrate more specifically the pattern of the first-order concepts. Basically second-order concepts are concise articulation, whose drawing is the consequence of the first-order concepts analysis. They focus on explanation of specific relationships observed in the first ones. Some authors define them "interpretations of interpretations". Van Maanen (1979), stated that they can be considered the researcher-centric terms, because they are the outcome of the researcher elaboration starting from the notions developed in the first step. They are opposite to the informant-centric terms, which are the first-order concepts.

4.3.1 Daily Habits related to Sustainability

I developed four second-order concepts. The first one collects all the behaviors of candidates, arisen from the interviews. Thanks to the exchange of information developed with the interview, I was able to understand in deep the daily habits of candidates, in relation to sustainability. The *"Daily habits related to Sustainability"*, focuses on answers of interviewees to question *"Do you daily pay attention to the environment in your choices? For example: Prefer the use of public transport or the bike to the car; do not use plastic bottles"*, that is covered by sustainability field. And it is strongly correlated to the previous question: *How similar do you think you are to environmental issues? Explain in words exactly how you feel similar.* Thanks to a deeper investigation made through sub-questions, it was found that candidates in their daily habits and choices, are influenced by several factors. There is not a distinct dichotomy between being aware of the sustainability importance and the consequent commitment on a daily basis and the disbelief of sustainability's relevance and the subsequent daily foresight. Indeed, especially for those who feel aware of sustainable issue, being able to pursuit it on a daily basis was not so easy. As highlighted in the previous section, there are many aspects that convey the sustainable impact of their actions. I was able to identify four main elements through my analysis:

- Practical reasons related to time, parking

- Economic reasons
- Ethical reasons
- External constraints reasons

4.3.2 Personal affinity to Sustainability

The second second-order concept is, instead, related to *"Personal affinity to Sustainability"*. This might be considered the key point to answer to the research question of this thesis. Staring from how much individuals feel akin to sustainability, it is possible, in turn, to understand their daily commitment to it or how important would be to work in such a context. In this case the dichotomy is marked: akin or not akin. It was interesting to understand how an akin person, that in turn identify its values more similar to sustainability ones, had then developed its analysis. In some cases, interviewees had declared to emphasize with sustainability's values but then had chosen the company with less sustainable impact.

4.3.3 Importance of working in a sustainable environment

The third second-order concept is the *"Importance of working in a sustainable environment"*. This concept is declined as a consequence of the previous two. This third approach is important to understand, work-wise, which are the interests to invest their own career path in a context careful to sustainability. The reference question *How important would it be for you to work in a sustainable environment (in all three spheres)? From 1 to 10 explaining the answer and knowing that 10 means that you would give up a possible job proposal if the company does not invest in sustainability.* This one provided a numerical question, where 1 meant that the subject did not care at all about sustainability so any type of job would be accepted; and 10 meaning that the issue was so important that they would have rejected the job if the employer did not invest on it. Thus, I divided the answers in three parts: low, medium and high. For each part corresponded three different first-order concepts, developed in the previous section. What was curious is that up eight subject who gave a low importance, five declared to be akin to sustainability issue. Once again, it was interesting to see the correlation between who considers itself conscious about the issue and if they actually respect this value on their daily habits.

4.3.4 Driver of choice

The last second-order concept was inherent to the reasons of the final choice between the two offers. This is related to what was mentioned before, which is the actual willingness to enter in a sustainable working environment. With regard to this part of interview, there were several drivers that conveyed the interviewees' choice. Then, I collected all these drivers in seven macro areas: sustainability, training, decision-making, work-team, personal satisfaction, compensation and going abroad. This was actually the core of my analysis, where I could understand in deept which kind of inner reasons drove people to a specific direction. In this case as well, it was interesting to see how people that felt akin to sustainability, then oriented toward the second choice, the less sustainable. This shows that there are several factors that determine decision about working path. However, two job offers provided different features, so also the choice was not immediate and considered many elements. Being able to isolate them and explaining each of them how much it influenced the choice, allowed do develop a profound and well-detailed analysis of the importance the sample gave to Sustainable Human Resources Management field.

In table 11 it is shown the elaboration of the second-order concepts.

Table 4.2: Second-order Concepts

FIRST-ORDER CONCEPTS **SECOND-ORDER CONCEPTS**

1	Ethical reason for usage of friendly-environment transports
2	Practical reasons for usage of non-friendly-environmental transports
3	Economic reason for usage of friendly-environmental transports
4	Economic reason for usage of non-friendly-environmental transports
5	Compulsion to use their own vehicles

Daily Habits related to Sustainability

6	Affinity to Sustainability Issues
7	Non Affinity to Sustainability Issues

Personal affinity to Sustainability

8	The importance of working in a sustainable environment: low
9	The importance of working in a sustainable environment: medium
10	The importance of working in a sustainable environment: high

Importance of working in a sustainable environment

11	Sustainability as a driver of choice
12	Training as a driver of choice
13	Decision-making power as a driver of choice
14	Work-Team as a driver of choice
15	Personal satisfaction and loyalty as drivers of choice
16	Compensation as a driver of choice
17	Possibility of going abroad as a driver of choice

Driver of choice

4.4 Identification process

My analysis evolved for the entire process, having on the background the Social Identity Theory. As specified on the previous chapter I will undertake the Grounded Theory for the devel-

opment of my results, starting from the data assembled during my whole analysis. For doing that I will consider as a basis the Social Identity Theory. On the second chapter I specified that SIT would have been the mean for answering to my research question: how important is Sustainable Human Resources Management for future employees, who in my analysis correspond to a sample of nearly and freshly graduates. The concept of identification has been analyzed under several aspects from the role of organization at the entry moment, to the efficacy of training programs' implementation. In my analysis I have focused on the concept of identification toward a group of reference where the group of reference, is the company that applies Sustainable Human Resources Management policies. In particular I wanted to investigate how certain people values lead the subject to identify a specific organization. With this regard, I wanted to develop the concept sustainability as it was a value in which the individual identify itself with or not. From that starting point, I tried to evolve the analysis so that the candidate, when choosing the offer, could take into account of its own self and of other external factors. The interview was the mean through which the candidate was able to analyze itself in deep, pondering its personal values. The role of identification in this dynamic, is the key actor because it helped me to get the answers of my research question. The focus of my analysis is the Sustainable Human Resources Management and correlated to it, sustainability. So individuals have specific values that resemble, more or less, to sustainability. Starting from this kind of identification, how much does this incentivize the individual to choose an organization? Do other factors step in the choice? This was the fulcrum of my analysis.

The previous literature about Social Identity Theory suggests many implication between the identification process and role of organizations. Ashfort and Mael (1989) suggest that first of all, people tend to choose activities consistent with the most peculiar aspects of their identities, hence they will invest time and effort in institutions embodying those identities. This identification, in turn, can lead to commitment and loyalty toward it and observance of attitudes and behavior typical of that group. The entering process is a good background for the development of identification mechanism. Entering a new company might be hard, especially for the initial assessment of roles and status. Also in this field, identification plays a key role because it helps to assess the process of organizationally self-definition: having very clearly who you are and what you are expected to do inside the company. Identification, in this sense, plays a crucial role for newcomers: the more they feel identified with that specific company, the more they will feel committed and engage with it. Scheepers and Ellemers (2019) stated that one of the things that is most appreciated by future employees or actual employees is their organizational identity. This aspect is much more important rather than personal career

opportunities, compensation packages, or other employee benefits. This is due to the values of pride related to identification and hence to self-definition. The literature focuses also on the role of Corporate Social Responsibility in relation to the identification of employees toward the company.

A study conducted by Kim (2010), focuses on this specific issue. The dissertation explores the influence of Corporate Social Responsibility association in comparison to Corporate Social Responsibility participation. The results of the study show that these two are both related to employee-corporate identification, meaning that these two factors affect the identification of employees toward the company. But while the CSR participation has a direct impact on the identification of these two subjects, the CSR association acts on this kind of identification through another factor: the perceived external prestige. This is important because it varies culture by culture, and it can be analyzed in order to have a stronger outcome of the identification. The identification between company and employees is fundamental because, according to this study, it impacts the commitment of employees to their company. My analysis follows the pattern of this dissertation because I wanted to investigate the role of identification of future employees toward a specific theme, sustainable human resources management, and how this can be conveying for attracting them to a company that apply SHRM

My sample embodied 22 candidates, all about to enter the labor market. The interview, with its 19 questions, helped me to understand the interviewees from a personal, academical and work-wise point of view. But one of the key question for the evolvement of my dissertation, was the one about how affine the candidate feel toward sustainability. Out of a total of 22 candidates, 16 declared to feel akin to the sustainable issue, meaning that they daily inquire about it (through newspaper, articles, essays, blog) or they study matters inherent in that. This feeling of identification suggests a personal inclination of subjects to values recognizable to those of sustainability. For this reason it could be obvious assuming that their choice between the two offers could be oriented toward the first one. But it was not the case for all 16. Indeed, only 12 out 16, then opted for the more sustainable firm. Furthermore on this sample of 12 interviewees, only 7 actually chose it for sustainability (in all its 3 spheres). This demonstrates that even if people identify themselves with certain values, when placed in front of a choice, there are other variables that they consider. The choice is not as binary as it might seem. Several candidates, indeed, focused on the decision-making influence or the training programs offered by the same company. Considering the question relative to the importance given to working in a sustainable working environment, only 3 out of a total of 5, that are those who gave an high importance, then actually preferred the first company. The two candidates con-

sidered other factors when approaching the choice: one focused on the higher remuneration that could ensure an economic independence and the other one chose the second company because it allowed her to get a stronger experience to put on her resume and to acquire an higher bargaining power so that in the future she could choose a company more similar to her values. The same applies to the sample who stated not to be akin to sustainability. When they had to choose, out of a total of 6, 2 opted for the sustainable company. Their motivation are pretty similar: both focused their attention on sustainability, even if on two different aspects of the same matter. This is also related to the fact that candidates, when asked if they liked or not to work in an organization that applied SHRM all of 22 answered yes, they would like. Even if part of them, then opted for the second offer. This shows that for all the students interviewed, working in such an environment, would be positive but at the moment of the choice they also consider other factors. But it also demonstrates that for those that do not feel akin to sustainability issue, but then would appreciate a company with SHRM, they probably do not make the association between SHRM and the broader Sustainability field.

Hence, for sure the majority confirmed its propensity for sustainability, choosing the first firm; but not the whole sample. This might due to the scarce knowledge of labor market as well, but the identification I have previously referred to, cannot be applied properly to the whole sample. What was interesting was that when asked to candidates if they enjoyed working in an organization that apply Sustainable human Resources management policies, all 22 candidates answered yes. This shows that, even if the candidates do not consider themselves akin to the issue, they all appreciate the careens toward the employees, typical of this type of policies.

4.5   Discussion

4.5.1 Discussion of Results

My analysis developed with the aim of answering to the research question: how future employees orient themselves toward an organization that applies Sustainable human Resources Management. Inside this orientation there are two main players: identification and an eventual choice. These two elements are one the consequence of the other; meaning that I wanted to see how future employees identify toward some specific values: the sustainable ones. And, in turn, how this identification leads to choose, or not, an organization that has these values and shows it through the application of SHRM. I structured the interviews, the mean of my qualitative analysis, in order to understand how candidates identify themselves into some specific

values and then choose a sustainable organization. The first questions were more introductive, to frame the academic and personal background of candidate. Then, gradually, I moved forward to the general concept of sustainability, in order to understand how they orient toward it and if they identify in sustainable values. And then I moved on the SHRM field with some general questions about it and the administration of the two offers. My results demonstrated that out of a total of 22 candidates, the majority, exactly 14, opted for the more sustainability oriented organization, which is the one applying SHRM policies. The motivations that pushed students to choose this company over the other one, in order of importance are: sustainability, decision-making influence, training. Nine students opted for the first organization because of the care toward employees and the sustainable training. Motivating that this kind of environment would feel them safer and more productive as well. Three have also declared to prefer the decision-making influence, and finally two the training. The drivers have been ranked for order of preference. In the following tables you can see the ranking.

Tab 4.3: Most preferred driver of choice by organization

Organization	Most preferred drivers of choice
Organization *"Telospiego S.p.a"*	Sustainability Decision-making influence Training programs
Organization *"Siamonoi S.p.a"*	Going abroad Remuneration

Table 4.4 Most preferred Driver of Choice

Most preferred drivers of choice	Sustainability (9) Going abroad (5) Decision-making Influence (3) -Remuneration (3) Training programs (2)

When referring to sustainability I included all the three spheres: environmental, economic and social ones. In particular, the first company applied training programs to educate its employees to more sustainable work and extra- work practices and it was also committed to value its human resources through the creation of an inclusive work environment.

When asked to candidates if they consider themselves akin to sustainability, the majority, exactly 16 up 22, answered they do. Furthermore the majority of these 16, 12 students , have in turn opted for the organization with SHRM practices. A little part of them, 4, even if they recognize more similar to certain values, they opted for the second company. This is due to

several reasons: remuneration, going abroad, training. It was interesting to see that for the majority of those who identified in sustainability values, this has not led to opting for the most sustainable organization, as immediately as one could assume. There were other factors to consider, like the economic independence and the fact that the sample is not well aware of the labor market; indeed they have no previous work experience. The sample was composed of people that are facing a transition period from being student and usually being financially supported by parents, to an higher independence condition. For this reason, some choices have been dictated by a short-term vision focused mainly on being financially independent and not by the personal values. But, despite these few people who did not opt for the company with SHRM, even if the identified in those values, the answer to my research question is still positive; both in regard to the identification in sustainability values both in the consequent choice of an organization that applies SHRM.

Hence, the majority of the sample of students under analysis identified with certain values, the sustainable ones and in turn, this sense of recognition led them to opt for the organization applying SHRM policies.

As mentioned earlier the most preferred motivation among students, was the sustainability policies implementation by the first company. But behind this preference, the most interesting fact is the identification in some specific values that, in turn, led to a specific preference. The link between the identification and the following choice is the positive image suggested by Social Identity Theory. As specified in the previous chapters, people tend to affirm their identity through being part of a specific group. Thus individuals will look for groups whose association will increase the positive elements of their identity. For this reason, people chose the first company because, in their imaginary, it enhanced their identity as well. Hence, this explains the sense of proudness emerging from their motivations.

Another interesting point was that all the candidates answered positively to the question about if they liked to work in an organization applying SHRM policies. Even those who did not identify in those values. Despite their positive answer, not all of them opted for the first organization. This is due, to several factors explained in the above section. However, it was interesting to notice the discrepancy between these two answers. Such a sustainable work environment, where the focus in on people, and the inclusivity is major goal, is well appreciated by each of the interviewees. Demonstrating in this way that they would have appreciated, in a purely hypothetical context, this factor. But at the moment of the choice, they had to consider many other factors.

4.5.2 Managerial Implications

Through my analysis I wanted to give a contribute to companies in the attraction phase. This one is related to the employer branding matter, to which my thesis gives contributes as well. In particular, through my research question and the consequent results, it was possible to highlight how appreciated it was by future employees, the SHRM policies system implemented by organizations.

Ashfort and Mael (1989) suggest that first of all, people tend to choose activities consistent with the most peculiar aspects of their identities, hence they will invest time and effort in institutions embodying those identities. Indeed identification is important when individuals, through socialization, can really perceive the values and beliefs of the group of reference, that is the organization.

Hence, literature as well has affirmed the role of identification in specific values as conveying for choosing a company. Because individuals through the positive perception they have of a company, will identify in that group.

Out of a total of 22, 14 opted for the first company, of which 9 exactly for organization's SHRM. In this way it was demonstrated that the SHRM are an effective mean to attract future employees. In the recent years a war for talents has arisen, shifting the contracting power up to people and not up companies anymore. For this reason the image of companies should be perceived as unique and valuable. In this regard the Employee Value Proposition states that " An employee value proposition embodies the company's mission, beliefs and culture, to your organization's mission, values, and culture, and provides employees a strong motivation to invest their career on your company. It incorporates all that your organization can grant as an employer, in exchange for all the knowledge and competencies your employees own and will lead" (LyBrand, 2018).

As Turban and Cole (2003) stated, companies with an higher prestige, attracts a huger portion of applicants, increasing the likelihood of having higher qualified employees as well. When candidates approached to their choice, expressing their motivations, has emerged that they were feeling proud and that they were doing the right thing. All this builds a strong willingness of working in a company that values its employees and that in turn, make them feel worth. Companies that apply SHRM transmit on the collective imaginary, a positive picture of themselves as a valuable corporate citizenship. Consequently they create a good reputation as a great employer and in turn, future employees are willing to invest their career on it.

This work has shown that SHRM is an effective way to create a positive image of the brand; letting the company become an employer of choice among future employees. Hence, integrat-

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ing SHRM in the employer's EVP can establish in the mind of future job seekers, a positive image because they have previously identified toward some specific values, the sustainability ones. For future companies this could be the right strategy to build a strong brand image, useful to attract the best labor force and to distinguish themselves from competitors because of the competitive advantage created with SHRM policies.

4.5.3 Theoretical implications

My results can contribute to existing literature due to their innovation deriving from the method applied for the analysis: the administration of the two job offers following the interview. Indeed the previous literature considered in my dissertation, developed its analysis mainly through quantitative methods. The dissertation, presenting its results in relation to the role of SHRM in organizational attractiveness, supports the exiguous SHRM academic literature, that is lacking in terms of practical implications. Indeed about the role of SHRM in relation to attraction of future employees, there is not much information that follows practically the existing literature.

My results are consistent with the results of the literature considered in my dissertation. In particular, the study conducted by Chaudhary (2019) found out that the GHRM policies adopted by an organization are very important for the future employees' job pursuit intention. My results are aligned with it, because they have confirmed sustainability as the major driver chosen by most of candidates. The same mechanism is applied with the study conducted by Bettina Lis (2018) which investigates the role of Corporate Social Responsibility, compared to other factors, in the job searching process by university students. The results show that corporate social responsibility is the most important factor, followed in order by remuneration, intellectual challenge, and location. This is pretty consistent with what I observed, because the sustainability was the major driver when students approached to the company's choice. According to a study conducted by Arachchige at al. (2011), which ranked the principal factors that attract Sri Lankan university graduates to potential employers, what these ones preferred the most are, instead: gaining experience to help career, future opportunities, promotes self-esteem, develops confidence, appreciation from management, good relationship with superiors, good relationship with colleagues. These results go against what the candidates of my analysis, preferred the most: having a sustainable work environment, meaning that the focus is on the development of the human resource, on the creation of an inclusive work-environment, and on training to establish an education about sustainable practices. Then, in order of preference, going abroad, decision-making influence, training programs, remuneration and work in

team. For this reason the results of this study is not in line with the mines. Hence, the results of my study are consistent with the literature about the specific issue of Sustainable Human Resources Management and Corporate Social Responsibility because they confirm the important role of SHRM in a company for attracting future employees.

About the role of identification, the study conducted by Kim (2010) focused on the role of CSR for the employee-company identification; showing that CSR affect the identity of employees toward the corporate. In this sense my analysis confirms the results of the author because I have seen how the SHRM let increase the identification of subjects toward a specific company as well. Candidates who have already identified in some specific values, have in turn opted for the SHRM company, stressing the identification in some specific beliefs.

4.6   Research Limitations

The present study wanted to enrich the existing literature providing a practical transposition of the current theories. This was possible thanks to the interviews and the administration of the two job offers. Despite the innovative contribution of the job preferences in relation to SHRM, there are some factors to consider for further research. The sample under analysis is all about freshly or nearly graduates students, who are approaching to the labor market for the first time. Therefore their knowledge about the real work and dynamics inside a company and more in general of the job industry, is not so developed. This can lead them to make some choices not having a broader view. Their choices can be dictated by a short term perspective, which influences them to choose the offer that pays more, not considering the external context. For instance, the fact that the candidates should like the work environment when they work. And it happened in some cases that they put aside what they preferred the most, in terms of context and values, to go for another offer that could offer more in terms of a future career pattern. Another factor that could limit the research is that the choice is also dictated by personal drivers and these can lead to some bias in the results. Hence, for the possible future research the sample could consider already graduates students with a deeper knowledge of labor market and its dynamics.

My thesis has also focused on the employer branding matter. Indeed through my work I wanted to give a contribute for future organizations that want to attract employees, leveraging the implementation of SHRM policies. I have focused only on the attraction phase, but a good company with a successful EVP is able to attract employees but also to retain them. One of the main concept about SIT is the idea that people had developed about an organization, (the

identification established between two subjects), should match with the reality. For this reason it could be interesting for the future, to analyze the retain phase as well.

Another bias for this work was dictated by the historical moment. Nowadays we are living during a worldwide pandemic, whose evolution is completely uncertain. This in turn creates insecurity about own personal future. Consequently the choice can be dictated by this factors as well, even if unconsciously. Therefore, for the future research it might be interesting to see the results without having this difficult situation on the background

4.7   Conclusions

In the present chapter has been analyzed the whole study process. Starting from the development of the first-order concepts I was able to identify the key concepts of the interviews, from the interviewees' point of view. In this way I was able to extract the fundamental elements useful to answer to my research question. All the seventeen concepts were important to do that. Then the second-order concepts were the researcher's point of view, starting from the already initiated process of the first-order concepts. I was able to identify four main elements in this part of analysis. The whole iterative process was very useful to raise the link between my research question and the Social identity Theory. Indeed thanks to the main concepts identified in the first and second order concepts I was able to understand in deep if existed and how strong was, the identification of candidates toward the sustainability and in turn to Human Resources management. And consequently how this identification impacts the choice of a specific organization; in my analysis I wanted to understand the influence of these values toward the choice of a company that applies Sustainable Human Resources Management policies.

CONCLUSIONS

The present work wanted to investigate in deep the role of sustainability through the HR perspective. People are the real driving force of companies and their role is often underrated. What is happening in the recent years around us, should make us question about what we can really do to improve the living and working condition around the globe.

My entire academic career was dedicated to the study of organizations. For this reason, in this context, I wanted to highlight the main role that companies could play to change the actual paradigm. Simply looking at the contribution of PMI in Italy, they contribute to the Veneto regional GDP for the 63,47% (IlSole24Ore, 2019). Only considering the regional level, the function of firms is essential. Hence, it is pretty evident how strong might be the role companies in conveying sustainability on a larger scale, at the economic and societal level.

For this reason I wanted to focus the attention on the people. Indeed, I concentrated the investigation on a matter about people, from a people point of view. The analysis investigated the role of SHRM policies on attracting future employees to organizations.

Employer branding is an important factor for organizations, because the bargaining power shifted from companies to people. Indeed, nowadays there is a war for talents among companies. The focus is on attracting the right people and one of the way is to be more appealing for them. It was demonstrated, in these pages as well, that people identify in organizations that can increase their positive image. Applying SHRM enhances the image of a company making it a better corporate citizenship. For this reason who identify in some specific values, then opted for companies that resemble them and that in turn, make them prouder.

The present study was able to demonstrate all that; indeed the majority of students interviewed, answered positively to my research question. Demonstrating in this way, that people who identified in sustainable values, then opted for the organization with SHRM policies. The students with their preferences, highlighted how appreciated was the commitment of companies toward sustainable human resources. The candidates explicitly recognized the value of a company that ensures an inclusive work-environment that the focus its attention on people care. In fact, even those who did not care about sustainability explicitly stated that they would have enjoyed working in a company with SHRM policies. Therefore, the results of this thesis

show how can be beneficial for all parties involved, students and companies, to implement these policies.

I have always wished to have an impact on increasing the awareness toward sustainability, through my work. Thus, my biggest hope is to have done it with the present thesis. This dissertation is the result of months of work on which I stored all my hopes for future organizations to recognize that we are all part of the same world and the interests cannot be divided. What I like the most about sustainability is that shows how common the interests and goals should be. I hope, with this thesis, to have contributed to demonstrate this. And I hope for the future, that organizations can apply SHRM on a larger-scale. This is my wish as writer of the work, but as future employee as well.

APPENDIX

In the following Appendix I have attached the entire structure of questions that I have administered to the sample under analysis, during the interview:

1) *How old are you?*

2) *What degree course do you attend and if you have completed a bachelor's degree, which one did you attend?*

3) *What is your grade average? And if you have attended a three-year course, what is your graduation grade?*

4) *Which optional courses did you choose during your last degree?*

5) *Do you plan to continue your academic career (Masters, PhD students) or enter directly into the labor market in the future?*

6) *In which work field would you like to work in the future?*

7) *In which job function (sales, administration, human resources, Research and Development, marketing, ...) are you more likely to work? Even if not listed, you can specify this in your answer. You can express more options.*

8) *What kind of employment contract would you like to enter the labor market with? Internship, Apprenticeship, Other*

9) *Knowing that the average salary in Veneto of those who enter the job market through internship, is 565 Euro, how much do you expect to receive with your first salary? * Source: Neuvoo*

10) *How much would you like to earn when you enter the labor market?*

11) *How do you see yourself working in five years' time in terms of remuneration, position and stability?*

12) *How similar do you think you are to environmental issues? Explain in words exactly how you feel similar.*

13) *Do you daily pay attention to the environment in your choices? For example: Prefer the use of public transport or the bike to the car; do not use plastic bottles.*

14) *How important would it be for you to work in a sustainable environment (in all three spheres)? From 1 to 10 explaining the answer and knowing that 10 means that you would give up a possible job proposal if the company does not invest in sustainability.*

15) *Do you know what the HR department deals with in a company?*

16) *Have you ever heard of Corporate Social Responsibility?*

17) *Have you ever heard of Sustainable Human Resources before?*

18) *Following the above-mentioned description of "Sustainable Human Resources", would you like to work in a context that implements these kinds of policies? Would it give you personal satisfaction to work in this kind of context? Explain well*

19) *Choose among these two job vacancies your favorite one and explain why.*

JOB VACANCY 1

Telospiego S.p.a is one of the world leaders in the consultancy sector. Born in the 80s, in a few years it has established its presence in business consulting. Recently, it launched an internal communication campaign "SustainabiliTE", aimed at implementing sustainable practices for its employees. This includes: training programs for more sustainable living practices, efficient use of business resources. In recent years, the number of women managers has exceeded that of men and this gender gap policy has been confirmed by the election of the first female CEO. The resource will then be inserted in an inclusive and innovative working environment, attentive to the environment and people.

Search for the following location

• Business function: x

• Business sector: consultancy

• Type of contract: internship contract entry level 6 months, for recruitment purposes

• Provided framework: reimbursement of expenses of 600 Euro, with continuing training both on the specific position and on sustainability. Possibility to work in team and to decide/have influence on what to do and how to implement it.

JOB VACANCY 2

The company *Siamonoi S.p.a*, born a century ago, is a world leader in the consultancy sector. The company has a strong position in the sector of reference, with offices around the world. The company is known for having a large incentive and benefit system that offers its employees, on which it invests in training. It also offers a period of mobilization to younger employees abroad, in one of its branches. Recently it implemented a policy of hiring young people, called "Employoung", aimed at hiring many recent graduates in various functions of the company. The company in spite of the thriving business performance, last year classified last in the Global 100. This ranking lists the 100 most active societies in the sustainability field; in particular they refer to the commitment to the environment, social, governance and ethics of business.

Search for the following location

• Business function: x

• Enterprise sector: large-scale distribution

• Type of contract: internship contract entry level 6 months, for recruitment purposes

• Provided framework: reimbursement of expenses of 900 Euro and food vouchers. Possibility to work in team, to work for a period abroad, no influence on what to do and how to implement it.

In both cases, the function of the vacancy is not specified because people interviewed are from different disciplines (business, veterinary, medicine, biology and so on). They could be divided in five sections:

1) Academic and personal background, from 1 to 4
2) Attitude toward labor market, from 5 to 11
3) Attitude toward Sustainability, from 12 to 14
4) Attitude toward Sustainable Human Resources Management, from 15 to 18
5) Job Preference, 19

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