

Employer Attractiveness Dimensions: A study of Perceptions of the Management Students

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Abstract:- Organisation today are facing challenge in attracting the right talent to the organization. This challenge is even observed when they are recruiting candidates at the management institutes. The focus is always on the branding strategy so that the organisation is able to recruit the appropriate candidate. Employer Attractiveness has become a key area of the Talent Strategy framework of the organisation. The study attempts examine the perceived importance of dimensions of Employer Attractiveness as referred by Berthon et al(2005) and to contrast the perceptual differences (if any) regarding the gender, age, prior work experience and years of work experience on the candidates. The data is collected through a self-administered questionnaire based on the EmpAt Scale proposed by Berthon et al. The sample is collected from the final year students of the management institute. The analyses results indicated a significant difference in the perception of the dimension of Employer Attractiveness with reference to the demographic profile of the students. The study results help the organisation to frame the employer attractiveness strategies based on the important dimensions in order to establish a positive Employer Brand.

Keywords:- Employer Brand, Employer Attractiveness, Talent Acquisition, Human Resource Management.

I. INTRODUCTION

Employer Branding is a concept which ensures establishing a brand for an organization in the talent market. There is a stiff competition for attracting the talented people to the organization. It becomes a significant issue in the Attracting potential candidates is a significant issue in the talent acquisition function, as it requires the organization to compete for the talented candidates in the scarce talent pool (Collins & Kanar, 2014, Fernandez, Castilla, & Moore, 2002; Hewelt & Rashid, 2010). Companies are aiming to communicate the unique aspects through various strategies and create a strong brand value. The Employer Branding is the application of the Branding principles to HRM. (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005). Employer branding is termed as “the sum of a company’s efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work.” (Lloyd, 2002). Employer Branding strategies contribute to increase employer attractiveness in the labor market as a whole and, more specifically, among potential

skilled candidates. In the employment market place characterized by talent shortage, firms need to create an image of an attractive place to work, to attract people with right skills. The workplace today is dominated by millennials. With baby boomers retiring, organizations are faced with the challenge of managing expectations of the younger generation employees. No longer are they attracted by the organizational attributes that the previous generations were drawn to. The strategies used by the organizations will fail if they are not able to analyse the dimensions which are considered to be important for them to apply to an organization. The talent war at the management campuses is also evident. Campuses are an important source of potential employees, as students form a significant part of the workforce hired by the organizations. Major recruitment drives are also conducted in the campuses hence it is imperative to analyse the employer attractiveness dimensions as per the candidates.

The study aims to understand the dimensions of the employer attractiveness from the perspectives of the management students. The study also aims to study the impact of the demographics on the dimensions of the employer attractiveness. The study will add to the current HRM literature by investigating the perceived importance of the dimension of employer attractiveness and the impact of the demographic variables on it.

II. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

A. Employer Branding

Employer Brand as a concept was first defined as by Ambler and Barrow “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company.” The Employer Brand is also referred to as the company’s image as per the perception of the associates and the potential hires (Martin & Beaumont, 2003). Here it is referred to the employee experience which is much more than just looking for a salary or the perks associated with a position. Kunerth & Mosley (2011) highlight through their study that the employer branding results to an effective and enhanced talent acquisition, help in employee retention and also result in better employee commitment. The employer branding can be seen as a combination of both internal branding practices and external branding practices which helps in differentiating the organization from the rest of the competition (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). There is a great need to design and align the employer branding strategies with the overall employer branding. It need to be also

aligned with the customer branding strategies of the organization (Hieronimus, Schaefer, & Schroder, 2005; Wheeler, Richey, Tokkman, & Sablynski, 2006; Mark, Golan, & Grigg, 2009; Arachchige, & Robertson, 2013). The employer brand includes the employer brand proposition which aims to highlight to the perspective and also the current employees what they can expect from the organization. This can be stated as the rational and also the emotional benefits of being associated with the organization (Mosley, 2007). These are signals which is sent out by the organization to the candidates which is termed as employer brand equity (Oladipo, et al., 2013). This helps in making an organization attractive to the outside world.

B. Employer Attractiveness

Employer attractiveness has been receiving considerable attention because of its usefulness in the talent acquisition domain and the benefits it provides to the potential employees (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005; Pingle & Sharma, 2013). It helps in the recruitment by attracting the talent to apply for jobs in the organization. It influences the talent acquisition process (Gatewood et al., 2018) and the retention of professionals (Helm, 2013). Aiman-Smith et al., (2001) add that attractiveness refers to “an attitude or expressed general positive affect toward an organization, toward viewing the organization as a desirable entity with which to initiate some relationship.” The authors conclude that the organisation is considered to be attractive to an individual when they desire to seek more information about the organisation and participate in the selection process. Employer attractiveness can be defined as “the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization.” (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).

The employer attractiveness model assumes that there is an internal employer brand image which is the recruiters perception of the organization and an external image which is the potential recruits perception of the organisation and a construed employer brand image, which reflects the perception of the employees (Knox & Freeman, 2006). The results of the study indicate that the internal and external perceptions of the employer brand significantly varied among people. The recruiters who perceive the brand internally and the potential candidates who perceive the brand externally significantly differ in their perceptions of the employer brand.

The general impression of the organization within and outside is referred as the internal brand image (Barber, 1998). The internal brand is referred to the perception of the job offer as per the employees and the external brand image explains the perception of the organization brand as per the potential applicants. It is established on the companies' identity projection in the talent market (Vaijyanthi & Shreenivasan, 2011). The concept of employer attractiveness has been studied more in the context of the recruitment and retention (Pingle & Sharma, 2013). It necessarily highlights that the internal employer attractiveness is the level of attraction created among the existing employees of the company and the external

employer attractiveness is the impression the perspective and potential employees have of the organisation (Pingle & Sharma, 2013). External employer attractiveness can furthermore be understood as the assessment of professionals with experience in the field as well as from the viewpoint of novices, mostly students (Colomo-Palacios, 2012).

The anticipated benefit that a potential employee sees in applying and being a part of an organization is known as the Employer attractiveness (Berthon et al., 2005). The job choice an applicant initially makes is greatly dependent on the employer image and also how the applicant perceives it while making job-related decisions. The information gained through the information available to the job seekers help them make this form a perception about the organisation (Gatewood et al., 2018). It was suggested to identify the dimensions of employer attractiveness for an applicant and also personalise these dimension for further study (Berthon et al., 2005). The author operationalized the dimensions through five factors: Social Values, Interest Value, Economic Value, Development Value and Application Value. The Social Value assesses the extent to which an individual is attracted to an organization that offers a social, friendly environment. The extent to which a conducive and a healthy teamwork is encouraged. The Interest Value assess the extent to which an individual is attracted to an organization that provides a creative, novel work environment. An organization that utilizes an employees' creativity to produce creative and high-quality products will be perceived high on this value. The Economic Value assess the organization on the compensation and the package offered by them, the job security and the options for growth provided by the organization. Development Value assess the organization on the recognition and respect provided by them. The confidence and the esteem an individual will experience being a part of the organization. It focusses on the development opportunities provided by the organization. Finally, the Application Value identifies the extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that aims to provide application opportunities to them. Applying of things learnt back to the job, teaching others and having a customer-oriented approach to the business.

Some studies also highlight and conclude that the attractiveness and prioritization of attractiveness elements differs according to the cultures, the demographic characteristics of the applicants and also the likes and dislikes of people. It can be also referred to the dimensions as per the regional or national context (Alniaçık, Alniaçık, Erat, & Akçin, 2014; Newburry, Gardberg, & Belkin, 2006). The way in which the students are attracted toward employer attractiveness dimensions also varies with the educational background (Arachchige & Robertson, 2013). The role of social media is also important in terms of effective employer branding. The job seekers perceive a positively brand image of an organization that invest time and resources in utilizing social media for employer branding activities (Priyadarshini, Kumar & Jha, 2017). In order to understand the impact of the demographics on the

dimensions of employer attractiveness the study has been conducted.

III. HYPOTHESIS

After a detailed literature review, the following hypothesis is proposed for the study.

- *There is a significant difference between age of the students in the dimensions of employer attractiveness.*
- *There is a significant difference between gender of the students in the dimensions of employer attractiveness*
- *There is a significant difference between work experience of the students in the dimensions of employer attractiveness*
- *There is a significant difference between years of experience of the students in the dimensions of employer attractiveness*

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

C. Sample and Sampling Framework

In the present study, Simple Random Sampling technique has been adopted. The sample is selected from the Management Institutes students. The students are considered to be an appropriate sample as per the study because of they being the job seekers in the near future and can appropriately reflect on the employer attractiveness dimensions. The reason for choosing management students is because they are sought after among companies in the work domain in general an organization to attract the best talents. The survey is administered on the final year students of the management program. The study aimed to collect responses from 240 students, however the 194 students responded to the survey questionnaire. Out of which 180 responses were considered for further statistical analysis.

D. Survey Instrument

The survey instrument was made by using the employer attractiveness (EmpAt) by Berthon et al (2005). The five dimensions of the Scale included Interest Value, Development Value, Social Value, Economic Value and Application Value. The dimensions were measured using a 7 point Likert Scale ranging from 1 to 7. 1 being mentioned as “Extremely Important” and 7 being “Extremely Unimportant”.

The instrument also collected data on the demographics of the students in order to understand the impact of it on the dimensions of employer attractiveness. The survey instrument is a self-administered questionnaire which collects data pertaining to the study.

V. DATA ANALYSIS

The data has been analyzed by using ANOVA. The five dimensions of the employer attractiveness was studied with reference to the demographic details of the students.

The demographic profile of the respondents has been provided in the table 1.

Age		
	Frequency	Percent
21 - 25 years	14	7.7
26 - 30 years	111	61.3
31- 35 years	37	20.4
More than 35 years	19	10.5
Total	181	100.0
Gender		
Male	109	60.2
Female	72	39.8
Total	181	100.0
Work experience		
Yes	97	53.6
No	84	46.4
Total	181	100.0
Work experience: number of years		
No work experience	76	42.0
Less than 1 years	32	17.7
1 - 2 years	39	21.5
2 - 3 years	23	12.7
3 - 4 years	11	6.1
Total	181	100.0

Table 1:- Demographic Profile of the Respondents

The relationship of age on the dimensions of employer attractiveness is studied. The ANOVA results have been shown in the Table 2.

As per the Table, the age has a significant relationship to the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness. However, the relationship is found to be significant for the Development Value (DV) (p-value<0.5) and Interest Value (IV) (p-value<0.5). The relationship is not found to be significant for Economic Value, Application Value and the Social Value (p-value >0.5). It signifies that the student’s age determines the perception of employer attractiveness. Hence, Hypothesis 1 is partially accepted as per the results of the study.

The relationship of gender and the dimensions of employer attractiveness is studied. The ANOVA results have been shown in the Table 3.

As per the Table, the gender is observed to be impacting the perception of employer attractiveness among the students. The relationship is found to be significant for the Social Value (DV) (p -value <0.5) and Interest Value (IV) (p -value <0.5). The relationship is not found to be significant for Economic Value (EV), Application Value (AV) and the Development Value (DV) (p -value >0.5). It signifies that the student's gender partially determines the perception of employer attractiveness. Hence, Hypothesis 2 is partially accepted as per the results of the study.

The relationship of prior work experience and the dimensions of employer attractiveness is studied. The ANOVA results have been shown in the Table 4.

As per the Table, the work experience of the students is observed to be impacting the perception of employer attractiveness among the students. The relationship is found to be significant for the Development Value (DV) (p -value <0.5 , Application Value (AV), and Interest Value (IV) (p -value <0.5). The relationship is not found to be significant for Economic Value (EV), and the Social Value (SV) (p -value >0.5). It signifies that the student's work experience partially determines the perception of employer attractiveness. The students with work experience are found to differ in the perception of the Employer Attractiveness. Hence, Hypothesis 3 is partially accepted as per the results of the study.

The relationship of number of years of work experience of the students and the perception of dimensions of employer attractiveness is studied. The ANOVA results have been shown in the Table 5.

As per the Table, the years of the experience is observed to be impacting the perception of employer attractiveness among the students. The relationship is found to be significant for the Development Value (DV) (p -value <0.5) and the Application Value (AV) (p -value <0.5). The relationship is not found to be significant for Economic Value (EV), Interest Value (IV), and the Social Value (SV) (p -value >0.5). It signifies that the students with higher work experience (2-3 years, 3 – 4 years) prefer the dimension of Development and Application in the job or the organisation. The students with less work experience (less than 2 years) do not perceive the dimensions different. Hence, Hypothesis 4 is also partially accepted as per the results of the study.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In the study, the perceived importance of the different dimensions of employer attractiveness was studied with respect to the age, gender, employment status and years of work experience. The data analysis suggested that the five dimensions are perceived according as per the characteristic of the respondent. The Development Value

has been significant in most of the demographic characteristic of the respondents. With respect to the gender of the respondents it was evident that the male respondents gave more importance to the Interest Value (M-2.49) and the Social Value (M-2.03) as compared to the female respondents. The age of the respondents also provides inputs on the perception difference among the dimensions. The respondents of age group 26 to 30 years and 31 years to 35 years of age differ significantly from respondents below 26 years of age and above 35 years of age. They prefer the dimension of Development Value and Interest Value. It suggests that the organization should focus on the attractiveness on these domains if they are looking for talent within a period age frame.

The findings of the study also highlight that the students with a prior work experience perceive the dimensions of Development Value, and Application Value different from respondents with no prior work experience. The experienced respondents are attracted towards organization which provide them sufficient development opportunities and flexibility to apply whatever is learnt back to their jobs. The respondents with more work experience 2 years and above also perceive Interest Value as an important dimension. Organisation aiming at recruiting people with higher work experience should focus on the innovativeness and uniqueness of the job profile too.

These results provide an important managerial implication related to the acquisition and attraction of the talent in the organization which is an important human resource function. The perception of the candidates of an attractive organization is based on the things that they value the most but the study highlights some key areas which the organization can design the talent strategy both internal and external. As per the results, the Development Value is considered to be an important dimension. The candidates may no longer just consider economic factor to be a crucial factor in deciding whether or not the job will be taken by them but Interest Value in terms of innovation of the company both in the products and services is attracting the management students.

Organisation can decide and design the Employer Branding strategies for these students keeping in mind the importance given to the development of their career, recognition and the application of their learning to the job and innovation. The communication strategies focusing on this will help organization build a better brand image.

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TABLES

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DV	Between Groups	12.404	4	3.101	3.599	.008
	Within Groups	151.649	176	.862		
	Total	164.052	180			
SV	Between Groups	2.211	4	.553	1.154	.333
	Within Groups	84.263	176	.479		
	Total	86.474	180			
IV	Between Groups	8.859	4	2.215	3.120	.016
	Within Groups	124.912	176	.710		
	Total	133.771	180			
AV	Between Groups	.488	4	.122	.269	.898
	Within Groups	79.796	176	.453		
	Total	80.285	180			
EV	Between Groups	2.892	4	.723	.947	.438
	Within Groups	134.319	176	.763		
	Total	137.211	180			

Table 2:- Age and Dimensions of Employer Attractiveness

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DV	Between Groups	1.407	2	.703	.758	.470
	Within Groups	165.066	178	.927		
	Total	166.472	180			
SV	Between Groups	3.415	2	1.708	3.349	.037
	Within Groups	90.757	178	.510		
	Total	94.173	180			
IV	Between Groups	7.518	2	3.759	3.207	.043
	Within Groups	208.661	178	1.172		
	Total	216.178	180			
AV	Between Groups	1.213	2	.607	1.366	.258
	Within Groups	79.071	178	.444		
	Total	80.285	180			
EV	Between Groups	.157	2	.079	.102	.903
	Within Groups	137.053	178	.770		
	Total	137.211	180			

Table 3:- Gender and Dimensions of Employer Attractiveness

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DV	Between Groups	3.797	1	3.797	4.241	.041
	Within Groups	160.256	179	.895		
	Total	164.052	180			
SV	Between Groups	.124	1	.124	.257	.613
	Within Groups	86.350	179	.482		
	Total	86.474	180			
IV	Between Groups	3.319	1	3.319	4.555	.034
	Within Groups	130.451	179	.729		
	Total	133.771	180			
AV	Between Groups	2.202	1	2.202	5.048	.026
	Within Groups	78.083	179	.436		
	Total	80.285	180			
EV	Between Groups	.033	1	.033	.043	.837
	Within Groups	137.178	179	.766		
	Total	137.211	180			

Table 4:- Work Experience and Dimensions of Employer Attractiveness

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
DV	Between Groups	9.321	4	2.330	2.610	.037
	Within Groups	157.151	176	.893		
	Total	166.472	180			
SV	Between Groups	2.089	4	.522	1.089	.364
	Within Groups	84.385	176	.479		
	Total	86.474	180			
IV	Between Groups	2.992	4	.748	1.007	.406
	Within Groups	130.779	176	.743		
	Total	133.771	180			
AV	Between Groups	4.564	4	1.141	2.652	.035
	Within Groups	75.721	176	.430		
	Total	80.285	180			
EV	Between Groups	2.956	4	.739	.969	.426
	Within Groups	134.254	176	.763		
	Total	137.211	180			

Table 5:- Work Experience and Dimensions of Employer Attractiveness