# EXPLORING THE ROLE OF EMPLOYER BRANDING ON TALENT ACQUISITION: A LITERATURE REVIEW

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*ABSTRACT:*

*In the recent years, the concept of employer branding has truly become a major area of interest for the researchers. In this hypercompetitive modern business environment, attracting and retaining talented employees have become one of the main means of competitive advantage. Now a days, employer branding has become a very vital tool for attracting talented workforce towards the organization and retaining them at work through cultivating an employer of choice strategy. The study is exploratory in nature and focuses on systematic literature review of available research publications related to employer branding and its influence on talent hiring process. Through a comprehensive literature review and analysis of empirical studies, this paper examines the key components of employer branding, its impact on talent acquisition, strategies for building and maintaining a strong employer branding and also recommends the challenges associated with employer branding. The findings of the study reveals that employer branding is the image of an organization that creates and maintains "a great place to work" in the mind of its current and potential employees. The findings also highlight that the employer branding has a significant and positive influence on talent acquisition. The literature review demonstrates that by effectively communicating organization's core values, establishing strong culture, optimizing online presence, refining employee value proposition (EVP), responding to the employee experience, recognizing employee advocacy and creating strong brand ambassador can enhance employers' appeal to potential candidates, thereby increasing employer branding efforts.*

*KEYWORDS: Employer Branding; Talent Acquisition; Talent Attraction, Talent Retention.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

"Branding" originates from marketing with a primary aim to create differentiation. Earlier it was used only to distinguish tangible products, but with passage of time it has been applied to differentiating people, places and organizations (Peters, 1999). Organizations do their branding activities in order to differentiate them from their competitors. The concept of Employer branding emerged in early 1990's by Tim Ambler and Simon Barrow who had a try to test the application of brand management techniques in field the field of human resource management. According to Ambler and Simon Barrow (1996), "the employer brand is the package of functional, economic and psychological benefits provided by the employer organization". Employer branding is the perception and reputation of a business organization in the eyes of its current and potential employees. It includes various elements, including the organization's culture, values, work environment, employee benefits and reputation in the surrounding job market. It is well-known that a strong employer brand helps organizations to attract talent people and also enhance employee engagement, retention and improve overall organizational performance. The success of today's market competition largely depends on the company's ability to attract and keep high-caliber talent personnel at work.

Furthermore, according to Becker, B. E., & Huselid, 2009 and AIHR, 2025 "there are four core parts of talent acquisition process namely attracting, selecting, onboarding and retaining talent". Talent attraction is the ability of drawing attention of the right candidates to the organization. Talent selection involves choosing the best fit from the pool of candidates. Onboarding is the process of incorporating new joiners in the company. Finally, talent retention is the process of keeping employees engaged and committed at work for long time. Article review reveals that (Bhatt and Jain, 2015) "under the cutthroat competition of marketplace, hiring and retaining talents have become one of the most critical functions for the organization's Human Resource department. Employer branding helps organizations in promoting them as "a great place to work" or "employer of choice". As mentioned by Arora 2016 and Batta 2016, "Organizations are using employer branding as a strategic mechanism to acquire and retain talented workforce and to gain competitive advantages". Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) recognized that "if employers add value and create distinct identities that would appeal employees and stakeholders leading towards more retention and acquisition". Sullivan (2004) has defined employer branding as, "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with

regards to a particular firm". The marketplace is constantly changing due to evolving trends and increased competition. Earlier organizations selected their employees but now employees select their organizations (Michaels, Handfield-Jones & Axelrod, 2001). Berthon et al, (2005) in their study find that "attractiveness of employer is closely related with employer branding". They define employer attractiveness as the total benefits a worker expects from a company. This paper offers a retrospective review of the literature on employer branding, examining its effects on talent acquisition, employer attractiveness, and the intention of candidates to join an organization. A literature review was conducted to synthesize accessible articles pertaining to employer branding and the full scope of talent acquisition, specifically talent attraction, hiring, onboarding, and retention.

## 2. Research Methodology

A bibliometric and systematic literature review methodology was employed to categorize relevant employer branding literature concerning its impact on talent acquisition. The final stage of the study involved the analysis of the accessible data to meet the research objective. Researcher obtained a long list of articles on employer branding using relevant searched keywords. Further filtration was done to find the full availability of research articles through Google scholar. Thematic analysis was used to analyze data and describe the trend.

## 3. Objectives of the Study

The aim of this research paper is to:
o   Define and clarify the key components of employer branding
o   Examine the significance of employer branding in talent acquisition
o   Discuss the strategies for building and maintaining a strong employer branding

## 4. Literature Review

i. Conceptual Understanding of Employer Branding

According to research by Backhaus and Tikoo in 2004, "organizational success is highly dependent on employer branding and its ability to retain the most suitable employees". It is also the process in which a unique identity of an employer is built. In their 2009 study, Maxwell and Knox argued that "an organization must determine which attributes its employees find most appealing to effectively align the employer brand with employee interests and identity".

Sokro (2012) asserts that employer branding is instrumental in the acquisition and retention

of talented employees. This suggests that employer branding not only aims to positively influence prospective candidates to attract high-potential individuals but also functions as a strategy for retaining current staff. Reinforcing this perspective, Xie et al. (2015) emphasize that the acquisition of top-tier talent is critical for an organization's long-term survival and growth, as human capital is a valuable and contributing resource. The development of an effective employer brand requires careful consideration and a balanced approach between its instrumental and symbolic attributes. This integrated strategy is crucial for successfully acquiring and selecting talent. Russell and Brannan (2016) further state that brand managers are central to this process, holding significant responsibility for ensuring brand integrity and managing its promotion to both attract future applicants and retain existing employees.

Recent research by Theurer et al. (2018) suggests that by increasing investments in employer branding strategies, organizations can better acquire and retain talented individuals. This enables management to effectively guide talent acquisition and retention policies. Similarly, Miles and Mangold's 2004 research on "employee branding" found that successfully implementing these programs encourages employees to internalize the desired brand image, motivating them to project that image to customers and other stakeholders. Wallace et al. (2014) further categorized their study of branding into two levels: micro and macro. At the macro level, the role of branding and industry image is crucial for attracting the human capital necessary to achieve strategic goals and financial performance. At the micro level, potential recruits' decision-making is influenced by employer branding, which is formed through marketing, personal experience, word-of-mouth, and their overall perceptions of the brand. Ultimately, employer branding is an integrated process that requires all its components to be treated with equal importance to shape the organization's distinctiveness and attractiveness as a means of acquiring talent (Botha et al., 2011).

Alshathry et al. (2016) suggest that the distinctive characteristics of a firm's internal employer brand should be strategically deployed during the recruitment process to acquire talent. Potential candidates evaluate the degree of congruence between their identity and the organization's image. This emphasis on strategic talent acquisition, incorporating marketing principles, has grown in significance as employees are recognized as a core driver of competitive differentiation (Knox & Freeman, 2006). In 2007, Lievens defined that the core values of an organization should be applied using brand personality traits, as this method is significantly more successful in regard to employer brand attractiveness. Employer brand is

also defined as a continuous promise to employees and referred as the psychological contract between an employer and an employee in the organization (Moroko and Uncles, 2008). On 2010, Edwards has proposed in his research that organizations should be part of a psychological contact with the employer brand in return for commitment throughout employment. Employer branding activities will also involve in presenting a range of distinctive and unique employment experiences and enjoyed by employees at a particular organization, this will include a wide array of different features and benefits which attract the talents. Employer branding has classified into two types internal and external. Internal branding is the creation of an environment where employees feel a sense of belonging, purpose, and pride in the company. According to George (1990), the fundamental concept in internal branding is that the employees are internal customers for the firm and the jobs they execute are internal products (Berthon et al., 2005). Kotler (1994) defined internal branding as "it is the task of successful recruitment, motivating and training of the manpower so that they can serve the customers well". According to the researchers such as Rafiq and Ahmed (2000), and Tansuhaj et al. (1991), internal branding of an organization may upgrade employees' job satisfaction and responsibility. Internal branding idea is to think the existing employee as an internal customer, and the outcome of their work are the internal products, and expect to fulfil their demands with the internal products that they produced (Longbottom et al., 2006).

External branding is an acquisition strategy and there are a multiple ways that an organization can brand themselves in environments which will be recognized by the potential employees. The multiple ways for external branding are advertising and publicity, sponsorship activities, word-of-mouth endorsements including from past and current employees, creative and engaging recruitment advertising and using websites and social networking sites such as YouTube, Linked In, Facebook and Twitter, videos and pod-casts, and online chat, in order to maintain the good relationship with previous employees who might rejoin the organization also to reach prospective new employees (Carmichael, 2009; Collins and Stevens, 2002; Cooper, 2008; Minton-Eversole, 2009; Russell, 2009).

The literature review summarizes that the employer branding is the management of a company's image and reputation to position it as a desirable employer for both internal and external audiences. It is the sum of perceptions held by employees and candidates, based on their experience with the company's culture, values, and benefits. From the literature review

the study devises the definition of employer branding as the "image of an organization that creates and maintains a great place to work in the mind of its current and potential employees".

ii. Importance of Employer Branding

Employer branding is defined as the process of cultivating a favorable organizational image for both prospective and current employees (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Lievens, 2007). In the contemporary business environment, organizations face continuous challenges in attracting and retaining talented personnel. Consequently, firms are increasingly leveraging employer branding as a strategic tool to build a positive reputation, which in turn aids in the acquisition and retention of a skilled workforce (Lyons and Marler, 2011). The creation of an employer brand image involves two primary dimensions: general attitudes and perceived job attributes. The latter, perceived job attributes, is directly linked to an organization's recruitment decisions and intentions (Collins and Stevens, 2002). Furthermore, a robust employer brand offers tangible benefits, including the reduction of recruitment costs and the ability to hire talented individuals with a lower salary package compared to organizations with a less established brand (Ritson, 2002).

A well-established employer brand has been shown to predict various organizational outcomes, such as employee satisfaction, affective commitment, and turnover intentions (Priyadarshi, 2011). Employer branding serves as a mechanism through which an organization establishes its identity as an employer. It encompasses the organization's values, systems, policies, and behavioral norms, all of which contribute to the overarching objective of attracting, motivating, and retaining both potential and existing employees (Dell et al., 2001). Internal employer branding initiatives strengthen employee loyalty, whereas external branding efforts enhance the organization's ability to attract talented and prospective employees. Consequently, employer branding provides a competitive advantage in the acquisition, development, and retention of human talent (Minchington, 2006). A clear understanding of the organization's brand knowledge and value among employees not only deepens their cognitive and emotional connection to the brand but also enhances overall organizational performance (Thomson et al., 1999; Tsai & Yang, 2010). However, employee turnover can generate significant costs related to reference checks, security clearances, temporary staffing, relocation, formal training, and induction programs. Therefore, employee retention has become a primary concern for many organizations (Roodt & Kotze, 2005).

Scholars such as Ind (1997), LePla and Parker (1999), Schiffenbauer (2001), Duboff (2001), and Hatch and Schultz (2001) have emphasized the importance of aligning internal and external branding strategies. Such alignment not only enhances marketing effectiveness by addressing the needs and preferences of target audiences but also supports effective recruitment, training, and motivation of employees responsible for delivering the brand promise (Aurand et al., 2005).

Organizational talent management practices have been shown to correlate strongly with perceived employer branding (Maurya & Agarwal, 2018). The literature emphasizes the importance of employer image and branding as crucial elements for attracting top talent (Lievens & Slaughter, 2016). In the contemporary recruitment landscape, digital platforms are pivotal in shaping job seekers' perceptions of a firm. Websites such as LinkedIn, Glassdoor, and Indeed aggregate facts, views, and reviews that collectively define a company's reputation as an employer. Prospective candidates typically consult these platforms before applying to assess employee sentiment regarding the role, workplace culture, and overall treatment of staff. Furthermore, research by Hongal and Kinange (2020) indicates that talent management strategies significantly affect organizational performance, and Albert (2019) notes the increasing use of artificial intelligence applications in talent acquisition processes. However, a critical challenge arises when there is a disconnection between the external employer brand and the internal culture. If the external narrative—claiming fairness, care, or team value—is not mirrored by the actual workplace experience, trust erodes, and employees feel deceived. As this gap widens, frustration, diminished morale, and voluntary turnover often follow. Therefore, authentic employer branding must be grounded in truth rather than mere image. It needs to reflect genuine practices in task design, peer interaction, work-life balance, and professional development opportunities.

For sustained organizational growth, the effective acquisition and retention of talent is paramount (Jain & Bhatt, 2015). Heightened global competition has necessitated that organizations intensify their efforts in optimizing recruitment and selection processes, recognizing talent as their primary asset (Santiago, 2018). In response, organizations are increasingly leveraging employer branding as a strategic mechanism to attract, engage, and retain a skilled workforce, thereby securing a competitive advantage (Arora, 2016; Batta, 2016). Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) highlighted that developing a unique and valued employer identity can significantly enhance both talent acquisition and retention rates. Employer

branding has been formally defined by Sullivan (2004) as: "a targeted, long-term strategy to manage the awareness and perceptions of employees, potential employees and related stakeholders with regards to a particular firm." This evolving dynamic in the labor market signifies a shift in power, moving from an employer-driven selection process to one where potential employees are increasingly selective about their prospective organizations (Michaels, Handfield-Jones, & Axelrod, 2001). Further underscoring this point, Berthon et al. (2005) demonstrated a strong correlation between employer branding and employer attractiveness, conceptualizing the latter as the cumulative benefits an individual anticipates receiving by working for a specific organization.

The systematic review process explores that employer branding plays a crucial role in talent acquisition by influencing candidates' perceptions of an organization as a desirable place to work. Research has shown that job seekers are increasingly considering employer brand reputation when making employment decisions. A strong employer brand can attract a larger pool of qualified candidates, reduce recruitment costs, and improve the quality of hires. Moreover, employer branding can have a significant impact on employee retention and engagement. Organizations with a strong employer brand are more likely to retain their top talent and benefit from higher levels of employee satisfaction and productivity.

iii. Strategies for building Employer Branding

The concept of employer branding operates on the fundamental principle that an organization's workforce constitutes its most critical asset. Consequently, strategic investments in employee satisfaction and professional growth are posited to yield superior organizational performance (Dousin et al., 2021). Mouton and Bussin (2019) delineated five primary dimensions of employer branding within their research:

- Work-life balance (WLB)
- Ethics and corporate social responsibility (ECSR)
- Training and development (TD)
- Healthy work atmosphere (HWA)
- Compensation and benefits (CB)

As defined by Ambler and Barrow (1996), employer branding involves the strategic formulation and stewardship of the employer's image to facilitate the attraction, retention, and engagement of personnel. Key elements integral to this definition include:

Employer Value Proposition (EVP): The EVP represents the unique aggregate of rewards and advantages an organization extends to its employees in return for their skills, competencies, and input. This encompasses diverse elements such as remuneration, prospects for career advancement, work-life equilibrium, and the prevailing organizational culture.

Organizational Culture: The cultural milieu of an organization significantly influences its employer brand identity. A positive, inclusive environment that supports diversity, nurtures innovation, and prioritizes employee well-being can substantially enhance the organization's appeal as an employer.

Employee Experience: This construct captures the totality of an individual's interactions with the organization across their entire employment lifecycle, from initial recruitment and onboarding through daily operations and career trajectory. A favorable employee experience is instrumental in reinforcing the employer brand and fostering heightened levels of employee engagement and retention.

The reviewed articles discussed how it is important for organizations to become an employer of choice. A study show that work content and work culture are the drivers for becoming employer of choice as the organization that attract best talent have a recognizable image in the market (Rampl, 2014 and Maheshwari et al. 2017). Organizations need to develop their employer brand focusing the needs of employees as they are the main asset for organizations. Ronda et al,(2018), in their study presented an employee-centric framework on the basis of 'employer attributes', 'employee benefits' and 'perceived value' for the creation of attractive employer brand. Employer brand equity affects employee acquisition and retention; as the employer brand is influenced by target group needs, differentiated Employer Value Proposition (EVP), the people strategy, brand consistency and communication (Botha et al. 2011; Alshathry et al 2017). Existing employees plays a major role in conveying the employer brand of a firm to the outer world. There are high chances of becoming employer of choice when the employer name is more familiar to the employees. Literature supports that brand name plays a vital role in influencing the decision of employee to join or to stay in an organization, along with brand name the other most preferred organizational attributes found were organization's culture and compensation; enhancing the probability of more application for joining the organization (Evans Sokro 2012). In the same way, Prasad (2019) explained that there is a direct relationship between employer branding and a candidate's intention to join (Sharma, R. and Prasad, A. 2018); employer attractiveness influence the intention of an

employee to join a firm while gender plays an important role in perceiving the importance of employer attractiveness dimension (Alnıaçık and Alnıaçık, 2012). Dabirian et al. (2017) explained seven employer branding value propositions namely, social elements of work, interesting and challenging work task, using skills in meaningful way, professional development, compensation & benefits, supporting management and work life balance ; playing an important role in creating employer attractiveness.

It was in 2005 that Berthon et al. (2005) developed the scale measuring the attractiveness of a company as an employer of choice, enriching the corresponding Ambler and Barrow's (1996) original scale of 3 dimensions-criteria for employer selection. This new scale, known by the abbreviation "EmpAt" was adopted in the following years by a large number of researchers worldwide and applied to both student and employee populations, investigating the factors of attractiveness of a company in both groups  (Arachchige and Robertson, 2013; Sivertzen et al., 2013; Eger et al., 2019). According to Berthon et al. (2005), there are five factors that shape the Employer Brand of a company, as namely the identity of an organization as an employer of choice is called: interest value, social value, economic value, development value and application value. In consequence with this, a strong employer branding strategy is built through defining Employer Value Proposition (EVP), creating a multi-channel communication plan, engaging employees, and continuously measuring and refining the efforts of employee motivation and satisfaction.

The literature survey reveals the key components of strategic initiatives for building a strong employer brand focusing on clearly defining Employee Value Proposition (EVP), effectively communicating organization's core values, establishing strong culture, optimizing online presence, responding to the employee experience, recognizing employee advocacy and promoting employee as a brand ambassador.

## 4. CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Employer branding plays a vital role in talent acquisition, as it outlines how potential candidates notice a company. A strong employer brand not only attracts top talent but also improves employee retention and engagement. Effective employer branding significantly impacts talent acquisition by attracting top talent, enhancing retention rates and promoting a positive company culture. Creating an effective employer brand faces several challenges, including a lack of alignment between the brand and company goals, ensuring authenticity and consistency, measuring its impact, and engaging employees. Other hurdles include standing out

in a competitive market, addressing negative feedback, and adapting to different platforms and audiences on social media.

Based on the findings of this study, several recommendations are proposed to strengthen their employer branding and improve talent acquisition outcomes. Invest in employee development programs and career advancement opportunities. Enhance transparency and communication about organizational values and culture. Genuine communication and transparency are essential to building trust and credibility. Failure to be genuine can lead to disengaged employees and high turnover rates, ultimately affecting the company's success. Employer branding initiatives need to be consistent with the company's goals to ensure that everyone is working towards the same vision. Misalignment can harm employee engagement and retention, as employees may not feel connected to the company's mission. Budget constraints require companies to prioritize their employer branding activities and focus on those with the highest impact. Effective budget allocation and creative solutions are essential to overcoming financial limitations and achieving employer branding goals. Consistent messaging across all platforms and communication types keeps everything aligned. Regularly reviewing and adjusting employer branding initiatives ensures they stay in sync with changing business goals and market conditions. Prioritize diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to attract a diverse pool of talent. Utilize digital platforms and social media channels to amplify employer brand messaging. Monitor and respond to employee feedback to continually refine employer branding strategies. By creating a strong brand image in mind of potential employees, employers improve the chance of intention to join a firm by the employee.

Limitation of the present study is that it is conceptual in nature and presented only the accessible data by researcher. This study may give further directions to future researchers to conduct more focused empirical and conceptual research. The mediating and moderating impact of employer branding on talent acquisition can be further studied in different country context and a model can be developed; which can be further tested empirically in various industries.

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