

Organizational Image and Attractiveness in the context of Recruitment: A conceptual review

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Abstract

In the recruitment literature the importance of organizational attractiveness and image has been studied over the last two decades demonstrating the relevance of this research in this field. From the review of literature, we find that there is no systematic literature review of organizational image and organizational attractiveness from various perspectives. This article aims to close this research gap. A systematic review of 36 articles in reputed journals provides a broad overview of the theoretical and empirical findings on organizational image and attractiveness. A systematic literature review adds value by synthesizing largely unconnected research from various disciplines and theoretical frameworks, which allows the creation of a common knowledge base for future research.

Keywords: *Recruitment, Organizational attractiveness, Organizational Image, Corporate Image.*

1. Introduction

Every organization has an image, whether planned or not. A good image can offer much to an organization's success (Gregory 1999). A favorable corporate image is an important resource as it provides organizations with a competitive advantage by stimulating potential candidates.

Organizational image is a source of information about a firm, which may be used to form perceptions and beliefs. Gooch (1999) believes that "image is everything" and Lewis (2001) says image is an asset of immense value that enable organizations to charge a premium for their products and services.

The concept of organizational image is multi-disciplinary, covers disciplines such as Organizational behavior, Psychology, Marketing, Public Relations, Branding and Organizational communications. Organizations spend considerable resources in building a unique and distinct image

using branding, communications as well a culture management to align the organizational behavior with the projected self-image.

Organizational attractiveness as an employer denotes "the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization" (Berthon et al, 2005).

Bendaravičienė, Krištolaitis, & Bakanauskienė (2011) refer to organizational attractiveness as "The power that draws applicants attention to focus on an employer brand and encourages existing employees to stay".

2. Review of Literature

Organizational image has been studied from very different perspectives and researchers from different backgrounds have attached very different meanings to the constructs. This has resulted in fragmentation of literature and confusion among research community. Bennett, Jermier, Lafferty (2006) in their review article titled corporate reputation - the definitional landscape, identified three groups, researchers who understood corporate reputation as an asset, as a judgement (evaluative), or just a perception (information) held by various stakeholders. They differentiated and proposed relationships among the related constructs of corporate identity, corporate image, corporate reputation and corporate reputational capital. They found that corporate identity was understood as a perception of an organization held by their internal stakeholders (employees), whereas, corporate image was a perception of organizational held by external stakeholders, corporate reputation was an evaluative (positive or negative; good or bad) judgement of organizations held by all stakeholders, whereas reputation capital was meant to suggest the value of reputation in terms of financial benefits, this was held by economists, accountants and finance professionals.

An organizational image in general, is the public opinion of a company. It includes all the experiences, impressions, beliefs, feelings and knowledge that people have about a firm. It contains invisible and intangible elements such as organizational, personnel, environmental policies, Ideals, beliefs, culture of country and location of company as well as its media report. Organizational image refers broadly to what members perceive, feel and think about their organizations.

According to Erdem (2013), Researchers have studied the concepts of organization credibility, reputation, identity, attractiveness, employer branding and image. All of these concepts have at one time or another, been treated synonymously. Of course, there are similarities, differences as well as interdependencies amongst the concepts.

3. Research Methodology

A systematic literature review approach comprises a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method to identify, appraise, and synthesize extant research. It gives an overview of prior research findings to identify similarities and differences. It deduces and links previous research in new ways or with an original perspective and to ascertain the reasons for conflicting findings. Thus it helps to identify the gap and determine the areas of future research (Booth et al.2011).

We first defined the topic and the corresponding key words. Existing recruitment related articles were tagged with the following key words: “recruitment”, “employ*image.” These search items were combined with keywords “organizational image” and “organizational attractiveness” as they are related constructs and are sometimes used synonymously. Since the corporate brand concept also relates to organizational image and attractiveness (Balmer 2000), the keyword “brand” was included in the search.

We then searched scientific databases such as ProQuest, JSTOR, google scholar, Emerald for corresponding titles, keywords and or abstract of articles that were published till 2019. Using the title and the abstract of the article, we determined whether an article was relevant. A total of 119 articles that matched the defined search terms in the title, abstract and /or keywords. We then filtered the articles using the following filters (Table 1&2). Articles prior to 1999 were excluded. articles with less 20 citations have been excluded as a lower citation means that they do not exert a great amount of influence in the field. However this rule does not apply for articles published in 2018 and 2019 since they might be too new to have citations already. All

duplicates were excluded and articles that were not adequately related to the concept were excluded.

Table 3 shows the most common definitions.

Table 1: Table of Filter Criteria

Criteria	Description
Period	Articles published before 1999 were eliminated
Citations	Articles with less than 20 citations were excluded. However this rule does not apply for articles published in 2018 & 2019 as these are too new for having citations.
Duplicates	Articles that were duplicated due to search from different databases were excluded
Research design	Empirical or conceptual

Table 2: Selection process

E database	No. of Articles
Google Scholar	52
ProQuest	34
JSTOR	21
Emerald	12
Total	119
Filter Criteria	
No relation to concept of OI & OA	17
No relation to early recruitment related topic	27
Articles with < 20 citations	07
Duplicates	32
Total	83
Final articles for review	36

Table 3: Definitions

Definition	Author
“The set of beliefs that a (potential) applicant holds about the attributes of an organization”.	Cable and Turban (2001)
“Envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization”.	Berthon et al (2005)
“The degree to which an individual would personally seek a company as an employer”.	Newburry, Gardberg & Belkin (2006)
“An attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the organizational as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship”.	Aiman-Smith et al (2001)
“Overall judgment of the attractiveness of a joborganization”.	Chapman et al. (2005)

3.1 Theoretical frameworks

Numerous theoretical lenses have been applied to examine organizational image and attractiveness in the context of recruitment. Most papers have clearly defined theoretical framework. Social identity theory, Signaling theory and Brand equity theory are commonly used in the various studies.

Social identity theory focuses on 'the group in the individual' and assumes that one part of the self-concept is defined by our belonging to social groups (Tajfel and Turner, 1986). Social identity theory is built on three key cognitive components: social categorization, social identification, and social comparison. In recruitment literature, social identity theory has typically been used to provide the mediating mechanisms between organizational perceptions and applicant behaviors.

Lievens et al (2001) in their study of Belgian Army examined which factors relating to employer image and organizational identity, the company outsiders (applicants) as well as company insiders (employees) associate with a given employer. Their findings were consistent with the tenets of the social identity theory, in that applicants ascribe symbolic meaning and traits to organizations because these traits enable them to maintain their self- identity and to enhance their self-image.

Based in cognitive psychology, brand equity theory has commonly defined brand equity as the incremental value or effect of what is known about the brand on consumer response to the marketing of the brand (e.g. brand prominence, differentiation and associations). Collins & Kanar (2013) integrated a brand equity perspective from marketing to propose that the extent to which applicant's recognition of and favorable impressions about the organization's brand influence their willing to apply for a job. Employer brand equity occurs when potential job applicants strongly associate the organization with favorable emotions and attributes (Collins & Kanar, 2013).

Recruitment research has used signaling theory to suggest that job seekers experience information asymmetry about potential employers and use signals from the organization to make inferences about organizational attributes (Highhouse, etal 2005).

Allen and Mahto (2007), based on data from 814 student participants searching actual organization web sites support and extend signaling and brand equity theories by showing that professional, well-designed web sites may help prospective applicants find the information they are most interested in and provide positive signals about the organization and its potential as an employer.

The review of literature based on the above theories and frameworks assume that applicants' form impression of organizations during the recruitment

process. They further propose that these impressions can be influenced by recruitment information provided by the organization and thus the impressions formed influence their behavior and choice. Thus, it could be inferred that the image formed by individuals about an organization depends on the information each one has about the organization, the way the individual picked up the information, the personalized way of classifying the information, the insight of the connection between those pieces of information and others already stored in their memory and the unique way of accessing the information and retrieving the data from the mental models.

4. Results and Discussion

An analysis of the research articles under review, categorized under journals and methods is presented below.

4.1 Categorized by Journal publication

The Table 4 shows the results of the type of journals in which articles under review on organizational image and attractiveness were published. Majority of the articles 45% are published in journals related to psychology, 22% in organizational studies, 11% each in Marketing and General Management and rest in HRM & others.

Table 4: Journal category

Journal Category	Articles
Psychology	16
Organizational studies	08
Marketing	04
Management	04
Human Resources Mgmt.	02
Others	02
TOTAL	36

4.2. Categorized by Research Methods employed

An analysis of the papers under review, which were classified based on the theoretical framework viz; social identity theory, brand equity theory and signaling theory etc.; we find that over 95% were empirical in nature, further the purpose of research in organizational image and attractiveness in our sample is mostly explanatory. Explanatory research is the investigation of cause-effect relationships and is most often performed by means of an experiment. The research methods used in the papers under review mostly employed the experimental design and survey method. The surveys were mostly cross-sectional, which leads us to infer that the concept of organizational image and attractiveness can be easily measured at a certain amount of time. We also find that the commonly discussed antecedents of

organizational image and attractiveness were familiarity and differentiation of the firm

5. Conclusions

The aim of the present review was to systematically examine the literature in the field of organizational image and attractiveness in the context of early recruitment. The most salient feature of the current literature is the variety of terms, definitions and methods and theoretical frameworks used. Though still fragmented, this field of research has constantly grown over the last two decades.

From the 36 core papers, we find that, predominantly the articles employed either the theoretical base of the social identity theory, signaling theory or brand equity theory.

Based on the social identity theory, we can infer from the articles that the identity of an applicant influences the way in which the applicant, looks at the organizational image and attractiveness. From the signaling theory we can infer that applicants rarely possess complete information about a company, and thus, use the information available as signals of unobservable factors. From the brand equity perspective the impression created by the brand image influences the favorable or not so favorable disposition towards the organization.

Most of the articles under review were empirical in nature, survey and experimental design was the predominant methodology and design. Most of the surveys were cross-sectional; therefore we can infer that the concept of image and attractiveness can be measured at a certain moment in time instead of a longer period.

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