

Indian B-School Students' Perceptions of Best Employers

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Employer branding has been gaining focus among the corporates in recent times. Many organizations have started allocating significant budgets for strengthening their employer brands. Theoretical concepts of marketing are being applied in building employer branding strategies for the corporates. Most of the researchers in this area have identified the relations between employer brand and talent attraction/ retention. However, very few of them have talked about the frameworks from the perspectives of the prospective talent. This study explores employer branding from the students' perspective and provides a framework to attract talent by focusing on drivers of the best employer brands among the students.

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Introduction

Employment branding today represents a growing share of recruitment budgets of organizations. Most organizations recognize the need for a cohesive and clearly articulated employment brand to attract candidates. In the quest to attract and retain high quality talent in an ever increasing competitive employee marketplace, employers are focusing significantly on building an employer brand, which showcases the organization's strengths as an employer and its employee value propositions. According to Hewitt Point of View (2009), "Best employers enjoy a bigger pool of talent from which to select employees"; this creates a need for organizations to become the best employer or the most preferred employer in the eyes of the targeted candidates.

Best employers enjoy a bigger pool of talent from which to select employees.

Employer branding exercise faces several obstacles some of the major ones being:

- o Threat from the competitors who share the same talent pool.
- o Negative information in public domain which can damage employment reputations.
- o Changing employee demographics and needs/priorities of the new generations (Gen Y, Z etc.).
- o Technologies and systems which transform the ways in which companies, potential candidates, and consumers interact.

To overcome these obstacles and maximize the returns on the employer brand investments, understanding the perceptions of the target audience is critical. Engaging the audience and communicating with them through compelling branding strategies is possible only when those strategies align with the best brand perception. Thus, there is a focus on understanding the key drivers of successful employer brands among the talent segments. The drivers will help in selling the brand to the potential candidates in targeted, credible, and differentiated ways by customizing brand messages to the preferences and behaviors of key talent segments.

Employer Branding for Indian B-School Students

Indian graduates face problems of unemployment in large numbers (10% in 2011, Labor Bureau) but graduates from the top-tier Indian business schools such as Indian Institutes of Management (IIMs), Xavier School of Management (XLRI), Faculty of Management Studies (FMS) and a few others, are the most

sought after by the recruiters. These institutes, consistently ranked among the top 10 by Business Today, Business Week, Economic Times etc., are renowned for grooming India's top talent in different fields of management through best educational facilities and training.

The concept of Employer Branding has gained significant importance among the recruiters in the Indian business schools. In these institutes, the placement of students happens during a specific period, when the recruiters are asked to visit the campus and select students. The recruiters have to compete among themselves for the limited pool of best talent. In order that a company gets to select the desired candidate, it will have to attract its customers (students) by differentiating its brand from others. This calls for a robust branding strategy to acquire the position of the most preferred employer in the minds of the students. Such a situation increases the significance of the students' perceptions regarding an employer brand.

Attracting and retaining the right candidates helps organizations to attain their strategic goals and long term vision. Employer branding concept, adapted from marketing, has increasingly become the focus of organizations towards developing their image as most preferred employer to enable the recruitment and retention of the best possible workforce. An effective

An effective employer brand can be developed using the aspects of employer attractiveness.

employer brand can be developed using the aspects of employer attractiveness, which can be identified as the perceived benefits by a potential employee.

Some research has identified that job seekers' early beliefs and perceptions determine how they respond to organizations' recruitment and selection activities. Especially, for the Indian students pursuing management studies, the perceptions form very early through the word of mouth in the campuses and from college alumni in the industry. Sometimes the perceptions can be quite different from the reality and fragmented information can cause building of a wrong perceived image of an employer. Employer branding will therefore be crucial to reduce the gaps in the perception and reality about an employer.

This study analyzes and discusses the key factors which attract the Indian b-school graduates to the potential employers, both on a general basis and for specific student segments. The drivers or dimensions of the employer's attractiveness (based on the students' perceptions) are identified using a research methodology. It also discusses the implications and limitations of the findings and suggests the directions for future research. The research is an attempt to provide meaningful insights to the organizations for developing an effective employer branding strategy for the b-school campuses.

Scope of the Study

This study is carried out with the purpose of identifying the key drivers of suc-

cessful Employer Brands with respect to the Indian b-schools campuses. The scope of research is limited to the tier-I b-schools or those institutes who have been consistently ranked among the top 10 management institutes by popular ranking agencies (Economic Times, Business Standard etc.). The drivers are identified from the perspectives of the students in these institutes. Data is gathered from the current students of the institutes and analyzed to generate the key attraction factors which make an employer the most preferred one among the candidates. The factors have also been classified on the basis of perceived importance (by the candidates in choosing an employer) as necessary factors, neutral factors and high impact factors. The study also segments the students according to gender as well as specializations and presents the key employer attraction factors for each of the segments.

Objectives

The three main objectives of the study are as follows:

1. To identify the most significant employment factors which attract the candidates towards an employer.
2. To classify the identified employment factors on the basis of perceived importance while choosing an employer.
3. To identify the factors which differentiate the most preferred employers from the others.

The research will also categorize the above factors on the basis of gender and area of specialization of the student

(marketing, operations, finance, and human resources etc.).

The aim is to provide a valuable framework for the employers to design and manage an effective employer branding strategy for recruitment. Next, by classifying the factors from the most valued ones to the neutral ones, the study will generate a targeted approach to employer branding.

Sometimes, employers fail to attract a particular segment of candidates, for example, female candidates for operations role or male candidates for HR roles. Therefore, this study recognizes the importance of variations in the students' perceptions as per the different segments and presents the drivers of employer attraction for each of the student segment. This information can help in organizations to modify their branding strategy to target and attract the specific segment. Lastly, the results are analyzed to present a framework which distinguishes the perceived best employers (by the campus students) from the remaining ones.

Methodology

For this study, the methods of data collection used are survey and interviews. In the first stage, a survey was carried out by administering a questionnaire to the students across 10 b-schools in India. The questionnaire was e-mailed to the respective SPOC¹ from each in-

¹ SPOC-Single point of contact. From each institute one student of full time 2-year Post-graduate program was identified as the SPOC for the survey. SPOCs were interviewed for the second phase of data collection

stitute, while the SPOC further e-mailed it to his institute students (at least 20 students) to get the responses. In all, 106 responses were received from nine institutes during the period September-November 2013. The initial questionnaire aimed at collecting the data on-

- o Students' perceptions on the employment factors and the perceived importance.
- o Most preferred employers among the students.
- o Associations of the most preferred employer brands with the employment factors.

In the next stage interviews were conducted with nine students representing nine b-schools in both face to face and telephonic format. The interviews aimed at analyzing and relating the on-campus brand building activities by the preferred employers with the employer's perceived image. The interviews were conducted in November 2013. Each interview was of the duration ranging 30-40 minutes.

Sample

The sample has consisted of 106 students of 2-year/1-year fulltime post graduate management program (and such other equivalents) in Indian Business Schools. Some of these students have prior work experience and many of them have experience of two month summer internships in different organizations, in their area of specialization.

Questionnaire

Among the available standard questionnaires on employer attractiveness, 25-item Employer Attractiveness (EmpAt) scale, developed and validated by Brethton et al. (2005), as a result of focus groups using final year students at a large Australian university, is currently the most popular one. However, this scale has limitations of assessing employer attractiveness from the potential employee who seeks employment through applications in response to the newspaper classifieds, website advertisements or recruitment agencies and any other networks.

In the current study, however, the situation is exactly the opposite. Here, the recruiters are seeking applications from the best talent when they visit the campus during placements. Recruiters have better channels and several touch points to attract the candidates. This recruitment exercise is also of prime importance for the recruiters as they select candidates for the strategically important positions and provide highly attractive remunerations (only 0.001% of Indian graduates get paid such high remunerations at entry levels in organizations). The situation in the current study being very different from the existing studies and research, it would employ a new way of measuring the drivers of most attractive employer brands.

As the study is specific to Indian management students, the employment factors used in the questionnaire have been adopted from the popular employer ranking surveys conducted by the Nielsen

agency in India. Through a scientifically designed, tested and validated instrument of 72 employment factors, Nielsen has identified 25 such factors which significantly impact the selection of an employer in Indian scenario. The questionnaire uses these 25 factors to further draw conclusions on the key drivers of the best employer brands.

The 25 employment factors for the study are:

- Degree of independence at workplace
- Total salary package offered
- Growth prospect is good
- Good standing in the market
- Job provides lot of learning
- Increase my market value / employability
- Encourages creative thinking
- Among the top companies in its domain
- Company has a performance based culture
- Opportunity for international exposure through projects
- Provides cross-functional mobility
- Enhances my social status
- Opportunities to work with the top talent in the organization
- Offers good starting designation
- Offers good training programs
- Organization with strong values

- Approachable senior management
- Kind of location offered
- Large sized company
- Take-home salary offered
- Open and transparent organization
- Participative management in terms of decision making
- Good working environment
- Employee friendly HR policies
- Provides job security

The questionnaire has been divided into three parts.

- o Part I- Identifying the high impact, neutral and necessary factors of employment.

This part contains the questions related to identifying the five topmost factors in the 'must have', 'most attractive' and 'indifferent' categories.

Must have/necessary factors- The candidate has to select 5 factors (out of 25) which he/she considers are the must have in an organization to consider it for application. He/she would not apply to any organization unless all these basic (essential) factors are present.

High impact/ high influence factors- The candidate has to select the top 5 factors which he/she thinks differentiate his/her dream or most preferred employer from the rest. So, the candidate's dream employers set would have only those organizations which can fulfill his most high impact category factors.

Neutral factors- The candidate has to identify those 5 factors which he places as non-differentiating ones for his choice of employer. So, he would be indifferent to these factors while preferring one employer over another.

- o Part-II- Identifying the most popular employer brands on campus

The candidate will provide names of five most preferred employers or the employers he definitely aspires to work for. These are the candidate's dream employers. This set would give us the most popular employer brands among the campus students.

- o Part III- Identifying the differentiating factors of best employers

The candidate is asked to associate his/ her dream employers with the given employment factors. This would provide us with a set to derive the key drivers of employer attractiveness for the b-school students.

Interviews

Once the survey data is collected and analyzed for the above factors, interviews are planned with the same institute students. These interviews try to relate the best employer brand on campus with their branding activities, thereby gauging the impact of the campus branding activities on the perception of the employer brand.

The Interview had two parts-

- Part I- Questions about the popular/ most preferred brands on campus

This will help us further in confirming the topmost employer bands in the particular campus.

- Part II-Questions on the branding activities done by the most preferred employers on the campus

General Information

It was observed(from Table 1) that a majority (68.8%) of the respondents are males. They are distributed among different areas of specialization such

as marketing (32%), human resources (28.40%), finance (20.70%), operations (11.40%), and general management (5.70%). With respect to prior employment experience, 14% of them did not possess any experience; 30% had less than one year of experience; 27% had one to two years. This is followed by 22.6% of the respondents with experience of two to three years. The remaining 5.6% of the respondents had above three years of employment experience.

Table 1 General Information of Respondents

General Information	Number of Respondents	Percentage
Gender		
Male	73	68.8
Female	33	31.1
Area of Specialization		
Finance	22	20.70
Marketing	34	32
Human Resources	30	28.40
Operations	12	11.40
General Management/	6	5.70
International Management Others	2	1.80
Employment Experience (Years)		
>3	6	5.6
2-3	24	22.6
1-2	29	27
0-1	32	30
0	15	14
Total	106	100

Table 2 Necessary Factors of Employment

Necessary Factors	Percentage of Candidates
Take-home salary offered	75
Open and transparent organization	69
Participative management in terms of decision making	55
Good working environment	52
Employee friendly HR policies	48

Necessary Factors

Among the top fivefactors selected by the candidates as Necessary Factors’ or ‘Must have’ to choose an employer, those which scored the highest are as in Table 2. These factors show the minimum requirements which a candidate expects from an employer. In the absence of these factors, the candidate

would not even consider the employer in his/ her preference set.

Neutral Factors

Among the top five factors chosen by the students as neutral employment factors, those which scored the highest are as follows:

Table 3 Neutral Factors of Employment

Factors	Percentage of candidates
Provides Job security	88
Offers a good starting designation	72
Approachable senior management	62
Kind of location offered	54
Large sized company	53

These factors show that the candidate would be indifferent to the above factors while differentiating one employer from the other.

High Impact Factors

Among the top five chosen by the students as high impact employment factors, the highest scoring ones are the following:

Table 4 High Impact Factors of Employment

Factors	Percentage of Candidates
Degree of independence at workplace	100
Offers good training programs	90
Growth prospect is good	88
Good standing in the market	83
Job provides lot of learning	63

These are the most important factors for candidates while choosing their dream employers. These factors will make or break the choice of an employer by a candidate and will play a major role in making an employer the most preferred one among the students.

Most Preferred Employers

Among the various companies chosen as the dream employers, the five top-most which received maximum nomination from the candidates are as follows:

Table 5 Most Preferred Employers

Most Preferred Employers	Percentage of Candidates
HUL	93
TAS	88
Microsoft	87
ABG	74
Cadbury	70

These five employers attract the maximum candidates from the considered sample. No doubt they are perceived as the best employers to work for by the sampled candidates. These employers have the best perceived brands on campus. These five employers were further examined for their association with the employment factors and their employer branding activities and initiatives on the campuses.

Factors of Employer Brands

The students associated their chosen dream employers with the given employment factors. Table 6 shows percentage of the students which associated the above five companies with the top five necessary, neutral and high impact factors.

Table 6 Association of Best Employer Brands with Employment Factors (%)

Most Preferred Employers	Necessary Factors	Neutral Factors	High Impact Factors
HUL	80	65	100
TAS	76	72	100
Microsoft	76	55	100
ABG	77	63	97
Cadbury	72	42	98

While ‘must have/ necessary factors’ of the top 5 employers are on the higher side (range: 72-80%) and the neutral factors percentages are on the lower side (range: 42-72%), the high impact factors have shown almost cent percent ratings in the case of all the employers. This implies that candidates associated each of the dream employers with all the five high impact factors, viz. the top five employers provide degree of independence at workplace, offer good training programs, provide good growth prospects, have good standing in the market and provide lot of learning on the job. Thus, we can state that the students perceive those companies as their dream employers who provide all the high impact factors in the job.

Students perceive those companies as their dream employers who provide all the high impact factors in the job.

The percentage of association with the necessary factors shows how the students perceive the employers on the minimum requirements for their choice of job. Here the percentage for the top 5 employers is lower than that for the high impact factors. As many students have chosen these employers as their dream

employers, they must qualify the necessary factors or minimum requirements in the first place. Thus, students should have chosen the employers based on their individual preferences of the necessary factors, which might not directly get reflected in the association percentage. For example: a student who chooses ABC company as his dream employer will have different minimum requirements from another student who also chooses ABC company. So, ABC Company becomes the dream employer by maximum choice but might not have the highest association of the necessary factors, which are an individual’s personal preference.

Similarly, the neutral factors have the lowest percentage of association with the dream employers, which means they are not perceived as offering the career with these factors by maximum of the candidates. However, as these factors do not impact the choice of one employer from other (neutral), the top employer brands are not impacted by the low association.

It was observed that while there are many top employer brands which provide the best job in terms of learning opportunities, work environment and career growth, the ranking according to the stu-

dents' perceptions has reflected the differences between the actual image and the perceived image of an employer. For example, P&G has a history of being one of the best employers according to the Global Employer Ranking Agency, Universum and has been ranked higher than Unilever in the 2013 survey.² However, for the considered set of Indian B-school students, we find that P&G is not listed among the top five (Overall Rank-6th, 64%) whereas, Unilever (HUL in India), has secured the topmost rank.

It was also observed from the interviews, conducted to gauge the significance of the on-campus branding activities, that top employer brands have been among the most active in engaging the students with their campus engagement activities. HUL has been the most active employer on the campus throughout the year through its branding activities (India level case competition-HUL LIME, telecast on CNN 18, prizes-6 lakhs and Pre-Placement Interviews), high level engagement of student audience on Facebook. For e.g. TAS also has a history of engaging students through its popular case study competition-TBLA, which also offers PPIs to the winners. Microsoft has a dedicated career website for the student audience and promotes its independent work culture through alumni-talks on campus. ABG has recently become popular through its LEAD-LEAP leadership programs, which offer a similar profile and job stints as those offered by TAS. Also, ABG lures stu-

²<http://universumglobal.com/ideal-employer-rankings/global-results/>

dents early (in August) through its i) popular competition-ABG Stratoes, which offers attractive prizes and PPIs to winners and ii) Aditya Birla Group Scholarships, which is covered on a grand scale in National Newspapers and offers around 1/3rd of the college fees and PPIs. Cadbury has been active on Facebook to promote its brand messages and has been successful in portraying its image as a learning and growing organization.

Framework of Employment Factors

From the above observations, we derive a framework for becoming the best employer brand on campus. The framework is based on the categorization of the employment factors. The high impact factors can be termed as the key drivers of the best employer brands on campus.

From the below framework, we can derive that an organization should focus on the high impact, high importance factors of employer attraction, or the high impact factors when it frames its employer branding strategy. An employer should develop its brand, and design its campus branding activities such that the messages related to the high impact factors are communicated clearly and consistently to the students. This will help build the students' perception about an employer as the best employer.

Messages related to the high impact factors are communicated clearly and consistently to the students.

pete to move into the candidates' interest and preference set. The aim of the employers on the campus is to become the most preferred employer by all. The findings of this research will add value to the organizations' employer branding exercise by providing a targeted and customized approach to get into the candidates most preferred set.

Recommendations

Employer branding is an exercise to attract prospective employees by differentiating one's brand from the others, and promoting one's strengths. However, if an employer is promoting the strengths, which lies in the neutral zone of the candidate's preference (according to the framework), then the branding exercise will not generate the desired impact. Similarly, any differentiating factors will attract the candidate only when they are perceived highly by the candidate in the choice of his employer. Therefore, it is recommended that employers try to identify the strengths and differentiation of their brands from among the high impact employment factors, while concentrating on the value proposition of their brand. Also, as the management candidates perceive the necessary factors as the 'must-have' in their job, employers should also focus on including these factors in their branding strategy to gain entry into the candidates' set of considered employers for employment.

Limitations of the Study

The study was limited to the students of top ten management institutes in India. If an employer only wishes to cater to the

candidate segment from these institutes (on-campus students) then this study would be useful but if the recruiting channels of an employer are many and he wants to design a generic employer brand strategy which caters to all his sourcing segments, then he would have to look out for other solutions. The findings of the study would also not be applicable for management students from tier-II or tier-III institutes (tier as per the popular B-school rankings in India). The candidates from top management institutes being the best and rare talent of India, enjoys high value in the job market and therefore this set of candidates have altogether different expectations from the employers and jobs. Also, changing nature of technology, changing demographics and behavior of job seekers, macro-economic conditions would influence the employment factors even for the same set of students, in the coming years. During the recession period, the importance of necessary factors might increase as the candidates would be simply aspiring to land a job when many others are getting unemployed. India being a family-oriented nation, the employment factors used for this study might not be applicable for the similar students in any other nation, which does not hold culture and family dependent orientation. However, the approach and methodology of the study can be useful in determining the drivers of successful employer brands under different circumstances.

The outcomes of this research will not be applicable for lateral hires or experienced employees. One aspect of employer brand also concerns with retention of internal employees which has

not been taken into consideration here. As human resource management is moving towards a value-based approach, measuring the value generated by using the given framework for employer branding will be challenging here. However, the value can be identified only after a substantial period, when the recruited on-campus candidates have stabilized in the organization and started showing tangible results. Such measurements would require complex algorithms and analytic mechanisms and large amount of integrated data over the years.

Future Research

Indian b-schools present a strategic value for organizations by providing the best human talent for their growth. Similarly, the top tier technical institutes of India (Indian Institute of Technology, BITS Pilani, National Institutes of Technology etc.) are known for providing the best engineering talent to the organizations. There has been comparatively less focus on attracting these engineering candidates through employer branding value propositions. However, if the returns of selecting the right candidates for the job are deemed to be high, then even technical hiring should employ employer branding in recruitment strategy. A similar research can be carried out for the technical institutes.

The research can be extended to include the internal employees and even those applicants who have not been selected by the organizations. By understanding the factors which influenced the internal employees and applicants to generate interest in a particular company,

a holistic employer brand solution can be built. Internal employer branding would also have impact on the employee engagement and job satisfaction levels, which can be observed through the improved retention levels in a company. Academic research in this area would not only help organizations to find solutions to internal human resource problems but will also be a major contribution to the organizational behavior stream.

Through some required modifications, the same research format can be made applicable for understanding the employer attraction factors for middle or top management employees. The solutions would be helpful in retaining the critical talent or the high potential employees at those levels.

More research and empirical studies related to identifying factors of becoming an employer of choice will gain high attention from corporates. Such studies will enable the human resource department for creating high impact recruitment strategies thus simplifying their work and also bringing HR closer to being a strategic partner.

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Employer Attractiveness: A Conceptual Framework & Scale Development

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It is of key importance for any organization, especially in the software industries to become an employer-of-choice to attract and retain talent. The study proposes that the level of employer attractiveness can be measured from the level of gratitude employees have towards their organization. This paper aims to an empirical investigation on how to measure the level of employer attractiveness within Indian software organizations. Through an extensive review of literature and subsequent focus group interview the aspects of employer attractiveness were understood and scale items were developed, validated and standardized. The finding of the research is discussed, limitations noted and future research directions suggested.

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Introduction

The term ‘War for talent’ was brought by McKinsey consultants (Chambers et al, 1998). Organizational attractiveness with reference to recruitment has been explored in related areas of research in human resources and has been linked to marketing literature (Daniel & Neves, 2011). Ambler and Barrow (1996) have shown the importance of recruitment outcomes of the image of the organization as an employer. Recruitment has received extensive attention from academics in these years (e.g. Cable & Turban, 2001; Kickul, 2001). Organizations should come up with their innovative recruitment strategies to win the war for talent by becoming an employer of choice within the talent pool (Berthon et al., 2005; Armstrong, 2006) to sustain their business and achieve competitive advantages. Employee’s perception of employer attractiveness is key to organizational success in attracting and retaining talents (Williams & Bauer, 1994; Albinger & Freeman, 2000; Berthon et al, 2005). Organizational attractiveness refers to the degree to which a person favorably perceives an organization as a place to work (Rynes et al., 1991), and the intention of referring their organiza-

tion to the external talent pool. While much focus in academia as well as in practice has been devoted to understand what leads to employer attractiveness (Berthon et al., 2005; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), substantial focus has not yet been given to measure the level of employer attractiveness through the identification of attributes that employees look for in their employer.

Employer Attractiveness

Psychological research is focusing on what makes individuals attracted, or what makes an employer attractive in terms of specific (personal) characteristics (Highhouse et al., 2003; Rentsch & McEwen, 2002; Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Recruitment literature relates this term to the decision of a job applicant to apply for a job (Allen et al., 2007; Hoye & Lievens, 2007). Despite the differences in focus, most research measures the level of attractiveness at the individual level (Judge & Cable, 1997; Turban & Greening, 1996). Perceptions of organizational attractiveness refers to the level to which a person positively perceives an organization as a great place to work (Rynes et al., 1991), or the broad professed desirability of working for an organization (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001).

The concept of ‘employer attractiveness’ leads to employer branding.

Berthon et al (2005) suggested that the concept of ‘employer attractiveness’ leads to employer branding. In their study on dimensions of attractiveness in em-

ployer branding the authors identified five dimensions or in other words a set of value proposition that lead to employer attractiveness. This certainly helps to understand the attributes of employer attractiveness but does not say whether with these proposed attributes employees will stay attached to the organization.

Sokro (2012) studied the influence of employer branding on employee attraction and suggested that employers need to create conducive work environment with conditions to enable employees feel comfortable and remain in the organisation. The study was limited only to identify the attributes of employer attractiveness. Post implementation of these attributes and its effect on the retention matrix is un-determined.

Devendorf and Highhouse (2008) studied workplace attraction, and the contribution of existing employees on attracting the potential employee to the prospective pool. The study highlighted that job seekers look for three types of important information from potential employers i.e. people information, employer information, and job information. Out of the three, people information is particularly significant as job seekers are likely to be interested in the attributes of their potential co-workers. Authors argued that the attributes of current employees can significantly predict the organization’s employer attractiveness.

The attributes of current employees can significantly predict the organization’s employer attractiveness.

Kanar et al (2010) studied on how the positive word-of-mouth of existing employees about their current organization effects in attracting potential employees towards the organization. The study revealed that negative information is having a larger impact than positive information on job seekers' organizational attraction. The result had shown that job seekers who were exposed to negative information were much less attracted to the organization compared to participants who were exposed to positive information.

Sullivan (2004) argues that organization should do periodic survey to understand that public recognizes the organization as a great-place-to-work. Organization should focus that the existing employees are satisfied with the current people practices and "proactively" telling positive stories. A satisfied employee will prefer to getting talked about his organization and thus the employers must measure this. The organization should always focus to become a benchmark firm, increasing employees and potential employees' awareness of the best people practices and finally should assess the branding metrics.

Organizational attractiveness has received considerable attention in research. Although, it is a widely used term in empirical research; no common definition is available (Bondarouk et al 2012). For example in marketing research, organizational attractiveness is mostly referred to branding (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Cable & Turban, 2001; Mosley, 2007).

Past researchers were of the view that attractiveness can be influenced through symbolic and instrumental attributes, job and organizational attributes or characteristics or specific attitude towards the company (Aaker, 1997; Cable & Turban, 2003; Highhouse et al., 2003; Lievens et al., 2005; Turban & Keon, 1993; Turban & Greening, 1996; Turban et al, 1998; Turban 2001). However, since there are so many different areas in which attractiveness is measured, the focus of the study plays an important role. Employer Attractiveness in this study is operationally defined as an inductive character that propels the existing employees to gratitude their employer to the external world through word-of-mouth. Measuring this word of mouth is the level of employer attractiveness from the existing employees' point of view.

Research Design & Methodology

Examination of past scales on employer attractiveness shows no consensus regarding measuring employer attractiveness from the employees' psychological view point. Therefore, the present study used both inductive and deductive approaches to propose a scale for measuring employer attractiveness. Based on the focused group discussion and subsequent review of literature the researchers developed a pool of scale items. Further, each question of the questionnaire was evaluated for the comprehensiveness, knowledge and ability, willingness of a typical respondent to answer the questions. The draft questionnaire was shared with a small group of HR professionals of Indian IT companies for face

and content validity. The comments received from these experts were carefully evaluated and appropriately incorporated in the questionnaire with due focus that the objective of the questions and study does not deviate.

The study was intended to develop an instrument to measure the employer attractiveness from the current employees of the organization. Therefore 5 statements with 5 responses (5 = strongly agree, 1 = strongly disagree) with respect to employer gratitude towards their organizations was considered to be fit to measure the level of employer attractiveness (Table 1). Slavec & Drnovsek's (2012) ten step methodological approach was followed for employer attractiveness scale development. These ten steps are subsequently categorized into three phases. The first phase regards the theoretical importance and existence of the construct, the second phase deals with the representativeness and appropriateness of data collection, and the third phase regards the statistical analysis and statistical evidence of the construct.

A questionnaire was designed incorporating the objectives of the study and was sent to 700 employees of Indian IT companies. 397 valid responses were received with a response rate of 56.71 percent. The primary data for the study has been collected from the ultimate sampled units. Basic information in respect of the IT companies has been obtained through secondary data (NASSCOM). Due to the confidentiality of the organization and respondents,

the identities of these organizations are not disclosed in the current paper.

Statistical Analysis

Descriptive statistical analysis was performed to give a feel of the demographics information and subsequently the normality was tested and reported. A skewness and kurtosis value of +/-1 is considered very good for most psychometric uses, but by statistical convention a value of +/-2 is usually acceptable as normally distributed (Lewis-Beck et al., 2004). In the current research, skewness and kurtosis value for all the items fall under a value of +/-2 and thus the data is considered as normally distributed. Before moving to the scale validation and scale standardization, 397 respondents were split into two sub samples; Sample 1 (n = 200) used for testing the scale purification and homogeneity test followed by exploratory factor analysis to assess scale validation.

Exploratory factor analysis was carried out through SPSS version 16 to purify and reduce the data into meaningful form with principal component analysis along with orthogonal rotation procedure of Varimax for summarizing the original information with minimum factors and optimal coverage. As the study was explorative in nature the statements with Eigen values less than 1.0 were ignored for the subsequent analysis (Bagozzi & Phillips, 1991). Exploratory factor analysis was done on the employer attractiveness variables and the results of communalities table, KMO Value, Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, factor loading were checked.

Sample 2 (n = 197) was used for the confirmatory factor analysis to assess scale standardization. According to Hoyle (1995) CFA was used to test the relations among observed and latent variables. Fit statistics was evaluated to check whether the proposed employer attractiveness model is a fit to the data or not, or whether any modification is required to increase fit. Further, psychometric properties of employer attractiveness scale were also assessed.

Demographic Information

A sample of 397 respondents currently working in IT industry were identified for this study with the following demographic information: with Team Member, 44.3 %, Team Leader/ Project Leader 19.2%, Project Manager/ Account Manager/ Delivery Manager 29.5%, Senior Management, 7%.

Gender wise 64.71% were males and the rest were females. Experience wise, 43.8 % respondents have less than 6 years of work experience and rest more than 6 years of work experience. 46.6 percent of the respondents were below 30 years of age. Education wise 59.9% of respondents holds a BE / B. Tech or equivalent degree, 31% holds a ME/ M. Tech / MCA master degree , 7.8% holds an MBA or equivalent degree while the rest 1.3% holds other qualifications such as BSc, MSc, Diploma etc.

Purification & Homogeneity Test

Corrected item – total correlation for all the 5 items of employer attractiveness scale appeared greater than 0.60 and hence, none of the items was deleted during the scale purification (Table 1).

Table 1 Item-Total Correlation

Item	Item Mean	Item-Total Correlation
Q1 Given the opportunity, I tell others great things about working here.	3.8550	.657
Q2 I would not hesitate to recommend this company to a friend seeking employment.	3.9600	.688
Q3 I feel proud to say outside that I am working for this company.	3.9700	.651
Q4 I rarely think about leaving this company to work somewhere else.	3.8700	.712
Q5 My company keeps the promises that this is a great place to work.	3.6350	.603

Exploratory Factor Analysis

Exploratory factor analysis was done on the employer attractiveness variables. KMO for sampling adequacy was 0.831. On Bartlett's Test of Sphericity whether the correlations between the questions are sufficiently large for factor analysis to be appropriate it is

found to be significant, $c^2(10) = 406.563$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that the correlations within the *R*-matrix are sufficiently different from zero to warrant factor analysis. Percentage of variance appeared 62.782 percent. The factor analysis confirmed that all the items Q1 till Q5 are loaded into a single factor as expected (Tables 2 & 3).

Table 2 Factor Loadings, Variance Explained & Reliability Estimate

Items	Factor Loading Score	Percentage of Variance	Cronbach Alpha
Q4 I rarely think about leaving this company to work somewhere else.	0.829	62.782	0.850
Q2 I would not hesitate to recommend this company to a friend seeking employment	0.815		
Q1 Given the opportunity, I tell others great things about working here	0.787		
Q3 I feel proud to say outside that I am working for this Company.	0.786		
Q5 My company keeps the promises that this is a great place to work	0.742		

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Principal components analysis on employer attractiveness scale items confirmed that the scale is one-dimensional with 5 items and thus the next step was to confirm the EA model on sample 2 (N=197) using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). CFA is used to verify the model fit by analysing a subset or sample of fit indices from major categories of fit indices (Holmes-Smith, 2004). Taking sample sensitivity and model complexity effect into account, Chi-square/df (CMIN/DF), comparative fit index (CFI), initial fit index (IFI), GFI, adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI) and RMSEA are considered in this study for evaluating fit indices because these have been commonly used and reported in the literature (Hair et al., 1995). As represented in Fig. 1 all the 5 items Q1, Q2, Q3, Q4, Q5 (I tell others great things about working in

this company, I would not hesitate to recommend this company to a friend seeking employment, I feel proud to say outside that I am working for this company, I rarely think about leaving this company to work somewhere else, My company keeps the promises that this is a great place to) are loadings statistically significant to predict the latent variable employer attractiveness (0.70 - Q1, 0.60 - Q2, 0.64 - Q3, 0.79 - Q4, 0.59 - Q5, $p < 0.001$). The χ^2 associated with the EA scale was 4.685 (df = 4, $p < 0.01$), and χ^2/df is < 3.0 , probability = 0.321 suggest that the model excellently fits the data (Table 4). That the employer attractiveness yields a RMSEA value of 0.030 means that only about 3% of the variance and covariance are left unexplained, making the model highly acceptable. Further the fit indices CFI= 0.998, GFI= 0.990, AGFI= .0964, IFI= 0.998 highly satisfy the requirement for model fit. In

Table 3 KMO and Bartlett's Test

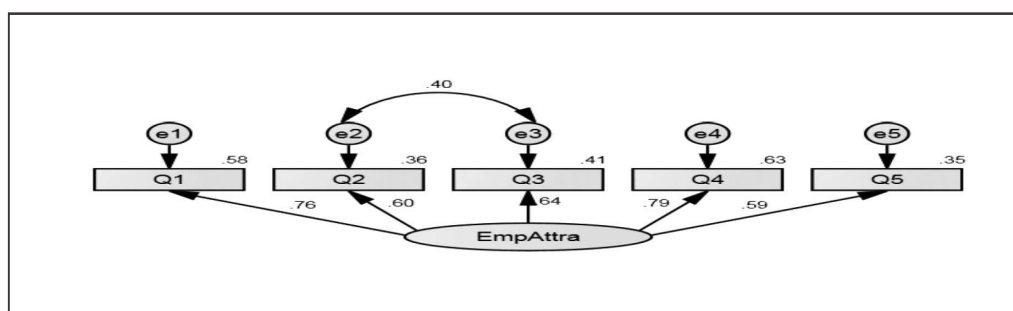
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.831
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	406.563
	Df	10
	Sig.	.000

Table 4 Confirmatory Factor Analysis Indices

CFA	Chi-square	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	CFI	GFI	AGFI	IFI
Employer Attractiveness	4.865 Df=4; P=<0.01	<3.0 P=<0.321	0.030	0.998	0.990	0.964	0.998

summary, that the values of all parameters' estimates are all positive and significant suggests that the model fits the data well and that it is an acceptable model. In short, CFA confirms the 5 items structure EA instrument (Fig. 1).

Fig. 1 Confirmatory Factor Analysis of Employer Attractiveness Scale



Psychometric Properties

The psychometric property of employer attractiveness scale was assessed. Cronbach Alpha for the five item employer attractiveness one-dimensional scale appeared as 0.850 and proved the reliability of the scale (Table 2). Nomological validity of an instrument is established if items that are expected to load together in a factor analysis and the employer attractiveness scale was loaded into a single factor as expected and proved the nomological validity of the scale. Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy appeared 0.831 and proves the construct validity (Table 3). Face and content validity was judged through internal check and discussion with the experts from academics and industry. Convergent and Discriminant Validity was assessed for the employer

attractiveness scale using CFA and the results supported the factor structure of employer attractiveness, and established evidence of convergent and discriminant validity as all the items had significant loadings and the fit of the model was good as mentioned earlier.

Discussion & Conclusion

The objective of the present study was to develop a scale to measure the level of employer attractiveness through the psychological intuition of employees' gratitude towards their employer. The findings of the study show that the level of employer attractiveness can be measured using the five item employer attractiveness scale.

In helping to understand the attributes of employer attractiveness that has sig-

nificant effect on the employee attraction, retention in the Indian origin software companies, the current study has derived important implications for research and practice. Employer can measure their level of employer attractiveness with the five questions during any period. Similarly from research point of view the complicated process of employer attractiveness with reference to existing employees can be measured using the five questions of employer attractiveness scale.

The samples collected for the present study was small. More accuracy can be attained with large sample size by extending the research to more Indian IT organizations. The applicability of the current research results needs further analysis and consideration. Further research is needed across various domains / sectors such as banking, manufacturing, and retail using the employer attractiveness scale to find its validity and applicability across different domains.

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