EXPLORING EMPLOYER BRAND BASED ON THE RESEARCH TRENDS IN THE LATEST DECADE

HUI-CHUN HUANG[1*], Yuan-Duen Lee[2] and Ing-San Hwang[3]

[1] Graduate School of Business and Operations Management, Chang Jung University, Tainan, Taiwan
[2] Department of International Business, Chang Jung Christian University, Tainan, Taiwan
[3] Department of Business Management, Tatung University, Taipei, Taiwan

*Corresponding author Email: a91223@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

The traditional definition of human resource has been modified by the notion of "Employer Brand", the concept proposed by stakeholders, caused by the new perspective on relationship marketing. The notion suggests organizational reputation as an employer, who incites identification and encourages more participation among employees, stakeholders, and customers. The notion triggers the corporal value and dynamics which can be considered as a kind of relationship marketing without extra expense.

Exploring deeper interpretation of "employer brand" and related conceptions, including "employment brand" and "employee brand", this study intends to build the relationship among them within the latest decade. Analyzing the 4,251 citations from 67 articles on SSCI journals in the field of Employer Brand between 2007 and 2016, this study defines the developing trends and contents of Employer Brand which provides important insights and implications of current and future research paradigms for scholars and practitioners on business management.

KEYWORDS - Employer Brand, Citation, Human Resource Management, Relationship Marketing

1. INTRODUCTION

In the era of rapid technological progress, many companies' resources and their status has been changed; which means the industrial value has been inclined to personal capital, human resources, from conventional definition on corporal products (Cable and Turban, 2003). Less than one year on the amalgamation between Hon Hai and Sharp, Jeng-Wu Tai, Sharp's new president, claims 2017 to be the year of real challenge with three strategies for application; "To find talent" is one of the three strategies (Yen, 2017) which echoes with the declaration by Fishman (1998) that "The war for talent" will become the modern trend on competition among contemporary enterprises.

Due to the prompt renovation on technology, talent has been considered to be the most valuable property to manufacturers. Modern enterprises rely on talent for higher marketing share. Soon after with confidence with sufficient manpower on talent, makers can devote to marketing with higher expenditure. Certainly that the qualified scenarios on workplace and good reputation can provoke more consumption as well as more participation of qualified employees. The positive performance on above mentioned conditions activate positive response ranging from potential employees to clients.

Although "Employer Brand" has been discussed intensely, the norm has only been employed for a decade. Human resource management and employment management used to be the sole topics on brand management. The new notion is considered as one of marketing concepts, especially relationship marketing, because which owns the factor of interpersonal relationship and benefits the marketing. This can be observed from the situation that "Employees" are not only partial of the customers but also stakeholders including supplier partnerships, buyer partnerships, internal partnerships, and lateral partnerships (Morgan and Hunt, 1994). The reason can be defined that marketing towards a paradigm shifts marketing mix to relationship marketing (Grönroos, 1994), and becomes more important than before (Gummesson, 2002).

From another point of view on marketing trends, this can be explained as a transformation from the "goods-dominant" to "service-dominant" (Vargo and Lusch, 2004), and the branding is not all up the end-customer but more about the value co-creation of the companies and the stakeholders (Merz, He, and Vargo, 2009). The concept, employees are important, overwhelms the ideas of conventional stakeholders since they have strong capacity on determing the employment issue. Convincing these stakeholders successfully can result in higher annual turnover. Besides better customers' satisfaction can be decided by corporate image (Vella,Gountas, and Walker, 2009) , and the notion favors the positive feedback from customers. Therefore, the contextual study on employer brand should be indispensable on marketing. The less attention to this symptom narrowed down the profound investigation on business management in the past.

Facing the challenges of promoting attraction, employer brand could be a workable tool for motivating more business chances through different generations in the competitive era (Wolfe, 2014); which means that employees can play the key components (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003; Westermanand Yamamura, 2007) with competitive advantage (Sureshchandar, Rajendran, and Anantharaman, 2002; King and Grace, 2005) for organizing successful. Internet of things (IOTs) and breaking the barrier between physical and virtual world as well as breaking the barrier between human resources and marketing issues.

Due to the fact that the employer brand is an emerging issue from late 20th century to early 21st century, this research has emerged only a decade on Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) from 2007 to 2016. Citation analysis is based on the premise that authors cite articles they consider important to the development of their research and to describe the process of identifying the importance (Ma, Lee and Yu, 2008). Therefore, in this study in the field of employer brand, there is one research purposes –To integrate and analyze the trends of reference about employer brands in latest ten years; to provide an integral reference for academic or practitioners interested in research in this study field.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employer brand (EB) was first proposed in 1996 by Ambler and Barrow, defining as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified

with the employing company."They applied marketing concept to human resources management (HRM) field. To take advantage of techniques and strategies of employer brand, it is going to attract and retain the valuable talent, enhance the company's human capital, and enrich their competitive advantage for the enterprise. Later some scholars defined it with different perspectives, such as Collins and Stevens (2002), they think employees are focused as the main definition that employer brand image, it then possess two dimensions of the attitude for the company and the perception attitude. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) focused on shaping a process that is differentiated and unique to competitors. From brand point of view, Davies (2008) thought the employer brand must create (employee) satisfaction, affinity and loyalty and perceived differentiation. It can be seen that the employer brand is indeed integrated into the views of marketing.

Edwards (2010) summarized employer branding from organizational behavior is a relationship action that is applied in human resources. Lloyd (2002) emphasized through communication to let employees think it is a good place to work. Sullivan (2004) argued that the employer brand is a targeted strategy that focuses on managing the emotional aspects of the stakeholders. The above scholars' views on the employer brand are both internal current and external potential employees. In other words, employer brand is about the science of branding for current and potential employees.

Table 1 Integration of the Employer Brand View

| Scholars / Year	View
Ambler and Barrow 1996	"the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company"
Backhaus and Tikoo 2004	"the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors."
Collins and Stevens 2002	"early recruitment-related activities were related to intentions and decisions indirectly through two dimensions of employer brand image: general attitudes toward the company and perceived job attributes. "
Davies 2008	"the employer brand might be expected to play, the roles that are relevant to a corporate brand and to employees: creating (employee) satisfaction, affinity and loyalty and perceived differentiation."
Edward 2010	Employer branding is an activity where principles of marketing, in particular the "science of branding", are applied to HR activities in relation to current and potential employees
Lloyd 2002	"sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work."
Sullivan 2004	"a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm"

As the slogan of Google Scholar goes like "Stand on the shoulders of giants." which plenty illustrates the importance of the advances and accumulation of knowledge. We use the skill of bibliometrics to analyze the academic background data and to study a theme trend. Analysis of

citations is a significant research topic in bibliometrics. Since the employer brand has become emerging issues only in the past few years, current research articles are still few. Therefore, this study is less citation analysis literature for the past 10 years. Even so, the study is still aggregated to find out the important message of the topic for academic and practical researchers.
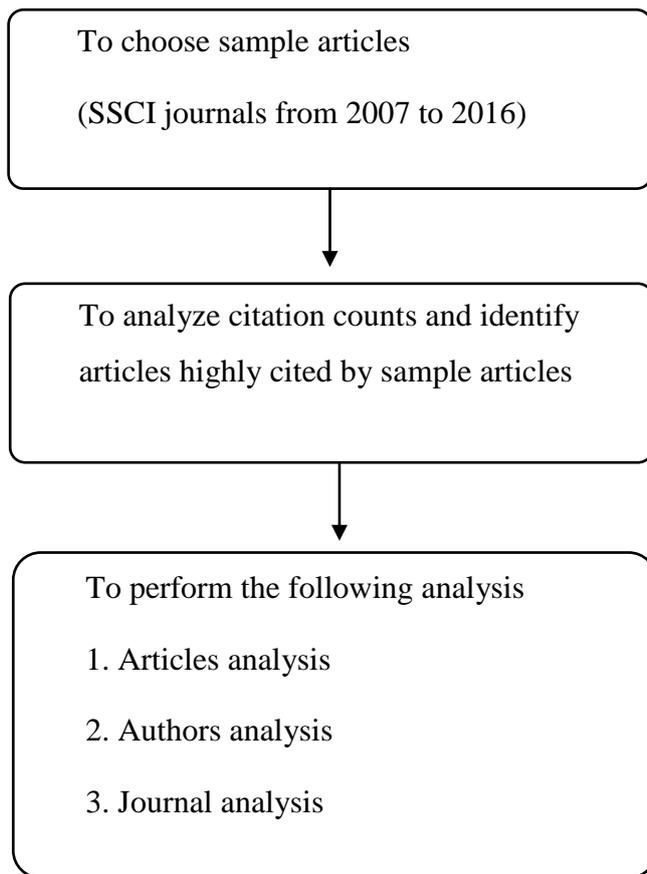
3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In this study, we explore the research trends of employer brand by using of citation analysis in the latest decade. A database is summarized from citations in Social Science Citation Index (SSCI) from 2007 to 2016. This time period was chosen because contemporary employer brand studies of the latest decade represent the most updated and an emerging issue and probably also the most important research on employer brand. To make use of citation analysis is the main method for this study.

To start our analysis, based on the data set of 67 articles and 4,251 citations published from 2007 to 2016, we developed graphs to reflect the development of the employer brand field by drawing the numbers of articles from latest ten years (see Figure 1). In Figure 1, obviously, the later five years in the field of employer brand research is heating up than former five years.
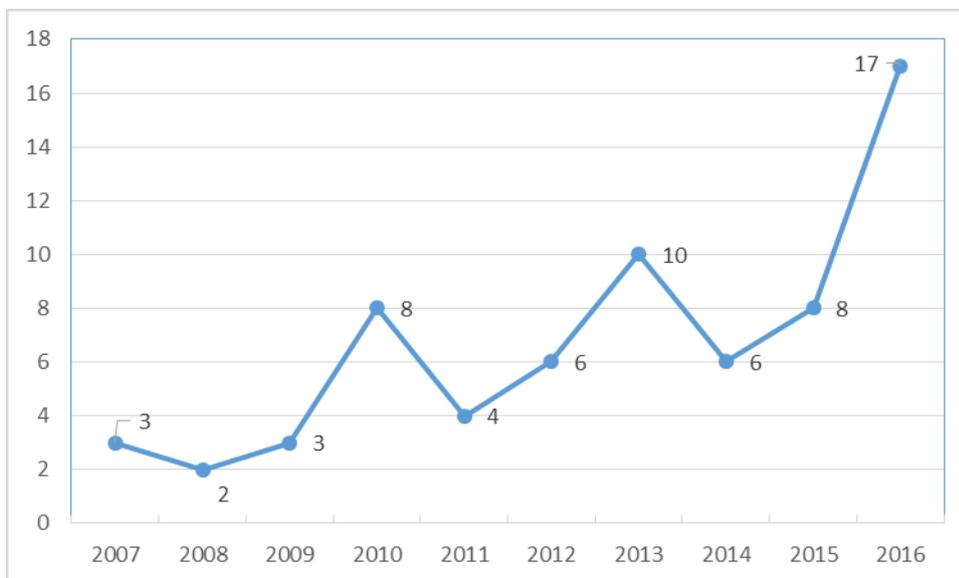
Figure 1 Source: sampling distribution of articles samples in SSCI employer brand literature: 2007-2016

Firstly, the databases were identified as the sources of EB publications. Secondly, the collected data was analyzed and systematized by sorting, screening, summing, subtotaling, and ranking. Finally, we review and discuss the contents about articles, scholars and journals. The flow chart of the study on highly cited articles, authors and journals is shown in Figure2.

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│  To choose sample articles          │
│                                     │
│  (SSCI journals from 2007 to 2016)  │
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│  To analyze citation counts and     │
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│  To perform the following analysis  │
│                                     │
│  1. Articles analysis               │
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│  2. Authors analysis                │
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│  3. Journal analysis                │
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Figure 2 Flow Chart of the Study

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

To analyze the 4,251 citations of the 67 articles published in SSCI journals in the field of employer brand from 2007 to 2016. The study discussed the results from articles, authors and journals.

4.1 The Findings from Articles Content Analysis

The chronological citation of literature analysis, according to the timeline, listed the top most-cited articles in Table 2. In Table 1, we list the more cited articles in the 2007-2016 decade. The first column shows the timeline of the article, the second column shows the author and the source of the article, and the third column indicates the number of times the article was cited, and the last column indicates the article's ranking.

Table 2 Top 16 articles selected for the citation analysis: 2007-2016 (Frequency ≥10)

Timeline	Top Citation Index (Articles / Books)	Frequency	Ranking
2010	Edwards M.R., 2010,Personnel Review, V39, P5	14	6
2007a	Lievens F., 2007, British Journal of Management , V18, pS45	13	8
2007b	Lievens F., 2007, Human Resource Management, V46, P51	12	11
2005	Berthon P., 2005, International Journal of Advertising, V24, P151	13	8
2005	Burmann C., 2005, Journal of Brand Management, V12, P279	10	15
2004	Backhaus K., 2004, Career Development International, V9, P501	20	2
2004	Mangold G., 2004, Journal of Relationship Marketing, V3, P65	12	11
2003	Lievens F., 2003, Personnel Psychology, V56, P75	21	1
2003	Cable D.M., 2003, Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, V33, P2244	13	8
2003	Podsakoff P.M., 2003, Journal of Applied Psychology, V88, P879	12	11
2002	Collins C.J., 2002, Journal of Applied Psychology, V87, P1121	19	3
1996	Barrow S., 1996, Journal of Brand Management, V4, P185	18	4
1994	Dutton J.E., 1994, Administrative Science Quarterly, V39, P239	14	6
1993	Keller K.L., 1993, Journal of Marketing, V57, P1	17	5
1989	Ashforth B.E., 1989, Academy of Management Review, V14, P20	12	11
1981	Fornell C, 1981, Journal of Marketing Research, V18, P39	10	15

Note: some articles were cited the same times, therefore, there are articles some ranked the same.

From the point of view of the classification of journal papers, Edwards (2010) was a literature review paper, Podsakoff (2003) and Fornell (1981), which were theoretical review papers, and the rest are research report papers. Edwards (2010) was an integrative concept of employer branding, and Podsakoff (2003) and Fornell (1981) discussed the theory of research methodology. Podsakoff (2003) discussed the common method biases in behavioral research, we boldly speculate that the theory of behavior. Fornell (1981) was to discuss the application of SEM methods.

From the academic content, they can be divided into employment activities, brand management, marketing management and other aspects to explore. Collins (2002) and Lievens (2003) both discussed the impact of employment activities on the employer. The study refers to employment activities, including publicity, sponsorships, word-of-mouth endorsements, advertisement and so on.

In term of brand, the general discussion of three main directions: one is the brand equity, another is the brand image, the other is the brand attractiveness. To explore the brand equity articles are Backhaus (2004), Cable (2003), Collins (2002) and Keller (1993); brand image of the article are Lievens (2007a), Mangold (2004), Lievens (2003), Collins (2002) and Dutton (1994); brand attractiveness article is Berthon (2005). Although we have a little bit of three directions to explain their articles, in fact, the reason for the formation of the brand is very complex. These several major factors affect each other. Apart from above, Burmann (2005) also explored the internal branding from the brand identity, brand commitment and brand citizenship. This article also emphasized the importance of communication, leadership and fit-brand related HR activities.

Regarding marketing view, mainly on the derivation of internal marketing and instrument-symbolic framework. The former related articles are Backhaus (2004), Berthon (2005) and Burmann (2005); and the latter related articles are Lievens (2007a), Lievens (2007b) and Lievens (2003).

Among them, especially Lievens (2007b) research the army of soldiers with the employer brand of view.

Adding a lot of marketing and brand concept elements to form the employer's brand, but its nature is still related to the organization. Therefore, in these articles, there are still many articles from the perspective of the organization to explore. For example: from the organizational image and attraction (Dutton, 1994; Lievens, 2003; Lievens, 2007a, 2007b), organizational communication (Burmann, 2005), organizational behavior (Edwards, 2010; Burmann, 2005), and even leadership point of view (Burmann, 2005). One of the special point of view of organizational identity, it is often explored to be combined with the views of social identity. From these views, they extended to person-organization fit (P-O fit) new ideas.

Finally, we look at some of the proposed theories from these highly cited articles. Cable (2003), Collins (2002), Backhaus (2004) and Keller (1993) studied from the perspective of brand equity. Identity theory includes social identity, organizational identity and brand identity (Lievens, 2007a; Dutton, 1994; Ashforth, 1989; Burmann, 2005; Backhaus, 2004).In addition, the psychological contract is one of the main construction of the employer brand theory (Backhaus, 2004). Some of the above important theories have constructed the main spirit of the employer brand, and the rest are organizational behavior theory, resource base view, and personality trait theory are usually discussed (Backhaus, 2004; Edwards, 2010). This study summaries papers classification based on different criteria in Table 3.

Table 3. Papers classification based on different criteria

Criteria	Category	Papers
classification of journal papers	literature review paper	Edwards (2010)
	theoretical review papers	Podsakoff (2003) and Fornell (1981)
	research report papers	etc.
academic contents	employment activities	Collins (2002) and Lievens (2003)
	brand management	Backhaus (2004), Cable (2003), Collins (2002) and Keller (1993); Lievens (2007a), Mangold (2004), Lievens (2003); Dutton (1994); Berthon (2005); Burmann (2005)
	marketing management	Backhaus (2004), Berthon (2005)and Burmann (2005); Lievens (2007a), Lievens (2007b) and Lievens (2003)
	organization management	Dutton, 1994; Lievens, 2003; Lievens, 2007a, 2007b; Burmann, 2005; Edwards, 2010
theories	brand equity	Cable (2003), Collins (2002), Backhaus (2004) and Keller (1993)
	Identity theory	Lievens, 2007a; Dutton, 1994; Ashforth, 1989; Burmann, 2005; Backhaus, 2004
	psychological contract	Backhaus, 2004
	organizational behavior theory, resource base view, and personality trait theory	Backhaus, 2004; Edwards, 2010

4.2 The Findings from Authors Analysis

About the author's analysis, this study will not be used to indicate and rank the cumulative number of citations, because some of the articles in the author's name on the error writing or abbreviation of the different format. That is easy to cause the cumulative number of errors. Even so, this study is still sorting out several highly cited scholars.

In employer brand issue, Lievens, F. and Cable, D.M. are very highly cited scholars. The former scholar mainly specializes in HRM, employment management and talent selection; the latter scholar researches not only organization issues, but also value congruence. The two scholars have recently focused on the issue of person-organization fit. Except for the above, there are Backhaus K., Barrow, S., Burmann C., Collins, C.J., Edwards, M.R., Highouse, S., Keller, K.L., King, C., Martin, G, Podsakoff, P.M., and Turban, D.B. are the scholars of often cited articles. Burmann C., Keller, K.L., and King, C. are mainly specializing in brand management, and Keller, K.L. is also very special in the field of marketing. In addition to the above three brands, marketing more relevant scholars, the highly cited scholars have most of the human resources management, organizational management or employment management expertise.

4.3 The Findings from Journals Analysis

The citation of literature analysis according to the cumulative number of times, listed the top cited journals in Table4. From these highly cited journals, it is clear that these journals, in addition to the top journals of Academy of Management Review and Academy of Management Journal, are mostly well-known journals of marketing and branding (e.g. Journal of Marketing, European Journal of Marketing, Journal of Brand Management, Journal of Marketing Research). Particularly it is worth mentioning that the top journals of psychological types Journal of Applied Psychology and Personnel Psychology in here. Obviously, the psychological factors are one of the most important constructors in exploring the context of the employer brand. For example, the psychological contract mentioned earlier is an important argument. In summary, we can speculate that the employer brand research trend might move from the field of human resource to marketing and psychology concepts.

Table 4 Top 9 journals selected for the citation analysis: 2007-2016 (Frequency ≥60)

Top Citation Index (Journals)	Frequency	Ranking
Journal of Applied Psychology	189	1
Journal of Marketing	127	2
Academy of Management Journal	106	3
Personnel Psychology	97	4
Journal of Management	82	5
Academy of Management Review	78	6
European Journal of Marketing	76	7
Journal of Brand Management	72	8
Journal of Marketing Research	60	9

4.4 Discussions

From the above results, we can summarize several phenomena:

a. More the highly cited articles mentioned brand-related concepts, especially the brand equity.

b. The article from the traditional view point of the organization is lesser. Articles were wrote from an organizational point of view, mostly focusing on organizational behavior and the new type of employment methods.

c. Due to the progress of science and technology, especially the emergence of social media, the employer brand management and practice are more and more important.

d. This study find that highly cited authors, whose related articles are mostly listed in highly cited journals. In addition, there is another type of author, although his single article is not highly cited, his articles are more cited at the same time, e.g. King C., Martin G., and so on.

e. The well-known journals about psychology and marketing are highly cited on building an employer brand. Thus, in exploring the subject of this study, the concept of psychology and marketing is not unavailable. It is an important basis for the formation of the employer brand.

This study intends to find out the outline of the information, in order to facilitate the study of this topic scholars and experts a faster study.

5. CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

This study investigates "Employer Brand" research using citation data published journals in SSCI from 2007 to 2016. We find employer brand issue is emerging and important. Perhaps EB is mixed with human resources and marketing cross-domain concept, so that it can be deeper into the perception of potential employees..

As the relationship management generates employers, employees, customers, the proposal of employer brand also has an enterprise be re-oriented by markets, society, customers, and employees. Particularly, global competition is rapidly progressing era in technology and network, the re-innovation of the relationship is important. When the capital of a company has gradually moved from financial capital towards human capital and social capital, the relationship between brand human resource and the internal and external partner relation is worth studying.

To obtain information on highly cited articles, authors and journals, the brand equity, identity, psychological contract and advertisement communication are all important concepts when exploring the employer brand from this study; in addition, resource-based theory, personality trait theory and the organizational behavior theory are also often cited with theoretical perspectives. Employer brand has been used in the early recruitment of related activities, and now has become one of the important elements of the formation of the corporate brand.

The limitation of this study is to summarize the articles only related to employer brand in SSCI database, so some highly cited articles that are not included in SSCI may be ignored.The study suggests that the research trend of the employer brand should strengthen the firm performance evaluation, employer brand of chain stores and the organizations of multi-generation employees.

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