



EMPLOYER BRANDING: A STUDY OF EMPLOYMENT FACTORS CAPABLE OF LURING THE STUDENTS PURSUING SELECT PROFESSIONAL COURSES

Prof. Dinesh Kumar Pandiya

Professor, Department of Commerce, Assam University, Silchar, Assam, India

Dr. Pinak Deb

PGT (Commerce), Don Bosco School, Silchar, Assam, India

Jitendra Reang

P.G. Student, Department of Commerce, Assam University, Silchar, Assam, India

ABSTRACT

KEYWORDS:

Employer branding, employee satisfaction, stakeholders, sellers' market

Employer branding is a distinguishing and relevant opportunity for a company to differentiate itself from the competition creating its branded factors as its USP for employee satisfaction and happiness resulting in retention, productivity and efficiency. The study aimed to identify select the employment factors that are capable of alluring the students of select U.G. and P.G. courses and also made an attempt to measure the relative capability of the select employment factors capable of alluring the students.

INTRODUCTION

The term “Employer Brand” was first used in the early 1990s which denotes an organization’s reputation as an employer. Employer branding is a recent, growing phenomenon that is evolving strategically for the companies surveyed worldwide. Employer brand is understood as a brand which differentiates it from other competitors in the employment market. The art and science of employer branding is concerned with the attraction, engagement and retention initiatives targeted at enhancing company’s brand. It defines the personality of a company as a preferred employer (Babcanova, Babcan & Odlerova, 2010). Employer branding is a long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees, and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm. The employer brand puts forth an image showing the organization as a good place to work. This means involving employees at all levels in the development of the brand so that it accurately reflects both the realities and aspirations of the business and its workforce (Dawn & Biswas, 2010). Employer branding closely relies on marketing concepts for highlighting the positioning of a company as an employer. The ‘customer’ here is the employee /potential employee’, while the aim remains the same: attracting new customers while retaining the current ones. Also, just like a consumer brand, the employer brand highlights the emotional and rational benefits that the employer provides to the employees (Dawn & Biswas, 2010).

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

In the countries practicing market economy industries and business organizations have started paying greater attention towards the ‘internal customers’. It is not that the importance of the internal customers has only recently been realized. Pages of the concerned history reveal that after the emergence of trade unions, more particularly after these turned so much strong that they started throwing formidable challenge to their employers, the owners of the business organizations had no option but to recognize their importance. This kind of a practice had its roots in the scenario of sellers market. Once the structure of the market changed from that of the sellers to buyers for ultimate customers, the internal customers also started comparing; in their case it was the employers. The business owners had no options but to budge to the wishes and preferences of their employees more particularly of the ‘would be’ ones who had more keenly started looking for ‘an ideal employer’. The employers did so as a ‘compulsion’ as they would not have been able to attend the ‘pin pointed’ and very specific needs and the preferences of the ultimate customers had they not been able to employ that workforce who has willingly opted in favor of the brands (companies) they are the employees. The old phrase ‘right man for the right job’ was thus truly in place.

Unlike the past when the ‘would be’ employees, specially for the high-tech white collar jobs, concentrated more on the issues like pay packet, security of service and the proximity of the work place with their native places,

today's contenders for such jobs though do look for all such things but probably with a changed preference over many of the offers by the employers.

Many employers in the past, as revealed by the concerned studies, could not understand the wishes and the preferences of their internal customers in relation to the perks and fringe benefits to be given to them. As a result some of them had to be losers in the market. Even when some of them did pick it up they unfortunately could not guess the relative worth of these perks and benefits. The present study is an attempt to identify the receivables the 'would be' employees of the day look for along with the relative worth of these in the eyes of the ones who though are only students today but not to say that it is they who would be the 'human resource' of some brand tomorrow.

The fact that the quest for such an employer who could fulfill the wishes of the job seekers does exist in all the job seekers, however this is also a fact that the bargaining power of the ones who in one or the other way are professionally qualified is always more. Keeping in mind this higher bargaining capacity of the students pursuing such professional courses that are governed by All India Council of Technical Education, the study was devoted to read their minds about their dreams of 'an ideal employer'.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Buttenberg, K., (2013) conducted a research on employer branding mainly targeted towards recruiting. Purpose of the research is to assess the current state of organizations and to evaluate their impact on the motivation of their employees. Study revealed that there is a positive impact of employer branding on the understanding of the brand of the organization as well as employee motivation and organizational performance. Largestrom (2013) had studied the employer branding with special interest to examine the field of Employer Branding in the context of recruitment and retaining. The study examines the questions of *how* and *why* Employer Branding is implemented in firms and *what* role such implementation plays in Human Resource Management, in the context of recruitment and retaining processes. The study concluded that the Employer Branding can be utilized both externally to attract potential employees, and internally to increase commitment and loyalty among current employees. In the context of recruitment, Employer Branding can make the process more effective. Vataliya (2012) made a study on employer branding with reference to higher education sector in Bhavnagar city with special focus on M. J. College of commerce. The study found that the employer branding for M.J. College of commerce is high among present employees of the organization. The happiness level for work is high in the view of employees active in the M. J. College of commerce because of the various parameters like popularity, pay, involvement, quality, supportive work environment, attractive salary package, good reference, job security, work life balance,

career opportunities and Recognition of work. So, all the attributes of employer branding positively affect the branding level of the organization. Further, the study found that there is no discrimination between genders in the field of employer branding. Suikkanen (2010) studied how employer branding increases the employee retention. The major hypotheses were, Marketing activities aim to produce (employer) brand equity increasing (employer brand) loyalty; Employer branding is a retention management technique influencing engagement, organizational culture and the perceived psychological contract, all positively linked to retention and The employer brand reinforces the entire employment experience increasing retention.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

1. To identify and select the employment factors that are capable of alluring the students of select U.G. and P.G. courses.
2. To measure the relative capability of the select employment factors capable of alluring the students pursuing select courses from Assam University, Silchar.
3. To compare the perceptions of students about the capability of the select employment factors to lure them on the basis of select demographic backgrounds.

METHODOLOGY OF THE STUDY

Source of Data: The parts of the objectives which had to be addressed through mustering the secondary data were attained by managing the same from the concerned sources mainly the literature available on the matter. In order to address the requirement of the primary data a structured questionnaire was developed keeping in mind the requirement of the objectives. To address the first objective of the study, i.e., to identify the employment factors that are capable of luring the students pursuing their select U.G. and P.G. courses, initially a thorough scan of the literature available on the subject was done. However, to ensure the inclusion of the appropriate factors that are capable of alluring the students a pilot survey with the help of a purposively developed questionnaire was also conducted. To attain the second and third objectives of the study i.e., to determine the relative capability of the employment factors that are capable of luring the students of the select courses and to compare the capability of the factors to lure the students pursuing their select courses from A.U. Silchar across the courses pursued by them and their background based on select demographic variables the major dependence was made on the information provided by the respondents and the opinion shared by them on the matter through the questionnaire developed for the purpose.

Survey Instruments: The factors which emerged, out of the exercise mentioned above, were eight. Each of these factors entailed in it certain number of components, totaling forty one. The eight factors thus developed are as follows:

Table 1: List of Factors

Sl. No	Factors	No. of Components
1	Direct Monetary Benefits	6
2	Indirect Monetary Benefits	5
3	Accessibility to Workplace	4
4	Image of the Organization	5
5	Industry Type Firm Belongs to	5
6	Opportunities for Career Development	4
7	Employment Conditions	6
8	Welfare Facilities	6

The respondents were initially requested to share their insight regarding the components included under eight factors on a five (5) point rating scale developed for the study. Further they were asked to assign points to each factor in such a manner that the total of such allocation does not exceed 100. They were asked to respond in this manner so that it enables the researcher to have knowledge over the relative importance of the factors in being able to allure the students under study for their employment.

Population and the Sample: The target population of the study is the students of Assam University pursuing such six select courses which are run by five departments of Assam University and fall under the control of AICTE in addition to U.G.C. The list of the Departments under study is mentioned below along with the population which is 347. A judgmental sampling method, which is a non-probability sampling, was adopted. As per this a sample of 49 students are picked up at 95% confidence level and 13% confidence interval. The description of the population as well as the sample is as follows:

Table 2: Details of Population and Sample

Name of the Department	Name of the Course	Duration of the course	Semester from which the samples were picked up			Semester from which the samples were picked up			Total No. of Sample from the course
				Population	Sample		Population	Sample	
Computer Science.	Five years Integrated M. Sc. Program in Computer Science	Five years	8 th	24	4	10th	24	4	8
	Two years M.Sc. Program in Computer Science	Two years	2 th	8	1	4 th	8	1	2
Agricultural Engineering.	Four years U.G. Program in Agricultural Engineering	Four years	6 th	42	6	8 th	43	6	12
Pharmaceutical Science.	Four years U.G. Program in Pharmaceutical Science	Four Years	6 th	37	5	8 th	37	5	10
Computer Science and Engineering.	Four years U.G. Program in Computer Science and engineering	Four years	6 th	39	5	8 th	39	5	10
Electronics and Communication Engineering.	Four Years U.G. Program in Electronics and Communication Engineering	Four years	6 th	22	3	8 th	24	4	7

Source: Office Records

In order to get the questionnaires filled up, the researcher made personal visits to gather quality responses from the respondents by describing and explaining the text

and/or language etc., of the questions in the questionnaire, whenever this was considered useful and necessary.

Tools and Techniques of Analysis: After collecting the primary data with the help of questionnaire the raw data were put in an excel sheet. Apart from frequency and percentage, statistical tools such as mean and standard deviation were used to address the requirements of second and third objectives of the study and interpret the same on that basis.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- The scope of the study is confined to the students of select professional courses of only one university, i.e., Assam University, Silchar.

LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study is devoted to the employment factors capable of alluring the students of professional course based on select employment factors and its components.
- The possibility of sampling error cannot be completely eliminated and hence the findings of the study may not reflect the preference level of the population concerned.

RELATIVE CAPABILITY OF THE EMPLOYMENT FACTORS

Table 4: Relative Capability of the Employment Factors in being able to lure the students

Factors	Mean	Rank	S. D.	Rank
Direct Monetary Benefits	20.20	1 st	8.658	8 th
Welfare Facilities	14.98	2 nd	7.965	7 th
Opportunities for Career Development	12.23	3 rd	4.764	4 th
Employment Conditions	11.94	4 th	5.789	6 th
Image of the Organization	10.99	5 th	5.169	5 th
Indirect Monetary Benefits	10.89	6 th	4.538	3 rd
Accessibility to Workplace	10.46	7 th	3.942	2 nd
Industry Type Firm Belongs to	8.31	8 th	3.423	1 st

Source: Field Survey

Note: Higher the mean score higher the rank and Lower the S. D. higher the rank

Key Findings from the table 4 are as follows:

Out of the eight factors, in terms of Degree of Influence – ‘Direct Monetary Benefits’ was ranked 1st with a mean score of 20.20 which got followed by ‘Welfare Facilities’ (14.98), ‘Opportunities for Career Development’ (12.23), ‘Employment Conditions’ (11.94), ‘Image of the Organization’ (10.99), ‘ Indirect Monetary Benefits (10.89) and ‘Accessibility to Workplace’ (10.46). The factor ‘Industry Type Firm Belongs to’ got the last rank i.e. 8th with a mean score of 8.31.

Out of the eight factors in terms of Degree of Dispersion – ‘Industry Type Firm Belongs to’ was ranked 1st with the lowest SD of 3.423, which got followed by ‘Accessibility to Workplace’ (3.942), ‘Indirect Monetary Benefits’ (4.538), ‘Opportunities for Career Development’ (4.764), ‘Image of the Organization’ (5.169), ‘Employment Conditions’ (5.789), and ‘Welfare Facilities’ (7.965). The factor ‘Direct Monetary Benefits’ got the last rank i.e. 8th with the highest SD of 8.658.

GENDER WISE DEGREE OF INFLUENCE

Table 5 Gender Wise Relative Capability of the Employment Factors in Luring Students

Factors	Male		Female	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Direct Monetary Benefits	20.00	9.574	20.56	7.048
Indirect Monetary Benefits	11.94	4.597	9.08	3.927
Accessibility to Workplace	10.48	3.949	10.42	4.045
Image of the Organization	11.63	5.586	9.89	4.283
Industry Type Firm Belongs to	8.26	3.336	8.39	3.664
Opportunities for Career Development	11.95	4.779	12.72	4.836
Employment Conditions	11.77	6.443	12.22	4.609
Welfare Facilities	13.97	7.618	16.72	8.463

Source: Field Survey

Note: Higher the mean score higher the rank and Lower the S. D. higher the rank

Key Findings from the table 5 are as follows:

- With regard to the factor 'Direct Monetary Benefits' it was found that females (20.56) felt more inclined towards the said factor than their male counterparts (20.00), which is evident from the mean score associated with them.
- With regard to the factor 'Indirect Monetary Benefits', males (11.94) were found more inclined than their female (9.08) counterparts, which is evident from the mean score associated with them.
- It is evident from the mean score, with regard to the factor 'Accessibility to Workplace', males (10.48) felt more influenced by the said factor than their female (10.42) counterparts.
- With regard to the factor 'Image of the Organization' males (11.63) were found more influenced than their female (9.89) counterpart which is evident from the mean score associated with them.

LOCATION OF PERMANENT RESIDENCE WISE DEGREE OF INFLUENCE**Table 6: Location of Permanent Residence Wise Relative Capability of the Employment Factors in Luring Students**

Factors	Rural		Semi-Urban		Urban		Metro	
	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.	Mean	S.D.
Direct Monetary Benefits	20.67	6.779	19.55	6.105	20.28	12.184	20.00	3.536
Indirect Monetary Benefits	9.00	2.803	11.23	4.009	11.94	5.461	12.00	5.701
Accessibility to Workplace	10.67	3.200	12.05	5.570	9.44	3.382	10.00	3.536
Image of the Organization	9.67	4.419	11.32	3.273	10.78	6.151	15.00	6.124
Industry Type Firm Belongs to	8.00	3.684	9.00	3.606	7.94	3.523	9.00	2.236
Opportunities for Career Development	13.00	5.278	11.32	3.951	13.06	5.093	9.00	2.236
Employment Conditions	12.33	4.169	14.09	4.908	10.28	4.483	12.00	13.038
Welfare Facilities	16.67	7.237	11.45	6.948	16.28	8.295	13.00	10.368

Source: Field Survey

Note: Higher the mean score higher the rank and Lower the S. D. higher the rank

Key Findings from the table 6 are as follows:**The mean score of degree of relative importance reveals that –**

- Out of four categories of the students, based on the nature of the area they belonged to, viz., metro, urban, semi-urban and rural, the students having their permanent residence in rural areas (20.67) were found influenced to the highest extent by the factor 'Direct Monetary Benefits' leaving behind the other three categories of residence i.e., urban (20.28), metro (20.00) and semi-urban (19.55).
- With regard to 'Indirect Monetary Benefits', the students having their permanent residence in metros (12.00) felt allured by this factor to the highest extent, out of the four categories of the students based on their permanent residence, relegating the students belonging to the remaining three i.e., urban (11.94), semi-urban (11.23) and rural (9.00) to lower positions.
- Out of four options over the nature of area the residents belonged to viz., metro, urban, semi-urban and rural, the students having the permanent residence in semi-urban areas (12.05) felt influenced by the factor 'Accessibility to Workplace' to the highest extent, out of the four categories of students based on their permanent residence, followed by rural (10.67), metro (10.00) and urban (9.44).
- With regard to the factor 'Industry Type Firm Belongs to' females (8.39) were 40 found more inclined towards this factor than their male (8.26) counterparts.
- With regard to the factor 'Opportunities for Career Development', the mean score reveals that the females (12.72) felt more influenced by the said factor than their male (11.95) counterparts.
- With regard to the factor 'Employment Conditions' females (12.22) were found to feel more influenced by the said factor than their male (11.77) counterparts.
- With regard to the factor 'Welfare Facilities' females (16.72) were found more inclined towards it than their males (13.97) counterparts, which is evident from the mean score associated with them.

felt allured by this factor to the highest extent, out of the four categories of students based on their permanent residence, relegating the students belonging to remaining three i.e. rural (12.33), metro (12.00) and urban (10.28) to lower positions.

- With regard to 'Welfare Facilities' the students having the permanent residence in rural areas (16.67) felt influenced by this factor to the highest extent, out of the four categories of students based on their permanent residence, followed by urban (16.28), metro (13.00) and semi-urban (11.45).

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The study aimed at identifying the employment factors capable of alluring the students of select U.G. and P.G. courses. The study also made an attempt to identify the relative capability of the select employment factors capable of alluring the students pursuing select courses from Assam University, Silchar as well as to compare the perceptions of students about the capability of these select employment factors on the basis of select demographic backgrounds.

In terms of degree of influence 'Direct Monetary Benefits' was ranked 1st and the factor 'Industry Type Firm Belongs to' was ranked last.

Between male and female, with regard to the factors such as 'Direct Monetary Benefits', 'Industry Type Firm Belongs to', 'Opportunities for Career Development', 'Employment Conditions' and 'Welfare Facilities', females felt more inclined towards the said factors than their male counterparts. Whereas, with regard to the factors 'Indirect Monetary Benefits', 'Accessibility to Workplace', and 'Image of the Organization' males were found more inclined than their female counterparts.

With regard to the factor Direct Monetary Benefits, the students belonging to the category of having their permanent residence in rural areas got influenced by this factor to the highest extent among the four categories of the students, leaving behind the other three categories of the respondents viz., urban, metro and semi-urban. With regard to the factor Indirect Monetary Benefits, the students having the permanent residence in metro cities got influenced by this factor to the highest extent followed by urban, semi-urban and rural. With

regard to the factor Accessibility to Workplace, the students having the 65 permanent residence in semi-urban got influenced by this factor to the highest extent followed by rural, metro and urban. With regard to the factor Image of the Organization, the students having the permanent residence in metro cities got influenced by this factor to the highest followed by semi-urban, urban and rural. With regard to the factor Industry Type Firm belongs to, the students having the permanent residence in metro cities and semi-urban areas got influenced by this factor to the highest extent among followed by rural and urban. With regard to the factor Opportunities for Career Development, the students having the permanent residence in urban areas got influenced by this factor to the highest extent among the four categories of students based on permanent residence followed by rural, semi-urban and metro. With regard to the factor Employment Conditions, the students having the permanent residence in semi-urban areas got influenced by this factor to the highest extent followed by rural, metro and urban. With regard to the factor Welfare Facilities, the students having the permanent residence in rural areas got influenced by this factor to the highest extent among the four categories of students based on permanent residence followed by urban, metro and semi-urban.

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