

# Employer Attractiveness: A Comparative Analysis of Professionals & MBA Students' Perceptions.

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*Today every company is competing for the acquisition and retention of best talent. The employer attractiveness plays an important role for the company to attract potential employees and retain the current employees. This study examines the difference between the potential and current employees' perceptions along with the difference between male and female perceptions. What are important attractiveness dimensions aimed by current and potential employees? The results show that there is a significant difference amongst the perceptions of two sets of potential and current employees and males and females also. The importance of the dimensions of attractiveness is also very different among current and potential employees. The current employees value recognition/appreciation from management; the potential employees give most importance to gaining career enhancing experience.*

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## Introduction

Human resources are considered one of the main driving forces of numerous organizations as they have the abundance of financial resources and the state-of-the-art technologies (Shahzad et al., 2011). However, the procurement of best human resources emerges as a major challenge and also a chief business problem (Ramasamy et al., 2009). There is huge competition amongst the organizations for the attraction of best skills because of the talent shortage at the global level (Bergen, 2008).

The complexities of the labor market make this situation more difficult (Hassan & Sassanpour, 2008). There is high inconsistency among the supply and demand for the talent in the market (Birdsall & O'Connell, 1999; Galal, 2002). Organizations must be attractive enough as the employers for candidates by managing the image in their minds (Shahzad et al., 2011). This study attempts to compare the perceptions of the working professionals and the students about the attractiveness dimensions of an

employer. The research also aims to check the difference between the gender perceptions about the employer attractiveness, if any.

### Employer Attractiveness

In the recruitment and selection process, both the individual and the institution make decisions about the other (Breugh, 2017). On the recruitment side, organizations choose the people that best suit their needs and expectations. On the part of the applicant, based on past experience, interests, needs, preferences, and personality, individuals evaluate potential employers (Lievens et al., 2001). When applicants find employment in an institution that meets the minimum recruitment criteria, they tend to confirm this choice. In this sense, Berthon et al. (2005) defined employer's attractiveness as "the expected benefits that a potential employee sees when working in a particular institution." Therefore, the higher the attractiveness of the employer for the potential employees higher will they be interested in working for that particular company.

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So far, some scholars have tried to identify the attributes of the organization that make the work of a prospective candidate attractive (for example, Newburry

et al., 2006; Ng & Burke, 2005). Cable and Judge (1994) found that job seekers prefer organizations with similar values. In this sense, Berthon et al. (2005) identified five types of values (i.e., interest, social, economic, development and application). Other researchers found that the organizational structure (Turban & Keon, 1993), the reward and compensation systems (Bretz et al., 1989), the organization of corporate social services (Albinger & Freeman, 2000), and the organizational image and brand (Sivertzen et al., 2013) are key factors in choosing a job. Aiman-Smith et al. (2001) defined employer attractiveness as "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 attractiveness of the employer in recent years has received considerable attention to research (Breugh & Starke, 2000; Aiman-Smith et al., 2001; Boswell et al., 2001), which refers to the aids that potential employees expect to be able to get from a particular company they are working with (Pingle & Sharma, 2013, Berthon et al., 2005.). The employer attractiveness influences the recruitment, selection and retention practices at companies (Helm, 2013).

**The employer attractiveness influences the recruitment, selection and retention practices at companies.**

Various scales have been proposed for the measurement of the employer attractiveness; wide-ranging the at-

tributes denote dimensions offered by Ambler and Barrow (1996), where the concept was very first time introduced. The scale developed by Berthon et al. (2005) named 'EmpAtt' has been used widely in subsequent studies for measurement of this construct (Arachchige & Robertson, 2011; Roy, 2008; Alniaçik & Alniaçik, 2012; Sivertzen et. al, 2013), signifying a conjunction in classification of various attributes. Hence, we adopted this tool for the present study.

Agreeing with Berthon et al. (2005) the employer attractiveness comprises different value factors as interest, social, economic value, development, and application. First, the value of interest examines the attractiveness of a job seeking candidate for a company which provides a motivating environment for work and where one can use creativity and innovation for the production of products/services (Berthon et al., 2005). Next, social value is the candidate's attraction for organizations that provide a pleasant working environment, enhances the working relationships and team spirit among the members. The economic value represents monetary and non-monetary benefits from the organization. Next, the value of development demonstrates a recognition environment, along with professional development and experience development programs etc. Lastly, the application factor represents the opportunity for the employee to apply practically their theoretical knowledge (Berthon et al., 2005).

### **Previous research**

Gomes & Neves (2010) tested the theoretical model of organizational attributes, organizational attractiveness, and candidate's intention to apply for the job vacancy (IAJV). Findings were that the positive employer branding supports the IAJV. This IAJV is weaker when the applicants carry negative employer brand assessment. Organization attractiveness is the key variable for the recruitment stage and acts as a mediating variable for the prediction of IAJV and Employer brand moderates this process.

Yaqub & Khan (2011) conducted a descriptive study about the part of employer branding (EB) along with talent management for organizational attractiveness. The result of the study indicates that EB has a positive relationship with organization attractiveness and the student would like to work for the prestigious employer. Likewise the study demonstrates that respondents are more disposed to those associations which have general engaging quality like "perfect workplace," and they are intrigued to find out about them. Research also indicates that talent management (TM) is correlated with EB and organizational attractiveness. Therefore, EB and talent management have an association with the attractiveness of organization.

Vaijayanthi, Roy, Shreenivasan & Srivathsan (2011) also explored the research questions like: how employee perceived the EB and its components, how employee perceive the organizational commitment and its component, is there

any relationship between EB and organizational commitments?. Furthermore, what is the impact of demographic factors on the aspects of study? The result shows that personal desires for the company and the offer are congruent and they additionally see that their company have high employer brand. Employees' organizational commitments are also high. Research also shows that the work environment was perceived to be a satisfying component as far as EB is concerned. But all the EB components have very low intercorrelation with organization commitment, especially work environment is negatively correlated with EB, indicates a lack of willingness to accommodate any change, even if positive, in a work environment. The study also found that on all the three components employees' organization commitment is high. It also shows that continuous commitment is very less correlated with EB.

**Showcasing the marketing promotion was not powerful in imparting center values of Navy nor able to communicate the employer brand.**

Davey, Burtenshaw, Fitz Patrick & Haar, J. (2011) conducted exploratory research using the interview method to explore the dimensions of employer attractiveness in Navy. The study revealed that job-seeking students attach more importance to symbolic dimensions like prestige over the job and organizational attributes like as material rewards. The study also additionally demonstrates that showcasing the marketing promo-

tion was not powerful in imparting center values of Navy nor able to communicate the employer brand. Franca & Pahor (2012) conducted a longitudinal study on a huge sample of 7000 employees and 283 employers. The study built a model that catches diverse parts of the (external) employer brand and build factors which influence the distinctive levels of employer brand. Variables were: Dependent variables: Employer Knowledge, Employer Consideration, Employer of Choice and Independent Variables: Opinion about the employer, Exposure and Properties of an employer. The study found that the three levels of the forte in an employer brand are appreciation, attention and choice. Media exposure and organizational size have a positive relationship with employee recognition while wage policies have a high effect on attention. Wage policies, media exposure, and personal development have a positive effect on the employer choice by the respondents, while financial and business characteristics of companies, multinational position do not have any impact on the strength of EB. Important conclusions are that EB cannot be considered as a one-dimensional concept as it comprises several dimensions and every dimension is subjective to different factors. Different companies can have different problems in the same dimension.

Further, a study conducted by Alniacik and Alniacik (2012) about the dimensions of attractiveness in Employer Branding links it with Age, Gender, and Current Status of employment. Results showed that respondents accredited the

highest significance of social value and least importance of market value when looking for employment. There is a huge contrast among the apparent significance levels of the particular measurements of employer attractiveness. The research additionally found the noteworthy contrast between the apparent significance levels of the employer attractiveness measurements concerning the sexual orientation of the respondents. The study likewise uncovered that older representatives give more significance to managers who deliver high caliber and inventive products and services and customer situated solutions. While, on the job, employees tend to credit more significance to the market value of the company in contrast with jobless candidates, however, distinction is not much large. This exploration has suggestions for HR experts in understanding which the searchers value, factors which may help recruitment managers in the development of job advertisements that are attractive. Kucherov and Zavyalova (2012) steered an experimental design study and found that companies with a strong employer brand had lower turnover and they are more training and development undertakings. Internal recruitment practices and training programs along with highly efficient incentive activities were prevalent and employees were enthusiastically involved in the basic leadership and administration forms. There is a significant distinction regarding financial indicators, human resource development practices, and talent management in the companies with and without employer brand.

**The main reasons for Employer Branding are the best image of the employer, more efficient hiring and better job satisfaction.**

Heilmann, Saarenketo & Liikkanen, (2013) researched Employer Branding in the energy sector. Companies that have an Employer Branding, the recruitment process are diminutive and supplier, and recruitment costs are reduced. An interesting finding is that a company that has a good Employer Branding attracts candidates of good quality and can even pay an inferior salary than companies with frailer employer brands. The main reasons for Employer Branding are the best image of the employer, more efficient hiring and better job satisfaction. Employer Branding's efforts are focused on the target group. Recruitment and educational cooperation are Employer Branding's main objectives for potential employees, while Training and Development is an indispensable part of Employer Branding for current employees.

### Objectives

This study investigates perceptions of the potential and current employees about employer attractiveness dimensions along with gender differences. The following are the objectives:

- To study the difference amongst the perceptions of potential as well as current employees.
- To study the difference between the perceptions based on gender.

- To study the important attractiveness dimensions for current and potential employees.

### Sample & Procedure

The reported data in the research was collected through an online questionnaire from the working professionals who are current employees and from the management students who are the potential employees for the different companies in the labor market. All responses to items are measured on a seven-point scale, ranging from 1 = "Very Unimportant" to 7 = "Very important." The survey link was sent to 250 respondents out of which a total of 150 full questionnaires were reverted which represents the return rate of 60 percent. 57 respondents were females, 93 being males.

### Measure

The scale was adapted from Employer Attractiveness Scale developed by Berthon et al. (2005) named EmpAt Scale. Respondents were requested to rate the importance of job features, conditions and potentials when considering potential employers.

### Method of Analysis

The independent t-test analysis was performed on the calculated means of all the dimensions for comparative analysis between the working professional and students and further between the genders. The ranking method was used to check the priority of the candidates for the different dimensions. Factor analysis was performed to determine the dimensions of the employer attractiveness.

**Table 1 Group Statistics**

	Category	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MeanScore	Professional	78	6.1867	.56479	.06395
	Student	72	5.8606	.53155	.06264

**Table 2 Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
									Lower	Upper
Mean Score	Equal variances assumed	.139	.710	3.634	148	.000	.32611	.08974	.14878	.50345
	Equal variances not assumed			3.643	147.941	.000	.32611	.08952	.14921	.50301

**Independent Sample t-test between the Professionals& Students.**

Tables 1 and 2 show that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of the potential and current employees regarding the employee attractiveness dimensions as the significance value is less than .05.

**There is a significant difference between the perceptions of the potential and current employees regarding the employee attractiveness dimensions.**

**Independent Sample t-test between Genders**

Tables 3 and 4 show that there is a significant difference between the perceptions of the genders regarding the employee attractiveness dimensions as the sig value is less than .05.

**There is a significant difference between the perceptions of the genders regarding the employee attractiveness dimensions.**

**Table 3 Group Statistics**

	Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
MeanScore	Male	93	6.1428	.59243	.06143
	Female	57	5.8463	.48567	.06433

**Table 4 Independent Samples Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances			t-test for Equality of Means					
		F	Sig.	t	Df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
								Lower		Upper
Mean Score	Equal variances assumed	2.042	.155	3.179	148	.002	.29648	.09327	.11217	.48079
	Equal variances not assumed			3.333	135.911	.001	.29648	.08895	.12058	.47238

**Ranking**

The ranking analysis of the classification supports the results of the independent t-test. The five main dimensions for current and potential employ-

ees are very different to the extent that current employees evaluate the recognition/appreciation of management, potential employees give the greatest importance to the improvement of their professional experience. Similarly, the

next four dimensions for current employees are good promotion opportunities within the organization, an attractive global payment package, job security within the organization, career improvement employee experience whereas potential employees value feel

good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization, a happy work environment, feeling more confident about yourself or working for an organization, acceptance, and membership in particular.

**Table 5 Employer Attractiveness: Working Professionals, Current Employees**

Question	Working Professionals		
	Mean	SD	Rank
Recognition/appreciation from management	6.63095	0.72444	1
Good promotion opportunities within the organization	6.60714	0.72839	2
An attractive overall compensation package	6.55952	0.88292	3
Job security within the organization	6.53571	0.78305	4
Gaining career enhancing Experience	6.47619	0.98759	5
Happy work environment	6.41667	0.71487	6
Having a good relationship with your colleagues	6.35714	0.75479	7
supportive and encourage colleagues	6.35714	0.81615	8
Having a good relationship with your superiors	6.29762	0.92853	9
An above average basic salary	6.27381	1.03378	10
The organization both values and makes use of your creativity	6.2619	0.86594	11
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization	6.2381	0.80089	12
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization	6.22619	0.96131	13
Innovative employer- novel work practices/forward-thinking	6.11905	0.97443	14
The organization produces high-quality products and services	6.03571	1.03489	15
A fun working Environment	5.9881	1.11392	16
The organization produces innovative products and services	5.97619	1.12984	17
Working in an exciting environment	5.96429	1.11341	18
Acceptance and belonging	5.95238	0.93015	19
A Springboard for future employment	5.89286	0.96963	20
Humanitarian organization-gives back to society	5.83333	1.09581	21
Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	5.7381	1.2036	22
The organization is customer-oriented	5.71429	1.28543	23
Hands-on inter-departmental experience	5.70238	1.073	24
Opportunity to apply what was learned at a tertiary institution	5.64286	1.00172	25

**Table 6 Employer Attractiveness: Potential Employees**

Question	Students		
	Mean	SD	Rank
Gaining career enhancing Experience	6.37879	0.77985	1
Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization	6.33333	0.75107	2
Happy work environment	6.31818	0.78758	3
Feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization	6.28788	0.83694	4
Acceptance and belonging	6.18182	0.87546	5
Having a good relationship with your colleagues	6.16667	0.9858	6
Having a good relationship with your superiors	6.12121	1.00023	7
Good promotion opportunities within the organization	6.12121	0.86851	8
Recognition/Appreciation from management	6.09091	1.07742	9
Job security within the organization	6.07576	1.20653	10
supportive and encourage colleagues	6	0.96077	11
An above average basic salary	5.98485	1.05964	12
An attractive overall compensation package	5.92424	1.08572	13
A fun working Environment	5.90909	1.04848	14
The organization both values and makes use of your creativity	5.87879	0.98473	15
Innovative employer- novel work practices/forward thinking	5.84848	1.04134	16
Working in an exciting environment	5.80303	1.02612	17
Humanitarian organization-gives back to society	5.65152	1.31842	18
A Springboard for future employment	5.62121	0.90749	19
The organization produces high-quality products and services	5.60606	1.0507	20
The organization produces innovative products and services	5.40909	1.18941	21
Hands-on inter-departmental experience	5.36364	1.07612	22
Opportunity to apply what was learned at a tertiary institution	5.28788	1.21231	23
Opportunity to teach others what you have learned	5.25758	1.37349	24
The organization is customer-oriented	5.25758	1.32793	25

**Table 7 Comparative Analysis of the Top Five Factors of Current & Potential Employees**

Current Employees' Factors	Potential Employees' Factors
Recognition/Appreciation from management, Good promotion opportunities within the organization, an attractive overall compensation package, job security within the organization, gaining career enhancing experience	Gaining career enhancing Experience, Feeling good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization, happy work environment, feeling more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization, Acceptance and belonging

### Factor Analysis

The factors defined were the following: Factor 1: working in an exciting environment, innovative employer - new

work / foresight practices, the organization produces high quality products and services, the organization produces innovative products and services, opportunities to apply what has been learned in a

**Table 8 KMO & Bartlett's Test**

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.857
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1632.326
	df	300
	Sig.	.000

**Table 9 Total Variance Explained**

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	8.267	33.067	33.067	8.267	33.067	33.067	3.560	14.240	14.240
2	2.052	8.207	41.273	2.052	8.207	41.273	3.181	12.724	26.964
3	1.464	5.857	47.130	1.464	5.857	47.130	2.946	11.785	38.749
4	1.415	5.659	52.789	1.415	5.659	52.789	2.298	9.191	47.940
5	1.272	5.088	57.877	1.272	5.088	57.877	1.887	7.550	55.490
6	1.046	4.183	62.060	1.046	4.183	62.060	1.397	5.587	61.077
7	1.030	4.121	66.181	1.030	4.121	66.181	1.276	5.104	66.181
8	.913	3.653	69.834						
9	.756	3.023	72.857						
10	.743	2.971	75.828						
11	.670	2.678	78.506						
12	.626	2.504	81.011						
13	.571	2.285	83.296						
14	.544	2.175	85.471						
15	.512	2.050	87.521						
16	.464	1.858	89.379						
17	.436	1.742	91.121						
18	.380	1.519	92.641						
19	.362	1.449	94.089						
20	.328	1.313	95.403						
21	.290	1.159	96.561						
22	.285	1.140	97.701						
23	.227	.908	98.609						
24	.180	.719	99.328						
25	.168	.672	100.000						

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

tertiary institution and the opportunity to teach others what they have learned. Factor 2: good promotion opportunities within the organization, the organization is customer oriented, job security within the organization, a salary above average and an attractive global payment pack-

age. Factor 3: have a good relationship with superiors and colleagues and supporting and encouraging colleagues. Factor 4: a springboard for future employment, acceptance and belonging and practical interdepartmental experience. Factor 5: feeling good about yourself as

**Table 10 Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>**

	Component						
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Recognition							.552
Fun						.717	
Future				.730			
Feel_good					.807		
confident					.791		
Career							
Superiors			.781				
Colleagues			.836				
Supportive			.648				
Exciting	.518						
practices	.735						
Values							
quality	.677						
Innovative	.741						
Promotion		.558					
Humanitarian							.726
Application	.652						
Teach	.574						
Belonging				.581			
Cus_oriented		.536					
Security		.633					
Experience				.541			
Happy							
Salary		.811					
Compensation		.799					

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.

a result of working for a particular organization and feeling more confident about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization. Factor 6: A fun work environment and Factor 8: Recognition / Appreciation from management and humanitarian organization: returns to society.

### Implications for Practitioners

The results of the study indicate that there is a significant difference among

the perceptions of current and potential employees and also between the sexes. The company must recognize that the need for current and potential employees are different. And in the same way for men and women, different dimensions are important. The company should focus on the following dimensions for current recognition/appreciation by management: good promotion opportunities within the organization, an attractive global payment package, job security within the organization, career improvement experi-

ence and the potential career of employees experience, feel good about yourself as a result of working for a particular organization, a happy work environment, feeling more confident about yourself or working for a particular organization, acceptance and belonging.

### Study Limitations & Future Scope

Some limitations can be recognized in the present research. Firstly, despite the sizable sample and the selection criteria, the taken sample may not be representative enough because the student selection criteria vary from university to university hence this may have had the impact on results. The demographic difference has not been considered which may affect the perceptions like total experience, age, managerial level, marital status for the professionals, etc. Future research can consider the mentioned limitations. Future research can also consider the salary offered dimension by the organization and check the impact of the same on the perceptions of the candidates. A longitudinal study can be done to check the differences as it can bring additional insights.

### Conclusion

Accepting the factors that endorse employer attractiveness is vital if organizations need to secure an employer brand that is operative in recruiting and retaining employees. It is expected that the use of the results of this study will be of great advantage to those responsible for company policies and human resources professionals in the improvement of an employer brand and recruitment

and retention of employees, especially in the workplace professional sector.

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