

Internal employer brand, employee engagement and perceived organizational support: A review of literature

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Abstract. The satisfaction of existing employees and the retention of talents are the basic elements of organizational success. In this context, this study intends to build a research model of "internal employer branding - perceived organizational support - employee engagement", aiming to explore whether the process and method of employer brand building within an enterprise can improve the engagement of existing employees. Employer branding was initiated by Ambler and Barrow (1996) with an aim to attract and retain the best talent through various activities, and the contemporary research has proven that if branding of the organization is done in an effective manner then it retains the best talent; further, it enhances job engagement and motivation. The present chapter elaborates the concept of employer branding, benefits, and importance of employer branding. Recent surveys and trends of employer branding have also been discussed, Perceived organizational support may be another important antecedent variable for employer branding.

Keywords: Employer branding; employee engagement; perceived organizational support.

1. Introduction

Attracting and retaining valuable human resources has become one of the main means for enterprises to gain competitive advantage (Itam et al., 2020). Meanwhile, with the deepening of research on organizational behavior and the increasing importance of human resource management practices in enterprise management, the study of employee output has also become a hot topic. Especially how to improve employees' work output has become a key factor for enterprises to gain competitive advantage.

However, perceived organizational support is an effective informal means of control that can help employees improve their identification and sense of belonging to the company, and effectively strengthen the company's control over its employees.

On the other hand, research on employee engagement is in a period of rapid development, and there is also a wealth of research on the factors that affect employee engagement. Generally, the impact of these variables on employee work output is explored from the perspectives of organizational environment characteristics and individual characteristics. To some extent, we can consider that the research on the pre-variables of employee engagement has reached a bottleneck, and there is rarely a more appropriate perspective to achieve theoretical breakthroughs.

Therefore, this study intends to introduce perceived organizational support as a mediating variable, attempting to establish a research path of "internal employer brand perceived organizational support employee engagement", and to supplement the research gap between internal employer brand and employee engagement to a certain extent.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Internal Employer Brand

A brand has both tangible and intangible attributes, symbolized by a trademark. If managed properly, it can create higher value and influence for the enterprise. Product brands consider how products are presented to customers, enterprise brands consider how an organization presents to various external audiences, and employer brands consider current and potential employees as brand goals (Chawla, P, 2020). Therefore, employer branding will involve identifying unique 'employment experiences' by considering the characteristics of tangible and intangible rewards that a particular organization provides to its employees. The core elements of employer branding are the elements that identify the organization's own characteristics, such as key values, guiding principles, etc.

In the research on the concept and model of employer branding, scholars such as Backhaus (2004) and Martin (2011) have divided it into two levels: external and internal. External Employer Branding focuses on analyzing how companies attract and recruit potential employees, involving research perspectives such as Employer Familiarity, Brand Associations, Employer Image, Employer Identification, Organizational Attraction, and Job Pursuit Intentions. Internal Employer Branding focuses on what companies can do to develop the employer knowledge of their internal employees. (Staniec et al., 2021) categorized it into three aspects: Internal Branding Activities, Conducting Intra organizational Research, and Employee Value Proposition.

The employer brand reflects the external market image characteristics of the enterprise. Previous research on it has focused on recruitment and job seeking, but lacks research on its impact and mechanism on internal employees of the enterprise. The value positioning of an excellent employer brand is based on meeting various needs such as employee safety and respect, emphasizing the emotional experience of employees, and thus promoting a sense of belonging to the organization among employees.

2.2. Employee Engagement

The concept of Employee Engagement was first introduced by scholars such as Kahn in social psychology. Kahn (1990) proposed that when "people bring in or leave out their personal selves during work role performance," personal engagement occurs. Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement from the perspective of "need satisfying". He believed that if employees perceive their work content as meaningful, their work place as safe, their work resources as sufficient, and have a positive attitude towards completing work tasks, then this indicates that employees are psychologically, socially, and physically involved in taking on and executing work roles. Maslach (2001) explained employee engagement from the perspective of "Burnout," which is considered a weakening of employee job engagement. They developed the Maslach Burnout Inventory, where employee engagement was used as the inverse of the Maslach Burnout Inventory score. The higher the score on the Burnout Inventory, the lower the employee engagement, and vice versa. Employee engagement as "personal participation and satisfaction, as well as enthusiasm for work." The study also concluded that employee engagement is positively correlated with important business outcomes of the enterprise, such as customer satisfaction, turnover, safety, productivity, and profitability. Saks (2006) constructed a model based on the "social exchange theory" to attempt to theorize employee engagement and separate work participation from organizational participation. He defined employee engagement as "a unique and distinctive structure composed of cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components related to individual role performance." Employee engagement as a positive and satisfying psychological state related to work, as well as a sustained emotional cognitive state.

2.3. Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived Organizational Support is a perception among employees that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. After Eisenberger proposed the concept of organizational support, subsequent scholars mainly conducted empirical research to study the

development of measurement scales, the influencing factors of organizational support, and the positive impact of organizational support on employees and organizations. Perceived Organizational Support (POS) is proposed based on reciprocity theory, social exchange theory, and organizational personification, reflecting an organization's focus on employee contributions and welfare. It is an important tool to help organizations establish good relationships with employees and motivate them to work hard. Aselag (2003) pointed out that when a person accepts "positive treatment" from others, they naturally experience psychological pressure and a sense of obligation to reciprocate, leading to a attitude or behavior of gratitude towards the treatment given. When applied to organizational environments, employees often give more positive feedback when they perceive the organization's attention, appreciation, and affirmation. Perceived organizational support (POS) reflects the relationship between employees and the organization from the perspective of employee perception, and has been proven to have significant benefits for both employees and employers. Research has found that employees with a strong exchange ideology reward perceived organizational support by changing their efforts to achieve organizational goals, such as reducing absenteeism and increasing emotional attachment to the organization and work effort (Eisenberger, 1986). conducted a meta-analysis on the impact of perceived organizational support, turnover intention, and job performance, and found that perceived organizational support (POS) is significantly directly correlated with emotional commitment and turnover behavior, and is significantly negatively correlated with turnover behavior.

3. Methods

3.1. Data collection

Several databases are available for bibliometric analysis, such as Scopus, PubMed, and Web of Science (WoS). Scopus provides wider overall coverage and indexes a greater number of unique sources than WoS and PubMed. Therefore, Scopus was chosen as the source for this study.

“Internal Employer brand*” was used to search within the titles, abstracts, and keywords of publications together with the following criteria: (1) subject areas/topics: business, management, and accounting (BUSI); (2) type of publication: articles (ar); (3) language: English; and (4) publication year: up to the end of 2022. Annual Scopus-indexed papers are only updated in June; therefore, 2023 and 2024 were excluded from the search. Furthermore, even though Ambler and Barrow first defined EB in 1996, the first Scopus-indexed publication appeared in 2004, so this bibliometric analysis only examines EB literature from 2004 onwards.

We followed the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines for the document search. The search and screening process are shown in Figure 1. The initial Scopus search yielded 676 documents, of which 387 were rejected as they did not meet the criteria regarding document type or language. Subsequently, the titles and abstracts of the remaining 289 documents were read to determine their relevance. An additional 57 documents were deleted from the Scopus list, and the final number was 232.

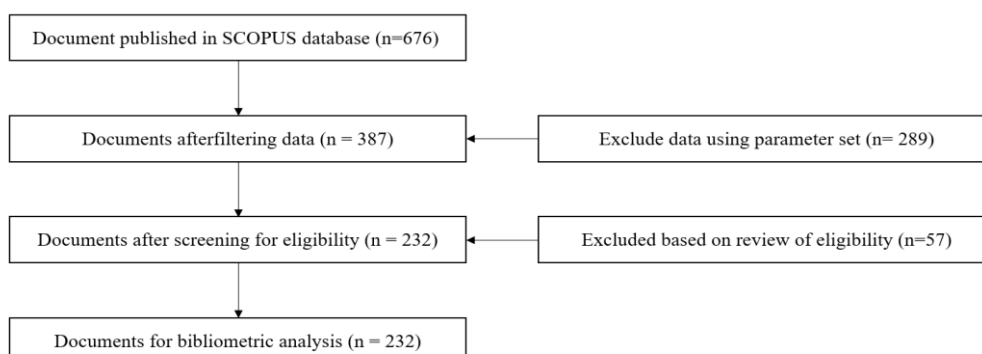


Fig 1. Search and screening process.

3.2. Data analysis

The metadata of the 232 articles were exported from Scopus into a master Excel file, including paper title, paper source, author names, affiliations, keywords, citations, and references. The Excel file was then uploaded into VOS Viewer software. The information generated by VOS Viewer was used to conduct descriptive statistical analyses to document the EB scholarship landscape.

Additionally, we read all articles and collected content-analysis information, such as types of data, research subjects, methods, main findings, and research implications to gain further insights.

4. Results

Scholars' research on employee engagement (EE) has focused more on individual roles, leadership, and team factors of employees, and the stimulation of EE is eager to find new breakthroughs. Employer brand (EB), as a brand of enterprise human resource management service products, is divided into two levels: internal and external. Scholars have confirmed the impact of internal employer brand (IEB) on organizational innovation performance, organizational citizenship behavior, work output, etc. through various methods (Stanpiece, 2021). However, scholars have not yet delved into employee engagement (EE), which is closely related to innovation performance, work output, etc. This study takes employees' perception and internal experience of internal employer brand building in enterprises as the starting point, and deeply explores the internal mechanism of the impact of internal employer brand (IEB) on employee engagement (EE). It has important theoretical value and practical significance for promoting domestic enterprise employer brand building and employee innovation performance.

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