Project Dissertation Report On

A STUDY ON IMPACT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING IN SMEs

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CERTIFICATE FROM THE INSTITUTE

This is to certify that **Mr. Pratyash Singh (2K20/DMBA/93)** has satisfactorily completed the Project Report titled **"A Study on Impact of Employer Branding in SMEs "** in partial fulfillment ofthe requirements for the award of the degree of Master of Business Administration from Delhi School of Management, Delhi Technological University, New Delhi during the academic year 2020-2021. The contentsof the report, in full or part, have not been submitted to any otheruniversity or institution for the award of the degree.

Project Guide

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<u>STUDENT DECLARATION</u>

I, **Pratyash Singh**, Roll Number **2K20/DMBA/93** hereby declare that the project work entitled "**A Study on Impact of Employer Branding in SMEs** " was submitted to Delhi School of Management, DTU towards partial fulfillment for the award of Master of Business Administration. It is my original work and the dissertation has not formedthe basis for award of any degree, associate ship, fellowship or any similartitle to the best of my knowledge.

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<u>Acknowledgement</u>

At the outset, I express my heartfelt thanks & gratitude to those who sincerely helped and supported me throughout the project & without their active support & help it would not have been possible for me to complete the venture. As such, I once again extend my sincere thanks & gratitude to all of them.

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I also sincerely thank the participants that I surveyed and interviewed. Finally, I would like to express my earnest gratitude to my friends and family members for their constant support & encouragement.

PLAGIARISM REPORT:

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The world of work has dramatically transformed in just over a year, but some things remain same in 2022 The job benefits that attracted talent to organizations before the pandemic continue to be important to work ingage adults around the world. However, some of these attributes are increasingly critical in a more remote global workforce. We know that remote working arrangements broadly expanded since the onset of COVID19 tend to result in greater talent loyalty. Employer brand research 2022, global report Overall, workforce allegiance has also improved based on the strong handling of the crisis by most employers, as the number who approve of their organization's actions vastly outnumber those who don't. This is good news for the employer brand of many organizations.

Throughout the pandemic, concerns about workforce stress and safety, layoffs and diminished job opportunities have persisted throughout many organizations. **Will these forces, exacerbated by the pandemic, affect how companies are perceived? How will the global crisis change the way employers attract great talent? Will the top motivations for switching employment change?** Questions such as these are increasingly critical as growing economies once again grapple with talent scarcity. Surprisingly, despite all the upheaval that COVID19 has thrusted upon the global labor market, talent preferences remain much the same. The factor most appealing about an employer is its salary and benefits offering (cited by 62%), followed by a good work-life balance (58%) and job security (56%).

Similarly, due to massive layoffs since last March (2021), a majority of survey respondents consider job security to be an essential quality of an ideal employer. This concern may be one reason more working age adults are logging longer work hours. Furthermore, job insecurity has led to increased symptoms of depression and anxiety, according to one study. As these two issues have grown more consequential for employers, they also present an opportunity to showcase effective policies that support the workforce in these areas, which helps to bolster employer brand

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1. INTRODUCTION

In light of an ever increasing global talent shortage, organizations are seeking comprehensive strategies to attract and retain potential and current employees. Urgency of this situation is evidenced by a recent global study indicating that, across more than 37,000 employers in 42 countries, over one third reported talent shortages in 2014 the highest percentage in seven years. At the intersection of human resource management (HRM) and brand marketing, employer branding has been proposed as an effective organizational strategy to differentiate from competitors and gain a competitive advantage in the labor market. Thus, employer branding is seen as a prime approach for responding to recruitment and retention challenges. The inherent multidisciplinary nature of employer branding has led to a broad view of the phenomenon. Simultaneously, it has engendered heterogeneous conceptual and empirical approaches and directions (Edwards 2010). Hence, we witness a dispersed interpretation of constructs and applications in the scholarly discourse around employer branding without a unified understanding. More than ten years ago, Cable and Turban (2001, p. 118) noted that 'past recruitment research has been labeling similar concepts by different names, and has been labeling different concepts by the same name'. Unfortunately, this is also true for employer branding research today.

It is important to distinguish two terms in employer branding research: 'employer brand' and 'employer branding process'. In a first attempt to examine synergies between HRM and brand marketing, Ambler and Barrow (1996, p. 8) describe the employer brand as the 'package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company'. The specific association of the employment offer with a firm is emphasized in a widely cited definition by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p. 502), who state that 'the employment brand highlights the unique aspects of the firm's employment offerings or environment and is a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors by attracting, motivating, and retaining the firm's current and potential employees'. These unique criteria of the employment offer, or the 'package of reward features or employment advantages and benefits offered to employees', are often referred to as the 'employer value proposition'. In contrast, 'employer branding describes the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity' or, more specifically, 'the promotion of a unique and attractive image' as an employer

In this process, marketing principles are applied to manage organizations' tangible and intangible employment offerings through, for example, communication campaigns 'to raise awareness and strengthen associations between the brand and desirable attributes'. Although the em3ployer brand is, technically speaking, merely an identifier (e.g. name, logo), all brand related information is actually stored and summarized under the construct of 'employer (brand) knowledge', consisting primarily of 'employer familiarity', 'employer image' and 'employer reputation' (Cable and Turban 2001). The added value of favorable employee response to employer knowledge is generally expressed as 'employer brand equity' or 'recruitment equity' in a pre-employment context.

1.1 Background and Problem Statement

In recent years there has been a labor war.for.for.the challenges of aging and the lack of talent in the changing industries, especially IT. Therefore, employer marketing has become an emerging topic that draws special attention to large companies in Finland as a viable solution to the talent shortage. As a result, there are various studies on this subject in large companies.

However, there are a few studies that show a clear relationship between SMEs and Employer Branding. Questions such as "Can employer's branding work for SMEs?" or "Could employer's branding be a concern for SMEs?" have been raised, yet their responses are still limited. Notable research in this field is a master's thesis from the University of Aalto, where the author, Simonen Aleksi, is studying for a position in Employer Branding at Major Finnish Companies. It was a test case as the Employer Branding study is still limited.

This study aims to explore the link between Employer Branding and SMEs, especially SMEs in the IT industry. The research base will be based mainly on the areas of Corporate Brand,

1.2 Purpose of research and inquiries

Based on the local business environment in the IT industry, and the Employer Branding framework, this study aims to study the role of Employer Branding in SMEs in the IT industry. The purpose of the research is achieved by finding the answers to the following key questions:

• RQ1: What is the impact of Employer Branding on students' decision to work for SME?

• RQ2: What attracts graduates to a job search?

• RQ3: From what source do students build the idea of their employer's name?

• RQ4: What is a student career orientation after graduation?

1.3 Scope of the study

Within this study, Business and IT students studying at DTU, New Delhi were considered the main objectives of the study. According to the European Commission, the name SME is made up of three types of companies based on their size and profitability. Medium sized companies are those that employ less than 250 people and have a turnover of less than EUR 50 million. Smaller companies employ less than 50 people and have a turnover of less than EUR 10 million. Companies with smaller sizes, most of all types, employ less than 10 people and have a turnover of less than EUR 2 million. The scope of this study is limited to Small and Medium Enterprises. Therefore, the term 'SME' has now been referred to by small and medium sized companies
operating in the IT industry.

The main purpose of the study was to explore the role of Employer Branding in SMEs in the IT industry. The general scope of branding is very broad which includes the internal characteristics of the companies as well as the external characteristics of the business environment. Therefore, understanding the expectations of potential employees is an important step in making a successful employer's brand. Therefore, the study will take into account the expectations of potential employees, such as Business and IT students, for IT SMEs.

2. Literature Review:

The concept of employer branding which has been increasingly popular since the 1990s means in the simplest terms the perception by the existing and potential employees of the company as the best place to work for. Employer branding has become crucial for many organizations as they all are keen to attract, develop and retain the right talent in their organization. Employer branding needs to attract and communicate to both potential employees and existing employees the attractive employee value proposition they have built. A strong internal as well external branding by organizations helps them to influence the employees' delivery of promised brand with the assumption of employees being satisfied with the organization (Kaur & Syal, 2013).

In today's era of boundary less, technology driven, rapidly changing business environment, one of the major corporate challenges is to meet the increasing demand for executive talent. The survival and success of organizations depend upon the quality of its workforce who can face the above challenges. Chiu et al., (2020) defined employer branding is an approach used by different companies to maintain their current employment and attract individuals to join the company. The practitioner and academic research have highlighted that developing effective employer branding strategies can provide a strategic advantage to the firm by developing engaged employees who are loyal and committed to the firm and work towards achieving the superordinate objectives of the firm (Wilden et al., 2010). Biswas & Suar (2013) defined employer branding to managing employer employee relationships. It includes the employee's employment experience right from the start of the relationship in order to facilitate the retention of talented workforce. Bussin & Mouton (2019) defined employer branding as a management strategy for retaining current employees & attracting the right talent.

While traditionally, branding efforts focuses towards development of corporate and product brands according to consumer perspective. The limitation and restriction for branding is no longer opt for products only. In the past, organizations used branding efforts to promote their products and services, recently branding strategies applied in human resource management, even organizations resorting to branding for attracting and retaining the best talent. Organizations realized that the appropriate way to become attractive in employment market is by having strong, distinguishable and clear

employer brand (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Gözükara, 2016; Kucherov & Samokish, 2016). Research also showed that the overall image and impression of the Feedforward: Journal of Human Resource Vol. 1, No. 2, September 2021 Faculty of Economics and Business Pelita Harapan University 106 organizations in employees mind determines a lot of organizational outcomes, such as retention, employee engagement, loyalty, and better talent attraction (Canhoto & Kietzmann, 2013). Kaur & Syal (2013) concluded that an effective employer brand is essential for satisfying its existing workforce. Another finding result from Gözükara (2016) also concluded that organizations can offer career opportunities and promotions, support a creative and innovative environment, conduct social responsibility projects, and provide above average financial packages to their employees to build a strong employer brand, which in turn would enhance citizenship behavior. Jain & Bhatt (2015) stated that efficient employer branding enhance employee satisfaction and their willingness to remain loyal to their organization. Companies with higher involvement in employer branding are generally well managed and have employees who are motivated, continually learning, and growing. From the above definitions, it can be concluded that employer branding is an approach developed by organization for retaining current employees and attracting potential employees. The purpose of this article is to review the literatures on outcomes of employer branding. The article integrates the existing works of literature in the area and helps to identify the outcomes of employer branding.

3. EMPLOYER BRANDING AS AN INTERSECTION OF MARKETING AND HUMAN RESOURCE MANAGEMENT

3.1 Marketing

3.1.1 Brand, Branding and Brand Equity

The understanding of Employer Branding, the main topic of this research, requires in depth understanding of the subjects of brand, branding and brand equity. As the study progressed, the relationships of those fundamental subjects will be further discussed.

According to American Marketing Association (Aurand et al. 2005) and Keller (2008), a brand is a consequence of creating a new name, logo, symbol, design or combination of them for a new product. Brand is structured by brand attributes, which differentiate one brand from another brand. The establishment of a brand would generate the values of awareness, reputation and prominence in the marketplace. The objective of those elements is to identify the goods and services and to distinguish them from the competitors. Aaker (1991) further points out that a brand would protect the product from being identically produced by the competitors.

Wheeler (2013), however, defines brand in a more simple word: within the abundance of choices in the market, a brand should be highlighted as an emotional connection that creates lifelong relationships with customers. The success of a brand depends vastly on how customers perceived it and the affection they have for it. The success of a brand is achieved through a disciplined process that involves building brand awareness and extending customer loyalty. This process requires strong commitment from the company's leaders. Furthermore, branding is about giving reasons for customer why they should choose this brand instead of another one. Thus, leveraging branding is a prerequisite to success in branding.

Apart from value of the product or service, the brand of that product or service has a commercial value itself. This value is derived from the perception of consumers using the product of that brand. In marketing terminology, the value of a brand is construed as 'brand equity'. Aaker (1991), a leading author in brand study, categories brand equity into five brand assets including brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality, brand associations and other proprietary assets.

From the customer perspective, brand equity is the subjective and intangible assessment of customers towards the brand. According to Keller (2008), this assessment is accessed individually and is 'above and beyond its objectively perceived value'.

This part of the research discusses brand to the extent of product and service. The broader discussion of brand such as corporate brand or employer brand is facilitated in the following parts, after the foundation of brand has been laid in this part. As a recap, brand is a name, logo, symbol, design or any intangible object that is stuck to a product or service. The production of identical products from competitors would be challenging by the presence of the brand, as the brand represents the source of the product. Thus, the brand protects both customers and producers. Every brand has its own equity namely brand loyalty, brand awareness, perceived quality and brand associations. The strength of a brand is summoned up by various branding activities and processes.

3.1.2 Corporate Brand

Corporate brand, according to Balmer (2001), is a means for corporate to deliver characteristics of corporate identity towards its internal and external stakeholders. As corporate brand involves inner and outer parties, there are gaps between how the organisation illustrates itself and how the outsiders perceive the organisation. Balmer (2001), thus, describes corporate brand as 'the interface between self portrayal and external perception' of the organisation.

In the world of marketing, brand usually sticks with a product or service. Corporate brand, argued by Uggla (2006), however, 'can be much more multidimensional by their ideology'. Balmer and Gray (2003) refer this multidimensional aspect as people, values, practices and processes. Unlike branding in its general understanding, where customer based images are focused, corporate branding, according to Hatch and Schultz (2008), contributes to the images of the whole organisation and all its stakeholders including employees, customers, investors, suppliers, etc. Therefore, every activity of the organisation regardless of time or level is considerably influenced by the corporate brand.

The topic of corporate branding is discussed in this research since employer branding is the message insi

de corporate branding, the employer branding activities are steered by the strategy of corporate brandig. While the target of corporate branding aims at a broader scope, the target of employer branding is limited to the labour pool. Thus, the clear connection between corporate branding and employer branding is they both serve as the instrument to convey the organisation's message. In this way, employer branding falls under the umbrella of corporate branding and employer branding strategy should be associated with corporate branding strategy.

3.2 Human Resource Management (HRM)

Armstrong (2012) defines HRM as 'a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well being of the people working in organisations'. In an earlier study, Beer (1984) specifies that HRM involves management decisions that influence the relationship between organisation and employees. Attending to more detail, Guest (1987) points out that the goal of HRM is to maximise the shared values at the workplace including organisational integration, employee commitment, flexibility and quality of work.

Serving as a main function in every business, HRM plays an integral role in the success of the organisation in terms of its human capital (Armstrong 2012). Furthermore, Ulrich and Lake (1990) assert that "HRM systems can be the source of organisational capabilities that allow firms to learn and capitalise on the new opportunities".

In order to attend eventual success of the organisation through people, HRM has been developed and has been suggested to be seen as a system in which every element of its functions should be 'coherent and internally aligned' (Kepes and Delery 2008). The main functions of HRM include Organisation, Resourcing, Learning and Development, Reward Management and Employee Relations.
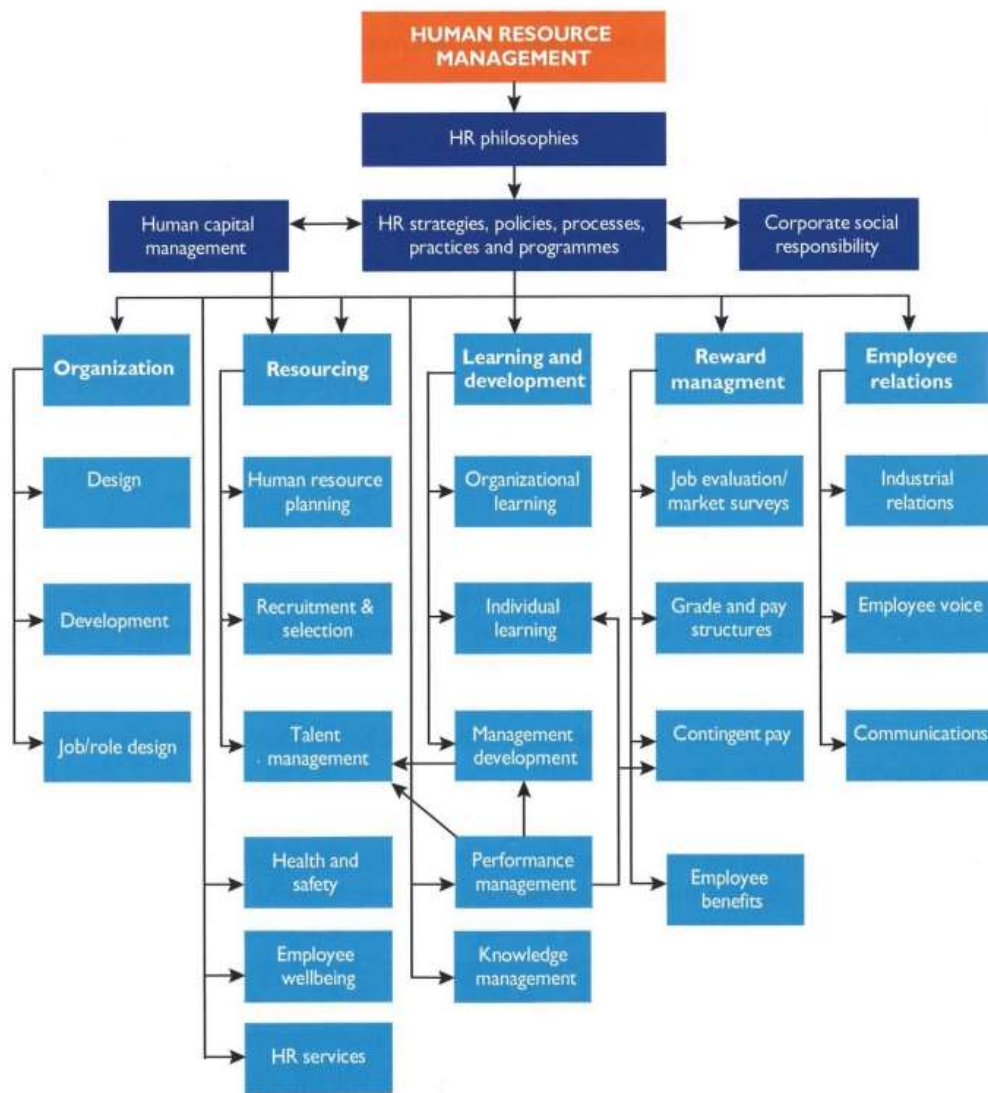
HRM System

Although HRM is a broad topic concerning how organisations manage their workforce to achieve their success, the scope of this research only limits to Recruitment, which is a function of HR that interacts directly with candidates, the potential employees.

3.2.1 Recruitment and Selection process

Recruitment is one of the main functions of resourcing within HRM. Recruitment is intimately connected to Selection as they are both involved in finding and choosing the most suitable people for the job and organisation. Regarding Recruitment and Selection, Armstrong (2009) illustrates that recruitment is the whole process of attracting and catching sight of candidates that fit the job or organisation. This suggests why Employer Branding, which is partially concerned with attracting potential employees, is closely related to Recruitment. Selection, on the other hand, is a stage within the recruitment process that deals with choosing the right applicant for the job. In other words, as a main role in resourcing human capital, the recruitment and selection process consists of the funct-ions such as identifying, attracting and choosing suitable candidates (Beardwell 2004).

The review of Recruitment and Selection process suggests that although Employer Branding is not clearly stated to belong to this process, it is presumably believed that it has its own stance within Re-cruitment and Selection. Furthermore, Employer Branding is about attracting people in the labour pool, which is a function of Recruitment. Thus, the theory review of Recruitment and Selection helps explain the role Employer Branding in the world of HRM.

3.2.2 Strategic Human Resource Management

Strategy:

In every form of business, achieving particular organisational objectives gives organisations reasons to exist. That is where strategy takes effects as it clarifies a way for organisations to achieve their goals. In that meaning, Thompson and Strickland (1996) explain strategy as 'the pattern of actions managers employ to achieve organizational objectives'. According to Armstrong (2011), strategy has two meaning, in which the first meaning is to define the destination and the means to get

to that destination. Within this first meaning, longer term goals are defined and strategic planning is covered. The second meaning of strategy involves identifying the organization's position in the environment it operates. Thus, matching its 'capabilities and resources to opportunities available in the external environment' is a vital requirement when dealing with strategy.

Johnson and Scholes (2008) describes this second meaning of strategy in other words: strategy signifies 'the direction and scope of an organization over the longer-
term ideally, which matches its resources to its changing environment, and in particular, to its markets, customers and clients
to meet stakeholders expectations'.

Strategic Human Resource Management (SHRM)

As mentioned earlier, HRM is 'a strategic, integrated and coherent approach to the employment, development and well being of the people working in organisations'. Strategic HRM is regarded as a higher form of HRM when it is not only limited to the well being of the people working in organisations but rather to fulfil the organisation's goals. Accordingly, human capital is a major source of competitive advantage and the organisational goals are achieved through human resources of the organisations using the means of 'integrated HR strategies, policies and practices' Armstrong (2006, 2011, 2012). From another perspective, Schuler (1992) points out that SHRM is related to activities that enhance behaviour of individuals to 'formulate and implement the strategic needs of the business'. In other words, Storey (2009) refers SHRM as the way to manage employment relationships to deliver the best performance of human resources and, thus, to achieve the organization's goal.

In the context of this research, Strategic Human Resource Management is regarded as a theme to understand the Resourced Based View, which is a strategic approach to recognise human capital as a viable source of competitive advantages. The following parts provide in-depth understanding of Resource-Based View and how it is integrated to the domain of SHRM.

3.2.3 Resource-Based View of Strategic Human Resource Management

The theory of RBV:

Resources of a firm, from the viewpoint of Barney (1991), are everything including assets, capabilities, organisational processes, know how, human capital, etc. that empower a firm to formulate and utilise a certain strategy. Based on previous researches of (Williamson 1975), (Becker 1993) and Tomer (1987), Barney (1991) categorises resources into three fields which are physical capital resources, organisational capital resources and human capital resources. In terms of physical capital resources, technology, plant, equipment, location and access to raw materials are considered.

Human capital resources account for training, experience, judgement, intelligence, relationships and insight of employees. Organisational capital resources, on the other hand, consist of structure, planning, controlling systems or relations between parties. Although listing aforementioned concepts as resources of a firm, Barney (1991) argues that not all of them are considered as strategic resources. While several serve as crucial aspects for a successful strategy, some others are neutral and some are even impediments.

Barney (1991) indicates that only resources with a set of particular attributes are regarded as competitive advantages. According to Barney (1991), resources of a firm might create sustained competitive advantages when its resources are valuable, rare, in-imitable and non substitutable. Within the Resource Based View (RBV), the firm's resources serve as the driven force of competitive advantage and performance. A resource is a competitive advantage when it either exploits opportunities or reduces the firm's own weakness. In the base of RBV, the resource is rare among the current and potential competitors. Moreover, the resource is "imperfectly imitable", in which it is challenging for other firms to access if they do not own those valuable and rare resources.

Lastly, the resource must be without strategically equivalent substitutes.

Furthermore, Barney (1991) differentiates between competitive advantage and sustained competitive advantage by clarifying his understanding between them: A firm is said to have a competitive advantage when it is implementing value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented

by any current or potential competitors. A firm is said to have sustained competitive advantage when it is implementing a value creating strategy not simultaneously being implemented by current or potential competitors and when these other firms are unable to duplicate benefits of the strategy.

This line of reasoning suggests a relation between Strategic HRM, Employer Branding and Resource Based View. Moreover, it should be interpreted in the way the resources are an indispensable part of strategy. Discussing about the rationale for resource based strategy, Grant (1991) argues that " the resources and capabilities of a firm are the central considerations in formulating its strategy: they are the primary constants upon which a firm can establish its identity and frame its strategy, and they are the primary sources of the firm's profitability. The key to a resource based approach to strategy formulation is understanding the relationships between resources, capabilities, competitive advantage, and profitability in particular, an understanding of the mechanisms through which competitive advantage can be sustained over time. This requires the design of strategies which exploit to maximum effect each firm's unique characteristics."

Resource-Based View of Strategic Human Resource Management

Burke and Cooper (2006) point out "the logic of a RBV emphasis in SHRM is understandable as the RBV provides a broad argument as to why HRM practices and employees may be a potential source of value creation". Furthermore, Wright, McMahan, and McWilliams (1994) also show that all those four requirements: value, rarity, inimitability and non substitutability are potentially possessed by the employees.

Armstrong (2012) clarifies the significance of the resource based view of the firm is that "it highlights the importance of a human capital management approach to HRM. This provides the justification for investing in people through resourcing, talent management, and learning and development programmes as a means of enhancing competitive advantage with an emphasis on building flexibility and developing the integrative linkage."

Colbert (2004) convinces that RBV is an integrating ground for SHRM in which "most resource based arguments are rooted in human resources the skills, knowledge, and behaviour of employees – or organizational resources – control systems, routines, and learning mechanisms –

that are products of complex social structures built over time and, thus, are difficult to understand and imitate".

Deeper investigations into the aspects of RBV in SHRM provide more clues of how human resources should be viewed as a competitive advantage. According to the aforementioned research of Barney (1991), a resource is regarded as a competitive advantage when it is rare, valuable, inimitable and non substitutable. First of all, human resources, according to Wright et al. (1994), are not a rarity but, nevertheless, abundant due to the endless pool of labour supply. However,

Wright et al. (1994) adds that what is considered to be rare in this case is in fact the skills, competencies, capabilities and high quality among the resources are limited. In short, human resources are bountiful yet talents are rare. Secondly, human capital resources are valuable since only human resources can facilitate the development of business. Thirdly, human resources as competitive advantage have to be imperfectly imitable. The inimitability is assured by the three prerequisites namely unique historical conditions, causal ambiguity and social complexity (Wright et al. 1994).

Among the three requisites, unique historical conditions are attached to the firm's culture, leadership or underlying assumptions (Kotter and Heskett 1992); casual ambiguity is the condition in which factors of a competitive advantage are ambiguous to the competitors (Barney 1991); social complexity serves as a source of complexity which might hinder inimitability. Lastly, human capital resources need to be non substitutable to be considered as competitive advantage. Wright et al. (1994) asserts that human resources are not obsolete and meet the criteria of a sustainable competitive advantage by challenging that "only resources that can substitute for human resources are those resources that are themselves valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable."

The theory review of SHRM and the Resource-

Based View of SHRM provides solid ground to consider HRM as a valuable source for sustainable competitive advantage. The reason behind this is that HRM has all four elements of such competitive advantage namely value, rarity, inimitability and non substitutability. Only when human capital is viewed as a source of sustainable competitive advantage that help organisations outpace in the

market and fulfil their goals can they value human resources and spend effort to attract and develop effective strategy for them. The aforementioned reasoning suggests that Employer Branding is a p art of HRM strategy. The presence of RBV in SHRM would leverage the status of HRM in every or ganisation.

3.3 Employer Branding

Employer Brand is a concept denoting perception of current and prospective employees toward an organisation as a great place to work (McLeod and Waldman, 2013). In line with this definition,

Employer Branding is the process of sending out the 'great place to work' image to those groups.

Involved with emotional values, Employer Branding is a storytelling process that leverage the ima ge of the employer and help bring the employer closer to the candidate pool (Sluis 2009).

Generally understanding, while Marketing is the communicating process of selling a product or se rvice to customers and Human Resource Management plays the role of attraction, recruitment, sel ecting, training, development, assessment, rewarding and other activities related to employment, Employer Branding is regarded as the connection between those two fields as it involves building a n appealing image of the employer in the mind of potential employees. Thus, Marketing concepts o f branding, image, reputation, awareness, and HR concepts of organisational identity and employe e satisfaction are converged in Employer Branding. (Barrow and Mosley 2005)The perception of p rospective employees towards a brand depends greatly on their experiences with that brand. The pr ocess of providing those experiences for consumers is known as creating brand awareness. Mentio ned in marketing literature, the repeated exposure of a brand would increase its familiarity and, thu s, brand awareness. Experiences of a brand that a consumer have include seeing, hearing, thinking about it. Discussing about brand awareness, Keller (2008) illustrates that various forms of exposur e ranging from 'brand name, symbol, logo, character, packaging, or slogan' to advertising and pro motion, sponsorship and event marketing, publicity and public relations, and outdoor advertising have the possibility of increasing familiarity and awareness among the consumers. Employer Bran ding, thus, is not an exclusion from branding activities mentioned in marketing literature. The perc eptions of consumers (in this case, current and potential employees) towards the employer brand ar

e partly shaped from their exposure of the brand.

Referring to the researches of Keller (1993) and Aaker (1991) on consumer based equity, as long a s the consumers acknowledge a unique brand image of certain products or services, the probability of them buying those products or services of a company over comparable products or services of an other company will increase. Similarly, according to Cable and Turban (2001), the inner mind of c andidates applying for jobs is identical to the decision of a consumer buying a product or service. What job seekers acknowledge of an organization would considerably affect their decision to appl y for that organisation.

The marketing literature has pointed out that image of a brand is possibly perceived differently inte rnally and externally (Dukerich and Carter 2000). This indicates that the employer brand of a comp any is perceived by its current and prospective employees in the way illustrated in marketing literat ure.
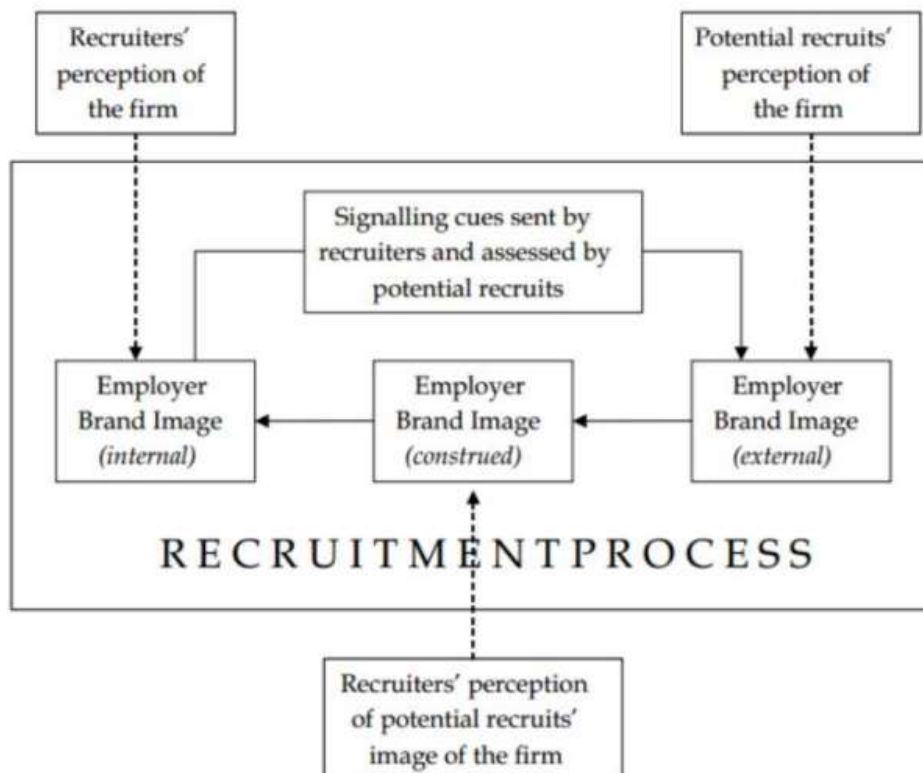
Employer Branding in recruitment process by

(Knox and Freeman 2006) (Dukerich and Carter 2000)

4. Instrumental-Symbolic Framework in Marketing- Lievens and Highhouse

Lievens and Highhouse (2003) have conducted a research to explore how job or organisational factors and characteristics of a company affect the perceptions of potential employees towards the company's attractiveness as an employer. From the instrumental and symbolic framework established from marketing literature, each product has both functional and symbolic meanings.

The functional or instrumental functions of a product correspond to its physical or tangible values. For example, a consumer buys a mobile phone because he/she wants to utilise its instrumental functions such as communication purposes and convenience. On the other hand, symbolic functions of a product are associated with its intangible or imaginary attributes that would help enhance the consumers' self image or maintain their self identity.

For example, a consumer buys a smart phone because its traits or image might show who he/she is or the way he/she wants other to see him/her.

Instrumental-Symbolic Framework in Marketing

	Instrumental attributes	Symbolic attributes
Synonyms	• Utilitarian or functional attributes	• Self-expressive attributes
Content (Keller 2008)	• Product-related attributes • Describe a product in terms of objective, physical, and tangible attributes that a product either has or does not have	• Non-product-related attributes, especially user imagery • Describe a product in terms of subjective and intangible attributes that accrue from how people perceive a product and make inferences about it rather than what a product does/has
Motive (Katz, 1960; Shavitt, 1990)	• People's need to maximize rewards and minimize punishments. In other words, they enable consumers to maximize benefits and minimize costs • Utility serves as the primary reason for consumers' attraction to instrumental attributes	• People's need to maintain their self-identity, to enhance their self-image, or to express themselves (beliefs, traits, personality, etc.) • Self-expression serves as the primary reason for consumers' attraction to symbolic attributes
Example	• A wants to buy a car because it drives fast and has comfortable seats	• A consumer wants to buy a car because it seems cool and trendy

Regarding company's image as an employer (as known as employer brand), Lievens & Highhouse (2003) assume that the instrumental symbolic framework has major significance on attracting applicants to the companies. In the world of human resources, within this framework, instrumental attributes attend to functional, concrete and factual aspects of the job or the organisation such as financial benefits namely salary, commission, monetary rewards, etc. or non financial benefits for instance gym, insurance, medical care, etc. or size of t

he company or its location.

Additionally, Lievens and Highhouse (2003) specify that instrumental attributes of the job or organisation cannot be the only basis that determines applicants' initial attraction to a company. Symbolic attributes are also a source of attracting applicants. Aaker (1997), suggests that symbolic use of brands could be categorised into five dimensions of brand personality namely Sincerity, Excitement, Competence, Sophistication and Ruggedness.

Lievens & Highhouse (2003) explain the five traits as: "Sincerity denoted traits related to warmth, acceptance, and honesty. Excitement encapsulated traits described as trendy, spirited, and imaginative Competence was typified by traits referred to as reliable, secure, and successful." Sophistication is "characterised by traits such as upperclass and prestigious" and Ruggedness is 'presented by traits such as masculine and tough'. Furthermore, the research of Lievens and Highhouse (2003) proves that symbolic attributes have more effects on attracting applicants than instrumental values.

Brand personality				
Sincerity	Excitement	Competence	Sophistication	Ruggedness
Down-to-earth - family-oriented - small-town - down-to-earth	**Daring** - trendy - daring - exciting	**Reliable** - reliable - hard-working - secure	**Upper class** - upper-class - glamorous - good-looking	**Outdoorsy** - outdoorsy - masculine - western
Honest - sincere - honest - real	**Spirited** - cool - spirited - young	**Intelligent** - intelligent - technical - corporate	**Charming** - charming - feminine - smooth	**Tough** - tough - rugged
Wholesome - original - wholesome	**Imaginative** - unique - imaginative	**Successful** - successful - leader - confident		
Cheerful - cheerful - sentimental - friendly	**Up-to-date** - up-to-date - independent - contemporary			

4.1 Brand Personality Scale

Within this research, these two types of attributes in Employer Branding: instrumental and symbolic attributes are researched to explore their importance in students' decision to consider an IT SME as a prospective employer. The answers received would give a hint for IT SMEs on which points they should focus in case they decide to pursue Employer Branding. Regarding instrumental attributes, 7 options of this type of attributes are included. On the other hand, five attributes of symbolic value are not directly quoted in the questionnaire. The basic definitions and examples of them based on theory presented are included instead. The five symbolic attributes are interpreted as following:

1. **Sincerity:** 'A workplace that is open, friendly and sincere where honesty is emphasized'.

2. **Excitement:** 'A work place where my innovative and creative thinking are encouraged and valued'.

3. **Competence:** 'A workplace where my competencies are valued and rewarded'.

4. **Sophistication:** 'A workplace where the values of being trendy, classy or having charming style are appreciated'.

5. **Ruggedness:** 'A workplace which is dynamic, performance-driven and result-oriented'.

5. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK OF THE RESEARCH

The theory of Employer Branding is built based on the conjunction of Marketing and Human Resource. The understanding of Employer Branding requires the base of both fields.

Earlier literature suggests that Employer Branding is derived from the branding activities of Marketing. Thus, the concepts of Brand and Branding are examined and served as foundation for further research on Employer Branding. Moreover, Employer Brand is known to be a part of Corporate Brand. While corporate brand sends out the image to a broader scope, which includes all its stakeholders, employer brand is specifically designed for its current and prospective employees. The theoretical research of Corporate Brand ensures that Employer Brand is in line with its broader umbrella, Corporate Brand. Furthermore, from the perspective of Employer Branding, current and potential employees are regarded as its 'customers', compared to traditional customers in Marketing.

From the perspective of HRM, Employer Branding is integrated with HRM since Employer Brand

ing involves attracting potential candidates, which is closely related to the Recruitment and Selection, one of the main functions of resourcing within HRM. Along with HRM and particularly Recruitment process, the literature of Strategic HRM and the Resource Based View of Strategic HRM are as well recited. The integration of such subjects suggests that Employer Branding is required to be adhered to the overall strategy of the company and, thus, involves the participation of HR department to a higher degree.

View within Strategic HRM implies that considering human resources as strategic competitive advantage with four values immense elements: value, rarity, inimitability and non substitutability is a requisite condition to the success of Employer Branding. Apart from the theory, chapter 3 provides the theme of business environment in Finland. Facts of business environment, IT industry, and particularly Software and Game industry are presented.

Information regarding SMEs and their significant role in Finnish economy is also showed. The inspection of SMEs in Finnish business environment provides sound foundation of how some questions related to SMEs in the questionnaire are shaped.

Within the questionnaire aims at figuring out if the concept of 'Employer Branding' is popular among the students. The knowledge of students about the researched topic would determine how they react to following questions.

Questions 2 (7 items) and question 3 (6 items) are coordinated with the literature of instrumental and symbolic values of employer brand (Lievens and Highhouse 2003). However, question 3f is not a s part of the literature but is intentionally included to study the importance of international diversity when students look for a job.

Afterward, question 4 (8 items) lists out the possible sources that are most likely exposed to the students. Question 4 is included to investigate how experiences of the perceivers affect the process of building brand awareness and how brand awareness is shaped (Keller 2008).

Questions 6 and 7 directly figure out opinions of students towards SMEs' employer brand and the i

mpact of SMEs' employer brand (if any) on students' preference. Lastly, question 8 is an additional open-

ended question to acquire other opinions on how a SME could attract the students if its employer brand does not work.

Research objective: Study the role of Employer Branding in IT SMEs in Finland			
Literature	Research Questions	Hypotheses	Survey Questions
Employer Brand	**RQ₁:** What is the impact of Employer Branding on students' decision to work for a company?	**H₁:** Employer Brand positively affects student's decisions to apply for a job in SMEs	Question 6 and 7
Instrumental and symbolic attributes of Employer Branding	**RQ₂:** What attract the graduating students when they look for a job?	**H₂:** Instrumental attributes are positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding	Question 1, 2, 3 and 7
		H₃: Symbolic attributes are positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding	
		H₄: In Employer Branding, symbolic values have stronger influence than instrumental values.	
Brand awareness	**RQ₃:** From which source do the students build employer brand perception?		Question 4

6. Methodology

6.1 Selection of the Research Method

6.1.1 Quantitative Research

The research aims at developing initial understanding of students expectations and having an overall view of employer branding in IT SMEs. Thus, the quantitative research is chosen.

This chosen method would make the collected data quantifiable, reliable and easy to generalise to larger population, which helps understand the role of Employer Branding in a larger scale.

A fixed questionnaire with closed-
ended questions is selected as this type of research allows the usage of various statistical analysis tools. In the form of a standardised questionnaire, the data collected is expected to be more objective. Furthermore, the limited variables of answers in questionnaire method would make it easier to control the research.

6.1.2 Data Collection

The IT and Business students from college groups at Delhi Technological University and Whatsapp group of previously internship members are the

target in this research. Within the 181 respondents, 40 are business students and the other 141 are IT students. Within those students, there are 93 first year students, 79 second year students, 8 third year students and 1 last year student.
The number of senior students is limited since most of them are not present as they are doing their practical training or do not have any other classes.

The students from 12 groups were directly asked to do the questionnaire in the classrooms during the lecture, as the approval was given by the lecturers and school president beforehand. The direct approach assures the response rate to be 100% with the sample size of 181.

6.2 Data Analysis

Within this research, descriptive statistics is used in every question to figure out the frequency distribution of each variable. This ensures that all variables and their number of responses are attained to provide a holistic view of the data collected. Depending on every variable, frequency distribution is presented in figures or percentages. Besides, crosstabs, frequency tables, bar charts or other statistics figures are good means to demonstrate univariate and bivariate data are also used in this research (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011).

Along the research, **Chi_Square test** is used to measure if the observed distribution is due to chance and, thus, test if a certain number of variables are independent of one another. In order to test further the relationship between some variables, depending on measures of the variables,

Pearson product moment correlation coefficient (Pearson's correlation) or Spearman's rank correlation coefficient (Spearman's rho) can be used to analyse the correlation between two certain variables. Moreover, for variables that are not normally distributed, **Manni Whitney U Test** is used to compare differences between them. (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011)

However, in some analyses where Chi_Square test is invalid as there are empty cells or cells with expected values less than 5, Monte Carlo test is used alternatively. Nevertheless, the value calculated from Monte Carlo method should only be used as a guideline to see if variables are independent.

6.3 Validity and Reliability

Validity is a concept that refers to 'whether we are measuring what we are measuring' and how well the survey measures what it sets out to measure. Validity can be assessed in many forms.

Content validity is one of them, in which the questions on the questionnaire have to relate to the construct measured. This requires the definition of what to measure and discussion of what to include (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011). This aspect of validity could be assessed through the theoretical framework, which is mainly based on Employer Branding. This theoretical framewoek clearly defines what to measure and directly links the theory with the items in the questionnaire.

Reliability refers to the circumstance in which the questionnaire can produce the exact result while conducted under identical conditions. Validity is required before accessing reliability. Reliability can be assessed in three forms including test retest reliability, interrater reliability and internal consistency reliability (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011). The test retest reliability is challenging to assess in this research due to time and effort restriction. Furthermore, making a respondent answer the questionnaire twice might relate to the past survey and feel uncomfortable doing it again. While the inter-rater reliability is only used to assess the reliability of secondary data of qualitative data, internal co

nsistency reliability is the option for this research (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011).

According to Mooi and Sarstedt (2011), the use of internal consistency to assess reliability of the questionnaire requires the use of multiple variables to measure the same thing and examine how these measures relate to one another. If those measures relate strongly and positively, the degree of internal consistency should be high. Cronbach's α is an index that measures internal consistency. The value of Cronbach's α varies from 0 to 1. The questionnaire is generally regarded as reliable when the coefficient is 0.70. For exploratory studies such as this research, 0.60 is an acceptable value (Mooi and Sarstedt 2011). Aligning with this guideline, within this questionnaire, the items in Q1 measure the same topic, instrumental values of employer brand. Correspondingly, the items in Q2 measure symbolic values of employer brand. The usage of SPSS makes it simple to calculate Cronbach's α of items in Q1 and Q2. The coefficient of Q1 is 0.616 (7 items) and that of Q2 is 0.732 (6 items) which satisfy the conditions to be regarded as reliable.

7. EMPIRICAL FINDINGS AND DATA ANALYSIS

7.1 The Impact of Employer Brand on Students' Decision to Work for a Company
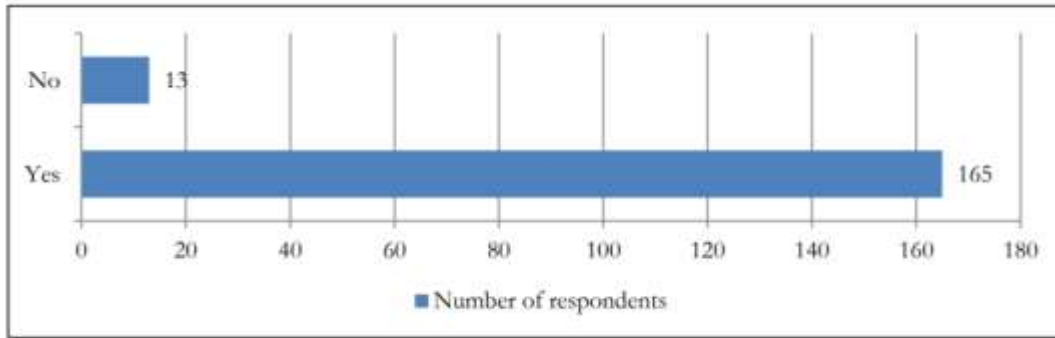
. Q6: Does a SME has an employer brand? (n=178)
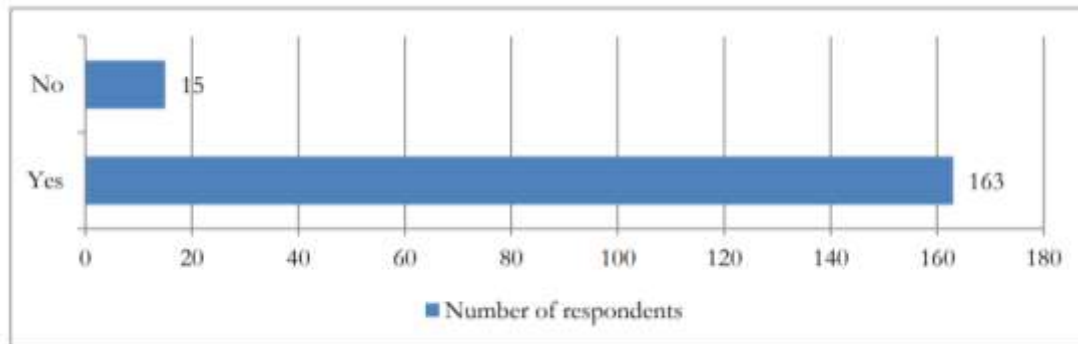
Q7: Will the employer brand of a SME attract the students to consider it as a prospective employer? (n=178)

It shows that the majority of respondents, which are 165 over 13 respondents, think that SMEs have an employer brand. Equivalently, 163 over 15 respondents think that employer brand of a SME would attract the students to consider the company as a prospective employer. Correspondingly, below results presents that 86.9% of the respondents think that a SME has an employer brand and the employer brand of the SME would attract the students to consider it as a prospective employer.

6. Do the students think that a SME has an employer brand?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	No	13	7,3
	Yes	165	92,7
	Total	178	100,0
Missing	System	3	
Total		181	

7. Will the employer brand of a SME attract the students to consider it as a prospective employer?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	No	15	8,4
	Yes	163	91,6
	Total	178	100,0
Missing	System	3	
Total		181	

Chi-Square Tests[d]

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (2-sided)	Exact Sig. (1-sided)	Point Probability
Pearson Chi-Square	16,138[a]	1	,000	,002		
Continuity Correction[b]	12,258	1	,000			
Likelihood Ratio	10,037	1	,002	,002	,002	
Fisher's Exact Test				,002	,002	
Linear-by-Linear Association	16,046[c]	1	,000	,002	,002	,002
N of Valid Cases	176					

a. 1 cells (25,0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 1,11.

b. Computed only for a 2x2 table

c. The standardized statistic is 4,006.

d. For 2x2 cross tabulation, exact results are provided instead of Monte Carlo results.

Symmetric Measures

		Value	Asymp. Std. Error[b]	Approx. T[c]	Approx. Sig.	Monte Carlo Sig.	99% Confidence Interval	
						Sig.	Lower Bound	Upper Bound
Nominal by Nominal	Contingency Coefficient	,290			,000	,002[a]	,001	,003
Interval by Interval	Pearson's R	,303	,122	4,191	,000[d]	,002[a]	,001	,003
Ordinal by Ordinal	Spearman Correlation	,303	,122	4,191	,000[d]	,002[a]	,001	,003
N of Valid Cases		176						

a. Based on 10000 sampled tables with starting seed 112562564.

b. Not assuming the null hypothesis.

c. Using the asymptotic standard error assuming the null hypothesis.

d. Based on normal approximation.

Mann-Whitney Test

Ranks

	7. Will the employer brand of a SME attract the students to consider it as a prospective employer?	N	Mean Rank	Sum of Ranks
Instrumental attributes	No	15	74,80	1122,00
	Yes	160	89,24	14278,00
	Total	175		
Symbolic attributes	No	15	88,40	1326,00
	Yes	163	89,60	14605,00
	Total	178		

Test Statistics[a]

	Instrumental attributes	Symbolic attributes
Mann-Whitney U	1002,000	1206,000
Wilcoxon W	1122,000	1326,000
Z	-1,060	-,087
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	,289	,931

a. Grouping Variable: 7. Will the employer brand of a SME attract the students to consider it as a prospective employer?

7.2 HYPOTHESIS ANALYSIS;

H1: Employer Brand positively affects student's decisions to apply for a job in SMEs

The contingency coefficient value calculated previously indicates that there is positive relation between the students' perception that 'SMEs have an employer brand' and 'Employer brand of a SME attracts the students to consider the SME as a prospective employer'. Although the correlation is slight, it can still be drawn out from **this result that Employer Brand positively affects student's decisions to apply for a job in SMEs. This means that H1 is accepted.**

H2: Instrumental attributes are positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding.

In order to test H2, the Mann-Whitney U test is utilised to compare means of answers from two questions Q2 and Q7 to see if instrumental attributes are positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding. In Q2, the 1-5 Likert scale was used to measure opinions of the respondents.

In this test, the means of 7 variables are calculated to use for Mann-Whitney U test to compare with the answer from Q7. The calculation of mean rank gives the value of 74.80 for 'No' answers and 89.24 for 'Yes' answers. The p-value is 0.289, which is higher than 0.05. Thus, the means from Q2 and Q7 are equal. This suggests that a change in one variable would not lead to a change in another variable and two variables are not correlated. **Therefore, H2 is rejected, which means that instrumental attributes are not proven to be positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding.**

H3: Symbolic attributes are positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding.

Similarly, the identical test is carried out to test H3 to explore if symbolic attributes are positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding. Within symbolic attributes, the mean rank of 'No' answers is 88.4 while the mean rank of 'Yes' answer is 89.6. The p-value from this

Mann-

Whitney U test is 0.931, which is very close to 1, implies that the means of Q3 and Q7 are basically the same, and thus, H3 is also rejected. **The conclusion from this H3 test suggests that symbolic attributes are not proven to be positively related to perceptions of students on Employer Branding**.

H4: In Employer Branding, symbolic values have stronger influence than instrumental values.

H2 and H3, which are the preconditions of H4 are not fulfilled. **Thus, H4 is abandoned due to the unavailability to carry out the test and compare the correlation between two groups Q2xQ7 and Q3X Q7**

Aiming at exploring the role of Employer Brand in SMEs from the perspective of students and, the construct of the research encompasses literature review, research questions, hypotheses and survey questions. While the theories are utilised to reflect the observations, hypotheses and survey questions play a vital role in answering the research questions. The success of this research is achieved when the answers of all four following research questions are addressed:

RQ1: What is the impact of Employer Branding on students' decision to work for a SME?

RQ2: What attract the graduating students when they look for a job?

RQ3: From which source do the students build their employer brand perception?

RQ4: What is the career orientation of the student after graduating?

The empirical findings presented to answer the four research questions. The discussions in this chapter correspond with four parts of data analysis demonstrated

Research Question 1: What is the impact of Employer Branding on students' decision to work for a S

ME?

The results of Q6 and Q7 shown in clearly show that most of the respondents strongly believe that SMEs have employer brand and the employer brand of SMEs would significantly affect the decision of the students to consider the SME as a prospective employer. Furthermore, the results also show that those who think that SMEs have employer brand and those who think employer brand of SMEs would attract them have a closely related opinion.

Hypothesis H1 has given the answer for RQ1. Regarding the impact of Employer Branding on students' decision to work for a SME, Employer Brand has shown to have positive impact on the decisions of students to apply for a job in SMEs. This strongly convinces that exercising employer branding would help SMEs win the people of their choice over other SMEs. However, the answer or RQ1 is only limited to the extent that Employer Branding might be helpful for SMEs to attract their interested people, the examination of in which way could Employer Branding takes effects is yet to be discussed.

Research Question 2: What attract the graduating students when they look for a job?

According to the data presented more than half the respondents are not acquainted with the concept of Employer Branding. This spells out that among the students, those who do not know the existence of what is called 'Employer Brand' is still the majority. This imposes a threat for companies intending to launch their employer branding campaign towards the students that the
students might not get the message the SMEs try to send out and they might perceive the message in a different way. However, this unpaved path could be seen as an opportunity since those SMEs who first proceed would have a higher probability to dominate the late comers. Reflecting from the theoretical framework, employer brand is categorised into instrumental and symbolic values. On the side of instrumental values of employer brand, career opportunity and competitive financial benefits are obviously seen as the most attractive attributes that a student consider when he or she looks for a job after graduating. However, financial benefits are a challenging point for a SME to compete with other SMEs or large companies to attract graduating
students, due to limited of fund for HR and branding activities. Notwithstanding, opportunities for career advancement are what SMEs could offer their employees as a selling point. Unlike large companies with sophisticated and highly-

structured system, SMEs are more relaxing and it should take shorter time for promotion. With more th an 70% of the respondents ranking this attribute as their top priority (ranked as 'important' and 'very im portant'), this is surely an aspect for SMEs to put efforts in to gain student's attention and eventually the ir skills. Another perspective that

should be considered as an intriguing possibility to attract graduating students is the 'empowerment to work independently'. Considering the conditions of SMEs, which are allegedly known to be flexible, o ffering employees the power to work on themselves is not necessarily seen as troublesome but rather an effective strategy that helps the employer gain its positive image. Moreover, there is an indication in the data collected from Q2 that most of the respondents (93.9%) think that size of company does not really matter. Furthermore, 73.9% of the respondents also think that size of the city where the workplace is loc ated is not important either. These two elements can be viewed as opportunities for SMEs to compete fo r human resources with large companies.

In terms of symbolic values of employer brand, 'Sincerity', 'Competence' and 'Excitement' are ranked among the top with no significant different between its mean. 'Sincerity' refers to a workplace that is op en, friendly and sincere where honesty is emphasized. 'Competence' indicates a workplace where com petencies are valued and rewarded. 'Excitement' specifies a workplace

where innovative and creative thinking are encouraged and valued. Those are the three symbolic fields that students pay special attention to.

The answer to RQ2 is discovered by testing H2 and H3, H2 and H3 imply that the instrumental and sym bolic attributes play an important role on Employer Branding and they shape the perceptions of student s towards Employer Branding. The answer could be considered as a guideline for IT SMEs on which att ributes they could focus spending efforts on in case they decide to exercise

Both hypotheses H2 and H3 are rejected. This means that neither instrumental nor symbolic attributes h ave influence on how students shape perceptions towards Employer Brand of a IT SME and make them consider that SME as a prospective employer.

Although being supported by the research of Lievens and Highhouse (2003), which proves that symbol ic attributes hold stronger influence than instrumental attributes, hypothesis H4 could not be tested in th

is research due to the rejection of H2 and H3.

However, the validity of the two hypotheses H2 and H3 are suspicious. The reason behind the suspect is the limitation of respondents as well as their knowledge of Employer Branding, since most of the respondents are first or second year students.

Research Question 3: From which source do the students build their employer brand perception?

Regarding the sources of employer branding, the data presented give an idea through which channel should employer branding be directed in order to reach the most attendants that SMEs might be interested in. Positioning on the top is the attribute 'use product or service of the company'.

This indicates that directly using the product or service of a company has a strong effect on how an individual shape the brand of that company. There are 86.7% of the respondents agree or strongly agree with this attribute. This line of opinion suggests that if SMEs provide potential candidates with the product or service, it is likely that it would positively affect the perception of the user towards employer brand. Besides, 'interact with the company (via previous job application or inquiry)' is another aspect that helps students shape their employer brand perception. This opens up a lot of fields where SMEs could build or improve its employer brand such as a user friendly or vivid platform on the website for candidates to apply for job or inquire information.

Furthermore, training employees to directly communicate with the outside such as applicants or those who acquire information could be an effective way of building Employer Brand.

The results from Q4 partially support that direct interaction with the employer is one of the strongest source of brand perception. 'Using the product or service of the company' is agreed by the majority, which is 86.7%. Considering applying this practice of Employer Branding in the context of IT SMEs in Finland, the number of products and services of those IT SMEs using by graduating students and the number of students using products and services of those IT SMEs are very limited. Thus, direct interaction can be accepted in this context as the strongest source of Employer Brand for IT SMEs.

Research Question 4: What is the career orientation of the student after graduating?

The results obtained from student's preference towards their career orientation suggest that between working for a company and starting up an own company, most of the students preferred working for a company. Reflecting this tendency, 66.3% of the respondents (38.1% preferred and 28.2% most preferred) are affiliated with the 'work for a company in IT industry' option. Likewise, 63% of the respondents (49.2% preferred and 13.8% most preferred) are on the side of 'work for a SME'. On the contrary, only 30.9% think that starting up a company is their choice (23.2% preferred and 7.7% most preferred). This is seen as an advantage for SMEs that right after graduating, most of the students tend to jump directly to the job market. However, this, as well, is a challenge that it brings up the questions on how to attract and recruit the right ones once there are many of the graduates.

Moreover, another challenge for IT SMEs in practising its Employer Branding strategy is that although the majority of students choose to work for a SMEs and the majority also choose to work in IT industry, it should be noted that there is no relationship between this two fields. This translates that IT SMEs might not be a preference for students and it requires attention from IT

SMEs to attract the right people. Meanwhile, it is considered as an opportunity when students already prefer to choose either working for a SME or working in IT industry.

8. CONCLUSION

8.1 Outcome of the Study

As a recap, the main objective of the research is to study the role of Employer Branding in IT SMEs The process of attaining the research objective involves answering four research questions. Theoretical framework of the research was built by using the theories of Marketing, Human Resource Management, Strategic Human Resource Management, Resource-
Based View and finally Employer Branding. From the foundation of Employer Branding and related topics, research questions have been framed to shape the outline of the research in which several hypotheses were initiated and the questionnaire was conducted to collect appropriate data to test the hypotheses. Eventually, the answers of research questions have been deliver both directly and

via testing hypotheses. Quantitative research in the form of a close-ended questionnaire has been chosen for this research as it allows the usage of further statistical methods to analyse numeric data and generalise the result up to a larger scale..

The outcome of the research is intriguing when it suggests that Employer Branding has positive influence on students' decision to apply for a job at a SME. Thus, the practising of Employer Branding of IT SMEs would seemingly attract the graduating students. However, although mentioning that Employer Branding is useful and several instrumental and symbolic values of Employer Brand appear to gain preferences of the students, both types of instrumental and symbolic values might not have direct impact on perceptions of students towards the Employer Brand.

Not with standing, larger scale of researches regarding more students in third or fourth year are suggested to conduct as they could help study deeper on the correlation between two types of

Employer Brand's value and perceptions of prospective employees towards the Employer Brand.

In addition, the research specifies that using the product or service and having direct interaction with the company are the strongest sources that students build their employer brand perception.

Moreover, regarding career orientation after graduating, working for IT SMEs are yet to be a preferable choice for most of the respondents.

8.2 Limitations of the Research and Suggestions for Future Research

The major limitation of the research is most of the researched students are first year or second

year students, which account for 95% of the respondents. The first and second year students are those who just enter school or recently choose their major and start to shape their mind about the real working environment. As a result, it was challenging to generalise the opinions of all the students in general the third and fourth year students were challenging to reach in a large scale.

It would be interesting if further research could examine Employer Branding from another perspective which is from the side of IT SMEs. The empirical findings from this research could be used as preliminary data for that research that view from the side of SMEs. Furthermore, examining the opinion of senior students or student from other parts is another suggestion for future research. The results would be interesting as they help understand the viewpoint of business and IT students towards Employer Branding in SMEs in general

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10. ANNEXURE.

10.1 Questionnaire survey

1. Do you know the meaning of "Employer Branding" before this survey?

Yes (1) _____

No (0) _____

2. Among the following attributes, how important are they to you when you look for a job?	1 = Unimportant	2 = Of little importance	3 = Moderately important	4 = Important	5 = Very important
a. Offers competitive financial benefits (e.g. salary, commission, monetary rewards, stock option)					
b. Offers competitive **NON**-financial benefits (e.g. gym, insurance, medical care)					
c. Offers opportunities to work abroad					
d. Offers opportunities for career advancement					
e. A workplace that is located in big city					
f. A workplace that has more than 50 employees					
g. Empowers to work independently					

3. Among the following characteristics of a company, how important are they to you when you look for a job?	1 = Unimportant	2 = Of little importance	3 = Moderately important	4 = Important	5 = Very important
a. A workplace that is open, friendly and sincere where honesty is emphasized					
b. A workplace where my innovative and creative thinking are encouraged and valued					
c. A workplace where my competencies are valued and rewarded					
d. A workplace where the values of being trendy, classy or having charming style are appreciated					
e. A work place which is dynamic, performance-driven and result-oriented					
f. A workplace that values international diversity					

4. I build my brand perception through the following exposure.	1 = Strongly Disagree	2 = Disagree	3 = Neutral	4 = Agree	5 = Strongly Agree
a. See the brand of the company or its products, services from advertisements					
b. See events sponsored by the company					
c. Participate in an event organised by the company					
d. Have friends or relatives working for the company					
e. Use the product or service of the company					
f. Interact with the company (via previous job application or inquiry)					
g. Receive scholarship from the company					
h. Have worked for the company that has more than 50 employees					

5. What is your career orientation after graduating?	1 = Least preferred	2 = Less preferred	3 = Neutral	4 = Preferred	5 = Most preferred
a. Work for a company (either technical or business role) in IT industry					
b. Work for a Small or Medium Sized company (SMEs) with 50 employees or less					
c. Start up a company of my own					

6. Do you think a small or medium sized company (SME) have an employer brand?

Yes (1).............................

No (0).............................

7. Will the employer brand of a small or medium sized company (SME) attract you to consider it as a prospective employer?

Yes (1).............................

No (0).............................

8. If the employer brand of a small or medium sized company does not attract you, how do you think they can attract you to apply for a job?

....

10.2 Results from SPSS

Question 1: Frequency table

1. Do the students know the meaning of "Employer Branding" before this survey?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	No	101	57,4
	Yes	75	42,6
	Total	176	100,0
Missing	System	5	
Total		181	

Question 2: Descriptive statistics and frequency tables

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
2a. How important are competitive financial benefits when the students look for a job?	181	3,66
2b. How important are competitive non-financial benefits when the students look for a job?	181	2,91
2c. How important are opportunities to work abroad when the students look for a job?	181	2,15
2d. How important are opportunities for career advancement when the students look for a job?	181	3,92
2e. How important is a workplace located in big city when the students look for a job?	180	2,02
2f. How important is a workplace that has more than 50 employees when the students look for a job?	181	1,31
Valid N (listwise)	180	

2a. How important are competitive financial benefits when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	2	1,1
	Of little importance	20	11,0
	Moderately important	44	24,3
	Important	87	48,1
	Very important	28	15,5
	Total	181	100,0

2b. How important are competitive non-financial benefits when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	10	5,5
	Of little importance	61	33,7
	Moderately important	59	32,6
	Important	38	21,0
	Very important	13	7,2
	Total	181	100,0

2c. How important are opportunities to work abroad when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	57	31,5
	Of little importance	66	36,5
	Moderately important	38	21,0
	Important	14	7,7
	Very important	6	3,3
	Total	181	100,0

2d. How important are opportunities for career advancement when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	2	1,1
	Of little importance	10	5,5
	Moderately important	42	23,2
	Important	74	40,9
	Very important	53	29,3
	Total	181	100,0

2e. How important is a workplace located in big city when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	61	33,9
	Of little importance	72	40,0
	Moderately important	34	18,9
	Important	9	5,0
	Very important	4	2,2
	Total	180	100,0
Missing	System	1	
Total		181	

2f. How important is a workplace that has more than 50 employees when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	139	76,8
	Of little importance	31	17,1
	Moderately important	9	5,0
	Important	1	,6
	Very important	1	,6
	Total	181	100,0

2g. How important is the empowerment to work independently when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	6	3,4
	Of little importance	39	21,8
	Moderately important	57	31,8
	Important	58	32,4
	Very important	19	10,6
	Total	179	100,0
Missing	System	2	
Total		181	

Question 3: Descriptive statistics and frequency tables

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
3a. How important is a work-place that is open, friendly and sincere where honesty is emphasized when the students look for a job?	181	4,28
3b. How important is a work-place where innovative and creative thinking are encouraged and valued when the students look for a job?	181	3,91
3c.How important is a work-place where competencies are valued and rewarded when the students look for a job?	181	4,08
3d. How important is a work-place where the values of being trendy, classy or having charming style are appreciated when the students look for a job?	181	1,93
3e. How important is a work-place that is dynamic, performance-driven and result-oriented when the students look for a job?	181	2,55
3f. How important is a work-place that values international diversity when the students look for a job?	181	2,93
Valid N (listwise)	181	

3a. How important is a workplace that is open, friendly and sincere where honesty is emphasized when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Of little importance	4	2,2
	Moderately important	18	9,9
	Important	82	45,3
	Very important	77	42,5
	Total	181	100,0

3b. How important is a workplace where innovative and creative thinking are encouraged and valued when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Of little importance	13	7,2
	Moderately important	45	24,9
	Important	69	38,1
	Very important	54	29,8
	Total	181	100,0

3c. How important is a workplace where competencies are valued and rewarded when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Of little importance	7	3,9
	Moderately important	26	14,4
	Important	94	51,9
	Very important	54	29,8
	Total	181	100,0

3d. How important is a workplace where the values of being trendy, classy or having charming style are appreciated when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	66	36,5
	Of little importance	75	41,4
	Moderately important	29	16,0
	Important	9	5,0
	Very important	2	1,1
	Total	181	100,0

3e. How important is a workplace that is dynamic, performance-driven and result-oriented when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	22	12,2
	Of little importance	68	37,6
	Moderately important	65	35,9
	Important	22	12,2
	Very important	4	2,2
	Total	181	100,0

3f. How important is a workplace that values international diversity when the students look for a job?

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Unimportant	18	9,9
	Of little importance	47	26,0
	Moderately important	65	35,9
	Important	32	17,7
	Very important	19	10,5
	Total	181	100,0

Question 4: Descriptive statistics and frequency tables

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
4a. The brand perception is built through seeing the brand of the company or its products, services from advertisements	181	3,61
4b. The brand perception is built through seeing events sponsored by the company	181	3,32
4c. The brand perception is built through participating in an event organised by the company	181	3,07
4d. The brand perception is built through having friends or relatives working for the company	180	3,41
4e. The brand perception is built through using the products or services of the company	181	4,24
4f. The brand perception is built through interacting with the company (via previous job application)	180	3,78
4g. The brand perception is built through receiving scholarship from the company	181	2,81
4h. The brand perception is built through having worked for the company that has more than 50 employees	180	2,90
Valid N (listwise)	178	

4a. The brand perception is built through seeing the brand of the company or its products, services from advertisements

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	2	1,1
	Disagree	15	8,3
	Neutral	60	33,1
	Agree	79	43,6
	Strongly agree	25	13,8
	Total	181	100,0

4b. The brand perception is built through seeing events sponsored by the company

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	6	3,3
	Disagree	26	14,4
	Neutral	65	35,9
	Agree	72	39,8
	Strongly agree	12	6,6
	Total	181	100,0

4c. The brand perception is built through participating in an event organised by the company

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	8	4,4
	Disagree	34	18,8
	Neutral	82	45,3
	Agree	51	28,2
	Strongly agree	6	3,3
	Total	181	100,0

4d. The brand perception is built through having friends or relatives working for the company

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	5	2,8
	Disagree	22	12,2
	Neutral	67	37,2
	Agree	67	37,2
	Strongly agree	19	10,6
	Total	180	100,0
Missing	System	1	
Total		181	

4e. The brand perception is built through using the products or services of the company

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Disagree	1	,6
	Neutral	23	12,7
	Agree	88	48,6
	Strongly agree	69	38,1
	Total	181	100,0

4f. The brand perception is built through interacting with the company (via previous job application)

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	1	,6
	Disagree	10	5,6
	Neutral	51	28,3
	Agree	84	46,7
	Strongly agree	34	18,9
	Total	180	100,0
Missing	System	1	
Total		181	

4g. The brand perception is built through receiving scholarship from the company

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	16	8,8
	Disagree	35	19,3
	Neutral	100	55,2
	Agree	27	14,9
	Strongly agree	3	1,7
	Total	181	100,0

4h. The brand perception is built through having worked for the company that has more than 50 employees

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Strongly disagree	50	27,8
	Disagree	24	13,3
	Neutral	42	23,3
	Agree	22	12,2
	Strongly agree	42	23,3
	Total	180	100,0
Missing	System	1	
Total		181	

Question 5: Descriptive statistics, frequency table and nonparametric correlations

Descriptive Statistics

	N	Mean
5a. After graduating, the students tend to work for a company (either technical or business role) in IT industry	181	3,83
5b. After graduating, the students tend to work for a SME with 50 employees or less	181	3,71
5c. After graduating, the students tend to start up their own company	181	2,69
Valid N (listwise)	181	

5a. After graduating, the students tend to work for a company (either technical or business role) in IT industry

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Least preferred	4	2,2
	Less preferred	13	7,2
	Neutral	44	24,3
	Preferred	69	38,1
	Most preferred	51	28,2
	Total	181	100,0

5b. After graduating, the students tend to work for a SME with 50 employees or less

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Least preferred	2	1,1
	Less preferred	6	3,3
	Neutral	59	32,6
	Preferred	89	49,2
	Most preferred	25	13,8
	Total	181	100,0

5c. After graduating, the students tend to start up their own company

		Frequency	Valid Percent
Valid	Least preferred	44	24,3
	Less preferred	38	21,0
	Neutral	43	23,8
	Preferred	42	23,2
	Most preferred	14	7,7
	Total	181	100,0

Correlations

			5a. After graduating, the students tend to work for a company (either technical or business role) in IT industry	5b. After graduating, the students tend to work for a SME with 50 employees or less
Spearman's rho	5a. After graduating, the students tend to work for a company (either technical or business role) in IT industry	Correlation Coefficient	1,000	,089
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	,235
		N	181	181
	5b. After graduating, the students tend to work for a SME with 50 employees or less	Correlation Coefficient	,089	1,000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	,235	.
		N	181	181