ARTÍCULO DE INVESTIGACIÓN

Administración y negocios

THE "GREAT PLACE TO WORK" CERTIFICATION AS AN EMPLOYER BRANDING PROMOTIONAL STARTEGY IN THE RECRUITMENT OF COLOMBIAN SME´S

LA CERTIFICACIÓN "*GREAT PLACE TO WORK*" COMO ESTRATEGIA PROMOCIONAL DE MARCA EMPLEADORA EN EL RECLUTAMIENTO DE PYMES COLOMBIANAS

A CERTIFICAÇÃO "*GREAT PLACE TO WORK*" COMO UMA ESTRATÉGIA PROMOCIONAL PARA A MARCA DO EMPREGADOR NO RECRUTAMENTO DE PMES COLOMBIANAS

Andrés Escobar Uribe, Marlon Fernando Palacio Ríos

Master's Degree in Social Psychology from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Assistant Professor of the Faculty of International Business, Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, School of Economics, Administration and Business. ORCiD: 0000-0002-1070-6803. E-mail: andres.escobarur@upb.edu.co, Medellín - Colombia.

Master's Degree in Administration from Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, Full Professor of the Faculty of Business Administration Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana, School of Economics, Administration and Business. ORCiD: 0000-0003-3511-7113. E-mail: marlon.palacio@upb.edu.co, Medellín - Colombia.

Abstract

The present article has as its main objective to evidence the incidence between promoting the Great Place to Work (GPTW) certification as an employer branding strategy, and the increment of recruitment in organizations that have obtained the certification. A theoretical framework of the concept of employer branding, including a research review on how the concept has evolved, as well as the GPTW Organization and the certification process is also provided. The research was carried out through a descriptive design using the IMRaD structure, in which the data collection methods were a semi-structured interview with staff of the GPTW Organization and a social media analysis of the certified organizations, using averages from the results obtained, and open coding for information analysis. Finally, the findings and conclusions are presented, the notable ones being that, just by the mere fact of being certified, does not guarantee recruitment increment and that, if there is an indirect effect in recruitment increase in these organizations, it cannot be evident in their social media or corporate website given the lack of promotion of the certification, or the lack of metrics to corroborate this incidence.

Keywords: employer branding; recruitment; medium businesses; small businesses; human resources.

JEL: M51; D22; M10; O15.

Resumen

El presente artículo tiene como objetivo evidenciar la incidencia entre promocionar la certificación *Great Place to Work* (GPTW) como estrategia de marca empleadora, y el incremento de reclutamiento en las organizaciones que han obtenido la certificación. También se proporciona un marco teórico del concepto de marca de empleadora, incluida una revisión de antecedentes de investigación sobre cómo ha evolucionado el concepto, incluyendo los aportes de la Organización GPTW y el proceso de certificación. La investigación se llevó a cabo a través de un diseño descriptivo utilizando la estructura IMRaD, en la que los métodos de recolección de datos fueron una entrevista semiestructurada al personal de la Organización GPTW y un análisis de redes sociales de las organizaciones certificadas, utilizando promedios de los resultados obtenidos, y codificación abierta para el análisis de la información. Finalmente, se presentan los hallazgos y conclusiones, destacando que el solo hecho de estar certificado no garantiza el incremento de la contratación y que, si existe un efecto indirecto en el aumento de la contratación en estas

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organizaciones, no puede ser evidente en sus redes sociales o sitio web corporativo ante la falta de promoción de la certificación, o la falta de métricas que corroboren esta incidencia.

Palabras clave: marca empleadora; mediana empresa; pequeña empresa; reclutamiento; recursos humanos.
JEL: M51; M10; D22; O15.

Resumo

O presente artigo tem como objetivo principal evidenciar a incidência entre promover a certificação *Great Place to Work* (GPTW) como estratégia de marca empregadora, e o incremento do recrutamento em organizações que obtiveram a certificação. Também é fornecido um quadro teórico do conceito de marca empregadora, incluindo uma revisão de pesquisa sobre como o conceito evoluiu, incluindo a Organização GPTW e o processo de certificação. A pesquisa foi realizada por meio de um projeto descritivo usando a estrutura IMRaD, em que os métodos de coleta de dados foram uma entrevista semiestruturada com funcionários da Organização GPTW e uma análise das mídias sociais das organizações certificadas, usando médias dos resultados obtidos e codificação aberta para análise de informações. Por fim, apresentam-se as constatações e conclusões, sendo de realçar que, apenas pelo facto de estar certificado, não garante o incremento do recrutamento e que, se existe um efeito indirecto no aumento do recrutamento nestas organizações, não pode ser evidenciado em suas redes sociais ou site corporativo pela falta de divulgação da certificação, ou pela falta de métricas que comprovem essa incidência.

Palabras-chave: marca empregadora; média empresa; pequena empresa; recrutamento; recursos humanos.
JEL: M51; M10; D22; O15.

Introduction

Human Resources Management (HRM) professionals in organizations have the constant challenge of achieving employee loyalty, which is why strategies, policies and retention mechanisms are generated to find the path to retain talent. According to the above, HRM implements the concept of employer branding as an attraction strategy, understanding that human talent considers factors beyond the salary to remain at work. In an article by Lievens & Slaughter (2016), it is stated that beginning the twenty-first century, companies have become more conscious of their corporate

image, market differentiation, better recruitment outcomes, and stronger emotional bonds from their employees. In 2007, Lievens explained this practice as employer branding, and that "involves internally and externally promoting a clear view of what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer" (p. 51).

This article seeks to research the effect of employer branding on the organizations that have promoted the certification of a Great Place to Work (GPTW), and the incidence this has had in the increment of recruitment of new applicants. The article follows a qualitative path containing the introduction of the research topic, the promotional implications faced by organizations that yearn to promote themselves a desirable employer, and the GPTW certification as an employer branding strategy in Colombian SMEs. Later, a research background was conducted through search equations in Scopus as a scientific data base, combining the concept of employer branding with human resources, recruitment, Latin America and the Great Place to Work. In the final part, a results and conclusions section is presented with information obtained from a semi-structured interview with corporate employees of the GPTW Organization in Colombia, a social media analysis of the certified SMEs, and a analysis of the implications of the promotion of the certification and its effect on recruitment increment.

With the progression of time, employer branding has become a more heterogeneous concept, where, in many cases, understanding its application, implication and implementation become bleary for organizations, denoting that it holds marketing foundations; with intersection of HRM (Ambler & Barrow 1996; Theurer et al., 2018). The authors describe the employer brand as the "package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company" (p. 2), therefore, since a lot of its implications affect staffing processes, employer branding has become in many organizations an HRM function with promotional support.

The aforementioned has led organizations to think of mechanisms aimed at flexible, and specifically, emotional compensation, where employer branding becomes a relevant factor that generates identity within employees and attracts potential candidates to apply to organizations (Mosley, 2014).

It is important for organizations to realize that talent attraction should be part of the corporate strategy and are a fundamental resource for the organization itself, and the achievement of that strategy; which is why a brand does not grow by itself and cannot only rely on marketing efforts. Organizations do not disappear from the market and are not successful only because of a brand as a promotional tool, it is the human talent that makes an organization move forward (Backhaus, 2016).

Considering this, organizations should work in the construction of their employer brand and make it part of the corporate strategy, in building different alternatives for attracting, retaining and maintaining employees. Understanding the diverse changes brought by globalization in the labor market, organizations now face the challenge of finding qualified individuals whilst competing for them with other institutions. This, in international business, is known as the global race for talent and leads to the emergence of inquiries such as how to make employees feel identified with the company's brand, how to attract the best talent in a labor market under constant competition, and how to generate visibility in the labor market in terms of recognition; all while dealing with high-context cultures such as Latin America (Frías y Rocha, 2017).

All these questions allow organizations and human talent areas to think about the dependence of employer brand regarding their attraction and loyalty policies, when the goal is to achieve a true competitive advantage. Initial attempts have been to generate indicators that measure an organization's employer branding efforts, from inside and out, how they are perceived by their collaborators, the competition, and the possible applicants they want to attract (Smith & Wheeler, 2002).

According to the above, there are certifications that allow organizations to increase a positive market image and achieve the attraction and loyalty that they long for; the "Great Place to Work" (GPTW) certification being one of the most relevant ones. This certification, known as part of a group of certifications known as the "Best Place to Work Certification" (BPTW), is a recognition program for the quality of the work environment for companies that voluntarily wish to be certified. According to Dineen & Allen (2016), organizations that has obtained the certifications "have been shown to positively affect employee attitudes, applicant pool quality and financial

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performance" (p. 3). The authors clarify that these are third party sources for employer branding and other certifications in the group are the Glassdoor and the Yelp certifications.

The GPTW organization defines a Great Place to Work as one in which the organizational objectives were achieved, with people who give their best and work as a team, all in an environment of trust (Great Place to Work, 2022). The methodology behind the Certification Program is based on 30 years of research to quantify the work environment and compare it with the Best Places to Work in the country and the world. Figure 1, shows the certification steps, the variables organizations that seek to obtain it must consider, and the actions to take once certified:

Figure 1

Steps to be certified as a GPTW

1 — Survey Employees: Employers must select a two-week period to launch the Trust Index™ survey to learn about employee experience. Here, in addition, the employer will tell us about your organization by completing the Culture Brief™.

2 — Earn the Great Place to Work ® Certification: If you meet all the requirements, you earn the Great Place to Work ® Certification™.

3 — Promote this recognition: Use our stamp and celebration kit to celebrate with your entire team and give visibility to this great achievement. You can do it on your digital and analog channels.

Source: based on the GWP methodology.

First, this article centers on the fact that this certification allows the organization and HRM areas to evaluate and measure how it is perceived by its employees and future applicants, and, consequently, the possibility to identify a correlation between having the certification and the increase in recruitment as a result of it.

By participating in this certification, organizations and HRM areas of 55 countries and territories where the GPTW organization operates are required to have permanent monitoring policies, developing different measurement or evaluation tools that are provided by the certifying entity and also those built by the organization itself (Horstmann & Martin, 2017). From those 55 countries,

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12 are located in Latin America (about 21.8% of the total number of countries or territories), representing challenges that adapt an evaluation instrument built initially for low-context cultures in North America (Meyer, 2017).

According to Elvira & Davila (2007), Latin America is a growing economy affected by newer globalization and internationalization trends, Foreign Direct investment (FDI) from North America, Europe and Asia, as well as economic integration processes that involve the signing and implementation of international treaties; however, when it comes to human resources, the region has followed an idiosyncratic development, where many of its companies represent family-owned conglomerates or informal business initiatives, where cultural practices such as indulgence, paternalism, interpersonal relationships, and religiosity prime in the national and organizational cultures. The authors also mention the existence of a *hybrid management* system, shaped by legal labor principles inherited from Spanish and Portuguese civil law, and local management practices developed by organizations in the region.

Due to these challenges, any firm seeking to enter Latin America must research the cultural values guiding life and the labor laws that regulate Human Resources (HR) processes like job analysis, recruitment, personnel selection, training, performance appraisal, compensation, and lay-off. This allows organizations such as the GPTW to understand, design and implement the proper evaluation instrument when certifying organizations.

In this research, Colombia, as part of Latin America, was chosen for two main reasons. First, the GPTW organization operates in the country, certifying small, medium and large enterprises. Second, the geographical proximity of the authors to access the required information, from the organization's website and the experts that work there in the city of Bogota. The authors chose to work with Small, Medium, Enterprises (SMEs), where it is considered to have the highest challenges in terms of *hybrid* management and the consciousness to obtain the certification as a small firm.

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Legal Framework of SME´s in Colombia

In Colombia, based on recent data provided by the Cámara de Comercio de Bogotá (2022), SME´s constitute 99.2% of the country's business and business activities. For this reason alone, it can be concluded that they are important for the national economy and worth studying more. SME´s were legally recognized as a type of company in the year 2000, meaning that the legal nature of how they function in Colombia requires further explanation. Traditionally speaking, in many countries, these types of organizations are categorized based on the number of employees that are directly linked to the organization. In Colombia, based on the decree 957 of June 5th, 2019, a SME is not just classified based on the number of employees that are directly linked to the company, but rather as a tributary unit of measurement, which in Colombia stands for *UVT (Unidad de Valor Tributario,* as evidenced in Table 1. Articles 2.2.1.13.2.1. and 2.2.1.13.2.2 of this decree establish that the new criteria these companies need to meet in order to be classified is the income resulted from yearly economic activities, segmented as follows:

Table 1

Categorization of SME´s in Colombia

Economic sector	Micro	Small	Medium
Manufacturing	Less than or equal to 23.563 UVT	More than 23.563 UVT, and inferior than or equal to 204.995 UVT	More than 204.995 UVT, and inferior than or equal to 1.736.565 UVT
Services	Less than or equal to 32.988 UVT	More than 32.988 UVT, and inferior than or equal to 131.951 UVT	More than 131.951 UVT, and inferior than or equal to 483.034 UVT
Commercial	Less than or equal to 44.769 UVT	More than 44.769 UVT, and inferior than or equal to 431.196 UVT	More than 431.196 UVT, and inferior than or equal to 2.160.692 UVT

Source: elaborated from *Decreto 957 del 5 de junio de 2019.*

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From Table 1, it can be observed that not all SME´s in Colombia follow the same tributary requirements. At the present time, SME´s are categorized based on yearly income translated into a tributary unit of measurement, as stated above. Each unit is defined the previous year by the Government and, in 2023, has a value of 42.412 COP (local currency). It can be evidenced that SME´s located in the commercial sector have a heavier tributary requirement than those located in the manufacturing or service sectors.

It is important to clarify that the GPTW Organization states that SME´s that wish to be certified have at least 30 employees directly linked to the organization full-time. However, it is unknown if the certification respects and works under the legal framework that emphasizes on the number of tributary units of measurement (*UVTs*) that characterizes the size of the companies evaluated.

Cultural context of HRM of SME´s in Colombia

As stated by Ogliastri et al. (2007), the cultural context of Colombia regarding HRM is constructed with a centralized power system, where social inequalities are still present in a labor system that is yet to be formally implemented in many economic sectors, generating high degrees of collectivism oriented towards family and small primary groups, low uncertainty avoidance, and even rejection of prevalent elitism.

In human management, there are notable gaps in Colombia such as the difficulties of line managers in converting human management policies and processes into action. In addition, the lack of indicators that measure productivity and business growth with the help of technology is also a concern for many organizations, regardless of their size. Hernández et al. (2010) describes that the contribution of human management to the organization's strategy must also be increased, establishing clear policies in career management, in evaluation processes, identifying strengths and potential in human talent, which are aspects that are still ignored by many Colombian HR managers that focus mostly on the legal nature of HRM.

When talking about the modern concept of human management, it refers to the fact that the processes transcend towards the government of people, the organization of work, management of

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labor relations, understanding of labor markets, meeting organizational objectives, being in accordance with organizational strategy and people development. Human management must be the heart of the organization, a strategic partner of the directives and the spokesperson for the employees (Hernández et al, 2010). This, and other HR-related goals such as the high qualification of managers, the development of competencies in knowledge, soft and hard skills in terms of personnel administration, effective communication, leadership, people management, the design and execution of strategies, the management of globalization and diversity; and even employer branding, are still aspects undermined in the Colombian HR system.

Complementing the study of HRM in Colombia, in this case of SME´s, where Salas (2020) describes that, in general, HRM practices in Colombian SME´s is limited due to the fact that internal employees do not have the knowledge and characteristics to implement a well-established HR branch. As a result, it becomes evident that HRM processes such as staff selection and performance evaluation, other HRM processes, and overall the company's ability for a higher degree of innovation are negatively affected.

It becomes evident that SME´s in Colombia generally struggle with the implementation of an HR branch within the firm, and even with the implementation of HRM-related processes. This adds to the fact that newer trends of HRM are hardly considered by these organizations, specially trends that merge HRM with the collaboration of other areas of the organization, like marketing, and the practice of employer branding.

Research background

The research background began with three search equations in the database Scopus which was chosen as a meta search engine that contains most of the world's academic publishing companies. The equations were conducted with the variable's human resources and recruitment, using employer branding as the common denominator to observe when the concept was first used in HRM Departments, specifically in HRM staffing processes. The equations were constructed as follows: TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Human Resources" AND "Employer Branding"), TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Recruitment" AND "Employer Branding"), and TITLE-ABS-KEY ("Employer Branding" AND

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"Great Place to Work"). The first equation provided a total of 154 results of published documents, where the first year of publication was in 2004, India leading the number of published articles, and english being the dominant language of publication. The second equation provided a total of 108 published documents, also having 2004 as the initial year of publication in these topics, India leading the number of published articles, and english as the dominant language of publication. The third search equation provided 12 results, thar one being more centered amount previous research done around certifications used as an employer branding strategy, India also being the leading publishing country.

At last, a final search equation TITLE-ABS-KEY ("employer branding" AND "latin america") was created to distinguish the implementation of employer branding practices in Latin America and the number of scientific or academic studies on the matter. The equation provided zero results, where it can be inferred that there is an existing lack of research and academic study of this phenomenon in the region.

From the first equation, in the established timeline, the concept was first introduced formally by (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), noting that employer branding

> Constitutes a firm's efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer, establishing that branding isn't just a marketing effort to develop products or corporate brands, that its principles can be applied to human resources management.

Moroko & Uncles (2008) state that the two key dimensions of successful employer branding are attractiveness and accuracy, clarifying that, from a consumer-based approach, attractiveness is directly linked to brand awareness, differentiation and relevance; but, accuracy highlights the consistency of the brand being marketed and employment experience, a company's organizational culture and its corporate values. Recently, the concept of employer branding has evolved to the point where its effects can be evidenced in sustainable development and green practices of human resources. Napathorn (2022), explores how green HR processes are implemented by organization as a response to governmental cultural contexts, all in the pursuit of environmental sustainability

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goals, establishing that the promotion of green HR processes such as recruitment, green selection of personnel and green training can translate into a green employer branding strategy.

From the second equation, it can be evidenced that in 2006, employer branding was directly related to a firm´s recruitment needs. Kaliprasad (2006) adds further comprehension of the employer branding phenomenon by denoting that the greatest challenge in the new economy is finding and retaining good people, and, for a firm to remain competitive, it needs to acquire capable people. In order for a company to be an "employer of choice", the company should understand that employees opt for a work environment that allows them the flexibility of learning while being employed, and that this should also be promoted as a strategy for attracting and retaining human resources. In terms of other HR processes, Edwards (2010) further explains in literature review that employer branding has more engaging benefits beyond recruitment. An example of this is referenced as employer branding having the capacity to modify organizational behavior within existing firm employees, the creation of an organizational identity, the establishment of a psychological contract, and even in defining organizational personality characteristics. From a more contemporary development of employer branding, in a recent article about virtual content influencing employer attractiveness, Ahamad & Saini (2022) examine the value that information holds in terms of job persuasion and how job seekers interact with it. The authors found that not all of the information on web portals was relevant to the subjects of the study, meaning that well-established company content made a significant differential effect on web content that was poorly structured or presented, thus the first increase in job applications and content interaction.

In the third search equation, the notable studies that explored previous research of the GPTW certification and employer branding attempts include Dabirian et al. (2017), with a mixed study that includes the analysis of certified companies under the Glassdoor certification, where the authors were able to identify seven key employer branding propositions of the highest and lowest ranked firms. Even though these propositions do not have the same weight or valence to the employees of the certified companies, they were present in the highest and lowest ranks of the certification ladder. Bagirathi & Magesh (2019) mention employer branding as "symbolic meaning of an organization´s market reputation as an employer" (p. 1), and through extensive research of an 18-country survey conducted by employer branding international, the use of social media

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marketing was placed as the main channel used by companies to communicate and promote their employer branding strategies (more than other web portals and traditional media). The authors also evidence that the most common social media portals to promote and employer brand are LinkedIn, Facebook and Twitter, later followed by blogs and career websites.

Other notable studies that contribute to recent employer branding theory but not to the focus of this research include Ala & Järvenpää (2023), which explains employer branding as a tool that should build an organizational image and employee identity (in this case accountants), as well as in defying the roles and expectations of a given position. From a mixed approach, Hosain (2023), focuses on studying the integration of social media into HRM practices through a bibliometric overview, emphasizing on the crucial role that social media promotion has in HRM practices such as talent-seeking and branding, where the first has the intention to use social media platforms for behavior and job-related information (of applicants), and the latter to build a strong corporate brand position; thus, creating employer branding. In closing, employer branding is also being incorporated in topics related to diversity. Kele & Cassell (2022) research on the marketing of workforce diversity, with a pivot on small-sized law firms, where the findings show that diversity is used in an advertising and commercialized manner, but it does not reflect on the inclusion of disadvantaged groups; where the desire of an employer brand is more of a marketing desire rather than a managerial policy.

Methodology

This research was conducted using the IMRaD methodology, which, under the use of acronyms, presents research articles in the following order, I: Introduction, M: Methodology, R: Results and D: Discussion. The introduction section contains the main purpose of the study, as well as the theoretical approaches of the discipline being studied and a research background. Regarding the methods, the procedures and tools used are clearly described, according to the problem posed in the research, the nature of it, as well as the design and data analysis (González & Máttar, 2010). In results, the findings obtained in the year 2022 should indicate the statistical significance and highlight those innovative results, with the greatest impact, comparing and contrasting them with existing theory. Finally, in conclusions, the results are explained through the authors´

interpretations, where important ones are highlighted and, if applicable, comment on possible implications for further research (González & Máttar, 2010).

In terms of the research design, a qualitative method was implemented, with a descriptive approach. A qualitative design was considered as the most fitting, understanding that it recognises the subjective nature of the problem, the different experiences participants and organizations have with employer branding and the GPTW certification, and will present the findings in a way that directly reflects or closely resembles the terminology used in the initial research proposal (Bradshaw et al., 2017).

To gather information, two methods were used. First the non-probability sampling technique used was expert sampling through a semi-structured interview. As stated by Etikan & Bala (2017), by having access to experts (in this case staff that work in the Great Place to Work Organization), the consent of the experts in the area of study and the fact that they hold primary information are essential to provide accurate findings (p. 2). The reasons for using expert sampling is to provide confirmation of validity of the information within the GPTW Organization, the way the organization certifies other organizations and how to use the public platform to access the information. These experts were questioned through a semi-structured interview (in Spanish), where the method employed a blend of closed- and open-ended questions, often accompanied by follow-up why or how questions (Adams, 2015). To build the semi-structured interview, the authors used the categories of employer branding, recruitment as an HRM process, and the GPTW certification. To structure the questions (seven in total), the authors asked about the importance of being certified as a GPTW, the ability to be certified as an SME, if these organizations have any knowledge of the concept of employer branding, the efforts the certified organizations have gone through to promote the certification, and if by having the certification the recruitment rate has incremented.

Second, a social media analysis as a data collection method was applied to observe if any content published on the social media and websites used by certified organizations promote the GPTW certification. Schober et al. (2016) explains that practical and ethical considerations surrounding the use of the data obtained in social media are useful for extracting opinions and experiences from

these platforms, considering that the content published distills or summarizes broader conversations and realities (pp. 1-2). To the results obtained from the analysis, descriptive statistics are also provided to better explain the findings.

For information analysis, an open coding technique was executed with the intention of approaching the text to undress concepts, ideas, and meanings behind the categories stated to build the interview questions and the data provided from the social media results. Later, an axial coding technique was used, which, according to Struss & Corbin (1990), cited by Vollstedt & Rezat (2019), is needed to investigate the relationships between concepts and categories that have been developed throughout the research process (p. 87). For the purpose of this research, the aim is to establish the relationships between the concept of employer branding, the GPTW certification and its incidence in the increment of recruitment in certified organizations.

Results

The findings of the research are divided into three parts. The first shows the results obtained through one semi-structured interview with two employees that currently hold the following positions in the GPTW Organization, Colombia:

- Coordination of digital strategies, leadership of experiences.
- Coordination of content and projects.

The second evidences the promotion of the certification in the certified organizations´ digital platforms, and if this activity has any effect in the recruitment increment. The third compares if existing theoretical approaches to employer branding exposed in the theoretical framework and research background reflect the reality of these organizations.

The GPTW certification and recruitment based on the answers provided by the interviewed experts

First, it is understood that there is a benefit to having the certification, but the organization (GPTW) does not have the metrics or indicators that verify the correlation between the demand for

recruitment and being certified. The website states that organizations seeking to get certified must follow a pre-established surveying process to quantify an organization work environment and classify it as a great place where employees can work.

The methodology to be certified is clear and the steps that companies must follow. What the methodology does not grant are the statistics based on recruitment since it is not considered as a factor to obtain this certification. In Colombia, there are 230 organizations that have obtained this certification in the year 2022. 30 of these organizations fall under the category of SME´s. This becomes a noticeable factor since the GPTW Organization still categorizes SME´s based on the number of employees that work for an organization full-time (at least 30, no more than 300), and not based on the recent change in Colombian legislation, as it was mentioned in the theoretical framework.

The methodology used in the certification process relies on descriptive statistics that average the responses on a survey provided to the employees that work for these organizations. It is fundamental to clarify that each response becomes anonymous and that the responses are grouped in a 0 - 100 scale (0 being the lowest and 100 being the highest). There are organizations that have better results than others, although in general companies tend to have a high score (close to 100), with a sample of 30 companies averaging a score of 97.25%.

 The aforementioned signifies that a certified brand complies with certain guarantees and security for applicants, focused on the work environment and internal factors of the organization, not recruitment assessment, or metrics, or any guarantee of it, nonetheless, the increment of recruitment might be an indirect effect of being certified.

The GPTW Certification and the use of digital tools for its promotion

The certification promotes the concept of work environment and well-being. The intention is not necessarily for publicity or visibility, but rather to encourage organizations to evaluate the work environment and the perception of the employees regarding organizational well-being. The GPTW Organization understands well-being as a six-element variable based on trust, the maximization of

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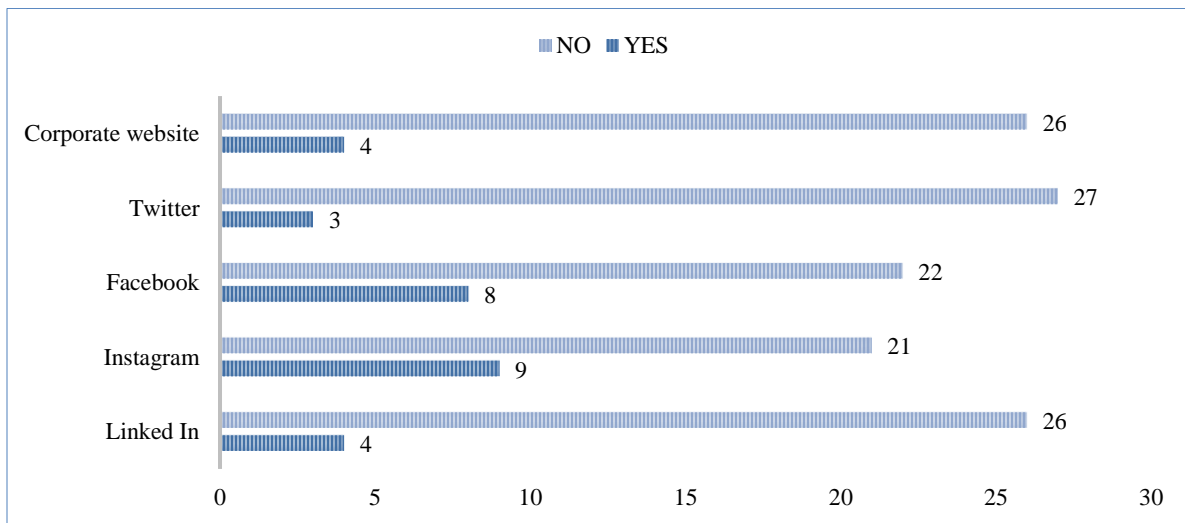Andrés Escobar Uribe, Marlon Fernando Palacio Ríos

human potential, value establishment, leadership effectiveness, cohesive leadership and financial growth. Therefore, it is not promoted in order to increase the recruitment rate. It is understood that it may be an effect, but not the purpose or intention of the model. By being implemented, it is noted that the organization cares about basic elements of its social and work environment.

The answers given after the evaluation instrument of the certification have an impact on the organizational culture and the behavior of the organization's employees. This is, however, an endogenous activity implemented by the organizations, with no known correlation to recruitment increment, which is, mostly, an exogenous activity.

To complement this statement, the following figure was created after an analysis of the different social media and corporate websites used by the organizations. Figure 2, shows the digital platforms used by these organizations for the different promotional purposes. First, it was found that the most common are: a corporate website, Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Linked In. Later, it was defined if the GPTW certification is promoted anywhere in these sites.

Figure 2

Digital platforms considered by the 30 organizations for the promotion of the GPTW certification

Source: self-elaborated.

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It can be observed that all the organizations have all of the promotional platforms specified above. This however does not mean that the GPTW certification is promoted or depicted in these sites; reaching three major findings:

- It was found that the most popular platform used to promote the certification was Instagram, with nine out of 30 organizations certified using it, meaning only 30% of the whole sample size.
- The platform with the least amount of organizations used to promote the certification was Twitter, with only three out of 30 organizations considering it for this purpose; only 10% of the whole sample size.
- None of the organizations specify in these sites if the promotion of the certification had an impact on recruitment increment simply by being promoted.

These findings provide relevant validations and contributions to existing employer branding theory, shown as follows:

The first notable result lies in the fact that HRM in Colombia, especially HRM in SME´s, still has an informal and empirical implementation, such as it was observed in the studies executed by Elvira & Davila (2007), Ogliastri (2007) and Salas (2020). Only 30 SME´s, in the year 2022, in Colombia, have decided to obtain the GPTW certification; and not all the organizations that have been certified get into the mindset of promoting the certification in their social media or websites, let alone using it for further strategic purposes like recruitment increment or employer branding.

Second, it is understood that those organizations that do promote the certification within their social media platforms and websites, are doing it with the efforts of making their brand as a more desirable company to work for, and that companies care about creating an employer brand that causes attractiveness and accuracy. This adds validation to the approaches proposed by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), and Moroko & Uncles (2008), establishing that:

Employer branding constitutes a firm's efforts to promote, both within and outside the organization, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer; as well as the fact that having an employer brand causes a company to reach brand awareness, differentiation and relevance.

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Third, Kaliprasad (2006) states that employer branding is directly linked to a firm's recruitment needs, and that finding and retaining capable talent is the greatest challenge of the new economy. In this research, however, in the analysis of the social media platforms and websites, it was evidenced that the GPTW certification in these companies is not necessarily promoted in order to increase the recruitment rate. It is understood that it may be an effect, but not the purpose or intention of its diffusion.

Fourth, Edwards (2010) exalts that employer branding has further benefits beyond recruitment, and that it can contribute to a firm´s shaping of organizational behavior, identity and retention through psychological contracts. This perspective contemplates practices that are ignored or simply cannot be evidenced in the certified Colombian SME´s, which are still at rudimentary stages of employer branding.

Conclusions

There is not enough data in the findings to determine that the certification does in fact have any direct effect in the increment of recruitment in certified companies. In spite of that, it does not mean that it does not have an indirect effect in recruitment or attraction efforts in these firms. As a matter of fact, in Figure 3, it can be observed that the attraction and retention of qualified talent is expected just by the mere fact of being certified.

Figure 3

Expected results of the GPTW certification

Atrae y retiene los mejores talentos del mercado

El hecho de ser una organización certificada por Great Place to Work® facilita la atracción de nuevos talentos. También sabemos que la retención es mayor en las organizaciones con altos niveles de confianza.

Source: the image was obtained based on the GPTW website (2022).

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Even though the certification is not directly linked to employer branding (as informed by the interviewed experts), the third step of the certification process (as indicated in Figure 1) suggests that companies should post and promote on its website and web portals, meaning that indirectly, again, just by the mere fact of being certified, the image of the company could have a positive valence and increase recruitment numbers.

It is also noted that, for many of these organizations, employer branding responsibilities is an exercise executed more by marketing departments than HRM departments, such as selling a value proposition. This means that HR Departments do not have as much incidence in the promotion of employer branding, which, in theory, should be a collaborative effort. This would explain why the certification is not commonly promoted in the social media or web portals of the organizations.

If organizations have reviewed if there is a direct effect in recruitment increment by having the GPTW certification, this has not been communicated and has been a confidential and internal organizational effort. It was informed during the semi-structured interview that the GPTW Organization plans to review the effect of the GPTW certification on the employer brand, and if it generates a reactive stimulus in the attraction and recruitment processes indirectly; concluding that by having it, it may end up being a benefit but not the intention behind the certification.

Finally, the theory behind employer branding, as well as the data obtained from the GPTW organization interview and website, agree that the certification, as well as any other employer branding effort must be promoted by organizations. However, in practice, for SME´s in Colombia, having the certification has reduced strategic intention in terms of promotion. Even though having the certification can increase brand awareness as an employer, and it is expected to promote it once obtained; most of these organizations do not.

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Consideraciones éticas

Las consideraciones éticas de la presente investigación organizacional, están relacionadas al estudio del comportamiento organizacional, las interacciones y la toma de decisiones dentro de un contexto profesional. Los investigadores cumplimos con estrictas pautas éticas para garantizar el bienestar, la privacidad y los derechos de los participantes, en este caso las personas entrevistadas y los datos de las empresas involucradas en el proceso de certificación como un Great Place to Work. Para garantizar esto, se implementó un consentimiento informado que requiere que los investigadores comuniquen de manera transparente el propósito, los procedimientos y los riesgos potenciales del estudio a los participantes, permitiéndoles tomar decisiones voluntarias y con conocimiento de causa sobre su participación. Este documento fue creado siguiendo los principios del código de buen gobierno de la Universidad Pontificia Bolivariana.

Conflicto de interés

Todos los autores realizaron aportes significativos al documento y declaran que no existe ningún conflicto de interés relacionado con el artículo.

Declaración de contribución de los autores

Andrés Escobar Uribe: Redacción y líder del proyecto ante el CIDI (Centro de Investigación para el Desarrollo y la Innovación), encargado de la estructura, conceptualización, metodología, software, validación y análisis formal de los resultados. Marlon Fernando Palacio Ríos: Coinvestigador en el proyecto, encargado de la estructura, conceptualización, metodología, software, recolección de datos por medio de entrevista, validación y análisis formal de los resultados

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