

# **The Influence of Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP on Employer Brand Attractiveness in Chinese Tourist Destinations–The Mediating Role of Brand Identity and Work Happiness**

**Peixuan Fang**

School of Business, Macau University of Science and Technology, Macau, China

**Keywords:** Cartoon IP; Employer Brand Attractiveness; Brand Identity; Work Happiness

**Abstract:** The main focus of this study is to explore how cartoon IPs like the Chimelong Paradise impact upon the attractiveness of employer branding the tourism destinations of China focusing on the mediating effects of work happiness and brand identity. This study has undertaken a primary quantitative data collection approach through which it has gathered responses from 150 employees in the tourism sector of China. The gathered data has been analysed using SEM (structural equation modelling). The findings of this study reveal that using Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP does not have a positive influence on the attractiveness of employer brands, specifically in the tourist destinations of China. However, the positive relationship between cartoon IP and employer brand attractiveness is strongly mediated by factors like Brand identity and Work happiness. When tourism employers with the Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP have a well-esteemed brand identity, then the employer brand attractiveness of such enterprises enhances. Similarly, when tourism employers with the Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP have a well-established perception among people that they foster higher work happiness, then the employer brand attractiveness of such enterprises enhances. This eventually contributes towards higher attractiveness and retention of employees. However, the study found that there is no positive relationship between brand identity and work happiness, especially in the context of Chimelong Paradise-themed tourism organisations of China.

## **1. Introduction**

### **1.1 Background and context**

Although the IP (intellectual property) market is intense it has not developed fully yet. According to the viewpoint of Cheng et al. (2023) IP personas help in providing a positive and friendly image in the application of a brand, product and/ or service, which is why it is often used as a marketing tool[1]. In recent times, the number of childlike adults is significantly increasing, as a result of which the market for cartoon IP characters is expanding. Generally, cartoon characters are popular globally among all age groups, especially children. However, almost all cartoon characters have gained adulation from all the age groups and are not only limited to children (Bu et al., 2022)[2]. Eventually, young people are more influenced by fresh ideas and themes which can have a major impact on brand attractiveness especially in the case of employer branding. However, there are rising instances of exclusionary practices as well in cartoon-themed tourism destinations, like theme parks and hotels, which are pushed back by employees. For instance, a case with the opening of Disneyland Paris in France took place where Disney imposed strict grooming rules such as forbidding nail polish for women, tattoos or long hair for men. In this case the unionisation of workers helped them to fight against rules (Anton Clavé et al., 2023)[3]. The study further claims that the situation of employees in many cartoon-theme based tourism organisations/ destinations is dire due to perceived underpayment and suppression, which may also affect the public image of such organisations. Therefore it is unclear whether Cartoon IP has a positive impact on employer brand attractiveness in tourist destinations. Moreover, there is a lack of existing studies which unveils the role of brand identity and work happiness in the relationship between Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP and Employer Brand Attractiveness, specifically in Chinese Tourist Destinations.

## **1.2 Research aim and objectives**

The aim of this study is to explore the impact of cartoon IPs like the Chimelong Paradise on the attractiveness of employer branding the tourism destinations of China focusing on the mediating effects of work happiness and brand identity. In doing so, the following objectives needs to be met-

Research objective 1: To evaluate how cartoon IPs like the Chimelong Paradise impacts the attractiveness of employer branding the tourism destinations of China.

Research objective 2: To investigate whether brand identity mediates the relationship between the employer brand attractiveness and cartoon IP- Chimelong Paradise.

Research objective 3: To examine whether work happiness mediates the relationship between the employer brand attractiveness and cartoon IP- Chimelong Paradise.

Research objective 4 : To discover the relationship between brand identity and work happiness in Chimelong Paradise-themed tourism enterprises.

## **1.3 Research question**

How does the use of the Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP in tourist destinations impact the perception of potential employees regarding an employer's brand, especially in theme parks and hotels?

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 Theoretical review**

In the views of Boukis and Christodoulides (2020)[4], brand identification demonstrates the extent to which employees combine the brand identity into their own self concept. This implies that brand identification explores how the personal identity of employees is aligned with the brand identity of the employer. When employees internalise and determine the values of a brand, it is more likely that they will engage with the brand more emotionally and cognitively. Again, the Self-Congruity Theory helps in exploring how the congruence between the brand's image and self-image of employees tend to attract employees. The theory posits that people tend to prefer those products and/ or brands which unveils a consistent brand personality/ image concerning the self-concept of employees (Sheeraz et al., 2020)[5]. This implies that with a higher extent of alignment between brand image with what a person wishes/wants to be, the ideal self-congruence will be higher. This can eventually contribute towards the attraction of employees towards a brand and lead to enhanced employer brand attractiveness. Lastly, the Work Happiness Theory contributes towards the demonstration of the impact of emotional well-being on employees' sense of happiness and job satisfaction. In this regard, Jaswal et al. (2024) emphasised that happiness tends to encompass feelings of satisfaction, optimism, and hope, which delineates a subjective plight of human emotions which is characterised by a sense of wellbeing, joy and joy, contentment[6]. When there is happiness, people tend to perceive life as meaningful and rewarding. This similarly applies to employees (Kun & Gadancz, 2022)[7]. When employees experience work happiness they feel emotionally satisfied. This further contributes to their emotional wellbeing.

### **2.2 Empirical review**

According to the findings of Younis and Hammad (2021)[8], both corporate image as well as employer image have a significant positive impact on the attractiveness of the organisation and the employer. This implies that when an employer has a positive image/ identity, their employer brand attractiveness enhances manifold. Similarly, Ahmad et al. (2020) have also found that the attractiveness of employers enhances when they have a good image and this helps in better attractions and retention of employees[9]. The study by Baziga et al. (2024) has revealed that employer branding offers a strategic value in promoting work happiness and maintaining its significance[10]. This implies that when an employer ensures higher work happiness for its employees, the image and attractiveness of the employer enhances. With respect to cartoon IPs, Cheng et al. (2023) have opined that for people, especially customers/ employees, brands with emotions tend to be easier and more

popular as compared to simple goods, and brands, as a result of which several businesses make their own IP. When different characters are looked upon especially among the demographics, it has been noted that many people like cartoon IP personas. One of the key reasons for such a finding is that IP personas have the potential to render a positive and cordial image in the application of a brand or its offerings (Cheng et al., 2023). These cartoon IPs are often used as a marketing tool not only to attract customers but also to attract potential candidates/ employees. Furthermore, with the rising number of childlike adults, there is an emerging market for cartoon IP characters in recent times. However, due to lack of existing literature on the direct relationship between cartoon IPs and employee brand attractiveness in the tourist destinations of China and the mediating role of work happiness and brand identity in this relationship, detailed research is conducted in the following section.

### **2.3 Research hypothesis**

H1: Using Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP has positive impact on employer brand attractiveness in the tourist destinations of China

H2: Brand identity mediates the relationship between the use of Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP and employer brand attractiveness.

H3: Work happiness mediates the relationship between Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP and employer brand attractiveness.

H4: There is a positive relationship between brand identity and work happiness in Chimelong Paradise-themed tourism enterprises.

### **3. Methodology**

To execute the conference paper a primary quantitative study has been performed with 150 employees in the tourism sector of China. The survey method has been used to collect responses based on the influence of Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP on Employer Brand Attractiveness in Guangzhou- Chinese Tourist Destinations. To select the sample respondents of this study, a purposive sampling technique along with snowball sampling has been used. Firstly, using the purposive sampling technique networks with employees in the tourism sector of China has been created and invited them to participate in their study. Secondly these participants have helped in reaching out to other employees in the Chinese tourist sector to form the sample. The questionnaire included a 5-point Likert scale to measure the variables of the study. The data has been analysed using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM); to test hypotheses. This method integrates aspects of factor analysis and multiple regression, that facilitates measurement of relationships between observed (measured) and latent (unobserved) variables. Besides, Cronbach's alpha will test for reliability, and Exploratory Factor Analysis & Confirmatory factor analysis is used to validate the constructs.

### **4. Data Analysis and Discussion**

#### **4.1 Factor Analysis for Reliability and Validity**

A total of 25 items have been included in the model considering 5 scales of variables, with 247 observations. The following Exploratory Factor Analysis result is based on Principal Component Extraction followed by Varimax Rotation with Kaiser Normalisation. The KMO coefficient is 0.908, which indicates that the sample size is sufficient for the model and Bartlett's Test ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicates that the item selection is significantly valid. Table 1 shows that all items are loaded within the intended group of specific variables. Here Factor 2 implies Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP, Factor 1 implies Work Happiness, Factor 3 is Employer Brand Attractiveness, and Factor 4 is Brand Identity. However, the items within Factor 5, have very poor commonalities (communality  $< 0.6$ ) and the AVE = 0.519. Therefore, the Factor 5 is rejected from the model. All the remaining 4 factors for 4 indented variables have adequate validity (AVE  $> 0.6$ ) and a high reliability (CR  $> 0.8$ ).

Table 1: Exploratory Factor Analysis, Validity and Reliability

	Communalities	Factor Loadings					AVE	CR
		1	2	3	4	5		
CPCIP1	0.847		0.822				0.708	0.924
CPCIP2	0.877		0.813					
CPCIP3	0.876		0.837					
CPCIP4	0.831		0.859					
CPCIP5	0.888		0.874					
BI1	0.963				0.801		0.607	0.885
BI2	0.749				0.687			
BI3	0.822				0.778			
BI4	0.881				0.817			
BI5	0.836				0.804			
WH1	0.983	0.956					0.916	0.982
WH2	0.985	0.954						
WH3	0.984	0.957						
WH4	0.972	0.958						
WH5	0.984	0.96						
EBA1	0.813		0.817				0.745	0.936
EBA2	0.888		0.890					
EBA3	0.863		0.840					
EBA4	0.900		0.885					
EBA5	0.875		0.882					
MED1	0.560					0.745	0.519	0.841
MED2	0.374					0.549		
MED3	0.654					0.804		
MED4	0.427					0.647		
MED5	0.696					0.820		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation. a

a Rotation converged in 6 iterations.

(Source: Created by the author)

## 4.2 Sample Characteristics and Descriptive

Table 2, it has been found that 57.49% are Male, whereas 69% of the participants are 25 to 44 years old. Around 25% of participants are managers, 16% are Frontline Staff and 14.58% are HR Executives. Around 55% of participants have 1 to 5 years of experience, whereas 35.63% of them have more than 6 years of experience.

Table 2: Demographic Characteristics of Participants

		Count	N %
Gender	Female	105	42.51%
	Male	142	57.49%
Age	25-34	89	36.03%
	35-44	82	33.20%
	45 and above	31	12.55%
	Under 25	45	18.22%
Job Position	Assistant Manager	10	4.05%
	Executive	15	6.07%
	Frontline staff	41	16.60%
	HR Executive	36	14.58%
	HR Manager	8	3.24%
	IT Executive	10	4.05%
	Manager	63	25.51%
	Marketing Specialist	14	5.67%
	Receptionist	26	10.53%
	Supervisor	14	5.67%
	Vice President	10	4.05%
Work Experience in Tourism Industry	1-3 years	72	29.15%
	4-6 years	65	26.32%
	Less than 1 year	22	8.91%
	Over 6 years	88	35.63%

(Source: Created by the author)

As per Table 3, the implementation of Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP is currently at a very high level ( $4.126 \pm 0.806$ ). Brand Identity ( $3.516 \pm 1.064$ ), Brand Happiness ( $3.584 \pm 1.094$ ) and Employer

Brand Attractiveness ( $3.585 \pm 1.200$ ) are currently at a moderate level. However, Work Happiness is notably higher than other factors (median = 4).

Table 3: Descriptive Results of Variables

	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Q1 (25%)	Median (50%)	Q3 (75%)	Max
Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP	4.126	0.806	1	3.8	4	5	5
Brand Identity	3.516	1.064	1	3	3.6	4.4	5
Work Happiness	3.584	1.094	1	3	4	4	5
Employer Brand Attractiveness	3.585	1.200	1	3	3.8	4.6	5

(Source: Created by the author)

### 4.3 SEM with Confirmatory Factor Analysis using AMOS

The following structure of the CB-SEM model has been developed as per the conceptual framework of this research while considering the Maximum Likelihood Method for analysis. The model considered only 4 identified valid scales or variables from the factor analysis. The model has significant predictability (Chi-square = 498.228,  $p < 0.05$ ) (See Figure 1).

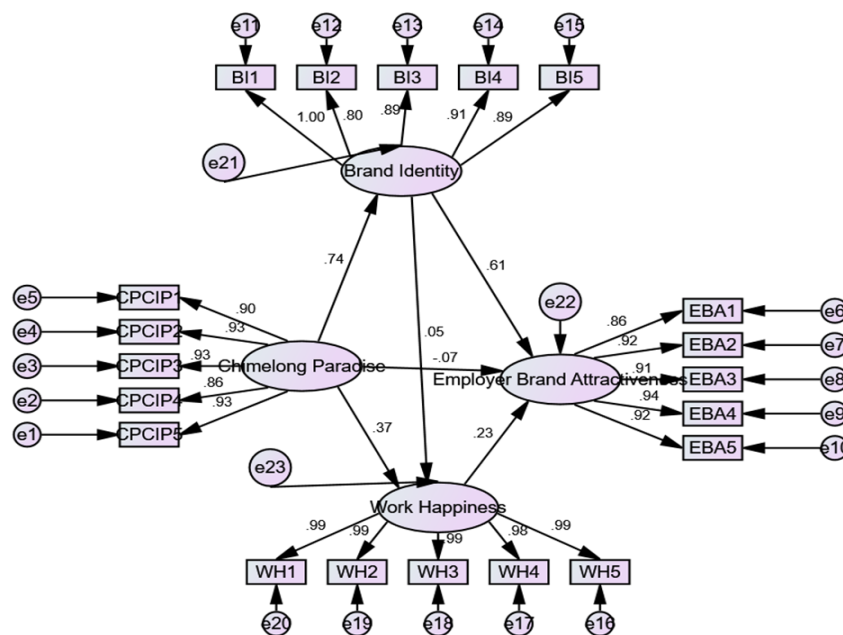


Figure 1: SEM Model of AMOS with Standardised Estimates

(Source: Created by the author)

The indirect effect of Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP on Employer Brand Attractiveness is 0.838 (Standardised = 0.55). As per Table 4, Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP ( $\beta = 0.742$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has a significant positive and strongest effect size on Brand Identify. Additionally, Brand Identity ( $\beta = 0.613$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has a significant positive effect size on Employer Brand Attractiveness. Therefore, there is a significant indirect effect of the Chimelong Paradise cartoon on Employer Brand Attractiveness that is significantly mediated by Brand identity. Hence, hypothesis H2 is accepted. Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP ( $\beta = 0.375$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has a significant effect size on Work Happiness. Besides, Work happiness ( $\beta = 0.231$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ) has a significant positive effect size on Employer Brand Attractiveness. Considering the strong indirect effect, it can be also said that Work Happiness also has a significant mediation role between Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP and Employer Brand Attractiveness. Therefore, H2 is accepted. However, there is no direct effect of Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP on Employer Brand Attractiveness ( $p = 0.573$ ), which indicates hypothesis H1 is rejected. Besides, there is no direct effect of Brand Identity on Work Happiness ( $p = 0.361$ ), which indicates hypothesis H4 is rejected.

Table 4: Model Estimates Considering Only Direct Effect

			Estimate	S.E.	Std. Est	C.R.	P
Brand Identity	<---	Chimelong Paradise	1.158	0.074	0.742	15.613	***
Work Happiness	<---	Chimelong Paradise	0.541	0.131	0.375	4.132	***
Work Happiness	<---	Brand Identity	0.046	0.081	0.05	0.563	0.573
Employer Attractiveness	<---	Chimelong Paradise	-0.11	0.12	-0.072	-0.913	0.361
Employer Attractiveness	<---	Brand Identity	0.598	0.076	0.613	7.894	***
Employer Attractiveness	<---	Work Happiness	0.244	0.058	0.231	4.231	***

(Source: Created by the author)

## 5. Summary

H1: The use of the Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP positively influences the attractiveness of employer brands in the tourist destinations of China. REJECTED

H2: Brand identity mediates the relationship between the use of Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP and employer brand attractiveness. ACCEPTED (strongest)

H3: Work happiness mediates the relationship between Chimelong Paradise IP and employer brand attractiveness. ACCEPTED

H4: There is a positive relationship between brand identity and work happiness in Chimelong Paradise-themed tourism enterprises. REJECTED

## 6. Conclusion and Future Work

### 6.1 Conclusion

As per the findings of the research, it can be concluded that brand elements like the Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP, plays a critical role in shaping the attractiveness of employer brands in the tourism sector of China. However, this impact is indirect. In other words, the use of the Chimelong Paradise cartoon IP does not influence the attractiveness of employer brands in the tourist destinations of China in a positive manner, rather this relationship is largely mediated by brand identity and work happiness. The analysis has found significant alignment with theories related to employee management and brand identity where the findings reveal that cartoon IPs, helps in fostering a precise brand identity for employers in the Chinese tourism destinations. Besides this, the study reveals that work happiness is an important mediator. When a higher work happiness is experienced by employees, they tend to perceive their employers in a positive manner which eventually enhances their attractiveness. In this study, the direct effect of the Chimelong Paradise Cartoon IP on the attractiveness of employer brand has been reflected which implies that the influence of cartoon IPs are fundamentally effective through better brand identity and higher work happiness. The study underscores the significance of incorporating aspects which resonate with the employees at an emotional level, which can eventually contribute to increased employee engagement and loyalty.

### 6.2 Limitation and further scope of study

Although this study provides some insightful findings pertaining to the role of Cartoon IP on Employer Brand Attractiveness in Chinese Tourist Destinations. There persist certain limitations. Firstly, this study has been conducted based on responses from only 150 respondents which might fail to ensure broader generalizability of the findings, across the tourism industry of China. Given that the Chinese tourism industry is a huge, the sample size of this study is quite insignificant. Secondly, a cross-sectional design has been undertaken in this study, which has only captured data at one given point of time. This can potentially limit the ability of this study to explore and demonstrate the dynamic changes in the perception of employees over a longer period of time. Thirdly, the study rejects the 4<sup>th</sup> hypothesis, which is a key area that requires further exploration to determine the relationship between work happiness and brand identity. This relationship can be influenced by variables like organizational culture or leadership styles, which are not examined through this study.

Through future research in this field, the above identified limitations can be addressed. It is recommended to conduct a longitudinal study with a larger and diverse sample size which can significantly represent the Chinese tourist industry to ensure higher generalizability. Besides, future researchers can employ a mixed method approach collecting both qualitative and quantitative data to gain in-depth insight into the variables, and mediators which are unexplored in this study.

## References

- [1] Cheng, W., Li, S., & Xu, Y. (2023). Explore the Role of IP Marketing in Promoting Economic Development. *Journal of Education, Humanities and Social Sciences*, 23, 857-866.
- [2] Bu, N. T., Parra-López, E., Barrientos-Baez, A., Li, T., & de los Ángeles Pérez-Sánchez, M. (2022). Creating a re-tech theme park through the neuromarketing and cartoon characters. *Preprints*, 2022060150. <https://doi.org/10.20944/preprints202206.0150.v1>
- [3] Anton Clavé, S., Carlà-Uhink, F., & Freitag, F. (2023). *Inclusion and Exclusion: Marginalization in Theme Parks*. In Key Concepts in Theme Park Studies: Understanding Tourism and Leisure Spaces (pp. 129-142). Cham: Springer International Publishing.
- [4] Boukis, A., & Christodoulides, G. (2020). Investigating key antecedents and outcomes of employee-based brand equity. *European Management Review*, 17(1), 41-55. <https://doi.org/10.1111/emre.12327>
- [5] Sheeraz, M., Qadeer, F., Khan, K. I., & Mahmood, S. (2020). What I am, what I want to be: The role of brand experience in the relationship of self-congruence facets and orientation toward happiness. *Journal of Business & Economics*, 12(1), 43-61. <https://ssrn.com/abstract=3653501>
- [6] Jaswal, N., Sharma, D., Bhardwaj, B., & Kraus, S. (2024). Promoting well-being through happiness at work: a systematic literature review and future research agenda. *Management Decision*, 62(13), 332-369. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MD-08-2023-1492>
- [7] Kun, A., & Gadanez, P. (2022). Workplace happiness, well-being and their relationship with psychological capital: A study of Hungarian Teachers. *Current Psychology*, 41(1), 185-199. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s12144-019-00550-0>
- [8] Younis, R. A. A., & Hammad, R. (2021). Employer image, corporate image and organizational attractiveness: the moderating role of social identity consciousness. *Personnel Review*, 50(1), 244-263. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-02-2019-0058>
- [9] Ahmad, A., Khan, M. N., & Haque, M. A. (2020). Employer branding aids in enhancing employee attraction and retention. *Journal of Asia-Pacific Business*, 21(1), 27-38. <https://doi.org/10.1080/10599231.2020.1708231>
- [10] Baziga, B. F., Mushtaq, N., & Munaqib, P. (2024). Impact of Employer Branding on Job Satisfaction: A Conceptual Framework. *Asian Journal of Economics, Business and Accounting*, 24(8), 10-9734. <https://doi.org/10.9734/ajeba/2024/v24i81443>