Driving Success in Digital Employee Advocacy: The Role of Organizational Experts and Institutional Logics

Impulsando el éxito en el employee advocacy *digital: El rol de los expertos organizacionales y las lógicas institucionales*

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ABSTRACT: This article examines the successful relationship between a digital employee advocacy program utilizing LinkedIn and the organizational components of agency and institutional logic, as observed in a case study of a globalized international company. Using a mixed-methods approach, two research questions were answered: what online content that workers posted from the organization studied came from, and how did institutional logic emerge in workers' messages. Studying employees' messages after they gained expertise from a digital employee advocacy program was key to answering these questions. Moreover, based on the findings of this work, academic and managerial implications are explored for future research.

Keywords: Organizational communication; Social media; Employee advocacy; Institutional Theory; LinkedIn.

RESUMEN: *Este artículo examina la exitosa relación entre un programa digital de employee advocacy en LinkedIn y los conceptos de agencia y lógica institucional, a partir del caso de una empresa con presencia internacional. Mediante un enfoque metodológico mixto se respondieron dos preguntas de investigación: de dónde provenía el contenido en línea publicado por los trabajadores de la organización estudiada, y cómo emergía la lógica institucional en dichos mensajes. Para esto se analizaron contenidos publicados por los trabajadores en sus cuentas personales de LinkedIn. Con base en los hallazgos de este estudio, se exploran las implicancias académicas para futuras investigaciones.*

Palabras clave: Comunicación organizacional; Medios sociales; Embajadores de marca; Teoría institucional; LinkedIn.

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Introduction

Today, the traditional knowledge and authority associated with experts and their expertise are being questioned (e.g., Reed & Reed, 2022; Stampnitzky, 2023). Specifically, the actual professional services consulting market scenario has not been free from criticism or doubts (Mazzucato & Collington, 2023) regarding the roles and expertise of experts.

Linked to expert knowledge, digital employee advocacy has undoubtedly evolved. The latter has been conceptualized as the activity by which employees advertise the brands and values of the organizations in which they work using social media. Although the literature on employee advocacy is scarce, its introduction into the digital world has triggered a new shift in employee's online behaviors.

Until now, the literature has demonstrated that digital employee advocacy is an organizational concept closely tied to traditional organizational components, including corporate branding, organizational climate, and change management (Thelen, 2020; Thomas, 2020). However, besides the concepts mentioned, digital employee advocacy also implies a new way of rethinking how organizations may conceive the employees with new roles, such as ambassadors of their organizational fabric open to the external environment.

In particular, the concept of employee advocacy may range from a corporate macro perspective to a group level and then to an individual level (Thelen & Men, 2023). Although each of these factors is exposed, the linkage between an institutional perspective, as manifested through corporate communication strategies and, specifically, through employee advocacy behaviors, remains missing. To address this gap, this paper examines the relationship between successful employee advocacy experiences and the concepts of agency (Giddens, 1984) and institutional logic (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999).

The exploration presented in this work aims to unveil how a digital employee advocacy program can bring substantial benefits to organizations. For this purpose, we have chosen a particular case study from the Global South, through which we aim to understand how employees' advocacy content has turned them into brand ambassadors, as evident on social media, specifically LinkedIn.

1. Literature Review

1.1. Experts and Expertise in Crisis

Nobody questions that the postmodern world is suffering from multiple changes, among them a potential crisis involving the concepts of experts and expertise (Reed & Reed, 2022).

From a traditional point of view, the concept of expert stands for "someone who possesses knowledge, skills or capabilities that are judged superior to others" (Allen, 2020, p. 447). Therefore, experts possess superior abilities that others do not have, enabling them to perform and overcome particular tasks that non-experts cannot. These accomplishments bring out a difference that is socially recognized, conferring them the name of an expert (Agnew *et al.*, 1994).

Under this same logic, expertise refers to precise «characteristics, skills, and knowledge that distinguishes experts from novices and other, less experienced people» (Allen, 2020, p. 448). The classical journey from novice to expert typically takes several years, which involves two main aspects: a cognitive side, as the person can achieve challenging tasks, and an attributional aspect, as their competence is recognized by others (p. 449).

As scholars have demonstrated, experts perceive the world differently from those who are not, although expertise can be acquired by anyone (Ericsson & Pool, 2016). In a working context, expert labor

is commonly a differentiated category based on power, knowledge, and organizations (Fincham, 2012). In particular, expert groups play strategic roles in systems as they challenge conventional forms of professional expertise (Allen, 2020).

Today's scholars' debate extends beyond commonly evaluating what is or has been done in new and different ways in organizations. Researchers have begun to envision a crisis of expertise, despite not all fields being in crisis.

As Stampnitzky (2023, p. 1101) openly acknowledges, among the primary concerns of experts is that they hold "too much power," which they fear they will lose. In particular, three primary organizational levels are affected by these changes: (a) at the individual level, as a "loss of confidence in those who possess specialized knowledge and training"; (b) at an institutional or organizational level, conceived as a "decline in influence and power of traditional sites of expert authority"; and (c) at the macro-societally level, understood as an "overall collapse of expert's authority in politics and society resulting from a macro-level shift such that social organization and governance no longer require expert advice to function."

Although our convoluted world is full of many disciplines that may be experiencing and even suffering from these global changes, others have begun to shift into new linkages. Conversely, a deeper understanding of digital transformations that extend beyond the simple adoption of technical and computational tools is needed to study the actual possibilities that open up for all employees.

1.2. Digital Employee Advocacy Behaviors

In recent years, employee advocacy has emerged in the academic literature as an attractive practice due to its impact on various, yet complementary, arenas such as corporate branding, organizational climate, and change management (Thelen, 2020; Thomas, 2020).

However, employee advocacy is not a recent organizational practice, as some companies have developed in the past programs to teach their employees how to advocate for them (Ilic & Tranell, 2018). Nevertheless, particularly after the COVID-19 pandemic, this organizational practice has resurfaced as organizations have had to implement remote work systems without the necessary tools or work culture (Spicer, 2020).

In today's world, digital employee agency constitutes a new path to connect and engage organizational workers with the firms in which they labor (Akgunduz *et al.*, 2023). Furthermore, converting employees into part-time marketers helped them feel a more vital linkage with the companies where they work advocating for them (Ilyas *et al.*, 2018). As Löhndorf & Diamantopouls (2014) have demonstrated, making workers highly identify with their organizations stimulates their feelings of relevance, which, in turn, constitutes a fundamental pillar of an organization's internal branding.

Despite traditional employee advocacy being primarily performed through word of mouth, its potential has now extended to social media. Conversely, as Frank (2015) states, "On average, employees are connected to 10 times more people than their organizations' official channels, and we have found that brand messages can be shared 24 times more frequently when distributed by employees, versus official brand channels alone" (p. 145).

Therefore, digital employee advocacy has become an exciting new avenue for organizational communicators, enabling organizations from any arena to value and represent themselves internally through external online social media platforms. Thus, digital employee advocacy may increase the likelihood of retaining employees, maintaining and attracting new expert human capital into organizations, or simply developing organizational growth through employees' digital behaviors (Halpern & Castro, 2018).

In addition, digital employee advocacy programs constitute recent communicational efforts. To thoroughly study what these types of initiatives require, De Kerpel & Van Kerckhove (2023) reviewed 45

publications, concluding that it is essential to have a powerful combination of supportive organizational components and employee attributes to make advocacy programs successful.

According to De Kerpel & Van Kerckhove (2023), the following components are needed for a successful employee advocacy program under the organization's responsibility: a strong culture concerning clear organization's core values and shared practices, transparent processes, to transfer the organization's image to the outside world; people, in the sense of an adequate social climate in which an employee finds oneself comfortable to make advocacy; and structure, where information flows between organizational levels, as well as activities directed through clear and different roles and responsibilities among organizational actors. At the same time, but under the employee's responsibility, these other elements are basic: employee personal characteristics, such as motivation; positive feelings towards the organization, like proudness or a strong sense of community; and the job within the organization, regarding how employees feel and make sense of their particular facets inside it.

1.3. Digital Employee Advocacy Programs

Together with the theoretical literature background presented, from a more practical perspective, social media has already begun to be addressed in some digital employee advocacy experiences. One current example is Dell (2024), which has empowered its workforce through the use of the online program EveryoneSocial on social media. Just as Amy Heiss, Dell's social media marketing director, has declared,

> One of the key tenets of our social media and community training is that we encourage people to post 80% about topics that are informative, helpful, and relevant to customers —or personally interesting to our employees— and only 20% about the company (Dell, 2024).

Indeed, there is no doubt that this particular program has reached outstanding results:

> "over the last year, Dell has driven more than 150,000 shares within EveryoneSocial that have yielded 45,000 clicks to Dell's website. In total, the reach has exceeded an audience of 1.2 million" (Dell, 2024).

Another fruitful example of digital employee advocacy is the company General Electric (GE). Under the goal of building and transforming their employees into brand ambassadors, looking forward to building a global employer brand, GE has changed its traditional perspective for a fresh and new one:

> If you approach talent acquisition as "brand led", you center things and make decisions around candidates instead of each job opening. Old school, we used to market or sell each job (this was a job of a recruiter) —the new school is to market and brand the company and to have your employees help you to do this by sharing their authentic experiences about working for the company (Seel, 2017).

In other words, the internet and social media platforms are nowadays presetting a new paradigm shift, in which employees' voices are not only sending one-way positive messages regarding the organization where they work. On the contrary, as Ilic & Tranell (2018) have noted, they are fostering strong back-and-forth interactions with the public, particularly with stakeholders, by introducing new types of relationships through interactive content.

Additionally, from a practical perspective, the literature has not presented these programs in detail, revealing how they have been constructed behind the scenes. Overall, when searching for more detailed steps on how to build these types of programs, only general descriptions were found. For instance, Kim and Rhee (2011) studied employees' communication behavior, confirming the importance of employee advocacy by addressing the program's purpose of work culture, overcoming employee inhibitions, combating inactive leaders, and highlighting that content quality is crucial.

Thomas (2020) recognizes that a successful employee advocacy program creates a win–win situation that cannot be characterized by "sharing funny content on social media platforms to get the most views and responses, but a thoughtful and planned procedure with clear objectives. It is essential to know the advocacy goals and content strategy in organization's point of view" (p. 171). Therefore, any type of content that has not been previously produced, notwithstanding its good faith, is not enough. Moreover, it cannot be expected that every employee will exhibit the same digital advocacy behavior, as their content needs to be perceived as honest (Katila, 2016). Thus, selecting and preparing the content to be posted and shared by employees constitutes a crucial step that cannot be neglected.

Despite the positive experiences and initial steps previously presented, potential frameworks related to digital employee advocacy programs have not yet been thoroughly studied. Moreover, as De Kerpel and Van Kerckhove (2023) have openly acknowledged, preceding studies have primarily mentioned possible frameworks related to employee advocacy; however, empirical testing remains absent.

This last pitfall is especially significant, considering that organizational communication constitutes one of the primary disciplines related to organizational studies. Therefore, uncovering insights into how these programs are working from a novel perspective that has not yet been explored will provide a deeper understanding of the diversity of these programs, as well as lay the groundwork for a broader future research agenda related to these initiatives. In addition, considering that most of these efforts have been studied from a Northern perspective, this work opens the venue to explore a Global South employee's advocacy program that, besides being successful, is grounded in Institutional Theory from a communicational standpoint.

1.4. Agency and Institutional Logic

From a theoretical perspective, as organizations operate in dynamic environments, Institutional Theory (IT) constitutes a fundamental cornerstone that enables the study of shared, pre-existing rules, beliefs, and norms that individuals conform to within organizations (Lammers, 2011). Furthermore, drawing upon IT, the concept of employee advocacy is linked in this work in two particular ways: each individual that belongs to an employee advocacy initiative delivers specific digital human actions related to their agency (Giddens, 1984) and capabilities; at the same time, established social practices begin to emerge connected with to organizational institutional logics that are previously clear and well defined by each organization.

The conjunction between these two key concepts belonging to IT is a fundamental pillar to studying how organizations need to provide each employee with clear and defined requirements to follow as, at the same time, employees need to be knowledgeable, experts, and sensitive enough to the information that they are communicating into the social structures in which their organizations are embedded. Therefore, we now turn to the two main terms: agency and institutional logic.

Agency. Rooted on Gidden's Structuration Theory (1984), organizations are social phenomena permanently created through the progress of everyday social practices. Therefore, organizations are not only constituted by their actions but also operate and are affected by their employees' actions as individuals who, through communication, contribute to their creation, maintenance, or termination. Even more, agency has been conceived as how "social agents are capable of making a difference to everyday social affairs or courses of events" (Chatterjee *et al.*, 2019, p. 63). This "transformative capacity" (Giddens, 1986, p. 136) of individuals, based on proper human actions within organizations, may thus lead to and develop organizational members into experts in the eyes of their coworkers, regardless of their professional background, social roles, or position in any type of organization.

Institutional Logics. Also based on IT, the concept was reconceptualized by Thornton & Ocasio (1999) as "socially constructed, historical patterns of material practices, assumptions, values, beliefs, and rules by which individuals produce and reproduce their material subsistence, organize time and space, and provide meaning to their social reality" (p. 101). Organizational communication theorists have rec-

ognized that the logic and coherence of institutional logic encourage the study of how particular organizations construct their sensemaking about their actions and how they relate to today's world (Lounsbury *et al.*, 2021). Thus, institutional logics constitutes a solid foundation on which institutional arrangements play a vital role in structuring formal and informal roles that operate through organizations, providing order and a set of well-known practices understood and shared by all organizational members.

In short, in today's digital world, no organization can move forward without acknowledging the importance of their workers as ambassadors of new digital employee advocacy programs. However, while the scope has traditionally remained within organizational actions of branding itself, today, there is an urgency to recognize how, through social media, employees have begun to reveal new paths of action by which these programs need to be studied.

To explore how a particular digital employee advocacy program is created, the steps followed, and how employees become organizational ambassadors, we now turn to our case study from the Global South.

2. **Methodology**

2.1. RESEARCH DESIGN: CASE STUDY

A case study refers to empirical research that examines a phenomenon in depth and within its real-world context (Yin, 2018). It involves a detailed analysis of a phenomenon or event for which quantitative and qualitative methods, or both in conjunction, can be applied (Hancock & Algozzine, 2006, p. 85). However, their results are not generalizable as they do not seek to represent populations since the 'case' is not equivalent to a sample (Yin, 2018). Using this research helps to develop concepts and theories. As our purpose is to examine the successful process of creating, developing, and applying an employee advocacy program aligned with institutional logic through the case of an international company, we have chosen this type of empirical research, which involves experts and expertise.

2.2. CONTEXT AND ORGANIZATION SELECTED

As the literature describes, incorporating employees as brand ambassadors challenges a company not only to become more open, positive, legitimate, empowered, and recognized (Thelen & Men, 2023) but also enables the organization to establish a presence in the digital world. For this study case, we have selected one of the largest Chilean globalized companies, named Arauco. We chose this organization due to some particular characteristics:

—Arauco is one of the largest and most significant companies in Latin America's industrial sector, with activities that encompass various tasks, including forest cultivation, pulp production, and commercial management. Therefore, among internal communication initiatives, this organization simultaneously faces multiple institutional logics.

—To become a successful organization in the digital sphere, Arauco created a tailored employee advocacy program that allowed workers to develop specific digital skills related to generating new expertise and ultimately becoming innovative experts within its own organizational life. The period chosen for this work corresponded to one calendar year, from 2022 to 2023.

—In the Latin American context, and more specifically in Chile, research on employee advocacy is scarce. To the best of our knowledge, the most suitable case study examining previous employee advocacy was the work of Thelen & Formanchuk (2022). The latter explored how an ethical organizational culture is connected to employee advocacy behaviors through the mediating role of transparent communication and perceived relationship investment, confirming this relational process.

2.3. Characteristics of the Organization Studied

Initially, the organization's general characteristics were examined through its institutional website (Arauco, n.d.) to establish a general profile. Arauco is a Chilean forestry company with a global presence. It produces and manages renewable forest resources for paper, clothing, construction, packaging, furniture, and energy industries. The company has an international presence on five continents, reaching more than 4,300 clients in millions of homes worldwide. In Chile, it has 1,012,066 hectares of forest assets, comprising five cellulose plants, two plywood plants, two panel plants, seven sawmills that include four remanufacturing production facilities, and ten power plants. Based on its forest heritage, this company provides cellulose as a raw material for manufacturing a diverse range of products, including paper and packaging materials. Furthermore, the company's main essential pillars are forest cultivation, pulp production, and commercial management.

Moreover, the organization has three main philosophies that correspond to the company's institutional logics, as stated on their website (Arauco, n.d.): the organization's environmental impact, organizational commitment, and local contribution to communities, as well as Arauco's presence in the everyday life of local people.

Regarding the country's forestry business, Arauco has a notable presence on social media. According to the company's Institutional Report (Arauco, 2023), there are 21 corporate accounts in Chile, Peru, Colombia, Argentina, Brazil, the United States, and Mexico. Among them, six belong to Facebook, seven to Instagram, and five to LinkedIn, while X (Twitter), YouTube, and TikTok have unique accounts throughout the global ecosystem. Moreover, their digital community (total followers) is built up of more than 1,267,038 users present throughout the world, which translates into 74,907 new followers compared to 2022. In turn, Arauco's website had 9,519,408 visits during 2023, which considers the entire global spectrum of the different countries.

To maintain effective communication and relations with its stakeholders, Arauco has established professional public affairs, communications, and investor relations teams. Among their primary duties, the continuous improvement of the communication processes has been achieved through their employee advocacy program. Moreover, in 2022, the company recognized the need to implement an employee advocacy pilot program for a select group of workers. The results have been successful, and the company has announced that, for a third consecutive year, it has already trained a total of 70 ambassadors up to date (Arauco, n.d.).

Central to understanding the organizational processes related to this favorable organizational experience, this work focuses on studying how the relationship between this particular employee advocacy program is connected to agency and the institutional logics of the organization. To examine these connections, we now provide a more detailed description of the employee advocacy program implemented in Arauco.

2.4. The Employee Advocacy Program Implemented

To initiate the training employee advocacy program, contextual factors and features to be communicated were agreed upon between the consultant and Arauco. In particular, an initial program was established to define the features and content that ambassadors would promote, thereby increasing the brand's visibility through social networks. As a result, the decision was made to provide the employee with the opportunity to create new content based on the company's three main institutional logics. On the contrary, contrary to what might be assumed, the employees chosen to become ambassadors did not receive any elaborate previous messages on what they needed to deliver on social media.

The training program took place over approximately one year, from 2022 to 2023, during which employees were chosen from across the company. The selection criteria were not addressed by profes-

sional degrees or socioeconomic background. Employees from various organizational segments were selected based on their positive relationship with the company.

To develop an employee advocacy program, many crucial steps, decisions, and resources were required in the case of Arauco. The main steps to develop this kind of program are: (1) to establish objectives; (2) define a content strategy; (3) benefits for those who participate and selection of ambassadors; (4) training and permanent feedback of ambassadors; and (5) the assessments of the program results (Halpern & Castro, 2018).

Additionally, it has been acknowledged that employee advocacy is closely connected to the concept of employee branding. According to Miles & Mangold (2004), the last term is the "desired brand image internalized by employees, who then became inspired themselves to project the brand images to others" (p. 68). This conceptualization also relates to social exchange theory (Natarajan *et al.*, 2017), as employees exhibit favorable behavior towards the organization where they work in exchange for the organization's fulfillment of promises made to them.

Therefore, this type of internal branding involves transforming familiar organizational employees into knowledgeable individuals who understand the importance of their role in conveying the brand promise and the company's image. As Natarajan *et al.* (2017) imply, internal branding needs to be tailored to each organization, as employees build an emotional bond with it.

2.5. Case Study Research Questions

To achieve our goal of understanding the expertise acquired by workers after exposure to the employee advocacy program, we initially formulated two specific research questions.

Firstly, we were interested in determining the diversity of digital human actions, or "agency" (Giddens, 1984), that Arauco's workers developed, framed by the employee advocacy training program they received. In particular, considering that online content is one of the most crucial components in any employee advocacy program, we need to determine what type of content workers within the organization posted and where that content originated. Therefore, the selection of the kind of information posted by each organization's ambassador requires an examination of each of their online messages or posts. Based on this rationale, our first research question was: (RQ1) What type of content did employees post from the organization studied come from?

Secondly, considering that the employee advocacy program formed brand ambassadors who developed a particular type of digital expertise, it is necessary to explore how this new knowledge relates to each of the institutional logics that the organization delivers to its workers. As a result, we expect to understand which type of content has been privileged by the ambassadors based on their online behavior, as reflected in their posts on their own LinkedIn websites. Thus, our second research question was: (RQ2) Enlightened by the expertise on content developed by the organizational ambassadors through the employee advocacy training received, did institutional logics emerge in the workers' messages?

2.6. Case Study Methodology

Considering the nature of the research questions, a mixed-methodological design was chosen, combining both qualitative and quantitative aspects.

Qualitative Methods. Initially, the information background on the organization and the tailored employee advocacy program was reconstructed based on publicly available online information. This type of research emphasizes the depiction of social phenomena from the perspective of the people being studied, bringing an interpretive and naturalistic approach (Creswell & Clark, 2011). Furthermore, qualitative

methods capture insights into sensemaking processes (Alvesson & Skoldberg, 2009), which is entirely suitable for studying multiple institutional logics within an organization. Later, we adopted a basic interpretive qualitative approach to explore and understand the phenomenon.

Quantitative Methods. Once we began the process of finding some of Arauco's ambassadors online, we decided to construct our purposive sample. Using an Excel spreadsheet, we listed all the organization ambassadors whose profiles were available on LinkedIn, a social media platform studied. In addition, to classify each of the content of our ambassadors' messages based on the information openly available on the organization's website (Arauco, n.d.), we operationalized each of the organization's institutional logics in the following terms:

—Institutional Logic 1 (IL1): Organization's environmental impact. This logic was operationalized involving messages related to these three particular contents: (a) To develop a renewable activity through the use of clean energy; (b) To protect and promote biodiversity and conservation of native forests; and (c) To emphasize efficient water management, management of emissions, and efforts to achieve a circular economy.

—Institutional Logic 2 (IL2): Organizational commitment and local contribution to communities. This second institutional logic was operationalized as content related to (a) Involvement of the company in the community through the various programs it carries out, such as helping to educate the Chilean population, and (b) Maintaining a constant and transparent dialogue with the neighbors to comply with the agreed commitments, and also recognizing the native people of the area.

—Institutional Logic 3 (IL3): Arauco's presence in local people's everyday life. This third institutional logic was operationalized by information about educating and informing audiences regarding what the company does, focusing on (a) Different daily uses of wood and how it is present in everyone's lives and (b) Connecting what is understood as forestry industry with the final products generated through this industry and that are valued by citizens today.

Considering that our sample is purposive, the researchers in this work agreed that once an overall list of Arauco's ambassadors is compiled, only three of them—one per each institutional logic—would be chosen for in-depth study, thereby returning to qualitative methods.

Data Analysis. Once the purposive sample and operationalized Arauco's institutional logics were identified, the content of each ambassador's online LinkedIn messages was classified. Following the criteria provided during the tailored employee advocacy program for this specific organization, each ambassador message was allocated in a spreadsheet according to two main types of content: (a) Those that presented content created by each of Arauco's ambassadors and (b) Those that had content that was institutionally delivered based on the organization publicly available information —directly taken from the organization institutional logics. In addition, each of these two types of contents was also classified according to each of the three institutional logics disclosed. The units of analysis in the study were the posts as a whole (considering verbal text and visual content, when present).

3. Findings

Based on the information available on Arauco's corporate website, we found specific details regarding the "Yo Soy Arauco" (in English, "I am Arauco") employee advocacy training program, which was implemented during 2022-2023.

Although no public information was available on the particular steps or phases of this initiative, the successful results of this program have been openly described by the company declaration through its in-

stitutional website: "There is no better representative of an organization than its workers, and that is why we expanded and globalized the Leading Ambassadors Program, managing to connect our purpose and values with teams from Brazil, North America, Mexico and Argentina" (Arauco, n.d.).

In addition, Arauco's Corporate Manager of People and Sustainability admitted in the same public information available (Arauco, n.d.) that,

> This initiative adds a distinct and unique seal to traditional communication. It is they —the ambassadors— who know the organization best and can most reliably and authentically explain and convey our various projects. Thank you to all the ambassadors for your passion and commitment. We hope it is a process full of learning, good moments, and beautiful experiences!

As a first finding of this work, an initial list of 26 ambassadors was identified on LinkedIn who explicitly recognized themselves as Arauco's ambassadors. Details on ambassadors' profiles that emerged are summarized in Table 1.

TABLE 1

Ambassadors profile that emerged through the purposive initial sample

	Geographical location (Production plant)						
Gender	Horcones	Nueva Aldea	Santiago	Concepción	Valdivia	Constitución	Total
Male			4	7	2	1	14
Female	1	2	2	4	2	1	12
Total	1	2	6	11	4	2	26

Source: Own elaboration.

Following the researchers' agreement, after obtaining this initial purposive sample, we proceeded to choose three brand ambassadors, one for each of Arauco's institutional logics. The criteria used to select each ambassador were the highest number (frequency) of posts during the one-year study period. Findings are shown in Table 2.

TABLE 2

Frequency analysis by brand ambassadors of the studied company

Name	Position	Geographical location (Production plant)	Number of followers	Total posts during 2022-2023
Pamela Argomedo (AOC: IL2)	Superintendent of People and Occupational Health and Safety	Horcones 4012	3723	173
Raúl Briones (AOC: IL1)	Head of Wildlife Conservation	Concepción	1425	110
Yalesky Medina (AOC: IL3)	Production Shift Manager	Nueva Aldea	4121	101

Source: Own elaboration. AOC: Institutional Logic Predominant in the Ambassador's Own Content.

As discussed in the previous sections, this case study aimed to answer two research questions. RQ1 inquired about the content that workers posted from the organization studied; meanwhile, RQ2 investigated the relationship between institutional logics and ambassadors' messages. For each ambassador in our sample, we found the following results for both research questions:

— Pamela Argomedo[1] is the Superintendent of People and Occupational Safety and Health at the Horcones production plant, located in the Biobío region of Chile. Her professional expertise is specifically in Human Resources Management and the Prevention and Care area of Arauco workers. Pamela was the ambassador with the highest number of own posts and employee advocacy brand publications (173), with a monthly average of 14.4 publications. Additionally, 68.8% of these publications were based on her content, while 31.2% were based on brand content.

Regarding the contents of her posts, 53% of them were directly related to the three institutional logics exposed by the organization; meanwhile, the remaining 47% addressed her technical expertise and professional role in Arauco. Concerning brand content published by Pamela, IL2 "Organizational commitment and local contribution to communities" was the one with the most significant preference with 56% of posts (n = 30), followed by IL1 "Organization's environmental impact" with 28% of the posts (n = 15), and finally IL3 "Arauco's presence in local people everyday life" with 17% (n = 9) of the content published.

— Raúl Briones[2] is the Head of Wildlife Conservation, located in Arauco offices in Concepción, Chile, in the Biobío Region. His professional expertise is related to the Management and Conservation of Wildlife on Arauco properties. During the period studied, Raúl actively participated in the Program, ranking second in content generation with a total of 110 posts, corresponding to an average of 9.16 posts per month. Additionally, 85% of these posts (n = 93) were based on the ambassador's content, while 15% (n = 17) were based on the brand's organizational content.

Within the content itself, 35% were directly related to the three institutional logics studied, and the remaining 65% were on the ambassador's technical expertise and his professional role in Arauco. Regarding the brand content published by Raúl, the most significant preference was IL1 "Organization's environmental impact," with 53% (n = 9) of the posts, followed by IL2 "Organizational commitment and local contribution to communities," with 47% of the posts (n = 8). IL3 "Arauco's presence in local people's everyday life" had no publications by this ambassador.

— Yalesky Medina[3] is a Shift Manager at the Nueva Aldea Industrial Forestry Complex, one of the central productive units of Arauco, located in the Ñuble Region. Her professional expertise is related to the plant's production processes and its operational continuity. During the period studied, she ranked third in content generation, with a total of 101 publications, averaging 8.41 content posts per month. Moreover, 80% of these publications (n = 81) were classified as own content, and the remaining 20% (n = 20) corresponded to brand content.

— Within her content, 71% (n = 59) of the publications were directly related to the content of the three institutional logics studied, while the remaining 29% (n = 22) focused on her technical expertise and professional role at Arauco. About the brand content published by Yalesky, IL1 "Organization's environmental impact" was the one with the largest preference with 50% (n = 10), followed by IL2 "Organizational commitment and local contribution to communities" with 30% (n = 6), and IL3 "Arauco's presence in local people everyday life" with a 20% of posts. Table 3 presents a summary of the frequency analysis of RQ1 and RQ2.

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[1] LinkedIn website: https://www.linkedin.com/in/pamela-argomedoschiaffino/
[2] LinkedIn website: https://www.linkedin.com/in/ra%C3%BAl-briones42560b215/
[3] LinkedIn website: https://www.linkedin.com/in/yalesky-medinacontreras-65139841/.

TABLE 3

Findings of ambassador type of content by Institutional Logic and brand content

Name	Total Posts during 2022-2023	Own Content % (n)	Brand Content % (n)	Ambassador own content by Institutional Logic				Brand content by Institutional Logic		
				IL1 % (n)	IL2 % (n)	IL3 % (n)	Other content % (n)	IL1 % (n)	IL2 % (n)	IL3 % (n)
Pamela Argomedo	173	69 (119)	31 (54)	3 (3)	29 (34)	22 (26)	47 (56)	28 (15)	56 (30)	17 (9)
Raúl Briones	110	85 (93)	15 (17)	26 (24)	6 (6)	3 (3)	65 (60)	53 (9)	47 (8)	0 (0)
Yalesky Medina	101	80 (81)	20 (20)	1 (1)	10 (8)	62 (50)	27 (22)	50 (10)	30 (6)	20 (4)

Source: Own elaboration.

4. Discussion

In this paper, we sought to identify and explore the actual conditions and future projections of employee advocacy programs related to individual agency and organizational institutional logics. As we have previously discussed, we are living in particular times in which the roles of experts and expertise are being questioned.

This particular case study from the Global South revealed how LinkedIn exemplifies the execution of expert authority through organizational communication messages (Reed & Reed, 2022) connected to agency and institutional organizational logics. However, advocacy labor is not left without guidance, as employees and their organizations have previously aligned their objectives and content regarding what they will communicate about their organization.

The results of this work confirm the dynamic and fundamental role of digital employee advocacy programs in organizations. Based on the organization studied (Arauco), employee advocacy interactions have been key to generating new value in the digital space through the individual's work.

Among our findings, we established that LinkedIn was an excellent platform for this company to disseminate its institutional logics to both its own employees and external digital users. Moreover, the creation of shared understandings through each employee's communicational messages played a vital role in producing and reproducing sensemaking aligned with each of the three organizational logics that were defined. This latest result reinforced the importance of retaining employees as active and expert human capital trained to sustain and disseminate organizational well-being through social media.

The analysis developed in this paper confirmed some of the advantages that an employee advocacy program can bring to employee branding. Coincidentally with the literature, workers' training on their company information is one of the fundamental pillars on which their image and power rely. Moreover, the particular case of designing and developing a great employee brand experience not only provides positive organizational results but also fosters favorable experiences linked to employees' internal communications and, in turn, their emotional connections.

For example, in the case study presented in this work, all of Arauco's brand ambassadors on LinkedIn felt free enough to prioritize their content over the brand content provided by the organiza-

tion. Specifically, this was revealed as the total content published by Yalesky Medina (85%; n = 109), followed by Raúl Briones (68%; n = 65), and later by Pamela Argomedo (62%; n = 116) by their own was superior to the one provided by the organization. However, it is necessary to consider that all the content posted by each of the three ambassadors was always in line with organizational values and principles.

From the perspective of Arauco's brand ambassadors, the three cases analyzed contributed to each of their social media influence. This finding is confirmed by the fact that each of the ambassadors published posts in a monthly average of 31 posts for Pamela Argomedo —corresponding to at least one post daily— followed by Yalesky Medina with 21 monthly posts —out from the days of a month—, and by Raúl Briones with an average of 16 posts monthly —so, at least, every other day. This productivity does not occur spontaneously, as the training process had influenced the importance of their permanent presence on social media, particularly LinkedIn.

Overall, in addition to our empirical findings, this work makes significant contributions to the field of organizational communication. Firstly, employees' voices are not limited to daily interactions within their organizations, as digital employee advocacy allows them to amplify their voices in public domains (Miles & Mangold, 2004). Therefore, organizational communication studies need to consider that through new mechanisms, such as employee advocacy programs, new voices will emerge to enhance their competitive advantages. Moreover, this factor requires further study, as communication mechanisms are key to supporting and guiding what and how employees communicate about their organizations.

Secondly, addressing digital employee programs is relevant to the communication discipline, as highly skilled human capital experience will affect internal organization dynamics, which, in turn, will be a key difference between organizations that have implemented this type of program and those that have not yet done so.

Finally, we agree that employee advocacy programs constitute a new paradigm in which concepts such as engagement, identification, knowledge, experts, and expertise require further investigation. In this sense, we firmly believe that IT provides a communicational framework to explore future avenues on this topic.

4.1. ACADEMIC AND MANAGERIAL IMPLICATIONS

From an academic standpoint, studies have buttressed the existence of multiple logics in organizations (Greenwood *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, the importance of this work relies on two main aspects.

First, discovering how an organizational employee can acquire digital expertise after participating in an employee advocacy program, thereby enhancing their agency (Giddens 1984) and transforming themselves into a brand ambassador, reveals a powerful opportunity to create new experts on organizational brand content through social media, in this case study, on LinkedIn. In other words, exploring the specific type of content published by an employee, besides enlightening us on what is said, helps us determine the expertise a brand ambassador has acquired.

Second, the fact that employee advocacy programs need to be connected to institutional logics if they want their ambassadors to grasp and deliver organizational content that is linked to today's world reality (Lounsbury *et al.*, 2021). As any other work has not previously explored this connection, this research aims to create a new bridge that motivates future employee advocacy programs and internal communicators to consider institutional logics components as one of the crucial pillars of employee branding studies.

In terms of managerial implications, this work highlights the crucial role that a consultant, as an expert, plays in designing and delivering a tailored employee advocacy program. In this sense, the experience and management knowledge of any consultant in tailoring employees' capabilities and ex-

pertise within the organization are crucial. In this particular case study, the content delivered by the brand ambassadors, based on the previous employee advocacy program, was successful as workers were able to create their own and organizational content in coherence with the organizational institutional logics.

Additionally, this study lays the groundwork for examining how employee advocacy strategies and expertise development are applied in diverse cultural and organizational contexts. This last proposal could help organizations leverage the expertise of different employees' advocacy programs across multiple industries and geographic environments, thereby maximizing their effectiveness and relevance.

5. **Conclusion**

This article examined the successful relationship between a tailored employee advocacy program and the organizational components of agency (Giddens, 1984) and institutional logics (Thornton & Ocasio, 1999) in a case study of a globalized international company. Using a mixed-methods approach, two research questions were addressed: on the one hand, the content that employees posted from the organization and on the other hand, how institutional logics emerged in these workers' messages. Studying employees' content messages after they gained «expertise» from a tailored employee advocacy program was key to answering both research questions.

In addition to the research conducted in this study, this work also offers a fresh perspective on studying employee advocacy programs through an Institutional Theory lens. Although the company studied had particular features, we are hopeful that this initial examination constitutes a new point of departure for new approaches to how expert ambassadors shape organizations' communication processes. Finally, this research combines individual experts' knowledge with organizational and institutional logics that may not have been examined before in other investigations.

The present study is not exempted from limitations. First, employees' posts before the start of an employee advocacy training program were not examined. Including this initial stage would have been useful to uncover more details about the type of expertise the ambassadors had before and after the employee advocacy program. However, due to ethical considerations and respect for the subjects' privacy, they could not be included in this research.

These same ethical considerations limited the ability to publish deeper analyses and descriptions of the ambassadors' content. Future research may provide more detailed readings in this regard, showing in a multimodal way —drawing on images, videos, and verbal text— how ambassadors employ discursive mechanisms to represent both the Institutional Logics and their company's brand values.

Finally, completing similar future research with more qualitative techniques, such as interviews, may provide deeper insights into the ambassadors' own experiences through their content creation. However, the researchers of this work agree on the fact that social media constitutes a powerful tool by which agency and institutional logics are combined through ambassadors' messages.

Distribución de trabajo y orden de autoría (en caso de dos o más autores/as)

This article comes from the authors, whose work is recognized in this order:

Pablo Matus (responsible for the general writing of the text, the articulation of the theoretical framework and the methodological design of the study). Ignacio Ovalle (responsible for the methodological design of the study and fieldwork, plus the revision of the text of the article).

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