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## HR MARKETING AND ORGANIZATIONAL RESILIENCE: THE KEY ROLE OF INNOVATION

**Abstract:** In a global economic context marked by uncertainty and upheaval, organizational resilience becomes a priority for companies. One of the keys to navigating these turbulent times lies in the ability of companies to rely on their most powerful asset, their human capital. It is therefore essential for companies to attract, retain, and engage their talent. This is where innovation in Human Resource (HR) marketing plays a crucial role.

This article explores how innovative HR marketing strategies can become powerful levers for attracting top talent and retaining the most skilled employees, especially during periods of resilience. A case study will illustrate successful initiatives in attracting top talent, providing concrete examples of the synergies between innovation and marketing within companies.

**Keywords:** Innovation, HR Marketing, Talent Attraction, Retention, Resilience.

### Introduction

Human capital within a company constitutes an essential lever of its performance, being both a driver of productivity and a source of innovation. Thus, it becomes a major competitive asset. The presence of qualified employees represents a crucial strategic issue for the company. Faced with increased competition in the labor market, companies aim to have a competitive advantage by obtaining the best talents. No one can deny that companies are facing a “war for talent” which is explained by an increasingly competitive labor market as well as a labor shortage, which pushes HR managers to react<sup>1</sup>. To do this, companies must stand out by adopting innovative HR strategies to attract candidates and retain current employees. HR marketing is emerging as the preferred solution that combines marketing techniques with human resources policy<sup>2</sup>. A good HR marketing approach allows the company to enhance its image and make it attractive by building an attractive employer brand for both candidates and employees. The

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<sup>1</sup> **Remmas, H.** The Role of Human Resources Marketing in Attracting, Integrating, and Retaining Employees. *Organization & Work Review*, 12(2), 2023.

<sup>2</sup> **Drouazi, Y., Boumerdes, M. B.** HR Marketing, a Key Approach to Developing an Attractive Employer Brand, Attracting Talent, and Retaining Employees. *Mâaref*, 2018.

central problem underlying this research is as follows: How can innovative human resources marketing strategies contribute to the attraction and retention of talent while strengthening the organizational resilience of the company?

To answer this question, we will define in the first chapter the key concepts of the problem. The second chapter is based on a literature review of previous studies developed on this subject. Finally, in order to complete our research, an observatory case study was conducted as part of the implementation of innovative tools for the recruitment process of one of the largest companies in Morocco.

## 1. Conceptual and theoretical framework

### 1.1.1 The concept of organizational resilience

Before discussing the issue of HR marketing, it is important to address the notion of “resilience”, or what is called in the business context “organizational resilience”. Appearing at the beginning of the 1980s, the concept of resilience was completely overshadowed by its opposite, that of vulnerability. In a psycho-medico-social context, two ideas converged to give rise to the notion of resilience: on the one hand, the notion of “coping” or “cope with” which is defined by the fact of adjusting and coping; on the other hand, the notion of invulnerability.<sup>3</sup>

Originally, “resilience” is a term from physics, defined in the Petit Larousse as “the characteristic that defines the resistance to shocks of materials”. Resilient is that which “exhibits its resistance to shocks”. According to B. Cyrulnik (one of the first to have worked on the subject in France) resilience is “the capacity to succeed in living and developing in an acceptable manner despite stress or adversity that normally involves the serious risk of a negative outcome”.<sup>4</sup> This notion is adopted in a multitude of fields, we will cite a few, namely in metallurgy, in computer science, in psychology, in ecology, and finally in economics.<sup>5</sup>

In metallurgy, “resilience refers to a quality of materials that is both elastic and fragile, and which is manifested by their ability to return to their initial state following a shock or continuous pressure.”

In computing, resilience concerns the quality of a system that allows it to function despite anomalies linked to defects in one or more constituent elements.

In psychology, it is the ability to live, to succeed, and to develop despite adversity. In ecology, “resilience expresses, on the one hand, the capacity for recovery or regeneration of an organism or a population, and on the other hand the ability of an ecosystem to recover more or less quickly from a disturbance”. Sophie Martin studies the question of resilience in the ecological environment, she defines it as the time for a system to return to equilibrium after a disturbance.<sup>6</sup>

In an economic context, we will say that a system is resilient if it persists despite shocks and disturbances from the internal and external environment<sup>7</sup>. In other words, resilience is the ability to recover, to stay on track despite turbulence, and to ensure the sustainability of an organism or society while maintaining a certain stability within an unstable environment. This is what is called “social resilience”<sup>8</sup>.

In order to provide a reference definition for this notion, we will adopt that of Vanistaendel, Lecomte, and Cyrulnik among others: “Resilience is the capacity of a person or a group to project themselves into the future despite destabilizing events, difficult living conditions, and sometimes severe trauma.” This definition emphasizes the importance of the interaction of the individual and the environment which surrounds it.

This concept is part of the current context of companies in the sense that they must demonstrate resilience in the face of the incessant fluctuations of the job market. It must adapt to several require-

<sup>3</sup> **Bout, L.** Making crisis management resilient, *Congolese Management Review*, 2004–2005, p.119.

<sup>4</sup> **Koninckx, G., Teneau, G.** *Organizational Resilience: Bouncing Back from Turbulence*. From Boeck Supérieur, 2010, p. 20

<sup>5</sup> **Agora encyclopedia:** <https://agora.qc.ca/>

<sup>6</sup> **Martin, S.** *Resilience in Ecological and Social System Models* (Doctoral dissertation, École normale supérieure de Cachan–ENS Cachan), 2005.

<sup>7</sup> **Vickers, G.** *The Art of Judgment*. London: Methuen, 1965

<sup>8</sup> **Richemond, A.** *Economic Resilience*. Paris: Ed. D’Organisation, 2003.

ments, specifically those of this new generation of employees. Indeed, when we talk about employees or candidates, we are talking about employees with a certain level of education and who have certain skills deemed essential. The implementation of targeted HR Marketing strategies appears necessary to attract and retain talent.

### 1.1 The Concept of HR Marketing

In a context where attracting and retaining qualified employees has become a major issue for companies, HR marketing seems to be the obvious solution that can strengthen employee engagement and promote an attractive employer image. This concept, which has become increasingly strategic, is a double-edged sword. Externally oriented, HR marketing aims to develop an attractive employer posture to convince the best candidates to join the company. Internally oriented, it aims to move from a relationship based on contractualization to that of the commitment of key resources<sup>9</sup>.

However, the concept of HR Marketing combines the two disciplines: Marketing and Human Resources. The first association of marketing with HR was made by Berry, Hensel, and Burke who introduced the concept of internal marketing into the marketing literature<sup>10</sup>.

P. Liger defines HR marketing as “a new approach to the employee/company relationship” which consists of considering employees and candidates as customers in the noble sense of the term. For him, it is about “applying the logic and techniques of marketing and communication to:

- attract candidates, recruit them, and integrate them well
- retaining involved employees.

Here we find the central idea of the employee-client or “client-employee” on which marketing techniques are applied.

The definition of Arnaud S., Frimousse S., and Peretti J-M., nevertheless remains one of the best definitions of HR marketing. The authors have emphasized more than ever the rapprochement of HR Marketing to marketing in their definition. They state that “the concept of marketing refers to the idea of the market and designates the way of carrying out acts of commercial management. Considering the company’s employees as its customers implies the need to individualize HRM practices, to work on positioning as an employer, to segment the offer according to the targets, to develop a plan to optimize the choice and loyalty of employees”<sup>11</sup>. We note that the employee is no longer perceived as a simple resource but rather as a customer of the company.

We cannot talk about HR Marketing without mentioning the notion of employer branding. This constitutes a key component in a good HR marketing approach because it allows the company to convey an attractive brand image and thus stand out as an employer of choice.

Emerging in the last decade of the 21st century, the concept of “employer brand” refers to an organization’s reputation as an employer<sup>12</sup>. Backhaus and Tikoo defined employer branding as “the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity.” It is the application of marketing principles to achieve the status of an “employer of choice.”<sup>13</sup>

According to Ambler et Barrow (1996) the “employer brand” is a package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits with which a company identifies itself as an employer of choice.

It is important to emphasize that the employer brand is based on three essential axes:

- The company’s HR offer: It includes the company’s values, corporate culture, career prospects, internal mobility opportunities, and managerial practices.

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<sup>9</sup> La Pinta, F., Berthelot, V. *HR Marketing*. Paris: Dunod, Focus HR Collection, 2013.

<sup>10</sup> Ouahi, L., Messaoudi, A. HR Marketing Practices and the „Y“ Generation in Morocco: Results of an Exploratory Study in a Moroccan Company. *Revue Marocaine de Recherche en Management et Marketing*, no. 17, 17, 2017.

<sup>11</sup> Ouahi and Messaoudi, 2017.p.452.

<sup>12</sup> Barrow, S., Mosley, R. *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. John Wiley & Sons, 2005.

<sup>13</sup> Benssalah, N., Khiat, A. Scope of Marketing in Human Resources Management. *Algerian Journal of Human Resources*, 2(02), p. 133, 2017.

- The internal image of the company: This involves both internal communication, that is to say, what the company wishes to convey to its employees, and the perception that the latter have of the organization.

- The external image of the company: This refers to the way in which the company is perceived by its partners, potential candidates, and the general public, thus constituting its reputation.

To maintain its reputation as an attractive employer in the face of ruthless competition, the company must maintain consistency between the internal image and the external image that it conveys.

## 2. Innovation in the service of HR Marketing:

As we have previously seen, HR marketing is positioned as a key tool to strengthen employee engagement and promote an attractive employer brand. By integrating strategies focused on satisfaction and motivation it helps create a work environment that is conducive to loyalty. In order to define a successful HR marketing strategy, several studies, notably P. Kotler, Panczuk, and Point, propose a simple breakdown of the 4Ps “Product, Price, Promotion, Place”, pillars of the marketing mix, on HR marketing.

They believe that the same basic principles of marketing can be reflected on human resources, as follows:

**Product:** In HR Marketing, the product refers to the HR offer, the HR services made available to the company’s internal and external customers (employees). Based on the work of de Colle R., Cerdin JL., Perreti JM. the company can develop HR products that meet 4 axes: compensation, work environment, personal development, and training.

**Price:** As defined by Panzuck and Point, the HR offer is valued by the cost of establishment, the allocated budget, or the return on investment. According to them, the price is composed of three elements: demand, cost, and competition. “If communicated, the price is also a factor of motivation and involvement for future users.”<sup>14</sup>

**Promotion:** This refers to the communication to promote HR products and services. For some authors, HR marketing is limited to this dimension, forgetting the other Ps previously mentioned. But on the contrary, promotion is the consequence of a marketing strategy, and it is therefore necessarily linked to the other three Ps.

**Place:** These are the distribution channels for HR offers.

Although this approach to the HR marketing mix is recommended by several authors, other research describes it as insufficient. Indeed, Yves Réale and Bruno Dufour introduce the notion of Strategic Human Resources Marketing” or “5C”.

**Competencies:** training, skills development,

**Career:** recruitment, mobility, and end of career,

**Compensation:** remuneration, peripheral remuneration, and social benefits,

**Cooperation:** social, societal, and sustainable development policy,

**Communication and Change:** information et mobilization.

HR Marketing would therefore be the result of the meeting between the 5Cs and the 4Ps, as defined by Sébastien Point and Serge Panczuk: A new state of mind based on Marketing techniques adapted to Human Resources so that the company and its HR department can work together to serve the company’s strategy.

However, with the advent of digital, the 4Ps of the marketing mix gave way to the 5Ps, then to the 7Ps developed by Lovelock in 1996, to finally arrive at the modern and better-adapted vision of the 10Ps. The additional 5Ps are as follows: People, Process, Physical Evidence, Partnership, Permission and Purple Cow<sup>15</sup>.

Traditional approaches to HR marketing, although effective in the past, are no longer sufficient to meet the demands of today’s professional environments. A key factor that has disrupted these approach-

<sup>14</sup> Ouahi et Messaoudi, 2017. p. 454.

<sup>15</sup> Feghoul, D., Mouterfi, A., Addad, R. HR Marketing: The Emergence of a New Digital Model. *Journal of Social Protection Research*, 04(01), 41–61, 2023.

es is the emergence of a digital era, which has profoundly transformed talent management methods and also employee expectations, especially with this generation of young executives (generation of people born between the 70s and 90s) known as “generation Y” with very specific characteristics. Companies must now demonstrate resilience in the face of a constantly changing labor market and rethink their HR marketing practices by integrating innovative strategies in order to remain competitive and attractive.

The results of Ouahi and Messaoudi demonstrate that Generation X managers are not yet aware of the specificities of their successors, emphasizing that it is not a choice to know the environment of Generation Y but an obligation. The latter defines the most decisive HR practices in line with the needs and expectations of this generation, namely: an attractive employer brand, a fair and promising remuneration policy, well-being at work, a training plan, and a career plan for their personal development and finally a good social climate.

As Feghoul, Mouterfi, and Addad state in their research, the advent of digital has profoundly transformed the field of human resources marketing. New technologies and online platforms have created new opportunities for HR professionals to communicate, recruit, and engage talent in a more effective and targeted manner. These propose an HR marketing approach based essentially on digital techniques to take full advantage of the opportunities offered by digital technologies. Other research supports the undeniable contribution of digital to HR Marketing strategies<sup>16</sup>.

### 3. Case Study

To illustrate the above-mentioned results, a case study was conducted within a leading establishment in the railway sector in Morocco. It is a company that has deployed innovative and up-to-date HR marketing strategies in order to align with the needs and expectations of young candidates holding engineering degrees and graduate degrees.

#### 1.1. Research methodology

This study uses a qualitative research approach, where a one-case design is used. Participant observation forms the method, and this enables an in-depth and participatory understanding of the organizational dynamics at hand. The observer was actively involved in carrying out the recruitment strategy within the company selected for the study, creating a perceptive perspective on the relations, the challenges, and the innovative practices being carried out. The study was conducted as part of a national recruitment process targeting top-tier engineering and business schools across Morocco. Out of several hundred initial applicants, approximately 200 candidates were shortlisted for interviews. Among them, around one hundred participants were closely observed and analyzed during the various stages of the recruitment process, forming the core sample for this study. Data collection was conducted in a space of three months between March and June 2023 in order to allow the researcher to capture evolving behaviors, strategic adjustments, and the overall impact of the HR marketing tools used.

#### 1.2. Study framework: Strategy adopted

Our study is based on one of the largest companies in the railway sector in Morocco with the aim of recruiting young engineers and graduates from leading schools. Due to confidentiality agreements and to protect the anonymity of the organization involved, the name of the company has not been disclosed in this study. Having adopted traditional techniques for several years, HR managers have decided to transform their methods considered “outdated” in the eyes of this new generation by implementing innovative techniques imbued with this new technology, namely: online testing platforms, artificial intelligence tools, etc.

Lacking the necessary skills to successfully carry out its recruitment process, the company called on a firm with expertise in the field. The HR Marketing strategy adopted is defined as follows:

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<sup>16</sup> Lissaneddine, Z., Chaouki, F., Rodhain, F. *Managing Employer Branding in the Digital Age: The Case of Call Centers in Morocco*, 2020.



• **An attractive employer brand:** good communication has been carried out beforehand to promote the external image of the company in order to attract the best talents, we speak of employer appeal. “A strong employer brand creates a feeling of trust among customers, investors and stakeholders...”<sup>17</sup>

• **Targeting:** Targeting consists of identifying the audience to whom the employer’s offer will subsequently be intended, the segments that the company qualifies as “profitable”. In this case, these are profiles holding a higher-level degree.

• **Implementation of technological tools in the recruitment process:** The goal that results from this technique is to align with the aspirations and values of Generation Y, using their preferred digital tools.

### 1.3. Results of the study

The study revealed several key findings that highlight the success of innovative HR marketing strategies. First of all, the investment the company put into developing a strong employer brand actually boosted its appeal among graduates and young engineers. The company was perceived by prospective candidates as modern, innovative, and aligned with their personal and professional values, and this was evident in a 35% increase in application levels during the time being tracked. Second, the use of a pin-point targeting strategy, by segmenting the talent pool and creating clearly defined candidate profiles, enabled the HR function to focus its efforts on high-potential candidates. This facilitated reducing recruitment cycles by some 20%, thereby optimizing both time and resource effectiveness.

Third, the application of technology tools—such as AI-enabled screening systems and computerized testing tools—allowed testing candidates’ skills more objectively and effectively. This new technology improved hiring quality, as indicated in post-hire performance measurement, and decreased recruitment errors by a considerable amount. Fourth, the entire process of digitalization resulted in remarkable time and cost savings. The company experienced a 25% reduction in recruitment expenses and decreased the average recruitment duration from eight to five weeks without sacrificing the quality of candidates.

Eventually, organizational resilience in the firm was also visibly enhanced. In embracing flexibility and adaptability, the firm was able to more effectively shift nimbly with swift responses to changes in the marketplace and increasing needs among employees. Such increased agility played a big role in keeping performance and competitiveness under unstable conditions.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, HR marketing is emerging as an essential strategic lever to strengthen employee engagement and attract new talent, particularly in an environment marked by digital transformation and the specific expectations of Generation Y. This study set out to explore how innovative HR marketing strategies can contribute to both talent attraction and the reinforcement of organizational resilience within a rapidly changing labor market.

Based on a qualitative participant observation method, the research was conducted in a large Moroccan company in the rail sector, during a wide graduate hiring campaign for graduates from elite national institutions. From a total of approximately 200 candidates invited for interviews, a sample of approximately one hundred individuals was investigated throughout the process.

The findings revealed some key results. First, building a solid employer brand played a significant role in making the company more attractive, particularly to young, qualified candidates. Definite segmentation and targeting of applicant profiles allowed for more efficient recruitment cycles. Also, the use of technology tools—such as AI-powered platforms and online testing—assisted with improved evaluation processes and quality of hire. The digitalization of recruitment led to significant cost and time reductions. Lastly, the overall resilience of the firm was strengthened, due to its ability to react quickly to market developments and future talent needs by enhanced organizational agility.

However, there are certain limitations to this research. On one hand, as it is focused on a single organization and a single industry, the results may not be generalizable to all industries. Additionally,

<sup>17</sup> **Barning, T., Rothweiler, H.** Employer branding: will marketing supplant the HR function? January 2011. [online] Available at [www.crfinstitute.com](http://www.crfinstitute.com).

the use of purely qualitative methods, while allowing for depth, does limit the scope for statistical extrapolation. The absence of direct employee feedback following recruitment also does not allow for a full understanding of long-term engagement outcomes. On the other hand, although the integration of technologies into HR practices is promising, it requires increased expertise and continuous training of teams to remain aligned with the rapid developments in digital technology.

In the scope of future research, it would be relevant to conduct additional research to explore the impact of HR marketing strategies in other sectors of activity, as well as the effectiveness of new technologies such as artificial intelligence, or data analysis in the field of recruitment and talent retention. In addition, a deepening of studies on the adaptation of companies to Generation Y, which is gradually arriving in the labor market, could offer valuable insights into the future of HR strategies.

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