Developing An Attractive Employer Image in the Human Resources Marketing Plan

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ABSTRACT

In a highly competitive environment, companies seek various human resources (HR) marketing plan strategies to develop a strong employer image and become a more attractive employer. However, this has received little attention in the existing literature. This paper examines the components of the employer image central to a company's HR marketing plan and how to communicate it effectively. This study concluded that developing the employer image is essential to HR marketing. This is because HR marketing plans focus on developing the organization into an attractive and competitive employer to attract and retain the best talent. Similarly, HR marketing must create a lasting, individualized relationship with each employee and build loyalty. Thus, an HR marketing plan is vital in enhancing the company's HR vision and strategy without deviating from the company's overall strategy, values, and vision. To reach the target population, there is a need to disseminate the employer's image through the proper tools and communication channels like mobile devices, the web, free press, online social media, customers, and school campuses.

Keywords: HR Marketing, Employer Image, Attractive Employer, Talent.

INTRODUCTION

Organisations always seek top talents to drive innovation, enhance productivity, and achieve sustainable growth. The job market landscape consists of recruiters or applicants (Heikkila, 2024). Despite high unemployment, companies face challenges recruiting and attracting competent candidates or talent (El Fissi, 2023). Also, the lack of investment in the employer's image to attract talent and the absence of continuity in the marketing plan for welcoming, integrating, and retaining this talent has resulted in high turnover rates at organisations (El Fissi, 2023; Nanthagopan & Vivek, 2021). Consequently, this can lead to decreased productivity, increased recruitment costs, lower employee morale, and disruption to team dynamics. In addition, it can cause a loss of valuable institutional knowledge and a negative impact on the company's reputation (Serenko, 2022).

Employer image is the distinctive positioning of a company that will enable it to stand out from the competition and attract talent (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). An employer's image attracts applicants like a strong brand image that attracts customers. Recent evidence suggests that companies have to remain attractive and competitive to attract top talent (Heikkila, 2024). Companies seek to analyze their value system better and know how they are perceived externally (Arduini et al., 2024). They may have a good reputation based on their products. However, they may have a bad image as an employer. A much-debated question is whether candidates will apply

for jobs at companies they feel have a better employee image and are more competitive. However, much of the research has not addressed this question.

This paper investigates how organizations can enhance their employer attractiveness and improve market positioning in a job market characterized by increasing talent scarcity.

The following questions are addressed:

- What is the employer image? And what are its components?
- Does HR marketing adopt an employer image development strategy?
- How do you go about developing your employer image?
- What are the relays for conveying and transmitting this employer image?
- What is the added value of an attractive employer image for an organisation?

The Challenges of the Employer Image

Managing an employer's image can attract talented individuals. However, it is essential to retain them. An employee's relationship with an organization is a long-term one. However, this depends on several factors, including career growth, job satisfaction, motivation, benefits, work-life balance, company culture, leadership effectiveness, and recognition (Wang et al., 2024; Nassani et al., 2024). Consequently, work experiences differ from one individual to the next, notably due to specific and evolving career paths. The key issues include:

- *Pleasure:* Work is valued for the pleasure it brings. Doing what you love and having stimulating experiences is valued above everything (Michel, 2013, p92).
- *Variety and Richness at Work:* The strictly financial aspect does not always appear to be a source of retention for individuals, as richness at work can enthuse employees with greater independence and more room for maneuver in the activity.
- *Work-life Balance:* Work-life balance is a decisive element that the employer image must provide and defend. "Although young people place a high value on learning opportunities through work and the application of skills, the perception of an imbalance between the (work) and (non-work) spheres is an important factor in leaving the company" (Michel, 2013, p93).
- *Autonomy:* Employees need a space where they can react freely and in their own way, thus developing confidence and motivation to perform their tasks as well as possible. It is also one of the most important aspects of an employer's image.
- *Work that Gives Meaning:* "the spiritual dimension and the ability to produce meaning at work are other important aspects emphasized by employees" (Michel, 2013, P94). This ability to give meaning is based on the company's core values.

Importance of Employer Image

Knowing an employer's image is essential in differentiating the organization as part of a global competitive strategy. Employer and corporate images significantly positively affect organizational attractiveness (Younis & Hammad, 2021). A company where current employees are engaged, satisfied, and speak positively about their experiences helps them attract top talent. According to Banerjee et al. (2020), employer brand mediates the relationship between the corporate brand and the people's intention to work for the organization. Employees with a positive image of themselves within the company are more likely to remain at the organization (Kumar, 2022). They feel a sense of belonging and are motivated to contribute to the organization's success. Contrarily, a negative employee image can result in high employee turnover.

In a company, it is vital to identify the strengths and weaknesses to gain a competitive advantage and identify areas for improvement (Farida & Setiawan, 2022). Thus, an organisation that values its employees will likely invest in their development and fosters a positive work environment. Consequently, this contributes to a strong and positive employee image. This employer image is sustained by the human resource (HR) culture, the statistical data, procedures, and reputation.

Diversity

One of the challenges of an attractive employer strategy is to ensure that different genders from different age groups can coexist within a standard structure. Companies with different products and services based on their consumer base must attract and retain talent by considering their preferences and practices (Agu et al., 2024; Liger, 2016). Additionally, diversity can enhance a company's attractiveness while broadening its sources of recruitment and human capital (Gross-Golacka et al., 2022). A genuine diversity policy within the company will broaden the recruitment sources and enrich the company. Hence, it can develop the capacity for innovation and a better understanding of the expectations of different customers while opening up to new markets.

Attractive Employer Strategy in Human Resource Marketing

Human Resource Marketing

Human resource (HR) marketing aims to optimize the recruitment process for lasting relationships with employees. The lasting relationship makes the company an attractive employer. This is because organizations that retain talent are viewed as more reputable and stable, fostering a sense of trust and reliability among stakeholders (Yan et al., 2022). Hence, effective employer branding strategies attract and retain talent.

The HR Marketing Plan

In organizations, HR and strategy implementation are becoming closely related. While traditionally, HRM is considered administrative, HR significantly enhances strategy implementation in modern organizations. However, some companies have shown that HR can foster a pragmatic, organized, and effective strategy (Anita et al., 2022; Verrier, 2012). In the past, HR was limited to administrative or support tasks. However, HR is now invested in attracting, retaining, and developing talent. Furthermore, the HR marketing plan adopts this vision, supported by promotion and awareness campaigns among external partners to make its actions visible and effective.

Creating an Employer Image and Measuring Attractiveness

A company's attractiveness measures its ability to attract new employees or retain existing ones (Dassler et al., 2022). It is based on stakeholders' public perception of its employer image, like competitors, job seekers, customers, and suppliers. A competitive and innovative company must listen to the views of its customers, including current and future employees. This means developing the image of an attractive employer, expressing its identity and values based on the following actions:

- Attracting employees: communicating a social brand image, differentiating ourselves from competitors, and becoming a benchmark employer.
- The company must offer high-quality and satisfactory work experience and working conditions. The work quality will attract more talent to the organization.
- Creating an employer's image: An employer's image must be based on authentic values and be capable of inspiring employees and job seekers.
- The company's image is built internally through actions, words, visuals, and partnerships. The company's work is attached to beliefs and notions linked to the industry, management, and the owner.
- The mission statement outlines the organization's purpose, presenting an attractive and challenging organization to attract prospective candidates.
- Employer brand management is centered on the company's professions and functions. The success of employer branding is based on its ability to integrate the different representations of each business with consistency and relevance.

Defining Professions for Better Recruitment

Identifying a company's professions is essential, as it involves mapping out current and future needs. Mapping provides a clear vision of the channels around which the recruitment policy will be organized, and highlights the significant sectors (Liger, 2016). However, some requirement agencies.

HR Marketing Positioning: Monitoring & Benchmarking, HR Differentiation

This entails HR intelligence, benchmarking, differentiation, and positioning. HR intelligence implies understanding the practices of competitors concerning recruitment and human resources management towards formulating HR strategies to address them (Margherita, 2022). This is particularly crucial when considering positions with high demand and competition, which may exist across various sectors. Specific job roles attract competition from various organizations; a company can develop targeted intelligence HR strategies to compete effectively for top talent. Moreover, social networks are an effective way of identifying intelligence. The services include conferences, studies, access to specialised websites, and thematic reports.

HR benchmarking refers to analyzing the content and form of competitor recruitment advertisements profiles in a database to identify strengths and weaknesses (Arora et al., 2021; Margherita, 2022; Liger, 2016). For instance, the HR marketing positioning of your employer competitors can be analyzed by organizing a systematic watch and developing a database. This enables organizations to exchange, share, benchmark, and reflect on current and future HR issues (Arora et al., 2021).

HR differentiation is a qualitative analysis of a competitor's recruitment communications to determine how to attract top talent. Employees must highlight to top talent that they are ahead of others and offer them better working conditions, job satisfaction, or enhanced benefits (Liger, 2016). Meanwhile, positioning involves

developing a roadmap with short- and medium-term objectives towards becoming an attractive employer. Table 1 illustrates the initial positioning with themes and associated taglines or catchphrases.

Table 1: Initial Positioning

Theme	Tagline
Challenge, taste for challenge	*"Together, let's push the limits."*
Innovation, creativity	*"Innovate in complete freedom."*
Innovation, creation	*"Together building our future."*
Teamwork	*"Let's combine our talents."*

Source: Liger (2016)

Asserting Identity

Organizations that cultivate an appealing employer image without a functional foundation or genuine alignment with their operational realities risk consequences, especially during a crisis (Faqihi & Miah, 2023). In such situations, the disconnect between perceived image and experience becomes apparent, leading to employee disenchantment and exiting the company (Kele & Cassell, 2023). Hence, organizations must display their identity. The personalities of the founders of the company are vital in defining this identity. However, it may not be sufficient. Therefore, it is essential to identify the elements that constitute the company's identity, such as date of establishment, sales, number of employees, and how the jobs are performed. Also, it is important to work on expressing and sharing our values and developing them as necessary. Once its identity has been defined or rediscovered, the company can highlight its personality through an HR marketing action plan (Kele & Cassell, 2023).

The Relays of the Employer's Image

The image created must be communicated externally and internally. This is to make employees aware that their employer differs from its competitors. Hence, their organization offers an environment conducive to personal and professional development (Moiseeva et al., 2021; Chaminade, 2006). This reinforces their commitment to the company and strengthens their sense of belonging and value.

Press and Free Newspapers

Journalists directly influence target audiences as they are usually present at meetings and in the field to get first-hand information about the company (Dodds et al., 2021). The relationship between organizations and the press will facilitate future communication that strongly conveys the employer's image. Free newspapers have a wide readership and can advertise the company's image (Dodds et al., 2021). Hence, they represent a suitable recruitment channel in some cases and for particular profiles but unsuitable in others. Moreover, free newspapers are available online and can be accessed on mobile devices. Thus, free print media can enhance the visibility and reputation of a company.

Customers

Customers can be leveraged to convey an employer image and reach out to targeted talent (Panagiotidou et al., 2024). This can be done through word-of-mouth and recommendations. Satisfied customers who observe that the employees are motivated and developing a promising career will likely project a positive company image. Also, newsletters can be distributed to customers to inform them about the organization and enhance its reputation (Dodds et al., 2021). Hence, customers are essential to improving an organization's image.

Schools and the Manager Campus

The presence of companies in business and engineering schools can attract talent (Yameen et al., 2021). Some organizations hire a campus manager with a long-lasting relationship with the school. This strategy gives a company an edge by putting them in a better position to secure highly sought-after graduates. This close interpersonal relationship with university campuses and proximity to students can help recruit top talent.

A Practical Guide to Recruitment Communications

A recruitment communication guide is essential in HR marketing and in communicating the employer's image (Hussain et al., 2022). It is a vital tool for ensuring the consistency of recruitment practices concerning content and form, especially for large and decentralized organizations (Hussain et al., 2022). Notwithstanding the official rules for job adverts, companies, and their HR teams should have clear hiring guidelines, especially about treating everyone fairly. These principles need to address the recruitment tools and explicitly discard tests not validated by the company (Liger, 2016)

The Web and E-community Manager

The web has become an essential communication platform for disseminating information (Anuar & Qian, 2024). It offers organizations a powerful tool to share news, promote products and services, and build brand awareness globally (Zulfikar,2023). Accordingly, organisations can utilize social media platforms to promote their image. An e-community manager can interact with users online through dialogue, question and answers (Q&A), vlogs, and content sharing (Guan et al., 2022).

The e-community manager is expected to be proactive and available to respond to queries. They should be effective communicators with a good knowledge of the company. Additionally, they should be sensitive to relationships and human resources while using content with search engine keywords. Moreover, they should apply HR intelligence to monitor the activities of their competitors to gain insights into their strategies, anticipate market trends, and ultimately enhance their competitive advantage in attracting, developing, and retaining top talent.

These different aspects will primarily constitute the company's e-reputation, which must be set up and monitored carefully (Guan et al., 2022). Correspondingly, smartphones are an essential communication tool and a medium for recruitment. Hence, displaying the employer's image on mobile devices, which is always accessible, can be highly strategic in reaching a wider audience. Thus, it is an additional element in the company's HR marketing approach.

Accordingly, opinion leaders, professional organizations, customers, employees, campus managers at schools, e-community managers, and recruitment communication guides can convey a strong, attractive employer image (Panagiotidou et al., 2024; Hussain et al., 2022; Guan et al., 2022). They can also reach out to target populations and effectively identify potential HR needs at the company level. Notably, an action plan is needed to cover the contacts, information, and operations; an employer-image communication strategy can be multi-channel, using various channels and appropriate action plans. Furthermore, it can be implemented in carefully planned stages.

CONCLUSION

In a job market facing a scarcity of talent and competent candidates, developing an attractive, competitive employer image is essential to attracting and retaining top talents. In the same way, a company cultivates its brand image to attract and retain customers, it must also prioritize its employer brand to attract and retain talent. This study identified that the company's identity and values must inspire the employer's image. It should offer potential employees personal and professional development. Additionally, the study showed that organizations must meet employees' expectations and provide autonomy, training and skills development, and work-life balance.

This study concluded that developing the employer image is essential to HR marketing. This is because HR marketing plans focus on developing the organization into an attractive and competitive employer to attract and retain the best skills. Also, HR marketing must create a lasting, individualized relationship with each employee and build loyalty. Thus, an HR marketing plan is vital in enhancing the company's HR vision and strategy without deviating from the company's overall strategy, values, and vision. Finally, the employer's image must be disseminated through the proper tools and communication medium to reach the target population. Such communication channels include mobile devices, the web, print media, free press, online social media, customers, and school campuses. Future studies should investigate how to welcome, integrate, and retain employees and develop lasting relationships. This will assist in building the company's employer image. Moreover, empirical studies in the future will help assess the opinions of customers and job seekers on factors affecting attractive employer image and branding.

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