Employer Branding Practices: Case Review on IT Sector Companies in India

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Abstract- **This paper has been developed as an empirical piece of work referring to the practices of employer branding in India. It has focused on IT sector as the scope of the case reviews and researchers used literature based approach to connect theory into practice. Descriptive statistical tools were used to discuss the responses of employees towards the employer branding practices. It has selected three companies in the IT sector those who have applied employer branding practices as to gain strategic outcome through people value creation. . Both primary and secondary data were used for this case review study. Key findings have been presented in the paper as to contribute for the practice. Study revealed that learning opportunities, challenging working environment flowed by pay structures could facilitate to build string employer brand perception.**

Index Terms—**Employer Branding, IT Sector, Employer Brand Perception**

I. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, the world has witnessed the dramatic entrance and success of Indian corporations in the global marketplace. As per the continued influx of multinational corporations in India, and Indian corporations expanding beyond the own border, the opportunities for India to contribute to the international economy have significantly increased, combined to likelihood of favorable outcomes for "Brand India" in the context of both local and global markets. The IT sector overall in India represents just over 5% of GDP in 2014/15 (ict4dblog.wordpress.com) .The same source reveled that Indian domestic IT market is large and growing so that production for exports is growing faster than production for the domestic market. As a result, the share of exports in total IT output has risen from 19% in 1991/92 to 49% in 2000/01 to 67% in 2007/08 to 81% in 2014/15. Sri Lanka as another upcoming economy in the south Asian region has to have a strategic focus on penetrating IT sector opportunities. It needs to look at holistically in terms of policies, practices and entrepreneurial perspectives. According to Dissanayake D.M.R. (2011), ICT will pave the ways for new BPO ventures, infrastructure supports and improving human capital. Therefore, it has to amalgamate with ministries, universities, policy makers and foreign missions to enhance the possibilities of getting sustainable results.

In the perspectives of human resources management too, India shows a huge chapter compared to regional countries. Moreover, Information Communication technology (ICT) has impacted to Indian society in a lager manner. When companies in India move forward to make a wider mark in the world; the employer brand as a strategic HR tool is taking the driver's seat in Indian organizations. The companies are focusing on how employer brand is developed, communicated, marketed which will lead to sustainability and growth along with making profit. By paying attention on how to create the right kind of image through employer branding, Indian Business Houses are luring talented work force to attract and retain. Organizations can position themselves to win lasting competitive advantage in the talent marketplace. In this paper, study was initiated for three companies in the IT sector on the concept of Employer Branding referring to IT Sector in India to study the factors which make a particular organization or an employer attractive to work with. Further some of the secondary objectives of the paper include getting an insight into the strategies adopted by best workplaces to gain a comprehensive knowledge of what people initiatives are required to underpin the Employer brand. This paper might help the organizations desirous to create a brand as an employer. The contribution to practice of this case reviews could be used by the HR consultants and policy makers to set their priorities and achieve the goal of being an employee-friendly company at fast pace.

1.1 Objectives of the Paper

As per the approach followed in this paper, researchers selected three IT sector companies in India followed by a rationale as the study focus of the case review. Accordingly, It has focused on the following objectives:

- to understand and get the views and expectations of IT employees of their current organization as well to get their views on Branded organizations
- To get an insight into the strategies adopted by best workplaces and inspiring firms in recruiting and effectively managing talent
- To gain a comprehensive knowledge of what people initiatives are required to underpin the brand

II. LITERATURE REVIEW AND INTEGRATING TO THE CASE CONTENT

The concept of branding for products and services is well known. According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is "a name, term, sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of

one seller or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors" (Schneider, 2003)[1]. The term 'Branding' was at first used to differentiate tangible products, but over a period of time it is used to set apart people, places and firms by their own right. In today's scenario employers are creating the brand to make a mark and to have the competitive edge. In marketing terms, a brand's image is grounded in three dimensions:

- **Functional benefits -** What the product does, for example: "this Canon digital camera takes good pictures" and "this particular model is great for portraits, video, and long distance shots."
- **Emotional benefits -** How a product makes the customer feel, for example: "I feel happy when I see this beautiful shot of my kids" and "I feel loving and fun when I e-mail these pictures to their grandparents."
- **Reasons to believe -** Validation of the product's claims, for example: "Canon means reliability and ease of use" and "reviewers on CNET.com rate the Canon digital camera as excellent."

A solid **employer brand** is grounded in the same dimensions:

- **Functional benefits -** Tangible rewards of working at the employer: salary, health care, a clean, safe workplace, and a convenient location; for example: "XYZ Co. has great compensation and has a beautiful office near my home."
- **Emotional benefits -** Intangible rewards: mission, pride, status, job satisfaction, companionship/collegiality, belonging to a "winning team," and so on; for example: "I'm proud to work for XYZ Co.—my pals and I make the best widgets in the world."
- **Reasons to believe -** Validation of the employer's claims; for example: "my friend says XYZ Co. is a great place to work" and "the local news station calls XYZ Co. a hot company for talented people."

The functional and emotional benefits are used for "positioning," which means defining the unique combination of attributes that define the product (or employer). XYZ Co.'s positioning says that it has a winning culture combined with strong tangible rewards, which in combination with other attributes creates a unique identity. XYZ's competitors will have different cultures, locations, compensation packages, and so on. [2]

The employment brand highlights the unique aspects of the firm's employment offerings or environment. The term "employer branding" was first publicly introduced to a management audience Barrow (1990), and further Tim Ambler (1996) referred that it as how company's efforts made communicate to existing and prospective staff what makes it a desirable place to work nourished with the active management of a company's image. As per the matters said , it could conclude that creation of Employer Branding leads to develop Psychological Contract. Employer branding is important because by creating a brand image it can attract potential employees; Recruitment time would be reduced, a Psychological image will be developed, employees committed to organizational goals, enhances level of staff engagement, employees will be retained; consequently Recruitment Costs might be reduced to a certain extent, company can develop an image as a "preferred "place to work, leading to competitive edge.

Moreover, Sartain and Schumann(2006) stated that employer brand as a manner in which business builds and packages its identity based on the origin of the firm and its values, which   promises to delivering emotionally connect employees resulting in turn delivering what the business promises to customers. Further, Brett Minchington(2005) defines employer branding as the image of an organization as a 'great place to work'within in the mind set of current employees and key stakeholders in the external business environment. According to the view given by Sullivan(2004) , employer branding has been referred as a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees in addition to potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular organization. However, it has given some thoughts for the same in terms of connecting to rewarding context. Accordingly, Ambler and Barrow (1996) highlighted the content of employer brand as the benefits inclusion of functional, economic and psychological benefits offered by employment, and identified with the employing company.

Therefore, researchers conclude employer branding involves promoting, both within and outside the firm, in order to provide an unblemished view of what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer. Employers create the brand in order to attract, motivate and retain the current and potential employees. It is made of human relationships and human emotions. Therefore Internal communication, Reward & recognition, Training & development, Measurement systems, Performance appraisal, Team management, Recruitment and on-boarding, Working environment, External marketing, and the role played by senior leadership play critical role in employer branding. It indicates that Employer Branding is related to what the company's value system, policies and behaviors are and thus it is linked to organizational culture.

2.1 Bringing the Employer Branding to the Case Reviews: An theoretical Approach to the Paper

The Employer Brand can be brought to life through the 'employee value proposition'. It is the core of an employer brand and defines the set of attributes; that existing and prospective employees perceive as the value they gain through employment with the said company. In other words, it is a set of promises that a company makes to its current & prospective employees. The employee value proposition manifests itself into different attributes such as: "A great place to learn & grow", "An organization that creates successful leaders", "A fun place to work". These attributes can be presented to needful stakeholders as Rewards (e.g. - Compensation, Health & retirement Benefits), Opportunities (e.g. - Development & Career opportunities), Work (e.g. – Location, Job Impact, Work-life Balance), People (e.g. – Work environment, Co-workers & Manager quality) and Organization (e.g. – Customer reputation, Diversity). Having said, it is obvious to say that Employer Branding as not a 'one-size-fits-all". Perhaps, different industries & types of businesses need to take different approaches in leveraging their Employer Brand. The Employer Brand must reflect the inherent attributes of the company and business context of operating.

High Performing organizations ensure that their employee value proposition is closely aligned to the customer value

proposition. By weaving brand messages into the employee's everyday experiences, these organizations ensure that on-brand behavior becomes intrinsic. The external brand promise can be delivered only when the employees live the brand in each and every action, i.e. by internalizing the brand. The Employee Value Proposition also needs to be linked to the HR Processes. Elaborate value statements are ineffective unless they are delivered through every single talent management process in the organization, i.e. Delivery is the key. Communication needs to be done through multiple channels so that employees receive multiple reinforcing messages. It needs to be tailored to meet the needs of disparate employee groups and a unique proposition needs to be crafted to meet the diverse needs of distinct employee groups, i.e. Customization is the key. HR processes need to be regularly checked to assess how effectively they are delivering to the promised brand i.e. a feedback loop is built into the system. One way of creating employer brand is to focus on the different functions of Human Resources management and create a benchmark on those areas.

III. METHODOLOGY OF THE CASE REVIEWS

The data was collected from both primary and secondary sources. Secondary sources were used to understand and develop the checklist to review how it has impacted to employee behavior. Research Approach followed was the Survey Method and Research Instrument used was a check list based questionnaire. It has used simple random sample to collect data from 120 employees drawn from different employees working in Information Technology sector. Researchers selected 3 IT companies those who allowed to interview their employees based on the employer branding practices being implemented. Those companies are namely PATNI,CRISIL and ECLERX ,and 40 employees were selected form each company since the workforces of those 3 companies were found to be quite similar in terms of amount and socio-demographic profiles. Sample selection for this research consists of employees with different background, work experience and management level. Researchers used descriptive statistics how those companies implement employer branding tactics to develop employee relationships.

3.1 Limitations of the Study

Any study has certain limitations and this is not an exception. The study identified the various measures that are to be followed by the organization to create an exceptional Employer Brand where the current & prospective employees are highly satisfied.

- This study is limited only to IT Professionals working with different Employers.

- The study was time bound because the employees had to be interrupted from their work and prior appointments had to be taken, employees might have filled the questionnaire in haste.
- The study is restricted and hence the expectations & perceptions of employees could change in future.
- The findings of the study might not be applicable to any other industry as the study was carried out specifically for IT Professionals. Hence the findings and suggestions are confined only to the IT Sector.
- Tenure of service in a specific company might lead bias. Generally the trend is the dissatisfaction from employer is directly proportional to the length of employment. Long service years leads to higher level of dissatisfaction.
- Sample selection for this research consists of employees with different back ground, work experience and management level. There might be differences of opinion between lower lever employees and top level executives.

IV. DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE CASES

Researchers had to customize the content of the questionnaire (checklist) as per the employer branding strategies and methods being used by the said 3 companies. However, the question content was consistent even though way of inquiring from the sample unites was different as per the company practices. Accordingly, it has given the descriptive statistical analysis as follows.

4.1 Impact of Value Proposition of the Employer Brand:

Researchers were able to develop a common practice list after analyzing the case practices of those 3 companies, and tested how employees have been perceived those things as the main employer value proposition to be motivated to join with the employer.

Figure 1: Responses of Employees towards Employer Brand Value Proposition
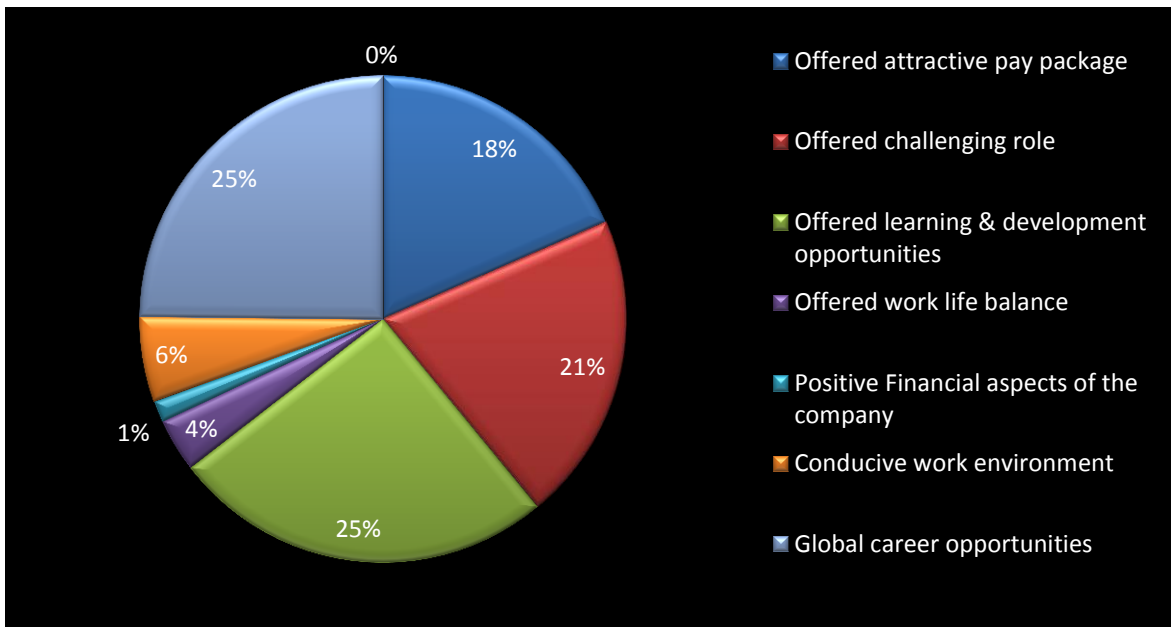
When asked why an employee (the respondent) had chosen this (current) employer, the following were the different answers provided by them. The above result depicts that most of the IT Professionals look out for Learning & Development Opportunities as well as Global Career Opportunities while choosing their employer. Further, Challenging Role Factor was another key factor for the employees to be motivated towards their respective employer brand.

4.2 Cross Analysis of the Overall Satisfaction towards the Employer Brand

When asked how happy an employee is with the current organization, the following were the different answers provided by them. Most of PATNI employees are Extremely Happy with the organization, and it was nearly 75% said as extremely happy. The rest is found as at the satisfied level. Important point to note is none of the PATNI employee is perplexed or not happy with the organization. Also 55% of CRISL employees are extremely satisfied with the organization referring to the employer branding practices. With ECLERX, it

was nearly 50% are at satisfied level referring to employer branding practices.

When asked whether current employer is a branded organization, All PATNI employees are of the view that PATNI is definitely a branded organization. Most CRISIL employees also believe that CRISIL is a branded organization. However seventy-five percent of ECLERX employees are of the view that it is a branded organization, while the rest was contradicting it.

It was found that the general perception towards "learning & development opportunities" and "recognition in the market" followed by "pay scale" are the factors which contribute in making PATNI a branded employer.

4.3 Analysis of the Benefit Factors Associated with Employer Brand

Researchers were able to figure out how employer brand perception has been built as associating to the employer brand into a benefit proposition.

Figure 2: Perception towards the benefit factors associated with employer brand
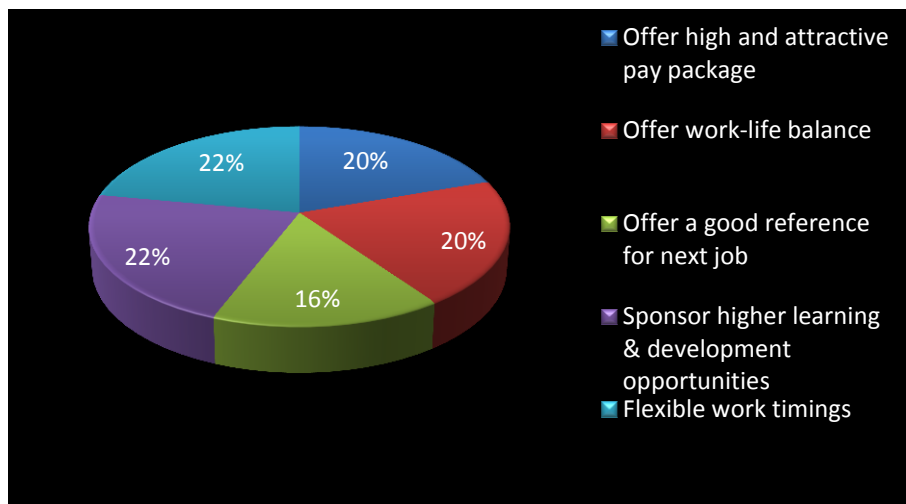
Note: IT Professionals are of the view that Sponsorship of learning & development opportunities & Flexible work timings are the major benefits with a branded organization followed by work-life balance & high & attractive pay package. It was revealed that the less expectations amongst the employees to get good reference for the next job as a rewarding factor towards the current employer brand indicating just 16% as said in the figure 2.

4.4 Employee Perception towards the Scale of the Organization as Employer Branding Component

It was five close-ended questions were asked for which the respondents were supposed to answer in either true or false to get an insight towards how far employees consider "Being Big" as an employer branding factor. IT Professionals are of the view that not every MNC or organization with strong financial background is a branded organization. Also they believe that even a small & growing company & a small company capable of attracting & retaining people can be a branded organization. It was nearly 80% said size of the company as not a building factor for employee brand perception. The open ended question was asked to get an insight form IT professionals to figure out what are the best practices to be crafted in an organization to build employer brand perception.

Accordingly, IT Professionals did grade the following factors to be executed to become a branded organization. Well defined HR Policies followed by Good company reputation are strongly expected from a branded organization. Also there is a moderate expectation towards Work-Life Balance, Good Ethical & Moral Values, Basic Employment Benefits & Recruiting Through Employee Referrals from a branded organization as the determinants to be allied in building strong employer brand.

4.5 Brand Citizenship Behavior as Word of Mouth Recommendations

When asked whether the respondent like to refer his friends / family / acquaintances to the current employer and they were supposed to answer in the form of 'Yes' or 'No', the respondents from different companies provided the answers in the following manner. All PATNI employees are strongly willing to refer their friends / family / acquaintances to PATNI. It was exactly 92% of responses mentioned their response as said. Also around 78% of CRISIL employees are willing to refer their friends / family / acquaintances to CRISIL. On the other hand majority of ECLERX employees (62%) were found to be indifference for the question asked.

4.6 Summary of the Findings of Case Reviews

- PATNI as an employer is successful in building trust with the employees trying to make them the ambassadors of the organization while ECLERX has to embrace certain principles of Employer Branding to develop trust in its employees.

- IT Professionals are of the view that not every MNC or organization with strong financial background is a branded organization. Also they believe that even a small & growing company may be capable of attracting & retaining people as a branded organization.

- The Major motivational factors reported that help employees stay with their employer are Challenging Role and Learning Opportunities apart from the regular pay schemes.

- Majority of the IT professionals agreed that well defined HR Policies followed by Good company reputation are strongly expected from a branded organization. There is a moderate expectation of Work-life balance, Good ethical & moral values, Basic employment benefits & recruiting through employee referrals from a branded organization. Also sponsorship of learning & development opportunities & flexible work timings are the major benefits expected by IT sector employees to perceive the employer as a branded organization.

V. CONCLUSION AND REMARKS FOR THE CONTRIBUTION TO PRACTICE

Based on the analysis and findings, it can be concluded that PATNI and CRISIL are successful to a great extent in building trust amongst their respective employees as a reputed employer brand. Amongst the three companies, PATNI seems to be a successful case to reflect as a perceived employer brand. As per the practices noticed using the survey, it can practice some best practices like giving social and psychological recognition for the sector employees to feel good towards the employer brand as how PATNI had executed.

Since it was extendedly justified that IT Employers need to specifically concentrate on Learning & Development Opportunities along with other associated matters, companies could practice their marketing promotional programs related to recruitments by highlighting the value proposition of Training and Development Opportunities.

Employees do not perceive that scale or size of the organization as meters of overall employer brand image, rather best HR and Professional practices are found as important matters for the said. Industry Practitioners may apply this concept to develop their employer brand name through the learning culture, professionalism and even leadership practices where it provides challenging working environment for the employees to become brand citizens.

Strong Employer Branding will not be built over night but an effectively implemented plan that includes activities to foster a strong sense of internal identity as well as positive external reputation will hasten & enhance the process. If an organization is to grow and outperform against its competitors, it needs to attract & retain the most talented people via a comprehensive HR model. The integration of HR and Marketing could do the needful strategic initiation to build sustainable employer brand. Activities, culture, systems, relationships and professional approach could be used as consistent manner for the HR divisions to build employer Brand.

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