Employer Branding: The role of Social Media in Attracting and Retaining Talent "A study of Indian IT companies"

Amrita Clair

Research Scholar,
School of Management Studies, University of Hyderabad, INDIA.

ABSTRACT

Employer branding has risen in popularity due to the increased competition, globalization and lack of skilled talent. Employer branding is being used as a strategy for attracting, motivating and retaining staff. In order to propagate the Employer brand companies use multiple techniques to communicate its message to the target audience. These traditional methods like company brochure and website are not sufficient to meet the current talent demand. This has lead the firms to make use of social media as tool for propagating their Employer Brand. The increased popularity of using social networking websites can be attributed to the fact that firms are able to tap the passive candidates which is not possible in case of traditional recruitment practices and also communicating the employer brand to the existing employees. The paper aims at studying how social media is being used for enhancing the employer brand. This paper also focuses on the social media practices followed by Indian IT companies to attract and retain talent.

Keywords: Employer Brand, Recruitment, Retain, Social Media, Indian IT.

INTRODUCTION

The organizations are fighting the "war for talent", so as to stay ahead of competition and reap higher profits in order to survive in this global business environment. The role of skilled talent is very crucial as it will provide the firm an edge over their competitors, especially in the knowledge - intensive companies. Organisations are adopting various strategies for attracting and retaining employees. In this race for best talent, the firms are making use of their employer brand and social media for running their recruitment drives and conveying the brand message to its existing employees. Organisations use multiple marketing channels like brochures and corporate websites for propagating their Employer brand. These conventional techniques alone cannot meet the talent demand, so as to increase the talent pool organizations are making use of social networking sites.

The paper aims at studying how social media is being used for Employer Branding especially for attracting and retaining talent by Indian IT companies.

Employer Branding

The field of employer Branding has emerged from various discipline like organizational identity, corporate reputation, corporate communication, organisational image, culture and corporate branding. (Balmer, 2003) (Balmer J. A., 2006).The different perspectives through which the concept of employer Brand emerged has brought in confusion regarding how employer branding and their associated concepts like employer attractiveness can be defined. The increased interest in employer branding can be attributed to the demand for highly skilled talent due to the rapid growth of the service sector especially the Knowledge sector. At the same time the demographic and social factors have already reduced the available supply of these employees (Moroko & Uncles, 2008) .Due to skills, Mobility and confidence, employees have become aware of their rights and seek a better employment experience.

Employer branding supports the resource based view and human resource theory besides this it aims at creating an image of the firm as an "Employer of choice". (Backhaus and Tikoo 2004).Reputation of an organization also has an important role in developing competitive advantage. Employer Branding focuses on demands and aspirations of current employees (Internal employer brand) and potential employees (external employer brand).Employer Brand is a key component of the corporate brand, (Sponheuer, 2010). The employer brand needs to be aligned with the corporate brand in order to maintain a consistent brand image (Sponheuer, 2010) .This needs to be done as the customers can be potential employees at the same time (Grobe 2008 as cited in Sponheuer 2010).

Ambler and Barrow defined the employer brand as "the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company." "The main role of the employer brand is to provide a coherent framework for management to simplify and focus priorities, increase productivity and improve recruitment, retention and commitment." (Barrow, 2006).

Employer branding can be defined as "a specific form of managing corporate identities by creating, both within and outside the firm an image of the organization as a distinct and desirable employer… Employer branding has emerged from applying marketing principles to the field of personnel recruitment..." (Lievens, Van Hoye, & Anseel, 2007).

Sullivan (2004:1) defines Employer Brand as "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm".

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) state that organization make use of employer branding mainly for two reasons i.e. to project themselves as Great employers to work for or for promoting the company to the internal and external stakeholders. Employer branding is the most effective way for recruitment as it reduces the recruitment cost .The organizations after achieving the status of an "Employer of Choice", needs to spend less on recruitment advertisement , as the potential applicants get withdrawn to the organization as an when there is a job vacancy. (Taylor, 2014)

Employer branding helps in cutting down the recruitment cost, due to increased level of employee engagement. Keeping a side the cost of growing the organization. The cost of hiring a new employee is twice that of the salary of the employee who has left the organization. Decline in the staff turnover will provide a competitive edge to the organization. Strong employer brand provide higher level of employee retention.

Collins and Steven (2002) in their study showed that an organisation can improve its reputation or image by providing information on Job vacancy ads on Internet. In study conducted by Collins & Han, 2004, early recruitment practices , advertising and reputation have an impact on the applicant pool quality and quantity. (Collins and Hans 2004)

Employer Branding and Social Media

In order to recruit talent, organisation make use of various marketing channels like internet, newspapers and word of mouth. The internet provides the companies with opportunity to post job advertisement and information sharing about the new products and services offered by the company. The web also provides the employer with opportunity to connect with a wider talent pool. Social media is a valuable and cost effective tool for employer branding and recruiting. Social media play a key role in the recruitment process by branding the organization to potential applicants.(Sivertzen, Nilsen, & Olafsen, 2013). Employer Brand international highlighted the use of social media (58 percent) as an important tool for conveying the employer brand, while 21percent usage of mobile friendly career website to communicate the employer brand.

Social media is defined as *"a group of internet based applications that are based on ideological and technological foundations of web 2.0 and allow the creation and exchange of user generated content".* Organizations worldwide are using social media applications like content communities and social networking sites like LinkedIn, Facebook, and Twitter for projecting themselves as "Great Place to work" and for attracting the best talent (Kaplan & Haenlein 2010). The increased popularity of using social networking websites can be attributed to the fact that firms are able to tap the passive candidates which is not possible in case of traditional recruitment practices which only cater to the active job seekers.15 percent of the organizations fulfill 50 percentage of their talent requirements through social media. ("Linkedin," 2015)

By making use of LinkedIn employers are able to find the talent that they are looking for by reviewing their qualifications, career history. Organisations are also looking at Facebook profiles to get an idea about the candidates personality, character and fit for the company (Zeidner, 2008).According to Gregory et al (Gregory, Meade, & Thompson, 2013), 50 percent of new hires come from internet. The organisation should put that content and features, which would appeal to the job seekers. Companies by focusing on the interaction related to the brand through the help of social media are able to create a strong brand message and also enhance the recruitment results. (François, Alain, & Emilie, 2014)

Company websites are major source for recruiting new talent. It helps the organisations to cut cost on recruitment. They are able to attract those candidates who are

qualified for the job. Organisation prefer company website rather than internet job boards as they do provide lot of applications from unqualified applicants (Steel, 2007).

Career page on the company website tells the prospective candidates about the employer brand which highlights the work culture, benefits ,work –life balance opportunities available to employees, testimonials from existing employees which reflect about the work culture within the organization. There is a section on career page which tells about the job positions available with the company and where the employees can apply and fill in their details which would make it easier for the recruiters to assess if the applicant is suitable for the job.(Reynolds &Weiner 2009) (Online Recruiting and Selection: Innovations in Talent Acquisition, 2009).

In order to attract the right talent, it very essential to make use of the apt platform for attracting candidates. Facebook can be used for recruiting graduates right from colleges, LinkedIn for hiring Mid-career professionals , Meetup for hiring professionals who have a expertise and are not readily available and Yammer is being used by organisation internally for sharing information about the latest things in the company , industry and also internal job postings. Referrals appear to be credible source of employer brand information so companies should devise good employee referral program. (Wilden, Gudergan, & Lings, 2010)

Organisation make use of their social media page for hosting discussions about latest trends in their industry, company and things of interest to employees, post employee testimonials which reflect the company culture and employer brand. Companies regularly maintain and update their corporate profiles. (Kaur, Sharma, Kaur, & Sharma, 2015).

Organisations are making use of company websites and social networking sites, employee referrals for recruiting talent. (LinkedIn global Recruiting trends)
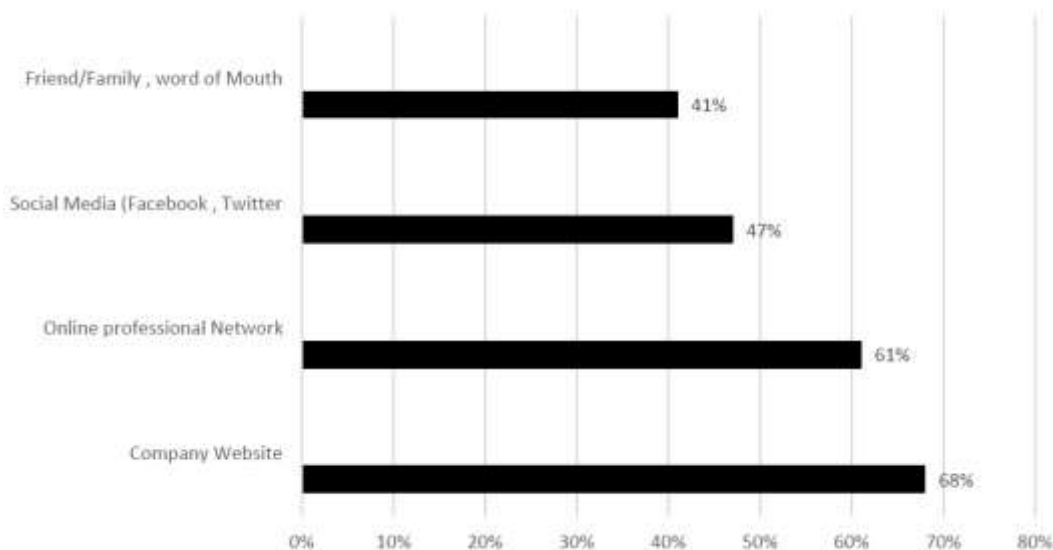

Figure 1: Successful Employer Branding Tools

Source: LinkedIn

Potential applicants see the company's career website, browse the blogs, employee testimonials and visit social media accounts of existing employees to gauge the corporate culture. (Randstad, 2015)

Social professional network are at par with the conventional recruiting channels such as job portals, employee referral and recruitment consultants. Indian organisations are making use of social professional network for hiring the right candidates. Corporate reputation is considered as an important indicator while applying for a job, according to 78 percent Indian professionals.

METHODOLOGY

The paper aims at studying how social media is being used for employer branding. A case study approach has been adopted for this paper which focuses on the social media initiatives taken by top IT companies in India. TCS, Infosys, Wipro and HCL have been selected for the study. The various social media channels used by firms to strengthen their brand.

Case -1
TCS

TCS has won many awards for being the best employer or great place to work for by various employer rating institutions. TCS has positioned itself as a company which provides its employees with opportunities to grow in their career globally.

TCS has positioned itself as an employer who provides Global IT career which emphasizes on 3 important value propositions.

- Global Exposure-Company provides the employees with opportunities to work across the globe on new technologies right from famous research labs. The chance to work, interact with people from different culture and enhance their learning which makes them best in the world.
- Freedom to work –TCS has developed an environment which helps the employees to plan their career. The employees can switch to across various industry verticals, service practices and functional domain.
- Work life Balance- keeping in mind the changing aspirations of the employees, the company provides flexibility to its employees through its various HR practices.

TCS makes use of various platforms for propagating its Employer Brand and Recruitment Efforts. TCS launched internal social media site "@TCS" in 2011, so that employees can communicate and share information on various themes, videos, views on any subject. It has forums, blogs, and wikis for the employees to convey their message to the management and express their concerns and feedback on various issues. They launched a "Great India Food Guide "for it employees which tells the employees about the various food joints around their workplaces as most of the people travel around for work.

TCS makes use of Facebook and twitter to interact with external parties to convey information about what's happening in the company, interviews, and press releases to reach out to the external audience and strengthen their brand. (Kaila, 2012)

Case -2
Infosys

Infosys has a special talent acquisition team for finding best talent to meet the project needs. To encourage innovative ideas, design thinking program has been started for employees to provide training to client teams as well as leadership team.

Infosys has a social Hub which has tweets from Twitter telling about what is happening at Infosys. It is aimed at propagating the brand Infosys. It mentions about the various firm initiatives. Infosys has created it is own internal social network called InfyBubble in 2011, which provides the employees a platform for sharing and discussing information. The page is similar to Facebook where the employees can share their pictures, videos and photographs, express their views/ concerns about the current company polices/practices. (Kaila, 2012)

Case -3
Wipro

Recruitment takes place through various sources at Wipro such as Wipro careers, internal job posting, employee referrals, global campuses, industry tie –ups, channel partners, job fairs and multi-Media. Wipro makes use of its career page to communicate the career opportunities and learning culture through Employee Testimonials videos. Wipro is one of the few organization to conduct conference on twitter to discuss its firm's initiatives. They make use of their Twitter and Facebook page to disseminate information about vision, other information to reach out to various stakeholders. (Pulla, 2010)

The company website has a Wipro social section which shows the live tweets, posts on Twitter, Facebook and videos on YouTube. Every time Wipro is quoted in any feed / post, it pops up at the Wipro Social page. Wipro has an internal social network named "MyWiproWorld" started in 2009 which helps in teaming up, networking, sharing information /Knowledge with other employees. Have discussion with other employees on various forums. The company has merged both Twitter, Facebook with MyWiproWorld so that the employees can assess personal and professional information at the same place. (Kaila, 2012)

Case -4
HCL

HCL makes use of it employee value proposition to create brand experience at every employee cycle touch point. The candidate are recruited through following sources – job boards, employee referral, partner recruitment firms, company website etc. HCL has dedicated team which recruits talent through various social media mediums. Taking into consideration the increased role of social media, HCL got into the social media platforms like Twitter,

Facebook, and LinkedIn to spread its employer brand. HCL has a career page on LinkedIn to provide an insight into the jobs, culture, employee testimonials to brand HCL as a 'Great place to work'. HCL started a recruitment drive through Twitter for recruiting talent across the globe. With this campaign the entire recruitment process took place over Twitter. Which increased the HCL follower base to above 2 lakh, leaving behind companies like IBM, Accenture, TCS and Infosys. HCL used YouTube for releasing its recruitment campaign through #HIRALVIDEOS. Instead of traditional written job description where converted into video format. This campaign was aimed at the passive candidates. With the help of recruitment channels, social media platform, the company was able to create an image as an innovative employer and bagged many awards for the same. (HCL, 2015)
http://www.hcltech.com/hcl_employer_brand_branding

CONCLUSION

Employer Branding has emerged as an important field in the Human Resource Management discipline. Employer branding helps the company to project an image as an "Employer of choice "which attracts new talent but also enhances a sense of pride of being a part of the organisation among the existing employees. Employer brand is communicated through various branding campaigns, the use of social media as medium for communicating the employer brand has gained popularity. It is a cost effective tool for the companies which enables the firms to reach out to wider audience. Majority of the Indian IT companies are making use of social media for strengthening their brand. They are making use of Facebook, Twitter, YouTube, and LinkedIn for interacting with their potential employees. Indian organisations are making use of social professional network for hiring the right candidates. In India, LinkedIn is being used for promoting the employer brand and attracting new talent into the organisation. Small businesses in India make use of company career website and campus recruitment for hiring talent. Larger firms aim at getting awards and recognition as "Best Employer " or "Great place to work" .They have accounts on Instagram , pin interest ,twitter sharing information about the company culture and posting employee testimonials on their career page. Job portals, recruitment agencies and employee referral programs are widely used by Indian companies (Gager .S, 2015). Traditional recruitment practices like interview and references still need to be used to validate what the candidate states (Ladkin & Buhalis, 2016). The companies are thinking of out of the box to promote their brand through social media like conducting recruitment drives over the social networking sites, posting videos of jobs vacancy rather than plain text job advertisements. IT companies have launched their internal social networking sites for employees to interact and share information within the company. Social media has revolutionized the way the companies promote their brand.

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