

The Importance of Employer Branding in the New Job Market

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Introduction

The internationalization of markets, the digital revolution and, in essence, what is called globalization have totally changed the context in which companies operate. They now find themselves operating in an increasingly integrated market, where management costs are one of the main nodes of competitiveness. After all, the enormous opportunities for comparison that the internet and the new telecommunication tools allow all consumers in the world, have exponentially increased the competitive pressure on companies.

Nonetheless, customer satisfaction alone can't determine a company's success in the new global markets, as competition also takes place when recruiting and attracting talent. Potential workers can now look for job opportunities in increasingly international contexts, so companies can no longer underestimate the attractiveness of work in the management of their company policies. In some markets such as the Italian one, persistent unemployment could apparently represent a favourable environment for the recruitment of human resources, but the economic leverage is no longer enough to capture talent, or to attract new collaborators. In fact, high unemployment, as economists indicate, tends to level wages downwards, with the consequence that they end up being unattractive, especially due to their variable effective purchasing power in different areas of the country.

It is known that for the same salary, "free and dignified existence", as referred to in the art. 36 of our Constitution, can be configured in totally different ways, depending on whether you work close to your network of relationships, which in fact allows for effective cost savings and better quality of life. To overcome these problems, a new personnel management strategy is emerging globally, called Employer Branding, aimed at

effectively defining the corporate (good) image towards the external job market. Essentially, a company should try to build a reputation as an attractive employer, with the purpose of enhancing human capital and retaining the human resources already employed in the company. From this point of view, the new forms of work allowed by modern technologies, which spread during the pandemic period, have a strong unexpressed potential: tempering the effects related to the different purchasing powers that wages express according to the worker's geographical location.

Given the situation of the global labor market, specifically the Italian one, stagnant and with serious problems in matching supply and demand, it comes as spontaneous to pose some questions about the role and the possibilities of EB. How can employer branding strategies, with all their advantages and disadvantages, be effectively utilized to address and improve the current job market conditions?

Index

Chapter 1: Unemployment as an economic and social issue (the Italy case)

- 1.1 Most relevant causes in the historic contest of globalization.....6
- 1.2 Wage deflation as a tool of competitiveness.....8
- 1.3 Talent shortage: the challenge of the globalized job market.....12

Chapter 2: Challenge and opportunities for Italian firms: a need for change in recruitment strategies

- 2.1 The complicated meeting between job demand and job supply in Italy.....15
- 2.2 Recruitment strategies in a low wage context.....17
- 2.3 The pandemic disruption: a new work-life balance.....21
- 2.4 New forms of work as a tool to take advantage of cost-of-living
differentials.....24
- 2.5 Local Pay Scales.....28
- 2.6 How Employer Branding can benefit companies and job
seekers.....30

Chapter 3: Employer Branding

- 3.1 Origins and evolution of Employer Branding.....32
- 3.2 Employer Branding and the human capital.....34
- 3.3 Internal Employer Branding activities.....37

Chapter 4: Employer branding as a competitive advantage in the post-covid job market

4.1 Human resources and marketing as drivers of Employer branding.....43
4.2 Key elements for the attractiveness of a company.....50
4.3 The advantages of employer branding in numbers.....53

Chapter 5: Some of the most successful employer branding models

5.1 The Brett Minchington & Ryan Estis model.....56
5.2 The Backhaus & Tikoo model.....58
5.3 The Talent Magnet model.....59
5.4 The E.Amendola model: Employer Brand Global Framework.....60

Conclusions.....62

Bibliography.....64

Chapter 1: Unemployment as a social and economic issue (the Italy case)

1.1 Most relevant causes in the historic context of globalization

The issue of unemployment within liberal societies in which the market operates is one of the most controversial aspects of economic theory. Exemplary in that sense the contrast between those who believe that the market, in the "long term", automatically determines a balance point between labor supply and demand and those who assign a significant (if not decisive) role to the state in managing public investment policies aimed at pursuing the so-called full employment. The goal of full employment, for example, is expressly mentioned in the statute of the American Federal Reserve¹, while it is completely absent in that of the European Central Bank² whose vocation is markedly monetarist. The latter, in fact, mainly pursues price stability and maintaining the level of inflation within the 2% limit.

¹ *"The Congress hereby declares that it is the continuing policy and responsibility of the federal government to use all practicable means consistent with its needs and obligations and other essential considerations of national policy with the assistance and cooperation of industry, agriculture, labour, and state and local governments, to coordinate and utilize all its plans, functions, and resources for the purpose of creating and maintaining, in a manner calculated to foster and promote free and competitive enterprise and the general welfare, conditions under which there will be afforded useful employment for those able, willing, and seeking work, and to promote maximum employment, production, and purchasing power"* (Unemployment Act, 1946).

² *"The primary objective of the European System of Central Banks shall be to maintain price stability. Without prejudice to the objective of price stability, the ESCB shall support the general economic policies in the Union with a view to contributing to the achievement of the objectives of the Union as laid down in Article 3 of the Treaty on European Union. The ESCB shall act in accordance with the principle of an open market economy with free competition, favouring an efficient allocation of resources, and in compliance with the principles set out in Article 119"* (TFEU, ART 127(1)).

In the context of markets globalization characterized by the substantial integration of value chains, favored by the free movement of capital and technological innovation, the issue of unemployment has also become decisive in the public debate of OECD countries (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development).

The globalization of both markets and companies has been achieved thanks to technological and political factors. Technological factors have made the transfer of data, information, goods and people increasingly cheaper, faster and more reliable. These factors have led to political choices aimed at increasing trade liberalization. But if some aspects of these choices can be directly attributable to what could be defined as the human factor, technological development instead has its own autonomy with respect to political decisions. It places decisive limits on the ability to regulate politics.

Therefore, globalization does not mean a homogeneous and uniform interdependence on a world level. The local, national and continental levels remain important, and, for Italy, the economic and political integration of the European Union is naturally the most important.

The national dimension that was the sphere of election of the dialectic of social bodies during the last century, in which the greater coherence between the labor market and regulatory guarantees was achieved, was in fact bypassed by the comparison between different and completely inhomogeneous legal systems. This was inevitably affected by the regulatory systems that had been forming in the individual developed nations on the basis of the laws and discipline deriving from national and company trade union bargaining.

It is therefore evident that, in the new context of the global market, characterized by extremely different economic and social standards, but

equally legitimized by the same adhesion to the WTO³ (World Trade Organization), the protection of labor has become a crucial problem for national legislators and for the companies themselves.

At the time, the West had too cautiously assumed that the opening of the Chinese market would soon lead to a less authoritarian political configuration and greater protection of the civil rights of the people who live in the great Asian country. Disillusioned hopes which placed the West before a scenario almost opposite to the one they predicted: it is now the Western countries that have an interest in looking at the Chinese socio-economic model as a winning model from which to draw lessons.

1.2 Wage deflation as an instrument of competitiveness

The factors listed so far have allowed companies to free themselves from the link with a specific territory and exploit on a planetary scale the existing differences in the availability of human and material resources, environmental and labour protection regulations, taxation and outlet markets.

For Italy, the international production delocalization of companies should be understood in a broader sense than is normally considered. It does not happen only by large groups that open production branches in other countries (the classic direct investments abroad), but also thanks to numerous small and medium-sized enterprises that use foreign subcontractors. The term international production delocalization here means the transfer of production from companies located on the national

³ On December 11, 2001, China joined the World Trade Organization (WTO).

territory to others in other countries. The latter can be owned by citizens residing in the country that relocates or even foreign owned, but the condition for talking about relocation is that the design and the brand belong to national clients who exercise strong technical / organizational control over the supplier. If the production is bought by domestic companies and designed by the foreign producer, it is a simple commercial operation. The transfer of production abroad under the control of national companies takes place in the presence of three different factors:

- specific advantages of the foreign country due to the abundance of cheap labour, the availability of natural resources, the presence of important consumer markets that use local production.
- specific advantages of the national company compared to the foreign one thanks to the possession of greater know-how, the ability to design a quality product or the possession of an established brand on the market.
- economies of internalization, or maintenance of control over the process in order not to sell strategically important know-how or due to the difficulty of its transfer.

Furthermore, the collapse of the socialist regimes of Eastern Europe has opened the possibility of operating in countries with a labour cost of up to one fifth of the Italian one and a decent industrial tradition.

For Italy, delocalization to the east concerns large companies, but in a very significant way, given our production structure, also medium and small companies. An exemplary case is Romania. Italian direct investments in Romania amount to nine billion euros, in first place by number and second by volume, after Germany⁴. But many small businesses escape scrutiny

⁴ *“Italian direct investments in Romania amount to nine billion euros, in first place by number and second by volume, after Germany”. “I know that there are currently about 20,000 companies with Italian capital active in our country and I am aware of the interest shown in investments in energy, precision mechanics and the agri-food sector”.* Nicolae Ciuca, Romania Prime Minister’s speech at The Romania Confindustria Economic Forum.

and takeover. This demonstrates how the Italian way of relocation presents peculiarities different from those of other countries, based on the presence of SMEs that carry out small investment operations in traditional sectors and / or intertwine productive subcontracting relationships with foreign partners. There are companies from all sectors, including the tertiary one.

A first line of defense for workers by companies has been to focus on the quality of work, which is not the same in all countries and is certainly higher in Italy, but of course this is true up to a certain point, as the most standardized productions are easily transferable, and with suitable machinery the productivity is the same. It is only when the product requires very precise and not easily transferable knowledge that it defends itself well. So only the most innovative productions tend to be kept in advanced countries. At one time it was also believed that it was the task of governments to stimulate these processes by sliding the country towards more sophisticated productions, yielding the less advanced ones to the more backward countries.

The manufacturing sector is, due to its intrinsic characteristics, the most exposed to delocalization due to competition from countries with lower salaries than those of the EU. There is, in fact, a trend towards relocation more frequent in Eastern European countries than in Western ones. The target countries are mainly in North Africa and Asia.

Ultimately, even if the overall results of trade liberalization are positive, some sectors are severely affected and the length of the transition period for workers to new jobs can have a very negative impact on overall benefits.

To reduce the negative impact of globalization and reduce unemployment, the EU created the European Globalization Adjustment Fund in 2006. The goal is to offer support to workers who lose their jobs due to globalization.

This solidarity emergency fund co-finances employment policies, which aim at orienting workers or supporting business development. Funded projects include, for example, training and accompaniment in job search and business creation.

In 2009, the Fund was extended to provide aid to those who have lost their jobs due to major structural changes triggered by the economic and financial crisis.

In April 2021, the Members of the European Parliament voted for a reform to improve the use of the Adjustment Fund, which would make it possible to help a larger number of European workers.

The Fund can be used:

- 1) if more than 200 workers have been dismissed by a single company and its suppliers, or if a large number of workers have lost their jobs in a specific sector of one or more regions;
- 2) to request a one-off investment of € 22,000 to start your own business or to hire employees.
- 3) to benefit from special measures such as child custody allowance which can be accessed when looking for a job or while participating in training activities.

Since 2007, the Fund has spent € 640 million to help 150,000 redundant workers. For example, € 3.35 million was used to help workers fired by the call center company Almoviva in Italy and € 2.6 million to help employees fired by Nokia in Finland.

In Italy the localization process took place to a lesser extent than in other advanced countries, and with some peculiarities. The strengths of Made in Italy have become, as is well known, the mechanics, the fashion system and, lately, the agri-food sector. However, little for a country that at the end of the 1960s was classifiable as a "complete industrial matrix", that is, it produced a bit of everything, from nuclear power to electromechanics, from nails to microchips, from drugs to shoes.

However, the disruption created by the Covid-19 pandemic seems to have partially called into question the main paradigms of globalization, as it has made evident (just think of the case of masks and ventilators) the need to bring back the production of some sectors and products essentials, such as medicines, in Europe.

Companies have therefore begun to rethink their procurement processes, "shortening" their value chain to bring it back to closer territorial areas.

1.3 Talent shortage: the challenge of the globalized job market

The brief analysis that I have tried to carry out in the previous paragraphs, has made it clear that what is usually defined as the New Economy has enormously increased the levels of complexity of the competitive context in which companies operate.

From a certain point of view, if companies are considered not only for the outputs they produce, but also for their ability to generate jobs, it is therefore natural that the recruitment system of companies has ended up being subjected to a great deal of stress. For years many companies have been able to operate in relatively small markets without having to take care of attracting young talents, as they have become the natural landing

place for workers operating in a certain territory. This was especially the case when companies enjoyed a leading position in their target market.

Conversely, today, this factor can no longer be considered the only driving force for recruitment, because on the global market there are several companies able to offer attractive salaries for talented workers. Moreover, the awareness that the so-called human capital, its experiences and skills are decisive factors in creating value has grown significantly in companies. So much so that in a 1998 McKinsey⁵ study conducted on a sample of large American companies, what was called the "war for talent" emerged, often conducted not only with good salaries, but also with various benefits.

The problem of "talent shortage" also affects Italy, albeit to a lesser extent than other countries. With the *Closing the Skills Gap: What Workers Want*⁶ research, Manpower Group has put together 13 years of data from the annual *Talent Shortage Survey* to map out the global relationship between supply and demand for job skills.

In this international context, Italy ranks in an intermediate position, with 47% of companies complaining of a lack of talent for the positions offered, a better result than countries such as the United States, Finland, Japan, Greece and Poland, all with percentages of difficulty ranging between 66% and 90%. Germany, Portugal, Sweden and India rank between 56% and 65% of companies in difficulty. Among the best aggregators of work supply and demand are China, the United Kingdom, France, the Netherlands, Switzerland, Norway and South Africa.

The study therefore traced, on the basis of the data collected, profiles based on personal data to identify the main drivers that push today's

⁵ Foulon M., Handfield-Jones H., 1998, *The War for Talent*, McKinsey.

⁶ https://go.manpowergroup.com/hubfs/MPG_WhatWorkersWant_2020.pdf

workers to hold on to their position or, vice versa, to change scenery. Few surprises: pay increases are the top priority of all workers interviewed, men or women, young or old. But immediately after the salary, with variable postings, components such as the flexibility of schedules, the ability to work in a group, proximity to home, the ability to improve one's skills and the working environment.

Women belonging to generation Z (aged 18 to 24) give double importance to earning compared to the possibility of developing skills; millennials (from 25 to 34 years old) value more flexibility (especially women) and the stimuli of work; Generation X (aged 35 to 44) seek work-life balance, giving great importance to the possibilities of smart-working and parental leave, as well as flexibility of hours. Boomers (aged 55 and over), who prefer a stimulating and flexible job, but also some form of leadership; they are also much more result-oriented, to contribute to the community.

In the next chapters, the Italian case will be analyzed in a more precise way, as a new strategy of human resources is emerging in Italy too, which has been called Employer Branding, or rather how a single company can project its image on the labor market to attract workers.

Chapter 2: Challenge and opportunities for Italian firms: a need for change in recruitment strategies

2.1 The complicated meeting between job demand and job supply in Italy

Statistical data often require in-depth analyses that make them intelligible, but the Italian ones in the field of work put everyone in agreement.

After all, in a country with 2.3 million unemployed and 13.5 million inactive, it is indisputable that a company looking for a worker should find him easily. Yet this is not the case at all.

The periodic analyses developed by the Unioncamere-Excelsior system⁷ relating to the forecasts of new hires by Italian companies, reveal their growing difficulty in finding adequate human resources for the required professional profiles. The most recent one, focused on the forecasts for the first quarter of the current year, shows that 30.6% of the potential need for new hires, estimated at around 1.1 million people, is considered by the companies interviewed to be difficult to find. An undoubtedly surprising figure for a country that ranks among the last of the European Union member nations for the employment rate. In fact, Italy shows a 10-point deviation from the European average. This is equivalent, for the same population, to just under 4 million employed.

The difficult availability, according to the survey cited, does not concern only the high professionalism. The set of graduates in the fields of science,

⁷ "Excelsior Informa i programmi occupazionali delle imprese rilevati dal sistema delle camere di commercio", 2022, <https://excelsior.unioncamere.net/>

technology, engineering, and mathematics, for instance, reaches up to 2/3 of the profiles sought. But it also concerns, for entities exceeding 50%, also the technical professions in the fields that range from computer programming, from chemistry to production and marketing technologies, up to specialists in the health, welfare and education fields. This issue embraces the entire range of professions and tasks that require medium and low qualifications: 40% of skilled workers in all sectors of manufacturing and construction; 30% of employees in food production and sales employees in trade, help cooks and waiters. Difficulties that arise, as the study reports, in a relevant way in the areas of Northern and Central Italy, in the metropolitan areas, and where the demand for work is addressed to young people.

According to the companies surveyed in the study, the reasons for the mismatch are many. They range from the inadequacy of the academic and training courses carried out by the candidates, especially for those who require high technical skills, to weak working experiences. There is also a low willingness, particularly among the younger generations, to accept work relationships that involve flexibility in working hours.

Furthermore, the social devaluation of manual labour⁸ (traces of which can already be found in studies dating back), as opposed to the intellectual one, is one of the consequences of this drift. It is not just an Italian problem, but in no other developed country has it assumed the size of our labour market. Much of the generational turnover in the 2000s, for many profiles and executive tasks, was in fact offset by a growth in immigrants in conditions of low productivity and low wages.

⁸ Cf "Lavoro manuale e lavoro intellettuale, il concetto del lavoro ieri, oggi e domani" Firpo L., Fondazione Agnelli Quaderno 18/1978, paragraph 2.

This situation, according to the analyses reported above, has produced a high stock of almost 4 million people looking for work; or rather, of people willing to work only under certain conditions, despite having low levels of skills; to which are added 2 million young people under 29 who do not study and do not work (the so-called Neet⁹).

2.2 Recruitment strategies in a low wage context

In additions to the difficulties mentioned above relating to the matching of labour supply and demand there are also, at least in the case of Italy, wage policies aimed above all at increasing the competitiveness of companies in the global market.

Scholars speak in this regard of "*wage deflation*", referring to a competition with other rival countries based on low labour costs¹⁰. This results in a compression of domestic demand, with the aim of conquering foreign markets. For this reason, the wage deflation strategy is also called competitive deflation: the aim is to keep national prices and wages low to crowd out competitors on foreign markets.

⁹ Individual, especially of young age, who neither has nor is looking for a job and does not attend a school or a training course or professional refresher course.

¹⁰ Cf <https://www.emilianobrancaccio.it/wp-content/uploads/2011/09/il-fallimento-della-deflazione.pdf>

"Between 1998 and 2006, the actual gross wages of the manufacturing industry did record the following increases in Europe: France 15.9%, Spain 5.3%, Germany 5.0%, Italy 2.6%,

UME average 10.1%. In the more general sector of goods and services intended for sale (except agriculture), in 2005 net wages for a single worker were (data in euros): Germany 23,942, France 21,470, Italy 16,538, Spain 16,493 (Source: IRES 2007 calculations on OECD data)".

Nonetheless, the limitations of this approach are evident. In the short term it allows companies to remain on the market, while in the medium term they begin to have difficulty in finding suitable profiles.

In fact, at the beginning of January, the Excelsior bulletin produced by Anpal and Unioncamere recorded that 31% of companies encounter "difficulties in finding" for 1.2 million contracts scheduled in the first three months of 2019, with an unsatisfied need for technical, scientific and engineering figures. A baffling fact, if considering that the youth unemployment rate remains - firmly - above 30%. These data would suggest that young people are unable to adapt to the market because they do not enjoy the appropriate qualifications or disdain salaries other than those claimed.

The organization for economic cooperation and development (OECD), in one of its studies noted that in Italy about 40% of workers are not compatible with their job qualifications¹¹. But the surprise is that the share of the under-qualified (20%) is practically identical to that of the over-qualified (19%): young and older workers with talents who cannot be absorbed or exploited by the Italian business system.

The difficulties of finding have increased by 6 percentage points (from 44% in January 2018¹² to 50% in January 2019¹³), worsening in the lack of specialized professions and technical figures, the famous Stem¹⁴ area profiles (science, technology, engineering, maths).

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https://www.oecdskillsforjobsdatabase.org/data/country_notes/Italy%20country%20note.pdf

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https://excelsior.unioncamere.net/images/pubblicazioni2018/excelsior_2018_laureati.pdf,
cf page 74

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https://excelsior.unioncamere.net/images/pubblicazioni2019/excelsior_2019_laureati.pdf,
cf page 73

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https://www.fondazioneecni.it/images/temi/universita_e_formazione/Laureati_2019_58d63.

In short, the demand for technicians is not as stringent as it should be apparent from the announcements. Especially considering that there is no lack of raw materials, despite the various alarms on the Stem resource deficit.

According to some, the Italian socio-economic structure, consisting mainly of small and medium-sized enterprises, would be unsuitable for exploiting the potential of the job offer, especially among recent graduates and young candidates. In this regard, Professor Giovanna Fullin, professor of sociology of economic and labor processes at the Bicocca in Milan, argues that *“in Italy we suffer from a production structure and a low-skilled demand for work, in the face of a highly qualified job offer. This is the real mismatch ”*¹⁵. According to Follin, *“These are companies that tend to have no interest in hiring candidates of another profile. Hence also the very low values of national investments in R&D, research and development. A sector that would guarantee the growth of quality employment ”*.

This thesis seems to be confirmed by Istat data, which highlight the large prevalence of companies with less than 10 employees, which make up about 90% of the total number of companies present on the Italian territory. While large ones make up less than 1% of the total¹⁶.

The European comparison, contained in the aforementioned Istat report, confirms that the Italian production system is characterized by having the largest population of companies: in the smallest aggregate of the non-

[pdf](#). In the report of the Study Center of the National Council of Engineers, a total of 53,000 engineering graduates were recorded in 2019, up 4.4% compared to 2018. If the raw numbers were enough, we would be faced with the paradox of a sector that struggles to find less than 8 thousand candidates compared to an annual average of engineering graduates almost six times greater.

¹⁵ <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/perche-giovani-fanno-fatica-trovare-lavoro-italia-AESVfiKH>

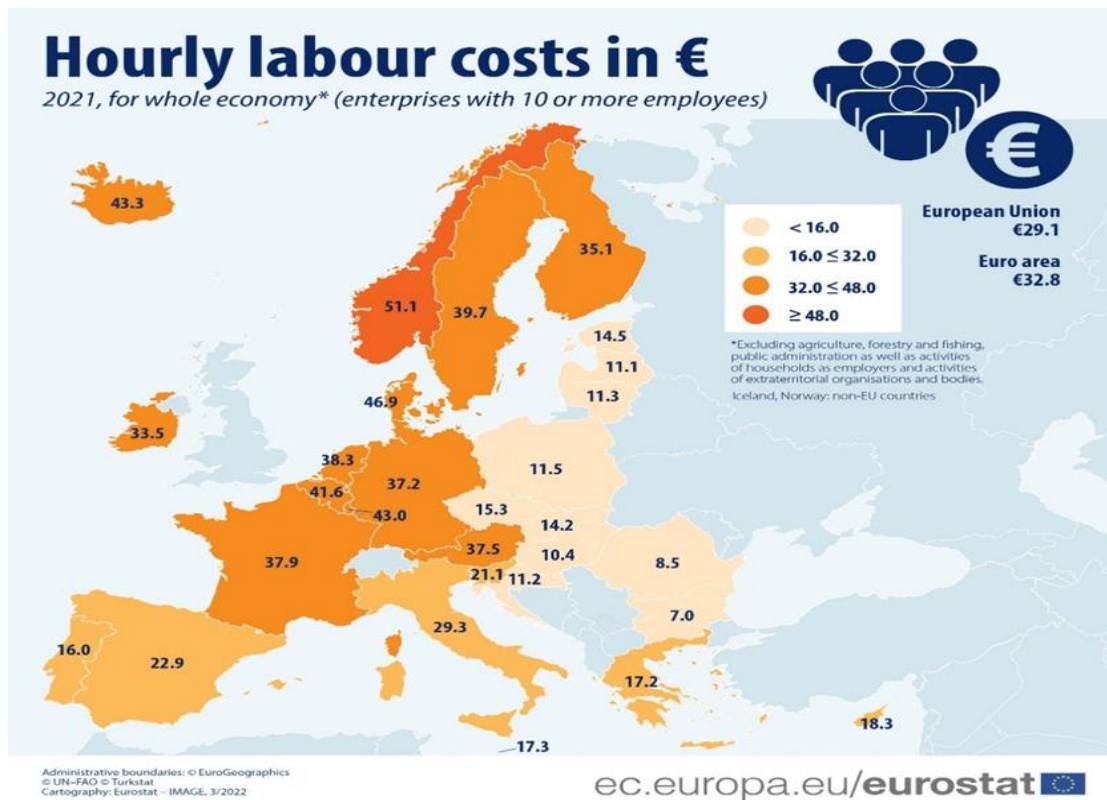
¹⁶ <https://www.istat.it/storage/rapporti-tematici/imprese2021/Rapportoimprese2021.pdf> (cf paragraph 1.1)

financial market economy, for which it is possible to make international comparisons, in 2018, there were 3.7 million Italian companies, which constitutes 16.3% of those in the EU27, against 12.6% in France and 11.5-11.7% in Germany and Spain. However, this high density corresponds to small average company sizes: around 4 employees in Italy against about 12 in Germany.

The Italian economic system, therefore, seems to need technicians, but with a lower level of qualifications than that offered by Italian graduates (and graduates in general), as most of our small and medium-sized enterprises concentrate their production on a single asset, while large companies tend to diversify in almost all cases. With an economic fabric dominated by medium, small and micro enterprises, it is logical that the demand for technical profiles refers to figures with technical skills, but not necessarily as high as those of a degree.

Perhaps this is also why the Italian market suffers from a wage gap compared to other European countries. The gap between the salaries offered in Italy and abroad is so much discussed that it seems commonplace. On the other hand, the latest Eurostat data on labour costs show that gross hourly wages in Italy are € 29.3, below the average for euro area countries, which is € 32.8 gross per hour, with peaks above 50 euros for Norway, 46 euros for Denmark and 37.2 euros for Germany.

For a complete picture of gross hourly wages in the EU, see the figure below:



Furthermore, according to a documented article by Il Sole24ore¹⁷, the Italian salary curve tends to reward almost exclusively the seniority factor: salary rises only on the basis of company seniority, reaching its maximum after 50 years and not in the peak productivity (generally between the ages of 30 and 40). A vision that does not favour the economic gratification of younger workers.

2.3 The pandemic disruption: a new work-life balance

Up to now, a general picture has been drawn on the effects of globalization and the consequent wage deflation, and on the difficulties in this context of company recruitment strategies. These elements pre-existed the totally unpredictable spread of the Covid 19 pandemic.

¹⁷ <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/lavoro-perche-italia-conta-piu-l-anagrafe-qualita-ACSiWAb>

Beyond the direct effects caused by the widespread lockdowns and the negative repercussions on all the world economic systems that have occurred in the last two years, an indirect and unexpected effect that the pandemic itself has caused on the traditional methods of carrying out work performance should be noted.

The disruption generated by the pandemic, which forced people to rethink the life-work relationship, caused a completely unexpected phenomenon that has been defined as “The Great Resignation”.

This expression refers to the significant increase in voluntary resignations. The causes that lead to this drastic decision are the most varied: from burnout to the search for a place that preserves well-being, to the desire to be able to manage the working days while defending the work-life balance. This indicates a marked change in employment expectations by workers who seem to have reconsidered their life priorities.

According to a recent McKinsey study¹⁸, 40% of employees globally are willing to change jobs in the next 4-6 months, 53% of employers said they have higher voluntary turnover than in previous years, and 64% he expects the problem to continue, or worsen, over the next six months.

The Great Resignation, or as McKinsey calls it The Great Attrition, is therefore something that companies will have to continue to contend with, and to do so it will require a deeper understanding of what has happened in recent months.

This research, which involved nearly 6,000 people of working age from Australia, Canada, Singapore, the United Kingdom and the United States, found that 36% of those who quit had not yet held a new job. This is what

¹⁸ <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/gone-for-now-or-gone-for-good-how-to-play-the-new-talent-game-and-win-back-workers>

characterizes the new phenomenon, which, unlike previous cycles of regression and recovery, is leading people to take a real leap in the dark.

Moreover, the extent of the phenomenon is testified by the numbers. According to data from the United States Department of Labour, taken from the aforementioned McKinsey study, in August 2021 a record value of 4.3 million Americans who voluntarily left their jobs was reached. Since spring 2021, the average value has been around 4 million.

In essence, the post-pandemic world of work is turning into a market in which the classic contractual levers (salary and career prospects) no longer seem sufficient to attract workers. If on the one hand it is necessary to find solutions to the problems of Burnout, on the other it seems that a more resilient, adaptable and creative business organization can no longer be ignored.

Italy is also no stranger to the phenomenon found in the Anglo-Saxon world. In a recent article by Il Sole24ore¹⁹, it is noted that almost 58% of new hires and employees ask for agile work from Italian companies as a precondition for being able to accept or continue their work.

This motivation also emerges in the analysis conducted by IBM²⁰ on the main reasons that lead people to resign. They are attributable to the need to work in a more flexible reality (32%), and to the desire to have more targeted and satisfying assignments (27%). When choosing a new job, what people are looking at is the balance between work and private life (51%) and to a lesser extent career advancement opportunities (43%). Furthermore, more than 40% stressed that the ethics and values of the employer are important to motivate them and make them feel part of a

¹⁹ <https://www.ilsole24ore.com/art/il-lavoro-il-covid-90percento-aziende-non-ha-dubbi-smart-working-modalita-definitiva-AEIPy1OB#U401135826058n8D>

²⁰ <https://it.newsroom.ibm.com/Study2021SkillsGrowth>

group, while 36% said they appreciate the opportunities for continuous learning.

Considering these trends, which are anything but fleeting, more and more Italian companies are considering, if not already implementing, hybrid working methods. The latter range from a restructuring of corporate environments aimed at promoting smart working and suitable for the consequent reduced number of physically present employees, up to guaranteeing the effectiveness of the right to disconnect.

Measures born, ultimately, to respond and adapt to the new demands of workers. However, as will be discussed below, these same measures have the potential to play a significant role not only in attracting new workers, but also in improving the competitiveness of the company without increasing its costs.

2.4 New forms of work as a tool to take advantage of cost-of-living differentials.

In June 1933 the then President of the United States, Franklin Delano Roosevelt, in the context of the speech on the National Industrial Recovery Act, stated: *“no business which depends for existence on paying less than living wages to its workers has any right to continue in this country”*.

The content of this assertion has a very current value, despite the historical moment in which it was made, because the years of globalization were often characterized by social dumping operations. As argued in the previous chapter, wage deflation has been one of the main tools that companies have used in order not to lose competitiveness in markets that have now become global.

At this point it would be natural to ask how these two apparently opposite poles can be reconciled. On one hand, the need of companies not to lose market share, on the other the need of workers not to retreat in their standard of living under the pressure of downward competition on wages.

To face this impasse, apparently difficult to solve, a concrete help can come from technology that has profoundly affected the way the company works.

In recent times, different and new forms of work have been classified which have disrupted traditional work.

In a study drawn up by Eurofound²¹ (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions), all the new forms of work detected by the foundation since 2000 in the EU member states as well as in Norway and United Kingdom are grouped into nine categories.

It is useful here to list them to define the single conventional meanings attributed in the classification.

- **Employee Sharing:** A group of employers hires workers and is co-responsible for them. The concept is similar to the temporary agency, with the aim of sharing staff to balance the human resources (HR) needs of companies while providing safe work to workers.
- **Job sharing:** An employer hires several workers to jointly fill a single full-time post. It is a form of part-time work, the purpose of which is to ensure that shared work is staffed with permanent staff.

21

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20027en.pdf

- **Voucher Based Work:** The employment relationship and related payment are based on a voucher (generally acquired from a third party such as a government authority) rather than an employment contract. In most cases, workers have a status between employee and self-employed.
- **Interim Management:** a company "leases out" workers to other companies temporarily and for a specific purpose. Unlike a temporary employment agency, the staff is composed of highly specialized experts who are sent to the receiving companies to solve a specific management problem. Interim management has some elements of consultancy, but, unlike the latter, the expert has the status of an employee rather than an external consultant.
- **Casual Work:** A type of work where employment is not stable and continuous, and the employer is not obliged to regularly provide the worker with work, but has the flexibility to call them upon request.
- **ICT-based mobile work:** The employee or self-employed person works from several possible locations outside their employer's premises (for example, from home or at a client's premises), supported by modern technologies such as laptops and tablets. This form of work is less tied to a specific location than traditional teleworking.
- **Platform Work:** This involves matching supply and demand for paid work through an online platform or app. The employment status is not clarified, but in most cases the worker is considered to be self-employed or self-employed.
- **Portfolio Work:** This refers to small-scale procurement of self-employed. Self-employed or micro-enterprises working for a large number of clients.

- **Collaborative Employment:** These are specific forms of cooperation or between self-employed workers that go beyond the traditional supply chain or the classic relationship between trading partners.

Of the types of work listed above, which refer to legal cases with completely different outlines, the one we intend to focus on is attributable to ICT-based mobile work. This typology presupposes stable employment contracts, characterized by decentralized performance methods.

Despite all the difficulties tied to the relatively recent nature of the data available on the subject and the different methods with which they were collected (which varies depending on the country), the study assimilates ICT-based work to the definition of smart working / agile working (in the case of Italy).

Although the study shows that the use of this method was widespread and constantly growing even before the pandemic, as previously argued, the latter has further accelerated the trend. In terms of the sectors concerned, the IT, real estate and financial services sectors stand out.

The data also show how smart working is a phenomenon that mainly affects young workers²². In fact, the study found that, in some of the countries examined, the number of smart working workers tends to increase with decreasing age, while being relatively neutral to gender differences.

22

https://www.eurofound.europa.eu/sites/default/files/ef_publication/field_ef_document/ef20027en.pdf, page 9

2.5 Local pay scales

Having defined in a general sense the new forms of work that companies can resort to, at this point of the discussion a brief digression about a long-debated topic in the economic literature appears necessary. We refer to the problem of cost-of-living differentials between geographical areas of the same national territorial context. A theme that has divided economists, pushing some to stress the need to define differentiated employment contracts in relation to the places of residence of workers, and others to strenuously defend the unity of employment contracts and wage homogeneity.

The digression is necessary because this socio-economic characteristic can turn into an element of attraction for companies that struggle to recruit staff, as we will better explain in the next chapter.

The phenomenon of cost-of-living differentials has also given rise to specific legal regulations in Italy. In fact, starting from 1946 a mechanism for calculating wages that took into account precisely these differentials was implemented, the so-called "wage cages". This system, which in 1954 had been extended to the whole country, was based on three characteristics²³:

- A subdivision of workers into seven categories: white collars (first, second and third level), specialized blue collar, qualified blue collar, specialized laborers and common laborers. Between the categories, fixed and binding wage differentials were provided for in each of the wage cages.
- The Italian provinces were divided into 14 wage cages with fixed wage differentials between them.

²³ "The Impact of Local Minimum Wages on Employment: Evidence from Italy in the 1950s", de Blasio G., Poy S., 2014

- In addition to the salary, an "emergency allowance" was provided, a compensation for the erosion of the purchasing power of workers due to inflation. The compensation mechanism was based on the national inflation index with an indexation of the cost of living in two areas: the compensation for the Center South was lower than that foreseen for the North. Furthermore, the allowances were specific to the qualification.

The results reached by the authors of the aforementioned study show that the implementation of this regulation didn't have a positive impact. The local regulation of wages, combined with the possibility for companies and workers to move freely throughout the territory, led to a cross-border reallocation of economic activities to neighboring areas characterized by lower (minimum) wages. The regulation also proved ineffective in combating unemployment, so much so that the employment impact calculated by the authors of the study was zero.

To summarize the results, it is useful to quote the words with which the study closes: *"A final remark from our empirical investigation refers to Italy's economic development. The role of the wage zones for the extraordinary growth rates recorded in the aftermath of World War II has remained unexplored to date. Casual empiricism could have suggested that the scheme was a good thing, as its implementation went hand in hand with unrecorded growth (and strong regional convergence). Our results suggest that this was unlikely to be the case."*

2.6 How Employer Branding can benefit companies and job seekers.

This distinctly macroeconomic first part of the thesis allows for a better understanding of the situation in which the global labor market finds itself, as well as to have a clear idea of the root causes of the problems. There is no doubt, from what has been reported above, that globalization has brought numerous advantages for the labor market. It has opened new markets and created opportunities for companies. They have been able to expand their market reach globally; expansion which often leads to the creation of new jobs, both nationally and internationally. This large scale has also allowed companies to tap into a larger pool of talent from around the world, allowing them to recruit skilled workers from different countries, thereby enhancing the diversity and experience of their workforce. Furthermore, by operating across borders, companies bring in valuable knowledge, technology, and improved production processes, thus facilitating the transfer of this knowledge to local workers, increasing their skills and employability in the future. It is evident, then, that globalization has been instrumental in driving economic growth in many countries, enabling emerging economies to attract foreign investment, create jobs and improve their infrastructure, leading to higher living standards and reduced poverty rates.

However, if it is irrefutable that globalization has brought with it numerous advantages, it is equally evident that globalization has also brought various disadvantages. For example, it has led to the relocation of certain production activities, which tend to have low added value, with the consequent displacement of jobs to countries with lower labor costs. This has led to job losses in many sectors, particularly in developed countries, where workers may find it difficult to compete with cheaper recruitable labor abroad. Added to this is another determining factor: the global labor market has inevitably become increasingly competitive as a result of

globalization, as fierce competition has exerted downward pressure on wages. For low-skilled workers in particular, it has led to wage stagnation and widening income inequality. Rapid changes in the global economy, such as technological advances and changing market demands, have therefore triggered uncertainty for many workers. The need to adapt to new skills and professions has generated insecurity and instability. Furthermore, globalization has often induced national policy makers to introduce weak labor regulations which have pushed back the rights of workers who are always exposed to the risk of losing their jobs. In fact, companies can try to minimize costs by taking advantage of permissive labor standards, with worsening working conditions that allow ever lower wages.

The labor market is a critical component of any economy, as it determines the employment opportunities available to the individual and shapes the entire workforce. However, from the considerations made so far and from the literature presented so far, it is clear that the labor market is facing various challenges, such as skill gaps, talent shortages and a lack of employee engagement. These challenges, in conjunction with the social changes brought about by the pandemic (see paragraph 2.3) have resulted in the creation of a hypercompetitive landscape, in which employers compete to attract and keep top talents. Therefore, in a labor market that appears to be upside down, several companies have turned to employer branding as a strategic approach to position themselves as desirable employers in the labor market to address these problems. In the next chapters, after having introduced the concept of employer branding, having dealt with its origins and the development of the literature over the years, we will see how this approach can, now more than ever, represent a significant competitive advantage for companies.

Chapter 3: Employer Branding

3.1 Origins and evolution of Employer Branding

Although it was highlighted in Chapter 2 (paragraph 2.3) how the advent of the pandemic has prompted workers to re-evaluate their priorities and needs, this process of seeking a new work-life balance is far from recent. As specified in chapter 1 (paragraph 1.3), the coining of terms such as “talent shortage” and “War for talent” dates back to 1997²⁴. In the aforementioned study by Mckinsey (1997) the authors already highlighted a difficulty on the part of companies in finding talent. The causes identified by the study at the time were multiple and foreshadowed a trend destined to worsen in the following years.

A complex economy requires increasingly sophisticated workers and talents, accustomed to working in an increasingly globalized context. Skills such as knowing how to "juggle" in a multicultural environment and a high level of "technological literacy", therefore become of vital importance to know how to manage decentralized and disaggregated organizations in an optimal way.

In addition, the emergence of efficient capital markets allows the rise of many small and medium-sized enterprises, which seek to attract the same talents also required by large companies, which generates increasing labor mobility.

If we compare the scenario illustrated in the Mckinsey study with the current situation of the job market, it is clear that the identification of the Talent Shortage problem represented a correct intuition. The three causes

²⁴ Foulon M., Handfield-Jones H., 1997, The War for Talent, Mckinsey.

identified by Mckinsey, even after 25 years, are still relevant in framing the labor market.

It is therefore not surprising that the concept of Employer Branding²⁵ was already outlined in 1996, the definition of which, at least in the first years of life, only identifies the ability to attract potential employees and retain the workforce already in the company.

In 2002, with the accentuation of the "talent shortage", the definition underwent a first transformation. In fact, Simon Lloyd defined Employer Branding as *"the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and potential staff that it is a desirable place to work"*²⁶.

A further refinement of the concept can be found in a 2005 article by Michington where Employer Branding is outlined as follows: *"the company's image as 'a great place to work' in the minds of current employees and external market stakeholders "*.

More recently (2013), Employer Branding identifies *"the development of the corporate image and reputation that would affect its ability to retain employees and attract new talent"*.

As can be seen from the definitions that have followed one another over the years, the concept of Employer branding has expanded, generating today other related concepts:

- Employer Identity: the identity of an organization as an employer. In this sense, the work environment, the synergy between team members and the relationship with top management are important.
- Employer Value Proposition: represents everything that workers experience for the duration of their relationship with the company such as

²⁵ The concept of "Employer Branding" was first coined in 1996 by academics Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow.

²⁶ <https://www.afr.com/companies/branding-from-the-inside-out-20020314-ka3rq>

pay, office, colleagues, the environment, job satisfaction and leadership. This definition, once again, is the result of Brett Michington's efforts: Employer Value Proposition constitutes the set of associations and benefits provided by a company in exchange for the skills, capabilities and experiences that an employee brings.

- Employer Brand Positioning: the set of actions aimed at outlining those characteristics that allow the company to qualify as an "employer of choice", as well as dictating the guidelines for the recruitment marketing strategy.
- Employer of Choice: the ultimate goal of an employer branding strategy, as it refers to the company as an ideal workplace for current and future employees.
- Employer Brand Promise: it is the realization of the Employer Value Proposition in a direct message to the company's target audience.

The evolution of the concept of employer branding has brought the concept increasingly closer to the world of marketing, as well as giving an increasingly central role to the human resources of a company.

3.2 Employer Branding & human capital

It is now well known in the specialized literature that people are the principle of every company and its greatest resource²⁷. In fact, human resources can be catalysts for a strategic advantage for a company that operates in a highly competitive economic environment, at a global level, and therefore characterized by extreme uncertainty²⁸. Therefore, being able to attract human resources with high professional potential is crucial

²⁷ Edwards, M. R. (2010). An integrative review of employer branding and OB theory. *Personnel Review*, 39(1), p. 5-23.

²⁸ Rose, R. C., Abdullah, H., & Ismad, A. I. (2010). A review on the relationship between organizational resources, competitive advantage and performance. *Journal of International Social Research*, 3(11), p. 488-497; Messersmith, J. G., Patel, P. C., Lepak, D. P., & Gould-Williams, J. S. (2011). Unlocking the black box: exploring the link between high-performance work systems and performance. *Journal of Applied Psychology*.

for the company's competitiveness, and sometimes even for the very survival of the company. In an internationalized market dominated by the development of the information and knowledge society²⁹, competition for competent talent is a constant for companies³⁰.

For this fundamental reason, specialized literature has placed more and more emphasis on the satisfaction and retention of valuable employees³¹.

It is therefore now an established fact that the human factor, evoked so many times by John Le Carré, has a decisive impact on the effective achievement of the result, influencing not only the first line of company management, but also the entire complex of internal resources.

From this point of view, the concept of "internal customer"³² therefore emerged, adapting the more traditional conceptualisations of marketing: according to Grönroos (1985), marketing activities can be effective if also applied to the specific organizational internal market, motivating employees to adopt attitudes oriented towards the external customer and, more generally, towards the reference market. This assumption is one of the essential cornerstones of the Employer Branding concept, as the marketing perspective also extends to the relationship between company management and personnel. As already mentioned, the concept of Employer Branding, initiated by Ambler and Barrow (1996) in the 1990s, is based on the principles of the classic product brand but concerns the process of building an employer brand.

²⁹ Alnıaçık, E., & Alnıaçık, U. (2012). Identifying dimensions of attractiveness in employer branding: effects of age, gender, and current employment status. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 58, p. 1336-1343

³⁰ Sivertzen, A.-M., Nilsen, E. R., & Olafsen, A. H. (2013). Employer branding: employer attractiveness and the use of social media. *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, 22(7), p. 473-483.

³¹ Osteraker, M.C. (1999). Measuring motivation in a learning organization. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, 11(2), p. 73-77.

³² Pawar, A. (2016). Employee Value Proposition: A Collaborative Methodology for Strengthening Employer Brand Strategy. *Journal of Resources Development and Management*, 16, 56-62.

The conceptual core of Employer Branding has its roots in marketing, but for the sole purpose of extending the approach towards the end customer also to the company's internal human resources according to a model based on the construction of processes that enhance employee commitment. This, in turn, leads to the improvement of the effectiveness of serving external customers and their satisfaction to a greater extent than competitors, and to the creation of competitive advantage for the organization³³.

In recent years, therefore, there has been a trend towards paying more attention to employees and the ways in which they can lead to further improvements and advances for the corporate brand. The literature on the subject proposes the concept of a "virtuous circle" which covers the key internal and external aspects of employer branding and its effects³⁴: the logical chain that scholars envisage is essentially constituted by the attractiveness and retention of valuable employees that proudly represent the company and meet customer expectations. As a result, satisfied customers become loyal brand advocates, which results in the strengthening of the company's reputation and profitability. Therefore, the logical chain closes when successful companies with an excellent external reputation attract and retain talents who want to contribute to the success of the organization and be associated with it, becoming its first "supporters".

³³ Lee, R. G., & Dale, B. G. (1998). Business process management: a review and evaluation. *Business Process Management Journal*, 4(3), p. 214-225.

³⁴ Moroko, L., & Uncles, M. D. (2008). Characteristics of Successful Employer Brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(2), p. 160-175.

3.3 Internal Employer Branding activities

The literature has identified the main approaches for the internal implementation of EB on which it is worthwhile to dwell, albeit briefly.

The first consideration to highlight is the intrinsic ambivalence of EB due to its character as an approach capable of performing both an attractiveness and a retention function. In fact, it can be used both externally, thus directing it towards future employees, or internally, and therefore aimed at current employees to increase their loyalty and dedication³⁵. Specifically, the care of the employer's image is prefigured as an external Employer Branding; on the other hand, identity management is ascribed to internal Employer Branding activities³⁶.

While the goal of external employer branding is to attract and retain talent who can add value to the company³⁷, internal employer branding, conversely, contributes to the creation of a working environment in which employees will help the company to achieve its objectives³⁸.

In this scenario, employer branding allows the creation of an employee value proposition (EVP) and takes care of its marketing within the organization³⁹, prefiguring the goal of retaining talented employees by increasing their determination⁴⁰. By following this approach, employees

³⁵ Theurer, C. P., Tumasjan, A., Welpel, I. M., & Lievens, F. (2016). Employer Branding: A Brand Equity-based Literature Review and Research Agenda: Brand Equity-Based Employer Branding. *International Journal of Management Reviews*, 20(1), p. 155-179.

³⁶ Lievens, F., & Slaughter, J. E. (2016). Employer image and employer branding: What we know and what we need to know. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, 3, p. 407-440.

³⁷ Moroko, L., & Uncles, M. (2005). Employer branding: The case for a multidisciplinary process related empirical investigation. In S. Purchase (Ed.), ANZMAC 2005 conference program (pp. 52-57). Australian and New Zealand Marketing Academy (ANZMAC).

³⁸ Ouchi, W. (1981). Theory Z: How American business can meet the Japanese challenge. *Business Horizons*, 24(6), p. 82-83.

³⁹ Backhaus, K. (2016). Employer Branding Revisited. *Organization Management Journal*, 13(4), p. 193-201.

⁴⁰ Chawla, P. (2020). Impact of employer branding on employee engagement in business process outsourcing (BPO) sector in India: mediating effect of person-organization fit. *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 52(1), p. 35-49; Tanwar, K., & Prasad, A. (2016).

are effectively treated as customers, and their interests are object of attention and care by the organization. In fact, the latter, thanks to targeted and functional tools, allows employees to self-define and improve their qualifications, with the aim of creating healthy interpersonal relationships and identifying employees with organizational objectives.

In consideration of the distinctly proactive nature of internal employer branding, the literature on the subject has systematically identified the tools to be used for an effective EB activity. Below is an effective synopsis found in one of the aforementioned sources.

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

By reading the activities shown in the table, the proactive nature of the internal EB tools is confirmed. In fact, all activities are evidently effective only in their interaction and complementarity. Just think of the close systemic correlation between the activities exposed, all aimed at determining an attractive corporate context: Team building, correct interactions between employees, are all related elements⁴¹. Such engagement may also be influenced, in turn, by various factors related to corporate culture and corporate networking. Think of coaching sessions, training courses on individual and professional growth⁴², opportunities to participate in career development workshops and coaching⁴³, and finally employee performance evaluation processes⁴⁴.

On this last point, two authors⁴⁵ in particular have underlined that there is a relationship between employee satisfaction and an effective internal recruitment system: internal promotions tend,

⁴¹ Herman, R. E., & Gioia, J. L. (2001). Helping Your Organization Become an Employer of Choice. *Employment Relations Today*, 28(2), p. 63-78; García, G. A., Gonzales-Miranda, D. R., Gallo, O., & Roman-Calderon, J. P. (2019). Employee involvement and job satisfaction: a tale of the millennial generation. *Employee Relations: The International Journal*, 41(3), 374-388.

⁴² Mihalcea, A. D. (2017). Employer branding and talent management in the digital age. *Management Dynamics in the Knowledge Economy*, 5(2), p. 289-306.

⁴³ Bai, Y., Yuan, J., & Pan, J. (2017). Why SMEs in emerging economies are reluctant to provide employee training: evidence from China. *International Small Business Journal: Researching Entrepreneurship*, 35(6), p. 751-766.

⁴⁴ Javidmehr, M., & Ebrahimpour, M. (2015). Performance appraisal bias and errors: The influences and consequences. *International Journal of Organizational Leadership*, 4(3), p. 286-302.; Idowu, A. (2017). Effectiveness of Performance Appraisal System and its Effect on Employee Motivation. *Nile Journal of Business and Economics*, 3(5), p. 15-39.

⁴⁵ Moroko, L., & Uncles, M. D. (2008). Characteristics of Successful Employer Brands. *Journal of Brand Management*, 16(2), p. 160-175.

in fact, to give personnel value and protect the specific investments in human capital made by businesses⁴⁶.

Therefore, from a corporate point of view, internal Employer Branding activities perform a function of "protection" of one's human capital in order to maintain a conscious loyalty of the most valuable employees. This factor is in fact decisive for the success of the corporate brand and as such it must be managed in a necessarily systemic way to consolidate the improvements obtained.

The first step is to identify the mechanisms that can be combined to create processes oriented towards strategic objectives and customer needs by modifying the corporate culture which tends to be functional in nature. Attention to process management⁴⁷, rather than to the functions performed, must start from the construction of a "friendly" and "inclusive"⁴⁸ work environment through which employees weave relationships and associations connected to the meaning of the brand and focusing on its development. Employee participation must also include their involvement in the development of future programs to increase their level of participation in the destiny of the brand.

⁴⁶ DeVaro, J., & Morita, H. (2013). Internal Promotion and External Recruitment: A Theoretical and Empirical Analysis. *Journal of Labor Economics*, 31(2), p. 227-269.; Bayo-Moriones, A., & Ortín-Ángel, P. (2006). Internal Promotion Versus External Recruitment: Industrial Plants in Spain. *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, 59(3).

⁴⁷ Lee, R. G., & Dale, B. G. (1998). Business process management: a review and evaluation. *Business Process Management Journal*, 4(3), p. 214-225.

⁴⁸ Stuss, M., & Herdan, A. (2017). External employer branding tools used for attracting graduates by energy companies listed at Warsaw Stock Exchange. *Proceedings of the 8th Economics and Finance Conference*. London.

From this point of view, knowledge of the "internal customer" is essential to understand their motivations and therefore adopt effective measures to meet the identified needs⁴⁹. Organizations are more successful when they collect and consider employee feedback, especially those that challenge existing regulations or policies⁵⁰. Companies can use surveys as a "key method" not only to evaluate but also to promote the necessary changes in the organizational structure⁵¹; by then comparing the resulting feedback with performance measurements, it is possible to determine which elements of the working environment have the greatest impact on the organization and which are the key factors that improve the efficiency of organizational processes⁵².

An internal survey is therefore an essential part of the internal Employer Branding process⁵³, as by monitoring the mood of the staff, it is possible to identify all those factors that contribute to employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction. While negative comments allow the employer to identify a current problem and

⁴⁹Kunerth, B., & Mosley, R. (2011). Applying employer brand management to employee engagement. *Strategic HR Review*, 10(3), p. 19-26.

⁵⁰ Edmondson, V. C. (2006). Organizational Surveys: A System for Employee Voice. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 34(4), p. 307-310.

⁵¹ Kraut, A. I. (1996). Introduction: An overview of organizational surveys. *Organizational surveys: Tools for assessment and change*, p. 1-14.

⁵² Mason, C. M., Chang, A. C. F. & Griffin, M. A. (2005). Strategic Use of Employee Opinion Surveys: Using a Quasi-linkage Approach to Model the Drivers of Organizational Effectiveness. *Australian Journal of Management*, 30(1), p. 127-143.

⁵³ Steel, R. P., Griffeth, R. W., Peter, W. H., & Hom, P. W. (2002). Practical retention policy for the practical manager. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(2), p. 149-162; Edmondson, V. C. (2006). Organizational Surveys: A System for Employee Voice. *Journal of Applied Communication Research*, 34(4), p. 307-310.

solve it, positive comments allow for a broader understanding of company values and how they reinforce the EVP⁵⁴.

Placing the focus of the survey on those critical aspects for employees, such as job satisfaction, satisfaction with remuneration and working conditions or the assessment of the level of work stress, allows to reinforce in employees the conviction of being a liaison point for the business and help ensure its success⁵⁵.

With specific reference to opinion polls, which, as underlined, represent the tool most frequently used by employers⁵⁶, it is also possible to detect current problems but also potential ones. In fact, employee satisfaction with the work they perform is not the only dimension to be investigated, but the entire breadth of values, attitudes and needs that influence motivation for commitment. Moreover, it has been observed that organizations that better understand the dynamics related to employee motivation in the physical, mental and social dimensions and take these analyzes into account in motivational processes, save time and money.

From the survey on the "state of the art" of EB, it is now easier to understand how the new socio-economic context determined

⁵⁴ Stuss, M., & Herdan, A. (2017). External employer branding tools used for attracting graduates by energy companies listed at Warsaw Stock Exchange. *Proceedings of 8th Economics and Finance Conference*. London.

⁵⁵ Steel, R. P., Griffeth, R. W., Peter, W. H., & Hom, P. W. (2002). Practical retention policy for the practical manager. *Academy of Management Executive*, 16(2), p. 149-162.

⁵⁶ Walters, M. (1996). *Employee Attitude and Opinion Surveys (Developing Practice)* (2nd ed.). Gardners Books.

by the evolution of a global pandemic (Covid 19) can be a decisive push for a more widespread use of EB in a competitive way.

Chapter 4: Employer branding as a competitive advantage in the post-covid job market

4.1 Human resources and marketing as drivers of Employer branding.

From the considerations made in the previous paragraphs, it is quite clear that in parallel with the evolution of the labour market and the enhancement of both the recruitment and the human resources management function, the attention of companies to employer branding strategies has developed.

The set of activities that refer to the concept of employer branding has become of particular importance precisely in relation to the strong development generated by new technologies, as well as the flexibility that has characterized the labour market since the 1990s. In this context, in fact, lifestyles that are less focused on long-term planning have been gradually affirming to the advantage of those anchored to the present. The new workers, moreover, aware of being in an increasingly “dynamic” labour market that is no longer able to guarantee conditions of stability, have adapted their expectations by focusing less and less on long-term plans.

For these reasons, the search for personnel to fill vacant positions in the company has become a crucial specialization to be entrusted to specialized branches, also to beat the competition.

In what has been called "war for talent", employer branding has been declined on the side of attracting talents, on the loyalty of the best employees and finally on remuneration policies. But in the incessant evolution of technology applied to work, flexibility in performing the service has also begun to assert its role, meaning the particular flexibility that every company with strong process engineering can allow the individual worker. In fact, this element can also play a significant role in the recruitment phase in attracting workers (see paragraph 2.3, page 21).

The recruitment function, therefore, can no longer be resolved in the mere advertising of the workplace, but must be integrated into a broader concept of attractiveness, built on a stimulating working environment, capable of capturing the attention of potential workers and guaranteeing, in addition to career paths, a dimension of the working context that is not exclusively based on remuneration policies.

From this point of view, the so-called "Benefits" can play a decisive role, i.e., all those forms of gratification not directly attributable to remuneration, but which allow the employee to feel involved in company life and its operational performance.

Now, if we consider the worker as a customer (external if not yet recruited, internal if already working in the company), the company strategies, in this advanced configuration, represent a sort of marketing aimed both inside and outside the company, to define a positive and engaging image. However, if classically understood marketing is aimed at customers, to whom the company wants to convey the value of its product and / or service so that they can buy it, this dynamic is reversed in employer

branding. In fact, the intrinsic value of human capital is the goal of employer branding strategies, aimed at attracting and retaining talent.

Another marked difference from classic marketing is the duration of the process. When a company is able to successfully convey its values to the customer, thus convincing him to buy the product / service, the marketing function is to be considered successfully fulfilled and above all completed. On the contrary, in an Employer Branding strategy, once the company has managed to "conquer" the worker, it is only at the beginning of the process. In fact, once the worker has joined the company, it will be of crucial importance not only to know how to enhance it, but also to continuously present the organization under the best possible light, as the worker will make a constant comparison between the promises made during the hiring or promotion process, with the working condition that he lives every day in the company: finding consistency between the promises of the company and the actual working reality, he will himself become an advocate of company values by "advertising" them also outside.

As is clear, the entire concept of Employer Branding is based on the assumption that satisfied and loyal human capital, as well as advocate of corporate values, are resources that a company can count on to increase its productivity and efficiency.

If, therefore, the marketing function is the main responsible for the attractiveness of the company in the recruitment phase, in the retention phase this responsibility will fall mainly on the shoulders of the human resources function. It will support the marketing department in communication during the recruitment phase, as well as ensure that the level of satisfaction and loyalty of employees towards the company remains high.

Amidst the complex unravelling resulting from the recruitment process, specific forms have been identified to make employer branding activities effective.

For example, the use of a particular approach to recruitment was envisaged: Talent Relationship Management (TRM)⁵⁷. This approach is based on a much better-known system in the field of sales: Customer Relationship Management (CRM)⁵⁸.

Unlike Employer Branding and conventional human resources marketing, generally aimed at the mass, this approach is aimed at a smaller group (Target groups can be certain professional categories, personnel in specific roles in other companies, or even graduates of specific courses).

The traditional approach to recruiting is usually focused on vacancies. A vacant position, which needs to be filled, triggers action by the marketing and human resources areas of the company. The recruitment process is then initiated: employers usually post an advertisement based on their respective position and associated challenges, awaiting applications, and then proceed to pre-selection. The most promising candidates are then subjected to a more intensive selection process, at the end of which the best candidate is offered the employment contract and the others are sent a courteous letter of denial of employment.

At this point, the problem of filling the vacancy is usually considered solved and the project can be closed.

Talent Relationship Management, on the other hand, reverses the classic recruitment process. The essence of TRM is to build a pool of talents and manage personal relationships with those selected in a structured and systematic way with the aim of retaining candidates. The rationale behind

⁵⁷ "Talent Relationship Management Competitive Recruiting Strategies in Times of Talent Shortage", Trost A., Springer, <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-642-54557-3>

⁵⁸ https://it.wikipedia.org/wiki/Customer_relationship_management

the TRM is quite simple: employers try to stay in touch with promising talent to secure them to the company sooner or later. The objective is, therefore, to ensure that a candidate expresses a concrete interest in a position usually offered in an active way by the company itself, stimulating a sort of selection process whose intensity and effectiveness naturally depend on the previous knowledge that the company has about the candidate.

The search for talent therefore becomes constant and no longer subject to the opening of a position that needs to be suddenly filled. Ultimately, it is not a question of looking for talent for a vacancy, but rather looking for a vacancy after identifying a talent.

From this point of view, TRM's activities take on a strategic character, as they refer to the long-term projection of the company's life. In fact, it is a question of identifying through a complex process not "normal" workers, but those subjects capable of developing a useful potential to gain positions over rival companies. For this reason, it is not possible to qualify the TRM as a traditional method of recruiting, rather it is an extremely active approach that develops for a certain time with the aim of attracting the potentially more professionalized candidate. Moreover, in the new job market the best talents will hardly propose themselves to the company, while it will be the company itself to be pushed to contact them after identifying them.

In this sense, the author of the aforementioned essay (Armin Trost) is the first to be aware that such a complex activity, such as TRM, involves a high consumption of resources for different areas of the company and is therefore an effort to be reserved to key positions. Of course, identifying the key positions of a company is not at all easy. In fact, the author focuses on a series of examples that make this difficulty evident.

Particularly interesting, as it is counterintuitive, is the example relating to the pilots of an airline: if the company decided to hire only the best pilots in the world, the advantages it would derive from them on the market would be substantially nil, as no passenger would notice, nor would he make his consumption choices based on this element. In this sense, it would be sufficient for the company to select pilots according to the criteria of ordinary international standards, without further efforts. To consider that of pilots a key function, according to the author, one should imagine that the airline positions itself on the market as the safest in the world, such as to attract passengers with fear of flying. Only in this hypothesis the choice of pilots, although essential, would be classified as a key function.

To schematically summarize the concepts expressed in relation to the key functions, which vary according to the company's objective, it is useful to report the scheme presented in the essay.

Strategic Focus	Key Function
Innovation, technological leadership	Research & Development
Growth	Sales
Brand leadership	Marketing, Design
Price leadership	Purchasing, Production Planning

Fig 4.3 Key functions based on a company's strategic focus⁵⁹

⁵⁹ "Talent Relationship Management Competitive Recruiting Strategies in Times of Talent Shortage", Trost A., Springer, <https://link.springer.com/content/pdf/10.1007/978-3-642-54557-3, fig. 4.3 pag. 21.>

In parallel with the key functions, the TRM also identifies the so-called Bottleneck Functions, where the determining factor is the planning relating to the number of employees necessary for the proper functioning of the company, also related to the degree of difficulty in finding them on the market.

Also in this case, the author of the essay gives an example that helps to outline the concept more clearly: although a hospital needs adequate nursing staff both quantitatively and qualitatively, it does not constitute a distinctive element for the hospital. It is clear, therefore, that this does not represent a key function for the hospital, but rather a bottleneck function because it could prove to be problematic to find a sufficient number of them on the market.

In conclusion, there are three fundamental criteria to be taken into consideration to distinguish between key functions and bottleneck functions:

- The strategic importance of a specific function in relation to the competitiveness and success of the company;
- Identification of the quantitative needs for a function, based on the quantitative planning of the necessary workforce;
- The actual availability of suitable talents to fill a specific function, also taking into account any market difficulties in recruiting.

Having outlined the main tools that a company can use to define an employer branding strategy, in the next paragraph we will try to identify what are the elements of attractiveness of a company.

4.2 Key elements for the attractiveness of a company.

It has been clarified so far what is the distinctive feature between marketing commonly understood and employer branding, with which organizations try to attract human capital and keep it in the company.

But what are the key elements to define an attractive image of the company that can be credibly projected outwards?

In his opinion, the first step in defining a credible brand image is to know the essential information on potential employees, to identify their expectations and choice parameters. For example, if the target audience is made up of a specific generation (Millennials), it will also be necessary to investigate through targeted interviews what the preferences and ambitions of this target group are.

In this context, the main data collection is that of Universum, world leader in the employer branding sector. The data collection is based on surveys conducted by interviewing over 1200 of the most authoritative professionals from 71 countries (marketing managers, HR managers, talent acquisition managers and recruiting professionals).

In the 2021 report, Universum identifies on an empirical basis the main guidelines on which the most attractive companies in the world (WMAE) have focused. The first of these guidelines has been the overinvestment that WMAE have made in internship programs aimed at both graduates and undergraduates. Having invested in these programs to a greater extent than other companies has allowed this small group of companies to build a more robust talent pipeline than those that, also due to the pandemic, have reduced or completely interrupted their programs of talent development.

Another distinctive feature of the best companies is the readiness with which they have moved to re-evaluate their Employer Value propositions considering the changing trend in worker demands brought about by the

pandemic. WMAEs have, in fact, revised their EVPs with the aim of including new values and ideas such as more flexible working conditions, diversity and inclusiveness.

Furthermore, the WMAEs continued to focus on and invest in data collection, aimed at improving decision-making processes. The availability of reliable data, aided by a consolidated review process and the company's ability to react based on results, has allowed WMAEs to gain a significant advantage over the competition. This has allowed the best companies:

- a) to be more reactive in changing and adapting their brand value;
- b) to expand their talent supply chain;
- c) to reduce the time needed to hire, as well as to give visibility to the eyes of the workforce.

Another feature that distinguishes WMAEs from the competition is the importance they attach to the concept of "purpose", making it an integral part of their EVPs. This approach is particularly effective in attracting young professionals who aspire to work for companies that reflect their values. In this sense, the Universum report quotes a statement by Yll Barjraktari, executive director of the US National Security Commission on Artificial Intelligence: *"We've talked to hundreds of companies in the last two years, and a lot of people are still motivated by an opportunity to work on solving real-world problems, whether on climate, healthcare, disaster related activities"*.

Once the elements on which the company must leverage to provide an image of itself as attractive as possible have been identified, the company has the task of identifying the most suitable channels to communicate its values externally. This phase, commonly referred to as Employer Brand Communication, encompasses all the choices that the company makes in

terms of communication. It will therefore provide for the identification of a channel, the identification of the target group, the choice of the tone of voice to be given to the message, as well as the creation of the message itself.

In the current panorama, the choice of communication channels cannot fail to fall on social networks. These are, in fact, the platforms most frequented by the majority of the population, who use them not only as a leisure tool, but also to actively seek work. According to the data also collected by Universum in 2020⁶⁰, in fact, 84% of young talents actively seek to participate in virtual career events organized by companies, and 75% are willing to work for a company they have met solely through virtual recruiting events. From this point of view, what emerges from specific research conducted with extremely rigorous methods is particularly significant. In this study⁶¹, the researchers presented a series of subjects with both positive and negative reviews, monitoring through an eye-tracking system where their attention was focused. The results revealed unequivocally that the time spent by subjects on negative reviews is twice as high as that dedicated to positive ones. Furthermore, the data revealed by the research showed that subjects perceive the E-Wom (electronic word of mouth) in different ways, depending on if they have pre-existing information regarding the employer in question. Finally, research shows that e-wom credibility and perception are directly related to a company reputation.

The choice of the social network, therefore, in addition to being the first in logical order, will inevitably also influence the form and the tone of voice of the message. It is therefore useful to make an overview of the

⁶⁰ Universum Survey to Early Talent 2020

⁶¹ Yu, K. Y., Goh, K. H., & Kawasaki, S. (2022). Investigating electronic word-of-mouth on social media: An eye-tracking approach. *Human Resource Management*, 61(5), 599–616. <https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22099>

most used social networks, with particular attention to the types of content they host and the most represented demographic on each platform:

- **Instagram:** is the most used platform by young people (Millennials and Gen Z) and hosts immediate and fast-consuming content. Communication on this particular social network takes place purely through multimedia content such as photos and videos, thus rewarding a more concise and immediate type of communication, driven almost solely by the attractiveness and immediacy of the multimedia content. Instagram is therefore the most suitable social network to show the company reality from a more human point of view, publishing content focused on employees and the working environment in general, such as presenting one's employees, showing team building activities or communicating the company values.
- **Facebook:** the other social network of the Meta group, has a much more varied target in terms of age. Although it is in many ways similar to Instagram, here the communication is focused on more discursive and detailed content. Facebook is therefore more suitable for hosting newspaper articles that talk about the company or links that refer to open positions in the company.
- **LinkedIn:** very different from the social networks of the Meta group, LinkedIn is the social network most closely linked to the world of work. Users are in fact profiled for the company they work for and for the role they hold. This allows the company to have a direct line with its employees who become the first promoters of the company's values, telling their positive experiences, the working environment in general and re-sharing the contents published by the company, thus providing the company a further sounding board for its Employer Branding strategy.

4.3 The advantages of employer branding in numbers

In the previous chapters, the main theoretical aspects that support employer branding, the most suitable means to communicate it to the inside and outside of the company as well as the main actors responsible for the implementation of this approach have been outlined. This paragraph will offer empirical evidence to show the economic benefits of Employer Branding.

Research published by Glassdoor⁶² in 2021⁶³ highlighted how a successful Employer Branding strategy is a key factor in forming a High Performing Team, as it allows the company to place itself at the top of the preference list of those who are actively seeking work. In this regard, to underline the importance of an excellent Employer Branding strategy, Glassdoor provides several statistics that highlight the profiling process to which job seekers submit companies at the time of application.

The study reports that 86% of job seekers and employees search for reviews and ratings of a company before submitting their application.

The consistency with which it is managed, updated and monitored over time is of crucial importance for a successful Employer Branding strategy. Glassdoor reports, in fact, how 75% of job seekers are more likely to submit their application if the company actively manages its Employer Brand, the same study reports that 68% of Millennials, 54% of Gen X and 48% of Boomers use a company's social media channels to grasp its Employer Brand and reputation. In this sense, Glassdoor found that, out

⁶² Glassdoor is an American website where current and former employees anonymously review companies. Headquartered in San Francisco, California, it has additional offices in Chicago, Dublin, London, and São Paulo. Glassdoor also allows its users to anonymously submit and view salaries as well as search and apply for jobs on its platform: <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Glassdoor>.

⁶³ <https://www.glassdoor.com/employers/blog/most-important-employer-branding-statistics/>

of a sample made up of US workers, 86% of women and 67% of men would not be willing to work for a company with a bad reputation.

As already extensively discussed in the previous chapters, a winning Employer Branding strategy is decisive in the recruitment phase, both from the economic and from the attractiveness side. A good reputation, according to Glassdoor, gives the company considerable bargaining power in the interview, as it is capable of influencing the candidate and his requests. According to Glassdoor's research, 50% of candidates would not work for a company with a bad reputation, even in the face of a salary increase. Conversely, the research reveals that 92% of respondents would be willing to change jobs if the offer came from a company with an excellent reputation. Conversely, a bad reputation can cost a company over 10% more when hiring, as evidenced by research from the 2016⁶⁴ Harvard Business Review. For example, based on an average salary of \$ 47,230⁶⁵, a turnover rate of 16.4% and a 10% salary increase due to a bad reputation, Harvard Business Review estimates that a company of 10,000 employees could spend up to to \$ 7.6 million in wage increases.

As already extensively analysed above, the objective of Employer Branding does not end at the time of hiring. The reputation of a company, therefore, also plays a fundamental role in the retention phase. Glassdoor also notes that almost 30% of workers have left their jobs after 90 days of employment, reporting misalignment with the Employer Brand as a reason. The study notes how an active and participatory approach by the company and its employees can prove to be a key factor in improving the reputation of the company in the eyes of employees and candidates: 7 out

⁶⁴ <https://hbr.org/2016/03/a-bad-reputation-costs-company-at-least-10-more-per-hire>

⁶⁵ May 2014 Bureau of Labor Statistics: <https://www.bls.gov/opub/ted/2015/occupational-employment-wages-2014.htm>

of 10 people interviewed by Glassdoor say they have changed their mind on a company after seeing the latter reply to a review.

Companies that actively invest in their Employer Brand can reduce the turnover rate by 28%. The aforementioned study states, with regard to the communication of actual working conditions in the company, that the voice of the employees is three times more credible than that of the CEO.

After analysing the context and the reasons that led to the birth of the concept of Employer Branding, having provided relevant data about its various present and future applications, it now appears useful to examine the various EB models provided by the literature and research.

Chapter 5: Some of the most successful employer branding models

5.1 The Brett Minchington and Ryan Estis' model

The first Employer Branding model under analysis is the result of the joint efforts of Ryan Estis⁶⁶ and Brett Minchington⁶⁷. Estis, one of the Top 100 Keynote Speakers in America, is a Business Performance expert who works alongside companies, managers and salespeople to support them in creating a connection between customers and employees. Brett

⁶⁶ Ryan Estis: <https://ryanestis.com/>

⁶⁷ Brett Minchington: <https://www.brettminchington.com/>

Minchington is one of the world's foremost authorities in the field of Employer Branding and CEO of Employer Brand International (EBI)⁶⁸.

Minchington and Estis identify six key areas on which a company should focus in order to achieve a successful Employer Branding strategy, capable of achieving the set goals:

- a) Assessing how the Employer Branding is perceived inside the company.**
- b) Defining objectives and the scope of the Employer Brand.**
- c) The relationship between HR, Marketing and communication.**
- d) Ascertaining you own EB.**
- e) CEO and Senior Management involvement.**
- f) Communication planning.**

The first area (a) refers to the initial stages of an Employer Branding project, in which, according to Minchington and Estis, the company must understand how it is perceived within the company. Treating the EB strategy as a departmental project, according to the authors, may limit its effectiveness and disconnect it from the overall business strategy.

Subsequently, according to the model, the company must establish the scope and objectives of the EB in the very early stages of the project's life, and model them on the basis of its own "life cycles", which are different and variable for each company. Regardless of the objectives (decrease the staff turnover rate, increase the volume of recruitments, improve the quality of candidates, etc.), this approach, the authors report, will allow the EB project to fall within the established time and budget limits.

⁶⁸ The EBI company is responsible for providing advice, publications, events and training to all 51 companies looking for EB strategies: it is made up of business professionals and academics from around the world. EBI chairs global research forums to help the scientific progress of employer branding. In 2011 it published the largest independent worldwide research study on Employer Branding. <https://www.employerbrandinternational.com/>

By its nature, an EB project requires a high rate of collaboration between the various departments of a company. This can lead to several difficulties in delineating the “ownership” and direction of EB's strategy, resulting in “power struggles”, project postponements and minimization of creativity and strategy. These conflicting dynamics can be avoided, in the authors’ opinion, through a clear definition of roles and skills, in this sense, the HR department will have the task of pushing EB's strategy by increasing awareness within the company.

The key to the success of an EB strategy, according to Minchington and Estis, is an understanding of organizational culture, work experience, key talent drivers, external perception, leadership vision and managerial practices. This will allow the creation of a message that is authentic, convincing, differentiated, internally shared and communicated to the external market, as well as being constantly respected by the company.

The authors identify the involvement of the CEO and senior management in the early stages of the development of the EB strategy as a key factor in ensuring the achievement of the set objectives.

The choice of communication channels must be accompanied by an adequate allocation of economic and human resources. Being present on any social platform without the adequate resources to respond and actively involve the community created, would result in a waste of resources and a failure to achieve the objectives.

Make sure that the message is consistently communicated by the company also globally, paying particular attention to all the nuances and cultural differences of the cultural areas to which the message is addressed. In this regard, the involvement of one's employees or a local salesperson can help to increase the level of understanding of the cultural context in which one operates.

5.2 The Backhaus and Tikoo model

The second model under analysis is the one conceived in 2004 by K. Backhaus, professor of management at the New Platz Business School (NY), and by S. Tikoo, professor of Marketing at Monarch Swiss Business School. The model is entirely based on two essential assets: external marketing and internal marketing⁶⁹. The first refers to the company's ability to attract new talent in line with its needs, the second concerns the ability to retain the best employees.

According to the authors, the Employer Brand Image can be defined in terms similar to the Brand Associations⁷⁰: just as a consumer will be more attracted to the company that best reflects their values, a candidate will also be more willing to work for the company they believe to be more in line with their values and needs. The model differentiates between Functional Benefits (salaries, benefits, leave allowances) and Symbolic Benefits (perception of the company's prestige, social approval that candidates imagine they will receive if they work for the company). The offer provided by the company in terms of benefits, according to the authors, represents the main element of differentiation from the competition: just as a consumer compares the offers of products and services of various companies, in the same way the candidates will express preferences for a company compared to another based on the benefits offered.

⁶⁹ Kristin Backhaus, Surinder Tikoo, (2004) Conceptualizing and researching employer branding, Career Development International, Vol. 9 Iss: 5, pp.501 - 517: https://www.researchgate.net/profile/Kristin-Backhaus/publication/235310489_Conceptualizing_and_researching_employer_branding/links/55144c190cf283ee083517fe/Conceptualizing-and-researching-employer-branding.pdf

⁷⁰ "Brand Associations are the thoughts and ideas that a brand name evokes in the minds of consumers", (Aaker, 1991)

5.3 The Talent Magnet model

Developed by the consulting firm The Right Group⁷¹, the Talent Magnet model is the most flexible of the models analyzed so far, adaptable to the specific needs of the company that employs it.

The Talent Magnet is divided into five phases:

1. **Audit & Analysis:** in this phase objectives and strategy are defined and the initial situation is compared with the desired one.
2. **Employer Value Proposition:** it continues with the creation of an Employer Value Proposition consistent with the vision and mission of the company and able to differentiate it from the competition in order to attract young talents and retain employees with the greatest potential.
3. **Testing & Approval:** EVP tests are carried out across all departments of the company, followed by the implementation of a communication strategy capable of capturing the attention of its target audience.
4. **Alignment & Communication:** the fourth phase aims to align the entire organization with EB's strategy in order to optimize the hiring and retention processes.
5. **Management & Metrics:** the last phase consists in the comparison between the results obtained and the objectives set.

The Talent Magnet model also envisages a high rate of collaboration between the various company functions (in particular Human Resources and Marketing).

⁷¹ The Right Group is a consulting company founded in 1995 that deals with offering brand strategies through practical management advice within the EB field. (<https://therightgroup.com.au/>).

5.4 The E.Amendola Model: Employer Brand Global Framework

The latest model under consideration is the one designed by Eugenio Amendola, Managing Director of Anthea 57 Consulting srl and Chairman of the HR Innovation Forum⁷².

The Employer Brand Global Framework model is divided into four conceptual areas⁷³ that are not chronologically linked:

1. **Employer Brand Experience:** this area emphasizes how the set of tangible and intangible factors are the main determinants of the experience of employees within the company.
2. **Employer Brand Positioning:** ensures, through the positioning of the brand, the identification of a target of candidates.
3. **Employer Brand Action:** the portfolio of activities that can be implemented for the realization of the model is shown (initial analysis, perspective, monitoring and development).
4. **Employer Brand Benefits:** in this phase the final result is analysed. If the strategy has been successfully implemented, it will be able to effectively and efficiently attract the target candidates, bringing benefits also in terms of process costs, such as shorter recruitment time, greater involvement of employees in company dynamics.

⁷² Eugenio Amendola: <https://www.linkedin.com/in/eugenioamendola/>

⁷³ E. Amendola, Corporate recruiting. Employer branding e nuove tendenze Ed. Anthea Consulting 2008.

Conclusions

In the first two chapters of this thesis, we deliberately focused on the macroeconomic context determined in the last 30 years characterized by the so-called globalization of the markets. This starting point served to place the specific theme of employer branding in the new economic system, characterized by a very strong competitive dynamic and by uncertainty, both fuelled by the geopolitical framework and by the incessant progress of technological innovation; uncertainty aggravated by the onset of the pandemic. The latter, in fact, has profoundly affected the relationship between work and private life, making the recruitment activities of companies and their ability to retain personnel even more complex. To further understand such impact, it would suffice here to cite a story recently reported by *Corriere della Sera* (written by Antonio Polito), which circulates among entrepreneurs in the industrial triangle of Brescia: "once interviews used to end with a "thank you, we'll let you know" by the employer to the candidate, nowadays interviews end with a "thank you, I'll let you know" by the candidate to the employer".

Therefore, if this is the new situation companies must deal with, it doesn't seem so farfetched to imagine how difficult it will be to fill the 3.8 million jobs which, according to the Unioncamere-Anpal report, will become available between now and 2027. In the post covid world, more and more young people, even talented ones, are wondering about the meaning of work in their growth path, not only professionally but also personally. The new generations no longer experience work solely as a necessary means of sustenance, steeped in renunciations and sacrifices, but as an expression of their personal identity based on a solid network of human and professional relationships. In short, the new generations appear to be distant from their fathers and grandparents and very careful to employ part

of their working time in tasks that bring satisfaction, with participation in the achievement of objectives, and relative gratification, including economic or second welfare.

Starting from the description of this macroeconomic context, in chapters 3 and 4 Employer Branding, already known since the 1990s, was identified as the most appropriate tool to face this new reality. After having focused on all the elements that the academic literature has highlighted with reference to EB, we then moved on to examine the theoretical models that the main authors have elaborated.

At the conclusion of this discussion, it seems possible to state that the development of an Employer Branding strategy can allow the few Italian companies (medium and large) to reconcile the needs for competitiveness which lead to strong control over labor costs, with the need to acquire talented workers, willing to lead the company towards improvement objectives over time.

Offering a stimulating work environment, characterized by strong participation in company results, using new forms of work that allow for the reconciliation of private life with work, can represent the key to facing the challenges posed by the new economic system. In particular, EB strategies can allow companies to counter the new phenomenon of "quiet quitting", i.e., voluntary resignations, which in 2022 alone grew by 22% compared to 2021 and involved over 1 million workers (according to the Ministry of Labor data).

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