

Employer branding and its influence on employee retention: A literature review

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The subject of employer branding and its impact on employee perceptions is attracting great interest from researchers and practitioners. The main aim of this research is to explore the influence that employer branding has on employee retention. A detailed literature review of core and contemporary academic contributions on the subject areas was carried out and there were seven key themes identified within employer branding literature, which were: brand values, induction and training, internal brand communication, organisational culture, rewards and benefits, brand commitment, and employer brand management. Overall analysis of the literature review indicates that employer branding is integrated into the organisation and the various employer brand attributes, and along with the organisation's culture, holds value for employees and contributes to them staying employed within the company. These findings, along with previous research, allow the conclusion that employer branding does have a clear influence on employee retention. Scope for future research could include undertaking quantitative research testing the devised conceptual framework, in addition to looking in more depth at the seven key themes identified within retail employer branding to find out which brand attributes are valued the most by employees. Moreover, other service organisation set-ups could be researched in a similar way to see if results are similar between services organisations, and the results can then be generalised across the service sector.

Keywords Employer branding, Employee retention, Employee commitment, Organisational culture

Introduction

This research paper examines the influence of employer branding on employee retention within a firm. The concept of employer branding is relatively new, and much of the research has been carried out within the and

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much of the research has been carried out within the last 20 years. Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 187) were some of the earliest academics to define the topic, and they defined it as: *"The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company"*.

Employer branding is an interesting topic as it has integrated two significant organisational fields, branding and human resources, and together they provide a rounded view on how to attract and retain suitable employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). An employer brand should represent an organisation as a potential employer, and the organisation should aim to position itself as an employer that provides a superior employment experience against competitors, to enable competitive advantage (Love & Singh, 2011). It has been identified that a strong employer brand should include rewards, salary, benefits, career progression, and scope for added value (Jain & Bhatt, 2015; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003).

The concept of employer branding and its ability to retain the right individuals is extremely crucial to companies in regard to organisational success (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Interest into the topic is ongoing, and research suggests that the success of a business can depend on its capability to attract and retain employees, thus identifying the growing importance of employer branding (Burmamann & Zeplin, 2005; Gilliver, 2009; Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Sengupta, Bamel, & Singh, 2015).

Literature review

What is employer branding?

Ambler and Barrow (1996) were some of the first academics to acknowledge the concept of employer branding, acknowledging its ability to attract potential employees and retain current talent. They defined the topic initially as a package of benefits which is provided by an employer during employment (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.187). Further research into the concept by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) stated that employer branding is the process in which an identifiable and unique identity as an employer is built. More recently, Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen (2013) proposed that employer branding is the development of an organisation's image and reputation as a prospective employer, and would affect its ability to retain employees.

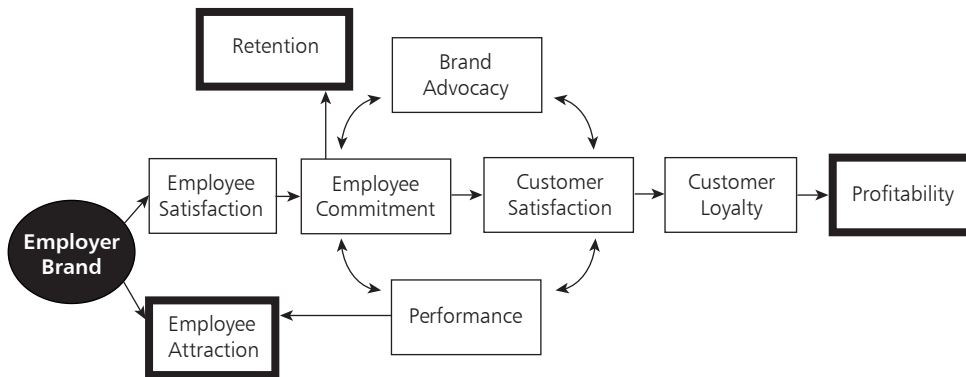
Employer branding has progressively become a vital factor for success within organisations and has captured significant attention in recent years, being used to appeal to potential employees whilst also engaging current employees within an organisation (Gilliver, 2009). Davies (2008) identified the positive influence of employer branding on: employee's perceived loyalty, retention, satisfaction, affinity with the employer, and differentiation from other competitor brands. Organisations which actively use employer branding are thought to benefit from increased interest from potential employees and higher levels of loyalty and commitment from current employees (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). The employer brand should initially be communicated through core values and it should represent an organisation's culture, to enable employers to benefit (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Collins & Han, 2004; Fulmer, Gerhart, & Scott, 2003).

Core values of an organisation have to be stable and established in an organisation before employer branding is implemented, as these values are what makes up the employer brand (CIPD, 2015; Urde, 2003). Lievens (2007) states that the core values of an organisation should be applied using brand personality traits, as this method has shown to be significantly more successful in regard to employer brand attractiveness. Using brand personality traits to form the core values for an employer brand helps potential or current employees assess their suitability to a certain workplace, as employees can see if their own desired self-concepts are consistent with an employer's brand personality (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Bhatnagar & Srivastava, 2008; Viktoria-Rampl & Kenning, 2014). Moreover, additional research into core values identifies that values are vital to an organisation and should be ingrained into the organisation's culture (Burmamann & Zeplin, 2009; Gilani & Jamshed, 2016; Ind, 1997). Core values should also be internally rooted within an organisation, and they should be the hub around which an organisation's business strategy and culture revolves (Arachchige & Robertson, 2013; Louro & Cunha, 2001; Mark & Toelken, 2009).

Employer branding and retention

Armstrong (2007) established that the aim of an employer brand is to become an employer of choice. The importance for organisations to be able to attract, recruit and retain talent has been identified due to the growing shortages within labour markets (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Companies should understand employer branding, as it is the instrument that allows firms to show how they differentiate themselves from competitors (Ito, Brotheridge, & McFarland, 2013). Likewise, employer branding helps to improve organisational performance within the context of HR in areas such as recruitment, retention, and engagement, by allowing them to differentiate themselves from competitors (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Russell & Brannan, 2016). Fernon (2008) additionally argued that, if done correctly, employer branding has the ability to retain the best people by providing an environment that allows employees to live the brand through various aspects such as training and progression. This increases their satisfaction and likelihood of remaining employed with the organisation (Cable & Graham, 2000; Jain & Bhatt, 2015).

The positive outcomes that employer branding has on an organisation are shown in Gaddam's (2008, p. 47) 'Employer Brand Model' (Figure 1), which identifies that commitment, retention, performance, satisfaction, attraction, and loyalty can all be linked back to the employer brand. Allen, Bryant and Vardaman (2010) support the model by recognising that employer branding increases employee morale and satisfaction, which in turn improves retention. Moreover, employer branding heightens employee morale, and it has been suggested that employees who enjoy working for an organisation subconsciously become brand ambassadors (Holbeche & Matthews, 2012). Employees then praise and recommend the company to family and friends, but also remain loyal to the organisation for a longer period (CIPD, 2015). Employers do this by recognising the areas in which they provide a unique employment experience, looking at the tangible and intangible benefits they offer (Mosley, 2007).

Figure 1 Employer brand model

Source: Gaddam, 2008

Organisations are now having to benchmark themselves against rival competing employers via means such as surveys, including ISR (International Survey Research) and Best Employer Survey (Barrow & Mosley, 2005). This is to enable retention levels to increase and create a competitive advantage, to counter the rise in the extensive list of potential employers available to employees (Love & Singh, 2011). Morgan (2008) and Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) support the use of surveys as a way of employers branding themselves, and state that surveys should be completed regularly as it differentiates the best employers and gives these companies an advantage when looking for potential talent. Despite this, Mosley (2007) suggested that although benchmarking is a vital part of developing a strong employer brand to ensure a superior employment experience, organisations should not become absorbed by benchmarking themselves against competitors. It is more important to communicate the values internally and ensure that the brand is being managed to meet the needs and desires of employees, and that the values are being interconnected in the organisation on a daily basis (CIPD, 2015; Foster, Punjaisri, & Cheng, 2010; Mosley, 2007).

Perception

Individuals are thought to have more favourable perceptions of organisations that offer a competitive employer brand, which can include benefits, rewards, career development, and a positive work environment (Jain & Bhatt, 2015; Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010). This is supported by Gatewood, Gowan and Lautenschlager (1993), who suggest that an individual's perception of an organisation plays a significant role in the decision to pursue employment with a company. This can then create an attachment that the employee has with the brand, and increase loyalty (Aaker, 1991).

Likewise, employer brand attributes allow employees or potential employees to have a positive perception of an organisation, and can increase the number of suitable applications for a position (Moroko & Uncles, 2008).

Further research suggests that organisations with strong employer brands that are perceived positively could potentially see an increase in employee satisfaction, commitment and retention, as a positive image is automatically in the mind of the individual (Davies, 2008; Ritson, 2002; Shivaji, Shivashankar, Maruti, & Reshma, 2013).

Organisations that provide a current employee with a superior employment experience automatically build themselves a strong employer brand for external perception, and they will benefit from this (Jain & Bhatt, 2015; Oladipo, Iyamabo, & Otubanjo, 2013). Employees who have careers that are well managed, and who are satisfied and engaged in their work are more likely to stay with that organisation, but it has also been researched that engagement is associated with organisational commitment (Bambacas, 2010; Levinson, 2007). This perception and image surrounding the superior employment experience and HR effectiveness will be communicated externally from the organisation, thus adding to the positive perception and appeal (Deery, 2008).

Value propositions

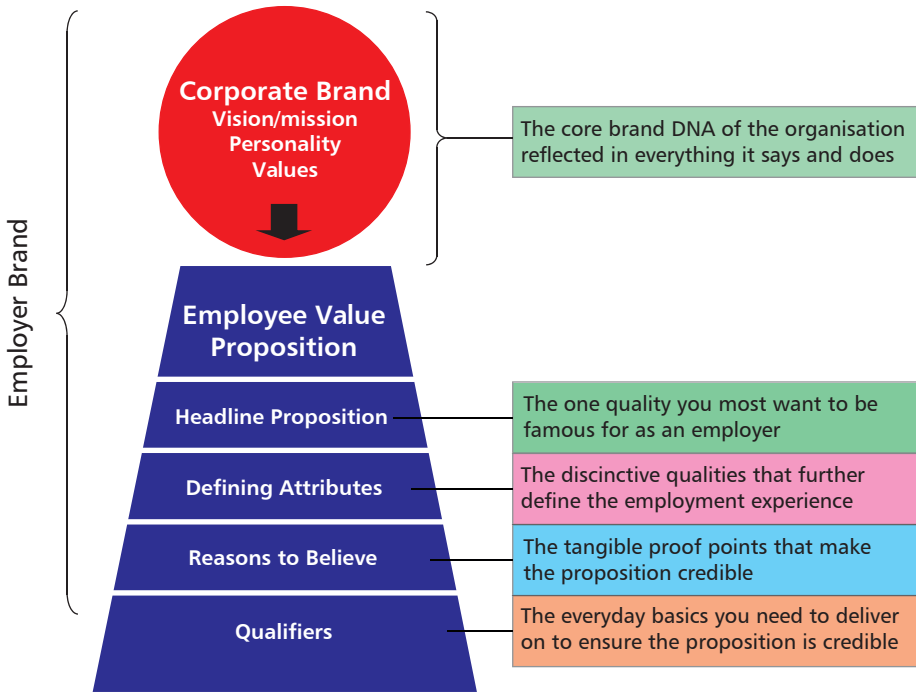
Sengupta et al. (2015) identified that value propositions are the backbones of employer branding as they create a clear vision of how organisations brand themselves to help increase retention levels. Marketing and organisational strategies play a significant role in strengthening an employer brand to increase retention, and it is thought that organisations should analyse how the employee views the employer to generate a suitable value proposition (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009). These suitable propositions need to identify to both current and potential employees what they could expect from the organisation in regard to emotional and rational benefits, to ensure that any initial perceptions are correct and that there is no confusion (Mosley, 2007; Oladipo et al., 2013). This would then give an organisation a competitive advantage over their competitors, as it enables the employer brand to enrich the complete employment experience (Taylor, 2002).

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) consider that a successful employer brand first develops value propositions that carry a central message identifying the organisation's offerings and then uses external marketing to attract potential talent. Similarly, Barrow and Mosley (2005) developed their own value proposition model entitled 'Recommended Employer Brand Model' (Figure 2), and state that if the brand has a clear vision/mission that expresses the personality and value of the brand, followed by the employee value propositions, the organisation should benefit from increased retention. This is due to retention stemming from an employee's commitment to an employer based on the organisation's value propositions, brand values and engagement within the organisation (Sengupta et al., 2015).

Internal employer branding

Frook (2001) identified how internal employer branding creates a culture of trust between an employer and employee, while Deery (2008) suggests this is a vital part of the brand as employees are key for creating a positive employer brand. Supporting research proposes that recruiting the right talent becomes essential, as employees are the best form of employer branding, alongside

Figure 2 The recommended employer brand model



Source: Barrow & Mosley, 2005

the role of the employer brand image within the recruitment market (Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy, & Berthon, 2002; Gilani & Jamshed, 2016). Furthermore, internal brand management is becoming a method that organisations are using to acquire a competitive advantage, by building their internal brand to have such a strong positioning that it is difficult for any competitors to imitate or beat (Burmamann & Zeplin, 2009; Martin, Gollan, & Grigg, 2011). Organisations can create and maintain their strong positioning by ensuring that they have a number of established evaluation and feedback systems for employees, so HR can manage the brand in order to remain attractive (Chunping & Xi, 2011).

Gaddam (2008) discusses how the employer brand should be present in every part of the employment experience and should promote an employment package, including career development, working environment, benefits, social and mental satisfaction, etc., in order to retain employees. This has been supported by Huczynski and Buchanan (2013, pp. 5-6) who developed the 'Employment Cycle', which illustrates the stages an employee should go through whilst working for an organisation. So from recruitment to induction and from training to performance appraisal, an employee goes through many stages that exposes him/her to the corporate brand through the organisational culture and internal brand communication. The aim of the cycle is for organisations to be able to promote their 'superior employment experience' throughout the entire employment cycle to enable them to become an 'employer of choice', which is an extremely successful method of increasing retention (Munsamy & Venter, 2009). This is due to it

enhancing the complete employment experience by increasing organisational commitment, satisfaction and engagement, thus leading to higher levels of retention (Cascio, 2014).

The foregoing argument, about complete employee experience, leading to employee retention through the means of employee brand commitment and engagement, has been supported by Crawford (2015), who states that rewards and benefit strategies must be present during the employment cycle to motivate staff and increase satisfaction. It has also been proposed that having a competitive reward and benefit programme in place can increase organisational success as it has a positive impact on the welfare status of employees, and therefore individuals are more likely to become loyal to the brand (Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012; WorldatWork, 2007). Moreover, Marchington and Wilkinson (2012) and Taylor (2002) both similarly state that having a good induction and training programme can positively influence an employee's journey within a company and increase commitment due to the early integration into the brand.

It has been identified that all staff within an organisation must be made aware of internal employer brand values (Kunerth & Mosley, 2011). If this is accomplished, their commitment to delivering the organisation's brand promise will increase, and will not only increase customer satisfaction but also enhance employee emotional engagement with the brand (Heskett, 1987). Employees who have an emotional engagement with their employer tend to stay employed with the associated company for longer, increasing retention levels (Brown & Williams, 1984; Cascio, 2014). Mael and Ashforth (1992) support the concept that retention levels are increased if an employee has an emotional engagement to the employer, and proposed the 'Organisational Identification Theory', which states that an employee should have a sense of belongingness to an organisation's culture to enable them to become committed and loyal to that organisation.

Moreover, Ind (1997) suggests that HR managers should include an understanding about 'living the brand promise' throughout the employment cycle to maintain internal branding standards, and that employees should be rewarded accordingly to increase motivation and commitment. Similarly, it is argued that organisations that emphasise the importance of adopting brand-supporting attitudes and behaviours during the employee cycle are thought to have higher proportions of positive employees and in addition, employees are more committed and loyal to the organisation, which in turn allows the organisation to achieve higher levels of retention (Punjaisri, Wilson, & Evanschitzky, 2008).

Commitment

Commitment is thought to be higher in an organisation where the employees identify and are involved with the brand (King & Grace, 2012), and also in organisations where employees exhibit a significant psychological attachment to the employer brand (Piehler, 2011, p. 200). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) observed that certain psychological needs are recognised between the employee and employer to enable an organisation to be perceived positively by a new employee, and to develop commitment from them. A psychological contract should be established during the recruitment process: the employer

provides the employee with training and development, which is returned by employee performance, commitment and retention (Backaus & Tikoo, 2004; Bellou, Chaniotakis, Kehagias, & Rigopoulou, 2015; Moroko & Uncles, 2008). Edwards (2010) similarly suggests that organisations should form part of a psychological contract that correlates with the employer brand in return for commitment throughout employment. This applies particularly to the employer, as there is nothing more damaging for an organisation than an employer brand that turns out to be untrue for new employees (Bersin, 2013; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003).

Employee engagement also plays a significant role in enhancing commitment; employees who are more engaged with and contribute to the culture of an organisation are likely to stay with that organisation for longer periods of employment (Richman, Civian, Shannon, Hill, & Brennan, 2008). Therefore, employers should emphasise integrating the employer brand with culture throughout employment and engagement to increase retention (Allen et al., 2010). Moreover, it has been argued that both the employer and employee should uphold the brand image throughout the employment period to create commitment towards the corporate brand. It is suggested that employee commitment would lead to brand trust in the long term and through effective internal brand communication, human resource management and leadership, the employee would be influenced towards employer brand loyalty (Knox & Freeman, 2006; Punjaisri, Evanschitzky, & Wilson, 2009). This in turn enables employees to get involved and interact with the culture of the brand and become committed, as identified by the factors contributing towards internal brand management (Figure 3). Furthermore, Paille (2013) and Porricelli, Yurova, Abratt and Bendixen (2014) identify and discuss the argument that if an employee shows the citizenship behaviours of the organisational brand, they are more likely to become committed to the brand and remain employed with the organisation. Similar research also recognises that internal brand communication and brand training promotes brand identification, loyalty and commitment amongst employees (Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012).

Figure 3 Factors contributing towards internal brand management



Adapted from Burmann & Zeplin, 2005

Additionally, King and Grace (2008) developed an employee brand commitment pyramid which illustrates that commitment to the brand is only generated after internal brand information has been given and commitment to the job is achieved, thus allowing the employee to progress, and increase retention within an organisation. This is supported by research from Barrow and Mosley (2005) that demonstrates that employees are much more likely to stay employed at any organisation after they have become committed to the brand, as they feel inclined to stay due to the commitment and loyalty they have developed.

Organisational culture

Employer branding boosts the organisational culture within a business, and businesses with strong organisational cultures benefit from higher levels of retention (CIPD, 2015; Wheeler, Richey, Tokkman, & Sablynski, 2006). Ind (1997) claims that an organisation's culture needs to be communicated efficiently to allow cultural characteristics to be upheld, and this is done by ensuring that the organisation's brand values are focused (Hieronimus, Schaefer, & Schroder, 2005). This has been supported by Sengupta et al. (2015), who identified that organisations with clear values within their organisational culture can use the values as a source of motivation for individual action. The organisation will then benefit from higher retention levels due to individuals feeling empowered while working for that particular company, and thus increasing job satisfaction (Alvesson, 2013).

Furthermore, Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) proposed an 'Employer Branding Framework' which suggests that when employees' beliefs, attitudes and values match and are aligned with the company's core values, employee retention is greater, as they identify with the organisation and its culture. The model further highlights that organisational culture feeds back to the employer brand, and retention can be shaped by a behavioural component that links back to organisational culture (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The behavioural component that links retention to employer branding and organisational culture also shapes the way that employees behave, as employees become engaged by the culture of the organisation and begin to adopt behaviours in line with the culture (Foreman & Argenti, 2005). This then leads to employer brand loyalty, and increases employee productivity which paves the way for employee retention.

In exposing employees to the employer's brand values, the organisation's culture is automatically formed around their corporate goals, which enables them to attain an exclusive culture, therefore creating an organisational culture that is impossible for competitors to match (Melewar, Gotsi, & Andriopoulos, 2012). It is thought that this nurturing of the employer brand through corporate culture increases retention due to the reinforcement of the concept that the brand is exclusive, and increases an employee's readiness to stay with an organisation (Inabinett & Ballaro, 2014; Melewar et al., 2012). Moreover, further studies into organisational culture suggest that the culture motivates individuals to adopt citizenship behaviours (Dukerich, Golden, & Shortell, 2002; Tyler & Blader, 2000), and this enables them to behave in ways that reflect the organisation's culture, thus leading them to become committed and to 'live the brand' (Haslam, Powell, & Turner, 2000; Ind, 1997; Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

Table 1 Themes identified and related literature

Theme	Related literature
Brand values	Arachchige & Robertson, 2013; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Ind, 2007; Louro & Cunha, 2001; Mark & Toelken, 2009; Urde, 2003; Viktoria-Rampl & Kenning, 2014
Induction and training	Marchington & Wilkinson, 2012; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Taylor, 2002
Internal brand communication	Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Burmann & Zeplin, 2009; Forman & Argenti, 2005; Froom, 2001; Gaddam, 2008; Gilani, 2011; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013; Punjaisri et al., 2009; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012
Organisational culture	Alvesson, 2013; Arachchige & Robertson, 2013; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; CIPD, 2015; Dukerich et al., 2002; Hieronimus et al., 2005; Ind, 1997; Mark & Toelken, 2009; Melewar et al., 2012; Oladipo et al., 2013; Sengupta et al., 2015; Tyler & Blader, 2000; Wheeler et al., 2006
Rewards and benefits	Gaddam, 2008; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013; Kucherov & Zavyalova, 2012; Mosley, 2007; Thompson & Bunderson, 2003; Wilden et al., 2010; WorldatWork, 2007
Brand commitment	Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barrow & Mosley, 2005; Burmann & Zeplin, 2005; Edwards, 2010; Gilani & Jamshed, 2016; Haslam et al., 2000; Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2009; King & Grace, 2008; Knox & Freeman, 2006; Maxwell & Knox, 2009; Piehler, 2011; Richman et al., 2008
Employer brand management	Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Edlinger, 2015; Foster et al., 2010; Gilani, 2011; Kunerth & Mosley, 2011; Martin et al., 2011; Mosley, 2014

Given the detailed literature review, the seven themes (see Table 1) emerged in the context of an employer brand impacting on employee perception and retention:

Research gaps

From this initial review of literature surrounding employer branding, it would be accurate to state that employer branding has a clear impact on the retention of employees (Allen et al., 2010; Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Armstrong, 2007; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Barrow & Mosley, 2005; Cascio, 2014; Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Davies, 2008; Fernon, 2008; Gilani, 2011; Gilani & Jamshed, 2016; Love & Singh, 2011; Moroko & Uncles, 2008; Mosley, 2007; Munsamy & Venter, 2009; Punjaisri et al., 2008; Russell & Brannan, 2016; Sengupta et al., 2015). Despite much research supporting the relationship between employer branding and retention, there have been no clear attempts undertaking identification of a relationship within a retail set-up.

This is in addition to research having slowed within the past five years, and as organisations are having to constantly adapt their employer branding approaches to remain competitive, this could suggest a gap in research. Moreover, the majority of the most recent literature that has been considered throughout this review has been carried out in countries other than the UK (Arachchige & Robertson, 2013; Edlinger, 2015; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Sengupta et al., 2015; Viktoria-Rampl & Kenning, 2014). Therefore, we have identified that there are gaps in this research topic, and recommend further research to attempt to fill

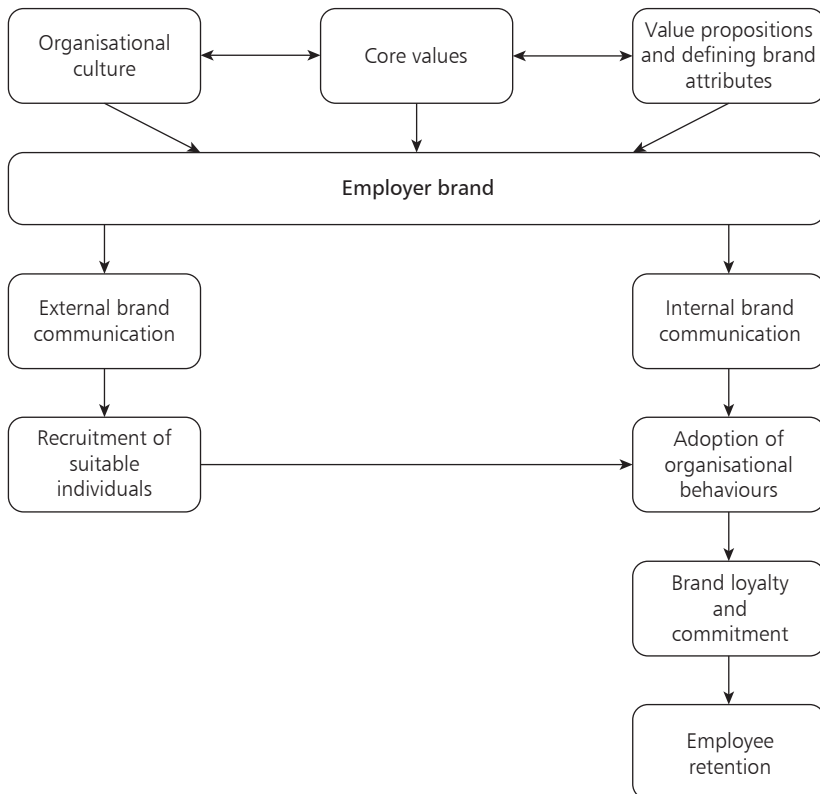
these gaps, by exploring the influence of employer branding on retention in a retail set-up.

Conceptual framework

The literature review identifies that employer branding should be an integrated process within an organisation (Gaddam, 2008; Gilani, 2011; Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013) that results in positive outcomes which contribute towards the retention of employees (Armstrong, 2006; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Gatewood et al., 1993; Ind, 1997). Based on this, a conceptual framework has been devised by the authors of this paper to indicate the influence that employer branding has on employee retention within a retail set-up. This is displayed in Figure 4.

The proposed conceptual framework is based on an in-depth analysis of the literature review which indicates that organisations should initially focus on value propositions and defining brand attributes (e.g., induction, training, rewards, benefits, career progression), and these create a clear vision of their offerings as an employer which is then communicated to the employees through internal branding or internal brand communication activities (Barrow & Mosley, 2005; Sengupta et al., 2015; Srivastava &

Figure 4 Proposed employer branding conceptual framework



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Bhatnagar, 2010). The analysis additionally suggests that if internal branding is implemented effectively, it then enables the organisation to appear attractive to potential and current employees, as they can identify what they can expect from the employer in regard to emotional and rational benefits (Mosley, 2007; Taylor, 2002). The literature also recognises that once value propositions and brand attributes are acknowledged, the organisation should be sure that their organisational culture and brand values are reflected throughout the employer brand (Arachchige & Robertson, 2013; Louro & Cunha, 2001; Mark & Toelken, 2009), and then demonstrate to both potential and current employees how they provide a superior employment experience (Mosley, 2007). This can be demonstrated through internal and external communication (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Gilani, 2011).

Further analysis of academic literature identifies that external communication could be made to potential employees, including through recruitment websites and other various marketing and PR techniques, in order to promote positive perceptions of an organisation as a good employer (Gatewood et al., 1993; Knox & Freeman, 2006; Ritson, 2002). From the analysis it is clearly recommended that the organisational values and culture should be promoted through external communication, and then individuals who have similar values to those of the company would be more likely to apply. These would be the most suitable employees, due to their personal values corresponding with those of the organisation (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Mael & Ashforth, 1992).

The literature further acknowledges that internal communication focuses on communicating an employer brand to current employees, and this is done throughout the employer cycle (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2013; Sivertzen et al., 2013), with the majority of communication coming from management, but also from organisation intranets, internal videos and updates. The data recognises that internal brand communication enables employees to adopt organisational attitudes and behaviours, as this promotes brand identification and enables them to 'live the brand' (Gilani & Jamshed, 2016; Haslam et al., 2000; Ind, 1997; Sharma & Kamalanabhan, 2012; Maxwell & Knox, 2009).

The analysis also suggests that the adoption of organisational behaviours has a link to employee brand loyalty and employee brand commitment due to employees developing an attachment to the brand after these behaviours have been adopted (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Punjaisri et al., 2009). Moreover, it also identifies that after an employee has become committed to the brand, they feel inclined to stay due to the loyalty and commitment that they have developed (Barrow & Mosley, 2005; King & Grace, 2008), thus suggesting that employee retention is positively influenced by the employer branding process within an organisation.

Scope for further research

The proposed research framework can be extended into other areas such as:

1. The researchers suggest that quantitative research using large data sets from many different retail organisations should be undertaken, testing the conceptual framework using inferential statistics to prove or disprove the proposed model and its multifaceted relationships.

2. The key themes identified within employer branding can be explored in more depth, and this would enable an analysis to be undertaken to identify which areas of the employer brand carries the most values for employees.
3. As employees 'living the brand' is a salient feature of many service organisations, and particularly of retail firms, an additional suggestion is to formulate a similar study with various retailers to enable a narrower aim to be researched and to test the proposed conceptual model within a more specific retail context.

Conclusion

This paper explored the literature on employer branding and its influences on employee behaviour. A detailed literature review indicates a clear influence of employer branding on employee brand perception and brand image which then leads to brand retention. From an internal branding perspective, this subject needs further research in sub-areas like employee perceptions, employee brand citizenship behaviour, and internal brand communication issues. This research can be a starting point for many other areas of research on the subject area and gives a relatively clear understanding on the importance of employer brand management influencing employee brand commitment, leading to brand loyalty. The many variables identified in the proposed conceptual framework give a clear idea of the direction that future research should take, in order to confirm the relationships and the process of employer brand management from an employee's perspective.

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