

An Internal Perspective of Employer Branding at Bharti Airtel Limited

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Abstract

The demand for qualified working capacity is increasing faster than the offering. The competition in the market has intensified and has made companies to show an ever increasing interest in strategies to differentiate them. Strong demand for specific skills, in addition to ever tighter markets generally is making it much more difficult both to retain current employees and to recruit new employees. Employer branding is called the “hottest strategy in employment”. It is an international concept referring to the work with making the identity clear as an employer. The result is the companies’ images as employer, both internally and externally. The objective of this research was “To study the internal Employer Branding” where the data was collected from the employees of Airtel. The survey was majorly based on fifteen parameters that an employee always looks for in an organization. This included competitive compensation, work life balance, career or growth opportunities, quality of work, financial strength, proper management and leadership skills etc. Employer branding is also matched with the product branding and the consumer behavior studied accordingly. It was observed that the company provides very good work life balance and quality of work but lacked at international career opportunities and hence suggestions were put forward to improve over the same. As per the analysis it was observed that there is not much difference in the response of the respondents on the basis of gender but there is a significant difference among the responses on the basis of age and hence accordingly the suggestions were provided.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Attractiveness, Marketing, Internal Branding

Introduction

The term employer brand was introduced in the early 1990s to denote an organization’s reputation as an employer. (Barrow & Mosley) Since then, it has been widely used by the global management community. (Martin 2009; Edwards 2010) defines employer brand as “the image of your organization as a ‘great place to work’ in the mind of current employees and key stakeholders in the external market (active and passive candidates, clients, customers and other key stakeholders). The art and science of employer branding is therefore concerned with the way to attract, engage the candidate and retaining initiatives targeted at enhancing your company’s employer brand.

Employer brand management expands the scope of this brand intervention beyond communication to incorporate every aspect of the employment

experience, and the people management processes and practices (often referred to as “touch-points”) that shape the perceptions of existing and prospective employees. In other words, employer brand management addresses the reality of the employment experience and not simply its presentation. By doing so it supports both external recruitment of the right kind of talent sought by an organization to achieve its goals, and the subsequent desire for effective employee engagement and employee retention.

As for consumer brands, most employer brand practitioners and authors argue that effective employer branding and brand management requires a clear Employer Brand proposition or Employer value proposition. This serves to: define what the organization would most like to be associated with as an employer; highlight the attributes that differentiate the organization from other employers; and clarify the ‘give and get’ of the employment deal (balancing the value that employees are expected to contribute with the value from employment that they can expect in

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return). This latter aspect of the employer brand proposition is often referred to in the HR literature as the “psychological contract”. Just as a customer brand proposition is used to define a product or service offer, an Employee Value Proposition or EVP is used to define an organization’s employment offer. Likewise the marketing disciplines associated with branding and brand management have been increasingly applied by the human resources and talent management community to attract, engage and retain talented candidates and employees, in the same way that marketing applies such tools to attracting and retaining clients, customers and consumers. Employee Value Proposition (EVP) is the balance of the rewards and benefits that are received by employees in return for their performance at the workplace. Organizations generally develop an EVP to provide a consistent platform for employer brand communication and experience management. It has become closely related to the concept of employer branding, in terms of the term EVP being used to define the underlying ‘offer’ on which an organization’s employer brand marketing and management activities are based. In this context, the EVP is often referred to as the Employer Brand Proposition. The researcher reinforces this link to employer branding, and urges all organizations to develop a statement of why the total work experience at their organization is superior to that of other organizations. The value proposition should identify the unique people policies, processes and programs that demonstrate the organization’s commitment to i.e., employee growth, management development, ongoing employee recognition, community service, etc. Contained within the value proposition are the central reasons that people will choose to commit themselves to an organization. The EVP should be actively communicated in all recruitment efforts, and in letters offering employment, the EVP should take the focus off of compensation as the primary “offer.” This study includes the factors defining the employer brand given by Berthonet. al (2005). It is important that organizations must focus on the different parameters and understand their importance for their internal employees. There are many studies that prove internal branding leads to employee satisfaction and reduces attrition in any organization. Thus it makes important for the organization’s to study these

dimensions and observe their fluctuations across males and females and also the different groups working in the organizations. This study is undertaken at top most telecom company Bharti Airtel Ltd. because the company has recently been in a lot in news because of its increasing profits in recent quarters. Also there have been articles stating that employees at Bharti Airtel Ltd are satisfied and growing in career prospects as well.

Literature Review

“The hottest strategy in employment”, is called - Employment Branding. It 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 solution designed to provide a steady flow of applicants. (Sullivan, 1999). The Employer Brand concept is borrowed from marketing. It helps organisations focus on how they can identify themselves within their market as an employer of current staff, as a potential employer to new recruits and as a supplier or partner to customers. Employer Branding is a relatively new idea, but in practice some organizations have been making use of the idea implicitly for some time now. Employment branding is the process of placing an image of being a “great place to work” in the minds of the targeted candidate pool. It is a concept borrowed from the business side of the enterprise. Product Branding is designed to develop a lasting image in the minds of the consumer, so that they start to automatically associate quality with any product or service offered by the owner of the brand. An Employment Brand does the same, it creates an image that makes people want to work for the firm because it is a well-managed firm where workers are continually learning and growing. Once the image is set, it generally results in a steady flow of applicants. Employment Branding uses the tools of marketing research, PR, and advertising to change the image applicants have of “what it is like to work at the firm.” (Sullivan, 1999). However, it is true that a person goes through a series of steps, considering a purchase of anything. This goes for washing machines, mutual funds, clothes, cars, vacations and jobs. We don’t make these decisions instantly, and we don’t make them in isolation. The steps mentioned by Vallee, in

ascending order toward the point of commitment, are: Trigger; Consideration; Search; Choose; and Buy. With an understanding that there are different steps, the marketer attempts to build communication that will positively influence, assist – and ultimately persuade – the suitable and qualified prospect to move forward through each stage of the decision process towards the purchase. (Valley, 2001). Clearly, employers seek to achieve the same outcome from their recruitment marketing efforts. But in many cases, the employer does not have the understanding of the prospect's needs and wants, aspirations and concerns. In that knowledge vacuum (which most companies would never accept from the marketing function), connections are not established with prospects, and they are not provided the means to evaluate whether the job available would qualify as their "dream job". (Valley, 2001). A strong and distinct profile does not only create an attractive working place, it can also function as a kind filter, and create better accuracy of aim by having, to a greater extent, suitable candidates trying to find their way to the company (Talent Talk, 2003). Keeping valuable competence is essential for any company or organisation. Finding the right people, fitting into the company culture, sharing its goals, values and attitudes, are increasing the chances for creating a 'relationship' that will last. By clarifying one's advantages and valuations as an employer the company also achieve higher motivation and commitment among current staff. (Talent Talk, 2003) Benefits of Employer Branding revolve around the notion of committed or engaged employees. Research has demonstrated the causal relationship between high levels of engagement and enhanced business performance. Organisations ignore low levels of engagement at their peril, not only because of the lost business benefit, but also because of the cost of replacement, training etc. Without high levels of engagement, it is difficult to envisage an organisation having a strong brand. The Employer Brand can take on special importance when a corporate brand is less well known or understood. This is true for companies whose business, by their nature, make it difficult to establish strong product or corporate brand images – for example, because their products or services are sold not to end-users but to other companies and thus lose much of their product brand identity in the process.

(David Dell & al, 2001). Berthon et al. (2005) contributed to employer branding through their widely known empirical research wherein they developed a 32- item Employer Attractiveness Scale (EmpAt) scale for the measurement of employer attractiveness of an employer. They identified five factors of employer branding namely, interest value, social value, economic value, development value and application. Promoting a favorable image of the organization among employees has become part of the organisations' employer branding strategy (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens, 2007). This internal perspective aims at motivating and retaining employees who live the brand and act accordingly as ambassadors of their organisations with both clients and prospective employees (Mosley, 2007; Van Hove, 2008). Employer branding creates two most important assets in brand equity, namely brand association and brand loyalty. While employer brand associations forms organisational image that will have impact on interest on prospective applicants of the organisation, employer brand loyalty is the commitment given by employees to their organisation that will have an impact on their productivity (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). These two assets need to be considered by the organisation in order to get and retain employees in competitive "war of talent". Kimpakorn (2009) emphasizes the role of employees in building the brand and making the brand 'come alive'. The research explored employees' brand commitment in the hotel industry in a highly competitive market. The dimensions of employer brand were used as independent variables for explaining the level of employee's commitment to their company's brand. Focus groups and in-depth interviews were conducted to identify the dimensions of employer brand. The four dimensions thus identified were used to explain the level of employee brand commitment. Through structural equation modelling it was found that employees' brand commitment is strongly linked to the dimensions of employer brand. Ampuero & Storsten (2013) examined the effect of employer brand on pride and affective commitment. Through regression analysis, the impact of employer brand on affective commitment was found to be significant. It was concluded that if employees have a positive perception of the corporate brand identity and

employer branding, then they will be more caring of their employer and more satisfied with their employment in general, and vice versa. Melin, E. (2005) also stated the likenesses and differences between external and internal employer brand images. This study also contributed to many other studies as there may exist the difference between external and internal brand image of any organisation.

Objectives of the Study

1. To study the effectiveness of internal Employer Branding at Bharti Airtel Ltd.
2. To analyse the different factors of Employer Branding and its relationship with demographics (Age and Gender).

Hypothesis Statements

The following hypothesis have been formed and tested.

H₀₁- There is no significant difference between responses of males and females on the basis of different factors defining a brand.

H₀₂- There is no significant difference across different age groups on the basis of different factors defining a brand.

H₀₃- There is no significant difference between responses of males and females on the basis of preferred communication channel for employer attractiveness.

H₀₄- There is no significant difference across responses of different age groups on the basis of preferred communication channel for employer attractiveness.

H₀₅- There is no significant difference between responses of males and females on the basis of different dimensions of employer brand.

H₀₆- There is no significant difference across different age groups on different dimensions of employer brand.

Research Methodology

This study is descriptive as it analyses the employer branding as a practice and its dimensions as its structure. An exploratory research design is also applied to ensure cohesiveness and effectiveness in research.

Sample Definition and Data collection

The methodology being used involves two basic sources of information primary source and secondary source. Primary data is collected with the help of the questionnaire adopted from Employer Attractiveness scale of **Berthonet. al. (2005)**. This scale has identified the different attractiveness dimensions of employer brand and has been empirically validated and tested. The questionnaire was distributed to 70 employees working at Bharti Airtel and 57 completely filled in questionnaires were received which leads to the response rate of 80% which is acceptably good. Primary sources also included formal meetings and discussions with the employees and the different research papers, data files of the company and presentations were also analyzed which were the secondary sources of data collection. The sampling technique undertaken was convenience sampling.

Data Analysis

Table 1: Demographic Analysis

Gender	
Male	25
Female	32
Age	
21-30 yrs	31
31-40 yrs	13
41-50 yrs	10
50+ yrs	3

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	No. of Items
.908	.908	24

Scale Reliability

Reliability of all the factors was calculated and all the items were reliable with Cronbach's alpha more than 0.6 so it is efficiently acceptable.

Factors Defining Brand

The respondents were asked about the different factors

that define a particular brand and hold importance in brand building and maintenance. From the mean analysis of all the factors defining a brand for the respondents quality of the product stands out to be the most important factor with a mean value of 4.21 and cost of the product is the least important factor with a mean value of 3.16

Table 3: Mean Analysis of Brand Definition

Statistics					
	Cost of Product	Quality of Product	Respect for Customers	Environment Friendliness	Giving Back to Community
Mean	3.16	4.21	3.96	3.77	3.82
Median	3.00	4.00	4.00	4.00	4.00
Mode	3	5	4	4	4
Std. Deviation	1.031	.861	.731	.780	.947
Variance	1.064	.741	.534	.608	.897

Table 4: T-Test for Brand Definition on the Basis of Gender

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Brand Definition	Equal variances assumed	3.194	.079	.521	55	.604	.082	.1572	-.23319	.3971
	Equal variances not assumed			.539	54.989	.592	.082	.1522	-.22314	.3871

Table 5: Anova Test for Brand Definition on the Basis of Age

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.805	3	.268	.773	.514
Within Groups	18.384	53	.347		
Total	19.189	56			

From the table 4 it is evident that there is no significant difference between male and female responses in defining a brand. Hence the hypothesis H_{01} is accepted and this infers that all parameters hold the same importance for both males and females. If we observe the mean values of both male (3.8320) and female (3.7500) there is no significant difference between the two groups in defining the important factors for brand building.

From the table 5 it is evident that there is no significant

difference between mean values of different age groups in defining a brand. Hence hypothesis H_{02} is accepted.

From the table 6, it is evident that there is no significant difference between the responses of males and females on the basis of preferred communication channel for employer attractiveness. Hence hypothesis H_{03} is accepted. Even if the mean value of both the groups is observed males have mean value as 3.73 and females have as 3.74 that it shows no significant difference.

Table 6: T-Test for Preferred Comm. Channel on the Basis of Gender

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Preferred Comm. Channel	Equal variances assumed	.620	.435	-.073	55	.942	-.01219	.1670	-.34704	.3226
	Equal variances not assumed			-.072	50.283	.943	-.01219	.1682	-.35005	.3256

From the table 7 it is evident that the significant difference between responses of different age groups on their preference for different communication channels as the significant value is less than 0.05. Hence hypothesis H_{04} is rejected. Even if the mean values are observed the different age groups shows

different mean values. The age group of 31-40 years shows that job fairs and college presentations plays the most significant role and the age group of 21-30 years states that media and tie up with B-schools play the most important role.

Table 7: Anova Test for Preferred Comm. Channel on the Basis of Age

ANOVA					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	5.576	3	1.859	6.166	.001
Within Groups	15.977	53	.301		
Total	21.553	56			

Table 8: Mean Analysis of Defining Factors

	Work Life Balance	Career Enhancement Opportunities	Flexible Working Hours	Quality of Work	Strong & Clear Company Culture
Mean	4.11	3.95	4.00	4.11	3.91
	International Career Opportunities	Competitive Compensation	Good Promotion Opportunities	Secured Employment	Challenging Work Opportunities
Mean	3.32	3.84	3.84	3.89	3.82
	Effective Leadership & Management	Financial Stability	Good Ethics & High Morale	Exciting Products & Services	CSR
Mean	3.82	4.04	3.95	4.07	3.81

Different dimensions of Internal employer branding given by Berthon et.al (2005)

From the table 8 it is evident that out of all the dimensions of internal employer branding-work life balance and quality of work are the most important factors considered with a mean value of 4.11 and international career opportunities are the least important factor with a mean value of 3.32.

From table 9, it is evident that there is no significant difference between responses of male and female respondents on different dimensions of employer branding. Hence hypothesis H_{05} is accepted. When mean values are observed there is no significant difference between mean value of male (3.9013) and females (3.8958).

From the table 10, it is evident that the significant difference between different age groups on different dimensions of employer branding as significant value

is less than 0.05. Hence hypothesis H_{06} is rejected. Also there is a significant difference between mean values of responses of respondents belonging to different age groups on the basis of different dimensions of employer branding.

Findings

There is no significant difference between the response of males and females and also across the different age groups for defining a brand. Brand definition holds the same value and importance across gender and different age groups. Also, there is no significant difference between the response of males and females for preferring a communication channel for employer attractiveness but there is a significant difference in the response of respondents on the basis of different age groups. Similarly there is no significant difference between the response of males and females for different dimensions of employer branding but there is a significant difference in the response of respondents

Table 9: T-Test for Defining Factors On The Basis of Gender

Independent Samples Test										
		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Overall Average	Equal variances assumed	2.682	.107	.033	55	.974	.00550	.16872	-.33262	.34362
	Equal variances not assumed			.034	54.269	.973	.00550	.16140	-.31806	.32906

Table 10: Anova Test for Defining Factors On The Basis Of Age

ANOVA					
Overall Average					
	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	3.812	3	1.271	3.708	.017
Within Groups	18.163	53	.343		
Total	21.974	56			

on the basis of different age groups. The quality of the product is considered as the most important factor for defining any brand and cost of the product is considered as the least important factor for defining any brand. When the different channels are observed, media advertisement is regarded as the most preferred communication channel for employer attractiveness and Tie ups with B-schools is regarded as the least preferred communication channel for employer attractiveness. Out of all the dimensions defining employer branding for the organization quality of work and work life balance are two such factors which are given highest priority among the respondents and organization international career opportunities are rated lowest among the employees.

Conclusion and Discussions

It can be concluded that there is not much difference in the response of the respondents on the basis of gender but there is a significant difference among the responses on the basis of age. The employer branding has also matched with the product branding and the consumer behavior studied accordingly. It was observed that the company provides very good work life balance and quality of work but lacked in providing international career opportunities and hence suggestions were put forward to improve over the same. The organizations should aim at developing better internal and external brand management activities to woo skilled talent for further expansion and growth. A powerful employer brand has the

strength to attract and retain talent and also achieve the organizational objectives. A strong employer brand also increases productivity, lowers the cost, results in greater retention of employees and customers. Successful alignment of employer with corporate brand will yield better success. Every employer brand is an investment that should demonstrate a return comparable to other forms of business investment. It is suggested that the company should plan its strategies keeping in view the different age groups and their preference and choices. Airtel should plan its strategies to improve international career opportunities for its employees. As quality of the product is considered

the most important factor for defining a brand, hence the company should focus on improving the quality of the product. Media and advertisements is considered as the most preferred communication channel for employer attractiveness, hence the company should focus on designing attractive and innovative advertisements so as to be considered as the most attractive employer. The company should also focus on its CSR activities and should highlight among the employees what it is doing for the society. The effective management and leadership strategies should be implemented to keep the employees motivated.

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