

A STUDY OF INDIGENOUS MEASURING FACTORS FOR EMPLOYER BRAND ATTRACTIVENESS IN TAIWAN: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF ACADEMY AND INDUSTRY EXPERTS

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ABSTRACT

This research, aim to investigate the crucial role played by employer brand, with comparative analysis between experts from academy and industry (eight members for each group) through different perspectives, on the importance of employer brand.

The review of literature stresses the image and attractiveness of employer brand, through five kinds of speculation on value - reputation value, economic value, development value, work-life value and social value.

Checking the ranking of the diverse value, comparing and integrating the bilateral experts' opinions by AHP (Analytic Hierarchy Process), is indispensable. According to survey to experts from industry, highest one is reputation value, and the rest by order are economic value, development value, work-life value and social value. The academic response to the ranks can be aligned from economic value, development value, reputation value, social value and work-life value, respectively. The results will provide future researchers on related fields with relevant data on literature and references once if with requirement of application and promotion on business employers as well as company brand development.

KEYWORDS: Analytic Hierarchy Process, Employer Brand Attractiveness, Human Resource Management, Relationship Marketing

INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the concept of 'Employer brand' has been widely employed by practice managers (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005), and applied onto business competition and ranking; which shows the necessity of the practice. In academic field, the employer brand is an emerging issue from late 20th century to early 21st century, but more and more academies adopted this concept for psychology (Collins & Stevens, 2002), communication (Bergstrom, Blumenthal, & Crothers, 2002), marketing (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002) and human resource.

The proposal of employer brand means the reshuffle of strategies markets, society, customers, and employees; such adjustment is indispensable while encountering the rigorous global competition caused by rapid transformation and movement on technology and network. While considering human capital as major linkage to organization performance and competitive advantage (Breaugh and Starke, 2000; Sureshchandar, Rajendran, & Anantharaman, 2002; King & Grace,

2005). Nevertheless, Employer brand should be categorized, as one of human capitals, since which can create value for company on duty performance (Berthon et al., 2005). In other words, human capital is the important element to long-term competition from resource-based view (Barney, 1991; Priem and Butler, 2001).

Accordingly, both expert consultation and literature integration are conducted for checking items required for employer brand with capacity to upgrade tangible value for enterprises. Besides, applying of quantitative (AHP-Analytic Hierarchy Process) method can display the different views on the value transferred between academy and industry—which can develop the dimensions of employer brand attractiveness and compare the different points of view between academy and industry.

LITERATURE REVIEW

American Marketing Association entitles the brand to be "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors". Hsieh et al. (2004) defined a brand as the feelings, impressions, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes toward a company. Accordingly, meaning of the brand is a consequence of customers' experiences (Brodie, Whittome, & Brush, 2009; Grace and O'Casey, 2004) evolving between the interactions of stakeholders (Merz, He, & Vargo, 2009; Ballantyne and Aitken, 2007); which can be ranged from employees to customers. Contemporary, the notion is treated as a brand generation with focus on stakeholder; moreover, which represents the brand with dynamic and social process. The brand is an effective resource, value-in-use with logical concept of employer brand from internal to social (Merz, 2009).

The aim of employer brand is to create the corporal value; therefore, which should be considered as a marketing concept. Nevertheless, the main purpose of this concept is not for selling products; which relates to human resources management (HRM) and aims to attract and retain the valuable talent, enrich company's human capital, and enhance competitiveness. In 1996, employer brand was first proposed by Ambler and Barrow (1996) defining as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company." It suggests three important concepts: function, economy, and psychology. Collins and Stevens (2002) focused on employer brand image: attitude and perceived job attribute; which emphasizes behavior and perceived feeling. Lloyd (2002) said "sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work." which clarifies employer brand targeting at current and potential employees. Sullivan (2004) defined as "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm"; which raises two important points about long-term strategy and stakeholders. The above definitions can be concluded that the long-term strategies to provoke stakeholders' positive and active ambition to the job and the company should be covered with functional, economic, and psychological aspects.

The main objective of the employer brand is positive influence among employees with strong expectation and cognition to the job and the firm, and prospective employees in order to attract high-potential employees while with the difficulty of keeping loyal employees. (Berthon et al., 2005; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Michaels et al., 2001). There are two crucial advantages in employer brand: first, employees constitute an important link on establishing the service brand, and second, better management of employees.

The more attractive an employer is perceived, the stronger the employer brand equity is defined. (Berthon et al., 2005; Jiang and Iles, 2011). The concept of the employer brand describes the degree of a company's attractiveness to current (Berthon et al., 2005) and potential employees (Collins and Stevens, 2002; Slaughter et al., 2004). Berthon et al. (2005) confirmed that the attraction of employer can be shifted to employment brand value. As the notion of 'employer attractiveness' is similar to employer branding. (Berthon et al., 2005), this research would generate the content on employer brand attractiveness.

Developing a workable measure to EB attractiveness, we partly applied the items suggested by Schlager, Bodderas, Maas, & Luc Cachelin, (2011) and Jiang & Iles (2011). Although, there are only four dimensions, economic value, development value, reputation value and social value, in this paper, they still can be integrated with the ideas mentioned by Berthon et al. (2005) and Zhu, Wang, Yu, Hu, Wen, & Liu, (2014). Furthermore, we added one another dimension: work-life value.

The first dimension is reputation value; which is increasingly important, in the contemporary era to the employment process (Cable and Turban, 2003) and can be evaluated as a job seeker's beliefs (Cable and Turban, 2001). Besides, reputation will have a more positive impact on applicants' identification to the company (Smidts, Pruyn, & Van Riel, 2001; Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010; Lievens, Van Hoye, & Anseel, 2007; Xie, Bagozzi, & Meland, 2015). Zhu et al. (2014), depicted the organization mark as the unique label in non-West countries, especially in China, as which relates to prestige and organization culture. Since, what consumers' concern is not only from the economic point or the availability, but also the reputation value of the company, while purchasing products (van Rensburg, 2012); the employee is another consideration of procurement to consumers.

Economic value is the second one; which is not only a fundamental item, but also affecting employee attitudes (Schlager et al., 2011). This dimension can be defined as relevance to statutory benefits, including both of monetary and non-monetary (Schlager et al., 2011), as well as compensation (Zhu et al., 2014), which can be ranged from good salary, economic benefit, to job security.

The third one is the development value; which is connected with employee satisfaction (Judge, Bono, & Locke, 2000) and the organization commitment (Schlager et al., 2011). This can be divided into three parts: training (skills) and education (knowledge) opportunities; recognition or appreciation; promotion and career enhancing.

The fourth dimension is the social value; which focuses on in-group relationship. This one has frequently been assessed by academy, as they appear to be the key component to employee attitudes (Saari and Judge, 2004); which can be included from interpersonal relationship, respectful/ happy working environment, to team atmosphere.

Finally, the added work-life value to the dimensions of Schlager et al. (2011) based on the proposal by Zhu et al. (2014). This is a particular dimension in non-Western cultures, especially in Chinese culture since Chinese applicants care both of work and home at the same time (Zhu et al., 2014). Work-life value concept is derived from work-effectiveness; which aims to strive for a situation where work fits with other aspects of life (Riordan, 2013). Although there's similar scenario in Taiwan, the further adjustment to current Taiwan situation should be applied; which involves with non-statutory vacation benefits, flexible working time and work-family balance work.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research referred to adaptation approach in Chinese management research (Farh, Cannella and Lee, 2006), discussed by expert's consultation questionnaire after literature review to adjust suitable dimensional concepts for Taiwan context.

Comprehending the dimensionality of employer brand attractiveness and comparing the importance of dimensionality, both qualitative (literature survey, expert questionnaire consultation and feedback) and quantitative (AHP-Analytic Hierarchy Process) studies are conducted in this study.

Dimensionality of Employer Brand Attractiveness

This study is mainly based on Schlager et al. (2011), Jiang & Iles (2011). Berthon et al. (2005), and Zhu et al. (2014) to integrate the dimensionalities of employer brand attractiveness framework, and to develop 6-dimensional construct draft.

By 16 experts (each eight members for academy group and industry group) questionnaire consultation and feedback, the framework adjusts to 5-dimensional concept: reputation value, economic value, development value, social value and work-life value.

Analytic Hierarchy Process of Employer Brand Attractiveness

A dimensional questionnaire of employer brand attractiveness was designed to consult professionals in academic and industry field regarding their opinions and attitudes toward about dimensionalities. Using 9-point paired comparing questionnaires; the quantitative analysis of the questionnaires was conducted by using the statistical software - Expert Choice 2000 to explore the weights of different dimensions.

This research design included the comparison of two groups' (experts of academy group and industry group) weights and summarizing weights.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the literature review process, the research framework draft of employer brand attractiveness appealed six dimensions, namely economic value, development value, social value, diversity value, reputation value and work-life value. After the 16 expert's questionnaire survey, the most of experts had a consensus and suggested to delete diversity value because its concept partly overlapped with development value and work-life value, so finally the dimensions of employer brand attractiveness is five items and as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: The Dimensions of Employer Brand Attractiveness

Employer Brand Attractiveness	
Dimensions	Reputation Value
	Economic Value
	Development Value
	Social Value
	Work-life Value

Eight professionals participated in the AHP academy group and industry group, respectively. Table 2 is the academy experts-based and Table 3 is industry experts-based weights and ranking. Figure 2 and Figure 3 is a graphical

representation, representing academy experts and industry experts. Two groups of statistical results, C.I. values are less than 0.1. That means the error of consistency is acceptable; the former Consistency Ratio (C.R.) is 0.027 and the later C.R. is 0.018. Both value of C.R. are less than 0.1. That means, the distribution of weights is reasonable (Saaty, 1980).

As shown in Table 2, the sequential order is (1) Economic value (weight is 0.308), (2) Development value (weight is 0.222), (3) Reputation value (weight is 0.199), (4) Social value (weight is 0.166), (5) Work-life value (weight is 0.106). The weight (0.308) of economic value is higher than others significantly, that is to say academy experts' speculation of the economic value is the most important dimension of employer brand attractiveness. While from Table 3, the sequential order is (1) Reputation value (weight is 0.270), (2) Economic value (weight is 0.250), (3) Development value (weight is 0.221), (4) Work-life value (weight is 0.131), (5) Social value (weight is 0.128). The weight (0.27) of reputation value is slightly higher than others, that is to say industry experts speculated the reputation value is the most important dimension of employer brand attractiveness. Table 4 is a comprehensive comparison data.

Table 2: The AHP Weights of Employer Brand Attractiveness from Academy Experts

Dimensions	Academy experts weights	Ranking
Reputation value	0.199	3
Economic Value	0.308	1
Development value	0.222	2
Work-life value	0.106	5
Social Value	0.166	4
C.I.=0.03 C.R.=0.027		

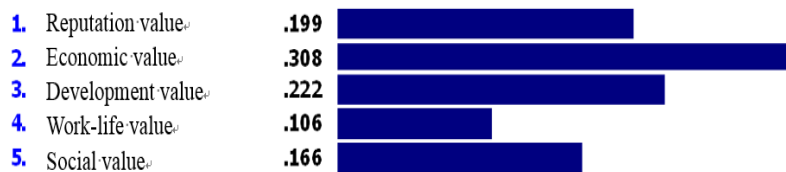


Figure 1: The AHP Weights Chart of Employer Brand Attractiveness from Academy Experts

Table 3: The AHP Weights of Employer Brand Attractiveness from Industry Experts

Dimensions	Industry experts weights	Ranking
Reputation value	0.270	1
Economic value	0.250	2
Development value	0.221	3
Work-life value	0.131	4
Social value	0.128	5
C.I.=0.02 C.R.=0.018		

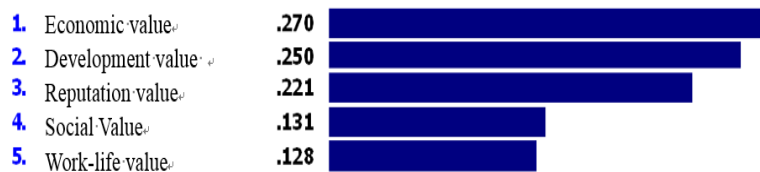


Figure 2: The AHP Weights Chart of Employer Brand Attractiveness from Industry Experts

Table 4 Comparing AHP Ranking of Academy Experts and Industry Experts

Dimensions	Academy experts weights	Ranking	Industry experts weights	Dimensions
Economic value	0.308	1	0.270	Reputation value
Development value	0.222	2	0.250	Economic value
Reputation value	0.199	3	0.221	Development value
Social value	0.166	4	0.131	Work-life value
Work-life value	0.106	5	0.128	Social value
C.I.=0.03 C.R.=0.027			C.I.=0.02 C.R.=0.018	

From academy points of view, the economic value can be judged the best and much better than other values, and presumably it may be due to the reference message provided by the school employment counseling unit. The information of economic value is more often easier to assess and more often used as a measurement of whether to enter the company's targets, Ambler and Barrow (1996) also thought that this was one of the main factor about employer brand. Such concept, development value is also often applied in school employment counseling. Both of the above, belong to the more dominant index, and therefore presumably more likely to be regarded as an important attraction. Although it is more and more important in recent years, the ranking is third. When academy may speculate this factor, thinking school graduates just entering the workplace. So they think previous two values should be more important than reputation value.

Comparing between industry experts and academy experts, the first three contents are economic value, development value and reputation value, but individual ranking is slightly different. The same point is that economic value is more important than development value, and the different point is that reputation value is the first ranking in academy, and the third ranking in industry experts (Table 4). This may be a key point from industry. From industry experts, their managing point of view and experience tell them reputation value is the most important factor in practice of competition. In addition, industry experts believe that the value of prestige represents not only the company's products, but the image of the entire company brand, so they will think reputation value is the most important.

Work-life value is the special factor from non-Western countries (Zhu et al., 2011). This view was never discussed in previous Western literatures; now it has attention because of generation issues, about employment (Twenge, 2010). While, it extends from work-life effectiveness, work-life value may enable employees enhance physical and psychological benefit. Its importance in recent years and has become increasingly important in practice, this inference may be verified from industry experts rating higher than the academy. In other words, we all seem to emphasize striving for work-life effectiveness—not balance (Riordan, 2013).

In the previous study, social value is most often one of the employer brand significant impact elements (Berthon et al., 2005). However, in this study regardless of the social value of academy experts or industry experts are not the top three. In this study, presumably with the social network developed in recent years, people substantially less emphasized on a real interact relationship. In the industry, most of not just graduated employees already have or intend to enter family life, so in the social values are slightly rated lower than the work-life value.

In this study, with AHP method comparing academy experts and industry experts on various employer brand attractiveness factor weight ranking, it is an important information. Particularly this is an issue developed from industry. We can clearly find two groups of experts with different views. Therefore, when using experts consults with AHP method, how to choose academy experts and industry experts is a key point. Two different results are found through the comparison of academy experts and industry experts (eight members for each group) for their different views about employer brand attractiveness dimensions. It is worth be explored as academy experts and industry experts of different perspectives. This study hopes to provide an employer brand attractiveness measuring template for other researchers to further develop and refine the scale.

MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

Employer brand is a practical issue, it covers both important human resource management and marketing management fields. It is also to run the corporate brand indispensable link. Distinctive and unique workforce is competitive advantage source, only it is stable, not sustainable, neither is the advantage (Barney, 1991). In contemporary, the baby boomer workers were coming retirement, it became important to understand generational shifts, especially in individualistic traits (Twenge, 2010). Furthermore, work-life value is important and distinctive in previous studies (Zhu et al., 2014) that have raised this factor in China and not appeared in Western countries. So this study to explore whether this factor is important in Taiwan culture context. Finally, no pervious review has summarized about dimensions weights of employer brand attractiveness and compared the different from academy and industries. And this study can provide a thought that the number of academy and experts should be consistent with the same number of experts in the field of experts in the future. This research hopes let researchers to think about their perspectives.

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