

## REVIEW OF DOCTORAL THESIS

Title of Doctoral Thesis: **Employer Brand and Firm Competitiveness on the Labour Market: The Case of Azerbaijan**

Doctoral Student: **Aydan Huseynova**

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Reviewer: **doc. Ing. Jena Švarcová, Ph.D.**

### Introduction

For assessment, I received Aydan Huseyn's dissertation in the amount of 171 pages, including all appendices. The theoretical framework includes pages 9 to 52, but it is also necessary to add References (pages 79 - 111) and the appendix Brief description of articles (pages 215 - 169). Conceptual framework and Methodology (pages 52 - 63), Quantitative study (pages 64 - 74) and discussion and conclusion (74 - 77) then represent a smaller part of the Thesis. In my opinion, the scope, structure and content of the dissertation meet the requirements for this type of qualification work.

### Evaluation of goals and objectives

The author of evaluated doctoral thesis investigates the impact of employer brand to increase the firms' competitiveness based in Azerbaijan. This goal demands a precise definition of the term "company based in Azerbaijan". *The author uses the concept of Glassdoor platform, but does not specify methodology of territoriality for relevant labour market in Azerbaijan - according to the available information, this concept does not answer the question of whether the employees involved in the survey must have Azerbaijani citizenship, work on the territory of the state of Azerbaijan, or whether they can also be foreign employees. This level of uncertainty in the definition of the labour market for firms located in Azerbaijan may have an impact on the research findings.* Furthermore, a dissertation investigates the mediation of organizational commitment and recruitment efficiency (RC) in the association of employer brand and firm competitiveness. And finally, the moderating role of online employee review (OnERev) as a moderator in the relationship of employer brand and organizational commitment is investigated.

The author finds a research gap in literature, on the basis of which author defines **the conceptual framework (pp 54 – 55)** and expects the relationship of employer brand with firm competitiveness, organizational commitment, and recruitment efficiency; relationship of organizational commitment and recruitment efficiency with firm competitiveness; mediating relationship of organizational commitment and recruitment efficiency to be expected between the relationship of employer brand and firm competitiveness. The conceptual framework also anticipates the moderating relationship of online employee reviews on the relationship of employer brand and organizational commitment.

In the chapter 3.2, the author lists research questions RQ1 – RQ5, **research objectives RO1a, RO2, RO3a, RO3b, RO4, RO5a, RO5b, RO5c**, and the H1-H8 hypotheses. *It is not clear, why there is RO1a, when there are no other sub-objectives in RO1. It would be beneficial if a suitable tree of objectives was presented, distinguishing the importance of individual sub-objective. From the point of view of the main topic of this Doctoral Thesis the RO1a looks to be the main objective, RO2 and RO4 could be sub-objectives, RO3b, RO5b and RO5c could be mediating objectives, and RO3a and RO5a could be just additional objectives.*

### **Evaluation of research issue in relation to the actuality of the topic**

Research issues, especially the impact of employer brand and firm competitiveness on the labour market, is topical. The emphasis on the relationship between the employer's brand and the company's competitiveness is appropriately chosen. The author derives competitiveness mainly from the publications of M. E. Porter from the end of the twentieth century and his followers; competitiveness in the labour market refers to the publications of a number of authors from the last 20 years. Among newer trends, the author mainly uses the Online employee review (OnERev) method. In chapter 3.1.1, the author reflects on the current macroeconomic and demographic situation on the labour market in Azerbaijan. However, I did not find a cited reference to "The State Statistical Committee of the Republic of Azerbaijan, 2022" in the bibliography.

### **Evaluation of procedures for fulfilling research goals and methodology**

Research design and measurement of variables are described on pages 52 - 63. Author used 374 Glassdoor registered companies from various industries of Azerbaijan, but I did not find a cited reference to Glassdoor platform in the bibliography. A total of 453 employees from 258 companies were contacted and requested to participate in the survey. In return, a total of 368 usable responses were received from 158 companies. Table 3 shows the attributes of the respondents and their employers.

Measures and variables are described in chapter 3.5. Table 5 describes Reliability and Convergent Validity. The Smart PLS 3.3.3 software version has been used to test hypotheses and path analysis using the structural equation model. Hypotheses 1 to 7 were accepted, hypothesis 8 was rejected. According to my opinion research goals were fulfilled and the methodology used was appropriate with only minor comments that follows.

PhD Thesis does not state the time horizon of the research. It can be assumed that this was short-term time-limited research on current data 2022.

The research described in the PhD Thesis does not work with the possibility of brand change and rebranding. It could be possible objective for future research.

Other aspects of the labour market, such as the wage level, were not the subject of research, although they certainly affect the competitiveness of companies.

In the discussion, the author states that study indicates that with higher unemployment in a developing country, despite looking at the negative reviews about the employers, job seekers do not pay much attention to employees' reviews (page 76). I can see that as very practical statement and recommendation.

### **Statement about expected results of dissertation thesis with particular contribution of the student for development of study field and for practice**

The author summarizes the benefits for theory and practice in chapter 5.1 According to the author the thesis contributes towards body of knowledge in several ways by investigating the role of employer brand in enhancing firm competitiveness. It contributes to the signalling theory by examining the moderating effects of OnERev signals on the relationship between employer brand and organizational commitment, though H8 was rejected. In the context of developing countries, the firms should focus more to build employer brand and work on best HR practices to attract and retain best talent rather than to put more attention to online employee reviews.

The limits of the research are stated in chapter 6.1 as well as recommendations for further research.

### **Formal presentation of the dissertation**

The formal presentation of the Doctoral Thesis corresponds to the requirements for this type of work. The work is clear, logically arranged and written in appropriate language. Occasional grammatical mistakes do not cause text comprehension mistakes.

In References page 101, the author mentions: "Porter, M. E. (1817). The competitive advantage of nations. The Free Press New York.", but I could not find such a source with this year of publishing.

### **Statement about the student's publications**

The publication activity of the author can be evaluated as adequate, though the author's publishing activity is not strictly focused only to the topic of Doctoral Thesis. The topic of the dissertation is discussed mainly in the author's articles 1, 5 and 11.

### **Questions suggested for the defence:**

- *Are the results published in Doctoral Thesis valid only under similar macroeconomic conditions that were valid in Azerbaijan in 2022?*
- *Can a change in the macroeconomic situation (economic crisis) affect the behaviour of employees in relation to the employer's brand?*

### **Definite statement of the reviewer on fulfilment of Doctoral Thesis Summary evaluation**

I recommend the Doctoral Thesis to defence.

In Zlín, October 13, 2023



Associate Professor Jena Švarcová