Employer Branding: A new Archetype to Target Endowed Employees
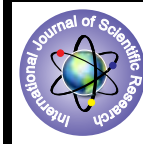
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ABSTRACT   *The concept of the employer brand, adapted from marketing theory, has increasingly become the focus of organisations towards developing their image as an employer of choice, thereby enabling the recruitment and retention of the best possible workforce. Acquiring, keeping and engaging these value-adding employees has seen many firms working harder at promoting themselves as desirable employers to potential and current employees. Employer branding programs include regular job training, training in customer service or customer interaction, corporate orientation, and education in the corporate brand. Well developed employer branding programs also include ongoing training, performance evaluation and rewards systems that support the employees' display of brand behaviours. This paper presents conceptual framework of employer branding with employer branding as a archetype to attract talented employees. It further focuses on employing strategies to attract endowed employees.*

INTRODUCTION

The employer brand is the package of psychological, economic, and functional benefits provided by employment and identified with an employer (Thorne, 2004). Manipulating these benefits to position the firm in the minds of potential employees as a great place to work (an employer of choice) is the role of employer branding (Branham, 2001). Closely related to employer branding is internal marketing, which considers the company to act both on consumer and employee markets (Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2003). The basic tenet of the internal marketing approach is that good customer service is only possible if employee satisfaction and motivation are high (Berry & Parasuraman, 1992). Consequently, internal marketing suggests that jobs are managed in a similar manner to products, and that the company should use marketing techniques to design jobs to meet both the employees' and the firm's needs, and to communicate the benefits of employment to internal and external markets. Employer branding is defined as "the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work" (Argyris, 1993). It was first defined as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company", with the primary role of the employer brand being to provide a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity and improve recruitment, retention and commitment (Argyris, & Schön, 1978). It is a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders, (Armenakis, & Harris, 2002) . It therefore puts forth an image showing the organisation as a good or desirable place to work (Argyris, 1993). The Corporate Leadership Council (1999) deconstructs employer branding in more applicable terms. It describes employer branding as the "employment offer" or "job offer", as a sign of value to the labour market. At the heart of employer branding is a compelling employment offer or employment value proposition. This is looking beyond the opportunity to work for an organisation with a leading product or company brand, as these offers are composed of selected levels of compensation and benefits, work environment, product/company brand strength work-life balance and company culture & environment. These five elements of the Job offer are essential since the two constituents of Employer brand image namely the Internal brand image and the External brand image revolve around these basic elements. Melin, Emma (2005), reinforces this concept holding that employer branding can be described at two levels. Employer branding programs include regular job training, training in customer service or customer interaction, corporate orientation, and education in the corporate brand. Well developed employer branding programs also include ongoing training, performance evaluation and rewards systems that support the employees display of brand behaviors

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF EMPLOYER BRANDING

The Dictionary of Business and Management defines a brand as: "A name, sign or symbol used to identify items or services of the seller(s) and to differentiate them from goods of competitors". However, this definition has been claimed to be incomplete as signs and symbols are only a part of what a brand actually is. A comprehensive definition of a brand is: "A brand is a collection of perceptions in the mind of the consumer". This definition makes it clear that a brand is very different from a product or service. "Branding is a strategic decision, as it is designed to not only highlight what a brand means, but also how it is different from its competitors. Branding provides consumers with a reason to buy and is thus much more than just giving a brand a name and signaling to the outside world that such a product or service has been stamped with the mark and imprint of an organisation. Branding is not about being on top of something, but within something (Kapferer, 1997).

Employer branding is one of the few long-term solutions to the "shortage of talent" problem. Whereas most employment strategies are short-term and 'reactive' to job openings, building an employment brand is a longer-term, proactive solution designed to provide a steady flow of applicants. Employment branding is the process of placing an image of being a "great place to work" in the minds of the targeted candidate pool. Employer branding is an occidental concept, used to define the strategic work with becoming an "employer of choice". It is about continued marketing, which does not end with a signed contract. Workers can be brand ambassadors for their workplace. At the heart of employer branding is the need to understand what it is like to work for an organisation, and what drives employees' desires to keep working for that organization. If an organization wants its employees to live up to the company brand promise, it clearly needs to understand what drives their sense of engagement or commitment

EMPLOYER BRANDING IS A NEW ARCHETYPE TO ATTRACT TALENTED EMPLOYEES

Employer branding undoubtedly is one of the most important precepts of modern management, one that offers a fine blending of the science of marketing with the art of enlightened human relations management. Employer branding has introduced a new paradigm by constructing an effective commercial bridge among HR, internal communications and marketing. This is particularly relevant in respect of what employer branding is not—for instance, a corporate image building exercise. Several scholars assert that brands and human capital constitute some of the firm's most important assets (Aaker, 1991; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), and that the development of these intangible assets is an important task for marketers and human-resource manag-

ers (Sutherland, Torricelli, & Karg, 2002). The human capital involved in the design and offering of products in general, and the delivery of services in particular, influences perceptions of the firm's consumer brand in the market (Papasolomou-Doukakis, 2003). Simultaneously, the firm's consumer and employer brands affect how existing and potential employees perceive the firm. Now attention is dedicated to examining the role of branding from a customer perspective and associated customer-based brand equity (Taylor, Hunter, & Lindberg, 2007).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Little research has explored the role that branding plays in retaining and attracting employees that constitute the firm's human capital and, ultimately, contribute to the efficient and effective delivery of products and services. The concept of branding has become an all-pervasive one, ruling the roost everywhere. The demographic, economic, sociopolitical and technological shifts are driving five workforce trends:

• Smaller and less sufficiently skilled
• Increasingly global
• Highly virtual
• Vastly diverse
• Autonomous and empowered

The outstanding strategy in employment is gathered under the international concept of employer branding (John Sullivan, 1999). Employment branding is the process of developing an image of being a "great place to work" in the minds of the targeted candidate pool. Employment branding uses the tools of marketing research and advertising to change the image applicants have of "what it is like to work at the firm". In a nutshell, employer brand can be said to be both the cause and effect of all the disparate elements of marketing. Employer branding is about continued marketing, which does not end with a signed contract. At the heart of employer branding is the need to understand what it is like to work for an organisation, and what drives employees' desires to keep working for that organisation.

EMPLOYER BRANDING AS A SUCCESSFUL STRATEGY

Brett Minchington (2011) had suggested that the success of employer brand strategy is determined by:

• Establishing a strategic framework for employer brand strategy: By ensure internal and external stakeholders (considering the role of employees, prospective candidates, customers) are working to achieve the same strategy.
• Ensuring collaboration between internal and external stakeholders: Ensuring a consistent approach to managing the company's brand assets through a joint approach amongst stakeholders responsible for the corporate, consumer and employer branding initiatives e.g. marketing, communications, human resources.
• Manage employee differentiation: Understand the role of cultural diversity in unlocking the potential of workforce.

CONCLUSION

Employer branding has gained favour as a management tool over the last decade. Even as firms face global economic conditions that are both difficult to forecast and subject to extreme variance, the need to attract, retain and motivate staff remains. Employees who can respond to challenging and intense competitive environments are valuable in every market cycle, and arguably more so in times of significant change. An employer's success relies on its ability to attract and retain key performers. If organisations are able to build consensus among their people, unity will result in greater performance. Often this boils down to establishing a common ground of work ethics and culture, one that can lead people in the right direction. Therefore, matchmaking between employer and employee thus needs to be done correctly if there is to be a harmonious environment in the organisation. If not undertaken well, breakups between the two are bound to happen and are a real inconvenience for both parties. What facilitates this matchmaking process is what is called "personality targeting," the practice of identifying and engaging with a group who share the organisation's culture—that's the area in which employer branding is developing.

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