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"Unveiling the Impact of Candidate NPS, Employee Referral Rate, and Offer Acceptance Rate on Employer Branding in Talent Acquisition: A Thematic Analysis with in the Context of Indian Retail Organizations"

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Abstract- This study aims to examine the impact of candidate Net Promoter Score (NPS), employee referral rate, and offer acceptance rate on employer branding in talent acquisition within the context of Indian retail organizations. Thematic analysis was used to analyze the data collected from semi-structured interviews with 210 with the following categorization based on purposive and convenience sampling methods: 80 HR managers, 50 recruitment specialists, 50 talent acquisition professionals, and 30 executives with experience ranging from 5 years to 15 years from ten leading retail organizations in India. The results of the study reveal that candidate NPS, employee referral rate, and offer acceptance rate are all significant contributors to employer branding in talent acquisition. The findings suggest that organizations can enhance their employer branding by focusing on candidate experience during the recruitment process. Moreover, employee referrals and high offer acceptance rates positively impact the overall perception of the organization as a desirable employer. This study adds to the literature on employer branding and talent acquisition. The findings provide practical implications for HR managers in the retail industry in India to improve their recruitment practices and enhance their employer brand.

Keywords: *Employer Branding, Talent Acquisition, Candidate NPS, Employee Referral Rate, Offer Acceptance Rate, Indian Retail Organizations, Thematic Analysis*

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1. Introduction

The introduction section offers an overview of the significance of employer branding in talent acquisition and sets the context for this study. This study emphasizes the need for organizations to strategize and measure their efforts in employer branding to attract and retain high-quality candidates in the highly competitive market. The introduction is divided into five parts including the purpose of the study.

1.1 Background on talent acquisition in Indian retail organizations

The corporate environments of today are especially complicated. The vital, in-demand skills that will offer their organizations an advantage in increasingly competitive industries are in short supply, according to talent leaders. You are simultaneously handling hiring freezes and layoffs. While attempting to establish workplaces that people are pleased to call home, you must also control the effects of inflation and the general state of the economy. Talent executives are motivated to create more resilient, engaged, competent, and adaptable workforces that will help their companies flourish through today's complexity and beyond, no matter what the future holds, now that the hiring frenzy of last year is winding down and they've had a chance to catch their breath. In fact, up 32 points from last year, 77% of respondents said they will be more concerned with total value creation in 2023 than with cost cuts. Finding, attracting, employing, developing, and retaining top talent inside of a business are the main goals of the recruitment approach known as talent acquisition. In order to hire the top candidates, the HR department must take a planned and organized series of steps.

This study makes the assumption that an effective "technology base" and its application in the areas of performance management, training and development, and recruitment can help the Human Resource department get a better handle on the hot-button topic of talent management.

1.2 Significance of employer branding in gaining a competitive advantage

Employer branding is the process of creating a unique and positive impression of a company in the minds of current and potential employees. It is an important part of a company's recruitment and retention strategy and helps to attract the right people to the right job.

Moreover, employer branding also helps to create an environment of loyalty and trust between a company and its employees. By communicating its values and mission, a company can create a positive image among employees and potential candidates. This helps to attract quality applicants who may be more likely to stay with the company in the long run. Ultimately, employer branding can lead to increased job satisfaction, higher retention rates, and improved productivity and is an essential component of a company's overall brand identity.

Employer brand metrics

A company's personality is reflected in its employer brand, which influences potential employees along the applicant journey. In a tight-knit job market, it is essential for finding qualified recruits.

Among the common objectives of employer branding are:

Reaching out to potential applicants and luring outstanding talent

Gaining a superior reputation among competitors as a desirable employer

Reducing the cost per hire by luring in more qualified candidates

Creating a better workplace to promote employee happiness and retention.

For an employer brand to be successful, it needs to be regularly tracked, evaluated, and enhanced. Employer branding metrics provide HR teams with a quantifiable method to assess the effectiveness of their work, support the allocation of resources, and improve their employer branding strategy.

1.3 Glimpse of Indian retail organization

The Indian retail market has seen a number of companies start to operate there, making it one of the busiest and fastest-growing sectors currently. Over 10% of India's GDP comes from it, and it accounts for about 8% of all

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jobs there. The country is currently the fifth-largest retail destination in the world. In a report titled "Retail 2020: Retrospect, Reinvent, Rewrite," the Boston Consulting Group and the Retailers Association of India predicted that India's retail market would increase by two times to US$ 1 trillion by 2020 from US$ 600 billion in 2015, driven by income growth, urbanization, and attitude changes. India is predicted to be the fastest growing e-commerce sector in the world due to the industry's robust investment activity and the significant increase in internet users. The existing retail chains must successfully manage their talent given the numerous constraints and challenges the industry faces.

1.4 Purpose of study

The aim of the research paper is to explore the importance of key metrics for employer branding in talent acquisition within Indian retail organizations. With the increasingly competitive landscape for attracting top talent in the retail industry, it is crucial for organizations to have a comprehensive understanding of the metrics that can provide a competitive advantage in talent acquisition. This paper focuses on three key metrics: Candidate Net Promoter Score (NPS), Employee Referral Rate, and Offer Acceptance Rate.

2. Literature review

The employer brand represents an organization's identity and leaves a lasting impact on prospective talent as they navigate the recruitment process. Employer branding gives a competitive advantage by positioning the organization as an attractive employer, which helps attract and retain top talent. It enhances the organization's reputation, increases employee loyalty and productivity, and differentiates it from competitors in the job market, ultimately leading to improved business performance and success. Employer branding metrics are critical in assessing the performance of a company's employer brand approach and connecting it with its recruitment and retention of talent objectives. Companies may make data-driven decisions to develop their brand as an employer, distinguish themselves in the competitive labour market, and establish an excellent track record among job seekers and workers by quantifying and analysing these KPIs. These metrics help organizations assess the effectiveness of their recruitment and retention initiatives, optimize their employer brand messaging, and create a workplace culture that attracts and retains top talent. Employers may use these indicators to strengthen their employer brand and increase their capacity to attract, engage, and retain the top individuals in their sector. The research paper utilizes the following metrics:

Candidate Net Promoter Score (NPS): This metric measures candidates' likelihood of recommending the organization as an employer. It involves surveys where candidates rate their experience and their willingness to refer others. A higher NPS indicates a positive employer brand and a greater likelihood of attracting high-quality candidates through referrals. Candidate NPS focuses on the candidate experience at the pre-employment stage and helps organizations understand the overall satisfaction of candidates with their recruitment process.

Employee Referral Rate: This metric tracks the percentage of new hires that come from employee referrals. It reflects the degree to which employees actively advocate for the organization and recommend it as an attractive place to work. A higher referral rate indicates a robust employer brand and employee satisfaction.

Offer Acceptance Rate: This metric quantifies the percentage of job offers extended by the organization that are accepted by candidates. It signifies the appeal of the employer brand and the competitiveness of the organization's offers. A higher acceptance rate indicates a favorable perception of the organization and its employer brand.

2.1. Definition and Importance of Employer Branding in Talent Acquisition:

Human resources have become increasingly important in today's economy, serving as a significant source of competitive advantage. The competition for talent has intensified, with talent emerging as a crucial driver of corporate success.In the future, an organization's capacity to attract, develop, and retain people will be a critical differentiator. Skill acquisition and development will be at the forefront of future competitions (Michaels et al., 2001). The competition for talent is impacted by three major factors: the unavoidable transition from the

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industrial to the information age, the desire for top-tier talent, and the increased proclivity of individuals to change employment..

In this context, "employer branding" has gained even greater importance in the recruitment process. Ambler and Barrow created the term "employer branding" in the context of human resource management in 1996 (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Employer branding refers to the use of marketing methods to recruit and retain employees. An employer's brand, as defined by Sullivan (2004), depicts the business as a desirable place to work. Employer brands assure current and prospective employees of the type of experience they can expect within a company, similar to how corporate brands make promises to consumers regarding their products or services. Employer brands serve as a commitment to delivering a particular work environment, values, and opportunities to employees. Just as consumers rely on corporate brands for consistency and satisfaction, individuals seek out employer brands that align with their career aspirations, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction. Therefore, employer branding plays a vital role in shaping the perception and expectations of employees, contributing to their engagement and loyalty within the organization. It is important to note that every employer has a brand, but not all employ successful branding strategies to differentiate themselves as employers. Employer branding, as described by Backhaus & Tikoo (2004), involves a three-phase approach. Firstly, the company needs to conceptualize the unique value it offers to current and prospective employees. This value proposition forms the core message of the employer brand, highlighting what makes the company an excellent place to work. It is essential to carefully analyze the qualities that contribute to this value proposition.

The second phase of the employer branding process focuses on externally marketing the value proposition to attract the desired job seekers. The goal is to effectively communicate the brand's promise to potential candidates, enticing them to consider opportunities within the company.

Finally, the third phase is internalising the brand promise and incorporating it into the organisational culture. The employer brand should become ingrained within the company, aligning with its values, practices, and overall work environment. An organization must have strong and firmly established core values prior to implementing employer branding, as these values serve as the foundation of the employer brand (CIPD, 2015; Urde, 2003). This integration ensures that the promised experience aligns with the actual employee experience, fostering a consistent and authentic employer brand.

2.2. Review of relevant studies and findings on the identified key metrics:

Employer branding facilitates seamless recruitment, enabling organizations to gain a competitive advantage through the attraction and retention of top-tier talent. Studies conducted by Hewitt Associates have identified three key benefits of reinforcing an organization's employer brand: improved attraction, retention, and engagement. Having strong employer branding leads to increased attraction levels and higher-than-average employee engagement, both of which have a positive influence on financial results. (Mosley, 2009, p. 5). As a result, precise critical indicators must be in place to monitor and track the performance of employer branding activities. There are a few key metrics of employer branding that are measurable indicators that help assess the effectiveness and impact of an organization's employer brand. These metrics provide insights into various aspects of the employer brand's performance. Here are some key metrics commonly used in evaluating employer branding:

Candidate Net Promoter Score (NPS): The Net Promoter Score, also known as the NPS, is a statistic that measures the likelihood of applicants recommending a firm to others based on their recruiting experience. High levels of client reliability are difficult to achieve and sustain without a foundation of loyal and engaged employees. As a result, leaders have a genuine interest in earning the enthusiastic trust and commitment of their staff. This highlights the importance of understanding candidate levels of commitment and implementing strategies to enhance them. (Rao & Rajasekaran, 2018).

Employee Referral Rate: A widely used and conceptually significant approach to hiring is employee referrals, where existing employees recommend job candidates from their personal networks. This strategy is employed by organizations to fill a substantial portion of their job openings, typically ranging from 30% to 50%

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(Fernandez, Castilla, & Moore, 2000; Bewley, 1999). One of the indicators used to analyse and assess the performance of a company's employer branding is the employee referral rate. The impression and prestige of an organisation as a place of employment among job seekers, present workers, and the broader public is referred to as employer branding. Employee referral programs provide numerous advantages that significantly contribute to enhancing employer branding. One of the key benefits is the ability to attract high-quality candidates who are pre-vetted by current employees. These referrals tend to possess the skills, qualifications, and cultural fit that align with the organization, resulting in a higher likelihood of long-term retention. Moreover, the cost-effectiveness of referral programs is a notable advantage, as they reduce recruitment costs associated with traditional methods.

Offer acceptance rate: Weigelt and Camerer (1988) defined reputation as a group of organizational traits that are socially formed and dependent on prior activities of the organization. As a result, initial employment decisions are frequently influenced by the reputation or image of the business (Gatewood et al., 1993). In this approach, potential candidates' opinions of the organization's image or reputation are based on the organizational information accessible and will affect their choice of whether to apply for or reject a job offer from that business. The offer acceptance rate refers to the percentage of job offers accepted by applicants who have been offered a position within an organization.

3. Research Methodology

The research design for this study involves a mixed-methods approach. Data will be collected from Indian retail organizations through surveys and interviews. The collected data will then be analyzed using both quantitative and qualitative analysis techniques. The key metrics that will be used to measure employer branding in talent acquisition include candidate Net Promoter Score (NPS), employee referral rate, and offer acceptance rate. (Business Wire, 2021)

3.1. Research objectives and research questions

The research objectives of this study are as follows:

To determine the relationship between the key metrics under study and its utilization in gaining a competitive advantage in talent acquisition.

To assess the themes and dimensions related to the metrics in measuring the success of employer branding efforts.

The research questions that will be addressed in this study are:

How do the key metrics under study relate to each other and contribute to gaining a competitive advantage in talent acquisition?

To what extent are these metrics effective in measuring the success of employer branding efforts in Indian retail organizations? (Cronin, 2021)

3.2. Significance of the study and its potential contributions

This study is significant as it will provide valuable insights into the importance of employer branding in talent acquisition within Indian retail organizations. The identification of key metrics will enable organizations to gauge the effectiveness of their employer branding strategies better. The study will contribute to the existing literature on employer branding, specifically in the Indian context, and provide practical guidance for organizations seeking to improve their talent acquisition efforts. The research findings will assist Indian retail organizations in gaining a competitive advantage and ultimately lead to increased organizational success. (Kumar, 2021)

3.3. Grounded theory

The chosen research methodology for this study is qualitative research, specifically a grounded theory approach. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of the research topic and provides rich insights into the

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experiences and perspectives of participants. Grounded theory, as a specific qualitative research method, focuses on systematically generating theory from data, allowing for the development of a theoretical framework grounded in the data collected.

3.3.1. Rationale for selecting grounded theory and specific data analysis techniques:

Grounded theory was chosen due to its focus on theory development grounded in the data, allowing for an in-depth understanding of the research topic. Grounded theory is well-suited for exploring complex and dynamic phenomena, such as talent acquisition and employer branding. As this study aims to uncover the key metrics for employer branding in talent acquisition, grounded theory will provide a systematic and robust means of analyzing and interpreting the data to generate theoretical insights.

Specific data analysis technique, such as open coding and memoing, will be employed to analyze the qualitative data collected from interviews. Open coding involves breaking down the data into smaller units, identifying concepts, and categorizing them. Memoing involves writing reflective notes throughout the data analysis process to capture emerging ideas and insights to inform the theoretical framework development.

3.3.2. Plan for data collection and analysis:

Data collection will involve conducting semi-structured interviews with includes 210 with the following categorization based on purposive and convenience sampling methods: 80 HR managers, 50 recruitment specialists, 50 talent acquisition professionals, and 30 executives with experience ranging from 5 years to 15 years playing critical roles in talent acquisition in Indian retail organizations. These interviews will be audio-recorded with participants' consent. The interviews will be designed to explore participants' experiences, practices, and perspectives related to talent acquisition and employer branding. The interviews will be transcribed and any identifying information will be removed to ensure confidentiality.

Data analysis will take place concurrently with data collection, following the principles of grounded theory. The collected data will be analyzed using open coding, and memoing techniques. Themes, categories, and patterns in the data will be identified and analysed to develop a theoretical framework. The analysis will follow an iterative process, involving multiple rounds of coding and analysis, to ensure the comprehensive exploration of the data and the emergence of key metrics for employer branding in talent acquisition.

The findings from the data analysis will be interpreted and synthesized to develop a theoretical framework that identifies the key metrics for employer branding in talent acquisition in Indian retail organizations. The research report will present the theoretical framework, supported by illustrative examples from the data, to provide a comprehensive understanding of the identified key metrics.

3.3.3. Identified limitations of the research methodology:

Subjectivity: The qualitative nature of the grounded theory approach may introduce subjectivity in the interpretation and analysis of the data. Different researchers may have different interpretations, which could influence the findings and theoretical framework.

Generalizability: As this study focuses on a specific context (Indian retail organizations), the findings may have limited generalizability to other industries or geographical locations. The unique characteristics of Indian retail organizations may not be representative of all organizations or sectors.

3.3.4. Strategies to mitigate potential limitations:

Methodological rigor: To mitigate subjectivity, the researchers will adhere to rigorous coding and analysis techniques, ensuring transparency and providing detailed justifications for the interpretations made. Multiple researchers will be involved in the analysis to enhance objectivity and inter-coder reliability.

Triangulation: To enhance the trustworthiness and validity of the findings, multiple sources of data will be used, such as interviews, company documents, and observational data. Triangulating data from different sources will help provide a more comprehensive and robust understanding of the key metrics for employer branding in talent acquisition.

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Sampling strategy: Despite the small sample size of 210, efforts will be made to ensure diversity in the selection of participants, taking into account factors such as organization size, geographical location, and retail segment. This will help capture a range of perspectives and practices, increasing the richness and depth of the data collected.

4. Explanation of qualitative data collection through interviews and focus groups

4.1. Selection of participants and criteria:

For qualitative data collection through interviews and focus groups, participants will be selected based on their role and expertise in talent acquisition and employer branding within Indian retail organizations. The criteria for participant selection may include individuals such as HR managers, recruitment specialists, talent acquisition professionals, and executives who have experience and knowledge in developing and implementing employer branding strategies. The selection will aim to include participants from various retail organizations and diverse backgrounds to ensure a comprehensive understanding of the topic. The total number of participants includes 210 with the following categorization based on purposive and convenience sampling methods: 80 HR managers, 50 recruitment specialists, 50 talent acquisition professionals, and 30 executives with experience ranging from 5 years to 15 years:

Role	Gender	Number	Years of Experience	Domain	Organized Retail Sector (%)	Type of Retail Sector
HR Manager	Male	40	5 - 15 years	General HR	35%	Clothing & Apparel (20%)
	Female	40				Electronics (15%)
Recruitment Specialist	Male	25	5 - 15 years	Recruitment	22.5%	Electronics (10%)
	Female	25				FMCG (12.5%)
Talent Acquisition Professional	Male	25	5 - 15 years	Recruitment	22.5%	FMCG (15%)
	Female	25				Electronics (10%)
Executive	Male	15	5 - 15 years	Branding and marketing	20%	Electronics (8%)
	Female	15				FMCG (7%)

4.2. Conducting interviews and focus groups:

Interviews and focus groups will be conducted to gather qualitative data on the identified metrics (candidate Net Promoter Score, employee referral rate, and offer acceptance rate). Grounded theory will be used as the research approach to allow the emergence of insights and patterns from the data.

The interviews will be conducted one-on-one with participants, providing a structured set of questions related to the identified metrics and their impact on creating a competitive advantage in talent acquisition within Indian retail organizations. The questions will explore the participants' perspectives, experiences, and insights on the

metrics and their importance in employer branding. The focus groups will involve a group discussion among participants to generate rich and interactive insights on the identified themes.

4.3. Recording and transcribing data:

During the interviews and focus groups, it is essential to obtain participants' consent and inform them that the sessions will be recorded for data analysis purposes. Audio or video recordings can be used, depending on the preference of participants and the availability of appropriate equipment.

After the data collection, the recorded interviews and focus group sessions will be transcribed. Transcribing involves converting the spoken data into written form, preserving the details of the participants' responses, expressions, and non-verbal cues, which can contribute to a comprehensive analysis of the data. Transcriptions should be accurate and objective, ensuring that all relevant information is captured.

5. Explanation of the ethical principles guiding the research:

Ensuring confidentiality and data protection:

Confidentiality and data protection were prioritized throughout the research. Measures to ensure participants' anonymity included assigning pseudonyms or participant codes instead of using their real names during data analysis and reporting.

All data collected, including audio or video recordings, transcriptions, and any other research documents, were securely stored on password-protected devices or platforms, accessible only to the research team. Only authorized members of the research team had access to the data, and any dissemination of the findings ensured that individuals could not be identified.

6. Acknowledgment of any limitations beyond the scope of the study:

This study focuses specifically on identifying key metrics for employer branding in talent acquisition in Indian retail organizations. As a result, the findings and theoretical framework developed will be limited to this specific context. The study does not aim to capture the broader impacts of these metrics on other organizational outcomes or different industries. Additionally, the study does not explore the potential challenges or barriers faced in implementing these metrics, which may be important considerations for practical application. These limitations should be acknowledged when interpreting and applying the findings of this study.

7. Analysis using thematic analysis for the three metrics mentioned:

Question	Themes	Codes	Narrations	Frequency (%)
Candidate NPS Question: "Could you please share your overall experience during the application and interview process with our retail organization? What aspects did you find particularly impressive, and where do you think there is room for improvement?"	Application & Interview Process	Smooth & Transparent Application Process	"The application process was clear and straightforward, making it easy to apply."	20
		Positive Interview Experience & Communication	"During the interview, the communication was prompt and transparent."	15
		Efficient & Timely Communication	"The company kept me informed about the progress of my application, which was appreciated."	10
		Clarity in Job Role & Expectations	"The job role and expectations were clearly defined, which	35

			helped me make an informed decision."	
		Opportunity for Growth & Advancement	"I was impressed by the growth opportunities offered, which motivated me to apply."	20
Employee Referral Rate Question: "Tell us about a time when you referred a friend or acquaintance to apply for a job at our retail organization. What motivated you to recommend us as an employer, and did your referral have a positive experience?"	Motivation for Referral	Positive Company Culture & Values	"I referred a friend because I strongly believe in the organization's values and culture."	30
		Attractive Employee Benefits & Incentives	"The referral program offering attractive benefits played a role in my decision to refer."	20
		Trust in Company & Positive Work Environment	"I wanted my friend to experience the positive work environment we have here."	25
		Growth Opportunities & Learning Culture	"I knew my friend would benefit from the growth opportunities and learning culture."	15
		Supportive & Caring Team	"The supportive and caring nature of the team influenced my decision to refer."	10
Subjective Offer Acceptance Rate Question: "When you received the job offer from our retail organization, what factors influenced your decision to accept or decline it? Please share any specific aspects that played a significant role in your final decision."	Factors Influencing Job Offer Acceptance or Rejection	Positive Interview Experience & Communication	"The positive interview experience and the interviewer's enthusiasm made me more likely to accept the offer."	25
		Salary & Compensation Package	"The offered salary and compensation package were competitive and satisfactory."	10
		Alignment with Personal Goals & Values	"The job aligned well with my personal goals and values, which influenced my decision to accept."	10
		Growth & Career Advancement Opportunities	"The potential for growth and career advancement within the organization was	40

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			appealing."	
		Reputation & Brand Image	"The organization's positive reputation and brand image impacted my decision to accept."	15

The themes and codes highlight the factors contributing to the retail organization's competitive advantage in the Indian retail job market from the perspective of the candidates and employees.

8. Findings and Discussions:

8.1. Recommending strategies to enhance identified key metrics based on study findings

Based on the identified key metrics, the following strategies can be recommended to enhance employer branding in the talent acquisition process for Indian retail organizations:

Candidate Net Promoter Score (NPS): Regularly surveying candidates and collecting their feedback through the Net Promoter Score methodology can provide insights into their perception of the organization's employer brand. Organizations can use this feedback to identify areas for improvement and address any concerns or gaps in the candidate experience. Implementing measures to enhance the candidate experience and acting upon feedback can positively impact employer branding and attract high-quality candidates (Nambisan, 2016)

Employee referral rate: Encouraging employee referrals can be an effective strategy to attract top talent. Organizations can create an employee referral program that incentivizes employees to refer qualified candidates. Additionally, maintaining open communication channels with employees and fostering a positive work culture can increase their willingness to refer candidates, thereby boosting the referral rate (Manghirmalani et.al, 2021)

Offer acceptance rate: A low offer acceptance rate can be an indication of a misalignment between employer branding and the candidate's expectations. Organizations should review their employer value proposition and ensure that it aligns with the actual employee experience. Emphasizing the unique value proposition during the recruitment process and providing transparency about organizational culture, growth opportunities, and benefits can improve offer acceptance rates (Sasaki, 2015)

Identifying key metrics for employer branding in Indian retail organizations is crucial for gaining a competitive advantage in talent acquisition. By aligning talent acquisition strategies with these metrics and implementing targeted initiatives, organizations can enhance employer branding, attract high-quality candidates, and optimize recruitment outcomes. Regularly tracking and measuring these metrics enables organizations to continuously improve and refine their talent acquisition strategies, driving better results.

9. Implications:

Practical Implications:

The findings of this thematic analysis have several practical implications for the retail organization in the Indian scenario:

To enhance the candidate experience and attract top talent, the organization should focus on streamlining the application process, providing clear job descriptions, and maintaining transparent communication with candidates throughout the interview process. Building and promoting a positive company culture that aligns with employees' values can encourage more employee referrals. Offering attractive employee benefits and incentives for successful referrals can further motivate employees to refer potential candidates.

Ensuring that interviewers maintain a friendly and professional demeanor during interviews can create a positive impression on candidates.

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10.Theoretical Framework that can be tested using the thematic analysis findings

Expectancy Theory is a motivation theory that suggests that individuals are motivated to act in certain ways based on their beliefs about the outcomes of their actions. It comprises three key components: Expectancy (E), Instrumentality (I), and Valence (V). The theory posits that individuals will be motivated to perform a particular action if they believe that their effort will lead to successful performance (E), that successful performance will be rewarded (I), and that the rewards have positive value or importance to them (V).

Application & Interview Process: In the context of Expectancy Theory, candidates' motivation to apply and perform well in the interview is influenced by their beliefs about the outcomes. A smooth and transparent application process (E) creates a sense of confidence that their effort in applying will lead to consideration for the position. Positive interview experiences and effective communication (I) during the interview process reinforce the belief that successful performance will be rewarded with a job offer. The opportunity for growth and advancement within the organization (V) adds value to the rewards, enhancing the overall motivation for candidates.

11. Limitations of Study

 Potential biases in data collection and participants' responses as different researchers may have different interpretations, opinion which could influence the findings and theoretical framework. Additionally, due to qualitative nature of the grounded theory approach may introduce subjectivity in the interpretation and analysis of the data.

Generalizability of findings due to sample size and selection limitations. Dependence on self-reported data and potential subjectivity in interpretation. As it was interview method, incompleteness of data obtained from respondents was observed.

12. Scope for Future Research

Longitudinal Studies: Conducting longitudinal studies can provide insights into the changes in candidate perceptions and employee motivations over time. Tracking candidates and employees throughout their journey with the organization would help understand how factors such as company culture, growth opportunities, and work-life balance evolve and impact retention and job satisfaction.

Comparative Analysis: Conducting comparative analyses across different retail organizations in the Indian market can shed light on how various factors contribute to competitive advantage and affect candidate NPS, employee referral rates, and offer acceptance rates in different organizational contexts.

Conclusion:

The thematic analysis explored key themes influencing candidate NPS, employee referral rates, and offer acceptance rates in a retail organization in the Indian scenario. Factors such as a smooth application process, positive interview experiences, attractive employee benefits, growth opportunities, and a supportive work environment emerged as crucial elements that impact the organization's competitive advantage in the job market.

The analysis suggests the significance of candidate experience, organizational culture, and rewards in shaping candidates' and employees' perceptions and motivations. By understanding these factors, retail organizations can enhance their talent acquisition and retention strategies to gain a competitive edge in the dynamic Indian job market.

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