

THE HISTORY AND IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

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ABSTRACT:-

The theme Employer Branding and its effect on employee attraction and retention had always created an interest among the researchers and practitioners to know the history of employer branding and its consequences. The main aim of the research is to explore the conceptual background of employer branding and to see how it fits into the zone of Human Resource. A detailed literature review about the background of employer branding was carried out from which the antecedents and consequences were extracted and steps for external and internal branding was also found. The overall analysis of the literature shows that employer branding as a theme become an integral part of the organization. Having its roots from branding it has entered into the zone of human resource. This application of branding strategy to human resource management has been termed as employer branding and proper implementation of employer branding strategy in the organization can help in attracting future employees and retaining existing employees which indeed will help in strengthening an organization and allow it to stand out of the competition. This paper deals with the theme of employer branding, its antecedents, consequences, importance and techniques showing how this concept can be helpful to organizations to build organizational image.

KEYWORDS: *Antecedents and consequences, Conceptual background, Employer branding, External and internal branding*

I. INTRODUCTION:-

Employer branding is defined as the process of reckoning the picture of the organization as suitable place to work. The picture is portrayed to potential (external) and existing (internal) employees to entice and absorb and retain the most talented employees in the organization. The term Employer Branding was first coined by Barrow (1990) and since then a lot of research has been done on it and it has also been embraced by the global management community. The term employer branding was later defined by Simon Barrow and Tim Ambler in December 1996. Ambler and Barrow has defined employer branding as “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with employing company” (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.187) [1]. Generally, individuals associates a brand with an organization’s name, product, services and logotype, when these branding ideas are incorporated to HR strategies it is termed as ‘Employer Branding’ (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004) [2]. Various other researchers have defined employer branding according to their research like Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) defined employer branding as “the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity” and also as “a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors” (Backhaus & tikoo, 2004). Sullivan (2004) [3] has defined employer branding as “a targeted long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm”. Further employer branding was defined as “a generalized recognition for being known among key stakeholders for providing a high-quality employment experience and distinctive organizational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident & happy to promote to others” (Martin et al.. 2011) [4]. Lloyd (2002)[10] described employer branding as “an aggregate of a company’s effort to acquaint to present and future prospective staffs that it is an adorable place to work for”. Rosethorn’s definition from the article: “The Employer Brand: Keeping Faith with the Deal”(2009) “An

employer brand is in essence the two way deal between an organisation and its people the reason they choose to join and the reason they choose and are permitted to stay. The art of employer branding is to articulate this deal in a way this is distinctive, compelling and relevant to the individual, and to ensure that it is delivered throughout the lifecycle of the employee within that organisation”.

YEAR	AUTHOR	DEFINITION	REMARK
1996	Ambler and Barrow	The package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with employing company	They defined employer branding as a package of 'Benefits'.
2004	Backhaus and Tikoo	The process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity	They said employer branding is used to create an 'Unique identity'.
2004	Backhaus and Tikoo	A concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors	Employer branding is used to build 'Competitive Strength'
2004	Sullivan	A targeted long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm	He defined employer branding as a 'Strategy' to manage current and potential employees.
2011	Martin et al.	A generalized recognition for being known among key stakeholders for providing a high-quality employment experience and distinctive organizational identity which employees value, engage with and feel confident & happy to promote to others	They defined employer branding as 'Generalized Recognition' to be known among stakeholders and others.
2002	Lloyd	An aggregate of a company's effort to acquaint to present and future prospective staffs that it is an adorable place to work for	He defined it as the 'collection of company's effort' to make the organization best place to work for.
2009	Rosethorne	An employer brand is in essence the two way deal between an organisation and its people the reason they choose to join and the reason they choose and are permitted to stay. The art of employer branding is to articulate this deal in a way this is distinctive, compelling and relevant to the individual, and to ensure that it is delivered throughout the lifecycle of the employee within that organisation	She has described employer branding as an "art" to formulate best deals for employees to attract them and retain them and which is distinctive from others.

To know the phenomenon of employer branding and how it is used in HR we should first know where its roots comes from. Employer branding has its roots or basic building blocks from the branding concepts (Morocco & Uncles, 2008) [5]. Kotler (1991)[9] defined branding as “a name, term, sign, symbol or design or a combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller or group of seller and to differentiate them from those of competitors”. This definition was primarily used for describing product brands (Mosley, 2007) [6]. But recent marketing literature says that a brand also has a huge effect on the company as an employer.

Brands now-a-days is not all used as a identification mark for the company products but it is also used as an identification mark for different organizations to be remarkable and noticeable among different companies so that best talented employees will be attracted towards it and the most competent employees of the organization will be retained. There is a passionate association between the employer and employee depending on brand image (Davis, 2008 ; Gaddam, 2008)[7] [8]. In the same way corporate brand makes an assurance to its clients about its product and services, the employer brand also gives an assurance to its future and present employees about the encounters and experiences that they will face in the organization. Employer branding is mostly used to present a positive and appealing image to present and future employees. It is considered as one of the important reputational factor that add-on competitive edge to the organization in the market place.

Employer branding normally means differentiating one company from another through unique Employer Value Proposition (EVP). A powerful EVP will acquaint the company ethics in a way that will show what makes a workplace unique and adorable to individuals sharing afore mentioned values. Employer brand is mostly dependent on intangible factors for example image, identity and perception having the capacity to find out what a brand actually is that generates a passionate slant and feeling of recognition with the company and can claim invaluable to employers. For creating a good employer brand two types of customers are much needed one is current employees who are presently working in the organization, their expectations should match with the companies values so that they will be satisfied and have apposite word-of-mouth. The second is the prospective employees, in order to attract talented and right employees the employer's needs to create a positive and satisfying experience for individuals throughout the recruitment process. If the candidates are given good treatment that makes them perceive valued, the employer will be valued in various ways. EVP is an important part of employer branding. EVP refers to the benefits and rewards that an organization offers to their employees in acknowledgement for their valuable contributions. Minchington (2005) [11] defined EVP as a package of associations and offerings given by the organization in exchange for the skills, competencies and experiences an employee acquires for the organization. EVP is an employee-centred perspective that is aligned with existing, integrated workforce designing strategies as it has been informed by present employees and outside targeted audiences. EVP must be unique, applicable and enthralling so as to act as a key driver for talent attraction, retention and employee engagement. Tandehill (2006) links this concept to employer branding and urges all organizations to articulate a statement defining why the overall work experience of their organization is better or superior than any other organization.

II. OBJECTIVES:-

1. To understand the concept of employer branding, its antecedents and consequences and techniques.
2. To discuss about the steps for internal and external branding.

III. POSITIONING IN THE ZONE OF HUMAN RESOURCE:-

The internal perspective of the employer branding mainly focuses at the current employees of the organization, where as the external focus is mainly on the stakeholders, primarily on the potential employees. Retention of the present employees and attraction and recruitment of the new and potential employees are the core operations of the HR department (Morocco & Uncles, 2008) [5]. The business environment is dynamic and is in a continuously changing process, which is why acquisition of proficient employees with technical expertise is essential and as the competition among the rival organizations is intense for proficient and qualified human resource, the companies are required to diversify themselves from other companies (Gaddam, 2008) [8]. A major activity of HR department is to handle the recruitment process and employer branding is used as a tool to attract and retain candidates to the organization. The task of burgeoning and communicating the employer brand is so assigned to the department of HR (Barrow, 2008). In HRM the development and communication of employer brand is enlarging as stated by Barrow (2008). Employer branding is one of the most suited term as they gives an overview of the organizations values and managerial insights needed. So, HR department is considered as to establish the foundation of employer brand and helps in communicating it to the present and potential employees to continue having growth with the organization (Morocco & Uncles, 2008) [5].

IV. CONCEPTUAL BACKGROUND RELATED TO EMPLOYER BRANDING:-

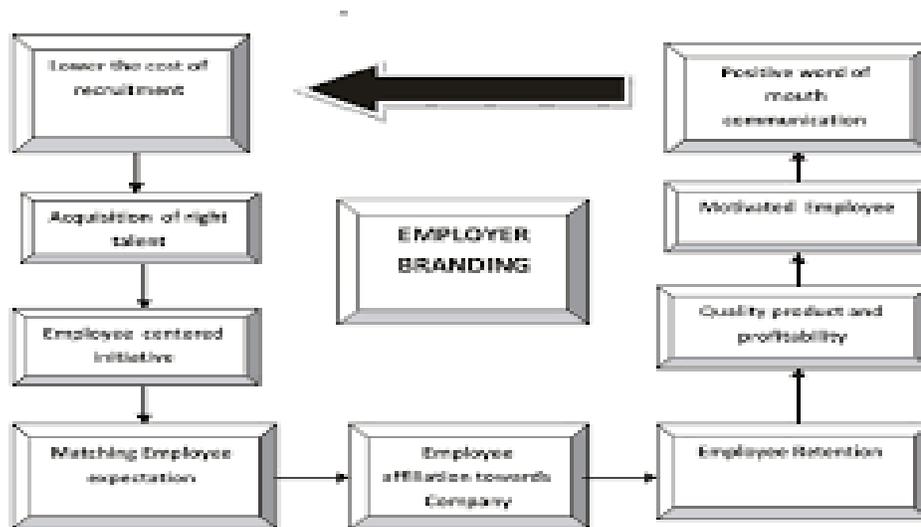
Employer branding is seen as a blended strategy between HR (employer) and Marketing (branding) (Seldrof, 2008). Unlike the branding process of a product, now the organizations have understood the importance of employer branding and have started investing in it, considering employees to be the first internal customers of the firm. A study done by SHRM (Society of Human Resource Management) on employer branding showed that 67% of the firms considered employer branding as one of the important strategic recruitment tool so as to have an competitive advantage on other firms to attract talented employees. Employer branding is considered as a means of communicating relevant message to the outside world that it is a 'great place to work' and also helps in bringing employer nearer to the candidate pools, setting an emotional value between both.

As it is an intersection of both the studies i.e HRM and Marketing, it is consider as a productive organizational strategy to gain competitive advantage and to be unique from its competitors. As we know marketing is the process of selling goods and services to the customers and HRM is considered as a process of attracting, recruiting, selecting, providing training and development to prospective employees and retaining, providing satisfaction & good working environment to current employees, employer branding is considered as a intersection point between these two fields as it helps in creating an unique image of the employer within the minds of the potential employees. So, some concepts of marketing like branding, image building, reputation and awareness and some concepts of HR i.e organizational identity, satisfaction, employee productivity comes together in employer branding.

Employer branding is considered to have eight distinctive components, they incorporates system for sequential development, attaining public identification, building a parity between high manufacturing and management, employees giving good word-of-mouth, turning into benchmark organization, marking appraisal metrics, enhancing potential employees attention to best polices and getting talked over are acknowledged as the significant components of a powerful employer branding. Thus, the process of employer branding is shown as a flowchart below in the figure , which is a 5-step process:-



As stated by Uma and Metilda (2012), Employer branding is a complex yet simple process which describes that a company's goodwill will help in reducing the recruitment cost and also helps in attaining suitable candidates for the organization.



(Source-Uma & Metild (2012))

According to the author, the diagram says that when an organization becomes employee centric and matches with the employees expectation which in-turn brings satisfaction, then the employee retention occurs which results in high productivity and profitability which moves towards again motivating employees and communicating positive word-of-mouth to potential employees which ultimately results in lowering the cost of recruitment and acquisition of right talent.

In present day context the main focus of employer branding is given on attracting and retaining employees. So, two ways of employer branding includes internal branding considering current employees as the first customer of an organization and then moving towards potential employees which is done through external branding. . An organization to become a desired place to work for employees, the employer has to think from inside out starting with internal employer branding which is used to create commitment, satisfaction and loyalty. Internal branding increases brand loyalty which is directly proportional to employee productivity. Various approaches are present to carry out internal branding.

1. Front Office-Attention should be given to the front office as it is the first thing which always comes into notice. As it is said first impression lasts long. The front office should be kept clean with a pleasing receptionist having a smile on her face.
2. Stay Interview-Interviews are conducted by the HR department to interact with the employees and know their expectations from the company. The feedbacks are then analyzed and necessary steps are taken, thus creating an internal brand.
3. Exit Interview-Exit interview always gives an opportunity to the company to know the lacuna and reason behind an employee quitting a job. By analyzing the reason organizations can overcome it in the future.
4. Employee Satisfaction- Satisfaction is always important for any organization to grow. Satisfied employees are productive and they helps in creating good and positive rapport for the organization in the outside market.

5. Organizational Culture & Policies-Culture of an organization should always be given importance when talking of internal branding. The culture should always match with the aesthetic values of the employees and policies of the organization should be designed in such a way that it can be carried for a long period without any fluctuations.



(Steps for Internal Branding)

External branding is considered as the sum total of all activities aimed to attract an employee. The main purpose of external branding is to attract potential employees to fill the current requirements of the organization. In this process communicating the firms Employer Value Proposition to the potential candidates is the key to success. The main aim of external branding is to create a transparent and true image of the organization to the outside world and to the potential candidates that it is a great place to work in. Various techniques are used for external branding such as job sites, banners, organizing seminars and presentations, CSR, public events, newspapers, etc.



(Steps for External Branding)

V. IMPORTANCE OF EMPLOYER BRANDING:-

Universum stated five reasons why employer branding is important for every organization:

- a) **Skilled labour shortage-** With the rise of the global power like China, Russia, India and Brazil as monetary forces and because of the ageing population of Japan, U.S and European Union the need of skilled labourer has been increasing. Adding to these trends present day students are shifting from technical courses to non-technical courses. So, there is a shortage of skilled labours in the market.
- b) **Getting more with less-** The main motto which every organization holds during recession period is getting more with less which means cutting down cost and to have high productivity. This has made to choose right people for right work to increase productivity and it become a crucial work. Employer branding helps to solve this problem by attracting and doing successful recruitment and retention of top talent. By communicating the reality work environment and culture of the organization more and more right candidates will be attracted towards the organization.
- c) **Development and Profitability-** Development and profitability of an organization is the main intension of any business. Recruiting and retaining top skilled employees is essential for the same. Employees having right skills and knowledge will be very helpful for the development of the organization which will also result in increase in profitability. This can only be done by attracting talented employees. Here is where employer branding plays its role.
- d) **Popularity-** It is seen the graduates and professional want to work in a well known having high reputation company. They usually take advice from family, friends and other known persons about the same. So, a positive

word-of-mouth will always be helpful for the prospective candidate and for the company to hire skilled employees and this can only be done with the help of employer branding.

e) **Strength-** Being known as an attractive employer works as a strength for the company to build its reputation, image and to stand out of the completion. An attractive company have the bargaining power with it by which it can hire competent employees who will join their hands in the progress of the company and increase profitability.

VI.ANTECEDENTS OF EMPLOYER BRANDING:-

The idea and proposition that all raised by a brand in the minds of a customer are called brand associations (Aaker, 1991). It can be verbal or can be felt by touch or psychological retaliation related with a brand (Supphellen, 2000). Brand association regulars brand image (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). As per Keller (1993) [21], brand image is a common impression of an item pursuing the real or possible consumers and when it comes to employer branding, employer brand image is also distinguished by utilitarian and emblematic benefits. The utilitarian well being consists of objective employment norms for example remunerations, benefits and more and the emblematic well-being comprises of perception of status of a firm and the social acknowledgement envisioned by an applicant (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Extracting from brand association literature, employer brand association is defined as the consideration and ideas that are induced in the minds of present and future employees when revealed to a employer brand. The possible employees will be attracted to apply in the organization basing on employer brand associations perceived by the candidate because of the projected employer brand image. So, employer brand association is defined as one of the antecedent of employer branding.

Employee inventiveness is in present days an attribute which is being considered seriously by gen y and gen z employees. The involvement of the employees in inventive behaviour and conduct including generation, promotion and understanding the idea with a purpose of developing inventive products and services (Scott & Bruce, 1994 [14]. Attributes like autonomy, accessibility with the available resources (West & Hirst, 2003) [15], adequate time for imaginative thinking (Amabile et al., 2002) [16], corporate strategy plays a very important role in inspiring an employee to get involved in imaginative behaviour. Before high pay structure was motivating employees to work, but in present days inspiring and provoking work environment (Simons, 2002), valuable work (Herman & Giola, 2000) [17] and chances of proving their inventiveness at their workplaces are the top ranked factors which are motivating employees to work with their full productivity. So, in current context it can be observed that the prospective employees are more attracted towards inventiveness opportunities and the present employees continues to stay with the employer showing this attribute.

Corporate culture is one of the most important criteria for the development and success of any organization. The success of any organization depends on the environment that is present in it. It describes the culture of an organization. The organization culture is characterised as the method of imparted importance that segregates one organization from another (Schein, 1996). The organization culture consists of culture with core values and subculture associated with everyday experiences (Hofmann & Jones, 2005) [18]. An organization with strong culture is hold hard and is wide spread (Swart & Kinnie, 2003) [19] which is mainly used to develop organizational loyalty and commitment which leads to employee retention. It helps to employees to understand the rules and regulations and practices of an organization which indeed helps to facilitate communication across the different department and improves cooperation among the employees. Thus, the organization culture plays important role in creating a positive aspect in mind of present and prospective employees to remain and apply in the organization. Employee normally perceives the organizations personality through its culture.

The consumer depends on the word-of-mouth of different customers for taking decisions regarding various products. Many times when finite information is available about a product, information regarding the organizational brand has a great impact on the buying decision of consumers. In the same way the present employees working in the organization are the brand ambassador to the organization, they acts as the spokesman of the organization to create and influence the stature of organization to be the employer of choice (Kennedy, 1977) [20]. Potential employees usually consider word-of-mouth an experiences shared by present employees in

the internet to assemble information about the organizational brand and the culture prevailed within it. The existing employees have a high influence or “signalling effect” on potential candidates (Rynes et al. , 1991). A worthwhile word-of-mouth from current employees helps and guides prospective employees to choose best organization with respect to person-organization fit of brand (Morocco & Uncles, 2005).

Word-of-mouth is always associated with employer brand awareness. It is defined as a degree to which consumers are capable of identifying the brand basing on unique brand features (Keller, 1993). It helps the consumers to make a buying decision. So, this can also be associated with employer branding, as an extent to which the employees are able to identify the employer’s brand on the basis of unique employment features. Employer brand awareness can be made by sharing details about different schemes, benefits, innovative ideas, growth & development ideas and new initiatives taken for the welfare of the employees. A brand should always be in alignment with its representation. A precise representation about the brand will help the current employees to ‘Live’ the brand and thus, they will deliver the brand objective which will indeed attract potential employees to apply in the organization (Ouchi , 1981) [23]. The cognizance of employer branding will help to increase employee loyalty among existing employees (Chhabra & Sharma, 2004) which leads to increase in productivity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The cognizance of employer branding with potential employees will intensify the attractiveness towards the organization.

Career growth and opportunity is considered as one of the most important benefit for every employee. Jobseekers normally look for an organization where they will get ample number of opportunities for growth and development, innovation and learning (Herman & Giola, 2000) [17]. These are all the intangible features but these are considered as much important features which an prospective employee will consider when looking for a job. On being a part of an organization every employee expects to get training for grooming themselves for growth and advancement.

Compensation and benefit works as a key factor for attracting potential employees as well as for retaining current employees in the organization. A brand image is generally represented through organization’s compensation and benefits as brand plays vital role in choosing a job (Delvecchio et al., 2007) [29]. A company achieve a hiring edge by leveraging a brand (Kim et al., 2011). So, compensation and benefit is also considered as a important factor for employer branding.

Person-Organization fit in employer branding is a technique of creating reputation of an organization as a great place to work for firstly, by combining recruiting and external human resource practices with the brand. Secondly, maintaining the stature of congruence than an organization wants to maintain. The main aim of having employer branding is not only to attract potential employees or try retaining existing employees but more specifically to attract the kind of employees who fits into the organization very well (Harquial, 2009) [28]. It is said the employees in any organization are unique in the way they are persuaded to apply for job, selected for and are chosen to continue in the organization. Both the organization as well as employees tries to make decision basing and taking into consideration each other’s needs, expectations and preferences. So, for the best result it is always important that there should be a person-organization fit.

VII. CONSEQUENCES OF EMPLOYER BRANDING:-

A powerful employer branding can upshot in attracting talented candidates and retaining the current employees, which as a result increases the organizations both financial and non-financial performances (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004 ; Biswas & Suar, 2016). A solid connection exists between employees and the brand promise prompting to client satisfaction and increase in profit (Hatch & Schultz, 2004). Customer has brand loyalty when they feel attached to the brand. They are less likely to shift to other brand irrespective of product modification and any strategy adopted by the competitors to attract them. In the same way a powerful employer brand will leads to employer brand loyalty which will in return leads to retaining of talented employees. Similarly, a strong employer brand will provide enough opportunity for new and prospective employees to get attracted to the organization, which will help both in enhancing their career as well as increasing profit rate.

In relation to employer branding, employer brand loyalty alludes to ‘commitment that workers make with their employer’ (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). The protrusion of a powerful employer brand prompts to organizational commitment and organizational identity. Organizational commitment will be those degree to which an employee recognizes with the organizations values, goals and objectives to be associated with the organization (Meyer & Allen,, 1991) [27]. In, the similar manner, in employer branding organizational commitment is the devotion and fondness of an employee with the organization (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). While discussing about organizational identity, it can be achieved by effective communication of organization goals, values to internal and external stakeholders (Aust, 2004) [24]. In employer branding context it can be said to be as ‘conceived as an aggregate disposition about who the organization is as a group’(Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

The employees behaviour at the work place always plays a vital role as they gives a proper shape to the organizational, psychological & social circumstances that works as catalyst for different activities and processes (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997) [25]. Organizational citizenship behaviour can be defined as the attitude or behaviour that accord to the sustention and improvement of the social and psychological circumstances which supports job performances (Organ, 1997) [26]. Organization citizenship behaviour talks of the attitude of the current or prospective employees which is not a work included in the job contract but put forwards to the social and psychological situation of the companies work environment.

A satisfied employee is always committed and a committed employee will identify the values and objectives of the company and will have a strong intention to remain and continue in the organization. Whenever a prospective employee comes across an employer brand, they will intend to search for all cues, with respect to which they can be associated with the relevant brand. Similarly, in case of current employees they will look for the brand promises as protruded in employer branding practices. This will leads to increase n organizational commitment and identification in the thoughts of the employees. The employee with high commitment, high identity will be very positive and satisfied and can perform additional duties which will leads in achieving organizational citizenship behaviour.

VIII. CONCLUSION:-

Employer branding was not so popular in past but in present context employer branding is essential to have a competitive advantage. Proper implementation of employer branding strategy will help to attract and retain talented employees who will indeed help in growth and development of the organization. A powerful employer branding has the strength to serve the best to its customers. A proper strategy made help to create a structure for recruitment which helps to recruit right kind of people at place them at right place and also spells out the company’s expectation from the beginning of the procedure. Employer branding should also focus on retaining existing candidates for the smooth and steady operation of the organization. So, the main focus of employer branding is to have an alignment between reality and expectation working in an organization.

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