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The Role of Employer Branding in Attracting and Retaining Top Talent: A Study on Modern Recruitment Strategies

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. *Background of the Study*

In a rapidly evolving global economy, talent has become one of the most critical resources for organizational success. Companies are no longer competing solely on the basis of products or services but increasingly on their ability to attract, develop, and retain the best human capital. As the dynamics of the labor market shift, employer branding has emerged as a strategic priority for organizations looking to gain a competitive edge in recruitment and employee retention.

Employer branding refers to an organization's reputation and image as an employer, and it is now considered equally important as corporate branding. It encompasses the values, culture, and employment experience a company offers to both current employees and potential candidates. A strong employer brand communicates trust, stability, opportunity, and alignment with employee expectations—factors that significantly influence a job seeker's choice and an employee's decision to stay.

With the increased transparency brought by digital platforms such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Indeed, employer branding has become more visible and influential than ever. Candidates now have real-time access to reviews, workplace insights, and employee testimonials, empowering them to make informed decisions. Consequently, organizations must manage their employer brand proactively to maintain a positive perception among their workforce and the broader labor market.

B. *Significance of Employer Branding in Talent Acquisition and Retention*

Talent acquisition and retention are two of the most pressing challenges in modern human resource management. The cost of losing high-performing employees is significant—not just in terms of rehiring and training, but also in the form of lost productivity and institutional knowledge. In this context, employer branding plays a crucial role in establishing a long-term relationship between the organization and its people.

A compelling employer brand attracts talent that aligns with the organization's culture and values. It also contributes to employee engagement, loyalty, and satisfaction—factors known to reduce turnover rates. Research by LinkedIn (2022) found that companies with a strong employer brand see a 50% reduction in cost per hire and 28% less employee turnover.

Moreover, employer branding is no longer confined to large multinational corporations. Even small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are investing in defining their employment value propositions (EVPs) and leveraging social media to showcase their culture and career opportunities. The rise of employer branding as a business strategy, therefore, has implications across industries and organizational sizes.

C. *Problem Statement*

Despite its growing importance, many organizations still fail to recognize the full potential of employer branding. Some limit it to recruitment marketing without aligning it to the broader employee experience. Others struggle to maintain brand consistency across multiple platforms and touchpoints, especially in global or digitally dispersed teams. There is also limited empirical research linking employer branding efforts directly to quantifiable recruitment and retention outcomes.

This research identifies a gap in understanding how employer branding strategies translate into real-world impact on talent acquisition and employee loyalty. It aims to bridge this gap by studying the perceptions of HR professionals, employees, and job seekers across various industries, and by analyzing case studies of organizations with successful branding practices.

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D. Research Objectives

The specific objectives of the study are as follows:

1) To examine the role of employer branding in influencing job seekers' employment decisions.
2) To analyze the impact of employer branding on employee satisfaction and retention.
3) To evaluate how digital platforms and social media shape employer brand perception.

E. Research Questions

This study will address the following key research questions:

1) How do job seekers perceive employer branding in the hiring process?
2) What influence does employer branding have on an employee's decision to stay within an organization?
3) Which strategies and platforms are most effective in communicating a strong employer brand?
4) What challenges do HR professionals face in building and maintaining a compelling employer brand?

F. Scope of the Study

This research focuses on mid-sized and large companies across diverse sectors including IT, finance, manufacturing, and services. Respondents will include HR professionals, current employees, and active job seekers. While the findings may primarily reflect urban and digitally-active organizations, the principles can be extended to other contexts with adaptations.

G. Structure of the Thesis

Chapter 1: Introduction — Presents the research background, significance, objectives, and scope.
Chapter 2: Literature Review — Reviews existing theories and studies on employer branding, talent acquisition, and retention.
Chapter 3: Research Methodology — Describes the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques.
Chapter 4: Data Analysis and Findings — Presents and interprets the results of the primary research.
Chapter 5: Discussion and Recommendations — Discusses key insights, compares them with literature, and offers practical recommendations.
Chapter 6: Conclusion — Summarizes the study, outlines limitations, and suggests areas for future research.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employer branding has become a critical strategy in today's dynamic business environment, especially in attracting and retaining top talent. The global war for talent and shifting employee expectations have prompted organizations to build and communicate a compelling employer identity. This literature review examines theoretical foundations of employer branding and explores real-world case studies from companies like Google, Unilever, and Deloitte to analyze how modern branding strategies influence recruitment and retention outcomes.

A. Theoretical Framework of Employer Branding

Employer branding is defined as a company's reputation and image as an employer, distinct from its more general corporate brand. According to Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), employer branding is a combination of marketing and HR principles, aimed at creating a unique employment experience and value proposition to current and potential employees.

Cable and Turban (2003) emphasized that organizations with strong employer brands are more likely to attract high-quality applicants because job seekers perceive them as more desirable. Tanwar and Prasad (2016) highlighted that employer branding also plays a vital role in employee engagement, job satisfaction, and long-term retention.

Key elements of employer branding include:

- Employer Value Proposition (EVP): What the organization promises to its employees.
- Internal branding: How current employees perceive the company.
- External branding: How outsiders, especially job seekers, view the company.

B. Case Study: Google – Innovating Employer Brand through Culture

Google is widely recognized for its strong employer brand, often ranking among the best companies to work for. Google's culture encourages innovation, autonomy, and continuous learning. One notable initiative is its "20% Time" policy, which allows employees to use a portion of their time for passion projects. Innovations like Gmail and Google News originated from this policy.

Google also uses a data-driven hiring approach and a transparent, structured interview process to ensure fairness and consistency. Their physical workspaces, perks, and flat hierarchy reinforce the message of a collaborative and employee-centric culture.

Impact:

Google's employer brand has led to an enormous volume of job applications annually and a high retention rate among top performers. According to a Front Porch Agility case study, employee engagement levels at Google are among the highest in the tech industry.

C. Case Study: Unilever – Aligning Employer Branding with Purpose

Unilever's employer branding focuses on sustainability, diversity, and purpose-led leadership. The company developed an "Employer Branding Wheel" to ensure consistency in messaging across all locations and departments. Their "Future Leaders League" competition for students and graduates promotes Unilever as a brand that invests in talent and values innovation.

In Unilever Indonesia, this strategy doubled the number of quality applications from 260 in 2018 to over 500 in 2020, as reported by Kalibrr's employer branding study.

Impact:

Unilever's EVP — "A better business. A better world. A better you." — resonates strongly with millennials and Gen Z, who prioritize purpose-driven workplaces. This has translated into stronger talent pipelines and higher retention among young professionals.

D. Case Study: Deloitte – Retention Through Well-being and Learning

Deloitte integrates employer branding deeply into its employee experience strategy. A notable initiative is the introduction of mental wellness programs, mindfulness training, and flexible work arrangements — which increased retention by 30%, according to employee retention studies cited on Wikipedia.

Deloitte also emphasizes learning and career progression. Their investment in digital HR systems like Workday supports data-driven decision-making and enhances employee satisfaction through personalized career paths.

Impact:

Deloitte's branding focuses on "making an impact that matters" — not just in client work, but in employee growth. This branding strategy has contributed to its low turnover rate compared to industry averages and high employee engagement.

E. Synthesis of Literature and Case Insights

From both academic literature and practical examples, a few themes clearly emerge:

Strong EVP and internal alignment drive loyalty and attract value-aligned candidates.

Purpose and innovation are key differentiators in competitive markets.

Digital tools and consistent messaging enhance employer brand effectiveness.

Employee well-being, autonomy, and growth opportunities are central to retention.

These companies highlight that employer branding is not just about marketing — it's a strategic function rooted in authentic culture, values, and employee experiences.

F. Conclusion

Employer branding is no longer a peripheral HR activity; it's a strategic imperative that directly influences an organization's ability to attract and retain top talent. As seen in the cases of Google, Unilever, and Deloitte, organizations that align branding with employee experience, purpose, and innovation reap the benefits of a stronger talent pipeline and greater workforce stability.

The evolving workforce — especially Gen Z and millennials — values authenticity, transparency, and purpose, making employer branding more important than ever. As digital platforms continue to give employees a voice and job seekers more information, employer brands must be carefully crafted and consistently lived across all levels of the organization.

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III. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Introduction

This chapter outlines the research methodology adopted for the study. The research aims to explore how employer branding influences the attraction and retention of top talent in contemporary organizations. This methodology includes a detailed discussion on the research design, population and sampling, data collection methods, research instruments, reliability and validity measures, and data analysis techniques.

B. Research Design

The study employs a mixed-methods research design, integrating both quantitative and qualitative approaches to ensure a holistic understanding of the research problem.

Quantitative Component:

Structured surveys will be used to gather measurable data from a large group of respondents (HR professionals, employees, and job seekers). This helps analyze trends and correlations between employer branding strategies and their perceived effectiveness.

Qualitative Component:

Semi-structured interviews with HR managers and branding experts will allow deeper insights into organizational branding strategies and their impact on recruitment and retention.

This combination supports both generalizability and in-depth understanding, ensuring that the findings are comprehensive and well-grounded.

C. Population and Sampling

1) Target Population

The target population for this study includes:

HR managers and recruiters in mid to large-sized organizations

Employees (both current and former)

Job seekers from various industries

2) Sampling Method

The study uses purposive sampling for qualitative interviews (to target professionals with employer branding experience) and stratified random sampling for surveys (to ensure diversity across industries and roles).

3) Sample Size

Surveys: 40–50 respondents across different industries

Interviews: 5-10 HR professionals and employer branding specialists

D. Data Collection Methods

1) Primary Data Collection

Primary data will be collected through:

Online surveys using Google Forms

In-depth interviews via Zoom or in-person sessions, depending on availability

A pilot test will be conducted with 10 respondents to refine the questionnaire and interview guide.

2) Secondary Data Collection

Secondary data will be gathered from:

Academic journals and HR research publications

Company websites and employer review platforms (e.g., Glassdoor, LinkedIn)

Reports from consulting firms such as Deloitte, PwC, and McKinsey

Case studies of companies like Google, Unilever, and Deloitte

This data will provide industry context and support comparative analysis.

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E. Research Instruments

1) Survey Questionnaire

A structured questionnaire will be used for quantitative analysis. It contains:
Multiple-choice and Likert-scale questions
Four main sections: Demographics, Employer Branding Awareness, Talent Attraction, and Retention Factors
The questionnaire is designed to assess how employer branding influences job seeker decisions and employee loyalty.

2) Interview Guide

The interview guide includes open-ended questions focused on:
Organizational branding strategies
Challenges in maintaining employer brand consistency
Role of branding in recruitment and retention outcomes
It allows flexibility for interviewees to share personal experiences and strategic perspectives.

F. Reliability and Validity

1) Reliability

To ensure reliability:
A pilot study will be conducted to test the clarity and consistency of the survey.
The Cronbach's Alpha test will be used to assess internal consistency of Likert-scale items.

2) Validity

Content validity will be established through expert review of the questionnaire and interview guide.
Construct validity will be verified by aligning questionnaire items with the research objectives.
Triangulation of quantitative and qualitative data will enhance the credibility of findings.

G. Data Analysis Techniques

1) Quantitative Data Analysis

Quantitative responses will be analyzed using:
Descriptive statistics (percentages, means) to summarize demographic and branding data.
Inferential statistics (Chi-square test, correlation analysis) to identify relationships between employer branding and attraction/retention metrics.
Data will be processed using Excel.

2) Qualitative Data Analysis

Interview transcripts will be analyzed using:
Thematic analysis to identify recurring themes and patterns
The integration of both data sets will support a robust interpretation of the research outcomes.

H. Ethical Considerations

This study ensures:
Informed consent from all participants
Anonymity and confidentiality of personal data
Voluntary participation and the right to withdraw
Ethical approval from the university and adherence to academic research standards
No sensitive or personally identifiable information will be collected beyond what is required.

I. Limitations of the Methodology

While the mixed-methods approach strengthens the study, limitations include:
Potential response bias in self-reported surveys
Limited sample size in qualitative interviews, which may not represent all industries

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Time constraints in scheduling interviews and follow-ups

Despite these limitations, the methodology ensures a comprehensive understanding of how employer branding influences hiring and retention.

J. Summary

This chapter detailed the research methodology adopted for the study, emphasizing the rationale behind using a mixed-methods approach. By integrating quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews, the study aims to provide valuable insights into how modern employer branding strategies influence both the attraction and retention of talent. The next chapter will focus on data analysis and interpretation.

IV. DATA COLLECTION

A. Introduction

This chapter provides a comprehensive overview of the data collection process undertaken for this study on employer branding. Given the significance of employer branding in influencing recruitment and retention strategies, it was essential to collect relevant and representative data from a wide range of respondents across industries. The data collection aimed to identify how employer branding is perceived by various workforce stakeholders including HR managers, employees, and job seekers.

B. Research Instrument

The primary research instrument used was a structured questionnaire distributed via Google Forms. The questionnaire included 15 items divided across multiple sections: respondent demographics, perception of employer branding, influence on job application decisions, impact on employee retention, and suggestions for improvement. The questions employed a mix of formats such as multiple-choice, Likert scale ratings, and short written responses.

C. Target Population

The target population consisted of individuals involved or impacted by organizational branding efforts, namely HR professionals (recruiters, managers), general employees (non-HR roles), and job seekers actively looking for employment. This population was chosen to ensure that both internal (employee) and external (candidate) perspectives on employer branding were captured.

D. Sampling Methodology

A non-probability purposive sampling technique was used, aiming to gather responses from diverse industries such as IT, Finance, Healthcare, Retail, and Manufacturing. A total of 70+ completed responses were obtained over a span of three weeks. Efforts were made to maintain a balance of roles, ensuring representation from different functional backgrounds.

E. Administration of Survey

The survey was shared through email, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, and internal corporate networks. The questionnaire remained open for responses from March 22 to May 9, 2025. Respondents were informed about the purpose of the research and assured anonymity and confidentiality. Participation was voluntary.

F. Ethical Considerations

Ethical integrity was maintained throughout the data collection process. Consent was obtained at the start of the form. No personal identifiers were collected, and data was used solely for academic analysis. Participants could withdraw at any point before submission.

V. DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A. Introduction

This chapter interprets the results of the collected data to answer the research objectives. The responses were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. Quantitative data was summarized using frequency analysis and visualized through bar charts, while qualitative responses were categorized thematically.

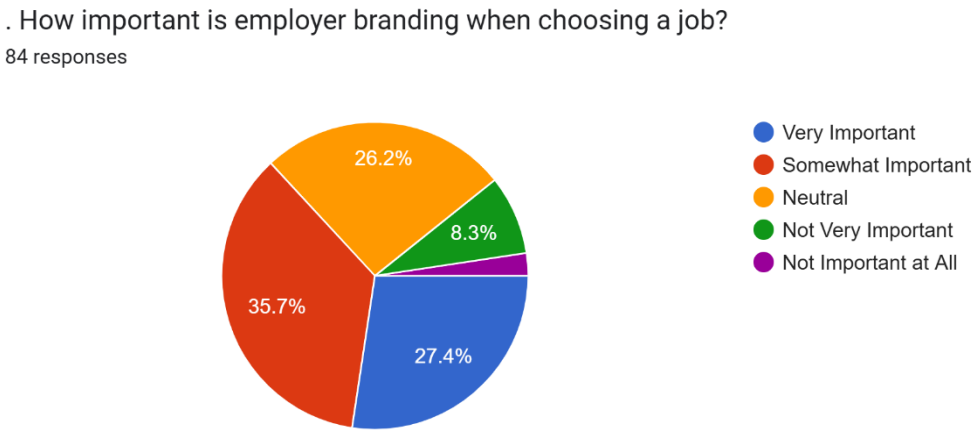
B. Demographic Summary of Respondents

Out of 70+ respondents, approximately 35% were HR professionals, 30% were general employees, and 35% were job seekers. Respondents were drawn from various sectors, including IT & Technology (30%), Finance & Banking (25%), Healthcare (15%), Retail (10%), Manufacturing (10%), and others (10%).

This diversity offers a balanced view of how employer branding is perceived across different functions and industries.

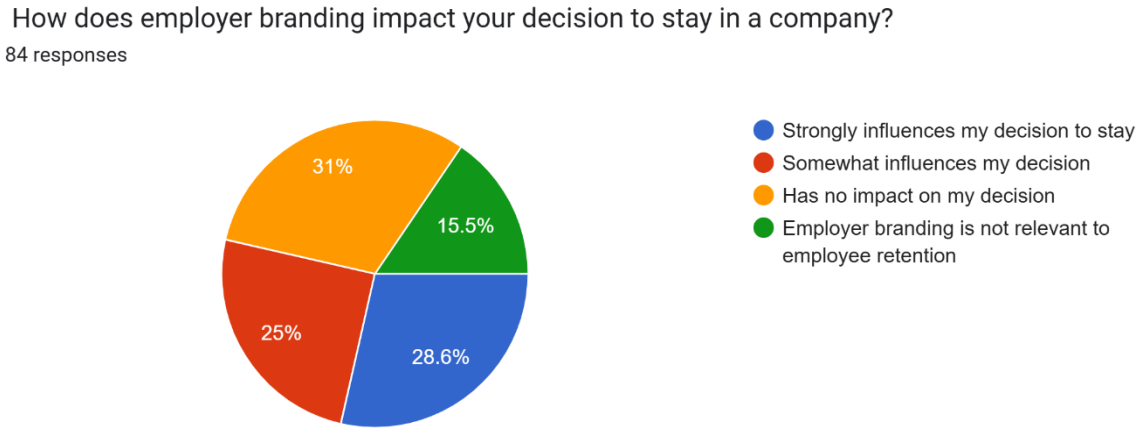
C. Importance of Employer Branding

A significant majority of respondents rated employer branding as 'Very Important' or 'Somewhat Important' when choosing a job. Only a marginal percentage considered it 'Not Important'. This confirms the rising relevance of employer branding in shaping job-seeking behavior.



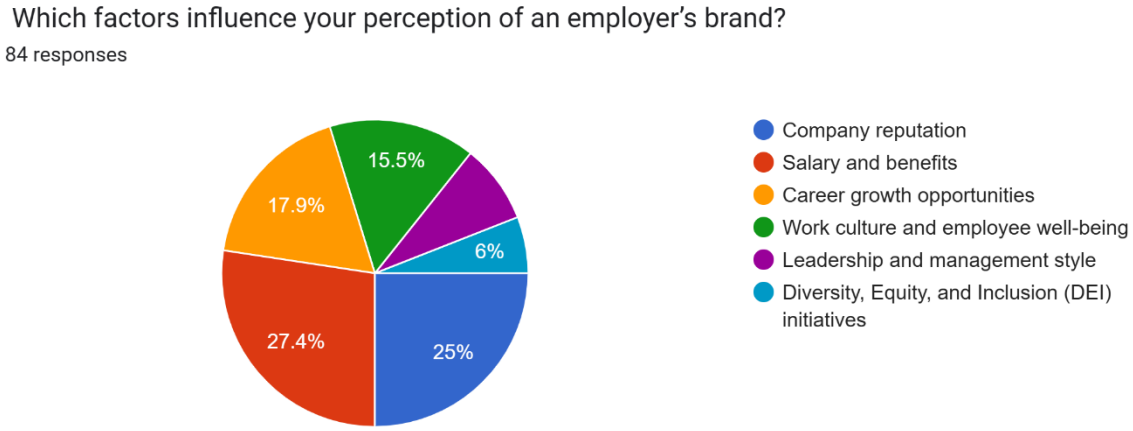
D. Impact of Branding on Employee Retention

More than 65% of participants stated that employer branding 'Strongly Influences' their decision to stay at a company. Others noted that it had 'Somewhat' or 'No Impact'. Interestingly, even those who didn't prioritize branding during job search acknowledged its influence on their long-term retention.



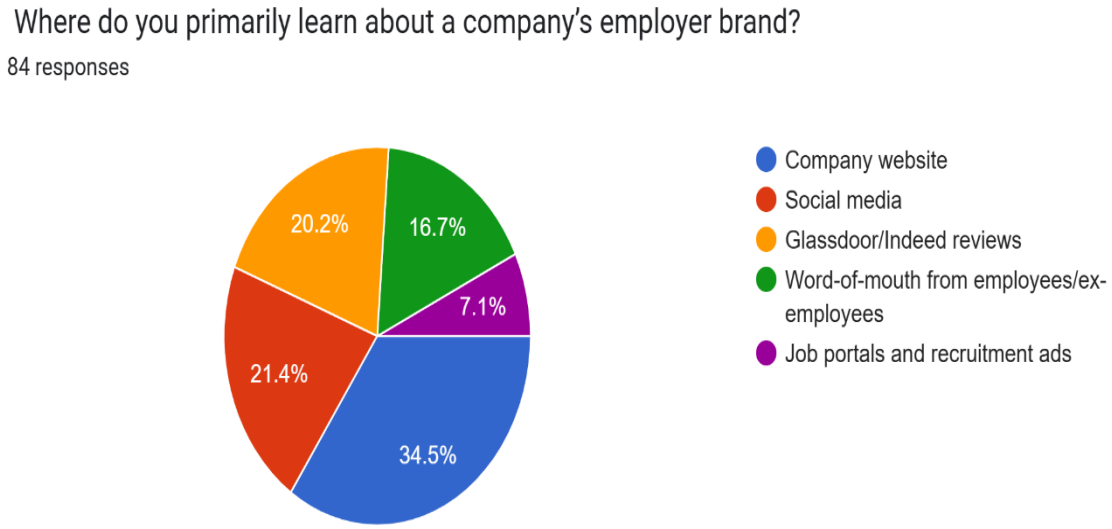
E. Key Perceived Elements of Employer Branding

Respondents identified several factors as central to a strong employer brand: career growth opportunities, positive workplace culture, leadership transparency, and competitive salary and benefits. DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) and recognition programs were also frequently cited, indicating that modern workers seek values-driven employers.



F. Channels of Employer Brand Perception

The most cited sources for employer branding information were company websites, Glassdoor/Indeed reviews, and social media platforms. A significant number of respondents also trusted word-of-mouth from current or former employees. This highlights the importance of external reviews and peer feedback in shaping brand reputation.



G. Suggested Improvements

Recommendations from respondents emphasized improving internal communication, enhancing employee well-being programs, increasing transparency from leadership, and building a consistent online presence. Respondents expressed a desire for authentic, people-focused branding that reflects real employee experiences.

H. Summary

The findings suggest that employer branding is a powerful tool for both attracting and retaining talent. Respondents from various roles and industries consistently linked strong branding with higher engagement, job satisfaction, and loyalty. These results align with existing literature while providing primary evidence from a diverse respondent pool.

VI. DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

A. Discussion

This study confirms the significant role of employer branding in both attracting and retaining top talent in contemporary organizations. The survey data revealed that job seekers prioritize employer branding as a deciding factor in their application process. Similarly, employees who feel that the organization's brand aligns with their personal values and expectations tend to show stronger loyalty and engagement.

Respondents indicated that a strong employer brand is one that promotes transparency, fairness, growth opportunities, and a healthy work-life balance. Digital platforms like LinkedIn and Glassdoor are the most influential in shaping external perceptions, while internal culture and leadership communication reinforce the brand for current employees. Importantly, inconsistencies between external brand messaging and actual internal experiences can damage employee trust and deter potential applicants.

Employer branding is not only a recruitment tool but also a strategic HR asset that influences employee retention, engagement, and satisfaction. Its effectiveness depends on authenticity, consistent messaging, and organizational alignment between brand promises and delivery.

B. Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the following actionable recommendations are proposed:

1) Ensure Brand Authenticity and Alignment

HR and leadership teams must ensure that the employer brand is a genuine reflection of the organizational culture. Misalignment between external messaging and internal reality can lead to disengagement and attrition.

2) Actively Manage Online Presence

Organizations should regularly monitor and engage with reviews on platforms like Glassdoor, respond to feedback, and showcase authentic employee experiences through social media and career sites.

3) Promote Transparent Communication

Consistent, honest communication from leadership builds trust and strengthens internal brand perception. Leadership visibility should be a part of brand strategy.

4) Prioritize Career Growth and Employee Well-being

Employees are more likely to stay in workplaces that invest in their growth and well-being. Employer branding should highlight these areas as core values.

5) Build Inclusive and Recognitive Cultures

Organizations should integrate diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) into their branding and reinforce it through recognition and engagement programs.

6) Evaluate Brand Performance Regularly

Organizations should collect data through employee surveys, exit interviews, and candidate feedback to assess the effectiveness of their employer brand and identify areas of improvement.

VII. CONCLUSION

A. Summary of the Study

This research was conducted to explore the impact of employer branding on attracting and retaining top talent in the modern workforce. The study focused on understanding the perceptions of job seekers, employees, and HR professionals regarding employer branding strategies and their influence on employment decisions. Using a mixed-method approach, primary data was collected through structured questionnaires, which provided both quantitative and qualitative insights into current employer branding trends and practices.

The research confirmed that employer branding plays a vital role in shaping an organization’s ability to recruit and retain quality talent.

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Key branding elements such as career development, organizational culture, leadership transparency, and employee recognition emerged as critical factors influencing employment decisions. Moreover, platforms like LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and company websites significantly affect how job seekers and employees perceive a company's employer brand.

B. *Key Findings*

1) Employer branding is considered highly important by job seekers when selecting a potential employer.
2) A consistent and authentic employer brand increases employee satisfaction, loyalty, and retention.
3) Organizations with a strong employer brand are more likely to attract qualified candidates with aligned values.
4) Social media and peer reviews are powerful channels for branding influence.
5) Misalignment between employer brand messaging and internal culture can lead to dissatisfaction and attrition.

C. *Implications of the Study*

The implications of this study are significant for HR professionals and organizational leaders. A well-crafted employer brand can serve as a strategic differentiator in a competitive labor market. Companies must invest in both internal and external brand development efforts that reflect genuine employee experiences and organizational values. Furthermore, the results emphasize the need for HR departments to collaborate closely with marketing teams to create a cohesive and consistent employer brand strategy.

D. *Final Thoughts*

In conclusion, employer branding is no longer a supplementary HR initiative—it is a strategic necessity. As the workforce becomes more digitally connected and values-driven, organizations must evolve to meet these expectations. The findings of this study provide actionable insights that can guide companies in refining their employer branding strategies to better attract and retain top talent.

Future research could expand the scope by comparing multinational and regional employer branding approaches or by exploring sector-specific branding challenges. Additionally, using longitudinal data could help measure the long-term impact of employer branding on organizational performance and employee retention.

VIII. LIMITATIONS

A. *Discussion of Results in Light of Limitations*

While this research provided valuable insights into employer branding's impact on talent acquisition and retention, the findings are constrained by several factors. The moderate sample size and reliance on self-reported data may not capture the full spectrum of employer branding practices across diverse industries.

B. *Validity and Reliability*

The validity of the study is supported through a pilot test of the questionnaire, but limitations such as response bias and non-representative sampling could affect generalizability. External validity is limited by the use of non-probability sampling and online data collection.

C. *Problems Encountered*

During the data collection phase, difficulties included reaching participants from non-digital sectors and ensuring data authenticity. Some respondents provided incomplete answers or selected neutral options, which limited interpretation.

D. *Lessons Learned*

Future studies should include more diverse sampling methods (offline and qualitative interviews) to improve richness of data. Further, triangulation methods like interviews and document analysis can provide more depth and reliability.

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I am grateful to my mentor Dr. Sanehal for their invaluable guidance and support throughout my master's thesis. From the moment I started Dr. Sanehal took the time to get to know me and understand my goals. They provided me with clear direction and expectations, and were always available to answer my questions and provide valuable feedback.

Throughout the period Dr. Sanehal provided me with invaluable insights and advice that helped me to grow as a professional. Their constructive feedback helped me to improve my skills and approach to my tasks, and their encouragement kept me motivated and focused. I am deeply thankful for Dr. Sanehal's time and effort, and for their commitment to my success and provided me with the valuable feedback and resolved my time-to-time queries. She provided me with invaluable insights to build up my career.

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Master Thesis Survey

1. How important is employer branding when choosing a job?
a. Very Important
b. Somewhat Important
c. Neutral
d. Not Very Important
e. Not Important at All

2. Which factors influence your perception of an employer's brand?
a. Company reputation
b. Salary and benefits
c. Career growth opportunities
d. Work culture and employee well-being
e. Leadership and management style
f. Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiatives

3. Where do you primarily learn about a company's employer brand?
a. Company website
b. Social media
c. Glassdoor/Indeed reviews
d. Word-of-mouth from employees/ex-employees
e. Job portals and recruitment ads

4. Have you ever chosen not to apply for a job due to a company's poor employer branding?
a. Yes
b. No
c. Maybe

5. Does your company actively promote its employer brand to retain employees?
a. Yes
b. No
c. Maybe

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6. How does employer branding impact your decision to stay in a company?
a. Strongly influences my decision to stay
b. Somewhat influences my decision
c. Has no impact on my decision
d. Employer branding is not relevant to employee retention

7. Which aspects of employer branding contribute to employee retention?
a. Competitive salary and benefits
b. Career development and training programs
c. Positive workplace culture and work-life balance
d. Strong leadership and transparent communication
e. Recognition and rewards for employees

8. Which employer branding strategies do you think are most effective in attracting and retaining talent?
a. Strong online presence
b. Employee testimonials and success stories
c. Transparent communication of company values and mission
d. Regular employee engagement and well-being programs
e. Public recognition and awards for best workplace culture

9. Do you believe employer branding will become more important in the future?
a. Yes, significantly more important
b. Yes, but only slightly more important
c. No, it will remain the same
d. No, employer branding is not a priority for job seekers or employees

10. What improvements would you suggest for companies to enhance their employer branding?
a. More employee engagement and well-being initiatives
b. Improved internal communication and leadership transparency
c. Stronger online and social media branding

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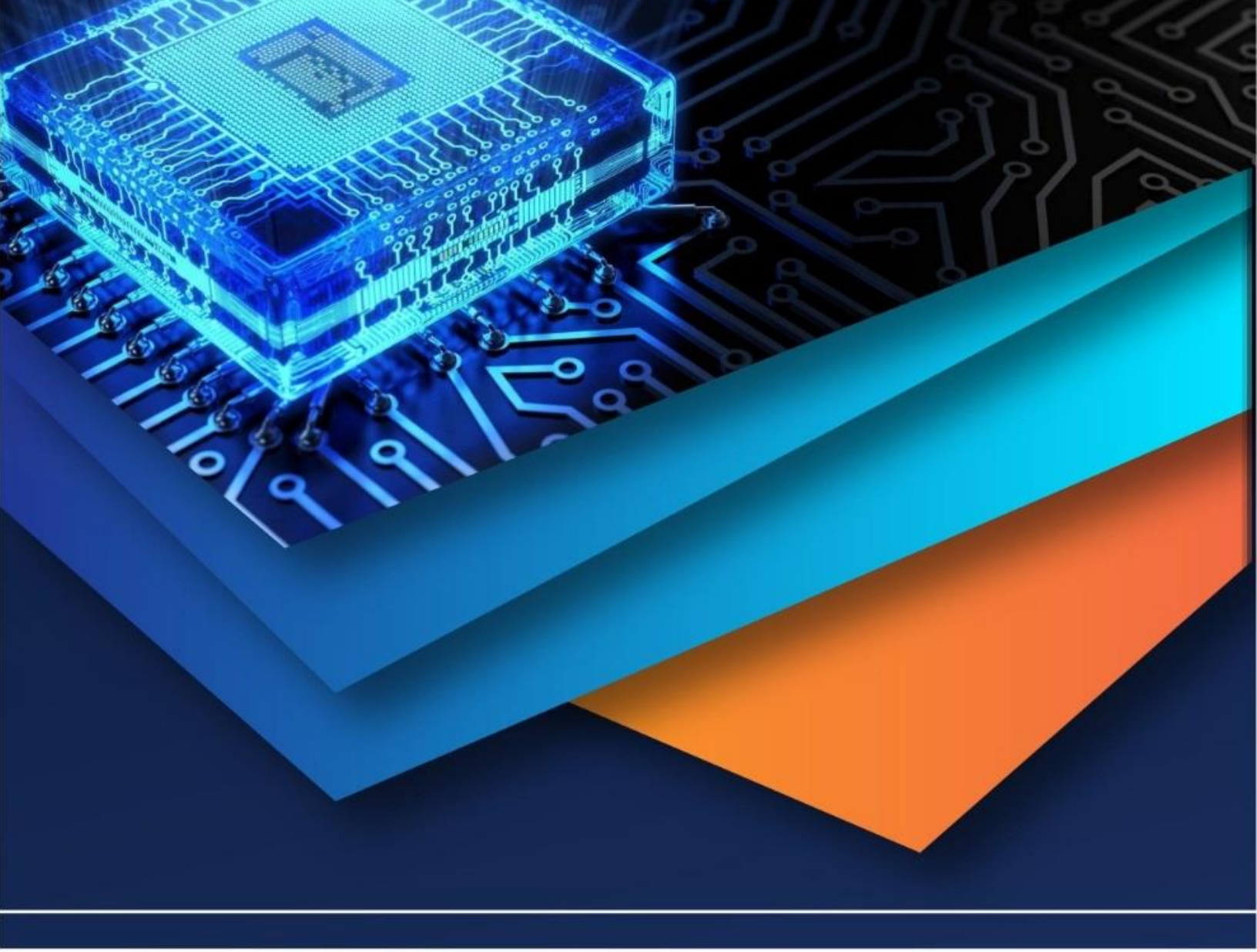

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