

Employer Brand Image as Predictor of Employee Satisfaction, Affective Commitment & Turnover

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The race for an employer to be seen differently has only intensified in recent years mainly due to the availability of multiple opportunities and scarcity of good quality talent in the emerging markets. Employer branding is fast emerging a potential tool not only to communicate the potential employees but also to the existing employees that the value proposition of the current employer supersedes their competitors. Participated by 240 executives from various organisations the study shows the importance of managing employer brand image for existing employees through highlighting the difference between the existing and preferred levels of employer attributes. It further highlights the relationship between employer brand attributes and job related attitudes showing how these attributes impact them.

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Background

Employer branding has captured considerable attention in recent times. Academicians and practitioners have reported evidence of organisations expending considerable resources on development of employer brand programme indicating its value (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). Employer branding as a concept is an extension of relationship marketing principles (Christopher, Payne & Ballantyne 1991, Kotler 1992, Morgan & Hunt 1994), which identify the need to build acquisition and retention strategies across a number of critical stakeholder markets through closer relationships. One of the most basic understandings about brand comes from the definition provided by the American Marketing Association which defines a brand as “a name, term sign, symbol, or design, or combination of them which is intended to identify the goods and services of one seller group or group of sellers and to differentiate them from those of competitors” (Backhaus & Tikoo

Employer branding as a concept is an extension of relationship marketing principles

2004). The term employer branding is used for the application of branding principles to human resource management. The concept is being increasingly used for attracting prospective employees while engaging the present employees to the organisation.

In a seminal work on employer branding, also one of the earlier definitions on the subject, Ambler and Barrow (1996) defined employer brand in terms of benefits, calling it 'the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company'. Further, employer branding or employer brand management involves internally and externally promoting a clear view of what makes a firm different and desirable as an employer. According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), employer branding is essentially a three step process. First, a firm develops a concept of the particular value it offers to prospective and current employees. This value proposition provides the central message that is conveyed by the employer brand. It is of key importance that this value proposition derives from a thorough audit of the characteristics that make the firm a great place to work. Once the value proposition is determined, the second step in employer branding consists of externally marketing this value proposition to attract the targeted applicant population. The third step involves carrying the brand "promise" made to recruits in to the firm and incorporating it as part of the organisational culture. In a sense the last step consists of internally marketing the employer brand. Human

Resource consultants Hewitt Associates suggests five steps to developing a strong employer brand: (1) understand your organisation, (2) create a 'compelling brand promise' for employees that mirrors the brand promise for customers, (3) develop standards to measure the fulfilment of brand promise, (4) ruthlessly align all people practices to support and reinforce brand promise, and (5) execute the measure (Berthon et al. 2005). According to Ritson (2002) companies with strong employer brands can potentially reduce the cost of employee acquisition, improve employee relations, increase employee retention and even offer lower salaries for comparable staff to firms with weaker employer brands.

The present study focuses on the image audit step of the employer branding process because it is the basis on which other steps develop. Given the key role of image audit step, it should incorporate important stakeholder beliefs about the characteristics of an attractive employer. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine the relative importance of different aspects of employer brand

Review of Literature

Despite employer brand gaining considerable popularity in HR practitioner literature (e.g., Froom 2001) empirical research is still relatively inadequate (Cable & Turban 2001). Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) and Davies (2007) echo the same sentiments and feel that the advent of the employer brand as concept has been recent in academic field and its theo-

retical foundation is gradually being developed even though it is being considered and applied by practitioners for sometime now.

Resource based view (RBV) provides the foundation of the concept of employer branding assuming human capital brings value to the firm, and targeted investment in human capital should enhance firm performance (Barney 1991). This framework has special significance at a time when financial markets are increasingly recognising human capital as a source of value for firms and shareholders (Cairncross 2000). Michaels *et al.* (2001) propose the explicit development and communication of employee value proposition (EVP) to attract and retain talented employee.

Recruiting right type of talent becomes critical, as does the employer brand image in the recruitment market.

In the service industry, employees play a critical role in development of brand image (de Chernatony & Segalhorn 2003, Mc Donald, de Chernatony & Harris 2001, Bitner, Boom & Mohr 1994). Therefore, recruiting right type of talent becomes critical, as does the employer brand image in the recruitment market (Ewing *et al.* 2002). What is even more critical is whether this image that they carried as an applicant is sustained with their stay in the organisation (Knox & Freeman 2006). Research studies in the area looking for continued association of these employees in particular are

scarce as most of them focus on potential applicants. Our research captures the employer brand image of the current employees and its consequences.

Although the study of organisational attraction has revealed some insights, there remains much to be learned (Barber 1998). One stream of extant research investigates organisational characteristics and their effects on attraction to the organisation. Structural attributes such as decentralised decision making (Turban & Keon 1993) and reward system (Bretz *et al.*, 1989), are shown to influence perceptions of attractiveness. Gatewood *et al.* (1993) found that perception of an organisation's image is a significant predictor of decisions to pursue employment with that company. Using brand in the context of employment, employer brand loyalty was found by many to be a useful concept to be applied. Brand loyalty is the attachment that a consumer has to a brand (Aaker 1991). Applied in the context of employment, employer brand loyalty is shaped by behavioural element relating to organisational culture and attitudinal element relating to organisational identity (Backhaus & Tikoo 2004). But unlike in the case of a product, in employment brand loyalty switching over to another brand cannot be done so frequently and comes at higher cost (Davies 2008). In a way employer brand loyalty forges greater commitment level resulting in increased retention of the talent. Among benefits, a strong employer brand attracts better applicants (Collins & Stevens 2002, Slaughter *et al.* 2004) and shapes their expectations about their employment (Livens & Highhouse 2003).

One role of brand is to create and enhance satisfaction and satisfaction predicts future behaviour towards the brand (Mittal & Kamakura 2001). Job satisfaction plays a very important role in creating customer satisfaction (Heskett *et al* 1997) and understanding of the various attributes of employer brand image can help facilitate customer satisfaction.

Employer brand loyalty is shaped by behavioural element relating to organisational culture and attitudinal element relating to organisational identity.

Research Focus

The main objective of the study is to understand employer brand image of an organisation from the perspective of existing employees. The research question that the study is designed to answer is 'Does employer brand image impact job related attitude of employees working there? If yes, the following objectives are identified to guide our understanding of the nature of relationship between employer brand image and job related attitude:

1. To understand employer brand image (EBI) in its various dimensions.
2. To describe the existing employer brand image, the image aspired and significant difference, if any, existing between the two.
3. To understand the nature of relationship between employer brand image and job satisfaction, affective commitment and turnover of the employees.

4. To examine whether employer brand image determined satisfaction, affective commitment and turnover.

Sample

The respondents of the study consisted of professionals, mainly engineers working in technical and non-technical functions, in two telecom companies in National Capital Region (NCR) Delhi. Nearly two hundred and forty professionals were contacted for the study out of which hundred and twelve responded (46.67%) to the survey of which ninety two responses were found suitable for the study. The average age of male respondent was 28 years and for their female counterpart it was 25 years. While more than 75 % of the respondents were Hindus the study was represented by major religious categories. 60% of the respondents were males as against 40% females. Nearly 45% of the respondents had less than 5 years of work experience while nearly 30% had more than 10 years of experience.

Measures:

Demographic Data Sheet: The demographic data sheet was prepared by the author containing details of age, education, religion, gender and work experience of the respondents to obtain relevant information.

Employer Brand Image: The study used the instrument for employer brand image designed by Knox & Freeman (2006). The instrument required the re-

spondents to rate the 20 attributes of employer brand image according to their current status and importance. The current status, presented by whether they perceived their present organization displayed this attribute, was rated on a five point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (5). Importance, reflecting their perception of the attribute being important to the organization or not was rated on a five point scale ranging from highly unimportant (1) to highly important (5). They were then asked for their ratings of these attributes for their present employers.

To test the underlying structure of the work values, an exploratory factor analysis was undertaken. The factor analysis of these work values were performed with the aim of collecting the same information but in a reduced number of variables. The final outcome was a more parsimonious structure of work values. The principal components method was used and the factors were obtained by employing the standard criterion of the latent root and rotation Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. Only those items having factor loading greater than 0.4 were included in the construction of the new factors.

Table 1: KMO and Bartlett's Test

Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.764
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	806.523
	Df	190
	Sig.	.000

Prior to factor analysis, the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and the Bartlett's test of sphericity were pursued to test fitness of the data. The KMO was 0.764, which was greater than 0.5. The Bartlett's test of sphericity had a chi-square value of 806.523, with significance lower than 0.000. Both statistical data supported the use of factor analysis for these items. Latent root/eigen values were applied as the criteria for selecting the right number of factors (Kim and Mueller 1994, Hair et al. 1995, Norusis 1994). The rotation converged in seven iterations.

The result of the component analysis, the respective item under each com-

ponent, and the item loadings are shown in Table 2. The factors were named considering the list of items under each component and the respective loadings of the items. Thus the various dimensions of employer brand image emerging were as follows:

Factor 1: *Organisational Environment*

(Eigenvalue = 3.51; Mean Value: 3.996; Cronbach's Alpha: .828)

Factor 2: *Organisational Fame & Flexibility*

(Eigenvalue = 2.69; Mean Value: 3.87; Cronbach's Alpha: .72)

Table 2: Factor Analysis Details

Factors	Short Description	Factor Loading	Mean	Cronn- bach's Alpha	Cumu- lative Vari- ance
Factor 1	Freedom of initiative	.72	3.99	0.83	17.53
Organisational Environment	Employs colleagues having things in common	.59			
	Dynamism in business	.63			
	Informal Culture	.69			
	Rotation of Job and Role	.55			
	Investment in T & D	.62			
	Meritocracy	.58			
	Concern for employees	.56			
Factor 2	Size of the organisation	.53	3.87	0.72	30.98
Organisational Fame and Flexibility	Prestigious Employer	.75			
	Scope for creativity	.81			
	Stress-free work environment	.59			
Factor 3	Variety in daily work	.84	3.927	0.76	44.12
Variety in Job and Work Setting	Diversity of colleagues	.63			
	Work as per standard schedule	.60			
	Usage of academic degree	.61			
Factor 4	High salary	.67	3.56	0.74	56.96
Compensation and career	Opportunities for career progression	.64			
	Opportunities for international Travel	.86			
	Opportunities to live and work abroad	.59			

Factor 3: *Variety in Job and Work Setting*

(Eigenvalue = 2.63; Mean Value: 3.927; Cronbach's Alpha: .76)

Factor 4: *Compensation and Career*

(Eigenvalue = 2.57; Mean Value: 3.56; Cronbach's Alpha: .74)

Factor analysis of employer brand image for the organisation resulted in four

factors accounting for 56.96 percent variance. 'Organisational Environment' came out as the first dimension having highest mean value (M = 3.996) among all the four identified factors and it accounted for nearly 18 percent of variance. Freedom to take initiatives supported by investments in employee development; dynamic business approach coupled with informal business culture which also respects merit seemed to be driving what signifies as the overall environment of the organisation. This clearly marked the at-

tractive proposition for the employees. The second dimension was 'Organisational Fame and Flexibility' which had a mean value of 3.87 and accounted for 13.45 percent variance. It consists of organisational attributes relating to organisational reputation and size having stress free environment where employees have scope for creative expression. 'Variety in Job and Work Setting' was the third factor ($M = 3.92$) which was signified by attributes like variety in daily work and diversity of colleagues and accounted for 13.14 percent variance. Compensation and growth was the fourth dimension and got its name from the attributes like long term career and high compensation. This dimension accounted for 12.84 percent variance and had the mean value of 3.56.

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Job Satisfaction was measured by Cammann et al. (1983) three-item scale. A sample item is, "All in all, I am satisfied with my job" ($\alpha = 0.84$). Respondents responded to all items for the above scales using a seven-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

Affective Commitment: Organizational commitment was measured by the six-item affective commitment scale used by Rhoades et al. (2001). A sample item is, "I feel personally attached to my work organization" ($\alpha = 0.90$). Respondents replied to all items for the above scales using a seven-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

Intention to quit was measured by Colarelli's (1984) three-item scale. A sample item is, "I am planning to search for a new job during the next twelve months" ($\alpha = 0.82$). Participants responded to all items for the above scales using a seven-point Likert-type scale with anchors (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree.

Table 3: Difference between Current & Preferred Status

Factors	Mean	Std.	Deviation
Organisational Environment	Existing	3.99	1.04113
	Preferred	5.45	.86376
Organisational Fame and Flexibility	Existing	3.86	1.26636
	Preferred	5.13	1.08083
Variety in Job and Work Setting	Existing	3.92	1.07771
	Preferred	5.38	.97671
Compensation and Career	Existing	3.55	1.18853
	Preferred	5.35	1.07304

Table 3 describes the perceived image of the organisation as also about their preferred image and the difference, if any, between them. The result shows maximum importance accorded to organisational environment followed by variety in work and work setting, opportunities and growth in career and organisational fame and flexibility. As also the discrepancy observed was highest among all the attributes studied. Organisation in the

present study will have to provide variety in work and suggests a difference on all the organisational attributes.

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Table 4: Employer Brand Image and Job Satisfaction, Affective Commitment and Turnover: Correlations and Descriptive Statistics (N=92)

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Organisational Environment	3.99	1.04	-						
Organisational Fame and Flexibility	3.87	1.27	.48**	-					
Variety in Job and Work Setting	3.93	1.08	.56**	.42**	-				
Compensation and Career	3.56	1.19	.36**	.38**	.41**	-			
JS	3.79	.93	.02	-.21*	-.06	-.11	-		
AC	3.63	1.38	-.20	-.21*	-.16	-.29**	.52**	-	
IQ	3.98	1.06	.18	.28**	.40**	.22*	-.10	-.29**	-

**Significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

*Significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

Table 4 depicts the mean, standard deviation and correlations among the variables studied. The components of perceived employer brand image were found to be correlated, the value ranging from 0.36 to 0.56, suggesting convergent validity of the measure. The existing organisational environment was found to be negatively related to affective commitment ($r = -.20$) suggesting that existing organisational environment reduced the commitment level of the employee

hence attention to be paid towards creating opportunities for personal initiative, cultivate informal culture, rotation of job and roles etc. It was also observed that existing organisational fame and flexibility was negatively related to both satisfaction ($r = -.21$) and commitment ($r = -.21$) of the employees. It is not surprising that this factor was positively related to intention to quit ($r = .21$). The employees did not find the work having enough variety neither their degrees being

utilised, positive correlation with intention to quit ($r = .40$) could be seen there. The existing opportunities for long term career or international assignment was not satisfactory as factor four representing

compensation and career growth correlated negatively ($r = -.29$) to affective commitment and positively to intention to quit ($r = .22$)

Table 5: Summary of Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Respondents Job Satisfaction, Affective Commitment and Turnover

Dependent Variables	Independent Variable	B	SE(B)	$\hat{\alpha}$	F	R ²
Job Satisfaction	Organisational Fame and Flexibility	-.15	.07	-.21	4.12*	.04
Affective Commitment	Compensation and Career	-.33	.12	-.29	7.98**	.08
Turnover	Variety in Job and Work Setting	.39	.09	.40	17.17***	.16

$N=92$; * $p<.05$, ** $p<.01$, *** $p<.001$

Multiple regression analyses were performed to explore the causality between employer brand image and the three dependent variables namely, job satisfaction, affective commitment and intention to quit the organisation. We tested for the direct effects of the variables in the regression model. In general, the probability of Type I error increases with the number of predictors used in the analyses. Hence to reduce the likelihood of the Type I errors, a set of predictors were introduced in to the regression equation and examined the significance levels of individual variables only if the entire set made significant contribution to the regression equation (Cohen & Cohen 1975, Taylor & Bergmann 1987). The results of various regression equations has been summarised in Table 5. When regression equation was run on job satisfaction, out of four employer brand attributes, organisational fame and flex-

ibility was the only attribute found to be relating to it ($\hat{\alpha} = -.21$; $p<.05$) albeit negatively. The other attributes viz. organisational environment, variety in job and work setting and compensation and career were not found to be significantly impacting job satisfaction. Commitment in today's context is one of the most critically desirable attitudes expected from an employee. When we ran regression equation to find out whether there was any causal relationship between four attributes and commitment we found compensation and career to be significantly but inversely relating to commitment ($\hat{\alpha} = -.29$; $p<.01$). No evidence was found for the other three attributes to be impacting commitment. Intention to quit is a measure to know whether the employee intend to leave the job. The regression equation pertaining to turnover proves that out of the four attributes, variety and job and work setting was sig-

nificantly related to turnover of the employees ($\beta = .40$; $p < .001$).

Discussion

We identified measures to capture employer brand image and job satisfaction, commitment and turnover as organisational attitude. We found mixed results as different facets of employer image impacted all three organisational attitudes. There is dearth of academic work in the context of brand image impacting the attitude of employees (Lievens 2007). The employee's perception of his/her employer's image is shaped by personal and professional experiences and this in many ways determines his attitude and consequently his behaviour. Hence it becomes important that an employer examines, at regular intervals, the factors which are critical for retaining and engaging the employees. The focus of earlier studies has been mainly on prospective candidate and the present study brings out pertinent issues concerning brand image and its impact on job related attitude of existing employees. Lievens (2007) recommends that internal audits provide an organisation with richer and more comprehensive picture of their image which may eventually result in ensuring that a good candidate not only apply but also stay working there.

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The existence of the relationship between employer brand attributes and job related attitude of an employee was confirmed by the study. The study also showed that there could be distinct ways in which various facets influence job related attitudes and hence required differential attention. Second, the study very clearly indicates that organisational fame and flexibility was related to job satisfaction of the employees. Fame and flexibility accounted for some variance (4%), what is significant is that employees felt the organisation to be short of desirable prestige as also wanting stress free work environment and scope for creativity. The negative relationship between organisational fame and flexibility could be attributed to the discrepancy between existing and preferred levels of organisational attribute. This result however, is partly supported by Davies (2008) where satisfaction was determined by friendly and supportive attributes of an organisation. According to the findings of this study dimensions like, organisational environment, compensation and career and variety in work setting were perceived not to be contributing to job satisfaction. Understanding the importance of satisfaction with respect to increased motivation and higher performance levels (Iaffaldano & Muchinsky 1985) and greater customer satisfaction (Ryan et. al. 1996) only reinforces the importance of addressing fame and flexibility issues in organisations.

Organisational commitment is defined as identification and involvement with the firm, including acceptance of organisational goals and values, eager-

ness to work hard, and desire to remain with the firm (Crewson 1997). The study used affective commitment as a second consequent variable and found compensation and career facet of the employer attributes to be negatively related to it. Findings of the study are in line with Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) who have elaborated on employer brand loyalty and found it akin to organisational commitment. 8 % variance in affective commitment was found to be determined by the perception of existing employees of career and compensation. Clearly the employees did not perceive the organisation providing long term career option and compensation. Further, the employers in this study needed to convey symbolic benefits, typically innovativeness and prestige (Lievens & Highhouse 2003), as organisational attribute to create distinctiveness from other employers.

Intention to quit is a measure used to examine whether organisational attributes contribute to an employees' decision to quit an organisation and this constituted our third measure. Cable and Judge (1996) attributed applicants' unbalanced information and unrealized expectation as the main reason of dissatisfaction and turnover of employees. Variety in job and work setting attribute in our study emerged as the factor positively contributing to intention to quit. Having 16% variance for turnover the organisations failed in providing a work setting where employees had diversity of colleagues, variety in daily work and their degrees being properly utilised. The findings here are in line with a study by Gatewood *et. al.* (1993) where corpo-

rate image was found to be a significant predictor of decisions to pursue employment with the company. In this case the image had specific reference to variety in job and work setting.

Limitations

This study was conducted in selected Indian organisations and the results are contextual. More studies required for greater generalisation particularly in the context of image audit for organisations facing stiff challenge of attrition. Generalisability for this study, its second weakness, is again restricted by the non-random nature of the sample used for the survey. Even though we used top two telecom companies (according to no. of subscribers) the sample was small in size and had limited representation. We suggest and expect that future research in employer image audit would have wider representation from telecom companies to provide us with more clear understanding.

Implications for Management

This study provides critical inputs about internal image audit and how does it influence job related attitude. The Indian telecom sector has seen phenomenal growth in the past few years and has attracted lot of talent who looks forward to long term career prospects but with more private participation retaining talent and providing value has become equally critical for them. In a way this study shows how various organisational attributes determine job satisfaction, affective commitment and

intention to quit and the need for clearly communicating the value proposition to the employees.

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