

TRENDS IN STRATEGIC HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT: EMPLOYER BRAND ATTRACTIVENESS

^aRENATA SKÝPALOVÁ, ^bMONIKA VENCOUROVÁ,
^cVENDULA HYNKOVÁ

*Department of Economics and Management, AMBIS College,
Lindnerova 575/1, 18000 Praha 8, Czech Republic*

email: ^arenata.skypalova@ambis.cz,

^bmonika.vencourova@ambis.cz, ^cvendula.hynkova@ambis.cz

Abstract: Employer brand management has become a growing necessity. For most companies, it does not mean the random short-term campaigns, but the crucial factor in successfully building the employer brand being the employees themselves. The aim of the paper is to present the findings from a questionnaire survey of selected factors that affect the employer brand image as a strategic tool for human resource management from the perspective of HR staff in the Czech Republic. The research was carried out from May 2019 to January 2020, 112 respondents (HR managers) taking part in it. The results show that systematic employer brand creation is conditional upon the company's personnel strategy. Appropriate use of the brand helps retain the existing employees. Satisfied staff are more likely to become ambassadors for the company brand, engaging in its communication towards the external labour market. Being a matter for the competence of the personnel department, employer branding must be integrated into HR managerial strategies. The results of the survey also support the assumption that the requirements and expectations of both current and prospective employees are to be complied with, the company's competitive advantage in the labour market thus being secured.

Keywords: human resource management, employer brand, Czech Republic, labour market

1 Introduction

Enterprises are aware of the importance of skilled staff, both current and prospective. Striving to become long-term attractive employers, thus gaining a competitive advantage, they develop their human resource management strategies, including employer branding.

In modern companies, attractiveness, profitability, and future operations depend on their readiness to put employees and potential employees first and recognize them as the most important stakeholders for organizational development (Tkalac Verčič, 2021). Attracting, hiring, and retaining skilled workers are critical for the success of any firm (Arijs et al., 2018; Theurer et al., 2018). Due to several trends, such as the population aging and the shift towards a knowledge economy, the competition of attracting employees with specific skills and knowledge has risen markedly (Carpentier et al., 2019; Ployhart et al., 2017). Consequently, the need to understand how to attract applicants and influence word-of-mouth has increased sharply (Carpentier et al., 2017; Theurer et al., 2018). Other authors (Dabirian et al. (2017) claim in their study that work environments do not emerge by happenstance, but rather result from deliberate and strategic initiatives aimed at attracting, engaging, and retaining employees. Organisations must recognize and offer the benefits that current and potential employees want. According to Tkalac Verčič & Čorić (2018), employer brands help potential employees in understanding their future workplace. The lack of sufficient and satisfactory communication is one of the most common issues in contemporary companies. Improving employee engagement adds to a higher level of perceived organizational support, that in turn adds to employer brands (Tkalac Verčič & Vokić, 2017). Dabirian et al. (2017) identified seven values of the employer's brand, that matter to current, former, and potential employees. These propositions include (1) social elements of work, (2) interesting and challenging work tasks, (3) the extent to which skills can be applied in meaningful ways, (4) opportunities for professional development, (5) economic issues tied to compensation, (6) the role of management, and (7) work/life balance. These propositions also develop competitive advantage.

The employer brand is intended to facilitate the prioritization of HR department's tasks, streamlining the recruitment of new employees while retaining the current ones, strengthening the engagement of the latter, and motivating them to participate in

employer brand communication. According to Sharma (2019), building an employer brand must be reflected in the company's strategic and marketing goals, and vice versa, the company's objectives must be considered in a brand creation. Since companies start to understand the employer brand as an important aspect of their future growth and competitiveness, Sharma (2019) envisages the potential for success.

A significant issue in the US and the UK is attracting quality talent (Cheesman, 2017), that shows the importance of preserving the employer brand and promoting the company's reputation as a desirable employer on social media, each of which is more important than ever. The applicants' experience is a key outcome with implications for a firm. A focus on the employer brand's long-term development within a dynamically changing environment is therefore of particular importance, its systematic construction facilitating strategic workforce planning. (Theurer et al., 2018; Dabirian et al., 2017; Barbaros, 2020).

This paper examines the factors affecting the attractiveness of the employer brand as a strategic tool in human resource management. Its aim is to present the findings from a questionnaire survey conducted among HR staff in the Czech Republic. The paper is divided into five parts. In addition to the general introduction to the issue of employer branding, the first two sections outline the previous research outcomes, referring to the selected publications. In the following section, the methodology of the questionnaire survey is described. The main section presents and discusses the results. Summarizing the acquired knowledge, the last section draws practical conclusions and acknowledges the limitations of the present research, giving suggestions for its continuation.

2 Literature references

The employer brand should be true and authentic (i.e., in line with reality), distinguishable from competitors' brands (offering identifiable unique values) and attractive to members of the target audience (see, e.g., Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The employer brand construction requires the cooperation of marketing and HR departments, allowing for reasonable attractive job offers and fulfilling both the needs of employees and strategic goals of the company (cf. Cable & Graham, 2000).

Barbaros (2020) highlights the following practical ideas in his study: a) management teams must have a holistic approach of employer branding, organizational attractiveness, and company culture; b) employer branding, in order to become a useful tool for employees' retention and recruitment, must be managed by both the HR Department and the Marketing and Communication Department within a coordinated and coherent strategy and c) for employer branding to be efficient, there is a need to leverage HR as a strategic partner and, as a result, employees will be developed into strategic assets of the company. Kucharska & Kowalczyk (2019) add that the Employer Branding strategy must be carefully thought out and implemented.

Meeting the expectations of current employees is as important as a valuable offer for external job seekers, communication being an essential element of the employer brand building strategy (cf. Cable & Graham, 2000). Carpentier et al. (2019) find in their study the way the company communicates it plays an important role in the process of perceiving the employer's brand. Potential applicants form a mental picture of what a firm is like as an employer (Dineen, 2019). Companies that communicate in a more personal, friendly, and social way, are generally perceived as more attractive (Frasca & Edwards, 2017). In today's corporations, engaged employees represent a competitive advantage. The more attractive the employer, the stronger the employer's brand. (Ruchika & Prasad, 2017). The importance of the applicant experience during the recruitment process is critical in the company's quest to win the war on talent. The recruitment

process has a two-fold objective: hire quality applicants and ensure a positive applicant experience, as shown by the study by Miles & McCamey (2018). Miles & McCamey (2018) also conclude that an applicant's positive experience accurately reflects and strengthens the employer's desired brand, also improving recruitment results, while a negative experience can lead the applicant to leave the competition. Positive and negative experiences affect the attractiveness of the employer. Ensuring a positive applicant experience requires a comprehensive, well-thought-out plan to ensure the applicant's experience promotes the employer brand in the way the company desires. The quality of talent increases as more people seek employment in companies having a strong employer brand reflected in the public area (Miles & McCamey, 2018). According to a CareerArc study (2016), almost 60% of jobseekers reported they had a bad recruitment experience, while 72% stated they shared this negative experience online. And 61% of Glassdoor (2016) users report that they seek company reviews and ratings before deciding to apply for a job.

2.1 Employer brand attractiveness

Closely related to the employer's brand is the employer's attractiveness that describes the extent to which the job seeker is interested in working in the company. The attractiveness of the employer reflects the strength and value of the employer's brand. (Kapuściński et al., 2021; Carpentier & Van Hoye, 2021) Employer branding is applied to improve employer attractiveness that is defined as the sum of benefits seen by employees of a specific firm (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019; Kang & Sung, 2017). A lot of studies have sought to explore ways to create or enhance a positive or favourable perception of employer attractiveness (e.g., Carpentier et al., 2017; Frasca and Edwards, 2017; Klimkiewicz and Oltra, 2017). A national study by Tkalac Verčič (2021) that involved 1805 employees from twelve large corporations, shows there is a relationship between employee engagement, employer brand, perceived organizational support, and satisfaction with internal communication. And all this mentioned influences the attractiveness of a corporation (Tkalac Verčič, 2021).

Factors influencing the attractiveness of an employer brand are based on thought connections (specific cognitive associations) that emerge in the minds of potential applicants (Rampl, 2014). The attractiveness of a particular employer brand manifests itself as the applicant's desire to work for this company (cf. Collins & Stevens, 2002; Lievens, 2007).

2.2 Employer brand as a competitive advantage in the labour market

Companies successfully managing their employer brand can attract more job seekers and better retain their current staff. An employer's brand is also a way for firms to differentiate themselves from their competitors. (Tkalac Verčič & Čorić, 2018). Companies have always cared about what their employees think and say about them. Collective employee opinions shape not only the loyalty, engagement, and retention of existing workers, but also how the companies are seen publicly and how they are able to attract new talent (Dabirian et al., 2017).

According to a 2011 LinkedIn survey, up to 69% of employees consider the brand to be a major factor in choosing an employer (Market Research Explained, 2019). It can thus be viewed as a tool differentiating the company from its competitors (Ito et al., 2013).

The main objective in building the employer brand is to achieve a long-term competitive advantage in the labour market. Assuming corporates compete for their current and potential employees, it is necessary to devise new strategies to recruit, retain and develop talents. Some authors consider the employer brand to be a long-term strategy that is the optimal "weapon" in a highly competitive environment (see, e.g., Foster et al., 2021; Jain & Bhatt, 2015).

In the age of the 'War for talents' (Sommer et al., 2016), many companies invest significant number of resources in building strong and resilient employer brands to compete for high-quality workforce. Research on small and medium-sized companies suggests that the systematic employer brand building can help attract the required employees, thus enhancing competitiveness vis-à-vis corporations (cf. Sharma, 2019).

3 Methods

Following previous studies on employer branding, the present paper provides the results of a questionnaire survey undertaken among HR staff in the Czech Republic between May 2019 and January 2020. The questionnaire contained 26 open, semi-closed and closed (multiple-choice) questions. The survey was conducted electronically using Google Forms.

The respondents were HR managers in charge of employer branding in the firms addressed. The questions focused on four areas of the company's activities – basic information about the employer brand, activities performed in-house and those directed towards applicants on the labour market, and problematic aspects of maintaining the employer brand attractiveness. Based on the obtained data, the relationships and dependencies were explored, and established hypotheses verified.

The Amadeus database operated by Bureau van Dijk (cf. Bureau van Dijk, 2020), which contains data on approximately 19 million companies from 43 European countries, was used for sampling the respondents. The companies were selected applying the following criteria:

Company status: active.
Country: Czech Republic.
Number of employees: min. 50 (2016, 2015, 2014, 2013).
Annual turnover: min. €100 000 (2016, 2015, 2014, 2013).
Category: Large and medium-sized enterprises.
Contact: website, e-mail.

In the Amadeus database, 478 companies met the above criteria. 442 of them were contacted; for 36 companies, neither a website address nor a contact for a competent person was available. 112 companies answered the submitted questionnaire.

Based on the yielded data, it was possible to verify the validity of the following hypotheses. H1: Systematic employer brand building is related to a clearly defined personnel strategy. H2: The presence of a staff member responsible for building the employer brand is related to a clearly defined personnel strategy. H3: The regular frequency of detecting the involvement of the company's own staff is related to the employer brand attractiveness. H4: The frequency of detecting applicants' perception of the company is related to the attractiveness of the employer brand.

The data were processed using an MS Excel spreadsheet. The independence of nominal variables was subsequently evaluated by the STATISTICA program. The chi-square tests of independence included the following six steps: (1) the formulation of the null (H0) and alternative (HA) hypotheses, (2) the selection of a 5% level of significance, (3) the calculation of

the chi square statistic $\chi^2 = \sum \left[\frac{(O_{r,c} - E_{r,c})^2}{E_{r,c}} \right]$, where O are observed frequencies, E expected frequencies, and r and c the numbers of rows and columns in the contingency table, respectively, (4) the calculation of the degrees of freedom $f = (r-1) \times (c-1)$, (5) the selection of the critical chi-square value $\chi^2_{\alpha}(f)$, and (6) comparison of the chi square statistic χ^2 to the critical chi-square value $\chi^2_{\alpha}(f)$ and the acceptance or rejection of the null hypothesis.

The strength of the dependence is measured using the Cramér's V correlation coefficient, which is based on χ^2 statistics. $V =$

$$z = \frac{K}{\sqrt{n(m-1)}}$$
, where $m = \min\{r, s\}$. Taking the values between 0 and 1, the closer the Cramér's V is to 1, the tighter the relationship between X and Y. The closer it is to 0, the looser this relationship becomes (cf. Berk & Carey, 2009).

4 Results and discussion

Employer branding has not yet been properly integrated into the corporate organizational structure. It is usually the personnel department that is in charge, supposed to coordinate the related activities, the employer brand integration into human resource management depending on the level of brand centralization. A discussion about who actually is responsible for building it (recently prompted by the US agency Brandemix) is underway. In the Czech Republic, according to the present survey, 83% of HR staff pursue this agenda.

The 2019 questionnaire outcomes show that the HR department is part of the senior management in 64 (i.e., 57.14%) of the 112 companies surveyed, and in the remaining 48 (42.86%) firms it reports to the upper or middle management, not a single respondent choosing the possibility that the personnel department is not part of the management at all. The survey also reveals that 71.43% of companies set up a separate budget for the HR department to finance their personnel strategy, which may include employer branding. (The budget is approved by either the top management, the CEO, the board of directors, the owner of the company, or the global HR manager in the case of international corporations.)

The present analysis also focused on key factors that increase the attractiveness of the employer brand. Only 57.14% of firms pursue employer branding systematically, while 7.14% completely ignore it; see the left part Table 1 below. It was also examined whether the companies have a coherent personnel strategy, thus developing workforce management in the long run. 78.57% of respondents report they are dedicated to building an employer brand as an instrument for strategic development and competitiveness in the labour market; see Table 1 again.

Table 1: Employer branding involvement

Out of all 112 respondents, employer branding is pursued...	Relative frequency	Out of 88 companies that have a set personnel strategy, employer branding is pursued ...	Relative frequency
systematically	57.14%	systematically	72.72%
randomly	35.71%	randomly	18.18%
not at all	7.14%	not at all	9.10%
Σ	100%	Σ	100%

Source: authors' own elaboration

If a company decides to utilize a global employer brand, the emphasis is on the brand itself, the differences between the countries in which the company operates not being considered. If desired, however, the firm may create a local employer brand considering the specifics of the country (see Tkalac Verčič, 2021). The most significant trends in global human resource management are employee engagement and stability, and the acquisition of skilled staff, the employer brand supporting them considerably (Carpentier et al., 2019; Tkalac Verčič & Čorić, 2018).

In terms of strategic HR budgeting, the survey showed that 42.86% of firms planned to increase investments in personnel strategy (and therefore in employer branding) in the following year, half of the firms intended to keep them at the same level, and in 7.14% of cases respondents considered reducing investments. Regarding the personnel department, its support from other company units was inquired about as well. Public relations (in 56 cases), marketing (24), business excellence (16) and finance (8) departments, as well as the heads of ones (48), are also involved in communication with the internal and external labour market.

Cooperation of units is a prerequisite for the smooth running of the company. In practice, unfortunately, the larger the company, the more competitive the rivalry between departments, HR and PR ones being reported as the most frequently cooperating (42.86%). Depending on the need and urgency of the situation, the heads of individual departments get involved. Table 2 displays the outcomes of a quantitative evaluation of the given research hypotheses focused on key areas of employer branding implementation. The frequency of detecting applicants' perception of the company is related to the attractiveness of the employer brand.

Table 2: Hypothesis tests

	Independence test	
	Pears. chi-sq.	Cramér's V
H1: Systematic employer brand building is related to a clearly defined personnel strategy.	p=0,023913	0,2581989
H2: The presence of a staff member in charge of building the employer brand is related to a clearly defined personnel strategy.	p=0,627089	X
H3: The regular frequency of detecting the engagement of the company's own staff is related to the employer brand attractiveness.	p=0,00000	0,7791937
H4: The frequency of detecting applicants' perception of the company is related to the attractiveness of the employer brand.	p=0,00000	0,6422616

Source: authors' own calculations, 5% significance level

Note: x – Cramér's V was not calculated because the hypothesis was rejected.

4.1 Personnel strategy importance for employer brand building (I)

The results show that 42.86% of companies surveyed have a clearly designed personnel strategy. Systematically or randomly, 28.57% and 14.29%, respectively, devote attention to employer branding as can be seen in Table 1.

Based on Pearson's test, H1 hypothesis (the systematic nature of employer brand building is not related to the existence of a clearly defined personnel strategy) was rejected at the 5% level of significance. According to Cramér's V, the dependence between the variables is weak. It can be concluded that the methodical construction of the employer brand is related to a properly defined personnel strategy. Without it, the employer brand can be neither systematically built nor effectively managed.

4.2 Personnel strategy importance for employer brand building (II)

The HR department is responsible for the creation and maintenance of the employer brand. A current staff member or a newly hired employee can be charged with the task of building the employer brand or, alternatively, the company can ensure cooperation with an external partner. However, there are firms that do not yet have an employee who would fill this position. Some plan to establish it, others do not even consider it. The present findings show that 64.29% of the companies surveyed employ an internal or external worker who is responsible for building the employer brand. Exactly 28.57% of companies follow a clearly defined personnel strategy, 35.71% having no strategy at all. The questionnaire responses "We are currently filling the position" and "No, we do not have it, but we are considering its creation" were not chosen by any participant. Of the 35.71% of companies that do not have the position in question, not even considering its establishment, 14.29% have a clearly defined personnel strategy, while 21.43% do not.

According to Pearson's test, hypothesis H2 (the presence of an employee in charge of building an employer brand is not related to a clearly defined personnel strategy) is not rejected at the 5% significance level. It is obvious that the appointment of a person responsible for employer brand construction does not guarantee that an appropriate personnel strategy is launched. This is also confirmed by the present findings, 57.14% of the surveyed companies not reporting a well-designed personnel strategy. A

possible explanation is either that even relevant goals do not have to be based on a specific strategy or only short-term objectives are set. It is commonly assumed that the HR department makes use of the employer brand only to take on new employees, but not to develop relationships with the external and internal labour market. Company officials often argue that they must first hire enough new staff so that all positions are filled, and the firm can cut their current employees' overtime, not realizing that an exclusive focus on recruiting is ineffective in the long run. A comprehensive plan for how and to whom to communicate the brand allows the company to secure the necessary number of suitable applicants, thus reducing lingering vacancies in the long term. Thoughtful and purposeful communication saves the company time and energy to improve relationships with the existing employees.

4.3 Employer brand as a tool for retaining current employees

Tactics and activities designed to systematically create and maintain the employer brand should apply not only to the external but also to the internal labour market. Research studies have confirmed that proper employer branding begins as an internal company process. Only when its core values are defined, they can be communicated outside the company (see, e.g., Arijs et al., 2018; Theurer et al., 2018).

The employer brand helps the company identify and implement tactics for the continuous development and motivation of employees, significantly affecting their satisfaction. The positive impact is reflected in their commitment and loyalty (cf. Miles & McCamey, 2018).

Optimally, the employer brand can retain the best people, creating an environment that allows employees to promote the brand, increasing their satisfaction and the likelihood that they will remain in the company (see Arijs et al., 2018; Theurer et al., 2018). The loss of experienced professionals can have a profound economic impact on the employer (Dabirian et al., 2017). On the other hand, employees who like to work for a company may become its employer brand ambassadors (cf. Kapuściński et al., 2021).

The employer brand affects not only job seekers, but especially current employees. Its attractiveness, in general, is decisive in determining whether an employee is sticking with it. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct regular employee satisfaction surveys, respond to them and incorporate employee proposals. The interest of the senior management in the well-being of staff, their career and professional growth, improving the work environment and corporate culture, ultimately strengthens internal company relationships and cooperation across departments. Undoubtedly, individual employees differ in their perception of the employer brand attractiveness. Building it, however, presupposes finding out what motivates employees to work for the company and what it is valued for. If the company ignores this, it can cause employee dissatisfaction and high turnover. Questionnaire results indicate that 78.58% of surveyed firms are interested in why employees stay with them, and therefore what they appreciate. Half of the companies carry out job engagement surveys every year, 14.29% once every two years and the same percentage irregularly. Only 21.42% of the firms in question do not verify why their employees still work for them.

Based on Pearson's test, H3 hypothesis (the regularity of the survey of employee engagement is not related to the employer brand attractiveness) is rejected at the 5% significance level. According to the Cramér's V test, the dependence between the variables is strong. It can be concluded that regular surveying of employee involvement is related to the attractiveness of the employer brand, which can become a powerful tool for retaining the existing staff. The brand's effective use increases the long-term satisfaction of employees who can become its ambassadors, getting involved in its communication towards the external labour market, appropriate tools and activities being utilized.

4.4 Employer brand as a tool for getting potential employees

A strong employer brand helps companies lure suitable applicants through better recruitment strategies. At the beginning of the process, the firm tries to attract job seekers to its vacancies. To become a recognized employer, the company must constantly develop its attractiveness. If the employer brand is managed systematically, it can also raise the number of serious applicants, serving as a cost-effective and time-efficient tool. Ideally, the company becomes the so-called preferred employer, choosing from enough applicants. Since long-term vacancies are loss-making for the company, it is desirable to speed up and streamline recruitment procedures. Firms' experience shows that strong brands are succeeding in reducing recruitment costs while increasing the number of applicants (cf. Sharma, 2019; Barbaros, 2020).

As mentioned above, the employer brand is an efficient means of recruiting new staff. Their perception of the attractiveness of a potential employer must therefore also be detected. Based on the findings, it is then possible to identify the criteria that are preferred by applicants when choosing a company. The present survey shows that 92.86% of firms ask applicants how they perceive them as employers; 28.57% always ask this question, 35.71% very often and 28.57% occasionally. The remaining interviewed companies (i.e., 7.14%) do not find out how job applicants see them as prospective employers.

According to Pearson's test, hypothesis H4 (the frequency of detecting applicants' perception of the company is not related to the attractiveness of the employer brand) is rejected at a 5% level of significance. According to the Cramér's V coefficient, the dependence between the variables is medium. Thus, it can be stated that the frequency of surveying the perception of the firm by applicants is related to the employer brand attractiveness. This attractiveness perception varies, depending on whether the applicants are just entering the labour market or have a certain work history, whether they are building a career or are already experienced workers looking for new challenges. Applicants' preferences vary in other respects as well. Some are looking for an international environment, others a family business. There are also various requirements regarding the size and location of the company. For some people, job satisfaction means high pay, fringe and other benefits provision, professional growth prospects, part-time employment, and flexible working hours, or telecommute and work-from-home models. An attractive employer brand should clearly define who its target applicants are and what employee benefits it can offer.

A systematic approach using the right tools results in the building of a strong employer brand that not only motivates the existing employees, but also attracts and retains suitable applicants who will resonate with it. Such a brand captures attention of people who set themselves ambitious goals. A strong employer brand thus becomes an attractive one with the potential for applicants to actively seek it out themselves (Kapuściński et al., 2021; Barbaros, 2020).

The failure of employer brand building may be associated with the lack of interest of senior management which is not convinced of the effectiveness of the concept and accompanying measures that often require considerable costs to be incurred. Such concerns can be avoided by carefully planning measurable outputs, costs, and the implementation schedule so that the success of the employer brand concept can be reliably assessed. Reluctance on the part of employees themselves can also make a hindrance. A major obstacle is posed if the employer brand is managed by the parent company which centrally imposes a unified procedure and activities. This occurs when the corporate management enforces its own concept, not allowing local modifications.

5 Conclusion

This paper advocates the importance of creating an attractive employer brand as a significant part of strategic human resource

management. Employer branding is a long-term process allowing companies to respond to the expectations of potential and existing employees, recognition of their needs being an essential prerequisite. Ultimately, the employee brand brings a lasting competitive advantage in the labour market. Most effective in this respect is a reasonable job offer along with professional development opportunities.

The present research confirmed that there is a connection between the systematic building of the employer brand and a clearly defined personnel strategy. Without the latter, the brand cannot be effectively managed, and the tactics and activities utilized. Purposeful communication of the employer brand requires a methodical procedure for setting the objective and strategy of its creation, allowing to communicate it to both internal and external labour market.

The results showed that the person in charge of building the employer brand is not a guarantee that an appropriate personnel strategy is developed. This may be explained by the fact that companies adhere to certain goals that are not part of a specific strategy or pursue only short-term ones. It can also be assumed that the HR department uses the employer brand only to take on new employees, but not to build relationships with external and internal labour markets. However, many companies do not realize that a sole focus on recruiting new staff is short-sighted and ineffective in the long run. If the firm devises a systematic procedure for how and to whom to communicate the brand, it can attract the optimal number of applicants. Thanks to skilful communication, the company can save energy and time to improve relationships with current employees as well.

Further, a link between the regularity of surveying the staff engagement and the employer brand attractiveness was confirmed. The employer brand can be a reliable instrument for keeping the existing employees. Its proper use can also bring the company satisfied staff who, as its bearers, get involved in the brand communication towards the external labour market. It is necessary to start from within the company because the employer brand must be based on an analysis of the current situation in the internal and external labour market, communicating it properly afterwards, applying appropriate tools and activities.

The frequency of detecting the perception of the company by applicants is also related to the employer brand attractiveness. This perception varies, depending on whether the applicants are entering the labour market, launching their careers, or have previous work experience and are looking for further challenges. The choice between domestic vs. foreign employers, a large enterprise, or a small family business, a remote or close location also has an effect. Applicants differ in their emphasis on various factors of job satisfaction, such as high salaries, employee benefits, prospects for professional growth, flexible working hours, teleworking opportunities, etc. An attractive employer brand should be aware of what job seekers it is targeting and what benefits it can offer them.

The present results suggest that HR managers integrate employer branding into their agenda as part of personnel strategies, learn how to identify requirements of potential employees, and provide valuable employment opportunities. Employers should have a better understanding of the specific needs and expectations of both applicants and the existing employees.

The relatively narrow focus on the labour market of the Czech Republic and a certain respondent sample size here limits the generalizability of the present findings. Despite the limitations, they should be attended by HR specialists responsible for managing the workforce in corporates. The results of this paper can serve as a springboard for further research into the attractiveness of the employer brand whose construction is the manifestation of a new approach to human resource management applied in the labour market.

Literature:

1. Ambler, T. – Barrow, S.: The employer brand. In *Journal of brand management*, 4 (3), 1996, pp. 185-206. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.1996.42>.
2. Arasanmi, C. N. – Krishna, A.: Linking the employee value proposition (EVP) to employee behavioural outcomes. In *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 51 (7/8), 2019, pp. 387-395. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-05-2019-0043>.
3. Arijis, D. – Botero, I. C. – Michiels, A. – Molly, V.: Family business employer brand: Understanding applicants' perceptions and their job pursuit intentions with samples from the US and Belgium. In *Journal of Family Business Strategy*, 9 (3), 2018, pp. 180-191. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jfbs.2018.08.005>.
4. Backhaus, K. – Tikoo, S.: Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. *Career Development International*, 9 (5), 2004, pp. 501-517. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430410550754>.
5. Barbaros, M. C.: Does employer branding beat head hunting? The potential of company culture to increase employer attractiveness. In *Journal of Entrepreneurship, Management, and Innovation*, 16 (4), 2020, pp. 87-112. <https://doi.org/10.7341/20201643>.
6. Berk, K. – Carey, P.: *Data Analysis with Microsoft Excel*. Brooks/Cole, 2009. ISBN 9780495831495.
7. Bureau Van Dijk.: *Amadeus*. Retrieved October 22, 2020. Retrieved from <http://www.bvdinfo.com/Products/Company/information/International/AMADEUS.aspx>.
8. Cable, D. M. – Graham, M. E.: The determinants of job seekers' reputation perceptions. In *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 21 (8), 2000, pp. 929-947. [https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-1379\(200012\)21:8<929::AID-JOB63>3.0.CO;2-O](https://doi.org/10.1002/1099-1379(200012)21:8<929::AID-JOB63>3.0.CO;2-O).
9. CareerArc: *Survey connects poor candidate experience to limits in future job applications*. Retrieved from <https://www.careerarc.com/in-the-news/survey-connects-poor-candidate-experience-to-limits-in-future-job-applications>.
10. Carpentier, M. – Van Hoyer, G.: Managing organizational attractiveness after a negative employer review: company response strategies and review consensus. In *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 30 (2), 2021, pp. 274-291. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2020.1718748>.
11. Carpentier, M. – Van Hoyer, G. – Weijters, B.: Attracting applicants through the organization's social media page: Signaling employer brand personality. In *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 115, 2019. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2019.103326>.
12. Carpentier, M. – Van Hoyer, G. – Stockman, S. – Schollaert, E. – Van Theemsche, B. – Jacobs, G.: Recruiting nurses through social media: Effects on employer brand and attractiveness. In *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 73 (11), 2017, pp. 2696-2708. <https://doi.org/10.1111/jan.13336>.
13. Cheesman, J.: Glassdoor survey: This is the largest problem facing American and UK employers. *ERE Media*, 2017. Retrieved from <https://www.ere.net/glassdoor-survey-largest-problem-for-employers/>.
14. Collins, C. – Stevens, C.: The relationship between early recruitment-related activities and the application decisions of new labor-market entrants: A brand equity approach to recruitment. In *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87 (6), 2002, pp. 1121-1133. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1121>.
15. Dabirian, A. – Kietzmann, J. – Diba, H.: A great place to work!? Understanding crowdsourced employer branding. In *Business Horizons*, 60 (2), 2017, pp. 197-205. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2016.11.005>.
16. Dineen, B. R. – Van Hoyer, G. – Lievens, F. – Rosokha, L. M.: Third party employment branding: What are its signaling dimensions, mechanisms, and sources? In *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, 37, 2019, pp. 173-226. <https://doi.org/10.1108/S0742-730120190000037006>.
17. Foster, C. – Punjaisri, K. – Cheng, R.: Exploring the relationship between corporate, internal and employer branding. In *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 19 (6), 2010, pp. 401-409. <https://doi.org/10.1108/10610421011085712>.
18. Frasca, K. J. – Edwards, M. R.: Web-based corporate, social, and video recruitment media: Effects of media richness and source credibility on organizational attraction. In *International Journal of Selection and Assessment*, 25 (2), 2017, pp. 125-137. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijsa.12165>.

19. Glassdoor: *Top HR statistics: The latest stats for HR and recruiting pros.*, 2016. Retrieved from <https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/popular-topics/hr-stats.htm>.
20. Ito, J. – Brotheridge, C. M. – McFarland, K.: Examining how preferences for employer branding attributes differ from entry to exit and how they relate to commitment, satisfaction, and retention. In *Career Development International*, 18 (7), 2016, pp. 732-752. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CDI-05-2013-0067>.
21. Jain, N. – Bhatt, P.: Employment preferences of job applicants: Unfolding employer branding determinants. In *Journal of Management Development*, 34 (6), 2015, pp. 634-652. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-09-2013-0106>.
22. Kang, M. – Sung, M.: How symmetrical employee communication leads to employee engagement and positive employee communication behaviors: The mediation of employee-organization relationships. In *Journal of Communication Management*, 21 (1), 2017, pp. 82-102. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-04-2016-0026>.
23. Kapuściński, G. – Zhang, N. – Zeng, L. – Cao, A.: Effects of crisis response tone and spokesperson's gender on employer attractiveness. In *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 94, 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ijhm.2021.102884>.
24. Klimkiewicz, K. – Oltra, V.: Does CSR enhance employer attractiveness? The role of Millennial job seekers' attitudes. In *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 24 (5), 2017, pp. 449-463. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1419>.
25. Kucharska, W. – Kowalczyk, R.: How to achieve sustainability? - Employee's point of view on company's culture and CSR practice. In *Corporate Social Responsibility and Environmental Management*, 26(2), 2019, pp. 453-467. <https://doi.org/10.1002/csr.1696>.
26. Lievens, F.: Employer branding in the Belgian Army: The importance of instrumental and symbolic beliefs for potential applicants, actual applicants, and military employees. In *Human Resource Management*, 46 (1), 2007, pp. 51-69. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.20145>.
27. Market Research Explained: *Esomar, the global insights community*, 2019. Retrieved November 1, 2020. Available at: <https://www.esomar.org/market-research-explained>.
28. Miles, S. J. – McCamey, R.: The candidate experience: Is it damaging your employer brand? In *Business Horizons*, 61 (5), 2018, pp. 755-764. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.bushor.2018.05.007>.
29. Ployhart, R. E. – Schmitt, N. – Tippins, N. T.: Solving the supreme problem: 100 years of selection and recruitment at the Journal of Applied Psychology. In *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 102 (3), 2017, pp. 291-304. <https://doi.org/10.1037/apl0000081>.
30. Rampl, L. V.: How to become an employer of choice: transforming employer brand associations into employer first-choice brands. In *Journal of Marketing Management*, 30 (13-14), 2014. <https://doi.org/10.1080/0267257X.2014.934903>.
31. Ruchika – Prasad, A. Untapped relationship between employer branding, anticipatory psychological contract, and intent to join. In *Global Business Review*, 20 (1), 2017, pp. 194-213. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150917713897>.
32. Sharma, S.: Employer Branding: A Novel Route to Employee Retention and Competitive Advantage. In *Journal of General Management Research*, 6(1), 2019, pp. 14–31.
33. Sommer, L. – Heidenreich, S. – Handrich, M.: War for talents - how perceived organisational innovativeness affect employer attractiveness. In *R&D Management*, 47 (2), 2016, pp. 299-310. <https://doi.org/10.1111/radm.12230>.
34. Theurer, C. P. – Tumasjan, A. – Welpe, I. M. – Lievens, F.: Employer branding: A brand equity-based literature review and research agenda. In *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20 (1), 2018, pp. 155-179. <https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12121>.
35. Tkalac Verčič, A.: The impact of employee engagement, organisational support, and employer branding on internal communication satisfaction. In *Public Relations Review*, 47 (1), 2021. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2021.102009>.
36. Tkalac Verčič, A. – Pološki Vokić, N.: Engaging employees through internal communication. In *Public Relations Review*, 43 (5), 2017, pp. 885-893. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2017.04.005>.
37. Tkalac Verčič, A. – Sinčić Ćorić, D.: The relationship between reputation, employer branding and corporate social responsibility. In *Public Relations Review*, 44 (4), 2018, pp. 444-452. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pubrev.2018.06.005>.

Primary Paper Section: A

Secondary Paper Section: AM, AH