

NEMZETI KÖZSZOLGÁLATI EGYETEM

Hadtudományi Doktori Iskola



Olaf Christian von Roeder:

**Applicability of Employer Branding
in the Hungarian Defence Forces –
from a cross-national comparative Aspect**

Thesis Book

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Kalenborn, 2014

Description of the scientific problem

The demographic development in Hungary and Germany is characterized by a population decrease that leads to an enormous competition among employers about the most talented candidates in the corresponding labour market. The topic of becoming an attractive employer therefore appears as up-to-date and important to be analyzed. Employer Branding (EB) in turn can be considered as a successful tool to answer that challenge by increasing the employer attractiveness as well as the employee commitment and engagement. However, until today a comprehensive Employer Branding has only been successfully conducted in civil organizations, leading to the question if this instrument also could be applied by the military.

The plan to answer this question and to demonstrate the applicability of Employer Branding in Armed Forces can be considered as the origin respectively the motivation to do this research. Using the example of the Hungarian Defence Forces (HDF), an institution undergoing a period of transition (including the challenging task to find the appropriate number and quality of candidates) thereby appears as meaningful and beneficial.

Hypotheses

Based on the results of a conducted analysis about the HR-Management of the HDF including (the expected benefits of) Employer Branding the following different although relating statements were created as this dissertation's hypotheses:

- **No 1: „The missions of NATO / EU-militaries are getting more and more dangerous and challenging and require a better trained and highly motivated workforce. Therefore it is increasingly difficult to get adequate personnel for such joint missions.”**
- **No 2: “Employer Branding is a well proven management tool in civil organizations. Considering the recruitment of potential military employees, Employer Branding also raises the attractiveness of military organizations.”**

- **No 3: “The Benchmarking of differences and similarities in the applicability of Employer Branding in the Hungarian Defence Forces and the Bundeswehr (including further military, profit and non-for-profit organizations) can lead to increased employee satisfaction and a higher social prestige of the respective group.”**
- **No 4: “Employer Branding supports (and interacts with) the employees` commitment and motivation.”**

Through a comprehensive documentary analysis respectively through a semi-structured self-completion survey (with five Hungarian and five German high ranking Officers) the necessary data to test the hypotheses was generated. In doing so the focus on the respondents` answers was rather put on a qualitative than on a quantitative output due to the dissertation`s topic.

Anyhow, the aim of those hypotheses was to create a concept or theory by being confirmed (or rejected). Considering the research results, it can be stated that all hypotheses were more or less “confirmed”, which in turn represents the development respectively the creation of a new concept. From a scientific point of view the conducted work therefore appears as successful.

Research Objectives

The aim of this doctoral thesis is to demonstrate the applicability of Employer Branding in Armed Forces using the example of the HDF. Its result in turn shall lead to an increased employer attractiveness of the Magyar Honvédség (and other organizations) through enhanced elements of *Recruitment, Retention and Employee Engagement/Commitment*.

Due to the fact that the author represents a German reserve officer, this doctoral thesis argues from a cross-national comparative aspect recognizing particularly relevant aspects of the Bundeswehr. Besides the above-mentioned intention to demonstrate the applicability of Employer Branding in the military world including the development of an own EB-model, the aim of this project furthermore appears as the desire to close the therewith-connected scientific gap.

Research methodologies

Due to the topic of this dissertation and its therewith connected necessity to effectively recognize all qualitative aspects when focusing EB a qualitative research has been identified as the appropriate tool. In doing so, the so-called Grounded Theory applies, because it has been figured out as a proper and widely used framework for analyzing qualitative data.

Based on those considerations the necessary collection and sampling of data has been conducted through a comprehensive analysis of the HDF (and other organizations like the Bundeswehr), as well as through a fundamental literature review of HR-management in general and Employer Branding in particular.

In addition, the usage of a semi-structured self-completion survey appeared as the most appropriate way to obtain the desired practice information (*see chapter "Interviews"*). That way not only was considered as the most effective path to present the results against theory but also to identify what is happening respectively what issues are necessary among the militaries' HR-Management.

Anyhow, the survey's result can be considered as a useful and wide-based contribution to completing this study.

After having conducted the survey, its generated input besides the results of the documentary analysis were used to test the previously defined hypotheses (in terms of confirming or rejecting them) as well as to answer the previously set up research questions.

According to the Grounded Theory (again) the confirmed hypotheses in turn elaborated a new concept respectively theory. The concluding results of this dissertation were presented in the final summarizing chapter.

Concise description of the completed examination chapter by chapter

After having demonstrated the organizational environment of the HDF that needs to be recognized when conducting this research at the beginning of this dissertation (*see chapter Hungarian Defence Forces – Impacting Factors of Transformation*), the next milestone of this work is a comprehensive analysis of the HDF's (*current*) HR-Management including a

conducted benchmark with other relevant public and private institutions as well as a review focusing the relevance of this study including its motivating factors.

In the next chapter of this dissertation (*“Relevance of the Study”*) multiple factors are named that justify this study beginning with *the HDF’s need to recruit the adequate number and quality of personnel*. Further arguments in this connection are *demographical development, openness of the European labour market, abolishment of conscription, a high fluctuation rate, “War for Talent”, increased sophisticated technology, as well as increased international military co-operations*.

And last not least, Employer Branding is presented as the appropriate answer to increase the organization’s specialty, uniqueness and attractiveness as an employer. Its benefits are especially identified in the fields of *Recruiting, Commitment, Corporate Culture, Corporate Branding and Performance*.

This chapter in turn is followed by the main body of the thesis concentrating on the central research questions and the therewith connected testing of the (previously created) hypotheses in order to bring the scientific theory forward (*see chapter “Central Research Questions”*). This again is supported by an empirical research-study involving questionnaire-based interviews that are reviewed respectively measured and discussed.

The thesis furthermore rests on a comprehensive analysis of the *“Tendencies and Opportunities at the European Labour Market”* that shows the structural differences and challenges between the single countries; also demonstrating effective measures conducted by the Hungarian and the German government to fight unemployment.

In addition, this thesis is based on a substantial documentary review taking into account the most recent and recognized theories and approaches about Employer Branding (including its Critical Success Factors). By focusing the driving factors of EB, the potential output, as well as the benefits, for the HDF are elaborated. Those considerations in turn result in an own developed model focusing the implementation of EB in the Magyar Honvédség (*see chapter “Employer Branding – theoretical and empirical Findings”*). Finally this thesis contains a concluding chapter at the end of this work summarizing and interpreting its results, as well as naming the faced limitations and addressing recommendations for future practice.

Summarized conclusions

This doctoral thesis starts with the analysis of the HDF` chosen transformation as a consequence of the fundamental change of the world order in 1989 and the therewith-connected question, which technology and even more what kind of personnel will be needed in the future. Following those considerations the theoretical mindset of military transformation is elaborated through two scientific approaches; first as a continuous forward-looking process of change and second as a more focused approach aiming to use the most-modern high-tech military systems available. Anyhow, the HDF aspire to realize the second (“US-American”) approach in order to effectively conduct (joint and combined) missions (abroad).

Beyond the theoretical mindset, current and future impacts and trends that influence the transformational change of the Hungarian Defence Forces are evaluated by addressing the political, economical, socio-cultural, technological and environmental key factors. That analysis was not only necessary in order to categorize the different factors but also to enable a sound basis for this work in terms of better understanding the organizations surrounding. In addition, those impacts represent the “external framework” of the HDF.

All in all, the Hungarian Defence Forces appear to be on an excellent way having adopted the necessary transformation process (including the recognition of the above stated impacts). Anyhow, those named influences (also) have an effect on potential candidates, who think about a career in the HDF. This in turn needs to be recognized when organizing an effective recruiting of future personnel.

The aim and objective of this thesis is to show the applicability of Employer Branding in Armed Forces using the example of the HDF in order to increase the attractiveness as an employer and therefore to demonstrate a benefit (for the Hungarian military). In doing so particularly the elements of *Recruitment, Retention and Employee engagement / commitment* were identified as key for success.

Based on the analysis of the HDF` *current* HR-management, particularly comparing HR-theory with the organization`s practice, the HDF` HR-management`s *strengths and weaknesses* were identified. The following fields though were elaborated as the organization`s strengths worth to continue:

- **Own unique culture (including beliefs, values and attributes)**
- **Lived team spirit**
- **Opportunity of operations abroad**
- **Paid academic education**
- **Responsibility for subordinates and material in early years of age**
- **Fairness and equality to make a successful career**
- **Sound reward management**
- **Extensive social policy; *and***
- **HR-development / learning opportunities**

Anyhow, the elaborated *weaknesses* again were benchmarked against other relevant organizations in order to develop concrete alternatives and recommendations for the Hungarian military (worth to be adopted). The analysed organizations (Bundeswehr, US Armed Forces, Polish Armed Forces, United Nations, Profit and Non-for-profit organizations) were chosen in order to have relevant benchmarks for the HDF, that make sense in multiple meanings – however focussing a potential benefit worth to be adopted or at least to be concentrated on by the HDF. Those results appear as follows:

- Referring to the weakness of *not marketing the organization's (real) assets (like the social benefits) enough* – among the militaries – the US-Armed Forces can be considered as the benchmark, because they (realize the necessity to) seriously work on this topic. Another organizational category that was analyzed and, which appears as relevant for the HDF, is the non-for profit organizations issue (that the HDF are themselves). Here, the result shows, that the ability – to attract and to hold committed people – particularly depends on the organization's continuous success respectively on the possibility to work for something meaningful. In marketing the own institution, the for-profit sector including its realized Employer Branding represents the benchmark (particularly from a HR-perspective) worth to be investigated further (by the HDF).
- Considering the analyzed weakness of having *a remuneration rate for the management personnel (officers) below the (civil) market average*, the analysis of the non-for-profit organizations also generated an additional, interesting aspect. One of the big identified strengths of non-for-profit institutions is, that (the majority of) people there do not work for a

living; they want to work for a cause. Considering the HDF, it can be concluded, that the military's (professional) tasks increasingly need to be communicated. In doing so the right personnel, who work for a "cause", would be reached more effectively.

- According to the weakness of having *too many non-core (non-military) tasks* it was demonstrated that the majority of militaries face the same problem. However, the Bundeswehr has successfully initialized P3-concepts and outsourcing projects, where effective solutions have been launched. P3-projects as "something special" represent a good example worth to be adopted by the HDF.
- Considering the deficiency of having *too much bureaucracy*, it was analyzed that the bureaucracy phenomenon applies to all (different) organizations (that have been focused). In this field, the Hungarian military should go its own, individual way in finding appropriate answers. Anyhow, a bettering of this topic would (also) lead to increased employer attractiveness. Particularly when considering the organization's desired image (as part of the EB-process) it makes sense to deal with, respectively to improve, this matter.
- Referring to the weakness of *less (outside the own organization) accepted professional and academic degrees* it has been identified that the Bundeswehr as well as the US-Armed Forces have implemented successful co-operations with chambers of commerce or academic institutions in order to harmonize respectively accept relevant degrees. The Bundeswehr as well as the US-military again represent the benchmark considering this topic. The HDF should try to get further information about the realization of an increased co-operation with chambers of commerce. It is obvious, that further accepted degrees one could achieve in the HDF would mean an additional asset in terms of the employer's attractiveness.
- Considering the weakness of a *deficient HR-management focusing demanding operations abroad* it has been found out that more or less all organizations are affected by this topic. However, the United Nations (as an international institution) and the US-Armed Forces in doing so turned out as the benchmark. The HDF though in doing so should focus the US-military as well as the UN for further recommendations respectively additional information

about a comprehensive HR-management focusing their personnel (in military operations) and families.

- Referring to the identified weakness of *less structural space for improvements and entrepreneurship*, it was analyzed that all organizations compared have identified the necessity to foster (space for) improvements and entrepreneurship. The HDF in turn should (re)establish an own improvement program adopting the German “Kontinuierliches Verbesserungsprogramm” that contains not only the possibility to make processes more efficient and save costs, but also represents a huge asset in terms of engaging the personnel for the organization’s success.

The research questions again were answered as follows:

1. Considering the topic, *what measures are necessary to make the HDF more attractive as an employer* it was said that the performance management of the HDF should be optimised. A realization would enhance the organizational attractiveness in general and the recruitment and retention in particular. Here, especially the improvement subject comprised many options to be enforced. In doing so, a rebuilt improvement program, including a comprehensive approach covering all personnel, in connection with a sound evaluation and incentive system would (in addition) strongly enhance the (existing) personnel` commitment. For the dissertation`s output though this result was important particularly when creating the EB-process for the HDF and concentrating on the desired image of the organisation. In addition, the creation of a benefit package for the HDF respectively the generation of a (new) Employer Value Proposition (EVP) are intensively affected by this research question`s result.

2. Considering the answer to the research question, *what measures are necessary to keep the soldiers within the HDF*, it was stated that the military basically should maintain respectively keep its major assets in terms of employer attractiveness like the organization`s social policy (including medical support, support of accommodation, support of families, recreation, and ergonomic working conditions). In addition, here the possibility to obtain officially accepted professional and academic degrees was named. Those results again have an impact on the creation of a benefit package respectively the generation of a (new) EVP for the HDF. Fortunately, the HDF` new HR-strategy considers these factors as important too.

3. Referring to the answer of the question, *what measures are necessary to help the soldiers change successfully to the civilian labour market*, it was figured out that an increased co-operation with civil institutions (including professional and academic degrees from the military that are (also) accepted in civil life) would be the most meaningful way. That argument in turn was supported by the fact that the servicemen and women then compete with candidates from the civilian labour market. This result in turn needs to be recognized when defining the desired organizational image respectively the EVP (as part of the EB process). An adequate communication of those results is important too.

4. Considering the research question if the *Employer Branding approach could be adapted by the HDF*, the answer was a straightforward “yes” because EB basically is recognized as an effective tool for any employer that wants to increase the (HR-Management’s) performance. Beyond that it appears as meaningful to adapt Employer Branding to the HDF (and other militaries like the Bundeswehr), because it also would foster the military’s transparency to the (Hungarian) public in a way that is accessible and effectively shows how truly extraordinary the military and the (Hungarian) servicemen and women are. Anyhow, that result represents the basic answer to this dissertation’s research topic namely that EB can be adapted by armed forces. In addition this output supports the realization of the HDF` EB process including all its demonstrated benefits.

In addition, the results of the interviews (with the Hungarian as well as with the German respondents) turned out as multifaceted and comprehensive. Their impacts were recognized when the own EB-model for the HDF was developed.

In detail though the interviews respective their answers were divided into four parts covering different topics relevant for the outcome of this thesis respectively important for the development of the EB-process:

The first section focused the subject “A different HR-demand today and in the future” particularly questioning what type of servicemen and women is necessary for future operations of the HDF. Most of the answers here were quite similar, considering a psychological toughness for (potential) servicemen and women as important. Through the

outcome of this section not only the introducing question of this dissertation was answered but also practical input was given in terms of whom to recruit.

Section two covered the topic “Civil organizations vs. military organizations” particularly questioning, which actions should be undertaken in order to increase the organizational attractiveness of the military. Here, the single answers differed, although - more or less telling - e.g. that an increased marketing of the organizational “real” assets like social benefits would increase the militaries’ attractiveness. Those answers delivered a valuable input especially for the creation of the EB-process. Here again, the social benefits represent an Employer Value Proposition of the HDF, that needs to be recognized when realizing the organization’s recruiting to come.

Section three in turn focussing the topic of “Benchmarking the HDF and the Bundeswehr – in terms of HR-Management” developed significant input for this dissertation in terms of the possibility to learn from the other (in both directions). Here, particularly the increased cooperation with civil institutions (including professional/academic degrees from the military, which are (also) accepted in civil life), or an personnel` suggestion/improvement program including financial incentives, were identified as meaningful to copy. Furthermore, this section delivered a valuable output in terms of having demonstrated that a scientific work “from a cross-national comparative aspect” concentrating on two militaries` HR-management is meaningful and beneficial.

The fourth and final section of the conducted interview covered the “Employer Branding” topic and its applicability in the military. Here again practical value was generated through questioning e.g. if a forced communication of “military” characteristics (like “integrity”, “honesty”, “openness”) would positively influence the organization’s presence. In doing so, not only the EB-topic “communication” was covered (by this interview section) but also the EB-subject “EVP” was elaborated demonstrating, which factors the HDF should recognize, when developing the EB-model. In addition, this section stressed another major result of this work namely that Employer Branding can (also) be applied by the military.

Furthermore, it was explained that Employer Branding has a positive influence on the organization's recruiting. Beyond that, this chapter presented lessons learned and best practices.

New scientific results

The hypotheses were tested through comparing their statements with the results of the previously conducted documentary analysis as well as through comparing the statements with the answers of the conducted survey. Concluding those research results though it can be stated that all hypotheses were confirmed, which in turn means the development respectively the creation of a new concept. From a scientific point of view the conducted work therefore appears as successful.

In addition, through the conducted survey all research questions were answered in detail.

Finally, the own developed model considering the *applicability of Employer Branding in the HDF* (and other militaries) including the previously analyzed critical success factors was presented recognising the developed results of this work. It therefore appears as a practical (new) tool that's content has been elaborated respectively proven.

In order to realize the aspired benefits of Employer Branding, as shown before, and to become an "Employer of Choice", the developed tool constitutes a sustainable instrument. Its realization appears as an intensive support for the HDF's HR-Management.

In doing so Employer Branding performs as a substantial share of an effective *military transformation*.

Overall, the mission of this doctoral thesis to demonstrate the "Applicability of Employer Branding in the Hungarian Defence Forces" therefore has been accomplished.

Recommendations

Basically this dissertation has demonstrated the benefits for the HDF that could be gained through the adaption of the Employer Branding approach. Due to that and because of the demonstrated benchmarking of the HDF and the Bundeswehr in terms of adapting the one or

the other asset it appears as meaningful to regularly come together in order to exchange the latest information and experience in the area of HR-Management in general and Employer Branding in particular. Both institutions don't appear as competitors on the labour market however having similar tasks and challenges as demonstrated. This in turn enables the Hungarian as well as the German military to participate from the other in terms of creating synergies.

Therefore as a result of this dissertation, the recommendation for future practice would be to establish an own Employer Branding Round Table for the Hungarian and the German military (also inviting other Armed Forces) to exchange views and experiences. Possible subjects of these gatherings could be the named HR-management's weaknesses including their practical approaches. The result of those meetings would generate a beneficial impact for the participating organizations.

Possibility of practical use of the research results

Basically, enabling communication and marketing options, the developed EB-model represents an effective way to demonstrate the HDF as an attractive organization worth to work for.

In addition it appears as a sound tool for the HDF to effectively plan and conduct their HR-Management in general and their recruiting in particular. Basically, the developed model for the HDF is based on the previously elaborated Critical Success Factors, although recognizing the organizational specialties. Its implementation also appears as a meaningful way in order to realize the aspired benefits as demonstrated and to become an "Employer of Choice".

List of publications

Articles

- von Roeder, Olaf Christian (2013): Applicability of Employer Branding in the Hungarian Defence Forces, in Társadalom és Honvédelem, A Nemzeti Közsolgálati Egyetem, Hadtudományi és Honvédtisztképző Kar folyóirata, 2013. XVII. évfolyam 3-4. szám, p. 615-671, English language, 100% Participation
- von Roeder, Olaf Christian (2010): “Cold War” at the North Pole, in AARMS (Academic and Applied Research in Military Science), Vol. 9, Issue 2, p. 361-375, English language, 100% Participation
- von Roeder, Olaf Christian (2013): Impacting Factors of Transformation, in Társadalom és Honvédelem, A Nemzeti Közsolgálati Egyetem, Hadtudományi és Honvédtisztképző Kar folyóirata, 2013. XVII. évfolyam 1-2. szám, p. 247-264, English language, 100% Participation

Speeches given on scientific conferences

- German Army Logistics: HIL – A Public Private Partnership Project, English language, 100% Participation, Danish Embassy, Berlin, 24.01.2012
- German Army maintenance of Multiple Launch Rocket System (MLRS) – A European Perspective”, English language, 100% Participation, NATO Maintenance and Supply Agency (NAMSA) Conference Salisbury/United Kingdom, 31.05.2012
- IDM – Das Ideenmanagement der HIL Heeresinstandsetzungslogistik GmbH, German language, 100% Participation, Bildungszentrum der Bundeswehr, Mannheim, 07. 05.2014

Other scientific activities

- Presentation: “Germany`s participation in EU-led missions”, English language, 100% Participation, PhD-Seminar, ZMNE, Budapest, February 2012

Scientific CV

Personal data:

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Qualifications:

1993 Abitur degree, Aloisiuskolleg in Bonn/Germany
1995-1999: Master of Political and Social Sciences,
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1999-2000: Marketing and Organizational Behaviour Management Studies,
University of Texas at El Paso, Texas/USA
2004-2007: Master of Business Administration (MBA), Henley Business School,
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2009-today: Doctoral student,
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Language skills:

German	mother tongue
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Professional CV

After graduating from the German Gymnasium, I went to the German Bundeswehr in July 1993 and visited the Officer Candidate School of the German Air Force in Fürstenfeldbruck/Germany including stages in Budel/The Netherlands and in Decimomannu/Italy. I was promoted to Lieutenant in 1997.

In addition I mastered a practical training at the Consular Section of the German Embassy in Bangkok/Thailand in 1997 and at the Public Relations Department of BMW AG in Munich in 1998.

Afterwards I visited the German Air Force Tactical Training Center in El Paso, Texas/USA from 1999 until 2000 where I was trained as a Tactical Control Officer (TCO) in command, control and operations of the Hawk missile system.

Back in Germany I mastered the professional position as a Platoon Leader in Rottenburg/Laaberg where I was responsible for the training and readiness-status of the platoon (30 soldiers) and the weapon system.

Concluding that I was promoted to serve as a Controller and Head of the Continuous Improvement Program at the German Air Force Command in Cologne/Germany where I worked from 2002 until 2007. My basic tasks included cost accounting, project-, customer service-, and process management.

Furthermore I was the responsible project manager regarding the support for the Pope Visit/World Youth Day in Cologne in 2005.

After my time as an officer on active duty until 2007 I became a Reserve Military Intelligence Staff Officer. I currently fulfill the rank of a Lieutenant Colonel (Reserve). My tasks during military exercises include the creation of security analysis considering countries, regions or concrete theatres of operations. An example is the elaboration of emergency evacuation plans for German/European Citizens in crisis states.

I acted as an International Sales Manager for Naval Systems working for the Atlas Elektronik GmbH in Wedel/Germany from 2007 until 2010. My tasks were proposal creation and delivery, as well as marketing for the naval defence products „SeaDevil“ and „SeaHake“ plus CRM. Furthermore I was responsible for the identification of the customer budget/target price, identification of key players / cooperation with stakeholders, identification of potential Industry partners, control of export licenses, compliance and coordination of the proposal team. In addition I was responsible for the customer countries of Brazil, Chile, Columbia, Egypt, Greece, Indonesia and Norway.

I was a self-employed Consultant at Defendor Management Consulting in Hamburg/Germany from 2010 until 2011 where I was responsible for Business acquisition including market- and sales analysis for companies operating in the defence and security sector as well as for individual consulting on business and investment opportunities.

I am working as a Director of Business Development at the HIL Heeres-instandsetzungslogistik GmbH in Bonn/Germany since 2011 until today. My tasks contain market development including the analysis of customers, competitors and products (focusing the market for armoured military systems and vehicles) as well as the creation of the annual sales and marketing strategy.