Building Corporate Image through Recruitment Advertising: Interface between Human Resource and Marketing

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Abstract

Recruitment is an essential tool of HR for sustaining the required number of employees based on operation for the organization it serves. This process can be used to build a corporate image to make it more attractive to the job seekers as well as other stake holders. This paper seeks to highlight the current practice of recruitment advertising in the context of Bangladesh through newspapers. In this research it has been found that very few companies concerned regarding the attractiveness of their advertisement. Some of the companies provide thought provoking information of the content analysis of selected newspapers for a given period resurfaces some interesting findings including the basic research questions.

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1.0   Introduction

In today's communicative world a huge number of channels are available through which recruitment advertisement can be posted. While scouting for talents companies can seek many media channels to communicate and attract potential job candidates. An assortment of media also exists in Bangladesh e.g. print media (newspapers, magazines) television advertising, internet job search sites; companies own site etc. but the most important media in Bangladesh is still the print media. Through the print media a recruitment advertisement can present the company's image and create a positive impact to the readers.

Recruitment is necessary to fill a vacant or newly created position. There are many avenues of recruitment open to an employer who decides to recruit from external source. This includes the services of employment agencies, recruitment consultants, career and recruitment fairs, and campus rounds. However, the traditional press advertisement, placed in the classified or jobs sections, is the most commonly used form of job advertising. Gonzalez et al. [1997] identify three major empirical investigations which support this view [Bureau of National Affairs, 1988; Curnow, 1989; Schreier, 1983] but add that very little investigation or analysis has been carried out to determine the effectiveness of recruitment advertising.

Companies use recruitment advertising as a persuasive marketing communication tool (Alien et al., 2004), for it could possibly convince the applicants that they are the employer of choice (Neely-Martinez, 2002). Herman and Gioia (2000) found that organizational values and images are thus, communicated through publicity and advertising of variables such as salary, job content, opportunities of learning, flexibility and independence on the job, image of the company, company's areas of business, growth and potential for growth of the company and the industries in which it operates. They do it by using varied communication media such as written advertisements, internet, radio and television advertisements, and summer internship programs for graduating students, employee referrals, job fairs, pre-placement talks at the campus, etc.

Yet empirical research in the field of recruitment advertising is virtually non-existent, especially in the Bangladesh context, perhaps due to a lack of academic interest. The literature in this field remains severely limited with only a host of conjectures, speculations and contentions —that arc contradictory and inconsistent, available for study (Belt and Paolillo, 1982; and Mason and Belt, 1986).

2.0   Advertising in Newspapers

Looking at the Bangladeshi context, there are five main ways to obtain jobs in the organized sector. The first and the most popular category is the print medium, wherein advertisement space in general and in business interest newspapers and magazines are paid for. Placements and HR category fall into the second category, especially for senior and middle-level placements. The third category includes referrals and personal contacts. The online corporate web page of the company makes up the fourth category, while the fifth and fastest growing category comprises online job search portals like bdjobs.com, jobsa1.com, jobstreet.com, jobsahead.com, prothom-alojobs.com, jobs.com.bd etc. Apart from these, companies also recruit by holding campus interviews and job fairs.

At the same time, despite availability of numerous different channels for recruitment advertising, newspapers continue to be the most dependable and cost effective medium among them all (McIntosh et al., 2000). Newspaper advertising is predominantly used advertising to supervisory and managerial-level positions (Das and Jain, 1°98; and Russoef ai, 2000).

Newspaper advertisements are particularly beneficial for their being accessible and affordable both for larger firms and public, having a widespread reach and they can carry a bulk of useful information Yet very little research or analysis has been carried out in Bangladesh to determine the efficacy of recruitment advertising despite empirical studies confirming that traditional newspaper advertising placing ads in the jobs or classified section is the most commonly used channel for recruitment advertising.

Newspapers such as The Daily Star (most widely circulated English daily in Bangladesh) and The Daily Prothom-alo come out with a daily employment supplement. For government-related jobs and for those at the lower end, there are publications like "Chakrir Biggapon" and vernacular newspapers.

Newspaper advertisements are of several types. First, the blind advertisements which do not identify the organization placing the advertisement and the applicants are asked to reply to a post-office box number, a consulting firm or recruitment agency. Blind advertisements, while allowing the organization to remain, anonymous, make the applicants

apprehensive. The more qualified an applicant is, lesser are his chances of replying to a blind advertisement, as the general perception of an organization using blind advertisements remains negative (Das and Jain, 1998). Further, the authors found that well-established organizations of repute and those that had good corporate image hardly ever placed blind advertisements, as identity of the organization is very important for prospective applicants.

On the other hand, open advertisements (contrary to blind advertisements) carried a lot of useful information about the position being advertised for, goals, vision and stature of the organization, etc.

3.0   Features in Newspaper Advertisements

In a seminal work Rai and Kothari (2008) found that, through newspaper advertisements, organizations make a direct appeal to potential employees, thereby making them very powerful. They found that the content as well as the visual appeal of an advertisement is very important to influence potential applicants to respond to it. The content of an advertisement may comprise of details like descriptions, qualifications required for the position, details about the organization, mission and vision statements, career growth prospects of employees, selection procedures, etc. Visual details like company logo, the size and color and placing of the advertisement make it more appealing to the reader.

3.1   Corporate Logo

As a matter of fact corporate logos and trademarks are very important in

emphasizing the identity of an organization (Mishra and Dhar, 2000). Companies unfailingly make use of logos, trademarks and pictures, which normally help readers recall the brand identity requiring little processing (Collins and Hans, 2004). These visual tools also help reinforce the company's presence in the job market (Ryan et al., 2000).

3.2   Vision and Mission Statements

Vision and Mission Statements underscore the goals and aspirations of organizations and the values they stand for. For instance, statements taken from advertisements that appeared in a popular Bangladeshi newspaper like "Its vision to be a unique and green commercially viable community development company (CDC) with people at its heart.", "Our highly quality products & services through the highly constructive team effort to dominate modern business area as a legend." etc., speak of the company's goals. Similarly, the ones like 'to be an innovation-led transnational pharmaceutical company' speak of the aspirations of the organization.

Mission and Vision Statements carried in a recruitment advertisement create a positive impact on the minds of job seekers by talking about 'the big picture'—stating its goals, aspirations and achievements, apart from serving to recall the identity of the organization (Backhaus, 2004).

3.3 Summary of the Business, Manpower and Turnover

Through recruitment advertisements organizations seek to impress potential applicants by stating their size and share in the market, that reflects their potential. Companies find it important to mention their turnover in newspaper advertisements as it not only suggests growth but indicates future growth potential (Backhaus, 2004). Many recruitment advertisements carry a short summary of business of the organization or its history, seeking to evoke respect in order to influence the applicant's concept of self or personality (Ryan et al, 2000).

The manpower size of an organization too is stated to reflect its size and scope, for example: 'to be an innovation-led pharmaceutical company—this vision drives our 3,500 employees across the globe' and "BTH is one of the largest apparel accessories manufacturing group of the country with over 1500 employees and 3 state of the art production centre."

3.4 Offerings of the HR

Human resource offerings in recruitment advertisements tend to speak of what the company has to offer in terms of compensation, perquisites and career

growth, making them a set of information most sought after by potential employees.

3.5   Advertisement Summary

In the context of advertisements in the print media, it's very important for the advertisement to stand out among many others in order to catch the reader's attention. The use of logos, relevant visuals, headlines, sub-headlines and white space in a well-designed advertisement, when complemented by its size and strategic position on the page, makes it more attractive for the readers (Belt and Paolillo, 1982). Advertisements can be made more meaningful by adding relevant graphic imagery to them, including photographs of an employee (Ryan et al., 2000). Use of color makes an advertisement not only visually more appealing; it may also convey symbolic meaning, thereby increasing its effectiveness (Fernandez and Rosen, 2000).

4.0   Research Question

Based on the prevailing literature, one can easily conclude that that elements in corporate recruitment advertisement act as inducements to applicants. There is no doubt that a carefully designed recruitment advertisement attracts job candidates. The research question that follows from the above review is: Is the content of recruitment advertising by Bangladeshi organizations both local and multinational companies supportive of enhancing its corporate image?

5.0   Methodology of the Study

As stated earlier, not enough theoretical explanations and rationales are available in this area and there is a lack of adequate research to explain the phenomenon. Instead of Very few I suggest (there is no) empirical investigations were carried out in this field of recruitment advertising, especially in the Bangladeshi context. The purpose of this analysis is to examine recruitment advertisements in some popular Bangladeshi newspaper in terms of important variables on which these advertisements had been based.

This study presents the results of the importance of certain variables that determined the soundness of recruitment advertisements over two months in a supplement of three Bangladeshi Bangla and English daily newspapers, i.e. Daily Prothom Alo, Daily Ittefaq and the Daily Star (English). The analysis was based on 128 insertions of advertisements which include both the manufacturing and service sectors. It has to be mentioned here, that while sorting out the advertisements only open/non-blind ads were selected for inclusion in the study.

To avoid redundancy of the advertisement in different newspapers the survey was made parallelly in all three newspapers together.

6.0   Analysis and Discussion

The variables, on which the 128 ads had been based, are included in Table 1 to examine their significance over others. Initially, three tables contained elaborate details and specifications regarding the variables examined. Later, the variables were chosen and compiled into a single table, depicting exact and precise information needed for such an analysis.

None of the advertisements contained the turnover of the companies. This means that the companies were not too eager to disclose such details probably to maintain business secrecy, while 3.125% of the ads stated the manpower of the organizations. For example, "BTH is one of the largest apparel accessories manufacturing group of the country with over 1500 employees and 3 state of the art production center", "Ecotex limited is a newly built knit composite garment manufacturing factory, located at Chandura, Pallibidduth, Kaliakoir, Gazipur currently employed over 3000 employees.". On the other hand, 98% of the advertisements contained the summary of the business. This shows the significance of this variable for the job seeker, for it states the very nature of the work undertaken by the company and whether or not it is apt for him and includes his area of specialization, e.g., "We are a leading fast growing pharmaceutical company in Bangladesh. We produce market a wide range of high quality lifesaving products. We play a leading role in enhancing the quality of life and wellbeing of the people through responsible application of knowledge, skills and technology".

SL. No.	Variables	Number	Percentage
1	Name	128	100
2	Turnover	0	0
3	Manpower	4	3.125
4	summary of the business	125	98
5	Mission	16	12.5
6	Vision	12	9.38
7	Website	25	19.53
8	business sector	119	92.97
9	recruitment level	1	0.78
10	corporate logo	112	87.5
11	CSR	12	9.38

12	customer orientation	30	23.44
13	selection procedure	15	11.72
14	job description	69	53.91
15	job specification	80	62.5
16	Compensation	6	4.69
17	Perks	46	35.94
18	career growth	16	12.5
19	position of Ad (premium)	49	38.28
20	Ad color	11	8.6
21	Size		
	Extra Large (full page)	5	3.9
	Large (half a page)	31	24.22
	Medium	49	38.28
	Small	43	33.59
22	other graphics/photographs	47	36.72
23	informal language	45	35.16
24	appeal to self-actualization needs	16	12.5
25	Humor	49	38.28
26	thought provoking headline or image	40	31.25
27	employee name	0	0
28	employee photograph	6	4.69
29	employee testimonial	0	0
30	Age	65	50.78
31	Gender	9	7.03
32	essential qualification	128	100
33	desired qualification	66	51.56
34	personality traits	23	17.97
35	current salary	6	4.69
36	expected salary	5	3.91
37	positive action	0	0
38	equal opportunity employer	7	5.47
39	photograph asked	119	92.97
40	references asked	9	7.03
41	work family balance	5	3.91
42	educational/supporting documents	24	18.75
43	bank draft/pay order	3	2.34

Furthermore, 12.5% of the ads contained the mission of the company, for instance, "Mission is to be a leading Centre in the region for training and

research on trade, economics and business related subjects" and "Its mission will be to develop as a CDC and industry role model through employing passionate people with a desire to produce the best product in the best way, for the best reason. Caring for the workforce and enriching their lives".

Only 9.38% of the advertisements contained the vision of the company e.g. "Is a rapidly growing company engaged in real estate sector with a vision of long-term business". Furthermore 11.72% of the ads mentioned the selection procedure for the jobs sought. About 53.91% of the advertisements contained the job description, which included important details like the duties and responsibilities of the person occupying the position. For instance, "Job involves promoting, and creating demand for the company's product by calling on doctors, hospitals chemists and wholesalers in the assigned territory to generate business and "To be a reliable source of information in regard to our specialized products; to organized and participate activity in medical/paramedical meetings; to follow up the present contacts and find out the new."

However, in all of advertisements contained the essential qualifications of the job seeker. This was perhaps because it was the most important requisite for a job seeker. An interesting example would be, "To quality for an interview, you must be a graduate, preferably MBA majoring in Marketing, Computer literate, fluent in English and most importantly, a person who loves tea".

Further, 62.5% of the advertisements contained the job specification. This was another significant aspect of the job for the job seeker. It would entail the most important and specific expectations from the employee, while he holds that 'particular position, for instance,

Only 4.69% of the advertisements contained the compensation that would: be received by the prospective employees. ; The compensation stated in most cases was very flexible and often was determined on the basis of experience and skill. For example, "We offer an initial compensation of tk. 22,000 on probation period and a gross salary of tk. 27,600 on confirmation under a regular pay scale along with a handsome pool and benefits and incentives every year". The perks generally included the facilities and benefits that the employees: in the particular position that was advertised for, would receive for example, "We offer excellent compensation package with P.F, free transport, subsidized lunch, bonus along with other fringe benefits for the deserving candidates", and "A full time company car and other fringe benefits

will be offered that would commensurate with qualifications and experiences as per company polity."

Besides, 12.5% of the ads discussed the career growth of the employees that would, be employed. This is quite a significant aspect but was probably under-represented in the ads. An example that showed the kind of growth the job seeker could expect in the organization included, "We are committed to ensure individual development opportunity, fast individual growth path, pay-per-performance assurance and a caring work environment for all the members of the staff."

Ad color is so important because the visual image would have a positive effect on the minds of the readers but only 8.6% of the ads gave importance to the ad color. This variable should be taken into consideration by the companies that advertised for jobs is quite significant, for all efforts would be focused on making the ad appealing as well as attractive. Next, 38.28% of ads went for premium positioning and about 3.9% laid special importance on the size around 24.22% advertisement was given in half a page. Around 36.72% of the advertisements contained other graphics and photographs.

Surprisingly, none of the advertisements contained the name of the industry to which the company belonged and the recruitment level for which it advertised.

Only 19.53% companies mentioned website of the company, a large number of the advertisement around 92.97% mentioned the business sector of the company. As well as 9.38% mentioned of the corporate social responsibility. Furthermore 18.75% company asked for educational and others supporting documents; only 3.24% asked for bank draft or pay order and all of them are banks.

Some interesting variables, which came out of the analysis, have been discussed separately in the ensuing sections:

Informal Language

Only 35.16% of the advertisements contained informal language. Two interesting examples would be, "Are you reaching your full potential?" and "You want to broaden your horizons we give you the world".

Appeal to Self'-Actualization Needs

Although only 12.5% of the ads contained an appeal to the self-actualization needs of potential employees, yet the ads portrayed a kind of morale-boosting catch line. For instance, "Are you interested in health and healthcare, and world you like to join us? If yes then embrace this opportunity to be a part of a diverse and talented group of individuals championed to take on innovation and change in the number one multinational pharmaceutical company in the country".

6.1   Thought Provoking Headline or Image

Very few advertisements (31.25%) contained a thought provoking headline or image. The ones that did were those that advertised for jobs at large companies in Bangladesh. This again was a device employed by companies in the corporate sector to psychologically create an impact on the minds of the potential job seekers. Also, it would provide an insight to the readers about what the company stands for, in other words, the very aim of the companies and the values that it upholds and how significant a contribution can be made by the employees. To cite some examples, "We are looking for dynamic & dedicated individuals, who can take us to the next level" and "Commitment is our strength ready to grow with us."

6.2   Employee Details

None of the advertisements contained an employee's name from the company that advertised for jobs and employees' testimonial. Furthermore, only 4.69% percent of the ads contained an employee's photograph. For instance, no of the ads contained details of an employee—"Visiting card of an employee".

6.3   Age

About 50.78% of the advertisements mentioned the required age of the prospective employees in particular positions. For example, "Full time graduates from the class of 2005"; "He/She should be a graduate (Preferably an MBA major in Marketing) with 2-3 years of experience with a reputed organization and within the age of 25-35 years"; and "Age below 30 years".

6.4   Gender

Interestingly, just one advertisement (7.03%) mentioned the gender of the prospective employee, "Executive Administration (Female)". Probably the other recruitment advertisements did not contain the gender of the prospective employees because the companies did not have a special preference for either male or female candidates.

6.5   Desired Qualifications

About: 51.56% of the advertisements contained the desired qualifications of an employee for the particular positions advertised. The desired qualifications stated the additional qualifications required   apart   from the essential qualifications, for example, "We need some self-driven, young, energetic individuals for the position of medical services officer in our sales team", "Post Graduate Diploma in Human Resource Management will be given additional advantage"; "Excellent communication skills in English, working knowledge of computer will be preferable. Excellent organizational, computer skills, interpersonal skills and ability to supervise, motivate the team would be an asset".

6.6   Personality Traits

About 17.97% ads talked about the personality traits of the prospective employees. This variable seems important because it states the abilities required of candidates, especially those who are likely to be hired in challenging positions. To cite a few examples, "Eligible candidates having ability to work under pressure and commitment for empowerment of the poor, progressive ideas, gender sensitivity, pleasant personality and sound track record of reliability and trustworthiness are encouraged to apply", "Having a excellent leadership and team building qualities with superior communication and inter-personal skills"; "If you possess the right attitude, do contact us" and "The post, is highly challenging and candidates who have flair for result oriented assignments alone need to apply".

6.7   Current Salary and Expected Salary

Only 4.69% of the advertisements mentioned the current salary of the positions for those seeking the jobs, while 3.91% of the advertisements asked for the expected salary from the potential job seekers.

6.8   Positive Action

Surprisingly, none of the advertisements stated any aspect of positive action or other strategies that reflected social pro-activeness.

6.9   Equal Opportunity Employer

Only one advertisement (5.47%) contained such a variable. The company that did advertise for a job and made use of such a variable is a large company. The advertisement read, "Sanofi-Aventis is an equal opportunity employer who welcomes and fosters diversity at workplace".

6.10   Photograph

About 92.97% advertisements asked the potential job seekers to send their photographs along with the job applications. For example, "Apply immediately with detailed resume, current salary and color photograph" and "If you think, you are the right person we are looking for; please send your application with CV, photocopy of national ID card and recent passport size color photographs (not more than six months old)".

6.11   References

Surprisingly, none of the advertisements stated any aspect of positive action or other strategies that reflected social pro-activeness.

6.12   Works-Family Balance

Out of the many advertisements analyzed, only one advertisement (3.91%) mentioned about the work-family balance. The advertisement read, "Positive change accountability, opportunities for meaningful impact & doing what is right encompassing the foundation of our evolving culture. Moreover, our aspiration is clear: to be the best in what we do."

Thus, it can be seen through the various advertisements analyzed, the importance of some variables over others in recruitment advertisements, especially in the Indian context.

6.13   Educational and Supporting Documents

About 18.75% advertisement asked for educational and others supporting documents "Interested candidates are requested to attend a Walk-in-interview with a detailed resume, passport size photograph and attested copies of all academic certificates"

6.14   Bank Draft/Pay Order

Only 2.34% advertisement mentioned that the job applicants should send bank draft/pay order along with their job application. All the companies asked for bank draft/pay order in their advertisement were banks.

7.0   Conclusion

From the discussion above and the empirical findings it can be concluded that, a well thought out communication for a recruitment ad has direct bearing not only on the future prospects but also the stakeholders, business partners and employees within the company. A good recruitment ad also builds credibility and image of the organization so long as the company paints the correct picture and information of the organization. The power of recruitment ads also helps in enhancing the position of the company in the prospects mind by maintaining the right style and tone consistently in their communication. This is where creative excellence for recruitment ads will play a major role as that will motivate clients to think out of box and get their brand across in the most unique and outstanding manner instead of churning out the run of the mill formatted ads. Any piece of communication to attract talent must exhibit a good career path to entice the job seekers to respond.

Future research should examine a wider variety of recruitment sources like internet recruitment materials and traditional recruitment brochures. Backhaus (2004) suggest that analysis by industry showed significant differences among the industries in the way they described their firms. For example, electronics industry predominantly focused on product developments and service innovations. Little was mentioned about employee support, advancement opportunities, culture, climate or work/ family balance. Restaurants, retail and service industries were much more employee-focused making promises of interesting and challenging work. Future research should look at industry specific content analysis. It should also look at the impact of the identified variables on perceptions of prospective applicants about corporate image and the attractiveness of these ads. The relationship between marketing, corporate image, and human resources needs to be empirically tested further.

This study recommends that HR is a very important tool in building the corporate image of any organization. Companies need to be more pragmatic and innovative in evolving their PR strategy to attract and retain high talent and thereby strengthening the equity of the corporate brand in the employment market. If that promise is delivered through strategic recruitment

ads with opportunity for realistic preview of the job on the stake we will be able to witness a high inflow of job seekers with a better retention rate. HR must implement innovative PR strategy to deliver great value to the brand and motivate and attract quality talent to the organization.

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