Evaluating the Influence of Leadership on Employer Branding in select IT companies in Chennai city

Dr S Rukmani
Associate Professor
PG & Research Department of Commerce
Shri Shankarlal Sundarbai Shasun Jain College for Women, Chennai, India
rukmani0415@gmail.com

Abstract— Increasing globalization, technological advancements and a shift in demographics have contributed to an increasingly changing and challenging labour market. In such a scenario where the labour market is marred by talent shortages, the employer brand allows employers to differentiate themselves and cut through the competitive clutter so that they can attract and retain the services of high value talented employees. Among the various dimensions of employer branding, leadership has emerged as a critical factor influencing employee perceptions and organizational attractiveness. This study examines IT employees' perceptions of workplace diversity as a construct of employer branding and analyses the relationship between employees' demographic profiles and their perceptions of diversity. Primary data were collected from 600 employees working in the top 20 IT companies ranked by NASSCOM using a structured questionnaire. Judgement sampling was adopted, and statistical tools such as percentage analysis, t-tests, and ANOVA were employed for data analysis. The findings reveal that IT employees exhibit a moderate level of satisfaction with leadership. While no significant differences were found across gender, age, job type and years of experience in the field, significant variations in perceptions of leadership were observed across marital status, educational qualification, designation, experience within the organisation, and income levels. The study highlights that employer branding is a dynamic, complex and ongoing process and leadership plays a crucial role in building the employer brand and sustain it in the years to come.

Index Terms— **Employer Branding, Leadership, IT Companies, IT employees** *(key words)*

I. INTRODUCTION

Today, we live in an environment, where increasing globalization, technological advancements and a shift in demographics have contributed to an increasingly changing and challenging labour market. Manpower Group's (2019) global study demonstrates that 54% of companies report a shortage in talent. Sievertzen et al (2013) observe that it has become normal for employees to switch jobs as a step forward in their careers which is challenging for organisations to retain employees. Another challenge is that employees have a lot of expectations from organisations and to fulfil them, the organisations have to go an extra mile where they must offer more than just a high salary to attract and retain employees (Foster Thompson and Aspinwall, 2009). Due to the increasing global talent shortage, organisations are looking for strategies to attract and retain potential and current employees (Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpe & Lievens, 2018). In such a scenario where the labour market is marred by talent shortages, the employer brand allows employers to differentiate themselves and cut through the competitive clutter so that they can attract and retain the services of high value talented employees.

Ambler & Barrow (1996) are credited as the creators of the term "Employer brand" and define it as "the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company". The authors used semi-structured interviews with top executives of 27 UK companies and found the relevance between employer branding and employment. By comparing with conventional brand, the authors further explained functional benefit as employee development and job roles, economic benefit as material or financial rewards and psychological benefits as feeling satisfaction and recognition. Employer brand is the level of attractiveness of the organisation to existing and potential employees (Schagler et al, 2011). Fernon (2008) sums up the power of the employer brand as "its ability to deliver organisational success by attracting and retaining the right people, providing an environment in which employees live the brand, improving organisational performance in key business areas of recruitment, retention, engagement and the bottom line and differentiating employers from each other, creating competitive advantage". Employer brand can be defined as the level of awareness and attractiveness created by providing unique experiences thanks to functional, economic and psychological benefits to attract talented potential employees including stakeholders and to retain existing employees (Kahraman & Duger, 2019).

"Employer branding represents a firm's efforts to promote, both within and outside the firm, a clear view of what makes it different and desirable as an employer. It is the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity, and the employer brand as a concept of the firm that differentiates it from its competitors" (Backhaus & Tikoo,2004). It is a long-term strategy aimed at managing the awareness and perceptions of current and potential employees and relevant stakeholders for a particular organisation (Sullivan, 2004). Employer branding is described as "the process explicitly designed to shape employees' expectations by establishing and nurturing an emotional connect to the firm" (Cairn, 2009, p.1205). At the heart of employer branding is the need to understand what it is like to work for an organisation, and what drives employees' desires to keep working for that organisation (Pallavi,2010). Employer branding starts inside the organisation; the way current employees perceive their organisation is the starting point of the concept (Barrow & Mosley, 2006). Employer branding is an emotional relationship that extends from an employer to the current employees as well as to all stakeholders of the organisation and to the community and potential employees (Ozgen & Akbayir, 2011).

Leadership is considered to be an important and crucial factor in the organisation's effectiveness. Leadership helps the organisation adapt to its environment and create the resources required to survive. Leadership can be understood as a process of mutual influence between leaders and employees, where the leader supports the employee to develop his or her competence and the organisation as a whole. Leadership drives the organisation, the individuals and the group forward, which is essential for an organisation's growth (Yukl, 1999). In today's world, it is imperative that a leader can attract, create development and commitment among the foremost and competent employees (Foster, Punjaisri & Cheng, 2010; Yukl, 1999). According to Ellström, Fogelber Eriksson, Kock and Wallo (2016), leadership is a process that focuses on learning, to develop employees' understanding of work tasks and the performance of the tasks. Andersson et al. (2020) describe that there are several dimensions in leadership and recent research indicates whether it is possible to talk about the leader as a person as there are many factors included in a practical leadership situation. Instead of identifying personal qualities that make a good leader, research points out that leadership is complex and dependent on the context.

II. Review Of Literature

Barrow and Mosley (2005) draw attention to the importance of leadership in the contribution of employer branding. They believe that leadership is an important part of the communication work to strengthen credibility and to spread the corporate "spirit" further which is connected with employer branding. Furthermore, they also explain that the nature of leadership is critical for the implementation of a successful employer brand and for that reason it is important for a leader to be aware of the leadership style they use. Through their commitment and involvement, leaders can influence the experience of employees towards employer brand.

Opportunities to work with 'thought leaders' plays a crucial role in employer branding leading to attraction and retention of employees. Managers are expected to exhibit credible behaviour so that human energies and intellect towards organisational goals in processed (Chebolu, 2006). Leadership competencies such as strategic thinking, effective communication, business and HR knowledge and leading change help in successful leveraging of the organisation's employer brand (SHRM,2010). The effectiveness of internal communication and the quality of leadership, factors relating to employer branding, play a vital role in employee retention (Kelly Services, 2010).

Strong leadership and relevant, engaging and timely communication are important for a strong employer brand. Internal social networks to communicate across the organisation and to facilitate knowledge sharing also helps in strengthening the employer brand (Minchington, 2010). Wallace et al (2011), in a study on 750 frontline employees of banks in Ireland, examine the influence of leadership and commitment as antecedents to adoption of organisational brand values by the employees using Confirmatory Factor Analysis and Structural Equation Modelling. Results indicate that leaders are important to values adoption as they encourage employees to believe in their brands' value and reward behaviours which support brand value adoption. It is also crucial that involvement of senior leadership in employer brand management is a prerequisite. In a study on the SME sector in Poland, Wziatek-Staisko (2013) finds that having good leadership leads to good employer branding resulting in the well-being of the organisation. Likewise, Sarabdeen (2011) finds that leadership support assumes greater importance in employer branding. According to Campbell (2002), a successful employer brand constantly delivers on promises and is sustained and augmented by leaders of the organisation.

Kashyap and Rangnekar (2016) investigate the sequential mediating effect of employer branding and servant leadership on 253 employees working in an Indian organisation. The authors opine that servant leadership style helps an organisation portray and communicate a positive organisational image as a unique employer brand among existing and potential employees. It also influences employee behaviour outcomes such as turnover intentions and positive social exchange. Sahu et al (2017) explain that transformational leadership contributes to employee engagement, employer branding and psychological attachment. In an empirical study on a sample of 405 employees of IT companies in India, transformational leadership, employee engagement, employer branding, and psychological attachment were assessed. The results reveal that transformational leadership and employer branding is mediated by employee engagement and leadership relation with psychological attachment is mediated by employer branding.

Matongolo et al (2018) examine the relationship between employer branding attributes of reward strategy, people orientedness and leadership and development on talent retention in higher education institutions in Uganda. Results obtained from 218 respondents using confirmatory factor analysis and structural equation modelling indicate that three dimensions of reward strategy, people orientedness and leadership and development were maintained as employer branding attributes. According to Kahraman & Duger (2019), leadership plays a vital role in the accuracy and sustainability of the employer brand. A leader connects followers with the organisational culture and values. Thus, employees having high brand loyalty and organisational commitment are created. A leader, therefore holds the most important role in the employer brand process by exhibiting brand ambassador behaviours.

The study of Zeeshan et al. (2020) indicates that employer branding and transformational leadership are unified, as the purpose of transformational leadership is to retain loyal employees and to create a good reputation for the organisation, which is the premise upon which employer branding rests. The authors reveal that transformational leadership positively influences corporate reputation. Transformational leaders involve employees in the decision-making process and thus increases their positive assessment of the organisation by feeling more comfortable at work. They stress that organisations should focus on their leadership and employer branding to attract and retain talent and to be able to create a long-term good reputation. Jain (2020) links the role of leadership in the development of a strong employer brand by studying the various constructs of employer branding. Specifically, five important factors of employer branding were extracted, namely organisational fit, perceived organisational reputation, leadership and transparency, strong management, and work atmosphere.

Moller Almasidou (2021) establishes a strong connection between leadership and employer branding. Leadership affects employer branding, both at the organisational level and individual level. Results of the study indicate that leaders contribute to employer branding through working with the organisational culture, its values and vision, creating meaning in the work of employees and focusing on communication and development opportunities. This impacts the employer branding as it leads to positive employment experience which in turn affects the attraction and retention of the employees.

Vo et al (2025) investigate the mediating role of employer branding on leadership and organisational identification on a sample of 252 faculty and staff members of one of Vietnam's public universities using partial least squares structural equation

modelling. Results indicate that transformational leadership boosts employer branding and organisational identification, offering fresh insights into leadership and organisational behaviour in higher education. Novita & Hermina (2025) aim to determine the effect of employer branding and leadership style on employee turnover and employee engagement with employee experience as a mediating variable. Results using Partial Least Squar Structural Equation Modeling analysis on 252 respondents indicate that Leadership style is more effective in enhancing employee engagement through employee experience and employee experience substantially mediates employer branding and employee engagement. Onsten & Pilengrim (2025) investigate the role of leadership in the development of an employer brand through a case study of the consulting firm Accenture. The authors use a qualitative method based on semi-structured interviews to examine how leadership influences employer branding. The results indicates that leadership should not be understood as an individual quality, but as a relational and contextual process shaped by structure, culture, and interaction. The study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of the role of leadership in employer branding, which is viewed as a collective, dynamic, and evolving process.

III. Research Objectives

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

1. To analyze the perceptions of IT employees towards leadership as a construct of employer branding.
2. To find out the relationship between demographic profile of IT employees and their perceptions towards leadership.

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 0.88 for the construct leadership.

V. Results and Discussion

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

Table 1: Mean and Standard Deviation of Leadership in IT companies

Leadership	Mean	SD
The leaders inspire and motivate the employees.	4.35	1.03
Opportunity to work with thought leaders.	3.71	1.31
Systematic succession planning.	4.11	1.26
Ethical leadership.	4.09	1.32
Competent managers.	4.43	1.08
Visibility and accessibility of leaders.	4.30	1.20
Visionary leaders.	4.30	1.12

Source: Primary data

The mean and SD of Leadership in IT companies reveals that "Competent managers" has the highest mean score of 4.43 followed by "The leaders inspire and motivate the employees" with mean score of 4.35 and two statements, "Visibility and accessibility of leaders" and "Visionary leaders" share the third position with mean score of 4.30. The least important item is "Opportunity to work with thought leaders" with 3.71 mean score. This implies that the IT employees are highly satisfied with their managers being competent, the visibility and accessibility of leaders and the leaders' capability to inspire and motivate the employees. The IT employees are moderately satisfied with the opportunities to work with thought leaders.

Maximum numbers of employees agree that they have competent managers. This is due to the fact that promotion as managers is based only on competence and not on seniority. The leaders of the organisation inspire and motivate employees in many ways. Leaders' achievements at their personal level and team level are high due to which employees are inspired. Intrinsic motivators like appreciations, praise, and recognition are higher. The leaders of IT organisations adopt an informal way of working. They do not sit in their ivory towers; they step in when there are critical issues. These visionary leaders have guided the industry on a growth trajectory and have taken their organisation to the next level.

Although studies have revealed that leaders do not lead by example or be a role model to their employees (Employer Branding Survey, 2008), it is proved otherwise in this study due to global HR practices. It is interesting to note that most employees feel that they are not given opportunities to work with thought leaders. Normally, thought leaders strongly advocate succession planning and draw up plans to incorporate the same in their work structure. Hence, all employees may not get a chance to work with them. However, their ideas can cascade down to the lowest level which can motivate and inspire employees. A study conducted by Harvard Business Review (2014) also reveals that employees with a leader who communicated a clear and inspiring vision were 70% more satisfied with their jobs and 100% more likely to stay with their organisations.

Table 2: Frequency distribution of Level of Leadership

Level of Creativity	Frequency	Percent
Low	156	26.0
Moderate	291	48.5
High	153	25.5
Total	600	100.0

Source: Primary data

The above table reveals the levels of satisfaction of IT employees on Leadership. 48.0% of the sample respondents are moderately satisfied with the level of leadership.

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

H_0: There is no significant difference between demographic variables and leadership

Table 3: t test for significant differences between demographic variables and leadership

Demographic variable	t value	p value
Gender	1.166	0.244
Marital status	2.348	0.019

Source: Primary data

There is no significant difference between male and female respondents with regard to the dimension of Leadership, since P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted with regard to Leadership. The results indicate that with regard to the above dimension of employer branding, both male and female employees feel the same way. In a study conducted by Babcanova (2010), work life balance and work environment were important for women; leadership and culture were important for men, which is also partially supported in this study. Since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level of significance with regard to Leadership. Hence, there is a significant difference between married and single employees with regard to Leadership.

Table 4: ANOVA for significant differences between demographic variables and leadership

Demographic variable	F value	P value
Age in years	1.010	0.365
Educational qualification	6.209	0.002
Designation	2.988	0.050
Job type	0.051	0.951
Years of experience in the industry	1.013	0.364
Years of experience in the organisation	6.680	0.001
Monthly income	6.786	<0.001

Source: Primary data

There is no significant difference between age groups with regard to dimensions of Leadership, since P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted with regard to dimension of Leadership. Employees of different age groups feel the same way with regard to this dimension of employer branding. Since P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level with regard to the dimension of Leadership. Hence, there is significant difference between educational qualifications of IT employees with regard to this dimension. Since P value is less than 0.05, the null hypothesis is rejected at 5% level with regard to Leadership. Hence, there is a significant difference among employees of different designations regarding the above cited dimension. There is no significant difference between job types of IT employees with regard to the dimension of Leadership, since P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted with regards this dimension of employer branding. Results indicate that this dimension is important to employees of different job types and employers would benefit if it is strengthened in their employer brand. There is no significant difference between employees having different years of experience in the field with regard to the dimensions of Leadership, since P value is greater than 0.05. Hence, the null hypothesis is accepted. Regardless of the years of experience the employees gain, this was the dimensions that they give importance to during the entire period of their careers. Since P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level for the dimensions of Leadership. Hence, there is a significant difference between employees having different years of experience in the organisation with regard to this dimension of employer branding. Since P value is less than 0.01, the null hypothesis is rejected at 1% level with regard to the dimensions of Leadership. Hence, there is a significant difference between Monthly Income of employees with regard to the stated construct.

VI. Conclusion

In the constantly changing environment, an organisation's ability to attract and retain talent is vital for its success and long-term sustainability. In order to accomplish this, organisations must adopt employer branding strategies that communicate an attractive image of the workplace to various stakeholders. 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. Companies with strong employer brand will capitalise their competitive advantage which is vital in the highly competitive business environment. The main objective of an employer brand is in creating a workforce-friendly image of the employer which is institutionalised into a process of healthy working relationship between an organisation and its employees. Employer branding is a dynamic, complex and ongoing process. Here, leadership plays a crucial role in building the employer brand and sustain it in the years to come.

References

[1] Ambler, T., & Barrow, S. (1996). The employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, *4*(3), 185–206.
[2] Andersson, T., Crevani, L., Eriksson-Zetterquist, U., & Tengblad, S. (2020). *Chefskap, ledarskap och medarbetarskap*. Studentlitteratur.
[3] Babcanova, D., Babcan, M., & Odlerova, E. (2010). Employer branding: Source of competitiveness of the industrial plants. *Research Papers, Faculty of Materials Science and Technology in Trnava*, 20, 55–61.

[4] Backhaus, K., & Tikoo, S. (2004). Conceptualising and researching employer branding. *Career Development International, 9*(4/5), 501–517.
[5] Barrow, S., & Mosley, R. (2005). *The employer brand: Bringing the best of brand management to people at work*. Wiley.
[6] Cairn, M. G. (2009). *Managing identity: Buying into the brand at work* (Working Paper No. 09-10-01). Washington University School of Law.
[7] Campbell, M. C. (2002). Building brand equity. *International Journal of Medical Marketing, 2*(3), 208–218.
[8] Chebolu, R. M. (2006). Making of employers' brand: The relevance of human intellect and energies. *HRM Review*, June, 16–23.
[9] Ellström, P.-E., Fogelberg Eriksson, A., Kock, H., & Wallo, A. (2016). *Mot ett förändrat ledarskap? Om chefers arbete och ledarskap i ett organisationsperspektiv* (2nd ed.). Studentlitteratur.
[10] Fernon, D. (2008). Maximising the power of the employer brand. *Admap, 43*, 49–53.
[11] Foster, C., Punjaisri, K., & Cheng, R. (2010). Exploring the relationship between corporate, internal and employer branding. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 19*(6), 401–409. https://doi.org/10.1108/10610421011085712
[12] Foster Thompson, L., & Aspinwall, K. R. (2009). The recruitment value of work/life benefits. *Personnel Review, 38*(2), 195–210. https://doi.org/10.1108/00483480910931343
[13] Jain, S. (2020). The role of leadership in developing a strong employer brand. *International Journal of Business and Globalisation, 26*(3), 191–202.
[14] Kahraman, H., & Düger, Y. S. (2019). The role of human resource management, leadership, and marketing in employer brand. *Interdisciplinary Public Finance, Business and Economics Studies, 2*, 319–328.
[15] Kashyap, V., & Rangnekar, S. (2016). Servant leadership, employer brand perception, trust in leaders and turnover intentions: A sequential mediation model. *Review of Managerial Science, 10*, 437–461.
[16] Kelly Services. (2010). *Building a strong employer brand at all times for a sustainable organisation*.
[17] ManpowerGroup. (2019). *Closing the skills gap: What workers want*.
[18] Matongolo, A., Kasekende, F., & Mafabi, S. (2018). Employer branding and talent retention: Perceptions of employees in higher education institutions in Uganda. *Industrial and Commercial Training, 50*(5), 217–233. https://doi.org/10.1108/ICT-03-2018-0031
[19] Minchington, B. (2010). Employer branding needs good leadership. *HR Future*, September, 84–85.
[20] Möller Almasidou, D. (2021). *Leadership in the internal employer branding process: A hermeneutic study from a managerial perspective*.
[21] Novita, R., & Hermina, N. (2025). The influence of internal employer branding and leadership styles in increasing employee engagement: The mediating effect on employee experience. *Almana: Jurnal Manajemen Dan Bisnis, 9*(1), 76–89. https://doi.org/10.36555/almana.v9i1.2777
[22] Özgen, E., & Akbayır, Z. (2011). İletişim yaklaşımıyla bir değer önermesi: İşveren markalaması. *Erciyes İletişim Dergisi, 2*(1).
[23] Sahu, S., Pathardikar, A., & Kumar, A. (2018). Transformational leadership and turnover: Mediating effects of employee engagement, employer branding, and psychological attachment. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 39*(1), 82–99. https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-12-2014-0243
[24] Sarabdeen, J., El-Rakhawy, N., & Khan, H. N. (2011). Employer branding in selected companies in United Arab Emirates. *Communications of the IBIMA*. https://doi.org/10.5171/2011.228533
[25] Schlager, T., Bodderas, M., Maas, P., & Cachelin, J. L. (2011). The influence of the employer brand on employee attitudes relevant for service branding. *Journal of Services Marketing, 25*(7), 497–508.
[26] SHRM. (2010). *Employer brand in India: A strategic HR tool*.
[27] Sivertzen, A.-M., Nilsen, E. R., & Olafsen, A. H. (2013). Employer branding: Employer attractiveness and the use of social media. *Journal of Product & Brand Management, 22*(7), 473–483. https://doi.org/10.1108/JPBM-09-2013-0393
[28] Sullivan, J. (2004). Eight elements of a successful employment brand. *ER Daily, 23*, 501–517.
[29] Theurer, C. P., Tumasjan, A., Welpe, I. M., & Lievens, F. (2018). Employer branding: A brand equity-based literature review and research agenda. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 20*(1), 155–179. https://doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12121
[30] Vo, A. H. K., Pham, L. N. T., Nguyen, D. T., & Ha, M. H. (2025). Leadership styles, internal employer branding and organizational identification: Insights from Vietnam. *Asia-Pacific Journal of Business Administration*, 1–18.
[31] Wallace, E., de Chernatony, L., & Buil, I. (2011). How leadership and commitment influence bank employees' adoption of their bank's values. *Journal of Business Ethics, 101*, 397–414. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-010-0728-2
[32] Wziatek-Staisko, A. (2013). Leadership in SME sector: How it can create employer branding in regions? *Human Resources – The Main Factor of Regional Development*, 5, 321–330.
[33] Yukl, G. (1999). An evaluation of conceptual weaknesses in transformational and charismatic leadership theories. *The Leadership Quarterly, 10*(2), 285–305.