

An Empirical Investigation of Job Seekers' Occupational Fit and Employer Image on Employer Attractiveness

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Abstract

Modern digital firms need people from groups that aren't well-represented. Occupational fit is how well an employee's skills match what a firm needs. This study aims at occupational alignment and focuses on employer attractiveness, employer image, and human capital theory. This paper investigates how engineering and management graduates select the companies they apply for. 317 engineering and management graduates from top five engineering and management institutes were approached to collect their responses on how they shortlisted companies during campus placement drive. Engineers are quite picky about their employment and who they work for. Management graduates on the other hand conduct in depth analysis on the prospects of the company and also the priority ranking of the companies. A structured questionnaire collected responses on five point Likert scale on occupational fit, employer image and employer attractiveness, four items each, respectively. The data analysis was conducted by ADANCO software and the result showed a linear relationship between Occupational fit and Employer attractiveness ($\beta= 0.661$, $p=0.0000$), Employer Image and Employer attractiveness ($\beta=0.205$, $p=0.0182$), Indirect effect of Occupational fit on Employer attractiveness mediated by Employer image ($\beta=0.133$, $p=0.0024$). We conclude that Occupational fit and employer images contribute significantly to the employer attractiveness and employer image further mediates the effect of occupational fit on employer attractiveness.

KEYWORDS: Employer attractiveness, employer image, occupation, occupational fit, person-organization fit, recruitment.

Introduction

As the world grows more digital, businesses need people with matching skill sets. Many businesses feel a need to revamp the skill sets of their existing employees and hire new employees with the updates skills. Volkswagen will hire 2,000 people with skills in software and electrical architecture, according to Paroway (2020).

Volkswagen, like a lot of other German IT companies, hires digital workers even though it was founded before the digital age. This creates an interesting situation for the manufacturing companies in the modern age. Candidates don't want to work for great companies like Volkswagen since it is more mechanical and hardware than software. Occupational fit is what matters for a stable and sustainable employment for jobseekers.

There are not many studies that look at how occupational fit affects job seekers and companies. Colleagues share their skills and knowledge, beliefs, and identities. Value-based person-organization fit recruiting employs values, and identity (Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). Although employment may influence person-organization fit, not much work is available besides some staff hiring. Companies shy away from hiring otherwise qualified candidates if they fail to fit the occupational mould. Occupational fit is the subject of interest today (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The person-vocation fit research looks at how vocational theories might help people find employment that matter to them. Studies on people-job fit look at knowledge, and attributes and work tasks. This study attempts to fill the gap between the occupation or the job roles and the occupation or the collective sum of skills, abilities, values of the job seeker.

People looking for jobs may not always be a good fit for the company's vocation, which might make the company less appealing. A mechanical hiring for job titles may not always yield the best results. A poor occupational fit would not only make it hard for the employers but would also be equally tough on the sustainability of the employees.

Occupational fit can be visualised as the alignment between an employee's role and the employer's occupation. Some occupations require the employees to have certain skills and interests. For example Google, a technology leader naturally attracts people with coding skills. It is unclear how occupational fit influences the business evaluations of job seekers.

Research on career fit and attractiveness relies on corporate branding. Uggerslev et al. (2012) discovered that fit and corporate image significantly influence employer attractiveness. Going back to the example of a company like Volkswagen, job seekers who might be less interested in applying due to its mechanical engineering setup might still be drawn to apply for the massive brand value or the respectable image that the company enjoys.

Work is a significant aspect of person-organization fit in the context of job hunting. Job searchers can understand their task even if they don't have business experience (Miller, 2013). Content dimension employment necessitates more extensive employer scrutiny compared to person-organization fit which encompasses perspectives and identity. This research investigates the hitherto unexamined occupation to understand the attributes of job seekers. A lot of research on hiring stress the importance of person-organization fit (Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). However, the importance of occupational fit and employer image on the attractiveness of employers cannot be overstated and investigation into the causal effects might yield some important insights (Uggerslev et al., 2012).

Hypotheses

Recruitment must make sure that the organization has enough skilled and competent workers to carry out its new strategy (Gilch and Sieweke, 2021). This might help the business employ the best possible human resources to harness the maximum dividends. Attractiveness of a potential employee is the extent to which an individual positively views an organization and a workplace (Rynes, 1991). Attractiveness of an employer is one of the key attributes that may help in tapping the best talent to the employer (Chapman et al., 2005; Uggerslev, 2012). Organizations go to great lengths to create attractive job descriptions to draw and retain the best applicants (Thoms et al., 2004; Lee, 2013). Google advertises its on the job facilities, perks, excellent work culture, work atmosphere and potential career growth to attract the top percentile among engineers aspiring for a technical job. Employers indirectly gain from

being appealing since it helps people remember, recommend, and desire to work there (Walker et al., 2012).

A strong occupational fit is a big reason why people want to work for a company (Uggerslev et al., 2012). A good fit means that the person and the firm are a good match (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). The concept of person-environment fit is a well-established notion in the context of job seekers and employers (van Vianen, 2018). Interactional psychology posits that favourable outcomes arise from the interactions between individuals and their environment (Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). Fit theory posits that firstly fit predicts outcomes more effectively than its individual components, and secondly the alignment of human and environmental attributes yields optimal results (van Vianen, 2018). Numerous recruiting studies have analysed the personal and environmental characteristics of job seekers and employers to evaluate compatibility. The most common person-environment pairings are profession, job, and organization. Occupational fit evaluations look at the characteristics of both the person and the employer in a certain area (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005). Employers look at a job candidate's preferences, desires, personality, identity, values, and key attributes to see whether they are a good fit for the job. Fit may refer to any characteristic of a person or group (Harrison, 2007; Kristof-Brown & Guay, 2011). The occupational fit between the employee and the employer ensures a long term relationship that is useful and beneficial to all the stakeholders. Key employee attributes, values, and identities may separate people, and employment has a big effect on this. First, occupational groups are different because they need both technical or procedural expertise while conforming to the normative principles (Alutto et al., 1971). Second, occupational groups bring together people who think the same way. People choose occupations that seem right for them and available research on personality-vocation fit and professional choice supports this assertion (Kristof, 1996; Elias et al., 2018). Third, formal education, expertise in certain tasks, and groups of people who work in the same field create professional identities that help people find jobs. Professional social connections facilitate learning, cultivate authority, and enhance reputation (Lin, 2001). Personal organization aligns with beliefs, and professional objectives. People's professional attitudes are influenced by their unique occupational interactions and intersections. Since occupation is strongly tied to the work environment, it fits the content dimension of person-organization fit. Job seekers often use superficial attributes such as occupational fit rather than deep-level characteristics like beliefs or social identity in relation to corporate features. Job seekers heuristically assess employer attractiveness by focusing on the readily available information from job sites (Breugh, 2013; Miller, 2013).

The fit theory postulates a match between the employee and the employment environment as desirable (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown and Guay, 2011). People have natural affinity towards people, things and organizations which seem logically consistent with their values and beliefs (Montoya et al., 2008). People looking for work look for employers that breed familiarity, for example people have natural affinity to jobs and employers where their near family members are employed. Human capital theory extends beyond this general rationale to analyse occupational fit and appeal. When jobs are comparable, pay and education reimbursement go up. People typically get training for employment to improve their human capital, or income-generating livelihood skills. Additions to the human capital require expensive education, training, and learning (Becker, 1994). People seek occupations that pay well enough to meet these expenditures and wages increase with occupation-specific human capital (Kambourov and Manovskii, 2009; McDonald, 2011; Becker, 1994). People gain job-specific knowledge, power, and prestige via socialising and learning (Lin, 2001). Experience at work increases human capital, which is

likely to lead to promotions and higher compensation (Kwon and Meyersson Milgrom, 2014). Job seekers prefer working for companies that add to their future employability by aiding in skill development. Choosing a firm that offers occupational fit is the greatest way to achieve this since it gives job seekers experience in their field. The first hypothesis is proposed as follows

H1: Occupational fit is positively related to employer attractiveness.

The appeal of a workplace is strongly linked to how well a person fits in with the business. First, occupational groups have different skill sets because they need both technical or procedural expertise and the normative principles (Alutto et al., 1971; Dengler et al., 2015). Second, occupational groups bring together people who think alike. Individuals choose jobs that align with their self-concept. Research on person-vocation fit and occupational choice substantiates this (Kristof, 1996; Elias et al., 2018). Third, formal education, experiential learning tailored to particular tasks, and exposure to occupational peer groups generate occupational identities, which categorise job seekers based on their social identity. People study and behave in their professional social setting to achieve knowledge, power, and prestige that are particular to their jobs (Lin, 2001). Personal-organization fit content features include skill sets, values, and occupational identity. Occupation also includes the interactions and overlaps between its parts, which are people's unique experiences that impact how they think about their careers. Occupation is strongly related to the environment in which people work, hence it meets the content dimension of person-organization fit.

People looking for employment could use the content dimension of occupation to compare their present job duties to the ones they desire to undertake at a prospective company. This calls for a good match for the job. People looking for work could utilise superficial criteria like occupational fit instead of comparing their deep-level traits, such their beliefs or social identity, to company traits.

Person-organization fit predicts attractiveness, but employer image may also influence recruiting (Uggerslev et al., 2012). Company brand image, employment-related information, such as product or media experience, which reflects a mix of mental representations and associations regarding an organization as an employer together represent the corporate image which is often evaluated by prospective employees (Lievens and Slaughter, 2016). High salary, a preferred location, or a good work-life balance are some of the most important image characteristics that are used to measure the attractiveness of an employer to the prospective job seekers. The corporate image determines how much weightage job seekers place on the suitability of employment. The exalted corporate image of the employer keeps the employees happy and keeps the attrition rates low (Ito et al., 2013; Alshathry, 2017). A good corporate reputation could help people stay on the job a lot longer. The good corporate image of an employer also enriches the resume of an employer for future career advancements. A bad image on the other hand means negative utility, which effectively reduces the attractiveness of the employer. In addition to human capital theory, corporate image may change how well someone fits into a job. Job seekers may get higher compensation and gain valuable experience in a job that aligns with their skills and interests, thereby offsetting their educational and training expenses. Positivity is expected to retain employees more effectively than negativity: Companies with good corporate image get more returns from their human capital than their investment in people. Positive-image organisations gain more from job fit than negative-image businesses.

The second hypothesis is proposed as follows:

H2: Employer image fosters employer attractiveness.

While the occupational fit is a strong predictor of employer attractiveness the predictive influence of em-

ployer image cannot be overstated (Uggerslev et al. 2012). In addition to the direct effects that employer image and occupational fit have on the employer attractiveness, employer image also is likely to have a mediating effect on occupational fit on the employer attractiveness (Hohenberger and Grohs, 2020). The third hypothesis is stated as follows:

H3: Employer image mediates the effect of occupational fit on employer attractiveness.

The conceptual diagram indicating the two direct and one mediated relationship is depicted in Figure 1.

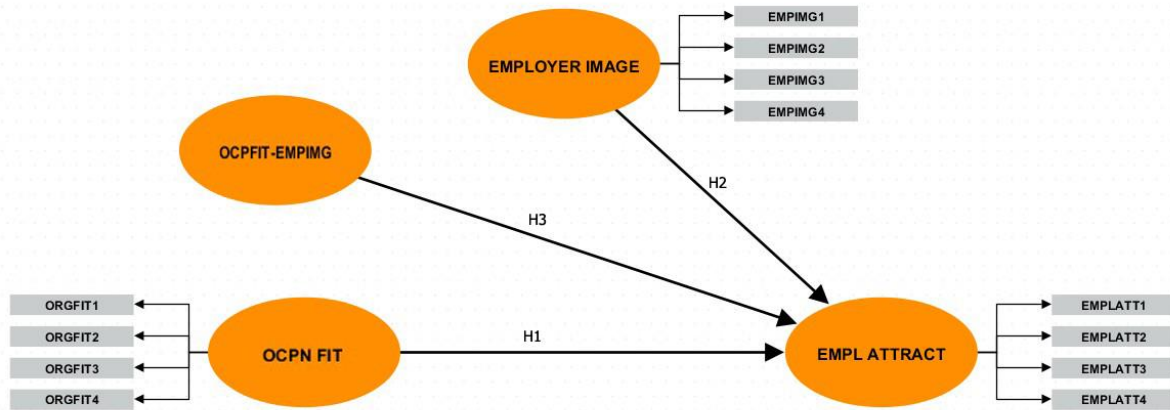


Figure 1: Conceptual model depicting direct and mediated effects on employer image and occupational fit on employer attractiveness

Materials and methods

Sampling and Sample Size: 500 students from the top engineering and management colleges from Mumbai and Delhi in India were contacted with a structured questionnaire. Random sampling was used to collect responses on the three constructs in the study, namely occupational fit, employer image and employer attractiveness. The questionnaire contained 12 items on 5 point Likert scale, four each on the three constructs measured. The management colleges were approached randomly and the students were given a brief introduction of the purpose of the survey. They were then asked to respond to the survey which took approximately 20 minutes to complete. The questionnaires were administered through online survey links on site. After eliminating the incompletely filled questionnaires 317 questionnaires were found useful indicating a 63.4% response rate which is adequate. The three scales were tested in a pilot survey conducted with 30 students and returned internal consistencies exceeding 0.7 (Cronbach alpha of 0.9124 for Employer attractiveness, 0.868 for employer image and 0.9295 for occupational fit respectively).

Analysis and Results

The data was input to an excel table and then analysed using the structural equation modelling software ADANCO (Henseler & Dijkstra, 2017). A bootstrapped model with 999 iterations was run and the direct linear relationships between Occupational fit>> Employer attractiveness and Employer Image>>Employer attractiveness were established with corresponding significance values. To evaluate the mediating effect of employer image on the effect of occupational fit on employer attractiveness, standardised scores from the ADANCO output were taken and a mediating variable namely OCPFIT-EMPIMG was computed by multiplying the scores of the OCPFIT and EMPIMG. The software was run

again with OCPFIT-EMPIMG included in the analysis. The mediating effect was thus evaluated (Memon et al., 2018)

The final structural equation model is presented in Figure 2.

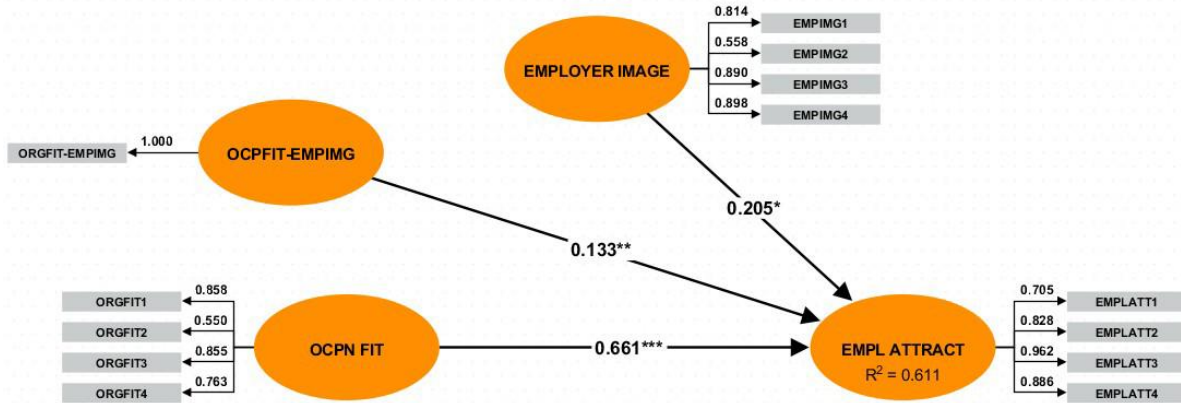


Figure 2: Model depicting the direct and indirect (mediated) relationships among constructs

(OCPN FIT=Occupational Fit, EMPL ATTRACT= Employer Attractiveness, OCPFIT-EMPIMG=Mediated effect of Employer Image on Occupational Fit).

Overall Model

Table 1. Goodness of .model fit (estimated model)

	Value	HI95	HI99
SRMR	0.0578		
d _{ULS}	-		
d _G	-		

Goodness of the model fit is given by SRMR (0.0578). A value of SRMR<0.08 is acceptable and the model shows good fit.

Table 2: R-Squared

Construct	Coefficient of determination (R ²)	Adjusted R ²
EMPL ATTRACT	0.6114	0.6083

The path coefficients are shown in Table 2. The strongest path coefficient is shown by Occupational Fit and Employer Attractiveness ($\beta=0.6607$, $p=0.0000$). the path coefficient indicates that for each unit change in occupational fit there is a 66.07% change in employer attractiveness. The employer image had a significant effect on employer attractiveness ($\beta=0.2048$, $p=0.0182$) indicating a 20.48% change in employer attractiveness for each unit change in employer image. Table 1 shows the coefficient of determination ($R^2= 0.6114$, $Adj R^2= 0.6083$). R^2 values above 0.50 are accepted and indicate that 61.14% variance in the sample is accounted for by the model. The Employer Image mediated the effect of Occupational Fit on Employer Attractiveness ($\beta=0.1334$, $p=0.0024$).

It can be seen that Occupational Fit had the most pronounced effect on employer attractiveness followed by the employer image. Employer image also had a significant mediating effect of occupational fit on employer attractiveness.

Table 3: Direct Effects Inference

Effect	Original coefficient	Standard bootstrap results				
		Mean value	Standard error	t-value	p-value (2-sided)	p-value (1-sided)
EMPLOYER IMAGE -> EMPL ATTRACT	0.2048	0.2037	0.0866	2.3647	0.0182	0.0091
OCPN FIT -> EMPL ATTRACT	0.6607	0.6608	0.0757	8.7336	0.0000	0.0000
OCPFIT-EMPIMG -> EMPL ATTRACT	0.1334	0.1345	0.0437	3.0484	0.0024	0.0012

Next the construct reliability is presented in Table 3. The reliability of the three constructs is examined by Dijkstra-Henseler’s rho (ρ_A), Joreskog’s rho (ρ_c) and Cronbach’s alpha respectively. The values are all above 0.7 and therefore the construct reliability is confirmed.

Table 4: Construct Reliability

Construct	Dijkstra-Henseler's rho (ρ_A)	Jöreskog's rho (ρ_c)	Cronbach's alpha(α)
EMPL ATTRACT	0.9226	0.9118	0.9124
EMPLOYER IMAGE	0.8972	0.8749	0.8686
OCPN FIT	0.9415	0.9306	0.9295

Table 4 presents the convergent validity of the three constructs. This is determined by the average variance extracted. The average variance extracted is computed by taking the average of the sum of squares (variance) of all the constituent items of each construct. Average variance extracted above 0.5 is acceptable.

Table 5: Convergent Validity

Construct	Average variance extracted (AVE)
EMPL ATTRACT	0.7234
EMPLOYER IMAGE	0.6432
OCPN FIT	0.7723

The constructs need to be tested for discriminant validity. This is tested by Fornell Larcker’s criterion. Fornell Larcker criterion is validated if the values on the extreme diagonal (AVE) are greater than all the values on the left of individual rows.

Table 6: Discriminant Validity: Fornell-Larcker Criterion

Construct	EMPL ATTRACT	EMPLOYER IMAGE	ORGN FIT
EMPL ATTRACT	0.7234		
EMPLOYER IMAGE	0.4205	0.6432	
OCPN FIT	0.5817	0.5534	0.7723
OCPFIT-EMPIMG	0.0360	0.1289	0.1428

While Fornell Larcker establishes the discriminant validity, another metric called heterotrait monotrait (HTMT) is considered a better metric. HTMT values larger than 0.85 indicate that hetero and monotrait values are nearly identical and therefore, the constructs are not discriminated from each other. Table 6 presents the HTMT values.

Table 7: Discriminant Validity: Heterotrait-Monotrait Ratio of Correlations (HTMT)

Construct	EMPL ATTRACT	EMPLOYER IMAGE	ORGN FIT
EMPL ATTRACT			
EMPLOYER IMAGE	0.6470		
OCPN FIT	0.7564	0.7531	
OCPFIT-EMPIMG	0.1868	0.3716	0.3825

Conclusion

While engineering graduates are inherently from technical backgrounds they find natural occupational fit in technical engineering jobs. Such graduates naturally gravitate towards corporates with basic engineering image such as automotive, manufacturing and service industries. Management graduates come from different backgrounds including engineering among many basic streams. Managers with engineering backgrounds again show affinity for employers in consultancy, engineering and service while managers with basic degrees in non engineering streams choose marketing and HR roles offered by their employers. Top institutes also rank the prospective employer companies based on the reputation or corporate image. The final choice of the prospective candidates depends both on the occupational fit and the corporate image of the employer.

This study evaluated the influence of employer image and occupational fit on the attractiveness of employer. Based on the responses collected from 317 final year engineering and management graduates about to enter the job market it was established that the employer attractiveness is directly influenced by occupational fit and the image of the employer. The occupational fit was found three times more effective than the image of the employer. The linear relationships were found to be significant and positive. Additionally the corporate image was found to be mediating the impact or influence of occupational fit on employer attractiveness.

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