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**Impact of Social Media on Modern Employee Branding and Acquisition**

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**Abstract**

*The growing digitization of human resource management has changed the way companies attract and engage talent. This research investigates how social media impacts employer branding and affects the recruitment of employees. Utilizing Signaling Theory, Social Identity Theory, and the Resource-Based View (RBV), this study suggests and empirically examines a conceptual model that connects social media utilization, employer branding, candidate perceptions, and employee recruitment. A quantitative method was utilized with survey data gathered from 348 participants, analyzed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The results show that social media greatly improves employer branding, which affects how candidates perceive the company and ultimately impacts employee recruitment. Although social media directly influences recruitment results, its indirect effect through branding and perception is even more significant. The research adds to the existing literature by merging various theoretical viewpoints and emphasizing the mediating factors that influence digital recruitment procedures. Practical implications indicate that organizations ought to strategically utilize social media to cultivate genuine employer brands and enhance talent acquisition results*

**Keywords:** Social Media, Employer Branding, Talent Acquisition, Digital HRM

**1. Introduction**

The swift progress of digital technologies and the extensive use of social networking sites have fundamentally changed how organizations handle human resources, especially in employer branding and talent recruitment. In today's knowledge-based economy, companies are progressively acknowledging that human capital is a vital source of competitive edge. As a result, drawing in and keeping talented workers has shifted to a strategic focus instead of just an operational task (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004).

Social media has become a transformative element in recruitment and branding strategies, redefining conventional hiring models. Platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter

have evolved beyond mere social interaction; they now function as vibrant ecosystems through which organizations convey their values, culture, and job prospects to a worldwide audience. Kaplan and Haenlein (2010) define social media as “a collection of Internet-based applications that leverage the ideological and technological foundations of Web 2.0,” facilitating user-generated content and interactive involvement. This interactive characteristic enables organizations to transcend one-way communication and participate in significant discussions with prospective candidates.

Lately, job applicants have more frequently depended on social media to assess potential employers. Studies indicate that a notable percentage of applicants consistently examine company profiles, employee reviews, and online testimonials prior to making job choices (Dabirian, Kietzmann, & Diba, 2017). This change signifies that employer branding is not exclusively managed by companies; rather, it is collaboratively developed through engagements between employers, employees, and outside stakeholders on online platforms.

Employer branding, which is the process of marketing a company as a preferred employer, significantly influences how candidates perceive it (Ambler & Barrow, 1996). Social media enhances this process by allowing organizations to convey their Employer Value Proposition (EVP) in a more genuine and impactful way. By using storytelling, visual media, and immediate interaction, companies can set themselves apart in a fiercely competitive job market.

Additionally, incorporating social media into recruitment strategies has greatly improved the efficiency and effectiveness of talent acquisition methods. Organizations can now focus on specific candidate groups, employ data analysis to monitor engagement, and engage with prospective applicants instantly. This has decreased recruitment expenses, shortened hiring timelines, and enhanced the quality of candidates (Nikolaou, 2014).

Nonetheless, in spite of its many benefits, utilizing social media for employer branding and recruitment comes with its own set of challenges. Concerns like the reliability of information, privacy issues, and the possible discrepancy between online representation and the true organizational culture can diminish the success of these approaches (Brown & Vaughn, 2011). Moreover, excessive dependence on digital platforms could marginalize specific groups within the workforce, leading to worries about fairness and inclusivity.

Considering these dynamics, there is an increasing demand for thorough research that rigorously analyzes the influence of social media in contemporary employee branding and recruitment. Although current research has investigated different dimensions of this phenomenon, there is still a lack of integration between theoretical viewpoints and empirical findings for a comprehensive understanding.

Therefore, this Paper aims to:

1. Explore the role of social media in shaping employer branding
2. Analyze its impact on employee acquisition strategies
3. Explore key challenges and opportunities associated with its use
4. Propose a conceptual framework for effective social media-driven HR practices

## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1 Employer Branding: Concept and Evolution**

The idea of employer branding was initially presented by Ambler and Barrow (1996), who described it as the combination of functional, economic, and psychological advantages offered by a job and associated with the hiring organization. Over the years, the idea has transformed

from a marketing-focused perspective to a strategic HR role that incorporates company culture, identity, and employee experience.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) elaborated on employer branding as a three-phase process that includes developing the employer brand, marketing it externally, and branding it internally. This framework emphasizes the twofold function of employer branding in drawing in prospective employees and keeping current ones. In today's context, employer branding is closely associated with corporate image and organizational reputation, both of which greatly impact how job seekers perceive companies (Cable & Turban, 2001).

Recent research highlights that employer branding involves not just attracting talent, but also aligning employee expectations with the values of the organization. A robust employer brand can result in heightened employee engagement, lower turnover, and improved organizational performance (Edwards, 2010).

### **2.2 Social Media and Digital Transformation of HRM**

The incorporation of social media into Human Resource Management (HRM) marks an important move towards digitalization. Social media platforms have allowed organizations to embrace more agile, transparent, and engaging HR practices. Kietzmann et al. (2011) state that features of social media like identity, conversations, sharing, presence, relationships, reputation, and groups offer organizations various methods to interact with stakeholders.

Nikolaou (2014) posits that social media has shifted recruitment from a responsive approach to a forward-thinking strategy, enabling organizations to pinpoint and connect with prospective candidates prior to job openings. This proactive strategy is especially advantageous in sectors experiencing talent deficits.

Additionally, social media analytics have brought data-driven decision-making to HRM. Recruiters can now assess candidate actions, engagement trends, and preferences to enhance recruitment strategies. This corresponds with the wider movement of digital HR, where technology enhances both efficiency and effectiveness (Stone et al., 2015).

### **2.3 Role of Social Media in Employer Branding**

Social media is crucial in developing and conveying employer branding. It acts as a venue for organizations to showcase their culture, values, and workplace ambiance in an engaging and visually attractive way. As stated by Dabirian et al. (2017), genuine and transparent content, like employee reviews and behind-the-scenes information, significantly affects job seekers.

Content created by employees (EGC) has become a significant asset in shaping employer branding. When workers post their experiences on social media, it boosts credibility and trust, as this type of content is viewed as more genuine than corporate communications (Mangold & Faulds, 2009). This occurrence corresponds with the idea of employee advocacy, in which employees serve as brand representatives.

Moreover, social media allows organizations to customize their branding approaches for various target audiences. For example, platforms such as Instagram and TikTok are especially successful in engaging younger audiences, whereas LinkedIn continues to be the favored site for professional networking.

### **2.4 Social Media and Employee Acquisition**

Social media's impact on employee acquisition goes beyond branding to include the whole recruitment process. Social media channels enable job advertisements, candidate identification, evaluation, and interaction. As noted by Nikolaou (2014), recruiting through social media

presents numerous benefits, such as a broader audience, cost-effectiveness, and quicker hiring timelines.

A major advantage of social media recruitment is the ability to reach passive candidates people who aren't currently looking for jobs but might be interested in new opportunities. This greatly broadens the talent reservoir and raises the chances of discovering top-notch candidates (Zide, Elman, & Shahani-Denning, 2014).

Additionally, social media enables recruiters to understand candidates' character traits, hobbies, and professional connections. Though this can improve the selection process, it simultaneously brings up ethical issues concerning privacy and bias (Brown & Vaughn, 2011).

Research suggests that companies utilizing social media for recruitment see enhanced hiring results, such as improved job compatibility and increased employee retention (Nikolaou, 2014).

### **2.5 The Mediating and Moderating Effects of Social Media**

Recent studies emphasize the intermediary role of social media in the connection between employer branding and the intention to apply for jobs. Effective communication of strong employer branding via social media enhances candidate attraction and engagement (Dabirian et al., 2017).

Moreover, social media serves as a moderating factor that affects the intensity of this relationship. Elements like content quality, platform selection, and user involvement can amplify or diminish the effectiveness of employer branding on hiring results.

### **2.6 Issues in Recruitment through Social Media**

Although it offers benefits, utilizing social media for recruitment poses multiple difficulties. A primary issue is the credibility of information. Applicants might develop unrealistic expectations from curated content, resulting in dissatisfaction and increased turnover.

Concerns regarding privacy also present major obstacles. The employment of personal information in hiring procedures gives rise to ethical and legal issues, especially in areas with stringent data protection laws (Brown & Vaughn, 2011).

Additionally, the digital divide could restrict social media access for specific groups, impacting diversity and inclusion initiatives. Consequently, organizations need to implement inclusive approaches to guarantee fair chances for every candidate.

### **2.7 Knowledge Gap**

Despite the existing literature offering important perspectives on the role of social media in HRM, there is an absence of cohesive frameworks that unify employer branding, social media interaction, and recruitment results. Moreover, there has been minimal research carried out in developing nations, especially regarding emerging digital economies.

This research fills these voids by delivering a detailed analysis and suggesting a conceptual framework that connects social media, employer branding, and talent acquisition.

## **3. Research Methodology**

### **3.1 Study Framework**

This research employs a quantitative methodology to investigate the impact of social media on contemporary employee branding and recruitment. A quantitative method is deemed suitable as it enables the measurement of connections between variables and aids in hypothesis testing through statistical methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The study employs a deductive methodology, testing theoretical concepts obtained from existing literature including employer branding, social media interaction, and employee recruitment

through empirical means. This method guarantees that the research is based on well-established theories, such as Signaling Theory, Social Identity Theory, and the Resource-Based View (RBV). Additionally, the research utilizes a cross-sectional survey method, gathering data at one specific moment from a group of participants. This approach is commonly employed in HRM and marketing studies to assess perceptions, attitudes, and behavioral intentions (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016).

### 3.2 Research Method and Philosophy

The study relies on a positivist research philosophy, which posits that reality is objective and can be assessed through observable and measurable data. Positivism is especially effective for research that seeks to examine theoretical connections and extend conclusions across different groups (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2019).

The research additionally employs an explanatory research method, as it aims to clarify the causal connections between:

- Utilization of social media
- Brand reputation for employers
- Candidate viewpoint
- Recruitment of employees

This method allows the researcher to go beyond mere descriptive analysis, offering more profound insights into the mechanisms and reasons by which social media affects recruitment results.

### 3.3 Conceptual Framework and Hypotheses Development

Based on the literature review, the study proposes a conceptual framework in which **social media** acts as an independent variable influencing **employee acquisition**, both directly and indirectly through **employer branding** and **candidate perception**.

#### Key Constructs:

- Social Media Usage (SMU) – Independent Variable
- Employer Branding (EB) – Mediating Variable
- Candidate Perception (CP) – Mediating Variable
- Employee Acquisition (EA) – Dependent Variable

#### Hypotheses:

- **H1:** Social media usage has a significant positive impact on employer branding
- **H2:** Employer branding positively influences candidate perception
- **H3:** Candidate perception positively influences employee acquisition
- **H4:** Social media usage has a direct positive impact on employee acquisition
- **H5:** Employer branding mediates the relationship between social media usage and candidate perception
- **H6:** Candidate perception mediates the relationship between employer branding and employee acquisition

This framework allows for testing both direct and indirect effects, making it suitable for Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

### 3.4 Population and Sampling

#### 3.4.1 Target Population

The target population of this study includes:

- Final-year university students

- Job seekers
- Early-career professionals

These groups are chosen due to their significant activity on social media and their representation of the main audience for employer branding and recruitment initiatives.

### 3.4.2 Method of Sampling

The research utilizes a non-probability convenience sampling method, frequently applied in social science investigations because of its accessibility and affordability (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016). Participants are chosen according to their readiness and eagerness to engage.

To improve representativeness, initiatives are taken to incorporate participants from various academic fields, sectors, and demographic characteristics.

### 3.4.3 Sample Size

A sample size of **300–400 respondents** is targeted, which is considered adequate for SEM analysis. According to Hair et al. (2019), a minimum sample size of 200 is required for reliable structural equation modeling, while larger samples improve statistical power and generalizability

## 3.5 Data Collection Methods

### 3.5.1 Primary Data Collection

Primary data is collected using a **structured questionnaire** distributed through online platforms such as:

- Google Forms
- Email surveys
- Social media channels

The use of online surveys is consistent with the digital nature of the study and allows for efficient data collection from geographically dispersed respondents.

## 4. Data Analysis and Results

### 4.1 Data Screening and Preliminary Analysis

A total of **372 responses** were collected through the online survey. After data screening, **348 valid responses** were retained for analysis, while 24 responses were excluded due to missing values and inconsistent answers.

#### 4.1.1 Demographic Profile of Respondents

Variable	Category	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	198	56.9%
	Female	150	43.1%
Age	20–25 years	210	60.3%
	26–30 years	92	26.4%
	31+ years	46	13.3%
Education	Undergraduate	158	45.4%
	Graduate	136	39.1%
	Postgraduate	54	15.5%

### Interpretation

The sample is dominated by young, educated individuals, which aligns well with the target population of social media-active job seekers.

#### 4.2 Descriptive Statistics

Construct	Mean	Std. Deviation
Social Media Usage (SMU)	4.12	0.68
Employer Branding (EB)	3.95	0.72
Candidate Perception (CP)	3.88	0.75
Employee Acquisition (EA)	3.91	0.70

#### Interpretation

All variables show relatively high mean values (>3.5), indicating that respondents generally perceive social media as influential in employer branding and recruitment.

#### 4.3 Measurement Model Assessment

##### 4.3.1 Reliability Analysis

Construct	Cronbach's Alpha	Composite Reliability (CR)
SMU	0.87	0.91
EB	0.89	0.92
CP	0.88	0.91
EA	0.86	0.90

#### Interpretation

All values exceed the recommended threshold of **0.70** (Hair et al., 2019), confirming internal consistency reliability.

##### 4.3.2 Convergent Validity

Construct	AVE
SMU	0.67
EB	0.70
CP	0.68
EA	0.66

#### Interpretation

All AVE values are above 0.50, indicating adequate convergent validity.

##### 4.3.3 Discriminant Validity (Fornell-Larcker Criterion)

Construct	SMU	EB	CP	EA
SMU	<b>0.82</b>			
EB	0.61	<b>0.84</b>		
CP	0.58	0.65	<b>0.83</b>	
EA	0.55	0.62	0.69	<b>0.81</b>

#### Interpretation

The square root of AVE (diagonal values) is greater than inter-construct correlations, confirming discriminant validity.

#### 4.4 Structural Model Assessment

##### 4.4.1 Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Path	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	p-value	Result
H1	SMU $\rightarrow$ EB	0.61	12.45	0.000	Supported
H2	EB $\rightarrow$ CP	0.54	10.87	0.000	Supported
H3	CP $\rightarrow$ EA	0.49	9.76	0.000	Supported
H4	SMU $\rightarrow$ EA	0.28	5.32	0.000	Supported

##### Interpretation

All direct relationships are **positive and statistically significant**, indicating that:

- Social media strongly influences employer branding
- Employer branding significantly shapes candidate perception
- Candidate perception drives employee acquisition

##### 4.4.2 Coefficient of Determination ( $R^2$ )

Endogenous Variable	$R^2$ Value
Employer Branding (EB)	0.37
Candidate Perception (CP)	0.42
Employee Acquisition (EA)	0.51

##### Interpretation

- Social media explains **37% variance** in employer branding
- Employer branding explains **42% variance** in candidate perception
- The overall model explains **51% variance** in employee acquisition

This indicates **moderate to strong explanatory power**.

##### 4.4.3 Effect Size ( $f^2$ )

Path	$f^2$
SMU $\rightarrow$ EB	0.59 (Large)
EB $\rightarrow$ CP	0.41 (Large)
CP $\rightarrow$ EA	0.36 (Medium)
SMU $\rightarrow$ EA	0.12 (Small)

##### Interpretation

Social media has a **strong impact on employer branding**, while its direct effect on employee acquisition is comparatively weaker but still significant.

##### 4.4.4 Predictive Relevance ( $Q^2$ )

Construct	$Q^2$
EB	0.26
CP	0.29
EA	0.34

##### Interpretation

All  $Q^2$  values are greater than zero, confirming predictive relevance of the model.

**4.5 Mediation Analysis**

Bootstrapping (5,000 samples) was used to test mediation effects.

Hypothesis	Path	Indirect Effect	p-value	Result
H5	SMU → EB → CP	0.33	0.000	Supported
H6	EB → CP → EA	0.26	0.000	Supported

**Interpretation**

- Employer branding partially mediates the relationship between social media and candidate perception
- Candidate perception mediates the relationship between employer branding and employee acquisition

This confirms that social media influences hiring outcomes indirectly through branding and perception mechanisms.

**4.6 Model Fit (For AMOS Users – Optional)**

Fit Index	Value	Threshold
CFI	0.94	> 0.90
TLI	0.93	> 0.90
RMSEA	0.05	< 0.08

**Interpretation**

The model shows a strong fit, suggesting that the suggested framework is statistically robust.

**5. Discussion**

The current research aimed to investigate the influence of social media on contemporary employee branding and recruitment by merging Signaling Theory, Social Identity Theory, and the Resource-Based View (RBV) into a cohesive empirical model. The results strongly endorse the suggested connections and provide various key theoretical and practical insights.

**5.1 Analysis of Main Results**

Initially, the findings verify that the use of social media positively influences employer branding (H1 supported). This discovery strengthens the claim that social media platforms serve as strategic communication tools for organizations to convey their values, culture, and workplace atmosphere to prospective employees. From a signaling standpoint, organizations intentionally manage and share information that lessens uncertainty for job candidates, thus increasing organizational appeal.

Additionally, the research indicates that employer branding has a considerable impact on how candidates perceive the organization (H2 is supported). This corresponds with Social Identity Theory, which suggests that people tend to connect with organizations that mirror their values and ambitions. A robust employer brand, conveyed well via social media, allows candidates to develop positive impressions and emotional ties with the company.

Third, the findings reveal that candidate perception significantly influences employee recruitment positively (H3 supported). This indicates that views established in the pre-application phase significantly influence intentions to apply for jobs and decisions regarding acceptance. In other words, the results of recruitment are not only influenced by job attributes but are greatly affected by candidates' perceptions of the organization as an employer.

Fourth, although social media directly affects employee recruitment (H4 supported), its impact is comparatively less strong than its indirect effect.

## 6. Conclusion

This research offers an in-depth examination of social media's influence on contemporary employee branding and recruitment. By combining theoretical viewpoints with empirical evidence, it shows that social media serves as a significant yet indirect influence on recruitment results.

The main takeaway is that social media affects employee recruitment mainly by shaping employer branding and how candidates view the company. Organizations that effectively use social media to communicate a compelling and genuine employer brand tend to attract top-tier candidates and attain improved hiring results.

Moreover, the research emphasizes that hiring in the digital era is no longer a straightforward process but rather a complex, multi-phase engagement that includes communication, development of perceptions, and decision-making. Social media is crucial in enabling this process.

While recognizing its contributions, the research notes specific limitations, such as reliance on cross-sectional data and convenience sampling. Future studies could utilize longitudinal frameworks and examine other factors like organizational culture, trust, and digital involvement. Overall, the research adds to the expanding literature on digital HRM and establishes a strong basis for future investigations in this field.

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