

Influence of Creativity on Employer Branding: A Study in Select IT Companies in Chennai City

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Abstract: *Organisations are becoming cognizant towards employer branding as it helps in attracting, motivating and retaining the best talent in the market. Employer branding is a HR-marketing strategy which communicates the goodwill or reputation of the organisation to employees and other stakeholders. This study examines IT employees' perceptions with regard to Creativity as a construct of Employer Branding and analyses the relationship between employees' demographic profiles and their perceptions of Creativity. Primary data was collected from 600 respondents from top 20 IT companies ranked by NASSCOM using a structured questionnaire. t-test and ANOVA was used to find the results. Findings reveal that employees exhibit a high level of satisfaction with creativity in their organisations. The study highlights the impact of creativity on employer branding.*

Keywords: Employer Branding. Creativity, IT companies. IT employees

I. INTRODUCTION

Organisations are becoming cognizant towards employer branding as it helps in attracting, motivating and retaining the best talent in the market. Employer branding is a HR-marketing strategy which communicates the goodwill or reputation of the organisation to employees and other stakeholders. It reflects the employment experience of the organisation and provides its employees the 'wow' factor. It is becoming essential for organisations to make their organisation unique and develop it as a 'great place to work' in the minds of its employees (Rokade & Singh, 2015). Cooper (2008, p.14) discussed employer branding in terms of "what a company has to offer its employees. Employer branding can be used as a long- term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular organisation... Employer branding strategies assist in shaping the perceptions of an organisation as an employer of choice..."

Employer branding enhances the perceptions of employees about the organisation as a good place to work for. It is expanded from branding theory which involves communicating to employees, both future and existing, that the organisation is a desirable place to work for by establishing unique EVPs (Jiang & Iles, 2011). An employer brand communicates what it is like to work in the organisation, what an organisation stands for and its unique value proposition to both potential and existing employees (Caplan, 2004). According to Minchington (2010), "in its simplest form, your EVP is a set of associations and offerings provided by your organisation in return for the skills, capabilities and experiences and employee brings to your organisation". The value proposition offered by the employer should include not only remuneration and benefits as stated in its formal employment contract but also the underlying value that the employer can offer. It should reflect on what employees think is most attractive about the organisation (O'Donohue & Wickham, 2008).

At the heart of Employer Branding is the 'Employment Experience'. An employer brand is the sum of all the characteristics and distinguishable features that prospective candidates and current employees perceive about an organisation's employment experience. The employment experience serves as the foundation of the employer brand and includes tangible features such as salary, rewards and benefits, but also extends to intangibles such as organisational culture, values, management style and opportunities for employee learning, development and recognition (Newell & Dopson, 1996; Hendry & Jenkins, 1997).



According to Florida (2002, cited in Jorgensen, 2005), “creativity has a multi-dimensional quality and is mobilised through new structures and modes of operation underpinned by an acceptance of individuality and the activation of diversity rather than the use of generic labels and approaches. Creativity comes from people working in new ways, motivated and nurtured in a multitude of ways”. Organisations need to develop a culture of creativity and innovation to retain talent (Heather, 2003).

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Sullivan, J (2004) refers to employer branding as “a targeted long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm”. Argyris (1993) terms employer branding as “the sum of a company’s efforts to communicate to existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work”. Employer branding is referred to “the efforts of the organisation in communicating to internal and external stakeholders of what it makes it both desirable and distinctive employer” (Jenner & Taylor, 2008, p7). “Employer branding creates competitive advantage, helps in internalising organisational values and aids in the attraction of potential employees and retention of existing employees (Conference Board, 2001).

Berthon et al (2005) consider the effect of an organisation’s advertising on its own employees in attracting them and identify five dimensions of employer attractiveness in employer branding namely Interest value, Social value, Economical value, Developmental value and Social value. Interest value refers to the work environment, work practices which uses employees’ creativity to produce high-quality products and services. Social value refers to the fun-filled happy work environment and relationship between employees. Economic value refers to compensation, job security and career progression. Development value refers to career-enhancing experience, ‘spring board’ for future employment and recognition. Application value refers to the opportunities of employees to teach what has been learnt. These five factors are an extension of Ambler and Barrow’s functional, psychological and economic benefits.

Findings of a study conducted by Corte et al (2011) suggest that product quality, social responsibility, continuous innovation, value, environmental responsibility and trustworthiness form the basis of employer brand. Working in an attractive, interesting and innovative environment and recognition of employees, both monetary and non-monetary, plays a crucial part in the retention of IT employees (De Mers, 2002).

In a dynamic business environment, human resource (HR) flexibility has emerged as a key factor in improving organizational performance and in potentially influencing employee outcomes. However, research on the complex cross-level effects of HR flexibility on employee outcomes remains underexplored. A study by Zhu, F., Wan, J., Zhu, X. and Yue, M. (2024) addresses this research gap by focusing on HR flexibility and its impact on employee creativity. Drawing on social information processing (SIP) theory, the authors present a novel model that elucidates the mechanisms through which HR flexibility promotes employee creativity and identifies the boundary conditions under which this effect is most pronounced. Specifically, they argue that perceived HR strength and career satisfaction play serial mediating roles in the relationship between HR flexibility and employee creativity, and that employer brand positively moderates this relationship. Their arguments are supported by a sample of 344 employees and 72 senior HR managers from financial services companies in China. Their paper applies SIP theory to deepen the understanding of HR flexibility and contributes to the literature on HR flexibility and creativity.

A study by Zhang, J.; Zhu, F. (2024) investigated the mechanism of employer brand attributes congruence on employee creativity through career satisfaction, and further revealed the moderating role of proactive personality. Based on the cue consistency theory and the social information processing theory, a polynomial regression model was created and a response surface analysis was conducted using 488 paired questionnaires. The results showed that employer brand attributes congruence impacted employee creativity via career satisfaction. A consistent employer brand strategy is more effective for the creativity of less proactive individuals, while a high-level proactive personality can compensate for the deficiencies of employer brand attributes incongruence. The results added to the employer brand research from the perspective of the instrumental-symbolic attribute configuration and provided supportive empirical evidence of employer brand practices aiming at improving employee creativity.

III. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Specifically, this paper proposes to address the following research objectives:

- To analyse the perceptions of IT employees towards creativity as a construct of employer branding.
- To find out the relationship between demographic profile of IT employees and their perceptions towards creativity.

IV. SAMPLING DESIGN

In an attempt to answer the above research questions, the present study has been conducted using a structured questionnaire to capture the views of the respondents with regard to the diversity dimension of employer branding. Employees of top 20 IT companies ranked by NASSCOM were selected as sampling population. Judgement sampling was adopted. T test, ANOVA and percentage analysis was employed to obtain the desired results. Data was collected from 600 respondents. Reliability score was measured using Cronbach's Alpha which showed a score of 0.92 for the construct creativity.

V. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to understand the perceptions of IT employees towards creativity, mean and standard deviation were calculated.

Table I Mean and SD of Creativity of IT employees

Creativity	Mean	SD
Creativity is encouraged at all levels.	4.49	0.65
Valuing and making use of creativity.	4.50	0.72
Opportunities which unleash creativity.	4.40	0.89

Source: Primary data

Mean scores and Standard Deviation of Creativity of IT employees are presented in the above table. The mean scores range from 4.50 to 4.40. The item "Valuing and making use of creativity" scores high (4.50) with SD 0.72 followed by "Creativity is encouraged at all levels" having a mean score of 4.49 and "Opportunities which unleash creativity" at 4.40. These scores indicate that creativity is highly valued in IT organisations as it is a knowledge-based industry and the IT employees are highly satisfied with the creativity aspect of their work. Results from a study conducted by Kuscu & Okan (2010) reveal that 'organisations valuing and making use of employees' creativity' was an important employer branding concept. Challenging assignments trigger creativity in employees of IT organisations. The informal culture adopted in IT organisations encourages creativity at all levels. The idea is important and not the level of employment. New and innovative ideas are appreciated openly in meetings and are well documented. New and fresh ways of rewarding ideas such as 'Idea board' encourage creativity in employees.

Table II Frequency distribution of Level of Creativity

Level of Creativity	Frequency	Percent
Low	48	8.0
Moderate	276	46.0
High	276	46.0
Total	600	100.0

Source: Primary data

The above table reveals the levels of satisfaction of IT employees on Creativity. 46% of the sample respondents are moderately satisfied and equal number of employees are highly satisfied with the level of creativity.

To find out the relation between demographic profile of IT employees and their perception towards creativity, t test and ANOVA were calculated.

H₀: There is no significant difference between demographic variables and creativity



Table III: t test for significant differences between demographic variables and creativity

Demographic variable	t value	p value
Gender	2.494	0.013
Marital status	0.237	0.813

Source: Primary data

Since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level with regard to Creativity. Hence there is significant difference between male and female employees with regard to Creativity. The mean score level of female employees is slightly higher than the male employees. This shows that male and female employees view these dimensions differently and their expectations are also in a different plane. There is no significant difference between married and single respondents with regard to the dimensions of Creativity since the P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted with regard to Creativity. Marital status does not affect the employees' perception of these factors.

Table IV: ANOVA for significant differences between demographic variables and creativity

Demographic variable	F value	P value
Age in years	1.066	0.345
Educational qualification	0.623	0.537
Designation	1.621	0.199
Job type	0.449	0.638
Years of experience in the industry	1.875	0.154
Years of experience in the organisation	0.814	0.443
Monthly income	3.679	0.012

Source: Primary data

There is no significant difference between age groups, educational qualification, designation, job type, employees having different years of experience in the field, years of experience the employee has in the organisation with regard to dimensions of Creativity since P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted with regard to creativity as an employer branding dimension. Employees of different age groups, having different educational qualification, level of employment, job types, having different years of experience in the field and the organisation feel the same way with regard to the above dimension of employer branding. However, with regard to monthly income, since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level for Creativity. Hence, there is a significant difference between employees having different ranges of monthly incomes for creativity.

VI. CONCLUSION

Employer branding is essentially an emotional bonding between an employer and his/her employer. A loyal employee is the brand ambassador of the employer and such employees generate tremendous goodwill that is the foundation of an employer brand. Encouraging creativity and innovation among the employees will lead to building a better employer brand. This study has theoretical implications on the literature in the staffing domain of Human Resources Management where employer branding is emerging as an important construct. HR practitioners would find this research of immense importance as it will help define the expectations of employees and would help the industry to build their strategies to suit the ever-changing needs of the employees. This study would also provide important cues for designing HR policies and interventions in making their organisations a 'great place to work'.

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