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Barriers of Attracting Male Top Talents for L'Oréal: Qualitative Study

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D e c l a r a t i o n   o f   A u t h e n t i c i t y

I hereby declare that the Master´s Thesis presented herein is my own work, or fully and specifically acknowledged wherever adapted from other sources. This work has not been published or submitted elsewhere for the requirement of a degree program.

Prague, May 14, 2018   B.A. Sarah Schwind

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Abstract:

This research study analyzes the main barriers L'Oréal is facing for attracting male top talents. Based on fourteen interviews with participants from three levels of exposure to L'Oréal, the research discovered several differences of the perception of L'Oréal's culture. Revealed barriers not only seem to apply to males but rather in general and include unsatisfied communication, entrepreneurial spirit not perceived as such by graduates, a stereotypically rather male than female company culture and the failure of successfully communicating the importance of gender balance. In order for L'Oréal to change from these misconceptions, three areas of improvement have been identified: points of contact, clarity of communication and employee attraction. Finally, managerial recommendations have been provided.

To my family

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CEMS - Community of European Management Schools

CEO - Chief Executive Officer

CSR - Corporate Social Responsibility

E-I-C - Employer, Internal and Corporate Branding

FMCG - Fast Moving Consumer Goods

HR - Human Resources

RoI - Return on Investment

VŠE - Vysoka Škola Ekonomicka

1   Introduction

> 'The cosmetics maker has a great track record drawing female employees – so great that now it's aggressively trying to attract men for balance" (Colby, 2017).

Large companies all around the world are striving for gender balance throughout their workforce and thus have it included in their diversity goals. For the majority of the companies, especially in the technology, banking and finance sector, this is mirrored in a desire to attract and recruit more female talents. However, for the French beauty company L'Oréal this contrastingly means there is a need to attract more male talents. L'Oréal has proven to be a pioneer in the rising importance of gender equality by regularly receiving awards for their achievements. Equileap, a non-profit organization, ranked the company in first place within their annual ranking of 3000 global corporations based on their progress towards gender equality. Nevertheless, when taking a closer look at this ranking, it becomes clear that L'Oréal merely acquired 22 out of the 35 available points – resulting in an overall grade B. When striving for excellence, L'Oréal is still not where it could be and wants to be, but it is on the right path.

However, the gender gap could put L'Oréal's recruiting processes at a disadvantage amongst its competitors, especially due to the increasing importance of male customers in the beauty industry. According to data from Euromonitor International (Colby, 2017), e.g., the market for men's grooming products will grow 3.3% annually for the next five years, compared to a 2.9% growth of the beauty and personal care market. L'Oréal is represented on the market with the male cosmetics brand L'Oréal Men Expert, directly targeting male customers, whereas their product brands Kiehl's and Skin Ceuticals are positioned to be unisex. Even though L'Oréal is not selling razors, they are still amongst the top three companies in the men's grooming market, after Procter & Gamble and Unilever. Having more men amongst the company's employees will help L'Oréal to better understand and attract male customers (Colby, 2017). However, in the year 2016, 77% of L'Oréal's new hires were female, which represents the gender imbalance within their applicants and employees. In order to tackle these challenges, L'Oréal is aiming to recruit an equal distribution of new male and female hires by the year 2020. (Colby, 2017)

Due to the authors' ambition of pursuing a career in management within the industry of fast moving consumer goods (FMCG), the author understands the importance in L'Oréal's goal of striving for gender equality amongst its workforce. Thus, the aim of the thesis is to expose the existing barriers for attracting more male candidates to apply for L'Oréal to ensure an increase in potential top talents. In order to resolve the question of which barriers L'Oréal is facing, the author integrated both theoretical concepts and qualitative research findings. Within the theoretical part, the author initially explains the relevance of attracting

more top talents across industries by introducing the topic of the war for talent. Furthermore, the author defines the concept of an employer brand, including its connection towards attracting millennials and outlines which aspirations are specific towards millennials in the workforce. In accordance with the aim of this thesis, the author moves on to the more psychological background of this topic and presents psychological differences between genders while also including applicable stereotypes. Finally, in order to provide insights into the impact of gender equality, the author describes the different aspects of diversity as well as its importance at the workplace and at the managerial level. The discussion will focus specifically on the area of gender diversity.

In accordance with the aspiration of an equal gender balance within L'Oréal's workforce, this study focuses on the following key research question: **What are the barriers of L'Oréal to attract more male talents to apply for a position?** In order to answer this question, the author conducted fourteen interviews with participants on three levels of exposure to L'Oréal, namely employees, graduates who participated at L'Oréal hosted events and graduates without prior connection to L'Oréal. The interviewees have been asked to state their experiences with and perceptions of important employer traits, L'Oréal's corporate culture and its diversity practices. Moreover, the author summarizes the qualitative research findings in the context of the different areas of research described in the theoretical part, compared these with the according literature and identified the main barriers for L'Oréal towards the attraction of male talents. Finally, the author provides managerial recommendations by assessing the outcomes and presents applicable limitations of the conducted study and aspects of further research.

The findings of this study should not be generalized as the presented opinions and experiences are rather specific to L'Oréal's target group and the interviewed participants each represent subgroups with specific characteristics towards their demographics, occupation and social class. In order to generalize this research and make it applicable for other companies, more extensive qualitative and quantitative research is needed.

2 Theoretical Research

2.1 The War for Talent

According to Bartlett and Ghoshal (2002), organizations require skilled and motivated employees in order to remain flexible and stay ahead of competition in today's fast-paced, knowledge-driven economy. People, more specifically potential employees, have to be understood as a key strategic resource. Therefore, the Human Resource (HR) department must play a central role in developing the strategic foundation of an organization in order to achieve a competitive hiring advantage. Hence, the tasks of HR departments must shift from a solely supportive and administrative role to a more strategic one with the key focus on building up human capital as a source of competitive advantage (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002).

Similarly, Barney and Wright (Barney & Wright, 1997) apply the Value-Rareness-Imitability-Organization (VRIO) framework to evaluate the preconditions that determine the quality of a firm's resources and capabilities (see Figure 1). In particular, they highlight the importance of human resources and illustrate how the HR department can create a sustainable competitive advantage for a company.

FIGURE 1: THE VRIO MODEL APPLIED TO HUMAN CAPITAL RESOURCES
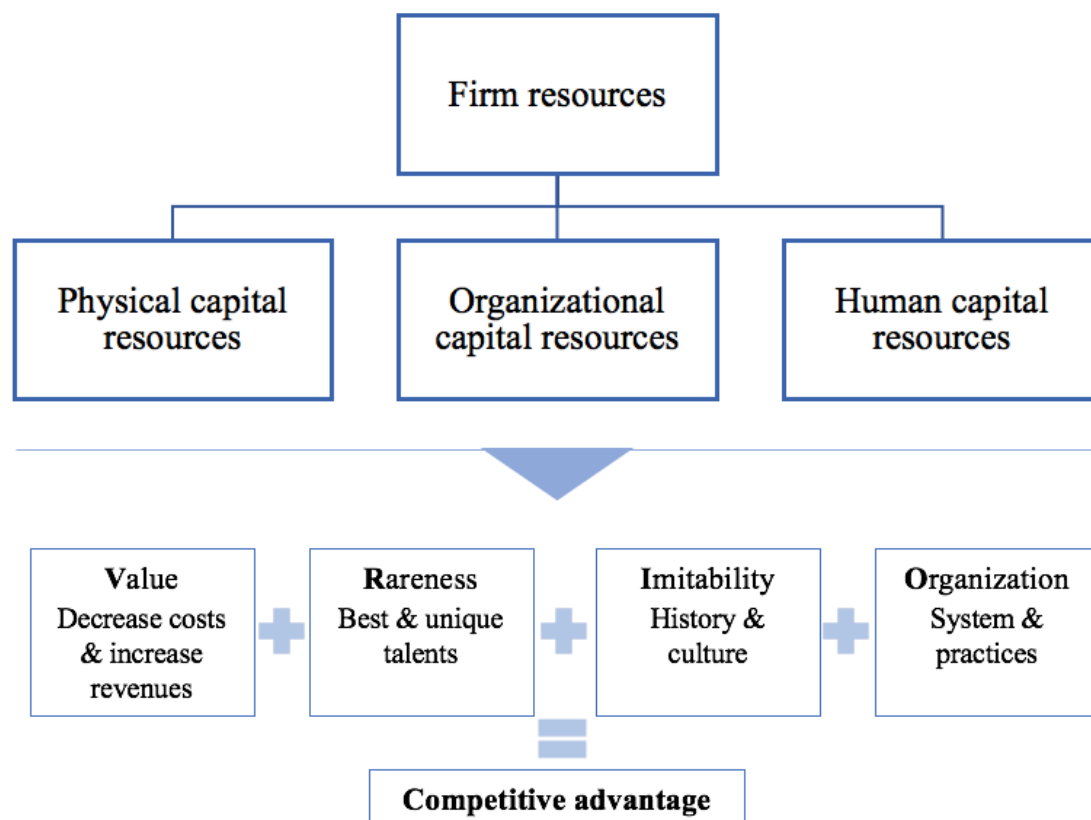
Source: adapted from (Barney & Wright, 1997)

According to the authors, a firm's HR department is capable of turning human capital into a lasting competitive advantage, if its HR practices meet the following four criteria:

Firstly, the HR department has to identify which human assets are particularly valuable to the firm in terms of bringing a long-term competitive advantage. Understanding where the true talent lies in an organization and how the talent can be leveraged most effectively provides great potential for a firm to differentiate itself from its competitors. Certain HR practices can have a direct financial impact, e.g., cutting costs by improving employee satisfaction and in turn reducing employee turnover or increasing revenues by increasing employee productivity.

Secondly, HR executives have to identify which human resources of the firm are rare and how they can be developed. One important aspect is to identify how the best talents can be sourced and retained in the company.

Thirdly, the HR department has to ensure that the valuable and rare characteristics of the firm cannot easily be imitated by competitors. The corporate culture plays a central role in this context as it is a highly complex, social phenomenon which is very difficult to imitate. The HR department can adjust the application process to carefully select those new employees who fit well into the prevailing corporate culture.

Fourth and lastly, the company has to be organized in a way in which it can best use its resources and turn them into a competitive advantage. One possible way to unveil the full potential of employees is to grant them the opportunity to work when they feel most productive by implementing a workplace flexibility system.

A sustainable competitive advantage will only be achieved if all four criteria are met (Barney & Wright, 1997).

According to Guthridge, Komm, and Lawson (2008), investing in talent is a long-term initiative and its impact does not materialize immediately in a company. Hence, it might be difficult to observe the benefits predicted by the above-mentioned theoretical model in practice, particularly in the short-term. More importantly, the most crucial of these long-term results is the impact of employees' work on the firm's performance, which is challenging to measure since many other variables also influence it and the individual effects are difficult to unravel (Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2008).

Nevertheless, there is evidence in the academic literature that investments in employees do indeed have a positive impact on company performance. According to a recent study by Morgan (2017), companies that invested in employee experience achieved an in average 4.2 times higher profit than those that did not (see Figure 2). We can see similarly encouraging results for profit per employee (4 times), revenue

per employee (2.8 times) and average revenue (2.1 times) (Morgan, 2017). This suggests, that investing in initiatives that help attract and retain talent, such as mentoring programs or workplace flexibility, has a direct positive impact on the companies' financial performance.

FIGURE 2: PAY-OFFS OF INVESTING IN EMPLOYEE EXPERIENCE
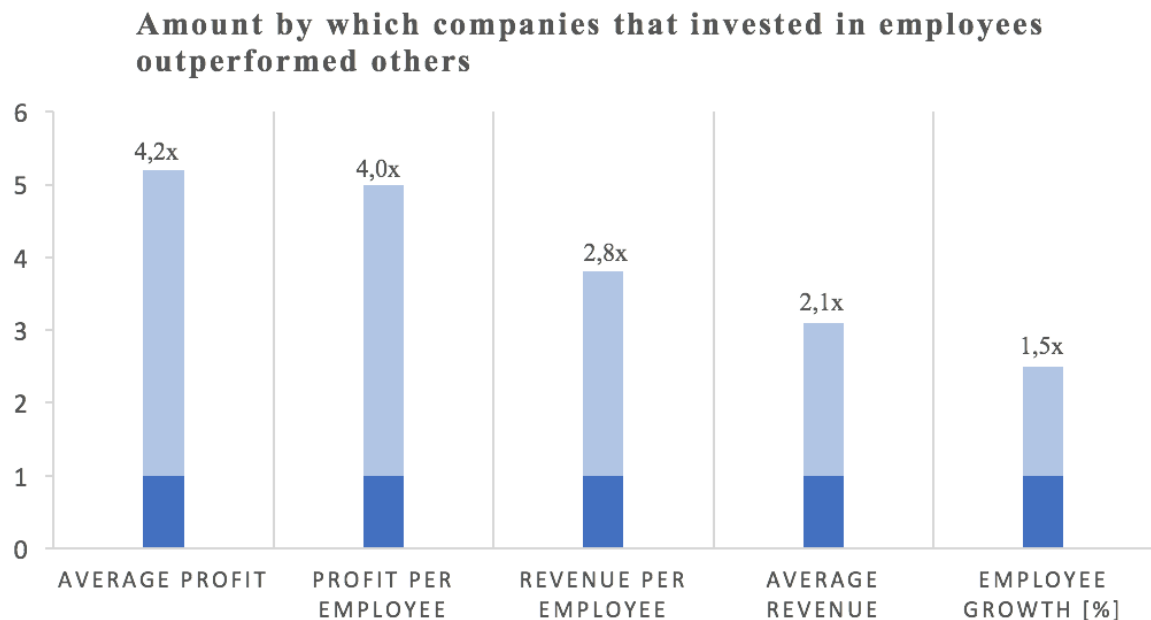
Source: adapted from (Morgan, 2017)

According to a paper by Guthridge, Komm, and Lawson (2008), an increasing number of companies notices the importance of human resources. This has led to a steep increase in demand for talent. At the same time, the well-known trend of an aging population in developed countries limits the supply of talent (Guthridge, Komm, & Lawson, 2008). As a result of this supply-demand mismatch, companies are in a constant competition to get good employees (Chambers, Foulon, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels, 1998). This "war for talent" (Chambers et al., 1998) is intensified by the changed mindsets of millennials towards their employers compared to previous generations: while only 17% of generation X employees expect to stay in the same job for maximal two years, this portion rises to 41% for millennials (Job Application Center Team, 2017). In short, as talent is a source of competitive advantage for companies and because of the war that rages to attract and retain employees, companies are forced to develop and invest into employer branding strategies to be successful in the long-term.

2.2 Employer Branding

In connection with the concept of the "war for talent" and the clear advantages a company achieves when recruiting and retaining the best employees, a critical element of success is the concept of positive employer branding. Being one of the best employers on the markets comes with many benefits. Employer that are amongst the best in their respective industry receive nearly twice as many job applications than other companies (Drury, 2016). Therefore, companies have the advantage of being able to be demanding and selective in their hiring process, giving them the opportunity to choose only the best candidates. As the labor market is becoming more and more competitive while population is declining, companies need to attract and especially retain high-qualified, value-adding employees (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012). In order to attract potential candidates to the organization, the company has to concentrate on how they are perceived by their consumers and stakeholders, including their employees and potential hires (Drury, 2016).

Employer branding was first introduced by researchers Ambler and Barrow (1996), defining it as "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company". They were the first to discourse the idea of employer branding from the perception of a corporation building upon branding for a given product or service (Aboul-Ela, 2016). Further research suggests that the term employer branding refers to "the application of branding principles to human resource management" and is increasingly used for "attracting prospective employees while engaging the present employees to the organization" by promising a particular kind of employment experience (Sokro, 2012).

Research indicates, that employer branding can be seen as an attempt to express a psychological bond between the organization and the employer. The employer, in order to truly attract and moreover retain talents, has to fulfill his communicated attributes as informal obligations towards the employee and create mutual beliefs (Bendaravičienė, 2016). Since employer branding is based on a company's culture and its values, a clear communication of its activities and offers towards prospective candidates as well as existing employees and customers cannot be foregone (Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng, 2010).

Branding is a strategic tool traditionally used by companies to develop and maintain an identity towards customers, differentiating the brand from its competitors and building value for both the company and its customers. Positive associations of individuals with an employer brand name of individuals can create positive feelings and behaviors, provide attributes of differentiation from competitors and create additional value to the firm (Drury, 2016). Employer branding can be applied in

the same sense to build a distinct identity of an employer that is attractive to both current and potential employees. It is a novel approach in human resources and talent management that can be used to recruit and retain the best talent in the increasingly competitive environment of recruitment (Sokro, 2012). As a tool to communicate with current and prospective employees and in order to build their loyalty, employer branding can be a very valuable concept for managers. They can use employer branding as "a shade under which they can channel different employee recruitment and retention activities into a coordinated human resource strategy. Accordingly, employers can control brand power to engage their employees in emotional ways to achieve change, outstanding results or increase attraction and retention" (Sokro, 2012).

The following framework (see Figure 3) was first proposed by Foster et al. (2010). It shows the conceptual framework of the brand promise and the linkage between employer branding, internal branding and corporate branding. Besides employer branding, a company's external branding activities include their fulfillment and commitment towards social responsibilities, trust-building and being trustworthy towards shareholders by maintaining authenticity (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015). Internal branding, on the contrary, creates a culture of trust between employer and employee by undertaking a promise made during the recruitment process (Frook, 2001) or by fulfilling employees' psychological contracts (Morko & Uncles, 2008).

FIGURE 3: BRAND PROMISE CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK
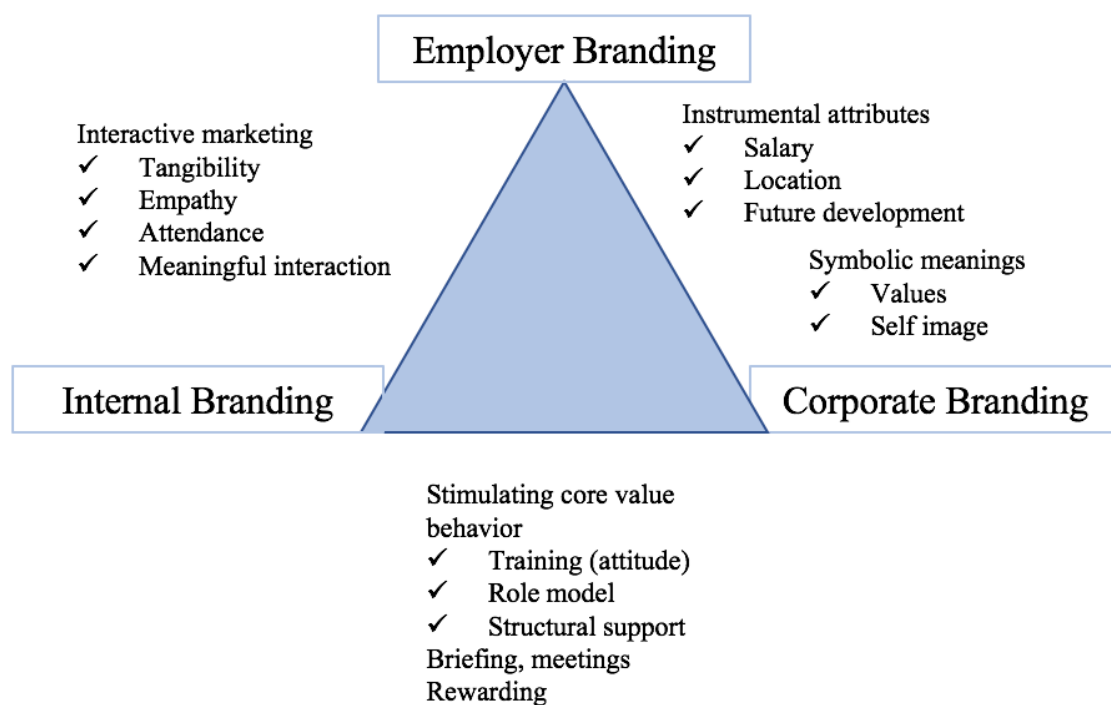
Source: adapted from (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015)

Further studies continued the research and analysis based on Foster's model and introduced the Employer-, Internal- and Corporate Branding (E-I-C) framework (see Figure 4) for employer branding, which shows that the concepts of employer branding, internal branding and corporate branding are not mutually exclusive but work together in order to communicate the core values of an organization (Näppä, Farshid, & Foster, 2014). Research further suggests that work values are a "perception of preferences of the employees that influence their attitudes and behavior in the workplace" (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015).

FIGURE 4: THE E-I-C FRAMEWORK FOR EMPLOYER BRANDING
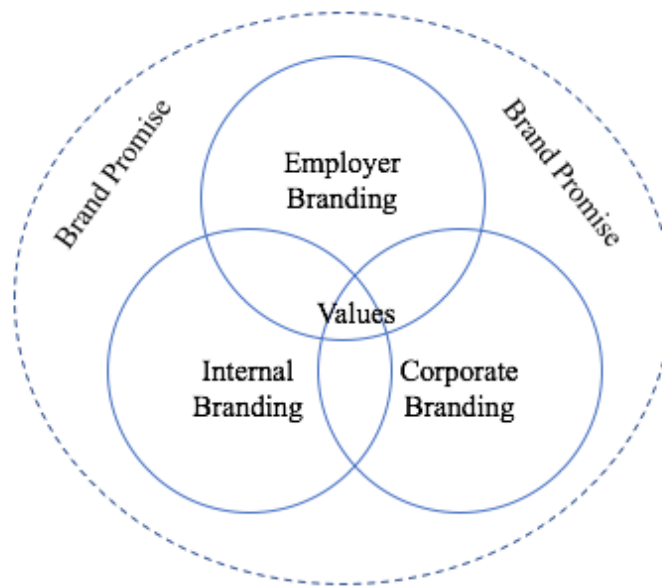
Source: adapted from (Näppä, Farshid, & Foster, 2014)

In order to appeal to potential candidates and attract prospective employees, organizations create an employer brand image including their associated benefits of economical, psychological and functional nature (Drury, 2016). When considering these benefits, it is useful to separate them into two groups: one focusing on functional attributes (including salary, benefits and health care coverage) and the other one on symbolic attributes (meaning company culture, career progression and prestige on the other side).

The use of conscious employer branding has proven to bring a vast collection of benefits to a company. Lievens and Slaughter (2016) have conducted a comprehensive review of academic work that was done on employer branding between 2001 and 2016. Thereof, they have identified a number of positive effects of strong employer branding on an organization's recruitment process and post-recruitment performance. Strong employer brands have decision-making benefits, including a better memory of relevant information, create stronger job pursuit intentions and increase perceived attraction of the job. Furthermore, they motivate

applicants to accept a lower pay by about seven percent by creating stronger emotional connections of applicants and employees towards the employer. Finally, there is evidence that an attractive workplace image is linked to improved economic performance of organizations (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Sokro (2012) finds similar positive effects, arguing that companies with strong employer brands can potentially reduce their hiring costs and offer lower salaries, while at the same time attracting better talent and increasing employee retention.

As the work-related expectations and attitudes of millennials significantly differ from other employee groups in the current workforce, employer branding plays a crucial role in recruiting and retaining millennials (Universum Global , 2017). Aruna and Anitha (2015) argue that millennial employees are typically loyal to their job position, however not as much to the company. They expect professional and personal development and place greater importance on aspects of the job such as mentoring, job satisfaction, flexibility, inclusive style of management or an active feedback culture. Therefore, it is the role of employer branding to communicate to the prospective millennial employees how the employer delivers on these expectations, more so than it needs to communicate these to the other generations in the workforce.

Sokro (2012) outlines a simple three step process for a company in order to shape and enhance its image of an employer brand towards its potential employees. Firstly, the company needs to define the particular value that it wants to offer to both its current and potential employees which indicates what the brand should be. Secondly, the company needs to market and communicate this employer brand proposition externally in order to attract the job applicants they are targeting. Lastly, the company needs to deliver on the brand proposition which is made to the hires by incorporating the promised propositions into its corporate culture. Thus, the process requires a thorough reflection about what the company wants to offer to its employees and how it can bring this offer to life given its current organizational culture.

2.3   Millennials in the Workplace

In recent years, a diverse range of companies has been obsessing over a better understanding of millennials, their thought processes, opinions, wants and needs. Millennials are defined to be born between 1979 and 1994 (Smola & Sutton, 2002), making them between 24 and 39 years old in the current year 2018. Often millennials are described as "easily distracted, impatient, self-absorbed, lazy, and unlikely to stay in any job for long. On the positive side, they are also looking for purpose, feedback, and personal life balance in their work." (2016). Due to the fascination and

increase in importance, endless studies on the market showcase the attitudes and opinions of millennials, confirming and opposing stereotypes about millennials and their differences towards other generations. Published research and studies on millennials are "often contradictory and sometimes confusing" (Deal, Altman, & Rogelberg, 2010). According to research presented in the book "The Human Capital Edge" (Pfau & Kay, 2001) employees ask themselves four key questions when deciding for an employer and according to the author Bruce Pfau (2016) these hold true independent of the generation:

1) *Is this a winning organization I can be proud of?* Employees want to work for a successful, high-performing company in order to be proud to work for the company.
2) *Can I maximize my performance on the job?* Employees want to make the most out of their skills by enforcing available resources and information as well as having the opportunity to receive training.
3) *Are people treated well economically and interpersonally?* An inclusive environment, where employees are valued and treated with respect, is highly important and thus recognition and reward in both, financial and psychological aspects, are key.
4) *Is the work itself fulfilling and enjoyable?* Employees want to enjoy the work they do, gain a sense of meaning and purpose and enjoy their surrounding environment.

(Pfau, 2016)

Nevertheless, the often contradictory studies on millennials still remain important, since millennials will soon comprise the majority of the workforce.

Studies suggest, that millennials are comprised of approximately 1.8 billion people worldwide as of today, making up the largest generation alive (Oliver Wyman, 2016). By 2020, they will represent half of the global workforce (Oliver Wyman, 2017) and in less than 10 years, by 2025, they will comprise 75 percent (Ernst & Young LLP, 2015). Thus, it is of great importance for organizations to engage in employer branding initiatives which meet the diverse expectations of millennials. When companies are trying to attract more top talent millennials, organizations have to make sure to correctly address millennials with both, channels and content. The following abstracts will go into further detail by addressing both areas separately.

2.3.1 Desired Channels

For an employer to successfully attract and recruit the desired millennials, companies need to choose appropriate channels in order to be able to reach their desired target groups successfully.

A survey conducted by Telefónica (2013) discovered that millennials from Western Europe spend on average five hours online per day. Additionally, with 79%, the majority of millennials owns a smartphone and uses it daily. Thus, social media activities and online advertisement campaigns seem to be one of the most relevant methods to approach millennials. Moreover, the study found that for 35% of Western European millennials use the internet as their main and most reliable source for news overall and 42% even state it is the best source for immediate access to crises updates and developing news stories (Telefónica, 2013).

In general, when searching for information about employers, the majority of millennials uses the company website to receive desired answers and information. A study conducted by Ernst & Young (2013) discovered, that 93% of the surveyed millennials first go to an employer's company website in order to inform themselves further. Furthermore, the study revealed that other channels commonly used by millennials for information research are job portals and friends and family, both categories with 52% each, and business networks and university fairs, each category with 32% (Ernst & Young, 2013). Additionally, a second study conducted by Kienbaum (2015) confirms that an employer's company website is the most commonly used source for information with 64%, closely followed by social media with 63%, career fairs with 53% and job boards with 51% (see Figure 5).

FIGURE 5: THE FOUR MOST UTILIZED CHANNELS FOR MILLENNIALS TO RESEARCH EMPLOYERS
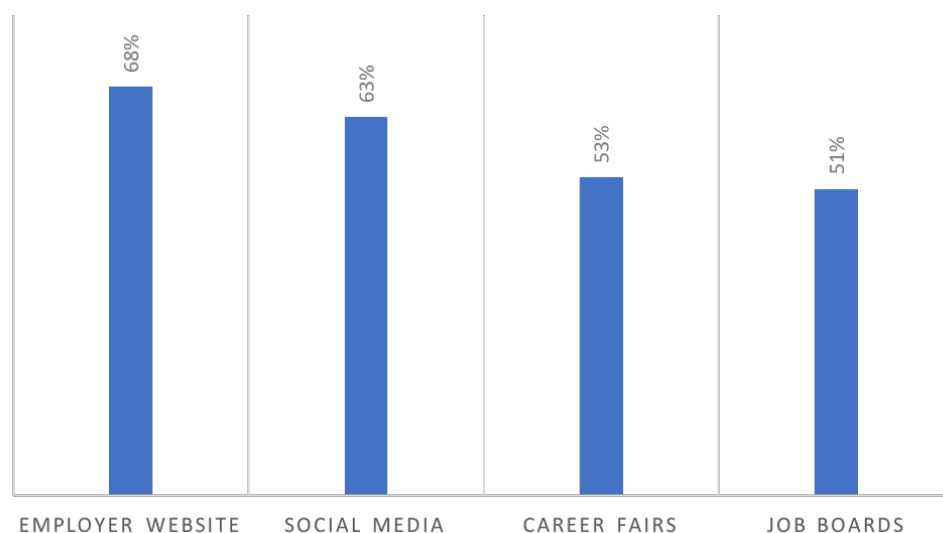
Source: adapted from (Kienbaum, 2015)

However, in order to communicate an employer brand successfully, not only the channels are an important aspect. To connect and respond to millennials effectively, companies also need to choose the appropriate content that resonances with the expectations of millennials.

According to academic research, a competitive salary remains one of the most important aspects for the majority of millennials when applying for a job and accepting an offer. A study by Accenture (2008) discovered that 92% of millennials expect a competitive salary. Additional studies support this outcome and according to studies by Universum (2017) and Clinard (2017), the connection was made that a higher loyalty towards an employer is a direct consequence of a higher salary.

In addition, employee retention can be increased by offering a mentor to millennials as it is stated to have a positive impact on millennials' loyalty towards the company. A study by Deloitte (2017) found that employees who have been staying with their company for five years or longer are twice as likely to have a mentor with a percentage of 68 in comparison to not having a mentor with 32%. Furthermore, various studies discovered the importance for millennials of learning from mentors as well as receiving adequate feedback and coaching (Oliver Wyman, 2016). Research further proofs, that millennials are likely to pay special attention to three attributes important for workplace interaction (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Firstly, close relationship with and frequent feedback from a supervisor are highly important to Millennials (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010). Secondly, millennials want to be informed and expect open and transparent communication even for matters more concerning towards upper management (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008). Thirdly, team-work is perceived as more fun and less risky and therefore preferred by millennials (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008).

Moreover, millennials tend to have a strong focus and enthusiasm for working abroad. A recent study by PricewaterhouseCooper (PwC) (2017) discovered that 71% of millennials want to and moreover expect to do an abroad assignment during their career. In addition, the study confirmed that the majority of millennials was willing to work in a less developed country for the aim to advance their careers (PricewaterhouseCooper, 2017). However, a study by Ernst & Young (2015) discovered a decrease in the willingness to relocate to another country for work reasons. The main finding of the study was that 80% of students are willing to move within their respective country if their employers would require them to, but would not want to relocate to a country abroad (Ernst & Young, 2015).

Nevertheless, the reason why many graduates are attracted towards the FMCG industry is because it offers opportunities to travel and start an international career (Universum Global, 2015). Well-known FMCG companies, such as L'Oréal and

Unilever amongst others, offer international travel opportunities already during their internship programs which enables them to attract and retain talent (L'Oréal, 2018) (Unilever, 2018). Moreover, students from Germany, the United States and Hong Kong who want to start their career in the FMCG industry are mostly driven by the following career goals: the most important reason with 69% is having a good work-life balance. Slightly less important, with each 40%, are being a leader or manager of people as well as having the opportunity to start an international career.

Lastly, millennials share the believe that the success of a company should not only be measured by its financial performance but on more dimensions (Deloitte, 2017). Especially Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) -activities are on the rise. According to a recent study by Stahl (2016), 92% of millennials indicated that they want to work for companies that act socially responsible.

2.3.3   Talent Management

When talking about talents, their attraction and recruitment, talent management programs are helping human resource departments to strategically organize, plan and improve value for the organization. Through talent management programs, individuals are provided with opportunities in order to expand and develop their skills and experiences by offering them challenging duties, career development, growth opportunities and rotation programs which, in return, result in loyalty towards the organization (Mahfoozi, Sanjar, Ghorbani, & Sheikhi, 2018). According to Rothwell (2005), studies suggest that in order to attract young top talents, talent management programs should contain the following nine dimensions:

1) *Get commitment* - includes clarification of the needed roles as well as methods for holding people accountable;
2) *Analyze the work and the people* – includes defining a systematic and thorough analysis and determination of what talent means for the company;
3) *Recruit and select talent* – includes not only offline but also online recruitment processes and considering the employer brand during the process;
4) *Evaluate performance* – includes the process of planning, managing and appraising workers' performance and their evaluation;
5) *Analyze the work and people needed in the future* – includes methods of forecasting work requirements and needed competencies in alignment with the business's objectives
6) *Evaluate potential* – includes assessing individual talents on their competencies through a 360-degree approach;
7) *Develop people* – includes the closing of gaps between performance and development;

8) *Retain the best people* – includes understanding the thought processes of the top talents within the organization in order to successfully meet their needs and wants;

9) *Evaluate program results* – includes the evaluation of the taken approach on its effectiveness towards the companies Return on Investment (RoI).

(Job, N., & Stiff, 2015)

2.4   Psychological Differences between Genders

Scientists discovered major distinguishers between male and female brains on approximately 100 gender differences. These include differences on the structure and activity of the brain, its processing and many more (Jantz, 2014). Processing thereby focuses on the gray-white matter difference. Whereas male brains utilize more grey matter resulting in a more focused and tunnel vision, female brains rather apply white matter which tends to make women better multi-taskers and networkers.

But research also often suggests, that gender differences in behavior are caused by differences of preferences between genders (Blau & Kahn, 2000). In addition, studies compare gender differences based on the five-factor model of personality, uncovering a higher score for men on extraversion facets such as assertiveness and dominance and a lower score on sociability and warmth in contrast to women who score higher on several neuroticism and agreeableness facets (Lippa, 2010). Assessing personality traits through the use of multidimensional personality tests shows that men score higher than women on aggressiveness, whereas women are more likely to avoid harm. Comparing the differences of gender on traits like self-control, stress reaction and social closeness, women score moderately higher than men according to studies. (Moffit, Caspi, Rutter, & Silva, 2001)

According to a study by Croson & Gneezy (2009), several fundamental differences between male and female have been found. Firstly, they discovered that women tend to be more risk averse than men, however excluding the managerial population. Secondly, women's social preferences seem to differ from men's, meaning women tend to be more sensitive towards social cues resulting in a higher variability in the behavior of women. Lastly, the preferences of women to take part in competitive behavior seem to be lower than men's preferences. However, studies are not clear about whether these differences come by nature, meaning they are rooted in the personality, or nurture, meaning they got taught throughout life. (Croson & Gneezy, 2009)

When considering job values, research by Halaby (2003) suggests a tendency of men towards rather entrepreneurial values, including values such as high pay, esteem, discretion, autonomy and variety on the contrary to the so-called bureaucratic

values, referring to values such as pension, job security, job training and cleanliness, which tend to be preferred by females (Whittingham, 2017). Four factors which are widely studied in regards to attitudes towards the labor market include risk preferences, social preferences, reaction to competition and family-career trade-offs (Croson & Gneezy, 2009).

When analyzing different studies on the topic of gender differences, stereotyping has a strong linkage to the topic. "Gender stereotypes are considered as a structured set of shared beliefs within a culture or a group about the attributes or characteristics that each gender has" (Castillo-Mayén & Montes-Berges, 2014). Figure 6 shows one approach towards categorizing gender stereotypes into independent components, namely positive and negative personality, as well as cognitive and physical attributes. However, these are just an extract of the many attitudes and traits used to compare and describe male and female personalities (Schneider & Bos, 2014).

FIGURE 6: TRAIT STEREOTYPE DIMENSIONS OF WOMEN AND MEN

	Women	Men
Positive Personality	Affectionate	Competitive
	Sympathetic	Daring
	Gentle	Adventurous
	Sensitive	Aggressive
Negative Personality	Spineless	Egoistical
	Gullible	Hostile
	Servile	Cynical
	Subordinates Self to others	Arrogant
	Whiny	Boastful
	Complaining	Greedy
	Nagging	Dictatorial
	Fussy	Unprincipled
Cognitive	Imaginative	Good with numbers
	Intuitive	Analytical
	Artistic	Good at problem solving
	Creative	Quantitatively skilled
Physical	Cute	Rugged
	Gorgeous	Muscular
	Beautiful	Physically Strong
	Pretty	Burly

Source: adapted from (Schneider & Bos, 2014)

Over time and due to further studies, the stereotypes used for describing differences between men and women may be converging in the way that men are supposedly adopting more feminine attitudes whereas women are embracing more masculine traits (Dickman & Eagly, 2000).

2.5 Aspects of Diversity

2.5.1 Importance of Diversity at the Workplace

Diversity, as defined by Risberg and Soderberg (2008), is "a mix of differences, similarities, and tensions that can exist among the elements of a collective mixture". When trying to understand diversity, two separations can be made according to the dimensions of diversity, namely primary and secondary diversity as described by Hubbard (2011). Primary diversity includes dimensions like age, gender, ethnicity, culture, race, religion and sexual orientation (Schwind, Das, & Wagar, 2007). On the contrary, secondary dimensions refer to the socio-economic status, education, geographical association and marital status (Sweetman, 2004).

Most companies have facilitated diversity interventions, whether formally or informally, in order to educate employees about cultural differences, to encourage recruiting of a diverse workforce, to improve career progression or to enhance cross-cultural interactions (Holmes, 2016). In accordance to a study by the Society for Human Resource management (2010), the percentage of organizations that engaged in diversity activities, initiatives or similar, lays at 68%. However, in countries of the Visegrad region, namely the Slovak Republic, Poland, Hungary as well as the Czech Republic, diversity has not been emphasized as regularly. This is due to their rather homogenous implication in accordance to ethnic and religious backgrounds. Moreover, in many aspects of social life, these countries seem to be more male dominated. (Lančarič, Chebeň, & Savov, 2015)

Employees at a diverse workplace should hold necessary knowledge, skills and attitudes in order to effectively interact with colleagues, customers and clients with multicultural background (Ostendorp & Steyaert, 2009).

Increased diversity can have a positive effect on understanding local markets, customers and stakeholders. Moreover, it increases the company's ability to attract and retain talent, its creativity, its problem solving skills and it provides a greater flexibility to organizations. As the business environment becomes more global, organizations also tend to become leaner and flatter, meaning companies have to accomplish more with a smaller workforce, but a more diverse one with different cultures, backgrounds, values and lifestyles. (Montes, 2000)

2.5.2 Measuring Diversity

When managing employees as well as customers from a variety of national and cultural backgrounds, it is necessary to ensure a harmonious work environment towards common goals, to encourage each member to contribute and to ensure fair behavior and treatment (Day, 2007). Leaders and employees should actively take part in implementing diversity programs that are fully in line with the organizational goals and objectives (U.S. Department of Commerce).

In order to address the issues diversity can create within a company, McKinsey & Company identified the need for building a diversity ecosystem and suggests

the following model which covers several dimensions and management levels (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Kossoff, & de Zelicourt, 2016) (see Figure 7).

FIGURE 7: DIMENSIONS OF MCKINSEY'S DIVERSITY ECOSYSTEM
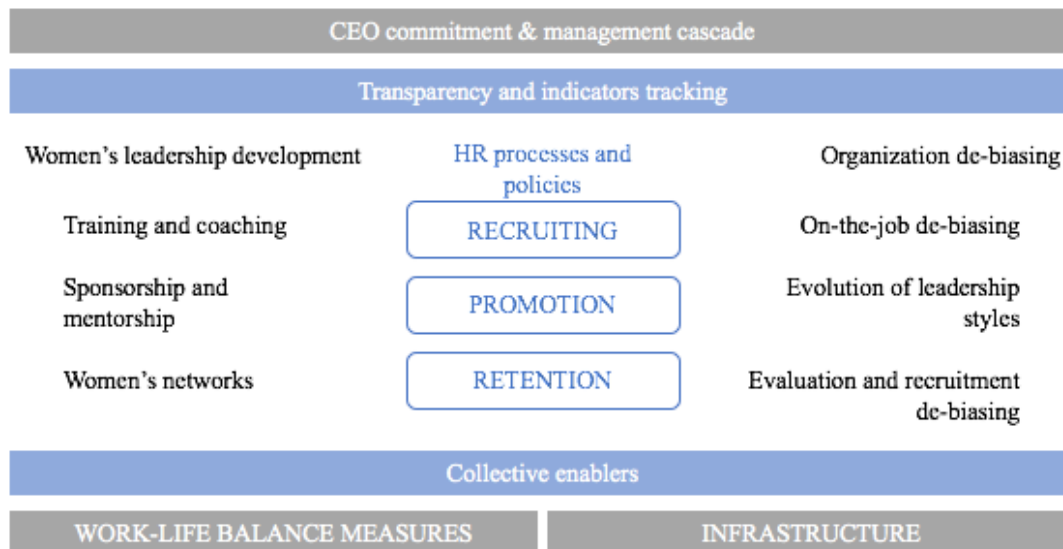
Source: adapted from (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Kossoff, & de Zelicourt, 2016)

Hubbard (2004) suggests a necessity to explain how diversity is creating value for organizational development and therefore leads to an increased profit for the organization. In order to measure diversity, an approach between quantitative or qualitative measuring can be chosen. Quantitative measurements include measuring the representation, pay equity, promotion and fluctuation of certain employee groups compared to others. On the contrary, qualitative measurements can be based on employee inclusion, affinity groups and similar programs in place. (Hubbard, 2004)

Best-in-class companies, as discovered by McKinsey & Company, show three corresponding game changers which lead to an improved diversity ecosystem (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Kossoff, & de Zelicourt, 2016):

1) *Persistence:* In order to achieve tangible and sustainable outcomes, a company should start as early as possible as it takes time and persistence to achieve these results.

2) *CEO commitment*: Organizations who have diversity as a strategic priority and receive support by the CEO and upper management are noticeably more successful in their diversity practices.

3) *Holistic transformation programs*: Best-in-class companies have a holistic transformation program implemented across all levels of the organization. This also includes the development and communication of a compelling change story to support diversity programs and policies as well as role models who embrace diversity.

(Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Kossoff, & de Zelicourt, 2016)

2.5.3 Diversity Management

Instead of being forced by law, diversity management is often seen as a way for companies to be proactive and take control over issues created by diversity (Gilbert, Stead, & Ivancevich, 1999). Thus, initiatives, activities and practices as part of diversity management programs are implemented with the aim of recognizing, promoting and encouraging the differences amongst people (Chiappetta Jaboour, Gordono, Caldeira de Oliveira, Martinez, & Gomes Battistelle, 2011). According to Olsen & Martins (2012), diversity management is defined as the utilization of human resource management practices in order to increase and maintain the variation in human capital, to ensure that this variation does not interfere with the achievement of organizational targets and moreover that the variation in human capital enables these achievements. These programs are generally implemented in order to enhance interaction among people from diverse backgrounds as well as to build upon creativity, complementarity and greater effectiveness (Stockdale & Crosby, 2004).

When diversity management is done right, it can have a positive impact on social architecture, employee satisfaction, knowledge sharing and employer attractiveness (Chavez & Weisinger, 2008).

The resulting benefits of diversity programs can be allocated to three different categories:

1) Enhanced individual and organizational performance including improvements in employee productivity, team performance and workforce quality amongst others;
2) Improved customer service capability to connect to and serve a multicultural customer base, measured by decreased complaints and increased market share;
3) Enhanced organizational bottom line referring to the improvement of revenues, costs and profitability.

(Slater, Weigand, & Zwirlein, 2008)

In addition, Cox and Blake (1991) initiated six main advantages for organizations with a diverse workforce in order to enhance their future growth and develop a competitive advantage. These are based on the approach that the present diverse workforce and diversity management programs will have a positive impact on a company's costs, resource acquisition, marketing activities, creativity skills, problem-solving abilities and system flexibility.

Nevertheless, fostering diversity is linked to costs of communication, coordination and conflict which can result in a negative influence on the company. A lack of communication within teams due to a misunderstanding or an absence of trust between employees with diverse backgrounds can result in an increase in conflicts (Ancona & Caldwell, 1992). However, a "paradoxical view suggests that greater diversity is associated with more group conflict and better business performance. This is possible because diverse groups are more prone to conflict, but conflict forces them to go beyond the easy solutions common in like-minded groups" (Herring,

2009). Thus, diverse groups are more able to adapt and innovate in contrast to homogeneous groups who might have a higher cohesion (Herring, 2009).

Unfortunately, many companies have failed "to connect diversity programs to their organizational performance systems such as strategic planning, performance management, compensation, and human resource development" (Holmes, 2016). Thus, Holmes (2016) developed "a five-step process to use in systematically developing performance-focused diversity interventions and evaluating their impact on individual and organizational success." The five-step approach includes the following action steps:

1) Clarification of the benefits of the diversity program

2) Identification of SMART goals: specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound

3) Development of an action plan

4) Definition of performance expectations

5) Determination of the impact on performance

(Holmes, 2016)

2.5.4 Gender Diversity

A continuous study commissioned by McKinsey (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, & Yee, 2018) established a positive and statistically substantial correlation between the diversity of an executive team and its companies RoI. The strongest correlation was seen for gender diversity (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, & Yee, 2018). Figure 8 shows "a positive correlation between greater levels of gender diversity and higher likelihood of financial outperformance across geographies at the executive level" (Hunt, Prince, Dixon-Fyle, & Yee, 2018).

FIGURE 8: LIKELIHOOD OF FINANCIAL PERFORMANCE BY DIVERSITY QUARTILE
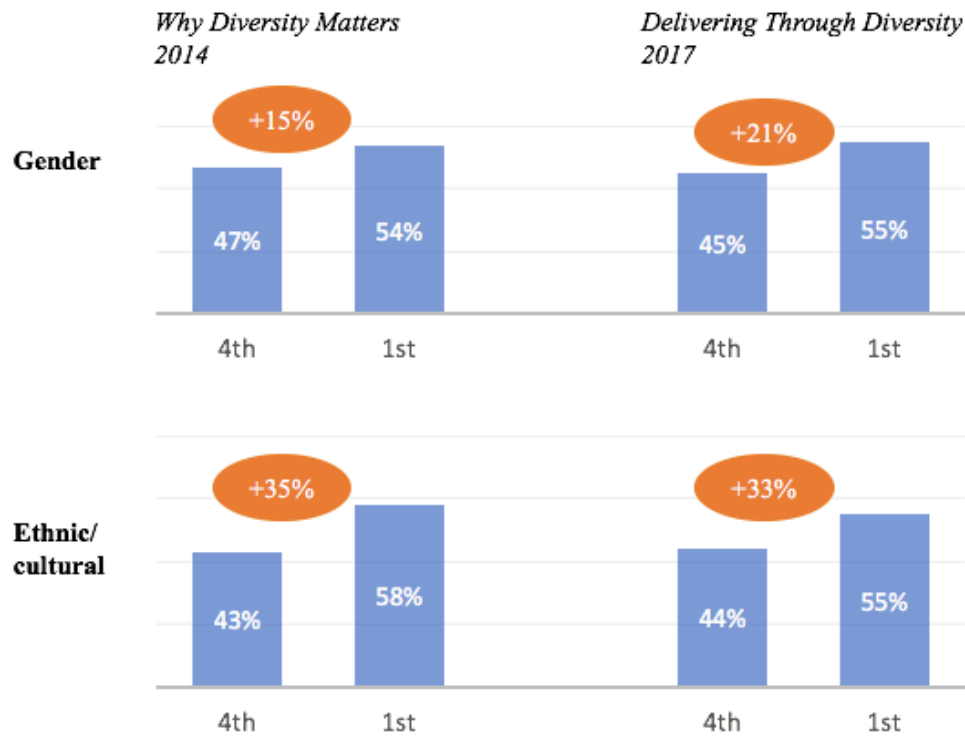
Source: adapted from (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Kossoff, & de Zelicourt, 2016)

Many other studies also suggest that teams existing of an equal number of males and females perform better than teams dominated by one gender in terms of sales and profits (Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, & van Praag, 2013). According to a study by Michael Landel (2016), the CEO of Sodexo, gender-balanced teams achieved "operational, organizational and performance benefits that include employee engagement, enhanced brand image, greater client and customer satisfaction, increased organic growth, and an increase in generating profit and cash." As the share of women increases, profits were uncovered to increase as well, however only until an equal distribution of genders. A female-dominated group did not seem to correlate with a further increase in profits. In addition, research discovered that conflicts, friendships, atmosphere, decision-making and mutual monitoring did not stand in relation with the composition of gender within a group (Hoogendoorn, Oosterbeek, & van Praag, 2013).

"A commitment to greater gender diversity can spur companies to reinvent the way they work; the way they attract, retain and grow talent; and encourage them to adopt new models that value entrepreneurship and independent work" (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Kossoff, & de Zelicourt, 2016).

3 Research Problem

3.1 Introduction of L'Oréal

L'Oréal is a French world-wide leading company in beauty, currently being "present in 130 countries on five continents (L'Oréal, 2018)". Furthermore, it is the number one worldwide cosmetics group, with 26.02 billion euros in sales in 2017, 28 international brands and 89.331 employees, according to L'Oréal's annual results (2018). Products range from hair care to skin care, colorations, sun protection, make-up and perfumes and the company is operated from its global headquarters in Paris, France. CEO and Chairman of the company is Jean-Paul Agon, the company was founded by Eugène Schueller in 1909 (L'Oréal, 2018).

The group's six founding values can be found on the website of L'Oréal, which "are embedded in L'Oréal's genetic code" (L'Oréal, 2018) and "are expressed in the daily operations of all" (L'Oréal, 2018) teams around the world. The six founding values are explained as following:

1) *Passion*: The creation of beauty products is not only understood as passion for the beauty industry which can bring self-confidence and well-being to men and women but also as passion towards L'Oréal's business linked to its humanity and culture.
2) *Innovation*: As L'Oréal was founded by a scientist, innovation has always been key to the company and helps L'Oréal to create new, different and surprising products in order to be ahead of the competition.
3) *Entrepreneurial Spirit*: In order to achieve innovation, L'Oréal encourages their employees to be daring and to take initiatives in order to create challenge and adventure, also represented in their management style.
4) *Open-mindedness*: Since founding the group, L'Oréal is "listening to consumers and understanding their culture, being open to others and benefiting from their differences" (L'Oréal, 2018).
5) *Quest for Excellence*: Expressed and embodied in every aspect of the business and the minds of L'Oréal's employees, they are constantly trying to pursue perfection in order to provide their consumers with the best.
6) *Responsibility*: L'Oréal's sense of responsibility goes beyond solely focusing on creating effective, safe and harmless products. Moreover, it is about preserving the beauty of the planet and contributing to the well-being of their employees and stakeholders.

(L'Oréal, 2018)

In order to act upon these values, L'Oréal is striving to hire only the best talents and thus has different events and programs in place, whether these are global or local initiatives, in order to attract, hire and retain top talents. In Prague, these include short-term events such as the attendance at job fairs, mainly at the University of Economics (VŠE), skill seminars and guest lectures as well as long-term programs

such as the CEMS-specific consultancy course Business Project or the global case competition Brandstorm amongst others.

3.2 Research Problem – L'Oréal's Barriers of Attracting Male Applicants

L'Oréal – as the number one company in the beauty industry – is one of the top employers worldwide in regards to current graduates. Within Europe, L'Oréal is amongst the top ten employers in 2015/2016, more precisely on place nine, for business students according to a study by the trendence institute (2017). Moreover, according to a study by Universum (2017), L'Oréal was able to increase their image and was ranked number eight in the year 2017. However, 77% of their new hires in 2016 were female. Male business graduates only rank L'Oréal as an employer on number 150 compared to number nine for women, representing the gap in gender amongst the applicants and employees at L'Oréal (Colby, 2017). Thus, L'Oréal is striving for a more equal gender balance of their workforces and trying to attract more male applicants in order to pick the top talents amongst them. They are aiming to recruit 50% of both men and women by the year 2020, quoting Le Grand, who's leading L'Oréal's diversity efforts: "Our vision is clear: We want a perfect balance between males and females" (Colby, 2017).

Due to the challenges L'Oréal is facing with attracting more men, the study aims to answer the following research question (R.0), further supported by four sub-questions which are needed in order to receive the aimed results (R.01-R.04):

R.0: What are the barriers of L'Oréal to attract more male talents to apply for a position?

- **R.01**: What are the existing gaps between L'Oréal and graduates' expectations towards a potential employer?
- **R.02**: What are the misconceptions of L'Oréal's culture and values based on the level of exposure towards the company?
- **R.03**: What are the perceptions of diversity and gender balance in relation to L'Oréal?
- **R.04**: What are the unfulfilled expectations L'Oréal should focus on in order to enhance their employer brand?

In order to gather more in-depth insights to the above stated research questions, the author conducted fourteen interviews with participants of different levels of contact towards L'Oréal. These can be divided into three groups, namely representatives of L'Oréal employees from the Prague office, graduates who have participated in long-term events and programs organized by L'Oréal as well as graduates who have not had in-depth exposure to L'Oréal. Moreover, the author

assessed and compared the responses of the interview participants based on their different level of exposure as well as their genders. Additionally, the main focus during the execution of the interviews and the subsequent analysis was put on the differences in perceptions and resulting misconceptions.

3.3 Argument for Chosen Research Method and Limitations

As the interview questions are highly dependent on the honesty and disclosure of personal feelings and perceptions, qualitative research, more specifically conducted through semi-structured interviews were chosen as the most suitable research method. According to literature, qualitative research seeks to analyze a "real world setting (where) the researcher does not attempt to manipulate the phenomenon of interest" as discussed by Patton (Golafshani, 2003). Unlike quantitative research whit the aim of causal determination and prediction, qualitative research strives for illumination and understanding (Ambert, Adler, Adler, & Detzner, 1995), besides being a more appropriate approach for research problems with little to no prior knowledge (Voss, Tsikriktis, & Frohlich, 2002), (Brannick, 1997). Qualitative research rather focuses on the depth of the analysis on the contrary to the width, as quantitative research does. Instead of analyzing a large and representative sample, the importance when conducting qualitative research is placed on learning how and why individuals behave, think and make meaning as they do (Ambert et al., 1995). Moreover, qualitative research is rather focused on the importance of discovery than on verification.

In situations like these, were limited prior knowledge and research are available, in-depth interviews with experts in the specified area are best suited best in order to deliver valid insights. Assuming the immaturity of the research area, the structure of the interviews structure should be relatively open, (Creswell, 2003). Furthermore, it is important to ensure the openness and honesty of the respondents. As the research concerns people's individual experiences, perceptions, opinions and believes, and the research questions are closely related towards the participant's emotions and behaviors, semi-structured interviews seem to be the best fit. Semi-structured interviews are the most common type of interviews used in collecting qualitative data. In order to gather a similar set of data as well as to provide the interview with a broad structure, an interview guide (see Appendix B) has been developed as recommended by Holloway and Wheeler (Doody & Noonan, 2013).

Moreover, the methodology of grounded theory has been applied, which is recommended when developing new theories in situations where there is a lack of theoretical grounding (Gummesson, 2003) (Wagner, et al., 2010). Furthermore, it can result in the detection of understudied phenomena (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). The grounded theory methodology involves "systematic, yet flexible guidelines for

collecting and analyzing qualitative data to construct theories from the data themselves" (Charmaz, 2014).

The major limitations of choosing qualitative research as the source of data comes from the limited capability to generalize the results across the globe. As the aim of the study is to gather insights about the participants' perceptions and believes, the developed results serve the purpose even though the study outcomes cannot be generalized outside of the conducted sample. Another limitation can arise through the rather novice approach of the author towards conducting interviews, as the author might not be able to ask prompt questions when needed which might result in a lack of data. However, the author has been aware of these limitations throughout the process of conducting and analyzing the interviews and has taken necessary steps in order to tackle these issues by taking the time to read, test and fully comprehend the appropriate literature in order to enhance the author's knowledge and experience.

3.4 Methodology

Due to the purpose of the study, to gather insights and perceptions of graduates as well as L'Oréal employees about L'Oréal's culture and it's recruiting processes, semi-structured interviews seem to be a suitable approach.

The author chose to conduct qualitative research specifically through individual semi-structured interviews due to the following reasons:

(1) The underlying issue examined in this study is concerning people's individual experiences, perceptions, opinions and believes;
(2) Due to the sensitivity of the enclosed emotions and behaviors the author has the ability to react appropriately;
(3) The open-ended questions allow the interviewer to explore mentioned opinions or believes in further detail.

3.4.1 Sampling

The sample of the conducted research included fourteen semi-structured interviews, ranging between twenty to fifty minutes, all conducted during the month of April (see Appendix A). The interviewees were selected based on the criteria of three different categories, namely graduates without a direct connection to L'Oréal, graduates with a prior connection to L'Oréal through one of their long-term events and programs as well as L'Oréal employees. In order to ensure the selection of an appropriate sample, the author initially listed the desired criteria for the to be

examined group and later on addressed the matching interview partners based on these. The eight interviewed graduates were chosen based on the following criteria:

- Four interviewees without any participation in long-term programs organized by L'Oréal Czech Republic
    - Solely exposed to L'Oréal on single-day events or job fairs
    - Equal ratio of male and female interviewees
    - Age between 22 and 28 (see Figure 9)
    - Current student or recent graduate
- Four interviewees with a prior connection to L'Oréal Czech Republic by participating in the CEMS Business Project or the Brandstorm competition
    - Equal ratio of male and female interviewees
    - Age between 22 and 28 (see Figure 9)
    - Current student or recent graduate

With the aim to avoid occurring biases based on ethnocentrism, all potential interview partners were selected with respect to their nationality and international experience resulting in the participation of interviewees from eight different nationalities, namely Czech, Slovak, Polish, Portuguese, Norwegian, Austrian, Italian and Chinese.

The six interviews with L'Oréal employees were arranged through the author's supervisor within L'Oréal based on specifics given by the author to ensure diversification within a homogenous group. For conducting the interviewees, the author has provided the supervisor with a short introduction to the author and the topic, as well as ensured the anonymity of the participant. The group was compiled from four male and two female interviewees, all working at the L'Oréal regional headquarter from Czech Republic, Slovakia and Hungary in Prague, all in between 25 and 32 years old (see Figure 9). One participant chose not to disclose the age. Additionally, the participants reflected different hierarchical levels, varying recruiting processes and were working in different teams and departments, namely Marketing, Public Relations, Key Account, Sales and Controlling. Two of the interviews were conducted with interns, who have been in the company for at least 10 months and with the ambition of staying long-term, one of them already having a full-time position available after graduation. Two of the interviewed employees were in an executing managerial position and with the company for approximately 10 years. One of the interview partners was in a managing position without a team-leading function and one in an executive position, both being in the company for about two years. Due to the requirement of working for the regional headquarter in Prague, the interview partners were Czech, Slovak or Polish, however with prior international experience.

In general, the structure of the interview questions structure was modified several times during the data collection process in order to include newly emerged topics and ideas throughout prior interviews. The interview guides in the appendix (Appendix B.1, B.2, B.3) reflect the final version, though should not be seen as a word-to-word transcript rather than a 'cheat sheet' to give the author guidance throughout the interview process.

Before conducting each interview, every participant was asked for approval to be audio recorded, which all interviewees agreed to. Afterwards the interviews were transcribed verbatim. All of the interviewees were over 18 years old at the time of the conducted interview and Figure 9 shows the age distribution of the participants. Each one of them was made fully aware of the later use of the data, its assessment and availability. In addition, all interviewees were made aware about the opportunity to terminate the interview at any given time or refuse to answer if they did not feel comfortable in revealing any kind of information. In regards to respecting the anonymity of the participants, the author used pseudonyms when quoting the interviewees both in the transcripts and throughout the course of this thesis. All interviews were conducted in person in Prague, Czech Republic, mainly in separate study rooms at university, quiet corners in cafés or outside, always paying attention to the absence of any spectators. All interviews conducted with L'Oréal employees were held in pre-arranged meeting rooms without the presence of bystanders.

FIGURE 9: AGE DISTRIBUTION OF INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS
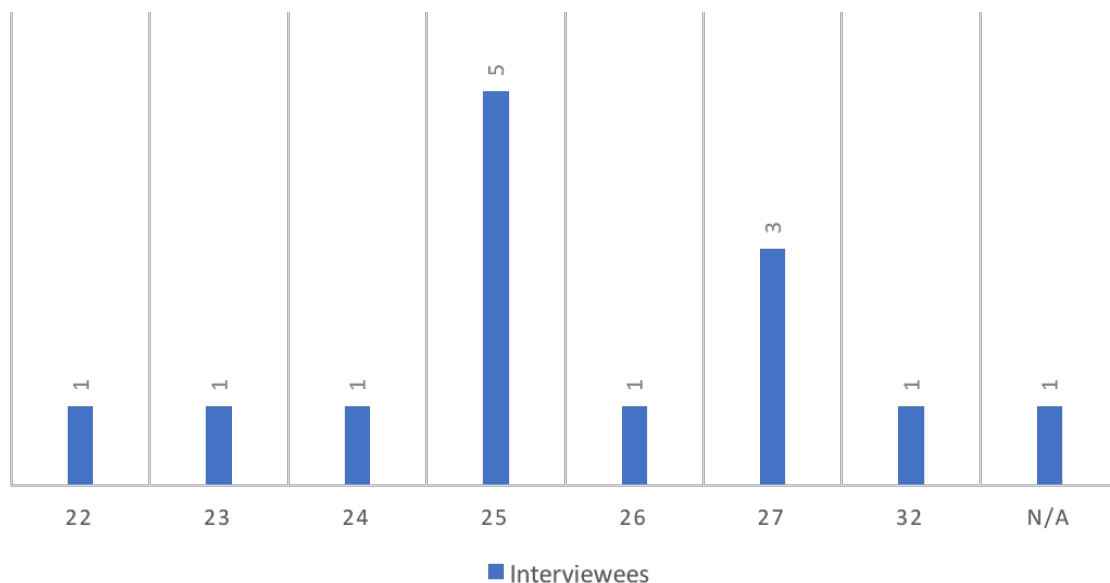
Source: own illustration

3.4.2 Approach

The author has been working with three groups of interviewees: Graduates without a connection to L'Oréal, graduates with a connection to L'Oréal and L'Oréal employees. For each of the groups the author used a very similar interview guide (Appendix B.1, B.2, B.3), including slight adaptations in order to accompany the differences of each group, especially in terms of their connection to L'Oréal. The interview guides are constructed in a very detailed manner in order to provide the novice author of conducting interviews with as much guidance as possible in case it is needed. However, the interview guide should not be seen as a word-for-word script rather than a guide when help is needed. Throughout each conducted interview, the author has adapted and varied the questions according to the need and might have used additional questions in order to go more in-depth towards a specific topic. Additionally, the interview guide includes several ways of phrasing a specific question as well as questions going deeper into the topic. Moreover, questions are open-ended, clearly structured and "neutral and sensitive in nature" (Doody & Noonan, 2013). In order to prepare the author conducting the research as well as proof the answers on their effectiveness, the interview guide has been send to the supervisors, both from the University of Economics, Prague as well as from L'Oréal and a trial-run has been held. In addition, the author transcribed the interviews close to the actual interview date to be able to continuously adapt and improve the guide based on detected confusion or misunderstandings as well as newly arose topics. In general, the interview starts with an introduction into the topic and about the author, following an introduction of the interviewee and a set of questions towards the different topics, ordered from more easy to more difficult or sensitive questions. As all participants agreed to be audio-recorded, the author remained from taking notes during the interview in order to ensure a smooth interview process without interfering, distracting or influencing the interviewee as well as the author in any way. After conducting the interviews, the author transcribed the interviews verbatim and transcripts have been uploaded or are available upon request.

In order to keep track of the individual interviews and provide easy access throughout the process of transcribing and analyzing, the author kept information of all participants close together in an interview log including dates, locations and brief profiles of the interview participants (see Appendix A).

3.4.3 Analyzing Qualitative Research

In order to analyze the conducted interviews and to be able to make conclusions, the author used a combination of thematic analysis, inductive and deductive reasoning and grounded theory. The main purpose is to categorize and recognize patterns, by the use of coding. Coding is used to bring things in a systematic order, to make something part of a system and for classification. When codes are applied and reapplied to qualitative data, you are codifying – a process that permits data to be "segregated, grouped, regrouped and relinked in order to consolidate meaning and explanation" (Grbich, 2007).

The process of coding was done with a combination of a deductive and inductive approach. The key idea in both of these strategies is to allow the development of new ideas, the merge of themes, a systematic and transparent approach and a coherent reflection on emerging patterns or ideas during the process. However, the main difference between these two approaches is that the aim of a deductive approach is to test a theory, whereas during the inductive approach the focus lays on the creation of newly emerging theory. Even though the deductive approach is more commonly used for quantitative research when proofing a hypothesis, the author used this method as an orientation through the set of data to be able to have an improved structure and analyzation (Gabriel, 2013). In regards to this a four-step-process was used: (1) Firstly, the author created a set of themes before starting the analysis based on the pre-existing theory. After this step was done, (2) the interviews were broken down into sentences and phrases which were (3) allocated and labelled with different highlighters in order to (4) be brought together with the prior developed themes, creating further sub-themes and connections. In addition, the author used the three-step grounded theory developed by Pratt, Rockmann and Kaufmann (2006) for the inductive approach. (1) In the first step, the author identifies distinct interviewee statements and highlights these via open coding in order to better understand the interviewees view of the world (Locke, 2001). Similar statements were grouped into temporary categories and first-order codes. (2) Secondly, categories were combined for the purpose of creating a more theoretical and abstract concept. In the literature, this is often described as a transfer from open to axial coding (Locke, 2001) (Strauss, Corbin, & Corbin, 1998). (3) As the third and final step after the creation of theoretical categories, dimensions underlying these categories were found to understand how different categories are related to each other and how they could be combined towards one coherent picture (Pratt, 2008).

In total, the combination of a deductive and inductive approach gave the author 185 codes, clustered in different categories and theory-related topics. Once the codes were created, the author decided which ones are the most relevant and created categories by finding similarities within the codes. The author continuously remained aware to be unbiased, be open-minded and stayed close to the data throughout the whole process. Moreover, the data was conceptualized and connected towards each other in order to be able to describe the connections as the most important outcome of the analysis. Emerging codes were exposed to constant comparison, meaning they were continuously cross-checked against

the prior analyzed interviews to ensure that newly arose insights from the interviews were represented correctly in the final data structure (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

Finally, the arose categories were used to construct charts and visualization as well as to bring structure into the write-up of the data in order to validate the analysis. For the purpose of providing evidence of the different categories when analyzing and making conclusions, the author used quotations as vivid examples to proof the origin of the established opinion. Throughout the process of writing, the author made sure to not only describe the data, but also to note down arguments and conclusions based on the research questions.

3.5 Research Verification, Triangulation and Ethical Issues

3.5.1 Verification

In order to verify the conducted research, the author followed the proposed assessment methods by Guba and Lincoln (1989) consisting of a four step process:

1) *Confirmability*: The author paid attention on gathering a sufficient amount of data and put special focus on following the methodological theory to gather and analyze data, in order to ensure objectivity of the outcomes.
2) *Dependability*: In order to ensure dependability and reliability of the qualitative research, the author studied the theory behind qualitative research, continuously applied triangulation and verified her findings with the thesis supervisor.
3) *Credibility*: In regards to providing credibility of the conducted research, the author asked for feedback on the research findings in addition to the supervisor's opinion. Additionally, the author carefully transcribed the audio recordings verbatim, which are available online and on request.
4) *Transferability*: the author especially focused on the creation of specific criteria in order to select the interview participants, according to the purpose of the study and to ensure the reliability and defensibility of the research outcomes.

In addition, the author made sure to determine **reliability**, meaning to show how consistent the outcomes were throughout the analysis, **validity**, meaning whether the outcomes reflect the intended purpose of the study, and **generalizability,** meaning to show if the outcomes and conclusions also apply to outsiders, within the process of development of the thesis.

3.5.2 Triangulation

In order to develop a comprehensive understanding of the outcomes of the qualitative research, the author used triangulation as a strategy to test validity through the convergence of information from different sources. There are four different types of triangulation identified by Denzin (1978) and Patton (1999),

namely (a) method triangulation, (b) investigator triangulation, (c) theory triangulation and (d) data source triangulation (Carter, Bryant-Lukosius, DiCenso, Blythe, & Neville, 2014). In this research study the author chose to focus mainly on (c) theory and (d) data, by analyzing and interpreting varying sources and types of theory and differentiating the interviewees in gender, cultural, demographic and to a certain extent also professional background. The interviewees consisted of students, part-time and full-time employees and included eight nationalities.

3.5.3 Ethical issues

Due to the nature of the interviews being very personal and emotional collections of thoughts and opinions, many basic ethical issues can arise (Patton, 1990), which are important to reflect on during the process of the study.

- *Confidentiality*, meaning to make sure to promise confidentiality of personal information honestly and transparently, also by considering how to remain confidentiality while analyzing and reporting the gathered data;
- *Informed consent*, meaning to receive permission by the participants of the study;
- *Risk assessment,* meaning to ensure the interview participant is aware of any kind of risks that could occur during the study;
- *Freedom of rejection*, meaning to ensure the participant knows about his right of rejection or termination of the conducted interview.
- *Promises and reciprocity*, meaning if any promises are made in regards to the participant for sharing their time and insights, e.g. the providing of results or copies, they should always be kept;
- *Interviewer mental health*, meaning that not only the participants could experience psychological stress when dealing with sensitive data, also the interviewer should know if any consultation or advice is needed.

4 Research Findings

The following chapter presents the findings of the conducted research while putting them into context to the studied groups and areas. Accordingly, the chapter is divided into four research areas each with several subchapters. The first chapter *Perception of L'Oréal's Employer Brand* shows which traits are of importance of to the interviewees, their perception of L'Oréal at various recruiting events as well as their communication with L'Oréal. The second chapter *Perception of L'Oréal* presents insights into the perception that the interviewees have on L'Oréal's culture, which traits are important to them in order to be a cultural fit and their perception of L'Oréal's six founding values. Thirdly, within the chapter *Perception of Diversity at L'Oréal*, the author presents the findings on the interviewees perception of diversity, more specifically on the topic gender balance, its importance and how it can be used for the attraction of more male talents. Lastly, in the fourth chapter *Unfulfilled Expectations* the author exhibits the unfulfilled expectations of the interviewed L'Oréal employees and graduates. Within each chapter, the findings are compared according to gender differences of the interviewees as well as the distinctions between graduates and L'Oréal employees.

4.1 Perception of L'Oréal's Employer Brand

Within the following chapter, the author presents which employer traits are important to the interviewees and describes the different experiences with the communication at L'Oréal events according to the level of exposure the interviewee received. In addition, the chapter showcases the reasons why the interviewees would or would not consider applying for L'Oréal and finally presents the different ways how the interviewed L'Oréal employees got to L'Oréal.

4.1.1 Traits of an Employer

The following abstract compares the various traits of an employer that the interviewees find attractive and are paying special attention to. The eight traits which were mentioned most often (i.e. work-life-balance, salary, career perspective, type of industry, team, responsibility, values and image are visualized in the following chart (see Figure 10). The chart shows a comparison between L'Oréal employees and graduates as well as between females and males.

FIGURE 10: EMPLOYER TRAITS OF IMPORTANCE
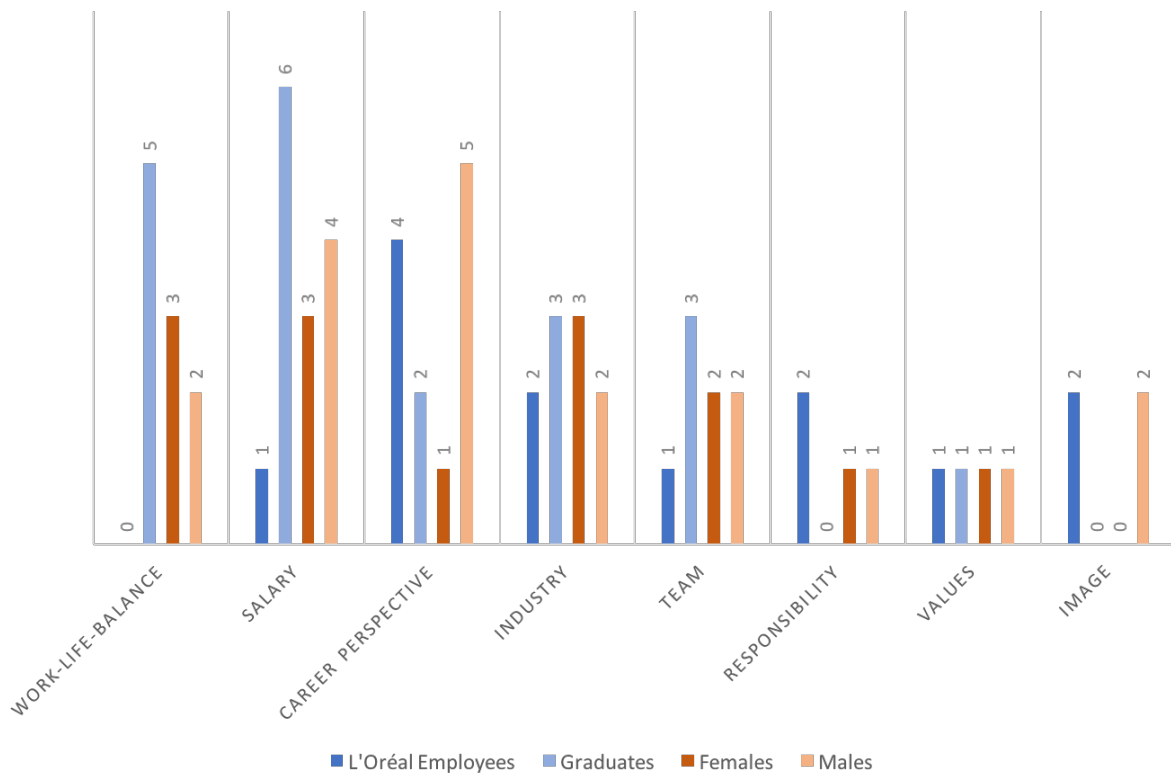
Source: own illustration

The work-life-balance was especially important to five out of the eight interviewed graduates, whereas this trait was not mentioned by any of the L'Oréal employees. Work-life-balance seems to be equally important to male and female graduates.

> "[...] it would be the best work-life-balance possible, flexible hours, working from home as a possibility [...]. Also a competitive salary, as they usually mention it, but that it's fair [...]." (Lisa, 22)

L'Oréal employees focused more on the surrounding in which they are spending a large amount of their time. They are looking for being valued and accepted by their colleagues and being in line with the company values as it was mentioned by one of the respondents.

> "When we speak about work-life-balance, it's not only about time that we spend here or at home, my idea of having work-life-balance, it's not having to change who I am the moment I enter the office and then getting back to someone else. So the fact that I am pretty much, or totally in line with company values and what I value is valued here [...]." (Maria, N/A)

One of the graduates also paid special focus to the values of the company but more regarding the value of their work in order to contribute to the general economic activity of the company.

> "For me it's really important to see the value of the work I am actually doing. So I don't really know how to call that, but in terms of integrity, that's of both what the company does, what I do within the company. But also if I'm contributing with the job but also if I'm learning a lot, if I find the job fun. So that would be first as like a general category." (Tom, 25)

The trait 'high' or 'competitive' salary was mentioned most often by the graduates and is clearly one of the main priorities that a future employer should provide. This was stated even more often than the work-life-balance. Moreover, the employees focus more on their career development however stating the close connection it has to an increase in salary, which if not given would make the company less attractive. No significant difference between genders is seen when it comes to the importance of a high salary.

> "Good salary, good salary, good salary, good salary! And career opportunities, I would like to work for a big group, so you know, with a lot of brands, lot of options. And in a good industry, a profitable industry, fashion or high-tech. I wouldn't, I would be reluctant to start in a industry that might not be great, [...] that are not performing very well." (Max, 27)

> "[...] when I think about being happy on the job, I think what I looking for is mainly development, so something that would make me grow, personally or career wise [...]. Because at the end the salary will grow with your positions, so this is what makes me stay and this is so far true.' (Simon, 32)

Often closely connected to a high salary was also the importance of career progression. Overall, this was the most important trait for L'Oréal employees and was given as one of their reasons for starting to work with L'Oréal and for why for example the start-up culture is not very attractive to them. When comparing the answers by gender, it is noticeable that for the male respondents the career perspective is the most important trait being mentioned by five out of the eight male interviewees in contrast to being mentioned only by one out of the six female interviewees. Additionally, the type of industry was often mentioned in relation to the career progression with an almost equal distribution between L'Oréal employees and graduates as well as females and males.

> "A good job, perspectives to a career, which can be offered by a big group. Good salary, of course. Good options about relocating maybe, and like the choice of where you want to work." (Max, 27)

> "What I'm most interested in when some job opportunity comes is some progress that comes along with the opportunity. So when I thought of starting as an intern here, I saw that there is a possibility to climb up in the corporate structure, to set the goals and go up for it which in the start-up company is also possible but its more flat and really depends on where you are getting in, how you deal with some other responsibilities [...].' (Daniel, 25)

Moreover, importance of relocation and an international exposure goes hand in hand with the importance of the size of the company and the industry branch a

potential employer is operating in as these can increase the possible opportunities, multinational aspect and available options for relocation.

> "I'd say very high would also be an international exposure or multinational team." (Tom, 25)

To the graduates, the team and the colleagues they are working with are as important as the industry the company is operating in. For the L'Oréal employees the team is however less important and was only mentioned by one of the six respondents. More important for the employees were the responsibility and trust they are given by their boss, especially for the junior levels, as for example for the interns.

> "I'm starting to learn that it's crucial to have good people around you in the company." (Peter, 25)

> "[...] that the people are nice and the work is really challenging and that you can touch really nice things, that afterwards you can see somewhere else." (Natalie, 25)

> "Salary of course is important as well, but I think its most important to have the nice office environment and you feel like the managers are approachable, you don't have the hierarchical structures from that you need five permissions before you can change a small thing." (Monica, 23)

The outside image of the employing company is significantly important to two of the L'Oréal employees, however, interestingly, it was only mentioned by the male respondents.

> "I wanted to work in very known, very well-known and successful company, with some multinational scope and I also wanted to have, to start on a position which allow me to grow, and those two criteria are the crucial, are the most crucial probably. And I wanted to work in some company which is prestigious on the market." (Paul, 27)

4.1.2 L'Oréal's Communication at Events

The graduates where asked to describe their first contact with L'Oréal and how they perceived L'Oréal during different events and programs such as the CEMS Welcome Event in Fall 2016, which was hosted on L'Oréal premises, the job fair Šance organized by the University of Economics, the business case competition Brandstorm annually held by L'Oréal and the CEMS-specific semester-long consultancy course Business project. Furthermore, the graduates stated additional occasions in which they got in contact with L'Oréal as an employer, such as skill seminars, guest lectures and similar events. Specifically highlighted by the graduates was the very open and proactive communication. This experience was independent on whether they were closely working together with L'Oréal during the Business Project or less intensely exposed to L'Oréal on job fairs or guest lectures.

"The fact that they left a lot of time for conversation compared to the time that it was for their own company presentation, it was really nice. Because usually companies have more time for them to talk about themselves than to actually have students to talk with other people." (Lisa, 22)

"So whenever we needed someone, they filled the relationship and the connection." (Max, 27)

The following chart (see Figure 11) visualizes the differences in communication experience between graduates without connection to L'Oréal, meaning they have solely been exposed to L'Oréal during job fairs or guest lectures, and graduates with connection to L'Oréal, meaning they participated or are currently participating in the semester-long CEMS-specific course Business Project which acts as a consultancy project for L'Oréal. In total, eight current students were interviewed on this topic with an equal distribution regarding these two groups.

FIGURE 11: COMMUNICATION AT L'ORÉAL-EVENTS

COMMUNICATION AT L'ORÉAL-EVENTS

- Graduates without connection to L'Oréal
- Graduates with connection to L'Oréal
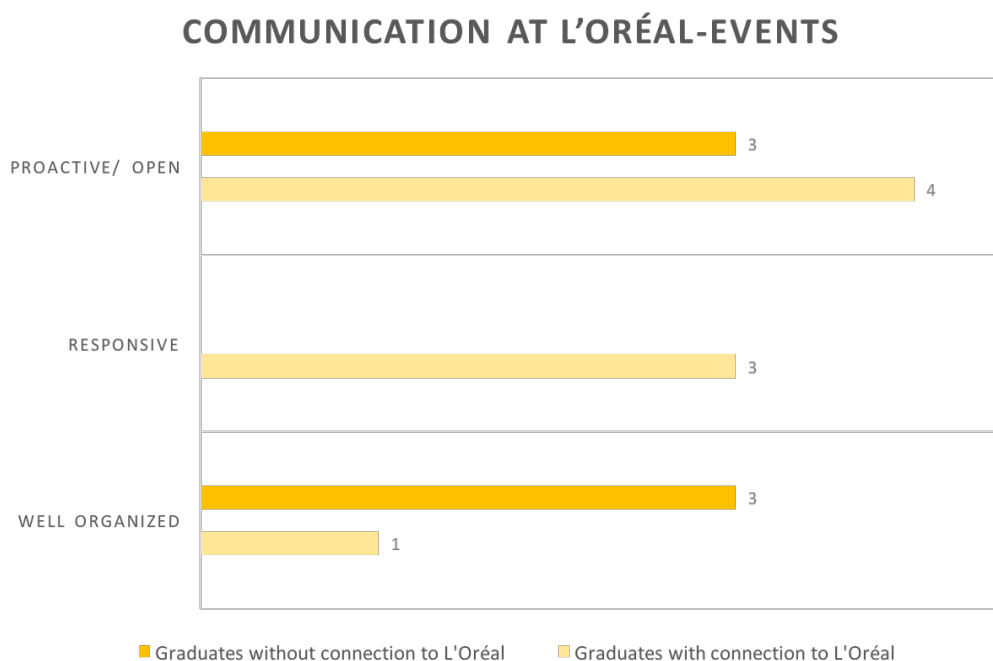
Source: own illustration

As already mentioned, the very open and proactive communication was stated by seven out of the eight interviewees. The second characteristic, L'Oréal's responsiveness, was only asked after in the interviews with the graduates with connection to L'Oréal and was perceived very well by three out of four respondents.

"It's very good, actually. [...] Whatever we discussed in the meeting, I am just sending an email with the summary and a list of things that he promised us, for example to deliver, and within a few days we usually get the information we need. So far it worked really well." (Monica, 23)

When inquiring about the organization of the various kinds of L'Oréal events and programs, the difference of the perception by the two groups was clearly visible.

The graduates who perceived L'Oréal during short-term events like skill seminars and the CEMS Welcome Event, described the event organization as very well structured. Graduates which participated in Brandstorm or the Business Project on the contrary did not perceive the organization as perfect and were slightly disappointed by the support and guidance they obtained during the time.

> "We are doing real project which they will use in future but if they don't believe us or, I don't know why, they don't want to give us the data." (Rachel, 26)

As stated by one of the respondents, this occured more often, but could also have been a consequence of their own 'laziness'.

> "[...] they always communicated everything clearly. There were, I remember my team mates or maybe the other teams that participated to complain about some kind of a miscommunication about how the presentation should look like and stuff like that, but from my perspective it was just like a little bit of laziness from their part to maybe focus on how previous years went and to check maybe videos which are available and stuff like that." (Daniel, 25)

4.1.3 Considering L'Oréal as a Future Employer

The following visualization shows if the interviewees consider applying for L'Oréal. Additionally, the visualization shows if the participants only considered applying after getting to know L'Oréal through one of their programs or events, which was mentioned by five out of the fourteen interviewees (see Figure 12). The six interviewees employed by L'Oréal were only asked if they would have considered applying before they got in contact with L'Oréal. The way in which the interviewed L'Oréal employees actually got in contact and recruited will be discussed later in chapter 4.1.4.

FIGURE 12: BREAKDOWN OF CONSIDERATION TO APPLY FOR L'ORÉAL

RQ: Do you/ did you consider applying for L'Oréal?	Male	Female	%
Yes, I consider/ -ed applying or actually did.	3	2	36%
My application depends/ -ed on the available position.	3	3	43%
Not at all.	2	1	21%
I considered applying only after getting to know L'Oréal.	3	2	36%

Source: own illustration

With a ratio of 43 %, almost half of the respondents would only consider applying if the available position was attractive to them as they are not exclusively interested in the company or the industry.

> "[...] for me it would really depend on the position that they have open, not that I have anything against the company but I think [...] they are very marketing focused,

and product/FMCG-oriented, so I am not sure if that would be the environment I am looking into getting. Because I am more oriented towards technology.'" (Lisa, 22)

"Under certain conditions, yes. It wouldn't be top of my priority list or choice list, but I can imagine working for them. If it was interesting offer, they would have to counterbalance that it's not my field of interest in the industry" (Peter, 25)

However, 36% of the respondents consider applying or actually applied as they perceive L'Oréal as a strong employer and are highly interested in the company and their products. In neither of the categories, the analysis shows a significant difference between males and females.

"I guess it would be like, I like their product, I like their brand, that can be one reason why I want to work for them because I know them and I really trust the product, the quality. I guess for me that is the biggest motivation cause I feel connected and related with the product, with the company." (Jerry, 25)

"I didn't really know what I wanted to do, but once I was reading some magazines about the employers and who are the bests and it was in that time, I read that Samsung is cool which also was something that I was interested in, like technology and innovation and then L'Oréal was one of the best also and I just decided one day lying on my bed, I'm going to work for L'Oréal or Samsung." (Natalie, 25)

On the contrary, 21% of the respondents would not consider applying to any position at L'Oréal, which is mainly due to the industry L'Oréal is operating in.

"Not really, but not because of the company, more because of the industry." (Tom, 25)

As previously mentioned, 36% of the respondents mentioned that the contact they had either through the Business Project or the case competition Brandstorm changed their opinion on applying to L'Oréal and they would now consider applying or are actually working for L'Oréal.

"The exposure to the company changed my mind. I probably wouldn't work for them otherwise; I probably wouldn't even think about it." (Peter, 25)

4.1.4   Recruiting of L'Oréal Employees

The following subchapter discusses how the interviewed L'Oréal employees got recruited and what their reasons were for applying and accepting the given job offer were. This was achieved by connecting the different answers to the research questions 'Do you remember the first contact you had with L'Oréal as an employer?' and 'How did you get recruited?'. The answers were then grouped into two categories based on the existence of a direct connection to L'Oréal prior to the employment or not and a further division into two sub-categories each. The employees with a prior connection to L'Oréal as an employer either got in contact through their studies, as for example the participation in Brandstorm or related events to the master program CEMS, or through a reference as for example by working with L'Oréal as a client within a previous employment or through a referral by a friend.

"[…] after Brandstorm, when I experienced the culture and I actually visited the office and met the people, I decided to apply to one of the positions that was offered to all the participants." (Daniel, 25)

The second category employees without a direct connection to L'Oréal prior to the employment can be divided into extrinsic or intrinsic motivations for applying. 'To try something new' or 'to experience a corporation' were stated as the main extrinsic motivations in contrast to 'being unhappy at the previous employer', their 'first impression' or the 'passion' to work for L'Oréal as intrinsic motivations. The following visualization shows this comparison and includes percentages of the occurrence of each answer within the total of 17 answers, as some of the six L'Oréal employees mentioned a combination of several touch points (see Figure 13).

FIGURE 13: CONNECTION TOWARDS L'ORÉAL

PRIOR CONNECTION THROUGH	STUDIES	PARTICIPATION IN BRANDSTORM	6%
		CEMS-RELATED EVENTS	6%
	REFERENCE	L'ORÉAL AS CLIENT	6%
		FRIEND REFERRAL	6%
NO DIRECT CONNECTION	EXTRINSIC MOTIVATION	TRY SOMETHING NEW/ JUST FOR FUN	29%
		EXPERIENCE CORPORATION/ INTERESTING POSITION	24%
	INTRINSIC MOTIVATION	UNHAPPY AT PREVIOUS EMPLOYER	6%
		FIRST IMPRESSION	6%
		PASSION/ DREAM JOB	6%

Source: own illustration

The majority of respondents with a percentage of 29% mentioned their need to try something new as the main motivation for their application to L'Oréal and their acceptance of the offer. Especially working in a multinational corporation sparked their interest.

"I wanted to try something new and experience the corporate culture because my previous job was in a start-up company." (Daniel, 25)

"[…] so I was like: okay, let's try it, I don't know, I will see; but after two months I realized that it was actually good decision, so I stayed here." (Paul, 27)

4.2 Perception of L'Oréal

The following chapter describes how the interviewees perceive L'Oréal's culture based on the different experiences they had with L'Oréal so far. This discussion includes how they would describe L'Oréal if it would be a person, what characteristics in a person they identify to be important in order to make sure they are a cultural fit and how they think the six founding values of L'Oréal are in line with their perception of L'Oréal. Additionally, the results are all compared based on the connection the interviewees have with L'Oréal.

4.2.1 Perception of L'Oréal's Culture

Firstly, the respondents have been asked to describe their perception of L'Oréal's culture, the work environment within the office and image by out standers based on the different levels of exposure they got so far. This was done in order to capture and compare the first impression and top of the head thoughts without being too in-depth in the topic. One of the first traits L'Oréal was often described with by the asked graduates was the connection to their products. This did not only apply to the beauty products and attractiveness coming with these, but also L'Oréal's attention to detail and innovative approach within the FMCG industry.

> "[...] so far a beauty company, or a FMCG company. They strike me as quite innovative and quite modern, a lot of young people. [...] I see value, I use their products and I enjoy them. I think they are trying to be innovative even though the industry isn't necessarily, or at least to that extent." (Tom, 25)

> "[...] careful to detail, they put a lot of attention to details, I guess like everything has to be very elegant, very precise, very fashionable. Because the appearance is of course matters a lot." (Max, 27)

As innovation is one of the six founding values of L'Oréal with which they are still today identifying themselves with, this topic will be further analyzed in comparison with the perception of the L'Oréal employees within this subchapter (4.2.1).

Another trait which was especially mentioned by the interviewees currently working at L'Oréal was the potential of growth within the company. Even so some seem to think that it is not communicated properly as they were "surprised by how much responsibility they gave me" (Natalie, 2018) once they started working for L'Oréal.

> "We are a company that makes people grow that will develop and there are endless perspectives for prospective growth or for the people who join us and I think we are not clearly communicating that." (Simon, 32)

In addition, growth was particularly correlated with the hard work and stress that is demanded from the employees, but also with the entrepreneurial spirit that is experienced. After innovation, entrepreneurial spirit is the second of the six founding values of L'Oréal that was mentioned as a trait and will be analyzed further later on.

> "[...] we make the people grow but people work hard for it [...]" (Simon, 32)

> "Obviously there are deadlines, there is stress, but this also pushes us to do a little bit more and you know this entrepreneurial spirit, this encouragement to try to get a little bit better, a little bit of perfection, I find myself totally in this." (Maria, N/A)

Furthermore, entrepreneurial spirit was connected to the responsibility the employees receive from their superiors and the ability of the employees to act unaccompanied. This appears to be enabled by the organizational structure of the company and the trust that is given in the employee's work and decision-making.

> "For me it's really a typical French company, so very disorganized, but there is organization in the disorganization so I think we are not the most tied up company, but on the other hand it gives us a big leverage in terms of, well if you want to try, you can, there is okay, if you are, you can choose, there are some priorities but we're not tied up, we are trust in frame, so within the frame you can always, always within some frame you can play with finance, you can develop new things, you can bring new ideas, so this is something that is very nurturing for the team [...]." (Simon, 32)

It is important to note, that this was not always perceived as a solely positive trait of L'Oréal, especially in certain departments, but rather something that needed some time to get used to and adjust to, as it encouraged an individualistic mindset in contrast to a mindset of cooperating with each other.

> "To be honest, like my first day, I was really like skeptical I would say, because I saw people who are like individualistic, who don't want to cooperate together, really individualistic, but then I realized that it's in sales because you have here outline that you are responsible for the numbers. [...] No-one didn't really want to help each other, I would say, yea so it was quite negative." (Paul, 27)

However, the combination of the hard-working environment, with the having to take responsibility one's work as well as the entrepreneurial spirit seems to give as a result the enthusiasm and passion that some of the interviewed employees show for the company and is what makes them successful. Passion, which is again one of the six founding values of L'Oréal, and the perception of passion by the other respondents, will also be further analyzed in the following subchapter 4.2.4.

> "I think this enthusiasm, passion and also sometimes it's also devotion, because I have not seen many people here who have this very kind of square nine to five work attitude and it's not about time that I'm referring because it's really, I think that people just enjoy working here and those who do seem to be the most say, lasting and the most successful, I would say." (Maria, N/A)

4.2.2 L'Oréal as a Person

Secondly, after letting them reflect on their perception of the culture and bringing the interviewees close to the topic, they have been asked to describe L'Oréal as if it was a person. The results were then grouped and categorized into four different physical and behavioral attributes in order to describe L'Oréal as a person and the percentages of how many of the fourteen interviewees mentioned a certain characteristic or their respective synonyms are given. Additionally, in cases in which

contrasting characteristics were mentioned, these characteristics are further split-up, as visualized in the following mind-map (see Figure 14).

FIGURE 14: MIND-MAP - L'ORÉAL AS A PERSON
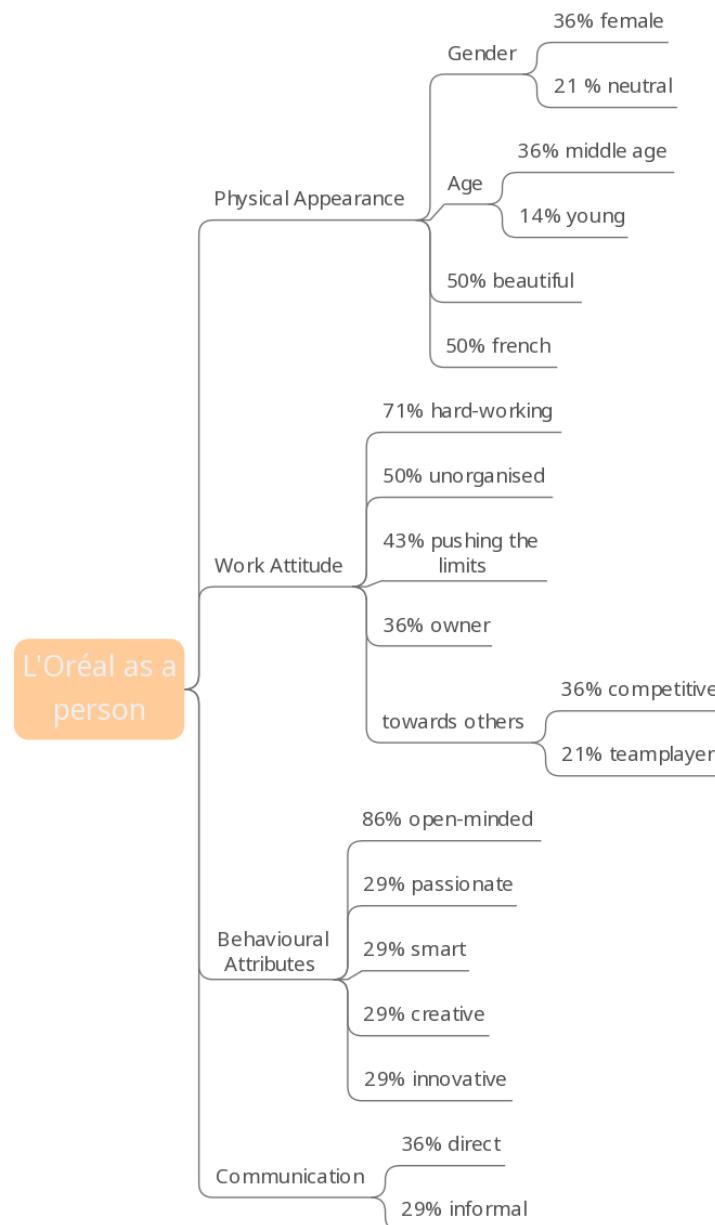
Source: own illustration

The four categories into which the different physical and characterizing attributes have been grouped are **(1) physical appearance, (2) work attitude, (3) behavioral attributes and (4) communication**. The **(1) physical appearance** was further divided into the categories gender, age and two descriptive features. 36% of the respondents specifically described L'Oréal as a middle-aged woman in contrast to 21% who specifically stated L'Oréal as a gender-neutral person and 14% described L'Oréal as being young. Half of the respondents also agreed that the person would

be beautiful and French. The following chart further illustrates the differences in responses by L'Oréal employees, graduates, females and males (see Figure 15).

FIGURE 15: ATTRIBUTES OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE
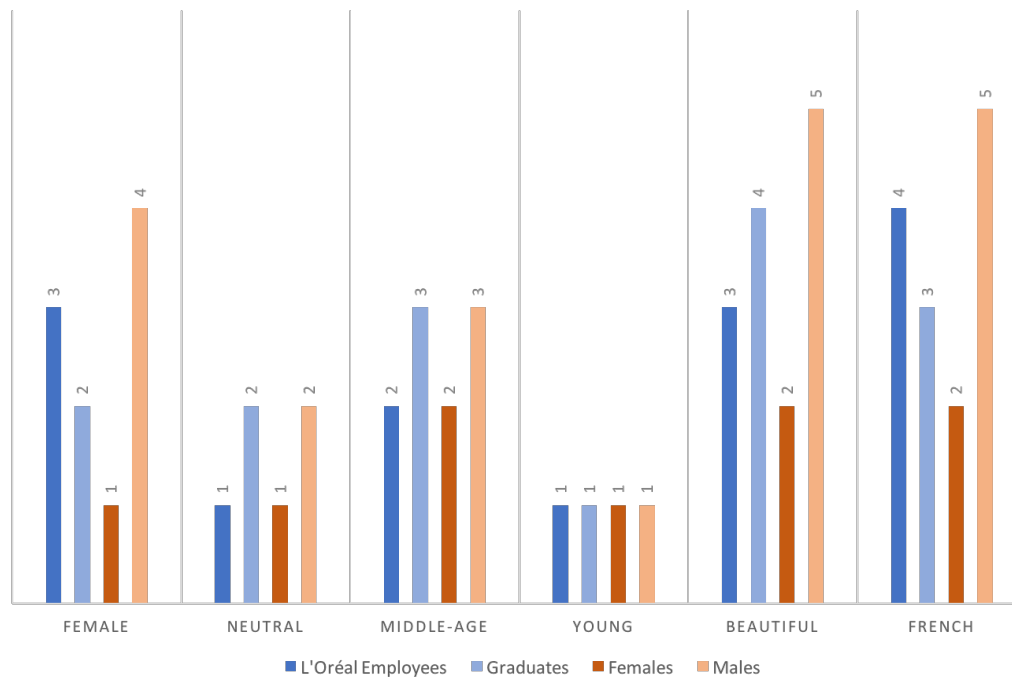
Source: own illustration

The biggest differences that were identified when comparing the female and male respondents are in the attributes female, beautiful and French. Four out of the eight male interviewees especially mentioned L'Oréal as being female, in contrast to only one out of the six female interviewees. Additionally, five out of the eight male interviewees described L'Oréal as a person that would be beautiful and French in contradiction of only two out of the six female interviewees. The attributes neutral, middle-aged and young were mentioned in an almost even distribution within each chosen subgroup. The differences in the answers of L'Oréal employees as compared to graduates are rather insignificant. When describing the physical attributes, the respondents often mentioned those associations to be connected to the products of the company.

> "[…] this chic and the beauty and of course its somehow, it is there in the DNA of the company and I hope we will never lose it." (Maria, N/A)

> "I kind of perceive it also that it's not really a girl-specific company, you know. I don't want to sound sexist or whatever but the industry, I guess you can say is attracting more females, so this with L'Oréal I also see the value they bring to guys, and I know quite a few guys that work there and enjoy it […]" (Tom, 25)

> "Okay lady, slim, fit, tall, lady, with nice hair, very nice perfume, somehow this how to say, I think Eva Longoria […]" (Rachel, 26)

> "[…] but it would be a woman for sure, full with make-up, and with a bit of a sassy look and a really defined attitude towards decision-making and so on." (Lisa, 22)

However, one respondent also stated that participating in one of L'Oréal's programs changed his opinion on whether he perceives the company as being female or male, while keeping the associated attributes of behavior and work attitude unchanged.

> "Before the business project, I would say, women, 35, successful, working in management position, taking care of herself, medium to high income, beautiful, obviously, smart and afterwards, I don't know, it's hard. It would still be the same description, like job description and age description, but [...] it can be a man as well. For example, the regional CEO [Tomáš Hruška] for me that is the men-version of L'Oréal." (Peter, 25)

Within category (2) **work attitude**, the interviewees responses were grouped into six different characterizing attributes of L'Oréal as a person of which two were sub-grouped into the work attitude towards other employees. The highest mention of the six attributes in this category was with 71% on the attribute hard-working. Half of the respondents stated the person to be unorganized and 43% that the person is always pushing the limits in terms of the person's attitude towards work, reaching goals and leading the change. 36% of the interviewees described the person L'Oréal as being an owner in regards of being responsible towards work and making decisions independently. This can, as already mentioned during the previous chapter, be connected to one of the six founding values, namely entrepreneurial spirit. When referring to the work attitude towards other employees, L'Oréal as a person was described as being competitive by 36% in contrast to 21% who described the person as being a team-player. The following chart shows the comparison of the answers of the sub-groups L'Oréal employees, graduates, females and males in relation to the mentioned work attitudes (see Figure 16).

FIGURE 16: ATTRIBUTES OF WORK ATTITUDE
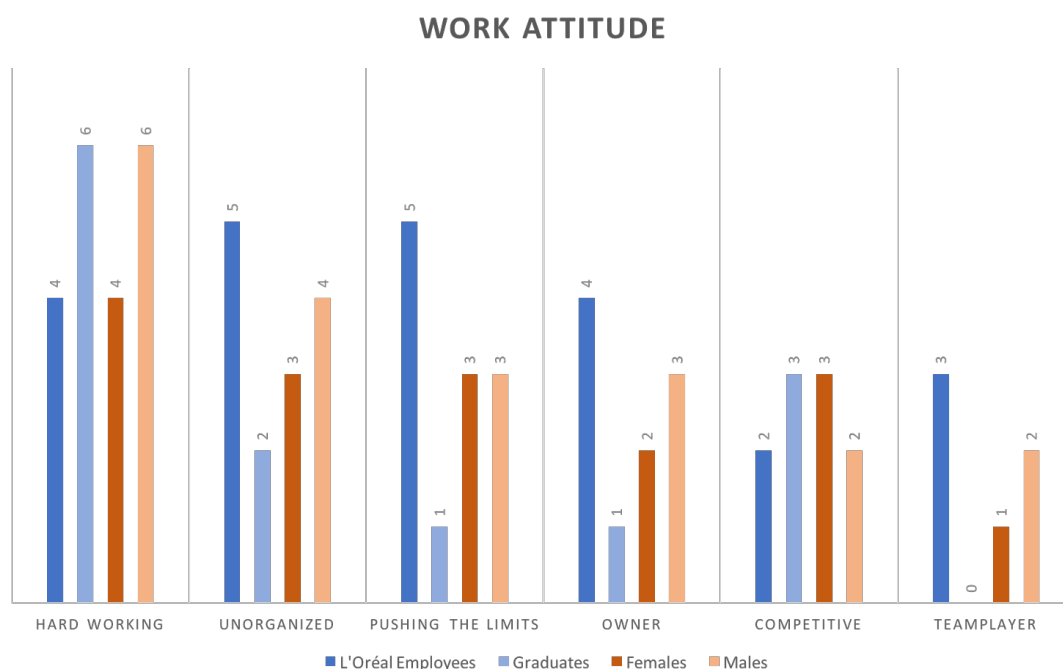
Source: own illustration

Regarding the different work attitudes that were mentioned by the interviewees, only insignificant differences were observed between the answers of the female and male respondents. However, the responses of L'Oréal employees and graduates differ more. The differences are especially large for the attitudes unorganized, pushing the limits, owner and team player. Five out of the six interviewed L'Oréal employees specifically described the person L'Oréal as being unorganized and pushing the limits in contrast to only two out of eight graduates associating the person with being unorganized and just one as pushing the limits. In terms of describing L'Oréal as a person with the characteristics of taking ownership and responsibility over its work, four of the L'Oréal employees specifically mentioned this attitude contrary to only one of the graduates. None of the graduates mentioned L'Oréal as being a team player in comparison to half of the interviewed L'Oréal employees. The interviewed graduates rather described the person L'Oréal as being competitive (three out of eight respondents). The interviewees responses were very often aimed at describing a hard working person, who has the "ambition to grow" (Simon, 2018) and push the limits. Even though it was mentioned that the person should also be humble about these ambitions it was also stated that he/she not always is which it not always is.

> "I guess elegant and hard-working, I mean, for me it's very female company so it will probably be a French lady, really, really elegant and not so young, maybe middle age. She like to enjoy her like life and this kind of stuff, quality. Quality about living." (Jerry, 25)

The following category (3) **behavioral attributes** was further divided into five different attitudes describing L'Oréal as a person, namely open-minded, passionate, smart, creative and innovative. With 86% of the interviewees having described the person as being open-minded, this is not only the highest percentage in this category but also the highest overall. The other four attributes of this category (being passionate, smart, creative and innovative) have been mentioned with an equal share of 29%.

The last category (4) **communication** was divided into two attitudes that are closely connected, namely being direct, which was mentioned by 36% of the respondents and informal, mentioned by 29%. The results of categories (3) and (4) are shown together in the following chart (see Figure 17).

FIGURE 17: ATTRIBUTES OF BEHAVIORAL ATTRIBUTES & COMMUNICATION
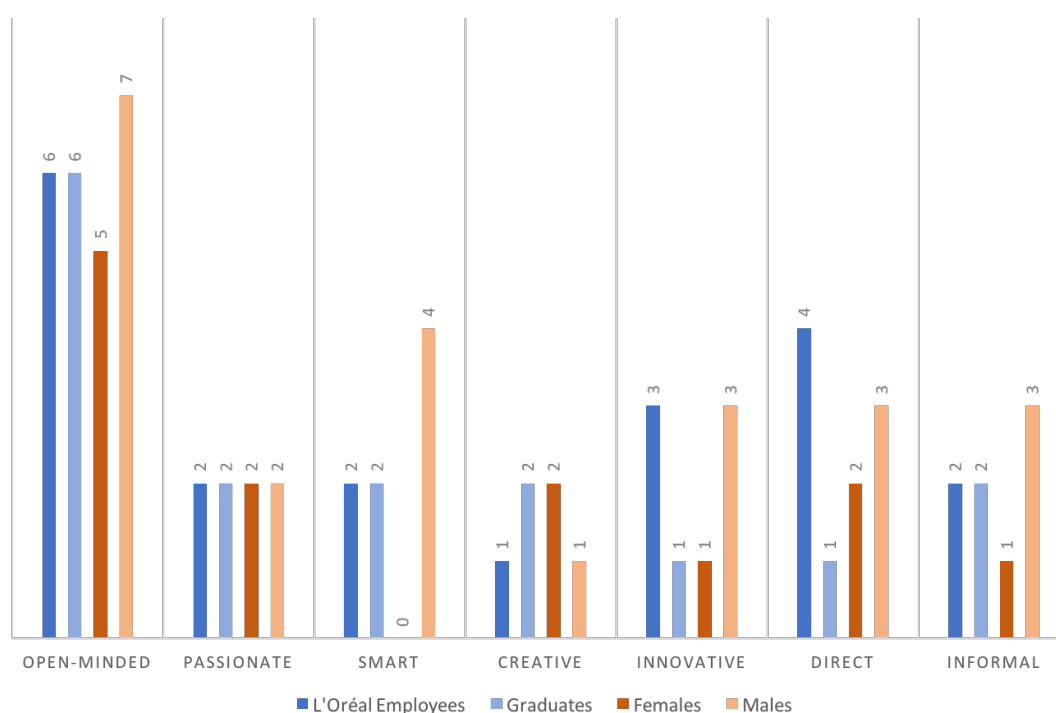
Source: own illustration

As mentioned, one of the **(3) behavioral attributes**, namely being open-minded, was stated by the majority of the respondents and thus no significant difference in the distribution between L'Oréal employees, graduates, females and males can be observed. Interestingly, this attribute is also reflected in the founding values of L'Oréal. Similarly, the behavioral attribute being passionate was stated with an equal count for all groups. However, it is interesting to note that both of the L'Oréal employees mentioning this attribute are female. They are describing passion as a highly important trait and perceive the culture and the environment as passionate. As already mentioned in the previous abstract, passion as well as the open-mindedness are two of the six founding values of L'Oréal and will be discussed in more detail later on. The behavioral attribute being smart was mentioned equally often by L'Oréal employees as compared to graduates, however solely by male respondents (four out of the eight male interviewees). A comparable number of people within each grouping described L'Oréal as a person as being creative. A difference between the responses of L'Oréal employees and graduates was found for the behavioral attribute being innovative with three of the L'Oréal employees stating this attribute versus only one out of the graduates. A similar discrepancy is seen when comparing by gender: three out of the four respondents using innovative as a descriptive attribute were male.

When looking into the answers per group for category **(4) communication**, a difference of replies was observed in regards to the person being direct, which was named by four L'Oréal employees in comparison to only one graduate. The difference between the male and female respondents is not as significant. In contrast, when comparing the attribute being informal, a higher discrepancy based

on gender was observed (it was mentioned by three out of the eight males in comparison to only one of the females) while an equal distribution of two responses each between L'Oréal employees and graduates was found. When the interviewees were questioned, the behavioral attributes were often connected to the previously mentioned physical attribute being French. Furthermore, the interviewees seemed to be somewhat interested and attracted to the person they were describing.

> "Okay, a bit sassy maybe, creative, a bit trendy and cool, and maybe, you know, typical French who has the nose a bit, you know, thinking the person is a bit better." (Anna, 24)

> "The person would be very interesting to meet." (Max, 27)

4.2.3 How to be a Cultural Fit for L'Oréal

To get further insights into the perception of the company, the interviewees were asked to describe which traits and attributes they would be looking for in a person to make sure they are a cultural fit for L'Oréal. The respondents were asked to imagine themselves to be in a recruiting position inside the company. Facilitated by the previous questions, the interviewees had already intensely thought about their perception of L'Oréal's culture and work environment which helped them to have base for their answers. One of the attributes, which was mentioned several times and has already been reflected on in the previous chapters, is the connection of the person with the product and the industry L'Oréal is operating in. However, this was mostly mentioned by female respondents.

> "I think everywhere it's very important to feel the brand and to feel the product, so if you really don't care about beauty and about cosmetic products, I think you don't have place in this company." (Rachel, 26)

> "I would say based on the image that I have from the company, and it can be incorrect, I don't know, but it would be somebody who is also competitive in the way how they approach their work and their life. And would be, like energetic, I think that is also something necessary for such jobs and also that cares about the products somehow, so that you can see that this person will in the future really connect to the products and be able to work on it and sell and improve it and so on." (Lisa, 22)

Furthermore, the behavioral attribute being open-minded, which was already identified as the most mentioned characterizing attribute when describing L'Oréal as a person within the previous chapter, was also one of the most mentioned characteristic both L'Oréal employees and graduates would be looking for in a new hire. Especially when relating this attribute to the commitment to the work, the willingness to learn and gain experience and to push the limits, this seems to be what is needed from potential candidates in order to succeed and fit in the environment.

> "I think I would look for someone who is open-minded, flexible, trying to push the limits to some extent, wanting to lead the future as they are, be the leader, make the change and all of this, so I think it is important that there is someone who

actually can take a punch but at the same time be able to create something back."
(Anna, 24)

> "I look more for this open-minded attitude, an attitude more important for me,
> certainly than skills, especially with young people. Because I think that's, you know,
> we learn all our lives, we have time to gain experience, to gain skills, to change our
> own profile in the end if we wish to. But one thing that will probably not change is
> the attitude and exactly this readiness to be a bit generous because this generosity,
> I think is something that I think can help a lot [...]." (Maria, N/A)

Likewise, the work attitude and commitment towards the company seem to be of
high importance especially to L'Oréal employees. Candidates who have a certain
amount of drive and the ambition to grow, but are aware of the knowledge and
experience they need to acquire in order to achieve these goals, are preferably hired
by the interviewed L'Oréal employees.

> "A person that is ready to work a lot, to commit to the company; he is not scared
> to do extra work." (Max, 27)

> "I need people who have the drive or the ambition to grow but they are able to admit
> that it takes you steps to do that." (Simon, 32)

4.2.4   Six Founding Values

Lastly in the chapter of the perception of L'Oréal's culture comes the subchapter
which analysis L'Oréal's six founding values and how they are related to the
perception of L'Oréal's culture. On L'Oréal's global website the following six
founding values are stated as being "embedded in L'Oréal's genetic code. They
continue to this day, to express themselves in the daily actions of all our teams across
the globe" (L'Oréal, 2018). These values are passion, innovation, entrepreneurial
spirit, open-mindedness, quest for excellence and responsibility. The interviewees
have been asked to comment on the traits which they see the connection to L'Oréal
and which ones appear to be rather surprising. This is further compared by the
differences in responses by the graduates without a connection to L'Oréal, the
graduates with a connection to L'Oréal as well as the L'Oréal employees, with a
special focus on the perception and recognition in the office in Prague. During the
study on how L'Oréal's culture is perceived by the interviewees as well as how they
would describe L'Oréal if it was a person, four out of the six founding values were
already mentioned by the graduates as well as the L'Oréal employees without
a specific prior indication. These four values were passion, innovation,
entrepreneurial spirit and open-mindedness. The following visualization shows
the number of interviewees who recognized the relation between the founding value
and L'Oréal in comparison to the amount of respondents who found the intended
relationship rather surprising, differentiated by L'Oréal employees, graduates with
connection to L'Oréal and graduates without connection to L'Oréal. The data didn't
show any significant differences amongst the female and male interviewees. Solely
in relation to the founding value passion, it was noticeable that the two interviewed
female L'Oréal employees gave it a higher importance than the interviewed male
L'Oréal employees.

FIGURE 18: RELATION TOWARDS THE SIX FOUNDING VALUES OF L'ORÉAL
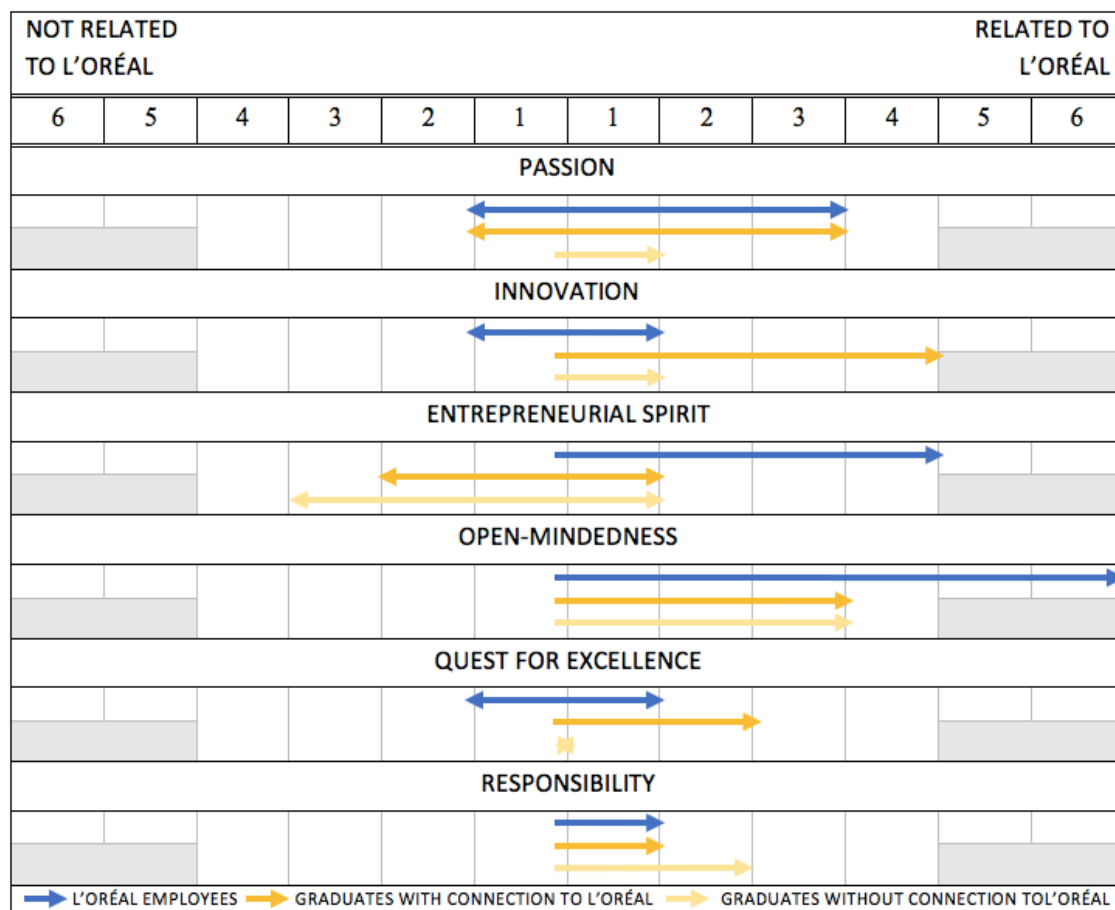
Source: own illustration

In regards to the value passion, it can be noticed that the interviewees with an exposure to the company saw a higher relation than the graduates without a connection to L'Oréal, even though it is only the third most mentioned value with a visible relation to L'Oréal. Respondents especially mentioned how passion lays in the source of the company and its culture, which partly seems to come from the consumer goods industry and the availability of a tangible product.

> "[...] beauty is very visible so it's something you can identify with, you want to buy it [...] so we have something that we can be proud of, so the passion is something that people have in general. And I think we also ask a lot from the people, so I think those who don't, in general follow these values will never succeed here." (Simon, 32)

> "[...] but without passion we wouldn't probably go very long way. So I think that if you combine passion with the striving for excellence, the result will be just multiplied." (Maria, N/A)

The value innovation, as it was already mentioned in the previous subchapter was frequently mentioned in connection with the fast-moving consumer goods industry. However, when asked specifically for innovation in contrast to the other founding values of L'Oréal, innovation does not seem to be as important. Solely for

the graduates with a connection to L'Oréal all four interviewees stated the relation to be visible on the contrary to one of the responding graduates with connection to L'Oréal as well as L'Oréal employees. One of the interviewed L'Oréal employees specifically stated to not even see the connection of innovation at L'Oréal, which shows a rather significant misconception about L'Oréal's founding value.

The third founding value which was already mentioned several times within the analysis of the perception of L'Oréal's culture is entrepreneurial spirit, mainly in connection to the ambition to grow and the enthusiasm towards work. However, the analysis regarding the relationship of entrepreneurial spirit and L'Oréal is significantly misperceived between graduates and L'Oréal employees. Four out of the six interviewed L'Oréal employees see the value highly related towards L'Oréal's culture and their ability to consistently learn and improve themselves. In contrast only one of the graduates in connection with L'Oréal saw the relation between the companies founding value and their exploitation of entrepreneurial activities.

> "Entrepreneurial spirit is maybe the one that can make the most difference [...] there's so many obstacles, and I think that this entrepreneurial spirit can help [people to be] persistent, consistent and staying on track, that will be adjusted sometimes when it's needed and learning new way and not giving up so easily." (Maria, N/A)

> "Entrepreneurial spirit of course, there are a lot of opportunities in the marketplace, it is a company as like all the other companies they are really trying to take advantage of these new opportunities and they, you know, like to exploit them." (Max, 27)

In addition, only one of the graduates without a connection to L'Oréal also saw the relation of L'Oréal towards the value entrepreneurial spirit, however particularly mentioning the change in her perception through the exposure of L'Oréal campaigns towards innovative research and development.

> "The Entrepreneurship part, I think if you asked me two years ago, I would be very surprised. But now I feel like I've seen how they are actually working a lot on it just when I was in Paris last week, L'Oréal had these huge banners at the airport saying how more and more scientists want to work for them. Because they are actually, you know, entrepreneurial in that way, trying to make new things [...]" (Anna, 24)

For graduates, both with prior connection L'Oréal and without connection to L'Oréal, entrepreneurial spirit was the most surprising, were the relation to the culture was hard to be imagined. This resulted from the perception of L'Oréal as a large corporation neither with much flexibility for the development of new ideas nor with the opportunity to follow individual entrepreneurial ideas or projects.

> "I don't know how individuals or individual departments are encouraged to act entrepreneurial in a way as like subsidies in itself, but that's maybe the one thing that I don't really see the fit there [...]" (Monica, 23)

> "I think none of them surprise me apart from maybe the Entrepreneurship. That one is a bit more surprising, I guess, because that's maybe something, I don't know that much about the company, how much can you promote your ideas and work on your projects, because it's still a big company and these things are generally difficult in corporations [...]" (Tom, 25)

Furthermore, entrepreneurial is perceived as a buzzword which companies are trying to implement without sufficient verification or proof of the company.

> "[...] maybe entrepreneurial mindset is becoming a bit of a buzzword in every company, not only, big corporations because they want to mimic a bit the lifestyle of start-ups which are now their actually biggest competitors in terms of acquiring talent." (Lisa, 22)

Moving on to the value open-mindedness, it has already been mentioned that the majority of respondents described L'Oréal if it would be a person as being open-minded. In addition to this, the majority of the interviewees also stated the founding value to be highly visible in relation to L'Oréal's culture. All six of the L'Oréal employees confirmed the relation as well as six out of eight of the graduates with an even ratio between the graduates with a connection to L'Oréal and without a connection to L'Oréal.

In regards to the founding value quest for excellence, the answers of the respondents were rather mixed and neither a strong relation nor a large surprise towards how L'Oréal's culture is perceived. With reference to the last founding value responsibility a slight relation towards L'Oréal's culture is visible and perceived by the respondents. Especially more graduates without connection to L'Oréal stated the relation as being noticeable. One misunderstanding that occurred twice in regards to responsibility was towards the interpretation of the meaning. Two of the interviewed L'Oréal employees interpreted responsibility with 'being responsible for their own projects' rather than the companies' responsibility towards "the well-being of our employees and of the communities in which we are present" (L'Oréal, 2018) as it is intended. This shows how embedded the value entrepreneurial spirit actually is in the company as it is one of the first things that comes to mind when talking about the ownership of projects.

4.3 Perception of Diversity at L'Oréal

The following chapter talks about how diversity at L'Oréal is perceived, comparing the differences in opinions of L'Oréal employees, graduates with a connection to L'Oréal and graduates without a connection to L'Oréal. First, the author presents the findings on the topic of diversity in general and more specifically on the topic of gender balance. Second, the author describes the importance of gender balance as stated by the interviewee and lastly, the opinions of the participants on how more male top talents could be attracted towards L'Oréal is presented.

4.3.1 Diversity and Gender Balance

As the last topic which was covered during the interview process, the respondents have been asked to describe their perception of diversity at L'Oréal. In order to receive an unbiased answer of their first impression, the interviewees were only

given the key phrase 'diversity at L'Oréal' in order for them to state what is the first thought that comes to their minds without any further instructions. Later on, the respondents were asked to specify their answers further towards their perception of the gender balance at L'Oréal and the importance of diversity. More specifically, the research questions were aimed to further think about the importance of a balanced male-female ratio, and what traits they would promote when it comes to equalizing the gender ratio. The following visualization categorizes the responses in seven groups and compares the differences in answers by L'Oréal employees and graduates as well as females and males (see Figure 19).

FIGURE 19: PERCEPTION OF DIVERSITY AT L'ORÉAL
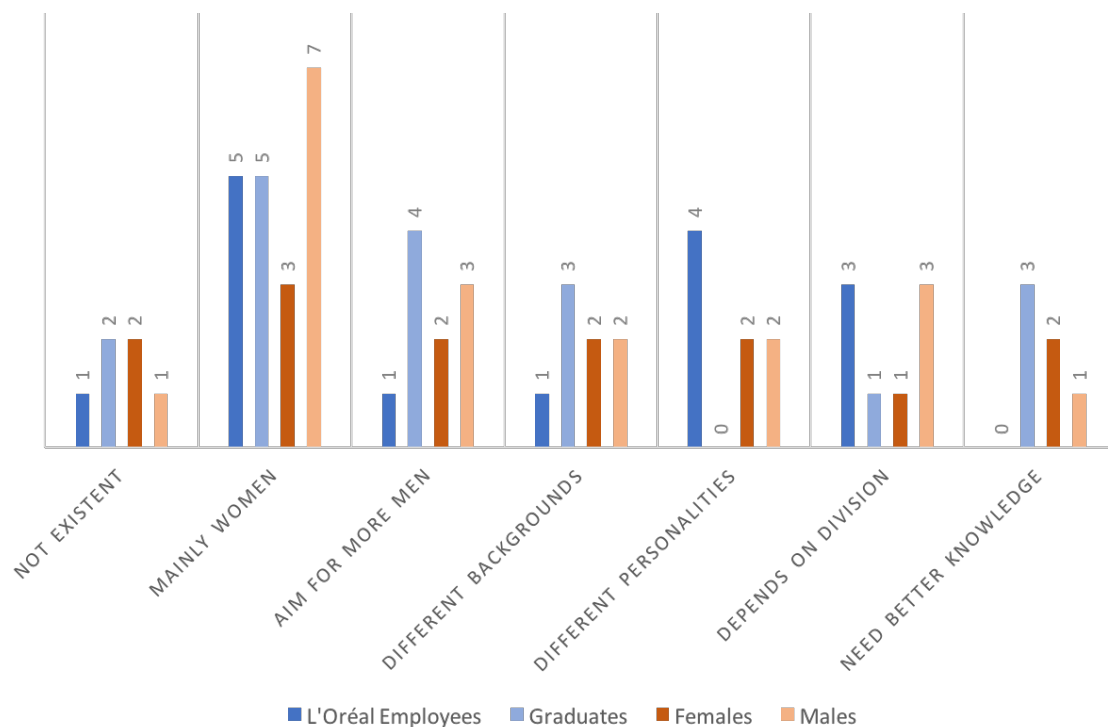
Source: own illustration

With an almost equal distribution, L'Oréal employees and graduates perceive diversity at L'Oréal as non-existent. The respondents do not recognize a diverse environment as the employees seem to have very similar backgrounds which might be correlated to the general structure of society.

> "I feel like everyone is the same, so not a lot of diversity. Females, either graduates or like in management positions [...]" (Anna, 24)

> "We are maybe at the first glance not so diverse but I think it does correspond with the structure of society in general" (Maria, N/A)

Furthermore, the main attribute with which the diversity of L'Oréal was described, is the female environment with a very high difference between male and female employees. An equal number of L'Oréal employees and graduates see more women in the company; interestingly enough this was mentioned by all except for one of the interviewed L'Oréal employees who is a woman herself. In addition, it is

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noticeable that seven out of the eight male respondents described the company is female and not diverse in comparison to only three of the six female respondents. Respondents blame mainly the beauty and cosmetics industry L'Oréal is operating in for the high perceived difference of females and males.

> "You can say the industry attracts women more than men." (Max, 27)

> "As a prejudice I would think of course that there are more women because it's a cosmetic brand, it's probably very likely, but I can't say for sure." (Monica, 23)

> "[...] beauty naturally attracts more women than men, so I think contradict to other companies, I think we might have the opposite view, we have too many female and too little male." (Simon, 32)

However, not all respondents agreed that the perceived reality reflects this uneven distribution to the right extent but argued that the importance of a more equal distribution at the higher level of career positions is a strong selling point for L'Oréal.

> "[...] it's definitely not as female dominated as one might expect or as with other companies in the industry [...]. I see them as being diverse." (Tom, 25)

> "I think L'Oréal is one of the few companies that actually has women at the top positions also, and that is actually great example for all the employees [...]" (Daniel, 25)

Half of the eight interviewed graduates also see a general aim of the company to hire and attract more men in contrast to only one out of the six interviewed L'Oréal employees. This is especially fueled by having male friends working for L'Oréal as well as by a perceived focus on the attraction of more male employees which seems to be resulting in tensions between male and female employees.

> "I would guess mostly it would be a women-based environment. Although I do have a friend, which is male and is working there." (Lisa, 22)

> "I think there are much more guys, probably its some KPI of HR, but the question is how long they going to stay here, the new guys." (Lucas, 27)

> "I see there's like a war between male/men and female/women and also that is fueled by the campaign of hiring more men [...]" (Peter, 25)

When looking at the background of L'Oréal employees and how it is perceived by L'Oréal employees and graduates, the distribution is almost equal. Nonetheless, L'Oréal employees rather see an unbalanced diversity of backgrounds than many kinds of social backgrounds especially when looking at different offices in other countries.

> "In terms of the diversity we sometimes tend to focus more on the men women side, but I think I've been in many countries with L'Oréal what I noticed is that okay, the gender bias is very balanced but in terms of the background of the people we hire always the same people. So I was for example, I was in Pakistan and all the people who we hired were rich, were western-educated, they were all from the same social background." (Simon, 32)

However, four out of the six interviewed L'Oréal employees describe the personalities of the people at L'Oréal as being diverse and more specifically tolerant towards other personalities on the contrary to none of the interviewed graduates.

> "This is the respect of embracing all kinds of beauty [...], that's accepting the beauty can have million different forms and shapes and all of them are great and also ideas come from many different people and can be composed of very various profiles [...]" (Maria, N/A)

Three out of the six L'Oréal employees stated the diversity especially in relation towards the gender ratio as being highly dependent on the actual department as people seem to mainly perceive the rather unbalanced marketing teams and base their opinion on this instead of taking other more men-fueled departments like finance and logistics into account. However, this seems to be closely related to the actual exposure the person is receiving from L'Oréal. In addition, many of the interviewed graduates stated that they would need more in-depth knowledge about the company and the work environment in order to properly build an opinion about the perceived diversity.

> "[...] a lot of people, including me perceive it as a feminine company as a cosmetics company, but then you realize there are so many departments that are not feminine and it's not about, you know, the products are one side of the story, but the company is a different side of the story. [...] But I do believe that it still prevents a lot of people from applying just because they are maybe worried that they will be perceived as working for a feminine company." (Peter, 25)

> "Many people think that L'Oréal is a very female company, which it is not. It just depends on the profession [...]. I really think we should go deeper than just look over the marketing teams. But also sales teams, logistic teams, purchasing departments and then I wouldn't say it's so much, women, female company [...]." (Maria, N/A)

4.3.2 Importance of Gender Balance

When asked about the importance of an equal or closer to equal ratio of the gender ratio at L'Oréal, the respondents answers varied widely from seeing the importance and benefits an equal gender ratio brings, to doubting the value or identifying themselves with the aim of reaching an equal ratio. The respondents especially connected the importance of gender balance within L'Oréal to their founding values of being more innovative and entrepreneurial, creating more and better ideas and gaining different views and opinions on the daily activities. In addition, the tolerance that comes with an equal gender balance is mentioned as one of the most important traits in order to be ambitious and nurture flourishing teams.

> "I think it is very important, but I guess the difficulty for L'Oréal is to attract the males towards the products. But at the same time, I think that the fact that you can mix both types of genders you can then embrace more into the products, that women want to attract men, men want to attract women. So having both in the picture made it probably easy for innovation and brainstorm around this kind of ideas." (Lisa, 22)

"I would say that diversity is really important generally so I think it's important to bring more men to the company which leads to let's say, remake the culture of the company [...]. If you are men or women you have let's say a little bit different point of view on some situation so you can cooperate together on the final result is better afterwards." (Paul, 27)

"[...] we show respect to every kind of person with all possible differences which actually we embrace, and this is something that for me creates an ideal environment to thrive for people, for teams [...]." (Maria, N/A)

On the contrary, some respondents did not see the importance of equalizing the gender balance of L'Oréal as it seemed to them rather as being a buzzword than a trait bringing value to the company activities. Respondents argued that the importance should be somewhat higher in the motivation, development and growth potential of the candidates than on their gender.

"I still understand the big value if the board is 50-50 or whatever in management. In terms of the whole company, I mean it sounds good as something to promote but otherwise I would take a motivated girl to do it over a guy who takes it as a second or third option any day." (Tom, 25)

"In the end for me it's not, I would say if it is 65-35 or doesn't make any difference, for me it's nothing that I would pay particular attention to, because I think we develop people, we should develop people based on the merit, not based on their gender [...]." (Simon, 32)

The respondents seem afraid that the importance for L'Oréal of a more equal gender ratio stands in connection of assuming a different skill set based on the gender of potential candidates and stereotyping their attitudes solely based on gender.

"I'm not confident enough to say for this, that there are skill sets that guys have over girls with what L'Oréal does." (Tom, 25)

Furthermore, respondents do not seem to completely identify themselves with the aim of attracting more male applicants even though L'Oréal employees stated that they noticed the aim of attracting more males throughout their time at L'Oréal. On the contrary, L'Oréal employees seem to rather appreciate more diverse teams and see the need for a better variety of backgrounds within the company. In addition, one of the graduates who was exposed to L'Oréal throughout the participation in the Business Project argues that the reason for L'Oréal of trying to reach an equal gender ratio might not have been a result of analyzing the culture and building upon the problems but rather the focus on how the actual number is perceived outside the company.

"[...] since I joined we always tried to attract more guys, so I think it's something that I understand but nothing that I would particularly 100% identify me with, because for me there will always be jobs that are very difficult to have men [...]. I think it's more important to build more diverse teams within the teams, so have a really general, get a mix [...]." (Simon, 32)

"I think they are pushing it to the extreme level and the whole impulse of trying to make it more diverse came from a number instead of an experience [...], it didn't come from analyzing the actual culture and the way things work there. [...] So I think they should build upon the actual problems and not just the number [...]. So diversity to a certain extent is important. But I would say that it needs to be built underneath not on the number. And if I can close it up, I don't think in L'Oréal it's too necessary to have more men. I don't think that the business does require it and I think the women make it as well as guys. So there's no actual need for having more men, from what I saw." (Peter, 25)

4.3.3 Perception of Attracting Male Talent

After spending some time on the perception of diversity with a special focus on the gender ratio at L'Oréal and the importance of such, the respondents were asked to name specific traits which could be promoted in order to increase the number of male applicants. The responses have then been compared, similarities were found and it resulted in the specification of four categories with two to five subcategories each, shown by the following visualization (see Figure 20).

FIGURE 20: TRAITS FOR ATTRACTION OF MALES TO L'ORÉAL

EXHIBIT HARD FACTS	SIZE OF THE COMPANY	55%
	STEEP CAREER PATH	45%
	SALARY/ MATERIAL BENEFITS	27%
	INTERNATIONAL EXPOSURE	18%
	RELOCATION	18%
EXHIBIT THE ENVIRONMENT	DIGITAL & INNOVATIVE	36%
	ENTREPRENEURIAL/ OWNERSHIP	36%
	COMPANY CULTURE	9%
EXHIBIT SOFT FACTS	CLEAR COMMUNICATION	18%
	TRANSPARENCY	18%
	GUIDANCE	18%
MALE-SPECIFIC COMMUNICATION	VISIBILITY/ STANDING OUT	36%
	EXHIBIT MALE ENVIRONMENT	36%

Source: own illustration

The four categories, which the answers have been grouped in, are **(1) exhibit hard facts, (2) exhibit the environment, (3) exhibit soft facts and (4) male-specific communication** each being further divided into subgroups and compared by the percentage of respondents mentioning the specific trait or activity. Within the first category **(1) exhibit hard facts**, the respondents mentioned the attraction of male talents due to the hard numbers about size, salary and career progression to be of high importance. 55% of the respondents stated the use of the size of the company as a selling point in order to promote L'Oréal's achievements and spread awareness of their market share, especially in comparison with their competitors.

> "I would focus all the things not only on L'Oréal as a brand but more on numbers, like achievements that we are top 1 company here, and we grow 10% every year, and our market share is higher than market share of Unilever, something like this. So to make the perception of the company that it's on the same level like Unilever, Procter and stuff." (Paul, 27)

In addition, 45% of the interviewees stated the perception of L'Oréal having a steep career path as an important selling point towards possible male talents who are ambitious and committed to achieving this goal. In contrast to that, 28% of the respondents mentioned the salary or material benefits as an important trait to communicate towards male applicants and 18 percent mentioned the opportunities for international exposure and relocation as an essential trait for L'Oréal's target group.

The second category **(2) exhibit the environment** groups the responses concerning how L'Oréal should demonstrate the specifics about the industry they are operating in connecting it with L'Oréal's culture and their founding values. With an equal ratio, 36% of the respondent's state L'Oréal as being digital and innovative as well as explicitly stating it as being entrepreneurial and the ability of being the owner of your work as a highly relevant and efficient promotional attribute towards male applicants. In addition, 9% of the respondents mentioned the company culture of L'Oréal as a major selling point when communicated properly. This especially goes hand in hand with the perception of L'Oréal's culture as rather being surprised with culturally understood masculine instead of feminine attributes.

> "In general some things that other companies don't have and not just in the industry but in general. So this can be the entrepreneurship […], digital or technical positions." (Tom, 25)

> "I think that to be very honest in the core our work, it's quite masculine in the sense that you need to have, you need to have a little bit of, how to say, you need to combine the traits, like that are culturally understood as masculine. That's what I want to say. That you need to be sometimes pushy, quite decisive, you need to know what you want to do, you need to be able to present it to convince others, to be persistent." (Maria, N/A)

Thirdly, respondents mentioned L'Oréal's opportunity to **(3) exhibit soft facts** in relation to their culture to the potential male candidates. This seems to have

the possibility to result in a higher application and satisfaction rate by focusing on three categories, namely clear communication, transparency and guidance, all stated by the respondents with an equal ratio of 18%. Additionally, respondents mentioned to especially target their values and communication activities towards the values and traits their target group is looking for in order to point out the similarities and points of interest reflected in L'Oréal's culture when simultaneously being transparent and clear about each step and aspect of the position and work environment.

> "L'Oréal should focus also on their communication, like they did in their values, to be more up-to-date towards what the young people are looking for. [...] If they want to capture more male applicants, then they should also think what male applicants are looking for, what are the backgrounds they are thinking to attracting and then really specify the job ad towards it [...]. Also they should think if they really have during the process, not only during the job ad, male people from L'Oréal that could be the ones interviewing them and giving them the first guidance, so that they can see that there is also not only female in the company." (Lisa, 22)

> "[...] they should promote themselves as an employer itself and their values that you get from them as an employer, not so much what they represent for products, because then of course men might not be as attracted to apply for a position in L`Oréal than let`s say IBM or what so ever. But if the benefits of the employer are clearly communicated for example like flexible working hours or whatever like their target group might look for, I think men can be attracted to work for L'Oréal as well." (Monica, 23)

Even though the previous topics can be applied in general and are not solely concerning male candidates, the fourth category focuses on specifically demonstrating the **(4) male-specific communication** at L'Oréal. The responses of the interviewees could further be categorized into the advantage of more visibility and standing out of the crowd as well as exhibiting the male environment at L'Oréal, both equally mentioned with a ratio of 36%. Respondents mentioned the opportunity for male employees to be more visible amongst a large number of female employees in regards to nurturing men's self-assurance. In addition, it seems that the majority of respondents believe that in order for more male talents to be attracted to applying for L'Oréal they want to see the connection through male employees and how they perceive the company in order to not feel left alone amongst females. In connection to this, it seems important to the interviewees that L'Oréal as an employer is communicated not just in connection with their products but about the company itself. Furthermore, especially when attracting male talents from university, their image and self-consciousness seems to be of higher importance comparing to being in a more mature age.

> "If you think on like biological terms, it's an environment for women so that's the first motivation, but I guess men like to be around men. So I think for L'Oréal to capture male talent, you have to exhibit that there is also a male environment within the company." (Lisa, 22)

"Lots of hot girls, no, I'm just kidding, [...] the most important thing is to show that L'Oréal is not just the L'Oréal make-up [...]." (Anna, 25)

"[...] it's easier for to attract guys on the university level in my opinion, however it needs to be communicated as, it is not just like a nice cosmetics or nice products, because that's something that attracts girls [...]." (Daniel, 25

"For me it's, at L'Oréal the quality as a man is that you stand out. So it's something, you know it's not like you're not among the one hundred guys that all want the same job and you have to, you are more visible, because you are not one in the crowd." (Paul, 27)

When especially focusing on the male interviewees, the respondents seem to agree that the recruitment of men for L'Oréal should not result in any favoritism or unfair exclusion of potential female candidates. The special focus on hiring more men could lead to a questioning of the reasons of being hired and respondents seem to think that the importance should be to focus on increasing the number of potential candidates instead of the actual number of male hires as well as a transparent communication of this.

"I don't want L'Oréal to just want men because they don't have enough men." (Jerry, 25)

"[...] for me it makes sense to want more men employees, but I don't know, I feel sometimes they are doing it to deliberately, so people who are recruited they feel a special focus, they may think they got recruited because their gender." (Jerry, 25)

"I think, that's not to hire more men per se, but stop losing lot of male talent. So I don't think the problem is, you don't have enough men, the problem is, we don't have enough men candidates, like qualitative candidates, because I suppose in my case I would've never think of applying for L'Oréal. So I think they should be targeting more men, but you know, just to increase the inflow of men candidates but they shouldn't just be hiring them to increase the number. So yes, in the pipeline of potential hires, it should be more equal in the ratio, but then the people you hire is a completely different story." (Peter, 25)

As the topic of communicating the focus on attracting more male applicants arose, the respondents, especially the interviewed graduates, have been questioned if they were exposed to any activities or perceived and recognized any special focus in the past. However most of the asked respondents do not seem to remember any special focus or communication. They rather perceive it as a more special and exciting event due to the rarity and limitation of applications by potential male candidates.

"[...] in terms of treating me differently than the girls and I mean not just in the application process that's obviously that they shouldn't, but in terms of communication and so I'm not really sure if I noticed that some roles would be communicated a bit differently." (Tom, 25)

> "I don't want to say happy but more, not passionate, but it's always like something special when a guy wants to work here […]. It's more excited before the interview but I mean that after the interview it doesn't really matter if it was a girl or a guy, it's more like, you know, more rare. That's why it is more special." (Natalie, 25)

On the contrary, the interviewed L'Oréal employees seem to have noticed a special focus on attracting more male talents to apply to L'Oréal, more specifically male employees seem to be in the center of attention on several occasions in order to attract and interact with potential male candidates. On the contrary, one of the female employees did not notice a clear communication on specifically hiring more men rather than the focus on not neglecting males for positions which are perceived as a better fit towards female candidates.

> "I think that it was noticeable for me that they always either tried to ask a guy to go there and to present something and to be there instead of girls, so I think HR is trying to push it a little." (Daniel, 25)

> "[…] I haven't noticed that very clear communication, OK, now we are trying to hire more men. It's more like everyone is welcome and we have to open our minds a little bit more because there might be a super talented guys that can work on makeup brands for example, and let's not be biased and think they cannot, I would rather, this kind of approach would, seems more logical to me." (Maria, N/A)

When asked if the focus on attracting more male talents should be communicated within the company, the responses varied in terms of the potential outcome of the communication. In particular the male interviewees seem to have mixed opinion if the communication could result in a feeling of discrimination by the other female candidates as well as the female employees at L'Oréal or if a clear and transparent communication, especially in connection with the importance of a rather equal ratio, could benefit the company overall.

> "Maybe no, because, you know, it would be, a side effect could be that women, possible future employees would feel that they are discriminated." (Max, 27)

> "[…] there should be communicated how getting the ratio more equal has benefits for the whole company, so that they (female employees) know that having more guys in the teams and in the company will benefit even to them and not, so that they are not taking it as a discrimination." (Daniel, 25)

Moreover, the male interviewees rather seem to think that a clear communication might result in tensions between male and female employees with the long-term consequence that employees leave the company as they feel threatened and not welcome in the environment.

> "[…] I think they should build upon the actual problems and not just the number and now it creates, coming back to the topic, now it creates tension between men and women because women from my experience, they kind of feel offended and threatened because they see that good female hires are not being hired because they have to hire men and it's frustrating, some people left the company from what I heard and it's not good." (Peter, 25)

In regards to that, the interviewed female L'Oréal employees have been asked if they feel demotivated when knowing about a special attention towards male applicants. The respondents did not feel this as a threat or demotivation regarding their work attitude in contrast to the perception by the interviewed male interviewees.

> "I think no, because I think I have a lot of experience and if I am good for them, they would hire me and if they want male, they will specify it in the job description." (Rachel, 26)

> "No, I don't think its demotivating. I certainly believe that there must be some sort of balance and balance is always better and diversity is always better than having the like really, you know, uniform team. Diverse teams are also more efficient and it's more fun working there." (Maria, N/A)

4.4 Unfulfilled Expectations

During the interviews, some unfulfilled expectations have been mentioned by the interviewed graduates and L'Oréal employees. When asking the respondents about their expectations before getting in contact with the company whether through one of their events or programs or by actually starting to work there, a few similar unfulfilled expectations were mentioned. One of those was the expectation of graduates to get more close contact with the L'Oréal employees, more specifically employees similar in age and in lower position, as it is perceived to be easier to talk to and ask questions more freely based on a certain amount of trust and understanding when talking to someone more similar to yourself. In addition, graduates working on the Business Project together with L'Oréal expected to be closer with the company for example by the opportunity of visiting and working on L'Oréal's premises in order to receive deeper knowledge about the company and its culture.

> "[...] what people around you are saying, so talking to people who have been working there, who have been to the offices and actually seen the working environment, kind of experienced it. [...] I mean, always talking to people who work there helps and I haven't gotten that opportunity yet just managers and you can't talk with them the same way, I feel as Trainees for example." (Anna, 24)

> "I expected to get more in-depth in the company during the Business Project but no, so they didn't even offer us a place where we could work on the Business Project." (Rachel, 26)

Furthermore, interviewed graduates as well as L'Oréal employees seemed to be slightly disappointed by not receiving enough guidance, especially in the beginning of their project or employment as they felt it would have helped them develop better and faster as well as provide them with more exposure towards the company.

"I expected that they would invite us for some skill seminar or some seminar where we can get more information about the company, where we can get more focus and we can get, you know, in-depth the company how they are thinking and everything." (Rachel, 26)

"I was thinking that something more than an empty table but, so it was quite challenging and I was expecting it would be more training like on the job or that I have to, I would learn the company [...]" (Simon, 32)

In addition, graduates as well as L'Oréal employees seem to put a high importance on guidance and training on the job, in particular during the beginning of their career or at the start of the consultancy project. Moreover, L'Oréal employees seemed to not have their job tasks and responsibilities completely communicated prior to the start of their employment which lead to a feeling of being overwhelmed and being afraid of not fulfilling the requirements to their fullest potential as well as an overall feeling of dissatisfaction.

"[...] But that would kind of attract me, having something that is really creative but I would need somebody to guide me well." (Tom, 25)

"I expected the room, I expected to be more in touch with the company, with the people, to get know the company, the culture of the company, to know how the people are thinking, you know and everything. For example, also some basic trainings for the employees what they are making, doing." (Rachel, 26)

"I had no idea like what my responsibilities would be [...]." (Daniel, 25)

"[...] before I came to L'Oréal I would never imagine that I would do work like this [...]. I didn't know what FMCG is, I didn't know how Sales and L'Oréal work and operate on the market, so I didn't have so good and detailed imagination of it. So to be honest I really didn't know what to think and what I am going to do." (Paul, 27)

The respondents additionally mentioned that their perception of L'Oréal as being a company with a high focus on career progression is not always living up to its potential, resulting in employees staying in the same position for a longer period than expected. It seems to be a problem of communicating the actual opportunities and not matching the fast moving and innovative companies operating in today's economy. Likewise, it seems to be a problem of retaining the acquired talents due to dissatisfaction whether amongst interns or regular employees.

"[...] nowadays when the amount of time that person spends in the one position really is shortening, I think nowadays, then I think L'Oréal should adapt to that and be able to promote people more quickly, to don't let them to get stuck on that one position for a really long time because then there is no progress [...]." (Daniel, 25)

"They are not really putting too much attention on people staying here [...]." (Natalie, 25)

5 Discussion

5.1 Key Barriers of Attracting Male Applicants

The aim of the research study was to present the barriers of L'Oréal towards the attraction of more male talents. In order to gather insights and experiences, the author interviewed fourteen respondents who can be categorized into three groups based on their level of exposure to L'Oréal. During the interviews, the author focused on three main areas to receive results based on the prior defined research questions, namely the expectations and traits of importance in an employer, the perception of L'Oréal's culture, communication and values as well as the perception and importance of diversity, more specifically gender balance, in relation to L'Oréal.

The following abstracts discuss the outcomes in more detail by comparing and assessing the findings based on the relevant literature, particularly in respect to the underlying research questions R.01 to R.04, defined in *Chapter 3.2 Research Problem – Barriers of Attracting Male Applicants*. Based on the findings presented in the previous Chapter, four key barriers have been assessed according to the conducted research. However, the research exposed that these barriers not only apply towards males but graduates in general, hence those are kept more general. Only due to the overall higher attraction of female top talents by the beauty industry, L'Oréal does not seem to have a problem with recruiting the best talents. An improvement in the following aspects identified in this study, is expected to also improve the satisfaction amongst female hires. The four key barriers are as following:

1) *Communication is not fulfilling millennials high standards:* Even though L'Oréal is being perceived as very open-minded, their organization seems to be unstructured and graduates are dissatisfied and are missing a clear and transparent communication.

2) *The entrepreneurial spirit is not perceived as such by Graduates:* Although L'Oréal seems to have a strong entrepreneurial culture amongst the employees, graduates are not perceiving it as such although it is of high importance to them.

3) *Stereotypically, the company culture reflects rather male than female attributes:* Due to the fact that L'Oréal operates within the beauty industry, the company is immediately perceived as female even though the atmosphere is rather masculine.

4) *The importance of gender balance failed to be communicated successfully:* Diversity and more precisely gender balance is not communicated effectively and a clear commitment by all managerial levels is missing.

5.1.1 Key Findings of Important Employer Traits

When comparing the conducted research findings with the relevant literature, it is especially noticeable that three of the most important traits of an employer studied by researchers (Universum Global, 2015) are corresponding to the traits valued by

the interviewed millennials, namely work-life balance, career perspective and a competitive salary (Accenture, 2008). The research further found that a good work-life-balance is important for the interviewed graduates more so than for the interviewed L'Oréal employees. Graduates are putting a higher focus on the salary, however literature indicates that a strong employer brand motivates applicants to accept a seven percent lower pay than average (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

Furthermore, interviewed graduates and L'Oréal employees perceive the industry the company is operating in as highly important, which is one of the main reasons why 21 percent of the graduates are not considering applying to L'Oréal. Thus, L'Oréal should focus on communicating how the industry is separated from the actual work environment within L'Oréal in order to motivate also this group of talents to apply. Further proof is provided by the fact that 36% of the interviewees changed their opinion on applying towards L'Oréal after participating in one of their long-term programs. In addition, 79% of the interviewees either already applied, are taking L'Oréal into account or consider applying when there is a position fitting their interests, which reflects a strong employer brand. Literature discovered that millennials typically tend to be loyal to their job position rather than the company which should be leveraged by L'Oréal to focus more on the professional and personal development of their employees than trying to convince them of the company itself (Aruna & Anitha, 2015).

When analyzing the according literature, it shows that good communication, as it is expected by millennials, comes through the use of the correct channels combined with the appropriate content (Ernst & Young, 2013). Interviewees agreed with the importance of an open and proactive communication, which they received by L'Oréal. However, graduates who have participated in long-term events or programs dislike the organization of these. Appropriate channels include the employer website, friends and family as well as university fairs, which are the main contact points for graduates to obtain more information on the company's culture. In addition, companies have to concentrate on their perception by their employees and potential candidates, which requires clear communication (Drury, 2016).

Lastly, research showed that the main motivation for L'Oréal employees to apply for L'Oréal in the first place were extrinsic motivations, more specifically their desire to try something new just for fun and to experience the culture of a big corporation. However, these are factors that L'Oréal has little to no influence on, thus they should rather focus on attracting more talents by establishing a direct communication channel through the events and programs they organize.

5.1.2 Key Findings of the Perception of L'Oréal's Culture

The conducted research showed that the perception of L'Oréal's culture is characterized by a strong link with their products but also their ability to be innovative. The latter is a result of the FMCG industry, the company is operating in. Literature shows that especially companies active in the FMCG industry are very

attractive employers for millennials as it reflects the opportunity to travel and to take on an international career (Universum Global, 2015). Thus, L'Oréal should leverage this more rather than mainly promoting themselves as an employer through their products.

Moreover, interview participants describe the person L'Oréal mainly with attributes which are stereotypically considered to be male as for example being competitive, smart, analytical and egoistical, according to literature (Schneider & Bos, 2014). However, the majority of interviewees described L'Oréal when asked specifically of the gender of the person L'Oréal as female rather than male due to its relation towards the cosmetic industry, in accordance with the attributes beautiful and French which are stereotypically rather female (Schneider & Bos, 2014). This shows a large misconception about the perceived female company and a male atmosphere. L'Oréal could actually take advantage of this evidence by communicating about their culture unrelated to the cosmetic industry. In addition, graduates, who had exposure to L'Oréal for a longer time period, changed their opinion on the company solely being female, which proofs the effect these events and programs such as the Business Project have and should be further leveraged.

Especially when considering the differences between males and females, research showed that females are more likely to connect L'Oréal with their products and their passion for these products than males. Attributes of L'Oréal that are perceived equally strongly by both genders are their open-minded culture and their hard-working attitude, in connection with their innovative and entrepreneurial approach.

When talking about the six founding values of L'Oréal (L'Oréal, 2018), namely passion, innovation, entrepreneurial spirit, open-mindedness and quest for excellence, literature indicates their high importance due to the strong relation towards the attitudes and behaviors within the workplace (Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015). Several differences in the perceived importance of the founding values are observed between graduates and L'Oréal employees: Firstly, passion is only considered important by the interviewed female employees and thus does not reflect a general attitude. However, when attracting more male applicants, this less-passionate atmosphere can be a benefit that should be communicated clearer. Secondly, the culture within L'Oréal as described by L'Oréal employees is not characterized by innovation as it depends on the actual department if it is perceived innovative, however the interviewed graduates strongly associate L'Oréal with the attribute innovation. L'Oréal should leverage the innovative departments within its communication, though it is important to clearly state the connected relevance in order to avoid creating false promises and expectations. Thirdly and lastly, the value entrepreneurial spirit is only perceived as highly related by the employees contrary to graduates, who perceive this value as very surprising. This states a significant

miscommunication towards graduates and should be improved by L'Oréal's communication towards potential candidates.

5.1.3 Key Findings of the Perception of Diversity at L'Oréal

According to literature, the Czech Republic seems to be more male-oriented and homogenous rather than diverse (Lančarič, Chebeň, & Savov, 2015). Therefore, it is no surprise that also L'Oréal in the Czech Republic is not perceived as being highly cultural diverse. However, this perception is mainly created by men who base their assumption solely on L'Oréal's relation to the beauty industry. In addition, the higher proportion of women on an upper management level should be stronger communicated to improve the perception of L'Oréal. Furthermore, across many departments, L'Oréal's gender balance is actually quite equal and it is important to communicate that the imbalance of gender is highly dependent on the department and thus, does not accurately represent the whole company.

The importance of having diverse teams and more specifically a balanced gender ratio, is not significantly understood amongst the interviewees. Only some see a connection between diverse teams and an innovative and entrepreneurial mindset. This exposes the need for more accurate communication within the company about the advantages of diversity. As literature indicates, it is highly important to educate employees (Holmes, 2016) about the benefits of diversity such as improved employee engagement, enhanced customer satisfaction and brand image, and increased organic growth and profits (Landel, 2016) in order to provide them with the necessary acceptance, appreciation and skills to act upon utilizing diversity (Ostendorp & Steyaert, 2009).

Lastly, the conducted interviews exposed four areas of communication, which can be put into focus in order to make L'Oréal's corporate culture more attractive for men. These include the communication of (1) hard facts via hard numbers, salary and a steep career path, (2) the digital, innovative and entrepreneurial environment, (3) soft facts of the attributes of L'Oréal's culture through a focus on communication, transparency and guidance as well as (4) male-specific aspects of the environment. Literature describes that men seem to have a tendency to strive for entrepreneurial values, high pay, esteem and autonomy which indicates the success of promoting on these four levels (Halaby, 2003). Moreover, male interviewees appear to think that women might be offended or feel threatened by a communication directed more towards men, however, women see the purpose and believe in the reasons behind. Additionally, according to literature, in more diverse teams, more conflicts occur. These conflicts force the group to go beyond the easy solutions and bring better business performance (Herring, 2009).
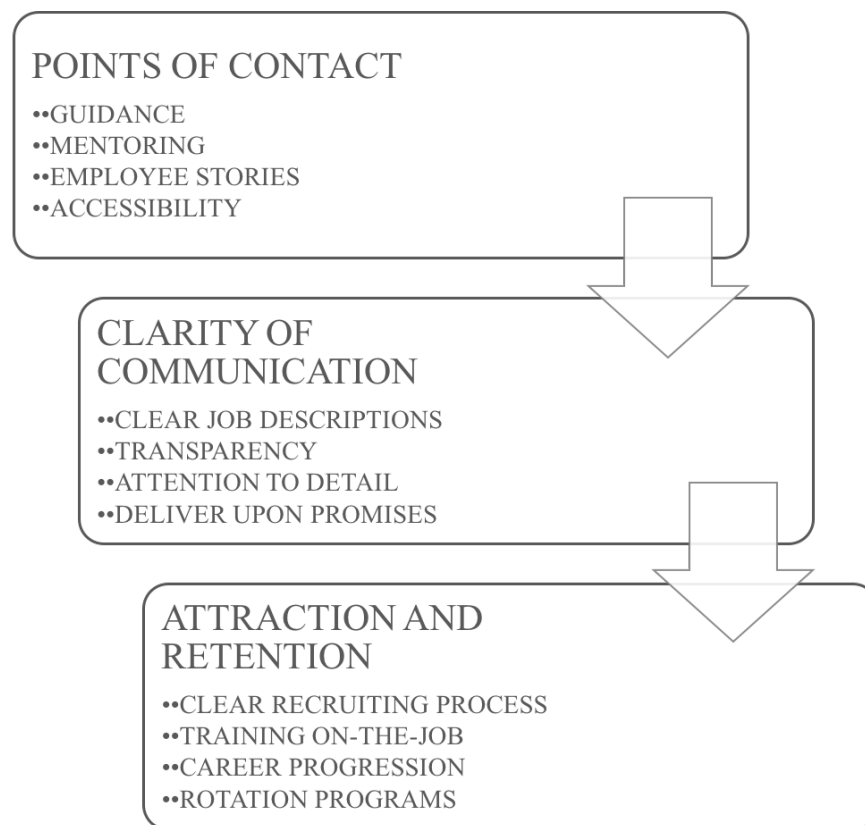
5.1.4 Unfulfilled Expectations

When comparing literature on traits of importance for millennials (chapter 2.3) with the findings of this thesis concerning unfulfilled expectations of graduates and L'Oréal's employees, several similarities have been found. The conducted research shows that current graduates are expecting close contact with L'Oréal employees in order to receive the best possible exposure towards the company, especially by obtaining clear and direct insights from employees they can relate to. This is also reflected within the literature, which describes that millennials want to be thoroughly informed about the company, they want to work for, and expect open and transparent communication (Gursoy, Maier, & Chi, 2008). In addition, the conducted research shows that guidance and training on-the-job are highly important to the interviewed graduates. Furthermore, literature also emphasizes the importance of close relationship and frequent feedback from a supervisor (Myers & Sadaghiani, 2010) and indicates how having a mentor is significantly important for companies to retain talents (Deloitte, 2017). This seems to not be appropriately fulfilled by L'Oréal.

Furthermore, a strong link between literature and conducted research can be seen in the increased need of job rotation and career progression by the graduates. Literature suggests that due to the changing mindsets of millennials, they are looking for fast career progression. This often leads to a higher fluctuation and millennials being more likely to quit their job, if they are unsatisfied than former generations (Job Application Center Team, 2017). However, this can be circumvented by improving the in-company career progression and rotation programs, as has been found in the conducted research. If the opportunities for career progression are not communicated adequately, L'Oréal is not taking advantage of its full potential.

5.2 Managerial Recommendations

In order to provide managerial recommendations, the author analyzed and assessed the previously discussed research findings: Three areas of improvement are derived, which are expected to attract and retain more (male) top candidates. The following visualization represents these three areas, namely points of contact, clarity of communication and employee attraction and retention (see Figure 21).

FIGURE 21: AREAS OF IMPROVEMENT TOWARDS ATTRACTING POTENTIAL CANDIDATES

POINTS OF CONTACT
- •GUIDANCE
- •MENTORING
- •EMPLOYEE STORIES
- •ACCESSIBILITY

CLARITY OF COMMUNICATION
- •CLEAR JOB DESCRIPTIONS
- •TRANSPARENCY
- •ATTENTION TO DETAIL
- •DELIVER UPON PROMISES

ATTRACTION AND RETENTION
- •CLEAR RECRUITING PROCESS
- •TRAINING ON-THE-JOB
- •CAREER PROGRESSION
- •ROTATION PROGRAMS

Source: own illustration

Figure 21 provides managers with more specific subjects within the three areas of importance, which should always be kept in mind when trying to attract and retain millennials and improving their employer brand. The three areas are interconnected with each other as each area can be seen as a step closer towards the final goal of attracting and moreover retaining top talents. Firstly, the points of contact with potential candidates should focus on four topics, namely guidance, mentoring, employee stories and accessibility. A focus on and enhancement of each of these topics results in an improved and more effective contact towards potential candidates. Secondly, the clarity of communication can be further divided into clear job descriptions, transparency, attention to detail and deliver upon promises, all of which are necessary steps to pursue the prior defined aim. Thirdly and lastly, in order to successfully attract and retain potential talents and fulfill their expectations, it is important to focus on the area of employee attraction and retention by offering a clear recruiting process, training on-the-job, fast career progression and rotation programs. The fulfillment of these goals are believed to be the key towards raising the number of applicants, improving the retention rate and creating job loyalty amongst millennials.

In the following abstracts, the author further explains the relation of the different areas of study to the three areas of improvement and provides suggestions for implementation, more importantly also stating specific recommendations in light of

the overall research question **R.0: What are the barriers of L'Oréal to attract more male talents to apply for a position?** and how the previously mentioned barriers can be overcome.

(1) *Communication is not fulfilling millennials high standards.*

As already mentioned, wrong communication is a major issue and should be improved by being more precise, transparent and clear. In order to enhance the communication and provide more guidance, the author recommends L'Oréal to (1) not only be cooperating with VŠE, but also other universities in Prague by having stands, attending job fairs and offering guest lectures in order to communicate their corporate culture widely, (2) provide students participating in programs and events, with a place at the offices in order to receive as much exposure as possible and (3) organize so-called 'chimney fire-evenings' which are get-together's aimed at giving the participants the opportunity to ask any kind of question in an informal setting, such as a peaceful pub or bar in order to receive a more transparent and genuine impression of the company.

(2) *The entrepreneurial spirit is not perceived as such by graduates.*

In order to tackle the problem of misconception of L'Oréal's entrepreneurial spirit, the company should leverage and build upon their history. This means, explaining the background of L'Oréal as a company of owners, developed by one scientist and emphasizing the atmosphere of entrepreneurial spirit. On a global level, L'Oréal is already putting the scientists who work for L'Oréal in focus. This is done in accordance with the founding value passion. This misses, however, a proper communication of the founding value entrepreneurial spirit. Also, steps mentioned according to the first barrier can also be applied here and used for communicating the entrepreneurial spirit.

(3) *Stereotypically, the company culture reflects rather male than female attributes.*

To resolve the issue of misperception of a female culture at L'Oréal, the company should highlight also the male aspects of its corporate culture by introducing campaigns that leverage the male attributes of the environment. Additionally, L'Oréal should take advantage of the fact that male hires will be more visible among the female employees when communicating with male employees. This means leveraging the fact that men will be at the center of attention within the company, however, execution has to be done carefully in order to not harm the brand image overall. One way to do this is using a slogan similar to 'At L'Oréal you can stand out in the crowd' and building campaigns around the promotion of L'Oréal's environment when communicating towards graduates at job fairs or similar events, targeted towards females and males separately.

(4) *The importance of gender balance failed to be communicated successfully.*

When communicating the importance of diversity and more specifically gender balance, L'Oréal should implement a three-step process, focusing on being persistent, receiving CEO commitment and implementing a holistic transformation

program, as presented in literature (Devillard, Sancier-Sultan, Kossoff, & de Zelicourt, 2016). For L'Oréal to improve diversity, it is important to get employees from all managerial levels on board in order to showcase the benefits of diverse and gender-balanced teams as presented in the theoretical research. What needs to be specifically communicated are the benefits of increased performance and creativity as well as the fact that conflict forces people to go beyond the easy solution in order to create better results.

5.3   Research Limitations and Areas for further Research

The basis of this thesis is formed by qualitative interviews with current graduates and employees from L'Oréal, certain limitations due apply in regards to the nature of conducting and analyzing qualitative interviews. The aim of this study was not the presentation of statistically representative findings and conclusion but to offer more in-depth insight of the individual believes and perceptions about L'Oréal, its corporate culture and current recruiting practices as well as to propose directions for handling and improving the perception of L'Oréal's culture in the future. The research findings should not be generalized to a wider population of graduates and L'Oréal employees. In order to be able to do so, the topic would need to be further analyzed and supported by an extensive quantitative study.

In addition, some aspects of the process of how the sample was created could potentially affect the results of the study. Although the author accomplished to receive a diverse mix of nationalities when conducting the interviews, the majority of L'Oréal employees were Czech with the exception of one Slovak and one Polish nation each. Furthermore, at the time of the interview, all participants were residents in the Czech Republic, thus, the research data and presented outcomes might be limited towards the Czech Republic. The conclusions are probably to some extent applicable also to the Europe region but should not be generalized as a whole across the world. However, as the research was mainly focused on specifics and experiences of the L'Oréal office in Prague, the participants were purposely chosen based on their connection to the HR activities in Prague and their experience with them. This makes it difficult to apply the results towards other L'Oréal offices. Moreover, due to the internationality of the students as well as the layout of their master programs, some of the interviewed graduates might have been exposed to HR activities from other L'Oréal offices, potentially resulting in a partially biased opinion about specifics of the Prague office. The author, however, informed the participants prior to the conducted interview about the specific aim to review practices of the Prague office and asked the participants to pay attention where they have been exposed to L'Oréal activities and if they can indicate whether they are talking about experiences related to the Prague office or another one. Moreover, as the mentor from L'Oréal organized the interviews for the author and due to the limited time on both the author's and the participant's side, certain limitations were inevitable. The interviewees in the group L'Oréal employees were not as diverse and neither as representative as the author initially intended to in order to obtain diverse research findings. More specifically, in terms of generalizing the findings from the perception of female L'Oréal employees, a sample of two interviewees is hardly

enough to make conclusions on all L'Oréal employees. In addition, the author was not able to take any personality traits into account when choosing the group of interviewees due to the difficulty of assessing the personality in advance and the limited time for conducting the research. Finally, any limitations of the underlying theoretical literature are consequentially also limitations towards this study.

Further research should especially focus on the quantitative aspects of the barriers of L'Oréal to attract more male applicants. More specifically, the demographics of the participants should be taken into account. The author suggests a division based on regions according to the structure of the L'Oréal Group and separately investigating areas such as Western Europe, Eastern Europe, Southern Europe, Nordics, United Kingdom, United States of America, Canada, Africa, China, to name the most important. This should not only be done for L'Oréal employees but also Graduates from the respective areas. When interviewing L'Oréal employees, it is important to use outside consultants in order to conduct additional interviews as the answers might not be honest if they are not convinced of the anonymity of their answers in case of sensitive topics are discussed. Likewise, further research should focus not only on graduates from business schools but also from other faculties and fields of study as potential top talents should not be assumed to be limited towards the field of business. Moreover, additional qualitative and quantitative research should also be done in areas closely connected to the research topic, such as diversity management programs, effectiveness of recruiting programs, number of applicants etc. Finally, any implemented activities should be analyzed and assessed on their long-term effectiveness.

6 Conclusion

The purpose of this research study was to identify the barriers why L'Oréal is unable to attract and recruit more male applicants in order to recommend L'Oréal ways of improvements. Therefore, the theoretical part of the thesis introduces the concept of war for talent across industries, showcasing the competition on top talents amongst employers. To provide the reader with a solid understanding of the marketing-related theory, the author explains the concepts of an employer brand in connection with the importance of millennials in the current workforce. In order for the reader to understand the applied psychological concepts, the author presented the psychological differences between genders and their respective stereotypical attributes. Moreover, the author provided insights about the importance of diversity and its management, as consequentially it is highly important due to the relevance of gender equality across industries.

In the author's original research, fourteen qualitative interviews have been conducted with a division into three categorize based on their level of exposure towards L'Oréal. The participants have been selected with an almost equal distribution of gender (six females and eight males), including eight nationalities and aged between 22 to 32. Six of the interview participants were L'Oréal employees and have been asked specifically about their perception of the company culture, how they were recruited and any changes they may have been exposed to since their employment. The remaining eight interviews were conducted among current and recent graduates, equally divided into two groups: Those that participated in L'Oréal events and programs such as the case competition Brandstorm or the CEMS-specific consultancy-course Business Project and those without prior engagement with L'Oréal. The participants were especially interviewed on their experiences with L'Oréal, their exposure towards the culture and the fulfillment of their expectations.

In order to pursue the aim of the thesis, the author conducted the study with the purpose of answering the main research question: *What are the barriers of L'Oréal to attract more male talents to apply for a position?* The author further addressed four sub-questions, which helped to assess and resolve its main goal.

> *What are the existing gaps between L'Oréal and graduates' expectations towards a potential employer?*

On the basis of the research findings, several gaps seem to exist between the expectations of graduates of an employer and what L'Oréal has to offer. These are mainly according to the perception of L'Oréal's work-life-balance, the beauty industry as such, L'Oréal's guidance and on-the-job training programs as well as their miscommunication on several of these points. Research revealed that millennials are more loyal towards the job than the company, looking for guidance, mentoring and personal as well as professional development, which L'Oréal does not seem to offer to them according to their standards.

What are the misconceptions of L'Oréal's culture and values based on the level of exposure to the company?

As the research was conducted with groups out of three levels of exposure towards L'Oréal, research findings uncovered several traits of L'Oréal's corporate culture which are not perceived by the graduates in the same way. L'Oréal employees strongly believe in the entrepreneurial spirit and the innovation power of the company is acting upon, however graduates do not seem to recognize it in spice of their tendency to place high importance on these areas. Moreover, the company in relation to its products is perceived as highly feminine, however the attributes describing the culture of L'Oréal are stereotypically masculine. This offers a great potential for L'Oréal to take advantage of. Additionally, employees do not actually derive their passion from the products but rather from the company culture, which could showcase potential candidates how they can be a cultural fit even without strong interest in beauty.

What are the perceptions of diversity and gender balance in relation to L'Oréal?

Since L'Oréal stands in close connection to its products, it seems obvious that the company is rather feminine. However, research exposed that the more exposure the interviewees had to the company, the more their opinion changed. Interviewees with a high level of exposure receive the company as rather balanced and only certain departments such as marketing seem to have an imbalanced gender ratio. Furthermore, employees are not widely educated on the benefits a diverse team can bring to the overall business performance, among others by occurring conflicts which forces employees to reflect their own assumptions and be more creative.

What are the unfulfilled expectations L'Oréal should focus on in order to enhance their employer brand?

L'Oréal employees as well as graduates seem to have several unfulfilled expectations which tend to worsen the more exposure they had to the company. Due to L'Oréal's strong employer brand across industries, expectations are rather high and L'Oréal has to pay special attention towards their communication processes. Research showed that L'Oréal's communication is not clear and transparent enough and does not always deliver its promises made during the recruiting processes which leads to a high dissatisfaction. Moreover, millennials expect to receive more guidance and exposure when participating in L'Oréal's programs as well as more trainings on-the-job trainings such as seminars targeting personal growth or mentoring programs.

Overall, L'Oréal's employer brand has many attributes which are perceived strongly by graduates and reflecting their position amongst its competitors in the strife for the best talents. However, the research exposed that L'Oréal's barriers of attracting more males do not, as initially assumed, solely specific apply to men, but rather are barriers amongst top talents in general with the only difference being that L'Oréal's operations in the beauty industry naturally attract more female talents, providing L'Oréal with access to a larger talent pool to pick from.

In conclusion, resolving the barriers which hinder graduates from applying to L'Oréal is not an easily achieved goal. It is generally a very difficult aspiration to change people's perception which requires time, commitment and persistence. The advantage that L'Oréal has amongst its competitors by focusing solely on the beauty industry seems to be their biggest disadvantage towards attracting male graduates. However, L'Oréal has many attributes it can leverage in order to address the high expectations of millennials towards their (future) employers. In order to convince graduates of L'Oréal's strong employer brand, the company has to perfectly understand the miscommunications and unfulfilled expectations and act upon those on all managerial levels to finally find ways to convince graduates that L'Oréal will be a cultural fit.

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8 Appendix

8.1 Appendix A: Interview Log

Category	Nick- name	Gender	Age	Country of Origin	Occupation	Date
Graduates without connection to L'Oréal	Lisa	Female	22	Portuguese	Full time student with a (part time) job	Saturday, 14.04.
	Jerry	Male	25	Chinese	Full time student with a (part time) job	Saturday, 14.04.
	Anna	Female	24	Norwegian	Full time student without a (part time) job	Friday, 13.04.
	Tom	Male	25	Czech	Full time student with a (part time) job	Monday, 16.04.
Graduates with connection to L'Oréal	Max	Male	27	Italian	Full time student without a (part time) job	Thursday, 19.04.
	Rachel	Female	26	Czech	Full time student with a (part time) job	Thursday, 19.04.
	Monica	Female	23	Austrian	Full time student without a (part time) job	Tuesday, 17.04.
	Peter	Male	25	Czech	Full time student with	Tuesday, 24.04.

					a (part time) job	
Part time or full time employees at L'Oréal	Daniel	Male	25	Czech	Full time student with a (part time) job at L'Oréal	Friday, 13.04.
	Lucas	Male	27	Czech	Full time employee at L'Oréal	Friday, 13.04.
	Paul	Male	27	Czech	Full time employee at L'Oréal	Tuesday, 17.04.
	Simon	Male	32	Czech	Full time employee at L'Oréal	Tuesday, 17.04.
	Natalie	Female	25	Slovak	Full time student with a (part time) job at L'Oréal	Thursday, 19.04.
	Maria	Female	N/A	Polish	Full time employee at L'Oréal	Tuesday, 17.04.

8.2   Appendix B: Interview Guides

8.2.1   Appendix B.1: Interview Guide – Graduates without Exposure

Interview Guide

This Interview Guide is intended to help me throughout the process of the interviews to remember the specific areas I would like to cover and help me phrase the questions appropriately. It should not be seen as a word-for-word script but rather as a "cheat-sheet", in order to keep the interview natural and flexible to respond or adapt based on the answers.

Semi-structured in-depth interview – one-to-one with Graduates without prior connection to L'Oréal

<u>>>ask prior about agreement to be recorded<<</u>

Hello _____, first thanks a lot for taking the time for this interview, I really appreciate it! My name is Sarah and I invited you today to talk about your opinions on different employer branding measures, L'Oréal as a possible future employer, your experiences of the previous contact you had with L'Oréal and your perception of the culture with a special focus on diversity as well as your recommendations for improvement. You have been selected because you are amongst the target group of L'Oréal.

I will be giving several open questions and your personal view is very important. Feel free to express your opinions and experiences during this interview – both positive and negative opinions are welcome and there are no right or wrong answers. So, please express yourself honestly.

The whole interview will be recorded for research purposes, but I will be the only person listening to the tape. Your name or any other personal information will not be revealed in the study or shared with anyone except me. The results will be shared as part of my master thesis and also used by L'Oréal CZ for research purposes.

In terms of organization, the interview will last for approximately one hour, but you are free to stop or leave the interview at any given time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

So, let's start with a short introduction of myself. I am Sarah, 25 years old, currently studying my Master here in Prague but I am originally from Germany and the last thing to do in order to graduate is to write my thesis and I chose to do this with the help of L'Oréal! I am looking forward to hear about your experiences and opinions.

Now could you please introduce yourself - where are you from, how old are you and what is your current occupation (student, working student, intern, Graduate)? When are you graduating?

>>Employer Branding measures<<

- How did you get to know L'Oréal? Do you remember the first contact you had?
- Are you considering applying for a position at L'Oréal?
- What are you looking for in an employer? What is important to you (e.g. salary, benefits, work-time-balance, diversity, environmental impact, career perspective?
- Are you actively looking for a job and where are you starting to look for opportunities?

>>Perception of L'Oréal's culture<<

- How do you describe the culture of L'Oréal? How do you imagine L'Oréal's atmosphere/culture?
- If L'Oréal was a person, how would you describe it?
- Is there something you would like to know about L'Oréal as an employer that you don't know?
- Imagine you are hiring a new candidate for L'Oréal, for which traits are you looking for?
- Passion, Innovation, Entrepreneurial spirit, Open-mindedness, Quest for Excellence, Responsibility → those are the six founding values of L'Oréal. Would you agree with all of them? Can you see the relation? Which ones surprised you and why?

>>Diversity at L'Oréal<<

- "Diversity at L'Oréal" – what does come to your mind? (Name three keywords)
- How do you perceive the ratio of women and men at L'Oréal?
- How do you feel about the special focus on male applicants? How is it communicated by L'Oréal? How should it be communicated by the company?
- What do you think a man is looking for in L'Oréal? What should be promoted to make more men apply?
- Is there anything that can be improved? Any recommendations on how it could be improved?

Would you like to add anything else or do you want to ask me anything?

>>Questions end<<

I would like to thank you again very much for taking the time to participate in this interview and for your opinions. I have gained many valuable insights and it will be

of great help for the results of my thesis. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me. Also if you would like to read about the results of my thesis, I am more than happy to share my thesis with you, once finished.

Thanks a lot and have a great rest of the day!

Interview Guide

This Interview Guide is intended to help me throughout the process of the interviews to remember the specific areas I would like to cover and help me phrase the questions appropriately. It should not be seen as a word-for-word script but rather as a "cheat-sheet", in order to keep the interview natural and flexible to respond or adapt based on the answers.

Semi-structured in-depth interview – one-to-one with Graduates with connection to L'Oréal

>>ask prior about agreement to be recorded<<

Hello _____, first thanks a lot for taking the time for this interview, I really appreciate it! My name is Sarah and I invited you today to talk about your opinions on different employer branding measures, L'Oréal as a possible future employer, your experiences of the previous contact you had with L'Oréal and your perception of the culture with a special focus on diversity as well as your recommendations for improvement. You have been selected because you participated in a specific recruitment program together with L'Oréal CZ e.g. the CEMS Business Project or L'Oréal Brandstorm competition here in the Czech Republic.

I will be giving several open questions and your personal view is very important. Feel free to express your opinions and experiences during this interview – both positive and negative opinions are welcome and there are no right or wrong answers. So, please express yourself honestly.

The whole interview will be recorded for research purposes, but I will be the only person listening to the tape. Your name or any other personal information will not be revealed in the study or shared with anyone except me. The results will be shared as part of my master thesis and also used by L'Oréal CZ for research purposes.

In terms of organization, the interview will last for approximately one hour, but you are free to stop or leave the interview at any given time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

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>>Questions start<<

Now could you please introduce yourself - where are you from, how old are you and what is your current occupation?

>>Employer Branding measures<<

- How did you get to know L'Oréal? Do you remember the first contact you had?
- Did you participate in any program together with L'Oréal (e.g. Business Project, Brandstorm)? How did you like the program? Anything that could be improved?
- Are you considering applying for a position at L'Oréal? Did the participation in one of the programs change your mind about this?
- What are you looking for in an employer? What is important to you (e.g. salary, benefits, work-time-balance, diversity, environmental impact, career perspective?

>>Perception of L'Oréal's culture<<

- How do you describe the culture of L'Oréal? How did you perceive the employees you were in contact with?
- If L'Oréal is a person, how would you describe it?
- Can you think of something you expected to be different before you got in contact with L'Oréal (e.g. about the culture, about the atmosphere)?
- Is there something that surprised you about L'Oréal, that you didn't know before you were in contact with them? How could it be communicated?
- Imagine you are hiring a new candidate for L'Oréal, for which traits are you looking for?
- Passion, Innovation, Entrepreneurial spirit, Open-mindedness, Quest for Excellence, Responsibility → those are the six founding values of L'Oréal. Would you agree with all of them? Can you see the relation? Which ones surprise you and why?

>>Diversity at L'Oréal<<

- "Diversity at L'Oréal" – what does come to your mind? (Name three keywords)
- How do you perceive the ratio of women and men at L'Oréal?
- How do you feel about the special focus on male applicants? How is it communicated by L'Oréal? How should it be communicated by the company?

- What do you think a man is looking for in L'Oréal? What should be promoted to make more men apply?
- Is there anything that can be improved? Any recommendations on how it could be improved?

Would you like to add anything else or do you want to ask me anything?

>>Questions end<<

I would like to thank you again very much for taking the time to participate in this interview and for your opinions. I have gained many valuable insights and it will be of great help for the results of my thesis. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me. Also if you would like to read about the results of my thesis, I am more than happy to share my thesis with you, once finished.

Thanks a lot and have a great rest of the day!

8.2.3   Appendix B.3: Interview Guide – L'Oréal Employees

Interview Guide

This Interview Guide is intended to help me throughout the process of the interviews to remember the specific areas I would like to cover and help me phrase the questions appropriately. It should not be seen as a word-for-word script but rather as a "cheat-sheet", in order to keep the interview natural and flexible to respond or adapt based on the answers.

Semi-structured in-depth interview – one-to-one with L'Oréal employees

>>ask prior about agreement to be recorded<<

Hello _____, first thanks a lot for taking the time for this interview, I really appreciate it! My name is Sarah and I invited you today to talk about your experience with the different employer branding measures currently in place by L'Oréal and your perception of the culture with a special focus on diversity as well as your recommendations for improvement. You have been selected because you participated in a specific recruitment program prior to your employment or you somewhat fit the target group of my study.

I will be giving several open questions and your personal view is very important. Feel free to express your opinions and experiences during this interview – both positive and negative opinions are welcome and there are no right or wrong answers. So, please express yourself honestly.

The whole interview will be recorded for research purposes, but I will be the only person listening to the tape. Your name or any other personal information will not

be revealed in the study or shared with anyone except me. The results will be shared as part of my master thesis and also used by L'Oréal CZ for research purposes.

In terms of organization, the interview will last for approximately half an hour to one hour, but you are free to stop or leave the interview at any given time.

Do you have any questions before we begin?

So, let's start with a short introduction of myself. I am Sarah, 25 years old, currently studying my Master here in Prague but I am originally from Germany and the last thing to do in order to graduate is to write my thesis and I chose to do this with the help of L'Oréal! I am looking forward to hear about your experience and opinions.

>>Questions start<<

Now could you please introduce yourself - where are you from, how old are you, what is your current position at L'Oréal and since when have you been working for L'Oréal?

Can you shortly describe the main tasks of your position?

>>Employer Branding measures<<

- How did you get to know L'Oréal? Do you remember the first contact you had?
- What made you apply for a position at L'Oréal? How did you get recruited?
- Did you participate in any program before starting to work at L'Oréal (e.g. Business Project, Brandstorm)? How did you like the program? Anything that could be improved? Did you consider applying for L'Oréal before participating in the program/ did the program change your mind?
- What are you looking for in an employer? What is important to you (e.g. salary, benefits, work-time-balance, diversity, environmental impact, career perspective?

>>Perception of L'Oréal's culture<<

- How do you describe the culture of L'Oréal? How do you describe the atmosphere in the office?
- If L'Oréal was a person, how would you describe it?
- Can you think of something you expected to be different before you started to work at L'Oréal (e.g. about your position, about the culture, about the atmosphere)?
- Is there something that surprised you about L'Oréal, that you didn't know before you applied? How could it be communicated?
- Imagine you are hiring a new candidate for L'Oréal, for which traits are you looking for?

- Passion, Innovation, Entrepreneurial spirit, Open-mindedness, Quest for Excellence, Responsibility → those are the six founding values of L'Oréal. Which ones are you most confronted during your daily work? Which ones do you identify most with?

>>Diversity at L'Oréal<<

- "Diversity at L'Oréal" – what does come to your mind? (Name three keywords)
- How do you describe the gender balance at L'Oréal? (Ratio of men and women)
- Did you see a change throughout the time you are working at L'Oréal?
- How do you feel about the special focus on male applicants? How is it communicated within the company? How should it be communicated within the company?
- What do you think a man is looking for in L'Oréal? What should be promoted to make more men apply?
- Is there anything that can be improved? Any recommendations on how it could be improved?

Would you like to add anything else or do you want to ask me anything?

>>Questions end<<

I would like to thank you again very much for taking the time to participate in this interview and for your opinions. I have gained many valuable insights and it will be of great help for the results of my thesis. If you have any further questions, feel free to contact me. Also if you would like to read about the results of my thesis, I am more than happy to share my thesis with you, once finished.

Thanks a lot and have a great rest of the day!