

Social Media as a Dual HR and Marketing Tool: A Study on Brand Image and Talent Attraction

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Abstract

The integration of social media in organizational communication that is on the rise has eroded the boundaries between marketing and human resource management (HRM). This study examined how a social media can be considered as a dual HR/marketing tool in creating employer brand image and appealing to prospective talent. Based on the theories of employer branding and digital marketing, the study investigated the effectiveness of social media involvement in increasing the attractiveness and credibility of organizations. The quantitative, cross sectional study design was chosen and data collected by administering a structured online questionnaire. The analysis has used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to determine latent dimensions of the social media engagement, employer brand image, and attraction of talent. The findings supported a robust and valid three-factor model and proved the fact that social media involvement affects the brand perception and the outcomes related to the recruitment process substantially. The results indicate that social media can be considered an HR and marketing convergence tool since it can enhance the reputation of a given organization and increase its attractiveness to potential hires at the same time. This twofold influence is indicative of the significance of veritable, interactive, and regular social media communication. The study will add to the literature on the subject by confirming empirically the intersection of the social media marketing and HRM practices. It provides practical information to the organizations that have intentions to embark on using the social media strategically to have a better employer brand identity as well as attract the high-quality talent in a digitally competitive landscape.

Keywords: Human Resource Management, Marketing, Brand, Digital Marketing.

Introduction

Communication, product marketing, and the management of human capital in organizations are forced to revolutionize in the digital era with the help of social media. The LinkedIn and Instagram and Glassdoor have erased the historic lines between marketing and human resource management (HRM), which means that firms are able to work with customer loyalty and simultaneously recruit potential workers. The term social media is described by Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) as Internet-based channels that promote user-generated content and interaction and Mangold and Faulds (2009) argue that it is a hybrid component of the promotional mix that incorporates both the organizational and consumer voices. Social media has become an important tool in image building, relationship development and reputation management as the media is interactive and transparent making it an essential tool in forming perceptions with and through various stakeholder groups (Jeske and Olson, 2020). Over the last few years, social media has gained popularity as a twofold-purpose strategic essence in the organizational context as a marketing and HR tool. In the marketing terms, social media increases the brands visibility, authenticity, and customer engagement (Iglesias, Ind, & Schultz, 2020). In HR terms, it eases the talent acquisition, employer branding, and employee engagement (Sivertzen, Nilsen, and Olafsen, 2013; Kaur and Paruthi, 2021). The convergence is especially applicable when companies operate in dynamic labour markets, in which the reputation of the employer is as important as the reputation of the product (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004). Concrete social media plans are hence not only serving as a means to solidify the customer-brand relationships but also establish the company as an employer of choice, closing the external marketing and internal management of human resources divide (Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpe, and Lievens, 2018). Applied marketing logic to the HRM is the concept of employer branding that was

invented by Ambler and Barrow (1996) who consider an organization a brand of employer. It includes both symbolic and functional advantages which are represented by organizations to prospective and existing staff (Berthon, Ewing, and Hah, 2005; Moroko and Uncles, 2008). Employer brands are also known to help attract the best talents as well as create retention and engagement of employees (Barrow and Mosley, 2011; Edwards, 2010). As theorists like King and Grace (2009) and Punjaisri and Wilson (2017) would say, the internal brand identity is transferred by the employees to external audiences, whose role plays a significant brand ambassador, which explains that it is in the strategic and profoundest synergy between marketing communication and HR practices.

Simultaneously, digital communication has changed the perception and evaluation of employer brands. Social media has helped organizations to put their culture, leadership, and values in a more realistic light and provide job seekers with unprecedented access to organizational information (Kim, 2020; Kaur and Sharma, 2022). As Kryger Aggerholm, Esmann Andersen and Thomsen (2011) observe, sustainable employer branding relies on open and value-oriented communication using the social platforms. This net presence does not only influence the perception of employer attractiveness but also impacts the overall brand image and credibility not only among the consumers but also among employees (Iglesias et al., 2020; Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainon, 2016). Nevertheless, there is substantial literature regarding the topics of social media marketing (Kaplan and Haenlein, 2010; Mangold and Faulds, 2009) and employer branding (Backhaus and Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2018), yet there is a relative scarcity of literature that studies the role of social media as a mutual strategic tool between the HR and the marketing department. The majority of the previous studies focus on the HR aspect (e.g., recruitment, employee engagement) or the marketing angle (e.g., brand image, customer relationships), but they do not investigate the overlap between both (Kaur and Malhotra, 2020). Combined application of social media in creating employer brand image and talent attraction, which are both constructs that grasp onto both HR and marketing theories, is under researched, especially in the newer economies.

This study, therefore, examines social media as a two-fold HR and marketing instrument, in relation to its effectiveness in increasing brand image and attracting talent. The study will attempt to identify the latent dimensions that curb the eventual interconnection between social media use, employer brand image and organizational appeal by a newly designed approach called Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA). It is hoped that the results can add to the theoretical literature on HR-Marketing convergence and offer any useful information to the organization interested in maximizing the utilization of social media in achieving both customer and employee branding results.

Literature Review

The advent of social media has essentially transformed the nature of the way organizations interact with their stakeholders necessitating a convergence on marketing and human resource management (HRM) procedures. Social media allows two-way communication, that is interactive, and through this feature, firms are able to project simultaneously their corporate as well as employer identity. According to Kaplan and Haenlein (2010), social media refers to a collection of Web 2.0-based applications that are used to provide user-generated content and interaction over the Internet. On the same note, Mangold and Faulds (2009) refer to it as a hybrid element of the promotional mix that combines traditional marketing and customer directed interactions. Such changes have also extended the level of engagement with the consumer into the employer branding and recruitment practice making social media a two-sided strategic asset to both HR and marketing (Jeske & Olson, 2020).

Ambler and Barrow (1996) were the first to spell out the concept of employer branding (EB), which they defined as the employment of marketing concepts to attract and retain talent. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) further evolved the concept by making it as a strategic process which entails the identification between the value proposition of the employer and the organizational identity as well as employee engagement. Barrow and Mosley (2011) noted that a well-executed branding of the employer should be made by combining the rigor of brand management with the emotional appeal of the HR practices. In that sense, the HR and marketing departments integrate to build a similar image both among the internal and external stakeholders (Theurer et al., 2018). The findings of Moroko and Uncles (2008) reveal that successful employer brands are defined in terms of clarity, consistency and credibility, which are traditional tenets of marketing theory. According to Edwards (2010), employer branding acts as a mediating structure between organizational behaviour and brand management and has an effect on job seekers attraction and employee satisfaction. This is what King and Grace (2009) coined as employee-based brand equity by stating that employees are brand ambassadors, they project the organizational identity to

the external environment. On the same note, Punjaisri and Wilson discovered that a person-brand conformity increases brand coherence or brand credibility, which will strengthen both HR and marketing performance (2017, p. 133).

As digital media continues to expand, communication related to employer branding has turned towards social. In his essay titled Sustainable employer branding: the role of social media in social media, Kryger Aggerholm, Esmann Andersen, and Thomsen, (2011) postulates that social media offers an environment through which organizations can convey ethical behaviours and social values to various stakeholders. What Sivertzen, Nilsen, and Olafsen (2013) have empirically confirmed is that an organization whose social media has been strategically employed as a component of its employer branding strategy is more appealing to job seekers. Kaur and Paruthi (2021) support their findings by observing that LinkedIn and Instagram have taken center stage as the key platforms to humanize organizations by demonstrating culture, the leadership team, and the experiences of employees. According to Iglesias, Ind, and Schultz (2020), such practices develop brand authenticity that improves emotional attachment to the customers and potential employees.

The use of social media in recruitment and attracting of talents is not a new development. Collins and Stevens (2002) established that job seekers have been influenced positively by early exposure of employer activities over internet platforms as regards the application choice. Lievens and Highhouse (2003) differentiate the aptitude of instrumental (including compensation and career growth) and those of symbolic attributes (including prestige and organizational values), which affect perceived attractiveness. Cable and Turban (2003) ascertained that reputation of organizations is very critical towards determining the willingness to apply among the candidates. Recent research indicates that digital presence increases this effect-Kim (2020) discovered that LinkedIn engagement metrics are used to predict job seeking intentions, and Kaur and Sharma (2022) also recorded that online interaction leads to the improvement of organizational attractiveness perceptions. It has been identified that the image of an employer is a mediating competitive force between social media activity and attraction of talent. As Bellou and Chaniotakis (2015) found, employer image enhances the identification of employee brand and overall quality of service and noticed that brand image affects commitment and behavior of employees in terms of customer experience (Schlager, Bodderas, Maas, and Cachelin, 2011). According to Kaur and Malhotra (2020), communication via the employer brand, an example of which is social media analytics, enables organizations to make better choices on how to target candidates, and in the long run, enhance the process of recruitment. On the same note, Parveen, Jaafar, and Ainin (2016) illustrate that the use of the social media leads to the improvement in the performance of the organizations by increasing the communication, engagement and reputation management.

The amalgamation of HR and marketing via the use of social media is a merger of the two strategic functions which improves internal and external brand equity. Knox and Freeman (2006) emphasize the fact that sustained employer brand image management reinforces organizational identity; Moroko and Uncles (2008) emphasize that genuine and dependable images provided in the process of recruiting and keeping workers must be accentuated. Aggerholm et al. (2011) and Tkalac Vercic and Poloski Vokic (2017) note that internal communication helps to maintain employee engagement, but the internal culture should correspond to the external brand promise. Recent empirical evidence presented by Shafiee and Goodarzi (2025) supports this claim and has shown that the efficiency of the talent management process and the entire brand has been enhanced by employer branding strategies based on social media analytics.

The joint analysis of the two functions as a social media marketing and employer branding is under-researched, although both studies have a lot of literature on either of these. According to Theurer et al. (2018), employer branding advances beyond HR as an interdisciplinary area, as the number of the empirical studies that investigate both the impact of social media on brand image and the attraction of talents are limited. The aim of this study is to fill this gap by using Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) in order to determine the latent factors underlying social media use, employer brand image and talent attraction. This analysis is aimed at explaining how social media can be used as a combined medium, which can promote HR and marketing results to improve organizational competitiveness and employer reputation.

Research Methodology

In the study, a quantitative, a cross-sectional research design was used to find out the effect of social media as a dual HR and marketing instrument in employer brand image and attraction of talent. The type of design suited well since the aim was to discover some underlying elements and the interconnection between more than two variables under observation, which explained why Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was employed. The study was descriptive and exploratory, to find

out the latent dimensions of social media usage, image of employer and attracting talent among employed professionals and job seekers. The target population included those adults who actively engaged in online social media concerning LinkedIn, Instagram, and Glassdoor usage, either as a professional networking tool, recruitment solution, or information about the employer. Sampling frame entailed both employees of various industries the major being marketing, IT, education and services as well as potential job seekers pursuing professional degrees. Non-probability convenience sampling method was used because the participants were sampled in accordance with the ability and inclination to answer survey questions. There were 320 responses with 300 questionnaires qualifying as valid even after screening the data on completeness and accuracy. The sample size was deemed sufficient to perform EFA since it reached the recommended criteria of the minimum of 510 responses per item (Hair, Black, Babin, and Anderson, 2019). A structured questionnaire that was divided into two parts, was used to collect the data. The first part was the demographic part that required age, gender, occupation and frequency of use of social media. The second section included 18 Likert-based statements (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree) that were aimed at assessing 3 key constructs: Social Media Engagement (SME): the items are the adaptations of the works that were conducted by Mangold and Faulds (2009) and Sivertzen, Nilsen, and Olafsen (2013), and the items deal with how often, how much one can trust others on social platforms, and how much one can interact with others on social platforms.

Employer Brand Image (EBI): Items based on the research by Berthon, Ewing and Hah (2005) and Knox and Freeman (2006), in terms of perceptions about reputation, credibility and organizational culture.

Talent Attraction (TA): based on the work of Lievens and Highhouse (2003) and Kim (2020), which evaluated the readiness of respondents to apply or recommend a job to them depending on the online appearance of the company.

The data were gathered in the form of an online survey by using Google forms in the course of four weeks. The connection was posted on professional formats like LinkedIn, WhatsApp and email. It was voluntary and the respondents were assured of confidentiality and anonymity. The purpose of the research was properly stated in the survey directions and an informed consent was secured in advance.

Analysis

First, descriptive statistics were calculated to give an overview of the sample claims by computing demographics and distributions of the key variables in the respondents. This was followed by analysis of reliability through use of Cronbachs alpha to determine consistency of the measurement scales internally and the value accepted to determine the acceptable level of consistency was 0.70 which was regarded to give a satisfactory value of reliability. EFA was used to implement their factor analysis further to establish the factor structure behind the observed variables. Validity of data in the process of factor analysis was checked by comparison of the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy and Bartletts Test of Sphericity which established the suitability of the data to further analysis. The Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) technique was subsequently applied to extract the factors with Varimax rotation and only factors with eigenvalues above 1.0 retained in order to guarantee the strength of the findings. Lastly, Cronbach alpha was used to compute again the reliability of each extracted factor to determine the consistency of the construct. The EFA outcome indicated a three-factors model to the conceptual framework of the study i.e. social media Engagement, Employer Brand image and Talent Attraction, where the overall variance accounted was over 65 which is satisfactory model-fit, reliability as well as dimensional stability.

Table 1***Descriptive Statistics of Study Constructs (n = 300)***

Construct	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Social Media Engagement (SME)	6	4.02	0.68	2.60	5.00
Employer Brand Image (EBI)	6	3.85	0.72	2.40	5.00

Construct	Number of Items	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Talent Attraction (TA)	6	3.91	0.70	2.50	5.00
Overall Scale	18	3.93	0.70	2.40	5.00

The results in Table 1 show that respondents had relatively high perceptions of their organization's social media presence and its impact on brand image and talent attraction. All constructs exhibited mean values above 3.8, indicating general agreement with the measurement items.

Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of each construct was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha. As shown in Table 2, all constructs demonstrated acceptable reliability levels, exceeding the standard threshold of 0.70 (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019).

Table 2

Reliability Statistics of the data

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)
Social Media Engagement (SME)	6	0.88
Employer Brand Image (EBI)	6	0.84
Talent Attraction (TA)	6	0.86
Overall Scale	18	0.91

The overall Cronbach's alpha of **0.91** indicated excellent internal reliability, confirming that all items consistently measured their intended constructs.

In order to determine the correctness of the information to go through with the factor analysis, the KaiserMeyerOlkin (KMO) measure and the Bartletts Test of Sphericity were calculated. The amount of the KMO value was 0.874, and that is more than the minimum of 0.60 (Kaiser, 1974) and this means that the sample size was sufficient to perform EFA. According to the Bartlett Test of Sphericity, this test of sphericity was significant ($2 = 1523.46$, $2 = 153$, $p = 0.000$), which means that the correlation was not an identity form and that there were enough relations between items to continue further with extracting the factor.

Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) with Varimax rotation was used to conduct EFA where 18 measurement items are then subjected in establishing latent dimensions. Variables whose eigenvalues exceed 1.0 were kept which is in line with the Kaiser criterion. The findings provided a three-factor solution which is congruent with the conceptual framework of the study; that is, Social Media Engagement (SME), Employer Brand Image (EBI) and Talent Attraction (TA) as shown in table 3 below.

Table 3

Rotated Factor Loadings (Varimax Rotation)

Item Code	Item Description (Summarized)	Factor 1: SME	Factor 2: EBI	Factor 3: TA
SME1	The company frequently posts engaging content on social media.	0.812	—	—
SME2	Social media helps me understand the company's values.	0.785	—	—
SME3	The company's social media presence reflects its professionalism.	0.768	—	—
SME4	I trust information about the company shared on social media.	0.731	—	—
SME5	The company interacts with followers regularly.	0.702	—	—
SME6	The firm uses social media for both recruitment and brand promotion.	0.689	—	—
EBI1	The company has a positive reputation in the market.	—	0.812	—
EBI2	I associate the company with strong ethical values.	—	0.801	—
EBI3	The organization's image on social media is consistent with its identity.	—	0.772	—
EBI4	The firm is considered innovative and dynamic.	—	0.758	—
EBI5	The company's posts create a favorable impression.	—	0.744	—
EBI6	I perceive the company as a credible and desirable employer.	—	0.733	—
TA1	I would consider applying to this company based on its social media presence.	—	—	0.826
TA2	The company's online activities make it appear as a great place to work.	—	—	0.808
TA3	Social media makes the company's work environment attractive.	—	—	0.794
TA4	I would recommend the company to others as a potential employer.	—	—	0.776
TA5	The company's digital presence influences my job pursuit intentions.	—	—	0.745
TA6	Social media enhances my perception of the company's career growth opportunities.	—	—	0.733

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring (PAF) method was used in the study with varimax with Kaiser Normalization with 3 factors are retained. All factor loadings exceeded 0.68, confirming strong associations between the observed items and their respective latent factors (Hair et al., 2019). Cross-loadings greater than 0.40 were not observed, indicating a clean and interpretable factor structure.

Table 5**Total Variance Explained**

Factor	Eigenvalue	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1 (Social Media Engagement)	7.21	40.06	40.06
2 (Employer Brand Image)	3.10	17.22	57.28
3 (Talent Attraction)	1.96	10.86	68.14

The three extracted factors together explained 68.14% of total variance, surpassing the acceptable benchmark of 60%, indicating a strong and interpretable model. The values of alpha that were obtained by Cronbach concerning each factor were reanalysed to ensure reliability: SME (0.88), EBI (0.84), and TA (0.86). All the values were greater than the reliability criterion of 0.70. the inter-factor correlation matrix indicated moderate interrelationships ($r = 0.56-0.68$), which establishes the existence of discriminant validity and some multicollinearity was absent. Both convergent and discriminant validity of the measurement model were confirmed as the average variance extracted values were above 0.50 and the square roots of average variance extracted above inter-construct correlations (Fornell and Larcker, 1981). The factors obtained in the extraction reflect the average differences in responses across various clients.

Social Media Engagement (SME) was the first factor which measured the level of organizational content and interaction with social media which affects perceptions. The second category was Employer Brand Image (EBI), which indicated the impressions of organizational reputation, credibility and consistency that manifested themselves via online presence. The third metric, which was called Talent Attraction (TA), was used to determine the degree to which the social media activity of a firm incites candidates to take jobs or refer other applicants. Combined, these results confirmed that social media is a twofold HR and marketing tool, as it not only influences the creation of brand image but also achieves greater talent attraction. The large factor loadings, significant variance explained, and large reliability coefficients are the measures of the statistical significance and stability of the EFA model.

Discussions

The current study was intended to delve into how social media is a two-fold HR and marketing instrument in terms of its impact on the employer brand image and talent acquisition. Three meaningful factors were identified through Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) Social Media Engagement (SME), Employer Brand Image (EBI), and Talent Attraction (TA), and explained 68.14 per cent of the overall variance, which showed a statistically adequate and theoretically sound model. These findings offer empirical evidence to the extent toward which social media can be incorporated in organization branding and recruitment practices. The outcomes align with the previous literature that underlines the multidimensionality of the social media in improving both the external brand image and internal employer image. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) and Mangold and Faulds (2009) observed that social media is a hybrid marketing channel, which unites consumer communication with communication within organizations. This study goes beyond such a suggestion to establish the fact that social media not only facilitates brand awareness but also enhances organizational image as a place to work- as claimed by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and Theurer, Tumasjan, Welpe, and Lievens (2018).

The aspect of Social Media Engagement was used to reflect the perception of the respondents about the capability of the organization to maintain genuine communications, interact with followers and its presence on the internet on a regular basis. The level of the factor loadings (between 0.68 and 0.81) indicated its active, transparent, and frequent online interactions play an important role in improving both the level of informational and emotional appeal of a company. The

results are consistent with those presented by Jeske and Olson (2020) who highlighted that the quality of engagement, in addition to its frequency, is extremely significant in the formation of the attitude towards organizations among the candidates.

The second driver was the Employer Brand Image which considered the manner in which the social media activities affected the credibility, innovation and trust. These findings showed that those organizations that make a consistent and value-based impression on the Internet were viewed as more ethical, professional, and attractive to work in-line with Kryger Aggerholm, Esmann Andersen and Thomsen (2011) and Edwards (2010). The linkage between content on social media and brand image, implies that brand storytelling, authenticity, and cultural representation play a crucial role in creating a reputation and differentiation in the job market (Iglesias, Ind, and Schultz, 2020).

The third driver, Talent Attraction, showed that job seekers intentions and willingness to give recommendation to an employer are directly related to the online branding by such an organization. According to the respondents, the companies that have clear communication and have a desirable digital story are more likely to be considered as desirable places of work. This confirms scientific hypotheses of Lievens and Highhouse (2003) and is corresponding with empirical results of Kim (2020) and Kaur and Sharma (2022) who found that the use of social media has a significant impact on organizational attractiveness and job application behaviour.

On the whole, the findings confirm the hypothesis that social media is a strategic unifier of the HR and marketing processes. Employer branding and marketing communication work together and thus increases employee participation and customer retention (Barrow and Mosley, 2011; Moroko and Uncles, 2008). The results additionally point to the fact that the image of the employer interferes with the association between social media use and attraction of talents- implying that organization can utilize online presence to indirectly improve recruitment results by building a stronger brand image. Such results have massive implications to professors as well as practitioners. To the theorists, the analysis is empirical evidence on the convergence of HRM and marketing by digital media in terms of multidimensionality of employer branding. To the practitioners, the insights emphasize the need to remain genuine, active and purposeful in online communication. The HR and marketing agencies need to coordinate efforts to deal with the digital employer reputation that enables the seamless alignment of the outside brand promise and the internal experiences of employees.

Conclusion

This study adds to the existing literature on the digital employer branding by providing empirical justification of the effectiveness of the social media as a two-faceted HR as well as marketing tool. The findings were able to confirm that high-quality use of social media will improve the image of the employer, and this will have a positive effect on talent attraction. Exploratory Factor Analysis has identified three key dimensions, namely, Social Media Engagement, Employer Brand Image and Talent Attraction, that show that these constructs are statistically different but conceptually related. Theoretically, the work enhances the stance in the interdisciplinary integration of marketing and HRM, and how principles of brand communication could be effectively implemented into the employer branding and recruitment settings. In practice, it reminds the fact that organizations can gain a competitive advantage by tactically using the social media platforms to not only promote themselves externally but also as a tool of internal branding and talent management. As a manager, authentic engagement, open interaction and consistent brand storytelling in attracting and retaining the best talent should be considered. The findings imply that the effectiveness of employer branding depends on the effectiveness of social media activities in terms of their cultural and value-based representation and employee experiences of the organization.

Although the study gives solid empirical evidence on its suggested model, it must be noted that it has some limitations. Cross-sectional design captures perceptions at one time and it also uses the convenience sampling which limits the generalizability. In future studies, however, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) or Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) can be used to confirm that constructs relate as hypothesized within bigger and more inclusive samples. Longitudinal designs could also be conducted to examine how changing trends in social media are affecting the perception of employer brand and recruitment performance over a period.

Finally, the study validates the idea that the social media is not simply a form of promotion, but is a strategic intermediary between the HR department and marketing system, which can positively affect the brand image and increase the attractiveness of employers. Using integrated social media approaches, organizations will be able to develop more

endearing relationships with the outside world and with prospective employees, and strengthen as reputable, appealing, and attractive employers in the digital era.

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