



Proceedings of International Conference on Strategies in
Volatile and Uncertain Environment for Emerging Markets
July 14-15, 2017
Indian Institute of Technology Delhi, New Delhi
pp.162-169

An Exploration of Various Dimensions in Job Advertisements for Effective Recruitment

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Abstract

While the study on the effectiveness of commercial product/services advertising has been a well-established topic, the one component of advertising that is still underdeveloped is the study on recruitment advertising (ad) effectiveness. Hence, this article focuses on addressing the gap, which is to explore the dimensions of attractiveness in job advertisements. We claim that for a job ad to be effective in pursuing job seeker towards application intention, it should be incorporated with attractiveness dimensions. Therefore, this paper covers a list of attractiveness dimensions compiled from literatures and have applied these to our exploratory analysis of 636 job ad contents (one-year period) from recruitment section of two leading Indian English newspapers. The result of the analysis determines its usage pattern in print recruitment advertisements explicitly as well as suggests suitable solutions to the recruiting institutions/organizations that are confronted with the issues of investing in targeted advertising. Finally, research findings and recommendations are discussed.

Keywords: Dimensions, Effectiveness, Job Advertisement, Organizational Attractiveness, Recruitment Advertisement

1. Introduction

Attracting and Recruiting the right applicant has become the new mantra of recruiting organizations recently. Therefore, it increases the concern for imparting attractive strategies in recruitment advertisements (ad). Attracting a pool of suitable candidate for recruitment is possible by effective usage of the recruitment message. In addition, appropriate message in a recruitment ad acts as a powerful tool in attracting applicants (De Cooman and Pepermans, 2012). Thereby, advertising becomes an important tool that firms deploy to identify, hire, and retain potential employees (Hah et al., 2005). Recruitment advertising is the phase in which the recruiting firms attracts prospective candidates through posting of recruitment advertisements and thereby foster application intention in them (Roberson et al., 2005). Regardless of huge progress in internet and online job portals, using the print media for posting job ads is the usually used method (Greenberg, 1986, Fyock, 1988), since it is the most reliable and less expensive medium among all other forms of media (Mcintosh et. al. 2000).

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Our study started with the search for solving the research question, “what makes a recruitment advertisement effective?” (Rafaeli and Oliver, 1998). Subsequently, our literature study provided us with organizational attractiveness dimensions that are to be incorporated in the recruitment advertisement to attract the potential job seekers (Hah et al, 2005). In addition, an attracted applicant tends to apply for the job (Winter 1996; Yuce and Highhouse 1998; Thorsteinson and Highhouse 2003; Reeve and Schultz 2004; Rau and Adams 2005), thereby proving the advertisement is effective (Barber (1998)). Despite widespread research that has been done on applicant attraction and organizational attractiveness, a void exists in integrating these attractiveness dimensions as a means to job advertisement effectiveness.

This vacuum inspired the present study and led us to collect relevant scholarly articles related to factors causing organizational/job attractiveness, resulting in the identification of attractiveness dimensions. Based on these identified dimensions, we examined a large number of recruitment advertisements from two leading English newspaper job supplements (The Empower and Ascent) in India. This examination yielded that there exist a lack of creativity in designing an attractive recruitment advertisement. Therefore, this paper carries relevant literature support on different dimensions of attractiveness, followed by problem identification, research design, and outcome of exploratory analysis on newspaper job ads and finally recommendations are discussed.

2. Literature Review

Organizational Attractiveness

For an ad to be effective, it should persuade consumers to like, believe and discover usefulness by engaging them with updated product and services (Mehta, 2000). Similarly, the job ad should prompt liking for the recruiting organization, which highlights the importance for attraction in a job ad (Sisodia and Chowdhary, 2013). Therefore, generating liking in a job seeker by gaining ‘Organizational attractiveness’ were observed as the potential applicant’s career advancement opportunity in working for the organization (Hah et al., 2005). Meaning which, Barber (1998) stated that the recruitment advertisements material is the primary source of causing organizational attractiveness phenomenon in a potential job seeker. Subsequently, these materials help job seeker to fit their needs with that of the recruiting organization and thereafter, positively initiate attraction, and application behavior in a job seeker (Celani and Singh, 2011).

As seen from literature on advertisements, differentiating between the rival organizations is essential. In case of typical products, consumers could recollect better, and are likely to acquire intention to purchase (Lynch, 1991). The inference is that hiring firms that shows its uniqueness through posting job ad with necessary dimensions are deemed as attractive. Moreover, attractive dimensions are the quantifiable variables in recruitment advertisement that would aid in the evaluation of job ads. Therefore, in the following paragraphs, we have identified and listed the attractiveness dimensions from the literature study and have presented with illustrations.

Dimensions of Organizational Attraction

Job and Work Characteristics

A Job and work characteristic denotes the duties, functions, and liability that are essential for a working environment where the actual job is executed (Gatewood and Field 2001). They are described in job advertisements for a job applicant to get details on job in the organization (Barber 1998; Highhouse and Hoffman, 2001). Moreover, the information provided in a job advertisement about a job nature is important as it clarifies the views of the job seekers about what the job entails (Albernthly and Franky, 1996). Job and work characteristics in advertisements enable the potential applicants to make more inferences about their suitability in the job (Gowan, 2004), thereby reducing uncertainty.

Employee Portrayal/Testimonial in Job Ads

Including photographs/testimonial of an employee makes the job advertisements meaningful (Ryan et al. 2000). As popular individuals are used in commercial ads, including employee picture with testimony in recruitment ads increases credibility to the corporate image (Ryan, 2000). These employee testimonials are useful because it provides job applicants with essential information on quality of work life balance in the organization (Deck, 1999). Moreover, job seekers are significantly attracted, when the testimony speaks about existing employee's potential suitability with the recruiting organization (Vanhoye, 2007).

Corporate Image Building Statements

Information about the recruiting company in the recruitment ads helps in implanting good reputation in the minds of the prospective applicants (Gatewood, 1993), creating attraction and applicants' interest to pursue the job (Belt and Paolillo, 1982; Highhouse *et al.*, 2003). The elements of corporate image in a job advertisement are the corporate emblem, trademarks (Mishra and Dhar, 2000), mission and vision statements, and company annual revenue earned, the labor strength and the overview of the business (Rai and Kothari, 2008). Therefore, providing corporate information in job ads can be viewed as one of the corporate brand-building activity.

Perception of P-O Fit

Person-Organizational fit assessment is the match across organizations and individuals in terms of values, beliefs, personalities, and culture (Bretz et al., 1993). P-O fit is an important factor in the job recruitment process as job seekers feels associated with the firm, which suits their personality and value system (Cable and Judge, 1997; Sacks and Ashforth, 1997). Applicants perceived fit comes as an outcome of appraisal between individual characters, needs, and job-organizational characteristics (Kristof, 1996). Hence, organizations should use such culture, values, or their personality depicting statements in job ads to achieve the phenomenon of perception of P-O fit with the potential applicants.

Aesthetic Appeal

To capture the attention of a reader, the following aesthetic characters are to be considered, Ad size, ad location on the page, headlines and sub-headlines, logos, borders, layout relevant visual images, graphics usage and the white space (Ryan, G. *et. al.*, 2000). Color plays a significant role in making an ad visually appealing (Fernandez and Rosen, 2000). Moreover, creative, stylish, colorful, and enlightening visuals in these advertisements affect the psychographic profile of the job applicant (Sisodia, 2012). Therefore, an aesthetically rich job ad is attributed as an attention grabbing and attracting component for an effective recruitment.

HR Offerings / Organizational Attributes

The effect of publishing the salaries and other organizational offerings in recruitment advertisement affects the perception of an applicant's intention to apply for the job opening (Taylor and Bergman, 1987). Remarkable compensation packages are attractive and effective in differentiating between the competitive employers. The information on organizational benefits helps candidates to understand the job nature in that organization and positively influences the applicants to react to those job advertisements (Villamil, 2007). Moreover, they are used to attract passive job seekers who are down with their current employment (Rynes, 1991; Ryan et al., 2000). In addition, benefit information in job advertisements were found to affect married job seeker's more than unmarried job seekers (Garcia *et al.*, 2010). Therefore, indication of the employee growth prospects and package details in the job ad helps to display the organization as an attractive place of employment.

3. Problem Statement

Here we propose that the attractiveness in job advertisement is the main root cause for achieving effectiveness, because an organizational job advertisement with these attractive dimensions are likely to be perceived as an attractive employer (Elving *et.al.*, 2013) and consequently creating application intention in a job seeker (Villamil, 2007). Based on the prevailing literature, we can infer that the presence of attractiveness dimensions in recruitment advertisements attracts the potential applicant to apply for the job. The research question that follows from the above review is: *Whether the recruitment advertisements posted by Indian organizations incorporates all these attractiveness dimensions in order to be effective?*

3.1 Research Methodology

There has been very little research on recruitment advertising and although the need for the study of job ad effectiveness is high as emphasized by Rafaeli and Oliver (1998), till date no attempt was made. Hence, this study would be first in assessing recruitment advertisement effectiveness. For which contents in a job advertisement are explored from the literature and compiled as attractive dimensions. To understand advertisement effectiveness appropriately, the attractive components/ dimensions that are incorporated in newspaper job advertisements has been explored from English newspaper and was percentage analyzed. For which a sample of 636 recruitment ads pertaining to different industrial sectors (Educational sector, Manufacturing sector, hospitals, banking, IT sector) was collected from the job ad supplements of two leading Indian English dailies (The Empower from The Hindu & The Ascent from Time of India) over a period of one year (2015 June to 2016 June).

The ads placed by the recruitment agencies were not included, as they do not disclose the company's information, which was like a blind ad not knowing the job and employer details. The Table 1 shows the different industrial sector percentage of job ad appearance in the newspaper. The Table 2 shows result of the percentage analysis of Indian job ads. At present, this analysis is just an attempt to know the percentage usage of attractive dimensions in recruitment advertisements and its importance.

Table 1: Industry-Wise Job ad Percentage Analysis

| Industrial sector | No of job ads | Percentage of job ad appearance during June (2015-16) |
|----------------------|---------------|---|
| Educational Sector | 267 | 42 % |
| Manufacturing sector | 237 | 37.2 % |
| Healthcare sector | 59 | 9.3 % |
| Banking & Insurance | 56 | 8.9 % |
| IT Sector | 17 | 2.6 % |

Source: Compiled by Author

Table 2: Indian Job Ad Attractiveness Dimensions Analysis

| Attractiveness Dimensions | Percentage of dimension usage in Indian Job Ads |
|--|---|
| Job/work characteristics | 60% |
| Corporate image | 10% |
| HR offerings/Organisational attributes | 9 % |
| Person-Organisation fit | 8 % |
| Aesthetic Appeal | 7 % |
| Thought provoking Headline | 6 % |
| Employee testimonial | NIL |

Source: Compiled by Author

4. Findings and Recommendations

This study integrates the recruitment advertisement literature and the exploratory analysis of job advertisement to provide theoretical and practical implications for HR managers and researchers in the recruitment process. This study suggests for improving the recruitment activities through increasing the effectiveness of job advertisements. We also identified the percentage of job advertisement posting by different industrial sectors, which clearly indicates that academic field job ads followed by manufacturing sector job ads is found mostly. Therefore, these two industries can benefit by posting effective recruitment ad by taking initiative towards the recommendations given below.

Organizations must plan a strategy to capture the attention of the right candidate (Pomeroy 2001; Cunningham 2007). Employers need to convey their distinctive attributes (attractive features) in job ads to establish a brand image in the mind of the job seeker (Hemphill and Kulik, 2013). The recruiting managers should emphasize on the aspect of inclusion of Employee testimonial or portrayal of employees' image in the job ads similar to that of product celebrity endorsement, to induce a potential applicant to make the perception of fit with the organization.

Job seekers are attracted based on the testimonials in their recruitment ads and they assess their fit with potential coworkers (Walker, 2009). However, we found that employee testimonial usage in Indian recruitment material is absolute (0%). HR recruiters should act as marketers in order to attract the best talent into the company. Consequently, to portray the organization attractive in the eyes of the prospective applicant, testimonial content must be prepared appropriately. Besides, not more than 6% of job ads is observed to be incorporated with thought provoking headlines. Such statements grab the attention of the user and urge them to read further, resulting in positive attitude and attraction.

Significantly, aesthetic appeal plays a significant role in gaining competitive edge over the other. Most of the recruiters do not invest in designing visually appealing ads, which is obvious from the fact that only 6 % of job ads were appearing with colors, fonts, figures and other visually appealing components. Large colorful advertisements with inclusion of company's logos, innovative designs attract the potential applicant to explore further and initiate interest in the organizational job (Ryan (2000), Sisodia, (2012). Notably, making a symbolic personality touch with a job seeker can be achieved by promoting personality revealing statements in the ads, which enables the job seeker to make association of fit with the organization (Schreurs et al.,

2009). We found that, not more than 8% of ads promote such statements. In order to make person-organization fit; the recruiter should coin and implement personality-related terms in the job ads. Importantly, HR offering such as pay band and other extra benefits influences the applicant largely. Statistics shows 9% of job ads are found with such details. The employers must be transparent in terms of such attributes to be considered as an attractive job destination.

Furthermore, organizational image enhancing statements in job ads might lead to the attraction of particular personality of applicant to apply for job (Ryan et al., 2000). Besides, 10 % of job ads come up with such statements that have a beneficial effect on the organization by making a lasting impression in the minds of the potential applicant. Subsequently, the job and Organizational specific information in the job ads are highly beneficial in highlighting the image of the organization. Briefing job and work information in the job ads, leads to the selection of the right candidate and elimination of unsuitable applicants are possible at the recruitment stage itself. Our analysis reveals 60 % of job ads hold details of job characteristics in the company. Eventually, job information in job advertisements greatly affects the job seeker's perception on organizational attraction and intention to apply (Gomes and Neves, 2011).

Our analysis clearly indicates the lack of effectiveness in designing the job ad, which must be addressed significantly by the HR manager, employers, agencies, and HR consultants. The initial recruitment phase plays a crucial role in grabbing the job seeker's attention. Recruiters should invest their time and money in designing an appropriate recruitment advertisement, incorporating all the above dimensions/factors to reap the benefit of cost-effective recruitment, in being able to zone in on the right kind of individual for the job posting. As rightly analyzed by Sisodia and Chowdhary (2012), a job advertisement must provide a job applicants with a realistic image of work in a particular firm and it should encompass all the necessary elements that declares the company as a best place of employment.

5. Conclusion

The job searching process involves the use of job information material, which is the job advertisement that influences the job applicant to either apply or deter. Estimating job advertisement effectiveness based on attracting dimensions among the different job seeker segment can show its significance. The design of the recruitment ad should be in accordance to the identified attractive dimensions, as they help in generating larger pool of potential job seekers. The role of recruitment advertisement is not only in pooling and in acquiring of potential applicants but also extends its significance to retaining them. Largely, this paper provides researchers, recruiting organizations and Human resource consultants with valuable insights in the process of understanding attractiveness components for making recruitment advertisement effective. The study also provides a wakeup call for the recruiting firms to make their recruitment ads attractive and highly informative for a cost effective hiring. In addition, an effective recruitment ad make the employers visible in the media and conveys the right message to build a better brand image in the minds of current and potential applicant pool. A well-designed job advertisement is beneficial to the job seeker because of its information on characteristics of job opportunity as well as the recruiting firm in highlighting its reputation.

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