Employer Branding as a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees

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SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS, BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION & LEGAL STUDIES
A thesis submitted for the degree of
Master of Science (MSc) in Management

December 2020
Thessaloniki – Greece
I hereby declare that the work submitted is mine and that where I have made use of another’s work, I have attributed the source(s) according to the Regulations set in the Student’s Handbook.

December 2020
Thessaloniki - Greece
Abstract

This dissertation was written as part of the MSc in Management at the International Hellenic University.

The aim of this research was to examine how people understand the concept of employer branding and through this to finally conclude that employer branding creates a competitive advantage for companies that use it in the process of attracting, recruiting, and retaining employees of high standards. The aim of the research was to be based on perceptions. As many times the perception that exists for something is stronger than the reality. In the world of marketing and branding, the perception that consumers have of a product or a company (in the case of employer branding, the employees) is much more important than the practices followed, as these perceptions are the ones that really lead companies to gain a competitive advantage.

For the purpose of the research, apart from the literature study, a questionnaire was used with 210 participants with different professional qualities (students, job candidates, employees, employers, human resources professionals) so that we could examine the issue from the point of view of all stakeholders.

The present research differs from those that have been conducted so far on the subject, as it examines the subject on the basis of people's perceptions of it. Concluding that employer branding is a competitive advantage, some suggestions are made on how to integrate it even more convincingly into our lives, as well as some suggestions for further research.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Human Resources Management, Competitive Advantage, Attracting, Recruiting, Retaining

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December 2020
Preface

I would like to start by thanking all the lecturers at the International Hellenic University who guided me and gave me valuable knowledge that I used in this research.

I would especially like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Stefanos Giannikis for his excellent guidance and support during this process. Dr. Stefanos Giannikis has given me lots of advice during the process and I would like to thank him for that.

I would also like to thank the International Hellenic University for giving me the opportunity to conduct such an interesting research in the context of my master’s degree.

I also wish to thank all of the respondents; without whose cooperation I would not have been able to conduct this analysis.

I would like to thank my parents. If I ever lost interest, you kept me motivated.

My girlfriend, Paulina, deserves a particular note of thanks, for patience and support during the process.
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1. Introduction

The idea of employer branding was created in the conclusion of 1990s in result of tightening labor market segments. From the time of the concept has created both marketing and human resources professional dealt with the concept. Nevertheless, the idea remains debatable and it is still responded skeptically. It has become more difficult to attract talents & companies have to create long term employer branding strategies (Taylor, 2010). In addition, increasingly more businesses seek to be "the employer of choice". Even during the present economic climate, it is regarded that employer branding still plays a crucial role particularly in retaining best talent. Today, that the economic system is beginning to recuperate, workers are getting back the self-confidence of theirs and may begin searching for various other possibilities (Riley, 2009). Businesses which have been managing their employer brand regularly have been equipped to deliver value to the employees of theirs hence bringing about increased commitment, retention, and loyalty.

The process of attracting and recruiting employees is a complex phenomenon that over time becomes more and more complex. The advent of technology and the internet has completely changed the balance in the recruitment process. New ways of attracting and selecting candidates have emerged but also new difficulties. High-quality employees now have the ability to look for work around the world from their computer, they are informed about each employer, they become more demanding and almost nothing is hidden. Of course, technology is one of the many components that have complicated the recruitment process. However, their further analysis does not fall within the scope of this dissertation.

Employee retention is another important factor in the success of the company today. as we will see in detail below high turnover rates can lead to many problems and create significant vibrations within a company. However, retaining employees and even a high level is not at all easy. Bibliographic research says that employer branding is the key to retaining employees. The goal of every company is to become the employer of choice, but even today its achievement techniques remain unclear. The workforce is decreasing, and companies do already fight over the reduced number of talented employees. There is no question that the equation is non-sustainable; companies are facing ruff times and need strategies to gain and maintain their positions as highly valued companies by potential and existing employees.

Studying the literature, the author concludes that employer branding is a new science and certainly has not expanded to the appropriate degree. A typical example is that there is no research that shows the negative effects of employer branding and the few that mention them simply make assumptions. The present study deals exclusively with the way in which people perceive employer branding, if it affects them in their professional decisions as employees but also as consumers, and how open they are to know more about it. This research does not deal with employer branding practices in depth; however, it simply
ments them as ways to achieve its goals. Focuses on how employer branding forms a competitive advantage for companies in the minds of employees, employers, candidates, and human resource management professionals and ultimately creates an advantage for the company itself.

The author researched the subject by researching and analyzing the existing bibliography which is the first part of the work. It discusses and analyzes the theoretical framework of employer branding, its advantages, its characteristics, and its correlation with the human resource management industry. In addition, the concepts of branding, brand equity, competitive advantage are analyzed, as well as the differences between marketing and branding. The chapter of the bibliographic research closes with a small analysis of the theories of attracting, recruiting, and retaining employees. Hereafter the author will move on to methodology used and finally to findings and analysis on the topic. The last chapter will consist of conclusions, discussions, and future recommendations.

The dissertation question is “is Employer Branding a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees?”. The author will try to answer this question through the bibliographic research and the questionnaire.
2. Literature Review

During this research, several difficulties were encountered, which mainly concerned the existence of a limited amount of literature. The situation created by the Covid-19 pandemic made research even more difficult. Access to libraries and resources was mainly through the internet as many of them were closed, but even in open cases they were under-operated. Regardless of the technical problems, employer branding is a relatively new idea, and it is obvious that the academic research that accompanies it, is limited. The research began with the study of Richard Mosley (1990), who originally created the concept of employer branding. In addition, other sources were used, so much of the literature is based on the work of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), Barrow and Mosley (2005), Moroko and Uncles (2008; 2009), Kunerth & Mosley (2011) and Taylor (2010). In conclusion, it is worth mentioning that the literature as well as the case studies that are studied conclude with the following simple conclusion "employer branding is good and brings only positive results", so the author has not been able to find much literature on negative impacts or research proving otherwise.

2.1 Employer Branding

The idea of employee branding was introduced into the literature in the mid-1990s as a result of the “war of talent” (Mosley, 2007). In the early 2000s, due to low unemployment rate and tight labor markets, companies faced many difficulties in attracting and recruiting high-quality employees (CIPD, 2010), so the need arose to find the best talent to survive. This led companies to understand how important it is to attract, recruiting and retaining the best employees (Mosley, 2007). The interest in employer branding, according to the literature, has always arisen through significant social, economic, and demographic changes both locally and globally (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). Employer branding is designed to advertise each externally and internally the desirable issues with employed by a particular organization to be able to appeal to recruits as well as interact with existing personnel (Tikoo and Backhaus, 2004).

2.2 Employer branding theories and definitions

“Employer branding is the development and communication of an organization’s culture as an employer in the marketplace.” (Manchanda & Maitri, 2010, p.44)

Employer branding deals with issues related to attracting and hiring prospective employees and retaining employees who are already in the company. Employer branding, then, does not only involve the creation of an employer image but also the policies, procedures, and actions of the company (Mandhanya & Maitri, 2010, p.44). The article written by Mandhanya & Maitri (2010) defines employer branding 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 (Mandhanya & Maitri, 2010, p.43). According to this article, it is very important to attract the right people but also to keep them in our company. This article also highlights that today there are fewer and fewer talented employees who even have a plethora of career options. According to this article, it is very important to attract the right people but also to keep them in our company. This article also highlights that today there are fewer and fewer talented employees who even have a plethora of career options. So, it is obvious that companies have a hard time finding and retaining these employees. A way to attract and retain talents is to create challenging job descriptions and job profiles. Attracting and retaining employees is not much different from creating and retaining customers. According to the article, it is very important for a company before creating happy and joyful customers it must create satisfied employees. “Talent management refers to the process of developing and integrating new workers, developing and keeping current workers and attracting highly skilled workers to work for the company.” (Mandhanya & Maitri, 2010, p.43)

One of the first definitions of employer branding was published in 1996, ”The Employer Brand” by Ambler and Barrow, where they define the concept as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Backhaus and Tikoo clarified the main purpose of employer branding which is "to provide a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity, and improve recruitment, retention and commitment" (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004, p.502). Other definitions have been developed along the way, employer branding was defined by Sullivan (2004) 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”. Martin et al. (2011) further developed the concept and define it as “a generalized recognition for being known among key stakeholders for providing a high-quality employment experience, and a distinctive organizational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident and happy to promote to others”. Most authors conclude that employer branding is the coordinated effort of companies to become, both for potential employees and existing ones the "employer of choice" (Ewing et al., 2002 /Berthon et al., 2005) or a "desirable place to work" (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). In conclusion, considering the above definitions, in this research we will define employer branding as those actions that a company does with the aim of gaining a competitive advantage, becoming the employer of choice and the strategies that adopts to attract, recruit, and retain high qualities employees.
2.3 Benefits of employer branding

Taylor (2010, p.198) argues that there are three main advantages to using employer branding practices. These benefits include attracting and recruiting employees, retaining existing ones and improving their performance. A strong employer brand name is understandable that would really help the company to promote the jobs it wants to fill and attract those employees who have the right talents that it needs and seeks. Therefore, it is not the purpose of the company to attract as many applicants as possible, but those who are truly talented and meet its needs. A company with a strong employer brand does not even need to look for talented employees as the employees themselves want to work for this company and are looking for job opportunities. This is how marketing campaigns work, which aim to attract certain eligible consumers and not the public. Thus, companies that rationally apply the employer branding strategy, can succeed in being characterized as the employer of choice in the labour market (Taylor 2010, p.198).

The benefits that come from using employer branding practices are many in the recruitment process. The recruitment process often requires costly and well-targeted advertisements. Companies with strong employer branding do not need to spend that much money to attract the right candidates as they do not need to advertise so much since they are inherently attractive. So, a strong employer brand reduces the cost of the attracting and recruiting process. In fact, these companies receive so many CVs which are stored in databases and can be used and cover future jobs without the need for further advertising (Taylor, 2010, pp.198-199).

The second of the benefits that employer branding brings, and Taylor mentioned, is the retention of employees. It is easy to understand that companies with strong employer branding, that are employers of choice, have a much lower chance of losing a high-quality employee since looking for another job is less attractive. The main purpose and task of employer branding is to influence the way in which employees see and feel about their employer. Two of the basic emotions that are created through employer brand in the employee are the pride and the loyalty, which naturally lead to an increase in the self-esteem of the employee (Taylor, 2010, pp.199-200).

The last advantage that arises through employer branding is the increase of work performance, something of course that is closely related to the reduction of absenteeism (Taylor, 2010, p.200). Employees who enjoy a beautiful workplace are loyal and proud of what they do, neglect their duties much less, enjoy their work and obviously increase their productivity. These employees want to keep their job, since they are proud of it, so they increase their productivity and become good at what they do since they love it.

In conclusion, an important advantage of employer branding is the differentiation it offers to each employer (Taylor, 2010, p.198). It creates a competitive advantage as with the right promotions the company can be turned into an employer of choice. In industries where the differences between companies are negligible, the creation of such an advantage is considered vital. In this way employer
branding is used to differentiate the company as an employer from others. Through the appropriate promotional moves and marketing communications, the company can enhance its image both of its existing employees and of the candidates and make them prefer it to a competitor. Potential employees will find the organization more attractive if that possesses the characteristics that the applicant considers important (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

**2.4 Characteristics of Successful Employer Brands**

As we will see below, employer branding can be used by human resource management professionals in the process of attracting, recruiting, and retaining (Barrow, 2008). However, in order for a company to become the employer of choice and to be able to gain a competitive advantage through employer branding, it must meet certain criteria. Strong employer brands are characterised, according Morocko and Uncles (2008), by being known and noticeable, relevant, and resonant, and differentiated from other brands. To begin with, attractiveness and accuracy are two of them. Employer branding has many similarities with other types of branding, such as product branding and corporate branding, which in order to be successful they must also be distinguished by these characteristics (Morocko and Uncles 2008).

During the recruitment process, a psychological contract is created between the employer and the employee, which essentially covers the expected obligations and rights of both parties (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). The obligations of the employer, which are defined in this informal psychological contract, include good working conditions, development, and training. On the other hand, an employer expects an increase in employee performance. This increase in productivity results, according to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), from loyalty and commitment. Which, loyalty and engagement, in turn, are the result of the fulfilment of the psychological contract (Morocko and Uncles, 2008). Maxwell and Knox (2009) discuss that the attributes employees consider important for their employers vary between different companies. However, there are categories of attributes that affect the attractiveness of the firm. Employment is one category that strongly affects the perceived attractiveness by current employees, which includes work environment, relations, management style, rewards, type of work and attributes of workforce (Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

**2.5 Positioning in the Area of Human Resources**

The process of attracting and hiring new employees as well as the process of retaining existing employees are part of the tasks of human resource management (Morocko & Uncles, 2008). Employer branding is divided into internal and external, the first concerns the existing employees while the second is addressed to candidates and interested parties. As mentioned above, the need to create a competitive advantage is enormous, combined with the fact that the business environment of companies is dynamic and constantly
changing, the need to obtain highly qualified employees is great. So, the competition between companies to integrate talent into their potential is very large, and for this reason they must differentiate and stand out from the others (Gaddam, 2008). The attracting and recruitment process, as mentioned above, is developed by the human resources management department, which can use employer branding as a tool to facilitate this process and reach the right employees. So, the procedures and practices related to employer branding, as well as its promotion at all levels are entrusted to the human resources department (Barrow, 2008). The idea of employer branding is constantly gaining ground in the field of human resource management. Barrow suggests that professionals in this field should be involved in its development and communication, as he says they are the most suitable since they have an overview of the organization and the managerial insights needed. Morocko and Uncles (2008) believe that work experience should be considered a product, so since the human resources department is responsible for attracting and retaining suitable employees, the role it plays is twofold that of the developer and the manager. In conclusion, the mission of human resource management regarding employer branding is the creation and dissemination of a strong employer brand to both existing and future employees and applicants. So that the company can create and maintain its competitive advantage around employer branding (Morocko & Uncles, 2008).

2.6 Competitive Advantage

When a company is able to offer products and services at a lower cost than its competitors, or to offer products and services that exceed the quality of competitors, then it has a competitive advantage. The theory of competitive advantage was developed in order to address the weaknesses and criticisms that have developed around the theory of comparative advantage. According to the theory of competitive advantage, companies must create high quality products to be able to sell them at high prices. Companies that hold scarce and valuable resources can create a competitive advantage over their competitors. In fact, if these resources are difficult to duplicate, substitute and hard to deliver then this advantage is easy to maintain in the long run. (Barney, 1991). So, it is obvious that when a company finds or develops a feature that makes it stand out from its competitors, then it has gained a competitive advantage. In order to achieve competitive advantage, companies must have access to valuable resources or the ability to attract, hire and retain highly trained and skilled workers.

Competitive advantage in Human Resources Management refers to the quality of the employees who cannot be copied, unlike company's systems and processes. It comes down to the fact that companies with better employees have the competitive advantage. Human Resources is important as it helps in creating strong competitive advantage through their personnel management policies – productivity and employee happiness is an advantage that often results in superior customer service, which helps drive sales. As we have seen above in a job market where talent is declining and there are more and more
options, hiring and retaining high-level employees is undoubtedly a competitive advantage. If that is so, human resource policies and practices may be an especially important source of sustained competitive advantage (Jackson and Schuler, 1995).

2.7 Branding

“Branding/brand is a collection of physical and emotional characteristics associated with a particular identified product or service that differentiates that product or service from the rest of the marketplace.” (Egan, 2007, p.444)

As we saw earlier in the definition, branding is a key element of marketing and a catalyst for the success of companies, as this success is based on the best possible communication between the company and consumers. (Egan 2007, p.79). The benefits of branding apply to both companies and consumers (Egan, 2007, p. 81). For companies is a valuable asset, while for consumers is a guarantee in terms of their purchase (Chernatory, de, 2001, p.4).

In the figure that we find on page 81 of Egan, 2017 we observe the characteristics that shape the brand of a company. In the core there are the functional characteristics such as shape taste and performance, while the augmented include aspects like packaging, price, after sale services and extras. Finally, there is the halo, which illustrates the brand of the company, including all the brand associations and the image which is created through marketing communications. The halo, and by extension branding is what makes the difference in the minds of consumers when companies are active in those business sectors where the products and services sold have many similarities, in other words the core and augmented parts are quite similar (Egan, 2007, pp. 79- 81).

![Figure 1: Brand characteristics (Egan, 2007, p.81)](image)

Storytelling, design, price, positioning, and customer relationship are the five elements that branding includes as Healey says. To begin with, it goes without saying that every brand should have a story to tell
that consumers can identify with. Continuing, design is a very important element of the brand and includes all the actions to create a thing, not just the visual part, the price is the element that plays a decisive role for the brand but also how customers treat it. Positioning determines the importance of a brand as well as what it stands for. Positioning also means where is the brand compared to its competitors, something that is in the mind of the consumers. The customer relationship refers to the way a brand treats its customers, if it makes them feel special and if it gives them the impression that they are different. Paying attention to all these elements and combining them correctly can create a strong brand (Healey, 2008, pp.8-9).

Finally, branding can be related to the human resources management. The science of branding according to Mandhanya and Maitri, in addition to its use for products, can also be used with regard to people in order to differentiate them (Mandhanya & Maitri, 2010, p.44). Branding is a very important part of this research, as our main object, employer branding, is based on its principles. When the branding practices used by a company are successful and the company brand is strong, the company can successfully cope with changes in consumer behaviour. Strong brands have the benefit of producing brand equity (Kay, 2004)

### 2.8 Brand Equity

“A set of brand assets and liabilities linked to a brand, its name and symbol that add to or subtract from value provided by a product or service to a firm and/or to that firm’s customers” (Aaker 1991, p15)

Then it is advisable to study two models that have been developed around brand equity. We will first study the BRANDZ model (Millward Brown and WPP, Marketing research consultants), which has as its main element the BrandDynamics pyramid. In this pyramid, as they themselves said, it is clear that the creation of a strong brand involves many steps. It is worth mentioning that, as Kotler and Keller said, the success of each step is based on the successful completion of the previous one (2009, pp.283-284).

![BrandDynamics pyramid](image)

Figure 2: BrandDynamics pyramid (Milward Brown, 2010)
The goal of the companies is to take the appropriate actions so that their consumers climb the pyramid and develop better relationships with the company. Analyzing the following steps, we would say that at the base of the pyramid where we have the "presence" the companies just have to make sure that the consumers know about the brand. In the second and third level they need to announce what the brand offers while in the third level they have to fulfill this promise. Reaching the top of the pyramid, in the fourth stage, the brand must offer things that its competitors cannot. Reaching the last level, the brand has now become the best in the minds of consumers, and nothing can beat it. All of the above result in the creation of loyal consumers who are able to offer more money. Companies need to focus on building a strong brand (Kotler & Keller, 2009, pp.283-284).

The second model we will consider is Brand Resonance model. It is having several similarities with the previous model as both argue that a strong brand is achieved through communication, with the difference that in this case the brand is twofold. On the left we have the steps required to create a strong brand while on the right is the emotional path. Concluding it is obvious that in order for a company to achieve a significant brand it must reach the top of the pyramid through the appropriate manipulations (Kotler & Keller, 2009, pp.284-285).

These models are widely used in the employer branding industry. Happy employees become more loyal to the company and are less likely to look for a new job. Through this the company has a financial profit and of course creates a strong employer brand. Of course, brand equity could also be a way of measuring employer branding, ie how loyal employees are to their employer. Companies with dedicated employees have the ability to create loyal customers. It is not uncommon that as customers we choose companies that treat their employees well and without knowing it in this way we reward a good employer brand name.

The concept of brand equity first appears in the literature in the mid-1980s (Keller et al., 2008 p34). One of the definitions developed for brand equity defines it as “the added value endowed on products and services” (Kotler and Keller 2009, p.278). The brand equity of a company can be seen through many...
elements. Kotler and Keller (2009, pp.278-280) mentioned some of them as the way consumers think, feel and act concerning the brand but as well in the price, market share and profitability of the brand. The concept of brand equity is complex. Initially we would say that it is a tool to better study the effects of branding strategies. In fact, this theory has strengthened the position of branding in terms of marketing strategies, but it still has many theories and interpretations, which makes it complex (Keller, 2008, p.34). Consumers prefer companies with a strong brand and are willing to pay more money to acquire their products (Doyle and Stern, 2006). The same theory was developed a year earlier by Kotler and Armstrong (2005). Strong brands have brand equity that results in consumers being influenced and moving towards specific brands. A strong brand offers a multitude of advantages such as differentiation in relation to other brands, but also financial benefits (Bick, 2009).

Aker in 1996, in addition to formulating the definition, clarified that brand equity affects both businesses and consumers, giving them value. This is done by enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of marketing, brand loyalty, prices and margins, brand extensions, trade leverage, and competitive advantage. Concluding that branding increases customer loyalty (Bennet and Rundle – Thiele, 2005).

2.9 Marketing and Branding

According to Doyle and Stern, the concept of marketing is to meet the needs of consumers. Therefore, the purpose of the science of marketing is to identify these needs and respond to them in the best possible way (Doyle and Stern, 2006). A superficial approach to needs is characterized as insufficient, as the environment in which companies operate is complex, dynamic, and highly competitive, since the risk of product duplication lurks constantly (Clarke, 2001). So branding is one of the most basic activities of companies and brands the most valuable assets they have in their possession (Backhaus και Tikoo, 2004). In the science of branding there is a main purpose, that of creating a competitive advantage, which is served by a basic goal. This goal is to become the product of each company as evolving and different as possible for the consumers, in relation to that of the competitors. (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

At this point it is considered useful to quote a definition of brand but also a definition of marketing. Doyle and Stern (2006, p.164) defined the brand as "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". According to AMA-American-Marketing-Association (2015) “marketing is the activity and set of processes for communicating, creating, and delivering values for the customers, partners, and society whereas marketing management (MM) focus on practical application of all marketing techniques, orientations, methods within available resources.”
Recruitment involves the searching for and obtaining (of) qualified job candidates in such numbers that the organization can select the most appropriate person to fill its job needs. In addition to filling job needs, the recruitment activity should be concerned with satisfying the needs of the job candidates. Consequently, recruitment not only attracts individuals to the organization but also increases the chance of retaining the individuals once they are hired (Schuler 1992, p. 147).

Another definition for recruitment was formulated by Mondy et al. “the process of attracting individuals on a timely basis, in sufficient numbers and with appropriate qualifications, and encouraging them to apply for jobs with an organization (Mondy et al., 1996 p.150).” In this section we will study the recruitment process, which includes the attracting process. To begin with, this process includes searching, advertising (trying to attract) and the part of interviewing future employees. Of course, the process does not end here but also includes the staffing and training of new employees in their new duties (Sangeetha, 2010, p.94). The way in which a company chooses to conduct the recruitment and selection process is very important for the way in which the company perceives its human resources, and whether the company will eventually be able to turn it into a competitive advantage (Aaker 1989, cited in Sangeetha, 2010, p.94). So, companies if they want to create and maintain a competitive advantage must be very careful in all the steps of the recruitment process. However, the creation of a competitive advantage is not so easy as more and more companies realize the importance of good human resource management and recruitment process (Schuler 2000, p.239). Wrong decisions in the hiring process can bring serious costs to the company and other problems in the future. So, we understand very easily how important the process is (Henderson, 2011, p.84). There are some practices in the recruitment process that have universal application, are characterized as excellent and can yield excellent results (Armstrong, 2014, p.30). The recruitment process includes the analysis of weaknesses and strengths, the analysis of requirements and of course the identification of the sources that will be used to draw candidates (Armstrong, 2014, p.234). The design and implementation of the jobs that will arise as well as the needs of employees are an important factor for any company. Also, the better the recruitment process, the greater the number of applicants, which offers many advantages as the company has more options (Herriot 1989, cited in Branine, 2008, p.498).

In the next paragraphs we will analyze the impact of employer branding on the recruitment and selection process as formulated by Kim. and Sturman (2012), which is the first of the two hypotheses of our research.

Employer branding is a way of attracting employees, just like branding is a way of attracting customers for the company’s products. Kim and Sturman (2012) characterize employees as "internal customers", while consumers as external customers.
The main goal of employer branding is to attract high-potential employees with skills and attitudes that will really help the company to achieve its goals and will give it a sustainable competitive advantage. For high-quality employees, the so-called talents, the reputation of a company as an employer as well as the way in which the company perceives the labor market are the main reasons to apply for a job there. Kim and Sturman (2012) describe the advantages and consequences of the adoption of employer branding strategy for recruitment and selection processes. Analyzing the benefits, employer branding helps us to ensure that the right candidates are the ones who will apply for the job (those who are better suited to the culture of the company and the demands of the position.) Still plays a key role in attracting many valuable, qualified candidates, so that there is a choice. Supports the control of the right choice before we end up hiring the candidate. And finally, having selected the right employees is more likely to accept job offers (because of the factors other than tangible remuneration) (Kim and Sturman, 2012).

2.11 Retention of Employees and Turnover

“Retention management is a portfolio of HR practises that organisations develop to reduce voluntary turnover rates” (De Vos and Meganck 2007, p46).

Retaining high-level employees is one of the main goals of every company (Hausknecht et al., 2009). the retention process mainly concerns employees who are considered talented and important (Buenger, 2006). Retention management has intensely occupied the human resource management sector in recent years. Globalization as well as liberalization, allow employees to easily change jobs and really difficult for companies to retain them (Chabbra and Mishra, 2008). At this point it is advisable to introduce the term turnover. Turnover was originally defined as the movement of employees beyond the boundaries of the company (Price, 1977). Companies that manage to retain their employees and reduce turnover rates gain a competitive advantage (Torrington et al., 2005). This reduction is often achieved through employer branding, and this will be the second hypothesis of our research. Doing a research, we see that many scientists have expressed the view that during our century the turnover rates have increased and also the retention of employees has become very important. The reasons this happens are the following.

Demographic change has led to job shortages as well as demands for the new workforce constantly changing. Increased competition combined with a lack of high-level employees. And finally, the diversity of the workforce in combination with the inadequate training programs (Chabbra and Mishra, 2008; Allen et al., 2010).

The effects of a high turnover rate are many in a company, but they vary depending on the economy and the industry in which the company operates. The effects of the turnover are not always negative as sometimes employees who do not offer much to the company leave (Allen et al., 2010). Most of the time, of course, the effects of a high percentage of turnover are negative, they are divided into external and
internal and mainly affect the cost. The turnover process results in very high costs as recruiting an employee is much more costly than maintaining it. Allen et al. (2010) argue that the cost of replacing an employee can range from 90% to 200% of an employee's annual salary in the company. High turnover rates can affect company's reputation in the labor market and in prospective employees by making the recruitment process difficult, and rendering the company's image as an "employer of choice" (Mowday, 1984; Torrington et al., 2005). Within the company, high turnover rates can lead to "demoralization" as Mowday (1984) puts it, or cause "survivors syndrome" according to Gandolfi, (2009). "Survivors syndrome" occurs when employees who have remain in the company question their job and start looking for new job opportunities. On the other hand, the results of employee retention, which in most cases are positive, are found in the increase of sales and the improvement of employee morale (Allen et al., 2010). Through employer branding practices companies can reduce turnover percentages, retain high-level employees and thus gain the reputation of employer of choice, creating a competitive advantage.

2.12 Research Problems

There are two primary research questions. The first question is “is employer branding a competitive advantage in the process of attracting and recruiting employees?” and the second question “is employer branding a competitive advantage in the process of retaining employees?”. The research aims to answer these questions:

- How familiar are people with the concept of human resources management?
- How familiar are people with the concept of employer branding?
- Do the theoretical benefits of employer branding exist?
- Are employers today interested in becoming the employers of choice?
- Are employees attracted as customers by companies that use employer branding practices?
- Would they rather work in companies that use employer branding practices?

The objective of this research is to find if actually employer branding exists in our lives, if people know about employer branding, if they prefer as employers or customers companies which apply these methods and if they are interested to invest in this concept.
3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

In our study the research used is quantitative. It is appropriate to mention that because the object of the study is employer branding, which is based on the minds of people, it would be better to have used also and qualitative research through interviews. However, the situation with Covid-19 did not allow the qualitative research to be carried out and so we will be content with the study of quantitative research. The results, however, are considered sufficient as we will see below.

3.2 Data collection and Sampling Method

The data for the primary research is collected by conducting a questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed in such a way that we can examine employer branding from all angles. In other words, we wanted to examine employer branding by collecting data from all people of different professional directions involved in the subject. For this reason, the questionnaire was divided into three parts. The first one and the second one, in which the questions are general and addressed to everyone independently, the first one is clearly demographic while the second have general questions about human resources management and employer branding, and the third in which the participants had to answer divided into five different categories depending on their professional situation. Divided into students, employees, employers, people in search of work (job applicants) and professionals in the field of human resources management. The questions are designed to be simple and understandable.

The sample of our research is considered reliable, as two hundred and ten people from different professional directions answered our questions. The sample is independent, and there has been an attempt to answer, people of different ages with different experiences, located in different places around the world. As we said above the situation with the pandemic of COVID-19 -19, did not allow the sharing of the questionnaire in real conditions, so the questionnaire was shared only online. Via mail to the entire academic community of our university, via Facebook, Instagram and of course via LinkedIn where was the main source of professionals in the field of human resource management.

3.3 Reliability and Validity

One of the main goals of research is to be reliable and vailable. This research was conducted in such a way as to reduce the likelihood of unreliability. The questionnaire was made as simple as possible with clarifying notes where deemed necessary so as to minimize the risk of misunderstandings. The questionnaire, as we said, was distributed online, was anonymous and the participants did not have any
time limit. Participants realized their importance for the validity of the research. Taking into account all this in combination with the fact that the questionnaire did not harm or benefit anyone, it is judged that the participants had no reason to answer lies.

3.4 Ethical considerations

The participation of the respondents in the questionnaire was completely voluntary, and the researcher undertakes to maintain their anonymity. The questions are not personal and are for academic purposes only. Also, the questions were carefully selected to meet the needs of the research. The information and data obtained through the questionnaire do not personally benefit the researcher and are used only for research. The researcher made clear the purpose of the research and did not try to influence the responses of the participants.

You can find a copy of the questionnaire in the Appendix.
4. Data Analysis

4.1 Key Findings

4.1.1 Questionnaire Part 1

The analysis will start with the first part of the questionnaire which deals with demographic data. The questionnaire generated two hundred and ten (210) responses. 52% (110) were male and 48% (100) were female. The age group which mainly participate in the questionnaire was 21-30 years old. Most of the participants in the research also have a bachelor's or master's degree.

![Pie Chart 1: Sex Group]

![Pie Chart 2: Age Group]

![Pie Chart 3: Level of Education]

In the next chapter of the analysis, we will see how some of the demographics influence the participants' view of employer branding. The following bar chart illustrates the working experience in years of the
participants. Most participants stated that they have 3 years of previous service (33). While they followed with one year of previous service (26), then they come with 4 and 5 years of previous service (16) and finally without any previous service (13). After this there is a table of the different fields of work of the participants, something very important, because expect the human resources professionals is very important to have people from different directions.

![Bar Chart 1: Working Experience in Years](image)

The following table shows the occupations of the people who completed the questionnaire categorized to a degree.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Field of Work</th>
<th>Geology</th>
<th>Journalism</th>
<th>Army</th>
<th>Tourism</th>
<th>Trading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Law</td>
<td></td>
<td>Researching</td>
<td>Administering</td>
<td>Human Resources</td>
<td>Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Engineering</td>
<td>Medicine</td>
<td>Business</td>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td>Virtual Reality Consulting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cookery</td>
<td>Customer Service</td>
<td>Sales</td>
<td>Fashion</td>
<td>Food Industries</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing</td>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>Management</td>
<td>Insurance</td>
<td>Finance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biology</td>
<td>Logistics</td>
<td>Retail</td>
<td>Accounting</td>
<td>Coaching</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial Refrigeration</td>
<td>Advertising</td>
<td>Commercial Shipping</td>
<td>Aesthetics</td>
<td>Production</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Figure 4: Field of Work**

The next pie chart illustrates information about where participants live and work, and after that a map with the places that people have lived and worked outside of Greece in previous years. The first part of the questionnaire is completed with a pie chart showing the annual income of the survey participants.
45% of the participant have an annual income between 0-10.000 euro, while only the 6% have an income over 40.000 euro.

Figure 5: Map of the countries where participants lived/worked
4.1.2 Questionnaire Part 2

The second part of the questionnaire contains questions that are common to all participants and which examine how familiar the participants are with the concepts of human resource management and employer branding. The first question of the second part is describing how well respondents believe they know the concept of human resource management. 40% of participants believe that they have a good knowledge of human resource management, and 39% that they know in depth. 17% have knowledge but not enough, while 4% believe that they do not know the meaning of human resource management.

![Pie Chart 6: Knowledge of Human Resource Management](image)

The next two questions examine how important participants consider human resource management for employees and employers. 87.2% consider it very important and significant while only 1.5% do not consider it important for employees. We would say that the percentages are correspondingly relevant to the employers as well. The cycle of these questions closes with how important the participants consider the human resources management for the good operation of the business, where here too the percentage is impressive close to 92%.

![Pie Chart 7: Importance of HrM for employees](image)

![Pie Chart 8: Importance of HrM for employers](image)
In the following questions the respondents answered how familiar they feel with the different functional areas of Human Resources Management and which of them they consider particularly important. Respondents could vote for more than one function and indicated that they consider recruiting and staffing, and employee training and development to be the most important procedures. Employer branding gathered 85 votes.

**Pie Chart 9: Importance of HRM for the good operation of the business**

**Pie Chart 10: Familiar with the different functional areas of Human Resources Management.**

**Bar Chart 2: Important areas for the Human Resources Management**
The second part of the questionnaire introduces the concept of employer branding and the participants answer how well they know its meaning, if they consider it important for employees and employers and if it is a competitive advantage for them. It is very important for our research that the largest percentage knows what employer branding is and of course that the vast majority recognizes its importance.

Pie Chart 11: Knowledge of Employer Branding

Pie Chart 12: Importance of Employer Branding

Pie Chart 13: Employer Branding as a competitive advantage in the world of Business.

The second part of the questionnaire closes with the categorization of the respondents into 5 categories (students, job candidates, employees, employers, human resources professionals) and the redirection of each one to complete the questionnaire. The first two categories will help us more in the first question about the concepts of attracting and recruiting while the other two with the second concept of retaining.

Bar Chart 3: Categorization of participants
4.1.3 Questionnaire Part 3

Students

Students are the first category of our research. The students are 21 years old and above (like all the participants in the questionnaire) therefore they are close to completing their undergraduate obligations. Their opinion is considered very important as many of them are already in search of work and constitute the workforce of the future. Their pre-service ranges from 0-5 years and very few have worked or lived in a country outside Greece. To begin with, we see that half of them are looking for a job (15) and of course everyone considers the working conditions very important for choosing a job.

Pie Chart 14: Looking for a job

Pie Chart 15: Importance of working conditions for job choice

The next two questions focus on whether student participants would choose to work in companies that have human resource management and employer branding practices so as to ensure better working conditions.

Pie Chart 16: Choose to work in a company that has a human resources management department.

Pie Chart 17: Choose to work in a company that uses employer branding practices
Survey participants characterize themselves as high-quality employees. They believe that companies should create a framework in which employer branding will be the main tool for recruiting and they also believe that talented candidates are more attracted to companies that use employer branding practices. With the exception of three of them, they believe that employer branding practices apply to all categories of employees. Finally, with the exception of one answer they believe that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productivity.

Pie Chart 18: “I would be a high-quality employee.”

Pie Chart 19: Employer branding as the major tool in attracting and recruiting employees.

Pie Chart 20: Candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.

Pie Chart 21: Employer branding practices only concern specific categories of employees.

Pie Chart 22: Employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productiveness.
The following questions address students’ perceptions of employer branding as consumers. The majority believe that people are attracted as consumers by companies that use employer branding practices, although we would say that 20% do not know companies that use them. They also believe that human resources management and employer branding as sciences should be promoted and taught in undergraduate departments.

![Pie Chart 23: Customers attracted by companies with employer branding practices.](image1)

![Pie Chart 24: Awareness of companies that use employer branding practices.](image2)

![Pie Chart 25: Human resources management and employer branding as sciences should be promoted and taught in undergraduate departments.](image3)

The student questionnaire section concludes with the question of whether they consider Employer Branding to be a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees, without any negative answers.
In our data we often observe a large percentage in the option "Neutral Agree nor Disagree". This is because a percentage of respondents do not have a complete opinion as they do not know in depth employer branding, something that we will analyze in the next section.

Pie Chart 26: Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees
Job Candidates

28 people looking for work answered the questionnaire. In the first question they answered about how long they have been looking for a job, and in the second if over time their demands regarding working conditions decrease. The answers were divided.

Bar Chart 4: Seeking for a job for about (time)

Bar Chart 5: As time goes on, requirements regarding working conditions, workplace, etc. decrease.

The next 4 bar charts indicate that the vast majority of applicants would like to work for companies that have human resources management and adopt employer branding practices. They also believe that companies with such tactics minimize turnover. Also, the majority (15) of those who have applied to companies with employer branding practices have seen a real difference in the way the recruiting and attracting process is done.

Bar Chart 6: Employer branding practices make easier to do the right matching between companies and candidates and there would be less turnover

Bar Chart 7: Choose to work in a company that has a human resources management department.
The next 2 graphs answer whether the respondents believe that employer branding should be the main tool in the recruitment process and that high level candidates prefer companies with employer branding practices (21 Strongly Agree and Agree).

21 participants believe that a strong employer brand fosters a great work environment and makes your brand more attractive to potential candidates while only one disagrees. The exact same percentage is found in the next question where 22 out of 28 participants consider that employees who work for companies that have a strong employer brand are generally more enthusiastic and motivated. This means that employees will be more productive and ultimately drive growth for the business.
Bar Chart 12: Strong employer brand fosters a great work environment and makes your brand more attractive to potential candidates.

Bar Chart 13: Employees who work for companies that have a strong employer brand are generally more enthusiastic and motivated.

All the respondents agree on the fact that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and that people are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.

Bar Chart 14: Employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productiveness.

Bar Chart 15: People are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
The Job Candidate questionnaire section concludes with the question of whether they consider Employer Branding to be a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees, without any negative answers.

Bar Chart 16: Awareness of companies that use employer branding

Bar Chart 17: Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting and retaining high quality employees.
Employees

Employees are the largest category of the questionnaire, as 90 responded. 28 of them have worked in two different companies while from 20 in 1 single company and in 3 companies. We also see that most respondents (36) work in companies that employ more than 100 people and many (22) in companies with less than 10 people.

The percentage of employees who have a human resources department in the company they work for (49%) is approximately equal to that of employees who do not have (51). Mainly the participants are satisfied with the current workplace and the level of their colleagues. While we would characterize as sufficient the percentage of employees who use employer branding practices in their companies (42.2%).

Pie Chart 27: Existence of human resources management department

Bar Chart 20: Satisfaction of current workplace and level of colleagues.
The respondents are divided as to whether they would leave the company they work for, for a company that uses employer branding practices, and for that reason there are many answers in the "Neutral Agree nor Disagree" option (43). However, they believe that qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.

Bar Chart 21: Leave the company work for, for a company that uses employer branding practices.

Bar Chart 22: Qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.

The participants answered that employer branding practices would improve the level of employees and the brand of the company that they work for (74), while even in their majority answered that when they were looking for a job the companies that used employer branding practices seemed more alluring to them (78.9%)
Bar Chart 23: Employer branding practices would improve the level of employees and the brand of the company.

Bar Chart 24: Companies that used employer branding practices seemed more alluring.

The two next bar charts illustrate that the participants believe that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productivity (68.9% Strongly Agree & Agree) and that employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding (70% Strongly Agree & Agree).

Bar Chart 25: Employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productiveness.

Bar Chart 26: Employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.

The participants in the vast majority believe that the company they work for should spend resources (money, time) to incorporate employer branding practices (61.1% Agree). The last question is about whether they consider employer Branding to be a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees. Where we have only one negative answer. (1.1% Disagree)
Bar Chart 27: The company should spend resources to incorporate employer branding practices.

Bar Chart 28: Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.
Employer

The next category is employers. The employers who responded are of great interest as they own companies that employ different numbers of employees. We would say that it is characteristic that the largest percentage (79.2%) do not have a human resources department in their company.

Bar Chart 29: The number of employees that company employs

Pie Chart 29: Existence of human resources management department

The set of next 4 pie charts illustrates the view of employers about their employees. The percentage that they are satisfied with the level of their employees, and the percentage that would use employer branding practices to improve the level of their employees. Then we see that the largest percentage of employees have faced problems in attracting and hiring employees.

Pie Chart 30: Use employer branding practices to improve the level of employees and the brand of the company.

Pie Chart 31: The level of my employees meets the needs of the company.
The employers are satisfied of their reputation as an employer and the reputation of their company as a place to work, but we see that several of them have encountered problems in retaining qualified employees in their company. (36.7% Strongly Agree and Agree).

75% agree that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productivity. 70% believe that companies that use employer branding practices gain an advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining employees. In their view also employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding. While 4 disagree.
12 of them are willing to invest in the concept of employer branding. 16 of them believe that employer branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.

Pie Chart 39: Spend company resources to incorporate employer branding practices.

Pie Chart 38: Employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.

Pie Chart 40: Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.
Human Resources Professionals

The last and most important category for our research are human resource management professionals. 37 of them answered the questionnaire and in the first two graphs we see their specialty (they could give more than one answer) and their previous service in years in the field of human resources management.

Bar Chart 30: Work in Human Resources Management sector for about (time)

Bar Chart 31: Specialization in the field of

In the following questions we see that all participants agree that we need more employer branding experts so the process of attracting, recruiting, and retaining will be easier, and that they have very good knowledge about employer branding and its techniques. Also, everyone (1 negative answer) agrees that they have encountered problems in attracting and recruiting qualified candidates for a recruitment period and retaining them as well as all of them trying to use employer branding techniques.

Bar Chart 32: We need more employer branding experts so the process of attracting, recruiting, and retaining will be easier.

Bar Chart 33: Knowledge about employer branding and its techniques
The next 5 charts provide information on whether human resources management experts agree that a strong employer brand fosters a great work environment and makes the brand more attractive to potential candidates (91.8% Agree). Everyone agrees that qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding as well as everyone agrees that employees who work for companies that have a strong employer brand are generally more enthusiastic and motivated. This means that employees will be more productive and ultimately drive growth for the business.

Bar Chart 34: Encountered problems in attracting and recruiting qualified candidates for a recruitment period, and retaining them

Bar Chart 35: Use techniques of employer branding in attracting & recruiting employees and encouraged by supervisors to do it

Pie Chart 41: Strong employer brand fosters a great work environment

Pie Chart 42: Qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
They disagree on a large percentage (80.8%) that Human Resources Management is only consulted or informed about employer branding but does not play a principal role in the actual process, while everyone agrees that an employer branding strategy allows you to control and positively change the dialogue surrounding your company to ensure higher talent acquisition and retention.

Pie Chart 34: HR is only consulted or informed about employer branding but does not play a principal role in the actual process.

Pie Chart 43: Employees who work for companies that have a strong employer brand are generally more enthusiastic and motivated.

Pie Chart 45: An employer branding strategy allows to control and positively change the dialogue surrounding company to ensure higher talent acquisition and retention.
Reaching the last questions of the questionnaire, we see that everyone agrees that employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding and that companies should spend more resources to incorporate employer branding practices.

Bar Chart 36: Employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.

Bar Chart 37: Companies should spend more resources to incorporate employer branding practices.

Bar Chart 38: Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.
4.2 Discussion - Analysis

As in the previous section, here too the analysis will be divided into 5 parts depending on the professional category mentioned above. We will start with the demographic analysis and the information we can get from it, and we will end with a pooled analysis of the data. Before that a reference will be made to the "Neutral Agree nor Disagree" option. The author in the context of the bibliographic research but also during the research conducted through the questionnaire found that many people, although they know the meaning, functions, practices and even the benefits of employer branding, are not sure and have doubts. After all, the questions concern issues that fall within the perception of each participant and of course there is not everywhere "black and white". This choice translates into the present research as a positive assessment that the participants have about the concept of employer branding and its functions, but they surround it with some doubts. In other questions that do not refer to employer branding but to peripheral factors that affect it, such as whether they have encountered problems during a recruitment period, the option is quantified.

Starting with the analysis of demographic data, the wide range of ages that participated in the survey gives greater reliability to the data. The young people, who were the largest part of the participants, face the concept of employer branding in a very positive way (77% answered “Strongly Agree” to the question if employee branding is a competitive advantage.) The reliability of the data is sealed with the participation of people from different levels of education and people who have lived and worked in places outside Greece. Respondents who have been active professionally outside Greece, are much more familiar with concepts such as "human resource management and employer branding". 85% of them answered “Strongly Agree” regarding the knowledge they have about these concepts. We are led to the conclusion that in Greece we must strengthen the practices and the promotion of the concept of employer branding.

Closing the analysis of demographic data, the existence of people from different professions (with different lengths of service, and different incomes) helped us understand that people working in areas related to management and finance (such as marketing and accounting) are much more informed on the concepts of human resource management and employer branding.

Going to the second part of our research, it is found that the vast majority of respondents know very well the meaning of human resources management and consider it very important for employees, employers, and the smooth operation of the company. The necessity of having Hr practices and a human resources department is fully verified by the participants. The participants also consider as the most important functions of the human resources management the process of hiring the employees and that of the
training and development of the employees within the company. Functions closely related to the concept of employer branding.

Closing the second part of the questionnaire, the participants in the majority know the meaning of employer branding and in the vast majority consider it to be very important for employees and employers. Verifying the initial hypothesis, to some extent, the participants recognize employer branding as a competitive advantage in the field of business. The analysis continues, with the personalization of the questionnaire, with the aim of verifying our original theory, from all aspects of the stakeholders.

**Students**

The students who participated in our research are the workforce of the future. Based on the results, we would judge them as demanding as they consider that they will be high level employees. Young employees want to work in companies that care about the human factor. Will prefer companies that have a human resources department and apply employer branding practices, as they attach great importance to the working conditions they will find. Through their answers we understand the importance of employer branding and that they really consider it a competitive advantage in the recruiting process as they believe that high level employees are attracted more by such practices. The majority of them also express academic interest in the subject as they believe that the concept of human resources management and employer branding should be taught in undergraduate departments.

The theory is further reinforced by the fact that they would like a framework in which employer branding would be the main recruitment tool as it does not only concern specific categories of employees. The theory we saw in the bibliographic research that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productivity is still being verified. It is worth mentioning that although they are not aware of companies that use such practices, they believe that customers are more attracted to them. Finally, for this category, employer branding is undoubtedly a competitive advantage in the process of attracting and recruiting.

**Job Candidates**

The second category, the candidates, is also a very important category for investigating our first case, ie whether employer branding is a competitive advantage in the process of attracting and hiring. The author observes that they too are very demanding regarding the conditions of work and they also express their preference to work in companies using employer branding practices and have a human resources management department. They are looking for companies that use employer branding practices in the recruiting process as they believe that they will ensure better matching with the companies that will come and there will be less turnover. Their answers also lead to the conclusion that companies that use practices employer branding fosters a great work environment and makes the brand more attractive to
potential candidates, in this way not only attract high-quality candidates but then the climate that created
make employees who work for such companies, that have a strong employer brand, more enthusiastic
dedicated, loyal and motivated. This means that employees will be more productive and ultimately drive
growth for the business.

The experience they have gained from companies that use employer branding practice is particularly
positive and in their vast majority they believe that companies should consolidate a framework where
employer branding will be the major tool in attracting and recruiting employees. And in this case they
consider employer branding as a way of attracting customers and know companies that use such
practices. Concluding, everyone argues that employer branding is a competitive advantage in attracting,
recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.

**Employees**

Employees are the category that has the most answers and that will help us to verify mainly the second
theory, that employer branding is a competitive advantage in retaining high level employees. Participants
work in companies with different numbers of employees. It is observed that companies that employ more
employees have a human resources management department and use employer branding practices in
contrast to the others. Mainly companies with more than 50 employees use such practices.

Also, here there is the view that qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and
good employer branding and the assumption that when they are in job search, companies that used
employer branding practices seemed more alluring to them. Despite this assumption, respondents would
not easily leave the company they work for, for a company that uses employer branding practices. On the
other hand, they believe that their company should invest more in the concept of employer branding, in
order to improve the level of employees and working conditions. Even in this way they believe that the
turnover rate in the company will be reduced, they will lead to higher levels of productivity and they will
be more dedicated and loyal. Even in this way they believe that the turnover rate in the company will be
reduced, they will lead to higher levels of productivity and they will be more dedicated and loyal. In
conclusion, they judge that employees are attracted as customers by companies that pay attention to the
human factor and use employer branding practices. In the basic question of our research, all of them
consider that employer branding is a competing advantage.

**Employers**

Employers are an equally important category. The respondents employ a different number of employees
and not all of them maintain a human resources management department in their company. And in this
case the employers who employ more employees have a human resources department and apply
Employer branding practices. The author describes it as the most skeptical category regarding the concept of employer branding, although it is the one that needs it the most.

Employers are not completely happy with the workforce they employ and would use employer branding practices to improve the level of employees and the brand of the company. They have all encountered problems in the recruitment process and in retaining employees, but they are satisfied with their reputation as an employer and the reputation of their company as a place to work.

They also consider that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productivity and will invest company resources (money, time, etc.) To incorporate employer branding practices. They believe that their customers are more attracted to companies that use such practices and all agree that employer branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.

**Human Resources Professionals**

The last category, the professionals of the human resources management, is the most important category. Most of them specialize in recruiting however they cover all the different areas of Hr. They all think that we need more employer branding experts so the process of attracting, recruiting, and retaining will be easier. They know very well the techniques of employer branding (either they work in Greece or abroad) they use them, and they are encouraged by their supervisors to use them more.

According to their answers they have encountered problems in attracting and recruiting qualified candidates for a recruitment period, and retaining them, these problems would have been minimized if they had used employer branding techniques. As they consider that strong employer brands foster a great work environment and make the brand more attractive to potential candidates.

They believe that the role of employer branding is not just advisory and that through this concept employees who work for companies that have a strong employer brand are generally more enthusiastic and motivated. This means that employees will be more productive and ultimately drive growth for the business. They want their companies to invest more resources in employer branding as they believe they will be able to control and positively change the dialogue surrounding their company to ensure higher talent acquisition and retention. In this way they believe that they will attract more customers. Finally, without a "Neutral Agree nor Disagree" option, they completely agree with the premise of our research that Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.

Concluding the discussion on the data, the author notes that all participants believe that employer branding is a competitive advantage that has come to stay. In the last question, which is the subject of our work, the 210 respondents gave only 3 negative answers, so the theory is unquestionably verified.
5. Conclusions

It is obvious that the concept of employer branding is very new, and people do not know the aspects in depth. Through the research we found that although those who do not know it well, many believe in their positive effects and consider it a competitive advantage. So, companies need to invest their resources in this way so that they can attract talent, high-level employees. They also need to invest so they would consolidate a framework where employer branding will be the major tool in attracting and recruiting employees.

The process of attracting and hiring employees, and in particular a high level, has become very demanding in the context of the "talent war". Companies need to adapt to the new generation of employees. The new generation of employees tends to be more demanding and certainly possess the power of information. The concept of employer branding is unquestionably a competitive advantage in the minds of all stakeholders. The companies that will adapt and integrate this advantage will approach and withstand these employees in their potential. Beyond that, however, employer branding, as it was found through the questionnaire research, also functions as a marketing and branding tool. Satisfied employees mean happy customers. Customers are attracted to companies that care about the human factor and take care of their employees.

The research conducted was exclusively oriented to the perception that people have about the concept of employer branding. The author concludes that the concept of employer branding will play a leading role in the labor market of the future.

The research conducted was exclusively oriented to the perception that people have about the concept of employer branding. The author concludes that the concept of employer branding will play a leading role in the labor market of the future. The investigation fully confirmed the original hypothesis of the work. The employer branding process, however, is not simple. It has many pieces, and it is very important to start from the beginning. It starts by creating meaningful positions with challenging job profiles. For the open positions, the advertising should be carefully planned by designing distinctive job announcements which catch the attention of high-level employees. When job description meets the needs, wants and desires of the applicants encourage them to apply for the job which increases the possibility for getting the best talent. After the recruitment branding has succeeded, is the turn for internal branding which should make the job so attractive that the employee has no reason to look for better opportunities. That would increase the employee retention and decrease the recruitment costs. Continuous internal employer branding would enhance the atmosphere at the company, the employer loyalty would improve and make it even less attractive to apply for other jobs. The labor market as well as our society is becoming more and more anthropocentric. Humans are the resources that will make the difference and lead companies to success,
5.1 Suggestions for further research

The author would suggest that the survey be repeated with a larger number of participants for even greater reliability. The author also suggests conducting research focused on employer branding practices and how they create a competitive advantage. Finally, it proposes a research aimed at incorporating any negative effects of the employer branding concept as this field remains unexplored and is of great interest.
6. Bibliography


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Appendix

Questionnaire

Part I.
1. What is your sex?
   (• Female)-(• Male)-(• Prefer not to say)-(• Other)

2. In which group age do you belong?
   (• 21-30)-(• 31-40)-(• 41-50)-(• 51-60)-(• Over 60)

3. What is the highest degree or level of education you have completed?
   (• Some high School)-(• High school diploma)-(• Bachelor’s degree)-(• Master’s degree)-(• Ph.D. or higher)

4. Working experience in years
   ....

5. Field of work
   ....

6. Country of work/live
   (• Greece)-(• European Union)-(• U.S.A.)-(• Other Countries)

7. Have you ever lived/worked in another country, if yes where?
   ....

8. What is your annual income?
   (• 0-10.000€)-(• 10.001-20.000€)-(• 20.001-30.000€)-(• 30.001-40.000€)-(• >40.001€)

Part II.

Below are some questions about how familiar you are with Human Resources Management. Please check the box that best indicates the level of your involvement with HRM.

9. I know what Human Resources Management means
   (• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

*Human Resources Management*

Human Resource Management (HRM or HR) is the strategic approach to the effective management of people in a company or organization such that they help their business gain a competitive advantage. Human resource management, also, is the department of a business organization that looks after the hiring, management and firing of staff. HRM focuses on the function of people within the business, ensuring best work practices are in place at all times.

10. Human Resources Management is very important for the employees
11. Human Resources Management is very important for the employers
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

12. Human Resources Management is very important for the good operation of the business
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

13. I am familiar with the different functional areas of Human Resources Management
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

14. Which of the following are considered important areas for the Human Resources Management
○ Recruiting and staffing employees.
○ Employee benefits.
○ Employee and labor relations.
○ Human resources compliance.
○ Organizational structure.
○ Human resources information and payroll.
○ Employee training and development.
○ Employer Branding.

15. I know what Employer Branding means
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

Employer Branding
Employer brand: it is a company’s reputation as a place to work. In other words, employer brand is how people perceive the company’s values and work environment. Therefore, employer branding is everything a company is doing — whether intentionally or not — to promote its unique identity as an employer among current and potential employees.

16. Employer Branding is very important for employees and for the employers
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

17. Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in the world of business.
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

18. I am a(n) ....
(• Student)-(• Job Candidate)-(• Employee)-(• Employer)-(• Human Resources Professional)

Part III.

Student
19. I am looking for a job
(• Yes)-(• No)

20. Working conditions will play a very important role in my job choice
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)

21. I will choose to work in a company that has a human resources management department because that way I know that I will ensure better working conditions.
(• Strongly disagree)-(• Disagree)-(• Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(• Strongly agree)
22. I will choose to work in a company that uses employer branding practices because that way I know that I will ensure better working conditions. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

23. I believe I would be a high-quality employee. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

24. Companies should consolidate a framework where employer branding will be the major tool in attracting and recruiting employees. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

25. In my opinion qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

26. I believe that employer branding practices do not offer anything different and only concern specific categories of employees. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

27. I believe that human resources management and employer branding as sciences should be promoted and taught in undergraduate departments. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

28. I believe that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

29. In my opinion people are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

30. I am aware of companies that use employer branding practices. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

31. Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

Job Candidate
19. I am seeking for a job for about(time) 
....

20. As time goes on, my requirements regarding working conditions, workplace, etc. decrease. 
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)
21. If companies used employer branding practices it would be easier to do the right matching between companies and candidates and there would be less turnover
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

22. I would prefer to work in a company that has a human resources management department because that way I know that I will ensure better working conditions.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

23. I would prefer to work in a company that uses employer branding practices because that way I know that I will ensure better working conditions.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

24. I have applied for jobs that met employer branding standards and I saw a real difference in attracting and recruiting employees.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

25. Companies should consolidate a framework where employer branding will be the major tool in attracting and recruiting employees.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

26. In my opinion qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

27. In my opinion a strong employer brand fosters a great work environment and makes your brand more attractive to potential candidates.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

28. Employees who work for companies that have a strong employer brand are generally more enthusiastic and motivated. This means that employees will be more productive and ultimately drive growth for the business.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

29. I believe that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productiveness.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

30. In my opinion people are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

31. I am aware of companies that use employer branding practices.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

32. Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)
**Employees**

19. The number of companies I have worked for is
(•1)-(•2)-(•3)-(•4)-(•>=5)

20. The number of employees employed by the company I work for is
(•<10)-(•11-30)-(•31-50)-(•51-100)-(•>100)

21. In the company in which I work there is a human resources management department.
(•Yes)-(•No)

22. I am satisfied with the current workplace and the level of my colleagues.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

23. The company I work for uses employer branding practices.
(•Yes)-(•No)

24. I would leave the company I work for, for a company that uses employer branding practices.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

25. In my opinion qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

26. In my opinion employer branding practices would improve the level of employees and the brand of the company that I work for.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

27. When I was looking for a job the companies that used employer branding practices seemed more alluring to me.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

28. I believe that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productiveness.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

29. In my opinion employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

30. In my opinion the company I work for should spend resources (money, time, etc.) to incorporate employer branding practices.
(•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(•Agree)-(•Strongly agree)
31. Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees. *
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

Employers
19. The number of employees that my company employs are
   (•<10)-(•11-30)-(•31-50)-(•51-100)-(•>100)

20. In my company there is a human resources management department
   (•Yes)-(•No)

21. The level of my employees meets the needs of the company and there is no reason to improve their level.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

22. I would use employer branding practices to improve the level of employees and the brand of the company.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

23. I have encountered problems in attracting qualified candidates for a recruitment period.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

24. I have encountered problems in recruiting qualified candidates for a recruitment period.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

25. I am satisfied of my reputation as an employer and the reputation of my company as a place to work.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

26. I have encountered problems in retaining qualified employees in my company.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

27. I believe that employer branding practices make employees more dedicated and loyal and push them to higher levels of productiveness.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

28. I believe that companies that use employer branding practices gain an advantage in attracting, recruiting and retaining employees.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

29. In my opinion employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)

30. I would spend company resources (money, time, etc.) to incorporate employer branding practices.
   (•Strongly disagree)-(•Disagree)-(•Neutral agree or disagree)-(• Agree)-(•Strongly agree)
31. Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

Human Resources Professional
19. I have specialization in the field of
(Job analysis and job design)-(Recruitment and selection of retail employees)-(Training and development)-(Performance Management)-(Compensation and Benefits)-(Labor Relations)-(Managerial Relations)-(Employer Branding)

20. I work in Human Resources Management sector for about ....

21. In my opinion we need more employer branding experts so the process of attracting, recruiting, and retaining will be easier.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

22. I have very good knowledge about employer branding and its techniques
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

23. I have encountered problems in attracting and recruiting qualified candidates for a recruitment period, and retaining them
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

24. I use techniques of employer branding in attracting and recruiting employees and I am encouraged by my supervisors to do it
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

25. In my opinion a strong employer brand fosters a great work environment and makes your brand more attractive to potential candidates.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

26. In my opinion qualified candidates are attracted by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

27. In my opinion HR is only consulted or informed about employer branding but does not play a principal role in the actual process.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

28. Employees who work for companies that have a strong employer brand are generally more enthusiastic and motivated. This means that employees will be more productive and ultimately drive growth for the business.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)
29. An employer branding strategy allows you to control and positively change the dialogue surrounding your company to ensure higher talent acquisition and retention.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

30. In my opinion employees are attracted as customers by companies with loyal employees and good employer branding.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

31. In my opinion companies should spend more resources (money, time, etc.) to incorporate employer branding practices.
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)

32. Employer Branding is a competitive advantage in attracting, recruiting, and retaining high quality employees
(Strongly disagree)-(Disagree)-(Neutral agree or disagree)-(Agree)-(Strongly agree)