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HRM AS A MARKETING FUNCTION: SELLING EMPLOYER BRANDING, ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE, AND CORPORATE IMAGE TO PROSPECTIVE EMPLOYEES IN A MEDIATED MODEL

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Abstract

This study explores the role of HRM as a marketing function in shaping organizational attractiveness and its subsequent effects on employee recruitment outcomes. Using a quantitative approach, we tested the relationships between Employer Branding, Organizational Culture, Corporate Image, Organizational Attractiveness, and Employee Recruitment Outcomes. The findings reveal that while organizational attractiveness serves as a key mediator between organizational culture and recruitment outcomes, the relationships between employer branding, corporate image, and organizational attractiveness were not as expected. Contrary to existing literature, employer branding and organizational culture were found to have a negative influence on organizational attractiveness, potentially due to misalignments between branding messages and actual workplace experiences. The study's findings underscore the complexity of integrating marketing principles into HRM and highlight the need for authenticity in employer branding to effectively attract and retain top talent.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Organizational Culture, Corporate Image, Organizational Attractiveness, Employee Recruitment.

1. BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY

Currently, organizations are fighting over resources, forcing them to appreciate the need to incorporate marketing techniques into Human Resource Management (HRM) to attract and retain skilled personnel. This strategy, known as HR marketing, entails marketing an organization's culture, values, and other attributes to both existing and potential employees. If companies are able to communicate this effectively, they stand to enhance their employer brand and attract talent that fits with their organizational culture (Busa & Rutitis, 2023). The combination of marketing with HR functions is apparent in the attempts to

integrate employer branding and recruitment marketing. Employer branding seeks to capture how the company's culture, values, and human resource development opportunities are presented and thus facilitates the creation of an employer brand that attracts the desired talent and enhances the firm's image in the market (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In addition, the coordination of marketing and HR departments is important for building a positive employer brand and culture. Advertising, PR, and social media strategies as marketing tools greatly influence the perception of the organization among employees. Positive employer branding is the outcome of repetitive communication that is in harmony with the company's values and culture (Wijaya et al., 2023). For example, using marketing methods in HRM enables companies to better articulate their value propositions, target and recruit candidates with the right skills, as well as the right cultural fit, and improve the company's position in the talent competition (Mallen & CampusLogic, 2018).

1.1. Problem Statement

The competition for talent has necessitated the application of marketing concepts in Human Resource Management (HRM) disciplines. Still, there is little understanding of the ways HR functions as a marketing department besides the obvious task of selling organizational culture and employer branding. Numerous organizations find it difficult to integrate HRM policies with marketing functions, which results in the inconsistency of the employer's brand and the inability to attract talent (Kantar & Bouckennooghe, 2021). One of the primary challenges has to do with a proper nexus that joins HR marketing, employee perceptions, and organizational performance. Although there has been progress in developing concepts like employer branding and recruitment marketing, their effect on target employees' choices is still not analyzed (Theurer et al., 2018). Moreover, they do not know how to demonstrate the success of their HR marketing activity, which makes it impossible to analyze the impact of these strategies on the preferences of job seekers and levels of engagement among employees (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). Moreover, the growing dependence on digital platforms for employer branding and recruitment casts doubt on the genuineness of organizational culture representations. Many companies find it difficult to manage the online employer brand and the actual brand, which results in growing discrepancies between reality and expectations for new employees (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). These discrepancies can have dire consequences for employee retention, as misaligned expectations result in discontent and increased turnover (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Considering these issues, it is necessary to explore the functions of human resources as a marketing function concerning employer branding, recruitment marketing, and the communication of organizational culture. It is critical to understand how organizations can market themselves to prospective employees while being able to protect their organizational authenticity to enhance talent acquisition, employee engagement, and overall organizational performance (Leekha Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Concept of HRM as a Marketing Function

The application of marketing concepts in Human Resource Management (HRM) has gained notable attention in recent times. Marketing, traditionally a business auxiliary function, has a definite place in Human Resource Management that was once thought of as a standalone function consisting of recruitment, training, performance evaluation, and employee relations (Hair et al., 2012). In contrast, with the level of competition for hiring good employees escalating, firms are beginning to market their organization's image as an employer to be desired (Kantar & Bouckennooghe, 2021; Pahi et al., 2024). This transformation demonstrates the broader perspective in understanding the function of HRM as a marketing function through employer branding, where organizations are engaged in "selling" their organizational culture, philosophy, as well as working environment to their employees

and potential employees (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005).

Employer branding is one concept developed in HRM as a marketing function that deals with branding an organization in a way that attempts to position itself as an employer of choice using communication and marketing tools and techniques (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Within the framework of HRM, employer branding borrows from the marketing concepts of brand identity, brand image, marketing communication, employee loyalty, and reputation, which consolidate the identity of the organization's internal culture and external perception (Theurer et al., 2018). Enhanced employer branding positively influences employees' perceptions of organizational capabilities, which ultimately increases the number of applications for better-qualified candidates (Leekha Chhabra & Sharma, 2014).

Marketing of employment positions is another important aspect that uses marketing strategies like digital advertisement, social media, and content marketing to capture potential employees marketing the organization (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Marketing of recruitment involves designing sophisticated job offers, building positive employee impressions, and disseminating them over the Internet. Evidence suggests that firms having stronger employer brands advertised through digital media get substantially more interested applicants than those who do not market their brand in the digital environment (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Moreover, the marketing of organizational culture has a fundamental function in making sure that employees perceive their workplace as consistent with the organization's values and mission. Marketing emphasis on work culture typically results in higher employee retention and lower employee turnover rates (Kantar & Bouckennooghe, 2021). Employees' integration into the organizational culture and their satisfaction at work are positively correlated with one's willingness to stay and support the organization in the long run (Ehrhart & Ziegert, 2005). In spite of the advantages, there are obstacles to treating HRM as a marketing function. A more significant problem is the legitimacy of an employer's branding. When the marketed image of an organization differs from the actual employee experience, it usually results in frustration and high turnover. To preserve credibility with people employed and seeking jobs, organizations need to ensure that their branding does not misrepresent the actual work conditions rates (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016).

2.2. Employer Branding and Organizational Culture

In the contemporary landscape of human resource management, employer branding constitutes an important consideration, especially as companies strive to stand out in the competitive marketplace for talent. It encapsulates the communication strategies of an organization concerning its identity, culture, values, and the employees that it has or intends to have (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Such strategies ideally position the organization as an employer of choice while enabling the company to attract and retain talent that meets its mission and vision. The branding of an employer is important because it can alter the organization's image to prospective employees and, thus, their motives to apply for or accept job offers (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). A critical component of successful employer branding is the fit between the organization's brand and its culture. An organization's culture, which consists of values, beliefs, and accepted practices, is essential in making sure employer branding campaigns are genuine and impactful (Schein, 2010). When organizational culture is integrated into employer branding communications, it increases the credibility of the organization's image and helps enhance employees' satisfaction and involvement (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Conversely, gaps between the promised employer brand and the real work conditions may have adverse effects such as job dissatisfaction and attrition (Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Building an employer brand goes far beyond marketing; it includes developing an employee-friendly organizational culture. Employees tend to stay with organizations that correspond with their values and work style preferences, as these factors affect satisfaction and commitment to the organization (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012). The impact of organizational culture within employer branding relates to the perception of the company's leadership, diversity, innovation, and general approach to work-life balance (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012). The association of employer branding

with organizational culture highlights the necessity for employers to provide a unified image internally and externally to effectively manage talent (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). Moreover, branding an employer also influences the organization's capacity to motivate employees and be productive. Employees who strongly identify with an organization tend to take pride in their work, which can improve commitment and performance (Ahmad, Rafiq, & Ahmed, 2019; Edwards, 2010). As organizations seek to attract top talent, nurturing a positive organizational culture in line with employer branding will result in an increasingly engaged workforce and a strengthened employer brand (Tohidi & Jabbari, 2012).

2.3. Corporate Image and Its Role in Recruitment

The corporate image is primarily understood as the perceived picture of a given organization by its various stakeholders, such as employees, customers, investors, and even the general public (Fombrun, 1996). A positive corporate image is essential not only for retaining customer satisfaction and competitive edge but also during the recruitment of candidates. Organizations with strong and favorable images are more likely to be seen as attractive employers, and this helps them be more competitive in recruiting top talent (Turban & Greening, 1997).

One of the primary ways corporate image influences recruitment is through the impact it has on the employer brand. The employer brand is the organization's identity as an employer and is also linked to a corporate image in that a strong corporate image enhances an organization's appeal to prospective employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). As asserted by Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005), a company's image can be an important asset in recruitment by communicating important values, cultures, and working conditions to the employees. Signaling a good corporate image is stability, fairness, and a good work-life balance, which are some of the aspects that job seekers look for. The impact of the corporate image in recruitment activities is more noticeable in some competitive markets. Some organizations strive to achieve a positive reputation because it helps them appropriate skilled human resources. Ethically inclined organizations and socially responsible employers tend to attract more employees with similar ethical values (Turban & Greening, 1997). The same trend is noted when job applicant's corporate image of organizations assists them in making positive decisions about applying for jobs (Stephenson, 2018). Corporate image has effects on organizational attractiveness, which subsequently impacts recruitment outcomes. As posited by Highhouse, Lievens and Sinar (2003), organizational attractiveness is defined as the perception that an organization is a good place to work. Interested applicants perceive organizations with positive corporate images to be more attractive, thus increasing application rates and the number of suitable applicants (Ledi & Ameza-Xemalordzo, 2023). Consequently, organizations that need to fill particular positions of responsibilities from the opened vacancies tend to enhance the standard of their employees, thereby improving the merit of hires. Furthermore, the corporate image has an important impact on employee retention. Potential employees who are motivated to join a company because of its strong corporate image are likely to possess more favorable work expectations. When these expectations are met or exceeded, employees tend to demonstrate high levels of job satisfaction, commitment, and retention (Korschun, Bhattacharya, & Swain, 2014). On the other hand, a gap between the company's corporate image and the actual work environment can result in employee discontent and increased attrition (Berthon et al., 2005).

2.4. The Role of Organizational Attractiveness as a Mediator

Organizational attractiveness assists in shaping the processes for recruitment by affecting how potential employees perceive an organization and their willingness to work for it (Highhouse et al., 2003). As a mediator, organizational attractiveness acts as a link to employer branding, corporate image, and the final recruitment results. It denotes the extent to which the company is regarded as favorable by job seekers, which affects

both their feelings toward the company and their willingness to undertake the application processes (Koch-Bayram & Kaibel, 2023). Studies have found that organizational attractiveness can stem from a variety of sources, including the firm's CSR activities, the company culture, the remuneration and benefits offered, and the public relations image of the firm (Allen et al. 2007). These elements help to create a positive image of an organization and have a strong impact on the intention of job seekers to apply for employment. A favorable corporate image or a well-known employer brand can increase organizational attractiveness and thus act as an important mediator in the recruitment process (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In this case, organizational attractiveness is an outcome of the company's investment in employer branding and corporate image and explains the increased chances of the organization attracting the preferred employees.

Using the militaristic framing of marketing, advertising, and communiqués, an "employer brand" tends to synonymize the organization's reputation as an employer with other brands offered by the organization. Each brand comes with a set of expectations to be fulfilled. Berthon et al. (2005) assert that employer branding is correlated with recruitment outcomes because organizational attractiveness mediates this relationship through job seekers' perceptions of organizational culture, fit, and values. As branding attempts become more in sync with the values and expectations of potential employees, organizational attractiveness improves, thus increasing the number of job applications from those who are qualified (Koch-Bayram & Kaibel, 2023). This, in turn, leads to more effective employment branding because it ensures that organizations attract not only those who are skilled but also those who will thrive in the organization's culture and value system. In addition, organizational attractiveness is a motivator for improved employee engagement and retention. An individual or a group of individuals positively identified with the organization's image and branding is more likely to want to join and subsequently engage with the organization. The discrepancy or alignment between the anticipated and actual working environment cultivates a sense of identity and fulfillment within the organization (Chowdhury et al., 2023). Thus, it is the attractiveness of the organization that enables the organization to not only attract talent but also enables the organization to retain its employees by ensuring the organizational environment remains attractive throughout the employment lifecycle.

Blau's social exchange theory (1964) suggests that organizational attractiveness is a construct that can be studied from several perspectives. The theory states that people are more willing to engage in reciprocal interactions with entities that they feel will benefit them or meet their expectations (for instance, a favorable workplace culture, reasonable employer policies, etc). As an outcome of employer branding, organizational attractiveness affects recruitment results by attracting prospective employees who decide to apply for open positions. This argument suggests that organizational attractiveness mediates the recruitment process and thus aids the obverse outcome of employer branding and corporate image by increasing the number of applicants and enhancing employee retention rates. As an organizational mediator, attractiveness enables the organization to capture the talents of the people it wants and makes the organization more desirable to prospective employees. As a result, organizations need to focus on building their brand image, image of the organization, and organization's culture to become more attractive and, thus, able to successfully recruit and retain employees.

2.5. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework for understanding the adoption of HRM as a marketing function in the recruitment process can be grounded in several key theories, including Signaling Theory and Employer Branding Theory. These theories offer valuable insights into how organizations communicate their identity to prospective employees and how this communication influences their recruitment decisions.

2.5.1. Signaling Theory

Signaling Theory, initially developed in economics and applied to labor markets, posits that employers and

employees exchange signals that help reduce information asymmetry during recruitment processes (Spence, 1978). In the context of employer branding and HRM as a marketing function, organizations send signals to prospective employees about their organizational culture, values, and working conditions. These signals can be explicit (e.g., job advertisements, recruitment brochures, online presence) or implicit (e.g., reputation, employee testimonials). During the recruitment process, signals provide information that assists a job seeker in assessing if a company is appealing or not. Positive signals such as the organizational culture, core values, and working conditions offered by an organization may increase its attractiveness and the interest of potential job candidates (Turban & Greening, 1997). On the other hand, weak or negative signals may cause the right candidates to not apply, particularly if they view the organization as lacking credibility or does not share their values. Therefore, signaling theory proposes that initiatives of employer branding, using their signals, can make a considerable impact on the attraction of talent and, consequently, the results of recruitment.

2.5.2. Employer Branding Theory

The focus of the Employer Branding Theory is on the development and maintenance of an organization's particular identity as an employer of choice, which helps to differentiate the organization in the competitive labor market (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Promoting the company as an employer of choice involves communicating its culture, value systems, and other benefits associated with employment in the company (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). From the theoretical perspective of employer branding, organizations proactively manage their image among job seekers by communicating both functional and emotional aspects of their employment offer. Functional aspects include direct benefits such as salary and a chance for advancement. Emotional aspects cover the culture of the organization, the values of the people in the organization as well as the work environment (Berthon et al., 2005). Collectively, these attributes define the reputation of the organization in the eyes of prospective employees and determine its competitiveness in the labor market.

Emphasis on Employer Branding suggests an integrated approach in which the culture inside an organization is compatible with how prospective employees look at the company. Employers who have a strong and positive image are more likely to receive applications from individuals whose beliefs and behaviors are congruent with the employer's organizational culture and are more likely to be engaged and retained (Chowdhury et al., 2023). In addition, these employers will stand out in the market and will be more preferred because they can market a strong employer brand as supporting these employers' positive value propositions (Koch-Bayram & Kaibel, 2023). Using the principles of Employer Branding Theory enables an organization to implement strategies to communicate the employer value proposition in a way that positions the organization more appealingly and positively, affecting recruitment.

2.5.3. Merger of Signaling and Employer Branding Theory

Both Signaling and Employer Branding theories complete each other and provide an understanding of the role of human resource management (HRM), especially about recruitment, as part of the organizational marketing strategy. The former views the act of branding as an action an organization takes to disclose its identity, while the latter is concerned with the creation and dissemination of the organization's identity. Both heads state the importance of recruitment for the image of the organization, especially how the organization is portrayed, to attract, engage, and retain the most qualified candidates. Consider, for example, the case of a strong employer brand. Such a brand acts as an uninterrupted and dependable signal to prospective applicants regarding the company's cultural beliefs and values thereby aiding the applicants in their decision-making processes (Turban & Greening, 1997). With effective strategies of employer branding, companies can improve their recruitment activities, increase their competitive position within the labor market, and develop a sustainable talent pipeline. The integration of Signaling

Theory and Employer Branding Theory offers a robust theoretical framework for understanding how HRM as a marketing function can drive successful recruitment outcomes. By focusing on the signals they send to potential employees and aligning those signals with the organization's employer brand, firms can attract candidates who are more likely to be engaged and committed to the organization. Based on the above discussion, the following research framework can be developed.

2.6. Research Framework

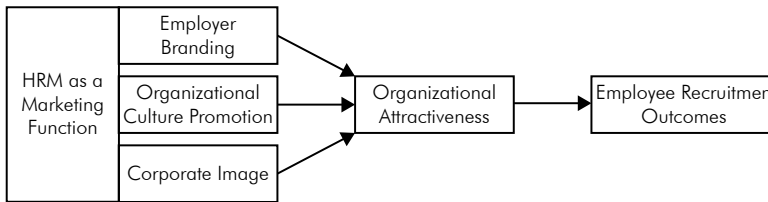


Figure 1: Research Framework.

2.7. Hypotheses

H1: Employer branding positively influences organizational attractiveness.

H2: Organizational culture positively influences organizational attractiveness.

H3: Corporate image positively impacts organizational attractiveness.

H4: Organizational attractiveness mediates the relationship between employer branding and employee recruitment outcomes.

H5: Organizational attractiveness mediates the relationship between corporate image and employee recruitment outcomes.

H6: Organizational attractiveness mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee recruitment outcomes.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Design

This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the relationships between Employer Branding (EB), Organizational Culture (OC), Corporate Image (CI), Organizational Attractiveness (OA), and Employee Recruitment Outcomes (ERO). A quantitative approach is appropriate for hypothesis testing and determining causal relationships using statistical analysis (Chopra, Sahoo, & Patel, 2023).

3.2. Population and Sampling

This research focuses on job seekers, human resource managers, HR consultants, and business leaders from Saudi Arabia and Bahrain, as they have a significant influence, whether direct or indirect, on employer branding, organizational culture, or corporate image in the recruitment processes. In total, Google survey forms were shared with 250 respondents, of which 220 were valid responses that were analyzed. The convenience sampling method was employed, which provides easy access to respondents making employment decisions and engaging in HR activities. The constructs were calculated employing the five-point Likert scale, where 1 means Strongly Disagree and 5 means Strongly Agree, concerning previously verified scales. The employee recruitment outcomes (DV) were evaluated with five items derived from the recruitment effectiveness scale developed by Shrivastava (2022).

Organizational attractiveness (Mediator) was evaluated using six items from Highhouse et al. (2003) that measure an organization’s desirability in comparison to other organizations. Employer branding (IV) was evaluated with seven items derived from Berthon et al. (2005) that capture employer brand appeal and reputation. Organizational culture (IV) was evaluated with eight items from the Denison Organizational Culture Survey (Denison & Mishra, 1995), which measures the perception of core organizational values and the work environment. Corporate image (IV) was evaluated with six items from the Fombrun, Gardberg and Sever (2000) Reputation Quotient scale that measures the external perception of an organization. These scales guarantee the reliability and validity of researching the effect of HRM as a marketing function in the processes of recruitment.

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Data Normality Assessment

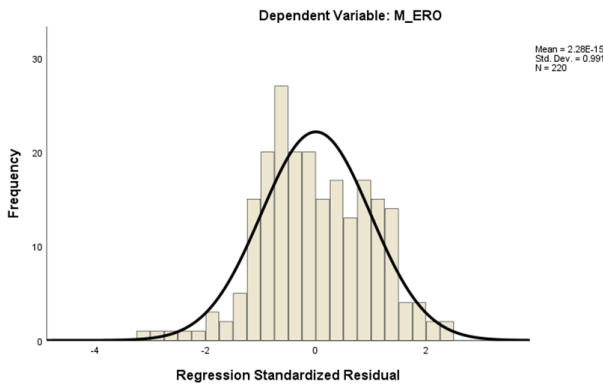


Figure 2: Histogram.

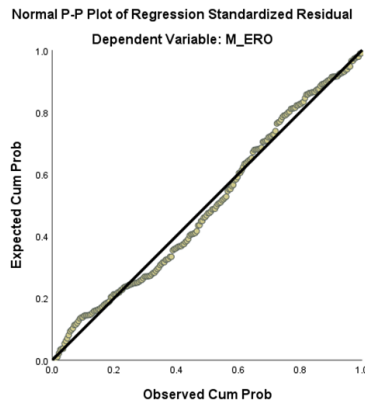


Figure 3: p-p plot.

The descriptive statistics, as presented in Table 1, show an overall coherent dataset for the constructs analyzed in the model, such as Employer Branding (M_EB), Organizational Culture (M_OC), Corporate Image (M_CI), Organizational Attractiveness (M_OA), Employee Recruitment Outcomes (M_ERO). Every construct seems to have means around 3, which implies the respondents tend to

give ratings to the factors somewhere in the neutral to mildly positive vicinity of the Likert scale. In addition, the relatively small standard deviations for all variables suggest a moderate rather than a high agreement level among the respondents, which is helpful in achieving consistency in the data. The skewness and kurtosis values serve as indicators for the normality of the data. For instance, M_EB, M_OC, M_CI, and M_OA have slight skewness (-0.026 to 0.077) and moderate Kurtosis (-0.426 to 0.326), which implies that the distributions are more or less symmetric and approximating normality which is critical to using parametric tests such as regression analysis. The negative kurtosis for M_OA is suggestive of a mildly platykurtic distribution due to the data being more widely spread than normal. This is further justified by Figure 2 & 3.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics.

	Descriptive Statistics								
	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness		Kurtosis	
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Statistic	Std. Error
M_EB	220	1.43	4.57	3.0435	.55122	.077	.164	.326	.327
M_OC	220	1.63	4.50	2.9108	.50560	.107	.164	-.235	.327
M_CI	220	1.67	4.50	3.0280	.54185	-.026	.164	-.275	.327
M_OA	220	1.50	4.33	3.0303	.55205	-.009	.164	-.426	.327
M_ERO	220	1.00	4.60	3.0445	.66978	-.020	.164	-.179	.327
Valid N (listwise) 220									

4.2 Assessment of Measurement (outer) Model

The evidence included in Table 2 offers a clear justification for the trustworthiness and accuracy of the constructs employed in the study. Internal consistency, measured using Cronbach’s alpha, ranged from 0.746 to 0.942, demonstrating reliable to exceptional ranges above the universally accepted benchmark of 0.70 (Cronbach, 1951). Alpha coefficients are particularly high for Employer Branding (EB) and Corporate Image (CI) at 0.942 and 0.931, respectively, implying very high internal consistency. Nonetheless, the values of composite reliability (rho_a) and composite reliability (rho_c) further confirm the strength of the constructs’ validity. Most of these values fall within the range of 0.801 (Organizational Attractiveness) to 0.996 (Corporate Image). This, combined with the majority of constructs surpassing the cutoff value of 0.70, which indicates strong convergent validity, supports good reliability (Hair et al., 2010). For instance, EB and CI demonstrate reliability estimates exceeding 0.90, further confirming the validity of these measures. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) ranges from 0.531 (Employee Recruitment Outcomes) to 0.773 (Employer Branding). It reflects Employee Branding (EB) and CI constructs that portray AVE measures greater than the generally accepted 0.50 threshold, signifying that these constructs explain a good amount of the variance in their indicators (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). Conversely, ERO and OA have relatively lower AVE values, but nonetheless, they are reasonable in this study’s context. The reliability and validity values suggest the measures in the study are ready for further analysis.

Table 2: Construct Reliability and Validity-Overview.

	Cronbach’s Alpha	Composite Reliability (rho_a)	Composite Reliability (rho_c)	Average Variance Extracted (AVE)
CI	0.931	0.996	0.944	0.738
EB	0.942	0.963	0.953	0.773
ERO	0.790	0.843	0.847	0.531
OA	0.746	0.801	0.839	0.573
OC	0.832	0.835	0.864	0.544

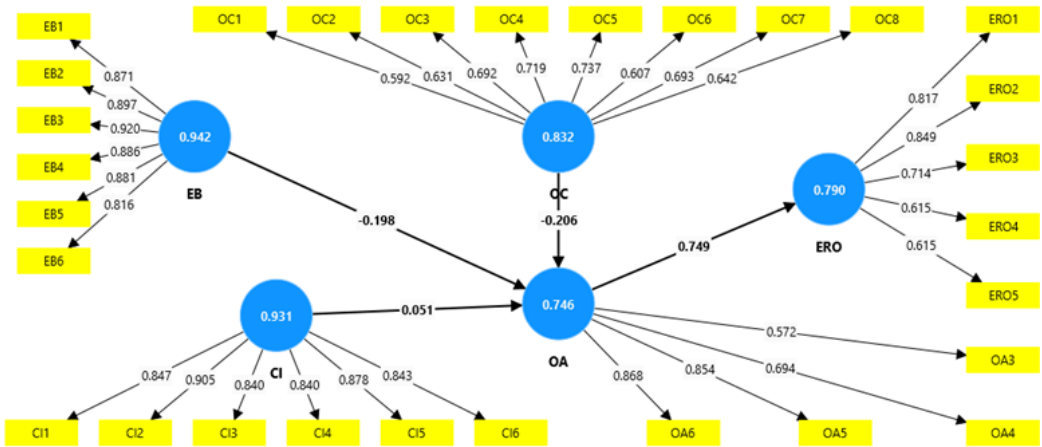


Figure 4: Measurement Model.

4.3. Assessment of Structural Measurement Model

This study’s results, as shown in Table 3, show that corporate image (CI) does not significantly influence organizational attractiveness (OA) in the study (beta= 0.051, $p = 0.613$). Thus, an organization’s positive reputation does not improve its attractiveness to potential employees. This outcome differs from Lievens and Slaughter’s (2016) research, which claims that corporate image affects how job seekers view their potential employer’s CI; however, the degree of impact varies from industry to industry. Given the non-significant relationship, the hypothesis (H3), which suggested that CI positively impacts OA, remains unconfirmed. Employer branding (EB) is also significantly negatively correlated with attractiveness (beta= -0.198, $p = 0.012$), meaning that efforts to strengthen the employer brand tend to decrease an organization’s attractiveness. Such a claim goes against widely accepted views that suggest strong employer branding leads to higher organizational attractiveness (Theurer et al., 2018). A possible explanation may be that branding and the actual workplace experience can be so different that they trigger disbelief in the organization’s capability, and thus, a negative perception of the brand emerges. Since the relationship is significant but goes against the hypothesis (H1), the claim that employer branding increases organizational attractiveness is not supported.

Similarly, it is demonstrated that organizational culture (OC) has a negative and significant relationship with organizational attractiveness ($\beta = -0.206$, $p = 0.004$). This implies that some aspects of culture may obstruct the organizational appeal, which is more likely because there is a mismatch of the organization’s internal culture and value system with that of the job seekers’ expectations. Some studies, such as Schneider, Ehrhart and Macey (2013), observed that a stronger culture might increase retention, but it does not guarantee the attraction of new employees, especially when they consider the culture to be too rigid or exclusionary. Therefore, the prediction that organizational culture has a favorable effect on organizational attraction is not validated. Therefore, H2 is also not supported. On the contrary, organizational attractiveness (OA) has powerful, positive, and highly significant correlations with employee recruitment outcomes (ERO) ($\beta = 0.749$, $p < 0.001$). This is in line with the findings of Klotz et al. (2013), which establish that more attractive organizations tend to have greater employee retention as well as better organizational performance. Differently from the previous relationships, this is a statement that is empirically verified regarding an alleged attractiveness and its influence on long-term employee retention as well as on organizational effectiveness.

Table 3: Path Coefficients and Significance Testing (Direct Effects).

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
CI -> OA	0.051	0.020	0.101	0.505	0.613
EB -> OA	-0.198	-0.187	0.079	2.515	0.012
OA -> ERO	0.749	0.752	0.026	28.508	0.000
OC -> OA	-0.206	-0.240	0.072	2.855	0.004

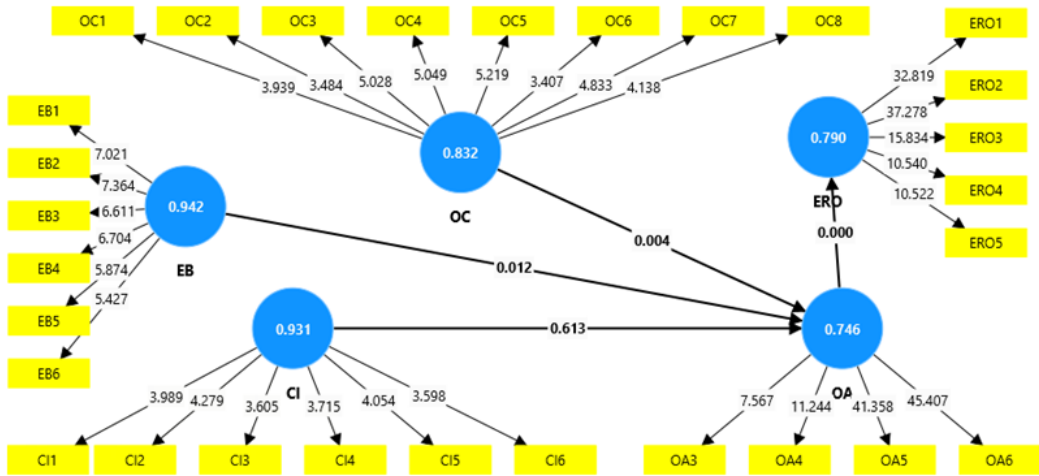


Figure 5: Structural Model.

Table 4: Mediating Effects.

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P values
OC -> OA -> ERO	-0.155	-0.180	0.055	2.827	0.005
CI -> OA -> ERO	0.038	0.015	0.076	0.504	0.614
EB -> OA -> ERO	-0.148	-0.141	0.059	2.513	0.012

The results, as shown in Table 4 of the mediation analysis, indicate that organizational attractiveness (OA) significantly mediates the relationship between organizational culture (OC) and employee recruitment outcomes (ERO) ($\beta = -0.155$, $p = 0.005$). However, the negative coefficient suggests that a strong organizational culture does not necessarily enhance attractiveness and, in turn, recruitment outcomes. This finding challenges the widely held assumption that a robust culture directly translates into positive recruitment effects. Prior studies, such as those by Schneider et al. (2013), have highlighted that an overly rigid or exclusionary culture may deter prospective employees rather than attract them. Given the significant but negative mediation effect, the hypothesis (H6) that OA mediates the relationship between OC and ERO is supported.

Similarly, the mediating role of OA in the relationship between employer branding (EB) and ERO is also significant but negative ($\beta = -0.148$, $p = 0.012$). This suggests that while employer branding influences organizational attractiveness, it may not always have the intended positive impact on recruitment outcomes. One possible explanation is that discrepancies between employer branding messages and actual workplace experiences can lead to skepticism among job seekers (Theurer et al., 2018). If an organization overemphasizes its employer brand without aligning it with reality, it could result in lower recruitment success. Since the relationship is significant but in the opposite direction of the proposed hypothesis (H4), the hypothesis that OA mediates the relationship between EB and ERO is

supported. On the other hand, corporate image (CI) does not have a significant indirect effect on ERO through OA ($\beta = 0.038$, $p = 0.614$). This indicates that organizational attractiveness does not serve as a meaningful mediator in the relationship between corporate image and recruitment outcomes. This result is consistent with prior research by Lievens and Slaughter (2016), which suggests that corporate image alone does not significantly shape job seekers' decisions unless other factors, such as employer branding or organizational culture, are also taken into account. Given the non-significant mediation effect, the hypothesis (H5) that OA mediates the relationship between CI and ERO is not supported.

5. CONCLUSION

The research sought to examine the HRM interrelationship as a function of marketing with particular reference to Employer Branding, Organizational Culture, and Corporate Image, as well as their impacts on Organizational Attractiveness for potential employees and recruitment results. The findings confirmed that organizational attractiveness (OA) served as a significant mediating factor in the relationship between Organizational Culture (OC) and Employee Recruitment Outcomes (ERO) and between Employer Branding (EB) and Employee Recruitment Outcomes (ERO), thus supporting the recruitment hypotheses H6 and H4 respectively. However, the expected significant positive relationships between employer branding, corporate image, organizational culture, and organizational attractiveness were not supported. These findings lead to the conclusion that branding an organization's image and a corporate image do not, by themselves, make an organization attractive as an employer, which is contrary to what some may think. Rather, there is a possibility that branding and image building lead to a gap between perceptions and reality that is bound to result in disappointment, thus negatively impacting prospective employees' perceptions. This puts into question the belief that employer branding positively impacts recruitment outcomes by default while calling for more authenticity and less image when it comes to branding and the real conditions of the workplace.

5.1. Limitations of the Study

Even with a substantive sample and an in-depth theoretical framework, the study is still faced with some limitations. To begin with, the method of convenience sampling used is likely to introduce some degree of bias since the respondents were only from two countries (Saudi Arabia and Bahrain), which, for all we know, may not represent the views of job seekers in other areas and industries. Also, the study takes only cross-sectional data, which makes it difficult to establish causation. Such research would benefit from a longitudinal approach that could track changes over time and evaluate the impact of employer branding and organizational culture over time. Finally, the study suffers from a self-report bias, which makes the data unreliable because respondents' perceptions of employer branding and organizational culture may not be accurate due to the tendency to wish to be viewed in a favorable light.

5.2. Recommendations for the Future

Future research should consider the inclusion of a wider variety of geographical locations and industries for better applicability of the results. Moreover, the role of social media and digital platforms as brand employers should be looked into in future studies, particularly because these platforms have a greater impact on an organization's potential employees' image. Additionally, it would be good to study the factors of an organization's culture that make an organization attractive or unattractive to its employees. A qualitative study would be useful to understand how potential employees perceive employer branding in practice. Lastly, looking into the role of employee engagement in the recruitment process would capture a different perspective on the effectiveness of HRM practices within the organization.

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