

## Exploring Dimensions of Employer Attractiveness in India

### *A Viewpoint of Prospective Employees in Indian IT Sector*

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#### Abstract

With an aim of attracting right talent the organizations today are adopting different strategies of employer attractiveness. Organizations are trying to build their brand through the thriving strategy of employer branding to become the desirable employer for potential employees. Employer attractiveness is “the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”. Employees have enormous options to select an employer for their career management and growth. This is making the organization to be more cautious in defining themselves as prospective employer and projecting the right image in the minds of their prospective employees. This study explores the different dimensions of employer attractiveness from the perspective of potential employees in India. This paper develops a scale of employer attractiveness in Indian context and ensures its significance in top three Indian IT companies. Implications of the research are discussed, limitations noted and future directions have been suggested.

#### **Introduction**

After the year 1990, the organisations started realizing the importance of gaining competitive advantage through their workforce. Organizations are now facing tough competition both in product branding and branding themselves as the right employer in the market. They are required to project themselves in a way that attracts the right talent in the right capacity for them. There was a time when organizations were more focused on their existing employees but the trend eventually shifted from the concept of internal branding and employee branding to external branding and employer branding. The increasing number of organisations in the market and the thirst for right talent has triggered the growth of the concept of employer branding. The current business landscape is complicated and competitive that holds the complications from both the employer and employees. The changed attitude of people towards work has made the labor market flexible. Employees are more aware and believe in

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switching their jobs more often (**Universum Young Professional Survey, 2003**). They view employer value proposition and evaluate it rationally as a brand or a valued product in the market (**Corporate Leadership Council, 1999**). Thus the organizations must build their brand as the desirable employer for potential employees to fight and raise the bar of competition in the market. “The hottest strategy in employment”, to use words of **Dr. Sullivan**, is summarized through the concept of “**Employer Branding**”.

The concepts are interrelated and overlapping in nature. An employer brand constitutes the Employer value proposition that is the totality of the company’s offerings in the form of its culture, systems, attitudes and their relationships with the employees working in the organization. With the need of attracting the skillful workforce there is a need to develop and present the employer value proposition in a way to attract the number as well as quality of the applicants to attain highest level of organizational efficiency and effectiveness (**Chambers et al, 1998**). **Ambler and Barrow (1996)** in their research wherein they assessed the possible application of branding techniques for better management of human resource. They concluded the study mentioning the applicability of branding in employment situations. They also emphasized on the relationship between the quality of employees and quality of product and services which were found to be directly related. Moving on this trend, there were three identified dimensions that defined employer identity, namely psychological, functional and economic factors. The exploration on the dimension of attractiveness was initiated by this specific study and then there were number of further studies that demonstrated the dimensions of employer branding in international context. This paper is focused to identify the dimensions of employer brand from the perspective of prospective employees in Indian context. It’s important to make the organisations aware of different dimensions a prospective employee considers while applying for a job and develop an intention to join it. This will make the organisations in the better position to attract the right talent in the right capacity for them.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### Employer Branding

#### Evolution of Employer Branding

During the 1990’s the organizations started realizing the importance of gaining competitive advantage through their workforce. They increasingly realized the importance of attracting and retaining the best human talent for their organizations and maintain and develop their brand as a desired employer. It gained added momentum due to the demographic challenges and the high-maintenance, high expectation and high self-interest attitude of the Generation

Y talent segment (those born between 1977 and 1995) **Rosethorn (2009)**. During the mid-1990's organizational branding concept emerged in response to all these changing needs and was strategically introduced and defined in 1996 by the industries across different sectors. It was first defined by **Ambler and Barrow in 1996** as *“the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company”* and was taken forward by many other preceding researches. Soon the organizations started thinking what distinguishes them from other employers in the market and tended to define their employment value proposition similar to their corporate or customer brand. However unlike corporate brand their target market tends to be their current as well as their prospective employees (**Minchington, 2007**). The organizations started extended their resources on building their brand in terms of employment and consider it an important part of their marketing and branding effort (**Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004**).

### **Employer Branding and Its Dimensions**

Employer branding is not much explored research area and thus it's not supported by large amount of literature **Ewing, Pitt et al. (2002)**. Now the organizations are moving from using the internal branding and employee branding to the term employer branding and external marketing. Employer branding was first conceptualized by **Ambler and Barrow (1996)** in their research wherein they assessed the possible application of branding techniques for better management of human resource. They concluded the study mentioning the applicability of branding in employment situations. They also emphasized on the relationship between the quality of employees and quality of product and services which were found to be directly related. Moving on this trend, there were three identified dimensions that defined employer identity, namely psychological, functional and economic factors.

**Backhaus and Tikoo (2004)** define Employer branding to be a three step process wherein first the organization develops the 'Value proposition' developed in terms of organizational culture, management style, product, services etc. In the second step this is communicated to the targeted potential employees and other related sources such as recruitment agencies etc. The third and the last aspect is internal marketing wherein this proposition is communicated to the recruits in the form of brand promise and incorporated in the organizational culture. After going through an extensive literature research they proposed an effective employer branding framework.

Previous to this, **Collins and Stevens (2002)** suggests that employer brand is an effective tool of external marketing and has a positive influence on increasing the quality and quantity of applicants for a job. This was also supported by **Fulmer et al.(2003)** through his research.

According to Human resource consultants **Hewitt Associates**, there are five major steps to develop an effective employer brand. They are as (i) understand your organization; (ii) create a ‘compelling brand promise for employees similar to that for the customers, iii) develop the standards to measure the fulfillment of brand promise, (iv) align all people practices to support and reinforce the brand promise and (v) execute and measure. It’s also been found that the companies with strong employer brands can potentially reduce the overall cost of talent acquisition, employee retention, and attrition and can also improve employee relations (**Ritson, 2002**).

**Berthon et al. (2005)** contributed to employer branding through their widely known empirical research wherein they developed a 32- item Employer Attractiveness Scale (EmpAt) scale for the measurement of employer attractiveness of an employer. They identified five factors of employer branding namely, interest value, social value, economic value, development value and application.

**Melin (2005)** highlights the similarities and dissimilarities between external and internal brand images of a company. This study identified five components of employer brand namely, product/company brand strength, compensation and benefits, work life balance, work environment and company culture and environment.

**Davies (2008)**emphasize on the impact of employer branding in influencing employees' perceived differentiation, affinity, satisfaction and loyalty – four outcomes chosen as relevant to the employer brand. The findings suggested that employer brand is an important aspect but results also suggest that it’s not an easy aspect to manage it efficiently.

**Roy (2008)** conducted a research to identify the dimensions of an employer brand in the Indian context. He further explored the research conducted by **Berthon et al. (2005)** by reviewing it in Indian context and added two more factors to the scale strong and clear company culture and an ethical organization.

**Moroko and Uncles (2008)** also supported his view culture has a great role to play in making an employer attractive. Also the ethics plays an important role in employer attractiveness. Every individual has different definition to ethics and is also perceived differently by the individual. So organization must have consistent ethical value in order to achieve sustainable results **Melin (2005)**.

**Jain (2013)** found four dimensions of employer branding. Management of the organisation, perceived organisation prestige, transparency and leadership and organisation fit were the four dimensions identified after conducting exploratory factor analysis.

The younger generation of workers (especially generation Y) has higher and different expectations concerning job challenges and success; they request 'the job promotion' more quickly than baby boomers' **Smola, Sutton (2002)**. This has resulted in the overall evolution of human resource practices. Also the students think that the companies involved in CSR initiatives are better employers due to the respect and reputation they earn in the society (**Albinger and Freeman, 2000**). According to prior studies, CSR initiatives also clearly influence employees' commitment to the organization.

The study conducted by **McKinsey (2001)** found that there are certain factors to which current generation is attracted to. They are fun place to work, training opportunities, innovative company etc. It's also been observed that innovative company and opportunity to grow is an important parameter over salary for attracting the current generation.

**Mosley (2007)** states that many organizations are now striving hard to develop an "ideal blueprint of employment to benchmark their own practices against those that have already been achievers and recognized as 'Best Employers'. Employer branding helps the organization to attract the applicants with the right skill and desirable cultural fit and consistent experience with the employer (**EB Insights, 2011**).

**Barrow and Mosley (2005)** also identified twelve dimensions of employer branding which are controllable by the employer. They are external reputation, internal communication, senior leadership, corporate social responsibility, internal measurement system, service support, recruitment and induction, team management, performance appraisal, learning and development, reward and recognition and working environment. They proposed the companies to consider these dimensions to effectively manage their brand.

**J. Sullivan (2004)** proposed the different parameters of employer branding such as (i) a culture of sharing and continuous improvement, (ii) a balance between good management and high productivity, (iii) obtaining public recognition (great-place to- work lists), (iv) employees "proactively" telling stories, (v) getting talked about, (vi) becoming a benchmark firm, (vii) increasing candidate awareness of your best practices, (viii) branding assessment metrics. This research has been undertaken to identify the different factors of employer attractiveness in Indian context. **Awang and Jusoff (2009)** found that there are three elements of corporate reputation which highly contribute to the corporate reputation of the firm; these are (a) emotional appeal towards the services, (b) emotional appeal towards the

firm, and (c) corporate social responsibility of the firm. **Freeman and Albinger (2000)** advised that an organization's corporate social responsibility provide a competitive advantage in order to attract the applicants to the organization. **Backhaus (2004)** has given a strong advancement on how employer branding can be understood by concluding the presence of several magnitudes of the construct, such as: corporate social responsibility; customer orientation; and work-family balance. The studies show that new graduates are becoming increasingly concerned about a company's values and how socially responsible they are while considering where to work (**Backhaus et al., 2002**).

Though **Berthon et al. (2005)** has identified different dimensions of employer attractiveness in global context and **Roy (2008)** has identified it in Indian context but still rationality and changing demands of the current generation along with the incessant changes in the external as well as internal business environment has laid down a basis for modifications in already existing scale of employer attractiveness. Keeping these changes in concern the current study fills this research gap by developing a modified employer branding scale for Indian IT companies.

### **Employer Attractiveness**

Employer attractiveness is considered to be the output of external employer branding. It can be defined as "the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization" (**Berthon et al. 2005**). With the need of attracting the skillful workforce there is a need to develop and present the employer image to attract the number as well as quality of the applicants to attain highest level of organizational efficiency and effectiveness (**Chambers et al, 1998**). Employer attractiveness represents a significant component of the value of the brand, its equity. **Berthon et al. (2005)** state the greater is the employer attractiveness higher is its brand equity. **Collins and Stevens (2002)** studied the impact of publicity, advertisements, word-of-mouth on generating employer attractiveness and proposed that publicity play an impactful role in attracting people and generating effective results in all the recruitment activities of the organizations.

According to the report of 'The corporate leadership council in 1999', it was suggested that a strong employment brand is a compelling employment offer. The employer brand is the sum of five major dimensions and their attractiveness for prospective and current employees. These dimensions include product/company strength, company culture and environment,

work environment, work life balance and compensation and benefits and they also formulate the employer value proposition for current as well as prospective employees and become the basis for external and internal communications regarding employer brand.

### **OBJECTIVE OF THE STUDY**

1. The objective of the study is to analyze the various dimensions of Employer Brand from the perspective of prospective employees in India.
2. To identify the significance of these attractive dimensions for three top Indian IT companies, TCS, Wipro and Infosys.

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

This study is descriptive as it analyses the employer branding as a practice, its dimensions as its structure. To ensure both cohesive and effective research, an exploratory research design is also applied.

#### **Sample Definition and Data collection**

To revise the scale of employer branding an exploratory research is followed by descriptive research. Primary data is collected with the help of the questionnaire adopted from Employer Attractiveness scale of **Berthon et. al. (2005)**. This scale has identified the different attractiveness dimensions of employer brand. It's developed in the global context which may not fit well in the Indian context too. So with an aim of developing the scale in Indian context the different factors such as corporate social responsibility undertaken by the companies especially after the amendment of Companies Act 2013, use of social media for the betterment of the society, excursion trips and foreign assignments, fun component to name a few, are added to already existing scale of Berthon et. al. (2005) and a revised scale is developed in Indian context.

There are two basic approaches through which a scale can be developed. It can be either deductive approach or inductive approach. Deductive approach involves the development of a schema or a prototype with the help of a thorough literature review. In this research 42- items are explored with the help of literature review and other secondary sources which are empirically analyzed through principle component analysis and regression is applied further to check their significance in IT sector.

The questionnaires were distributed among the final year students of MBA, MCA and B.Tech. of central, state and deemed universities in Delhi. The convenience sampling method is used to select the students from population. 250 questionnaires were distributed and 209 completely filled in questionnaire were received which accounts to 83.6 %, an adequate level for such kind of a survey. ( Malhotra, 2005). All the items were in the form of a scale wherein respondents were asked to rate the dimensions of employer attractive on five point likert scale starting from not at all important as 1 till most important as 5.

For the second part of the study three top Indian IT companies are selected for studying their attractiveness on the basis of five dimensions proposed by **Melin (2005)** and **The corporate leadership council (1999)**. These five dimensions include product/company strength, company culture and environment, work environment, work life balance and compensation and benefits. According to The Annual BT-PeopleStrong Survey 2014, carried out in association with Naukri.com conducted by The India Today Group, it's found that TCS, Infosys and Wipro are the three top most Indian IT companies. So these companies are selected to check the significance of dimensions of employer attractiveness through regression analysis.

The percentage of males in the sample is 58 % and about 42% are women. All the students are the final year students of MCA, MBA and B. tech. Around 72% were in the age group of 20- 25 years, 25 % are from 25-30 years and around 3% are from the age group of 15-20 years.

## **DATA ANALYSIS**

In the first part of the study, all the 26 items are factor analysed using principle component analysis with varimax orthogonal rotation. Secondly, the factor scores of dimension of attractiveness were considered as independent variable in regression analysis with the measure of attractiveness of three Indian IT companies TCS, Wipro, and Infosys as independent variable. IT\_Attractiveness is considered as the dependent variable which is the total average score of all the five dimensions of employer attractiveness (**The corporate leadership council (1999)**).

### **Factor Analysis and Result**

Reliability of all the factors was calculated and all the items were reliable with cronbach's alpha as 0.8 which is more than 0.6 hence all of them were considered reliable for the study. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy is 0.907 which indicated high level of adequacy with significance less than 0.05. Also, the reliability of the modified scale in this study is 0.89 which shows good level of acceptance and thus this scale can be considered to define employer attractiveness. All the factors accounted for a cumulative 74.3% of the total variance in the data.

Table 1: Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix <sup>a</sup>				
	Component			
	Organization component	Growth component	Interest component	Societal component
	1	2	3	4
Effective management practices	.813			
Effective Leadership	.764			
High quality product	.764			
Social image of the company	.726			
Financial Stability	.722			
Organization is customer oriented	.695			
Ethical organisation	.654			
Technology driven organization	.544			
Effective and clear culture	.514			
Recognition and appreciation		.824		
Positive Working Environment		.729		
Good relationship with superiors		.710		
Career enhancement opportunities		.683		
Supporting and encouraging colleagues		.664		

Feeling good and confident of working for a particular organization		.612		
High morale and motivation among employees		.554		
Flexible working hours		.553		
Foreign assignments and placements			.788	
Excursion trips and fun component			.768	
Attractive Compensation Package			.626	
Social media usage			.604	
Competitive working environment			.563	
Focus on giving back to the society				.716
Value addition to the society				.656
CSR				.592
Social Initiatives for better society				.589
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.				
a. Rotation converged in 8 iterations.				

Factor extraction and nomenclature:

As shown in table 1, the following factors are extracted from the factor analysis.

### **Organization Component**

First factor is recognized as Organization component that indicates the characteristics of an organization and its working environment. This factor includes Effective management practices, Effective Leadership, High quality product, Social image of the company, Financial Stability, Organization is customer oriented, Ethical organization, Effective and clear culture and Technology driven organization. The Cronbach's alpha for this component is 0.84.

### **Growth Component**

The second component is recognized as the growth component that includes Recognition and appreciation, Positive Working Environment, Good relationship with superiors, Career enhancement opportunities, Supporting and encouraging colleagues, Feeling good and confident of working for a particular organization, High morale and motivation among employees and Flexible working hours. This component gives the opportunity to grow as an employee of the organization. The cronbach's alpha for this component is 0.86.

### **Interest Component**

Third component is interest component that signifies the areas that current generation especially Gen Y considers important while deciding their employer of choice. These are additional areas of interest for the prospective employees. It includes foreign assignments and placements, Excursion trips and fun component, Attractive Compensation Package, Social media usage and Competitive working environment. The cronbach's alpha for this component is 0.82

### **Societal Component**

This component signifies the contribution of an organization towards society. Since the current generation also evaluates an organization against their responsibilities and piece of work they have performed for the society so this component also plays an important role. This includes Focus on giving back to the society, Value addition to the society, CSR and Social initiatives for better society. The cronbach's alpha for this component is 0.84.

### **Regression Analysis**

In this part of the study regression analysis is carried out to test the significance of these four factors in Indian IT sector. The cumulative attractiveness of top three organisations is considered as the dependent variable and the four components of attractiveness as computed in the first part of the study are considered as the independent variable.

**Table 2: Regression Analysis for IT sector (Cumulative attractiveness of TCS, Wipro and Infosys)**

Regression Analysis for IT sector							
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.	Mean
		B	Std. Error	Beta			
	Organization component	.385	.112	.354	3.434	.001	3.83
	Growth Component	.291	.104	.261	2.802	.007	3.81
	Interest Component	.492	.128	.462	3.860	.000	3.98
	Societal Component	.463	.150	.335	3.088	.003	3.79
a. Dependent Variable: IT_Attractiveness							

Table 2 represents the regression model to study the significance of these factors in IT sector of India. The regression model is significant with  $p < 0.01$  and with adjusted R square as 0.68. As shown in the table above all the components are significant with value less than 0.05. From the result of regression it can be concluded that all the dimensions are significant in the case of top three Indian IT companies, TCS, Wipro and Infosys.

When the mean values of the components are analyzed the most important component with the mean value of 4.02 is the interest component and least as societal component with mean value of 3.7. With this it can be concluded that interest component is most preferred component followed by organization and growth component while deciding the attractiveness of any employer in IT sector and societal component contribute the least but though is considered an important part of the study.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

This paper tried to identify the different employer attractiveness dimensions in Indian context. There are scales available in the literature but less emphasis has been paid on attractiveness scale according to Indian perception. According to the current generation and their expectations from their prospective employers this study has identified four major factors that define employer attractiveness in Indian context. They are organization component, growth component, interest component and societal component. The study has referred already developed and validated scale of Berthon et. al. (2005) and the scale has been modified according to the current context. The final year students of MBA, MCA and B.Tech have defined their perception and rated the different dimensions of employer attractiveness on the basis of their importance for them. The dimensions were factor analyzed and four major components organization component, growth component, interest component and societal component were extracted after the analysis. On notifying the mean values it was observed that interest component plays the most important role followed by organization, growth and last the societal component. The significance of all these factors were analyzed through regression with cumulative attractiveness of top three Indian IT companies TCS, Wipro and Infosys as the dependent variable and the four factors are considered as the independent variables in the study. All the factors were found to be significant with p value less than 0.05. This indicates that all the factors predict the attractiveness of IT firms in India.

The current batches of students search for some specific factors in deciding their employer of choice. The human resource department and marketing department of the companies should focus on the factors like foreign assignments and placements, Excursion trips and fun component, Attractive Compensation Package, Social media usage and Competitive working environment while presenting their employer brand to the prospective employees. Effective company culture, overall brand of the organization and the different growth opportunities should be focused and made the part of preliminary discussions or pre placement talks the company does with the students. This will make the students to be in the better position to select their employer and form positive anticipatory psychological contract with the organisations.

It's high time for the organisations to define the area of interest of their prospective employees and work on their expectations and ways to meet them. These expectations may vary from sector to sector so they must be specifically defined and well communicated to the prospective employees with intent to attract the right candidate for the job and organization as a whole.

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