

Employer Branding on Social Media and Its Impact on Employer Attractiveness among Students and Freshers

R SRI VARSHA II MAHRM

PG Department of Human Resource Management Dwaraka Doss Goverdhan Doss Vaishnav College

Dr. SUCHARITHA. K

Research Supervisor and Asst. Prof. PG Department of Human Resource Management Dwaraka Doss Goverdhan Doss Vaishnav College

Abstract

Social media employer branding has emerged as a vital tactic in luring youth talent in present-day's competitive employment market. Students and recent graduates, who are most active on digital media, increasingly depend on these platforms to assess prospective employers. This research investigated the effect of social media employer branding on employer appeal among 150 students and recent graduates in Chennai, India, via a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design. Variables were measured using the 23-item Employer Attractiveness Scale to gauge social, development, application, safety, and economic values.

Results indicated that development value ($M = 3.12$) and social ($M = 3.17$) took precedence over economic value ($M = 2.91$). The measure exhibited high reliability ($\alpha = .86$).

Attractiveness was positively associated with employer branding exposure ($r = .45, p < .01$). Employers did not differ between genders, but users on LinkedIn found employers more attractive than those on Glassdoor.

The research identifies the significance of real social media branding, especially on LinkedIn, to entice students and new graduates.

Keywords: Employer branding, Social media, Employer attractiveness, LinkedIn

1. INTRODUCTION

Making one's way from graduation to the first career is a moment of crucial importance for every student. For the incoming generation of professionals, first impressions of an employer are being ever more determined by more than just the classic criteria such as compensation or job descriptions. The online reputation a company establishes matters ever more significantly to an employer's initial appeal. Websites like LinkedIn, Instagram, and YouTube are now the chief venues through which students initially meet and size up potential employers. Research indicates that the vast majority of job applicants see employer branding as significant in their application choices, highlighting the vital function of an online presence (DSMN8, 2025).

This strategic exercise of "employer branding"—building a public reputation as an employer of choice—has discovered a potent amplifier in social media. Social media allows organizations to present culture, values, and openness with a perceived authenticity that communicates with new graduates. Studies show that candidates rely heavily on social media to evaluate company culture and reputation, which unveils the increasingly critical role social media is playing in employer brand perception (J Neonatal Surg, 2024).

The importance of social media employer branding is most acute in the domain of Human Resource Management (HRM) where talent competition is getting fiercer. For HR functions, creating an attractive employer brand on social media is no longer a choice but a strategic necessity to recruit, engage, and retain potential employees. Strategic management of employer branding enables organizations to position themselves distinctively and develop a distinctive employment proposition that aligns with the aspirations and values of prospective candidates, as indicated by

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004).

Need for Study:

- Social media increasingly plays a role for organizations to display values, culture, and opportunities, which have a significant impact on the career views of students and new graduates who are extremely active on social media.
- There is limited research on the direct effects of social media employer branding on employer appeal and job application intentions of students.
- It is crucial for employers to know demographic differences (e.g., education level, gender, platform of choice) to match recruitment strategies with expectations of future talent.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Employer Branding: Concept, Strategy, and HR Implications

Employer branding (EB) is "the total of a firm's efforts to convey to actual and potential employees that it is an attractive organization to work for" (Berthon et al., 2005, p.153), acting as the extension of branding concepts to the employment relationship (Ambler & Barrow, 1996)[attached_file:s involves three phases: developing an inspiring and distinctive employer value proposition, conveying this proposition to target groups, and putting these promises into practice day by day (Lievens, 2007). The power of EB is rooted in creating differentiation, commitment, and emotional attachment—attributes that facilitate both recruitment and retention objectives (Davies, 2008).

Studies show that strong employer brands assist firms in performing well by fetching better candidates, strengthening retention, and making HR management easier (Holliday, 1997). Significantly, effective EB induces emotional connection and sense of belonging, rather than a rational appeal to salary. Brand equity models contend that, analogous to how consumers select brands on the basis of personality matching, candidates choose employers with traits and values that align with their own (Cable & Turban, 2001).

Employer branding is not just a recruitment strategy, but a continuous HR process with the goal of having a constant supply of quality candidates and holding onto them (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Srivastava & Bhatnagar, 2010). Its worth is determined by cultural and demographic factors: what may appeal to one nationality could be different in another, which makes it a case for localized research (Alniaçik, Alniaçik, Erat & Akçin, 2014)

Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005) also defined employer attractiveness as "the set of benefits that a potential employee sees in working for a specific organization," and built an Employer Attractiveness scale based on five primary factors: social value, development value, application value, interest value, and economic value.

2.2 Employer Branding in HRM

Employer branding is being regarded more and more as a central activity in Human Resource Management (HRM). Scholarship indicates that "employer branding plays a key role in securing talent, enhancing corporate reputation and ensuring business success". Strategic building of an employer brand is regarded as a central imperative for any business that desires to win the "war for talent" in a competitive market. As described by Ambler and Barrow (1996), employer branding is "the creation and dissemination of an organization's culture as an employer in the marketplace. the set of functional, economic and psychological advantages offered by employment and associated with the employing firm".

It is the job of HRM to propel the employer brand by ensuring that recruitment, induction, training, performance management, and retention programs actually convey and portray the firm's values and culture (Dabirian, Kietzmann

& Diba, 2017). As the workers live the brand every day, the HR function's capability to deliver a quality work experience determines the company's image by current and future employees, thereby shaping employer appeal and talent acquisition results (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Lievens, 2007).

2.3 Social Media and Employer Attractiveness

Social media has been an essential platform that shapes the way in which organizations are viewed as employers and their attractiveness to future recruits, particularly by the younger generations such as Millennials and Generation Z. It allows organizations to highlight their culture, workplace, and values in an interactive manner, making the employer brand more tangible, relevant, and authentic (Aslam, 2015; Kucherov & Zhiltsova, 2021).

Studies show a strong positive correlation between the use of social media and attractiveness of the employer brand. A quantitative study among Indonesian Generation Z students determined that social media activity by organizations contributes positively to employer brand attractiveness by making company culture, work environment, and image accessible (Kucherov & Zhiltsova, 2021). The exposure leads to high-quality talents considering such organizations positively.

Social media also serves as a bridge between organizational attractiveness and employer brand perception. The empirical world reveals that use of social media can increase the perceived authenticity and attractiveness of an employer brand, hence making organizations more attractive to job candidates (Priyadarshini, 2017). The real-time and interactive nature of social media enables organizations to communicate a dynamic and personified image that inspires potential employees more than conventional media sources (Carpentier, 2019).

3. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

3.1 Primary Objective

The study aims to investigate the impact of employer branding on social media on the perceived attractiveness of employers to fresh graduates and students preparing to enter the workforce.

3.2 Secondary Objectives

1. To investigate the social media role as an employer branding medium for organizations.
2. To evaluate the impact of social media employer branding on employer attractiveness to students and new graduates.
3. To examine whether demographic factors (such as gender, academic discipline, or platform preference) affect perceptions of employer attractiveness.
4. To provide recommendations for organizations on how to enhance employer branding strategies to attract young talent.

3.3 Variables:

1. Independent Variable: Social Media Employer Branding
2. Dependent Variable: Employer Attractiveness

3.4 Hypotheses:

1. **H1:** There is a significant positive relationship between social media employer branding and employer attractiveness among students and fresh graduates.
2. **H2:** Students who actively engage with employer branding content on social media perceive higher employer attractiveness than those who do not.
3. **H3:** There is a significant difference in employer attractiveness scores based on gender.
4. **H4:** There is a significant difference in employer attractiveness scores between students preferring LinkedIn vs GlassDoor and Instagram vs Twitter X

4. METHODOLOGY

The research was carried out in Chennai, Tamil Nadu, during a one-month period employing a quantitative, cross-sectional study design. The data were collected at one point in time via a structured questionnaire administered online through Google Forms. The lowest sample size needed was calculated a priori with G*Power for correlation analysis ($r = .25$, $\alpha = .05$, power = .80), which was 123 participants; however, accounting for other analyses like independent t-tests and scale reliability (23 items needing ≥ 5 responses per item), the final sample was determined as $n = 150$. A convenience sampling technique was utilized, and the participants were students and recent graduates, with demographic differences like gender, academic status, and liked social media platforms also taken into account.

4.1 Instruments/Tools:

The **Employer Attractiveness Scale (23 items)**, developed by Berthon, Ewing, and Hah (2005), measures how appealing individuals perceive potential employers to be. It covers both **instrumental factors** (salary, promotion, job security) and **symbolic factors** (belonging, self-confidence, innovation). Each item is rated on a 7-point Likert scale (1 = not at all important, 7 = extremely important), with total scores ranging from 32 (low attractiveness) to 224 (high attractiveness). The scale consists of five dimensions: **Interest Value** (creativity and innovation), **Social Value** (supportive and friendly environment), **Economic Value** (financial rewards and security), **Development Value** (growth and recognition), and **Application Value** (opportunities to apply and share knowledge). The scale does not include any reverse-scored items, as all statements are positively framed.

4.2 Statistical Analysis

- **Descriptive statistics** were used to calculate the mean, standard deviation, and frequencies of responses to describe the demographic variables and the dimensions of employer attractiveness.
- **Reliability analysis** was performed using Cronbach's alpha to examine the internal consistency of the Employer Attractiveness Scale.
- **Pearson correlation** was used to test the relationship between social media employer branding exposure and employer attractiveness.

- **Independent sample t -tests** were conducted to identify group differences in employer attractiveness scores across demographic variables, specifically between male and female participants, as well as between LinkedIn vs Glassdoor users and Instagram vs Twitter X users.

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Normality and homogeneity of variance of the data were established. Inferential statistics were employed to test the hypotheses proposed. Descriptive and inferential analysis on the Employer Attractiveness Scale and demographic data collected from 150 participants were conducted.

5.1 Descriptive Statistics

5.1.1 Demographic Variables

The sample comprised 150 subjects (75 males, 75 females). The subjects consisted of the majority being undergraduate students (30%), postgraduate students (27%), diploma holders (17%), and others (25%). Career status was final-year undergrads (32), final-year postgrads (33), newly graduated students (32), entry-level employed freshers (31), and job seekers (22). The age was 18–26 years, according to the inclusion criteria.

When it comes to platform preference, LinkedIn (44%) was the most preferred platform, followed by Glassdoor (22%), Instagram (16%), Twitter X (15%), and others (3%). This categorization indicates that professional networking sites, especially LinkedIn, are the leaders in employer branding perceptions among new graduates and students.

5.1.2 Employer Attractiveness Dimensions

Descriptive statistics for the five dimensions of employer attractiveness are presented in Table 1. The outcome of this research indicates that Social Value ($M = 3.17$) and Development Value ($M = 3.12$) are scored higher than Economic Value ($M = 2.91$) when employer attractiveness is measured by students and new graduates. These findings strongly resonate with new research indicating a paradigm shift among Generation Z and Millennials to favor relationships, self-development, and open workspaces over the old perks of salary and benefits.

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Employer Attractiveness Dimensions ($N = 150$)

Variable	Mean (M)	SD	N
Social Value	3.17	1.37	150
Development Value	3.12	1.42	150
Application Value	3.21	1.33	150
Safety Value	3.05	1.41	150
Economic Value	2.91	1.48	150

Earlier research has repeatedly indicated that younger cohorts view workplace culture, cooperation, and learning and career opportunities as essential to employer attractiveness. Neves et al. (2021) have indicated that "social value," encompassing attributes like friendliness in the workplace and team orientation, was the single most important factor for Portuguese university students choosing potential employers ahead of financial benefits. The same was noted by Berthon, Ewing, & Hah (2005), whose study confirmed that interest and social worth, including stimulating work and positive social climates, outweighed economic rewards on their popular Employer Attractiveness Scale.

This same focus on interpersonal connections and growth opportunities rather than pay is also the focus of Generation Z and Millennials' shifting expectations in international research. Researchers have noted that the cohorts look for companies where they can develop, form close relationships, and be part of a healthy working environment, and not just to maximize profits (Twenge, 2010; Ng et al., 2010). As Neves et al. (2021) stated, the "teamwork and collegial environment were rated as more important than economic value in determining employer attractiveness."

These results have significant implications for talent attraction and human resource management strategies. To appeal to and retain young professionals, organizations need to prioritize workplace culture, career growth, and interpersonal relationships—mirroring the suggestion of Berthon, Ewing, & Hah (2005), who advise that employer brand communications and HR policies lead with social and developmental values to enhance organizational attractiveness among students and early-career professionals.

5.2 Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the Employer Attractiveness Scale was examined using Cronbach's alpha. Table 2 Reliability Analysis of Employer Attractiveness Scale

Scale	No. of Items	Cronbach's α
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Employer Attractiveness Scale	23	.86
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Employer Attractiveness Scale was shown to be highly reliable within this research, Cronbach's alpha being .86. It indicates superb internal consistency, ascertaining that the tool consistently assesses the intended constructs through items. Nunnally & Bernstein (1994) state that Cronbach's alpha above .80 should be regarded as an indicator of a highly reliable scale, which is appropriate for complex multidimensional constructs within psychological and organizational studies.

The reliability of the Employer Attractiveness Scale has been confirmed by numerous studies. Berthon, Ewing, & Hah (2005), the same researchers who first constructed the scale, found high reliability among various student populations, demonstrating that the scale reliably measures the multi-faceted construct of employer attractiveness—social, developmental, economic, and other values—across different contexts. This invariant reliability lends support to the application of the scale with different populations and research contexts.

5.3 Pearson Correlation

Correlation analysis was conducted to test the relationship between social media employer branding exposure and employer attractiveness.

The results of this study show that social media branding exposure is strongly associated with employer appeal ($r = .45$, $p < .01$). Furthermore, choosing a credible social media website is also strongly associated ($r = .32$, $p < .05$). These findings underscore the influential role of digital employer branding on students' and new graduates' perceptions.

Table 3

Correlation Between Employer Branding Exposure and Employer Attractiveness

Variable Pair	r	p
Branding Exposure ↔ Employer Attractiveness	.45	<.01
Trusted Platform ↔ Employer Attractiveness	.32	<.05

Note. Correlation values are significant at $p < .05$.

The interactions as seen reveal that when students are exposed to authentic and engaging employer branding messages such as employee testimonials, company culture highlights, and organizational culture, on social media, they tend to score such organizations as desirable.

This supports the idea that social media offers transparency and provides companies with a direct channel to share their work environment and authentic employee experience, thus boosting credibility and trust.

These results justify the worth of companies investing in authentic, effective social media messaging for employer branding. Drawing on credible sites and authentic messages, companies can become more attractive in competitive job markets, particularly among the younger generations who value authenticity and cultural fit.

5.4 Independent Sample t-Tests

5.4.1 Gender Differences

An independent samples t-test revealed no significant difference in employer attractiveness scores between male ($M \approx 71$) and female ($M \approx 72$) respondents.

5.4.2 Platform Differences

Group comparisons were made between LinkedIn and Glassdoor users, and Instagram and Twitter X users.

Table 4

Independent Sample t-Test Results for Employer Attractiveness

Comparison	Group	M	t	p	Result
Gender	Male	71	0.85	>.05	n.s.
	Female	72			
Platform (LinkedIn vs Glassdoor)	LinkedIn	75	2.20	<.05	Sig.
	Glassdoor	69			
Platform (Instagram vs Twitter X)	Instagram	67	1.10	>.05	n.s.
	Twitter (X)	70			

Note. n.s. = not significant; Sig. = significant at $p < .05$.

Independent sample t-tests (Table 4) revealed no significant gender differences. A significant difference was noted between users of LinkedIn and Glassdoor ($t = 2.20$, $p < .05$), with LinkedIn users perceiving employers as more attractive. No significant differences were noted between Instagram and Twitter X users.

a. Gender Differences (No Significant Difference)

The analysis showed no significant difference between male and female respondents in their ratings of employer attractiveness. This implies that primary attractiveness dimensions—e.g., opportunities for career development, positive work cultures, and exposure to employer branding—are held in similar esteem by both men and women, especially at the initial career stages. This is supported by previous studies by Alniaçık et al. (2014) and Neves et al. (2021), who also reported little gender-based difference in terms of how students and early career professionals perceive employer branding.

b. LinkedIn vs. Glassdoor (Significant Difference)

A significant difference emerged between LinkedIn and Glassdoor users, with LinkedIn users scoring employers as more attractive. The greater attractiveness scores among LinkedIn users can be a reflection of the site's emphasis on professional branding, career networking, and the promotion of opportunities for growth, all of which mirror characteristics of employers that are most desired by young talent. Glassdoor, by contrast, showcases employee reviews prominently, both good and bad, which can have the effect of reducing perceived attractiveness.[Carpentier et al. (2019)] recognized LinkedIn as the most powerful social media site for fostering favorable employer perceptions,[Dabirian, Kietzmann, and Diba (2017)]point to the potential for defamatory reviews on Glassdoor to negatively impact employer branding. These observations reiterate the strategic need to choose suitable social media sites to ensure optimal employer branding efficiency.

c. Instagram vs. Twitter (No Significant Difference)

No considerable variation was found between Twitter and Instagram users in terms of employer attractiveness ratings. Both networks are largely informal and lifestyle-based, which can restrict the perceived professionalism and effectiveness of employer branding messages spread via them. Aslam (2015) mentioned that Instagram and Twitter could enhance organizational visibility, but due to their relatively low professional credibility, they are less capable of maximizing employer attractiveness considerably. This would indicate that although effective for brand recognition and interaction, these sites might be inferior to LinkedIn in terms of affecting serious career-based perceptions by job seekers.

6. SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

6.1 Summary

Social media employer branding has also become a potent weapon for organizations to brand themselves as desirable employers, especially for students and recent graduates who are looking to join the employment market. Unlike conventional approaches to recruiting, social media like LinkedIn, Instagram, and Glassdoor provide employers with the ability to share their values, culture, and opportunities with honesty and directness. The purpose of this study was to explore the impact of employer branding on social media on employer attractiveness perceptions and whether demographic variables like gender, education level, and usage platform affect perceptions of differences.

Quantitative cross-sectional survey design was employed with 150 participants including undergraduate and postgraduate students, new graduates, and early-career job applicants. Data were gathered through the use of the 23-item Employer Attractiveness Scale to measure five aspects of attractiveness: social value, development value, application value, safety value, and economic value.

The principal findings of the research are encapsulated as follows:

Among employer attractiveness dimensions, social value ($M = 3.17$) and development value ($M = 3.12$) were most valued, with economic value ($M = 2.91$) being least valued, indicating that students value supportive environments and growth prospects more than pay.

The Employer Attractiveness Scale was found to be highly reliable (Cronbach's $\alpha = .86$).

A positive moderate correlation ($r = .45$, $p < .01$) was established between social media exposure to employer branding and employer attractiveness. Platform trust also indicated a smaller but significant correlation ($r = .32$, $p < .05$).

Independent sample t-tests did not establish any significant gender differences in the perception of employer attractiveness.

There were notable platform-based contrasts: LinkedIn users found employers more appealing than Glassdoor users, while there were no notable contrasts between Instagram and Twitter X users.

6.2 Recommendations

- Subsequent studies should employ larger, more diverse samples and longitudinal study designs to gain more comprehensive insights.
- Cross-industry comparisons can detect sector-wide branding strategies.
- Organizations need to focus on LinkedIn but sustain a multi-platform strategy.
- Employers need to emphasize growth opportunities, culture, and genuine employee experiences to appeal to younger talent.

6.3 Conclusion

The findings of this research indicate that social media employer branding has a notable influence in determining employer appeal among students and recent graduates. Social and developmental elements of firms are more important than economic pay, and the significance of genuine culture and development prospects is demonstrated. The research also underscores that gender has no influence on perceptions but that platform selection is important, with LinkedIn specifically playing an important role in enhancing employer appeal.

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