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THE IMPACT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING ON EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOR AND MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

Employer Branding is the new word for the modern Human Resource Managers. What was once considered to be the least of the management's worries has now come at the forefront while attracting employees of caliber. Employer Brand denotes an organization's reputation as an employer. For the purposes of the study, a questionnaire was prepared for the employees of a company in the financial consulting sector in India. Thirty respondents from lower, middle and higher-level management responded to the questionnaire. The responses were measured on a five-point Likert Scale. Simple statistical measures such as Arithmetic Mean and Mode were taken to evaluate the results. The prime purpose of the study was to understand whether the employers use branding in their organizations and whether the employees attach any value to the brand value that they are associated with.

KEYWORDS

employer brand, loyalty, attraction and motivation.

1. INTRODUCTION

Just like any other brand available in the market, Employer Brand too has a value and a positioning. Some may even attach a sentiment to it. In the present business scenario, it has become critical to not only build an Employer Brand but to also maintain it.

The employers are using branding today as a strategic tool. While for products, branding helps to create a market standing, an employer can use it to build economic value in order to attract and retain talent.

Employer branding is understood as the organization's value in the market. It is about a long-term relationship with the employees and the customers. There are two sets of employees – the current employees of the organization and the prospective employees. Both are concerned about the image of the organization in the eyes of the public. Employees are the internal customers of the organization and they facilitate the creation of its brand image. When people talk about a company, they usually refer to the organization climate, especially leadership style and the performance profile. Employer branding is understood as a concept linked to HRM as a strategy for attracting and retaining talent in a highly competitive environment.

Employer Brand denotes an organization's reputation as an employer. It is a set of attributes and qualities, often intangible, that makes an organization distinctive, promises a particular kind of employment experience, and appeals to those people who will thrive and perform to their best in its culture.

Today, an effective employer brand is essential for competitive advantage. Increasingly, corporations are becoming intentionally strategic to utilize the employer brand to attract and retain talent, and ultimately, to expand and grow.

The Human Resources of a company could use the employer brand for three main reasons:

1. Organizational Culture and Employee Fit
2. Positive outcomes for Recruiting
3. Retain talent with Corporate Values and Team-Based Culture

Despite the fact that the concept of Employer Branding is gaining popularity, there still seems to be a lot of scope to broaden the understanding of the concept.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The literature available on Employer Branding is considerable; however, there is insufficient literature available on the linkage between employer branding and employee retention.

Employer branding has been described as the sum of a company's efforts to communicate to the existing and prospective staff that it is a desirable place to work (Lloyd, 2002)

It can also be described as a company's image as seen through the eyes of its associates and potential hires (Martin and Beaumont, 2003).

Organizations today seek dual role of attracting new employees and retaining the existing lot. It is not only the intention of employees to stay in the organization but also the intention of an organization to retain its employees that matters.

Employer branding has been introduced as a method of enhancing retention by making the promise of employment (brand promise), so distinctive and superior to that of the competitors that the employee would not consider switching.

According to Banerjee (2008), employer branding is the process of creating an identity and managing the organization's image and its role as an employer to its present as well as prospective employees. He was of the view that HR branding is a subset of employer branding and therefore, the organization needs to take the following basic steps before it can embed an HR brand:

- The HR team of the firm must focus on developmental activities like strategic recruitments and training needs.
- The HR team must be given professional importance.
- The HR team must have close interactions with each departmental head so that it can play a pivotal role of facilitator in cross-functional issues.
- The HR team must lead the way for proper communication to reflect the vision of the firm

PERSPECTIVES ON EMPLOYER BRANDING

Ambler and Barrow (1996) defined employer brand as the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by employment. According to the author, employer branding is to be construed as the personality of an organization as a preferred employer so that a person joins and works for the organization instead of its competitors.

The process of branding is 'involved in creating a unique name and image for a product (good or service) in the consumers' mind, through advertising campaigns with a consistent theme' (Business Dictionary 2013) and can be controlled by an industry or organization. Branding influences 'the beliefs held by individual consumers about a product's, or service's brand (perception of the name or logo)' (Collins and Stevens 2002, p. 1122). These beliefs constitute the brand image of a business or industry that individuals evoke when its name is heard. Image can be influenced by branding activities, but is also subject to the influence of consumer experiences of an organization, and is only partially in the control of the organization.

Potential employees perceive employers who have 'high employer brand value' as more attractive than those with lower employer brand value (Berthon et al. 2005).

Borgohain (2010) explained the term Employer Branding as the organization's value in the market; a long-term as well as a meaningful relationship between the employees and the customers.

Employer Branding is not an isolated activity. The company, its stakeholders, creditors and employees are all a part of the planned branding which the organization undertakes. The corporate brand constitutes a promise provided by the organization to its stakeholders; it needs to permeate all of the companies' behaviors and actions (Tilley 1999; Backhaus and Tikoo 2004).

The importance of a strong brand is stressed through the increased role of the Human Resource Department in the organization.

It is apparent that brand image of a company is noticeable, identifiable and can be easily distinguished from other companies. Company's brand communicates the goals, objectives and missions of the organization. These factors play a role in attracting and retaining talent and sustaining the brand image.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The design employed for this research was a descriptive survey. A descriptive research attempts to describe characteristics of a population or phenomenon being studied. However, it does not answer why, when or how the characteristics occur. For this purpose, a sample of individuals is taken so that attributes of a larger population can be described.

The target sample were the employees working in a well-established financial accounting and consulting company. These employees were selected because the company was one of the pioneers in its area of expertise. It employs a large number of people and has often been considered the employer of choice.

A standardized questionnaire from Borgohain (2010) was taken. Fifteen questions were asked and these were divided into four sub-heads namely:

- a. Management of the Organization
- b. Management Practices
- c. Comparative Evaluation
- d. Customer Perception

These factors relate to various dimensions of the organization and contribute to building of an effective employer brand.

A five-point Likert Scale was used for the purposes of the study where the values allotted had the following connotations:

- 1 – Strongly Disagree
- 2 – Disagree
- 3 – Neither Agree nor Disagree
- 4 – Agree
- 5 – Strongly Agree

Responses were collected and conclusions were drawn gender-wise and designation-wise.

Of the data collected, 63% were males and 34% were females. Out of these, 40% of the employees surveyed belonged to the entry-level positions, 43% belonged to middle managerial employees and 17% were interns/associates.

The aim of this study was to identify the perceptions of employees towards the brand name of the organization in which they work and whether such a brand name has any relation with a long-term commitment with the organization.

4. FINDINGS AND RESULTS

The analysis was done gender-wise and designation-wise. The mean and modal scores of all the respondents were taken in order to find out the variations in responses.

TABLE 1

S.No.	Question	Mean	Mode
1	I have a great feeling about contributing something worthwhile for the organization and thereby facilitating creation of organization's image	3.67	3
2	A powerful employer brand is a necessity for attracting quality talent as well as retaining them in the current competitive environment of business	4.47	5
3	I have the opportunities to do what I am best at in my work and I wish to continue with the job and remain loyal to my organization	3.13	3
4	My work challenges me to be creative	3.28	3
5	I have flexibility in organizing my work and can take time off from work whenever necessary	2.73	3
6	The organization's dealings with its clients are transparent and it maintains effective relations with them	3.63	4
7	The organization's website contains all relevant information on business operations and projects a good public image	4.07	4
8	The organization's initiatives and implementation of CSR activities facilitate creation of the corporate brand	4	4
9	Employees consider their job more attractive than similar jobs elsewhere and intend to work as hard as necessary to continue with the organization	2.67	3
10	The organization empowers employees to take their own decisions on matters pertaining to their jobs	3.13	3
11	Employees like to associate themselves with the organization as it demonstrates a "brand of success" and instills pride	3.8	4
12	The employees and management all endeavor to Live the Brand	3.43	4
13	The work culture is transparent and employees participate in the management decisions	2.77	3
14	The organization's current brand image communicates the USP that helps to differentiate from its competitors	3.77	4
15	The organization is considered to be the "Employer by Choice" among the others	3.7	4

While the most frequent responses vary between *Agree* and *Neither Agree nor Disagree*, employees do feel that a powerful employer brand is a necessity for attracting quality talent as well as retaining them in the current competitive environment of business.

However, looking at the mean scores, the lowest scores are in terms of not getting enough flexibility, the degree of attractiveness of their current job and transparency of the organization. Employees are not very involved in the management decisions but would like to participate in these, if permitted.

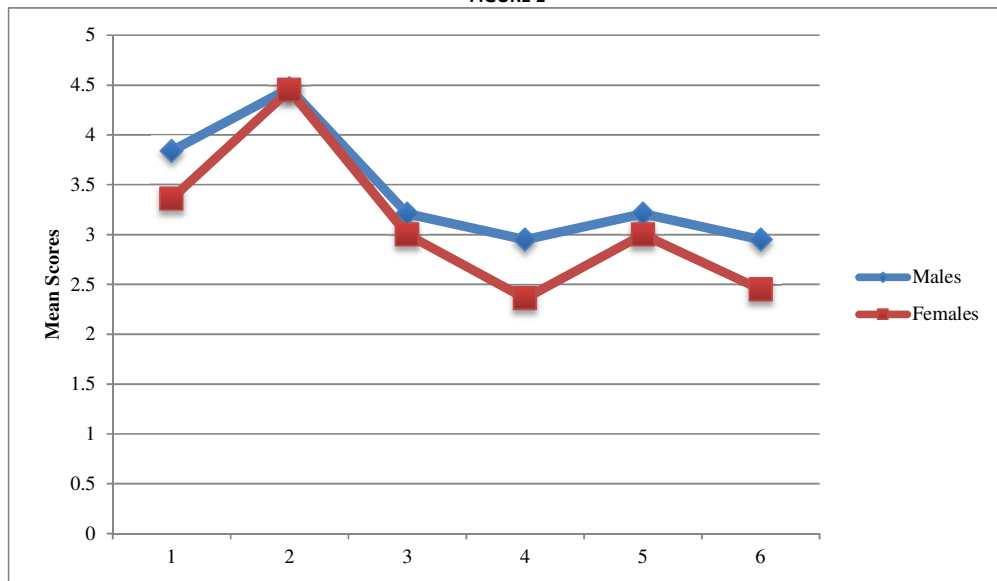
These questions were further sub-divided into four factors and were analyzed as follows:

1. MANAGEMENT OF THE ORGANIZATION

Of the fifteen questions asked, six questions pertained to employees' perception of how the organization was managed.

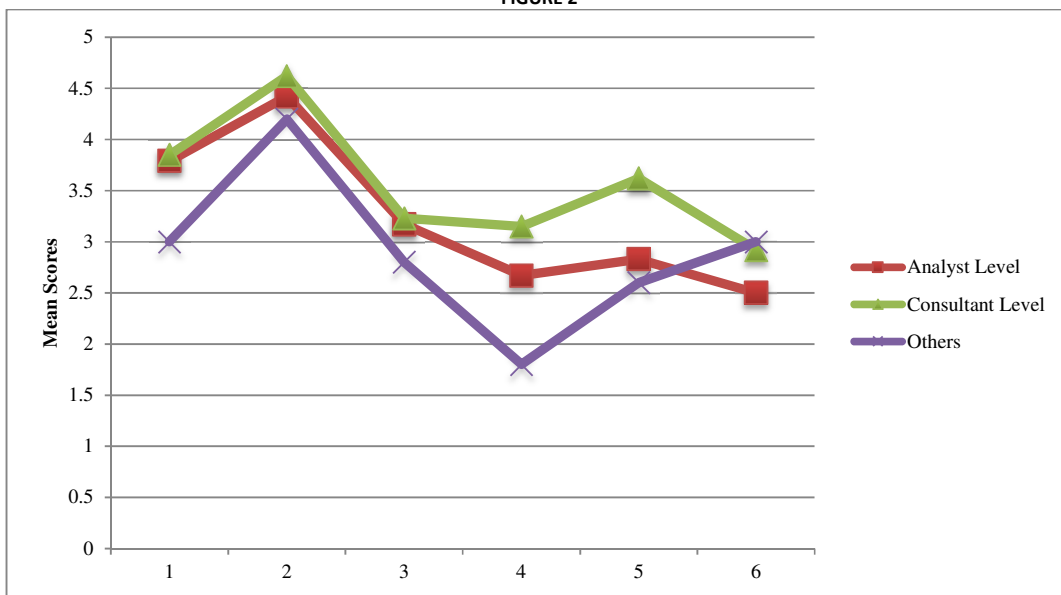
Males were found to be more satisfied with the way the organization is managed in terms of wanting to remain loyal to the organization and having flexibility in organizing their work with a mean score of 3.44 as compared to females who had a mean score of 3.1. This can be seen from Figure 1.

FIGURE 1



If we take a look designation-wise, employees at the Analyst level (i.e. the first level of hierarchy in the organization) seemed to be satisfied with a mean score of 3.23 while the employees at senior levels (associate consultants, consultants and senior consultants) were marginally more satisfied with a mean score of 3.57. However, other employees who fell in the category of executives or interns seemed the least satisfied with a mean score of only 2.9. This is shown in Figure 2.

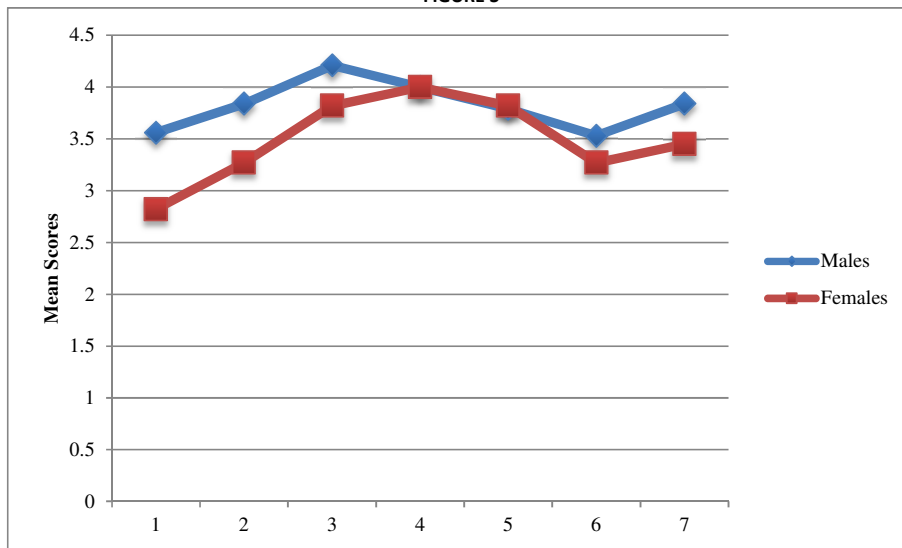
FIGURE 2



2. MANAGEMENT PRACTICE

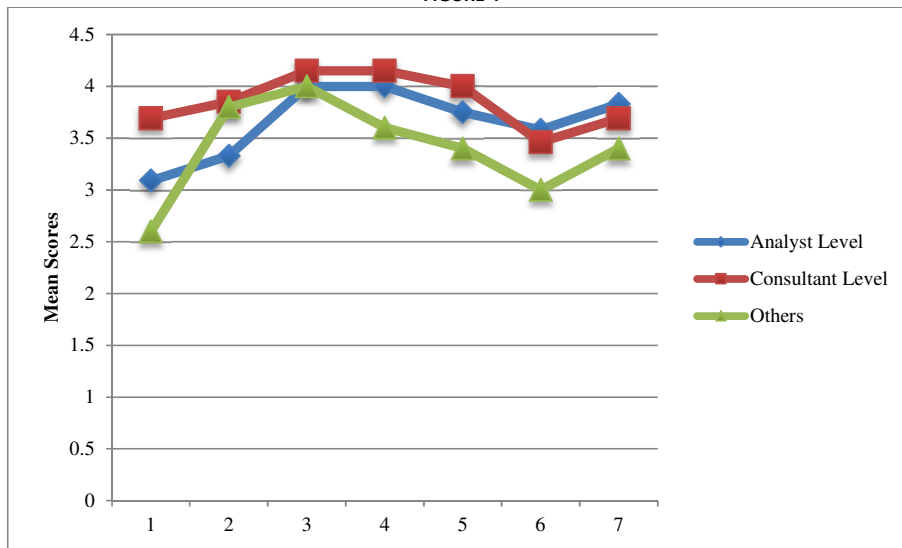
Of the fifteen questions asked, seven questions pertained to managerial practices in the organization. Similar to Management of the Organization, males were again found to be marginally more satisfied with the management practices in terms of the creativity they were allowed to exhibit at the workplace as well as the brand name of the company instilling a sense of pride. They had a mean score of 3.82 as compared to females with a mean score of 3.49. We can refer to Figure 3 for a comparative analysis.

FIGURE 3



Employees at the Consultant level were most satisfied with the management practice in terms of the organization projecting a good public image and being considered as an Employer of Choice among other competing firms with a mean score of 3.86. The mean scores of employees at the Analyst level and Other Employees were 3.65 and 3.4 respectively and this is shown in Figure 4.

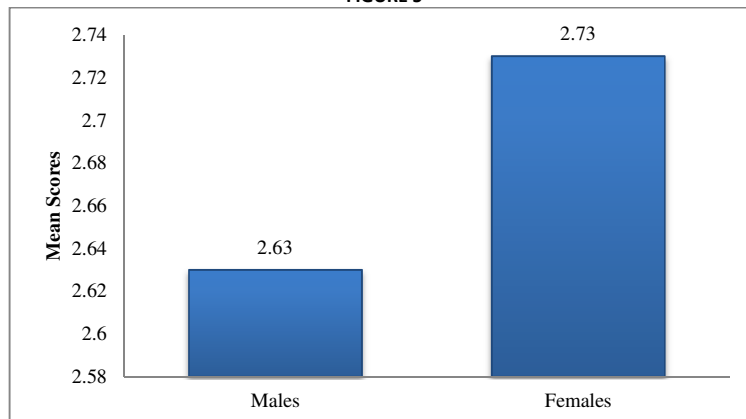
FIGURE 4



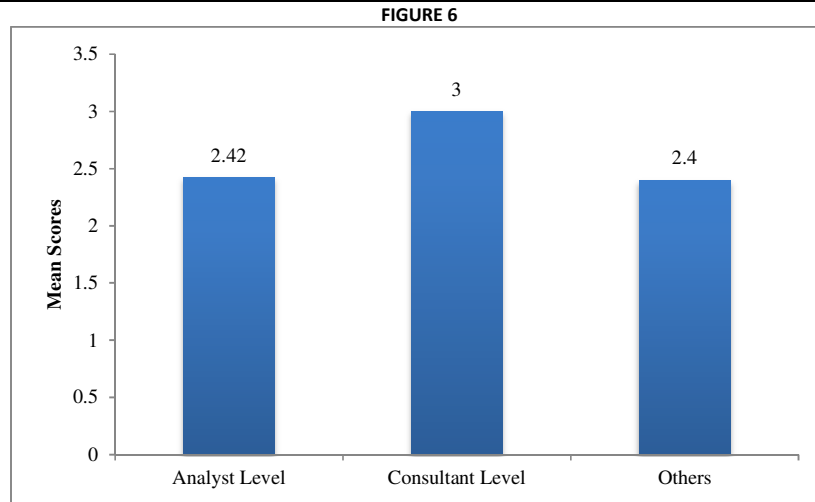
3. COMPARATIVE EVALUATION

One question pertained to how the employees compare their jobs to other available jobs akin to their nature of work. Although employees working in this organization did not consider their jobs more attractive than similar jobs elsewhere, females were comparatively more satisfied than males and intended to work harder to continue with the organization. They had a mean score of 2.73 as compared to a mean score of 2.63 for males. Figure 5 represents this information.

FIGURE 5



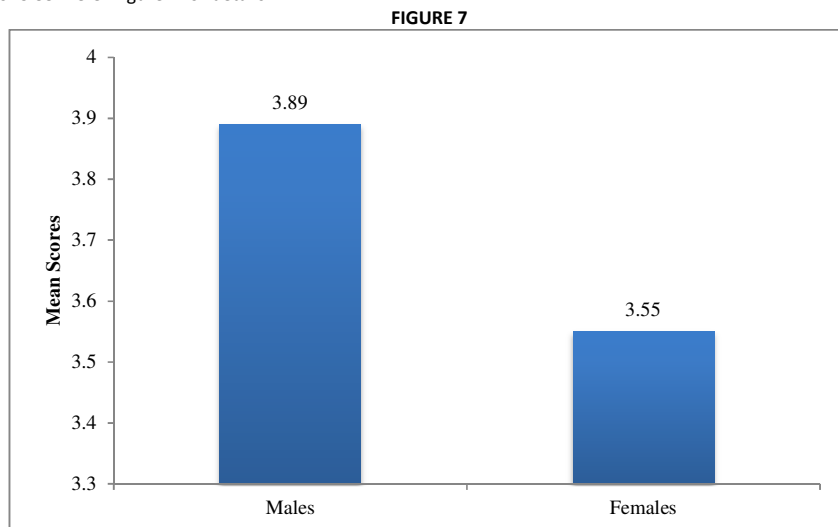
Employees at the Consultant positions were slightly more inclined to work hard in the organization with a mean score of 3 while employees at Analyst and Other positions had similar views on the attractiveness of their jobs with mean scores of 2.42 and 2.4 respectively. This is shown in Figure 6.



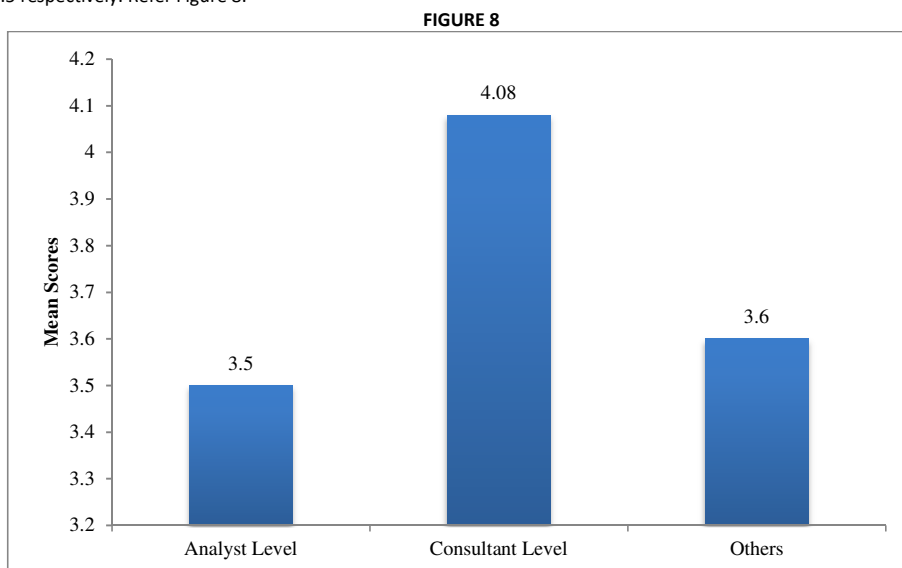
4. CUSTOMER PERCEPTION

One question also pertained to how the organization characterized itself as more superior with regard to its competitors. The organization’s current brand image communicates the USP that differentiates it from its competitors. This is reflected in the employees’ responses to the perception about the organization.

All employees seem to exhibit high levels of satisfaction where this factor is concerned. Males are more satisfied than females with a mean score of 3.89 while females have a mean score of 3.55. Refer Figure 7 for details.



Employees at Consultant level have shown very high levels of satisfaction with a mean score of 4.08, which is the highest score. Other employees especially interns also associate themselves with the organization’s brand image and have scored marginally higher than employees at the permanent Analyst level positions with a mean score of 3.6 and 3.5 respectively. Refer Figure 8.



5. CONCLUSION

For confidential reasons, the name of the organization has not been revealed. However, the Forbes Magazine has continuously ranked the organization as one of the best Accounting Firms to Work for. With a strong reputation and an already established brand name, this organization claims that it treats its employees better than others.

It has also been given the tag of the Ideal Employer by Universum in the past.

Due to limitations of time and unavailability of employees, the study was restricted only to 30 employees of the company. However, the findings of the study can be further analyzed to understand the impact of a strong employer brand. More employees at higher levels can be surveyed. The viewpoints of employees belonging to different business units and service lines can also be taken into consideration to understand if there are any differences in the views of employees across Business Units.

On an analysis of all the four factors mentioned above, we can see that although the company carries a huge brand name to its credit, the employees have not shown the satisfaction level that they ought to have. Most of the employees seem to be somewhat satisfied with the organization.

The following tables show the results

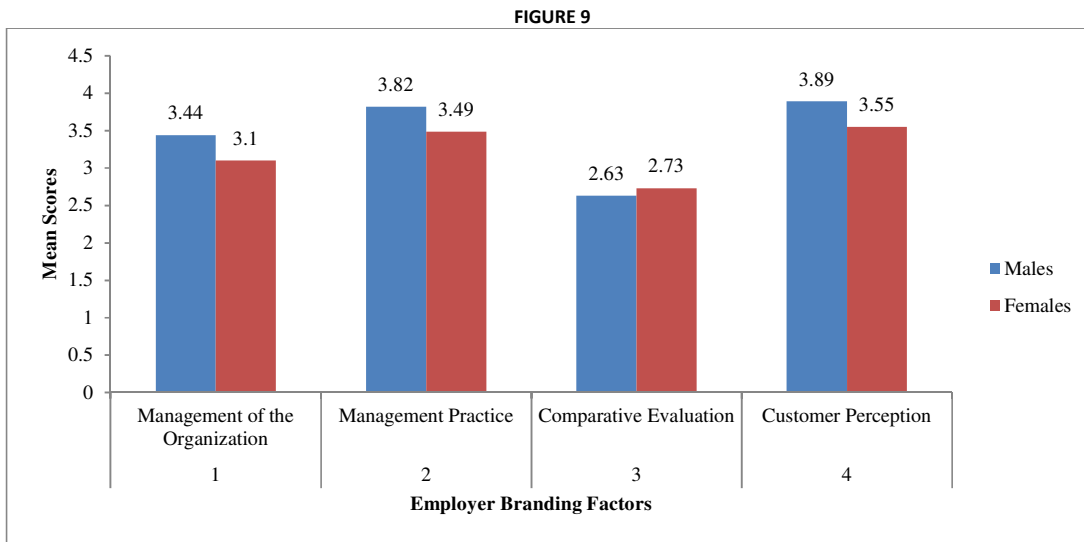
A. GENDER-WISE ANALYSIS

The table shown below gives the gender-wise average of responses according to the four factors:

TABLE 2

Gender Wise			
S. No.	Factor	Males	Females
1	Management of the Organization	3.44	3.1
2	Management Practice	3.82	3.49
3	Comparative Evaluation	2.63	2.73
4	Customer Perception	3.89	3.55

Males have a greater feeling about contributing something worthwhile for the organization. They wish to remain loyal to the organization and have flexibility to manage their work. They exhibit greater satisfaction and like to associate themselves with the brand name of the organization. Although they find outside jobs more attractive, nevertheless they believe that the organization has a USP that differentiates itself from others in the field. This is shown in Figure 9.



B. DESIGNATION-WISE ANALYSIS

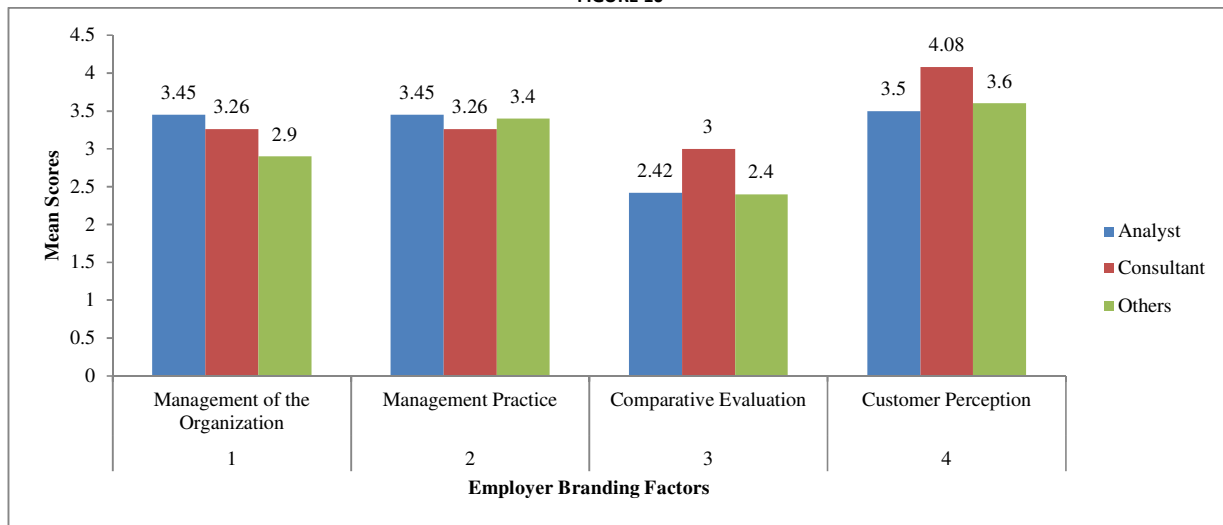
The designation-wise analysis is also shown below:

TABLE 3

Designation Wise				
S.No.	Factor	Analyst Level	Consultant Level	Others
1	Management of the Organization	3.23	3.57	2.9
2	Management Practice	3.65	3.86	3.4
3	Comparative Evaluation	2.42	3	2.4
4	Customer Perception	3.5	4.08	3.6

The employees at the Consultant levels i.e. Associate Consultants, Consultants and Senior Consultants are most satisfied with the organization for all four factors. This could be due to their longer affiliation with the organization as well as a better understanding of the mission and vision of the organization. Employees at the Analyst level who have just begun their career with the organization seem to show slightly less satisfaction in terms of flexibility, creativity and other such factors. This could change in due course as they spend more time with the organization. Other employees especially interns have had a very short affiliation with the firm and may not have fully understood the functioning of the organization which is why their responses have shown lowest levels of satisfaction. This is evident from Figure 10.

FIGURE 10



Based on the above analysis, it is recommended that ideal management practices such as keeping the communication channel prompt, having transparent public dealings, etc. can help further improve the corporate brand image. Further, empowering employees to take their own decisions regarding their job by providing autonomy to employees to act independently by having a supportive and approachable environment can improve management of the organization. It can be concluded that Employer Branding has gained popularity in the turbulent organizational climate and has been used by many organizations to maintain successful relationships with its employees as well as the public. Its importance and pertinence cannot be neglected.

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