

Appearance or reality? Monitoring of employer branding in public network space: the Glassdoor case.

Raimondo Ingrassia¹

Summary: 1. Employer Branding - 2. The impact of employer branding on the management of human resources - 3. Monitoring of employer branding - 4. Monitoring employer branding in public network space: the Glassdoor case - 5. Critical implications of the Glassdoor case - 6. Research contributions and case study limits - References

Abstract

To what extent does Employer Branding (EB) express the real-life company working environment or merely constitutes a well-orchestrated organizational image? After reconstructing its significance and impact on the managing of the human resource cycle (recruitment, commitment, and retention) this study describes three ways of monitoring EB: internal, professional and public control. They each make use of a variety of tools in order to assess the extent to which the appearance of the employer corresponds to an authentic reality. Then, there is a presentation of the features and critical issues of a case of public EB control: Glassdoor.com. More specifically, this is followed by descriptions of the structure, services and critical implications of the crowdsourcing-based platform of Glassdoor.com (retaliatory, improper, frivolous and illusionistic utilizations). Implications which may affect the platform's validity as a monitoring tool of EB. The article ends with several considerations regarding the use of the site as a research-tool. Research sources: literature reviews, Glassdoor-site analysis, specialized web-journals, social-media, studies that used Glassdoor for research purposes. Method: theoretical and empirical data-processing.

Keywords: Employer Branding; Monitoring Tools; Glassdoor.com

¹ **Raimondo Ingrassia**, Associate Professor of Organization Theory (OT), Organizational Behaviour (OB) and Human Resource Management (HRM) of the Department of Economics, Business and Statistics at the University of Palermo (Italy).

1. Employer Branding

In marketing theory, the term *branding* is used for a policy aimed at establishing and differentiating the quality of goods and services, in order to generate financial appeal for consumers and corporations (Kotler and Lee, 2008, p. 215). The concept of branding has spread greatly over the last few years, also in the field of managing human resources (HRM), engendering a shift in significance and professional practices (Collins, 2007; Edwards, 2010; Sisodia and Chowdhary, 2012; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013).

In a contemporary society such as ours, which is becoming ever more globalized, sophisticated and competitive, the labour market has become a place for the employer to try to attract workers responding to specific productive, organizational and cultural requirements, and, at the same time, where individuals might seek to find gratifying and worthwhile employment (Joo and McLean, 2006).

The academic world has been dealing with this issue and has suggested the theme of Employer Branding (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010). EB constitutes a policy of differentiation from competition geared towards offering a single and distinctive picture of functional, economic and psychological benefits to be obtained from a relationship with a specific employer (Ambler and Barrow, 1996; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Edwards, 2010). EB is aimed both at those who are already employed and those seeking new employment².

The reasons for which a corporation, these days, tends to invest in EB are various. First of all, there is a need to outdo rivals on the labour market in order to gain a competitive advantage; this would derive from taking on employees of high potential, exploiting the appeal of good working conditions, the corporation's image and respectable reputation, and also the brand's goods and services (Turban, 2001; Collins, 2007; Gomes and Neves, 2010; Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Moretti, 2013, p. 233). Secondly, there is a need to delineate expectations regarding the characteristics of the working relationship, with the potential employee understanding the conditions and the employer illustrating the nature of the (material, professional and psychological) conditions that characterize the working relationship, such as the salary-scale, working hours, the scope for training and development, work-life balance policies, organization of work etc. This should lay the basis for the person to be taken on to adapt better to the new organization (Saks and Ashforth, 2002). Thirdly, investment in EB needs to have a positive impact on the entire human resource management (HRM) cycle.

² Lievens e Slaughter (2016, p. 410) emphasize the distinction between *employer brand* and *employer branding*. The former is the mental representation of an organization's attributes as an employer while the latter is the set of organizational and communicative policies which allow that representation to be formed. In other words, employer branding and employer brand are in a relationship of means and ends. In the text the term employer branding is used to indicate both the organizational and communicative policies pursued and the representation they have obtained.

2. The impact of employer branding on the management of human resources

Numerous studies actually testify that EB has positive repercussions on at least three significant stages in the HRM cycle: recruitment, commitment and retention.

Recruitment. A positive perception of EB demands a high number of candidates, in terms of both quantity and quality, creating the conditions, if well-handled, to gain a competitive advantage on the labour market. Extensive research deals with this assumption. In fact, EB: (1) responds to a precise strategy of signalling, in a context in which the candidates (and especially the less qualified) have incomplete information about the organization's true characteristics (Spence, 1973; Turban, 2001); (2) influences positively the recruiters' perception and the features attributed to the organization (Collins and Han, 2004; Clegg, 2004; Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Knox and Freeman, 2006).

Commitment. Commitment embodies the psychological condition that brings a sense of identification, satisfaction and involvement in belonging to a given organization, a psychological condition that is correlated with good productivity, quality of work, capacity to comply with a corporation's values and strategies (Robbins *et al.*, 2016, p. 34). Wide-ranging research demonstrates that creating unrealistic expectations during the recruitment process can lead to problems with personnel in subsequent stages of the working relationship (Cotton and Tuttle, 1986; Griffeth *et al.*, 2000). Edward's literature review (2010) shows that: (1) the degree of identification and commitment to an organization also increases when EB strategies tend to emphasize the organizational identity, i.e. the organization's single and distinctive attributes; (2) organizations that maintain their EB promises with regard to aspects such as personal support, open communication and organizational fairness also benefit from greater identification with the organization.

Retention. Maintaining EB promises over a period of time will build up trust towards his/her employer on the part of the employee; it will minimize the probability of abandoning a job, with the widely-acknowledged, positive impact on staff turnover, a leading contributor to a corporation's expenses (Tanwar e Prasad, 2016). Research confirms this belief. It has been seen that low organizational commitment is often correlated with an intention to quit and voluntary turnover (Felps *et al.*, 2009; Sokro, 2012; Chang *et al.*, 2013). Ambler and Barrow (1996) assert that EB based on the concept of *great-place-to-work* increases the person's inclination to remain within an organization. The following features might identify a place of work where it is pleasurable to operate and eventually to remain: (1) the guarantee of reasonable levels of job security; (2) the market-value of professional experience with a particular employer who usually only takes on qualified persons; (3) the learning opportunities provided; (4) the ability to balance work and private life; (5) a retributive system that acknowledges levels of performance and guarantees competitive salaries and benefits; (6) the possibility of carrying out interesting and gratifying work; (7) career development prospects.

Therefore, employers have a strong interest in building up effective EB, because this might enable them to obtain indisputable benefits with regard to the

performance of the whole HRM cycle. In fact, in the last few years, organizations have greatly augmented the number of EB initiatives, also thanks to the increasingly effective and widespread mass-communication tools, such as company web-sites and the social media (Young and Foot, 2006; Kluemper *et al.*, 2016). A study carried out on the top 500 businesses, as classified by *Fortune*, found that organizations tend to present themselves in a favourable light in attempts to “to sell a glorified image of work, one which positions workers as powerful actors and employers as kind benefactors”. (.....) “The persuasive movements employed on career sites include sketching the company’s values, objectives, and credentials, building a case for the company as an employer of choice, sampling the workplace, and enabling the job search and application process. The representations of work displayed on career sites depict work as career-building, workers as agents, and employers as benefactors” (Young and Foot, 2006).

However, EB is not a policy merely for outward show, a passing fashion, or an unscrupulous communications and marketing campaign; it is, above all, a solemn promise to the general public in the commercial, juridical and ethical meaning of the term.³ Therefore, the question arises of whether, and to what extent, EB expresses an authentic picture of the corporation or does it only present a well-orchestrated organizational image. In order to answer this question we need to focus on the modalities that consent verification of the extent to which EB’s promises correspond to actual reality. We know that HRM policies may encounter considerable difficulties in their implementation process due to inconsistency issues which arise from the *intended HR practices* to the *actual HR practices* and the *perceived HR practices* in those for whom they are intended (Wright and Nishii, 2007; Piening *et. al.*, 2014).

3. Monitoring of employer branding

Whilst there has been continuous and steady attention on the part of the academic world and business corporations on evaluation of company performance (Daft, 2014, pp. 64-76) the monitoring and assessment of EB have also attracted increasing attention. Internal, professional and public controls of EB are three different ways which can be identified regarding the monitoring of EB. Each of them uses various means to assess the extent to which the appearance of the employer matches the true reality.

Internal control is based on perceptive and objective evaluation of data, events and persons, carried out by those who actually know and work inside the company (employees, managers, administrative staff and trade union officials). The tools of insightful control comprise focus groups, in-depth interviews, investigation into the organization’s working climate (Robbins *et al.*, 2016, pp. 333-334). Objective indicators of control are represented by work productivity (Robertson and Khatibi,

³ Under Italian regulations, for example, EB could take on the shape of a unilateral promise to the public, capable of generating expectations in candidates and obligations in juridically relevant employers (Art. 1989 of the civil code).

2013), organizational conflict (strikes, company protests, boycotting) (Noe *et al.* 2006, p. 380) and voluntary turnover (Felps *et al.* 2009; Sokro, 2012).

Professional control, understood as an expert group and the tools at their disposal in the analysis of HRM policies in workplaces. Professional control has taken on various forms in the last few years. Among these we might mention: (1) journals and operators that provide ranking and benchmarking for the best places to work. These include: *Fortune* with “100 Best Companies to Work for in America”, *Working Mother* with “100 Best Companies for Working Mothers”, *Computer-world’s* with “100 Best Places for IT Professionals to Work” in USA (Joo and McLean, 2006), *Greatplacetowork*, *Universumglobal*, *Top Employer Institute*; (2) companies involved in research and selection of personnel offering services of *board evaluation* and *management assessment* (AESC, 2016) or in ratings and surveys like *Randstad Employer Branding Survey & Award*; (3) professional associations in the sector of human resources, with research, assessment and competitions for good practices in personnel management (in the same way as, e.g. AIDP in Italy, or many Human Resources Management Associations around the world)

Public control is a form of external control carried out by: (1) public opinion, through surveys, opinion leaders, stakeholder opinions; (2) mass-media, through the press and journalistic investigation; (3) social media on the internet (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, Quora) (Sivertzen *et al.*, 2013; Kluemper *et al.*, 2016; Holland *et al.*, 2016); (4) independent non-profit bodies (such as Transparency International); (5) commercial web-operators.

4. Monitoring employer branding in public network space: the Glassdoor case.

With regard to the specific area of interest of this study we have concentrated our attention on the Glassdoor case, making use of available sources of information (the Glassdoor web-site, a selection from specialized web-journalism regarding the case, a social media and two studies that used Glassdoor for research purposes)⁴. Glassdoor has been a commercial operator on the web in the USA since 2008, offering its services as intermediary between the supply and demand of employment. Its business model comprises a number of paid services for employers, in accordance with a mixed model that envisages both subscriptions and forms of pay-per-use (company profiling, consultancy for competitive positioning on the

⁴ Glassdoor is a particularly significant case regarding monitoring tools of EB on the public network space. In the field of this research we found two dot.companies that operate with a similar model to that of Glassdoor. Knozen.com, a New York start-up founded in 1997, which allows users to post anonymous comments on the personalities of friends and work-colleagues (www.crunchbase.com/organization/knozen). Vault.com, was founded in 1996 in New York, and was among the first sites to publish reserved information regarding general working conditions in three specific contexts: Companies, Internships, Schools (Paliotta, 2015, p. 146). Compared to Knozen, Glassdoor provides information on the companies as a whole rather than on the people while compared to Vault it has a much larger database than the one boasted by the New York platform of “840 professions” and “nearly 5,000 companies in more than 120 industries” (www.vault.com/about-us/our-mission).

labour market, assistance for targeted recruiting campaigns, publicity and job advertisements, access to data-banks, etc.).

Recent data reveals the presence of half a million companies, of which 12% interact with the site free of charge (descriptions of companies, photographs and company data, response to reviews) and 5,200 through payment (1%), with 39% of the paying companies appearing in the *Fortune 500* ranking (Glassdoor Site Stats, 2017; Adams, 2016; Glassdoor, 2017). Glassdoor states that it has collected \$200 million in financing from well-known US *venture capitalists*, such as Google Capital, Tiger Global, Benchmark, Battery Ventures, Sutter Hill Ventures, DAG Ventures, Dragoneer Investment Group (Adams, 2016; Glassdoor Corporate Fact Sheet, 2017; Glassdoor Press Releases, 2017). Its governance is made up of a Board of Directors of 7 members and an Executive Team of 17 managers (Glassdoor Corporate Fact Sheet, 2017). It was not possible to obtain data regarding neither income over the last few years, nor an employee headcount (Henry, 2014; Lunden, 2016).

Several free services, aimed at job-seekers, represent an integral part of Glassdoor business, such as access to offers of employment, sending CVs and the possibility of obtaining company reviews anonymously; the latter would describe the working environment, personnel policy, salary scales, management and every other aspect of the organization that might interest those seeking their first employment or wishing to change jobs. Furthermore, Glassdoor provides its subscribers with statistical material and news about opportunities in the labour market, exploiting the data in its possession, as well as offering advice for job-seekers (e.g. Local Pay Reports, The 50 Best-Jobs, “The perfect responses to these 8 common interview questions”, “Money isn't everything”, “How do I include soft skills on my resumé”, and so on) (Glassdoor.com, 2017).

In this way, Glassdoor has become a public receptacle for free speech regarding companies and employers, gradually becoming better-known as a site illustrating transparency at the company-level. Recent data reveals that there are 11 million employee reviews and 30 million visitors per month (Glassdoor.com, 2017; Adams, 2016). In this way job-seekers know that they can form an idea of the work-place before actually initiating the recruitment process (Molinari, 2015).

Glassdoor has been classified as a *career insiders site* in that it deals with gathering information regarding significant aspects of organizational life, thanks to the anonymous publishing of posts from its employees (Paliotta, 2016, p. 146). Glassdoor is also considered *social media* of the *content community* type, with specific communicational features: an average degree of *social presence* (acoustic, visual, and physical contacts) and *information richness* (capacity to convey information and knowledge) and a low capacity for *self-presentation* (capacity for *impression management*) and *self-disclosure* (capacity to handle personal information, such as thoughts, feelings, likes, dislikes) (Kluemper *et al.*, 2016).

On the site the sections of particular interest for monitoring EB are the following: (1) *overview*, where there is official information about the company (sales turnover, employees, sector, mission); (2) *reviews*, which presents anonymous reviews about the following themes: (a) work/life balance, culture aspects of the organization, career opportunities, compensation and benefits, senior management; (b) the

overall number of reviews and the opinions expressed (synthetic reviews expressed in *pay-off* form and analytical opinions expressed in a *pros and cons form*) classified by typology of occupation (part-time and full-time); (3) *salaries*, where it is possible to obtain information regarding average retribution paid by the company in the various posts, but only from those that have provided this information; (4) *interviews*, which presents anonymous reviews regarding job interviews on the basis of three criteria: (a) interview experience, (b) research channels through which it can be procured, (c) degree of difficulty of interview; (5) *benefits*, with its synthetic opinions regarding fringe-benefits and the most worthwhile benefits; (6) *preparing for your next job interview*, where one can read the reports on the previous candidates' interviews, discover the questions asked and receive advice on how to tackle them directly, from people who have had a successful interview and now work for the company; (7) *best place to work*, is a section where there is a ranking table, updated annually, with the best places to work according to its employees.

The final evaluation of each company takes the form of three overall assessments. The first is an evaluation of appreciation, on a scale of 1-5: the average for the site is 3.3. The second is the degree to which the company can be recommended to friends. The third is the degree of approval for the managing director: the average score on the site is 67%. A fixed caption at the bottom of the Glassdoor page reminds you that any information posted on the web-site is strictly anonymous. In order to read reviews in detail, and check up on salaries, interviews and benefits (only a few are not encrypted) there is no subscription fee nor commission charges, but it is obligatory to provide assessments on actual topics in accordance with a model called "give-to-get". This access to reviews, information about salaries and interviews is a very important aspect of Glassdoor's business methods. If the user does not feel inclined to provide contents or has no contents to share, or if considerable time has passed since he/she last provided a review, he/she is not excluded from reading, but is accorded a limited period of time of free access to data-bank (ranging from 10 days to 12 months).

The platform is well-organized and replete with content. The Help-Center section provide instructions on how to use the various functions. Common Issues, Write and Edit Reviews, Find a Job, Legal FAQs, Community Guidelines, Privacy & Trust constitute a few of the important features in this section. In their turn, these sections are arranged into documents that describe the regulations and company policy on issues such as the separation between commercial management and contents, removal of reviews, how to write reviews regarding interviews, how employers might handle the reviews, the procedures for protecting anonymity, and so on.

In this way, Glassdoor presents itself as an employment intermediary and, at the same time, a public data-bank for commercial purposes. Information to be obtained from the web-site, and in particular the summaries, give a sound idea, to job-seekers, of the working environment and recruitment methods; to employers they illustrate the state of their EB, and to third-party observers, elements for evaluating the policies pursued by EB.

5. Critical implications of the Glassdoor case

There have, however, been many criticisms directed towards a tool based on anonymous information. If the person using the site is an employee, he/she might be recognized when revealing facts, data and circumstances that only certain people might possess. Furthermore, the employee could be traced, especially when carelessly using the company's server. In the end, the employee could damage the company's reputation with potential harm also to him/herself (Boitnott, 2015).

Anonymous reviews do guarantee freedom of expression and the authenticity of the facts, but only when these are provided by real people, in good faith and with intellectual honesty. In the last few years more and more cases have been reported on the web-site, of barely truthful, distorted, invented or defamatory reviews. The objectives pursued are various. We have singled out four.

(1) **Retaliatory utilization** by employees who are dissatisfied (although the responsibility cannot always be attributed to the employer). The case of the law firm *Layfield & Barrett* seems to be particularly indicative in this regard. California trial attorney Philip Layfield, joined by his firm, has filed a defamation claim against 25 John Does over anonymous comments they left online about Layfield, his current firm of *Layfield & Barrett*, and his former firm of *Layfield & Wallace*. (...) Titles for some of the posts include: "Deceptive, Unethical, Poorly Managed, No Sense of Direction", "Working Here is Psychological Torture", "For the love of God, do NOT work here". One can understand why an employer would be unhappy about the existence of these reviews. (...) Philip Layfield says: "When people are lazy or incompetent, they either quit because the writing is on the wall or they are terminated. Unfortunately, most of those people are unwilling to recognize their shortcomings and they turn to anonymous blogs to spit their venom. (...). The majority of these posts contain blatantly false information. We are going to obtain the identities of these cowards and bring them to justice. (...) People need to realize that just because you are sitting anonymously behind a keyboard, you can't break the law" (Geigner, 2016).

(2) **Improper utilization** by stakeholders (suppliers, clients, competitors, financiers, consultants etc.) who have an interest in besmirching or exalting the company's reputation. Motley Fool analysts, a financial advice company, use Glassdoor reviews of publicly traded companies when they make their stock picks. HR staffer Kara Chambers says: "We believe that companies that have engaged happy employees who give high ratings to their employers on Glassdoor, are going to perform better than unhappy companies in the long run" (Adams, 2016).

(3) **Frivolous utilization** by web-trolls devoting their time to issuing superficial or destructively vulgar comments. Trolling has been a well-known phenomenon on the world-wide-web since its very beginnings. Trolls try to pass themselves off as users sharing the same interests and issues of a community. They can damage the group in many ways. They can provide false information and bad advice or undermine the reciprocal trust of the community of users. Trolls have no interest in virtuous participation in a group; their aim is to senselessly provoke and disturb the

virtual community. The members of the group need to be clever enough to single out and expel these impostors (Donath, 1999).

(4) **Illusionistic utilization** by employers who have an interest in creating or bolstering their own EB, often in order to compensate for the negative remarks made by employees, as the case of the anonymous employer on Quora (cited further on) seems to substantiate

All these objectives are likely to undermine the reliability of the reviews. Although today it is technically possible to trace and discover the source of this kind of message, checking the reviews is a very costly affair and not within everyone's means (Schiaffino, 2015). Furthermore, the anonymous review can end up becoming a bargaining chip in an illegal or ethically iniquitous market. Web-operators, individuals, service companies etc. offer reviewing services (upon payment) geared indiscriminately towards promoting or denigrating the company in question; this has happened in the last few years to web-sites such as TripAdvisor and Amazon (Ferraris and Morello, 2013).

Criticisms have been made about the potential media risk that might be generated by a crowdsourcing-based supplier of information, such as Glassdoor. Employers might feel it to be their duty to respond to the criticisms directed at them. Instead of calming the waters, censorship, clumsy counter-deduction, protests and legal actions, both on the web and in other media, might well boost negative opinions that are, in fact, irrelevant, disregarded and statistically non-significant; this then might bring about an escalation on the scale of ill-repute, which in the US has been labelled as the "Streisand effect" (Geigner, 2016, Adams, 2016).

There has also been widespread criticism directed at Glassdoor's commercial policy. Accusations have been made of its using data-banks and feedback about companies (as well as evaluations regarding the working environment and appraisals about personnel management policies) for commercial and non-ethical purposes. Potential candidates are drawn to the web-site by the promise of trustworthy information that might guide their research and their judgement as regards the best place to work.

Employers might be tempted to subscribe to services in order to read and respond to reviews, to occasionally revamp a dull EB, and, on other occasions, to compensate for negative reviews with positive evaluations by *obliging* employees or third parties. On this subject, we found an interesting statement about Quora.com (2016). An anonymous employer maintains that Glassdoor is doing its best to squeeze money out of employers. "It creates emergencies regarding reputations and sells solutions to tackle them. Its strategy entails: (a) allowing anybody to strike hard at any company, (b) to go to the employer (c) and say: "you have been criticized on the site", thus prompting a response by purchasing premium services, (e) and, lastly, encouraging employers to balance up the negative reviews by urging their employees to write positive reviews. This is Glassdoor in the eyes of one employer"⁵.

In order to improve the reliability of its reviews, which constitutes a fundamental asset of the appeal of the web-site, and to safeguard against possible legal action,

⁵ Synthesis of this statement edited by the Author.

Glassdoor has had to invest increasingly in audit and controls. Technology now exists for sifting suspect contents and identifying IP addresses, for reserved identification protected by the declarer, the formation of audit and control staff dedicated to the monitoring of reviews (Trip Advisor, for example, has set up a team of 300 for this purpose); these and other similar initiatives might well improve the web-site's power to gather reliable information and thus enhance its credibility.

Glassdoor Terms of Use obviously forbid a series of actions, such as: impersonating another person, or his or her e-mail address, or misrepresenting one's current or former affiliation with an employer, posting defamatory, libellous, or fraudulent comments, providing confidential information in violation of the law. Although the site guarantees the authenticity of the reviews via a procedure of control and monitoring of users before these reviews are published, the capacity to enforce these regulations has been called into question. Glassdoor is "chock-full of unverified, exaggerated, and just plain fabricated information. Membership is free, and checks on users' identities are imperfect at best; Inc.com has confirmed that it's possible to create multiple accounts under fake names and to post critical reviews of companies where the writers have not worked" (Henry, 2014).

Glassdoor says it does what it can to police its user-submitted reviews: A content management team, based in Ohio and Sausalito, screens reviews and weeds out posts that include obscene or threatening language. The team rejects up to 10 percent of submissions "because they don't meet our community guidelines," says spokesperson Samantha Zupan. But "how do we know these are the people that they say they are? We don't. It's a crowdsourced site." (Henry, 2014).

However, there is no lack of positive opinions on the *business idea* and activities of Glassdoor. Glenn Humble the director of marketing at Adroit Digital, says a Inc.com: "It's been a really effective recruiting tool". The marketing agency's parent, MediaMath, has an enhanced profile - which shows off a 4.5 score - and now Adroit is considering buying one. The "great draw" would be adding a video component to Adroit's page, Humble says. "The downside, of course, being that it's paid." (Henry, 2014). Davis Molinari (2015), a software engineer from Malta, states that he obtained useful information from Glassdoor reviews regarding retribution, interview modalities and working environment. J.B. Kellogg, CEO of Loveland, digital marketing software provider Madwire, has even made changes to company policy in response to Glassdoor reviews, like offering a share of paid time off at the beginning of each month instead of requiring employees to accrue it over time. He believes that positive Glassdoor reviews have helped him add to his staff of 250. Some 20% of Madwire hires come through Glassdoor, he says (Adams, 2016).

Ingrid Lunden (2016) of the on-line review techcrunch.com, writes that what makes Glassdoor different from other recruitment sites is that it is not only an accumulator of job opportunities, but also a site whose contents are generated by its users. As such, it becomes a *repository* to help search for companies and jobs. Criticisms and opinions, such as the ones mentioned above, might induce us to draw up a potentially ambiguous balance regarding Glassdoor operations.

6. Research contributions and case study limits

Monitoring of employer branding in public network space by means of an operator such as Glassdoor may help scientific research command precious information that no standardized questionnaire would ever be able to obtain. Studies using this tool are in their early stages, given the negligible presence of Glassdoor-like web-sites aimed at the labour market, employer evaluation and career guidance (DeKay, 2013; Dabirian *et al.*, 2017)⁶. There are countless opportunities for research and not only centred around the issue of EB monitoring. As regards the subject of EB monitoring, research could well avail itself of the control system tools as described in this article (internal, professional and public control) as well as the afore-mentioned Glassdoor repository. The aim is to assess to what extent the policies set forth in the employer image (intended HR practices) affect the organization (actual HR practices) and how they are understood by those for whom they are intended (perceived HR practices).

As for issues not directly ascribable to EB monitoring, information can be acquired on HRM regarding recruitment, training and development policies, assessment and retributory systems, trade union relations, outplacement, etc. Evaluation of organizational behaviour (OB) can be carried out, with regard to working attitudes, leadership, motivation, group dynamics, internal communication, ethics and organizational corruption. When all is said and done, the quality of sources for research purposes hinges on the extent of the actual gap between the appearance and the reality of the information available.

The Glassdoor case has limits. Despite being a promising platform as a monitoring tool of EB and as research support on HRM, it presents significant concerns which can affect its credibility. This, however, does not mean that the database is completely useless as when opinions are the result of an adequate number of reviews they tend to become more reliable by the *law of large numbers* (LLN) (Holland *et al.*, 2016). On a methodological level, other limits should be sought in the absence of comparisons with operators similar to Glassdoor and in the absence of direct interviews with employees, administrators, supporters and detractors with expertise in Glassdoor who can testify on the strengths and weaknesses of the platform.

References

- Adams, S. (2016), "How companies are coping with the rise of employee-review site Glassdoor", February 24th, available at: www.forbes.com.
- Ambler, T., Barrow, S. (1996), "The employer brand", *The Journal of Brand Management*, n. 4, p. 185-206.

⁶ This refers to the two operators Knozen.com and Vault.com cited in footnote 3.

- Association of Executive Search and Executive Consultants (AESC) (2016), "Head-Hunter. I primi dieci", *HR On Line*, n. 1-2.
- Backhaus, K., Tikoo, S. (2004), "Conceptualizing and researching employer branding", *Career Development International*, vol. 9, n. 5, p. 501-517.
- Boitnott, J. (2015), "3 Reasons to think again before bashing your company on Glassdoor", available at: www.entrepreneur.com.
- Chang, W.J., Wang, Y.S., Huang, T.C. (2013), "Work-design related antecedents of turnover intention: a multilevel approach", *Human Resource Management*, vol. 52, n. 1, p. 1-26.
- Clegg, A. (2004), "Companies pull on grab-a-graduate night", 25th November, *Financial Times*.
- Collins, C.J., Han, J. (2004), "Exploring applicant pool quantity and quality: the effects of early recruitment practice strategies, corporate advertising, and firm reputation", *Personnel Psychology*, n. 57, p. 685-717.
- Collins, C.J. (2007). "The interactive effects of recruitment practices and product awareness on job seekers' employer knowledge and application behaviors", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 92, n. 1, p. 180-190.
- Cotton, J., Tuttle, J. (1986), "Employee turnover: a meta-analysis and review with implications for research", *Academy of Management Review*, n. 11, p. 55-70.
- Dabirian, A., Kietzmann J., Diba, H. (2017), "A great place to work!? Understanding crowdsourced employer branding", *Business Horizons*, 21 dicembre, p. 1-9 (in press).
- Daft, R. (2013), *Organization Theory and Design*, South West, Cengage Learning (It. trans. *Organizzazione aziendale*, Rimini, Apogeo-Maggioli, 2014).
- DeKay, S.H. (2013), "Peering through Glassdoor.com: What social media can tell us about employee satisfaction and engagement", *Conference on Corporate Communication Proceeding*, June, 4-7, New York, Baruch College/CUNY.
- Donath, J.S. (1999). "Identity and deceptions in the virtual community", In Smith, M.A., Kollock P. *Community in Cyberspace*. London, Routledge, p. 29-59.
- Edwards, M.R. (2010), "An integrative review of employer branding and OB theory", *Personnel Review*, vol. 39, n. 1, p. 5-23.
- Felps, W., Mitchell, T., Hekman, D.R., Holtom, B.C., Cook, W.S., Lee T.W (2009), "Turnover contagion: How coworkers' job embeddedness and job search behaviors influence quitting", *Academy of Management Journal*, vol. 52, n. 3, p. 545-561.
- Ferraris, G., Morello, M. (2013), "TripAdvisor: fidarsi oppure no?", available at: www.panorama.it.
- Geigner, T. (2016), "Law firm subpoenas Glassdoor for negative anonymous reviews, supercharges Streisand effect with its response", May 20th, available at: www.techdirt.com.
- Glassdoor.com (2017).
- Glassdoor Corporate Fact Sheet (2017), available at: glassdoor.com.
- Glassdoor Press Releases (2017), available at: glassdoor.com.
- Glassdoor Site Stats (2017), available at: glassdoor.com.
- Gomes, D.R., Neves, J. (2010), "Employer branding constrains applicants' job seeking

- behaviour?", *Revista de Psicología del Trabajo y de las Organizaciones*, vol. 26, n. 3, p. 223-234.
- Griffeth, R.W., Hom, P.W., Gaertner, S. (2000), "A meta-analysis of antecedents and correlates of employee turnover: update, moderator tests, and research implications for the next millennium", *Journal of Management*, vol. 26, n. 3, p. 463-488.
- Henry, Z. (2014), "Secrets of a very opaque Glassdoor", available at: www.inc.com/magazine/201412/zoe-henry/a-very-opaque-glassdoor.html.
- Holland, P., Cooper, B.K., Hecker, R. (2016). "Use of social media at work: a new form of employee voice?". *International Journal of Human Resource Management*, vol. 27, n. 21, p. 2621-2634.
- Joo, B.K., McLean, G. (2006), "Best employer studies: A conceptual model from a literature review and a case study", *Human Resource Development Review*, vol. 5, n. 2, p. 228-257.
- Kluemper, D.H., Mitra, A., Wang, S. (2016), "Social media use in HRM", *Research in Personnel and Human Resources Management*, n. 34, p. 153-207.
- Knox S., Freeman C. (2006), "Measuring and managing employer brand image in the service industry", *Journal of Marketing Management*, n. 22, p. 695-716.
- Kotler, P., Lee, N. (2008). *Social marketing: Improving the quality of life*, Sage Publications.
- Lievens F., Slaughter, J.E. (2016), "Employer Image and Employer branding: what we know and what we need to know", *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, n. 3, p. 407-440.
- Lunden, I. (2016), "Glassdoor raises \$40M, valued around \$1B, for a job search platform with peer reviews", Posted Jun, 3, available at: techcrunch.com
- Molinari, D. (2015), "5 esempi del perché dovreste sempre consultare Glassdoor prima di un colloquio da Software Engineer", June 24, available at: www.davismol.net.
- Moretti, E. (2012), *New Geography of Job*. Zoe Pagnamenta Agency (It. trans. *La nuova geografia del lavoro*, Milano, Mondadori, 2013).
- Noe, R.A., Hollenbeck, J.R., Gerhart, B., Wright P.M. (2010), *Human resource management* (7th ed.), Chicago: MacGraw-Hill (It. trans. *Gestione delle risorse umane*. Milano, Apogeo, 2012).
- Paliotta, A.P. (2015), "Where the Jobs Are. Diffusione, tipologie e caratteristiche dei job websites negli USA e in Italia", *Osservatorio Isfol*, n. 4, p. 133-153.
- Piening, E.P., Baluch, A.M., Ridder, H.G. (2014), "Mind the Intended-Implemented Gap: Understanding Employees' Perceptions of HRM", *Human Resource Management*, vol. 53, p. 545-567.
- Quora (2016), available at: www.quora.com/topic/Glassdoor-company.
- Robbins, S.P., Judge, T.A., Bodega, D. (2015). *Organizational Behavior*. Prentice-Hall/Pearson. (It. trans. *Comportamento organizzativo*. Milano-Torino, Pearson, 2016).
- Robertson, A., Khatibi A. (2013), "The influence of employer branding on productivity-related outcomes of an organization". *Journal of Brand Management*, vol. 10, n. 3, p. 17-32.

- Saks, A.M., Ashforth, B.E. (2002). "Is job search related to employment quality? It all depends on the fit", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, vol. 87, n. 4, p. 646-654.
- Schiaffino, M. (2015). "TripAdvisor, le contromisure del sito contro le false recensioni", available at: IlFattoQuotidiano.it.
- Sisodia, S., Chowdhary, N. (2012), "Selling internally: Should the service employers start that!", *International Journal of Marketing, Financial Services & Management Research*, vol. 1, n. 5, p. 1-11.
- Sivertzen, A.M., Nilsen, E.R., Olafsen, A.H. (2013), "Employer branding: employer attractiveness and the use of social media", *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, vol. 22, p. 7, p. 473-483.
- Sokro, E. (2012). "Impact of employer branding on employee attraction and retention european", *Journal of Business and Management*, vol. 4, p. 18, p. 164-173.
- Spence, M. (1973), "Job market signaling", *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, vol. 87, p. 355-374.
- Tanwar K., Prasad A., (2016), "Exploring the Relationship between Employer Branding and Employee Retention", *Global Business Review*, vol. 17, n. 3 (Supplement Issue, June: Human Resource Challenges in 21st Century).
- Turban, D. (2001), "Organizational attractiveness as an employer on college campuses: An examination of the applicant population", *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, n. 58, p. 293-312.
- Wright, P.M., Nishii, L.H. (2007), "Strategic HRM and organizational behavior: Integrating multiple levels of analysis", *CAHRS Working Paper Series*.
- Young J., Foot, K. (2006), "Corporate E-Cruiting. The Construction of Work in Fortune 500 Recruiting Web Sites", *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, vol. 11, n. 1, p. 44-71.