

Relationship between Employer Branding, CSR and Social Media Communication

Ilarija Bašić^a, Nino Ćorić,^a Nenad Brkić^b

^a The Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, University of Mostar, Bosnia and Herzegovina

^b School of Economics and Business, University of Sarajevo, Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina

ilarija.basic@ff.sum.ba, nino.coric@ff.sum.ba, nenad.brkic@efsa.unsa.ba

ARTICLE INFO

Original Scientific Article

Article history:

Received December 2024

Revised August 2025

Accepted August 2025

JEL Classification

M14, M30, M5

Keywords:

Employer Branding

Corporate Social Responsibility

Social Media Communication

Most Desirable Employer

UDK: 339.13:316.472.4(497.6)

DOI: 10.2478/ngoe-2025-0015

Cite this article as: Bašić, I., Ćorić, N. & Brkić, N. (2025). Relationship between Employer Branding, CSR and Social Media Communication. *Naše gospodarstvo/Our Economy*, 71(3), 29-43. DOI: 10.2478/ngoe-2025-0015

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Abstract

This research aims to examine whether employer branding (EB) activities are related to the ranking of the *Most Desirable Employer* in Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH), and to explore the correlation between EB, corporate social responsibility (CSR), and organisational representation on social media. The research was conducted among employees of 15 organisations ranked as the Most Desirable Employers, potential employees, and final-year university students from various academic fields. While in developed countries, specialised companies focus on talent attraction and recruitment as part of EB strategies, employers in BiH have yet to reach that level of long-term workforce planning and fully recognise the strategic benefits EB can offer. The findings indicate that EB significantly influences employer's desirability among current and potential employees, and that organisations perceived as socially responsible tend to enjoy a stronger employer brand and are considered more desirable. Moreover, the analysis revealed no significant differences in the perception of the relationship between socially responsible business practices and organisational representation on social media between current and potential employees. The study's key contributions include the finding that EB correlates positively with employer desirability; and that the impact of perceived dimensions of EB attractiveness is evident from the perspectives of both current and potential employees.

Introduction

The focus of this research was to explore the relationship between employer branding (EB), corporate social responsibility (CSR), and organisational communication on social networks, from the perspectives of both current and potential employees. Over the past decade, employment methods and models for attracting and engaging new human resources have changed significantly. Strengthening

^{*}Corresponding author

Bosnia and Herzegovina, which face severe depopulation and a rapidly transforming labour market. In the literature, CSR is frequently linked to EB, particularly concerning organisational behaviour, corporate image, competitiveness through employer branding and enhancing organisational attractiveness has become a crucial response to the global challenges of societal development, especially for countries like and reputation—attributes often emphasised as desirable by both employees and external audiences. Consequently, EB offers a valuable framework for developing a more comprehensive and theoretically grounded understanding of how current and prospective employees engage with an organisation's socially responsible identity. At the same time, the growing presence of digital technologies across all sectors, combined with the strategic role of organisational representation on social media, significantly contributes to building a more attractive employer brand that helps attract top talent and retain high-performing employees. The digital transformation of society has introduced a wide array of channels for disseminating information to target groups. As a result, terms such as *brand*, *branding*, and *brand management* are now more prevalent than ever. It seems that today, almost anyone or anything can become a brand, navigating the branding process with varying degrees of success—its longevity depending mainly on the capacity to adapt to an increasingly demanding and dynamic market.

Literature Review

Employer Branding

The term *employer branding* was first introduced and defined in the business context by journalist and consultant Simon Barrow in 1990. Later, Ambler & Barrow (1996, p. 187) defined the employer brand as “*the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment, and identified with the employing company.*”

According to existing literature, employer branding is also referred to as employer identity. It can be described as the process of shaping audience perceptions about an organisation to distinguish it clearly from competitors (Sokro, 2012). Sullivan (2004) argues that employer branding reflects an organisation's image as a desirable workplace (Khalid & Tariq, 2015, p. 352). Similarly, Martin, Gollan & Grigg (2011, p. 3618) define employer branding as the general recognition of an organisation characterised by satisfied and loyal employees willing to

recommend the company as both a good employer and a provider of quality products and services.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004, p. 502) distinguish between the terms employer brand and employer branding. The employer brand refers to the organisation's identity as an employer and how current and potential employees perceive it. In contrast, employer branding relates to the active process by which an organisation positions itself as an attractive workplace and manages its image among internal and external stakeholders. Armstrong (2006, p. 248) notes that employer branding aims to become the employer of choice. Similarly, Knox et al. (2000) emphasise the importance of a unique organisational value proposition, which Martin (2008) further elaborates as a value proposition or employee value package. In employer branding process, perceived attractiveness is vital in recruiting and retaining employees. Berthon et al. (2005, p. 166) identified five key dimensions of employer attractiveness, which have been widely adopted in subsequent studies:

- Interest value: the organisation is attractive due to its work environment, operational methods, and innovative culture.
- Social value: employees feel loyalty because of a supportive atmosphere, positive relationships with colleagues and supervisors, and a pleasant working environment.
- Economic value: employees are satisfied with their earnings, types of compensation, and opportunities for promotion.
- Development value: employees appreciate career progression and the availability of development opportunities.
- Application value: employees are satisfied with the ability to apply their knowledge and skills in practice.

Chhabra & Sharma (2014) argue that the success of employer branding strategies depends on management's ability to transform the organisation into an attractive employer. Likewise, Sivertzen et al. (2013) and Jain & Bhatt (2015) emphasise that an organisation becomes attractive when the characteristics of potential employees align with those of the organisation itself.

The COVID-19 pandemic introduced uncertainty and significant shifts in organizational behaviour, requiring companies to balance compliance with national restrictions and preserve company culture (Carroll, 2021). Human Resource Management required new

approaches that placed greater emphasis on understanding employees' attitudes, needs, and motivations. This shift called for a stronger focus on fostering a supportive work culture, effective communication, and responsive leadership (Johnstone et al., 2023). The crisis highlighted the growing importance of work-life balance and prompted many employees to reassess their career goals (Curtis, 2021). As a result, employer branding evolved into a strategic priority. Organisations were urged to demonstrate transparency and authenticity, particularly through social media and recruitment channels, where both current and potential employees assess organisational culture before employment. Remote and hybrid work models became the norm, not just as a crisis response, but as a means of building long-term competitiveness, and an employer branding tool with a stronger focus on the well-being of employees.

Organisations across sectors increasingly prioritise environmental, social, and governance (ESG) issues, driven by growing stakeholder expectations for transparency, accountability, and compliance. Companies are adopting innovative measures to reduce energy consumption, enhance employee engagement, attract talent, and implement sustainable practices to meet these demands. In the post-pandemic context, many organisations have shifted their focus toward talent acquisition, reducing employee turnover, and fostering engagement. Central to this is developing a strong Employee Value Proposition (EVP)—a clear articulation of the benefits offered to employees in exchange for their skills, experience, and contributions. EVP not only differentiates an organisation from its competitors but also addresses a key concern of both current and potential employees: *"What's in it for me?"* Embracing flexibility, technology, and a culture of trust allows organisations to redefine workplace autonomy and strengthen their EVP, ultimately enhancing talent attraction, retention, and long-term growth.

Corporate Social Responsibility

Since 1953 when Bowen first defined corporate social responsibility (CSR), much has been done to promote CSR, which has become an essential tool for strengthening positive relationships with stakeholders and building and preserving an organisation's public image and reputation. In its early conceptualisation, CSR was linked to Friedman's (1993, p. 32) idea that its primary purpose was to maximise profits and shareholder value. However, today CSR is viewed mainly as an organisation's responsibility toward society and its

stakeholders (Tench, 2009, p. 109). The roots of CSR can be traced back to Andrew Carnegie's *The Gospel of Wealth*, published in 1899, which emphasised the organisation's duty to improve the society and environment in which it operates. The first formal definition of CSR was provided by American economist Howard R. Bowen in 1953: *"The social responsibility of businesspeople pertains to their obligation to pursue policies, decisions, and actions that are desirable within the context of the goals and values of our society"* (Dujilović, 2020, p. 14).

In 1970, Heald offered a comprehensive overview of CSR's historical development in his book *The Social Responsibility of Business: Company and Community 1900–1960*. Drawing from Carnegie's 1889 thesis—which advocated that businesses owe ethical responsibilities to their environment—Heald argued that CSR originated more than fifty years before the Second World War. This business approach, reflecting organisational concern for public interest, was known as the *concept of stewardship*. It gained popularity after 1920, when entrepreneur Young and General Electric president Gerard Swope proposed that shareholders are just one of many stakeholder groups to whom an organization is accountable. Their perspective prioritised the public, consumers, and employees, promoting a cooperative model that included businesses, workers, authorities, and local communities (Centre for Ethical Business Cultures, 2005, pp. 11–13).

Carroll (1979) stated that CSR encompasses society's economic, legal, ethical, and discretionary expectations of organisations at a given point in time. Accordingly, organisations bear economic, legal, ethical, and philanthropic responsibilities. Vehovec (2000, p. 644) defined CSR as corporate accountability for its activities and their direct or indirect impacts on individuals, communities, and the environment. Buble (2009, p. 102) emphasised that social responsibility involves managerial decisions and actions that benefit society and the organisation. CSR requires distinguishing right from wrong and striving to act ethically. CSR is considered an indispensable component of employer branding. Aggerholm, Andersen, and Thomsen (2011) define it as *"communicative, integrative, and interdisciplinary processes that create, negotiate, and implement sustainable relationships between employers and employees, as well as long-term connections between the organization and its potential and current employees, initiated by corporate branding processes integrating the notion of corporate social responsibility"* (Tkalac Verčić & Sinčić Ćorić, 2018, p. 446).

Bustamante (2021, p. 14) argues that the core objectives of employer branding are to retain current employees, attract new talent, strengthen organisational culture and brand, and increase the effectiveness of CSR initiatives. These outcomes, in turn, enhance organisational attractiveness by building trust (signalling), fostering identification, and growing employees' perceived work value. Since trust and identification are key branding functions, integrating CSR into organisational positioning significantly strengthens the employer brand.

Research indicates that the positive relationship between corporate social responsibility (CSR) and organisational performance is particularly pronounced in cultural contexts where CSR is highly valued. For instance, Griffin et al. (2020) demonstrate that CSR contributes more significantly to firm value in environments with stronger societal expectations for responsible business practices. Similarly, Albuquerque et al. (2020) find that companies with higher environmental and social performance experienced more resilient stock returns during market downturns. Their study also highlights the role of customer loyalty and investor segmentation in enhancing the crisis resilience of high-CSR companies.

Increasingly, employees—especially those from the Millennial and Gen Z cohorts—are seeking purpose-driven employment aligned with their personal values. According to Deloitte's 2024 Global Millennial and Gen Z Survey, nearly half of these employees factor in a company's social and environmental commitments when evaluating potential employers. Many even state they would decline a job offer from an organisation lacking strong CSR values. 67% of Gen Zs and 72% of millennials feel their job allows them to make a meaningful contribution to society.

Consequently, a robust ESG (Environmental, Social, and Governance) strategy has become a critical component of employer branding. Not only does it attract socially conscious talent, but it also aids in employee retention. The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM, 2022) reports that while the average cost of hiring a new employee is approximately \$4,700, replacing an employee can cost up to 50–60% of their annual salary. Organisations with strong ESG practices tend to have lower turnover rates, as employees are more engaged and aligned with corporate values.

Organisations and Social Media

New communication technology is transforming the world in unpredictable and profound ways. Cutlip, Centre, and Broom highlight the rise of telecommunities as a significant feature of these changes. Mirković et al. (2019) argue that the development of digital technologies has also impacted employers, who increasingly recognise the necessity of adapting to new communication methods. Social networks have become a vital source of information and a universal communication channel that connects individuals with shared interests and keeps them united. Moreover, these platforms serve as ideal media for organisations to disseminate information swiftly, economically, and efficiently to diverse target audiences. They are used for business development, brand building, and maintaining and strengthening corporate identity and reputation. Bugliarellou (cited in Prelog, 2018, p. 15) views social networks as powerful communities based on common interests that transcend national boundaries.

Numerous studies indicate that social media play a pivotal role in shaping employer branding (EB) efforts. McFarland & Ployhart (2015, p. 1653) noted that these platforms can fundamentally transform various human resource (HR) functions, particularly recruitment. The rise of social media has altered how individuals access and interpret information about prospective employers, offering them tools to generate and disseminate content widely. This dynamic fosters a more participatory environment in which employer brand perceptions are jointly constructed by both organisational actors and external stakeholders (Yu et al., 2022, p. 517).

According to the *Digital 2021* report, 53.6% of the global population uses social networks as new channels for communication, information seeking, brand engagement, and even exploring employment opportunities online (Lissaneddine et al., 2021). This trend has generated increased demand for digitised information. Digital communication has become the norm within the business world (Küpper et al., 2019), and organisations have capitalised on this opportunity to enhance their reputation management (Vlastelica, 2016).

Unlike traditional communication methods, digital channels enable organisations to engage in dialogue with stakeholders and deliver messages rich in relevant content tailored to recipients' needs (Ivančević &

Vlastelica, 2022, p. 79). Kraljević and Perkov (2014, p. 205), authors of the textbook *Management of Market Communications*, argue that social networks have become indispensable interactive communication channels where particular attention must be paid to published content. This content is crucial for developing a successful long-term strategy and creating a satisfied target audience. Oladipo et al. (2013) observe that organisations today operate in an environment characterised by constant and often unpredictable change. Social networks and mobile devices have revolutionised the Internet, facilitating new ways for individuals to connect (Kietzmann, Hermkens, McCarthy & Silvestre, 2011; Kietzmann, Silvestre, McCarthy & Pitt, 2012, as cited in Dabirian, Kietzmann & Diba, 2017). Furthermore, Cascio (2014) emphasises that only organisations that innovatively engage in human resource development will remain competitive in the marketplace, enabling employees to realise their potential fully.

Relations between the Concepts

Pološki Vokić, Tkalac Verčić, & Sinčić Ćorić (2021, pp. 19–20) in their research assert that scholars have identified numerous elements crucial for evaluating employer desirability. Among these, particularly significant are organisational image and reputation, recognisable products, services, and brands, comprehensive internal and external communication, human resource management activities emphasising attracting potential employees, a pleasant and motivating working environment, and opportunities for additional education and development. Corporate social responsibility (CSR) helps organisations build a better reputation among internal and external stakeholders. By attracting, motivating, employing, and retaining talent, CSR practices contribute to employer branding (Suliman & Al-Khatib, 2014) and are an important element of overall communication with target audiences. Research indicates that effective CSR practices send positive signals to prospective employees (Gond et al., 2017). Suliman & Al-Khatib (2014) highlight a strong and significant connection between social responsibility and employment. Kim (2016) emphasises that successful communication regarding CSR should reflect the organisation's commitment, positive impact, motivation, and implementation of related activities. Social networks influence the increase in employer desirability and serve as the primary platform for external employer branding (Backhaus, 2016). Employer desirability is understood as an advantage perceived by both potential

and current employees when working for a particular organisation (Berthon, Ewing & Hah, 2005). According to Holtbrugge & Kreppel (2015), such employers have greater opportunities to recruit qualified professionals (Kucherov & Zhiltsova, 2020, p. 163) and retain their current workforce. Social networks have evolved into an extension of public relations and have become an indispensable component of organisational communication, enabling organisations to reach their target audiences at minimal cost. Numerous studies have shown that using social networks in employer branding increases organisational attractiveness and fosters the intention to apply for jobs (Carpentier et al., 2017; Kissel & Büttgen, 2015; Sivertzen et al., 2013). This practice facilitates the development of a positive employer brand and its attractiveness by sharing accurate and comprehensive information with job candidates regarding organisational culture, working environment, career advancement opportunities, and business ethics (El Zoghbi & Aoun, 2016). Social networks enable organisations to communicate with target groups and promote their corporate brand, products, and services (Etter, Ravasi, & Colleoni, 2019). Many organisations use them to complement traditional recruitment tools (Koch, Gerber, & De Klerk, 2018). These digital platforms emerged as new recruitment tools in the mid-1990s (Parry & Tyson, 2008) and have revolutionised how individuals seek employment (Birchfield, 2002). We can conclude that social networks owned by organisations have become instrumental in attracting talent. These platforms enable employers to convey brand personality and organisational image in ways that enhance perceived attractiveness and positively influence job-seeker behaviour. Therefore, developing a coherent and purposeful content strategy is essential for maximising the effectiveness of social media in employer branding (Liadeli, Sotgiu & Verlegh, 2023, p. 421).

Research Question, Hypothesis and Method

This research aimed to determine whether employer branding activities are related to the ranking of the *Most Desirable Employer* in Bosnia and Herzegovina, and to examine the correlation of employer branding with corporate social responsibility (CSR) and organisational representation on social networks from the perspectives of both current and potential employees. Accordingly, the central hypothesis of this study was formulated as follows: "There is a positive correlation between employer branding, corporate social responsibility, and organisational representation on social networks."

Procedures and Samples

The analysis included 15 organisations identified as the most desirable employers across the 15 largest sectors in Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2021. The research was conducted among 200 employees from these selected organisations and an equal number of final-year students from various academic fields.

Some authors, such as Wells (1993), argue that using student samples may compromise the validity and generalizability of research results due to the lack of representativeness and the unique characteristics of that population. Conversely, Calder et al. (1981) assert that students are acceptable research subjects when focused on testing theories and examining multivariate relationships among constructs, rather than univariate differences between samples. Students have also been used as research subjects in studies conducted by Berthon et al. (2005), Sivertzen et al. (2013), Kissel & Büttgen (2015), Tkalac Verčić & Sinčić Ćorić (2018), and Kucherov & Zhilstova (2020).

Among all respondents who participated in the research, 51% were job seekers, while 49% were currently employed.

Instrument

The Employer Attractiveness Scale (EmpAt), developed by Berthon et al. (2005), initially comprising 32 items, was used to explore and assess the dimensions of employer branding attractiveness. A 42-item scale formulated by Duygu Turker (2008) was employed to measure corporate social responsibility. This scale was developed after thoroughly analysing existing scales, addressing deficiencies noted by practitioners. A 55-item scale developed by Kissel & Büttgen (2015) was used to measure organisational representation on social networks. All scales were translated into Croatian from their original English versions. In line with the theoretical framework, the scales were adjusted by excluding sets of questions from the original instruments that did not align with the research model. Items were measured using a five-point Likert scale (1 – completely disagree, 5 – completely agree) or frequency scale (1 – never, 5 – always). Additionally, a qualitative study was conducted via a focus group to assess participants' perspectives on the clarity and comprehensibility of the measuring instruments. The focus group consisted of final-year students and current employees from the organisations serving as units of analysis since the qualitative research

was explicitly related to the established research model, and its objectives aligned with those of the main study.

Results and Discussion

Initially, the reliability and validity of the measurement instrument were tested. Both convergent and discriminant validity were assessed. Reliability was evaluated through the standardised loadings of each factor, alongside Cronbach's Alpha values. The Cronbach's Alpha reliability test results for all variables were acceptable (Table 1). For the predictor variable QM, Cronbach's Alpha ranged between 0.905 and 0.913.

Table 1

Construct validity: Reliability test of all statements/questions in the model

Cronbach's Alpha	Number of statements/questions
0.982	51

Source: Authors

To determine discriminant validity, the Fornell-Larcker criterion (1982) was applied. According to this criterion, each construct's square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) should exceed its correlations with all other constructs. In the correlation matrix (Table 3), the diagonal values represent the square roots of the AVE. They are higher than the off-diagonal correlations, indicating that discriminant validity of the measurement instrument has been achieved. Based on the results of the presented analysis, it can be concluded that all measurement models meet the criteria for reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity. The models show satisfactory fit with the data, allowing for testing and analysing correlations within the proposed structural model.

Convergent validity refers to how a construct, measured by its observed variables (indicators), aligns with theoretical expectations. According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), convergent validity is established when the AVE for a construct exceeds 0.50. Table 2 presents the calculated AVE and Composite Reliability (CR) values. All AVE values exceed the recommended threshold of 0.5, while CR values for all latent variables exceed the recommended value of 0.7 (Hair et al., 2010). Therefore, all latent variables fall within the acceptable range, confirming the convergent validity of the measurement instrument.

Table 2
Reliability and convergent validity test results

Constructs	Variables			
EMPLOYER BRANDING	BREND1	17	4.24	1.065
	BREND 2		4.56	0.884
	BREND 3		3.82	1.121
	BREND 4		4.39	1.068
	BREND 5		3.95	1.005
	BREND 6		3.36	1.219
	BREND 7		3.65	1.000
	BREND 8		3.77	1.055
	BREND 9		3.77	0.937
	BREND 10		3.78	0.955
	BREND 11		4.24	1.065
	BREND 12		4.56	0.884
	BREND 13		3.82	1.121
	BREND 14		4.39	1.068
	BREND 15		3.95	1.005
	BREND 16		3.36	1.219
	BREND 17		3.65	1.000
CORPORATE SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY	DOP 1	15	3.97	1.055
	DOP 2		3.71	0.937
	DOP 3		3.58	0.955
	DOP 4		4.21	0.790
	DOP 5		3.91	1.050
	DOP 6		3.97	1.040
	DOP 7		4.20	1.020
	DOP 8		4.60	0.900
	DOP 9		3.80	0.940
	DOP 10		4.20	0.879
	DOP 11		3.90	0.960
	DOP 12		3.79	0.870
	DOP 13		3.90	0.900
	DOP 14		3.70	0.879
	DOP 15		3.68	1.020
ORGANIZATIONAL REPRESENTATION ON SOCIAL NETWORKS	ORG 1	6	3.94	1.060
	ORG 2		3.91	1.080
	ORG 3		3.96	1.090
	ORG 4		3.62	1.022
	ORG 5		3.74	1.034
	ORG 6		3.87	1.040
	ORG 7		3.85	1.030
	ORG 8		3.97	0.900
	ORG 9		3.98	0.790
	ORG 10		3.65	0.960
	ORG 11		3.42	0.970
	ORG 12		3.98	0.970
	ORG 13		4.50	0.990
	ORG 14		4.80	1.098
	ORG 15		4.78	1.079
	ORG 16		4.80	1.098
DESIRABILITY OF THE EMPLOYER	NAJP 1	3	3.80	1.087
	NAJP 2		3.70	1.020
	NAJP 3		3.90	1.057

Source: Authors

In Table 3, the correlation matrix shows that the values along the diagonal, representing the square roots of the AVE, exceed the corresponding off-diagonal values. This indicates that the measurement instrument has achieved discriminant validity.

Table 3
Correlation matrix

	BREND	DOP	ORG	NAJP
BREND	0.871			
DOP	0.403	0.830		
ORG	0.373	0.214	0.950	
NAJP	0.497	0.468	0.239	0.836

Note: The correlation values displayed below the diagonal represent correlations for $p < 0.05$.

Source: Authors.

The measurement models demonstrate satisfactory fit with the data, allowing for testing the proposed structural model and analysing the presented correlations. The model includes four variables: two related to employer branding, corporate social responsibility - indirectly influencing employer desirability - and organisational representation on social networks, which moderates the relationship between branding and employer desirability. One of the key stages that every prospective employee must go through is the job selection process. Gatewood, Gowan, and Lautenschlager (1993) argue that the initial step in this process involves evaluating information received from employment sources, such as job advertisements, media messages, and word-of-mouth communication. Ewing et al. (2002) suggest that strategies for attracting and retaining employees will need to be adapted in the context of the knowledge economy. Berthon et al. (2005) explain that the importance of employer branding and employment advertising will increase as companies strive to attract and retain employees. These authors further suggest that, to successfully compete in attracting talent, companies must understand the factors that contribute to employer attractiveness and incorporate them into their employer brand (Berthon et al., 2005). Prospective employees are more likely to apply to organisations with a positive corporate reputation, and the stronger the reputation, the more attractive the organisation appears to potential candidates (Edwards, 2010).

The fit indices obtained for the second model are presented in Table 4. The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio ($\chi^2/df = 1.971$) is below the recommended threshold of $\chi^2/df \leq 3$, indicating appropriate model specification. The Root Mean Square Error of

Approximation (RMSEA) is 0.069, suggesting that the model fit is within acceptable limits. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI = 0.901), along with other fit indices related to explained variance—Normed Fit Index (NFI = 0.795) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI = 0.798)—fall within the expected range between 0 and 1.

The model explains 45.5% of the variance in the dependent variable ($R^2 = 0.455$). The variable “Employer Desirability,” treated as a dependent variable, was constructed as a proxy for ranking the 15 most desirable organisations. Given the statistically significant correlation between employer desirability and employer branding, it is conclusively demonstrated that the operationalisation of these variables is justified.

Table 4

The acceptance indices for the structural model

The acceptance index	Recommended values	GFI values
χ^2/df	≤ 5.00	1.971
AGFI	> 0.80	0.913
RMSEA	< 0.08	0.069
NFI	≥ 0.70	0.795
CFI	≥ 0.70	0.798
GFI	≥ 0.70	0.901

Source: Authors

The research results have confirmed the hypothesis: “There is a positive correlation between employer branding, corporate social responsibility, and organisational representation on social networks.” The results indicate that the predictor variable, employer branding, significantly influences employer desirability among current and potential employees. The moderating variable, organisational representation on social networks, has a significant impact on the indirect relationship with employer desirability. The findings confirm that organisations perceived as socially responsible possess recognisable employer branding and are considered more desirable. Furthermore, the analysis reveals no differences in perceptions of the relationship between socially responsible business practices and organisational representation among current and potential employees on social networks.

Respondents generally share the view that they continuously evaluate employers and that the overall

work environment—not just salary—makes an employer desirable. According to the respondents, advantages that distinguish one employer from another include:

- a balanced relationship between income, work engagement, and opportunities for advancement,
- socially responsible behaviour regarding care for the local community and the environment,
- opportunities for additional training,
- a comfortable working environment for all employees, and
- employee satisfaction through monitoring employee attitudes.

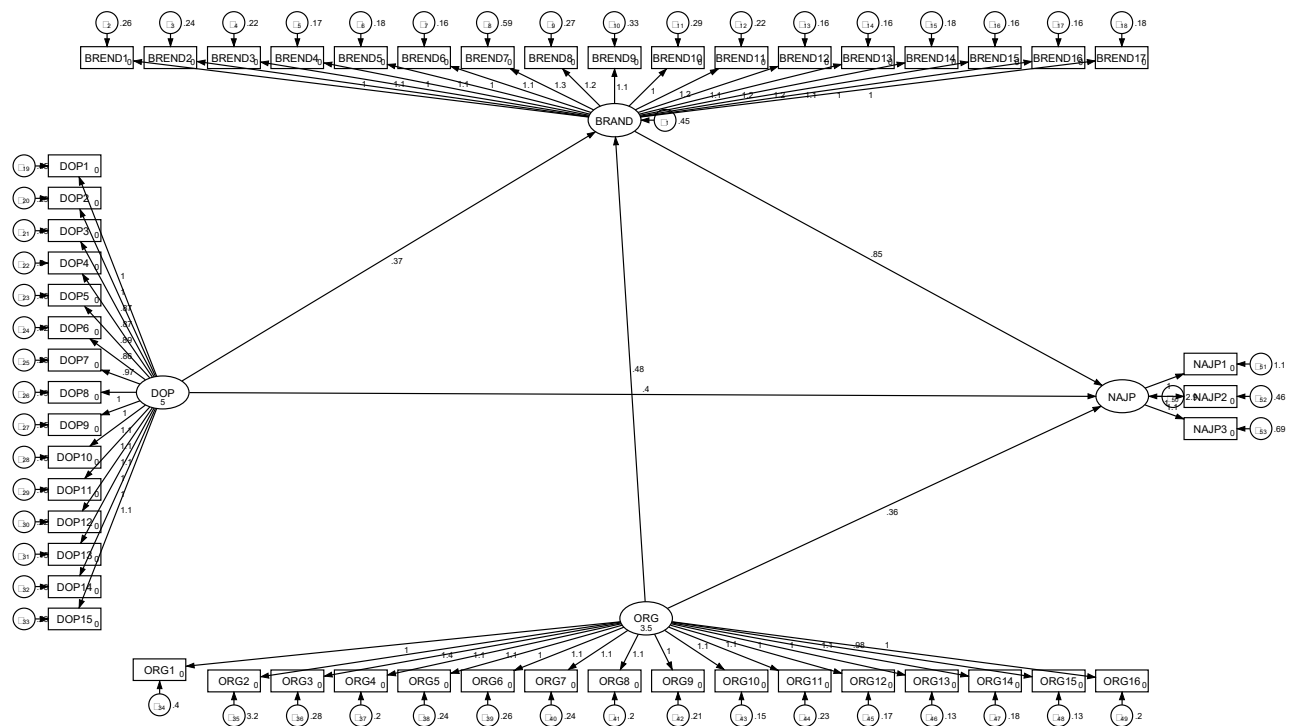
Students generally agree that they continuously monitor employers, focusing on their social activities, volunteer engagements, and employee relations. They are concerned about employers who neglect the business environment and interpersonal relations at work, fail to adequately value labour, or engage in uncontrolled capital acquisition at the expense of fair employee compensation.

Both students and current employees emphasised the importance of employers maintaining high standards in treating people and the necessity for social media content to be complete, diverse, and credible. For students, employers’ social networks are the primary source of information through which they seek a realistic impression of what it is like to work for a particular organisation. Therefore, they emphasise the need to see content that reflects real everyday situations – such as the appearance of the workplace, glimpses of the working atmosphere, transparency in work processes, stories from current employees, socially responsible activities, teamwork, and the practical application of organisational values.

Unlike current employees, students expressed that it is essential for them that the employer values employee creativity and knows how to nurture it. While job security – i.e., assurance against layoffs – is extremely important for current employees, the most important factor for students is career development opportunities. Additionally, students value employers who contribute to societal welfare and allow them to volunteer, engage in socially responsible work, and propose initiatives that the employer will support.

Figure 1

Graphic presentation of the research results



Source: Authors

In his study, Sokro (2012) found that opportunities for professional development, job security, recognition and respect, and corporate image are the most important factors influencing employee retention. Research also indicates that non-financial aspects of the employer brand have a greater impact on employee attraction and retention than financial incentives (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). According to Dabirian et al. (2019), employer branding is defined as an organisational strategy to differentiate the organisation from its competitors, characterised by social, economic, developmental, reputational, and distinctive values. Turban & Greening (1997) demonstrated a link between higher CSR performance ratings and better corporate reputation, showing that stronger social performance ratings attracted higher-quality job candidates. Barnett and Salomon (2006) summarised the benefits of CSR in five categories: easier resource acquisition, attraction of high-quality employees, more effective promotion of products and services, generation of new business opportunities, and the creation of competitive advantages.

As part of the research, the results of testing the attitudes of both potential and current employees were presented regarding the correlation between employer branding

and its dimensions of attractiveness: interest, social, economic, developmental, and application values.

Gomes & Neves (2011) identified a strong and positive relationship between organisational attractiveness and corporate image, employer brand, and reputation. Cable & Turban (2001) argue that candidates' knowledge of an employer comprises three dimensions: familiarity with the employer, the employer's reputation, and the employer's image. These dimensions influence job application intentions and decision-making (Cable & Turban, 2001).

Within this paper, we also examined interaction effects to determine whether the two specified groups of respondents—current employees and job seekers—differed in their ranking of employer branding dimensions. The fit indices obtained for both groups are within the recommended acceptable ranges. For the subsample of current employees, the fit indices are as follows: $\chi^2/df = 3.541$; RMSEA = 0.0547, indicating an acceptable model fit. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.871, while the Comparative Fit Index (CFI) is 0.81 and the Normed Fit Index (NFI) is 0.845. These values fall within the acceptable range between 0 and 1. The fit

indices for the combined respondent categories are: $\chi^2/df = 2.974$; RMSEA = 0.069, confirming that the model fit remains acceptable. The Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) is 0.914, with CFI = 0.795 and NFI = 0.914, all within the acceptable range between 0 and 1.

The established model, in which employer branding is positioned as a variable, showed that both groups of respondents exhibit significant differences based on the acceptance index results, with a p-value less than 0.05. This indicates that notable differences exist between the subsamples and that the ranking of employer branding dimensions depends on the specific group to which respondents belong – namely, whether they are current employees or job seekers. Furthermore, each branding dimension's influence on the latent employer branding variable is markedly stronger among currently employed respondents. Chhabra & Sharma (2014) argue that the effectiveness of employer branding strategies depends on management's ability to create the employer's attractiveness successfully. These authors also differentiate between employer brand and employer attractiveness regarding brand promotion. Promoting the brand internally increases employee loyalty, while external brand promotion enhances the organisation's attractiveness to potential candidates. It can be concluded that employer branding strategies strengthen employer attractiveness and improve corporate reputation (Bakanauskiene et al., 2017). Numerous communication activities, both formal and informal, are aimed at enhancing employees' sense of belonging, thereby positioning them as ambassadors of the organisation.

The primary group that can benefit from research on branding and employer desirability are employers, many of whom may lack sufficient knowledge about employer branding and, as a result, do not know how to attract and retain the most competitive workforce—one that can significantly contribute to the company's overall competitiveness. On the other hand, the findings of this type of research may also be valuable to the available workforce. When highly qualified individuals are informed about recognising desirable employers, they can make more deliberate and strategic career decisions, avoid impulsive employment changes, and potentially view their current employer more favourably. Therefore, it is crucial that employers develop well-considered staffing and recruitment policies, as poor decisions in this area can have a negative impact on labour market dynamics. Here are some practical recommendations, which would further enhance human resource

management and help organisations to attract talent and hold current valuable employees:

- Develop transparent and authentic employer branding strategies, including an Employee Value Proposition (EVP) that aligns with the organisational culture and values.
- Segment communication and recruitment approaches by generation (e.g., for Gen Z: focus on values, career purpose, and flexible work; for Millennials: emphasise career development, hybrid work, and a values-driven company culture; for Gen X: offer job stability and clear performance-based recognition).
- Implement generation-sensitive retention strategies by providing diverse benefits packages (e.g., mental health support, childcare options for Millennials, pension advice for older generations).
- Promote internal branding and employee ambassadorship to empower employees as authentic company representatives.
- Integrate Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) into HR branding efforts to strengthen the employer's reputation and appeal.
- Enhance digital visibility and transparency by sharing content that reflects everyday work life, team dynamics, leadership style, and growth opportunities.
- Create inclusive and flexible work environments by promoting flexibility in working hours, locations, and roles—especially attractive to Gen Z and Millennials.
- Support lifelong learning and upskilling through tailored training programs and mentoring initiatives.
- Strengthen recruitment marketing tailored to each generation's preferences through social media platforms.
- Think outside the box by offering unique workplace benefits such as nursing rooms, music or relaxation spaces, on-site gyms, flexible working hours, wellness programs, and creative spaces for collaboration and innovation.

Conclusion

For countries in transition, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina, research on employer branding is particularly significant, given the relatively low presence of organisations that prioritise employee well-being alongside profit, compared to developed countries. Since the workforce plays a crucial role in generating overall

social value and capital, and in shaping the development of the broader community, this topic represents a key area of research for understanding and advancing social development.

The findings of this study demonstrate a clear correlation between employer branding and employer desirability, with the proposed model explaining 45.5% of the variance. Additionally, the research highlights the influence of perceived dimensions of employer branding attractiveness, as seen from the perspectives of both current and potential employees. These insights offer practical implications: employers can use the findings to refine their recruitment and retention strategies, thereby attracting a more competitive workforce to enhance the organisation's performance and market position. On the other hand, job seekers and employees alike may benefit from these results by more easily identifying desirable employers, avoiding impulsive job changes, and gaining a deeper appreciation for the strengths of their current workplaces.

In addition, this paper provides a comprehensive review of the literature, practical conditions, and guidelines for implementing employer branding, contributing to a deeper understanding of the topic. This can be particularly useful for researchers and practitioners who need to grasp the concept of employer branding in both theoretical and applied contexts. By collecting and synthesising relevant literature, this study contributes to the theoretical integration of various sources on employer branding, corporate social responsibility, and organisational representation on social networks, including approaches to measuring these constructs. Given the lack of professional literature and textbooks on this subject in Bosnia and Herzegovina and the wider region—particularly in the fields of employer branding and organizational communication via social media—this work also contributes to the advancement of scientific discourse. It enhances the body of knowledge related to the practical application of these concepts in the strategic operations of organizations operating in the Bosnian and Herzegovinian labor market.

One limitation of this study lies in the factorial definition method used to operationalise the variable of the "most desirable employer." Additionally, the research focuses on the behaviour of potential and currently employed

respondents at a specific point in time. A longitudinal study might yield different results with the same participants because individuals are subject to behavioural changes and shifts in certain personality traits throughout their lives.

Monitoring the behaviour of the available workforce over multiple time periods using the same SEM model could help clarify whether there are changes in the influence of branding factors on the ranking and performance of the most desirable employer over time—and, if so, what those changes are.

Another limitation of the study is the geographical scope of the sample, which includes only respondents from Bosnia and Herzegovina. Furthermore, the sample was limited to post-professional students and currently employed individuals, which may not fully represent the diversity of the labour force.

Future research should consider expanding the sample to a regional level, especially since many of the companies ranked among the 15 most desirable employers in Bosnia and Herzegovina also operate in other countries across the region. Researchers may also explore differences between specific groups based on demographic or other individual characteristics. This would allow for an examination of whether the causal relationships in the research model differ between groups—for example, between male and female respondents, individuals with varying education levels, different monthly incomes, or different lengths of work experience.

Moreover, by developing a more comprehensive SEM model that captures the relationships among key variables within the employer branding process itself, researchers could replicate this study to compare the findings with those obtained from different samples.

Finally, future studies may focus on longitudinal analysis. Such research would offer insight into whether behavioural factors influencing perceptions of the most desirable employer—and their relationship to employer branding—remain consistent over time or undergo significant changes. Such research results would answer the question whether consistent behavioural patterns exist in the labour market, regardless of the period, or whether notable shifts occur across different phases.

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Razmerje med blagovno znamko delodajalca, družbeno odgovornostjo podjetij in komunikacijo v družabnih medijih

Izvleček

Cilj te raziskave je bil preučiti, ali so dejavnosti povezane z blagovno znamko delodajalca (employer branding - EB) povezane z uvrstitvijo na lestvico najbolj zaželenih delodajalcev v Bosni in Hercegovini (BiH), ter raziskati korelacijo med EB, družbeno odgovornostjo podjetij (corporate social responsibility - CSR) in predstavitvijo organizacij v družbenih medijih. Raziskava je bila izvedena med zaposlenimi v izbranih organizacijah uvrščenih na lestvico najbolj zaželenih delodajalcev in potencialnimi zaposlenimi, študenti zadnjega letnika različnih akademskih področij. Medtem ko v razvitih državah obstajajo specializirana podjetja, ki se osredotočajo na privabljanje in zaposlovanje talentov kot del strategij EB, delodajalci v BiH še niso dosegli te ravni dolgoročnega načrtovanja delovne sile in v celoti prepoznali strateških koristi, ki jih lahko ponudi EB. Ugotovitve kažejo, da na privlačnost delodajalca med sedanjimi in potencialnimi zaposlenimi pomembno vpliva pojasnjevalna spremenljivka EB. Rezultati tudi potrjujejo, da organizacije, ki se jih dojema kot družbeno odgovorne, uživajo močnejšo blagovno znamko delodajalca in se štejejo za bolj zaželeni. Poleg tega analiza ni pokazala pomembnih razlik v dojemanju odnosa med družbeno odgovornimi poslovnimi praksami in predstavitvijo organizacije v družabnih medijih med sedanjimi in potencialnimi zaposlenimi. Ključni prispevki študije vključujejo ugotovitev, da je EB pozitivno povezana z zaželenostjo delodajalca in da je očitni vpliv zaznanih dimenzij privlačnosti EB iz perspektive sedanjih in potencialnih zaposlenih.

Ključne besede: blagovna znamka delodajalca, družbena odgovornost podjetij, komunikacija v družabnih medijih, najbolj zaželen delodajalec