IMPACT OF EMPLOYER BRAND ON SELECTION AND RECRUITMENT PROCESS

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Abstract. This research aims to explore the relative advantages of using employer branding in recruitment process. The research question is raised whether there is some association between the facilitated recruitment scores and in the perceived employer branding score. The dynamics of Employer-branding as effective long-term recruitment strategy was explored. This research was laid out through combination of qualitative case study and with quantitative survey design. The data collection methods were entail interviews, collection of existing departmental record: archival analysis etc. The substantive support was sought from few questionnaires like employer-branding checklist and recruitment resources checklists. In order to explore the impact of Employer-branding on recruitment and selection, two organizations practicing employer branding and the other following the traditional, customized image building was sought. The cross comparison of the data from both organizations reveal the differences that perception of employer branding carries in different dimensions. For the sake of the differential analyses in both organizations, the independent sample t-test reveal the differences in the consumption of resources for recruitment and selection. The correlation analyses reveal that there is significant positive relationship between employer branding and the facilitated recruiting process. The findings are carried both theoretical and practical implications which are discussed in the light of evidential findings.

Keywords: Employer brand, Selection, Recruitment process

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I. INTRODUCTION

The crucial aim of this research is the exploration of impact of the employer branding on recruitment and selection. The concept of employer brand is quite recent. In developing countries like Pakistan, the term employer brand is not generally understood and practiced in the indigenous and local organizations. The term Employer brand is very recent and was introduced in 1992 when an academic article was published to underline the importance of perception of employer brand in facilitating the process of recruitment and selection.

Researching and Conceptualizing Employer Branding

Brands are an organization's mainly precious resource (Dawson, 2013), brand management is a primary action in most organizations. Even though many organizations, in regard to branding efforts, mainly emphasize on product development and on corporate brands but concept of branding can also be utilized in domain of human resource management (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Ballantyne and Aitken, 2007; Berthon, Ewing and Hah, 2005; Hulberg, 2006; Ito, Brotheridge and McFarland, 2013; Saini, Rai and Chaudhary, 2014). Employer branding is the appliance and use of branding philosophy to human resource management. Many organizations are using employer brandings not only to attract recruits but also to engage current employees in strategy and culture of the organization. Employer branding can be explained as process of developing the perception of the brand for the audience and make it that much unique that it could be differentiated from their competitors (Ito, Brotheridge and McFarland, 2013; Sokro, 2012; Sparrow and Otaye, 2015; Sullivan, 2004). Employer branding produces a reflection of the organization which portrays the organization as a comfortable place to work (Sullivan, 2004). More recently Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy and Berthon (2002) emphasize the practicality of employer branding in an progressively knowledge-based economy where skillful employees are often short in supply (Biswas and Suar, 2013; Cable and Turban, 2001; Edwards, 2010; Elving, Westhoff, Meeusen and Schoonderbeek, 2013).

Initially branding was used to discriminate substantial products, but afterwards it was applied to discriminating between different people, organizations, groups and places (Peters, 1999). According to Aaker (1991), recognized brand is supposed as a critical mean for creating differences between different products and generating new advantages for the success of an organization. In addition employer branding has become a way to compete with modern world to keep pace with them. To achieve position in the market it became really important to introduce employer branding and

making a brand message of a company by using marketing principles to know about the position of employer's choice (Sutherland *et al.*, 2002). According to Barrow and Richard (2005) employer branding is used to represent the image of a company and its personality to target the employer of own choice. It is also used to motivate the current employees working in that company. Employer branding is also an emotional attachment between an employer and employee.

Ambler and Barrow (1996) explain employer branding as growth and joining culture of an organization and introducing him as an employer. It is combination of a lot of benefits which are identified with the employing company. It represents the culture of an organization how that people work and move, and its place in the market, to encourage people for achieving their goals and share them with others.

Employer Branding

According to the American Marketing Association, a brand is a design, name, sign, icon and combination of all these, which differentiate the company and vendors from the competitors in the market (Jones, Willness and Madey, 2014; Schneider, 1987).

Literature of human resource practitioners defines employer branding as a triad process. First step is to create and maintain the value proposition by the company that is there in the brand. Second is to use information about the management style, culture of organization, current employment image, impressions of product or service and qualities of current employees. Quality managers convey a message about the value, their organization offers to the employees (Cable and Turban, 2001; Davies, 2008; Mokina, 2014; Sullivan, 1999).

In order to develop value proposition, the organization markets it to its targeted potential people, employing agencies and placement counselors. External marketing does not only attract the targeted employees rather it helps to support and increase the employer's product or corporate brands. It is essential to employer branding that particular brand has to be persistent with all other branding efforts (Nolan, Gohike, Gilmore and Rosiello, 2013; Sharma and Kamalanabhan, 2013; Sullivan, 1999).

Another important aspect of employer branding is internal marketing which transfers the brand promise made to recruit into the organization and includes it as part of the culture of an organization (Frook, 2001). Internal promotion is very important because it plays a vital role in developing goals for the company's success. There is similarity between employer brand and

the product and corporate brand, but there are differences as well. Product and corporate oriented brands mostly target external audience while proprietor brand target both internal and external audience. It is more employment oriented and it represents organizational identification (Wallace, de Chernatony and Buil, 2013).

Theoretical Foundation

Employer branding has got much consideration in professional and practical setups, but little in the academia. That is why the underlying theoretical foundation is not fully developed for employer branding. Resource-based view describes that if your organization has unique features you can get better work force (Barney, 1991; Love and Singh, 2011). Presence of distinctive feature makes it unique among other competitors and gives it different position among others (Barney, 1991; Wayne and Casper, 2012). Among other things plant, tools and assets as resources that create competitive advantage, employer branding is also important as well and can create advantages for the company (Edwards and Edwards, 2013; Priem and Butler, 2001). Employer banding builds image for the external market they attract and wish to join or to attach with them. Employer branding makes the company different from others and gives it a unique position in the market. Internal marketing is also very important which helps to bind the individuals with the organization. Employer brand helps the individual to adopt unique culture which makes them different among the others in market and gives them a place in the market. It makes them different and gives them more chances to grow (Stamler, 2001). Employer branding gives more competitive environment (Barney, 1991). Employer branding helps to recruit the best workforce and it also helps to maintain their position (Ambler and Barrow, 1996). The use of employee branding helps to make employment more powerful in the company. They show more psychological contract with the organization and bind them with the organization if they get security in return from them. This makes workforce more powerful and strong (Hendry and Jenkins, 1997). Although there is a current trend of employees outsourcing and downsizing, it is very effective for the employees to make their psychological contract more strong. Employer branding demands for being flexible and requires more efforts (Baruch, 2004). Different companies use employer branding to advertise their benefits, training sessions and chances of personal growth and other opportunities for their development. Mostly organizations failed to do so, they get less chance to get work force (Newell and Dopson, 1996; Hendry and Jenkins, 1997) so employer branding helps to change the general trends in marketing.

Brand equity is also important to explain employer branding. Brand equity is all those resources that are attached to the brand. It is important because it provides the opportunities for the customers to get involved with the organization. It is the success of the organization (Aaker, 1991). Customer based brand equity is the publicity and knowledge of the brand to the customers and how they respond to it (Breaugh, 2008; Keller, 1993).

Further, employer brand equity is to motivate the employees currently working in the organization. Employer brand equity is the result of the branding activities. Other employees react differently who are already working in the organization (O'Halloran, 2003).

Conceptual Framework of Employer Branding

Brand relations are the ideas and thoughts that brand develops in the minds of customers (Aaker, 1991). Brand associations are the predictors of brand image. Brand image is the combination of thoughts associated with the products and product related attributes and related benefits of the product (Keller, 1993). Attributes describe the objectives and benefits of the product or the service.

Employer brand has also been termed as a very successful long term recruitment strategy that can be equally prolific in attracting the best talent pool for the organization. This can help the corporate recruitment managers in maintaining a continuous flow of the talent for the organization. The way that the current employees are treated makes a lot of difference in building the perception of employer brand and the employer's image (Aaker, 1991).

Globalization, pressures for speed, efficiency etc. compel the organizational professionals to invest their systematic efforts in the building of employer brand. There are several benefits that employer branding offers like economical use of resources in recruitment, reduced lay-offs, increased volume of unsolicited and talented candidates, better committed prospective employees, greater levels of job and organizational commitment. But on the top of all these benefits lie the advantages of facilitated recruitment and selection (Collins and Stevens, 2002; Riordan, Gatewood and Bill, 1997). The hiring that is subsumed as recruitment and selection is greatly affected by the way, some organization is perceived by the people from outside and inside of the organization. The way some organization builds, maintains and highlights its image determines the way; this is perceived by its possible stakeholders like employees and the consumers. This is so natural for the employees to desire to work for the organizations that have well-established reputation and image. The talent pool in its best quality is attracted by the

organization that has best employer brand, and the acceptance of the offers by the best polished employees is greater. There are lesser turnovers and lay-offs. People hanker after working with such organizations and they strive to maintain their output and performance to the best of their efforts by holding their organizational and job commitment to an optimal level. All this not only helps to save the time and resources for the organization in undertaking recruitment but also helps to maintain the stability and work perpetuity, which is a greater determinant feature of all successful organizations (Allen, Mahto and Otondo, 2007; Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy and Berthon, 2002; Priyadarshi, 2011).

Effective employer branding takes a practical approach because latent employees also develop employer brand associations that are based on sources of information and they are not controlled by the employer, that is, by ascertaining anticipated brand associations and then determined to develop these associations (Gioia, Schultz and Corley, 2000).

A number of areas of recruitment research support the practice of skills and developing desirable brand associations and brand images. First, employer image has been found to influence applicant's fascination to the organization (Collins, 2007; Turban and Greening, 1997), which relates to similarity attraction (Byrne and Neuman, 1992; Highhpuse, Thornbury and Little, 2007) or person-organization fit. Similarly research shows that the better the match between the values of the organization and the values of the individual, the more likely the individual is to be concerned to the organization (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin and Jones, 2005; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Judge and Cable, 1997).

Social identity theory also explains a connection between employer brand image and its attraction to the employee. Social identity theory states that people get to know about themselves with the group they belong (Tajfel, 1982). We become part of that group we follow having the same likes and dislikes (Catanzaro, Moore and Marshall, 2010; Underwood *et al.*, 2001). As brand awareness is are the customers have positive image of the brand the more they have positive image with more frequently they will follow them. Social identity theory also explains that if people see that specific group follow that which have positive image, more frequently they will follow them. Similarly, if the prospective employees find positive facets of the employer image, they are more likely to identify with the brand and will look for the affiliation with that organization. This is because to seek the sense of sharp self-image that was promised by the membership. The employer branding becomes useful because of the ability to use a brand to convey

representative benefits to potential employees. Branding is the symbol which represents the brand. The branding represents the benefits of the brand and its objectives (Hirschman, 1980). Branding are the ideas which represent the product's image that is built by employer branding. It plays a vital role in the success of brand and organization (Elliott and Wattanasuwan, 1998). In employment branding, it makes the job more attractive for the employees.

Branding work shows that significance of the symbolic functions increases when functional variances between different brands are limited. Within the same industry job related factors are the same and then it became difficult for the other competitors (Cober, Brown, Keeping and Levy, 2004; Lievens and Highhouse, 2003). For developing higher brand image employer branding become more useful for the organization. To support this contention, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) discuss that pay and other incentives for the employees are important to describe to attract the employee and represent the status of the employee in the organization.

Objectives and Scope of Employer Brand

Defining the objectives of the employer brand saves the time and money in the long run and keep the programme on time and within the budget. The objectives may be related to the whole employer brand programme or a specific employer brand project. Other objectives may include integrating the cultures of two companies during a amalgamation, declining staff turnover rates, increasing volume of hires for a recruiting campaign, civilizing candidate quality, or evaluating and updating the career website to appeal the audience (Knox and Freeman, 2006).

Relationship Between Marketing, Communications and HR

Employer brand strategy is usually a gray area that should be clearly defined so that everyone; stakeholders and potential employees achieve accord and are incorporated in the goals and objectives. To acquire order to get both budget and buy-in, HR often has to drive employer branding through internal education and awareness building. The employer brand is a long-term, strategic talent management enterprise; however, some level of misunderstanding or standards adherence is natural and may vary depending on the organization (Kotler and Lee, 2008; Kucherov and Zavyalova, 2012; Ritson, 2002; Sparrow and Otaye, 2015). The strategies are intended to attract, connect and preserve talent, which clearly sets up a strong case for teamwork between human resources, marketing, and communications. In cases where there is a lack of teamwork and groups tasks, power struggles ensue, projects can be delayed, and creativity/strategy diminished to the

harm of the consequence (Crumpacker and Crumpacker, 2007; Harthine, Maxham and McKee, 2000; Knox and Freeman, 2006; Kotler, 2003; Nishii, Lepak and Schneider, 2008; Underwood, Bond and Baer, 2001).

Justification and Likely Benefits

In Pakistan, the research scenario is quite weak with little efforts that are being undertaken to explore phenomenon on empirical grounds. Very few researches have been done in this area, although it is important for organizational success. There could be many reasons people don't have any idea about that and who have they don't want to use. People usually avoid adopting new concept, they use old methods which have been used for many times.

There are multiple reasons for this like limited resources, rigidity of the system to adopt some new concept and infrastructural barriers. In spite of all this, the concept of employer brand is being widely practiced informally by the international and some national organizations. The wide acceptance of such novel and recently developed concepts can take place if extensive efforts are being carried on to explore such topics on theoretical and empirical grounds. Therefore this topic is greatly significant in the background of Pakistani perspective. Employer branding has got much attention in practitioner settings, but little in the academia, the underlying theoretical groundwork for it is not fully developed.

Employer branding is to increase the image and reputation of the organization. Moreover it increases the familiarity of employees with the organization and to their jobs. Employer branding helps in facilitating the process of recruiting the employees. Literature has suggested that employer branding saves resources and time in selection process of employees. Further it builds a positive image of the employer organization to attract the potential people to build a positive workforce. This helps in recruiting the right employees for the right job. Hence employer branding affects the recruitment and selection process. In the light of the reviewed literature, the present research has been formulated.

Aims and Objectives

The following aims and objectives are to be achieved through the current research study:

1. To systematically streamline and arrange the available theoretical and empirical data on such sparsely explored topic.

2. To juxtapose the two organizations, *e.g.* the one following Employer-branding and other not following this recent in order to highlight for hiring the advantages and facilitations trends that Employer-Branding offers in recent times.

3. This study would help the professionals to focus on the need for the development and exploration of effective Employer-Branding techniques and strategies/ interventions.

4. The awareness towards effective Employer-Branding would be enhanced among professionals and the policy-makers.

5. The findings would shed light on how to cut expenses of organization by propagating a conflux.

6. Exploration of employer branding as a long-term strategy of effective hiring (recruitment and selection).

7. The provision of an insight to future researchers and mangers, concerning the role of employer image in recruiting.

8. The provision of insight and orientation to recruiters on the importance of efficient and well-organized recruitment process.

9. This is an effective solution to the problem of talent retention within an organization. This is due to the fact that the employer branding is the only available solution to the corporate recruiters in maintaining the flow of talent within some organization.

10. Last but not the least providing the empirical scenario of employer branding in Pakistani perspectives.

Research Questions

The following research questions have been explored in the current research study:

- Does Employer Branding help to reduce the recruitment expanses?

- Does the budget for marketing and HRM reduce due to Employer Branding?

- Does the Employer branding increase the organizational commitment of the employees?

- Is the perception of employer brand inevitable for the organization?

- Is the better talent pool generated in the organizations, which are practicing employer branding?

- Do organization brand associations affect the image of the firm as an employer?

- Does organization brand present information that contributes to formation of a psychological contract between the employer and the employee?

- Is organization brand association positively related to employer attraction?

II. METHOD

Research Design

This research study was laid through qualitative case study. Interview method and content analyses was used since in depth data on employer branding is scanty and sparse. Thus this was an explorative case study to unravel the dynamics of the organization.

Sample

The sample for the current case study comprises the data from juxtaposed organizations, *e.g.* the one actively practicing the employer branding and the other not following the employer branding for the sake of recruitment.

Sampling Strategy

Non-probability purposive sampling was used as there is certain criterion measure on the basis of which the eight organizations were selected.

Measures/Instruments

Employer-Branding Checklist

Checklist was developed on the basis of previous literature findings. Number of questions was 20 which were measuring organizational image, organizational reputation, organizational familiarity, perceived attractiveness of the organization. The responses of checklist were on seven rating (1-7) scale including strongly disagree to strongly agree.

Recruitment Facilitation Checklists

Previous records of the companies were obtained for getting their criteria of recruitment. It included written tests, task performance, interview, experience, and academic qualifications. These were obtained on the basis of seven rating scale (1-7). The record collected was from January 2009 to 2011.

Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic questionnaire included the demographic information of the employees, including their name, company name, designation, age, gender, marital status, and satisfaction level of their job.

Procedure

This case study cum survey research was based on the extensive studies of the organization, *i.e.* one following the employer branding and the one following the customized practices. For the sake of the data collection, the companies were formally accessed and the permission was sought. The employer branding was evaluated through employer branding check list which was made on the basis of previous literature. Recruitment records of these employees were sorted out from the companies. For finding out the effect of employer branding focus group was conducted of the employers of two groups of the companies. The scores of recruitment facilitation scale indicated how conveniently, the recruitment process takes place in an organization.

Ethical Issues

Following ethical issues were fulfilled/ maintained in the study under speculation:

Informed Consent

All the data was acquired from the participants with their permission and will. The objectives were explained to all the participants from whom the data was collected. The organizations' heads were also be contacted for the due permission.

Debriefing

This refers to the process of explaining the exact aims and objectives of the research to the participants and this also involves the clarification of all dubious notions in the minds of the participants, including the answers to all the queries that are raised by the participants, pertaining to the research.

Confidentiality

It was assured that the data sought from the organizations will be kept confidential and no information related to the participants or the organization will be used other than that of the academic and empirical objectives; thus no breach of confidentiality will take place.

III. RESULTS

For the present study Pearson Product Moment Correlation analysis and Independent sample t-test was used to assess the data.

TABLE 1

Independent Sample t-test Comparing Recruitment Records and
Perceived Employer Branding of Group *A* and Group *B*

	Group *A* $n = 150$		Group *B* $n = 150$		t	df	p
	M	SD	M	SD			
Recruitment Records	4.10	0.90	4.60	0.72	5.298	298	0.00
Perceived Employer Branding	3.55	0.42	4.58	1.18	9.981	298	0.00

*p < 0.05

Independent sample t-test was applied to compare the recruitment records and perceived employer branding of two groups of companies. Results showed the significant difference in recruitment records of the two groups (p = 0.00, N = 300, df = 298). Means showed that recruitment records of group *B* were higher than group *A*. further results of independent sample t-test analysis revealed a significant difference between scores of perceived employer branding of both groups (p = 0.00, N = 300, df = 298). Means showed that scores of group *B* were higher than group *A*.

TABLE 2

Correlation Between Recruitment Records of Participants and
Perceived Employer Branding (N = 300)

|	Recruitment Records	Perceived Employer Branding
Recruitment Records	–	0.584**

**p < 0.01

Results of the correlation revealed that there is a significant positive correlation between recruitment records of participants and perceived

employer branding scores at 0.01 significant level (r = –0.584, N = 300, p < 0.01).

Results of the correlation and t-test analysis showed that employer branding and recruitment are related to each other. The recruitment records of employees and employer branding have significant positive correlation. Whereas the organization that uses employer branding and the one that doesn't use employer branding are different in their recruitment and selection.

FIGURE 1

Factors of Perceived Employer Branding
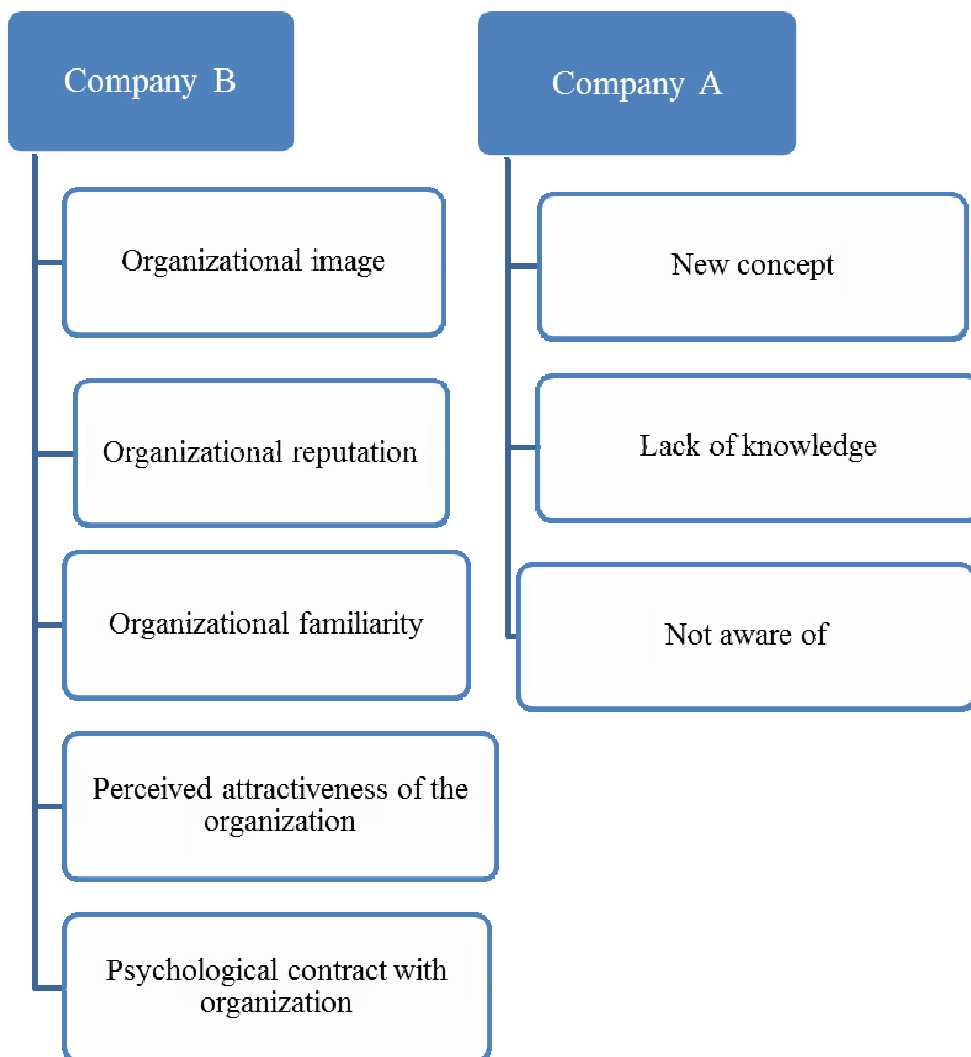
Qualitative Analysis

Results of the focus group indicate that there is a difference between perceived employers branding of employees of two companies. Company *B* was having know-how about perceived employer branding and another thing that they explained was their psychological contract with the organization. Company *A* was not aware of the concepts for them that concept was not that much important. Results are shown in Figure 1.

Effects of Employer Branding

Results of focus group with employers indicated that company *B* showed more positive effects of perceived employer branding and for company *A* it was not that much worthy thing. Employers of company *A* showed that using Perceived Employer Branding would Increase referrals, Large applicant pool and competitive employees, Low work load for recruiting employees, Increased organizational commitment, Company performance, and Increased job satisfaction. For the company *A* it was an extra work and having no effect on performance of employees or company. Results are shown in the Figure 2.

FIGURE 2

Effects of Employer Branding
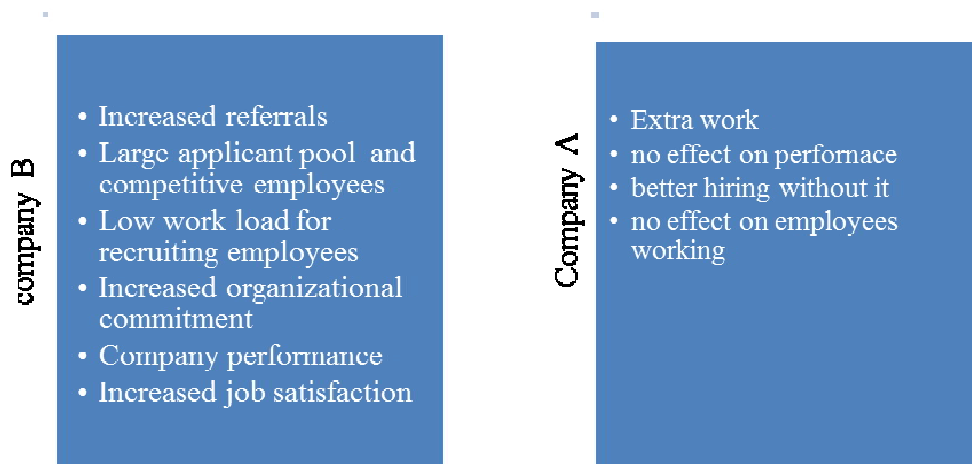
IV. DISCUSSION

This research aimed to explore the concept of employer branding and its relative advantages of using employer branding in recruitment process. Employer branding is an organization's marketing of its offers that it is given

to its potential and existing employees. Further employer branding involves techniques to attract employees, communicate with them effectively and maintain their loyalty to the organization. In short it involves people management.

In the current research impact of employer branding on recruitment and selection process has been studied. Two types of companies/organizations were included in the sample; one that was practicing employer branding and other one that was not practicing it. The results of two companies showed that there was an association between the facilitated recruitment scores and in the perceived employer branding score. The company *B* which is using employer branding strategy have highly positive association than company *A* which is not using employer branding strategy. These findings of the study are consistent with the literature as it suggests that positive employer branding increases the intention of applicants to get that job. According to Lievens, Van Hoye and Anseel (2007) organizational image is very closely related to applicant attractiveness to the organization and organizational identification. The results also show that attractiveness of the organization is predicted by employer image, employer branding and employer familiarity and employer reputation.

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) find that symbolic trait conclusion of organizations have additional value over and above active job and organizational attribute like pay or other increments in explaining a company's perceived attractiveness as an employer.

Organization brand presents information that contributes to formation of a psychological contract between the organization and the employee. According to Robinson and Rousseau (1994) accurateness of organizational image is very important, it gives reputation to the organization. If they don't have organizational image they don't want to stay in the organization. They want to quit, they don't want to be the part of that organization any more that shows lower job performance and if organization has organizational image, employees want to be part of it (Chapman, Uggerslev, Carroll, Piasentin and Jones, 2005; Robinson and Morrison, 1995; Robinson and Rousseau, 1994).

The results of the study also indicate that positive image of the employer is important for getting more applicants. Employer branding helps organizations to attract and retain high performing employees and increases the number of applicants. Turban and Cable (2003) conclude in their study that higher the positive perception of organization, there will be increased applicant pool. This is a positive point for the progress of the organization. By attracting and retaining people with the right attitude and for the right job,

the organization can create a more productive workforce to gain a long term success.

Study shows that proportion of hires from employee referrals will increase as a result of company employees' increased satisfaction and information about what makes their organization better than others. Increase in the number of referrals will be helpful in that it increases employee tenure in the recruiting process and at the same time reduce recruiter's workloads (Sullivan, 1999).

The results also reveal an important issue which is the reputation of the firm that is also an important factor for employee branding. Awang and Jusoff (2009) find that there are there very important factors of company emotional appeal towards the organization, emotional appeal towards that reputation, and social responsibility of the organization, contribute tremendously to the company standing of the organization.

Results also indicate that perceived brand image is positively associated with organizational commitment of employees. Levinson (2007) also propose that employees want to stay in the organization if they get what they want. They show more engagement with the organization and organizational commitment associated with organizational commitment.

Results also reveal that positive employer branding increase the job satisfaction of employees. As Riordan, Gatewood and Bill (1997) conclude that organizational image is positively related to job satisfaction and negatively related to intentions to leave the organization.

Employer branding helps to increase performance of the company. According to Ambler and Barrow (1996), the most important thing is that employer branding is helpful in achieving success for the organization. It gives him importance in the competition.

If an organization has been facing continuous talent scarcity, employer branding can help to get out of it. Employer branding is basically a process of creating organizational image and making organizational identity. This helps in attracting employees and right people for the right job. Employer brand develops the image of the organization and highlights what the company delivers to the employees, customers, public and shareholders. It also helps in recruiting talent saving time and budget and helps to overcome the shortage of talent.

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