Managing human resources through employer branding: assessing the impact on employees' citizenship behavior

Nawel Benessalah[1], AssyaKhiat

[1]Doctoratestudentattheuniverityof Oran2, nawelbenssalah@gmail.com

[2]Professor atthe University of Oran2, assya.khiat@gmail.com

Abstract:

The application of a marketing framework on human resources management results in effective employer-employee relationships that engender satisfaction, commitment, engagement and better performance. This study aims to explore the association and level of influence of employer brand attributes on organizational citizenship behavior. To fulfill the stated objective, a review of the existing literature was conducted, with a survey analysis of 264 employees from 7 companies listed as the best employers in Algeria. Results show a moderate level of significance of employer branding on organizational citizenship behavior.

Keywords :employer branding; employer of choice; Human resources management; organizational citizenship behavior.

Jel Classification Codes :M12, M54, M31.

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[1] Auteur correspondant : Benessalah, Nawel, nawelbenssalah@gmail.com.

1. INTRODUCTION

The discipline of Human Resources Management generated a considerable amount of knowledge in the area of people management. It engages in a holistic, strategic and interactive approach in order to face the new challenges entailed in the nature of the global market. In light of globalization, there is a large diversity of cultures, sexes, generations and competences (Stone & Deadrick, 2015). For the Human Resource function to manage these challenges, it is required to enlist high cognitive and managerial skills.

There is a strong consensus among HR professionals on the importance of fostering positive employment experiences and creating high employee commitment to enables organizations to sustain a strong competitive advantage and face the challenges imposed by the new dynamics of the global market. Organizations today compete to attract and retain qualified talents the same way as they compete to attract and sustain loyal customers (Beechler & Woodward, 2009). For more than twenty years, the HR community aligned itself with marketing for the betterment of the HR activities and to assert its role as a strategic partner (Ulrich, Brockbank, & Johnson, 2009). This alliance is embodied in employer branding.

Since Ambler and Borrow first referred to it in the 1990 CIPD conference, the concept generated a great inflow of research from both academics and professionals (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Lievens, et al, 2007; Theurer, et al, 2018). Most of the conducted research focused either on the identification of the employer brand attributes (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005), or on candidates' attraction strategies (Dougherty, 1992; Heneman, Herbert, & Berkley, Robyn, 1999; Martin & Franz, 1994; Rynes & Barber, 1990; Turban, Forret, & Hendrickson, 1998). Moreover, the focus extended to public (Reichenberg, 2002) and military (Lievens, 2007) institutions.

The rising interest is found to have a great impact over the race of becoming an employer of choice (Love & Singh, 2011). The focus on being an employer of choice originates from the service industry in the early stages of the war for talent that evaded the American labor market by the end of the last millennial (Ulrich & Lake, 1991). Marriott, one of the leading companies in the service industry, engaged in a set of activities aiming to foster employee engagement (Ulrich & Lake, 1991). Their approach highlights one of marketing's applications in the field of HR by conducting internal and external surveys, to current and potential employees, to assess their needs and expectations when considering employment for the company. The results of these surveys enabled managers to design activities that emphasize training and career development to channel

and sustain employees' engagement (Ulrich & Lake, 1991). This emphasis was heightened by consulting agencies and magazines who found a business opportunity in the attempts of organizations to distinguish their employment offerings and signal the superiority of the working experience over the competition's (Joo & Mclean, 2006). Love and Singh (2011) presented a list of surveys across the world namely Fortune's 100 best companies to work for in America, Great Place to Work, Employer of Choice, etc. Companies participating in these surveys draw on signaling theory to take advantage of the generated media and press attention to communicate their distinctive identity as an employer (Dineen & Allen, 2016; Love & Singh, 2011).

Since 2015, Algerian companies, namely MNCs, have expressed a desire to assert their position in the labor market by participating in the "Great Place To Work" survey conducted by Best Companies Group (BCG). Under the assumption of the positive effect of such certifications on employee engagement (Theurer et al., 2018), and the lack of empirical evidence that link employer branding with employees' behavior, this study explores the employment value proposition of best employers and their effect on employees' organizational citizenship behavior in the case of seven companies listed as best employers by BCG.

Quantitative method, through a survey analysis, was used to answer the question of whether the employer branding attributes have an influence on employees' organizational citizenship behavior. The study was designed around two hypotheses. The first one postulates the existence of a significant association between employer brand attributes and organizational citizenship behavior. And the second one posits the prediction effect of employer brand attributes on organizational citizenship behavior.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW
1.1. Employer branding defined

'Employer Branding' is concerned with the perceived image of an organization as a place to work (Charbonnier-voirin, Vignolles, & Charbonnier-voirin, 2011). It is the process of placing an image of being a "*great place to work*" in the minds of the target group (Christiaans, 2013). Ambler & Barrow (1996, p. 187) define it as "*the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company*". It is the process of building a unique identity as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Liger (2013) also defines HR marketing as "a new approach to the employee / employer relationship that considers present and potential employees as customers. This new approach to people management is a tool for managers desiring to design jobs and work environments that create a positive and distinctive working experience for individuals. In order to develop a framework for employer branding, researchers drew from marketing and branding theory. Lievens and

Highhouse(2003) developed the instrumental/symbolic attributes framework based on Keller's (1993) approach. Symbolic attributes refer to perceptions of organizational identity inferences like prestige and the social approval gained from working for the organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Instrumental attributes on the other hand relate to all tangible benefits derived from the work experience such as salary, workplace design, place and benefits (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Panczuk and Point (2008) and Liger (2013) applied the 4Ps marketing mix to the employment relationship where (1) the product stands for for job offerings and working experiences, it refers to emotional and functional characteristics e.g. compensation, benefits, work location, job design, and hours of work ; (2) Price in HR marketing is anything the employee would be willing to sacrifice to accomplish the requirements of his job, whether it is physical, moral, emotional effort or time ; (3) Promotion's role is to improve people's understanding and perceptions of the employment experience and (4) Place is concerned with the physical characteristics of a workplace.The adaptation of this framework to the employment relationship will lead to better HR practices.

For long, scholars have considered it as a fashion statement and a way of creating unrealistic expectations in the minds of potential candidates (Jenner & Taylor, 2007). To contest these assumptions, a considerable amount of research was directed toward the contributions of such strategies on organizations' attractiveness to potential employees with findings confirming the positive correlation (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Current employees on the other hand were found to express a high level of engagement, mediated by satisfaction, for companies with strong employer brand attributes (Davies, Mete, & Whelan, 2018). On the same line, Ferreira (2018) found empirical evidence that link employer brand attributes perception to employee engagement. Gaddam(2008) considers employer branding as a tool to foster employee loyalty. Moreover, it is considered to have a clear influence on employee retention (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017). To our knowledge, the studies dedicated to the influence of employer brand perception on employees behavior is considerably scars. So for our study, the following hypothesis was proposed:

Hypothesis 1: employer branding is significantly associated with organizational citizenship behavior.

1.2. Organizationalcitizenshipbehavior

The concept of Organizational citizenship behavior describes employees' behavior beyond the role of task performance and there to commitment to extra role behaviors to ensure positive results for the organization (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1993; Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000; Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). It is defined as a behavior expressed by employee voluntarily in order to help to fulfill the

functions efficiently without taking into consideration the organization's formal reward system (Organ, 1997). Citizenship behaviors are often performed by employees to support the interests of the organization regardless of personal benefits (Moorman & Blakely, 1995).

There are eight behavior types according to literature, altruism(Lee & Allen, 2002), sportsmanship(Podsakoff et al., 2000), conscientiousness/organizational compliance(MacKenzie et al., 1993), civic virtue(Lee & Allen, 2002; MacKenzie et al., 1993), helping behavior(Lee & Allen, 2002; Moorman & Blakely, 1995), organizational loyalty(Lee & Allen, 2002; Moorman & Blakely, 1995), individual initiative(Lee & Allen, 2002), and self-development (George & Brief, 1992).

Charbonnier-Voirin & Lissillour (2018) explored the influence of employer branding on organizational loyalty. Results revealed positive influence on four out of five dimensions. The current study aims to investigate the ability of employer branding attributes to inspire positive contributions on the overall organizational citizenship behavior. The second hypothesis we propose for this study is the following:

Hypothesis 2: Employer branding attributes are significant predictors of organizational citizenship behavior.

2. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Deciding on the research methodology for data collection is very important to ensure the validity of any research. In this study, the main objective is to explore the presence of each one of the components of the HR marketing attributes in the HR strategies of the companies who gained the recognition as a "*best employer*" in Algeria and the retributions that the positive perception of these attributes can have on employees' behavior. The study follows the research agenda of Wong (2014) who explored the implication of employer branding promise fulfillment on citizenship behavior and task performance in a case study of a single enterprise. However, our study aims to focus on the Algerian context. The study targeted 7 companies who have gained the best employer certification since the first issue of the contest. The data was collected from a sample of (264) employee. The study used convenience sampling as the targeted companies are located all across the country.The question were set up in a 5 level Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. The empirical data was coded and processed with SPSS. A principal components analysis was used for this part of the study. Correlations and multiple regressions were used to establish positive or negative links between the employer brand attributes and citizenship and the level of prediction.

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The survey of this study was conducted on 354 employees from selected organizations operating in various industries in Algeria and all benefited from the best employer certification or among the top 5. There were non-responded items in 35 questionnaires out of 354. Therefore these 22 questionnaire forms were excluded from the analysis, in addition to 55 forms that were eliminated do to internal inconsistency in the answers. Therefore, data obtained from 264 employees, 208 of which were male78.8% making up 57, 2 % of the sample. Concerning age, 58% of the respondents were less than 36 years old (generation X, 40.5% were between 36 and 54 (generation Y). the majority of participants have either a manager or a supervisor's position within their organization 61.4%.

Table 1 below reveals the means, standard deviations, alpha coefficients and correlations of the dimensionsunder study. It was found that all the inter-correlations were significant and positive as expected apart from the inter-correlation between OCB factors 2 and 3 that demonstrate a low level of correlation of 0.081. The inter-correlation among the EB variables derived through the factor analysis was significantly related to OCB factors. Prestige (r=0.582) had a large correlation effect on OCB. The remaining factors on the other hand namely Promotion (r=0.476) and Recognition (r=0.468) approximately followed by Reputation (r=0.379) and Relations (r=0.361) who were found to have a moderate effect on OCB consistent with hypothesis 1. Cronbach's alpha analysis, KMO (Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy) measure, and Bartlett's test of sphericity were conducted to assess the internal consistency among the construct of the items and the sample. The results of analysis revealed a Cronbach's alpha of 0.919 for the construct of the employer branding EB scale, and a Cronbach's alpha of 0.922 for the OCB scale. The degree of common variance among the twenty variables of EB scale and the 19 items of the OCB scales were bothmeritorious showing a KMO of 0.915 and 0.922 respectively.

Results of the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity for both scales ($\chi2=2850.094$; $p<0.001$; $\chi2= 2557.857$, $P<0.001$) showed that the sample inter-correlation matrix did not come from a population in which the inter-correlation matrix was an identity matrix. As such, the factors extracted will account for substantial amount of variance.

The results of the factor analysis of the employer branding scale are demonstrated in Table 2. The employer brandingscale was borrowed fromBerthon et al.(2005), whoalso developed five sub-dimensions, namely economic, social, interest, development, and application values. However, in this study the items were not loaded on the same factors. So the EB factors were relabeled accordingly with the new construct. Factor 1 included items related to economic and social recognition to employees it was therefore labeled Recognition and Reward with a total variance of 42.677%. Factor 2 was labeled Prestige comprising items expressing the positive psychological attributes associated with working for the organization. This factor explains 8.23 % of total variance. Items related to career and experience opportunities were loaded under the label Promotion with a

variance of 6.54%. The remaining factors, Relations and Reputation relate to the organization's working dynamics with a percentage of variance of 5.01 and 5.09 respectively. The total variance explained for the EB scale is 67.57(%).

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlations								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. OCB fact1 Organizational Loyalty	**(0.911)**	,566[**]	,221[**]	,489[**]	,617[**]	,496[**]	,360[**]	,351[**]
2. OCB fact 2 Individual Initiative 3.	,566[**]	**(0.832)**	,081	,376[**]	,393[**]	,395[**]	,326[**]	,297[**]
4. OCB fact 3 Affective Engagement	,221[**]	,081	**(0.502)**	,180[**]	,276[**]	,183[**]	,166[**]	,161[**]
5. EB fact1 Recognition and Reward	,489[**]	,376[**]	,180[**]	**(0.911)**	,678[**]	,587[**]	,517[**]	,258[**]
6. EB fact2 Prestige	,617[**]	,393[**]	,276[**]	,678[**]	**(0.838)**	,585[**]	,496[**]	,332[**]
7. EB fact3 Promotion	,496[**]	,395[**]	,183[**]	,587[**]	,585[**]	**(0.718)**	,435[**]	,317[**]
8. EB fact4 Relationship	,360[**]	,326[**]	,166[**]	,517[**]	,496[**]	,435[**]	**(0.699)**	,209[**]
9. EB fact5 Reputation	,351[**]	,297[**]	,161[**]	,258[**]	,332[**]	,317[**]	,209[**]	**(0.409)**
10. OCB				0.465**	0.582**	0.476**	0.379**	0.361**
Mean	37.147	23.659	6.950	36.371	16.253	11.659	8.435	8.454
Standard deviation	7.974	4.069	1.998	6.989	3.139	2.386	1.580	1.519

Table2. Factor analysis for employer branding attributes

	Factors				
	1	2	3	4	5
Factor1 recognition and rewards %variance explained 42.677					
I am constantly encouraged and provided with the necessary means to improve my skills within the enterprise	0,831				
My efforts are appreciated and awarded	0,783				
The company provides opportunities for career advancement	0,777				
Overall attractive compensation package	0,767				
Access to training programs	0,679				
Possibility for work-life balance	0,654				
Above average salary	0,585				
Employees' creative solutions are valued and taken into consideration	0,542				
Happy and positive work environment	0,459				
Factor 2 Prestige %variance explained 8.23					
I feel a sense of pride for working for this company		0,754			
Working for the company enhances my confidence and self esteem		0,676			
My company is devoted to provide innovative and high-quality products/services		0,609			
Constantly innovating work practices		0,560			
Factor 3 Promotion %variance explained 6.54					
Opportunity to apply previously acquired knowledge and skills			0,733		
Access to a unique and interdepartmental work experience			0,729		

Enhanced future career opportunities			0,615		
Factor 4 Relationships %variance explained 5.09					
I have a good relationship with my colleagues and my peers				0,824	
I have a good relationship with my superiors				0,747	
Factor 5 Reputation %variance explained 5.01					
The company's brand is attractive and well positioned in the market					0,816
My job in the company is stable and secure					0,613
Extraction method: Principal component analysis Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization Rotation converged in 5 iterations.					

Table 3 presents the results of the factor analysis for organizational citizenship behavior scale. The items of the scale were inspired from the OCB literature namely Moorman & Blakely (1995) ; Lee & Allen (2002) ; MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1993, George & Brief (1992) and Paillé (2008). The 19 items were loaded in three sub-dimensions, Organizational loyalty, individual initiative and affective engagement, with a percentage of variance of 41.23, 11.12 and 6.90 respectively. The total variance explained for OCB scale is 59.261 (%).

Table 3. Factor analysis for organizational citizenship behavior

	Factors		
	1	2	3
1. **Organizational loyalty** %variance explained 41.23			
Happily discuss the enterprise with outsiders	,853		
Willingly spend the rest of my career in this company	,790		
Pride when publicly presenting the company	,778		
Considering the company's problem like its own	,769		
participating in the enhancement of company's image	,763		
Defending the company when it is criticized	,735		
Being up to date with company's evolution	,706		
Expressing personal interest to the company	,632		
Respecting company's policies and rules	,554		
Willingly suggest ideas to improve company's performance	,527		
Always making extra efforts when conducting tasks	,500		
2. **Individual initiative** %variance explained 11.12			
Acquire new skills to accomplish more complex tasks		,832	
Attention to work and quick reflexes for unforeseen tasks		,806	
Voluntarily improve knowledge to improve performance		,751	
Voluntarily help colleagues to accomplish their tasks		,690	
keeping a positive attitude in situations of conflict		,594	
Express opinions of what's best for the company even with a risk of disapproval		,581	
3. **Organizational engagement** %variance explained 6.90			
Feeling of belonging			,835
Feeling of emotional attachment			,749
Extraction method: Principal component analysis Rotation method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization Rotation converged in 6 iterations.			

Results of the regression analyses are presented in Table 4. According to the results, employer branding (β=, 609; *p*: .000) had a significant relationship to organizational citizenship behavior. The standard error for this raw regression coefficient is .050. According to the data, Employer branding attributes are significant predictors of OCB. However, the level of predictions is weak (R^2=0.370; *P*=.000). These results are consistent with our hypothesis that suggested a causal relationship between employer branding attributes and organizational citizenship behavior. The table also reveals that only two factors reputation (β=,163;p=,002) and prestige (β=,377; p=,002) were significant predictors of OCB.

Table 4. Results of regression

	Dependent Variable: Organizational Citizenship Behavior		
Independent variable	Standardized β Coefficient	*t*	*p*
Employer brand attributes	0.609	12.417	0.000
Reward & recognition	,043	,607	,544
Prestige	,377	5,276	,000
Promotion	,148	2,307	,022
Relations	,071	1,217	,225
Reputation	,163	3,142	,002
R²/ R² adjusted	0.370/0.368		

4. CONCLUSION

To establish a good employment relationship, expectations and needs of both parties, employer and employee, need to be well understood and satisfied. The application of a marketing framework on human resources management results in an effective employer-employee relationship that engenders satisfaction, commitment, engagement and ultimately better performance. Furthermore, these satisfied employees will contribute to the employer brand and send positive signals to both potential customers and potential employees; they will constitute future ambassadors of the brand (Schweitzer & Lyons, 2008; App, Merk, & Büttgen, 2012).

The object of our paper is to contribute to knowledge gap by exploring the extent to which employer branding is associated with organizational citizenship behavior. The results revealed significant large to moderate associations between Employer branding factors and organizational citizenship behavior confirming our first hypothesis. Only 2 out of five factors are significant predictors of positive organizational citizenship

behavior, namely prestige and reputation.

One of the limitations of our study can be argued to rely in the size of the sample. Due to the novelty of best employer surveys in the country and the limited access to the certified organizations, convenience sampling methodology was used to select the sample. Another limitation can be presented in people's resistance to surveys and organizations' resistance to being investigated (Bryman, 2003).

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