



Pre-Onboarding Engagement Activities Impact on Employer Branding: A Study on Gen Z

Dr. Sunil Kumar

Associate Professor, Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University Suraj Samal, Janhavi Arya, Priyanka Sharma

MBA, Mittal School of Business, Lovely Professional University

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this paper is to find out how pre-engagement activities by companies during onboarding process helps them in building employer branding. For the purpose of that in this study that is conducted on Generation Z by taking into account a focus group, from whom we have asked certain questions related to their experience while pre onboarding and employer branding experiences. Based on various relevant literature reviews that are described below we have taken into account this studies by different authors previously in this research area. the study also focuses on the behaviour of organization while pre onboarding and engagement activities during orientation programmes so as to create a goodwill among the eyes of new joiners. A qualitative research technique was used to carry out the research wherein we have asked certain quotient based upon the themes that we have created for different onboarding activities that had done by the companies. We have created respondent profile analysis, where in we have analysed the key engagement activities that are done by the companies to showcase their organizational brand before potential candidates.

Keywords: Pre-engagement activities, Generation Z, Focus Group, Onboarding, Employer branding, Behaviour

INTRODUCTION

Onboarding activities allow employers to check whether the candidates are interested in their mission or vision even before they walk into the office for the very first. Any organization furthermore increases the number of employees who are interested to do the job remotely or increases pressure to feel connected in their newly engaged workplace while being pre- onboarded manually or virtually. Every Candidate faces challenges when it comes to joining any new organization or coming to an employee life cycle it also creates excitement because of the hiring process. As we can see boarding activities are the different set of activities that happens after accepting the real offer letter and it is the first step towards pre-onboarding. Thus,

it is a crucial element when the new employee accepts, and it enters a contract that continues till the end date or till he leaves the organization thus making him feel secure and comforting him concerning the company's culture organization onboarding activities. Examples could be ice-breaking sessions, orientation programs, and different other activities where we can engage the newly inducted employees. Pre-onboarding can be defined as the process that starts with when a new employee accepts and signs for an agreement that he/she we will continue his first day of joining and till the day when he leaves the organization. This also means that the candidates are prepared and feeling ready to start their new job in their respective organization. (Blog HubSpot article, 2020)

The process of introducing and acclimating new employees to a company is called "onboarding." This includes a series of activities that help new hires complete the orientation process and become familiar with the company's organization, culture, goals, and values. The length of the onboarding process can vary, with some companies completing it in just one or two days, while others may take several weeks or even months. While all new hires go through an onboarding process, the quality of that process can vary. Often, onboarding is limited to providing new employees with a pile of paperwork and giving them a basic tour of the workplace, with little interaction with colleagues. When done effectively, onboarding can set the foundation for both the employee and employer's long-term success. It can increase productivity, foster engagement and loyalty, and help new hires succeed early on in their new job. Onboarding procedures are not just about completing formalities and paperwork. They can take several days or even weeks to fully cover all the areas and components outlined in the onboarding plan. Onboarding is not only about making the recruit familiar with the company's atmosphere but also about introducing them to the company's principles and values. It helps in building a relationship with the new employee and keeps them informed about the process. The goal is to make the transition as smooth as possible and set the foundation for the employee's success in their new role. Employer Branding refers to the process that the organisations follow to create a goodwill of the company in the eyes of the potential employees, that might otherwise join a different company. These are the set of promotional activities that the organisations do to promote the company values and mission in front of the employees that they need to join the company and as a return what they could expect. This also caters to the need for creation of the employer data regarding the type of advertisement that they before the eyes of potential candidates. This process of employer branding could be done in generation of leads from potential pool of the candidates available in the set of the same domain that might joining the company as per the available vacancy. Simply it means keeping the company distinctive cultural aspects as compared to other competitors present in the market. (Blog SHRM article, 2020). Also, user experience will be better when activities related to pre-onboarding will be done and that will help in better understanding of the culture inside the company. This also increases the productivity of the working of the employees as a whole and makes them feel connected. This helps in retaining the loyalty of the employees, that again helps in retention of the employees those can perform better in respective organisations. These organisations further grow in their respective fields that helps in better profit making and growth of the business entities.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Onboarding activities are basically different kind of activities with the help of these strategic process we can ensure high retention rate as per SHRM journals. Many companies nowadays understand the need of onboarding and the work-related activities that they do during onboarding because that helps in the first day to create a brand value among different people who joined their company from different cultural backgrounds.

Thus, they perceive themselves as a part of the company and have a greater employee experience and that is very viable as well as crucial when it comes to employee experience over onboarding that is referred to Pre onboarding activities during day one, also these activities are highly important from the perspective of candidate. As first impression is the last impression the, does the company need to be fully invested on pre onboarding activities so that the respondents who will attend these will have a perceived and clear vision about the company's perspective and companies job role so that they have to barely spend any unusual time in understanding the job role profile and companies' culture. All these activities help in achieving the onboarding objectives as a whole and creating companies goodwill among the eyes of potential performing candidates (Maurer, 2015).

The main purpose of this research paper was to study the brand management under combining experiences of different organization under different variables. Purpose was to identify the strategic management processes that a company follows to manage different activities under recruitment funnel that could be for small scale as well as for a last scale industry. Different design methodologies have been used for SMEs as they have their different branding activities as compared to big companies.

There are several results that show in this research paper the understanding of employer branding practices works and how they evaluate their own brand in terms of branding and building strategic processes on the other hand to create different funnels of brand value. As the employer branding is very important and crucial for the smaller industries to attract good number of candidates having adequate skills to perform and give their desired result, this helps in companies promotion of goodwill as well as succession of the companies in profits (Näppä A.,2022).

Employer branding is completely a new discipline that came into existence with the need to cater the goodwill of the company in the eyes of potential candidates that they could hire by their recruitment process in future. Various recognisable position attracts many people with respect to the perceived value that is again an effect created by product branding by the organization to hire excellent candidates from the pool of category of candidates. These candidates help employees and employer in creation of new strategies that again help formulatenew HR policies that leads to overall development of the company and the candidate itself.

As per the research paper and recent SHR journal on employer branding 67% of organization view different kind of employer branding as a strategic recruitment pattern or strategic initiative for their firm to hire best of the candidates from market. As of now the focus of employer branding is mainly on the field of recruiting

and selection however the scope of employee branding is way too far more than expected as of now (Srivastava., Bhatnagar,2010).

The use and the need for employer branding and its greater impact on employee perception values that helps in greater interest of practitioners and researchers that analyse this data and data sets to get to know about better engagement activities that will convey them to take better decision about onboarding experiences by the new joiners inside the company.

This literature review also helps in reviewing of the core competencies that help employer branding activities, that will help in clearly influencing the employee retention. As the perceived values by the employees are of huge impose when it comes to retention rate inside the organisation. In this research paper Hassan Gilani also tends to focus on the idea of different branding activities that companies do to clearly give an essence of their culture. These Will help to no more about the company's culture as well as regarding the companies working during the orientation programmes. In this way they could help the new joiners to get an essence of the company with respect to employee engagement (Gilani,Cunningham, 2017).

According to the research paper it has been seen that the purpose and practice of employer branding is increasing now a days by the advent of data analytics to target specific users based on their data. Employer branding is much more of a concept rather than a specific concept because of the HR personals using branding data to brand their employer. Different companies and organization use branding techniques to differentiate themselves from competitors with respect to product branding and employer branding arenas.

Social media is a new platform for external employer branding that is taking trend because of the control that brand messages can have over social media like Instagram and Facebook. The emphasis is given on brand messaging by the help of communication or giving them goodies based upon the organizational values that will challenge to the brand message. Also, the organization you determine certain brand specific branding could be done so that it will give opportunities to the people to join and stay in long run with commitments inside the organization (Backhaus,2016)

This research paper conveys employer branding is a new concept in the modern world for the marketers as well as the HR personals to brand their company in the eyes of targeted consumers where they form long term strategies and they create awareness among the potential employees so as to change their perceptions and to form a goodwill of the company in their eyes. Employer brand is the image of the organization or the company as a whole where they can perceive a value so as to a great place to work in the mindset of the employees so that they will feel good about the brand and this is the process how company used to locate good consumers inside their form as a result brand management is done inside the organization. The need for development of brand strategy is to give a comprehensive knowledge about the company's culture diversity inclusion and other engagement factors along with the perception value and the vision and mission of the companies in the minds of potential targeted candidates, so that the company will have greater efficiency. Talent retention is also a part of the strategy because these are the ways by which organization retain their good and well performing candidates from attrition (Vijayalakshmi.,Uthayasuriyan, 2015)

Employer branding is the process of creating a positive image and reputation of a company as an employer to attract and retain top talent. This process involves highlighting the company's values, culture, and employee experience, and making sure that these align with potential employees' expectations and goals. A strong employer brand can help a company stand out in a competitive job market and can also lead to better employee engagement and retention. This can in turn result in improved business performance, as a company with a strong and dedicated workforce is more likely to be successful. A recent study by Theurer has indicated that increasing investments in employer branding strategies may help businesses recruit and retain top talent inside their organizations. This study highlights the importance of employer branding and the potential benefits it can bring to a company. As a result, management may make and direct an appropriate investment in employer branding to enhance the company's reputation as an employer, and ultimately attract and retain top talent.

The role of the brand manager in this process is crucial as they are responsible for safeguarding the brand, marketing it broadly, and managing it to draw in both new hiring and existing employees. The brand manager is fiercely dedicated to promoting the company as an attractive employer, and to make sure that the employer brand aligns with the company's values and culture, in order to attract and retain top talent (Krithika., Greeshma.,Auxilia, 2020).

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

For this research paper, we employ a particular set of approaches or procedures that we have identified, after which we have chosen the ones that work best and make it easiest for us to analyse the data on the chosen topic in focus group format. Our strategy and methodology were to divide the topics under investigation into various themes before considering our focus group once again. We then asked specific questions based on the themes we had constructed, and we then prepared their responses. We conducted thematic analysis and responded profile analysis to learn about our respondents' opinions on chatbots and their usage, as well as their experiences with them during the recruitment process. In essence, we conducted qualitative analysis based on the type of inputs that our respondents provided during interviews with them about their experiences from various industries.

We conducted interviews with 4 respondents, who have worked for various companies, such as Appstrail, etc. After that, we investigated the company and their profiles to learn more about why they chose that company. As a result, our sample group consisted of 4 people, from whom we collected thematic data to analyse the research paper. We also described how usual the methodology was and how we approached this situation, as well as the kind of data that we collected for our research paper.

3.1 OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

Our goal was to obtain response profiles from the group of respondents we interviewed. We asked them question related to their experiences in their companies where they have been recently onboarded and what was their experience with the mentor. Also, we had asked them whether they have got some goodies, and whether communication process during the recruitment process was up to the mark or not.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Our research was planned so that we could again receive some responses that would be pertinent to our themes. Based on those themes, we performed the analysis in Microsoft Excel, taking their responses and highlighting the crucial components that we need to analyse about the literature paper.

These analyses are all based on assumptions and data that we already have in the form of secondary data from the internet and previously published papers, allowing us to correlate them and conduct qualitative analysis to support or refute our statements.

3.3 SAMPLE UNIT

The entire student body at LPU who the members of the younger generation are taken into consideration and who have already experienced different onboarding activities as a part of their pre-onboarding process. Our sample unit took the form of a focus group, where we took 4 persons and questioned them in accordance with the data we needed.

These individuals made up our sample from the pool of students who are now enrolled in LPU.

3.4 SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The sampling method utilised was called focus group analysis. when we interviewed four to five persons in accordance with the concepts we developed. We analysed their responses and concluded about their experiences with onboarding activities and other activities during the onboarding process.

3.5 DATA COLLECTION METHOD

Focus groups and interviews have been used as our primary data collection methods. We conducted virtual interviews with 4 people, considering our themes and basing our questions on those themes. We have asked them certain pre-onboarding process and activities related questions, where they have experienced the type of engagement activities as conducted by theirrespected companies while they have their boarding process.

Respondent	Designation	Nature of Job (Trade)/ Department	Type of Training Attended	Age	Gender	Company
MugdhaJaiswal	HR ASSOCIATE	HUMAN RESOURCE	Technical/ Functional	23	Female	Appstrail
Ashish	HR ASSOCIATE	HUMAN RESOURCE	Technical/ Functional	24	Male	HP
RahulYadav	HR ASSOCIATE	HUMAN RESOURCE	Technical/ Functional	23	Male	L&T
Tripti Mishra	HR ASSOCIATE	HUMAN RESOURCE	Technical/ Functional	25	Female	Bajaj

Source – Compiled by authors

Also, the focus group have given the data as per their experience in activities related to pre- onboarding activities. Certain other data has been directly taken while taking them on to one interview. That video of the focus group has been converted into audio format and then by using text analytics we have got their respective responses for text to be analysed in excel as theme analysis and respondent profile analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

The respondents of the focus group were called to the venue and then they were briefed about the questions and their doubts were cleared discussed, one by one the questions were given to the focus group. Their responses were recorded through Mobile Video Recording. Later, the recording was converted into text using, MS Word 365 Transcribe feature. Further identified themes from literature were analysed through content analysis by using MS excel (see Table 4.2). The word cloud for the text is given in figure 4.1.

Statement/Question (s)	Theme (s)	Participant (s) Statements	Content Analysis (Categorical Groups)
What are the kind of goodies and welcome gifts given to you by company?	Goodies	Did not got any goodies. I only got office equipment's that was laptop and started tasks. About they are providing us the bag, the laptop and about the water bottle Rahul, yeah when I joined the company by company give me the like a laptop chargers and bottle and even, they give providers like some policies and those separations. When I was joining the company, they give me one diary and pen and one coffee mug.	1) Laptop, Charger 2) Bag, Laptop, bottle Laptop, Charger, Bottle, Policy documents 4) Diary, Coffee Mug
How well you are communicated during the entire recruitment cycle?	Communication	Was not feeling well. And clear that used to be way. Most of the time, so that used to. Create chaos also sometimes. About my company, the communication was purely. Your detailed and well communicated each and you know before each event or any level of that interview process, they will send us a name or call us. Rahul during my application my company was good like they asked me randomly few questions and on	1) Not clear, chaos 2) Pure communication, level wise communication, good 3) Good communication, modified

		<p>online like modification, modification questions and something like which is practically going in the organization.</p> <p>So they were asking me and they were also they were watching us like whether the student is capable means</p>	<p>questions, checking capabilities</p> <p>4) Not good communication</p>
		<p>capable of doing the work or not. So, they were watching that.</p> <p>Only like the communication was not that much good, just they just send one mail or time that's not any motion like they will do mentor.</p>	<p>on, bad delivery</p>
<p>Is there any mentor allocated to you. If Yes, Is that useful for career development?</p>	<p>Assistance (Mentorship)</p>	<p>There was no mentor allocated to me.</p> <p>There was no mentor allocated to me and whatever the training and mentorship I was promised, I also did not. I didn't get it, so that's how it was there. Ashish, yeah currently as a now I'm in a training process so yes, one meter is allocated to me and it's really.</p> <p>Rahul yes, during my period I got one mentorship and even he used to provide me different tasks and some like some different and competition task.</p> <p>Even he used to help me like when we were doing in an internal operation. That time when I was not getting something. Then I must ask my mentor and he used to clarify my doubts.</p> <p>Same one mentor allocated.</p> <p>Also, and she's very nice and she always guided me.</p>	<p>1) No mentor, nothing related to mentorship</p> <p>Mentor allocated, Training</p> <p>going on</p> <p>3) Mentor allocated, tasks assigned, problem solving</p> <p>4) Mentor allocated, guidance, regulations</p>
<p>What are the typical engagement activities are done during your onboarding process?</p>	<p>Employee Engagement Activities</p>	<p>Talking about the onboarding process, that was bit good.</p> <p>I got the offer letter and the the day I joined the first day, just the introduction session was done.</p> <p>Everybody introduced themselves to me. I introduced myself to them.</p> <p>In my organization, the whole process was well structured and well maintained. Each process like the games, mind storming, ice breaking activity or other sports activities. They are well maintained.</p>	<p>1) Introduction session, offer letter</p> <p>2) Well structured, brain storming, ice breaking</p>

		<p>Money gives me a one week like they provide us one week for a challenge. Like what other rules and policies of the company so they give me that task.</p> <p>Even my mentor will help me to like means we engage with many others like my superiors and all so that would.</p> <p>Onboarding process not that much good, but then I joined the company just 5 minutes onboarding process of fill up some sort of forms and they said this is your work.</p>	<p>activities, games</p> <p>3) Tasks related to rules and regulations</p> <p>4) Not good, quick form filling</p>
<p>How was the culture of the company, your work environment? Was it motivating for you?</p>	<p>Company Culture</p>	<p>The communication was clear. The chain was very vague and of course I say it was bit toxic also.</p> <p>Yeah, everyone in my organization is, you know, very helpful. Whenever I feel that.</p> <p>Issue so I don't have to any, you know, take any hesitation that should I ask from?</p> <p>In my organization, like the Culture was friendly but like.</p> <p>Like we can say as a start as a fresher they want that even a fresher should know what the challenges are should be faced in the organization. So, they should give us different tasks.</p> <p>And my normalization workers, who was nice. They all need us, but we don't have like right to talk with another like our seniors.</p>	<p>1) Not motivation, chain was bad, toxic culture</p> <p>2) Motivating, helpful, solution oriented</p> <p>3) Friendly, superior was interactive, task oriented</p> <p>4) Culture was nice, not allowed to talk to senior though</p>

Source – Compiled by Authors

WORD CLOUD CHART

Figure 4.1 Word cloud chart, word frequency set to 20



Source – Compiled by authors

Word cloud chart representing the most used pre-onboarding activities by the company as experienced by the candidates, word frequency set to 20. Majorly word such as good mentor, communication, culture and laptop has been found in common.

Figure 4.2 Word cloud chart, word frequency set to 10



Source – Compiled by authors

Word cloud chart representing the most used pre-onboarding activities by the company as experienced by the candidates, frequency set to 10. Thus we can see that words such as communication, bad orientation, laptop, mug, mentor, charger and policies has come now.

Figure 4.3 Word cloud chart, word frequency set to 5



Source - Compiled by authors

Word cloud chart representing the most used pre-onboarding activities by the company as experienced by the candidates, frequency set to 5. The words like good mentor, communication, laptop has been shown by analysing the texts.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSION

Our objective was to find the key activities that companies provide to their new recruits to create a brand value among their eyes to attract potential performing candidates. We have analysed cloud chart theme wise wherein we have concluded and find out different type of activities, goodies and other welcome gifts that companies provide to promote their company. These activities are all together a part of pre onboarding activities where companies tend to showcase their competitiveness among their competitors.

Coming to Goodies theme, we have found out that laptop, charger, coffee mug and water bottle are the most common goodies given by the companies as welcome gifts. However, some got policy documentations too as goodies. Then coming to Communication theme, we have seen some got poor communication by their organisation and some got good end to end communication. Assistance (Mentorship) was provided to all and was very helpful in their corporate career development. Also, during the initial days of the company and work me mentorship was quite helpful for the candidates. Employee Engagement Activities are experienced by everyone in the focus group that was well, and they have got many insights about the companies well. Company Culture theme was more like negative for half of the candidates and positive for rest. As some have bitter experiences when asked about culture, while others enjoyed the culture of their respective company.

Thus, we can conclude that company targets their potential candidates during pre-onboarding in such a way that they hold a very good reputation of their company and their company's environment in the eyes of potential new joiners. In this way the company can lead the business entity towards mutual progress.

REFERENCES

- <https://www.shrm.org/resourcesandtools/hr-topics/talent-acquisition/pages/onboarding-key-retaining-engaging-talent.aspx>
- <https://www.emerald.com/insight/content/doi/10.1108/EJTD-05-2021-0065/full/html>
- Näppä, A. (2022), "Co-created employer brands: the interplay of strategy and identity", *European Journal of Training and Development*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/EJTD-05-2021-0065>
- <https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/abs/10.1177/097226291001400103>
- Srivastava, P., & Bhatnagar, J. (2010). Employer Brand for Talent Acquisition: An Exploration towards its Measurement. *Vision*, 14(1–2), 25–34. <https://doi.org/10.1177/097226291001400103>
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/320104528_Employer_branding_and_its_influence_on_employee_retention_A_literature_review
- Gilani, H., & Cunningham, L. (2017). Employer branding and its influence on employee retention: A literature review. *The marketing review*, 17(2), 239-256.
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/308929357_Employer_Branding_Revisited
- Backhaus, K. (2016). Employer branding revisited. *Organization Management Journal*, 13(4), 193-201.
- https://www.researchgate.net/publication/331375673_The_Impact_of_Employer_Branding_on_Employee_Performance
- Vijayalakshmi, V., & Uthayasuriyan, D. (2015). The impact of employer branding on employee performance. *Indian journal of applied research*, 5(8), 211-213
- Kritika, J., Greeshma, B., & Auxilia, P. M. (2020). A review of literature on impact of employer branding in talent management. *International Journal of Management Concepts and Philosophy*, 13(1), 1-19