INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT

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INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF RESEARCH IN COMMERCE, IT & MANAGEMENT   iv

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    INTRODUCTION

    REVIEW OF LITERATURE

    NEED/IMPORTANCE OF THE STUDY

    STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

    OBJECTIVES

    HYPOTHESES

    RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

    RESULTS & DISCUSSION

    FINDINGS

    RECOMMENDATIONS/SUGGESTIONS

    CONCLUSIONS

    SCOPE FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

    ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

    REFERENCES

    APPENDIX/ANNEXURE

    It should be in a 8 point Calibri Font, single spaced and justified. The manuscript should preferably not exceed **5000 WORDS**.

10. **FIGURES &TABLES**: These should be simple, crystal clear, centered, separately numbered & self explained, and **titles must be above the table/figure**. **Sources of data should be mentioned below the table/figure**. It should be ensured that the tables/figures are referred to from the main text.

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- When listing two or more works by one author, use --- (20xx), such as after Kohl (1997), use --- (2001), etc, in chronologically ascending order.
- Indicate (opening and closing) page numbers for articles in journals and for chapters in books.
- The title of books and journals should be in italics. Double quotation marks are used for titles of journal articles, book chapters, dissertations, reports, working papers, unpublished material, etc.
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BOOKS

- Bowersox, Donald J., Closs, David J., (1996), "Logistical Management." Tata McGraw, Hill, New Delhi.
- Hunker, H.L. and A.J. Wright (1963), "Factors of Industrial Location in Ohio" Ohio State University, Nigeria.

CONTRIBUTIONS TO BOOKS

- Sharma T., Kwatra, G. (2008) Effectiveness of Social Advertising: A Study of Selected Campaigns, Corporate Social Responsibility, Edited by David Crowther & Nicholas Capaldi, Ashgate Research Companion to Corporate Social Responsibility, Chapter 15, pp 287-303.

JOURNAL AND OTHER ARTICLES

- Schemenner, R.W., Huber, J.C. and Cook, R.L. (1987), "Geographic Differences and the Location of New Manufacturing Facilities," Journal of Urban Economics, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 83-104.

CONFERENCE PAPERS

- Garg, Sambhav (2011): "Business Ethics" Paper presented at the Annual International Conference for the All India Management Association, New Delhi, India, 19–22 June.

UNPUBLISHED DISSERTATIONS AND THESES

- Kumar S. (2011): "Customer Value: A Comparative Study of Rural and Urban Customers," Thesis, Kurukshetra University, Kurukshetra.

ONLINE RESOURCES

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WEBSITES

- Garg, Bhavet (2011): Towards a New Natural Gas Policy, Political Weekly, Viewed on January 01, 2012 http://epw.in/user/viewabstract.jsp

BRAND PRIDE AS A CONSTRUCT CONTRIBUTING TO RETAINING MISSION CRITICAL TALENT OF THE ORGANIZATION: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF SELECTED ORGANIZATIONS

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ABSTRACT

The present study is an endeavor to find out the significance of brand pride as a major construct which plays a tremendous role in retaining what we call the star performers of the organization, which is a result of multiple organizational practices to create an employer brand image & to ensure the delivery of the brand promise to the employees, leading to the creation of stable organizations . In this quest a comparative study of the selected organizations in the IT sector was conducted .The study followed the grounded theory methodology wherein the raw qualitative data was chunked under the one critical antecedent dimension of organizational people practices ; i.e the brand pride. The sampled organizations; Genpact, Infosys and Google were finalized through incidental sampling within theoretical sampling. The qualitative data was collected through 95 long interviews, participant observation and secondary data .The software, Atlas. ti was used to content analyze the data . The main findings of the qualitative study showed that retaining the star performers of the organization is a function of creating a brand pride amongst the executives at all levels in the organization which manifests itself in the brand delivery and the brand image of the organization. The sub-constructs that evolved under brand delivery were: I. Employee care (1) first experiences, (2) experience of exceptional employee care through life cycle in the job, (3) experiences of infrastructural & recreational facilities, (4) Employee friendly policies & processes ('Rigorous' in the context of ITES & 'Flexible' in the context of IT product companies) . II. Perceived fairness (5) Equal opportunity, (6) Transparent processes. III. Opportunities for learning & Development IV. Growth path for each performer through seamless opportunities for growth & advancement.

JEL CODE
M51, M52, M53.

KEYWORDS
brand pride, brand image, brand delivery, grounded theory methodology.

1. INTRODUCTION

Retaining the star performers of the organization in today's competitive business scenario is indeed quite challenging. It is in this environment that the organizations are continuously on the prowl to outline the strategies to retain the best of the talent available which is the need of the hour. This could be attributed to a number of reasons, the prime being the paucity of the really talented people around in the face of phenomenal demand or due to the reverse trend of business causing a large number of professionals to be on the bench. In either case the onus of retaining the existing supply of the talented people lies on the organizations only. This calls upon the organizations to build up extremely strong muscle to keep up the motivation, commitment and the engagement of the people at an all time high to save the organizations from the so called' Executive Exodus'. The present study was conducted to explore the significance of creating brand pride as an organizational people practice for executive retention.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Brand Pride: This is a term given to the positive emotion that an employee feels as a result of being a part of the organization. **Brand Image:** it has come out as one of the most grounded constructs encompassing the following sub constructs: (1) brand social visibility, (2) perceived value attributed to products, services or work ethics, (3) size of the operation and stature in comparison to competition, (4) starting salary package (5) perceived culture on employee care (6) comfortable infrastructural & recreational facilities (7) perceived inspirational leadership (8) contribution to society. **Brand Delivery:** has also come out as a critical factor which states that most of the image elements are experienced by the employees on their job. For example employees see policies that are sensitive to their life outside office, or they see that there is actually a shared respect for the top leadership, or they experience great infrastructure (hygiene factors). Brand delivery starts at the time of an individual joining and has a significant impact at that time on whether the employee would feel high brand pride. Here is where best practices like 'giving a feel of the job before joining' or 'assigning a buddy to find your feet' etc. ensure that the new employee faces no dramatic surprises & experiences a soft landing. Additionally, the induction period or technically initial socialization goes a long way in instilling brand pride.

EXTANT LITERATURE FOR BRAND PRIDE

Brand Image: **Browne and Golembiewski (1974)** explained organizational image as a comparative structural frame that each individual develops to rate his organization in comparison with others. **Riordan et al. (1997)** suggest that organizational image reflects individual's perceptions of the actions, activities and the accomplishments of the organization and it ranks the organization in comparison with other organizations**. Dukerich et al. (2000)** have differentiated between the reputation of the organization and its external image wherein the former represents outsider's views of the organization, whereas the latter represents how organizational members think outsiders view the organization.

Researchers show how positive organizational image extrapolates to self esteem, power etc. leading to loyalty or cooperation or a negative image leads to decreased identification (**Brown & Golembiewski, 1974; Sutton and Callahan, 1987;**). On building an attractive image, **Post & Griffin (1997)** emphasize the role of corporate communications department and there have been studies on how a good organizational image attracts good people and vice- versa (**Highhouse et al., 1999; Arnold et al., 2003**). On brand image leading to commitment or loyalty or intention to quit, **Arnett et al. (2002)** enumerate benefits of branding as (1) Low employee turnover (2) An increase in service quality (3) high level of employee satisfaction (4) an improved ability to implement change in the organization. **Gadot & Zion (2004)** showed how relative brand image was an important criterion for intention to quit and join another organization. There have also been discussions on the kind of brand image leading to identification as realism (**Thorsteinson et al., 2004**); large size (**Buchanan, 2009**); integrity or social contribution (**Gorman (2007)** etc.

There have also been researches showing how communication & language go a long way in building an organizational brand image (**Duimering and Safayeni, 1998; Rafaeli, 2000; Schuler, 2004**).Finally there have been references to leadership of the organization being an important element of the brand image **Arlington, 2002; Gorman, 2007**.

Brand Delivery: included delivery of all the expectation both expressed or implicit of the employees from the organization in order to ensure that they are proud to belong to the organization. **Heger's (2007)** construct of Employee Value Proposition (EVP), comes closest. His article addresses an important business concept called Employment Value Proposition (EVP), which describes the value or benefit an employee derives from his or her membership in an organization. The EVP has been suggested to be a determinant of employee engagement and retention, both of which have an impact on critical business outcomes.

Moving on the area of psychological contract, implicit understanding (**Argyris, 1960**) or unsaid expectations (**Levinson et al.,1962**) promises, the literature saw in the recent past critical contribution by **Robinson & Rousseau (1994)**. In their view, "contemporary employment relations are in transition… psychological contracts can, when violated, generate distrust, dissatisfaction, and possibly the dissolution of the relationship itself. **Rousseau's (1990, 2001)** view has evolved and finally gave a comprehensive process on development of a psychological contract.

The antecedents of psychological contract & breach and outcomes of the same have been studied by many researchers. **Robinson (1996)** studied outcomes like performance, civic virtue behavior & intentions to remain with the organization. **McGovern, Stiles & Hope (1996)** studied impact on employee attitudes, in the face of lay offs and found that employees neither expect nor commit a long term association. **Dyne and Ang (1998)**, saw the same phenomenon in the context of contingency workers. **Turnley and Feldman (1999)** studied outcomes like employee's exit, voice, loyalty and neglected behavior. **Smithson & Lewis (2000)** show how the expectation of the young adults from their employers is undergoing a sea change. Outcomes like trust loyalty & commitment were studied by **Pate & Malone (2000).**

Recent studies on antecedents of perceived breach & its impact on attitudes, OCB, intention to quit have been studied by **Kickul (2001); Kickull, Neuman, Parker & Finkl (2001); Kickul & Lester (2001) Shapiro (2002)** where they saw a direct relationship between breach of psychological contract and negative outcomes.

Other individual constructs like employee care, fairness, learning & growth within brand delivery were also reviewed. **Bernstein Arron (1998); Michaud Laura (2002); Leigh Branham (2005); Somaya (2008)** have all set the stage for importance of initiatives like training and growth within the organizations in the context of turbulence in the environment.

3. NEED & SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The main reason for undertaking this research was that 'executive retention' is on top of the agenda of the organizations, especially in today's knowledge economy. Looking at the other dimensions of how professionals in ITES viewed this scenario, according to '**Hansa Research**', the ITES/ BPO employees look at their jobs as a stop gap before they get into a proper career or further studies. It is a good way of earning while having fun. While there was shortage of professionals, the ones that were there added to the instability by considering their current jobs to move out from in about a year or so.

While on one hand, organizations and the government were taking steps to curtail this huge gap between the demand and the supply of qualified and talented professionals, on the other hand all the organizations in this sector were making extra effort in retaining their professionals. Organizational branding as the 'Best Employers', 'Great Place to work' etc. are nothing but by- products of the high need of organizations to attract and retain their best people. Further ,
the absence of any previous research on 'the chosen aspect of brand pride as a construct to ensure executive retention ,makes this research all the more significant.

4. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the light of the globalized Indian economy, it becomes all the more imperative to find out how are the knowledge based IT & ITES companies coping with the trickling down of the talent from their doors . What are their strategies? What do they need to do to bring about stability in their set up? While there are a lot of surveys being conducted in India like "The Best Employer Survey" by Hewitt Associates, "Best Companies to work for" by Mercer, "Great Places to Work" by Grow Talent etc, it is yet to be seen if the same factors that make them best employers actually maintain a consistent low attrition rate. The organizations are thus making earnest efforts to check this executive exodus by creating brand pride amongst its executives which helps them in retaining the best people .Hence, this research endeavor aims at finding out the role of the organizational people practices encompassing brand pride as a major construct in retaining the star performers of the organization.

5. OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY

To find out the role of the organizational people practices, encompassing creating brand pride amongst executives in retaining the individuals in the organization.

6. RESEARCH DESIGN

Since Brand pride, as a comprehensive construct in creating stable organizations has not been explored by the researchers so far, The Grounded Theory & Case Study methodology was chosen .The current research initiative is exploratory in nature .

POPULATION & SAMPLE

The researcher chose the best known organizations in the knowledge domain operating in India; **Infosys Technologies**, **Google India** and **Genpact**. Theoretical sampling method was used whereby the sample was selected at two levels: first at the Organization level and the second at the Employees level.

PROCEDURE ADOPTED FOR DATA COLLECTION

Participant observation notes and other documents handed over by the HR & Corporate communications department were collected. Individual one hour interviews were scheduled by HR with vintage employees across locations like Hyderabad, Chandigarh, Gurgaon, Bangalore and Jaipur. Data was collected in the form of digital audio files from interviews, and all the other data was collected again in digital word or PDF files.

TOOLS USED FOR DATA ANALYSIS

The qualitative data was analyzed by using 'content analysis software': **Atlas.ti**. This facilitated in analysis from the constant comparison of events.

Stage one was to use free codes, then these were clubbed together to form categories, and concepts. These concepts were then put together as construct families. Each construct was accompanied with a groundedness score and a density score. Only the highly grounded ones were included in the theoretical model.

7. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

"For no matter what we achieve, if we don't spend the vast majority of our time with people we love and respect, we cannot possibly have a great life. But if we spend the vast majority of our time with people we love and respect – people we really enjoy being on the bus with and who will never disappoint us – then we will almost certainly have a great life, no matter where the bus goes. The people we interviewed from the good-to-great companies clearly loved what they did, largely because they loved who they did it with."

… **Jim Collins**

Organizational Practices leading to people stability that emerged as the most grounded were: 1) Brand Pride as a result of multiple practices to create an employer brand image & to ensure the delivery of the brand promise to the employees 2) Mission Resonance 3) Mentoring Supervisors 4) Friendships at work 5) Availability of Knowledge & Information when needed (to ensure success) 6) Opportunity to solve real problems & make a contribution 7) Nipping the negative energy at the bud.

In the current paper only brand pride as a construct in retaining the mission critical talent has been explored.

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BRAND PRIDE

Brand Pride is a term given to the positive emotion that an employee feels as a result of being a part of the organization. This emotion could be due to two main reasons; due to simply belonging to the best organization in a particular field or due to working with the best people in the industry; or due to conscious organizational practices like brand image building and keeping up the delivery of the brand promise to the employees.

Brand Pride is a positive emotion that each individual belonging to the organization feels as a result of all the formal people processes (run by HR department & corporate communications department). This construct came out as the single most important factor in contributing to organizational people stability. **Cumulative groundedness of this construct is 435**, far surpassing any other. Though brand pride emerged as an independent sub construct as well, it has been used as a main construct label also. The meaning of the two is the same; however, the scope (sub constructs & related codes) differs making this higher in hierarchy as compared to the sub construct. Fig. 7(i) depicts the main construct Brand pride is a family with 3 sub-constructs.

The subsequent figures depict the three main sub constructs: 1) Brand Pride 2) Brand Image 3) Brand Delivery.

FIG. 7 (i): BRAND PRIDE (BP)
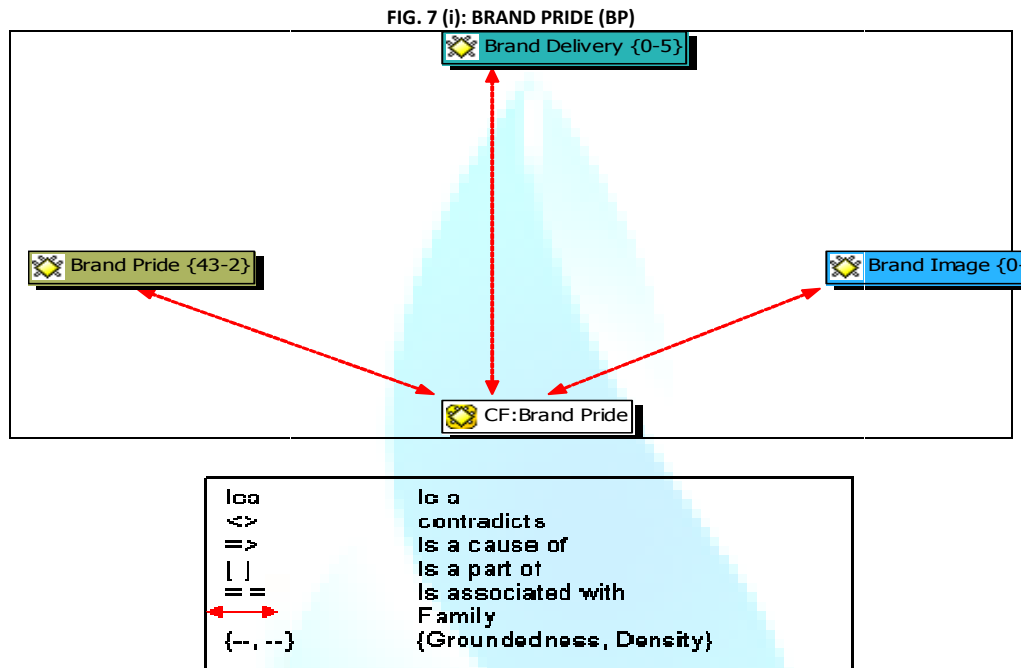
Source: Network view of construct family, Brand Pride, Atlas.ti

The sub- construct **Brand Pride** is a positive emotion felt by an employee by simply belonging to the best organization in the industry or working with the best people available in the field. The code |Brand Pride| was used where employees directly referred to their feeling proud of belonging to the organization they worked for. The following fig. 7(ii) depicts this construct Brand Pride.

FIG. 7 (ii): BRAND PRIDE (SUB CONSTRUCT)
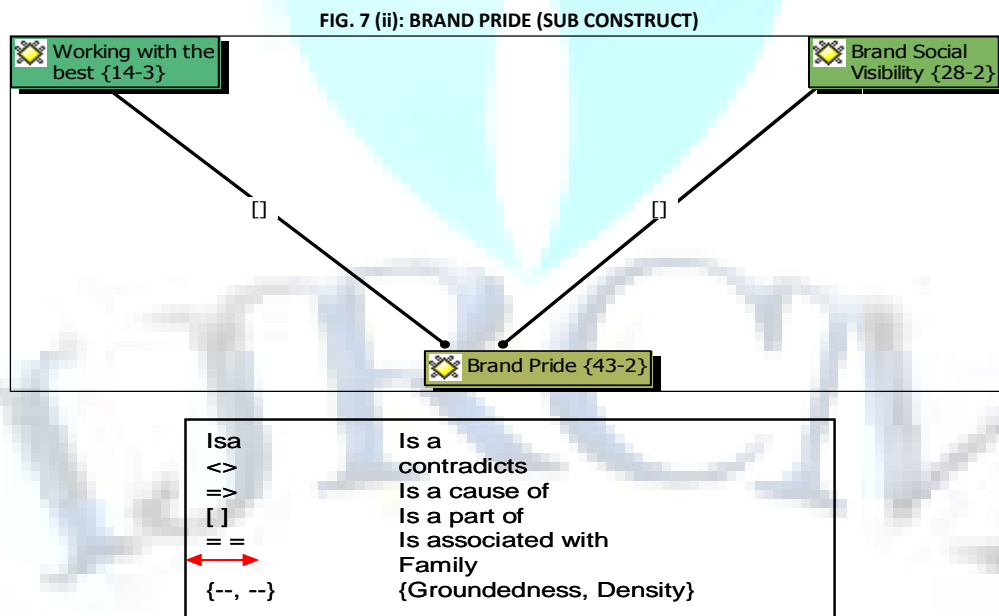
Source: Network view Brand Pride, Atlas.ti

The construct family Brand Pride has been seen to have a large number of codes clubbed within two sub-constructs. Brand Image & Brand Delivery.

Brand Image is a reputation or image that results from of conscious efforts & practices within the organization. Brand image has a cumulative groundedness score of **160**; i.e. it came as a significantly strong factor leading to people stability and retention. The key sub constructs that evolved were, size & stature of the organization as compared to the competition, social visibility, perceived employee care through luxurious infrastructural & recreational facilities & employee sensitive policies, contribution of value to customer or society & large, Inspirational leadership and starting salary package illustrated in fig. 7(iii)

FIG. 7 (iii): BRAND IMAGE
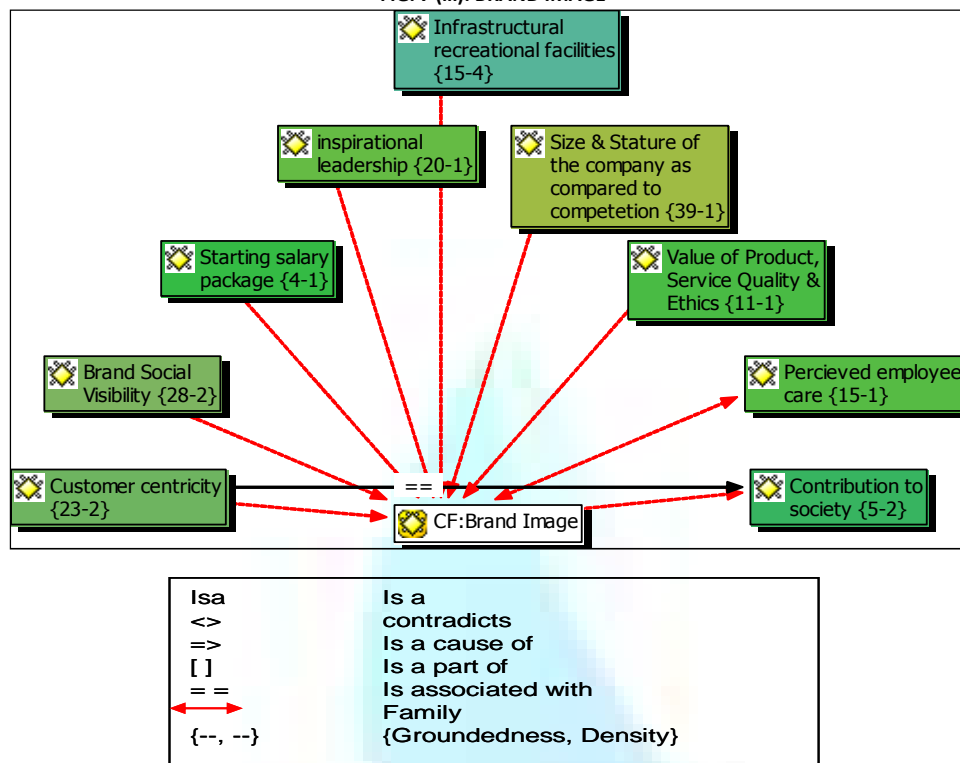
Source: Network view of Brand Image, Atlas.ti

The above figure 7(iii) depicts the family of the construct brand image as evolved from multiple source data collection. The most grounded & dense is the size & stature of the company. During the interview probes, the researcher asked a hypothetical question 'if another organization were to pay double the salary, what all would occur to you?' The answers or counter questions to this gave a clue to how important the size & social stature of the organization was. Directly linked to size, were issues like growth & learning, which formed important construct under brand delivery. The code |Social Visibility| was given to statements like 'somebody in family or friends knew about the company and highly recommended joining it. Another related term that came was |Leadership|; most people were attracted to Genpact (erstwhile GE) because of Jack Welch, or to Infosys because of Narayan Murthy. Here leadership just connotes the reputation & visibility of the learder/ founder team. As this construct came as a strongly grounded construct in the Organizational Strategic Factors, it has been described in detail there.

Brand Delivery essentially means delivering to the employee all that the brand promises. It starts at the time of an individual joining and has a significant impact at that time on whether the employee would feel high brand pride. Here is where best practices like 'giving a feel of the job before joining' or 'assigning a buddy to find your feet' etc. ensure that the new employee faces no dramatic surprises & experiences a soft landing. Additionally, the induction period or technically initial socialization goes a long way in instilling brand pride. Fig 7(iv) shows all the sub- constructs in the family of brand delivery.

FIG.7 (iv): BRAND DELIVERY
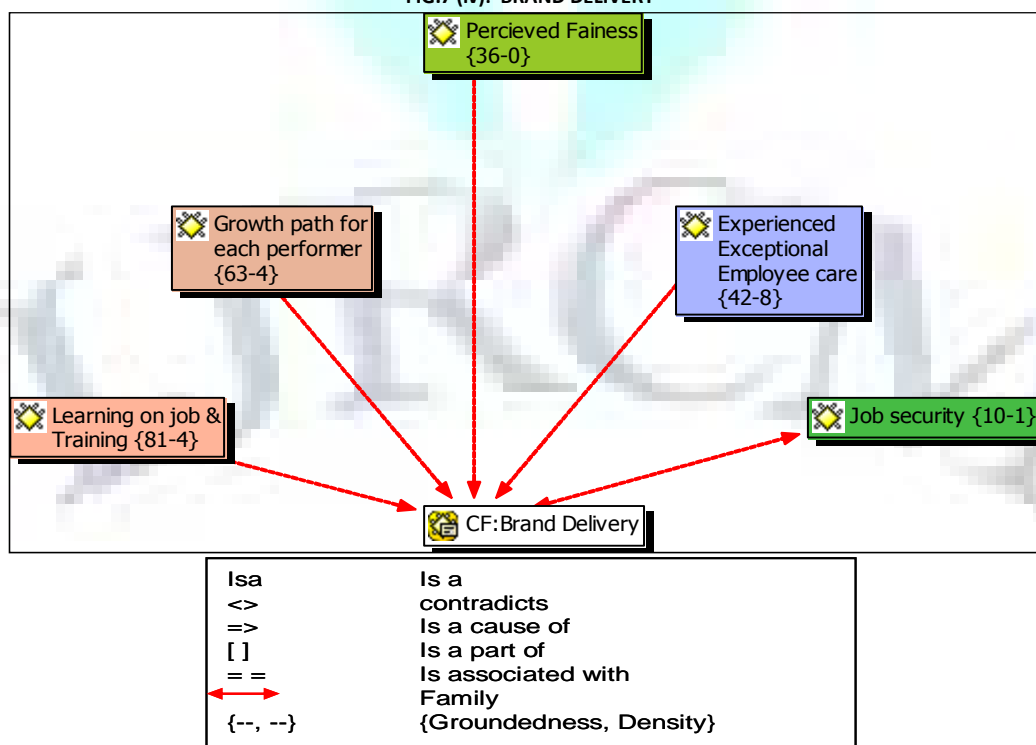
Source: Network View of construct family, Brand Delivery, Atlas.ti

The sub-constructs that evolved under brand delivery were: I. **Employee care** (1) experience of exceptional employee care through life cycle in the job, (2) experiences of infrastructural & recreational facilities, (3) Employee friendly policies & processes ('Rigorous' in the context of ITES & 'Flexible' in the context of IT product companies) (4) Variety of rewards & recognition . II. **Perceived fairness** (5) Equal opportunity, (6) Transparent processes. III. Opportunities for **learning & Development** IV. **Growth path for each performer through seamless opportunities for growth & advancement.** As clear from the fig. 7(iv), the cumulative grounded ness score of brand delivery is 232, with learning & development and growth opportunities being large sub-constructs.

8. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

This research study endeavors at finding out the role of the organizational people practices encompassing brand pride as a major construct in retaining the star performers of the organization.

The study was carried on in the selected organizations in the IT & ITES sector to explore what these knowledge based companies are doing to retain their mission critical talent. And it was found out that creating brand pride amongst the executives was a sure shot recipe for retaining people in the organizations.

T he grounded theory and case study methodology was adopted to sail through the process of data collection in the selected organizations.

All the constructs within organizational practices were fairly well grounded and had reached theoretical saturation before they got included in the theory. The groundedness & density scores are shared in the output charts for each construct from Atlas.ti. According to this theory, the most highly grounded construct was **brand bride**, with cumulative groundedness score as 532. The sub- constructs for this are brand pride, brand image & brand delivery. Organizational practices on various fronts leading to building a great brand & delivering all that is promised, enabling pride in employees for belonging to that particular organization are part of this construct. Three main codes under the brand delivery also find special mention as they are amongst the highest grounded, generalized learning opportunities, growth for each performer, experienced exceptional employee care.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS
SYSTEMATICALLY BUILD THE BRAND PRIDE

The research threw up that the most critical aspect of people stability in terms of people practices was 'Brand Pride'. Most people were stable within the organization because they were proud to be there. This pride was related to multiple aspects of a brand image (built through various communication initiatives) and brand delivery (cemented through systematic employee care and development). The following model, fig. 9 is suggested to build Brand Pride.

FIG. 9: EVOLVED BRAND PRIDE MODEL
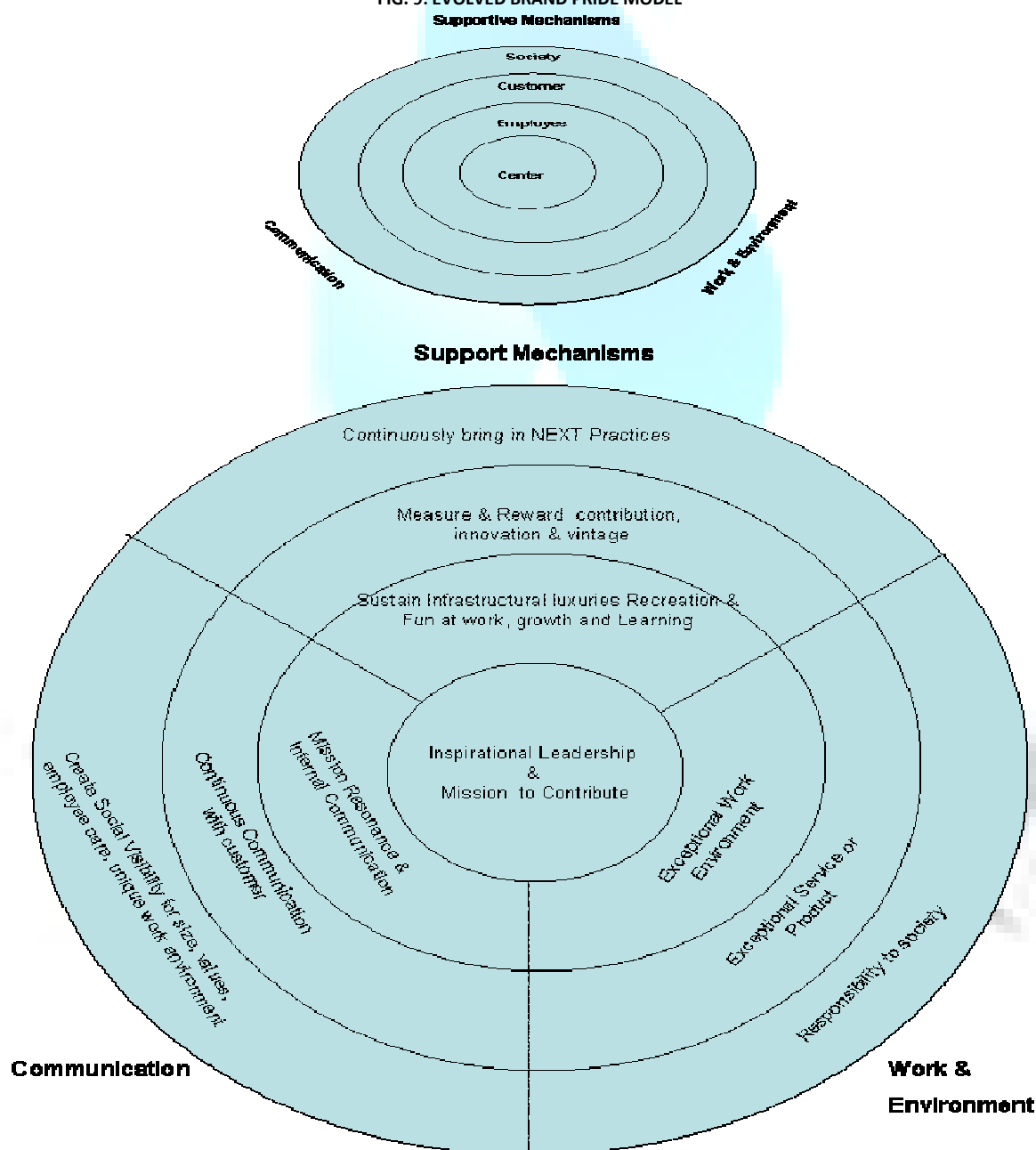
At the center of building Brand Pride is "A Mission to contribute" and "Inspirational Leadership". Inspirational leadership need not be confused with charismatic leadership. A leader inspires by sharing a strong mission to make a contribution; she is inclusive in her approach; finally she is has a clear focus on growth and regeneration. Secondly, mission to contribute also need not be confused with 'social entrepreneurship'. Contribution can be in multiple ways like providing easy and free access to all information or creating thousands of jobs or in some way making life easier for a particular segment of people. Once the critical contribution is articulated and continuously shared, it provides a direction and a glue to the core team. Finally, create **social visibility** for the values held by the organization or the significant contribution it is making for the customers.

Success should be defined and shared with passion amongst all the stake holders not merely in terms of size, stature or turnover of the organization vis-à-vis competition; it is defined in terms of the best contribution to the customer or community or society. For example, Genpact envisaged the number of jobs it could create while pioneering ITES in India; Infosys envisioned taking India on the Global IT platform and Google embarked upon free and easy access to unlimited knowledge to every individual seeking it.

Organizations can leverage the corporate communications function and systematically devise communications within the organizations as well as to the outside world, to build the brand image. People feel immense pride in working with the 'best brains in the world', communications on how they hire only the best in the bracket goes a long way in creating brand pride.

The organizations should set extremely high standards of delivery for both; the employees as well as the customers and then continuously beat their own standards. Right from physical environment management to the service delivery management, every thing needs to match the same quality standards; internal processes and mechanisms should be devised to ensure the same.

Finally, while measuring and tracking performance on each element of building brand is important, benchmarking for best practices is critical; the most important element is the continuous innovation of the 'Next Practices'. With the customer and the employee at the center, the organization can form **multiple think tanks for bringing out the next practices** and staying ahead of times.

10. CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

In today's information age it is very important for an organization to build brand pride amongst its people because that is one of the significant factors which can help the organizations in retaining their people , which is of course beneficial for both the organizations as well as the executives.

As evolved in the theory, Brand Image of an organization as a result of conscious practices of the organization is one of the most critical elements in retaining executives. Brand image encompasses, various competencies of the organization like; social visibility, size & stature as compared to similar other organizations, customer centricity & contribution to society, perceived employee care & infrastructural & recreational facilities for employees and inspirational leadership. .

The review of extant literature, showed a lot of overlap between, the constructs of corporate image, brand image, employer brand and reputation. The corporate image basically encompasses an emotive reaction of employee or potential employee to the signals/ messages from the organizational system. The messages could be about the leadership reputation, the product or service quality or employee care. The image is usually a shared 'sense making' or meaning converted into a visual of 'great place to work' or 'not a great place to work'. Empirical research shows that a good brand image does go a long way in attracting & retaining talent within the organization. Since the importance of brand image has been realized by the corporate world, a whole strategy of employer brand building both within and outside the company has gained significance.

However, one very critical dimension that evolved was that, the brand image was very important before joining an organization. Brand image was important during the tenure also to derive social pride, however, during the tenure brand delivery became very critical to keep employees motivated and equally engaged. The construct of brand delivery encompassed essentials that the employee came in taking for granted or rather hygiene factors of Herzber's two factor theory of motivation. If these factors exceeded the expectations, then they had a significant contribution to the brand pride. On the contrary if these factors did not meet the competition benchmarks, they became sore points in the minds of people and lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement.

As clearly seen the construct brand delivery, practically encompasses everything that is there in an organization's retention strategies. What makes it different is that the focus here is not merely strategy; it is a well engrained construct of meeting or keeping the promise made to any body as a potential employee or a current employee. The organization as a whole devises processes and systems that communicate the same in various ways to the employee.

Thus the findings of this study can be used by organizations facing the problem of executive retention by devising complete strategies to instill brand pride in the executives.

11. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

One of the major limitations of the study is that it is limited to one representative sample for each IT ITES: Indian origin, MNC and Foreign origin MNC's operating in India only. Organizational Practices leading to people stability that emerged as the most grounded were: 1) Brand Pride as a result of multiple practices to create an employer brand image & to ensure the delivery of the brand promise to the employees 2) Mission Resonance 3) Mentoring Supervisors 4) Friendships at work 5) Availability of Knowledge & Information when needed (to ensure success) 6) Opportunity to solve real problems & make a contribution 7) Nipping the negative energy at the bud .but in the present paper only brand pride as a construct in retaining the mission critical talent has been explored due to paucity of time constraint.

12. SCOPE FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

The scope of the research can be widened to more organizations to get better results. The other factors contributing to executive retention like Mission Resonance , Mentoring Supervisors , Friendships at work , Availability of Knowledge & Information when needed (to ensure success), Opportunity to solve real problems & make a contribution , Nipping the negative energy at the bud can be explored in detail as the current paper has examined only brand pride as a construct in retaining mission critical talent for the organization.

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