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A MARKETING PERSPECTIVE ON YOUTH PREFERENCES IN JOB CHOICE: IMPLICATIONS FOR EMPLOYER STRATEGIES

Abstract: *The aim of this study was to examine the preferences of young people when choosing a job and to consider the implications of the obtained results for employers' marketing strategies. The research was conducted through a questionnaire on a sample of 81 respondents, and included an assessment of the importance of key job characteristics, including salary levels, job security, work-life balance, work atmosphere and professional development opportunities. The collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistics. The results indicate that young people attach the greatest importance to material security and quality of the working environment, with a pronounced need for personal development. The observed differences in preferences indicate the possibilities of segmentation of the target group, which has important implications for the design and communication of employers' marketing strategies.*

Keywords: *preferences in choosing a job; labor market; marketing strategies; employer branding*

JEL Classification: *M31; J24*

1. Introduction

Changes in the labor market in recent decades, driven by demographic trends, technological developments and growing competition for skilled labour, have significantly affected the way employers approach attracting and retaining employees. Younger labor market participants are becoming an increasingly important target group, whose preferences when choosing a job represent a valuable source of information for shaping effective employer marketing strategies. The labor market is increasingly viewed through the prism of the market in which employers act as bidders, and potential employees as consumers who estimate the value of the job features offered.

Modern approaches in marketing emphasize the importance of understanding the preferences of the target group as the basis for shaping the value proposition and communication strategies. In this sense, job characteristics such as salary level, job security, professional development opportunities, working atmosphere and work-life balance can be seen as elements of employers' value propositions. The way in which these characteristics are shaped and communicated has a direct impact on the perception of the employer as a desirable "brand", especially among individuals who are at the beginning of their professional careers.

Although there is a significant amount of research in the literature focused on career expectations and work values of younger generations, there are relatively fewer papers that look at these factors from a marketing perspective, i.e. in the context of their application in the development of employers' marketing strategies. The lack of empirical research linking youth job preferences with the possibilities of segmentation of the target group and adaptation of communication in the labor market is particularly pronounced.

The aim of this paper is to examine the preferences among younger respondents when choosing a job and to analyze the differences in the assessment of the importance of certain job characteristics with regard to the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents. The obtained results are interpreted in the context of their implications for employers' marketing strategies, with special emphasis on the possibilities of shaping the value proposition, segmentation of the target group and improvement of communication. In this way, the paper seeks to contribute to a better understanding of the role of youth preferences in creating competitive advantages of employers in the labor market. This study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical insight into youth job choice preferences from a marketing perspective and by identifying implications for employer



strategies aimed at attracting younger workforce segments in contemporary labour markets.

2. Theoretical framework and literature review

Young people represent one of the most dynamic and changeable target groups in the modern labor market, especially in the context of demographic changes, accelerated technological development and growing competition among employers to attract quality labor. Their expectations and preferences when choosing a job are shaped by educational experiences, socio-economic conditions and changes in value systems (Eurofound, 2021; OECD, 2023).

Unlike previous generations, young people today access the labor market with significantly greater access to information about employers, primarily through digital platforms, social networks and specialized employment portals. Such an environment allows you to compare different offers and make more informed hiring decisions (Nikolaou, 2021; Suprawan et al., 2025.) Research confirms that young people do not see work exclusively as a source of income, but also as an important element of personal identity, social affirmation and quality of life (Twenge 2017; Ng & Parry, 2016).

Recent literature further emphasizes that members of Generation Z, who make up a significant part of young people in the labor market, are looking for a balance between employment stability and professional development opportunities, while at the same time expressing the need for the meaning of work, the authenticity of organizational values and the social responsibility of employers (Schroth, 2019; Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2020; Seemiller & Grace, 2019; Deloitte, 2024). These trends are also confirmed by international reports that point to changes in young people's expectations in terms of long-term security, development and value alignment with employers (Eurofound, 2021; OECD, 2023).

The empirical literature identifies several fundamental dimensions that shape the preferences of young people when choosing a job. The first dimension refers to material and security factors, among which the level of salary and stability of employment stand out. Although the growing importance of intangible factors is often emphasized in contemporary discussions, financial security remains one of the key criteria, especially in periods of economic uncertainty (De Hauw & De Vos, 2018; Eurostat, 2022).

The second dimension encompasses developmental and professional factors, such as learning opportunities, professional development and advancement. Young employees increasingly expect that the workplace will provide them with continuous development of competencies and clear career trajectories, which is related to the perception of employability and long-term professional success (Clarke, 2018; Akkermans et al., 2018).

The third important dimension relates to the quality of the working environment, including interpersonal relationships, organizational culture and leadership style. A positive work atmosphere, supportive leadership and a sense of belonging to the organization have been proven to increase employer attractiveness and employee satisfaction, especially among young people (Buil, Martínez & Matute, 2019).

A special place in contemporary research is occupied by the balance between private and business life, which is associated with general life satisfaction and mental health. Although flexible forms of work are not always a decisive criterion, their availability has a positive impact on the perception of the employer and the intention to stay in the organization for the long term (Ng, Lyons & Schweitzer, 2019; Allen et al., 2020).

Although young people share certain common characteristics, numerous studies confirm that they do not form a homogeneous group. Preferences when choosing a job vary with regard to gender, level of education and employment status. The level of education further shapes the expectations of young people. Highly educated young people express higher expectations in terms of professional development, autonomy in work and complexity of work tasks (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2020; Tomlinson & Holmes, 2022). Employment status also has a significant impact on preferences, with students often expressing more idealized expectations, while employed and unemployed youth emphasize practical aspects of work, such as job security and stable incomes (Baruch & Vardi, 2016).

These findings point to the need for a segmented approach to young people as a target group, which has direct implications for shaping effective employer marketing strategies.

Increasingly, the labor market is viewed through a marketing prism, in which employers act as brands that offer a specific value proposition to potential employees. In this sense, the concept of



employer branding is developing, which refers to the process of building the image of the employer as a desirable place to work (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018; Davies et al., 2018).

Employer branding is based on understanding the needs and preferences of the target group, whereby job characteristics become an integral part of the employer's value proposition (Employee Value Proposition). Research confirms that the correspondence between the preferences of potential employees and the perceived value proposition of the employer has a positive effect on the attractiveness of the employer, the intention to apply for a job and the long-term retention of employees (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

From a marketing perspective, understanding youth preferences enables more effective segmentation of the labor market, adaptation of communication messages and differentiation of employers in a competitive environment, especially in a digital environment where young people actively seek information about potential employers (Edwards, 2009; Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010).

A review of the literature shows that young people's preferences in choosing a job are a set of interrelated factors that include material, developmental, social and value factors, but also that they have strong implications for employers' marketing strategies. Understanding these preferences provides a theoretical basis for the empirical research presented in this paper and enables the interpretation of the results in the context of employer branding, labor market segmentation and the design of targeted communication strategies. In this paper, the terms "preferences", "factors" and "job characteristics" are used as conceptually related terms that denote the assessment of the importance of certain job characteristics in the process of professional decision-making of young people.

3. Research methodology

The aim of this research was to analyze the preferences of young people when choosing a job and to examine their significance for shaping employers' marketing strategies in the labor market. The research is focused on identifying the key factors that young people consider important when choosing an ideal job, as well as on determining the differences in these preferences with regard to the basic sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents.

The purpose of the research is to provide empirically based insights that can serve as a basis for the development of more effective marketing and communication strategies of employers, especially in the context of employer branding and a segmented approach to young people as a target group in the labor market.

In accordance with the defined objective, the research is based on the following research questions:

- IP1: What are the most important factors for young people when choosing the ideal job?
- IP2: Are there differences in young people's preferences when choosing a job with regard to gender?
- IP3: Are there any differences in the preferences of young people when choosing a job with regard to the level of education?
- IP4: Are there any differences in the preferences of young people when choosing a job with regard to employment status?
- IP5: What qualities do young people perceive as key to achieving success in the labor market?

Based on the theoretical framework and previous empirical research, the following hypotheses have been formulated:

- H1: When choosing a job, young people attach the greatest importance to material and security factors, such as salary and job security, compared to other job characteristics.
- H2: Differences in the assessment of the importance of certain job characteristics among young people with regard to gender are expected.
- H3: Differences in the assessment of the importance of certain job characteristics among young people with regard to the level of education are expected.
- H4: Differences in the assessment of the importance of certain job characteristics among young people are expected with regard to their employment status.

The formulated hypotheses enable the connection of empirical findings with marketing implications, especially in the context of segmentation of the target group of young people and adaptation of employers' messages to their specific expectations.

A total of 81 respondents, members of the younger population, participated in the research. The sample is heterogeneous in terms of gender,



age, level of education and employment status, which allows for the analysis of differences in job preferences among different groups of young people.

Respondents include students, employed and unemployed young people, while the level of education ranges from secondary to graduate studies.

The data were collected using a structured questionnaire, created for the purposes of the research. The questionnaire consisted of eleven closed-ended questions. The questions are divided into three parts:

The first part was related to the sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents (gender, age, employment status and level of education). The second part included an assessment of the importance of factors in choosing the ideal job using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = completely unimportant, 5 = extremely important). The factors were related to the level of salary, employment stability, development opportunities, work-life balance. The final part of the questionnaire included questions about motivational factors, characteristics of an ideal employer, perception of the possibility of finding the desired job and qualities important for professional success. This enabled additional understanding of the value orientations of young people and the interpretation of the results in the context of marketing implications.

The questionnaire was distributed online in the form of a Google forms form, and the survey was conducted in September and October 2025. Participation in the study was voluntary and anonymous. Descriptive statistics were used in data processing. The analysis of the differences between the groups was carried out at the level of comparison of arithmetic means, without conducting inferential statistical tests, which is why the results are interpreted as observed differences, and not as statistically confirmed significance. Given the relatively small and convenience-based sample, the findings should be interpreted as exploratory insights rather than broadly generalizable conclusions. The study primarily aims to provide an initial understanding of youth job choice preferences from a marketing perspective and to identify potential implications for employer branding strategies.

4. Research results

A total of 81 respondents participated in the research. The sample structure is dominated by women (77.8%), while men make up 22.2% of

respondents. The largest share of participants belongs to the age group from 18 to 22 years (46.9%), followed by the group from 23 to 26 years (40.7%), while respondents aged 27 and over make up 12.4% of the sample. Considering the employment status, almost half of the respondents are students (48.1%), while 44.4% are employed. A smaller share is made up of unemployed (4.9%) and self-employed respondents (2.6%). According to the level of education, the largest number of respondents attend or have completed undergraduate studies (48.1%), 28.4% have completed secondary school, while 23.5% have a graduate level of education.

In order to determine the factors that shape the preferences of young people when choosing an ideal job, and which have potential significance for the formation of employers' marketing messages, the respondents assessed the importance of individual job characteristics on a Likert scale from 1 (not important at all) to 5 (extremely important). Arithmetic means and standard deviations for individual factors are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Average importance of factors when choosing an ideal job

Factor	M	SD
Salary amount	4.30	0.90
Employment stability	4.20	1.03
Positive working atmosphere	4.20	0.99
Work-life balance	4.19	1.00
Opportunity for learning and professional development	3.95	1.11
Possibility of advancement	3.98	1.07
Flexible working hours	3.85	1.14
Employer reputation	3.74	1.09
Work in the profession	3.61	1.18
Work from home (remote/hybrid)	3.02	1.32

The results presented in Table 1 show that young respondents attach the greatest importance to the level of salary when choosing an ideal job (M = 4.30; SD = 0.90), which indicates a strong orientation towards material security. Employment stability (M = 4.20; SD = 1.03) and a positive working atmosphere (M = 4.20; SD = 0.99), which indicates that young people, in addition to financial aspects, attach significant importance to safety and the quality of the working environment. Also, the work-life balance has a high average value (M



= 4.19; SD = 1.00), which confirms the importance of employee well-being and the reconciliation of professional and private obligations. Possibility of advancement (M = 3.98; SD = 1.07) and the opportunity for learning and professional development (M = 3.95; SD = 1.11) are at the top of the importance scale, indicating a pronounced need for development opportunities and long-term employment prospects among young people. Respondents attach medium importance to flexible working hours (M = 3.85; SD = 1.14) and the employer's reputation (M = 3.74; SD = 1.09), which suggests that these factors are relevant but not decisive when compared to the basic material and security aspects of the job. Work in the profession (M = 3.61; SD = 1.18) is also of moderate importance, which may indicate a willingness of young people to compromise in the early stages of their careers. The lowest average value is the ability to work from home or in a hybrid form (M = 3.02; SD = 1.32), which shows that flexible forms of work, although present in contemporary discussions on the labor market, are not among the most important criteria when choosing a job for the majority of respondents. A relatively high standard deviation in this factor indicates pronounced individual differences in the perception of its importance. The results obtained indicate a relative hierarchy of importance of factors in choosing a job among young people, with material and security aspects occupying a central place.

In order to determine whether there are differences in the preferences of young people when choosing a job with regard to sociodemographic characteristics, an analysis of differences according to gender, level of education and employment status of respondents was conducted. The results are shown in Tables 2, 3 and 4.

Table 2. Average values (M) of career factors by gender

Factor	Men	Women
Salary amount	4.33	4.29
Employment stability	4.06	4.25
Work-life balance	4.00	4.25
Opportunity to learn and develop	3.78	4.01
Possibility of advancement	3.94	4.00
Flexible working hours	3.61	3.92

The analysis of gender differences shows that differences were observed in the average values of the assessment of the importance of certain job

characteristics, especially in terms of employment stability and work-life balance, with female respondents attaching greater importance to these factors. Differences are also visible in learning and professional development opportunities and flexible working hours. These observed differences suggest the existence of different expectations within the same age group, which may have implications for the segmentation and adaptation of employers' marketing messages.

Table 3. Average values (M) of career factors by level of education

Factor	High School	Undergraduate study	Graduate Study
Salary amount	4.17	4.26	4.47
Opportunity to learn and develop	3.65	3.92	4.37
Possibility of advancement	3.83	4.08	4.42
Employer reputation	3.48	3.69	4.05
Work in the profession	3.39	3.62	3.89

With regard to the level of education, the results suggest a trend of increasing importance of almost all observed factors with the increase in the level of education. Respondents with graduate studies emphasize to a greater extent the importance of opportunities for professional development, promotion, reputation of the employer and work in the profession compared to respondents with lower levels of education.

Table 4. Average values (M) of career factors by employment status

Factor	Students	Employees	Unemployed
Salary amount	4.31	3.83	5.00
Employment stability	4.18	4.00	5.00
Possibility of advancement	4.19	3.67	4.50
Opportunity to learn and develop	4.13	3.61	4.25
Work-life balance	4.26	4.03	4.75



The analysis of differences according to employment status shows marked differences in the average values of the assessment of the importance of individual factors. Students express relatively high expectations in terms of advancement and learning opportunities, which indicates a more idealized view of the labor market. Unemployed respondents predominantly emphasized the importance of salary levels and employment stability, although these findings should be interpreted with caution due to the small number of respondents in this subgroup. Employed respondents express more moderate and balanced expectations, which can be linked to previous work experience.

The results of the analysis of the answers to the question about the qualities that respondents consider to be the most important for career success show that young people emphasize personal and professional competencies to the greatest extent. The most frequently chosen trait is responsibility (63.0%), followed by self-confidence (55.6%) and communication skills (51.9%). This is followed by the ability to adapt (37.0%) and work ethic and perseverance (30.9%). To a slightly lesser extent, initiative and proactivity (29.6%), teamwork (25.9%), independence in work (23.5%) and creativity (21.0%) were highlighted, while technical expertise was chosen in 12.3% of cases.

The results obtained suggest that young respondents predominantly associate success in the labor market with personal characteristics and the development of competencies, and less with external circumstances. The emphasis on responsibility, communication skills and adaptability suggest a perception of the labor market as a dynamic and competitive environment in which individual engagement and interpersonal skills are key to professional success.

Additional insight into the professional orientations of young people is provided by the question about the preferred type of employment. The majority of respondents (75.3%) would choose a dynamic job with a higher salary but less security, while 22.2% would prefer a stable job with an average salary. These results indicate a pronounced propensity for challenges and potentially higher financial reward, with a willingness to accept a certain degree of risk.

In the marketing context, these findings suggest that employers' communication towards young people should highlight the possibilities of professional development, the dynamics of the work environment and the encouragement of individual initiative, but at the same time take into

account the segment of young people who continue to value stability and job security.

5. Discussion

The aim of this research was to analyze the preferences of younger respondents when choosing a job and to examine their significance for the formation of employers' marketing strategies. Starting from theoretical approaches that look at the labor market through the prism of marketing and consumer behavior, the results of the research enable the interpretation of young people as a differentiated and demanding target group, whose preferences shape the competitiveness of employers in the modern labor market.

The results show that young people attach the greatest importance to material and security factors, especially the level of salary and employment stability. Such a hierarchy of preferences is in line with recent research that highlights that economic security remains a fundamental criterion for young people's professional decision-making, especially in the context of volatile market conditions and perceptions of job insecurity. Such a hierarchy of importance of job characteristics is in accordance with the hypothesis H1 and provides it with support at the level of the conducted descriptive analysis. The obtained findings additionally emphasize the importance of a clearly communicated value proposition of the employer, which includes competitive financial conditions and job security, as key elements of the attractiveness of the organization. At the same time, the importance attached to a positive working atmosphere and work-life balance indicates that employment expectations extend beyond purely financial considerations. These results suggest that young people do not consider exclusively the material aspects of employment, but expect a complete work experience that includes the quality of interpersonal relationships, organizational culture and care for the well-being of employees. In this sense, employer branding strategies should also integrate the emotional component of the employer's brand, while emphasizing a work environment that encourages support, cooperation and balance of life roles.

The analysis of preferences with regard to gender shows observed differences in the assessment of the importance of certain job characteristics, with respondents emphasizing employment stability and work-life balance to a greater extent. These findings are consistent with H2 and provide indicative support at the descriptive level within the



analyzed sample. The results can be interpreted in the context of previous research that points to gender-based differences in the perception of security and the reconciliation of professional and private obligations. From a marketing perspective, this points to the need for a more sensitive and segmented approach in shaping communication messages towards different subgroups of young respondents.

Differences in the assessment of the importance of job characteristics with regard to the level of education also indicate a differentiation of preferences among young people. Greater emphasis on professional development opportunities and employer reputation among more highly educated respondents may reflect stronger career orientation and longer-term professional expectations. Such findings are consistent with H3 and provide indicative support within the descriptive analysis conducted. The results suggest that education may be associated with more complex and long-term oriented expectations towards employers, which has direct implications for the design of targeted employer branding strategies towards highly educated youth.

Similarly, differences in preferences were observed with regard to the employment status of the respondents. Greater emphasis on development opportunities among students may reflect career aspirations characteristic of early career stages, while the stronger orientation of unemployed respondents toward security factors may stem from uncertainty regarding their labor market position. These findings are consistent with H4 and provide indicative support at the descriptive level. The results suggest that personal experience and the current market position of younger workforce may be related to the way they evaluate certain job characteristics, which further confirms the need for segmentation within this target group.

The results of the research suggest that the preferences of young people represent a combination of material, security and developmental factors. The observed differences between individual subgroups of respondents further emphasize the heterogeneity of the analyzed population and the need for a segmented approach in employers' marketing communication. The findings additionally support the view that employer attractiveness should be understood as a multidimensional concept shaped by both economic and psychosocial expectations. The obtained findings therefore provide useful exploratory insights for the development of differentiated employer branding

strategies that take into account the specifics of different subgroups of young people in the labor market, with a methodological note that the conclusions are based on a descriptive analysis of the analyzed sample.

6. Conclusion

This research was focused on the analysis of job choice preferences among younger respondents and on examining their implications for shaping employers' marketing strategies. Starting from the theoretical framework that the labor market observes through the prism of marketing, segmentation and consumer behavior, the paper offers empirical insight into the structure of expectations of younger labor market participants as a specific and heterogeneous target group in the modern labor market.

The results of the research show that young people attach the greatest importance to the level of salary and employment stability, which suggests the central role of material and security factors in the process of professional decision-making. Despite the growing discourse on flexibility, the meaning of work and organizational culture, economic security remains the foundation of an employer's attractiveness. At the same time, the high ranking of a positive working atmosphere, work-life balance and professional development opportunities points to the complexity of respondents' job preferences. Respondents, therefore, do not perceive work exclusively as a source of income, but as a broader context of personal development, professional advancement and quality of everyday life.

The observed differences in the assessment of the importance of certain job characteristics with regard to gender, level of education and employment status of the respondents are consistent with the proposed hypotheses and provide indicative support at the level of descriptive analysis. The results indicate that the analyzed population is not homogeneous, but that there are different patterns of expectations and priorities within the population. Respondents with a higher level of education attached greater importance to developmental and status elements of employment, while unemployed respondents more strongly emphasized income security and stability. Such findings further emphasize the importance of a segmented approach to young people as a market group and point to the need for differentiated design of employers' communication strategies.



From a marketing perspective, the results of the research have multiple practical implications. Employers who want to increase their attractiveness among younger workforce need to clearly communicate competitive financial conditions and employment stability, but at the same time build an authentic and consistent value proposition that includes the quality of the

working environment, development opportunities and balance of life roles. Universal and generic messages may be insufficient, while personalized and segmented communication has a greater potential for effectiveness. In this context, employer branding is positioned as a strategic tool for differentiation and long-term positioning of the organization in the labor market.

Despite its scientific and practical contributions, research has some limitations. The analysis was conducted on a sample and using descriptive statistics, which is why the obtained findings relate to the analyzed sample and require caution

when generalizing to a wider population of young people. Also, the data is based on the subject's self-assessment, which may include subjective assessments and perceptual deviations. Future research could include larger and more representative samples, a longitudinal approach, and the use of inferential statistical methods to further verify observed patterns and gain a deeper understanding of the relationship between job characteristics and youth preferences.

The research suggests that understanding the preferences of younger labor market participants represents an important prerequisite for the development of effective, differentiated and market-based strategies of employers. By integrating marketing principles into human resources management, organizations can strengthen their competitive position, build a stronger employer brand, and attract and retain younger employees in the long term in conditions of growing competition in the labor market.



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