

The Relationship between Perceived Fulfillment of Employer Brand Attributes and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

العلاقة بين المستوى المدرك لمدى تحقيق سمات العلامة التجارية لصاحب العمل وسلوك

المواطنة التنظيمية

Nawel BENESSALAH¹, Assya KHIAT²

¹University of Oran 2, nawelbenssalah@gmail.com

²University of Oran 2, assya.khiat@gmail.com

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Abstract

This paper examines the influence of employer branding on organizational citizenship behavior. A survey was conducted using a sample of 264 employees from companies certified as best employers in Algeria by Best Companies Group. This study draws from the instrumental /symbolic approach of brand management applied on the human resources management, to determine the effect of the level of fulfillment of organizational attributes on employees' citizenship behavior. The results of the study revealed a significant and moderate association.

Keywords: employer branding, organizational citizenship behavior.

Jel Classification Codes: M12, M31.

ملخص

يهدف هذا البحثي الى دراسة تأثير مستوى الإدراك لسمات العلامة التجارية لصاحب العمل على سلوكيات المواطنة التنظيمية. تم إجراء استبيان باستخدام عينة من 264 موظفًا من الشركات الجزائرية المعتمدة كأفضل أرباب عمل في الجزائر من قبل منظمة *Best Employer Group*. هذه الدراسة مستنبطة من النهج الفعال / الرمزي لإدارة العلامة التجارية المطبقة في إطار إدارة الموارد البشرية. استعمل هذا المنهج لتحديد مستوى تأثير السمات التنظيمية على سلوك المواطنة لدى الموظفين. وأظهرت نتائج الدراسة وجود ارتباط بين سمات العلامة التجارية لصاحب العمل والالتزام بسلوك المواطنة.

Corresponding author: Nawel BENESSALAH, nawelbenssalah@gmail.com.

كلمات مفتاحية: سلوكيات المواطنة التنظيمية، العلامة التجارية لصاحب العمل.

تصنيفات JEL: M12, M31

INTRODUCTION

Over the past few decades, human resources management and marketing have emerged as the newest trend power partners. It has become the dominant approach in people management. Such an alliance came as a response to the war for talent when companies unleashed a race for qualified and talented employees (Beechler & Woodward, 2009; Chambers, Foulton, Handfield-Jones, Hankin, & Michaels III, 1998; Friebe & Giannetti, 2009). In doing so, employers embarked on a quest to discover the best practices and organizational attributes that will allow them to attract the best talent, and therefore win this war.

The introduction of a marketing approach to the employer-employee relationship was drawing the attention of many scholars since Simon Barrow first referred to it by using the expression of “*employer branding*” during the CIPD¹ conference in 1990. It became afterward’s the heart and soul of published articles, books and conferences, namely the first published paper by Ambler and Barrow in 1996 offering insight on the manifestation of branding activities in HR policies through culture and corporate reputation (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). However, deep literature research allowed us to trace the alliance back to when Leonard Berry suggested that recruiters and HR managers should think like marketers ; and that applying the tools of marketing such as marketing research, segmentation, and advertising, on potential and current employees will enable organization to achieve better attraction, retention and ultimately better performance (Berry, 1981).

In this study, we draw from signal theory and social identity theory to investigate the relationship between third party employer branding (Dineen & Allen, 2016) and employer brand attributes level of fulfillment perception, within the instrumental/symbolic framework, and the effect of the later on employees’ reported citizenship behavior. This research begins with a literature review of Employer Branding and Organizational Citizenship Behavior. The literature provided a rich body of knowledge that guided the

development of the measurement scales. Research methodology and the measurement tools selection will then be outlined as long as the results analyses and discussion.

1. LITERATURE OVERVIEW

1.1. Defining employer branding

Employer branding refers to the efforts made by companies to position themselves as employers of choice and differentiate their organizational value proposition from competitors within the labor market (Tavassoli, 2008). Some authors describe it as the set of communication tools used to promote a positive message of the organization as a place to work for (Graham & Cascio, 2018). The leaders of the field of employer branding define it as: *“the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employee company, with the primary role of provide a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity and improve recruitment, retention and commitment”* (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p. 185).

It is considered as a series of investments made by organizations to enhance the perception of the company’s values, culture and identity (Graham & Cascio, 2018). These investments might result in activities such as fair compensation, internal communication to improve HR policies and attraction strategies (Brusch, Brusch, & Kozłowski, 2018). Lievens and Highhouse (2003, p. 76) define it as: *“...potential applicant’s initial impressions of organizations as employers”*.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) build on this concept of impressions by introducing the notion of employer brand equity that encourages potential employees to join and current employees to stay within an organization and gives potential and current employees a sense of pride for working for a company carrying positive organizational messages. As stated before, the purpose of employer branding efforts goes far and beyond attraction dimensions and addresses issues related to the employment relationship post-hire, namely retention, loyalty and performance. In the same perspective, Graham and Cascio (2018) highlight the positive outcomes of loyalty and productivity in transforming current employees into brand

ambassadors to refresh the wheel of attraction and deliver appealing messages on the employment experience. Berthon et al. (2005, p. 153) argue that: *“Employees are becoming central to the process of brand building and their behavior can either reinforce a brand’s advertised values or, if inconsistent with these values, undermine the credibility of advertised messages”*.

Therefore companies need to focus their employer branding efforts on current employees as much as potential ones. Most empirical evidence from the employer branding literature is provided from samples of college and university students (Berthon et al., 2005; Lievens, Decaestecker, Coetsier, & Geirnaert, 2001; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Trank, Rynes, & Bretz, 2002). Targeting students may require recruitment strategies that can reflect the company’s willingness to invest in human capital by participating in job fairs, exhibitions, conferences and university activities (Brusch et al., 2018). One of these activities consists in the participation to best employer contests and competitions, defined by Dineen & Allen (2016) as *“Third party employer branding”*, which draws from the attention and the media exposure of such events to promote the organization as a desirable place to work. This approach inspired the decision of studying a sample of employees from companies certified as best employers in Algeria.

Furthermore, the lack of empirical evidence on current employees calls for more contributions to uncover innovative strategies to foster positive organizational behaviors among employees and therefore improve organizational performance. For this purpose, we suggest to assess the post-hire influences of dimensions of organizational attractiveness on organizational citizenship behavior.

1.2. Dimensions of employer branding

Many scholars have given a great deal of attention to determine what organizational value propositions are more likely to attract and retain the best talents (Berthon et al., 2005; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, Van Hove, & Anseel, 2007). Berthon et al., (2005) developed a measurement scale for organizational attractiveness including social (refers to the appeal provided by social relationships amongst colleagues and associates), economic (summarizes the attractiveness of salaries and compensation

packages), development (includes emotional attributes such as esteem, confidence and recognition provided by the employment relationship), interest (consists of the provision of challenging work and innovative practices) and application (defines opportunities to apply academic and cognitive abilities in the workplace) factors. Other researches have borrowed the same framework to assess the impact on organization's attractiveness (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012; Arachchige & Robertson, 2011).

On the other hand, Lievens & Highhouse (2003) established a framework based on the instrumental/symbolic framework of brand management (Keller, 1993). This approach distinguishes between the functional and the emotional benefits of the employment relationship. It is however noteworthy that such a distinction was before then mentioned in the definition of Ambler & Barrow (1996, p. 185), adding the economic value that the instrumental/symbolic framework included within the instrumental dimension (pay) of the employment benefits (Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Van Hove & Saks, 2011).

The instrumental dimension relates to functional benefits of the employment relationship such as pay, job security, advancement opportunities, equipment, task demands, training, challenge, place and work environment (Kausel & Slaughter, 2011; Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter, Zickar, Highhouse, & Mohr, 2004). Lievens & Highhouse (2003) consider that the initial attraction to apply for an organization is triggered by the package of instrumental benefits, however, these attribute alone cannot explain the variance in organizational attractiveness.

The symbolic dimension is defined as the set of emotional and psychological inferences associated with the impression or the experience of the employment relationship based on the personality traits of the organization and its reputation (Kausel & Slaughter, 2011; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Slaughter et al., 2004). Symbolic benefits consolidate the individual's self-esteem, self-identity and social approval drawn from the identification with organizational traits such as prestige, sincerity and reputation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Lievens

& Highhouse (2003) argued that the impact of symbolic attributes perception is significantly more substantial in the explication of the variance of company's attractiveness. However, the current study aims to investigate the impact of perceived organizational attributes (instrumental and symbolic) on organizational citizenship behavior.

1.3. Organizational citizenship behavior

One of the expressions of employee engagement consists in organizational citizenship behavior referring to employee's willingness to perform tasks far and beyond the requirements of his job and volunteer to carry out responsibilities that are not formally mandatory (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Organ, 2015; Paillé, 2006). It refers to non-required participations in functions and activities destined to improve company's performance and foster a positive organizational image (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000). This kind of extra-role behavior is considered as a factor of organizational sustainability and productivity (MacKenzie, Podsakoff, & Fetter, 1993). This behavior is performed on a voluntary basis regardless of the formal reward system within the organization (Smith, Organ, & Near, 1983). Organ and his colleagues (1983, p. 653) also define it as : “...*the day-to-day spontaneous prosocial gestures of individual accommodation to the work needs of others*”.

For an organization to be effectively functional, it must engage in activities that induce behaviors of cooperation and goodwill within employees (Katz, 1964). The manifestation of such behaviors has a significant effect on organizational performance and proved to improve the quantity and quality of work (Podsakoff, Ahearne, & MacKenzie, 1997). The literature revealed different dimensions explained as citizenship behaviors. These types of behavior include : Organizational loyalty, helping behavior (MacKenzie et al., 1993; Moorman & Blakely, 1995), civic virtue, organizational compliance (consciousness) (MacKenzie et al., 1993), sportsmanship (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000), individual initiative (Lee & Allen, 2002; Moorman & Blakely, 1995) and personal development (George & Brief, 1992).

These dimensions have been studied by literature to determine the impact on organization performance, namely the dimension of professional

consciousness (Grimault & Gangloff, 2018). More recent studies have focused on these behaviors on absenteeism and retention intentions. Results revealed that OCB generated positive effect on retention intention (Paillé, 2006). It appears intuitively appealing to investigate factors of the organizational traits and work practices that are considered as incentives for the employee's decision to perform citizenship behavior. For the purpose of this research and in light of the literature findings, the following hypotheses were formulated:

Hypothesis 1: *OCB behavior is significantly associated with employer branding instrumental and symbolic attributes.*

Hypothesis 2: *There is a significant difference in OCB scores between employees who perceive high levels of fulfillment and employees who perceive a low level of fulfillment of employer brand attributes.*

2. THE EMPIRICAL STUDY

This study aims to seek empirical evidence on the factors of the employment relationship related the decision to perform organizational behavior. We investigate the influence of the perception of employer brands attributes fulfillment within best employer practices on employees' willingness to express citizenship behavior. Our research model considers that organizational traits and organization's identity are core determinants of employee behavior. In the first part of this study, we investigate the relationship between instrumental attributes and symbolic attributes separately on OCB. Then we explore the significance of the score differences in OCB between employees who consider that the employer brand attributes (instrumental and symbolic) are adequately and more than adequately fulfilled and employees who consider that the employer brand promise of the organization was not fulfilled. These objectives are examined in the private sector and particularly on organizations certified as best employers in Algeria in the four editions of the contest of Best Companies Group in Algeria. We consider that organizations who take part in these initiatives enroll in a marketing state of mind.

2.1. Research methodology

For this purpose a survey questionnaire was conducted to test the

previous hypotheses. The research was performed using a questionnaire with a total of 49 measurement items between the dependent variable and the independent variable. The items were generated through a thorough literature research of the employer brand and organizational attractiveness literature for the measurement of the employer brand fulfillment perception on one hand, and the OCB and extra-role behavior literature to measure the level of performed OCB behavior. The instrumental/symbolic attributes scale followed the same approach as Lievens and Highhouse (2003), where a list of items referring to the employment relationship and organizational characteristics were introduced to a preliminary sample of 20 employees of the same targeted population. Participants were asked to distinguish the items that represent a functional value from the items that they consider as a source of emotional value. The construct validity was tested using facial validity (Leavy, 2017). Experts from the community of talent acquisition managers were consulted on the representativeness of the scale in measuring the desired variable. The questionnaire was administered on a convenience sample of 264 employees of the selected enterprises. Given that the sample is located in different principalities in Algeria, and in order to reach a wider population, the questionnaire was distributed online. This approach is recommended by Van Selm & Jankowski (2006) to improve participation rates and facilitate the reach of respondents. Responses were obtained using a five point Likert-type scale rating from (1) not at all fulfilled to (5) strongly fulfilled for the employer brand measurement scale and from (1) strongly disagree and (5) strongly agree for the OCB scale. The gathered data were processed using SPSS software. The investigated relations were explored using the correlation, and t-test. Moreover, the reliability of the measure scale was tested using the Cronbach Alpha test to examine the psychometric properties of the scales.

2.2. Data analysis and findings

By the time the researcher concluded the data collection procedures, the number of responses received reached 354 answered questionnaires. However, 25.4 % of these responses were excluded from the study. The researcher used the RIC (Reversed Item Check) recommended by Guiot & al. (2015) to verify the accuracy of the answers, by which 55 forms were

eliminated from the data processing. There were non-responded items in 35 questionnaires out of 354; therefore questionnaire forms were also excluded from the analysis. Consequently, data was obtained from 264 employees, 208 of which were male, making up 78.8% 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 demonstrates the correlation between the sub-dimensions of the instrumental attributes and OCB. Additionally, the mean scores of the fulfillment perception of the attributes are illustrated to examine the central tendency of the responses, in addition to the standard deviation to verify the dispersion of the responses around the mean. Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the scales is also revealed in the table. The findings reveal that the coefficients of the internal consistency of the constructs are acceptable according to Nunnally & Bernstein (1994). The Cronbach's alpha for the employer brand attributes constructs are ($\alpha=0.818$, $\alpha=0.848$) for the instrumental dimension and the symbolic dimension respectively. An even higher internal consistency revealing the strong psychometric accuracy of the construct is showed in the OCB ($\alpha=0.886$) construct, implying that the selected items for the scale represent the studied variable.

The correlation analysis performed on the data revealed highly significant and positive associations amongst all the study variables. The descriptive statistics of the analysis reveal a high level of fulfillment for the employer brand attributes. The mean values of the employer brand attributes shows that all variables are more than adequate fulfilled ($4.25 \geq \bar{X} \geq 3.68$). The lowest level of the mean is revealed in the symbolic attribute Work-life balance variable ($\bar{X} = 3.68$, $\sigma = 0.62$). The highest level of the mean can be attributed to the Job security instrumental variable ($\bar{X} = 4.25$, $\sigma=0.76$). Regarding the OCB variable ($\bar{X} = 3.90$, $\sigma = 0.92$), the findings show that the respondents are willing to demonstrate pro-social and extra-role behaviors toward their employers. The inter-correlation between the instrumental and the symbolic dimension show a highly significant and

large correlation effect ($r= 0.84$, $p<0.001$). A moderate correlation effect can be noticed between the level of fulfillment perception of the instrumental variable Job security and the level of fulfillment perception of the instrumental attributes: Pay ($r= 0.37$), Training ($r= 0.36$) and Advancement ($r=0.43$) from one hand; and the level of fulfillment perception of the symbolic attributes Recognition ($r=0.31$), Innovation ($r=0.44$) and the Psychological contract ($r= 0.37$) from the other hand. Another moderate effect is revealed between the level of fulfillment perception of the work-life balance and the Psychological contract ($r=0.47$). The only weak correlation effect in the construct is noticed between the level of fulfillment perception of work-life balance attribute and the job security attribute ($r=0.25$). In addition to the moderate yield between the overall perception of the symbolic attributes and Job security ($r=0.41$).

The relationship between the levels of fulfillment perceptions of the instrumental/symbolic employer brand attributes and the willingness of employees to demonstrate OCB is revealed to be significant but somewhat moderate for the instrumental attributes Pay, Training and Job security ($r=0.43$, $r=0.40$, $r=0.41$) respectively; and the symbolic attributes Recognition, Innovation and Work-life balance ($r=0.48$, $r= 0.49$, $r= 0.34$) respectively. However, the level of correlation between the overall instrumental dimension and OCB ($r=0.55$) and the overall symbolic dimension ($r=0.55$) are significantly large and similar in size.

Table 2 shows the results for the t-test performed on the data. The variables were recoded with SPSS for the purpose of this test. The scores below the value of 3 were considered to be lowly fulfilled and the score above were considered to be highly fulfilled. This test aims to check the validity of the hypothesis claiming that employees who consider that their expectations in regards to the employer brand attributes are highly fulfilled are more willing to demonstrate citizenship behaviors within the organization. Starting with the instrumental dimension, the findings show that employee who consider that the pay and benefit packages of the employment relationship are adequately or more that adequately fulfilled show a higher level of OCB that employee who consider that these expectations are not adequately or not at all fulfilled (3.97 ± 0.57 against

The Relationship between Perceived Fulfillment of Employer Brand Attributes and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

3.39±0.75, $p=0.001$). Moreover, employee who consider that their expectations in regards to the fulfillment of training aspirations are highly fulfilled show larger OCB scores than employee who consider that those aspirations are not met by the employer (3.96±0.57 against 3.46±0.76, $p=0.002$). More significant evidence is statistically revealed between the OCB score of respondents who consider that they have job security within the organization than employee who consider that this attribute was not fulfilled (3.93± 0.59 against 0.31±0.78, $p=0.012$). However, no statistical significance is noticed within the Advancement construct.

When it comes to the symbolic dimension, significant evidence was revealed within three out of four components namely recognition, innovation and psychological contract. The data shows that employees who perceive that their efforts and inputs within the organization are recognized and appreciated by the employer report a higher level of OCB than employees who consider that their efforts are not adequate appreciated (3.98 0.57 against 0.30 0.71, $p=0.021$). Furthermore, employees who consider that the self-image they associate with the innovativeness of the organization is satisfying show a significantly higher level of reported OCB than employees who consider that this association is not fulfilled (3.98±0.55 3.34±0.77, $p<0.001$). In regards to the psychological contract construct, it is revealed that respondents, who perceive that their organizations have adequately or more than adequately succeeded in keeping their pre-hire promises, see (Rousseau, 1995), report a higher level of OCB than respondents who perceive than their organizations have failed to keep these promises. The work-life balance however does not seem to have any significant influence on OCB.

Table 1. The relationship between the instrumental/symbolic mployer brand attributes and organizational citizenship behavior

Variables		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Indepe	1. Pay	(0.83	'	'	'	'	'	'	'	'	'	'

[illegible]

**** Significant at the level of $p < 0.001$.**

The Relationship between Perceived Fulfillment of Employer Brand Attributes and Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Source: by authors, adapted from SPSS

Table 2. Comparison of the OCB scores between employees who perceive the EB attributes as fulfilled and employees who consider these attributes have not been fulfilled

Employer brand attributes			Organizational citizenship behavior			
			N	M (μ)	S (σ)	P
Instrumental attributes	Pay	Low fulfillment	52	3.395**	0.753	0.001
		High fulfillment	212	3.977**	0.570	
	Training	Low fulfillment	55	3.469**	0.767	0.002
		High fulfillment	209	3.966**	0.577	
	Advancement	Low fulfillment	25	3.110	0.680	0.260
		High fulfillment	239	3.941	0.598	
	Job security	Low fulfillment	31	3.315*	0.785	0.012
		High fulfillment	233	3.936*	0.597	
Symbolic attributes	Recognition	Low fulfillment	46	3.302*	.712	0.021
		High fulfillment	218	3.981*	.573	
	Innovation	Low fulfillment	51	3.346**	.776	>0.001
		High fulfillment	213	3.986**	.553	
	Psychological contract	Low fulfillment	90	3.511**	.719	0.001
		High fulfillment	174	4.045**	.531	
	Work-life balance	Low fulfillment	71	3.558	.696	0.099
		High fulfillment	193	3.975	.598	

*statistical significance at the level of $p < 0.05$.

**statistical significance at the level of $p < 0.01$.

Source: By authors, adapted from SPSS

3. DISCUSSION

The findings of this paper corroborate the hypotheses proposed by the researcher regarding the positive association between employer brand fulfillment perception and reported OCB. In particular, the correlation test revealed a significantly positive association between employer brands attributes perception and organizational citizenship behavior. The largest correlation effect is revealed within the advancement (instrumental) and the psychological contract (symbolic). This can mean that the strongest the perception of career advancement within the organization, the strongest the

willingness to report extra-role behavior and concern with the well-being of the organization. Moreover, the strongest the fulfillment of the psychological contract promise the strongest the reported level of OCB. The effect of the overall instrumental employer brand and the overall symbolic employer brand is positively strong. The t-test confirmed the hypothesis of the distinction between the high fulfillment of the employer brand and the fulfillment of the later on reported organizational citizenship behavior. Also, the descriptive statistics showed that the respondents consider that the overall instrumental/symbolic employer brand dimensions are fulfilled within their organizations.

CONCLUSION

The current study aims to contribute to the body of knowledge on employer branding and HR marketing by investigating the intricacies of the associations between the fulfillment perception of the employer brand attributes and employee behavior, represented in this study by organizational citizenship behavior. The researcher considers that the real input of the employer brand efforts should be revealed in employees' voluntary willingness to outperform and serve organizational goals rather than the attraction and retention dimension that employer branding was first concerned with. The results revealed that when they are successfully perceived, employer brand attributes have a significant effect on organizational citizenship behavior.

However, our research model can be further examined to investigate the impact of employer brand attributes on employee behavior. A fact to be acknowledged is that the scales selected for this research can be enhanced with a thorough examination of the level of commitment of Algerian companies to invest in employees' wellbeing and retention. This examination can be addressed for the purpose of produce a referral of best HR practices adapted to the Algerian context (Benessalah & Khiat, 2018). Another recommendation for our study can be the application of the marketing mix approach to people management.

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