

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, ECONOMICS & MANAGEMENT

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A STUDY ON IDENTIFICATION OF TOP FACTORS IMPACTING EMPLOYER BRANDING IN IT MULTINATIONALS IN INDIA & ITS STRATEGIC IMPLICATIONS

**DR. SONAL SHREE
ASST. PROFESSOR**

**SYMBIOSIS INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
SYMBIOSIS KNOWLEDGE VILLAGE
LAVALE**

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ALUMNA**

**SYMBIOSIS INSTITUTE OF BUSINESS MANAGEMENT
SYMBIOSIS KNOWLEDGE VILLAGE
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ABSTRACT

Objective: The objective of this paper is to identify top factors that contribute towards effective employer branding of IT multinational companies in India from the perspective of current employees & potential hires. **Methodology:** For collection of data, an online questionnaire was administered. 200 employees of three IT companies in Pune & Bangalore and 200 final year engineering students in two Pune based engineering colleges were sent the questionnaire for the survey out of which the completed and accepted questionnaire were 78 for the former and 92 for the students. The survey findings have been analyzed on SPSS 22.0 for identification of top factors through factor analysis. Secondary data was mainly collected from online databases like Proquest, Ebscohost & other internet resources. **Findings:** A comparative analysis on the perspectives of potential hires, the final year engineering students, and the current employees of three IT multinationals has brought out a definite number of prominent factors responsible for effective employer branding of IT companies in India. The top three factors identified were – culture, career path & international opportunities. **Limitations:** Due to an average sample size, the study might not be an accurate representation of the population. However, it can be taken as a pilot study and more research with a much greater sample size can be undertaken to substantiate its claims.

KEYWORDS

employer branding, factors, prospective IT employee's perception, IT companies.

INTRODUCTION

Employer branding is the creation of a unique identity of a company, in order to make it a desirable employer for prospective hires (Backhaus & Tikko, 2004). It means the reputation of an organization as an employer. This is a field fast gaining attention which studies and works towards building organization's image as employer of choice and hence helps in attracting talent (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Adler and Barrow first coined the term 'Employer Branding' in 1996, and defined the term as "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company". As described by Adler and Barrow (1996), employer branding is an integrated brand management which serves to project an organization as a brand liked by customers and prospective employees with best human resource practices. They talked about the impact of organizational culture and value on employer branding.

Employer branding helps create a positive image of an organization, thus sending out the right message to the current and prospective employees (Smedley, 2007). Brand image of a company in terms of performance, social responsibility, work culture and its proposition for its employees often influences the future employee's decision of applying to and joining the company. A well-aimed employer branding campaign often ensures the availability of talent pool for the company (Collins & Stevens, 2002; Slaughter et al, 2004, Christopher Mossevelde, 2010) and also shapes their anticipations about their employment (Livens & Highhouse, 2003).

IT SECTOR & EMPLOYER BRANDING

The IT sector has consistently emerged as the most popular sector to potential job seekers, men (69%) and women (70%) alike (Randstad, 2015). The following table shows the ranking:

TABLE 1.1

	2015	2014
1. IT	56%	56%
2. technology	52% ▲	47%
3. life sciences	51% ▲	49%
4. automotive	50% ▲	47%
5. industrial	50% ▲	45%
6. consulting	49%	48%
7. FMCG	47% ▲	44%
8. financial services	43% ▲	40%
9. chemical	42% ▲	39%
10. construction	42%	40%
11. hospitality	41%	40%
12. services	40%	39%
13. logistics	38%	38%
14. retail	36% ▲	34%
15. energy & utilities	35% ▼	37%

(*) global sectors including approx. 6,000 companies surveyed worldwide

(Source: Randstad 2015 International Insights on Employer Branding)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Literature review brings up factors like compensation & benefits, work-life balance, nature of business, talent management activities in an organization, training & learning opportunities, career development, leadership, international opportunities to be among some of the most important factors for a good employer branding strategy. Corporate Social Responsibility of late has also been gaining ground. On the basis of secondary research, the following thirteen important factors have been identified as crucial factors which impact employer branding as far as the IT sector is concerned:

TABLE 1.2: LITERATURE REVIEW FOR IDENTIFYING FACTORS

Factor	Reference
Culture	Hatch and Schultz (2001), Barrow,S. &Adler.T (2006) ,
Work Environment	Biswas and Varma (2007)
Career Development Opportunities	Cable and Graham (2000)
Leadership Capability	Martin and Hetrick (2005)
Corporate Social Responsibility	Freeman and Albinger (2000), Edwards, (2005); Awang and Jusoff (2009), Backhaus et al., (2002)
International Opportunities	Corporate Leadership Council(2006) Attracting & Retaining Critical Talent Segments (Volume III)
Superior Help	Corporate Leadership Council(2006) Employee Value Proposition Redesign
Nature of Role	Barrow,S. &Adler.T (2006)
Work Life Balance	Stigler(1962), Carless and Wintle, (2007)
Word of Mouth	Wadee, Z. (2012) Harnessing the Power of Word of mouth for Employer Branding
Diversity	Gatrell& Swan (2008); Thomas, D.A.(2004)
Nature of Business	Burman et al., 2008
Availability of Training	Rhebergen and Wognum(1997); Armstrong-Stassen &Templer, (2005)

IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

To find a definite number of prominent factors responsible for effective employer branding of IT companies in India & identify the most prominent ones. Three multinational IT companies were selected for the study.

Employer branding initiatives of the Chosen IT Multinationals

Company A is Bangalore based and has spread its branches across 50 countries since its inception. It is generally well known for a very robust training program for fresh campus hires. It provides its clientele service in business technology consulting, IT products and outsourcing.

- Awards - Won the Asia’s Best Employer Brand Award twice.
- Global Recruitment –hires from local colleges, trains and deploys to home locations across the globe.
- Employee Engagement –caters to different states and cultures and hosts various events such as celebration of local festivals, etc.
- Leadership Institute – provides behavioural, simulated as well as conceptual training for leadership roles.
- Career Development – provides vertical, horizontal as well as cross functional growth to star performers.
- Social Work Foundation –the company is constantly active for various causes like education, healthcare, arts and empowerment across different underdeveloped states in India.

(Uma S, Shruthi VK, Smita M Gaikwad, 2013)

Company B is Dublin, Ireland based and has been established for 25 years. Its subsidiary in India is a listed company in itself now. It boasts of superior work culture and market leader compensation strategy. It provides management consulting to clients, along with the IT services.

- Global Referral System – the referral system works globally, so an Indian citizen can refer an American for a job in the subsidiary of the parent company
- Online Recruitment –targets GEN Z through their medium of recruitment; recruits heavily through social media
- International Opportunities – provides opportunities for rotational stints across various countries
- Work Life Balance – provides flexible work plans to suit employee needs
- Autonomy – the culture in this company supports complete autonomy and empowers all employee with decision making authority
- Hands on Hiring – hires from remote locations; breaks stereotypes in hiring and recruits as per requirement and availability

(Company Corporate Citizenship Report, 2008 - 2009)

Company C is also headquartered in Bangalore. It is the IT arm of a conglomerate established almost 80 years ago. The IT wing is relatively recent addition to the conglomerate, but it has managed to make a name for itself in a short span of time. It provides IT services and consulting to its clients.

- Compensation Package – gives a choice of flexible compensation at par with market, for each employee so that the compensation package suits the needs of all employees.
- Focus on Women Leadership – various programs aimed specifically at female talent development at all levels in the company.
- Superior Culture – special emphasis on company values; leadership team displays the values and lead by example.
- Social Responsibility – an 80-year-old foundation set up in the name of the founding father which supports charities for various causes.

(Source: Company Website)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data Collection: Two web based questionnaire were prepared & sent to:

- employees of three prominent IT Multinational companies in India to understand the concept from the perspective of the current employees of these companies,
- final year students of Pune based engineering colleges to know & understand the perspective of potential hires for these IT companies.

The target respondents were 200 current employees of these IT companies & 200 final year engineering students who were sent online questionnaire for the survey out of which the completed and accepted responses were 92 for final year engineering students and 78 for the IT employees. 13 factors were identified from review of literature and this research work was considered to suffice as pilot survey to check the validity and authenticity of factors. Researcher performed factor analysis on SPSS 22 for data reduction & identification of the top factors crucial for employer branding. The extraction method used was principle component analysis.

RESULTS & DISCUSSIONS

TABLE 2: FACTOR ANALYSIS

	Rotated Component Matrix ^a								
	Component								
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
VAR0001	.627	.639	.027	.206	-.150	.173	.169	.413	.025
VAR0002	.768	.432	.345	.023	-.205	.129	.058	.162	-.033
VAR0003	.419	.756	.215	.125	.105	.083	-.103	-.040	.022
VAR0004	.193	.785	.044	.342	.327	.456	.112	.128	-.003
VAR0005	.106	.205	.338	.052	.111	.072	-.128	-.018	-.143
VAR00006	.768	.135	.017	.207	.264	.174	.134	.284	.063
VAR00007	.146	.126	-.020	.413	.238	-.246	.021	.237	.316
VAR00008	.632	.033	-.032	-.063	-.038	-.105	.034	.451	.178
VAR00005	.228	-.025	-.034	-.156	.271	.228	.020	.136	.054
VAR00006	-.018	.205	.026	.429	.425	.512	.138	-.005	-.232
VAR00007	-.056	-.031	.396	.056	.604	.098	.078	-.035	-.006
VAR00008	.483	.108	.247	.348	.027	.232	.545	-.068	-.224
VAR00009	.826	.356	.036	.286	.034	-.037	.030	.472	-.031
VAR00010	.043	.364	.302	.433	.192	-.168	-.043	.215	.134
VAR00011	.714	.543	.225	.173	.383	.022	-.087	.012	-.065
VAR00012	.408	.512	.037	.035	.137	-.003	-.069	-.123	.234
VAR00013	.483	.106	-.129	-.035	.340	-.143	.256	-.017	-.043
VAR00014	.291	.101	-.027	-.022	-.175	.063	.064	-.005	.054
VAR00015	.428	-.128	-.215	.574	-.343	.316	.823	.312	-.025
VAR00016	.178	-.072	.112	.036	.032	.129	.329	.515	-.012
VAR00017	.262	.035	.504	-.008	-.092	.054	.129	.461	.463
VAR00018	.011	.045	.402	.306	.165	.050	.785	-.165	.023
VAR00019	-.066	.018	-.175	-.259	-.235	-.066	.235	.056	.345
VAR00020	.231	.127	-.030	-.032	.054	.052	.283	.118	.480

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

Hence, top three components post factor analysis were identified on the basis of loadings and factors with similar loadings were grouped together under three heads.

- **Culture** (questions related to culture, values, superior help, work life balance, word of mouth and diversity showed a strong correlation and the name of these components was collectively chosen as Culture which influences all the other factors)
- **Career Growth** (Questions related to Talent management initiatives and career growth showed a strong correlation and the name of these components was collectively chosen as Career Growth which is driven by defined and robust talent management initiatives)
- **International Opportunities** (questions related to nature of role and international opportunities showed a strong correlation and the name of these components was chosen under the head International Opportunities, although nature of role will be considered crucial when looking for international opportunities)

TABLE 3

Top Factors	Correlated Factors	Variables	Cronbach Alpha
Culture	Culture	Var0001	0.964
	Values	Var0002	
	Superior Help	Var0006	
	Work Life Balance	Var0008	
	Word of Mouth	Var0009	
	Diversity	Var00011	
Career Growth	Talent Management Initiatives	Var0003	0.716
	Career Growth	Var0004	
International Opportunities	Nature of Role	Var00015	0.746
	International Opportunities	Var0018	

RECOMMENDATIONS

HR Practices for creating a great Culture

- **Work Life Balance** – Employers should understand the needs of its employees in regard to private life and emergencies. Many flexible work options such as job sharing, work from home and flexi – time can be implemented to provide employees with an opportunity to perform efficiently at their jobs while having ample time for their family and personal needs.
- **Concern for personal and professional development of employees** – Development programs such as personality building, executive education courses and skill development courses can be provided to the employees. This is a two – fold benefit to companies as well as the employees. Through better performance, the employees can feel more confident and engaged with their work, and the company benefits through their productivity. It also ensures loyalty of the employees.
- **Concern for the welfare of the employee and his/her family** – Providing childcare, healthcare and eldercare facilities to the employees sends out a message that the company cares for them in a holistic manner. The employee develops attachment to the company and creates good brand image of the company in his/her acquaintance circle. (*Oxford Brooks University, 2004*)
- **Well defined core values and their embodiment by leaders and other employees** – The Company can create a unique culture where employees daily live the core values of the company. The core values define what the beliefs of the organization are and the employee can then see whether or not he or she resonates with the ideology of the company. (*Susan M. Heathfield, Year Unknown*)
- **Induction and adaptation to the company culture** – A properly planned induction can help the employees adjust easily in the company and also reduce the time to productivity. This eases the transition of the employees from one job to another and helps him to adapt to the beliefs and values of the organization.
- **Defining employee role** – A well-defined employee role and his contribution to the success of the organization can instill in the employee a sense of achievement and accomplishment. “Employees are the brand ambassadors of the company” quoted Narayan Murthy, Ex – CEO of Infosys Technologies Limited, and a proud employee does his/her best to endorse his company’s image.
- **Superior – Subordinate Relationship** – A good relationship between employee and manager can do wonders for productivity. The autonomy given by managers to employees, the acknowledgement of contribution by employees and their participation in the decision making are some of the relational rewards that employees seek.

(*University of Auckland, 2011*)

HR PRACTICES FOR DEVELOPING CAREER PATH FOR EMPLOYEES

- **Internal and External Development Programs** – Personal Development Programs for each employee to chart his progress and plan his advance in the company can be one way to ensure a proper career path for the employees. These can be done externally as well by agencies who chart out open important positions in the company and also highlight the possible candidates for the same and the development plan to ensure that the candidates are ready for the job.
- **Examinations** – Support can be given to employees for preparation for any examinations they want to take, by providing leaves and study material as well as coaching facility. (*Saumya Bhattacharya, 2011*)
- **Further Studies** – Programs like executive MBA or advanced studies in specialized courses can be sponsored by the company for the employees who are aspiring for higher job roles and want to take the examinations in order to enhance their eligibility for the positions
- **Certifications** – Technical or non-technical certifications can be given to employees in order to prepare them for the career path they have chosen
- **On the Job Training** – Techniques such as mentoring, shadowing, job rotation and job enrichment can be used to expose employees to different job opportunities and roles that companies can provide to the employees. This can help them decide which way they want to progress in their career path. These methods can also be used to train the employee later in preparation for taking over the coveted job position.

(*University of Auckland, 2011*)

HR PRACTICES FOR PROVIDING INTERNATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES TO EMPLOYEES

- **Construction of a Mobility Pyramid** – According to this concept, employees should be divided on the basis of their mobility, that is, what is the extent to which they are willing to relocate. The mobility pyramid defines the terms Glopats, Globals, Regionals, Mobile Local Nationals and Rooted Local Nationals. It can be used to divide the employees into groups based on their choice of off base location assignments and the skills they are equipped with. (*John A. Quelch, 2007*)
- **Break “Local National” Glass Ceiling** – Taking a cue from the concepts of ethnocentrism, polycentricism and geocentricism, one of the best approaches by any company can be ensure no discrimination against people from different nationalities and ethnic groups. This can be done by building a truly diverse culture through sensitization modules, culture sensitive training and adaptation trainings. (*John A. Quelch, Helen Bloom, 1999*)

CONCLUSION: PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS & FUTURE RESEARCH

This study aimed at finding the factors which contribute to the development of a strong employer brand for an organization & it illustrates how great an impact the three determined factors, namely Culture, Career Path and International Opportunities, have on the Employer Brand of the chosen companies. Taking a cue from the small sample of respondents for this study, IT companies can make focused and consolidated efforts to strengthen their focus on these three dimensions by focusing on creation & cementing of a strong work culture; by planning and executing a well formed career path for employees and by providing international assignments to worthy candidates.

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