



EMPLOYER BRANDING – A NEW APPROACH TO THE HOTEL INDUSTRY

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Abstract:

In the hotel industry, HR management is increasingly using Employer Branding as a very effective way of retaining and recruiting employees. In these activities, hoteliers use modern information and communication technology and creative experiences from the past. The goal is to create the best possible Employer Branding on that basis. In creating the employer brand, it is necessary to conduct more detailed research on the external and internal employer brand as well as this segment of the labour market. Therefore, it was necessary to research Employer Branding trends and take into account the current world practice in this domain. Concrete research was based on the experiences of several high-class Belgrade hotels (Sent Ten, Nine Square, Hilton) based on the scientific methodology used in internal and external environment research.

The findings of a short survey indicate the behaviour of employees, based on previous experience, their satisfaction with the work they perform and their strive to improve. Such a transformation of the experience of the employees leads to an increase in the level of competitiveness of the hotel company, higher occupancy of capacities, and thus an increase in the level of business profitability, all with the aim of a higher level of quality of the specific hotel product and services.

Keywords:

hotel, employer brand, employees; experience, recruitment, image.

INTRODUCTION

Employees in every hotel represent the most valuable resource. It is necessary to constantly train them and work on improving general and specific knowledge to effectively manage future innovations. Due to the achievement of a more competitive position in the hotel market, this process of learning and selection represents the most effective management of human resources. The motive as well as the basic goal of the work is to assess the expectations of the hotel employees in terms of satisfaction with their position and the achieved level of material and non-material compensations. New trends in the hotel industry (Anjunar *et al.*, 2021), after a worrying decline during the years of the pandemic (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), the hotel industry has positioned itself as the fastest-growing industry in the world economy (Bathon *et al.*, 2005) with realistic expectations for faster growth in the future (Canhoto & Wei, 2021). In the period of the general crisis, the hotel

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industry experienced new solutions in the management of human resources in the hotel industry [x], because hotels and hospitality professionals demanded better treatment and higher salaries (Anjunar *et al.*, 2021). At the same time, inflation led to higher prices after the sudden increase in travel after the end of the pandemic (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). The basic hypothesis in these short researches is that the acquisition of a richer experience for hotel employees leads to an increase in guest satisfaction (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017) and better occupancy of hotel capacities, and thus more efficient and profitable hotel operations (Babuna *et al.*, 2020). An additional hypothesis refers to the fact that the experience and satisfaction of hotel employees increase the level of loyalty (Bradić-Martinović & Kovačević, 2022), which contributes to faster growth and expansion of the hotel industry (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). At the beginning of this century, in the hotel industry, management is increasingly directed towards Employer Branding as an effective way of retaining employees in a particular hotel (Cascio, WF, 2014). In these activities, hoteliers use modern information and communication technology and creative experience (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017), intending to create the best possible Employer Branding (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019).

LITERATURE REVIEW

This short research paper aims to extend employer branding research by investigating the role of job satisfaction and organizational identification as predictors of employee retention and their mediating role between employer branding and employee retention (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In research, three out of five dimensions of employer and employee branding, namely the work environment, company reputation, and corporate vision, have a positive and significant impact on the interest of a talented local worker in a career (Babuna *et al.*, 2020; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barlow, 2022; Bathon *et al.*, 2005; Bradić-Martinović & Kovačević 2022; Cvijanović *et al.*, 2017). More productive employees mean business growth. When employee morale is happy, they feel proud to be part of the hotel company (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2022). A strong brand image is not only attractive to employees but also increases the level of job satisfaction of existing employees and they also develop a sustainable relationship with hotel companies (Hair, *et al.*, 2022). On the other hand, a strong brand can improve the overall value of a hotel company, attract specific and top talent, and create a sense of unity among all employees (Isagani, 2021). The branding process motivates employees and they can become emotionally attached to brands enabling strong loyalty and even a sense of ownership (Barlow, 2022). This can help maintain employee motivation and increase sales of hotel capacity (Cvijanović *et al.*, 2017). Given that employees spend most of their future hours in a random place, creating something they like is essential (Barlow, 2022).

METHODOLOGY

For this research, according to the research methodology field, three high-categorized hotels in Belgrade (Sent Ten, Square Nine, and Hilton) were focused on selecting 40 employees in different positions in the hotel according to the target sample method. A total of 120 employees (in a defined sample, with different working positions) were surveyed via e-mail, telephone, or direct contact, where they expressed their opinions based on their own experience. A total of five questionnaires were filled out: (1) What is important to candidates when choosing employers?, (2) What is most important for getting a job?, (3) In your opinion, what should be the monthly net salary for your workplace?, (4) Do you plan to change your job in the next year? (5) Fear of losing your job - Are you afraid of losing your job in the next year? The survey, which included a total of 120 employees in the three hotels mentioned above, was conducted in the period from 01.03.2023. to 31.05.2023. Important data were collected via the Internet and social networks (Facebook and Instagram), Newsletter, and questionnaires were sent and collected via e-mail. Sent questionnaires, with five groups of questions that were divided into predicted answers, were collected in three months. To determine those variables that best describe employee satisfaction, the partial correlation method was used. Then, the hierarchical regression technique was used to fulfil the objective of this analysis and the importance of the obtained answers according to the predicted scale. Grading the ocean based on higher credibility had a greater impact on the construction of the model.



RESULTS

Research results show a significant impact of Employer Brand on workforce performance, and vice versa. Employee branding affects more productive hotel operations and increased guest satisfaction. In practice, there are significant differences in the level of performance of the workforce in different hotels. Questionnaires used in the research were related to the position of employees and their attitude towards employers' loyalty, and employers' attitudes. Employees of three highly categorized hotels: Saint Ten, Square None, and Hilton with a sample of 40 employees expressed their views. In the first questionnaire that was filled out by employees out of 120 respondents, 77 of them declared that interpersonal relations (good working atmosphere) were the most important reason why they chose that particular hotel. The second place, why exactly those surveyed chose that employer, i.e. the hotel, is the attractiveness of the work they perform (64% or a total of 76 employees in various positions, excluding tactical and operational level managers). For the candidates who got a job in the surveyed hotels, the salary is in the third place (63% of the respondents, or a total of 75 of them put this position in an important place in terms of importance). This data from the research process indicates that every employee cares much more about having a good reference or a well-profiled personal brand, rather than some other categories that attracted him to find a job with a specific employer (in this case, highly categorized hotels in the strictest centre of Belgrade). In order of importance, as the candidates ranked the indicators that attracted them to the hotel for that job, the fourth place is the working time, which is important even for 67 respondents in those hotels, i.e. the category of flexible working time. The factor of social responsibility holds a very significant position for the employer in question. It is interesting that before the category of the possibility of learning and advancement (40 respondents or 34%) there is the category of the location of the company, i.e. the hotel (Table 1.).

Table 1. Questionnaire No. 1: What is important to candidates when choosing employers?

- Good interpersonal relations	65%
- Nature/content of work	64%
- Salary	63%
- Working time	61%
- Flexible working time/place	60%
- Social responsibility of employers	56%
- Location of the company (hotel)	49%
- Ability to learn and progress	34%
- Mentoring	37%
- Job security	26%
- Something else (specify)	12%

Source: Conducted employee survey, May 2023.

From the perspective of the hypothesis in the work, the question related to what (in the opinion of the surveyed employees) is most important for getting a job is very important. The majority of all 41 employees (over 30%) believe that the knowledge and skills possessed by an individual are a decisive factor in getting a job. Motivation and desire for that particular job is important for 24% of the interviewees, and only then the acquired work experience for 16% of the respondents. In this turbulent period, 12 or 10% of them declared that they were good contacts and acquaintances, and the category of party affiliation (12 of them or 10% of employees) was in the same ratio if it was an honest (albeit anonymous) declaration (Table 2.).



Table 2. Questionnaire No. 2: What is the most important thing for getting a job?

- Knowledge and skills possessed	30%
- Motivation and willingness to work	24%
- Work experience	16%
- Good contacts and acquaintances	16%
- Party affiliation	10%
- Luck	6%
- Recommendations of influential people from the profession (colleagues, superiors)	5%
- Formal education	3%
- Something else	2%

Source: Conducted employee survey, May 2023.

According to many managers for human resources in the hotel industry, an important determinant for employer branding that refers to its performance is the level of income. The research that has just been carried out refutes that common opinion, because new employees in high-ranking hotels consider it an important issue (in terms of the importance of the indicator in the third place), but not a decisive one when choosing employers, that is, in the last instance, they do not have a decisive influence when choosing an employer, and on the other hand, on employer branding, which is a continuous indicator that is upgraded over time. In the given period, when the research was conducted, the largest number of newly employed people declared that the monthly 700 to 1000 euro salary is quite satisfactory for the work they do, and that was a total of 42 or 30.2% of the employees who were surveyed in these three hotels that were chosen for this specific research. It is interesting that only 4.9% of those surveyed, or only 6 of them, believe that the acceptable amount of salary is the range from 1,300 euros to 2,000 euros. It is particularly interesting, from the perspective of the motive and subject of the research, that only 2% of them (only 2 newly employed) believe that a decent salary for a specific job should be over 2% at the present moment (Table 3.).

This leads to the conclusion, taking into account the goal and motive of the research, that the monthly net salary, for a specific job, on the contrary, is not a decisive factor. The whole process of OK research refers to a wide range of factors that affect employer branding and its creation from different value categories. A very important factor that was emphasized by the newly hired employees in the observed hotels was related to the experiences that came from engagements and arrangements during the pandemic. Certainly, it represents a special type of work engagement and the creation of elements of employer branding (experiences from the past) that can be used in future times. At the given time, the period 2020-2022, the monthly net salary, for a specific position, did not have any priority over other elements and criteria that related not only to the choice of employer but also to the loyalty of employees in that hotel.

Table 3. Questionnaire No. 3: In your opinion, what should be the monthly net salary for your position?

- up to 500 euros	30%
- 501-750 euros	24%
- 751 -1000 euros	16%
- 1001 - 1300 euros	16%
- 1300 - 2000 euros	10%
- over 2000 euros	6%

Source: Conducted employee survey, May 2023.



In terms of loyalty to the hotel where he works, i.e. to the employer, a question was asked about the possibility of changing the workplace in the coming year. A total of 82 respondents or 68.5 % think they will change jobs next year. On the other hand, only 14 or 10.8% of them do not plan to change their workplace, i.e. their job, while 23.4 or 28 of them believe that they will change their job only if they are forced to and this change would potentially occur in the coming year (Table 4.).

Table 4. Questionnaire No. 4: Do you plan to change your job during the next year?

- Plan to change a job during that time	68.5%
- No, I don't plan to change a job yet	10.8%
- Only if I have to	28.0 %

Source: Conducted employee survey, May 2023.

A separate question was about the fear of losing a job at the current random place in the hotel. Approximately 1/3 of the employees had three different answers: (1) I am afraid 38 workers or 31.2%, and 41, or 31.8% stated that they are not afraid, while 41 workers or 30.8% do not think about it (Table 5.).

Table 5. Questionnaire No. 5: Are you afraid of losing your job in the next year?

- Yes, I am	31.2%
- No, I'm not	31.8%
- I don't think about it	30.8%

Source: Conducted employee survey, May 2023.

CONCLUSIONS AND DISCUSSION

Employee satisfaction and their satisfaction with the work and the stimulation they receive in hotels when performing operational tasks is a driving motive in modern human resource management in the hotel industry (Arasanmi & Krishna, 2019). In this way, the rich experience and reputation of the employees are effectively exploited. Research conducted in three highly categorized hotels in Belgrade leads to conclusions that are important to all employees. Ultimately, satisfaction with the work they perform leads to greater profitability and profitability of the hotel business. Branding of hotel employees represents a specific transformation of the experience of employees who contribute to the image of the specific hotel with their reputation (Bharadwaj *et al.*, 2022). From the aspect of human resource management in the future management of the hotel business, specific participation based on experience is gaining importance (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017). These accepted modern trends in the tourism and hotel industry will also contribute to raising the level of training of employees in hotels operating in Serbia (Cvijanović *et al.*, 2017). The branding strategy of employers and employees in hotels primarily refers to the plan that companies have to influence how their employees and the labour market, in general, perceive their brand (Cascio, WF, 2014). The main goal of an effective branding strategy is to enable the company to control the dialogue about its practices and help to acquire and retain top talent (Itam *et al.*, 2020). HR managers who deal with talent acquisition accept the importance of employee branding, but still, many hotels haven't adopted this modern trend yet, which is based on rich experience from the past, i.e. the rising business success of the hotel company (Riajur Rahman, 2023). While there are some universal ways to create and improve strategy, tactics, and operations in employee branding, there are, however, some best practices to a specific segment of the labour market that should be kept in mind. Having that in mind, it was necessary to conduct research Employer Branding trends and have a comprehensive insight into current world practices in this domain (Riajur Rahman, 2023). In the future, effective branding as a transformation of their previous experience could represent a significant direction in the effective management of human resources in the hotel industry.



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