

# Re-Imagining the Workplace through Employer Branding in the New Normal

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## Abstract

In today's scenario getting a job is the most challenging task & finding the most suitable candidate for a particular job is far more challenging. In this present covid 19 situations companies have learnt to sustain with the turbulence created by these uncertain Situations.

The paper focuses on the ways of building the employer branding by ways of internal marketing as well as external marketing. The paper also focuses on the redefining the EVP (Employer Value Proposition). It also lays emphasis on effective leadership that needs to be demonstrated at various levels across the organisation.

The other aspects of marketing which will also add value to the employer branding concept has been discussed in this paper. The workplace has been redefined in this covid 19 situation across the world and the companies are expected to bounce back to normalcy in the upcoming months. The paper highlights the necessity for changes in the company's HR policies in-order to create a sustainable future with a special focus on health & safety aspects as well.

This paper throws light on the new aspects of employer branding which seeks attention in these testing times and give some suggestions for organisations to cope up in the new normal.

Keywords: Employer branding, internal branding, external branding, strategic management, EVP (Employer Value Proposition)

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## Introduction

In the uncertain situation like the pandemic the companies needs to be proactive in order to sustain in the business. They have to be wise enough in choosing whether the pandemic creates an opportunity or it's a bane in disguise. If the organisation decides to layoff the organisation should be clear and transparent in their communication. For example: Airbnb & Marriott chose to lay off their employees, when they were clear and transparent in the communication, the damage caused by laying off of the employees to the employer branding is minimised. While Walmart considered it as a huge opportunity, they increased their employee strength by 150000 employees in order to support the overburdened existing employees. This is an example of positive employer branding in the tough times.

This paper highlights on the ways to build positive employer branding in times of uncertainty in business specifically during the pandemic.

The objective of the research is to understand and suggest the various ways of creating positive impact on the employer branding in an uncertain situation. It also aims at minimising the negative impact on employer branding in these testing times.

### **Need of the Study**

In the pandemic situation, it is essential to consider the health and safety of the employees. Hence, most of the companies chose to work from home to enable the safety of employees. There is a need to understand the prospects of employer branding in these uncertain situations. This paper tries to understand the prospects of employer branding and the new working style with the help of theoretical support.

### **Scope for Future Study**

It will be interesting to understand whether there is any change in employer branding on a long-term basis in a situation such as the pandemic/organisation's financial crisis etc., In addition there is a scope to understand the employer value proposition which is very essential for employer branding in the bottom top approach through empirical research.

This will eventually give an idea to employers about the employee's vision & their interests in developing a sustainable employer branding initiative.

### **Research Methodology**

The research methodology used in this study is the descriptive research, the reviews collected from the previously published researches has been compiled and used as a supportive document for concluding the research paper.

### **Review of Literature**

A.Dabirian et al., (2019) reinforces that the employees care about the same benefits whether they are potential, current or existing employees. Employer branding is an essential tool to attract & retain the talented employees. The employer branding assumed by potential; current & former employees express an organisation as “a great place to work”.

Liad Bareket et al., (2019) reiterates that as per the current market trend the organisations are expected to be aware of the fact that both prospective employees (candidates) & the employees are an important target of employee branding activities, aiming at campaigning as a “great place of work”. Conducting programs where employee's family are

invited to visit the work place, granting educational scholarship to promote higher education among employees & their family members & providing learning and development activities among employees can create a sense of pride & job satisfaction.

Dabirian et al., (2019) reiterates that in today's fast paced world the managers can mine their data of their employees regarding employer reviews and understand the perceived attractiveness of their employer as a brand.

Maheshwari et al (2017) suggest that employer branding has to be seen as an important attribute by both human resource management & marketing strategies in order to facilitate organisations to attract & retain key talents. Employer branding targets has to be shared among HR & marketing directors in order for HR marketing philosophies to become part of company's culture.

Dabirian et al (2017) articulates that employer branding through crowd sourced platforms offers immense opportunities to become a great to work & also to market themselves. It allows the managers to understand about what the employees are saying about the organisation. Thus, these organisations witness improved employee satisfaction & attracts the best talent far ahead of the competition.

Singh et al., (2014) articulates that currently the employees have become opportunistic i.e they make best use of the opportunity and move from one company to another. Hence, retaining such a talent would be a great challenge.

Menges et al., (2011) describes that positive affective climate represents the collective positive employee emotions and has been defined as “the shared effect within an organisation.

Lodberg (2011) reiterates that the existing workforce is getting older and may retire soon while the new workforce may take charge. The new challenge faced by the firms is that the retention of new generation workforce as they have a tendency to change job very often.

Van Mossevelde (2010) states that Employer branding is a contemporary priority in the personal administration that is gaining momentum in the corporate world. There are 5 reasons behind this, they are

1. There is acute shortage of skilled labour in the market.
2. The organisation is under pressure to perform more with less resources.
3. Growth & profit-making ability of the company
4. The popularity of the company as a brand

## 5. Strength of a company.

Xia et al (2010) articulates that an organisation with greater employer branding motivates the employee to perform more and better. This improves the employees job satisfaction, employee engagement, productivity and employee efficiency.

Lievens et al (2007) states that in the digital era where the information's are readily available, there is a shift in the recruitment trends of the business. It is the combination of the uniqueness, attractiveness, individuality which forms distinctive employer branding. The organisation prefers to tap the top talent by a more attractive brand image. Also, by confirming that the build in brand image is constant with the employee's perception of the identity of the organisation.

DelVecchio et al (2007) in a recent study conducted recently was extending the marketing concept of branding to human resource concept of employer branding. They have identified that brands play an important role in job choice. This study gains importance as brands goes beyond the marketing concept and adopts itself well into the concepts of human resources.

Hulberg et al (2006) reiterates that the new corporate branding faces new challenges that are not precisely answered by traditional marketing framework. There is also a need to understand that employee behaviour is in correlation with the brand performance.

Martin et al (2005) emphasises that benchmarking is now considered as a "central HR and business imperative". This strategy however has two defects: first being, the employer brand alone cannot reflect that of organisational value. It provides no basis for aligning the employee's behaviour with that of the organisational value. Secondly the research on which the blueprint was mainly based on the criteria of potential employees. However, the corporate branding can be understood by the behaviour of current employees. Marketers also need to understand what makes an employer branding more attractive.

Backhaus et al (2004) reiterates that organisations are now preferring to apply the principles of branding to the strategic human resource management, where the same concept is applied by placing employee in the place of

customer, which is used to distinguish between organisations by inspiring, engaging and delighting the existing employees and the potential employees. By this way it is assumed that the war for talent is greatly reduced.

Collins et al (2001) reinforces that in today's scenario, competitive organisations require a quality talent acquisition & talent retention principle that has become vital and has become the reason for success of any organisation. It is evident that human resource is the pillar of any organisation.

Cappelli et al (2000) reiterates that organization's success depends entirely on its competent workforce. Hence, it's important for organizations to review its human resource policies and constantly build employee friendly policies that facilitates employee retention to a great extent.

According to Barber et al (1998) recruitment process has 3 major stages. First being the potential candidate applying for the job. This is the most important stage of talent acquisition where the brand plays an important role. The brand image urges the potential candidate to apply for that particular job. While the other steps involve the candidate participates in the selection process & the third stage is the acceptance offer. Though all these stages are significant, attracting the best talented pool is the most important part & that's where employer branding plays an important role.

Ambler et al (1996) says that "Employer branding can be defined as the combination of functional, Economic and psychological takeaways given by the employer & it is directly perceived as the benefit from the employing company."

### **Pandemic Situation an Analysis**

During this pandemic situation, the position which adds more value to the business has been retained, while most organisations have closed the supportive and less value-added positions. This created a kind of panic among the employees.

While the other scenario shows the most talented employees are job hopping using these uncertainties. It really becomes tough for the employer to build and sustain a brand during this pandemic situation.

## EMPLOYER BRANDING CHART

Figure-1: Employer Branding Cycle



The Figure1 depicts the Employer branding cycle, it starts with the employer value proposition. The organisation first has to create a value differentiator for the organisation, this is important in the context that every organisation in a particular domain has the same set of working conditions. Hence a clear value differentiator is essential.

### Employer Value Proposition (evp)

Then, these values have to be communicated to the existing employees through internal marketing. Based on these value differentiators the employer value proposition is arrived.

This Employer value proposition which comes from the management to the employees is the TOP- DOWN approach, whereas there is one more approach where the

employee is taken into consideration by obtaining his/her views about what's their perception of a perfect organisation & how they wanted to contribute for the success of the organisation, with the help of these questions we come to know the perceptions and interests of the employees. This is called BOTTOM -UP approach.

While the former is very traditional in nature the latter is an emerging concept.

### Shift In The Paradigm

The concept of employer branding is not just viewed as the image of the brand alone, whereas it is the collective image of the brand, its performance, management style, commitment of the top leadership and the employer's personal brand value.

## LEADERSHIPSTYLE

In uncertain situations like that of a pandemic, the corporate leadership has been looked upon by its employees. It's a good gesture to show solidarity with the employees and retain them as much as possible. Such good gestures improve the brand value of the product as well as that of the employer branding. Current employees and the prospective employees are watching the steps taken by the management in these uncertain situations. A small gesture of care & empathy from the leadership will take a long way in the employer branding process.

## PRACTICALIMPLICATIONS

There is a need for change in the HR policies as the business grows & when there is a change in the demography of the business. In this millennium almost all companies started hiring cross cultural professionals, hence the HR policies could be framed such that it is inclusive of the diversities of culture. It should also consider the other benefits such as Health & safety of employees with a more enhanced allowances/benefits/packages etc., during the pandemic

The HR policies could be revised as per the change in business as well as the change in the perspective of the workforce.

## THEORETICALIMPLICATIONS

Irrespective of the pandemic situations, those companies which are strong in internal marketing and also practice what they preach in the external marketing survive well in the business. The organisations should strive their best to perform well in both internal & external marketing. The greater the positive correlation between the internal & external marketing the greater the brand image of the company.

The pandemic situation has taught us that irrespective of the performance of the business, the employee who is one of the pillars of the organisation has to be taken care of. Many companies have introduced pay cuts from top to bottom of the corporate ladder instead of lay-offs and unnecessary terminations. This is a good sign and will have a positive impact on the Employer branding.

The HRs of many companies have devised engagement policies in order to retain the employees where as companies such as Walmart has utilised the opportunity to grow.

## LIMITATIONS

This is a descriptive study and conclusions are based only on the review of literatures.

The study was conceptual in nature. An empirical approach

would add much value to the study.

The study does not cover the empirical research pertaining to the research topic. We may get much more interesting findings if the research is carried out with the help of a properly designed empirical research.

## CONCLUSION:

There was a time before the advent of the pandemic that work from home is not a part of many organisation's HR policies. They considered it as a breach of security.

It has been understood from the COVID 19 scenario that in order to sustain in business organisations should trust its employees and allow them to work remotely. This ensured that many working women work from home which also brought them work life balance. Its even applicable for the working men, they could now spend more time with their family.

Its need of the hour for the organisations to gear to the demands of the current and post covid situations.

When the pandemic ends, the market will be slowly opening up for business. When this business grows, there is much need for fresh recruitments to happen. The employees and prospective employees will remember the welfare measures taken by the management. This will create positive mindset among the employees and prospective employees which will influence them either to re-join or join the organisation.

In this digital era, the company's welfare and engagement activities are very much transparent. Employees are connected through social media such as LinkedIn, Glass door etc., where they share information about employers, which again add value to the employer branding. Hence, a positive employer branding will ensure the success of an organisation.

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