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Impact of employer brand-equity promotion for effective talent recruitment of fresh graduates in Pakistan

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The current study was an attempt to investigate the impact of employer brand equity towards effective talent recruitment in telecommunication companies of Pakistan. As suggested by Ting and Paul (2011), the study also sought to test the mediating role of educational institutions. Two types of survey questionnaires, adapted (with slight modifications) from the study of Collins and Stevens, were used to obtain the data from 200 fresh university graduates and 273 employees of the five cellular companies located in Islamabad and Rawalpindi. SPSS 18 and AMOS 18 software were used for data analyses. Data received from the university graduates was used for rating these companies against different parameters, for which cross tabulation was used to statistically test the results. Whereas, the data collected from the employees was used to measure the mediating effect of educational institutions in relationship between employer brand equity and effective talent recruitment. The results of structural equation modelling show that the educational institutions play partially mediating role in hypothesized relationship. The study recommends that the organizations should seek help from the educational institutions to improve effectiveness of their brand equity and talent recruitment. The study has implication for organizations as well as the academicians for further research on the topic, including other variables.

Key words: Employer brand equity, fresh talent, recruitment, universities, Pakistan.

INTRODUCTION

Employment branding and branding are the two primary sources of this study. First, there is a long history of the study of organizational attraction and secondly, there is tremendous growth in cross flow of research merge branding concepts from the consumer psychology (Turban et al., 2009) literature of organizational attraction and applicant job search behaviour (Gardner et al., 2010). This merging of employment brand with product and service brands is proficient, simply by recognizing employment as a monetary exchange between workers and employers and also resulting into improved brand equity promotion along with improved recruitment process (Melin, 2005). Organizations traditionally hire new employees by determining job vacancies, advertising open positions, applicant’s valuation and response to vacancy announcements, screening of applications and extending the job offer. There may be some other common paths used to complete the recruitment process. Conventionally speaking, the recruitment process is of two categories. One is of the employees who are already working somewhere and are known as the knowledge workers and second is the fresh talent recruitment. In this study, we will focus on the second category which is about the fresh talent recruitment by developing the strong and attractive brand image of employer through the educational institutions. On the other hand, it does not mean that employer brand equity does not exist, but it is about creating the awareness of the company before

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they can influence the job seekers; because what an applicant know about company affects his or her behaviour in the application process.

Though organizations generally focus their branding efforts towards developing products and corporate brands, branding can also be used in the area of human resource. The application of branding principal to human resource management has been termed as “employer branding”. Employer branding is defined as “a targeted, long-term planning to manage awareness and perception of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to particular firm” (Sullivan, 2004). The employer brand puts forth an image showing the organization as a good place to work (Sullivan, 2004).

Employer branding is a concept of developed countries where the recruitment process is already in mature phase. Pakistan is lacking in maturity of this process which is a missing element that results into less employer brand equity promotion in the fresh talent. If we talk about this concept of employer branding in Human resource area in Pakistan, there is no substantial study available which can be referred. It is a new area where the empirical study was required to make the concept obtainable. Currently in Pakistan, online recruitment and job posting is mostly exploited by the large organizations. Looking into the recruitment process of the famous companies of Pakistan as given by the largest job search engine (Rozeepk.com), Figure 1 depicts percentage of respondents which shows the substantial need for the employer brand awareness promotion.

If we come across region wise on respondent’s ratio, it is as shown in Figure 2.

Rationale of the study

In this study, the emphasis will be on developing new fad of companies brand equity in the mind of fresh talent through their educational institutes by the business organizations. In return, this will create repute of the employer in the mind of fresh graduates and will make their thought process mature while seeking for a job. According to Jiang and Iles (2011), it is “the process that leads employees and prospective applicants to be attracted to remain with the organization”. “Researchers have tended to examine a narrow range of practices, even though there are a variety of human resources practices and other organizational activities that may attract potential applicants” (Barber, 1998).

Aim of the study

The aim is to develop an understanding of how organizational recruitment practices may affect fresh graduate job application decisions. It is about creating a strong relationship between industry and academia and developing employer specific brand equity in fresh graduates through their educational institutes. This study is going to cover two things. Firstly, it is going to assist the fresh graduates to decide and bring clarity in their mental attitude for applying the relevant jobs. Secondly, it will enable the companies to first create branding equity of
their company before they can influence job seekers.

Critical analysis and gap identification

The proposition of the study was focused towards the investigation and analysis pertaining to the relationship building between industry and academia for effective talent recruitment through promotion of employer brand equity in conjunction with educational institutions. Employer branding is a relatively new approach towards recruiting and retaining best possible human talent in developing countries. A recent study was carried out by Gul et al. (2011) in Pakistan about the employer brand equity but they only measured the perceived brand image in the labour market. They assumed that employer brand equity was already prevailing in the market.

Pakistan’s educational institutions have been producing about two million fresh graduates of different disciplines to the labour market each year. Up till now, Pakistan’s education system has been directing the huge bulk of these new masses to enter the labour market. The outcome was twofold bind where fresh talent are unable to find relevant place in the market and at the same time, employers grumble that they cannot find required fresh applicants for job postings.

This study was carried out to fill the gap mentioned in the Ting and Paul (2011) study about employer branding through universities in the mind of fresh graduates and strengthening the industry academia relationship. The gap or suggested future study by them was to investigate how fresh graduates value company image as an employer in University recruitment and how the healthier relationship among the organization and educational institutions might fortify charisma of employer branding to generate awareness in fresh graduates in particular.

Research objectives

The objectives of the study were to:

i. Find out the relationship between employer brand-equity and effective talent recruitment in mobile phone companies of Pakistan

ii. Investigate the mediating role of educational institutions in relationship between employer brand equity and effective talent recruitment

iii. Obtain the rating of different mobile companies of Pakistan as prospective employer for fresh graduates, against different parameters

Research question

1. What significant relationship exists between the employer brand equity and effective talent recruitment in mobile companies of Pakistan?

2. To what extent do the educational institutions mediate the relationship between employer brand equity and effective talent recruitment in mobile phone companies of Pakistan?

3. How do the fresh graduates of Pakistan perceive different mobile phone companies as prospective
employer against different parameters?

**Delimitations of the study**

Limitations of the study were the recruitment strategies of the organizations and the existing culture which prevails in the labour market. There are other aspects of brand equity promotion for recruitment but the current study will only cater the given context in the model. Our focus group for the study was the fresh graduates of today. Other groups of the labour market have been excluded in this research.

**Concepts and definitions**

Employer brand equity: Employer branding is known as the latest trend in the employment strategy and a world-wide notion which belongs to the effort constructing the uniqueness as an employer apparently. “Employer branding is a term often used to describe how organizations market their offerings to potential and existing employees, communicate with them and maintain their loyalty; advancing, internally and externally in the organization, a clear view of what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer” (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004).

Effective talent recruitment: The impact of globalization has squeezed the world and companies are continuously expanding their pawmarks, the want for a universal imped to talent attainment and the capability to access eminence domestic adept is a key for accomplishing decisive factor. The primary rationale of hiring is to build up masses of competent individuals.

Educational institutions: Companies are now becoming conscious to invest in building up and overseeing masses of competent individuals globally in order to generate a legitimate competitive gain which ultimately in return can construct a sturdy relation with the academic bodies to hire fresh graduates.

**LITERATURE REVIEW**

“The hottest strategy in employment” is known as employment branding (Sullivan, 1999). “It is a long term planning of the organizations to the shortage of talent problem. Most employment strategies are short-term and reactive to job openings; building an employment brand is a longer-term solution designed to provide a steady flow of applicants”. For Feldwick (1996), “conceptual confusions surround brand equity as a gauge of brand attraction or value. Brand equity evolved from concept of brand image in the 1980s when brand values became apparent in financial terms and could be seen as the total value of brand as a separable asset”. Employer branding is the course of action of placing a reflection of a magnificent place to work (Barrow and Moseley, 2005) in the mentality of the fresh graduates. Product branding is a process of building up an enduring image in the brain of its end users; it will finally effect and link the quality of product or service available by the concerned business group. Employment does the same; it creates the image that creates people want to work for the organization because it is well managed where employees continuously learn and grow. “Once the image is developed, it generally results in steady flow of talented applicants. Employment branding uses the tools of marketing research, public relations (PR) and advertising to change the image applicants have of what it is like at the organization” (Sullivan, 1999). The concept of branding in HRM was first introduced by Ambler and Barrow (1996), depicting the employer as a brand and the employee as the end user. They describe employer branding as the box of purposeful, monetary and emotional benefits offered by employment and recognized by the employer. “Customer-based brand equity refers to beliefs held by individual consumers about a product’s or a service’s brand (that is, perceptions of the name or logo) that affect their preferences and purchasing decisions relative to other unbranded products or services with similar attributes” (Aaker, 1991; 1996; Keller, 1993).

The term recruitment engrosses seeking out for and attaining prospective job applicants in adequate figures and superiority so that the organization can plump for the suitable individuals to pile up its job requirements. Mostly, organizations are spotlighting their recruitment on embryonic professionals and fresh graduates. As a result, researches are putting attention particularly on the significance of these embryonic professionals. As per their view, these fresh graduates are assumed to be the potential prospect of this industry. Establishing well-built relations with fresh graduate masses provides the company an exclusive means to profile them as future employers and better augment their corporation likeness. “Research has indicated that one major determinant of an organizations ability to recruit fresh graduates is organizational reputation (Cable and Turban, 2003), referring to the status of a firm’s name relative to competing firms” (Belt and Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993). We have taken reputation as comparable to a trademark and have taken employer brand equity in this regard. The recruitment narrative has shed light and engaged with job search verdicts as the eventual conclusion of their significance.

Research on employer familiarity and knowledge has blossomed within the past decade. Cable and Turban (2001) has proposed that employer knowledge is comprised of familiarity, employer image (beliefs about employers) and reputation (perceived firms’ evaluations held by other people); employer images, in turn, have
been described as containing both instrumental (job and organizational attributes) and symbolic content. Employer images consistently show stronger relationships with job seekers' intentions and attractions (Chapman et al., 2005) and have been shown to increase as a result of exposure to news stories (Slaughter et al., 2004), product and company provided information, and word of mouth transmission (Cable et al., 2000). Educational institution's student resource centres will be used as talent pools. It is a mechanism of HRM which is principally in the framework of staff hiring. If organizations have to pile up a job opening, they will be able to portray the talent masses and there seem to be ways of harmonizing the profile in the right candidates and job vacancies. Companies will first create awareness of their company image before they can influence fresh graduates.

Visits from organization's HR department to student resource centres of the educational institutes will update the information about the recruitment process and new employment openings in the organization. In this regard, organizations will need to implement information recruitment practices, therefore their recruitment sources will provide line up in general and positive images of the company using recruitment sources. They will provide more extensive information to fresh graduates through detailed ads, brochures, web sites and organizing events in campuses. These activities will propel the familiarity of the employer in the minds of fresh graduates. Database developed in the student resource centres will be according to their educational programs so that appropriate job offers can be conveyed to their relevant graduates. Publicity, word of mouth, advertisement and sponsorship will form the key attributes for fostering employer brand equity.

**Theoretical framework**

In Figure 3, employer brand equity will be developed in the minds of fresh graduates through the educational institutions. Therefore, the following hypotheses were developed based on our proposed theoretical framework:

H$_1$: Publicity as a component of employer brand equity is positively associated with effective talent recruitment in mobile phone companies of Pakistan.

H$_2$: Word of mouth as a component of employer brand equity is positively associated with effective talent recruitment in mobile phone companies of Pakistan.

H$_3$: Advertising as a component of employer brand equity is positively associated with effective talent recruitment in mobile phone companies of Pakistan.

H$_4$: Sponsorships as a component of employer brand equity is positively associated with effective talent recruitment in mobile phone companies of Pakistan.

H$_5$: Educational institutions of Pakistan play mediating role between employers and university students to create effective brand equity leading to the effective talent recruitment.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research design**

The main source to gather the data was through questionnaires floated in the universities of Islamabad and in the selected
organizations. The items used were adapted from the previous studies with the permission of the authors. Questionnaires were based on the interval scale, that is, 5 point Likert scale. The main purpose was to measure the employer brand equity in the minds of fresh graduates as their future perspective employer. Research focuses on the telecom sector of Pakistan and has floated the instrument to measure the five existing companies’ employer brand equity in the mind of fresh talent. Comparison among the companies analysis is made to find out the strong employer image.

Sampling criteria

The process of convenient and purposive sampling is adopted in the research by floating the questionnaires in the educational institutions and offices of the selected organizations of Islamabad.

Population and sample size

The targeted population for this study was the fresh graduating students from the universities and the employees of the selected organizations of Islamabad. A sample of 250 students was selected and questionnaires were distributed in various universities and a sample of 350 was selected from the employees. A total of 531 were returned, out of which 473 were found to be accurately filled and up to mark for further statistical analysis. Therefore, a response rate of 78% was achieved.

Type of study and time horizon

This study is of descriptive type and is a one shot study that is cross sectional in nature.

Instrument

Two types of questionnaire were used for the collection of the data. One was floated among the university final semester students and other was floated in the employees of the selected organizations. The questionnaire used in this study is adapted from Collins and Stevens research conducted in 2002 in USA. Employer brand equity dimensions measures were patterned as per according to the Pakistan environment. The items of the questionnaire were measured at five point Likert scale in which 1 was showing mostly and 5 was never. Instrument contained a total of 35 items in which publicity, advertising, word of mouth and sponsorship had 5 items each while employer awareness, information, familiarity and responsiveness were having 3 items each. Dependent variable had only one dimension and it was measured by 3 items. The questionnaire floated in the organizations was slightly modified in scale to obtain the opinions of employees. The questionnaire floated among the students was used for rating the companies against different dimensions.

DATA RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

We collected the data from the university students about the five telecom sector organizations of Pakistan and from the employees of the selected companies to measure the existing employer brand equity in the minds of these respondents.

Table 1. Reliability statistics.

| Variable name     | Cronbach alpha value | No. of items |
|-------------------|----------------------|--------------|
| Publicity         | 0.603                | 5            |
| Advertising       | 0.613                | 5            |
| Word of mouth     | 0.696                | 5            |
| Sponsorship       | 0.646                | 5            |
| Employer awareness| 0.622                | 3            |
| Employer information| 0.692         | 3            |
| Employer familiarity| 0.619              | 3            |
| Responsiveness    | 0.619                | 3            |
| Decision making   | 0.691                | 3            |

Reliability

SPSS 18 was used for analysis of data. We first applied test of reliability for the instrument, the Cronbach’s alpha statistics is shown in Table 1, the alpha values remained within the range of 0.603 to 0.696 for individual variables. As known by Sekaran (2006), a value of alpha greater than 0.60 represents acceptable range of inter item consistency for a newly developed instrument. The mentioned values in Table 1 sufficiently fulfil the desired criteria for a reliable instrument. The data was further tested for correlation amongst the variables.

To check the assumption of multicollinearity among the variables, correlation analysis was carried out. Table 2 results show significant correlation ranging from 0.121 to 0.565 which is well within the safe range, satisfying the assumption. As stated by Sekaran (2006), correlation beyond the range of 0.80 reflects multicolinearity amongst the variables, which was not the case in present study.

Hypothesis testing

Table 3 shows that the H1, “publicity as a component of employer brand equity is positively associated with the decision making about the employer, amongst the fresh graduates of Pakistan” has been rejected by the study. This also shows that publicity, without mediation of educational institutions, does not affect the decisions about talent recruitment in selected companies of Pakistan. Similarly, advertising and sponsorship also show insignificant and negative relationship with decision making, rejecting H3 and H4, respectively. However, word of mouth as a component of employer brand equity has shown significantly positive association with effective talent recruitment, with a β and p values of 0.179 and 0.014 respectively.

To check the model fitness and the mediating role of the educational institutions between the employer brand equity and the effective talent recruitment, structural
equation modelling (SEM) was applied, for which AMOS 18 software was used. To fulfill the assumptions of SEM, confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was applied to confirm the discriminate and concurrent validity of the instrument. Tables 4 and 5 show the results of first and second levels CFA analysis (Figure 4). During the first level analysis, first item of independent variable “publicity” naming “company reputation” with factor loading of 0.411 was removed. Some other items also had factor loading less than 0.50, however, they could not be removed in the first level as having interrelationship with other significant items.

During the second stage of CFA, some other items causing factor loading less then the desired value of 0.50, were also removed. Item number 4 “top officials of the company are on media” and 5 “employees are loyal with the company” from the first dimension of independent variable publicity were removed due to lower factor loading.

Similarly item numbers 1 and 5 “job advertisements in newspapers” and “job advertisements are clear and show required information” respectively, from “advertisement” could not qualify the criteria and got removed. Item number 3 “PR of organization” and 5 “reliability as an employer” were also removed due to lower factor loading problem. From sponsorship item number 4 “offer any student study loans” and item number 5 “sponsorship for university magazines” were also removed. Revised model is shown in Figure 4. To improve the model fitness and relevant indexes, several modifications, as suggested by the software, were applied one by one. On the whole, 12 modifications were applied.

Table 6 shows the results of model summary indexes, where the direct and indirect models have been compared for the fitness. The CMIN/DF value (chi square/ DF) value shows good fit, that is, within the range of 1 to 3. However, the indirect model shows better strength with a value of 1.905 in comparison with direct model. The value of goodness of fit index (GFI) as 0.872 for each model reflect a good fit, as stated by Raykov and Marcoulides (2006) that it should be close to one. Root mean square residual (RMR) and root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) should be closer to zero which are 0.114 and 0.058 respectively in the case of current study which fulfils the criteria. The ideal values of critical fit index (CFI) and Trucker Lewis index (TLI) are also closer to one, which also fulfil the criteria in this case with values of 0.869 and 0.847 for direct model and 0.869 and 0.848 for indirect model. Although the model fit indices for both models remained equal in most of the cases, slight difference in TLI shows that indirect model is better than the direct one and confirms the partial role of mediator.

As hypothesized, educational institutions of Pakistan were found playing partial mediating role between employers and university students to create effective

### Table 2. Correlations.

| Variable     | Pub | Adv | Wom | Spo | EA  | EI  | EF  | Res | DM  |
|--------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Pub          | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Adv          | 0.438** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Wom          | 0.446** | 0.367** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |     |
| Spo          | 0.121*  | 0.233** | 0.253** | 1   |     |     |     |     |     |
| EA           | 0.258** | 0.387** | 0.285** | 0.493** | 1   |     |     |     |     |
| EI           | 0.342** | 0.240** | 0.442** | 0.350** | 0.433** | 1   |     |     |     |
| EF           | 0.236** | 0.203** | 0.322** | 0.358** | 0.505** | 0.533** | 1   |     |     |
| Res          | 0.176** | 0.151*  | 0.333** | 0.254** | 0.290** | 0.372** | 0.510** | 1   |     |
| DM           | 0.234** | 0.188** | 0.441** | 0.278** | 0.261** | 0.483** | 0.519** | 0.565** | 1   |

Key: Pub – publicity, Adv – advertising, Wom – word of mouth, Spo – sponsorship, EA – employer awareness, EI – employer information, EF – employer familiarity, Res – responsiveness, DM – decision making. **Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). *Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

### Table 3. Hypotheses testing.

| Variable          | B      | P   |
|-------------------|--------|-----|
| Publicity         | -0.099 | 0.140 |
| Advertisement     | -0.123 | 0.161 |
| Word of mouth     | 0.179  | 0.014 |
| Sponsorship       | -0.060 | 0.325 |
| **Dependent variable** | **Effective talent recruitment** |
brand equity leading to the decision making about the prospective employers. The modified SEM models (direct and indirect) were tested for mediation and significance of the paths. Figures 6 and 7 show the results of direct and indirect models respectively. The direct model shows the relationship between employer brand equity (IV) and effective talent recruitment (DV) without controlling the direct path which shows fulfillment of all the three assumptions of Baron and Kenny (1986) method for partial mediation.

As shown in the Table 7, the first path that is from independent variable EBE to mediating variable EDI is significant with a coefficient of 0.743. Similarly, the second path that is from mediating variable EDI to the dependent variable ETR is also significant with a beta value of 0.995. The third path that is EBE to ETR was found to be insignificant with a significance value of 0.505, which fulfils the requirement. However, the beta estimate, which was supposed to be zero for perfect mediation, came to be -0.077, showing partial mediation. By controlling the direct path, the value of relationship between EBE and EDI reduced to 0.731 and between EDI to ETR 0.916 showing slight variations from the direct paths. This also confirms the partial mediation effect.

In order to compare the selected companies in terms of promoting employer brand equity amongst the University students through their respective educational institutions, cross tabulation of each item was carried out. As shown in Table 8, the comparative analysis depicts that the items of Mobilink was ranked as having the strongest

| Table 4. First level CFA. |
|--------------------------|
| Adv1 <-- Wom 0.414 |
| PC1 <-- Pub 0.415 |
| PC5 <-- Pub 0.454 |
| PC4 <-- Pub 0.455 |
| Wom5 <-- Adv 0.458 |
| Adv3 <-- Wom 0.465 |
| Spo5 <-- Spo 0.468 |
| Adv5 <-- Wom 0.48 |
| Spo1 <-- Spo 0.489 |
| PC3 <-- Pub 0.525 |
| Adv4 <-- Wom 0.525 |
| Adv2 <-- Wom 0.526 |
| Spo4 <-- Spo 0.527 |
| Wom4 <-- Adv 0.542 |
| EF1 <-- Res 0.561 |
| Wom3 <-- Adv 0.566 |
| DM3 <-- DM 0.57 |
| EA1 <-- EA 0.576 |
| Res1 <-- EF 0.577 |
| Spo3 <-- Spo 0.581 |
| PC2 <-- Pub 0.584 |
| EF3 <-- Res 0.589 |
| EA3 <-- EA 0.595 |
| Wom1 <-- Adv 0.607 |
| EA2 <-- EA 0.623 |
| El1 <-- El 0.627 |
| El3 <-- El 0.633 |
| Wom2 <-- Adv 0.646 |
| Res3 <-- EF 0.65 |
| EF2 <-- Res 0.653 |
| Spo2 <-- Spo 0.663 |
| Res2 <-- EF 0.664 |
| DM1 <-- DM 0.684 |
| DM2 <-- DM 0.708 |
| El2 <-- El 0.738 |

| Table 5. Second level CFA. |
|---------------------------|
| Adv2 <-- Adv 0.464 |
| Adv3 <-- Adv 0.464 |
| Spo5 <-- Spo 0.469 |
| PC5 <-- Pub 0.472 |
| Spo1 <-- Spo 0.488 |
| PC4 <-- Pub 0.504 |
| PC2 <-- Pub 0.516 |
| Adv4 <-- Adv 0.52 |
| Spo4 <-- Spo 0.527 |
| Adv5 <-- Adv 0.528 |
| PC3 <-- Pub 0.546 |
| Wom4 <-- Wom 0.549 |
| EF1 <-- Res 0.56 |
| Wom3 <-- Wom 0.57 |
| DM3 <-- DM 0.571 |
| EA1 <-- EA 0.572 |
| Res1 <-- EF 0.577 |
| Spo3 <-- Spo 0.582 |
| EF3 <-- Res 0.59 |
| EA3 <-- EA 0.598 |
| Wom1 <-- Wom 0.603 |
| EA2 <-- EA 0.625 |
| El1 <-- El 0.627 |
| El3 <-- El 0.633 |
| Wom2 <-- Wom 0.638 |
| Res3 <-- EF 0.649 |
| EF2 <-- Res 0.653 |
| Spo2 <-- Spo 0.663 |
| Res2 <-- EF 0.665 |
| DM1 <-- DM 0.683 |
| DM2 <-- DM 0.709 |
| El2 <-- El 0.738 |
reputation in the minds of fresh graduates while Warid is the weakest one as far as the items pertaining to the first independent variable publicity is concerned. Telenor was ranked excellent in terms of providing good corporate culture, social welfare, media representation and employees loyalty towards the company. Over all, in terms of publicity, Telenor is the mostly known company by the fresh graduates.

The results pertaining to the advertisement as a dimension of the employer brand equity was rated as highest in favour of Mobilink, however, on the whole, mixed opinions were found for different items. The results show that Mobilink dominates in publishing the job advertisements in different newspapers and sending the alumni of the same institutes as their brand ambassadors and post; whereas, Ufone is rated highest for attractive job brochures. Telenor led by attaining highest points among others in billboards and Zong in terms of providing clear and proper information required for the job.

The university students considered Mobilink as the mostly heard company as far as the third dimension of employer brand equity “word of mouth” was concerned, where as Telenor was found to be the highly attracting
Figure 6. Direct diagram.

Table 7. Paths estimations.

| Paths                       | Direct estimates | Indirect estimates |
|-----------------------------|------------------|--------------------|
| ETR (DV) <- EBE (IV)        | -0.095           | 0.000              |
| EDI (IIV) <- EBE (IV)       | 0.743            | 0.731              |
| ETR (DV) <- EDI (IIV)       | 0.995            | 0.916              |
### Table 8. Cross tabs.

| Parameter                                      | Name of the company | Mobilink | Ufone | Warid | Telenor | Zong |
|------------------------------------------------|----------------------|----------|-------|-------|---------|------|
| **Strong company reputation**                 |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Excellent                                      | 100                  | 62       | 44    | 65    | 48      |      |
| Good                                           | 67                   | 71       | 57    | 73    | 57      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 20                   | 35       | 39    | 42    | 51      |      |
| Not good                                       | 5                    | 25       | 26    | 15    | 32      |      |
| Very bad                                       | 8                    | 7        | 34    | 5     | 12      |      |
| **Good corporate culture**                     |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Excellent                                      | 55                   | 46       | 25    | 61    | 20      |      |
| Good                                           | 79                   | 55       | 55    | 73    | 81      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 43                   | 55       | 58    | 45    | 55      |      |
| Not good                                       | 17                   | 21       | 39    | 16    | 25      |      |
| Very bad                                       | 6                    | 23       | 23    | 5     | 19      |      |
| **Work for society welfare**                  |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Excellent                                      | 39                   | 27       | 22    | 48    | 38      |      |
| Good                                           | 41                   | 80       | 35    | 71    | 46      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 72                   | 55       | 87    | 34    | 80      |      |
| Not good                                       | 41                   | 32       | 37    | 26    | 20      |      |
| Very bad                                       | 7                    | 6        | 19    | 21    | 16      |      |
| **Top officials of the company are on media**  |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Excellent                                      | 43                   | 46       | 23    | 44    | 25      |      |
| Good                                           | 57                   | 56       | 48    | 59    | 53      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 50                   | 47       | 51    | 52    | 56      |      |
| Not good                                       | 33                   | 34       | 45    | 26    | 45      |      |
| Very bad                                       | 17                   | 17       | 33    | 19    | 21      |      |
| **Employees are loyal with the company**       |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Excellent                                      | 33                   | 39       | 20    | 67    | 43      |      |
| Good                                           | 57                   | 67       | 44    | 59    | 38      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 50                   | 49       | 52    | 37    | 60      |      |
| Not good                                       | 32                   | 16       | 45    | 19    | 27      |      |
| Very bad                                       | 28                   | 29       | 39    | 18    | 32      |      |
| **Publicity**                                  |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Mostly                                         | 24                   | 13       | 8     | 26    | 8       |      |
| Sometimes                                      | 84                   | 91       | 46    | 86    | 71      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 77                   | 86       | 93    | 84    | 94      |      |
| Very few                                       | 15                   | 10       | 45    | 4     | 20      |      |
| Never                                          | 0                    | 0        | 8     | 0     | 7       |      |
| **Job advertisement in newspaper**             |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Mostly                                         | 54                   | 48       | 20    | 48    | 32      |      |
| Sometimes                                      | 65                   | 52       | 46    | 64    | 61      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 45                   | 37       | 58    | 41    | 50      |      |
| Very few                                       | 19                   | 34       | 28    | 38    | 43      |      |
| Never                                          | 17                   | 29       | 48    | 9     | 14      |      |
| **Attractive broachers for job adverts**       |                      |          |       |       |         |      |
| Mostly                                         | 30                   | 45       | 16    | 43    | 29      |      |
| Sometimes                                      | 79                   | 52       | 52    | 48    | 62      |      |
| Neutral                                        | 39                   | 48       | 46    | 45    | 62      |      |
| Very few                                       | 36                   | 30       | 56    | 26    | 27      |      |
| Never                                          | 16                   | 25       | 30    | 38    | 20      |      |
| **Bill boards**                                | Mostly               | 38       | 51    | 17    | 63      | 33   |
|                                                                 | Mostly | Sometimes | Neutral | Very few | Never |
|------------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|-------|
| University alumni visit your campus as their brand ambassadors   | 49     | 54        | 66      | 25       | 17    |
|                                                                  |        |           |         |          |       |
| Job advertisements are clear and show required information       | 45     | 62        | 49      | 22       | 22    |
|                                                                  |        |           |         |          |       |
| Advertising                                                      | 11     | 91        | 69      | 28       | 1     |
|                                                                  |        |           |         |          |       |
| You have heard most about the company                            | 61     | 63        | 25      | 33       | 18    |
|                                                                  |        |           |         |          |       |
| You feel attracted to the organization                           | 49     | 50        | 57      | 32       | 12    |
|                                                                  |        |           |         |          |       |
| PR of organization                                               | 46     | 34        | 61      | 46       | 13    |
|                                                                  |        |           |         |          |       |
| Strong brand image as an employer                                 | 44     | 34        | 59      | 34       | 26    |
|                                                                  |        |           |         |          |       |
| Reliability as an employer                                       | 53     | 46        | 63      | 46       | 26    |

Table 8. Continued.
|                                | Mostly | 39% | 51% | 33% | 35% | 47% |
|--------------------------------|--------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| Very few                       | 29     | 18  | 51  | 27  | 29  |     |
| Never                          | 33     | 29  | 41  | 18  |     | 29  |
| Mostly                         | 28     | 21  | 7   | 29  | 9   |     |
| Sometimes                      | 61     | 67  | 37  | 69  | 62  |     |
| Neutral                        | 81     | 91  | 98  | 80  | 96  |     |
| Very few                       | 26     | 18  | 38  | 20  | 30  |     |
| Never                          | 4      | 3   | 20  | 2   |     | 3   |
| Mostly                         | 41     | 31  | 23  | 36  | 43  |     |
| Sometimes                      | 48     | 58  | 35  | 56  | 40  |     |
| Neutral                        | 62     | 43  | 56  | 43  | 57  |     |
| Very few                       | 28     | 37  | 40  | 40  | 35  |     |
| Never                          | 21     | 31  | 46  | 25  |     | 25  |
| Mostly                         | 24     | 29  | 16  | 33  | 22  |     |
| Sometimes                      | 53     | 50  | 44  | 51  | 47  |     |
| Neutral                        | 58     | 51  | 45  | 45  | 54  |     |
| Very few                       | 29     | 27  | 49  | 44  | 38  |     |
| Never                          | 36     | 43  | 46  | 27  |     | 39  |
| Mostly                         | 28     | 23  | 21  | 28  | 33  |     |
| Sometimes                      | 46     | 50  | 33  | 58  | 42  |     |
| Neutral                        | 59     | 51  | 58  | 65  | 54  |     |
| Very few                       | 37     | 45  | 43  | 29  | 45  |     |
| Never                          | 30     | 31  | 45  | 20  |     | 26  |
| Mostly                         | 39     | 25  | 31  | 41  | 24  |     |
| Sometimes                      | 34     | 39  | 32  | 44  | 32  |     |
| Neutral                        | 51     | 52  | 44  | 42  | 57  |     |
| Very few                       | 33     | 36  | 44  | 36  | 53  |     |
| Never                          | 43     | 48  | 49  | 37  | 34  |     |
| Mostly                         | 38     | 15  | 17  | 46  | 30  |     |
| Sometimes                      | 38     | 47  | 27  | 44  | 34  |     |
| Neutral                        | 45     | 32  | 43  | 35  | 45  |     |
| Very few                       | 29     | 42  | 44  | 28  | 45  |     |
| Never                          | 50     | 64  | 69  | 47  | 46  |     |
| Mostly                         | 11     | 1   | 1   | 6   | 7   |     |
| Sometimes                      | 54     | 47  | 35  | 65  | 48  |     |
| Neutral                        | 84     | 93  | 85  | 86  | 87  |     |
| Very few                       | 38     | 41  | 52  | 38  | 46  |     |
| Never                          | 13     | 18  | 27  | 5   | 12  |     |
| Mostly                         | 36     | 34  | 26  | 37  | 18  |     |
| Sometimes                      | 65     | 29  | 39  | 39  | 54  |     |
| Neutral                        | 39     | 48  | 44  | 45  | 50  |     |
| Very few                       | 30     | 43  | 27  | 40  | 41  |     |
| Never                          | 30     | 46  | 64  | 39  | 37  |     |
Table 8. Continued.

|                                                                 | Mostly | Sometimes | Neutral | Very few | Never |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|-------|
| Emails prompts about the organization by your PR office         | 22     | 37        | 14      | 31       | 19    |
|                                                               | 50     | 48        | 28      | 46       | 53    |
|                                                               | 63     | 42        | 52      | 40       | 66    |
|                                                               | 39     | 50        | 53      | 47       | 32    |
|                                                               | 26     | 23        | 53      | 36       | 30    |
| Contribution in your any on-campus event / activity             | 23     | 18        | 11      | 48       | 32    |
|                                                               | 30     | 51        | 29      | 48       | 45    |
|                                                               | 61     | 40        | 53      | 32       | 40    |
|                                                               | 54     | 45        | 52      | 31       | 59    |
|                                                               | 32     | 46        | 55      | 41       | 24    |
| Employer awareness                                              | 10     | 9         | 3       | 16       | 0     |
|                                                               | 53     | 46        | 34      | 53       | 69    |
|                                                               | 78     | 72        | 66      | 78       | 70    |
|                                                               | 46     | 56        | 62      | 30       | 44    |
|                                                               | 13     | 17        | 35      | 23       | 17    |
| Organization working atmosphere information as a workplace      | 65     | 32        | 31      | 50       | 30    |
|                                                               | 43     | 51        | 26      | 73       | 33    |
|                                                               | 38     | 32        | 36      | 39       | 71    |
|                                                               | 39     | 58        | 37      | 20       | 40    |
|                                                               | 15     | 27        | 70      | 18       | 26    |
| Job postings gave detailed information about job openings        | 38     | 22        | 13      | 26       | 33    |
|                                                               | 48     | 35        | 36      | 70       | 37    |
|                                                               | 60     | 68        | 56      | 45       | 51    |
|                                                               | 30     | 44        | 50      | 39       | 45    |
|                                                               | 24     | 31        | 45      | 20       | 34    |
| Organization offers summer internships to your campus student    | 32     | 23        | 17      | 30       | 42    |
|                                                               | 41     | 45        | 27      | 44       | 34    |
|                                                               | 52     | 63        | 56      | 46       | 45    |
|                                                               | 44     | 31        | 41      | 43       | 46    |
|                                                               | 31     | 38        | 59      | 37       | 33    |
| Employer information                                             | 23     | 11        | 5       | 15       | 20    |
|                                                               | 62     | 48        | 45      | 76       | 42    |
|                                                               | 69     | 77        | 48      | 62       | 79    |
|                                                               | 36     | 52        | 61      | 34       | 40    |
|                                                               | 10     | 12        | 41      | 13       | 19    |
| A lot of alumni choose this organization as an employer          | 36     | 38        | 25      | 41       | 23    |
|                                                               | 55     | 55        | 35      | 52       | 66    |
|                                                               | 55     | 42        | 53      | 45       | 53    |
|                                                               | 38     | 36        | 34      | 41       | 33    |
|                                                               | 16     | 29        | 53      | 21       | 25    |
| At the job fairs at different places officials, are there to brief about the organization | 36     | 44        | 18      | 43       | 31    |
|                                                               | 37     | 42        | 36      | 53       | 38    |
Table 8. Continued.

|                                  | Mostly | Sometimes | Neutral | Very few | Never |
|----------------------------------|--------|-----------|---------|----------|-------|
| Seminars arranged about the familiarity of organization as employer | 30     | 48        | 58      | 35       | 29    |
|                                  | 13     | 70        | 53      | 59       | 5     |
| Employer familiarity             |        |           |         |          |       |
| Your friends think the organization is good to work with          |        |           |         |          |       |
|                                  | 44     | 55        | 54      | 30       | 17    |
| Have favourable impression as an employer | 37     | 53        | 55      | 44       | 11    |
| The company seems to be influential                                  | 32     | 59        | 49      | 32       | 28    |
| Responsiveness (Res)                                                    |        |           |         |          |       |
| Organization you feel the most attractive                             | 35     | 36        | 55      | 23       | 26    |
| Provides attractive pay scale                                         |        |           |         |          |       |
Table 8. Continued.

|                         | Never | 28 | 39 | 45 | 27 | 30 |
|-------------------------|-------|----|----|----|----|----|
| **Heard about the job security in the organizations** | Mostly | 32 | 38 | 21 | 60 | 31 |
|                         | Sometimes | 39 | 43 | 32 | 29 | 36 |
|                         | Neutral | 67 | 56 | 52 | 47 | 66 |
|                         | Very few | 36 | 28 | 44 | 28 | 37 |
|                         | Never | 26 | 35 | 51 | 36 | 30 |
| **Decision making**     | Mostly | 29 | 17 | 6 | 37 | 13 |
|                         | Sometimes | 63 | 45 | 47 | 53 | 50 |
|                         | Neutral | 49 | 89 | 52 | 60 | 79 |
|                         | Very few | 46 | 41 | 65 | 36 | 38 |
|                         | Never | 13 | 8 | 30 | 14 | 20 |
| **Employer brand equity** | Mostly | 7 | 1 | 0 | 1 | 0 |
|                         | Sometimes | 64 | 64 | 28 | 85 | 48 |
|                         | Neutral | 117 | 126 | 117 | 111 | 129 |
|                         | Very few | 12 | 9 | 46 | 3 | 22 |
|                         | Never | 0 | 0 | 9 | 0 | 1 |

organization. Ufone was rated as the best company in maintaining and managing in public relations. Ufone and Telenor were in close rating proximity in employer band image. While in employer reliability, Telenor took the lead from its competitors. On the whole, in word of mouth, Telenor and Mobilink almost stand together.

Zong stands as the most event sponsoring organization among others while Telenor was ranked at the top in granting study scholarships and study loans to the students. As per respondents of the study, Zong sponsors the seminars and workshops in the campuses more commonly. Mobilink was rated as “mostly” in sponsoring the in-campus magazines and newsletters. On the whole, sponsorship was rated at the lowest for Warid, whereas the other four companies remained close competitors to each other.

This study reveals that employers are not effectively using the educational institution to disseminate their brand equity, which was evident from the responses as being rated “neutral” for most of the items. Mobilink was rated as highest in paying visits to campuses while Warid remained at the lowest. The high frequency of e-mail prompts pertaining to the job openings lies with Ufone. Telenor and Ufone were found as the major event organizers in educational institutions. Regarding the information supply of organizational working atmosphere and detailed job posting, Mobilink was at the top whereas, summer internships were mostly offered by Zong thereby depicting overall unbalanced information of employers. The employer brand familiarity is measured by three components.

Telenor was ranked as the best and Warid the worst alumni preferred employers. The participation in the job fair was mostly done by Ufone and Telenor. As far as the third component, “arranging organizational familiarity seminars” was concerned, Telenor and Warid remained at the top and bottom respectively. Similarly, in “responsiveness”, Telenor and Ufone were rated as the most and Warid as the least responsive organizations by the respondents. Telenor lead as the organization of choice as an employer in the mindset of fresh graduates, while responding the questions pertaining to dependent variable, decision making. The overall rating of all the selected organizations in terms of employer brand equity remained neutral in the mindset of fresh graduates as the highest rating went on to “neutral”.

By applying post hoc multiple comparisons, we compared the companies. In this study, students were asked to rank the given companies according to the image they had in their mind about these companies. Multiple comparison analysis was done to check the existing image of employer brand equity of the selected organizations in the minds of the students.

DISCUSSION

“Customer-based brand equity refers to beliefs held by individual consumers about a product’s or a service’s brand (that is, perceptions of the name or logo) that affect their preferences and purchasing decisions relative to other unbranded products or services with similar
attributes” (Aaker, 1991; 1996; Keller, 1993) seen in this study, such as emphasizing the need of creating employer brand equity among fresh talents in Pakistan in their decision making process; and complementing the concept of branding in HRM which was first introduced by Ambler and Barrow (1996), depicting the employer as a brand and the employee as the end user. As per the study, the employer brand equity is the most important
element which needs to be cleared in the minds of fresh graduates so that they can better go on decision making about their future employer. The result of our study has evidenced that once the image has been developed in Pakistan’s culture, it generally results in steady flow of talented applicants (Sullivan, 1999). The study analysis has demonstrated that none of the selected organizations of Pakistan showed strong presence in all attributes of employer brand equity. As per Sullivan (1999), employment branding uses the tools of marketing research, PR and advertising to change the image applicants have of what it is like at the organization. Our respondents appeared to be attracted by the PR tools used by the Ufone and have a good image of Mobilink and Telenor because of their advertisement campaigns. Good corporate culture image has splendid impact in promoting the notion of an organization as a good place to work as per the respondents thereby proved that employer brand puts forth an image showing the organization as a good place to work (Sullivan, 2004).

The study has indicated the need of an employer to be familiar with the university students as their future prospective workplace which was supported Cable and Turban (2001) that employer knowledge is comprised of familiarity, employer image and reputation. The study has maintained the impression that employer images consistently shows stronger relationships with job seekers intentions and attractions (Chapman et al., 2005) and has shown to be enhanced as a result of exposure to news stories (Slaughter et al., 2004) through media, as supported by the respondents. The study has strongly influenced the significance of information to be provided and word of mouth transmission by the companies (Cable et al., 2000). Company reputation has a strong impact in the minds of university students for their prospective employer which indicated that one major determinant of an organizations ability to recruit fresh graduates is organizational reputation, referring to the status of a firm’s name relative to competing firms (Belt and Paolillo, 1982; Gatewood et al., 1993).

Overall three hypotheses were rejected and two were accepted. Looking at the labour market culture of Pakistan, the results have practical implications. Organizations are not paying any special attention of creating their brand equity to attract the new market entrants. Word of mouth is the only source of creating awareness about the organizations employer brand equity; interestingly, organizations have no role in that.

In general, the bottom line of results shows neutral ranking of employer brand equity resulting into the need of establishing a strong relationship between academic institution and industry so that academia can be well-built in creating and promoting employer brand equity of the organizations in the mindset of fresh graduates. The proposed model in this study shows the mediating role of the educational institutions; employers using this means can build a strong future labour force of their own choice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Current study shows that educational institutions have a partial mediating role between employer brand equity and effective talent recruitment in mobile phone companies of Pakistan. However, the direct relationship between employer brand equity and effective talent recruitment is insignificant in absence of mediator, which proves the importance of educational institutions towards the relationship. Pakistan’s educational institutions are producing about two million fresh graduates of different disciplines to the labour market each year. Up till now, Pakistan’s education system is not directing the huge bulk of these new masses to enter the labour market. The proposition of this study was focused towards the investigation and analysis pertaining to the relationship building between industry and academia for effective talent recruitment through promotion of employer brand equity in conjunction with educational institutions in Pakistan.

The comparative analysis shows that the level of brand equity is almost similar for all the selected organizations, fresh graduates are not having any prioritise image of their employer in their minds indicating unawareness. Students were almost neutral for all the organizations depicting that they were not paying the required attention to create their strong employer image and to develop talent pools for them to select their future effective employees. Employer brand equity plays a magnificent role in making the fresh graduates mind set about their future employer. As per our model, educational institutions can be the best source for developing employer image in the minds of fresh graduates which has a weaker relationship in existing scenario.

The study recommends the organizations to seek active mediating role of educational institutions to improve the effectiveness of new talent recruitment. In the future, the research can be carried out on developing the curriculum in partnership with the industry for the final year students to remove the gap. Moreover, future research focus can be on developing the organizational culture which attracts the fresh talent.

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