

Abstract

The concept of social entrepreneurship has been differently identified by diverse researchers leading to contradicting definitions. Therefore, whether social entrepreneurship is a mechanism of shareholder wealth creation is questionable in the research world. As an answer to these contradicting findings and ideas of social entrepreneurship in literature, the current study focused in explaining the characteristics and the behavior of social entrepreneurial ventures in Sri Lanka. Therefore, the focus of the study is to explain how employer branding emerges through social entrepreneurship and leading to create profits and how opportune it is to use social entrepreneurship as a mechanism in creating and maximizing economic wealth of the shareholders in a sustainable way.

In seeking evidence the study was approached predominantly with a qualitative approach by using a multiple case study approach. Four propositions were formulated with the support of existing literature. A sample of three private organizations in Sri Lanka were selected which are into different sectors and industries. Empirical data was gathered mainly through in-depth interviews with both social entrepreneurs and employees at three organizations and to enhance the validity; the study used focus group discussions; involving observations along with audio, video clips, photographs and from secondary data sources as well.

The study brings out evidence that employer branding emerges from social entrepreneurship leading to build a positive image to the organization. Thus, employer branding which emerges through social entrepreneurship has a direct positive impact on creating economic wealth of the shareholders as a mediating effect. Moreover, the study highlights that social entrepreneurship can be used as a mechanism of economic wealth creation of shareholders in profit oriented private organizations. Moreover, the study delineates that social entrepreneurship is a mechanism of earning profits or maximizing the economic wealth of the shareholders challenging the findings of a set of researchers who identify social entrepreneurship as purely not-for-profit. Thus, the current study supports the findings of the other set scholars who identify social entrepreneurship as a socially responsible practice of commercial businesses engaged in cross sector partnerships. Predominantly, the study highlights that social entrepreneurship builds

employer branding and that employer branding has a direct positive impact on creating economic wealth of social entrepreneurial ventures and its shareholders.

Thus, the study creates the awareness that social entrepreneurship can be used as mechanism in creating profits by exposing to new business opportunities with a sustainable competitive advantage. Hence, the study delineates the importance of understanding that there are many areas that profit maximizing private organizations can provide an alternative delivery system for public services and social entrepreneurs are becoming a growing source of solutions to the issues of social, employment and economic problems where traditional market or public approaches fail with empirical evidences.

Thus, the research contributes to the literature on providing a new insight to the concept of social entrepreneurship where social entrepreneurial ventures as a mechanism of profit earning more than providing charity. The significance of the study is that the economic gains of the social entrepreneurial ventures are hardly focused globally, and in the Sri Lankan context it is minimal. Predominantly, the employer branding effect which emerges from social entrepreneurship and the direction towards economic wealth of the shareholders are not much focused on in existing literature. Studies on social entrepreneurship with multiple case studies are also minimal in the Sri Lankan context. Thus, the study makes important theoretical and empirical contributions to the growing body of knowledge of social entrepreneurship.