

Employer Branding and Its Dimensions: A Pilot Study in Higher Educational Institutions of Pakistan

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Abstract

The purpose of this paper is a pilot assessment to determine the validity and reliability of the instrument of employer branding dimensions namely training and development, employer brand reputation, work life balance and organization culture developed by Tanwar and Prasad (2016). The survey approach was used to collect response through 61 usable questionnaires from the academic staff of higher educational institutions located in Punjab which is largest populated province of Pakistan. The present study used the simple random sampling method in data collection. Then, the validity and reliability of items of employer branding dimensions were assessed through expert's opinions both from academicians and practitioners and also from the small size sample data. The SPSS v20 was used to test the reliability in this study. Hence, the results of pilot study reveals that, the Cronbach's alpha values of all constructs are above than 0.80, so it can establish that all the constructs of employer branding are reliable and no need to remove any item.

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INTRODUCTION

Brand management is not a new concept for most organizations it has a significant importance; the brands are most important intangible assets of an organization (Keller, 2006). The definition of a brand recognized by American Marketing Association is a “ name, sign, term, symbol, design, or a combination of all of them, envisioned to identity of the goods and services of a seller, to create differentiation from their competitors’ goods and services (Kotler and Keller 2006:274). Organizations invested billions of dollars in building, developing and maintaining the brands. In brand management the consumer’s behavior towards brands and contribution in brand success attained the attention of researchers (Aaker 1996; Arasli & kayaman 2007; Keller 1993; Kim & Kim 2004). The main focus of academia and practice towards the outcome of consumer based brand marketing rather than other stakeholders. Traditionally in past time branding efforts exclusively studied in consumer context for development of corporate and product brands to attract and retain the consumers. But now the limitations of branding are not only for products. Recently the branding strategies applied in human resource management, even organizations resorting to branding for attracting and retaining the best talent (Mosley, 2015). Recent report highlighted that talent shortage in services sector is an alarming and urged employer to retain the best talent to compete in this new war for talent (Mosley, 2015). Now the employers realized that to sustain in new war for talent, is the appropriate way to become attractive in employment market is by having strong, distinguishable and clear employer brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Berthon et al., 2005; Born & Kang, 2015; Rampl & Kenning, 2014; Gozukara & Hatipoglu, 2016; Kucherov & Samokish, 2016). Similarly the aim of consumer brand is to attract and retain the consumers by developing consumer brand loyalty, in the same way the aim of employer brand is to attract and retain the best talent by developing employee brand loyalty.

The objective of this study is a pilot assessment to determine the validity and reliability

of the instrument of employer branding dimensions used in this study. Sekaran and Bougie (2016) described that the reliability test measures the scale’s ability to describe error free and consistent results, while validity test measures the degree to which an instrument is assessing what it should be measuring. Hence the present study produced results of a pilot study about the employer branding dimensions in Pakistani context, which will enable the practitioners and researchers in employer branding area to predict prospective issues and take corrective actions while conducting the actual research.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The employer branding concept was introduced almost before two decades but still considered as hottest strategy for talent attraction and retention (Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). The employer branding concept in talent management is still in developing stage, there is no a single indication that the concept of employer branding passing fad as a part of past (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). The conceptual foundation of employer brand concept is basically derived from literature of brand marketing. In brand marketing literature in the context of consumer brand marketing, a product brand provides to consumers a package of functional, economical and psychological benefits to attract and retain the customers. Likewise this concept applied in employment market, similar to corporate brand, the employer brand also provides a package of functional, economical and psychological benefits to their employees to attract and retain them (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Tanwar & Prasad, 2017). According to Ambler and barrow (1996), who introduced the employer brand term by emerging the human resource management and brand marketing concepts, defined employer brand as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company” (p. 18). The existing literature on employer branding much focused on potential employees (Alniacik, Alniacik, Eart & Akcin, 2014; Ambler & barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Berthon et al., 2005; Born & Kang, 2015; Rampl & Kenning,

2014; Shaker & Ahmed, 2014; Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013). The study of Maxwell and Knox (2009) stated that, the desired outcomes of employer branding is only attained, if it is attractive or employer of choice for current or existing employees. In employer branding literature there is paucity of research in the context of current employees (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). Therefore, the current study conceptualised the employer branding outcomes in context of existing employees.

Dimensions of employer branding practices

Although the organizations should ascertain the compelling and attractive attributes while strong employer brand development which attract the potential and retain the existing employees (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). And the employer brand attributes should be rooted with the organization’s culture. For example, among the targeted audience of employer brand, organizations should endorse those attributes such as training and development, attractive compensation, opportunities for career growth and appropriate work life balance (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). During studying the employer

branding dimensional structure, numerable literature on employer brand has focused “recruitment” aspect in the perspective of potential employees while developing of its dimensions (Tanwar and Prasad, 2016). According to the studies of Maxwell and Knox (2009), Lievens et al., (2007), Edwards (2010) and Tanwar and Prasad, (2016) stated that the potential employees and current employees have different perception regarding the employer brand. Maxwell and Knox (2009) suggested that the academicians should focus on empirical research while studying the dimensions of employer branding from the existing employees perspective and also identify its consequences and influences on employee’s attitudes. The antecedents or dimensions are those specific conditions and factors which has influencing ability on specific phenomenon or behavior (Saks, 2006). Previous literature highlighted various dimensional structures majority studies conducted for the perspective of potential employees (Berthon et al., 2005; Kucherov & Smokish, 2016; Sivertzen, Nilsen & Olafsen, 2013; Schlager, Bodderas, Maas & Cachelin, 2011).

Table 1. Employer branding dimensions

Authors	Dimensions	Nature of study	Context of Study
Ambler and Barrow (1996)	Functional value Economic value Psychological Value Development Economic	Conceptual	Potential employees
Berthon et al., (2005)	Application Social Interest Employer brand awareness Employer brand association	Quantitative	Potential employees
Kucherov and Smokish (2016)	Employer brand loyalty Perceived employment experience	Quantitative	Potential employees
Sivertzen, Nilsen and Olafsen (2013)	Interest value Social value Economic value Development value Application value Economic value	Quantitative	Potential employees
Schlager, Bodderas, Maas and Cachelin (2011)	Diversity value Reputation value Social value Development value	Quantitative	Potential employees
Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)	Organizational identity	Conceptual	Potential employees and

	Organizational culture		existing employees
	Training and development		
	Work life balance		
Tanwar and Prasad (2016)	CSR	Quantitative	Existing employees
	Organizational culture		
	Diversity		
	Reputation		

Source: Own researcher

By review of literature enlightened that the majority studies on employer branding were conducted in context of employer attractiveness for prospective employees. Maxwell and Knox (2009) stated that the methods and dimensions while studying employer brand attractiveness in prospective employee's context cannot appropriate to apply for studying employer branding in current employee's perspective. Therefore, the current study conducted in context of employer branding practices on current employees that's why the present study used dimensions of employer branding are namely training and development, employer brand reputation, work life balance and organization culture these dimensions studied by the study of Tanwar and Prasad, (2016). The reason behind adapting dimensions from the study of Tanwar and Prasad (2016) is that this study seems similar in context because that study also conducted employer branding efforts on existing employees.

Training and development attains more attention of academicians while discussion on dimensions of employer branding in recruitment of prospective employees context and development of existing employees context (Cable & Graham, 2000; Lievens, Hoye & Schreurs, 2005; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). Berthon et al., (2005) stated development value as dimension of employer brand which contains better training opportunities and personal developments for employees in the organization. According to Mcleod (2007) discussed that the flexibility in working hours and development opportunities at work place transforms the employer as the employer of choice for the potential and current employees. The study of Wilden et al. (2010) stated that the prospective employees give more significance to development opportunities when they evaluating the employer. Furthermore, the study of Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012) examined that the organizations having strong employer brand made heavy investments on

HR training and developments programs for employees. Thus the training and development programs have significant positive relationship with employer branding (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

The organizations more concerned about training and development practices and considered as an integral part which provides the platform to spread awareness among employees about organization and products (Biech, 2008). Tanwar and Prasad (2016) stated that the training and developments practices by organization also enhance the capability of skilled work force. Number of studies (Choo and Bowley, 2007; Mariani et al., 2013; Traut et al., 2000; Thacker and Holl, 2008; Tanwar & Prasad, 2016) examined the direct positive link between training and development with employee satisfaction which leads towards employee's intention to stay with organization or employee loyalty with organization's brand. The studies of Armstrong (2009), Wagner (2000), Shelton (2001) and Tanwar and Prasad (2016) also emphasized that the training and development practices considered as strong indicator of employer branding practices ultimately leads towards employee satisfaction, commitment and loyalty.

The employer brand reputation of an organization always seems as significant asset for organization to avail competitive advantage in market place. Sutherland et al., (2002) stated that the reputation helps the employer to become the employer of choice. The reputation conceptualized as cognition based on beliefs, knowledge and impressions about organization's brand residing in stakeholder's mind (Musteen, Datta & Kemmerer, 2010; Rindova, Williamson & Petkova, 2010). The organizational reputation is considered as crucial asset of the organization which has significant positive influences outcome variables in customer context such as customer loyalty (Eberl and Schwaiger, 2005; Rose and Thomsen, 2004).

Similarly, the concept applied to other stake holders of organization like employees. The reputation of organization perceived by employees pertains the employee's understandings about how others external stakeholders have perception about their employer (Helm, 2011). According to the study of Carmeli (2005) stated that employees perception about how reputable their organization based on perceptions of external stakeholders, it might be difference between employees judgments about what their organization's brand reputed publicly and actual external perceptions. The existing literature on reputation in the context of workforce-related factors including innumerable perspectives such as perception of potential employee use to determine the employer attractiveness (Cable and Graham, 2000; Cable and Turban, 2003; Lemmink, Schuijf and Streukens, 2003), perceived reputation by employee also linked with employee identification (Bartels et al., 2007; Smidts, Pruyn & van Riel, 2001), employee satisfaction (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016), employee loyalty in context of citizenship behavior (Niehoff, 2004; Helm, 2011). The study of Moroko and Uncles (2005) considered reputation perceived by employees about their employer is crucial predictor of employer branding practices. Incorporating the employees perceived external reputation about their organization's brand with employer branding dimension would help the organization to achieve perpetuation (Moroko & Uncles, 2005).

The researchers gave more attention towards work life balance strategies as an important part of talent management. According to the studies of Barrow and Mosley (2011), Hudson (2005) discussed that the work life balance strategies enables the organizations to enhance their employer brand which leads towards employee retention. The work life balance strategies are the integral part of employer branding practices (Barrow & Mosley, 2011). The study of McDonald et al, (2005) stated that the work life balance is significant determinant of employee intention to stay with organization aside the factor of prestige and salary. Furthermore, the study of Hillebrandt and Ivens (2013) identified the work life balance as an important factor which affects the organization's employer brand. Tanwar and Prasad (2016) stated that employer image could be enhanced by the

making flexibility in working hours, proper work life balance influence the employee's intention to stay with organization.

According to Clark (2000) argue that the work life balance considered as appropriate balance between in the employee's professional and personal life. Existing literature highlighted the beneficial results between employee and employer while practicing work life balance practices (Cegarra- Leiva et al., 2012; Virick et al., 2007; Wang and Walumbwa, 2007; Wayne et al., 2004). The study of Hartel et al., (2007) identified various dimensions of work life balance including flexible working hours, job sharing, on site care facilities and parental leaves. Any intervention between employee's work and personal matters generates the discontentment between employee and employer relationship (Pasewark & Viator, 2006). The studies of Karatepe and Uludag (2007), Namasivayam and Zhao (2007) stated that the various components of work life balance have significant positive influence on job satisfaction and employee's commitment which leads towards employee's loyalty and intention to stay with organization.

The organizational culture defined as "a system of shared meaning of values held by members of an organization that distinguishes one organization from other" (Robbins, 2001). According to the study of Ravasi and Schultz (2006) defined the organizational culture as a "set of assumptions that governs what happens in the organization by properly defining appropriate behavior for different situations" (p. 24). The organizational culture attains the academicians' attention in the perspective of human resource management. According to the study of Odom et al., (1990), the organizational culture enhances the employee's behavior and attitude. The crucial task for practitioners is to develop and maintain supportive and productive organizational culture which influences the quality of work life of employee. Gifford et al., (2002) argued that the productive and supportive organizational culture enhances the employee's commitment and loyalty with the organization's brand.

The study of Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) conceptualized the organizational culture as the predictor of employer branding and examined the

significant positive relationship between employer branding and organizational culture. Furthermore, the organizational culture leads to enhance the employee's sense of loyalty with the employer brand (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Therefore the current study incorporate the organizational culture as the striking dimension of employer branding practices adopted from the study of Tanwar and Prasad (2016).

METHODS

The essential part of any research is measurement scale or instrumentation without data collection to answer the research question and achieve the research objective seems impossible (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). In social sciences research the central issue is what measurement scales or instruments to be used to what extent the instrument has good psychometric properties (i.e. both reliable and valid). The developing own measurement items or instruments is rigorous process. The use of established measures is a common practice amongst social researchers. The current study adapts measurement scale from the study of Tanwar and Prasad (2016) which seems relevant to current study because both studies in the context of current employees. The research model consists of four employer branding dimensions namely, (1) training and development (2) employer brand reputation (3) work life balance (4) organizational culture. The current study used seven point likert scales for all instruments/items. The likert scale seems more appropriate for the present study. According to Krosnick and Fabrigar (1997) the five and seven point liker scale is more reliable than lower or higher scales and without mid-point can enhance the errors in measurement. Similarly Sauro, (2010) stated that seven likert scale is little better rather than five point likert scales. For the purpose of study all items gauged on a seven-point Likert type scale (Strongly disagree =1; Disagree=2; Somewhat disagree=3; Neither agree or disagree (Neutral) =4; Somewhat agree = 5; Agree = 6; Strongly agree = 7). Accordingly, total of 100 questionnaires were randomly distributed personally to the academic staff of private higher educational institutions in Pakistan. Out of the 100 questionnaires 73 were received, and 12 of them

were incomplete, so only 61 questionnaires were usable for pilot study. Finally, SPSS v20 was used to test the reliability in this study.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Validity test

The validity describes the legitimacy and trustworthiness of measures or constructs (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). According to Bordens and Abbott (2011) validity of item/measure express about what extent or length, it measures about what desired to measure. Likewise, validity termed as the degree to which the specific item/measure represents the concept of the study and also eliminates any non-random and systematic errors. According to Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson (2010) research validity is all about how to a level, a concept is defined by a certain items/measures. Therefore, in the present study the validity tests conducted to certify and ensure that the measures/items what it is desired for.

Reliability test

The similar results generate by measurements termed as reliable (Creswell, 2009). Hammersley, (1987) stated that the reliability is "achieving consistent results using the same technique". The reliability test measures that same trait of measure/item through same method (Hammersley, 1987). As per the study of Denscombe (2003), for the assessment of consistency among the measurements/items of variables a reliable measurement is essential. Reliability test also describes about variables is consistent in what it is intended to measure (Hair et al., 2009). The reliability of instruments/items also describes to the extent to which the measure does not contain random error (Singleton & Straits, 2005). According to Churchill (1979) the reliability coefficient computation is (cronbach alphas), which is most common approach among the researchers (Cronbach, 1951; Nunnally, 1978). Generally, the value of cronbach alpha above than 0.70 is acceptable (Sekaran, 2006; Nunnally & Berstein, 1994; Robinson et al., 1991). The study of Robinson et al (1991) stated that in exploratory research the value of cronbach alpha can decrease up to 0.60. The pilot study results shows the

Cronbach's alpha values of all constructs are above than 0.80, so it can establish that all the constructs of employer branding are reliable and no need to remove any item.

Table 2. Reliability Test Construct

Constructs	No. of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Employer Brand Reputation	7	0.918
Organization Culture	5	0.889
Training & Development	6	0.895
Work Life Balance	5	0.843

CONCLUSION

The purpose of the present paper was to conduct the pilot study to check the validity and reliability of the items of employer branding dimensions namely training and development, employer brand reputation, work life balance and organization culture. The pilot study results shows the Cronbach's alpha values of all constructs are above than 0.80, so it can establish that all the constructs of employer branding are reliable and no need to remove any item. Thus the present study reveals that the all instruments of employer branding practices are highly reliable.

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