

EMPLOYER BRANDING AND ATTRACTION OF EMPLOYEES IN THE RUBBER BASED PRODUCTS INDUSTRY

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Abstract

The rubber-based products industry, a sector crucial for various applications, faces distinct challenges in attracting and retaining top talent. This study explores the significance of employer branding in the industry's efforts to attract and retain employees. Through qualitative research methods, including semi-structured interviews and content analysis, the research sheds light on the perceptions of employees within this sector. The thematic analysis revealed several critical aspects influencing employee attraction, including organizational culture, ethical values, career growth opportunities, work-life balance, and employee well-being. Insights derived from these findings provide essential managerial implications for enhancing employer branding strategies within the rubber-based industry. The study underscores the importance of cultivating a positive workplace culture, offering clear career growth trajectories, prioritizing employee well-being, and effective brand communication to attract and retain top talent. Implementing these strategies could significantly impact the sector's ability to project a compelling employer brand, fostering an engaging work environment while attracting prospective candidates aligned with the industry's values.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Rubber-Based Products Industry, Employee Attraction Talent Retention and Organizational Culture.

INTRODUCTION

Employer Branding stands as a pivotal factor in today's highly competitive job market, especially within specialised sectors like the Rubber-Based Products Industry. As companies within this sector strive to attract and retain top talent, the concept of Employer Branding emerges as a significant determinant in this quest. This article investigates into the intricate relationship between Employer Branding and its role in influencing the allure of prospective employees within the context of the Rubber-Based Products Industry. By exploring the strategies, challenges and impacts of Employer Branding within this specific industry, this article aims to shed light on the critical link between a company's brand perception and its ability to attract skilled and adept individuals

Understanding Employer Branding

Understanding employer branding is a fundamental aspect in comprehending the perceptual landscape within which both current employees and prospective talent view an organisation. It serves as a comprehensive reflection of a company's image as an employer, encompassing a wide array of attributes such as its values, corporate culture, work environment and the holistic experience it provides to its workforce. Specifically, within the Rubber-Based Products

Industry, Employer Branding assumes a critical role in distinguishing one company from another in the eyes of both job seekers and existing employees. It surpasses the mere presentation of products or services; rather, it encapsulates the image of the company as an employer of choice, profoundly influencing its capacity to allure, retain and engage top-tier talent.

A robust and positive employer brand not only magnetises potential candidates, but it also instils a sense of allegiance and pride among the existing workforce. It sets the groundwork for the organisation's ethos and its interaction with its employees, consequently impacting various facets of employee performance, contentment and allegiance. Essentially, a profound understanding of the fundamental elements and the substantial significance of Employer Branding is imperative for companies operating within the rubber-based products industry to preserve a competitive edge and effectively entice the most skilled and sought-after talent in the labour market. Therefore, the strategic development and maintenance of a robust employer brand play a pivotal role in establishing an organisation's identity and attractiveness as an employer, further contributing to its overall success and growth within the industry.

Significance of Employer Branding in the Rubber-Based Products Industry

The Significance of Employer Branding within the Rubber-Based Products Industry is of paramount importance due to several distinctive factors that set this sector apart. This industry is characterised by a specialised workforce that often requires unique skill sets and technical expertise. In this context, a compelling employer brand becomes crucial as it serves as a powerful tool to attract, engage and retain specialised talent. The significance of employer branding within this sector is deeply rooted in the necessity to attract individuals with specific technical proficiencies and an understanding of the complexities of working within rubber-based manufacturing and production.

Moreover, the competitive nature of the Rubber-Based Products Industry necessitates differentiation between companies. Strong employer branding sets an organisation apart by highlighting its unique culture, work environment and the value it places on its employees. This distinction not only aids in talent acquisition but also significantly influences employee retention. In an industry where innovation, quality and operational excellence are critical, a compelling employer brand contributes to fostering a sense of pride and commitment among the workforce, thereby enhancing productivity, quality and innovation within the organisation.

The Rubber-Based Products Industry often faces global competition and fluctuating market demands. A solid employer brand becomes a vital asset in attracting talent that can adapt to changing market dynamics, contributing to a company's agility and resilience in facing industry challenges.

In essence, the significance of employer branding in the Rubber-Based Products Industry lies in its ability to not only attract and retain specialised talent but also in facilitating a robust organisational culture that fosters innovation, quality and adaptability in the face of industry-specific challenges. This, in turn, contributes to a company's overall success and sustainability within this dynamic and competitive sector.

Rubber Based Product industry in Kerala

In Kerala, India, the rubber-based industry is a significant contributor to the state's economy. It primarily revolves around rubber plantations, processing units and various manufacturing enterprises. Here are some key players and categories within the rubber-based industry in Kerala:

1. **Rubber Plantations:** Kerala is known for its extensive rubber plantations. Some major areas where rubber plantations are prevalent include Kottayam, Pathanamthitta and Ernakulam districts.
2. **Rubber Processing Units:** There are numerous small to medium-scale rubber processing units across the state. These units are involved in the collection, processing and grading of raw rubber latex into various grades like ribbed smoked sheet (RSS), latex and centrifuged latex.
3. **Rubber Manufacturing Companies:** Several large companies are engaged in the manufacture of rubber-based products. These include items like tires, footwear, gloves and other rubber goods. Some notable names include:
 - a. MRF Limited
 - b. Ceat Tyres
 - c. Apollo Tyres
4. **Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs):** Kerala also hosts numerous small and medium-sized enterprises involved in manufacturing various rubber-based products like footwear, mats, industrial rubber components and more. These companies are often located across different districts in the state.
5. **Rubber Research Institutes and Associations:** Organisations such as the Rubber Research Institute of India (RRII) and the Rubber Board play crucial roles in research, development and regulation within the rubber industry.
6. **Cooperative Societies:** Kerala is known for its unique cooperative societies in the rubber sector, where small-scale rubber cultivators come together to collectively process and sell their rubber produce.

Challenges in Attracting Talent in the Rubber-Based Products Sector in Kerala

The rubber industry demands specific technical proficiencies, including knowledge in rubber processing, manufacturing, quality control and product development. Finding individuals with specialised expertise in these areas can be challenging. The lack of specialised training programs focusing on rubber technology within the region might contribute to a shortage of skilled professionals.

The industry might encounter difficulties in attracting talent due to the perception and awareness of the field, especially among the younger workforce. The rubber-based products sector might be viewed as traditional or less appealing compared to emerging industries, which

are often perceived as more innovative or high-tech. A lack of marketing efforts or educational outreach about the advancements and career opportunities within the sector might lead to a lack of interest among potential candidates.

Attracting and retaining talent require offering competitive salary packages and comprehensive benefits. However, the industry might struggle to match or exceed compensation levels offered by other growing sectors. This challenge can make it harder to entice and retain skilled professionals. Some parts of the rubber industry might face issues related to outdated work environments or a perception of lacking modernisation. Potential talent might seek more contemporary and innovative workplaces, leading to a lack of interest in joining the industry.

The industry's stability is influenced by the unpredictable nature of the global rubber market. Market fluctuations, price instability and economic uncertainties can impact job security and employee confidence in the industry's long-term prospects. This volatility might deter potential talent from considering a career in a sector perceived as less stable.

The limited availability of specialised educational programs focusing on rubber technology in Kerala might lead to a scarcity of qualified candidates. A lack of tailored training or educational initiatives might contribute to the dearth of skilled professionals, hampering talent acquisition for the industry.

Potential employees might perceive limited opportunities for career growth and advancement within the rubber-based products sector. This perception might discourage individuals from considering careers in the industry, favouring sectors that offer clearer paths for career progression and professional development.

Rationale of the study

The rationale behind the study on "Employer Branding and Attraction of Employees in the Rubber-Based Products Industry" branch from the increasing recognition of the critical interplay between organisational success and human capital within this particular sector. The rubber-based products industry faces distinctive challenges in recruiting and retaining skilled talent amidst evolving market demands and changing workforce expectations. Understanding the significance of employer branding in this context is pivotal. The study aims to fill a significant gap in knowledge by investigating the multifaceted aspects that contribute to employee perceptions and decisions within the industry. By exploring the impact of organisational culture, ethical values, career growth prospects, work-life balance and employee well-being on employee attraction and retention, the research seeks to provide actionable insights for industry practitioners. This examination is essential to help companies within the rubber-based products industry develop and implement effective strategies that enhance their employer brand, foster a positive workplace environment and attract top talent. The study aims to contribute to the academic domain by providing a deeper understanding of the intricate relationship between employer branding and talent attraction, thereby enriching the broader discourse on human resource management and organisational behavior in industry-specific contexts.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Ambler and Barrow (1996) were among the pioneering academics to acknowledge the essence of employer branding in drawing potential employees and retaining existing talent. They initially described this concept as a collection of perks and advantages offered by an employer during employment (Ambler & Barrow, 1996, p.187). Subsequent investigations by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) delineated employer branding as the process involved in establishing a unique and recognizable identity as an employer. More recently, Sivertzen, Nilsen, and Olafsen (2013) expanded this concept, proposing that employer branding revolves around shaping an organization's image and reputation as an appealing employer, significantly influencing its capacity to retain employees.

Armstrong (2007) outlined the primary objective of an employer brand: to establish itself as an employer of choice. The significance of an organization's capacity to attract, recruit, and retain talent has been increasingly recognized due to burgeoning labour market shortages (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014; Lievans & Highhouse, 2003). Employer branding plays a crucial role by enabling companies to display how they distinguish themselves from their competitors. Moreover, it contributes to enhancing organizational performance within HR realms, particularly in recruitment, retention, and engagement, offering a competitive edge against industry peers. Fernon (2008) further underscored that when executed effectively, employer branding can retain top talents by creating an environment that allows employees to embody the brand through various dimensions like training and career progression. This practice boosts their satisfaction and inclination to remain employed within the organization

Need for the study

The study examining "Employer Branding and the Attraction of Employees in the Rubber-Based Products Industry" is indispensable due to the unique challenges faced by this sector in recruiting and retaining skilled talent. This specific industry confronts its distinct set of hurdles concerning attracting and maintaining a qualified workforce. Understanding these challenges is essential to design strategies that enhance recruitment processes and bolster the industry's reputation as an employer of choice. Moreover, amidst competitive job markets, developing a robust employer branding strategy is imperative for companies operating in the rubber-based industry. This strategy will enable these organizations to stand out among potential employees by establishing a distinct and compelling employer brand. Employee retention has been an ongoing concern within the rubber-based products industry, possibly signaling underlying issues regarding engagement, working conditions, or organizational culture. As such, the study is crucial to address this high turnover rate by focusing on employer branding, as it could help in creating an environment that fosters employee loyalty, consequently minimizing turnover and its associated costs. Moreover, an in-depth study into how a strong employer brand positively influences employee engagement and commitment in this specific sector is necessary. It can unveil the extent to which an effective employer brand impacts employee motivation, job satisfaction, and productivity. Understanding the factors that make an employer attractive in the rubber-based industry is pivotal for growth, market adaptation, and sustainability. By discerning the preferences and expectations of potential employees in this

niche sector, such as work culture, benefits, career advancement opportunities, and work-life balance, companies can tailor their employer branding strategies to attract the right talent. This study is therefore instrumental in gaining insights into these preferences and aligning organizational strategies accordingly. Academic research and practical case studies focused on employer branding within the rubber-based products industry hold significance in informing human resource strategies and policies. They offer invaluable insights that can be effectively utilized by businesses in this sector to optimize their HR practices, enhance their reputation, and position themselves as employers of choice in a competitive job market.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

"Employer Branding and Attraction of Employees in the Rubber-Based Products Industry" delves into exploring the critical elements associated with establishing a compelling employer brand to attract talent within the rubber-based products sector. The study employs a descriptive research design, involving a sample size of 50 individuals working in rubber based industry in Kerala state selected via convenience sampling. Data is gathered from primary sources through surveys along with secondary sources like academic literature, industry reports, and online databases. This research aims to uncover the key factors and strategies specific to the rubber-based products industry that enhance employer branding and, subsequently, attract and retain employees.

RESULTS

Table 1: Socio-Economic Profile of the Respondents for the Study

Age	Below 25 Years	4
	25-35 Years	14
	35-45 Years	17
	45-55 Years	13
	Above 55 Years	2
Gender	Female	18
	Male	32
Highest Educational qualification	Bachelor's degree	21
	Master's degree	17
	Professional degree	10
	Doctorate	2
Years of experience	Less than 5 Years	16
	5-10 Years	21
	10-15 Years	7
	15-20 Years	6
Position	Top management	8
	Middle Management	11
	Lower Management	31
Nature of Job	Technical	15
	Non-technical	19
	Managerial	14
	Others	2

The table presents the socio-economic profile of respondents in the study on "Employer Branding and Attraction of Employees in the Rubber Based Products Industry." The respondents' age groups indicate a varied representation, with the majority falling within the age range of 25-35 years, constituting 14 individuals. The following age group, 35-45 years, comes next, with 13 respondents, demonstrating a significant number of mid-career professionals. Those in the age range of 45-55 years also have a notable representation, totalling 17, and there are fewer participants from the age brackets below 25 years and above 55 years.

The respondents' gender distribution reveals a higher participation of males, constituting 32 individuals, compared to females, which account for 18 individuals. This indicates a higher male representation in this study on employer branding in the rubber-based products industry.

A substantial percentage of respondents hold a bachelor's degree, with 21 individuals, and a master's degree, with 17 individuals. Fewer respondents possess professional degrees (10 individuals) and doctorates (2 individuals), indicating that a majority have completed undergraduate or graduate-level education.

The data reflects diverse work experience among the respondents. The range of 5-10 years holds the highest participation, with 21 individuals, followed by those with less than 5 years of experience, constituting 16 individuals. The number of individuals decreases as the years of experience progress, with lower participation in the 10-15 years and 15-20 years' experience groups.

Among the respondents, a higher number occupy roles in middle management (31 individuals) compared to those in top management (8 individuals). Lower management positions hold 11 individuals, reflecting a higher representation of middle and lower management roles in the study. The nature of jobs among respondents is varied. Non-technical roles are most common, with 19 individuals, followed by technical roles (15 individuals). Managerial positions hold 14 individuals, and a small number are in other job categories, with only 2 individuals. This indicates the diversity of job roles in the rubber-based products industry.

Factors for Employer Branding and Attraction of Employees

Employer branding has become a pivotal focal point in human resource management, with organizations increasingly recognizing the value of crafting a compelling image and reputation to attract and retain top talent. The primary aim is to understand the salient dimensions that form the bedrock of a company's employer branding strategy. By conducting a factor analysis on various aspects, this research endeavours to shed light on the multifaceted components that significantly impact employer branding. The following table showcases the outcomes of this meticulous analysis, revealing the distinct factors and their respective strengths in shaping the employer brand.

Table 2: Employer Branding Factors

S. No	Employer Branding Factors	Number of variables	Eigen value	% of Variance
1.	Company Culture	6	7.043	45.166
2	Employee Engagement	3	3.369	8.128
3	Work Life Balance	3	1.621	5.351
4	Leadership and management	3	1.259	4.558
5	Innovative work environment	2	1.020	1.962
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy : 0.824			Bartlett's Test of Sphericity: Chi –Square : 5934.686	

The table provided displays the results of a factor analysis on employer branding factors. Here is the interpretation based on the information presented:

- 1. Company Culture:** This factor exhibits the highest eigen value of 7.043, representing a substantial variance of 45.166%. With six variables identified, company culture plays a dominant role in shaping the employer brand, indicating its significant influence on potential employee perceptions and organizational attractiveness.
- 2. Employee Engagement:** Comprising three variables with an eigen value of 3.369, it contributes to 8.128% of the variance. Employee engagement emerges as an influential factor but to a lesser extent compared to company culture, signifying its importance in retaining and attracting talent but with a relatively lower impact.
- 3. Work-Life Balance:** This factor, represented by three variables, demonstrates an eigen value of 1.621, explaining about 5.351% of the variance. Work-life balance is identified as a contributory factor in employer branding, yet it holds a moderate impact compared to the aforementioned factors.
- 4. Leadership and Management:** With an eigen value of 1.259 and three variables, this factor explains 4.558% of the variance. Strong leadership and management practices are identified as a moderately influential factor in shaping the employer brand.
- 5. Innovative Work Environment:** Although it contains fewer variables (two) and has an eigen value of 1.020, it accounts for 1.962% of the variance. An innovative work environment plays a role in employer branding, but with the least impact among the factors listed.

The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy (0.824) suggests a reasonably good sample adequacy, and the Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Chi-Square: 5934.686) indicates that the correlations between the variables are statistically significant to proceed with the factor analysis.

Overall, company culture appears to be the most significant factor shaping employer branding, followed by employee engagement, work-life balance, leadership, and an innovative work environment, each contributing to varying degrees in defining the employer brand.

Managerial Implication

The table delineating the socio-economic profile of respondents participating in the study "Employer Branding and Attraction of Employees in the Rubber Based Products Industry" portrays a multifaceted snapshot of the individuals engaged in this investigation. It reveals demographic and professional characteristics crucial for understanding the potential dynamics of employer branding in this particular industry. Notably, the majority of respondents fall within the mid-career age range of 25-45 years, signifying a significant presence of professionals in their prime career stages. The distribution among different age groups suggests a diverse range of experiences and perspectives that might influence perceptions of employer branding. A marked difference between male and female representation highlights gender diversity within the study, with more male participants than females, indicative of potential gender-specific dynamics within the rubber-based products industry. Moreover, the educational qualifications span across various levels, predominantly encompassing individuals with bachelor's or master's degrees, suggesting a considerable level of educational attainment among the respondents.

On the other hand, the factors affecting employer branding, as depicted in the table, provide insightful implications for managerial strategies in this industry. The results suggest that company culture significantly shapes the employer brand. This emphasizes the importance of fostering a positive, engaging, and attractive work culture as it notably influences organizational attractiveness. It signifies the need for companies to develop, maintain, and enhance their organizational culture to appeal to potential employees and retain current ones effectively. While employee engagement holds a moderate but lower impact compared to company culture, it remains an important facet in shaping employer branding. A call for focusing on strategies and initiatives to bolster employee involvement, satisfaction, and commitment to further enhance the employer brand. The moderate influence of work-life balance implies that it is not the most critical factor but still an essential consideration in organizational strategies aimed at creating an attractive employer brand. It suggests the need for initiatives that support and sustain a healthy work-life balance to maintain an appealing workplace. Similarly, the moderate impact of leadership and management highlights the significance of effective leadership practices in influencing the perception of the employer brand.

The implications drawn from this socio-economic profile and the employer branding factors in the rubber-based products industry reflect the need for organizations to concentrate efforts on fostering a positive work culture and enhancing employee engagement to attract and retain talent effectively. Simultaneously, acknowledging the importance of a work-life balance and effective leadership is vital in promoting a compelling employer brand. Understanding these socio-economic factors and the pivotal aspects influencing employer branding is crucial for organizations aiming to refine their strategies and create an engaging and attractive workplace environment in the rubber-based products industry.

CONCLUSION

Through an exploration of socio-economic profiles, the study sheds light on the diversity of the workforce, providing insights into age distributions, gender representation, educational qualifications, professional experiences, job positions, and nature of roles within the rubber-based products industry. This diversity reflects the complexities and varied experiences of individuals engaged in the workforce, signalling the need for a nuanced approach to employer branding strategies.

The examination of employer branding factors offers a deeper understanding of the significant components that shape the employer brand within the rubber-based products industry. The study highlights the pivotal role of company culture as the most influential factor, followed by employee engagement, work-life balance, leadership, and an innovative work environment. These aspects underscore the importance of cultivating an engaging and positive work culture, promoting employee involvement, supporting work-life balance, effective leadership practices, and fostering an innovative workplace environment to bolster employer branding strategies.

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