

Does Work-Life Balance Attract Generation Y? Evidence from Websites of Most Admired Organizations in Taiwan¹

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ABSTRACT

This paper examines work-life balance practices and organizational attractiveness in Taiwan at organizational level. This study developed coding schemes and collected data from a random sample of 50 websites of organizations in 2014 list of “Top 100 most admired companies by Generation Y” by Cheers magazine. The result shows a positive correlation between work-life balance and organizational attractiveness. The study also reveals common contents present on organizational websites of companies in Taiwan. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed.

Keywords: Work-Life Balance, Organizational Attractiveness, Organizational Websites, Generation Y

1. INTRODUCTION

The quality of the organization’s workforce not only has a direct impact on success and effectiveness of the organization, but also provides the company with a competitive advantage (Rynes & Barber, 1990; Turban and Greening, 1997). Through attracting capable applicants, organizations can select potential employees from a larger talent pool, which enhance the chance of hiring competent employees (Williamson, King, Lepak, & Sarma, 2010). Shifts in labor force have influenced organization’s recruiting strategy, for instance, the emergence of Generation Y, also known as the Net generation and the increasing number of dual-career couples in the workforce. In addition, according to the 2014 survey of 104 Media on employer brand in Taiwan, key factors for newly graduates to seek jobs are working environment, compensation, and most importantly, work-life balance (WLB). Specifically, young applicants mostly consider the work-life balance issue when they don’t have specific prospective employer in mind.

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Given numerous corporate scandals like sweatshop or the issue of long hours but low pay in Taiwan recently, an ideal employer image is particularly important to job applicants now for making their employment decision. One way for applicants to acquire information about an organization is through its website. Programs that assist employees to achieve work-life balance are always advertised on organizational websites (Cober, Brown, Keeping & Levy, 2004). Consequently, it is important to look specifically into organizational websites since employers typically use this mode of communication to project a good image where applicants may form an impression of an organization as an attractive employer. Turban & Greening, (1997) have suggested that initial applicant attraction toward a company is based on perceptions of the organization's image which now is projected mostly through websites (Cober et al, 2004). Although there are studies aiming to examine factors related to organizational attractiveness from the perspective of potential employees through surveys in Taiwan, very little research use the data directly from organizational websites in Taiwan and analyze them on an organizational level. This study attempts to help organizations to have deeper understanding of how and what messages to convey on their organizational websites to attract job applicants of new generation in the future. Increased knowledge of the influence of WLB on organizational attractiveness enables organizations to select recruitment tools more strategically.

The main purposes of this research are to examine the impact of WLB on organizational attractiveness, and to investigate what common contents on WLB are presented on organizations' websites. This study aims to investigate and analyze the effect of WLB on organizational attractiveness by answering the following research questions:

1. What common WLB practices are presented by organizations in different industries in Taiwan?
2. What is the relationship between work-life balance and organizational attractiveness?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Organizational Attractiveness

Attracting qualified applicants has become a growing topic to determine organizational success (Rynes & Barber, 1990). According to Rynes & Barber (1990), perceptions of organizational attractiveness refer to the degree to which a person favorably perceives an organization as a place to work, or by the interpretation of Turban & Greening (1997), the degree of potential applicants' feelings of attraction toward specific organization.

Organizational and job characteristics, such as the ability to pay or organizational values, form a general impression of organization as an employer (Rynes & Barber, 1990). Building employer image enables organization to raise its attractiveness of itself, which affects job pursuit

intentions (Turban & Greening, 1997). Applicants' impressions of a prospective employer, including perceptions of an organization's attractiveness, play critical role in organizational success when attracting applicants (Carless & Wintle, 2007). Evidence from several studies indicates that applicant's perceptions of organizational attractiveness predict job choice decision, including intentions to apply to a job vacancy; intentions to pursue a job and intentions to accept a job (Cable & Judge, 1996). Rynes (1991) advocated that job and organizational attributes may be the most important factor to attract applicants. Previous research has provided evidence that organizational attributes like compensation and benefits, industry, organizational culture, management policies and human resource management system heavily influence the applicant's employment decisions (Chapman, Uggerslev, carroll & Jones, 2005). Turban & Cable (2003) found that an applicant's familiarity with a company affects his or her actual application decision. Cable & Judge (1994) supported that organizations offering high pay levels, flexible benefits, and fixed pay policies are more attractive to job seekers.

Previous research has indicated that organizational attractiveness can be measured in the early stage of recruitment process and later can predict employment decisions. Uen, Peng, Chen & Chien, (2011) indicated that measuring organizational attractiveness can be based on organizational level and individual level. At organizational level, organizational attractiveness is composed of several elements such as employer image and reputation (Cable & Turban, 2001). On the other hand, organizational attractiveness is considered as the degree of potential applicants' job choice and employment decisions (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003; Cable & Judge, 1994). This study measure attractiveness at organizational level as most admired companies by young generation.

2.2 Work-Life Balance

Work-life balance (WLB) has emerged as critical issue for human resource in organizations to meet their stakeholder employees' need for more balanced lifestyle to create and sustain a competitive advantage (Lambert, 2000;). WLB strategies have been referred to as practices to increase the autonomy of employees to coordinate and harmonize with work and non-work dimensions (Felstead et al. 2002). In order to achieve WLB, many researchers have suggested some solutions for organization to help employees have better balanced life. Kirchmeyer (1995) identified the most effective way toward WLB for organization was the enhanced flexibility of the work and non-work boundary, and employer providing resources for workers to fulfill non-work responsibilities. In fact, Bardoel, Tharenou & Moss (1999) have identified 100 types of policies related to WLB and they reorganized 36 policies by combining the overlapping items and classified them into five different dimensions: child and dependent care benefits, flexible working conditions, leave options, information services and personnel policies and organizational culture. Their research indicated that organizations with greater records in human

resource management were found to implement more WLB policies and larger companies tended to initiate more policies than smaller companies. To sum up, these solutions not only do help employees to achieve a more balanced life, but also build a positive image for the employer (De Cieri et al., 2005). If an organization offers great benefits of work-life balance, employees would feel the job in the organization desirable because the presence of WLB policy symbolizes a supportive employer who cares for employees and their family. Thus, it is easy to relate the availability of WLB policies with applicant's intention to work in an organization.

Casper & Buffardi (2004) presented considerable empirical evidences have indicated that availability of work-life balance program in organizations lead to greater employment intention of job applicants. Specifically, WLB is particularly important to Generation Y who are the youngest workers in the workforce (Hershatter & Epstein, 2010). Studies of generational differences in work values indicated that younger workers place significant emphasis on balancing work and personal goals, freedom- related values, and leisure activities (Twenge, Campbell, Hoffmann, & Lance, 2010). Moreover, empirical studies have suggested that Millennials tend to be attracted to companies particularly addressing the importance of work-life balance (Twenge et al., 2010). Also, due to their higher levels of education, Millennials intend to seek companies that can allow them to balance their lives and work (McDonald & Hite, 2008). Carless and Wintle (2007) proposed that work-life balance policies can serve as signal of organization's support for employees' needs, which further can lead to attraction. Indeed, Cober et al. (2004) found that more than 50% of the websites of Fortune's 2002 "Best Companies" list included content related to work-life balance. Hence, organizations tend to communicate with their potential employees about their support for meeting applicant's need for WLB through websites. Based on these findings and the salience of work-life balance to younger workers nowadays, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 1: Work-life balance is positively related to organizational attractiveness.

3. METHDOLOGY

This study adopts a quantitative approach to collect data from organizational websites about work-life balance and test its influence on organizational attractiveness, operationalized as the ranking in "Top 100 most admired companies by Generation Y". Content analysis method was adopted and a coding scheme was developed as the instrument for data collection. Content analysis has been widely used in analyzing characteristics of commercial websites because it is ideal to make inferences systematically and objectively for recording the characteristics of websites (Cober et al. 2004). Also, it is a way to transform narratives into quantitative scales that allow for further analysis by codifying text or content (Weber, 1988). Then, statistical analysis was applied to test the hypotheses in this study.

3.1 Sample

The popular magazine in Taiwan, *Cheers*, publishes a list of “Top 100 most admired companies by Generation Y” (<http://topic.cheers.com.tw/issue/2014/jobs/chart.html>) every year in Taiwan. The list was compiled using data collected from a survey sent to newly graduates during December, 2013 to January, 2014. *Cheers* magazine sent out 4885 mail questionnaires to newly graduated students in 148 different departments, and the number of valid responses was 3456. The overall response rate is 70.75%. The list rank orders the companies in terms of their attractiveness toward newly graduates. Since these employers are not only the new generation’s choicest workplaces but also superior performers, they must have some important advantages for other business to learn, including how they tell the public about their work environments, and what source and type of information are accessible on their websites to potential job candidates who read about the company on the list. 50 companies were randomly picked as the sample in this study. The following figure shows the composition of the 50 companies by industry.

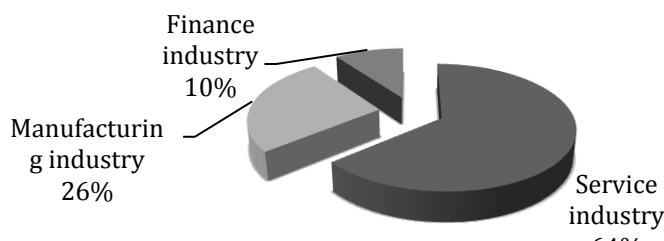


Figure 3.1. The composition of 50 companies from the top 100 most admired companies by Generation Y listed by the 2014 *Cheers* magazine. Retrieved from <http://topic.cheers.com.tw/issue/2014/jobs/chart.html> Note: The service industry includes IT, Accommodation & Food, Entertainment, Retail & Distribution, Transportation, and Health care industry.

3.2 Instrument and Measurement

Organizational attractiveness is defined as “the degree to which an individual perceives the organization to be a place to work or the general desirability an individual has to work for an organization.” (Williams, 2013). It is operationalized as the ranking in “Top 100 most admired companies by the new generation”. To measure organizational attractiveness, this study adopts the ranking of the 100 companies as the proxy of each company’s attractiveness. Ranking will be reverse-scored so that companies with higher ranking will have a higher score in organizational attractiveness.

A list of work-life balance attributes is developed as the coding scheme to help determine the presence or absence of a number of work-life balance practices. Fourteen of them are derived based on the literature (Bardoel, Tharenou, & Moss, 1999). Additionally 12 items are added by the researchers according to Taiwan’s Ministry of Labor’s criterion for work-life balance award, and also because of their popularity with companies in Taiwan to address work-life balance issues. These items are classified into four categories: child and dependent care benefits,

flexible working condition, leave options, and individual support policies. The content of each corporate website was coded for the presence or absence of attributes. If an attribute exists, it will be coded as “1”. Otherwise, it will be coded as “0”. A total of five coders were employed to determine the coding of each company website. The score of a company’s work-life balance policy is the total number of all work-life balance attributes present in the company’s website.

3.3 Validity and Reliability

This study developed coding schemes from the literature to ensure the content validity of measurement. Expert reviews and a pilot test were conducted to further establish the validity of these measures. In addition, reliability of the content analysis was established by testing inter-rater agreement and inter-rater reliability (LeBreton & Senter, 2007).

Given the goal to identify and record accurately company attributes presented on the company website, inter-rater agreement is important in content analysis. Besides, the data cannot be considered valid if reliability of coding is not established. In order to ensure inter-rater agreement, first, the five coders were trained on identifying and interpreting the data according to the coding scheme. The trained coders then went through selected company websites and coded the presence or absence of work-life balance attributes. Inter-rater agreement was determined by using an *a-priori* 80% agreement criterion (Braddy, Meade & Kroustalis, 2006). That is, the inter-rater agreement is achieved if 4 out of 5 coders reached the same conclusion. When disagreement occurs, the five coders discussed and attempted to reach consensus regarding the presence or absence of the attribute. Finally, Intraclass Correlation Coefficient (ICC) was tested to establish inter-rater reliability. The study adopted two-way mixed ICC model to measure the absolute consensus because every coder coded every attribute (LeBreton & Senter, 2007). The following table shows the ICC for WLB.

TABLE 3.1.

| | Intraclass Correlation | 95% Confidence Interval | |
|------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | | Lower Bound | Upper Bound |
| Single Measures | .979 | .968 | .987 |
| Average Measures | .996 | .993 | .997 |

4. RESULTS & DISCUSSION

The purpose of this section is to present the descriptive statistics, hypothesis results and discuss the findings. The following table shows the means, standard deviations of WLB and

organizational attractiveness in different industry.

TABLE 4.1

| | | N | Mean | Std. Deviation |
|-------------------------------|------------------------|----|---------|----------------|
| WLB | Service Industry | 32 | 8.0125 | 4.76843 |
| | Manufacturing Industry | 13 | 10.5846 | 1.99743 |
| | Finance Industry | 5 | 5.7600 | 3.29059 |
| | Total | 50 | 8.4560 | 4.28000 |
| Organizational Attractiveness | Service Industry | 32 | 63.7188 | 27.35930 |
| | Manufacturing Industry | 13 | 63.6923 | 26.22462 |
| | Finance Industry | 5 | 31.6000 | 24.87569 |
| | Total | 50 | 60.5000 | 28.05698 |

In order to answer Research question 1, the following table illustrate the frequency of WLB practices on the websites.

TABLE 4.2

Percentage of WLB practices in 50 company websites from *Cheers 2014* “Top 100 most admired companies by the new generation”

| WLB practices | Percentage of websites |
|--|------------------------|
| Child and dependent care benefits | |
| 1 Childcare program | 23% |
| 2 Elder-care program | 0% |
| Flexible working condition | |
| 1 Flextime | 14% |
| 2 Job sharing | 2% |
| 3 Compressed work week | 0% |
| 4 Telecommuting | 7% |
| Leave options | |
| 1 Maternity Leave | 23% |
| 2 Paternity Leave | 41% |
| 3 Parental Leave | 30% |
| 4 Marital Leave* | 5% |
| 5 Menstrual Leave* | 30% |
| 6 Family Care Leave* | 18% |
| Individual support policies | |
| 1 Life-skill educational program (e.g. parental skills, health issues, financial management, retirement) | 25% |

| | | |
|----|-----------------------------|-----|
| 2 | Professional counseling | 25% |
| 3 | Exercise fitness center | 48% |
| 4 | Workplace Cafeteria | 73% |
| 5 | Leisure activities | 86% |
| 6 | Family day/sports day* | 34% |
| 7 | Health check* | 75% |
| 8 | Breastfeeding room* | 30% |
| 9 | On-site medical center* | 39% |
| 10 | Club* | 61% |
| 11 | Retirement plan* | 70% |
| 1 | Children Education Subsidy* | 32% |
| 11 | Wedding Subsidy* | 75% |
| 12 | Childbirth Subsidy* | 48% |

Note. Adapted from “Organizational Predictors of Work-Family Practices.” By Bardoel, E. A., Tharenou, P., & Moss, S. A. (1999). *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources*, 36(3), 31-49. (* denotes items that were added by this research.)

For child and dependent care benefits, 23% of companies show they have childcare program such as on-site day care and some companies also show the pictures of day care on their websites, but none provide elder-care programs for their employees. As for the flexible working condition, more companies offer flextime to their employees in Taiwan, and multinational companies such as Google, Microsoft and IBM provide various flexible working option such as job sharing and telecommuting. Most companies highlight they have paternity leave for male workers as benefits on their websites as well as parental leave, menstrual leave and maternity leave. President Chain Store Corp. (PCSC) highlights all leave options on their recruiting websites. For individual support policies, near 90% of companies offer leisure activities such as incentive tour, karaoke, library or outdoor activities. Many companies have mentioned workplace cafeteria, health check, retirement plan, club and wedding subsidy on their recruiting websites. Specifically, only technology and airline companies mention professional counseling to assist their employees. However, some organizations have very few or none WLB programs on their websites but with high attractiveness scores including one civil service and hospitals. Specifically, the civil service, Taiwan Railway Administration of Ministry of Transportation and Communication doesn't reveal WLB practices on its website to attract potential applicants mainly because it belongs to government and provide substantial benefits to employees who had to pass civil service examination. As for hospitals standing as non-profit organizations, they don't necessary to provide incentives like WLB programs to attract potential employees. The researchers also found there are some differences among companies in different industries. The following table indicated the highest five WLB practices presented on websites in different industry.

TABLE 4.3

| Service industry | % | Manufacturing industry | % | Finance industry | % |
|---------------------|-----|-------------------------|------|--------------------|-----|
| Leisure activities | 75% | Exercise fitness center | 100% | Leisure activities | 80% |
| Health check | 72% | Leisure activities | 100% | Health check | 80% |
| Retirement plan | 66% | Workplace cafeteria | 100% | Retirement plan | 60% |
| Wedding subsidy | 66% | On-site medical center | 90% | Club | 40% |
| Workplace cafeteria | 59% | Family day/ Sports day | 80% | Wedding subsidy | 40% |

Companies in manufacturing industry are different from service and finance industry in terms of WLB practices present on the websites because its working environment and job characteristics, and manufacturing firms are more large-sized and tend to provide a variety of WLB programs to attract younger workers. Every manufacturing company all have fitness center, leisure activities and workplace cafeteria presented on their websites.

To determine whether industry influence WLB, the study uses ANOVA to see if there is any significant difference between 3 industries. It was measured by three types of industry; service, manufacturing, and finance industry and was coded as, service industry =1, manufacturing industry = 2, finance industry = 3. The assumption homogeneity of variance was violated because the Levene's test is significant indicating that the variances are very different across groups. Therefore, the Welch *F*-ratio is reported. There was a significant effect of industry on WLB, $F(2,11.345)=6.323, p=.014$. A Dunnett T3 post-hoc procedure showed in Table 4.4 revealed significant difference between service and manufacturing industry on WLB but no difference in other industry pair comparison.

TABLE 4.4

| Dependent Variable | Industry (I) | Industry (J) | Mean Difference (I-J) | Std. Error | Sig. |
|--------------------|------------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|------------|------|
| WLB | Service Industry | Manufacturing Industry | -2.57212* | 1.00869 | .042 |
| | | Finance Industry | 2.25250 | 1.69592 | .502 |
| | Manufacturing Industry | Service Industry | 2.57212* | 1.00869 | .042 |
| | | Finance Industry | 4.82462 | 1.57242 | .069 |
| | Finance Industry | Service Industry | -2.25250 | 1.69592 | .502 |

| | | | | |
|--|------------------------|----------|---------|------|
| | Manufacturing Industry | -4.82462 | 1.57242 | .069 |
|--|------------------------|----------|---------|------|

Hypothesis 2 proposed that work-life balance is positively related to organizational attractiveness. Correlation analysis was conducted to understand the relationship between two variables. According to Table 4.5, WLB is positively related to organizational attractiveness ($r=.463$, $p=.001$), which agrees with the study of Casper & Buffardi (2004) and McDonald & Hite (2008).

TABLE 4.5

| | | WLB | OA |
|-------------|-----|--------|--------|
| Person | WLB | 1 | .463** |
| Correlation | OA | .463** | 1 |

** $p < .01$

5. IMPLICATIONS & CONCLUSION

The goal of this study is to contribute theoretically to the literature on the online recruitment and employer branding in particular, as well as to the practical field of HR and recruitment. We focused on work-life balance content on website mainly due to the relevance of Internet and characteristic of Millennial generation workers. Similar to the study of Ehrhart, Mayer & Ziegert, 2012, we examine WLB serving as a signal that contributes to organizational attractiveness in the early stage of recruitment. The result shows that organizations implemented more work-life balance policies to assist their employees to cope with multiple responsibilities are more attractive, corresponding with previous studies (Cappelli, 2000; Friedman & Greenhaus, 2000, Casper & Buffardi, 2004, McDonald & Hite, 2008). Besides, the study also found that different industry influence organizations to implement different WLB practices to attract young workers. However, previous research only supported this relationship from employees' perspective and in the context of traditional recruitment, very few published studies examined the relationship between WLB and attractiveness in web-based recruitment. The present study has further found evidence that WLB is positively related to organizational attractiveness at organizational level through collecting data from real organizations' websites and correlate with their attractiveness ranking in young generation's mind done by well-known magazine in Taiwan.

According to recent Regus Work-Life Balance Index in 2012, Taiwan has achieved the realization of a better work-life balance and was ranked higher than other developed counties in Asia like Japan and Korea. Respectively, the authors have found multiple WLB practices presented on websites and usually highlighted with real pictures to attract job applicants. Moreover, the analysis of 104 Media on career web pages of "Top Ten Most Attractive Employer" in ten industry (2014) indicated that if the career pages shows terms like "convenient

location” or “fitness center”, more job seekers would click “apply for the job” on the web pages, which also matches the finding of this study. This shows that attractive organizations do possess multiple unique characteristics than others and present them on websites. Further, the researchers found that some organizations have a specific section introducing how to help employees achieve work-life balance with lots pictures and design features, but some just list the WLB programs. The website design may also influence job applicants’ attraction toward the organization. Therefore, we encourage future studies to incorporate website design and style and other content variables like WLB in one study.

Employer branding is an emerging field nowadays and effective employer branding has been used to raise organizational attractiveness, which makes organizations easier to attract job applicants (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Following this trend, human resource professionals need to think from a marketing perspective to create and implement a unique employer brand to project a distinctive image of an organization during highly competitive global war for talent (Lievens and Highhouse, 2003). For instance, the new survey of *Cheers* magazine in 2015 showed 25% of young workers put more emphasis on happiness from work than just worldly success and WLB is the second most important thing to consider about for the job. Hence, it’s more effective to provide more WLB related content on websites to build a desirable, happy working environment to recruit more talents. It’s critical for HR professionals to know what potential job seekers evaluate company’s attractiveness and make employment decision. Also, the survey indicated that 42.1% of newly graduates have already followed or added their admired companies on social media. As a result, it’s essential to build and keep good employer image to capture net generation ahead of other competitors. This study showed that organizations use great and various WLB programs as employer branding mechanism tool on Internet to attract these young workers. Nevertheless, this study only limits to Taiwan and WLB content; therefore, we encourage future research conducted in different countries and to examine more variables on websites that new generation take consideration into job choice such as training and development, challenging work or compensation. Additionally, this research only adopts industry as control variable, so we suggest future research to focus on other organizational characteristics as control variables such as employer reputation or employer familiarity to demonstrate the incremental contribution of variables.

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