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The war for talent?

The relevance of employer branding in job advertisements for becoming

an employer of choice

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Abstract

Organizations are in need of high quality employees in order to be able to fulfil the needs of its
stakeholders and to be successful. Employer branding might be powerful tool to attract high
potential employees. In this paper we will whether Employer Branding is used in the recruitment
practice in the Netherlands and the value of Employer Branding within an experiment. The
results show that incorporating Employer Branding might be beneficial for organizations, but is

hardly used in the Netherlands.
Keywords: Employer Branding, Corporate Branding, Corporate Identity, Job Advertisements,

Content Analysis, Experiment

Introduction

The importance of social capital on the effectiveness and the success of organisations have been
shown in many studies from various disciplines (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Hah, Ewing and
Berthon, 2005; Cable and Judge, 1996, de Chernatony and Harris, 2001; Mosley, 2007). High
quality employees are crucial for competitive strength in the global economy because they have
a major influence on organisational reputation (Gotsl and Wilson, 2001). Organisations grasp

that their employees have a big impact on perceptions of the organisation and it
s brand,

changing employees in a growing number of organisations in brand ambassadors . No l
onger

employees are recruited just for their functional knowledge, compatibility betwe
en employee
and organisation is important as well (de Chernatony and Harris, 2001; Gotsl and
 Wilson, 2001).
The importance of attracting high quality employees to organisations makes it es
sential to
develop a sound recruitment communication strategy. Finding the desired employee
s is not easy
because many organisations are looking for the same skills in their employees. R
eal talent is
scarce. It is important to gain competitive advantage through recruitment commun
ication if you
want to win the war for talent as organisation (Bhatnagar and Srivastava, 2008).
 A recent

McKinsey (2007) report shows that executives expect and intensifying competition
for talent

(p.49).
Besides the growing importance of attractiveness for organisations as employer,
it is becoming
more complicated to attract high potentials as well. Nowadays a job has to creat
e meaning and

support one s personality (Albert, Ashforth and Dutton, 2000). Especially persons
from

Generation Y (born after 1980), HR professionals claim these persons demand more
 flexibility,

meaningful jobs, professional freedom, higher rewards and a better work-life balance than older

employees do. This makes the question relevant how organisations can still seduce employees

to work for them. How do organisations become attractive employers for high potentials and
how do they implement this attractiveness in a recruitment communication strategy?
Attractiveness of an organisation is related to the perception of job characteristics and the
characteristics of the organisation (Cober, Brown, Levy, Cober, and Keeping 2003; Ehrhart and
Ziegert, 2005; Judge and Cable, 1997; Turban, Forret and Hendrickson, 1998). Potential
employees use the perception of these characteristics as a signal to decide how it would be to
work for a particular organisation (Ehrhart and Ziegert, 2005; Turban and Greening 1997).
Several studies have suggested the importance of the perception of a match between personal
and fundamental organisational characteristics and values (Cable and Judge, 1996; 1994; Cable
and Edwards, 2004; Kristof, 1996). Person-organisation (P-O) fit would, according to these
studies, contribute to the attractiveness of an organisation and to the identification process of
employees with an organisation. Another vital factor for the attractiveness of an organisation as
employer is its corporate image and employer image (Cable and Turban, 2003; Dutton, Dukerich
and Harquail, 1994; Ehrhart and Ziegert, 2005; Turban and Cable 2003, Turban, et al., 1998).
Positive image perceptions lead to a higher quantity and quality of potential employees for
organisations (Turban and Cable, 2003).
Employer branding adapts to the importance of Person Organisation Fit (P-O fit) and image
perceptions, by providing (potential) employees a unique and attractive employer brand image
(Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The roots of employer branding can be found in marketing
principles of branding strategy (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Backhaus, 2004; Cable and Turban,

2001). Employer branding represents a firms efforts to promote, both within and outside the
firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer (Backhaus and Tikoo,
2004, p. 501).
Although employer branding is a relative new concept in recruitment communication, there is a
growing interest in it. Searching employer branding on Google nowadays shows 470.000 hits,
which is an enormous growth compared to 3.000 hits back in 2004 (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

However, empirical studies on the topic are still relatively scarce (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004;
Lievens, Van Hoye and Anseel, 2007; Moroko and Uncles, 2008).
In this paper we focus on employer branding in job advertisements that is interesting because an
attractive first impression of the organisation is essential (Cober, Brown, Blumental, Doverspike
and Levy, 2000). Job advertisements can create the foundation for the link between organisation
and potential employee (Backhaus, 2004). The right words should be used to get attention from
desired potential employees and at the same time these words have to stimulate application for
the job (Backhaus, 2004).

The study starts with an exploratory part to investigate today s recruitment communication

practice in the Netherlands, by focussing on the corporate descriptions in job advertisements. In
the second study we used an experiment to test the possible influence of an Employer Branded
recruitment advertisement.

Theoretical background

Brands are one of a firm s most valuable assets. Therefore managing a brand is an important

activity in many firms (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Cable and Turban, 2001). Branding can be
applied on several ways and on different aspects of organisations, such as internal branding, but
also on cities or regions, referred to as city branding, and country branding. Branding seeks to
develop or align the expectations behind the brand experience, creating the impression that a
brand associated with a product or service has certain qualities or characteristics that make it
special or unique. Mainly branding is associated with the development of products or
maintaining the corporate identity.

Corporate identity refers to an organisation s unique characteristics that are rooted in the

behaviour of members of the organisation (Van Riel and Balmer, 1997, p. 341). Similarly it can
also be described as the projected corporate personality, where corporate personality is at the
heart of the organisation and embodies the corporate mission, corporate philosophy and core
values of the organisation (Stuart, 1998, p. 357). Much of the literature related to the
management of an organisation s identity and corporate brand suggests that alignment and
consistency in employee behaviour is an ideal (Cornelissen, 2008).
Applying branding on human resource management involves creating an attractive identity of
the organisation where an individual feel comfort, respect, trust and loyalty. It also involves
active participation, employees who are engaged in the strategy of the firm (Backhaus and
Tikoo, 2004; Barrow and Mosley, 2005; Martin and Hetrick, 2006) and because of that
engagement they are motivated to deliver the best quality products or services, or become real
brand ambassadors.
Communication and HRM practitioners have acknowledged employer branding as significant and
important in creating successful organisations (Willock, 2005). The term employer branding,
coined at first by Ambler and Barrow (1996), is about the package of functional, economic and
psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company. The
concept of employer branding is explored more in depth by Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy and Berthon
(2002) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004). Employer branding is defined as: The process of building
an identifiable and unique employer identity and the employer brand as concept of the firm that
differentiates it from its competitors (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p 502).

Organisational Attractiveness

Organisational attraction is defined as an attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an
organisation, toward viewing the organisation as a desirable entity with which to initiate some
relationship (Aiman-Smith, Bauer and Cable, 2001, p. 221). More specific for an organisation as
employer, it has to do with potential employees viewing an organisation as a desired and
positive place to work (Rynes, 1991; Ehrhart and Ziegert, 2005).
Individuals have different needs and look for jobs that are able to satisfy those needs (Schneider,
1987). Because of this, people will search for different factors if they decide where to work
(Aiman-Smith et al., 2001). Potential applicants perception of organisational att

ractiveness is
formed by their individual perception of available information, received from job
advertisements, websites, brand advertising and stories from other people or employees related
to the organisation (Brown, Cober, Cober, Keepin and Levy, 2003; Dineen, Ash and Noe, 2002;
Lemmink, Schuijf and Streukens, 2003). To influence this perception, organisations use various
forms of communication. In this process recruitment communication is leading. Recruitment is
defined as the activities and practices an organisation executed to identify and attract potential
employees (Brown et al., 2003).
Although there have been various studies on organisational attractiveness, there is still much
obscurity about the variables that influence organisational attraction (Lemmink et al., 2003).
Consensus however, can be found in the influence of characteristics of job and organisation and

the perception of these characteristics by employees, resulting in perceptions of an employee s

fit with an organisation and image perceptions (e.g. Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Backhaus, 2004;
Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Brown et al., 2003; Ehrhart and Ziegert, 2005; Judge and Cable, 1997;
Turban, et al., 1998)

Job and Organisational Characteristics and Person-Organisation fit

Several theories and studies demonstrate the value of characteristics of job and organisation for
organisational attractiveness (e.g. Brown et al., 2003; Lievens et al., 2005; Rynes and Barber,

1990; Turban and Keon, 1993). Signalling theory provides an explanation for this relationship.

Because potential applicants do not receive complete information about an organisation, they use job and organisational characteristics to form an image of how it would be if they were part of this particular organisation. The job and organisational characteristics are used as a signal for the working conditions of the organisation (Ehrhart and Ziegert, 2005; Spence, 1973). Empirical research examined a wide variety of job and organisational characteristics a supporting work environment, characteristics of the organisation (e.g. ethical standards), salary, career

prospects and location, organisation s compensation, culture and developmental possibilities

contributed to the attractiveness of the organisation as employer (Turban et al, 1998; Brown et al., 2003). Most studies link attraction of organisations to P-O fit (e.g. Cable and Judge, 1994; 1996; Schneider, 1987; Turban and Keon, 1993). P-O fit theory originally stems from the personenvironment paradigm. This paradigm is based on the proposition that attitudes and behaviours are the result of the congruence between attributes of person and environment (Schneider, 1987). In general, empirical studies concerning P-O fit investigate antecedents and consequences of compatibility between a person and organisation (Kristof, 1996). P-O fit occurs if person and organisation possess similar characteristics (e.g. Cable and Judge, 1994; Cable and Edwards, 2004; Judge and Bretz, 1992; Turban and Keon, 1993). To integrate different research traditions Kristof defines P-O fit as: the compatibility of a person and an organisation that occurs when a) at least one entity provides what the other needs, or b) they share similar fundamental characteristics, or c) both (1996, p. 4).

Several empirical studies contribute to the suggestion that higher levels of P-O fit, lead to more attraction to organisations (e.g. Dineen et al., 2002; Cable and Judge, 1996; Judge and Cable, 1997; Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse and Mohr, 2004; Turban and Keon, 1993). For example research of Slaughter and colleagues (2004) suggests that people are more attracted to organisations with traits that match the traits they use to describe their own personality. Especially the direct perception of fit by job seekers is suggested to explain organisational attraction (Cable and Judge, 1996; Judge and Cable, 1997).

To make it possible for employees to establish their degree of fit with an organisation, organisations need to provide potential employees enough essential information a

bout for
example mission, values and achievements in recruitment advertising (Backhaus, 2
004).
Communicating about these important issues will possibly lead to more attraction
 to
organisations and moreover, hiring employees with a high degree of fit will lead
 to positive
organisational outcomes (Backhaus, 2004; Chatman, 1991; Cheney, 1983).

Corporate Image

The awareness of the importance of a good corporate image for organisational suc
cess is
increasing (Lemmink, et al., 2003). One of the suggested advantages of a good co
rporate image

is its influence on applicants intentions to look for employment opportunities at
 a particular

organisation (Lemmink et al., 2003). Because potential applicants only have a sm
all amount of
information about an organisation in early stages of the job choice process, to
decide if they
want to pursue further contact with an organisation, they rely heavily on genera
l impressions of
organisational attractiveness; the corporate image (Rynes, 1991). Corporate imag
e is defined as
the way a company is perceived, based on a certain message and at a certain poin
t in time
(Cornelissen, 2008, p. 254). Several empirical studies contribute to the notion
that a positive
corporate image increases organisational attractiveness (e.g. Belt and Paolillo,
 1982; Cable and
Turban, 2001; Gatewood, Gowan, and Lautenschlager, 1993; Turban and Greening, 19
97). A
positive corporate image influences quality and quantity of the applicants (Fomb
run and
Shanley, 1990; Cable and Turban, 2003). Cable and Turban suggest that positive i
mage
perceptions increase organisational attractiveness not only because they are a s
ignal for positive

job attributes, but as well because they affect the pride individuals expect to receive from
organisational membership (2003).

Employer Image

The image of an organisation as a place to work has been treated as a distinct type of image in
several studies. According to Lemmink et al. (2003) this is useful because people form a general
image of a particular organisation (corporate image), that can change if they think about this
organisation as employer. More important in this last situation is what an organisation stands for
as employer, which possibly influences perceptions of the organisation (Gatewood et al., 1993).
This particular image is given different names in literature e.g. employer image (Cable and
Turban, 2001), recruitment image (Gatewood et al., 1993) or company employment image
(Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt, and Slaughter, 1999; Lemmink et al., 2003).
Especially symbolic image perceptions, defined as the subjective, abstract and intangible
attributes that convey symbolic company information in the form of imagery and trait inferences
that applicants assign to organisations (Lievens et al., 2007, p. 48), are suggested to be very
important for organisational attractiveness (Lievens, 2007; Lievens, et al., 2007; Slaughter, et al.,
2004). Certain empirical studies suggest that besides corporate image employer image
perceptions are important for organisational attractiveness (Gatewood et al., 1993; Cable and
Turban, 2001; Lemmink et al., 2002). For example Lemmink and colleagues focused on different
image perceptions and their influence on intentions to pursue further contact with organisations
(2003). According to their results, corporate images as well as company employment image are
important. Corporate image even had the strongest relationship with application intentions.
They suggest that a positive corporate image is the basis for a positive company employment
image.

Employer Branding

Creating an attractive image of an organisation as a distinct and desirable employer, both within
and outside an organisation, becomes possible with employer branding (EB) (Backhaus and
Tikoo, 2004). Employer Branding serves as a management framework that can help to improve
recruitment, retention and commitment, increase productivity and focus on priorities (Ambler
and Barrow, 1996).

The EB concept is based on the conviction that an employer can be seen as a brand (Ambler and
Barrow, 1996). Similar to a customer brand, the advantages an employer brand offers its
employees are, functional, economic and psychological (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Lievens and
Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, 2007). Both employer brand and customer-brand value depend on
differentiation from other brands and the visibility of benefits the brand offers. Because of the
several similarities, marketing research and techniques are appropriate for both types of brands
(Ambler and Barrow, 1996).
To establish an employer brand, an organisation has to build an image in the minds of the
potential labour market that the company, above all others, is a great place to work (Ewing, et

al., 2002, p. 12). It is closely related to organisational attractiveness. If organisations possess
several dimensions of attractiveness, they are most likely perceived to be an attractive

employer. The more attractive they are, the stronger that organisations employer brand is (Hah

et al., 2005).
A possible way to apply employer branding to job advertisements, is by incorporating
dimensions of organisational attractiveness in the advertisement text (Hah et al., 2005). It is of
vital importance that these dimensions should not be made up just to attract people, but should
be integrated in the identity of an organisation (Mosley, 2007). Hah et al. (2005) created a scale
for employer attractiveness. This scale consists of 25 items of attractiveness an organisation can

possess and can be clustered into five groups: development, economics, application, social and
interest. These groups identify the factors considered important by potential employees when
working for an organisation and therefore can be important for employer branding. The
literature on organisational attractiveness suggests that possibilities for development and
advancement (Hah et al., 2005; Turban et al, 1998), corporate responsibility (Backhaus, Stone
and Heiner, 2002; Backhaus, 2004; Turban and Greening, 1997), a positive and supportive
organisational climate (Backhaus, 2004; Hah et al., 2005, Turban et al., 1998), an innovative and
creative work environment and a good compensation (Cable and Judge, 1994; Hah et al., 2005)
all make an organisation more attractive as employer and contribute to creating a strong
employer brand.
We started this study by examining recruitment communication practice in the Netherlands, and
focused on job advertisements; by an investigation of the way Dutch organizations present
themselves in job advertisements. Second we conducted an experiment, in which we
manipulated employer branding in job advertisements and examined the influence on
organizational attractiveness and the estimate of P-O fit by our respondents. Also specific
dimensions of attractiveness in job advertisements are investigated in their relative importance
to organisational attractiveness. This leads to the following research question: What is the
contribution of employer branding in job advertisements to organisational attractiveness and the
estimate of p-o fit?

Method

To learn more about whether and how employer branding in the Netherlands is conducted, this
study starts with analyzing corporate descriptions in job advertisements through a quantitative
content analysis. Job advertisements are a useful study object to explore more about employer
branding. They play a significant role in most recruitment strategies and moreover, corporate
descriptions in job advertisements are vital to create the impression of an organisation as
employer (Cober, et al., 2000). Job advertisements can create the foundation to establish the
link between organisation and potential employee (Backhaus, 2004).
In order to compose a sound coding scheme to analyze the job advertisements, the first step of
this study was emergent coding (Stemler, 2001). We started exploring the content of 20
randomly chosen job advertisements from four different acknowledged recruitment

agencies
and established essential descriptors that are used to define corporate information in job
advertisements.
To compose a valid and various sampling unit, we randomly selected 100 job advertisements
posted in the spring of 2009. They were selected from acknowledged recruitment agencies in
the Netherlands aimed at high-educated graduates and professionals. Twenty job
advertisements were randomly chosen from these five recruitment agencies.
Important organisational aspects used to establish the degree of fit between person and
organisation, are scarcely mentioned in the analysed job advertisements. For example, only 9
percent of the job advertisements in the sample discuss organisational norms and values, while
values are one of the most important elements to establish a P-O fit (Van Vuuren, 2006).
Moreover, the organisational culture is mentioned in only 35 percent of the job advertisements,
and the vision and or ambition is mentioned in 26 percent of the advertisements. Since a lot of
relevant information about corporate identity is missing in most job advertisements, it is hard
for an applicant to make a good estimate of a P-O fit (Backhaus, 2004).
The fact that only little information discusses important organisational aspects also means that it
is difficult for a possible applicant to extract a differentiated employer image. Therefore, we
suggest that at the moment in the Netherlands employer branding in job advertisements is

hardly performed. Furthermore the two questions: Does the job ad define the organisation as
an attractive or desirable employer ? and Does the job ad discuss specific advantages of

working for the organisation? are responded negatively in a high percentage (respectively 90%
and 68%). This contributes to the suggestion that employer branding in job advertisements in
the Netherlands is not a common practice at the moment.
After exploring more about current performance of employer branding in job advertisements in
the Netherlands, we continue by researching the actual influence of employer branding in job
advertisements in an experimental setting. This will be described in study 2.
The content analysis showed that in the corporate descriptions of job advertisements in the
Netherlands employer branding is underdeveloped and not used as a strategy to attract high
potentials. Despite the growing attention and knowledge on branding processes and the insights
that employer branding could be an interesting and valuable strategy to attract high potentials,
employer branding is not used.
To test the value of employer branding within job advertisements we conducted an experiment
where we offered a normal job advertisement to respondents and an employer branded version
of the same job advertisement to test whether respondents would value an employer branded
advertisement. With the experiment we will test the following hypothesis will be tested:

Hypothesis 1: When organisations perform employer branding by using employer
attractiveness, potential employees perceive the organisation as more attractive, than without

the use of employer branding .
Hypothesis 2: When organisations perform employer branding by using employer
attractiveness, potential employees can realize a better estimate of a p-o fit, than without the
use of employer branding .

Respondents

This study examined the impact of employer branding on both organisational attractiveness and
the degree in which a potential employee can estimate its fit with the organisation. Two versions
of an online job advertisement had been drafted; one with and one without employer branding.
After reading the job advertisement, the respondents had to fill out a survey.

Conditions

Based on our content analysis, we created a job for a management traineeship position in the
experiment. The job was offered in a large non-existing organisation, active in the fast moving
consumer goods. It does not necessarily require a specific type of education, but requires a
certain level of education; in this case a Masters degree. The organisation is a

company where
many functions can be carried out, and many disciplines are represented. This results in a
general job offer and could be interesting for all university students regardless of their major.
The first condition with employer branding (EB) was a job offer filled with the regular vacancy
requirements described by Heneman and Judge (2003), replenished by 25 applied dimensions of
attractiveness, as developed by Hah et al. (2005). These items were used as independent
variables to measure the employer branding message. The second condition without employer
branding (non-EB) contained the job offer, filled with some regular, non-employer branding, job

information. The focus in this second condition is on more formal characteristics that don t really
show the identity or personality of the organisation. This version was inspired on real
advertisements . Because of the need for equality in amount of words for both conditions, the

condition non-EB was filled with significant more job information.

Although the brand itself is the most important part of the employer branding activity, we chose
to exclude the brand. This way the effect of the message itself could be measured, without being
disturbed by positive or negative associations with the brand.

Variables

The survey consisted out of three dependent variables: organisational attractive ness, perception
of the organisation and estimate of P-O fit. Before the dependent variables were measured, a
control question has been asked to make sure the respondents have read the job o ffer properly.
Organisational attractiveness is measured by questioning a scale developed by Hi ghhouse,
Lievens and Sinar (2003) to measure intentions of job acceptance. The estimate t o pursue the
job gives a good insight in the level of organisational attractiveness (Young, R einhart and

Herneman, 1993). The five questions were found strongly reliably (Cronbach s a > . 85), and were

asked directly after reading the job offer. The respondents were asked to rate t he five items on a
7-point Likert scale (1= fully disagree 7= fully agree).
Perception of the organisation is measured by questioning the applicability of 2 5 characteristics
of employer attractiveness (Hah et al., 2005). Respondents were asked to answer to what
degree a specific characteristic of attractiveness was applicable to the organis ation in the job
advertisement to their perception (1= totally non-applicable 7= totally applicab le). Because the
work value scale is applied on Dutch students and applied for this specific rese arch, a factor

analysis and reliability test had to be executed to measure the scale s consistenc y and reliability.
We did find four reliable (Cronbach s a >.77) factors with (loadings all above .41). We did label

these factors as: Organisational Climate, Development, Innovation and Compensati on.
Estimate of p-o fit is measured by questioning the work value items, developed b y Cable and
Edwards (2004). A qualitative pre-test showed that the estimate of items for sec urity and
authority were hard to measure when used in combination with the job offer in th is study. These
factors were therefore excluded from this research. For this reason the remainin g factors cannot
be seen as P-O fit in total and need to be characterized as work values. Respond ents were asked
to answer to what extent they could estimate the presence of a specific item in the organisation,
after reading the job advertisement (1= totally disagree 7= totally agree). In t he solution, four
different factors were found (loadings >.50); all of them were reliable (Cronbac h s a >.85).
For all the conditions the items of work value, measured in this study, were ana lyzed by use of a

factor analysis with varimax rotation. This analysis showed that the original scale has been
influenced by the adjustments and the application on Dutch students. Therefore some changes
were made to the scale regarding hypothesis 2. The factor analysis resulted in four factors and
these results can be found in table 1. Item gaining respect (12) was removed due to the overall
low eigenvalues.
At the end of the survey, respondents were asked to give their opinion on the extent of realism
of the vacancy on a 5-point Likert scale (1= very unrealistic   5 = very realistic). Both conditions
were rated as realistic (non-EB: m=3.6, sd= 1.1, EB: m=3.8, sd=1.1). Next to this question an open
question was posed to give respondents the opportunity to give their opinion towards the study.

Results

In the period from May 25th till June 9th 2009, an invitation has been send to 1400 students of
the University of Amsterdam by e-mail, with the request to participate in the experiment. A
reminder was sent after a week. Participants were encouraged to join the experiment by having
a chance to win one of the three 100 travel vouchers. A total of 361 respondents positively
responded to our invitation and were randomly assigned to one of the two conditions, 214 of
them completed the questionnaire (25% male, mean age 23.7 years).

Hypothesis 1

As expected, the organisation in the condition with employer branding is perceived to be more
attractive than the organisation in the condition without employer branding. The results show a
positive outcome on hypothesis 1. On a 7-point scale, the organisation s attractiveness in the job

advertisement with employer branding has been rated 4.2 (sd=1.29). The organisation s

attractiveness in the vacancy without the use of employer branding has been rated 3.8
(sd=1.20). An independent sample t-test shows a significant difference between both averages
$t(207) = 2.63$, $p < .05$.
As stated earlier, employer branding consists of several dimensions to define attractiveness of
an organisation. Table 4 shows the relative influence of the four dimensions related to
organisational attractiveness. The dimension Organisational Climate has the highest influence,
followed by, Development. Both results are found significant. Compensation and Innovation did
in our study not have a significant influence on organisational attractiveness

Table 1: Relative influence of elements of Employer Branding

EB dimension (n=119) Organisational Attractiveness

Organisational Climate .31
Development .26
Innovation .02
Compensation .06

$R^2 = .30$

Hypothesis 2
The second hypothesis, When organisations perform employer branding by using employer
attractiveness, potential employees can realize a better estimate of a P-O fit, than without the
use of employer branding , was tested by comparing the means of the work value scale for both

conditions, by use of an independent sample t-test. As can be seen in table 2, three out of four
factors show a significant difference in average on the estimate of work value between the two
conditions.

Table 2: testing differences between the two conditions

Variable Mean Non   EB Mean EB T-test
Working Climate 4.63 4.03 T= -3.91, df= 212, p<
0.001
Social responsibility 3.24 3.87 T= 3.53, df= 207, p<
0.001
Social Climate 4.40 4.71 T= 1.88, df= 197, p< .05
Compensation 3.68 3.78 T= .58, df= 206, n.s.

The average estimate of the factor compensation by potential employees (non-EB: m= 3.68, EB:
m= 3.78), does not differ significantly between the two conditions. This means that the

employer branding message did not improve the estimate of a potential employee, concerning

the organisation s compensation towards its personnel, compared to the condition without

employer branding. The average estimate of the factor social climate by potential employees
(non-EB: m= 4.40, EB: m= 4.71), differs significantly between the two conditions. Because of this
result, the employer branding message did improve the estimate of the social climate within an
organisation, by a potential employee.

Discussion

In this study we looked into the use of employer branding by Dutch organisations and the value
of incorporating elements of employer branding in job advertisements. In our analysis of current
recruitment practices we scarcely found employer branding elements applied. We did find it
very surprising that many advertisements had the same elements like the wish for superior
communicative skills and competencies and the need for at least five years of experience. In our
view, essential information about organisations in corporate descriptions is minimal and focuses
hardly on aspects like organisational culture and values. This does not match the current shift to

a more value-based economy instead of a product-oriented economy. Today it is essential for
organisations to be unique because singularity translates into value, something that will be
decisive for success in the future (Kunde, 2000). Not providing important organisational
information also undermines the possibility for employees to estimate their fit with the
organisation. After reading the job advertisement the potential employee knows what the
required skills for the job are and what the job contains but not really if he or she would match
with the organisation and its values.
Our experiment showed the potential benefits for organisations, if they perform employer
branding in their job advertisements. First of all organisations become more attractive for
potential employees if they create a desirable employer brand. Furthermore study 2 showed
that four different aspects respectively contribute to organizational attractiveness if they are
discussed in job advertisements: Organisational Climate, Development, Compensation and
Innovation. Finally study 2 showed some positive results regarding the influence of employer
branding on an employee s estimate of a person-organisation fit; the estimate of the items
corresponding to the factors social responsibility and social climate by a potential employee,
based on a job advertisement, are positively influenced by employer branding
The estimate of the factor compensation by potential employees did not significantly differ
between both conditions. This means that employer branding was not substantially of influence

on a potential employee s estimate of for example salary and the possibility of a company car.

The estimate of the factor working climate did differ significantly but different than expected. An
employee s estimate of items such as having different tasks and making own decisions during
work, were rated better when reading the vacancy without employer branding.
This study does not take the basic thought of employer branding in to account: the fact that an
employer brand has to be a reflection of the organisational identity. The value proposition an
employer brand provides to potential and current employees has to be in line with what the
organisation really is. Although this study did not use an existing organisation, it explores more
about the potential value of creating a strong employer brand. Especially organisations without
an acknowledged image can learn from this study. They can attract people if they show their
advantages as an employer in job advertisements. Especially if organisations discuss the

opportunity for people to develop themselves personally and professionally and reveal
information about the working climate in organisations.

Limitations

Like all field research, the present study has limitations. One limitation of this research is the
type of respondents. Although the target group has been argued well, it still limits the
generalisation of the results to students. For example job seekers at a senior level may have
different needs regarding job information compared to students. Closely related to these

limitations is the fact that the function traineeship has been used. Because of the very global

description, according to the qualitative results, not enough job information was given.
Another constraint is the fact that employer branding is conceptualized as an applied
phenomenon (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Ewing et al., 2002). Because
no brand has been used in this research, due to avoiding the influence of brand associations, the
actual influence of employer branding applied on a specific brand could not be investigated. This
may explain the overall low averages of the survey scores. Although the employer brand itself is
not included in this research (we used a non-existing, virtual organisation), the significant
positive effect of employer branding in this marginal setting can be seen as remarkable.
Therefore, when applying this research on real brands, the outcome is supposed to be valuable,
since the effect of the brand and its associations will be of influence.
A last notable limitation is about the application of the scale towards Dutch students. Although
the results are adjusted to the outcome of the different factor analysis, a separate research for
developing the scales would have been fruitful. Presently, this research has coped with uncertain
influence as a result of these adjustments.

Future research

Although employer branding has been investigated in different corporate areas, not much
scientific research has been done in the relation with job advertisements. It is quite curious that
such an important encounter as a job advertisement has not been researched broadly in relation
to employer branding, although employer branding is acknowledged as important (Willock,
2005).
First of all, research can be extended to other employer branding activities. The recruitment
process goes beyond job advertisements, for example in job interviews and career pages on
websites. It is interesting to learn more about employer branding and its contri

bution to
organizational attractiveness when it is performed in other recruitment activities. Probably the
employer brand will only be stronger and more distinct if activities are integrated in all
recruitment practices. As noted above, applying this research on a real organization can be very
valuable. Therefore some scales need to be developed based on the outcome of this research.
Then P-O fit for example, cannot be seen as one, but should be divided into different work
values. Thereby the different items of the employer branding message should be applied to the
ones that are truly part of the organization, what makes the vacancy more trustworthy. Because
of the possibility that different groups of employees have various needs, the work value scale
should be tested in the particular country of research as this seems to be subject to cultural
differences.

A final and important overall item should be the multidisciplinary application of employer
branding. Because employer branding can be approached from many different working fields
(Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004), the collaboration on this field of study is important. As there is
much to investigate regarding the topic of this research, different disciplines (e.g. marketing,
HRM, corporate communication) should assemble on the research of employer branding.

Managerial implications

Performing employer branding in job advertisements seems to be a careful approach. At first,
too much rosy information makes the organization less reliable. Therefore the employer
branding message should be conducted carefully. Only real and accurate information should be
selected instead of an advertisement filled with false information. Second, the essential
information as pointed out by e.g. Heneman and Judge (2003), like job information, labour
conditions etcetera, is still a very important aspect of a vacancy and should not be forgotten.
Third, it is necessary to take the length of the job advertisement in to account. Some readers see
a large job advertisement as boring and will not read it. Subsequently the employer branding
message can be implemented within the job advertisement. The items of organizational
attractiveness can be of use, if applicable, to bring out the right employer branding message.
Another important practical implication is seeing employer branding as a three-step process: 1.
develop value proposition, 2. expose brand externally and 3. integration of brand promise in the

organization s culture. Although the brand itself is not been used in this research, the effect of

branding the value propositions was of positive influence on the estimate of P-O fit. So when the
value proposition matches the exposed brand, the positive effect will presumably become
bigger.
Implementation of employer branding however, should be based on values co-created with the
employees and management. Communicating the values top-down, and act as these are
established might be an risky step, since honesty, reliability, responsibility and credibility are
essential elements of a corporate brand, and should be co-created with the employees to
become a high valuable employee, and to prevent discrepancies between the values and the
actions and actual behaviour.This is also in line with the concept of corporate identity as pointed
out by Cornelissen (2008). Employer branding therefore can be seen as a part of the process of
building a corporate identity; communicating and co-creating the organization s character in
such a way that every (potential) employee feels part of that organization and shares and acts
towards the core values of the organization and become ambassadors of the organization. The
organisation therefore needs to communicate their corporate identity to their personnel in

order to develop and preserve a well-rooted corporate identity. Being consistent in using the
corporate identity within the employer branding message is vital (Sullivan, 1999).
Employer branding asks for a multidisciplinary approach as postulated earlier. Practitioners from
different disciplines therefore should work together in order to create a stunning employer
branding strategy. This will result in to a distinctive corporate identity.

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