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EMPLOYEE RECRUITMENT AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH EMPLOYEE SATISFACTION: VERIFYING THE MEDIATING ROLE OF THE EMPLOYER BRAND

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The transformation of a capital-intensive to knowledge-driven economy has marked the beginning of a new epoch in business doing. Carrying out business activities in an extremely dynamic environment has greatly reduced the importance of traditional concepts and techniques, which is the reason why the focus has shifted to human resources and their management. Accordingly, a company should attract, retain and motivate its employees in order to ensure a high level of their satisfaction by ensuring the achievement of strategic goals. A possible direction of achieving the desired position is based on the development of the employer brand. Therefore, the aim of this paper is to determine the impact of practice in conducting employee recruitment activities on their satisfaction, as well as the influence of the employer brand as a mediator on the identified relationship between the recruitment and satisfaction of employees in Serbia. The results of the conducted empirical research study have proven the existence of a statistically significant positive influence of employee recruitment on satisfaction, while the mediating influence of the employer brand has also been fully confirmed.

Keywords: recruitment, employee satisfaction, employer brand, talents, fit model

JEL Classification: M12, M39, M51

INTRODUCTION

The digitalization of the business environment and the development of related technologies have an impact on the different aspects of business and require a rapid adaptation to emerging circumstances in order for organizations to maintain their competitive

advantage. In their respective reports, well-known consulting companies and HR agencies highlight the existence of a gap in the supply of and demand for skills and human resources, and emphasize the need for a strategic approach to tackling the problem of global talent deficits. In its regular quarterly report, McKinsey states that digitalization requires an urgent change in an organization's existing behavioral patterns in the domain of the structure, strategy and capabilities of its employees, especially in the

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domain of the personalization of talent programs and the existing leadership models (McKinsey, 2018, 44). ManpowerGroup (2018, 7) states that the global trend of talent shortages is continuing, a 12-year maximum is expected to be reached in 2018, a lack of applicants and a lack of experience are the most common causes of the non-fulfillment of open positions, and companies with more than 250 employees are being faced with the biggest talent deficit problem. In its talent report, the Boston Consulting Group states that 57% of the participants in the conducted research study would wish work abroad, which is significantly less than in the previous survey, conducted in 2014 (Boston Consulting Group, 2018, 5). According to the leading Global Competitiveness Index (GTCI) formed on the basis of the ability of the country to attract, develop and retain talents, leading positions have been developed by high-income countries, with a high degree of correlation between the GDP *per capita* and the values of the GTCI (Lanvin & Evans, 2018, 12). In addition to the evident lack of talents, these reports point to the fact that highly developed countries, currently providing the best conditions for attracting and retaining talents, will have a lesser talent inflow than those less developed because their aspirations to work abroad are being reduced. The potential causes for such a trend should be sought in the fact that an increasing number of less developed countries have been working on their own talent retention programs. The second conclusion stemming from the above reports suggests that large companies, which are dominated by multinational companies, have much more problems to fill positions than small companies and small and medium-sized enterprises, which can indirectly indicate the relatively lesser attractiveness of multinational companies as employers.

The operating arena for HR managers and HR specialists is becoming increasingly competitive with respect to the efforts companies are making to meet their talent needs in the global labor market. The simultaneous work performed by both national leaders and company leaders in attracting, developing and retaining talents is entering the zone of decreasing returns to scale, which in practice means that additional efforts do not lead to an increase in the number of applicants appearing for open positions. High-income countries and companies with a good

compensation package reduce their attractiveness as a place for jobs and work because of the trend of reducing talent aspirations to work abroad, whereas the assumption of the outflow of talents from less developed countries into developed ones is taken as the key trend of the global migration. Confronted with the fact that people, intellectual capital and talents are increasingly becoming the critical factors of an organization's strategic success, and that the existing mechanisms for attracting talents do not assure the expected results, HR managers and company leaders are active in identifying the other factors that can positively influence the attraction and retention of talents. In other words, welfare and the amount of the compensation, as the material motivators, are becoming less effective in attracting talents, which is the reason why attention is increasingly being focused on the intangible factors such as employee satisfaction, the employer brand, intrinsic motivation, or a work-life balance.

Academic researchers have contributed to tackling this problem through extensive research into the coherence of the relationship between the employee and the company, and the factors that influence this relationship. Aligning the relationship between an individual and the organization (PO fit) increases the probability of an individual's entering and remaining with the organization. The perception of this compliance is the predictor of the decision to join the organization, directs the behavior of individuals while working in the organization and influences the decision to leave the organization (Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009, 467). Organizations employ different individuals and, therefore, need to harmonize their PO fit with a specific category of employees, in which way they can improve organizational outcomes (Sekiguchi, 2007, 122).

In the given context, recruitment and selection activities offer a possibility of aligning PO fits, which can affect organizational outcomes, such as performance or employee satisfaction. Generally, the subject of the research carried out in this paper is the impact of employee recruitment activities on employee satisfaction through the development of the employer brand.

The purpose of this article is to determine, through an analysis of the recruitment activities containing the pre-selection criteria, its impact on the satisfaction of the existing employees as an important intangible factor for attracting new employees. In addition to recruitment, the employer brand, as an individual's perception of the company or the alignment of PO fits, is another intangible factor that can enhance the attractiveness of the organization and, therefore, is the subject matter of the research study presented in this paper.

The aim of the research study is to determine whether the recruitment process has an impact on the satisfaction of employees and whether the employer brand can strengthen this relationship and increase employee satisfaction.

Based on the results of the theoretical research, a research model based on three hypotheses was designed, which was done through the statistical data processing obtained from the original research. The data were collected by applying the survey method in the form of a structured questionnaire. The results of the regression analysis used to test the hypotheses have shown the existence of a statistically significant influence between the observed variables. The results obtained through this research have practical implications through determining the factors that can positively affect the solving of the problem of the deficit of candidates for a certain position in the organization.

The work is structured into seven parts. After the introductory part, the second part gives an overview of the relevant literature used as the basis for defining the research model and for the formulation of the hypotheses. In the third part, the research methodology is presented, and in this part the primary data collection method, the sample statistics and the presentation of the statistical techniques applied in testing the hypotheses are presented. The fourth part accounts for the results of the research study through the presentation of the results of the regression analysis carried out when testing the hypotheses. Also, this part of the paper discloses the results of the reliability analysis and the descriptive

statistical analysis. In the fifth part of the paper, the discussion of the results obtained is presented, and the practical implications of the conducted research study as well. At the end of the paper, the conclusions are given, prior to which the limitations of the research done and the direction for future research are accounted for in a separate part.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are two possibilities for organizations to fulfill their needs for human resources, i.e. knowledge, skills and talents:

- internal recruitment, through their own talent development, and
- external recruitment, through the acquisition of talents from the environment or other organizations.

External employee recruitment is one of the initial human resource management's activities that define the preliminary criteria for individuals' entering the organization. Recruitment can be understood as a set of the activities whose primary goal is to identify, attract and engage the best individuals who will enable the achievement of the strategic goals of the company (Ofori & Aryeetey, 2011, 48).

In academic research and HRM practice, it is often the primary task to provide a realistic piece of information about the job in order for candidates to know what is expected of them, with the primacy of applying traditional recruitment methods. In the current business environment, only vacancy advertising is often not sufficient to ensure the required number of quality candidates. Competition in the labor market requires that the company should implement the recruitment process in a timely manner, using modern technological solutions, whereby recruitment itself must be guided by a marketing strategy (Slavić, Bjekić and Berber, 2017, 89). In general, candidate recruitment can be internal and external, with companies applying different approaches in practice and using different means of advertising for vacant

posts. In addition to traditional ways, it is especially attractive and useful to recruit through the Internet and social networks. Internet sites and social networks often provide candidates with a variety of information regarding the work, working conditions, organizational culture, necessary qualifications, the exchange of knowledge, experience, and so on.

The recruitment process can have a positive impact on different organizational outcomes. A quality-driven selection process has a positive impact on an increase in the retention rate, organizational commitment and the productivity of employees (Sutanto & Kurniawan, 2016, 377). In order to achieve the appropriate level of employee satisfaction, the recruitment process needs to be implemented so that employees know what is expected of them at the workplace. It is known that the "blind advertising" strategy in which the company seeks to hide the key information is not efficient as employees are not familiar with what is expected of them, and do not accept the job or quickly leave it. When the employee in the recruitment process is provided with all of the relevant pieces of information regarding what is expected of him, as well as of what he can expect from the company, there is no inflationary expectation at the workplace, but it is easier to meet work demands, reduce the rate of absenteeism, increase employees' confidence in the company, as well as the level of their job satisfaction (Suszko & Breaugh, 1986, 521). As a result of satisfied employees, there are improvements in performance, efficiency, improvements in interpersonal relationships, reductions in the fluctuation and absenteeism rates (Inuwa, 2015, 289). Summarizing the above said, and in the context of the research involved in this work, it is possible to formulate the first hypothesis:

H1: Employee recruitment has a statistically significant, positive impact on employee satisfaction.

The overall recruitment activity can usually be divided into three phases: generating applicants, retaining applicants, and influencing decisions on accepting a job. Therefore, it is necessary to properly manage the recruitment process since any activity

in the process can affect the number of applicants, their decision to apply and accept the job if offered (Breaugh & Starke, 2000, 407). The sources used to advertise the workplace, as well as the image of the company, play a very important role. In order for the recruitment process to be successful, i.e. to attract and retain the best candidates from the labor market, marketing principles must be adhered to, especially so the principles of branding. The employer brand is also one of the ways in which a company differentiates itself from others and presents itself as a unique and desirable place to work. Developed as a result of the integration of marketing and human resources management, the employer brand represents a company's effort to communicate the organizational culture, systems, values and interpersonal relationships that make a workplace different from others (Singh & Rokade, 2014, 45).

The implementation of the marketing and branding principles in the human resource management discipline leads to the emergence of the employer brand that can be used as a means of attracting and retaining the best candidates from the labor market. Since the emergence of this concept in 1996, many researchers have sought to identify the key characteristics and factors that a particular company identifies as a unique and desirable place to work.

The conceptual designers of this concept, T. Ambler and S. Barrow (1996, 187), define the employer brand as a set of the functional, economic and psychological benefits that are secured by employment, and which are characteristic of the employer's enterprise. It is a process of building a picture in the minds of labor-market candidates that the company is the "preferred place to work in" (Ewing, Pitt, Bussy & Berthon, 2002, 12). As the process of building a recognizable and unique identity, the employer brand is the concept of the enterprise that makes it different from others (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, 502). So, the company will be an attractive or good place to work in if it offers a good balance between life and work, stimulating compensations, quality products and services, a challenging task, promotion, participation in humanitarian activities (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016, 4-5). In this way, the employer brand becomes a strategic

tool for attracting and retaining talents from the labor market (Mihalce, 2017, 290).

In order to build the employer brand, it is necessary to follow the marketing principles. First, it is necessary to perform an internal analysis, i.e. to examine the existing system of values, culture, employees, human resources management policy and the competitive position, and on the basis of such analyses to determine which benefits can be offered to the existing and potential employees. In the next step, external marketing efforts are identified and attracted by the candidates who match their capabilities and their value system to the company's. Internal marketing is the last stage in building an employer brand. In internal marketing activities, the company delivers the promised value to its employees in order to create the motivated workforce loyal to the company (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, 502-503; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014, 51).

As a result of building the employer brand, two very important outcomes emerge: brand associations and loyalty to the brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004, 504). Employer brand associations are the ideas that emerge in employees' awareness when thinking of a particular company and of the reasons for which it is good to work in it. In other words, employer brand associations shape the image of an enterprise as an employer in the labor market. Loyalty to the employer brand represents employees' commitment to the company. If the company has a developed employer brand, the employees will not easily change their jobs, even if there is another possibility of employment (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014, 50-51).

As a result of the creation of the employer brand, the company approaches qualified employees, improves interpersonal relationships, increases performance and retention rates, the identification with the organization and a commitment to the company and employees' self-confidence easily and at lower costs (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014, 51). Like the recruitment process, the employer brand also has an impact on job satisfaction. The results of numerous studies have shown that the employer brand positively links to the level of employee satisfaction with the work

(Schlager, Bodderas, Maas & Cachelin, 2011, 502; Yalim & Mizrak, 2017, 99; Davies, Mete & Whelan, 2018, 74). The results obtained can also be explained by the fact that business satisfaction factors, such as good interpersonal relationships, challenging work, stimulating compensations and the like, are already included in the employer brand and provided to employees. The above research is the basis for formulating the second hypothesis in this paper, which reads as follows

H2: The employer brand has a statistically significant positive impact on employee satisfaction.

As the employer brand represents an effective means of attracting labor market candidates, its significance in the human resource management process (Starineca, 2015, 27) is evident, primarily in the recruitment process. Those enterprises that have a developed employer brand are distinguished as recognizable and desirable places to work in, and have a positively built image in the public, thus acting positively on the perception of candidates (Gilani & Cunningham, 2017, 242). There are two essential elements of this image: the employee's attitude towards the brand and the perceived characteristics, i.e. the benefits that the company offers to its employees, on the basis of which the decision to accept the job is made. By applying various techniques to attract candidates, a company can act on these elements and form a positive image in the public before the recruitment process has begun. This can be achieved through sponsorship activities, cooperation with schools, faculties and government agencies, participation in humanitarian activities, etc. (Agrawal & Swaroop, 2011, 162). In this way, the recruitment process improves, the best candidates are attracted, and simultaneously the company's resources are saved (Khalid & Tariq, 2015, 358).

The employer brand can be used as a strategic tool in the recruitment process that will enable the attracting and retaining of talents from the labor market (Franca & Pahor, 2012, 90). If a company has built a good reputation in the public, the recruitment process is facilitated as the candidate already has a positive attitude towards the given company (Saini, Gopal & Kumari, 2015, 38). In some cases, as a result of such

a reputation, an enterprise is able to attract those candidates who are willing to work in the given company, as their value system fits into the value system of that company. This can be explained by the theory of social identity, according to which people tend to be members of a particular group because they have common characteristics, values and attitudes (Khalid & Tariq, 2015, 356).

A number of studies have shown that the companies that have developed the employer brand more easily implement the recruitment process, attract and retain more qualified candidates, and achieve numerous other benefits (Lemmink, Schuijf & Streukens, 2003; 11, Collins & Stevens, 2002). As a result of the implementation of the employer brand strategy in the recruitment process, employees have a higher level of trust and feel a higher degree of identification with and commitment to the company, which increases their work ethics. Numerous benefits are also present for employers. A positive public image allows them access to the best candidates, new recruitment strategies are developed, the retention rate increases, as well as employee satisfaction does (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016, 861). Satisfied employees transfer their experience to others, in which manner positive word-of-mouth propaganda additionally strengthens the reputation of the company on the market. Respecting these benefits, the third hypothesis of this study is formulated, reading as follows:

H3: The employer brand is the mediator of the positive relationship between employee recruitment and employee satisfaction.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

An empirical research study was conducted so as to identify the impact of employee recruitment and the employer brand on employee satisfaction. In order to collect the primary data, the survey method was used in the form of a questionnaire consisting of 25 statements, of which 5 items refer to employee recruitment, with the 10 statements measured by the employer brand, whereas the independent variable,

employee satisfaction, is measured by 10 statements. The survey was conducted through a direct contact with the respondents, leaving them the time to complete the questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire contains the questions intended for collecting descriptive data about the respondents and the business organizations included in the sample. The second part of the questionnaire contains the observations that observe the condition of the observed variables. The findings were based on the relevant previous research done in this field, which created the assumption of the high consistency of the conducted research (Lu, While & Barriball, 2007; Schlager, Bodderas, Maas & Cachelin, 2011; Peltokorpi & Jintae Froese, 2016). The respondents showed a degree of agreement with the stated conclusions on the five-point Likert scale.

Using the data of the Business Registers Agency, the business organizations were randomly selected and a procedure for collecting data was initiated. The survey covered 180 companies, whose managers and employees assessed the employee recruitment process, the strength of the employer brand and satisfaction. The largest number of the companies in the given sample employ in excess of 250 employees, being followed by the companies with between 50 and 250 employees. The development of the employer brand in the companies with less than 10 employees is impossible in practical terms. Nevertheless, these companies were not excluded from the sample for the two reasons: firstly, these companies also take care of their reputation in the public, and secondly, their number in the sample is small enough so as not to affect the results of the research. In the sample, almost 50 percent of the respondents from the multinational companies or the other smaller companies operating in the Republic of Serbia, whose owners are from abroad, are also present. Their presence in the sample enables a better understanding of the employment context in the Republic of Serbia because these companies employ a significant number of employees. The other data related to the sample statistics for the companies and the respondents are given in Table 1.

The processing of the collected data was carried out with the computer support of the IBM SPSS Statistics

statistical package, Version 23 (Statistical Package for Social Sciences). The application of the regression analysis measured the influence of the independent variable on the dependent and the mediator effect was tested through the results obtained by the multiple regression analysis. In order to determine the statistical significance of the obtained results, the following confidence levels were used: $\alpha = 0.05$, $\alpha = 0.01$.

Table 1 The sample structure: the summary

Variable	Absolute frequency	Proportion (%)
Number of employees		
2-9 employees	1	0.6%
10-49 employees	35	19.4%
50-249 employees	64	35.6%
Over 250 employees	80	44.4%
Business		
Production	126	70.0%
Trade	28	15.6%
Service	26	14.4%
Ownership		
Domestic private capital	90	50.0%
Foreign private capital	88	48.9%
State	2	1.1%
Sex of respondents		
Male	81	45.0%
Female	99	55.0%
Education		
Secondary education	62	34.4%
Higher education	32	17.8%
High education	86	47.8%

Source: Authors

RESEARCH RESULTS

In order to determine the internal consistency of the items used, Cronbach's alpha coefficient was calculated. The values obtained for the employee

recruitment variables, the employer brand and employee satisfaction are 0.908, 0.884, 0.910, respectively, and the presented values are indicative of a high level of the internal consistency of the given findings. In addition, Table 2 shows an overview of the results of the descriptive statistical analysis (the arithmetic mean and the standard deviation). Based on the given values, it is concluded that the highest degree of agreement between the respondents is achieved in the case of the developed employer brand, since the highest values of the arithmetic mean are identified in the conclusions related to the quality of the products/services of the given company, as well as its potential for future development.

In order to test the defined hypotheses, a regression analysis was performed by using the smallest squares method. In addition, in order to determine the mediator effect, a procedure developed by R. M. Baron and D. A. Kenny (1986) was implemented. The above procedure is based on the creation of several regression models, which relate to:

- determining the impact of the independent variable on the variable representing the mediator;
- determining the impact of the independent variable on the analyzed dependent variable;
- determining the influence of the mediator on the dependent variable.

The last step is the implementation of a multiple regression analysis, which implies the identification of the influence of the independent variable and the mediator on the dependent variable. According to R. M. Baron and D. A. Kenny (1986, 1177), the mediating influence exists when, in the last step, there is a decrease in the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable, or the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable becomes insignificant.

In accordance with the procedure described, four regression models were created. The regression model 1 examines the nature and strength of the relationship between the employee recruitment activities and the created employer brand, with the dependent

Table 2 The reliability analysis and the descriptive statistical analysis

Recruitment: Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.908			
	Item	Mean	St. dev.
RZ1	The company spends considerable resources on finding suitable individuals for vacancies.	3.02	1.286
RZ2	Finding suitable individuals for vacancies is an objective and impartial process.	3.49	1.197
RZ3	Various sources, such as the Internet, specialized agencies or human resources experts, are used to find potential candidates.	3.57	1.260
RZ4	The company uses different strategies to attract talented individuals.	3.30	1.246
RZ5	The company is trying to engage people who have the ability to think creatively.	3.39	1.378
Employer brand: Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.884			
	Item	Mean	St. dev.
BP1	As the employer, the firm in which I work stands out in relation to other firms.	4.02	1.020
BP2	To me, the firm in which I work is attractive as an employer.	3.99	1.069
BP3	Other people think the company where I work is a good place to work in.	4.12	1.029
BP4	Jobs in the company are paid above the average.	3.06	1.291
BP5	Work is done in good working conditions.	3.79	1.075
BP6	There is a good balance between the time spent at work and free time.	3.50	1.275
BP7	There are good opportunities for promotion and an improvement in the company.	3.53	1.243
BP8	Relationships among the employees are good.	3.90	1.088
BP9	The company offers quality products and/or services.	4.36	.881
BP10	The company has a good potential for development in the forthcoming period.	4.20	1.000
Employee satisfaction: Cronbach's alpha coefficient 0.910			
	Item	Mean	St. dev.
ZZ1	Generally, I am satisfied with the fact that I work in this company.	3.88	1.035
ZZ2	I am satisfied with the working environment which I do my job in.	3.94	.966
ZZ3	I enjoy my work.	3.75	1.141
ZZ4	I am adequately paid for the job I do.	3.18	1.283
ZZ5	Doing my current job is not too stressful.	2.97	1.256
ZZ6	The job gives me a sense of personal fulfillment.	3.49	1.289
ZZ7	In the company, I have all the necessary conditions and resources for doing business.	3.84	1.091
ZZ8	I am satisfied with collegiality at work.	3.97	.968
ZZ9	I am satisfied with the relationship with my superiors (managers, bosses, directors).	3.94	1.051
ZZ10	I have a feeling that the company takes care of its employees.	3.60	1.198

Source: Authors

variable being determined independent in 50.9% of the cases ($R^2 = 0.509$). Within the regression model 2, the interdependence of recruitment and employee satisfaction activities was observed, whereby the resulting value of R^2 points to a somewhat worse model than the previous one ($R^2 = 0.460$). The value of the beta coefficient is relevant at the level of 0.01, whereby the positive value of this coefficient imposes the conclusion that there is a positive influence of recruiting employees on their satisfaction.

The third regression model is aimed at establishing a link between the employer brand and employee satisfaction. The employer brand, as the independent variable, determines the dependent variable change, employee satisfaction in 57.7% of the cases ($R^2 = 0.577$). Based on the results shown and the positive value of the beta coefficient, which is significant at the 0.01 level, a statistically significant positive effect of the created employer brand on job satisfaction is determined.

The fourth model presented in Table 3 implies the implementation of the multiple regression analysis, which is aimed at identifying the impact of employee recruitment and the employer brand on the dependent variable, employee satisfaction. In this case, even 61.5% of the variability of the dependent variable is explained by the independent variables involved. Multicollinearity is not a problem, given the fact that the variance factor varies by less than 5. There is no problem with autocorrelation, as the Durbin-Watson coefficient approaches 2.

Table 3 The results of the regression analysis

Variable	Model 1: the employer brand dependent variable	Model 2: the employee satisfaction dependent variable	Model 3: the employee satisfaction dependent variable	Model 4: the employee satisfaction dependent variable
Recruitment	0.714**	0.678**		0.277**
Employer brand			0.760**	0.562**
R ²	0.509	0.460	0.577	0.615
Adjusted R ²	0.506	0.457	0.575	0.610
ANOVA F	181.567**	149.032**	238.861**	138,900**

Agenda: **p < 0.01; *p < 0.05. The table shows the beta coefficient.

Source: Authors

DISCUSSION AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

There are three hypotheses set in this paper. The first hypothesis seeks to point out the importance of recruiting employees in order to generate a higher degree of satisfaction. The results of the conducted statistical analyses have shown that the way of recruiting employees is positively reflected in the level of employee satisfaction, which is confirmed in

the works of M. K. Suszko and J. A. Breaugh (1986), and J. A. Breaugh (2008). Therefore, the H1 hypothesis has been fully confirmed.

The second hypothesis has been defined in order to identify the interdependence of the developed employer brand and employee satisfaction. In the concrete case, the image of the company built in the eyes of its employees, i.e. the brand, has a significant positive impact on employee satisfaction, as is confirmed in T. Schlager *et al* (2011), G. Davies, M. Mete and S. Whelan (2017), and F. Yalim and K. C. Mizrak (2017), due to which fact the H2 hypothesis is fully accepted.

The third hypothesis has been set so as to determine the median impact of the developed employer brand in the case of the interdependence between the recruitment process and the level of employee satisfaction. The procedure implemented in the form of the created regression models shows that in the last step, i.e. in the regression model, there is a reduction in the strength of the recruitment impact on employee satisfaction. Therefore, the strong employer brand is the mediator of the influence between employee recruitment and their satisfaction, which is the reason why the H3 hypothesis has also been confirmed.

The results of the conducted research study have important practical implications:

- The obtained results are a confirmation that the desired level of employee satisfaction can be influenced through the recruitment process, which should lead to the achievement of a superior performance through the motivation mechanisms.
- The way human resources management activities are conducted has an important impact on the creation of an image of the given employer in the eyes of the public, namely his potential and existing employees. Therefore, it is necessary that systematic efforts towards the development of a positive, unique and recognizable employer brand should be invested, taking into account the loyalty of the existing employees to the employer and their commitment to the realization of the set tasks.

- The built employer brand also affects employee satisfaction, so it should be seen as an important precondition for the effective recruitment process. By investing in the development of the employer brand, employee satisfaction can increase, the attractiveness for appropriate candidates simultaneously being enhanced.
- Employee satisfaction is a prerequisite for productivity growth, the improvement of interpersonal relationships, as well as a reduction in the fluctuation and absenteeism rates (Inuwa, 2015, 289).

It is, therefore, important to have an integral approach in generating the desired level of employee satisfaction, starting with: attracting potential candidates; selecting and retaining the best candidate; creating a favorable environment for work, with a focus on achieving a balance between job requirements and private life, which in turn contributes to a reduction in the absenteeism and fluctuation rates.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Despite the contribution of the research conducted for the purposes of producing this paper, it has a number of limitations, which is also a guide for future research. The first is the structure of the sample, which is considered to be a potential constraint from the aspect of the core business. Since the sample constitutes enterprises operating within the manufacturing, trade and services sectors, each of the sectors listed has certain specificities that primarily relate to the performance of certain operations that may affect the observed variables in the survey. Consequently, the research focus needs to be carried out so that the sample includes companies from one particular sector. In this way, the generalization of attitudes will be avoided, and the results obtained would contribute to the improvement of the human resources management practices within the given activity or sector, as well as to providing guidelines for the development of a positive employer brand, simultaneously respecting the specific nature of the specific activity.

The second potential restriction is that concerning the size of the sample. Compared to the studies previously conducted in this area, the need for an increase in the number of interviewed respondents is imposed. This constraint is due to a relatively underdeveloped business culture and the closeness of enterprises in transition economies, which inevitably reflects a limited number of options for collecting questionnaires and increasing the number of units in a sample.

The third limitation refers to the examination of employees' attitudes about the method of recruiting. Namely, the respondents did not agree on the key source of recruitment, since the two key sources, i.e. internal and external recruitment, are referred to in the literature. In the future, it is therefore necessary to distinguish between the two types of recruitment, focusing on the identification of the effectiveness of the given type, especially in order to generate a higher degree of employee satisfaction.

The fourth limitation concerns the absence of variables or statements to evaluate the recruitment process or the effects of the recruitment strategy applied. On the other hand, in practice and in the professional literature, the view that the purpose of recruitment is not about attracting the best candidates, but rather the candidates who are best suited to the organization and those candidates who are best fitted with the organization (the best fit model), is increasingly prevalent. Thus, the importance of traditional criteria for successful recruitment activities is simultaneously relativized.

In addition to the foregoing, future research should focus on incorporating the contemporary dimensions of the employer brand. In this way, we would gain an insight into the overall potential of the employer brand as a strategic tool in carrying out recruitment activities and provide recommendations for formulating the principle of building a positive image of the company in the eyes of the existing and potential employees. Ultimately, in terms of determining the level of employee satisfaction, it is recommended that the Minnesota Satisfaction Questionnaire (Martins & Proenca, 2012, 4) should be used and that the Job

Descriptive Index (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016, 880) should be calculated as well. The instruments created would enable the empirical results presented in the paper, as well as a detailed analysis of the various aspects of job satisfaction.

CONCLUSION

The results of the regression analysis demonstrate that employee recruitment has a statistically significant impact on employee satisfaction, as well as the employer brand, thus confirming the H1 and H2 hypotheses. Also, through the model of the multiple regression analysis, the mediating role of the employer brand has been confirmed in the paper, thus confirming the H3 hypothesis. In practical terms, the results of the research presented in the paper show that, through directing the employee recruitment process, important organizational outcomes can be influenced, such as, for example, employee satisfaction. In addition, representing a company in the public as a desirable employer through the development of the employer brand also contributes to an increase in employee satisfaction. The general conclusion is that the mentioned "recruitment" and "employer brand" variables can positively influence employee satisfaction, which is an important prerequisite for creating an image of the company as an attractive place to work in. This increases the likelihood of attracting new talents to the organization and potentially solves the problem of the current deficit in talents and skills in the local and global labor markets. By investing in certain dimensions of the employer brand, a company actually works on aligning PO fits as an important assumption of attracting and retaining individuals within the company.

Defining the recruitment process implementation method can affect employee behavior in the organization and their satisfaction with the work they do, which has been confirmed in the paper. The mediator influence of the employer brand, which in practical terms has been determined by this research study, accounts for the fact that investing in the employer brand increases the degree of individuals'

consent to the pre-selection criteria contained in employee recruitment and also increases the degree of the identification of individuals with the company. On the other hand, the inflow of potential candidates into recruitment activities can be significantly reduced through the selection process, which is the reason why it is necessary to include the selection process in future research, although in a situation where there is a significant shortage of human resources in the labor market, selection criteria are modified and adjusted to current circumstances.

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