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Research Paper

RESEARCHING ON IMPROVING ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE THROUGH EMPLOYER BRAND

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ABSTRACT

Employer branding is the 'Hottest strategy of employment' (Sullivan, 1999). Shortage of skilled and talented workforce, growing propensity of employees to shift from one job to another job, maintain profitability and sustainability of the organization and other similar challenges forced management to establish their organization as a strong employer among the target stakeholders. This is a conceptual study and based on observations and secondary sources of data like journals, books, web-sites, newspaper articles. The authors have devised a model "framework of linkage between employer brand and organizational performance" that shows the external and internal level of benefits of employer brand that leads to improved organizational performance. This study highlighted the growing role of employer branding for organizational success so that management can frame strategies accordingly.

KEY WORDS: Employer Brand; Internal Aspect; External Aspect; Organizational performance

INTRODUCTION

People are the most important part of the organizations because they are the only who develop the culture of the organizations and converts targets into results. Talented and skilled employees provide the competitive advantage to the organization. Because of this, human resource management (HRM) identified the need of employer brand because of increasing power of brands and searching credibility and interest in employee engagement practices (Jenner and Taylor, 2009). Consumer perceive the attributes of a product and service by its brand name, similarly social identity theory supports that employees and potential hires wants to identify themselves with the brand name to improve their self-esteem (Agarwal and Swaroop, 2011). Brand name is used by the companies to promote their products and service and attracting more consumers and increasing their profitability. Similarly, employer branding is a way used for increasing the loyalty level of employees and increasing their productivity. So, employer brand is not only a tool for increasing attractiveness of an employer but it is also a strategy to retaining, satisfaction of employees, organizational commitment and increasing productivity of employees (Tanwar, K. and Prasad, A., 2016).

Employer branding is a new concept that is an obvious mixture of marketing and HRM principles. This concept is used by Ambler and Barrow (1996) initially for place differentiation. Days are gone when branding was used only for differentiating products, but now branding used not only differentiating products but also used for differentiating people, places and firms. Employer branding differentiate one employer from its competitors. Employer brand concept emerged 20 years ago in Europe because of organizations' need to attract qualified talent. This term was first time introduced by Tim Ambler, senior fellow of London School of Business and Simon Barrow, Chairmen of People in Business in year 1990. They publicly defined this term in year 1996 in their paper entitled 'The Employer Brand' published in the Journal of Brand Management. Employer branding defined by Ambler and Barrow (1996) "as the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by the employment and identified with in the employing company." They considered it integrated brand management. Corporate leadership council (1999) described employment brand as the actual employment offers and the ability to deliver its promises. Hsieh et. al. (2004) defined the employer brand "as the feelings impressions, perceptions, beliefs, and attitudes towards a company."



Hewitt Associates conducted a survey in (2006) on employer branding and highlighted that employer brand is necessary for all the forms even for those organizations that have a strong customer organization brand exist. 85 % managers accepted the need of employer branding in future. Phillips and Connell (2008) highlighted that employees want to work with an organization that have a brand name rather than working with a company without brand name. This created a great need of creating positive brand image among the potential and existing employees of the organization. Chunping and Xi (2011) highlighted that potential and existing employees of the organization develops two aspects of employer branding named external aspect and internal aspect. External aspect of employer brand presents the organization as a best place for work in the market by communicating their set of attributes among potential employees. Internal aspect of employer brand draws a unique picture of employer among current employees through delivering their brand promises or employment aspect. Through this study, external and internal level benefits of employer branding is identified and their role in organizational performance is discussed.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

American marketing Association defined branding as “a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the good and services of one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors”. Drury, P. (2016) highlighted that brand image is basically related with the thoughts and the ideas that are related with the brand name and it benefits the organization by differentiating it from the competitors; creation of value for the firm and create positive attitude and feelings. Dawn and Biswas (2010) highlighted that employer branding is closely related with the product branding concept of marketing. In case of product branding positioning of the product is made in the eyes of customers and employer brand positions the organization as an employer among potential and existing customers. Martin et. al. (2005) stated that employer branding concept firstly described by marketing academicians. This is because branding is traditionally found in the sphere of marketing. But later it becomes a big issue for HR academicians. Lievens et. al. (2007) considered that employer branding emerged as a result of using marketing principles for recruitment practices.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) initially identified employer branding need in the context of HRM. They argued that “employer brand highlights the unique aspect of the firm’s employment offerings or environment”. Walker (2006) argued that it is the attributes of the employer that distinguish one employer from the other and establish an organization as an attractive work place. This study defined employer brand as “a set of attributes that makes an organization distinctive and attractive to those people who will feel an affinity with it and deliver their best performance within it”. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) highlighted the two aspects of employer branding that are external marketing aspect and internal marketing aspect. External marketing aspect presents the organization as ‘employer of choice’ and attracts the best workers towards the organization and internal marketing aspect that helps to

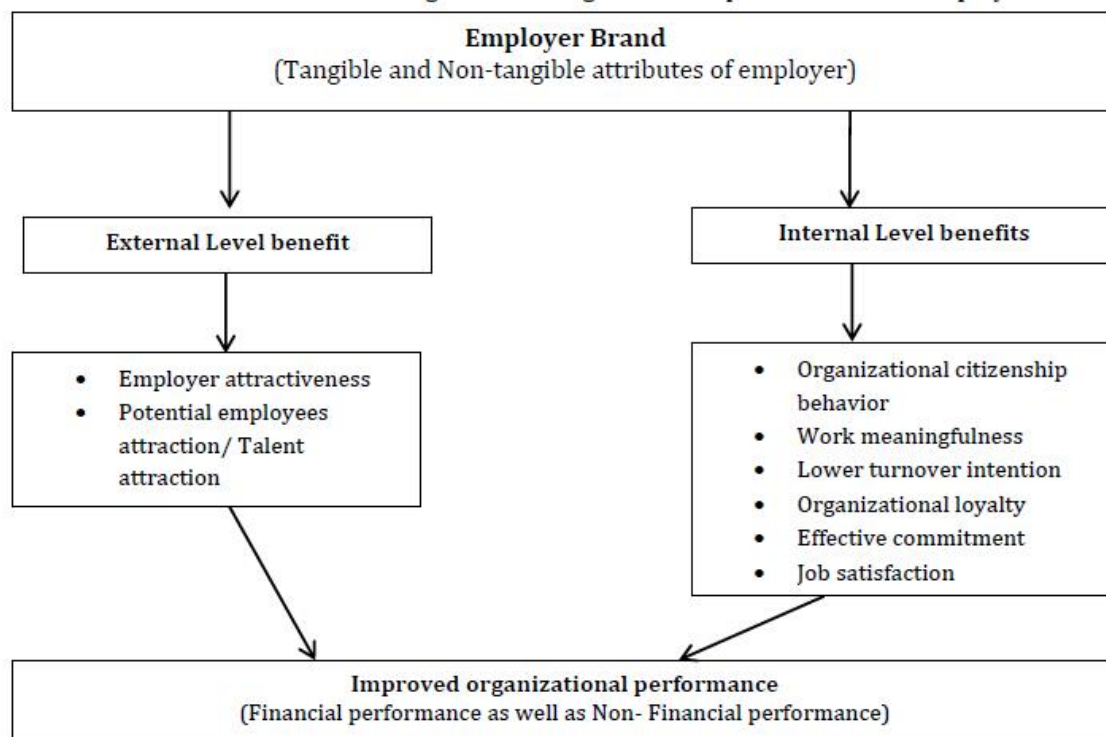
create a workforce for the organization that is hard for others to imitate. It develops a strong and unique culture within organization that helps employees’ retention and increasing productivity within the organization. Srivastava and Bhatnagar (2010) favored the external and internal aspect of employer branding and defined it as “giving an identity, image and distinctiveness to the organization as an employer in order to attract its prospective employees and to motivate, engage and retain its current employees.” Monika, S., (2014) argued that employer branding is the component of corporate branding. Corporate branding includes the product/ service brand, social brand, good will and employer brand. This study explained that employer brand aimed at creating positive and attractive image of the company in the internal and external labor market.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) describe the employer brand as three step process. First step related with developing the ‘value proposition’. Value proposition is related with the individuals believe what they will receive by working with a specific employer. Value proposition convey the central message of brand and represents of what the organization offers to its employees (Eisebberg et. al., 2001). After developing the value proposition of the brand next step is external marketing of that value proposition. It communicates the value proposition to the external world i.e. potential employees of the organization, recruiting agency, placement counselor etc. Third step related with the internal marketing of employer brand. Under this stage it is confirmed that an organization implemented its promised value proposition with in organization. Rosethorn (2009) highlighted that employee value proposition and employee experience are the elements of employer brand. Biswas and Saur (2014) argued that it is equally important for the organization to balance between perceived and existing values of employer branding. If there is a mismatch between existing and perceived values of employer branding then it leads to weak employer

Heilmann et. al. (2013) highlighted that better employer image, more efficient recruitment, improved job satisfaction are the motive for employer branding strategies. Khalid and Tariq (2015) stated that employer branding improves the recruitment process by increasing referrals, creates large talent pool. Employer brand also benefits the organization by increasing employees’ commitment, increased performance and job satisfaction. Kashyap and Rangnekar (2016) highlighted that employer brand perception leads to trust with the organization that further influences the turnover intention of employees. Dell & Ainspan (2001) investigated that employer brand provide competitive advantage to the organization by differentiating itself from its competitors. Competitive advantage internalizes the company values that further increase the employees’ retention.

EMPLOYER BRANDING AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE:

Employer branding benefits the organization both internally and externally. The authors devised a linkage between employer branding and its internal and external aspect with organizational performance.

Model 1: Framework of linkage between organizational performance and employer brand

1. Employer brand (Tangible and non-tangible attributes):

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) linked employer brand with brand associations. Brand association is the thoughts and ideas that come in the mind of a person when he/she hear the brand name (Aaker, 1991). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) further stated that in case of product branding, both product related and non-product related attributes develops the brand image of that product. Similarly brand association in case of employer branding considers the functional and symbolic attributes of a brand. Functional aspect of a brand deals with the employment elements with the firm like salary, benefits, leave allowances etc. while symbolic aspect of employer branding related with intangible aspect or mental and imaginary perception with the employment like social approval, reputation etc. Lievens, et. al., (2007) highlighted the symbolic and instrumental aspect of employer branding. Instrumental aspect describes the 'objective, physical and tangible attributes' of employer brand while symbolic aspect of employer brand 'subjective and intangible aspect' of employer brand. Newell & Dopson (1996) considered employment experience as a base for employer brand and constitute both tangible (Salary, rewards and benefits) and intangible (organizational value, culture, management style and opportunities) features. Lievens and Highhouse, (2003) researched that symbolic or intangible aspect of branding becomes more attractive when it is difficult to differentiate on the basis of functional (tangible) attributes. For example: in case of same industry functional aspects are almost similar then symbolic aspect becomes more important for differentiating the employer.

2. EXTERNAL LEVEL BENEFITS OF EMPLOYER BRAND

Employer brand has two perspectives named external perspective and internal perspective. External perspective is

related how the outside world perceive the organization as an employer. Potential hires are the key target stakeholders in case of external employer brand (Sarswathy et. al., 2011). Strong brand perception of employer brand among potential hires helps to make the organization as employer of choice and attract brightest talent with in organization. Major external level benefits of employer brand as follows:

2.1. Employer attractiveness:

Chhabra, N.L. and Sharma, S. (2014) highlighted employer branding as a strategy that improves the attractiveness of an organization as an employer. This research found that there is a strong relationship between the employer brand and applicants intention to apply for a job vacancy. Berthon et. al. (2005) stated that employer branding and organizational attractiveness both are closely related concepts. An organization that is perceived more attractive among potential hires have strong employer brand. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) highlighted that employer brand is linked with the brand association that develops the brand image of employer that leads to employer attractiveness. Elving et. al. (2013) found that an organization with strong employer brand perceived as more attractive as compared of an organization without employer brand. Sripirabaa, B. and Subha, V., (2013) researched that employer brand makes an organization as employer of choice where best and brightest candidates want to work.

2.2. Potential employees attraction/ talent attraction:

Mosely (2007) argued that interest of management in employer branding approach is originated because of growing competition within the labour market for acquiring talent for realizing their corporate ambitions. A report of Society of Human Resource Management (SHRM), 2014 stated that employer brand is an investment for the organization that gives benefits on investment in terms of talent attraction.

Drury, P. (2016) favored that “best employers get nearly twice as many job applications compared with other organizations.” Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012) accepted the role of employer branding in talent attraction. This study highlighted that employer branding is a significant factor for talent attraction. Davies (2008) explained that economic condition, employment opportunities and brand trust related with employer brand determine the attraction of talent.

3. INTERNAL LEVEL BENEFITS OF EMPLOYER BRAND

Internal perspective shows the internal outlook of employer brand among existing employees of the organization. Existing employees are the key stakeholders in case of internal aspect of employer branding. A culture of respect and trust with in organization develops the strong brand perception among current employees (Sarswathy et. al., 2011). A strong brand perception among current employees leads to organizational citizenship behavior, lower turnover intention, job satisfaction, organizational loyalty, work meaningfulness etc. Internal level benefits are discussed below:

3.1. Organizational citizenship behaviour:

Organ (1988) defines OCB as “individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization”. Williams and Anderson (1991) considered that organizational citizenship behaviour is directed towards other individuals and organization as a whole. Organizational citizenship behavior directed towards individual maintains cordial relations with other employees and self-satisfaction and organizational directed behaviour benefits the organization in terms of improved performance.

Piyachat et. al. (2015) found that employer branding practices affects the discretionary efforts (OCB) both in role discretionary effort and ex-role discretionary efforts. Gozukara and Hatipoglu (2016) highlighted that employer brand is positively impacts the organizational citizenship behavior of employees. Employer brand dimensions named organizational opportunities and work environment are positively linked with organizational citizenship behavior. This study favors that more employees attracted to employer brand, more they will be engaged in citizenship behavior within organization. Skandarpour et. al. (2016) researched that employer branding impacts the organizational citizenship behavior in banking sector directly and through mediating effect of job engagement.

3.2. Work meaningfulness:

Lam, Wan, Roussin (2016) explained that work meaningfulness measures the extent up to which a job or work is considered significant or useful by the employee. They favored that people involved in OCB during the day have higher level of work meaningfulness at the end of the day. Ashmos and Duchon (2000) supported that challenging and interesting work is not enough for the employee but work should have meaning and purpose. Leiter, Harvie & Frizzell, (1998) stated that lack of meaningfulness of work acts as a major reason for job burnout and quit intention.

Piyachat et. al. (2015) suggested that employer branding practices should focus on more emotional drivers like work meaningfulness, autonomy, supportive environment etc. as

compared of economic drivers. Robinson, D. (2016) argued that work meaningfulness is essential for engaging employees and employer brand development. Ahmad and Omar (2015) highlighted that meaningful work at individual level develops the citizenship behavior. Sargolzaei and Keshtegar (2015) stated that organizational citizenship behavior provides the sense of meaningfulness to work.

3.3. lower turnover intention:

Kashyap and Rangnekar (2016) researched that employer branding perception have a significant relationship with employees turnover intention in both service and manufacturing organizations in India. Employer brand perception leads to trust with the organization that further influences the turnover intention of employees i.e. there is an indirect relationship between employer brand perception and turnover intention among employees. Dell and Ainspan (2001) highlighted that employer branding provides competitive advantage to the organization by differentiating itself from the competitors. Competitive advantage internalizes the company values that further increase employees’ retention. Tanwar and Prasad (2016a) also identified the need of employer branding for increasing the employees’ retention with in organization. Lores et.al. (2016) found that employer brand develops the effective commitment with employer brand that is emotional bond between the subject and employer brand. It further encompasses enthusiasm with and attachment to the employer brand and creates a desire in the employee to remain in the organization in long term

3.4. Organizational loyalty:

Davies (2008) highlighted that loyalty with employer brand is stronger as compared of product brand because switching cost of employer brand is high in case of employer brand. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) developed a framework that highlights that employer brand develops the organizational culture and creates organization identity that leads to employees’ loyalty with employer. Gozukara and Hatipoglu (2016) highlighted that organizational loyalty is a dimension of organizational citizenship behavior that is positively influenced by the employer branding practices.

3.5. Effective commitment:

Lores et. al. (2016) highlighted that effective commitment with the employer brand developed through the sensory experience, intellectual experience and emotional experience. Employees who have positive experience in form of sensory, intellectual and emotional results effective commitment with employer brand. (Allen and Meyer, 1990) highlighted that effective commitment is a dimension of commitment along with continuance and normative commitment. Lores et. al., (2016) highlighted that effective commitment denotes the emotional bond between the subject and employer brand that encompasses enthusiasm with, and attachment to the employer brand and creates a desire in the employee to remain in the organization in long term.

3.6. Job satisfaction

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004); Gaddam, (2008) highlighted that employer brand develops a strong culture with in organization that increases the satisfaction level of employees

within organization. Tanwar and Prasad (2016) defined the term Job Satisfaction as “the feeling of contentment which employees feel at their workplace”. Schaleger et. al. (2011) empirically tested that in case of service industry employer brand determinants economic, development, social and diversity value influences the employees’ satisfaction and social and reputation value have significant role in employees identification.

4. ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

Employer branding activities plays significant role in employees’ performance measures named recruitment, retention, productivity. This increases the employees’ performance (Buttenberg, K., 2013). Stronger the perceived employer brand better will be the performance of the organization both financially and non- financially in all organizations (manufacturing and service) whether public and private (Biswas and Suar, 2014).

4.1. Organizational financial performance:

Employer branding benefits the organizations in various forms that further improves the financial performance of organization. Employer branding positively linked with organizational citizenship behavior (Gozukara and Hatipoglu, 2016) that is essential for improving organizational effectiveness (Organ, 1988). Several studies on organizational citizenship behaviour stated that OCB leads to organizational success and performance through operating efficiency (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1994; Walz and Niehoff 2000) that increases the financial performance of organization by increasing profits (Koys, 2001). Employer branding increases the performance of organization by increasing employees’ job satisfaction. Job satisfaction improves performance of the organization by increasing productivity (Robbins & Judge, 2007). Employer brand develops the organizational loyalty that increases the productivity (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

Employer branding benefits the organization by improving the financial performance through increasing the sales, profit share value etc. (Barrow and Mosely, 2006). Strong employer brand benefits the organization by providing less compensation package as compared of weak employer brands (Ritson, 2002). Companies with employer brand enjoy economic advantage because of lower employees’ turnover (Kucherov, D. and Zavyalova, E., 2012). Employer branding reduces HR cost by improving the performance of recruitment function through employer attractiveness and also offers benefits by paying less as compared of other organizations that does not have employer brand (Barrow and Mosely, 2006; Knox and Freeman, 2006).

4.2. Organizational non-financial performance:

Employer brand develops the organizational citizenship behavior that leads to organizational success improved quality of performance (Podsakoff and MacKenzie, 1994; Walz and Niehoff 2000). Applicants have very limited information at the initial stage of recruitment. Their initial job application decision is based on the impression of the organization or employer attractiveness (Rynes, 1991). Drury, P. (2016) highlighted that reputation and status of the organization acts as a source of information for prospective employees that

attracts the quality talent. Organizations that are involved in employer branding practices are perceived highly prestigious and have higher commitment level among employees (Nigel wright recruitment, 2011). As per the report of Employer Brand Institute (EBI) (2011) investigated that corporate reputation and culture considered as most important attribute of employer brand that attract the talent.

Cable, D.M. and Turban, D.B. (2003) highlighted that corporate reputation positively influences the Job seekers reputation perception, familiarity with in organization. Applicants will positively perceive the attributes of the job of an organization having high reputation and attractiveness. They will feel pride to be a part of that organization that have positive image. Edwards, M.R. (2010) found that employer branding helps in organizational identification because it is considered as highly recognized and prestigious. Cable and Turban, (2001) highlighted that reputation of organization makes the employer more attractive as compared of that organization that don’t have reputation or having low reputation in the market.

CONCLUSION

This study highlighted the role of employer branding for organizational success. Through this study a model is framed by the authors that show a linkage between employer branding and improved organizational performance. This study focused that employer brand benefits the organization at external and internal level. In case of external level benefits, employer brand increase the potential employees’ attraction and enhances the employer attractiveness that makes the organization employer of choice among potential hires of the organization. At internal level employer brand increases the organizational citizenship behaviour, work meaningfulness, organizational loyalty, low turnover intention, effective commitment and job satisfaction. External and internal level benefits of employer brand improves the organizational performance both financial and non-financial performance. In all type of climate, employer brand is the only really asset for the organization.

In this competitive era, where organizations are facing the problem of sustainability and struggle for acquiring talent, then employer branding acts as a strategic tool for management to face such critical situations. Thus, employer branding strategies is an essence for the organization to win the war for talent and sustaining themselves in this challenging environment.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

This is a conceptual study and lacks empirical work. Scarcity of financial resources and shortage of time also acts as a limiting factor for the study

FUTURE SCOPE FOR THE STUDY

Further empirical research can be conducted to check the employer branding role for organizational performance. Employer brand perception among external and internal audience can be studied separately and a comparative analysis can be made between them.

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