

Examining the Effect of Perceived Employer Image Mismatch on Job Satisfaction and Turnover Intentions

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Abstract: Employer image refers to an individual's inferences and understanding of an organisation as a place to work (Cable & Turban, 2001). It plays an important role in attracting and retaining a talented workforce. However, when employees perceive that the image prior to entry into the organisation differs from the image they perceive after entry, it results in an image mismatch. This study investigated the effects of image mismatch on employees' job satisfaction and turnover intentions. Eighty two managerial employees from a Malaysian manufacturing company took part in the survey. Consistent with the study hypotheses, employees' perceived that image mismatch was negatively related to job satisfaction and positively related to turnover intentions. Furthermore, attractiveness as an employer fully mediated these relationships. This implies that employer should convey an image that is accurate and reflective of the actual work place so that applicants will be more satisfied with their work and less likely to leave the organisation.

Key words: *human resource management, recruitment, skill shortages.*

INTRODUCTION

In the face of recession and skill shortage, it is crucial for organisations to recruit and retain the best workforce. Employer branding, a strategy used by employers to put forth a favourable image to existing and prospective workers (Sullivan, 2004), has been shown to help organisations attain competitive advantage in the acquisition of highly skilled workers (Conference Board, 2001; Ewing, Pitt, de Bussy & Berthon, 2002). Employer branding is based on the idea that by projecting a desirable employer image, employers may signal to potential and existing employees that the organisation is an attractive place to work (Sullivan, 2004). Similarly, it has also been argued that applicants often form impression or develop an image toward an organisation based on a set of limited information signalled by the employing organisation, prior to their entry into the organisation (Rynes, 1991).

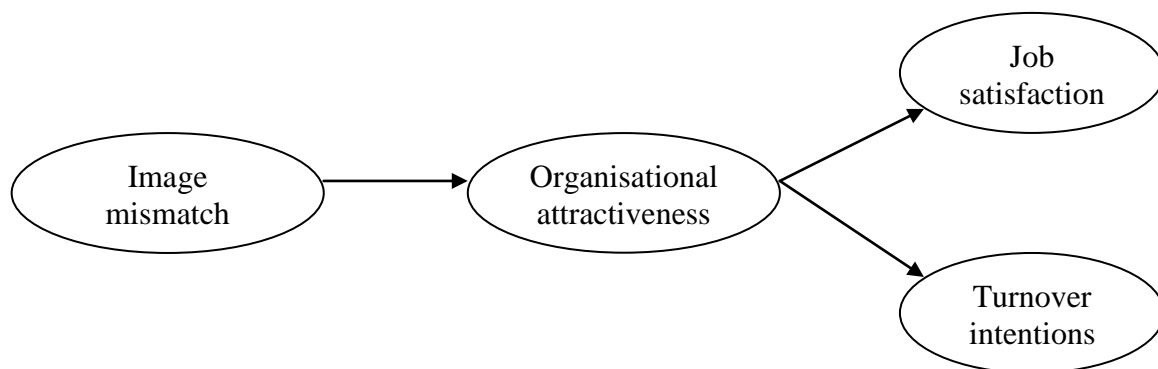
According to Cable and Turban (2001), employer image is the set of beliefs that individuals hold about an employer and the organisation. This set of beliefs or the knowledge about an employer is developed based on three types of information: people information (eg existing employees or superiors), job information (e.g. work tasks that to be performed), and employer information (e.g. organisational culture and values; Cable & Turban, 2001). Research scholars often conceptualise image as the general impression, which is a mixture of all three types of information that individuals hold toward the organisation (e.g. Allen, Mahto & Otondo, 2007; Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Fombrun & Shanley, 1990; Gatewood, Gowan & Lautenschlager, 1993; Turban, 2001). In recent work of Lievens and colleagues (2003, 2005, 2007), employer image is operationalised as the set of job and organisational attributes as well as the person-descriptive traits of the organisation.

Regardless of the conceptualisation of employer image, past research has consistently shown that a positive employer image leads to organisational attractiveness (e.g. Allen et al., 2007; Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Highhouse, Zickar, Thorsteinson, Stierwalt & Slaughter, 1999; Lievens, 2007). Furthermore, employer image has been found to influence job seekers' intention to apply (Collins & Stevens, 2002), actual job choice (Aiman-Smith, Bauer & Cable, 2001), and intentions to stay with the organisation (Leveck & Jones, 1996). In other words, employer image has important implications for organisation's recruitment and retention outcomes. This implies that organisations should project a positive image to their prospective and existing employees. Unfortunately, it has been argued that many organisations tend to convey an overly positive image (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984) which may mislead individuals to developing a set of unrealistic expectations prior to their entry

into the organisation. When one's experience is different from prior expectation, the individual is more likely to feel dissatisfied and leave the organisation (Cable & Judge, 1996; Wanous, Poland, Premack & Davis, 1992). Therefore, it is important to cultivate, not only a positive, but also an accurate image in the mind of new recruits (Knox & Freeman, 2006).

To date, there is little research that has examined the effect of discrepancy between the image prior to one's entry and the image after one's entry into the organisation (ie image mismatch). This study aims to contribute to the literature by investigating the effect of image mismatch on employees' job satisfaction and turnover intentions. There have been calls for research to examine the impact of inconsistency of the employer image on organisation's well-being (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Knox & Freeman, 2006). This study also proposes that organisational attractiveness will mediate the relationship between image mismatch and employee outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction and turnover intentions). Although past research has shown that employer image was an important determinant of attractiveness, there is limited research that has examined the role of organisational attractiveness as a mediator in the relationship between image mismatch and employee outcomes. Furthermore, this study aims to test the generalisability of the image concept and to extend the image concept into the concept of image mismatch in an Asian context. These proposed relationships between the variables are presented in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Study Model



Employer Image

The construct of brand image has long been established in the marketing literature (Gardner & Levy, 1955; Keller, 1993; Levy, 1957; Levy & Glick, 1973; Martineau, 1958; Padgett & Allen, 1997) and its adaptation to the employment context, in form of employer image, has also attracted research attention (e.g. Allen et al., 2007; Belt & Paolillo, 1982; Cable & Graham, 2000; Gatewood et al., 1993; Highhouse et al., 1999; Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003). Early studies on image showed that job seekers are more likely to get attracted to employer image that is favourable (Belt & Paolillo, 1982) and similar to their self-image (Tom, 1971). In the study of Belt and Paolillo (1982), image of the organisation was manipulated using the company name. It was found that the restaurant with a positive image (i.e. a very highly rated restaurant) was perceived as more attractive than the restaurant with a negative image (i.e. a very poorly rated restaurant, Belt & Paolillo, 1982). However, this study did not specify what information comprises the image that influences the attractiveness of the organisation.

In another study, Highhouse and colleagues (1999) showed that there were several dimensions of image that influenced attractiveness (e.g. pay, location, and advancement). The result shows that these dimensions distinguished one organisation from another. Similarly, several past studies have found that characteristics such as work environments, firm attributes, earning and advancement opportunities, challenging work, and location were positively related to attraction (e.g. Cable & Graham, 2000; Honeycutt & Rosen, 1997;

Turban, Forret & Hendrickson, 1998; Turban & Keon, 1993). These studies supported the notion where image comprises of job and organisational factors (Highhouse et al., 1999).

More recently, Lievens and colleagues (eg Lievens, 2007; Lievens & Highhouse, 2003; Lievens, Van Hoye & Schreurs, 2005) included the symbolic dimension of the image (i.e. subjective attributes), such as prestigious and exciting, apart from the objective job and organisational factors (i.e. instrumental attributes). It is argued that applicants are attracted to an organisation not only by the organisation's instrumental attributes, but also by the organisation's person-descriptive traits that may be congruent with the applicants' self-concept (Lievens, 2007) or may enhance their self-image (Aaker, 1997). The work of Lievens and colleagues (2003, 2005, 2007) has consistently shown that employer image predicted organisational attractiveness, and that both dimensions of image (ie instrumental & symbolic) uniquely predicted organisational attractiveness (Lievens, 2007). The effects of image on attractiveness have been explained using the theoretical perspective of brand equity (Keller, 1993) and Person-Organisation Fit theory (Kristof, 1996). In the following section, we will use a similar set of theoretical reasoning to predict the direct and indirect effect of image mismatch on job satisfaction and turnover intentions.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Brand equity is defined as 'the differential effect of brand knowledge on consumer response to the marketing of the brand' (Keller, 1993, p. 2). In essence, it refers to the value or beliefs that customers have towards certain brands. In a similar way, employer brand equity can be understood as the desirability of an organisation in the minds of job seekers based on the knowledge that they have about it as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Cable & Turban, 2001). That is, individuals may learn about an organisation or employer, and give meaning or evaluate the value of the organisation based on the perceived employer image (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Cable & Turban, 2001). As suggested in the image literature, applicants are likely to get attracted to an organisation based on the perceived positive aspects in the image (e.g. Highhouse et al., 1999). However, when there is a discrepancy between the perceived and actual image, the positive value that the employees had prior to their entry into the organisation may diminish, and hence, the organisation may become less attractive to them. That is, the perception of image mismatch may lead employees to believe that the organisation may no longer be a good place to work.

Along similar lines, it is argued that applicants select an organisation based on the beliefs that the employer will satisfy or match their desires and goals. Person-organisation (P-O) fit is generally defined as 'the compatibility between individuals and organisations' (Kristof, 1996, p. 3). It has also been operationalised as the match between a person's value and the organisational value (Boxx, Odom & Dunn, 1991; Chatman, 1989, 1991; Judge & Bretz, 1992; Posner, 1992) or person-culture fit (O'Reilly, Chatman & Caldwell, 1991). Based on the fit theory (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996), it is proposed that when employees perceive an image mismatch, they may perceive a lack of fit between themselves and the organisation. That is, employees may perceive that the organisation's goals and values are no longer compatible with theirs. As previous research has shown that applicants' perception of fit was related to organisational attractiveness (Cable & Judge, 1996; Carless, 2005; Dineen, Ash & Noe, 2002; Judge & Cable, 1997; Turban & Keon, 1993) it is proposed that employees are less likely to get attracted to the organisation when they perceive a lack of fit or a discrepancy between the two images. Given these theoretical and empirical considerations, it is predicted that:

Hypothesis 1. There will be a negative relationship between image mismatch and organisational attractiveness.

In the context of product brand image, research has found that a mismatch between a consumer's expectations of the product and actual experience after using the product may lower a customer's loyalty (Janonis & Virvilaitė, 2007). As employer image is comparable to brand image (Cable & Turban, 2001), it is suggested that a mismatch between pre- and

post-entry employer image may reduce the level of job satisfaction and employees' intention to stay with the organisation. It is important to study the job satisfaction and employees' turnover intentions as they may affect actual turnover or retention of employees (Holtom, Mitchell, Lee & Interrieden, 2005; Steel, 2002), which is crucial for an organisation's functioning. Consistent with the employer brand equity perspective, when employees perceive that the present organisational image is not as favourable as before, they are less likely to get attracted to the organisation, and hence more likely to feel dissatisfied and exit the organisation. Furthermore, previous research in fit literature has shown that the greater the match between an organisation's values and the individual's values, the higher the level of job satisfaction, organisational commitment, intention to stay, and actual retention (Chatman, 1991). This suggests that, as a result of image mismatch, employees are less likely to perceive the organisation as a favourable place to work, which in turn leads to employees' lower job satisfaction and higher turnover intentions. In line with the above reasoning, it is predicted that:

Hypothesis 2. Image mismatch will be negatively related to job satisfaction.

Hypothesis 3. Image mismatch will be positively related to turnover intentions.

Hypothesis 4a. The negative relationship between image mismatch and job satisfaction will be mediated by organisational attractiveness.

Hypothesis 4b. The positive relationship between image mismatch and turnover intentions will be mediated by organisational attractiveness.

To test the study hypotheses, interviews and a survey study were conducted in a Malaysian manufacturing company. This organisation was selected as it is well-established and recruits a large number of employees. The aim of the interview was to develop a measure of image mismatch that suits the study context while survey questionnaires were aimed to address the research questions.

METHODS

Participants and Procedures

In order to develop an image measure that fits the context of the present study, 17 employees were recruited to participate in semi-structured interviews. During the interview, participants were asked to describe the organisation that they are currently working at. Furthermore, they were asked to think about and compare the impression that they had before and after entry into the organisation. Sample interview questions are, "What was the impression that you had before you entered this organisation?" and "Was the impression that you had before same as the one you currently hold?" The interview for each participant lasted approximately 30 minutes.

Information gathered from the interviews was coded using thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is 'a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns (themes) within data' (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). This analytic method is chosen because it was commonly used in the literature and it matches the purpose of this study. First, all interviews were transcribed. Second, responses from the interviews were grouped into meaningful categories. Then, similar categories were combined and formed into a theme. These themes were repeatedly reviewed and refined so as to ensure that all themes capture unique content. Finally, each theme was defined and given a name that reflects the content of the theme.

The result of the thematic analysis revealed that the image measure consists of three themes (ie job characteristics, organisational characteristics, and management characteristics). These themes were derived from the attributes or adjectives that interviewees used to describe their job, the organisation, and the management team as an employer. In specific, descriptive details which were given to describe employees' everyday work task or responsibilities were grouped under job characteristics. For example, 'the jobs are challenging yet interesting' and 'I need to maintain a high quality and productivity level at all times'. In contrast, the theme of organisational characteristics captures the physical or factual attributes of the organisation (e.g. 'this firm has good facilities') and symbolic

representation of the work atmosphere or environment (eg 'it is innovative' and 'it is a place to learn'). Furthermore, the theme of management characteristics comprises of words that the employees used to evaluate the management team as an employer, such as 'it takes care of its employees' benefits and welfare' and 'the management is fair and transparent'. The grouping of these themes were consistent with previous research that employer image comprised of information about an employer/ organisation, a job, and the people/ management in the organisation (Cable & Turban, 2001).

Based on the result of the thematic analysis, a total of 26 items representing image characteristics were developed. The image construct along with other measures of the study were pre-tested with five working adults in Malaysia. The result of the pilot testing showed that the survey was clear and understandable. Following the pilot testing, survey questionnaires were distributed to managerial employees of the participating organisation. Each participant was given a survey pack comprising of an information sheet (stating the aims of the study, confidentiality, and voluntariness of participation), a self-reported questionnaire, and an envelope. To minimise the amount of work disruption, participants were allowed to complete the questionnaires during their own time and return the survey to the principal researcher in a sealed envelope.

Of the 114 surveys distributed, 82 usable surveys were returned, yielding a 71.93 percent response rate. Of these participants, 56 were males (ie 68.29%), 20 were females (ie 24.39%), and 6 did not report their gender (ie 7.32%). Majority of the participants (ie 57.32%, $N= 47$) belonged to the age range of 26-40 years. Participants' average length of service at the organisation was 10.25 years.

Measures

English is widely used in Malaysian corporate environments (Expat Focus, 2006). Thus, the survey was written in English. Unless otherwise specified, all items were measured using a seven-point Likert scale ('1 = strongly disagree'; '7 = 'strongly agree'). A higher score indicated a higher degree of the focal construct. Most of the items have been slightly modified such that the name of the organisation was used as a referent.

Image mismatch. Image mismatch was measured by the level of dissimilarity between participants' perceived employer image prior to, and after their entry into the organisation. It was measured using the 26-item image construct developed from the interviews. The list of 26-item image characteristics were presented in a table format and a leading statement was provided in the first row of the table: 'Below is the list of dimensions used to describe this organisation. Please indicate the similarity between the image you have now and the image you had before joining this organisation based on these dimensions.' Then, participants were given a seven-point Likert scale from one (not at all similar) to seven (extremely similar) that their ratings should be based on for each image characteristic. Sample items of the image characteristics were 'has consistent and high work demand', 'has good facilities', and 'good paymaster'. All items were reverse coded so that a higher score of the construct indicated a higher level of image mismatch. This scale yielded a reliability coefficient of .92.

Job satisfaction. Job satisfaction was measured using Hackman and Oldham's (1976) three-item global scale. The internal consistency of this measure was .82. A sample item was, 'All in all, I am satisfied with my job'.

Turnover intentions. Employees' intentions to leave the organisation were assessed using the four-item scale developed by Abrams, Ando and Hinkle (1998). The internal reliability of this measure was .87. A sample item was, 'I think about leaving this company'.

Organisational attractiveness. Organisational attractiveness was measured using the three-item scale developed by Fisher, Ilgen and Hoyer (1979). The internal consistency of this

measure was .89. A sample item was, ‘This organisation is attractive to me as a place for employment’.

RESULTS

Zero-order Correlations

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the study variables. All zero-order correlations were in the expected direction and a relatively high correlation coefficient was observed between job satisfaction and attractiveness. To check the discriminant validity of both constructs, a principal component analysis was run by entering all items of job satisfaction and attractiveness into the analysis. The result showed that items of job satisfaction loaded on one factor while items of attractiveness loaded on a separate factor. This suggests these two variables were statistically distinct from each other.

Table 1: Means, Standard Deviations, Zero-order Correlations, and Reliability Coefficients of the Major Variables in the Study

Variable	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Age	5.0	1.7	--					
2. Tenure	10.3	9.1	.79***	--				
3. Image mismatch	3.6	.72	-.03	-.02	(.92)			
4. Job satisfaction	5.3	.88	.41**	.37**	-.29**	(.82)		
5. Turnover intentions	3.6	1.1	-.39**	-.28**	.33**	-.53***	(.87)	
6. Organisational Attractiveness	5.2	.97	.20	.11	-.44***	.74***	-.57***	(.89)

N=82. * $p < .05$, two-tailed; ** $p < .01$, two-tailed; *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

Note. Reliability coefficients are shown in parentheses.

Tests of Hypotheses

Main effects. Hypotheses 1, 2 and 3 posited that employer image mismatch would be negatively related to organisational attractiveness and job satisfaction while positively related to turnover intentions. These hypotheses were tested using hierarchical regressions. Demographic variables including gender, age, and tenure were entered in step one. Image mismatch was entered in step two. After controlling for the demographic variables, image mismatch was found to be negatively related to attractiveness ($\beta = -.51, p < .001$) and job satisfaction ($\beta = -.34, p < .01$), while positively related to turnover intentions ($\beta = .29, p < .01$).

Mediating effects of organisational attractiveness. Hypotheses 4a and 4b postulated that organisational attractiveness would mediate the relationship between image mismatch and job satisfaction, and the relationship between image mismatch and turnover intentions. These hypotheses were tested following the procedure outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986).

The results of main effects in the previous section indicated that the first condition for mediation was met for both outcome variables. To satisfy the second condition of mediation, the proposed mediator (ie organisational attractiveness) must be related to each employee outcome. Regression analyses showed that organisational attractiveness was positively related to job satisfaction ($\beta = .68, p < .001$), and negatively related to turnover intentions ($\beta = -.54, p < .001$). Hence, the second condition for mediation was satisfied for both outcome variables.

Next, mediation is established if the effect of image mismatch on employee outcome substantially decreases upon the inclusion of organisational attractiveness to the regression equation, while the relationship between organisational attractiveness and each employee

outcome remains significant. After the inclusion of organisational attractiveness in step three, the beta coefficient of the relationship between image mismatch and each outcome decreased from $-.34$ ($p < .01$) to $.00$ (*ns*) for job satisfaction, and from $.29$ ($p < .01$) to $.01$ (*ns*) for turnover intentions. Furthermore, while the beta coefficients of image mismatch substantially decreased, the effect of organisational attractiveness continued to be significant for both employee outcomes (see Table 2). On the whole, the third condition for mediation was met.

Finally, Sobel test (Preacher & Leonardelli, 2001; Sobel, 1982) was used to examine the indirect effect of image mismatch on each employee outcome via organisational attractiveness. The result revealed that the indirect effect was significant for both outcome variables: job satisfaction ($z = -4.14$, $p < .001$), and turnover intentions ($z = 3.49$, $p < .001$). In summary, organisational attractiveness significantly mediated the relationship between image mismatch and job satisfaction and the relationship between image mismatch and turnover intentions.

Table 2: Hierarchical Regression Analyses for the Mediating Role of Organisational Attractiveness between Image Mismatch and Employee Outcomes

Step and Variables	Job Satisfaction (β)			Turnover Intentions (β)		
	1	2	3	1	2	3
Gender	-.06	-.11	-.01	.04	.08	.01
Age	.30	.25	.09	-.43*	-.43*	-.30*
Tenure	.16	.17	.24	.06	.04	-.01
Image mismatch		-.34**	.00		.29**	.01
Organisational attractiveness			.68***			-.53***
Adjusted R^2	.15**	.26**	.60***	.14**	.21***	.42***
ΔR^2		.11**	.32***		.08**	.20***

Note. Standardised beta coefficients are reported for the respective steps, demographic variables (step 1), image mismatch (step 2), and image mismatch and organisational attractiveness (step 3). * $p < .05$, two-tailed; ** $p < .01$, two-tailed; *** $p < .001$, two-tailed.

DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study was to examine the effect of image mismatch on employee outcomes and the role of attractiveness as a mediator in these relationships. Hypothesis 1 postulated that there would be a negative relationship between image mismatch and organisational attractiveness. Results of the present study supported this hypothesis. This shows that employees were less likely to view the organisation as a positive place to work when their perceived employer image prior to their entry differed from the one they currently hold. It is argued that the previously held employer image has become less favourable after entry into the organisation and hence, employees were less attracted to the organisation. This has supported the theoretical reasoning of brand equity (Keller, 1993) and P-O fit theory (Chatman, 1989; Kristof, 1996). In the occurrence of image mismatch, employees may perceive a loss of value of the organisation as an employer as well as a lack of fit between the organisation's goals and their own. As a consequence, they believe that the organisation may no longer be a good place to work and hence, they become less attracted to work at the organisation.

Consistent with hypotheses 2 and 3, perceived image mismatch predicted a lower level of job satisfaction and a higher level of turnover intentions. That is, employees were less likely to feel satisfied with their work and more likely to leave the organisation when they perceive a discrepancy between the two images. This pattern of results was consistent with the findings in brand literature such that consumers were less likely to continue using a product when their experience with the product failed to match with their prior expectations (Janonis & Virvilaitė, 2007). It has also supported the previous research that when one's experience is different from his/ her prior expectation, the individual is more likely to feel dissatisfied and leave the organisation (Cable & Judge, 1996; Wanous et al., 1992). Furthermore, it is in line with the findings in fit literature that employees were more likely to report a higher level of job satisfaction and intention to stay when they perceived a better fit with the organisational image (Chatman 1991). Hence, it is suggested that the perception of poor fit as a result of mismatch may lower the employees' job satisfaction and intention to stay with the firm. As predicted by hypothesis 4, organisational attractiveness mediated the link between image mismatch and employee outcomes (i.e. job satisfaction and turnover intentions). This suggests that the perception of image mismatch may generate a sense of misfit and thus, employees may perceive the organisation as no longer attractive. As a result, employees were less satisfied with the company and more likely to leave (e.g. Carless, 2005; Chatman, 1991; Judge & Cable, 1997; Turban & Keon, 1993).

The findings of this study contributed to the organisational image literature in several ways. Firstly, to our knowledge, this is the first study that has examined the effect of image mismatch. It provided empirical evidence on the link between image mismatch and employee outcomes. Clearly, employer image is crucial for an organisation to stay competitive in the market as it affects the retention of the best workforce and the extent to which the employees are satisfied with their work. Secondly, previous studies have consistently shown that image was a significant antecedent of organisational attractiveness (e.g. Allen et al., 2007; Highhouse et al., 1999; Lievens, 2007); this study found that image mismatch has also significantly but inversely affected attractiveness. Thirdly, present study showed that image mismatch influenced employees' satisfaction and turnover intentions, directly as well as indirectly, with organisational attractiveness acting as a mediator. This indicates the complex nature of the relationship between image mismatch and employee outcomes and thus, future research in this arena will be fruitful. Although organisational attractiveness and job satisfaction were highly correlated in this study, these two variables were statistically and theoretically distinct from each other. Organisational attractiveness is generally understood as the favourable affective attitude toward a firm (Aiman-Smith et al., 2001) or the perception that the firm is a good place to work (Rynes, 1991) while job satisfaction is defined as 'a pleasurable or positive emotional state, resulting from the appraisal of one's job experiences' (Locke, 1983, p. 1300). Last but not least, this study has tested and validated the conceptualisation of image in a non-western context. It implies that the concept of image can be generalised to an Asian setting and may be useful in improving an organisation's attractiveness as an employer.

This study is not without its shortcomings. First, the sample size was relatively small. Second, this study was a cross-sectional study; thus, no causal relationship could be drawn from the findings. Future studies should employ a longitudinal design by studying the same participants over a period of time. Third, only managerial employees were surveyed in this study. However, due to the language barriers and time constraints, recruiting the entire sample of workers may seem implausible. Fourth, data in this study were collected from the sole perspective of employees. As such, it was likely to be contaminated by common method variance. Fifth, the measurement process in the present study had not been optimally controlled. Employees were allowed to take home the survey and complete it in their own time. Having said that, it may not be possible to obtain employees' responses during their working hours, as this may result in severe work disruption to the organisation. Hence, the issues of confidentiality and anonymity were highly emphasised to obtain responses that were as objective as possible. Lastly, the nature of perceived image mismatch measure may

be confounded by individual bias. As participants were asked to recall their previous image and to compare with the current image, they might be more likely to report both images as similarly positive, merely because they have already chosen to join and stay with the organisation. Based on the theory of cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1957), individuals tend to justify their past behaviour (ie reasons for remaining with the organisation).

This study offers several implications for organisations. Clearly, the consequences of a perceived mismatch in employer image are detrimental to organisational well-being. Hence, organisations should be careful about how they communicate their employer image to potential applicants. Based on the current findings, the employer image should be designed in a way that is congruent with the organisational values and goals so that applicants who have then become employees are less likely to perceive a mismatch in the organisational image. Moreover, as the image held by existing employees would largely influence their job satisfaction and intention to stay, it is important for the organisation to, not only actively promote its image to its external potential job applicants, but also to its internal employees. Furthermore, the image should be revised and updated regularly in order to meet the needs of the labour market as a whole as well as to align with the overall strategy of the organisation. That is, which key characteristics or major attractors of the company are to be the emphasis in a recruitment material should depend on the perceived importance of targeted audience towards that particular criterion at that particular point of time. For instance, in the time of recession, individuals are looking for job security. Hence, if the company is looking for long term permanent workers, job security should be the focus during recruitment activities. Having said that, organisation should be truthful in what they convey to the public. Along the similar lines, it is important for the organisation to understand what the image means to the potential applicants. At times, an organisation may genuinely portray what it practises at work without any intention to be untruthful; however, new recruits may experience a mismatch as a result of misinterpretation. In other words, employer image lies in the eyes of the beholder. In conclusion, managing the employer image is crucial in talent attraction and retention.

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