

“Internal employer branding as a way to improve employee engagement”

AUTHORS

Iwona Staniec 



Magdalena Kalińska-Kula 

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Iwona Staniec, Ph.D., Assistant Professor, Department of Management, Faculty of Management and Production Engineering, Lodz University of Technology, Poland. (Corresponding author)

Magdalena Kalińska-Kula, Ph.D., Associate Professor, Department of Marketing, Faculty of Management, University of Lodz, Poland.



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Iwona Staniec (Poland), Magdalena Kalińska-Kula (Poland)

INTERNAL EMPLOYER BRANDING AS A WAY TO IMPROVE EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Abstract

In the turbulent environment of modern business, attracting and retaining valuable human resources have become one of the main means of competitive edge. The satisfaction of current employees and talent retention are essential elements of organizational success. Against this background, this study aims to examine whether the process approach to internal employer branding, including internal branding activities (IBA) and conducting intra-organizational research (CIR), allows for the improvement of the current employee involvement. The study used the method of regression analysis. In addition, a survey was used to collect necessary data. The sample included 120 personnel, selected by a convenience sampling method. In the light of the conducted analysis, it was confirmed that CIR significantly increases the employee value proposition (EVP). Likewise, IBA directed at current employees has a significant impact on EVP shaping. In this context, assuming EVP as a measure of employee involvement, it has been shown that the adoption of a process approach to employer branding can lead to the improvement of the current employee commitment and productivity. Thus, employer branding seen as a process in line with the human resource management and corporate strategy can contribute to building a competitive advantage.

Keywords

internal branding activities, intra-organizational research, employee value proposition, current employees, internal processes

JEL Classification

M12, J21, M51

INTRODUCTION

People are the principle of every enterprise and its greatest asset (Edwards, 2010). Human resources can be a source that provides a company with a strategic advantage in a turbulent business environment (Rose et al., 2010; Messersmith et al., 2011). Attraction and retaining valuable human resources is becoming one of the main ways of competitive edge in the era of the information society development (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012) and the knowledge-based economy, in which there is a constant war for competent talents (Sivertzen et al., 2013). In such a business environment, the satisfaction and retention of valuable employees are essential elements of organization success (Osteraker, 1999).

The result of recognizing the significant impact of the human factor (including not only the front line but also the entire staff) on the final effect of the customer service process was the emergence of an internal customer or an internal supplier and recipient concept (Pawar, 2016). According to Grönroos (1985), marketing activities can be effectively applied to the specific organizational internal market, motivating employees to adopt attitudes towards external customer orientation and,

more broadly, towards the target market. Thus, modern organizations, operating in a highly competitive and constantly evolving business environment, should attach great importance to building employee commitment, and by adequately satisfying their needs – improving the ability to meet the external customers' needs. This assumption is one of the essential premises of the employer branding concept, according to which the marketing perspective is extended to the relationship between the company management and personnel. The concept of employer branding, initiated by Ambler and Barrow (1996) in the 1990s, is based on the principles of classic product branding but concerns the process of building the employer brand.

According to the process approach, employer branding, perceiving the current employees as internal clients, cares about them and builds their commitment. This, in turn, leads to the improvement of the effectiveness of servicing external clients and satisfying them to a higher degree than the competitors do and to the creation of competitive advantage for the organization (Lee & Dale, 1998). Therefore, in recent years more and more attention has been paid to the employees and the ways in which they can influence further improvements and progress of the company brand. Employer branding permeates the awareness of stakeholders, in particular current employees who experience being part of the organization, and might leverage organizational branding success for personal gains (Edwards & Edwards, 2013). The literature on the subject proposes the concept of a "virtuous circle" that covers the key internal and external aspects of the employer branding and their effects (Moroko & Uncles, 2005). According to the proposed interaction chain, activities in the field of employer branding result in attraction and retaining valuable employees who proudly represent the company and meet customer expectations. As a result, satisfied customers become loyal advocates of the brand, which translates into the strengthening of the company's reputation and profitability. The circle closes when profitable companies with a positive external reputation attract and retain talents who want to contribute to the company's success and be associated with it.

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

1.1. Internal branding activities

Employer branding is defined as a continuous process aimed at informing current and future employees that this workplace is highly attractive and have many benefits (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Employer branding can be used externally towards future employees or internally among current employees to increase their loyalty and dedication (Theurer et al., 2016). Management of employer image is considered an example of external type of employer branding, while management of identity – as an internal one (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Considering external employer branding, the core of the process is attracting and retaining talents who can add value to the company (Moroko & Uncles, 2005). Internal employer branding, in turn, creates an environment in which current employees will support employer brand and achieve the brand/organization goals (Ouchi, 1981).

Employer branding seen as a managerial activity aimed at managing and controlling processes

concerning employer reputation should be proactively managed (Edwards & Edwards, 2013). In these considerations, employer branding helps the development of an employee value proposition (EVP) and the marketing of this proposition within the organization (Backhaus, 2016). Its primary goal is to retain talented employees and increase their determination, as well as attract valuable talents (Chawla, 2020; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

The involved employees are undoubtedly the basis for the effectiveness of the described process. According to the idea of internal employer branding, employees are perceived and treated as clients, and their interests are at the center of attention. The organization through appropriate actions enables them to self-define, improve their qualifications and adequately motivate them to work efficiently. The result should be a good spirit in interpersonal relations and employees' identification with the organizational goals. Team-buildings and proper interactions between employees are viewed as important elements of internal branding (Herman & Gioia, 2001; García et al., 2019). Employee engagement may also be influenced by several factors related to the business culture and corporate

networking. Examples are various coaching sessions, trainings on individual and career growth (Mihalcea, 2017), opportunities to participate in workshops and coaching for career development (Bai et al., 2017), and employee performance appraisal process (Javidmehr & Ebrahimpour, 2015; Idowu, 2017). Moroko and Uncles (2008) indicated a relationship between employee satisfaction and internal recruitment. Internal promotions tend to value staff and protect the specific investments in employee capital made by companies (DeVaro & Morita, 2009; Bayo-Moriones & Ortín-Ángel, 2003). Based on the literature review, Table 1 shows the main internal activities of employer branding.

Table 1. Internal branding activities directed at employees

Item	Source	Loading
Employee team-building activities	Herman and Gioia (2001)	.717
Internal communication	Herman and Gioia (2001); Moroko and Uncles (2005)	.756
Coaching	Mihalcea (2017)	.709
Employee training and development	Bai et al. (2017)	.717
Internal recruitment	DeVaro and Morita (2009); Bayo-Moriones and Ortín-Ángel (2003)	.791
Individual performance appraisal system	Javidmehr and Ebrahimpour (2015); Idowu (2017); García et al. (2019)	.809

1.2. Conducting intra-organizational research (CIR) as an element of internal employer branding

In the light of the growing impact of employees on the improvements and success of the company brand, a more systematic approach, which puts the issues related to the employer branding process at the center of attention, seems to be necessary. To apply a systemic approach to the employer branding process analysis, it is necessary to identify mechanisms that can be combined to create and consolidate this process. The purpose of business process management (BPM) is to adapt them to strategic goals and customer needs, which requires a shift from functional to process orientation (Lee & Dale, 1998). Thus, employers must constantly promote and build a good working environment. (Karga & Tsokos, 2020). Employer brand building

in terms of processes includes mechanisms at the company level that form the brand and employee engagement, as well as mechanisms by which employees build associations, brand meaning, and customer loyalty (Moroko & Uncles, 2005).

Internal branding, as addressed to current employees, is focused primarily on development programs and on building corporate culture and a friendly work environment (Stuss & Herdan, 2017). To effectively conduct activities that will result in employee approval, the satisfaction of their needs, and appropriate motivation for external customer-oriented activities, the organization should regularly conduct internal market research. Without researching internal stakeholders, it is impossible to get to know and understand their needs, and thus – to take effective measures to meet them (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011; Gaddam, 2008). Organizations achieve bigger success if they gather and consider employee feedback, particularly those that challenge existing rules or policies (Edmondson, 2006). Companies can use surveys as a 'key method' not only to assess but also to promote necessary changes in the organizational structure (Kraut, 1996). Such a feedback can be compared with other big data systems that exist in organizations. Linking this data to performance measures helps determine which elements of working atmosphere have the biggest impact on the organization. This data can be useful when determining what key factors improve the efficiency of the organizational processes (Mason et al., 2005).

Internal employee research is an essential part of the internal employer branding (Steel et al., 2002; Edmondson, 2006), which will enable the monitoring of staff moods, identify the defining factors determining satisfaction or dissatisfaction, and, consequently, lead to a specific action being taken. If the employer notices that some negative opinions indicate current problems, these issues should be investigated and then corrected. Positive comments from employees allow extending understanding of the company values and how they strengthen EVP (Stuss & Herdan, 2017). Undertaking research in areas critical for employees, such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with remuneration and working conditions, or the assessment of the occupational stress level, also con-

firms the employees' belief that they are a critical link in the company, and have an impact on the company fate and its success (Steel et al., 2002).

Concerning employee opinion surveys, the most frequently mentioned are employee satisfaction surveys, perceived as a tool used by employers to explore current or potential problems of employees (Walters, 1996). Satisfaction with the work performed, however, is not the only area that can be covered by the study. It is essential to investigate values, attitudes, and needs that influence employee motivation. It helps the employer understand the factors that motivate organizational members. It can be seen that organizations that understand the dynamics related to employee motivation in physical, mental, and social dimensions, and take this into account in motivational processes, save both time and money, and have more motivated staff (Osteraker, 1999).

Table 2. Examples of intra-organizational research by areas of exploration

Type of research	Source	Loading
Employee satisfaction survey (work)	Walters (1996); Steel et al. (2002)	.895
Employee satisfaction survey (remuneration)	Steel et al. (2002)	.890
Work engagement research	Steel et al. (2002)	.843
Employee company identification research	Clarke (2001)	.908
Managerial effectiveness research (skills, effectiveness of management staff)	Osteraker (1999); Clarke (2001)	.893
Internal communication research	Osteraker (1999); Clarke (2001)	.917
Occupational stress assessment	Osteraker (1999); Clarke (2001)	.927
Working conditions research	Osteraker (1999); Clarke (2001)	.889
Training quality and employee development research	Stuss and Herdan (2017)	.910
Career development opportunities assessment	Biswas and Bhatnagar (2013)	.897

1.3. Employee Value Proposition (EVP)

Alniaçık and Alniaçık (2012), and Kunerth and Mosley (2011) studied the relationship between employee engagement and employer branding. The development and implementation of effective employer branding strategies increase employees' sense of belonging and value compliance in terms of match-

ing a person to the organization (Chawla, 2020). As a result, employees feel appreciated, become loyal and committed to the organization, and are willing to commit themselves to achieve the company's overarching goals (Wilden et al., 2010). On the other hand, Monteiro et al. (2020) indicated a model based on four dimensions: company strategy, reputation, culture, and reward system as a useful strategic tool and a basis for talent enhancement, managing, and retaining. Under the proposed concept, development and progress of the company directly depends on employer branding, as well as in the acquisition and retention of valuable talents, and becomes a competitive advantage of the organization. Employer branding fosters the expansion of organizational pride and strengthens business culture, thus contributing to the retention of employees (Karga & Tsokos, 2020). Based on this premise, organizations are devoting significant resources to developing strategies that will achieve the involvement of competent employees (McCracken et al., 2016).

Process management assumes that performance measurement should be made with the use of indicators. Measuring the process effectiveness is of particular importance in the improvement of the organization. Due to the different approach to employer branding, it is not possible to adopt a uniform methodology for measuring the effectiveness of this process. Each unit should individually formulate criteria for measuring its effectiveness, appropriately select the measures and tools with which this measurement will be carried out (Walters, 1996). For example, Employee Value Proposition (EVP) describes key features of the organization and whether a job offer is considered engaging and attractive.

EVP is a "package of reward features or employment advantages and benefits offered to employees" (Barrow & Mosley, 2005; Edwards, 2010, p. 7) constituting the synergies between HRM and brand marketing (Theurer et al., 2016). It is a type of agreement between an organization and an employee regarding benefits offered in return for their contribution (Pawar, 2016). An organization provides a set of values in return for employee input, knowledge, skills, talents, behaviors, time, and energy. The benefits achieved by the employee must be proportional to the contribution to the organ-

ization, then it is possible to achieve the highest level of employee satisfaction. EVP is a concept that helps organizations attract and retain the best human resources. EVP directly affects employee productivity and loyalty, maintaining a “give and receive” relationship and determines the overall consistency of communication (Nagpal & Nagpal, 2019). Concerning the process of building employer branding, the target group are employees involved in the process of improving the organization. EVP should be comprised following the results of assessment of features that make organizations a desired workplace (Lievens, 2007). Therefore, it is of key importance to define the characteristics determining a value for the employee, which will constitute a reference point for the assessment of activities building their commitment. Employers should focus on areas such as relationships, infrastructure, and remuneration. In the case of relationships, it is about finding a plan that can connect the employees with the company, and thus give them a sense of belonging and shared responsibility for the company results. The aspect of infrastructure concerns the applied solutions or modern work techniques, while in the area related to remuneration, the company should be well prepared to attract and retain its best employees by offering them a competitive salary. Taking the EVP concept from Pawar (2016), and Nagpal and Nagpal (2019), it was assumed that value for employees is shaped by stabilization and creating real conditions of work safety and remuneration and enabling them to take action.

Table 3. Characteristics determining EVP

Item	Source	Loading
Satisfying remuneration	Collins (2007); Bellou et al. (2015); Pawar (2016); Nagpal and Nagpal (2019)	.766
Employment stability	Carpentier et al. (2017); Pawar (2016); Nagpal and Nagpal (2019)	.581
Competency job descriptions	Pawar (2016); Nagpal and Nagpal (2019)	.707
Working time flexibility	Carpentier et al. (2017); Dabirian et al. (2019); Pawar (2016); Nagpal and Nagpal (2019)	.746
The possibility of influencing operations and development of the company	Carpentier et al. (2017); Nagpal and Nagpal (2019)	.801
Professional development opportunities	Collins (2007); Dabirian et al. (2019); Nagpal and Nagpal (2019)	.638

2. AIMS AND HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

The study aims to answer the question of whether the process approach to internal employer branding, including internal branding activities (IBA) and conducting intra-organizational research (CIR), allows improving employee engagement and improvement of the current employee involvement.

The relationship between organizational commitment, employer branding, and employee productivity is confirmed (Backhaus, 2016). The committed employees of the company are more than able to meet the expectations of customers, providing them with the expected satisfaction (Woodruff et al., 1983). Increased customer satisfaction may lead to an increase in their loyalty (Karga & Tsokos, 2020), and customer loyalty and satisfaction may translate into an increase in revenues, profits, and profitability of the company (Reichheld & Sasser, 1990). Employer branding, therefore, has an indirect impact on the profitability of the organization by stimulating the efficiency of employees, their commitment to their organization, and, as a result, the satisfaction of external customers (Gaddam, 2008). In this process, a significant role is played by the preparation of the EVP concept and its implementation in the field of internal branding. It can therefore be stated that:

H1: Internal branding activities directed at current employees have a significant influence on the EVP.

To effectively prepare and implement an attractive EVP concept, it is necessary to accurately identify the factors determining employee satisfaction or causing its lack (Walters, 1996). Intra-organizational research can be an effective support in this regard (Kraut, 1996). Employee opinion surveys are a manifestation of a consultative form of participatory management, where the employee is not only a passive participant in the actions taken, but also actively influences their direction and course (Rose et al., 2010; Edmondson, 2006; Carpentier et al., 2017). Such activities additionally strengthen the emotional bond between the employer and employees, which generates easier identification with the organizational goals and

thus greater motivation to achieve them (Karga & Tsokos, 2020). It can therefore be assumed that:

H2: Conducting intra-organizational research significantly increases the EVP value.

3. METHODOLOGY

The surveyed population consisted of employees of various enterprises. Personal interviews were conducted, as well as detailed questionnaires were distributed among employees as part of the data collection undertaken in spring 2019. The pilot survey included 20 respondents. The pilot study assessed number of questions, the clarity of the instructions, the design, and the understanding of the questions. The selection of the appropriate sampling method depended largely on financial and time constraints as well as available resources. For these reasons, the snowball method was used for the study, i.e. initial participants were relied on to identify additional participants who were then used in the study. In total, data from 120 questionnaires were collected, which were used in the data analysis.

The perception of employers and their activities was measured using a 5-point Likert scale. Positive opinions resulted in high scores, low scores represent negative opinions respectively.

Appropriate scales were adopted and verified for theoretical accuracy. For this purpose, principal component factor analysis was used – it was expected that the variables forming the scale would have factor loadings of at least 0.6 (Maxwell, 1992). Then, the reliability analysis was performed using the method of examining the internal consistency of the scale using the Cronbach's alpha coefficient. It is required that the tested scales have the Cronbach's alpha coefficient higher than 0.7 – this condition is called the Nunnally criterion

(Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994) – and that removing variables from the scale always causes a decrease in the coefficient value. It is also expected that the correlations of the individual variables with the total score of the scale will be higher than 0.4. Statistical package of SPSS version 21 was used for data analysis. The data were statistically processed and used to verify the research hypotheses.

4. RESULTS

55.8% women and 44.2% men participated in the study, thus, the share of men and women in the survey is similar, correspondingly to the employee gender structure in Poland. The prevailing majority of respondents were people with a master's degree (42.5%), 35% of respondents had a bachelor's degree, and 22.5% – completed secondary education. 16.7% of the respondents represented the executives, and 30% – the managers. 29.2% of the respondents were administrative staff, and 24.1% were management staff, including industry specialists. 15% were respondents with seniority up to one year in the evaluated company, 36.7% of respondents had work experience with current workplace from one year to three years, and 40% – from 4 to 10 years. 8.3% of respondents had seniority in the present company rated above 10. It is worth noting that the respondents came from organizations employing up to 49 people (43.3%), organizations employing between 50 and 249 people (45%), and organizations employing 250 people and more (11.7%).

The reliability and validity of the results were verified to establish internal consistency and whether the questions measure what should be measured.

For the created scales (Table 1, 2, and 3), all factor loadings are greater than 0.6, i.e. the theoretical validity has been positively verified (Maxwell, 1992). The scales also indicate internal consistency

Table 4. The reliability of the scale assessment

Scale	KMO	Explain of the total variance	Cronbach's alpha	No items
EVP	0.861	56.68%	$\alpha = 0.760$	6
IBA (internal branding activities directed at current employees)	0.861	56.88%	$\alpha = 0.846$	6
CIR (conducting intra-organizational research)	0.899	80.48%	$\alpha = 0.943$	10

cy (Table 4), as Cronbach's alpha coefficients are higher than 0.7 and the correlations of individual variables with the total scale score are higher than 0.4. Thus, the data is reliable.

Table 5 presents all descriptive statistics for the constructed scales, which show that the respondents rated EVP the highest and CIR the lowest. The performed Shapiro–Wilk test reaches statistical significance $p > 0.05$, which proves that the distribution of the analyzed scales is consistent with the normal distribution. This allows the use of appropriate tests to verify the hypotheses.

The Pearson's linear correlation index and the regression equation (Diamantopoulos et al., 2003) were used to verify the hypotheses because the assumption of the normality of the distribution of scales was verified positively.

The results (Table 6) show that there is a positive correlation between IBA and EVP. The correlation coefficient is 0.679 and it is statistically significant

($p < 0.01$), which means that an increase in the average IBA value corresponds to an increase in the average EPV value.

Table 6 shows the regression results for *H1*. The statistic $F = 110.054$ ($p < 0.01$) is statistically significant; therefore, IBA has a significant influence on EVP. The coefficient of determination is 0.461, which means that 46.1% of the changes in EVP are due to the presence of IBA. Based on the results from Table 6, *H1* is verified positively: internal branding activities directed at current employees (IBA) has a significant influence on the EVP.

Table 7 shows the regression results for *H2*. The statistic $F=134.811$ ($p<0.01$) is statistically significant; therefore, CIR has a significant influence on EVP (Table 7). The coefficient of determination is 0.533, which means that 53.3% of the changes in EVP are due to the presence of CIR. Based on the results from Table 7, *H2* is verified positively: conducting intra-organizational research significantly increases the EVP value.

Table 5. Descriptive statistics and normal distribution tests

Descriptive statistics		CIR	IBA	EVP
Mean		2.788	3.008	3.628
Median		2.950	3.000	3.667
Standard deviation		1.103	0.972	0.646
Skewness		0.150	0.043	-0.383
Kurtosis		-0.829	-0.808	0.403
Shapiro–Wilk Statistics		.957	.983	.980
df		120	120	120
Significance		.051	.124	.068

Table 6. Influence of IBA on EPV

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.270	0.142		15.995	0.000
	IBA	0.451	0.045	0.679	10.053	0.000
Dependent variable: EVP						
$r = 0.679$; R -square = 0.461; adjusted $R = 0.457$; $F = 101.054$; $p < 0.01$						

Table 7. Influence of CIR on EVP

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.435	0.110		22.043	0.000
	CIR	0.428	0.037	0.730	11.611	0.000
Dependent variable: EVP						
$r = 0.730$; R -square = 0.533; adjusted $R = 0.529$ $F = 134.811$ $p < 0.01$						

Table 8. Simultaneous influence of IBA and CIR on EVP

Model	Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	p
	B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	2.214	0.128	17.314	0.000
	IBA	0.194	0.062	3.120	0.002
	CIR	0.297	0.055	5.410	0.000
Dependent Variable: EVP					
<i>r</i> = 0.754; <i>R</i> -square = 0.569; adjusted <i>R</i> = 0.562; <i>F</i> = 77.261; <i>p</i> < 0.01					

Table 8 shows the regression results for the EVP dependent variable and IBA and CIR independent variables. The statistic $F = 77.261$ ($p < 0.01$) is statistically significant; therefore, IBA and CIR have a significant influence on EVP. The coefficient of determination is 0.569, which means that 56.93% of changes in EVP are due to the presence of CIR and IBA. The statistic $t = 3.12$ ($p = 0.02 < 0.05$) is statistically significant and positive; therefore, IBA has a significant positive effect on EVP. The statistic $t = 5.410$ ($p = 0.02 < 0.05$) is statistically significant and positive; therefore, CIR has a significant positive effect on EVP. Moreover, when comparing standardized coefficients, it can be concluded that CIR (0.507) has a stronger influence on EVP than IBA (0.293).

5. DISCUSSION

Modern approaches to brand management suggest that brand value is co-created interactively with various stakeholders, and various touchpoints influence the quality of brand experience. Of all these touchpoints, direct interaction between employees and customers is crucial (Edwards, 2010; Rose et al., 2010; Messersmith et al., 2011). The role of employees in building the brand and creating the competitive advantage of the organization is emphasized and appreciated (Pawar, 2016; Lee & Dale, 1998), which strengthens the importance and role of internal branding.

Internal employer branding creates an environment in which employees can identify with the employer brand (Ouchi, 1981) and add value to the company (Moroko & Uncles, 2005). In this aspect, it is crucial to define the features determining a value for the employee, and on this basis to define the benefits offered to the employee in return for their contribution, under a specific

agreement between them and the organization, which is EVP (Pawar, 2016). EVP, which balances the benefits that employees can receive in return for their results and the contribution they bring to the company, can have a key impact on both attracting new talent to companies and increasing the involvement of existing employees (Nagpal & Nagpal, 2019). According to the subject literature, the development and implementation of effective IBA strategies influences the formation of EVP, and thus increases the employees' sense of belonging (Chawla, 2020) and their commitment level (Alniaçık & Alniaçık, 2012; Kunerth & Mosley, 2011). This assumption was confirmed in light of the results of the study. By adopting EVP as a measure of employee potential loyalty and commitment, this study has shown that employer branding used internally among current employees significantly increases their loyalty and commitment (Theurer et al., 2016). As a result, employees feel appreciated in their company, become loyal and committed to the organization, and are willing to commit themselves to achieve the company's overarching goals (Wilden et al., 2010).

By implementing the concept of employer branding in a process way, the company commits itself to its employees that they will receive certain values and experiences while working for a given organization (Backhaus, 2016). In identifying the characteristics determining the value for employees, it is necessary to examine their key expectations. In this regard, it is also necessary to obtain information by conducting internal organizational research (Kraut, 1996). Research among employees allows for a multidimensional diagnosis of the situation. They indicate not only the level of employee motivation or satisfaction but can also help in identifying the strengths and weaknesses of the company and determining the effectiveness of the tools used by the organiza-

tion, e.g. related to communication or training. By using CIR, the company provides high-quality benefits that distinguish organizational identity, which employees value, identify with, and which they willingly promote (Martin et al., 2011). CIRs help to identify the strengths of the organization, thus contributing to employee loyalty (Steel et al., 2002). It was confirmed in the light of the study results, which showed that conducting intra-organizational research significantly increases the value of EVP.

The simultaneous implementation of IBA and CIR allows employee involvement to be improved as well as their work-related positive state of mind, vigor, and dedication (Schaufeli

et al., 2002), by stimulating a feeling of unity with the brand. EVP influences employee loyalty (Davies, 2008), and results in greater involvement and identification of employees with the employer brand (Mosley, 2007). An integrated approach, i.e. a combination of IBA, CIR, and EPV activities, allows the company to increase the level of employee productivity, and at the same time attract talent, promote the involvement of current employees and retain them in the organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). An organization that can develop an employee-friendly culture can count on their positive behavior and attitude to work (Chawla, 2020).

CONCLUSION

The work aimed to examine whether the process approach to internal employer branding, including IBA and CIR, allows for the improvement of employee involvement. According to the process approach, employer branding perceives current employees as internal clients, and cares for them – builds their commitment, which in turn leads to the improvement of the effectiveness of servicing the company's external clients. Therefore, the adoption of a process approach to employer branding aimed at achieving the indicated results requires analyzing the basic generation mechanisms underlying the building of employee engagement at the level of internal employer branding.

The results suggest that IBA and CIR have a significant impact on EVP. Adopting EVP as a measure of employee involvement and commitment, it was revealed that employer branding used internally among current employees significantly increases the sense of employee belonging and improve their commitment.

The essence of activities in the area of internal employer branding is to recognize and satisfy the needs of employees. The comprehensive implementation of the tailored to the employees' needs EVP benefits offer, favors the creation of an appropriate organizational climate, conditions, and tasks conducive motivating to work. Consistency between the employer brand and EVP is crucial for fulfilling the promises made by the employer. If the company provides employees with the above conditions, as well as autonomy and appropriate support, employees will reciprocate by showing a higher level of commitment.

Activities in the area of the employer branding process affect the current employees, their productivity, and loyalty to the company, and at the same time affect the identity of the organization and its organizational culture. Internal employer branding strategies should serve to create an environment in which employees are provided with opportunities to learn and develop, and their contribution to the organization is appreciated. It is important to create an environment in which employees feel safe, participate in the organization management, and are motivated to achieve their goals. The development of such an environment will cause employees to show greater attachment to their work, which will convert into behaviors that lead to the improvement of the company productivity. The creation of the described environment is favored by an integrated approach, consisting of the combination of IBA, CIR, and EPV processes.

LIMITATIONS AND FURTHER STUDIES

The study has several limitations. The first limitation was the small size of respondents and the snow-ball sampling used in this study, which meant that the selection was not representative. Thus, it is not possible to generalize the results. Further studies are to be conducted with a more representative random sample to make the generalization possible. The respondents must come from different management levels: executive, managers, administrative, and specialists, which would be a problem for sample quality. Secondly, the study was conducted in one region, so the results can only relate to specific local conditions. Hence, the study should be continued in different regions. Finally, the proposed measurement of EPV, IBA, and CIR is disputable because there are no standards in this regard. Although the disadvantages of the proposed approach are vivid, it is necessary to emphasize that IBA and CIR have significantly affected the EPV, therefore a process approach is highly desirable in employer branding. Future studies should be directed to the verification of the adopted measurement scales.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Conceptualization: Iwona Staniec, Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Data curation: Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Formal analysis: Iwona Staniec.

Funding acquisition: Iwona Staniec, Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Investigation: Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Methodology: Iwona Staniec, Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Project administration: Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Resources: Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Software: Iwona Staniec.

Supervision: Iwona Staniec, Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Validation: Iwona Staniec.

Visualization: Iwona Staniec.

Writing – original draft: Iwona Staniec, Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

Writing – review & editing: Iwona Staniec, Magdalena Kalinska-Kula.

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