Managing the employer brand to attract talents in the organization

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***Abstract**: Nowadays, the interest for attracting talented employees represents one of the most significant organizational goal. The talents role in the organization has been highlighted in the last decades as an important asset in creating added value to the company. According to Barney (1997) human capital is" a rare and difficult to imitate resource" through which organizations achieve high level of productivity and organizational performance. To achieve this goal, companies must create strategies to succeed in attracting valuable employees into the organization. Lately, a successful strategy for attracting talents is the creation of an attractive employer brand. Without being an exhaustive approach, this paper aims to explore the relation between employer branding and the attraction of talented employees. Also, this article discusses some factors that organizations can use for developing an attractive employer branding through which they could achieve the recruitment goals. The study is a theoretical research which has some limitations: it was not tested in practice; its development is based on the information from the literature review and the research of the most reputed brands strategy. Second limitation consists in using only three factors (credibility achieved through the public relations strategy, employee value preposition and brand visibility) for developing a model of an attractive employer brand construction. Given these limitations, it is worth continuing and expanding research in this area.*

Key words: human capital, talents, employer brand, competitiveness, recruitment

JEL: M1, M5

1. Introduction

In an increasingly globalized and digitized economy, many of the practices that a decade ago seemed to be just predictions, nowadays they are present in the organizational day-to-day life, invading more and more of its processes. The changes of organizational processes have not been imposed forcefully, but it has been a natural shift in ensuring a hard-to-reach competitiveness without quick adaptation strategies and actions.

In this organizational transformation, human resource management has not escaped untouchable, creating a completely different paradigm of what human resources management meant so far. Today, many companies, especially those with highly changing environments, have created departments that incorporate more than the traditional human resources processes, the new departments have a strategic role, a role in which people have a central place in achieving organizational performance and which are called Human Capital Management departments.

In this context, the search for talented employees, ready to cope with multiple challenges in the business environment, has opened the way for new practices that organizations are increasingly using in their pursuit of success. In the struggle to attract and acquire talented people, companies have endeavored to use in the last decades, one of the most powerful weapons, the creation of an employer brand.

Given the main trends mentioned above, the paper aims to explore the relation between employer branding and the attraction of talented employees. The content of the paper is based on the answer to some key questions:

Q1. Could a stronger employer brand increase the chances of attracting talent to the organization?

O2. Does the employer branding have an external an internal value?

Q3. Does the online medium represent the main channel for employer brand visibility?

The answer to these questions is based on the research of the literature and on the author's observations and interactions with entrepreneurs and specialists in building an employer brand. Also, this article highlighted an organizational strategy for developing an attractive employer branding through which they could achieve the recruitment goals.

2. Literature review

The importance attributed to the attraction of valuable human resources is not a very recent one, the interest in this subject was more common with the development of modern human capital theory. The concept of human capital was attributed to a major interest, especially in the second half of the 20th century, when, with the development of technology, the highly qualified human resource was an important factor of competitiveness for both nations and companies. Thus, the growth and development of the knowledge and skills stock of an organization's employees have a positive effect on organizational performance, especially in a changing economic environment characterized by numerous challenges the business environment needs to overcome them and to win. Gary Becker (1964) argues that economic growth in some countries is explained by the expansion of scientific and technical knowledge that contributes to increasing labor productivity and production.

The basis for productivity and production growth lies in human capital that can be defined, according to the OECD (2001), as the knowledge, skills, competences and attributes of a person and facilitates the creation of personal, social and economic well-being. Moreover, human capital, in addition to ensuring economic well-being, also adds an economic and social value to it. In this respect, Singapore constitutes a successful example (Toma, 2019). Wallace (2010) argued that "human capital represents those skills, abilities, knowledge built into an individual that contribute to the production process by creating economic or social value.

These benefits are ensured by the fact that human capital held by people has some attributions that make it unique compared to other factors of production .According to Stiles and Kulvisaechana (2003) for organizations to achieve competitive advantage it is not dependent, as is traditionally assumed, on such bases as natural resources, technology or economies of scale since these are increasingly easy to imitate. Rather competitive advantage is, according to the resource best view dependent on the valuable, rare and hard to imitate resources that reside within the organization. Human capital in a real sense is an 'invisible asset'.

In line of these, Holland et al. (2007) had highlighted that" products and processes can therefore be more readily replicated by competitors, and intangible assets such as brands, intellectual capital and talent have become critical to organisational success.

Therefore, in this new context dominated by intangible resources, the "companies that want to dominate their industries must be able to attract and retain talented employees. They must also engage people like never if they want to innovate and grow. Only those companies that win the hearts and minds of their top talent will be able to deliver value over both the short and long terms" (Athey, 2004).

Otherwise, Cheese et al. (2008) mentioned that" Talent in the workplace is increasingly identified as a key factor in determining success. If effectively managed it has the potential to be a productive resource capable of adding value and competitive advantage to an organization. Summarizing the views outlined above, the competitive advantage of companies can be given by the talents they manage to attract and maintain in the organization. According with the authors Swanepoel, Erasmus, Schenk, & Tshilongamulenzhe (2014)" Talent attraction is significant for organizational productivity and thus human capital spending entails the attainment, management and maintenance of a talented workforce".

In order to achieve this goal, talent management is needed. Thus, the literature in the field shows this process as being" an organizational capacity to identify the right person for the right job and at the right time" (United Nations Development Program). The variety of processes that talent management encompasses was surprised by Khatri et al. (2010) who mentioned that "talent Management, often referred to as Human Capital Management, is the process of recruiting, managing, assessing, developing and maintaining an organization's most important resource- people."

Berger and Berger's (2003) definition of talent management is based on proactively identifying, selecting and nurturing key performers, the sourcing, development and allocation of replacements for key personnel and the allocation of resources to key talent,

contingent on their potential value to the firm. Nevertheless, talent management has a different meaning for each company as it is "applied differently from one organization to another depending on the type and stage of development where they are" (Marinescu et al., 2016). According to Gisele et al (2016)" attracting and retaining the right group of people with the required skills mix is thus a combination of the branding proposition and a range of recruitment, selection and performance management strategies".

Therefore, with the rise of talent competition, the concept of employer branding emerged as a response to the need for companies to attract highly skilled and growth potential individuals.

This concept appears in the literature in the early 1990s, both in research in the field of human resources management, as well as in marketing and public relations. Being an interdisciplinary domain, we propose in the following lines to highlight the main defining elements.

In the first literature approaches, the concept designates according to Ambler and Barrow (1996) "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employee company". Earlier research in the field showed that the employer's brand, brings real benefits to companies. The findings of Ritson (2002) study indicated that companies with strong employer brands can potentially reduce the cost of employee acquisition, improve employee relations, increase employee retention and even offer lower salaries for comparable staff to firms with weaker employer brands.

More specifically, Backahous, Tikoo (2004) mentioned that the employer brand represents" the firm's capability of differentiation as an employer from competitors". Therefore, this approach captures the origins of the corporate brand, the marketing one, which aims to highlight the unique aspects of the firm's employment placement or environment. The necessity of positioning on the market is explained by Mosley (2007) who asserted that the employer branding was developed due to the growing competition among rival companies which required talent to compete and achieve growth and sustainability. In line of these, Aggerholm et al.(2011) pointed that an "employer branding is a strategic branding process which creates, negotiates and enacts sustainable relationships between an organisation and its potential and existing employees under the influence of the varying corporate contexts with the purpose of co-creating sustainable values for the individual, the organisation and society as a whole. In the approach of Aggerholm et. the concept captures two dimensions. The first dimension covers to the role of internal branding, and the second dimension includes an external value, a social value. But both are based on building sustainable relationships. For most companies, the employer branding represents a priority in the war of talent in a highly competitive labor market. According to the Universum survey, the global employer branding leader, (2018) "Employer branding remains a top priority for companies regardless of size, industry or region. 84% of the World's Most Attractive Employers say employer branding is one of their top priorities, up from 79% in 2017." Considering the increasing importance shown to this concept, companies are trying to find the most persuasive strategies for getting talent. Thus, with the growth of

social media popularity, the concept has gained a new dimension. This new dimension focuses on developing a relationship of trust with potential employees through social media. Moreover, social media has become a main channel for recruiting talent.

Social media concept represents" a group of Internet-based applications that build on the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0, and that allow the creation and exchange of User Generated Content" (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010). For businesses, Social media platforms can serve as an appropriate cyber-space to promote and connect themselves with the actual and prospect employees (Grzesiuk and Wawer, 2018). Thus, in the digitized economy," Social Media is rapidly emerging as a popular and important tool for Employer Branding as that's where the talent is" (Nanda, N. and Saini, G. (2018) quoted Russell, 2009; Laick & Dean, 2011).

Thus, the employer brand helps to convey the workforce that the organizational culture, benefits, employee's engagement and growth opportunities are superior to those of the competitors. Starting from this conclusion drawn from the literature review, I will highlight some guidelines that companies can use in creating an attractive employer brand. The strategy below is not the only one, many more have been developed over time, but the one presented below contains three elements that cannot be missed and based on which a consistent brand can be built to attract talent into the organization.

3. Research methodology

The article is an exploratory study based on author`s observations and literature investigation which has two objectives:

O1. To analyze the relation between employer branding and the attraction of talented employee,

O2. To develop an organizational strategy for developing a consistent employer brand.

The interest for the employer branding concept has generally dominated the last two decades. Backhaus (2016) noticed that Ambler and Barrow in 1996 "introduced the term "employer branding" into the lexicon of human resource management".

Although it is a new concept, its popularity increased sharply and has become a topic of interest for both academic researchers and practitioners, especially those in the field of human resources. The attention paid by human resources specialists is explained by the fact that initially, the employer brand was developed as a marketing technique in the process of recruiting and retaining employees. In the early stages, the employer branding had seen as an external function which consists in promoting and ensuring the attractiveness of the employer on the labor market (Backhaus,2016).

With the development of researches and the expansion of organizational practices in terms of people management, the employer brand is gaining even more importance. Thus, the employer branding appears as a "qualitative features of the employing company, which are attractive to a target audience" (Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012), also as a technique for increasing employees' motivation and retention. Therefore, the employer branding also acquires an internal value. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) mentioned that employer branding" feeds perceptions of organization identity and organizational

culture, which leads to employee brand loyalty and ultimately employee productivity" (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The internal value was highlighted also by Gozukara and Hatipoglu (2016). They mentioned that the employer brand values impact organizational citizenship behaviors, which may potentially be a link from employer brand to employee productivity and other outcomes. Moreover, with the rise of online communication media, employer branding has gained greater visibility and the opportunity to promote itself among stakeholders. For example, in the studies conducted by Eger, Mičík and Řehoř (2018); Mičík and Mičudová (2018), Eger et al (2019), the impact of the online medium on creating and increasing the attractiveness of the employer brand was analyzed. The results indicate that websites and social media sites are used by companies to communicate and increase their employer branding attractiveness.

Based on the author's findings (literature review and the interaction and observation of the companies practices), the whole argument is built around the hypothesis that a positive employer brand image generates organizational attractiveness (Lievens, 2007), and attractiveness means congruence between the organization's values and goals and those of the prospective employees (Elegbe, 2018).

Given the evolution of the concept and its implications, the paper aims to explore the relation between employer branding and the attraction of talented employees. The content of the paper is based on the answer to some key questions:

Q1. Could a stronger employer brand increase the chances of attracting talent to the organization?

O2. Does the employer branding have an external an internal value?

Q3. Does the online medium represent the main channel for employer brand visibility?

The second stage of the paper presents a strategy based on three factors that companies can use to create and increase the attractiveness of the employer brand.

4. Results and discussions

Attracting and acquisition of talent people involves the existence of an attractive employer branding. To achieve this goal, it is necessary a consistent planned strategy based on defining employee value proposition, building a realistic but persuasive message through Public Relations and Marketing content dissemination and increasing visibility through the most suitable social media channels.

These issues are developed in the following sections. The purpose of this content is to create a strategy that companies can use to get an employer brand to help them attract talent.

1) Credibility achieved through Public Relations strategy

The strategy of creating an employer brand has common elements to the product strategy. Thus, similar with the product brand strategy, there are major differences between using Marketing and Public Relations in creating the employer brand. By using marketing, companies pay (job advertisements) to communicate brand to applicants who are looking for new opportunities, but for public relations, companies must provide credibility to win the goodwill of the public which is harder to achieve without consistent work

and solid knowledge of social trends, people management and public relations. In this research, we will focus our attention on Public Relations because the benefits are lasting and much more credible.

First, for creating a brand, the organization must define their unique value, their unicity in the market. For getting this, companies must be creative, transparent and consistent both internally and externally. Therefore, this unique place is influenced by a mix of factors that create the perceived image and reputation of the company as a place to work. That's why companies must define a realistic workforce plan based on a clear vision of the human capital they need. Also, a well-planned organizational environment will reduce future risks, increases employee motivation and promotes a good employer image on the labor market.

Second, companies need to translate the plan into concrete actions and results and then make them visible through attractive public relations content. Visibility and consistency are mandatory conditions for increasing brand awareness because as a result of the growing competition for well-trained, highly qualified workers to handle new technologies, the employer brand has begun to be an important tool for attracting talent to the company. In the new context, people are no longer seeking for a job, they are looking for a place where their needs, values, aspirations intertwine with the organizational ones. In other words, people are looking for the experience that the company sells through stories (messages, experiences, actions, images, opinions, interactions) about it. In this competition of creating a strong employer brand, an important role is played by current employees, they are the sincere voice, they are these credible spokespeople who can most influence the reputation of good employer. Therefore, no matter how he attempts to embellish the company external image, the facts and internal actions are the ones that really matter. Credibility is given by the concrete actions at the internal level that create loyalty, engagement and employee satisfaction. Through communication and public relations actions companies will increase visibility among target audience, create brand awareness and gain positive brand sentiment (Josan, 2010).

In order to increase work satisfaction, there is a need for human capital development opportunities that the company should provide both for increased satisfaction, work productivity and good employer image. A satisfied employee will be able to attract valuable candidates to the company.

2) Employee value proposition

It is necessary to use a single vision by creating a well-defined message that claims the benefits of the company. Of course, it should be in line with the current employee's views on the company. For this, it requires a very good knowledge of the company's values, vision and strategy, it must dispel any confusion, it must define that unique place for the company among valuable employers. A very important role for creating this unique message is the definition of employee value proposition. The employee value proposition provides information about career benefits, organizational spaces (cool, uniqueness etc), challenging or intellectually engaging work, and flexible hours or other time off benefits. For example, Novartis, a global healthcare company based in Switzerland, it announced that a 14 weeks parental leave was offered for all staff. More recently, Volvo Switzerland has upped the ante by saying it will give its employees six months parental leave (source: https://www.thelocal.ch/20190502/volvo-switzerland-to-offer-staff-six-months-paren-

tal-leave-family-parenting. This employee's benefit is part of the attracting talent strategy by creating a value proposition that differentiates them on the market and ensure them a good employer reputation. The employer brand is how this message is articulated across all the company stakeholders consistently, how the company organization stands for, and the reasons employees are motivated to work there. Consistency is not easy to achieve if the organization fails to identify those values / benefits that are specific to them or which they want to potentiate as the most important. That's why a first step is to get to know itself, to connect the current and future business strategy to the values of organizational culture, employee profile, and leadership style. The second step is to gain a good understanding of the competition to see where they stand in relation to others in terms of employee value preposition. Without these connected elements, it is very difficult to articulate a consistent strategy.

3) Brand visibility

Thirdly, creating a strong employer brand requires visibility. Thus, knowing and using high-potential communication media to reach mass of audience, and especially the target ones, is another tool that employers need to use. To ensure employer brand visibility, several actions need to be well planned and implemented. Of these, the following may be listed:

- create a specific and more personal career site. This must be a magnifying glass of the internal work environment, therefore, photos of the team, employ quotes and testimonials and a unique and relevant presentation of the company's benefits will help to provide a more valuable profile.

- stimulate the employees sharing of the company news and updates on their personal social networking pages (LinkedIn, Facebook, Instagram – photos, Twitter, Vimeo etc.) These can be stimulated by actions designed to create a sense of belonging to the organizational values by treating them as a teammate and by rewarding them through a referral employee program. LinkedIn is generally used for posting advertisements, searching for candidates, and contacting and vetting candidates (Jobvite, 2014). On the other hand, Facebook and Twitter are used more to showcase the employer brand and to generate referrals as well as to post advertisements (Jobvite, 2014).

- create official social media channels. Social media is one of the most powerful tools for becoming visible and credible. To meet this goal, it is necessary to design an accurate strategy and plan because "it is important that the right person hears about it in the right time and that he/she spreads the word to the right people through the right communication channel" (Tălpău, 2014). The official media channels are a medium of communication through which organizations can disseminate messages, images, videos in a manner that is more suited to the target audience. Also, the official media channels are efficient because could facilitates quick interaction between companies and public. The quality and persuasion of the content can generate visibility and credibility to the employer brand. To their official channels, companies could persuade using employees' testimonials, photos with unusual/cool workplace environment, positive relationships, great awards, creative content about employees' benefits, challenging team and organizational projects, interesting company events and targeted recruitment content. These are just a few of the most common content, but their list does not stop here; it is ideal that the

social media channel manages to make the most representative employee values and deliver them as efficiently as possible through this medium of communication.

Each element is very important because is a part of an interdependent process, the lack of one of them will affect the achievement of brand effectiveness. This will also affect the organization's strategy in attracting talents and in the long term, the organization's own performance. Therefore, it is necessary to develop an integrated strategy, well targeted, so that it leads to competitive advantages for the organization.

5. Conclusions

From this study we can therefore conclude that development of employer branding implies consistency, credibility and transparency in the relationship between organizations and the target audience (internal and external). First, the internal audience is a key player because their opinions and current satisfaction could influence the brand reputation. A satisfied employee will be able to attract valuable candidates to the company and to increase the organization performance. Second, the external audience needs suited messages and proper communication medium to achieve quality interaction between company and potential employees.

This employee's benefit is part of the attracting talent strategy by creating a value proposition that differentiates them on the market and ensure them a good employer reputation. The employer brand is how this message is articulated across all the company stakeholders consistently, how the company organization stands for, and the reasons employees are motivated to work there. For that reason, consistency is not easy to achieve without a good understanding of the internal and external organization. Good knowledge requires time, vision and a good ability to evaluate and analyze, then to connect all the elements into a unique and attractive employee value preposition. To meet this goal, organizations must properly manage the human capital held, creating innovative and motivating work environments, using attractive practices and facilities for current and future employees to and to define themselves on the labor market. By fulfilling a large part of them, companies can have an employer brand that can attract talent.

Finally, visibility and consistency are mandatory conditions for increasing brand awareness because as a result of the growing competition, these features could be the winning weapon for attracting talent to the organization.

Thus, the study will help the managers to find out on what to focus more in managing their employer brand in order to attract talents in organizations.

There are some limitations of the study. First, it is a theoretical strategy that was not tested in practice, its development is based on the information from the literature review and the research of the most reputed brands strategy. The second limitation is the use of only three factors (credibility achieved through the public relations strategy, employee value preposition and brand visibility). Given these limitations, it is worth continuing and expanding research in this area. The results may be important to many companies in the scope of creating and managing a consistent employer brand strategy.

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