Exploring the dimensions of Employee Branding: A study of Organized Retail Sector

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Abstract

Employee branding is new concept taken from the marketing which constitutes the essence of HR marketing. Employee Branding can be defined as "the image projected by employees through their work behavior, attitude and actions". It is a process of training employees and making them understand their responsibilities and duties with proper motivational factors to reach and build good brand image of the organization in front of the customer. The main aim of this paper is to explore dimensions of employee branding strategies in organized retail sector. For the purpose of this study data has been collected from 300 employees of organized retail sector through a structured questionnaire from Delhi-NCR. Research Design is used for this study is descriptive cum exploratory in nature. Descriptive, Factor Analysis (Exploratory factor analysis and confirmatory factor analysis) were carried out to explore the dimension of employee branding strategies. Six factors were extracted from this study namely: Job Satisfaction, Training and Development, Communication, Performance Appraisal, Work environment and Employee Participation.

Keywords: Employee branding, Perception, HR marketing

Introduction

Employee branding is a strategic approach that emphases on aligning employees' behaviors, values, and attitudes with the organizational brand identity to create a cohesive brand experience for clients and investors (Miles & Mangold, 2004). Unlike employer branding, which aims to attract and retain talent by positioning the company as an ideal workplace, employee branding emphasizes how employees represent and personify the brand in their interactions, thereby influencing customer perceptions and experiences (Miles & Mangold, 2005). This concept has gained significant attention in the modern corporate world as businesses recognize the role of employees as brand ambassadors who contribute to brand equity and organizational success (Agarwal, 2010).

The origins of employee branding can be outlined back to the internal marketing and organizational identity theories, which emphasize the importance of employees in delivering brand promises. Internal marketing posits that employees should be treated as internal customers whose engagement and motivation are crucial for delivering consistent brand experiences (King & Grace, 2005). Organizational identity theory, on the other hand, recommends that employees who strongly identify with their organization are more likely to exhibit brand-supporting behaviors (Kimpakorn & Tocquer, 2010). These theoretical perspectives underscore the need for organizations to invest in employee branding initiatives that foster alignment between employees' values and the brand identity. Several studies have explored the impact of employee branding on organizational outcomes. Erkmen (2018) highlighted the role of organizational processes in cultivating employee brand equity, which mentions to employees' ability to internalize and project the brand's values. Similarly, Garas, Mahran, and Mohamed (2018) concluded that internal corporate branding efforts significantly influence employees' brand-supporting behaviors, such as brand advocacy and loyalty. This aligns with the findings of King, Grace, and Funk (2012), who developed a scale for measuring employee brand equity and highlighted its importance in driving organizational performance.

Culture and identity are interconnected concepts that play a crucial role in shaping an organization's employee branding. An organization's identity is deeply embedded within its culture, serving as a self-focused aspect of sense-making that defines who the organization is within the broader social system (Hatch & Schultz, 2000). Kornberger (2010) describes identity as "identities-in-action" that provide stability while enabling change, highlighting the dynamic nature of identity within a brand. He also emphasizes that culture manifests through the behaviors of organizational members, indicating that culture is the visible and audible expression of how things are done within a company. While culture encompasses the ingrained behaviors and norms within an organization, identity pertains to the organization's mission, vision, name, logo, and overall representation. Culture and identity, though distinct, are interwoven and collectively contribute to the company brand, defining what the organization is and what it stands for (Schein, 2010). Employee branding, often referred to as employer branding, has emerged as a strategic concept that blends human resource management with marketing principles to create a distinctive image of an organization. Employee branding plays a crucial role in shaping employee behavior, loyalty by creating a sense of pride and connection to the organization (King & Grace, 2010). Employee branding represents a novel approach shaping employees' behaviors to project the brand identity through their everyday work. Ferrara (2005) highlights that organizations are implementing employee branding strategies as a means to mitigate employee turnover. These strategies aim to recruit suitable candidates who align with the company& culture and possess the necessary qualifications, hence reducing the need for subsequent employee replacements. The recruiters that demonstrate the highest level of effectiveness possesses the ability to present their organizations as employers that furnish an outstanding work environment and deliver benefits that surpass just monetary compensation. Developing an employee brand message that effectively attracts high-caliber applicants commence by prioritizing the key aspects that workers want in an optimal work environment, including competitive compensation and benefits, reasonable workloads, a harmonious work-life balance, attractive prospects for career growth and progress. Precisely articulating the employee brand message and providing explicit details on the nature of the offered experience will facilitate the attraction of suitable applicants who align with the organizational culture.

Literature Review

Sharma & Verma (2023) investigate the effects of "employee branding and employer branding" in multinational corporations operating outside national borders within the context of globalization. The prevalence of a MNCs culture in India is extensive, fostering an employee-centric ideology via the provision of comprehensive amenities for the workforce. Employee branding is a recently coined concept within the service

sector that underscores the significance of internal marketing efforts inside a firm in shaping its external reputation. India exhibits a notable representation of service industries, ranking among the top 10 globally. According to statistics gathered by the World Bank in 2020, the percentage of workers employed in the service industry in India exceeds 32.33%. This significant number of people engaged in various industries raises concerns regarding a company's policies. The study was carried out on a sample of 204 participants employed in MNCs located in Gurugram, India. This study aims to provide valuable insights for HR managers in enhancing HR policies and fostering a positive organizational culture. Additionally, it seeks to explore strategies for strengthening employee branding, ultimately contributing to the achievement of organizational goals and desired success.

Quaratino & Mazzei (2018) examine the impact of managerial practices on the encouragement of employee brand consistent behavior. Drawing upon a freshly developed and broad structure of behavioral branding, this study told that a wide array of management methods plays a significant role in the process of brand creation. The study focused on the communication strategies executives see to be successful in ensuring employee behavior aligns with the brand. An investigation was conducted that employed a multi-method research technique, which was thorough and wide in nature. The choice of many approaches was largely influenced by the unique characteristics of the two cohorts being examined, specifically communication managers and employees. The study suggests that strategies emphasizing enablement provide more effectiveness compared to those emphasizing communication in terms of upholding workers' role as brand ambassadors. In competitive environments, the attitudes of employees towards brand ambassadorship, which is seen as a very pertinent activity for maintaining employee brand consistency, may be impeded by many notable contextual factors. Instead of depending on rigid protocols for in-role conduct, organizations can adopt approaches that enable workers to demonstrate genuine and voluntary actions. Moreover, it is imperative for firms to dedicate significant resources to the

cultivation of a favorable work environment that promotes employee dedication, motivation, and synchronization with external communication endeavors.

Singh, M. (2012) examined the past, present and future of the employee branding through talent management for customer satisfaction. This study has taken a wide view of talent management as the biggest challenges before the HR professionals in today's world is to retain the talent and maintain a motivated and contended workforce for satisfied customers. Researchers revealed that due to the cut throat competition in the era of globalization, organizations have to focus on management of skilled employee, talented workers and knowledge workers retention and motivation of the best talents through employee branding.

Kimpakorn & Tocquer (2009) conducted an investigation into the concepts of employee branding and workers' brand loyalty within the context of the hostel sector. "Employee brand commitment" refers to the degree to which employees perceive a sense of affiliation and engagement with the brand values of their employing organization. This study investigates the procedure of establishing a robust brand within the cognitive framework of employees, with the objective of effectively identifying and attracting top-tier individuals, and ultimately ensuring their continued engagement and loyalty to the firm. Additionally, it is evident that there has been limited research conducted thus far on the manner in which employees see the brand with which they are associated. The study has reached the conclusion that employees' perception of the brand they are associated with, as well as their good experience with HR procedures inside the firm, have a significant role in fostering emotional commitment among employees. To enhance employee brand commitment, it is crucial to prioritize both tactical and operational efforts in the following manner: Maintaining regular communication with employees and understanding their demands is crucial to ensuring that these needs are effectively addressed and maybe surpassed. The company aims to give consumers with value-added features and continuously deliver services of high quality. Employees demonstrate higher levels of

commitment to the brand when the brand consistently exceeds consumer expectations in its delivery.

Roy (2009) in their study stated that the implementation of an employee branding strategy begins with the recruiting and hiring procedures, aiming to establish an optimal alignment the organization and its employees. Numerous firms employ a diverse range of recruiting and hiring methodologies, including the utilization of advertising materials, screening processes, and assessment techniques. In order to attract suitable candidates who align well with their firm, and to promote the unique characteristics of the organizational culture and environment that set it apart for a competitive edge, employers aim to target preferred applicants. The findings of the study indicate that it is advisable for organizations to primarily rely on subjective data rather than objective data when conducting performance assessments. Additionally, the study suggests that the performance appraisal method should effectively align with the organization intended measurements. In addition to recognizing the significance of performance assessments and training programs, it is imperative to emphasize the integration of the performance assessment system with broader organizational development initiatives.

Miles and Mangold (2004) described the term 'employee branding' as 'the process by which employees internalize the desired brand image and were motivated to project the image to customer and other organizational constituents. Thus, the similarity between the concept of internal branding and employee branding is that employees are expected to behave in alignment with the brand. Employee branding is used by the organizations to guide or shape employee's behavior and internal marketing activities are done in order to motivate employees to support the brand.

Research Methodology

This research study aimed to explore the factors of employee branding strategies. Research Design is used for this study is descriptive cum exploratory in nature. Data was collected from a sample of 300 employees of organized retail sector of Delhi-NCR (Delhi, Gurugram, Faridabad, Noida). Both primary and secondary data were used. The primary data is collected through a self-structured questionnaire on 5point Likert scale. The study used a convenience sampling method. For data analysis Descriptive statistics, Factor analysis is used. The data has been analyzed with the help of the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS). Six factors were identified using factor analysis such as Job Satisfaction, Work Environment, Performance Appraisal, Communication, Training and Development and Employee Participation.

Data Analysis and Interpretation

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Descriptive Statistics		Frequency	percentage	Mean	S. D	Skewness	Kurtosis
Gender	Male	192	64				
	Female	108	36				
	Total	300		1.36	0.481	0.586	-1.667
Age	Below 20	25	8.3				
	21-30	223	74.3				
	31-40	49	16.3				
	41-50	3	1				
	Total	300		2.10	.527	.525	1.746
Marital Status	Unmarried	159	53				
	Married	141	47				
	Total	300		1.47	.500	.500	-1.999
Education	Up to High School	68	22.7				
	Diploma	104	34.7				
	Bachelor's degree	119	39.7				
	Master's degree	9	3				
	Total	300		2.23	.832	-.138	-.996

Descriptive Statistics		Frequency	percentage	Mean	S. D	Skewness	Kurtosis
Experience	Less than 5 years	199	66.3				
	6-10 years	85	28.3				
	11-15 years	13	4.3				
	More than 15 years	3	1				
	Total	300		1.40	.623	1.555	1.374

Demographic classification of respondents under various categories like gender, age, marital status, education and experience is presented in table 1. All statements skewness and kurtosis values fall within the range of -2 to +2. The statistics fall near the normal distribution when the skewness and kurtosis values are within -2 and +2 i.e. there is no problem in the data. The table shows that out of 300 respondents 192 (64%) are male and 108 (36%) are female. The majority of the respondents fall under the 21-30 age category which is (223) 74.3 %, 49 (16.3%) respondents are under the range of 31- 40, 25 (8.3%) respondents are in the range of below 20 and 3(1%) respondents are under in the range of 41-50. With regards to marital status majority of the respondent i.e. 159 (53%) fall in the category of unmarried where 141 (47%) are married. Out of 300 respondents 68 (22.7%) are up to high school, 104 (34.7%) are diploma holder, 119 (39.7%) respondents are bachelor's degree holder, 9 (3%) are Master's degree holder.

Table 2: Reliability Statistics

Reliability Statistics	
Cronbach's Alpha	N of Items
.866	29

Source: Researcher's Calculation through SPSS

Table 2 shows the reliability statistics of the employee branding strategies of the employees in the organized retail sector. The alpha value should be greater than .7 (Nunnally,1967) and here the alpha value is .866 which is good. It is the proof of reliability of the data.

Exploratory Factor Analysis

It is a statistical method used to reveal the underlying structure of a relatively large set of variables. This technique is used to reduce the data to a smaller set of summary variables and to explore the underlying theoretical structure of the phenomena.

Table 3: KMO and Bartlett's Test & Communalities

KMO and Bartlett's Test		
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.		.890
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	6303.374
	df	406
	Sig.	.000

Source: Researcher's Calculation through SPSS

Table 3 depicts KMO value (.890) which clarify that sample was adequate for applying factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of sphericity with chi-square value of 6303.374 and 406 degrees of freedom justify that variables are correlated with each other.

Table 4: Total Variance Explained

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	7.645	26.362	26.362	7.645	26.362	26.362	4.633	15.976	15.976
2	5.221	18.004	44.367	5.221	18.004	44.367	3.843	13.253	29.229
3	2.839	9.791	54.157	2.839	9.791	54.157	3.456	11.918	41.147
4	2.461	8.485	62.642	2.461	8.485	62.642	3.263	11.253	52.400
5	2.098	7.233	69.875	2.098	7.233	69.875	3.167	10.920	63.320
6	1.227	4.230	74.106	1.227	4.230	74.106	3.128	10.786	**74.106**
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Source: Researcher's Calculation through SPSS

In Table 4, Six factors were identified, accounting for 74.106% of the total variation, much above the permitted maximum limit of 60% (Hair et.al., 2010) and (Malhotra and Dash, 2010). Researcher used Varimax rotation in exploratory factor analysis. It shows that from the table that the first principal component explains 15.976%, second component explain 29.229%, third component explain 41.147%, fourth component explain 52.400%, fifth component explain 63.320%, and sixth component explains 74.106% of the total variance.

Table 5: Rotated Component Matrix

Rotated Component Matrix a						
Items/Variables	Component					
	1	2	3	4	5	6
My manager helps me to understand the individual as well as organizational goals.	.873					
I feel proud to be part of the organization.	.862					
I enjoy the work I do in my organization.	.822					
My job gives me the feelings of accomplished and pride.	.819					
I am fully aware about my organization goals and policies.	.805					
I feel empowered at work.	.802					
I feel training helps to do job effectively and efficiently		.880				
Training helps in confidence building, leadership, personality development.		.872				
Training helps to acquire appropriate skills in delivering the brand promise.		.871				
Organization provides adequate training to perform my job.		.857				
Conduct various workshops and seminars.		.798				
Transparency in communication helps to fill the communication gap between manager and employees.			.883			
Encourages two ways communications.			.863			
During team meetings, clearly informed about the vision and mission.			.831			
Conflicts and grievances are handled appropriately through proper communication channel.			.792			

Rotated Component Matrix a						
Items/Variables	**Component**					
	1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**6**
Satisfied with the rewards and recognition policies of the organization.				.836		
Satisfied with the continuous feedback on the work performance.				.822		
Recognize my efforts and appreciate my work.				.819		
Recommend my company to my friends and family.				.784		
Carefully listen to my ideas and implements					.818	
Formal and informal relationship between employees and the seniors.					.805	
Offers monetary as well as non - monetary benefits.					.803	
Motivates to come up with suggestions.					.750	
Encouraged to make my own decisions regarding the daily work.					.730	
Organization does its best to ensure employees health.						.816
Responsibility and roles are clearly defined.						.795
Job has definite and fixed working hours.						.764
Satisfied with my job.						.753
Workplace is physically comfortable, well maintained and ventilated.						.698
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis. Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.						
a. Rotation converged in 6 iterations.						

Source: Researcher's Calculation through SPSS

The rotated component matrix provides factors loading which signified the importance of the items to the particular factors. Researchers used threshold value 0.4 while running EFA for each statement. The rescaled factor loading shows "Job Satisfaction" as the first factor having factors loading .873, .862, .822, .819, .805, .802, "Training and Development" as the second factor having factors loadings as .880, .872, .871, .857, .798, "Communication" as the third factor having factors loadings as .883, .863, .831, .792, "Performance appraisal" as the fourth factor having factors loadings as .836, .822, .819, .784, "Employees Participation" as the fifth factor having factors loadings as .818, .805, .803, .750, .730, "Work Environment" as the sixth factor having factors loadings as .816, .795, .764, .753, .698.

Table 6: Reliability Analysis: Factor wise

Biases	No. of Statements	Cronbach Alpha
Job Satisfaction	6	.926
Work Environment	5	.843
Performance Appraisal	4	.935
Communication	4	.941
Training and Development	5	.923
Employee Participation	5	

Source: Researcher's Calculation through SPSS

The researchers have adopted a self-structured questionnaire. So, testing the reliability of the questionnaire was imperative. The reliability analysis showed that the value of Cronbach's Alpha was .926 for job satisfaction, .843 for work environment, .935 for Performance Appraisal, .941 for Communication, .923 for Training and Development, .850 for Employee Participation. Cronbach's Alpha value higher than 0.70 (Hair et.al., 2010) denote internal consistency of the scale items.

Factor Analysis Result

After Applying the Exploratory Factor Analysis. Six factors have been extracted. These factors are based on the rotated component matrix. Factor 1(Job Satisfaction) comprised of 6 Statements with factor loadings ranging from .873 to .802. Factor 2 (Training and development) comprised of 5 statements with factor loading from .880 to .798, Factor 3 (Communication) comprised of 4 statements with factor loading from .883 to .792, Factor 4 (Performance Appraisal) comprised of 4 statements with factor loading from .836 to .784, Factor5 (Employee Participation) comprised of 5 statements with factor loading from .818 to .730, Factor 6 (Work Environment) comprised of 5 statements with factor loading from .816 to .698.

Confirmatory Factor Analysis

CFA helps to test the relationship between observed variables and their underlying latent constructs (Suhr, 2006). From EFA constructs were identified, now through CFA, these constructs, were confirmed by using AMOS software. CFA is basically is used for verifying the validity of a first factor model assess the significance of a specific factor loading, to test whether a set of factors are correlated or not correlated, test the multi co- linearity between the constructs and assess the convergent and discriminant validity of assets of measures (DeCoster,1998).

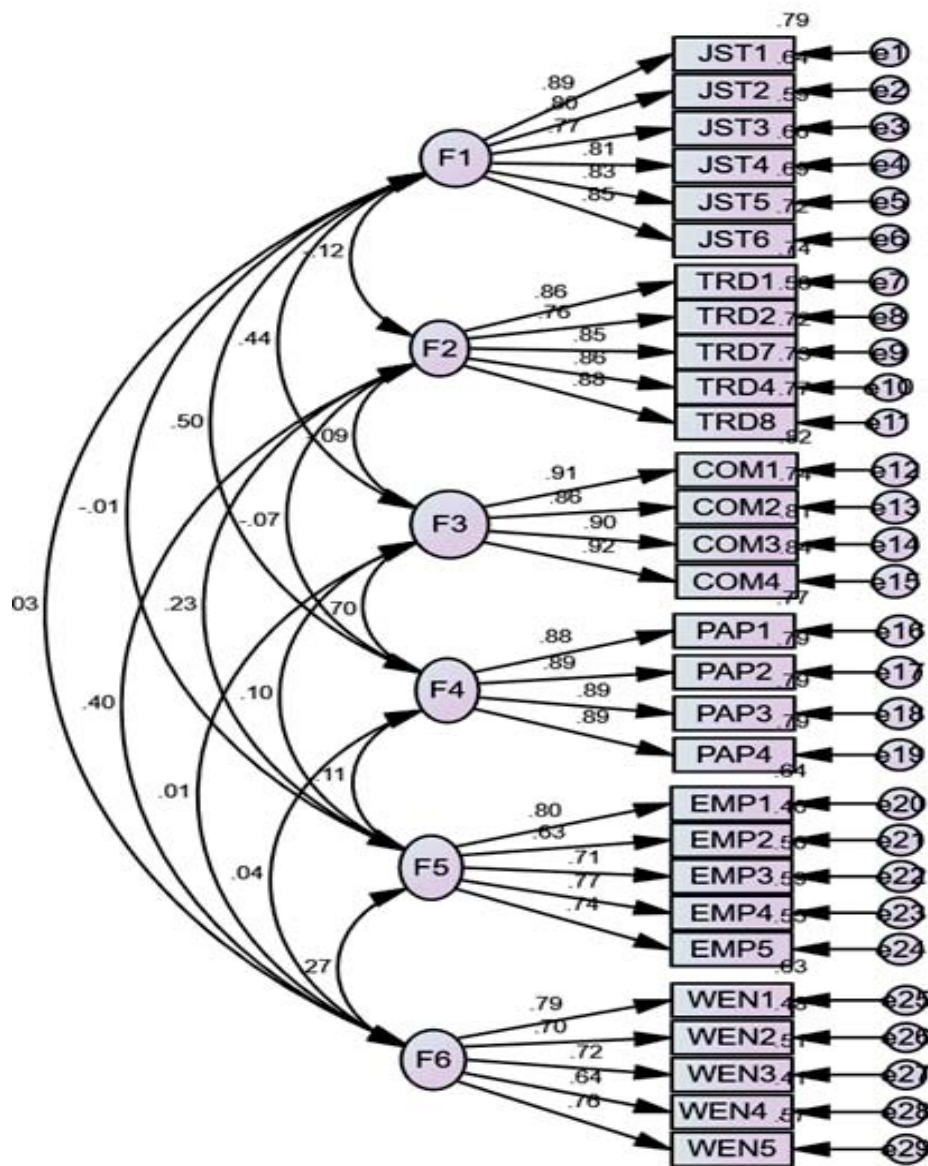**Table 7 Validity and Reliability Measures of Final Measurement Model of Employee Branding Strategies**

Measured Variables	Constructs	MSV	CR	AVE	F1	F2	F3	F4	F5	F6
F1	Job Satisfaction	0.253	0.928	0.681	**0.825**					
F2	Training and Development	0.159	0.925	0.711	-0.123	**0.843**				
F3	Communication	0.493	0.942	0.803	0.437***	-0.088	**0.896**			
F4	Performance Appraisal	0.493	0.935	0.784	0.503***	-0.072	0.702***	**0.885**		
F5	Employee Participation	0.074	0.852	0.537	-0.014	0.228***	0.095	0.107	**0.733**	
F6	Work Environment	0.159	0.844	0.522	0.034	0.399***	0.013	0.038	0.272***	**0.722**

Sources: Researcher's calculation through Stats Tool Package

The Above table 7 shows the value of CR, AVE, MSV, and ASV. It is very clearly depicted that all above mentioned conditions of convergent validity and discriminant validity are satisfied. Hence, it can be concluded that constructs are valid in terms of convergent validity and discriminant validity. The value of CR is must be greater than 0.7 and less than 0.9 and AVE should be greater than 0.5 and CR must be greater than AVE. (Fornell & Larcker, 1981)

Figure 1 Path Diagram for the Final Measurement CFA Model- "Employee Branding Strategies"

The Figure 1 shows the constructs of employee branding which extracted from EFA. Here, ellipse shape represents all the latent variables, item/observed variables are shown in rectangular box and error terms (e1 to e29) are shown in small circle. The standardized regression weights are shown above the arrows connecting from latent variable to items/ observed variables. The double-sided arrow known as covariance signifies the correlation between the latent variables which are extracted from EFA technique.

Table 8 - Model Fit Indices and its Threshold values

Measures	Estimates/Result	Threshold	Sources
CMIN	570.630		
DF	362		
CMIN/DF	1.576	> 3	Hu & Bentler, (1999)
CFI	.966	>0.90	Hu & Bentler, (1999)
NFI	.913	>0.90	Hu & Bentler, (1999)
RFI	.902	>0.90	Hu & Bentler, (1999)
IFI	.966	>0.90	Hu & Bentler, (1999)
TLI	.962	>0.90	Hu & Bentler, (1999)
RMS	.063	<0.8	Hu & Bentler, (1999)
GFI	.887	>0.80(close to 1)	Kline, (1998)
AGFI	.865	>0.80	Segars & Grover, (1993)
RMSEA	.044	<0.08	Browne & Cudeck, (1993)

Source: Researcher's calculation through AMOS

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.044 a value less than 0.08 stressing on the "Good Fit" of the model. Root means square residual (RMR) is 0.63 a value less than 0.08 shows "Good Fit". Further the Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.887 a value close to 1, the Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index (AGFI) is 0.865 a value above 0.80 and Chi-Square X2/df is 1.575 a value less than 3 indicates a Good Fit.

Additionally, the Relative Fit Indices or the Incremental Fit Index that are elucidated by the Normed Fit Index (NFI), Relative Fit Index (RFI), Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) are 0.913, 0.902, 0.966 and 0.962 respectively indicates a good Fit.

Conclusion

From this study, it can be inferred how employees perceive employee branding strategies., It's clear that the effectiveness of these strategies depends on authenticity and alignment. The findings show that employees are highly attuned to whether the image projected by the company matches their everyday experiences. When the branding strategies are not just words but are reflected in actual workplace culture and practices, employees feel more engaged and valued.

A key takeaway is that branding strategies need to be more than just promotional tactics; they must genuinely resonate with employees' experiences. When employees see that the company's stated values align with the reality of their work environment, it boosts their morale and commitment. On the other hand, when there's a disconnect between what the company claims and what employees experience, it can lead to disillusionment and disengagement. Communication is another critical factor wherein transparent and consistent communication about branding efforts helps manage expectations and builds trust. Employees appreciate when they are kept in the loop and when branding initiatives are not just surface-level but are deeply integrated into the organizational culture. In essence, for employee branding strategies to be successful, they must be authentic and well-integrated into the company's daily operations. Companies that manage to align their brand promises with actual employee experiences, maintain clear communication, transparency, include employee's participation and demonstrate true leadership commitment will likely see more positive outcomes in employee engagement and satisfaction. Furthermore, it would be valuable for future research to delve deeper into how different facets of employee branding impact diverse employee groups and organizational contexts.

Limitations and Future Scope for study

The study was conducted in the region of Delhi NCR with a sample size of 300 respondents only from the employees of organized retail sector so the finding of the study cannot be generalized. The study can conduct with the large

sample size with the other sectors like IT, BPO, health etc. Study can be done to the other parts of the country where study can be proved more generalized. The study used only 5 demographic characteristics to exploring the dimensions of employee branding strategies. Here more demographic variables can be included to better understand the facts.

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