

**DEMOGRAPHIC DIFFERENCES ENCOUNTER IN EMPLOYER
ATTRACTIVENESS**

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ABSTRACT

The apparel industry is one of the largest export earning industries in Sri Lanka and provides ample job opportunities for society. Despite that industry is facing a large labour deficiency which can lead to a shift in the industry in near future. It stresses that there is a less attraction of potential employees towards the industry. Employer attractiveness is the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization consist with five dimensions, namely interest value, social value, economic value, application value and development value. The dissimilarity of potential employees can be caused to prevailed differences in employer attractiveness. Therefore this study aims to investigate what demographic differences are exist in the employer attractiveness in terms of gender (Male & Female), age (Young & Middle-aged) and previous experiences in employment (Experienced & In-experienced) of potential employees in the apparel industry. Findings revealed that the perceived level of the employer attractiveness varies according to the gender, age and previous experiences in employment. The highest attracting dimension of males was economic value while the least was application value. Females were more attracted to social value and less attractive to development and interest value. Both young and middle-age people tend to attract more towards the economic value while the young category is least attracted to development value and middle age category is to application value. Experienced employees are highly attracted to the economic value of the employer while least attractive to the application value. Inexperienced people tend to attract more towards social value and least to development value.

Keywords: employer attractiveness, gender, age, employment status

1. Background of the Study

Attracting and retaining human capital is one of the best sources of competitive advantage for the organization when a shift from the industrial age to information age in global economies. Today human resource becomes the strategic element for the corporate success. Attracting talented employees from the pool of potential employees is difficult for organizations, since the competition is high to attract and retain skilled and talented employees. Human Resource Management (HRM) plays a major role in this, dealing with organizations human resource/employees. HRM is the efficient and effective utilization of human resourcestoachieveorganizationalgoalsandobjectives(Opatha, 2015). HRM consist with series of interrelated functions and success of one function has a direct impact on determining the success of other(Opatha, 2015). The recruitment function of HRM plays a major role in attracting potential employees for the organization and the retention and managing them largely depend on successful attraction of potential employees.

Backhausand Tikoo (2004) indicate that potential employees compare the organization's image with their own needs, personality, and values.In psychological research, they were focusing on why individuals are attracted, thus what makes an organization attractive in terms of specific (personal) characteristics(Highhouse, Lievens&Sinar, 2003; Van Hoyer&Lievens, 2007).Employer Attractiveness is a closely related concept to 'employer branding' (Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).Employment branding is, therefore, concerned with building an image in the minds of the potential labor market that the company, above all others, is a 'great place to work(Ewing, Pitt, & Bussy, 2002). That good image will help to attract relevant employees to form the job seeker's pool.Employer attractiveness defined as the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization(Berthon, Ewing, & Hah, 2005).Therefore employer attractiveness leads to attract human resources to a company and organizations should have an understanding of the factors affecting for potential employee intention to apply for the job of a particular company (Berthon et al.,2005).

The apparel industry is one of the main industries in Sri Lanka, which is still labor-intensive and contributes to the countries' economy in a considerably high level. According to the Central Bank report (2018), the Textile and apparel industry is the largest export earner in Sri Lanka, which provides a large number of job opportunities tothe job market. However, while remaining an unemployment rate at 4.4%, the apparel manufacturing industry faces a huge problem of attracting operational level employees, which affects for the smooth operations of factories, which may lead to a shift in the industry due to the problem of lack of labor in the country.

As a preliminary investigation,the cadre fulfillment data was analyzed in four apparel manufacturing companies for recent three years. The following table shows the discrepancies of budgeted cadre, actual cadre fulfillment, and the turnover rates of four companies.

Table 1.Cadre fulfillment of four apparel manufacturing companies

Company	Year	Budgeted Cadre	Recruited Cadre	Gap	Turnover Rate
A	2015	380	352	28	6.3
	2016	402	385	17	6.1
	2017	420	394	26	6.6
B	2015	405	400	5	3.2
	2016	428	427	1	3.5
	2017	439	436	3	3.1
C	2015	1520	1522	2	5.1
	2016	1523	1518	5	4.9
	2017	1508	1510	2	4.3
D	2015	3655	3650	5	6.5
	2016	3618	3603	15	6.6
	2017	3635	3621	14	6.3

Source: (HR Reports, 2015 - 2017)

In addition, a preliminary survey has been conducted by using a questionnaire initially developed by Berthon, Ewing and Hah(2005) to measure the potential employee's employer attractiveness to apply for the job apparel industry. Overall, 30 questionnaires were distributed among the potential employees and the result of the preliminary survey shows that there is less employer attractiveness of potential employees (Mean = 3.457).

Employer attractiveness was studied for different contexts and different respondents (Boswell, Roehling, Lepine, & Moynihan, 2003; Myrden & Kelloway, 2015, S.W. Ng, Gossett, Samuel, & Isaac, 2016). Also, a number of academic researches directly focused on identifying the dimensions of employer attractiveness indeed. Contemporary researchers view employer attractiveness as a multidimensional construct. There are various attempts to identify the distinct dimensions of employer attractiveness (Alniascik & Alniascik, 2012). However, the current literature does not fully answer the questions about the perceived importance levels of each dimension, nor about the perceptual differences between individuals having different characteristics. In 2012, Alniascik investigated whether the current employment status, gender, and age of the individual matter when assesses the dimensions of Employer Attractiveness.

Moreover, literature has been mainly focused on concepts and results obtained through EA dimensions and perceived EA levels (Biswas & Suar, 2014). Potential employees tend to find firms with which they identify based on corporate social responsibility reputations as more attractive. In addition, characteristics such as gender, race, age, education, or household income may shape identifications with firms and individual perceptions of firm attractiveness, depending upon potential employee characteristics perceived EA level vary according to those demographic factors (Newbury, Gardberg, & Belkin, 2006). Thus, examining demographic differences encounter in EA is important. Therefore, the remainder of this paper focused on answering the problem of **“What demographic differences exist in Employer attractiveness level in apparel manufacturing industry?”**.

Answering to the above research problem, current study aims to find out whether there is any mean difference in perceived level of dimensions of Employer Attractiveness (Interest value, Social value, Economic value, Development value, Application value) between potential

employees in the apparel manufacturing industry with relevant to their demographic differences (Gender, Age, Employment Experience)

2. Literature Review

2.1 Overview of Employer Attractiveness

To be an attractive employer for potential employees and current employees, organizations have to differentiate themselves from their competitors. (Alniacik & Alniacik, 2012). For that, as an employer, it is important to understand what kind of things which can be attracting the potential employees (Alniacik & Alniacik, 2012). Also, EA is plays a major role when attracting talented and suitable potential employees to achieve their targets. Employer attractiveness is not a novel concept to the research. It has been researched in many areas, such as management, marketing, behavioral sciences. Employer attractiveness is defined as the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization (Berthon et al., 2005). According to Jiang and Iles (2011), employer attractiveness is the degree to which potential applicants and existing employees favorably perceive an organization. Employer attractiveness is simply about being “a great place to work” and it helps an organization to outperform its competitors and achieve success in the long run (Jiang & Iles, 2011)

Soelberg as cited by Leivens, Decaestecker and Coetsier 2001, applicants use only few factors when they are selecting best option among the alternatives. Applicants tend to confirm their job in an organization when their minimum criteria on the important factors fulfill by that organization. Also, Schneider as cited in Leivens et al. 2001 that individuals are attracted to an employer in different level according to their needs, interest, preferences and personality. The ultimate result of this attraction can be gained both the individuals and the organization. The organization can attract the best individuals to achieve their goals and objectives. On the other hand, in the applicant side, they can do assessment on their potential employer according to their preferences, needs, and personality.

2.2 Dimensions of Employer Attractiveness

Interest value: The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides an exciting work environment, novel work practices and that makes use of its employee's creativity to produce high-quality, innovative products and services *Social value:* The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides a working environment that is fun, happy, provides good collegial relationships and a team atmosphere *Economic value:* The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides above-average salary, compensation package, job security and promotional opportunities *Application value:* The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides recognition, self-worth and confidence, coupled with a career-enhancing experience and a springboard to future employment. *Development value:* The extent to which an individual is attracted to an employer that provides an opportunity for the employee to apply what they have learned and to teach others, in an environment that is both customer orientated and humanitarian (Berthon et al., 2005; Jiang & Iles, 2011; Alniacik & Alniacik, 2012).

2.3 Demographic differences in Employer Attractiveness

In 2012 Alniasik and Alniasik found a significant difference between males and females considering the perceived importance levels of social value, market value, application value and cooperation value, but not the economic value or the workplace environment and there is higher importance level of social value, market value, and cooperate value in female respondents than male respondents.

Job applicant perceptions will be influenced by age, education, social relationships and types of work when they are selecting a potential employer (Wells, 1993 as cited by Arachchige & Robertson, 2013). In the study of Alniasik and Alniasik (2012) found that when potential employees are getting older, they attract the organizations which produce high-quality innovative products and services and are customer-oriented.

Arachchige & Robertson (2013) found that previously employed respondents tend to attribute more importance to the market value of the employer compared to unemployed respondents (Alniacik & Alniacik, 2012). Working experience may also largely influence applicants' preferences and expectations when they are selecting a future employer (Gu & Chi SenSiu, 2009 as cited in Bellou, Stylos & Rahimi, 2017).

3. Methodology

Demographic variables considered in the study are gender, age, and employment status of the potential employees. Gender is categorized as male and female, age is categorized into two groups as Age between 18-28 consider as younger and age between 29-38 consider as middle age. Employment status was considered in two categories as experienced (People who have done a job before) and inexperienced (People who are fresh to the job market). Employer attractiveness of the study stands for the envisioned benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization (Berthon et al., 2005).

3.1 Data Collection

Anyone unemployed was qualified to be selected as a respondent. The sample size of the study is 370 potential job seekers and the respondents were selected using convenient sampling due to the difficulty in accessing to the respondents. The primary data were collected using a survey method by employing a self-administered questionnaire. The demographic variables (Gender, Age and Experience in Employment) were included in Part A and Employer Attractiveness questions were included in Part B. Employer Attractiveness was measured using a reliable (0.95 Alpha value) and validated scale developed by Berthorn et al. (2005). The respondents were asked to provide their answers in a 7 point Likert scale rated as 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Slightly Disagree, 4 = Slightly Agree, 5 = Agree, 6 = Strongly Agree.

Table 2. Measuring Instrument of Employer Attractiveness

Variable	Dimension	Statement
Employer Attractiveness (Berthon et al.,2005) Seven point likert scale (1= To a very little extent and 7=To a very great extent)	Interest value	I hope to work in an exciting environment
		I expect an innovative employer with novel work practices/ forward thinking
		I hope the organization both values and makes use of your creativity
		I hope the organization products high-quality products and services
	Social value	I hope the organization produces innovative products and services
		I prefer a fun working environment
		I prefer to have a good relationship with my superiors
		I prefer to have a good relationship with my colleagues
		I expect to have supportive and encouraging colleagues
	Economic value	I prefer a happy work environment
		I expect good promotion opportunities within the organization
		I expect job security within the organization
		I prefer hands-on inter-departmental experience
		I expect an above-average basic salary
	Development value	I expect an attractive overall compensation package
		I expect recognition/appreciation from management
		I expect a springboard for future employment
		I like to feel good about myself as a result of working for the organization
		I expect to feel more self-confident as a result of working for a particular organization
	Application value	I prefer gaining career- enhancing experiences
		I expect humanitarian organization – gives back to society
		I expect to have opportunities to apply what was learned a tertiary institution
		I expect to have opportunity to teach others what you have learned
		I expect acceptance and belonging
		I hope this organization is customer oriented

4. Results and Discussion

The following three figures represent the distribution of samples based on the demographic variables.

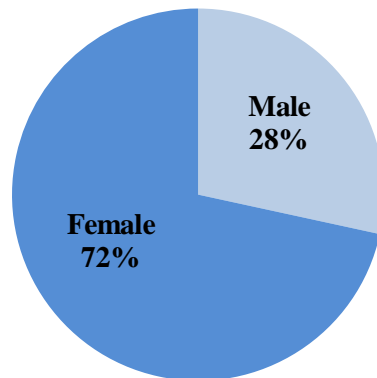


Figure 1. Gender Distribution

Figure 1 shows the gender distribution in terms of males and females. The majority of the sample consists of females, which account for 72%, while the males account only for 28% of the total sample.

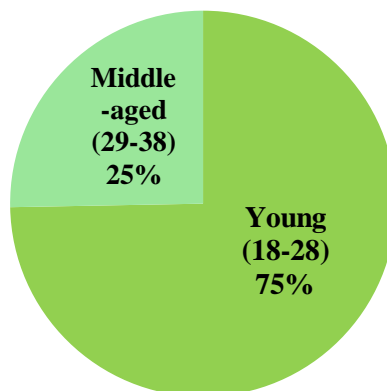


Figure 2. Age Distribution

Figure 2 shows the age distribution of the sample in terms of the two categories considered for the study as young and middle-aged. Two third of the sample (75%) belonged to the young category at the same time, 25% of the sample represents the middle-aged category.

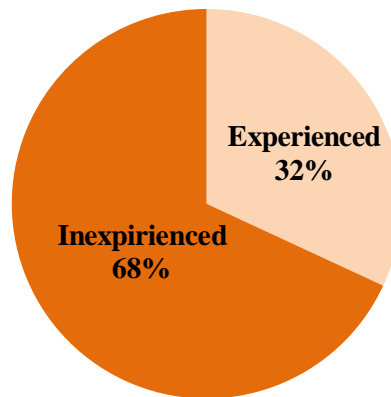


Figure 3. Experience in Employment

Figure 3 depicts that a greater part of the potential job seekers have no previous experiences in employment anywhere which is 68% and 32% of the potential job seekers have previous experiences in employment.

Testing the Demographic Differences in Employer Attractiveness

Independent sample t-tests were used to examine the differences in Employer attractiveness dimensions between two unrelated categories of Gender (Male & Female), Age (Young & Middle-Aged), and Experience in employment (Inexperienced and Experienced).

According to Table 3 below, there is a significant mean difference between males and females concerning the perceived employer attractiveness level in interest value, social value, development value and application value, but there is a small mean difference in economic value.

Table 3. T-test results based on gender

Variable	Gender	N	Mean	P value
Interest Value	Male	73	4.739	0.000
	Female	184	6.317	
Social Value	Male	73	4.117	0.000
	Female	184	6.622	
Economic Value	Male	73	6.008	0.000
	Female	184	6.526	
Development Value	Male	73	5.893	0.000
	Female	184	6.317	
Application Value	Male	73	4.118	0.000
	Female	184	6.505	

Alniasik and Alniasik (2012) found that there is a significant difference between males and females when concerning the employer attractiveness level and females are attracted to the social value, market value (interest value), application value than the potential male

employees. Confirming that it shows that females are more attracted to those three dimensions while the difference is very less in the development value and almost same level in economic value. The highest attractive dimension of males was economic value, while the least one was application value. Females were more attracted to social value and less attractive to development and interest value. Thus the males and females are different in attracting to employers and the things they looking at when they find a job are significantly different from each other. Males are more towards the economic gain that they can earn by selecting the particular employee as they are the breadwinners of a family and have more responsibility towards the earnings currently or in the future. Contrary to that, females concern more towards the opportunities they can have to interact with others and a collaborative environment. These differences might exist due to the biological, psychological and sociological nature and the differences of males and females.

Table 4 shows the differences in dimensions of Employer attractiveness based on age categories.

Table 4. T-test results based on age

Variable	Age	N	Mean	P value
Interest Value	Young	192	6.286	0.000
	Middle-aged	65	4.630	
Social Value	Young	192	6.443	0.000
	Middle-aged	65	4.350	
Economic Value	Young	192	6.457	0.004
	Middle-aged	65	6.147	
Development Value	Young	192	6.224	0.321
	Middle-aged	65	6.116	
Application Value	Young	192	6.341	0.000
	Middle-aged	65	4.307	

According to the Table 4, there is a significant mean difference between young and middle-ageders relate to the perceived employer attractiveness level of interest value, social value, economic value and application value but not the development value. Both young and middle age people tend to attract more towards the economic value while the young category is least attracted to development value and middle age category is to application value. Alniasik and Alniasik (2012) found that when people are getting older, they slightly attracted to the employers who produce novel and innovative products and services, which is development value in this. That type of behavior may not appear in this context because of the cultural differences in the countries and both age groups may not have longer expectations to achieve a career enhancement but to find a better job with an attractive salary.

Table 5 below depicts that there is a significant mean difference between experienced and inexperienced respondents concerning the perceived employer attractiveness level of interest value, social value, economic value and application value but not the development value.

Table 5.T-test results based on employment status

Variable	Employment status	N	Mean	P value
Interest Value	Experienced	82	4.817	0.000
	Inexperienced	175	6.362	
Social Value	Experienced	82	4.641	0.000
	Inexperienced	175	6.513	
Economic Value	Experienced	82	6.204	0.007
	Inexperienced	175	6.460	
Development Value	Experienced	82	6.175	0.753
	Inexperienced	175	6.206	
Application Value	Experienced	82	4.629	0.000
	Inexperienced	175	6.388	

Further, in this context, experienced employees are highly attracted to the economic value of the employer while least attractive to the application value. That might happens due to their previous experiences in doing a job and comparison of each organization with their previous employer when selecting an employer to gain more salary, compensation.

Inexperienced potential employees are highly attracted to the social value of the organization. The difference might exist because most of the inexperienced employees are young; hence they are more likely to gathering and having a social experiences and relationships even at work. Alniasik and Alniasik (2012) confirmed,experienced employees are highly attracted to the market value (Interest value) of the employer.But that type of a situation might not appear in the present context. Because, Sri Lanka is a developing country and thevery low level of per capita income compared with the developed country may leads people to concern about the salary and compensation rather interest value.

5. Conclusion

The findings of the study reveal that there are significant demographic differences are exists in Employer attractiveness in Sri Lankan context. Gender, Age and the previous experiences were creating significant differences in the context. Once organizations attracting potential employees for organizations they could not address all the potential job seekers in the same manner due to these prevailing differences among them. Thus demographic differences of potential job seekers have to be considered in attracting employees and different mechanisms were required. One important application of the findings is that both females and inexperienced people are more attracted towards the social value dimension. The majority of the operational level employees in apparel manufacturing are females at present in Sri Lanka. Moreover, a larger part of the unemployed was inexperienced; hence managers can attract more potential employees by addressing that. Economic value also was a significant dimension in attracting employees since both young and middle-age people, males and experienced people more attracted towards economic value. Thus organizations can redesign the benefits package to attract people for the organizations. Therefore Employer Attractiveness varies in terms of the demographic differences and organizations have to consider their contextual, demographic differences to attract potential job seekers in the competitive environment.

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