RATIONALE AND IMPACT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING IN THE RECRUITMENT PROCESS: A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to find out the rationale of employer branding for the recruitment process of employees and its impact on the process. This is a qualitative research-based paper. The paper is based on a comprehensive, conceptual, and critical review of some contemporary literature on the same topic. A detailed descriptive study has been conducted to find out what are the outcomes of different researchers' findings on the same topic and finally conclude this paper with a framework drawn from those research papers and their consensus based conclusion.

After critically reviewing the selected research papers it is found that based on the underlying job signaling theory, cognitive psychology view of brand equity, and information economics, we can derive that the concept of customer-based brand equity can be extended and be used to create employee-based brand equity. It can be concluded that the employer brand has a good relationship with organizational recruiting and has a significant influence on HR practices. This research illustrates that HRM techniques associated with internal marketing and management may keep the effort consistent of increasing the employee-based brand equity to gain a positive impact on effective recruitment. This research may help organizations understand how the important elements (i.e. employee-based brand equity, employer branding, cognitive psychology view of brand equity, and information economics) interact to influence the overall performance of the recruitment process and effective recruitment. Moreover, this paper may also help the researcher to conduct further studies to determine the most successful tactics and methods for converting customer-based brand equity into employee-based brand equity.

Key Words: – Branding, Employer Branding, Recruitment.

1. INTRODUCTION

The expansion of local and foreign trade connections resulted in an increase in human resource movement, as well as the dominance of large corporations in recruiting (Chitu& Russo, 2020). Every firm faces enormous challenges In today's

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internationally competitive market, experience growth, maintain itself and obtain competitiveness (Sivertzen, et al., 2013; Mosley, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). The human resource that is effective is essential for an organization's existence. As a result, finding a suitable and competent applicant becomes a critical component of the organization's success (Wright, McMahan & McWilliams, 1994). In addition to this, the present trend necessitates a far more thorough and deliberate approach to recruiting, using, and retaining valued human resources (Guthridge et al. 2008). Though the concept ‘employer brand' is relatively new, having been coined in 1992 when an academic article was published to highlight the significance of the employer brand perspective in aiding the recruitment and selection process (Khalid & Tariq, 2015). However, as the skilled workforce shortage has grown, the ‘employer brand' has become increasingly important in attracting and retaining the best talent in organizations (Theurer et. al., 2016). Employer branding, according to Branham (2001), is one way to ensure access to potential workers.

2. BRANDING AS A MARKETING TOOL

“Your brand is what people say about you after you leave the room,” says Larry Ellison, Oracle's founder, emphasizing the necessity of a strong brand name for a company (Robertson, 2013). According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is "a name, phrase, sign, symbol, or design, or a combination of these, designed to recognize and distinguish the items/products of one seller or group of sellers from competitors." A brand is "basically a seller's commitment to continuously offer a certain range of attributes, advantages, and services to buyers and is meant to identify the goods and services of one seller and separate them from those of rivals (Kotler 1997, p. 443)”. As a result, a successful brand must be remembered, significant, protectable, and adaptable to changing circumstances. Moreover, it is known that the more prominent a brand name is, the greater the competitive advantage it will give within the sector, particularly in terms of market capture (Weerawardane & Weerasinghe, 2018).

Branding research has traditionally been the domain of marketing, and it is viewed as a kind of corporate communication (Russell & Brannan, 2016). As a result, branding is viewed as being outwardly oriented and concerned with the transmission of images and ideas forward from the company to a target market of consumers and clients (Levitt, 1981). However, more lately, there has been evidence of a broader or critical scholarship on branding, which tries to highlight branding's unidirectional nature (Mitchell, 2002). One of the most important aspects of this has been the realization of how organizational branding finds responsive clients both within and outside of companies (Russell & Brannan, 2016). While marketers have mostly stud ied the effect of branding from the standpoint of exterior receivers, more recent research has looked at the role of branding from the employer's point of view (Russell & Brannan, 2016).

3. BRAND EQUITY AND THE FURTHER DIMENSIONS IN AN ORGANIZATION

The influence of product or corporate brands on customer sentiments, as well as the implications for brand equity, have dominated the marketing conversation (e.g. Keller 1993; Swait et al. 1993). "Customer-based brand equity is defined as the differential influence of brand knowledge on customer response to the marketing of the brand," writes Keller (1993, p. 1). According to (Wilden, Lings, &Gudergan, 2010), brand awareness advantages purchasers by enabling information processing, boosting their brand choices, and lowering risk perceptions and information costs. Changes in customers' risk, confidence, and information costs are also indicators of brand equity.

Tsao (2002) suggests two methods for determining brand equity: cognitive psychology-based approach is the first one, and information economics is the other one. According to cognitive psychology, buyer-based brand equity is a result of the brand's performance and personality, which is reflected in consumers' views (Tsao 2002). The cognitive psychology concept of brand equity is founded on the idea that the person has accessibility to data about the brand in the economy. This perspective ignores the knowledge asymmetry that exists in these market transactions (Erdem & Swait 1998). Information economics addresses this restriction by taking into consideration interactions between the parties involved and identifying issues that result from asymmetric information in the market (Spence 1973). Asymmetric information drives the data seeker to search out more information in order to close the apparent knowledge gap; as a result, information costs may be paid in the labor market (Wilden, Lings & Gudergan, 2010). Vickrey (1961), Akerlof (1970), Mirrlees (1971), and Spence (1973) are all signaling theorists who influenced this method. This theory proposes that in order to prevent adverse selection, information seekers construct quality judgments based on signals such as warranties, price, and brand (e.g. Dawar & Parker 1994; Koku 1995). Brands, according to Kirmani and Rao (2000) are transaction-independent signals that transmit unobservable quality regardless of a transaction. As would-be employees seldom have perfect knowledge about a prospective employer, information asymmetry and signaling theory have potential implications in job markets (Wilden, Lings & Gudergan, 2010). Jobs with a specific organization have lengthy consequences for employees (and employers), and these implications persuade prospective personnel to spend time learning about potential employers. Delivering suitable signals, via employer branding, is one way prospective employers can reduce potential employees' information costs associated with this search (Wilden, Lings & Gudergan, 2010).

So, despite increased competitiveness in the labor market, little study has been done on the processes through which potential workers assess prospective employers, as well as the employee-based brand equity that is implicit in these evaluations (Sutherland, Torricelli & Karg 2002; Schmidtke 2002; Ewing et al. 2002). Knowledge gained from research into customer-based brand equity may provide a conceptual model for a better understanding of how to generate an employer brand that conveys messages to prospective personnel about an organization's quality as an employer. In particular, the signaling theory provides insights into branding and brand signals that can be utilized to establish and interact with this quality message (Wilden, Lings &Gudergan, 2010).

4. EMPLOYER BRANDING

Employer branding is an extension of relationship marketing ideas, which recognize the need for stronger partnerships to establish acquisition and retention strategies across a variety of essential stakeholder markets (Christopher et al., 1991; Kotler, 1992; Morgan & Hunt, 1994). Within companies, multiple brands can exist in many areas, such as consumer brands, corporate brands, and employer brands, to name a few (Weerawardane& Weerasinghe, 2018). According to Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings (2010), managing these trademarks for diverse stakeholders is a difficult undertaking for any business.

However, when it comes to employer marketing, the brand of the employer is established as a collection of different pictures of a prospective employer that are manifest in the minds of the target audiences—potential workers (Petkovic, 2004; Meffert, Burmann & Koers, 2002). The 'employer brand' is the view of current and potential workers regarding whether the company is a good place to work (Clutterbuck et al. 2003, p. 123). Employer brand is simply defined by Lawler (2008) as "a significant component of what draws talent to a firm" (p. 68). According to Hor and Keats (2008), an employer brand is an image that a company creates in the minds of current employees and potential employees.

Because the labor market is characterized by information asymmetry, a prospective employee cannot completely judge a prospective employer's quality without actual experience (Wilden, Gudergan & Lings, 2010). From an employer's standpoint, the same is true (Spence, 1974). Given the risk to both sides, it is in a potential employee's best interest to learn everything they can about a prospective employer, and it is in a prospective employer's best interest to communicate their abilities and traits to the labor market (Spence, 1974, p. 1).

The amount to which the brand assists in keeping and attracting employees, as determined by Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings (2010) in their research, comprises the equity connected with the employer brand. Financial markets are increasingly recognizing employee-based brand equity, and human capital is increasingly contributing to an organization's market worth (Cairncross 2000). When it comes to employees, brand equity refers to "the influence of brand awareness on potential and present company employees." Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)

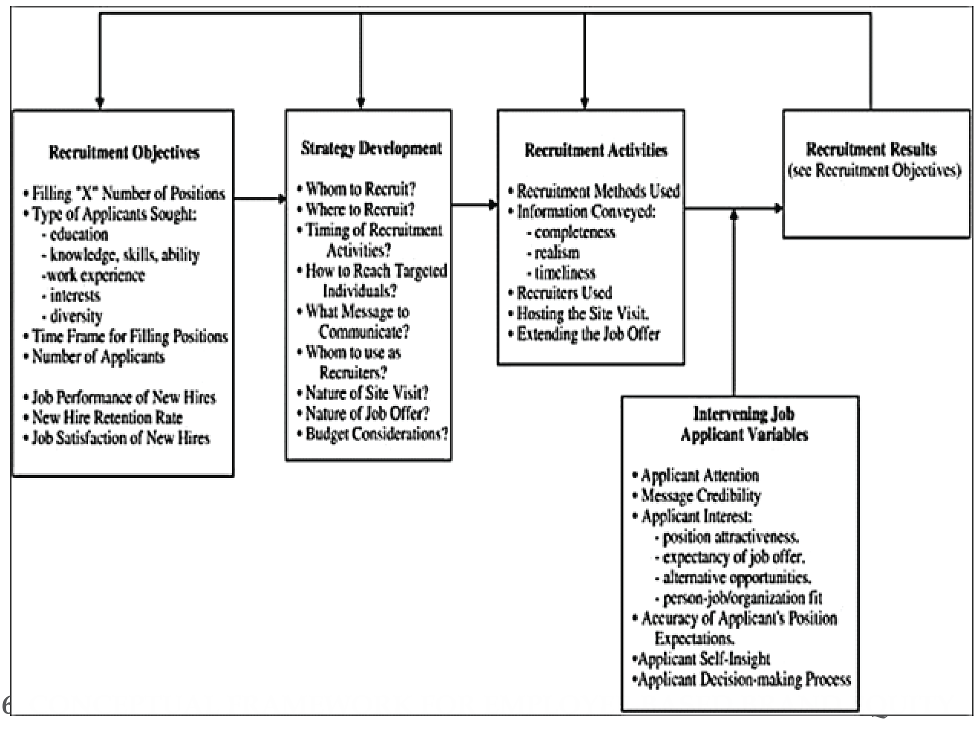
5. RECRUITMENT PROCESS

Recruitment is described as a method of locating eligible persons from a pool of candidate for filling available vacancy in a firm (Stoilkovska, IIieva & Gjakovski, 2015). HRM's primary focus is also on recruitment, because it is the employed personnel who will be susceptible to further HRM processes in the future. Newell (2005) goes on to say that having skilled personnel in a company is crucial, which is accomplished through an efficient recruiting and selection process. Instead, if the unfitting individual is recruited, the company might face a slew of financial damages (Newell, 2005; Muir 1988). However, with so much rivalry in the labor market, finding the most qualified and finest personnel is getting increasingly difficult (Taylor & Collins, 2000; O'Donovan, 2019). As a result of the rivalry, the way recruitment is handled has changed. Companies currently utilize more inventive means of hiring their workers as a way to distinguish them from rivals, as it is no longer possible to use the same recruitment sources as in the past.

The traditional recruitment process lacks a standard model for how it should be carried out; instead, a number of experts describe and speculate it in a variety of ways (Acikgoz, 2019). According to Acikgoz (2019), The traditional recruitment process may be viewed from two perspectives: that of the company and that of the job seeker. There are, however, few models that relate one point of view to another. As a consequence, when looking into the recruiting process, it's vital to keep the point of view in mind. Several elements of the recruitment process appear to be identical across all of the proposed models. The first step for a firm is to determine if a position or vacancy inside the organization needs to be filled, which is followed by an analysis of the job opening, drafting a job description, and ultimately determining a description of the perfect individual (Carroll et al., 1999; Mueller & Baum, 2011; Thebe & Van der Waldt, 2014).

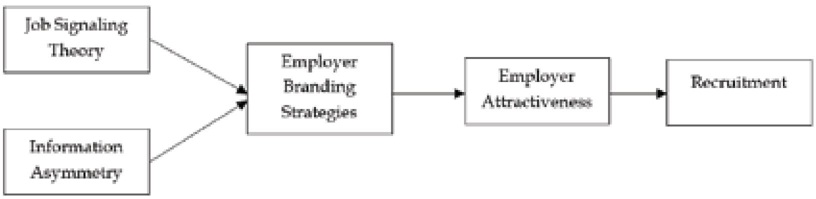
Breaugh (2008) presented a recruiting process model that consists of five interrelated phases (see Figure 1). The company's initial step is to identify recruitment goals, such as how many positions should be filled and what traits, such as skills, work experience, and education, the perfect candidate should have. The second stage is to create a strategy, in which firms choose what sort of person they want to employ, how they want to hire them, what message they want to put out, and whether or not they have any budgetary constraints (Breaugh, 2008). Internal, external, or walk-in sources are all possibilities (Moser, 2005). The third step entails deciding on the method of recruitment, which recruiters to hire, and whether or not the job offer should be extended. Breaugh (2008) illustrates the recruitment process from the perspective of the company up to the third phase, after which the job seeker variable is added into the model in the fourth step. This section includes information on the applicant's interests, such as how interesting the position is to them, what they expect from the job offer, and what other possibilities they may have. It also includes the applicant's own thoughts and decisions. The recruiting outcomes are the fifth and last stage of the hiring process, and they are interconnected with all of the previous steps. These are the end results of the whole recruiting process, which should be tied to the organization's recruitment goals from the beginning and visible throughout the strategy development and recruitment activities (Breaugh, 2008). According to Breaugh (2008), a company has effectively recruited a new employee for a vacant post after all of these stages have been completed.

Figure 1: Model of the Recruitment process as theorized by Breaugh (2008)



The concept of "employee-based brand equity" theory may be clearly deduced from the same root as "customer-based brand equity" theory based on the preceding discussion. Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings (2010) interpret the employer brand as a signal to overcome information asymmetry and impact employee-based brand equity, using logic similar to Spence's job market model (1974), which is based on signaling theory and information asymmetry. As a result, they propose an employee-based brand equity paradigm, which is based on earlier consumer-based branding research that looked at the impact of brand signals on customers' product quality ratings (Erdem et al. 1999).

Figure 2: A Conceptual Framework of Employee-Based Brand Equity and Recruitment.



7. EMPLOYER BRANDING – A MAGICAL TOOL FOR RECRUITMENT

The HRM-Marketing function is obsessed with the type of internal marketing in which "the customer" and "the supplier" are both presents within the company, and workers are considered as consumers or clients in this sense (Chitu & Russo, 2020). Workers and managers are treated as internal consumers by the HRM function, and the tasks and activities done by the HRM function are goods or services that meet the requirements and wants of employees and managers while also advancing the organization's goals (BRETT, 1991).

The parallels between marketing and human resource management are one of the main reasons why marketing is seen to be a helpful foundation for HRM (Chitu & Russo, 2020). The principles and methods that have been shown to be beneficial to marketing may likewise be used in human resource management (BRETT, 1991). Buyers are psychologically accustomed to experiencing detailed images of products, and with some brands, consumers develop long-term relationships based on a strong sense of efficiency, trust, and nostalgia, and there is an emotional relationship between the product and the brand in the case of a consumer brand, just as there is an employee-employer relationship (Chitu& Russo, 2020).

Company branding refers to the total of psychological, economic, and func tional benefits offered by a job that the employer has recognized (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Employer branding produces a psychological influence on potential workers by portraying the company as a great place to work (Lloyd, 2002). Job seekers' perceptions of a brand are strongly linked to the company's reputation (Micik & Micudova, 2018), which is most likely a reflection of the brand (Micik & Micudova, 2018), (Fombrun, 1996). Numerous researches have also shown that there is a link between a company's image and the attractiveness of qualified job candidates (Fombrun, 1996; Cable & Turban, 2001). Many studies back up the idea that an organization's reputation and brand image play an important part in the recruiting process (Berthon et al, 2005; Lievens et al., 2007; Xie, Bagozzi&Meland, 2015). Employer branding becomes an "umbrella program" to give prior HR rules and practices a clear framework (Edwards, 2010).

According to the job signaling hypothesis, the image does convey the psychological benefits that may be gained by being a member of a well-respected organization (Alshathry, Clarke & Goodman, 2016). And, according to the Signaling Theory, the Employer Brand will convey the firm's values, systems, policies, and depict the firm's identity in order for potential candidates to match the organization with their needs, and if these signals are properly communicated, the information costs associated with the search for potential candidates will be reduced (Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010).

8. LIMITATIONS OF EMPLOYER BRANDING ON RECRUITMENT

Employer brand strategy is often a murky area that has to be clarified so that all stakeholders and prospective workers are on the same page and are included in the goals and objectives (Khalid & Tariq, 2015). Although the employer brand is a long-term, strategic people management business, there is certain to be some misunderstanding or adherence to standards, which varies based on the firm (Kotier and Lee, 2008; Kucherov and Zavyalova, 2012; Ritson, 2002; Sparrow and Otaye, 2015).

9. DISCUSSION

The goal of this study is to look into the link between employer branding and recruiting, as well as to assess the effect and influence of employer branding on hiring. However, in order to capture, maintain, and build consumer equity, branding is an essential element of marketing strategy. However, as we saw in the previous analysis, branding has extended across the business in various areas, including the workers and therefore the HR practice. A brand's role extends beyond dealing with consumers as a marketing tool; it also regards workers as internal customers, which has a significant influence on HR practice, particularly in the area of recruiting. And, as a result of the customer-based brand equity idea, another aspect and concept of employee-based brand equity might emerge.

According to the job signaling hypothesis, the image does communicate the psychological benefits that being a member of a well-known organization may provide (Alshathry, Clarke& Goodman, 2016). And, according to the Signaling Theory, the Employer Brand will communicate the firm's values, systems, policies, and depict the firm's identity in order for potential candidates to match the organization to their needs, and if these signals are properly communicated, the information costs associated with the search for potential candidates will be reduced. (2010) (Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings). Organizational image is directly connected to candidate attraction to the company and organizational identity, according to Lievens, Van Hoye, and Anseel (2007). According to Khalid & Tariq (2015), positive employer branding improves candidates' desire to acquire the job. They also proposed that the company brand conveys information that aids in the creation of a psychological contract between the company and its employees. In their study, Turban and Cable (2003) found that the more favorable an organization's reputation is, the larger the application pool will be.

According to a study, the proportion of recruits through employee recommendations will grow as a result of increasing employee happiness and knowledge of what makes their firm better than others (Khalid & Tariq, 2015). An increase in referrals will be beneficial since it enhances employee retention in the recruitment process and reduces recruiter’s responsibilities (Sullivan, 1999).

Employee-based brand equity is impacted by employer brand clarity, consistency, brand investments, and the trustworthiness of brand signals, according to the results of Wilden, Gudergan, and Lings (2010). These are characteristics that a firm can manage given enough incentive. Other elements, such as a potential employee's past work experience, the sector in which a firm operates, location, and company size, impact the value that a prospective employee places on a prospective employer, and therefore their employee-based brand equity. They also highlighted that brand investments appear to affect a potential employer's appeal and, as a result, its employee-based brand equity.

Taking into account all of the evidence presented in this paper and cited by previous researchers, we can conclude that there is a link between recruitment and employer branding. Using the job signaling theory as the underlying theory, we can conclude that the more appealing the company reputation and job attributes are to potential employees, higher the person's organizational fit to the company.

10. CONCLUSIONS

With the critical literature review and analysis of the citation and findings of various researchers based on the underlying job signaling theory, the work of Vickrey (1961), Mirrlees (1971), Akerlof (1970), and Spence (1973) and cognitive psychology view of brand equity, information asymmetries and information economics we can derive that the concept of customer-based brand equity can be extended and be used to create employee-based brand equity. As a result of the findings, it can be concluded that the employer brand has a good relationship with organizational recruiting and has a significant influence on HR practices. HRM techniques are associated with internal marketing and external image. Furthermore, further study is needed to determine the most successful tactics and methods for converting customer-based brand equity into employee-based brand equity.

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