Indispensable Elements of Employer Branding in Different Business Milieu: A Conceptual Approach

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ABSTRACT

The research work on 'Employer Branding' started at the end of twentieth century. Two researchers named Simon Barrow and Tim Ambler in the Journal of Brand Management in December 1996 mentioned about employer branding and they suggested the importance of the same with respect to the sustainable growth of the organization. Companies started realizing the imperatives of employer branding in last decade as they had experienced extremely high attrition rates for various reasons, some of those are related to intrinsic and extrinsic factors. Human resource department tried to implement various employee engagement programs to increase the productivity of the employee and to retain the performer of the company. Retaining the best talent remains one of the most prominent issues of the organizations as they are always looking for the best possible opportunities for them. Slowly but quite steadily organizations realized that employer branding could be one of the weapon to experience long term success. Therefore, organizations are trying to formulate various employee oriented strategies to continue the value chain without disturbing the fundamental structure. So, it can be utilized as one of the growth propositions for the corporations internally. It had also predicted that, it could be a better proposition than any formal advertising or advertising campaign plan to gain the brand value and the brand equity. The researcher is trying to find out the importance of employer branding in different contexts and various factors those can influence employer branding practices in different ways. The research paper is also trying to investigate the reasons due to which Indian companies are not doing well as far employer branding is concerned.

KEYWORDS: *Branding, Employer branding, Leadership, Stakeholders*

Objectives

Objectives of the research paper are mentioned below: -
➢ To study the various aspects of employer branding in different contexts
➢ To understand the implications of employer branding
➢ To study the practices of employer branding in India

INTRODUCTION

About employer branding

Any company irrespective of scalability of doing business and its presence whether a domestic market or international market comprised of a very important intrinsic aspect called reputation. The reputation may come from products, services, any other offerings, management style, leadership, team members, historical background and many more. Company's reputation can also go ahead of any specific perception to influence any stakeholder. This perception could be anything like emotional, instinctive, intellectual etc. While any stakeholder is absolutely influenced by the reputation of the company then they will start using the product and would be talking about the products or services as well. The reputation can be mentioned as something beyond the product, brands; it could be a prevailing, inexplicable and synergistic force. So, it can be mentioned that there is an intangible, intrinsic, fundamental and elementary factor which is far more than the selling proposition of the company. Each company should understand that there is a secondary brand other than the primary brand which is offered in the market. This secondary brand is nothing but the viewpoint or standpoint of the company towards its employee and the nature of relationship between them. This employer brand has created enormous discussion in modern business era. The employer brand stayed there in the brain and mind of the former, current and future employee throughout and that would give a sense of belongingness among people.

Modern business and the relevance of employer branding

As today's product market is extensively competitive in nature similar to that the job market as well and that's how the positive employer brand had become very important and relevant with the situation. Without practicing the employer brand effectively and efficiently hiring and retaining of the employee in different organization had become increasingly complicated and challenging. We should not forget the involvement of towering cost structure related to the recruitment and selection process of any company. Any organization would be requiring an employee who must be knowledgeable, skilled, talented, leadership oriented, team player etc. These qualities in an employee would help the organization to grow and perform well in the market and help the business to move forward. The best possible way to find such employee with so many qualities would be casting the company's impression as best place to work in front of

those people. The offered benefits could be related to salary structure, other benefit packages, weekly off, employee engagement programs, overall organizational culture, career opportunities offered for them, overall treatment of the employee in different contexts. With the help of all these benefits companies are trying to attract potential employee towards them and tried to retain the good old employee. With different types of product or offering related branding activity, the employer branding is all about the procedure by using which companies are trying to promote their vision and mission statement in a storytelling way and the effectiveness of that to gain the attention of the people on continuous basis. It is the organization's strategy by using which they made sure the way they wanted to make people perceived about their brand, they did it effectively. Satisfied employee would help in positive word of mouth and they are the real loudspeaker to create employer brand. In new age marketing era where digital platforms are used quite extensively, in such cases referencing from positive employer would be very effective during the recruitment process. Companies are increasingly involved in developing,

implementing and managing employer brands in most effective way than ever they were involved. To get the formulated employer brand strategy in the correct direction companies are required to follow a very well planned and disciplined approach with strong guidance and support from every possible business lines of the organizations. Different organizations are practicing different strategic business units and due to that their perspectives towards employer branding is also different. The effective best employer branding practices helped any organization to stay focused towards the line of vision and mission statement and ultimately to get the taste of success with long term sustainability strategies. Companies are absolutely focusing on defining vision, mission and values well during the process of communication of employer branding with its employee. The modern day best employer branding practices are seen in the digital promotion strategies which is aligned with their social media usage and content strategies that is well connected with core values of the organization.

Exhibit I Top reasons to stay or leave the company

Source: https://www.peoplematters.in/news/employer-branding/randstad-reveals-countrys-top-employer-brand-18099

Literature review

An employer brand cannot be made in one day it takes some time and with the help of careful accomplishment explicitly and implicitly it can be developed over a period of time within any organization (Aaker, 1991). As the world is experiencing a serious shortage of global talent in organisation due to that the companies they need to formulate a comprehensive strategy not only to attract new employee but also to retain potential and current employee. Lots of researchers found there is a very interesting intersection between human resource management and brand marketing and this approach help to bring a new concept in the marketplace called employer branding (Barrow & Richard, 2005). It is also being considered as one of the most effective organisational strategies by using which the company can differentiate them from competitors and able to gain a sustainable competitive advantage in the labor market for the long run. Due to many such reasons employer branding is considered as one of the prime approaches for responding to recruitment and retention challenges in any market place. Employer branding practices can be regarded as one of the inherent multidisciplinary approach to handle people of different mentality and from different backgrounds.

In many cases researchers observed that the field of employer branding had gone through several impediments

due to different reasons like organisational culture, organisational development, organisational behaviour etc (Clark & Harold, 1987). In many cases it is observed that the people failed to differentiate between the employer branding and employee branding. There are many research constructs which can influence employer branding to a great extent like employer brand equity, employer knowledge, employer image, employee branding etc (Ambler & Barrow, 1996).

Employer branding practices in any market has become as important as any goods or services. Employer brand basically explains organisations reputation as an employer. It is quite evident that the success of any company broadly depends on the efficiency and efficacy of its employee and due to that attracting and retaining talented people has become one of the biggest challenges and major task in modern day business (Keller, 1993). Employer branding is one of those tools by using which companies can attract and retain talented people to reduce the shortage of talent within the organisation. It has been adopted at various scales and levels by different organisations in different parts of the world. In today's enormous competitive economic environment the promotion of employer brand has become a main lifeline of any organisation to increase profitability and sustainability. As we all know that product or service branding mostly influences consumer choice criteria or preferences which ultimately trigger consumer decision

making just before final purchase. Employer brand is nothing but such product or service branding activities by using which companies are trying to promote their name and fame (Peters, 1999). Employer brand is a combination of different types of economic and functional aspects which has an impact on professionals desire to work for any particular organisation in different parts of the world. This thing could be done with the help of culture, image creation, personality development etc.

An effective employer branding helps organisation to reduce the time to recruit a reliable employee in organisation. As we all know that recruitment is a lengthy and costly affair and it could be completed with the help of different ways. Organisations generally start its search process with the help of e-mailing mechanism. In the entire recruitment process the intrinsic interest of the candidate is also an important factor before going ahead with the application. Employer branding is actually playing an important role in attracting the suitable candidate for the job (Luthans & Peterson, 2002).

Strong employer brand is actually helping different organisation in lowering cost per hire. In many cases it can be said that cost per hire has become irrelevant for the organisation while their focusing more on hiring the best employee for the job. There are some conventional organisations those are still thinking that cost per hire is a very important criteria of the entire recruitment process and due to that many organisations formulates specific strategy to higher specific number of people with a defined budget and for that also measurement of cost per hire is crucial. Effectively a good employer branding actually helps in cutting the cost for cost per hire and eventually it acts as a referral mechanism for the organisation and this way the process helps the organisation to find the best profile at minimum possible cost (Fulmar et.al., 2003).

Company's culture is also playing an important role during the building and strengthening process of employer brand within the organisation. The effectiveness of branding will be proved when the branding process would be related to the employee and the people those are applying for the job in that organization (Collins & Stevens, 2002). A decent word of mouth will help in spreading a message about the brand and image of the organization's that will eventually help to attract new people. A two way communication model will ultimately help in making an excellent transparent organisational culture which will help any new candidate during their stay in the organization (Robert & Dowling, 2002).

If employer branding can be practiced in effective way then it will help to instigate in pushing up the revenue growth of the organization (Turban & Cable, 2003). Therefore it can be said that with the help of effective employer branding organisation can try to change or implement their revenue generation model in the most effective way. Most of the research works suggest that and effective employer branding helps in the process of building and increasing the revenue stream of the organisation in more sustainable way. The main reason behind the entire process is is a good brand image which is already established in the marketplace by the organisation to retain the best employee even at the difficult situation of the organisation. It would be helpful to find the

best possible workforce in minimum possible time by spending the lowest cost structure as compared to its closest competitors in the marketplace. So this way employer branding will ultimately help to build a good public image in the market (Sutherland et. al., 2002).

An effective employer branding will ultimately help to build a career growth plan which will ultimately leads to the quality of hiring. A good team, a bunch of people will always help the organisation to be in the best possible structure throughout irrespective of any situations. Organisational development will ultimately help to spread a good message about the organisational policy and its applications or implications in the social network which will help in mass marketing of the company. Eventually the process will help to increase the quality of hiring for the long run.

Branding activity is generally practiced to differentiate tangible products and with the help of this organisations are trying to create a sustainable competitive advantage in the market. But from last few years it is observed that branding is shifted from tangible products to different other services, people, places, organisation etc. Ambler and Barrow (1996) have defined employer branding as the development and effective communication preferably two way communication of the organization's culture as an employer in the marketplace. Employer branding can be considered as a package of functional economic and psychological benefits those come from the employment and it is the responsibility of the organisation to deliver the promised value to its employee. The concept employer branding actually promotes value proposition in totality which includes different aspects which is directly or indirectly related to the company and the employee like culture system attitude relationship communication flow shared goals productivity satisfaction at various levels delivering value according to the mission and vision statement. Effective employer branding is not only distinguishing the organisation from its competitor but also it helps to create a unique selling proposition that should be focusing more on the employee satisfaction and happiness for the employee which will ultimately result in employee retention, their productivity and efficiency. It should be practiced as a long-term strategy to manage the awareness program and perception of the present employee the potential employee and other related stakeholders those are directly or indirectly related to the value chain analysis. The employer brand ultimately helps to create an image which showcases the organisation as a good professional place to work. It suggests that employees at all levels are involved in the development process of the brand so that it explains the realities and aspirations of not only the organisation but also the employee those are working with organisation.

Practices and implications
Randstad Award
Now, organizations are working together to develop a strategic framework that will ultimately assist top management to implement employer branding more effectively and with a result orientation. Adoption of overall process oriented thinking is crucial to find things those influence each other and finally that should able to attract new talent or engage and retain the existing employee. Employer branding would be beneficial to circulate the company's attitude and business sentiments among internal

people those are directly or indirectly related to the value chain of the company. Employer branding is a holistic approach rather than a department specific approach as this includes everyone from various departments. So, cross departmental analysis would be more realistic approach to achieve the ultimate goal of the organization. If any organization tried to limit the activity of employer branding to one aspect then it would fail to imbibe organizational culture among the employee. Due to the advent of social media platform only the stance of employer branding had changed otherwise the fundamentals remain same. Inclusion of social media effectively had become an important channel for communicating employer brand today in the marketplace in more effective and meaningful way. With the help of modern day big data analytics tools companies are expected to leverage employer branding at different levels including its channel members and clients as well.

Every year, Randstad Award is presented in different parts of the globe to those companies which able to attract maximum employee. The winner is decided on the basis of the outcome of the world's largest public opinion survey in employer branding, Randstad Employer Brand Research. The winner of the award is based on "the people's choice" of the brand company. It is based on the view of a representative sample of the employees those are already associated with the brand, job-seekers those had shown keen interest to join the company, and all these data are obtained from national statistics agencies of that respective country. With the help of various quantitative and qualitative measures it is ensured that results remain objective, rational and devoid of any ambiguity. Ranking are given completely on the basis of the employer branding appeal which is generated in employee's mind by the company in due course of time. The variables those are used for the study are attractive salary and benefits, work-life balance, job security, career progression, strong management, financially healthy, reputation of the company, good training, technological inclusions, quality products etc. These measures are not the sudden selections of the authority. These measures are tested thoroughly with validity and reliability before implementing the same in the respective country.

Inferences of Randstad Award

If we look at the record of Randstad award, India which offered one of the most prestigious awards for corporate named "most attractive employer in India" from 2011 to 2019, then we would able to see that predominantly foreign multinationals are dominating the show since inception. In the year 2011, the first prize awarded to Microsoft and very closely followed by L&T. In the top five industry segment, we had seen the presence of some Indian companies like ONGC (energy), SAIL (manufacturing) and Taj Group (travel and hospitality). In the year 2012, again it was dominated by Microsoft India which ranked first followed by Oracle India which got second position and Tata Consultancy Services gained third position. In the year 2013, there was no change in the first rank as Microsoft India again received the award to complete the hat-trick followed by Hewlett Packard India, the first runner-up. In the year 2014, it was the master stroke of Microsoft India which outperformed other players to win the show for four consecutive times. Sony India was announced as the runner-up. Special recognition awards had given to State Bank of India (SBI) from Banking, Taj Group of hotels in hospitality sector and TATA Power in the energy

sector to name a few. In the year 2015, the change happened in the first rank as Microsoft India entered into "Hall of Fame" category. The first prize was bagged by Google India and followed quite closely by Sony India as runner-up. In the year 2016, Google India won the show for the second time and followed by Mercedes-Benz India. In the year 2017, Google India completed its hat-trick as winner and followed by Mercedes-Benz India. In the year 2018, Microsoft India regained the first position after waiting for three consecutive years. In the year 2019, all together a brand new company joined the party and replaced Microsoft India from the first position. The new company was from e-commerce sector named Amazon India that was awarded the first prize and followed by Microsoft India.

So, from the entire award list if anyone try to find out any clue as far as employer branding practices are concerned then it is quite evident that in all the time foreign multinational companies are awarded. Indian companies got their spot in some cases that to in some other categories like sector wise award or any specific business related award etc. From the record it is justified that there are definitely some lacunas due to that Indian companies are failed to mark their presence. TCS, Infosys Ltd. etc. tried to find their spot well in the list but unfortunately they failed. This failure had raised lots of questions about Indian employer on their style of doing business, management decisions, communication flow, promotional tools used, positioning statement, career management etc. Start ups remain in the question mark zone for several reasons like lack of fund, low brand value, lack of reputation, limited experience of doing business in the marketplace etc.

So the basic question is related to the understanding of Indian companies about employer brand and their readiness to practice it in the company. Whether Indian companies failed to realize and comprehend the correlation between the value addition and employer branding?

Conclusion

In recent times the world has seen many Indian corporations has already entered in the global marketplace and there contributing in globalised economy. There are a lot of multinational corporations which is already entered in India and the competition for Indian brands has become increasingly tougher to handle the business. The Indian organisations realised the importance of the concept called 'brand India' in the domestic and international market. Naturally there is a requirement of different people with different skill sets are required. So Indian organisations also started practicing employer branding quite frequently and seriously and they are trying to get the benefits of employer branding.

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