



Effect of Employer Branding on Talent Attraction in Ghana: Exploring the Roles of Employer Trust and Social Media Engagement

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ABSTRACT

Purpose- This study assesses the effect of employer branding on talent attraction, exploring the Roles of employer trust and social media engagement. The aim is to understand how these dynamics shape the intentions of job seekers, particularly university graduates in Ghana, to engage with and ultimately join prospective employers.

Methodology- A quantitative approach was employed, drawing on data collected from 320 final-year students across three leading public universities in Ghana. Using structured questionnaires, the study measured perceptions of employer branding, trust, social media engagement, and attraction. Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) was applied to test the hypothesized relationships among the variables.

Findings- The results show that strong employer branding significantly enhances talent attraction. Notably, employer trust was found to partially mediates relationship between employer branding and talent attraction, Additionally, social media engagement served as a positive moderator between employer branding and employer trust, demonstrating that active, meaningful interactions on digital platforms can strengthen trust and, in turn, increase the attractiveness of the employer brand.

Limitations of the study- This research is limited by its cross-sectional design and the use of self-reported data from university students, which may not capture broader employee sentiments or cultural differences. The Ghanaian context also suggests caution in generalizing the findings across regions or industries without further validation.

Practical Implications- Organizations aiming to attract top talent, especially from younger, digitally savvy demographics, should invest in building credible and engaging employer brands. Leveraging social media for transparent communication, interactive content, and authentic storytelling can enhance trust and improve recruitment effectiveness.

Originality/value- This study adds to the growing research on employer branding in emerging economies by uniquely incorporating trust as a mediator and social media engagement as a moderator. It offers practical, data-based guidance for HR professionals and brand strategists aiming to position their organizations as preferred employers in a competitive talent market.

KEY WORDS

Employer Branding, Talent Attraction, Employer Trust, Social Media Engagement

JEL Code: M12, M16, M53, M54

DOI : [10.46287/SCOB4054](https://doi.org/10.46287/SCOB4054)

1 INTRODUCTION

In the current competitive and evolving business environment, retaining and recruiting talent is no longer as easy as it once was. Organizations have been employing employer branding as a human resource management approach to influence existing and potential employees' perceptions of organizations as desirable places to work (Kalinska-Kula & Staniec, 2021; Yasin et al, 2023). Employer branding refers to the strategic process by which organizations develop and communicate a unique identity and value proposition to both current and potential employees (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). According to Theurer et

al., (2018), the outcome of this process is employer brand which is a company's reputation and identity as a place to work, shaped by its values, culture, employee experience, and growth opportunities. Employer branding comprises an employer's reputation, values, culture, and work life, which plays a pivotal role in talent attraction, especially as prospective employees become more and more informed and savvy (Hakam et al, 2024).

The demand for talented and committed professionals has increased more intensely, compelling organizations to compete not only through compensation packages but also through their image and organizational culture. Research informs us that employer branding profoundly affects job applicants' attitudes and decisions during the hiring process (Bahri-Ammari et al, 2022). It communicates a firm's personality, values, mission, and worker experience, thereby affecting talent attraction and retention.

A strong employer brand makes an organization more appealing, getting it onto the employers of choice list, particularly among the younger generations who value most organizational values, work-life balance, and social responsibility (Randstad, 2025). Employer branding may also be a psychological contract, delineating expectations between employer and employee even before formal engagement, thereby reducing information asymmetry and promoting harmonized expectations.

Trust from the employer is an important component in this process. Trust, which is created through transparency, ethical behaviour, and employee advocacy, has a tangible influence on the perceptions and behaviours of job seekers. Companies that establish employer trust have improved recruitment results, increased candidate quality, and stronger employee loyalty (Edelman, 2024). With the age of the internet, where reputation can be quickly and globally challenged, it is more critical than ever to maintain trust.

Social media has also heightened the importance of employer branding and trust. LinkedIn, Facebook, X (formerly Twitter), and Instagram have revolutionized how companies engage with potential employees. Social media engagement is now a key aspect of employer branding strategies, which enable firms to share their culture, values, worker experiences, and job openings in real time (Vanshika, 2024). The two-way communication facilitates building transparency and trust with prospective candidates.

Job candidates frequently use social media to evaluate firms, find authentic employee feedback, and compare firm cultures. Such organizations with a strong and positive social media platform are expected to bring in good talent. However, bad or inactive social media content might damage an employer's reputation and demotivate talent. Strategic use of social media thus serves as a recruitment and marketing vehicle by allowing companies to project an attractive employer brand and engage prospective employees in person.

While employer branding effects on talent attraction are acknowledged, the mediating and moderating processes explaining why and how these effects occur have not been adequately explored. Further, the theoretical roles of employer trust and social media usage have not yet been explored in the African context, particularly in developing economies such as Ghana. This is significant since employer branding processes are likely to differ across cultural, economic, and technological settings.

Furthermore, the employer trust as a psychological mediator's function within the employer branding-talent attraction link is theoretically dense but empirically under-investigated. Job candidates not only judge the symbolic presentation of a company but also infer the company's dependability, moral stance, and corporate social responsibility from a number of indicators, including web reviews, corporate social responsibility initiatives, and communication transparency (Alaina & Jean, 2024). Therefore, it is vital to understand how trust reinforces or moderate's employer branding persuasion on potential workers. Social media engagement has also emerged as a significant tool in talent acquisition activities. Firms that post actively positive information about their workplace, values, and culture on social media become more successful in attracting passive job hunters and opening up their pool of talent (Lori, 2024). Even as its role grows stronger, the combination of social media engagement and employer branding in how they form talent attraction has yet to be fully examined, particularly empirically and in theory. Research that amalgamates these variables under a single model is needed in order to better comprehend their synergistic effects.

Worldwide talent market trends like digitalization, remote work, and generational change are redesigning what talent seeks from an employer. Millennials and Gen Z workers, especially, are increasingly drawn to organizations that have similar personal values as they do, offer meaning, inclusivity, and flexibility. These preferences are often communicated and balanced via employer

branding vehicles, especially social media. Organizations thus have to develop employer brands that convey competence and create trust, authenticity, and engagement.

The interest in investigating employer branding in terms of trust and social media is also motivated by pragmatism. Companies invest substantial sums in branding and recruitment marketing but may lack an adequate comprehension of how that results in concrete talent ROI. For example, companies launch employer brand campaigns or partner in corporate social responsibility initiatives, but may fail to instill the trust or engagement that can enable them to capitalize on those initiatives in terms of attracting talent. Also, poorly thought-out or uncoordinated social media initiatives can destroy otherwise strong employer brands, creating a gap between perceived and actual realities of the workplace.

Accordingly, this research focuses on the influence of employer branding on talent attraction, with particular interest in the mediating role of employer trust and the moderating role of social media use. This research will attempt to shed more light on the effect of employer branding on the attraction of job seekers and the vehicles through which such an effect is supported or constrained. As prompted by the identified gaps and the scope of this research, the following research questions guide the research: What is the influence of employer branding on talent attraction? Does employer trust mediate between employer branding and talent attraction? Does social media activity mediate the employer branding and talent attraction relationship? The study also pursues the following objectives: To investigate the impact of employer branding on talent attraction. Also, investigate the mediating impact of employer trust between the employer branding and talent attraction relationship. And test the moderating impact of social media activity on the employer branding and talent attraction relationship.

2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND CONCEPTUAL MODEL

The present research builds on two prevailing theories. Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973) and Social Exchange Theory (SET) (Blau, 1964) are used to explain the influence of employer branding on attracting talent and how social media engagement and employer trust play important roles.

Signaling Theory, initially proposed by Spence (1973), remains relevant in modern recruitment literature as it explains how firms signal intangible characteristics to potential employees in the form of conspicuous signals such as employer branding exercises. In talent attraction, employer branding serves as an information reduction tool to reduce information asymmetry between the organizations and job seekers (Nguyen et al., 2023). Those signals capture the values of the organization, work culture, employee treatment, and career growth opportunities, helping job seekers make rational decisions (Kumari et al., 2024). Effective employer branding that transmits succinct and credible messages tends to create positive impressions, thus promoting the likelihood of hiring top talent that aligns with the values and goals of the organization (Kim & Park, 2022).

Employer branding has emerged as a strategic tool that companies utilize to place themselves in competitive labor markets. The embedded signals of the employer brand convey promises of career growth, diversity, corporate social responsibility, and reputation (Raj & Narayan, 2023). Signaling Theory suggests that the more intense, distinct, and consistent the signals are, the greater their impact in drawing the right candidates. This is most crucial at present in the current age of digital connectivity, where employers' reputations are easily made and transmitted through digital media.

This is supported by Social Exchange Theory (SET) developed by Blau (1964), which emphasizes the reciprocity of relations. It explains how individuals engage in relations such as employment whenever there is a perceived mutual benefit and fairness. In the workplace, this will manifest in the areas of trust, commitment, and perceived organizational support (Zhao et al., 2023). Employer branding based on values such as fairness, integrity, and empowering employees can create robust trustworthiness perceptions, which are central to the social exchange process (Li et al., 2022).

Trust is an essential element in the employer-employee relationship and has also been identified as a key psychological driver bridging employer branding to talent attraction (Jain & Walia, 2022). If applicants sense that an organization is trustworthy, delivering on its promises, treating employees fairly, and investing in professional development, such an employer is likely to attract them. Trust thus acts as a

facilitator between employer branding and talent attraction, translating brand signals into impactful perceptions of organizational reliability and appeal (Obuobisa-Darko & Arthur, 2024).

The relationship between Social Exchange Theory and Signaling Theory is critical in the understanding of the entire talent attraction process. Signaling Theory accounts for how prospective employees perceive and interpret brand signals, and Social Exchange Theory accounts for how they process those signals emotionally and relationally. Together, they provide a combined framework: signaling creates the initial impression, and social exchange seals the decision to engage or apply.

Besides, social media interaction is also identified as a moderator under this model. It enhances the employer brand by boosting the coverage, credibility, and volume of communication for the brand (Tan & Lim, 2023). Social media offers platforms that are interactive in nature where organizations can directly engage with future employees, give real-time communications, and highlight organizational culture through visual content and employee advocacy (Mensah et al., 2023). High levels of engagement enhance brand signals, community, and trust—key considerations that enhance the employer's attractiveness (Boateng & Asare, 2024).

Social media also facilitates two-way communication by allowing job applicants to verify brand commitments, ask questions, and interact with company officials or current workers. This type of interaction verifies or invalidates the signals already acquired, therefore building or dismantling trust. Efficient use of social media interaction improves transparency and reliability, which positively affects job applicants' attitudes (Ofori & Boakye, 2023).

In brief, the theoretical framework underpinning the current research integrates Signalling Theory and Social Exchange Theory to explain how employer branding influences talent attraction. Employer trust acts as a mediator, where it dictates the reception and internalization of employer signals, while social media engagement acts as a moderator in that it dictates the visibility or reality of these signals. Together, the theories offer a robust explanation for psychological and communicative behaviours that offer effective talent attraction in the information age.

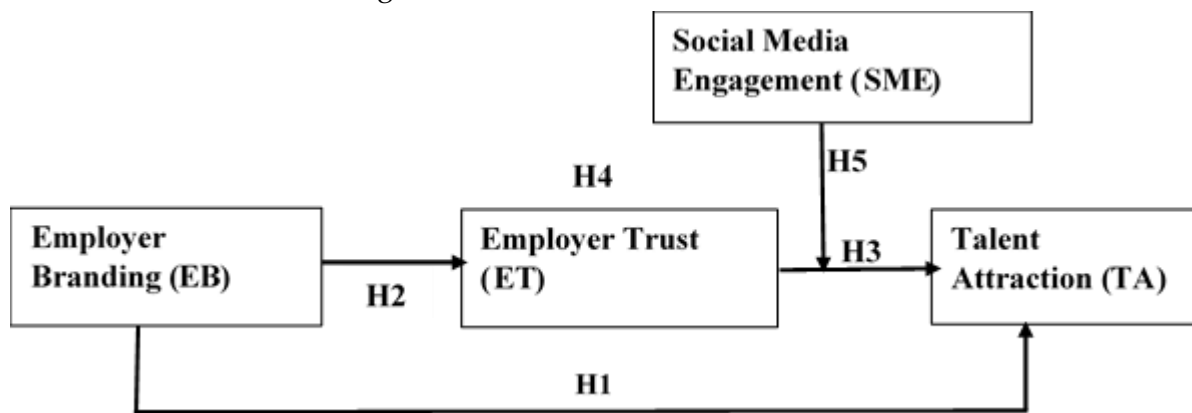


Fig 1. Conceptual Framework

Source: Authors' own elaboration

3 HYPOTHESES FORMATION

3.1 EMPLOYER BRANDING AND TALENT ATTRACTION

Employer branding is essential for recruiting skilled labor, especially in competitive job markets. It involves shaping a positive image of the company as a desirable place to work through consistent messages about its values, work environment, and career growth (Ismail, 2022). Job candidates are drawn to organizations with a strong employer brand that matches their career and personal goals (Mensah & Bawole, 2023). Recent studies also highlight the strategic importance of employer branding in recruitment. For instance, Kwame and Opoku (2023) found that organizations with a clear brand identity attracted more competent candidates and gained a better reputation among job seekers. Effective employer branding is no longer limited to large

multinationals; smaller SMEs and public organizations are also heavily investing in employer branding efforts to attract Millennials and Gen Z candidates (Boateng et al., 2022).

Recent empirical research indicates that employer branding has a significant impact on talent attraction, as numerous studies have highlighted its positive effects on a company's reputation and employee engagement. Bothra emphasizes that a strong employer brand enables organizations to position themselves as preferred employers, attracting experienced talent and transforming employees into internal brand ambassadors (Bothra, 2024). Similarly, Stokic & Gardasevic Zivanov, (2023), indicated that a powerful employer brand attracts top talent and also enhances overall organizational performance. Thereby underscoring the need for a structured approach to branding strategies. In the education field, Birajdar et al (2024), found that effective employer branding helps attract and retain key talent, especially by promoting a healthy work-life balance (Birajdar et al., 2024). Additionally, studies on Generation Z candidates reveal that employer branding positively affects their willingness to apply for jobs, with organizational reputation serving as a mediating factor (Jordan & Desiana, 2024; Silva & Dias, 2022). Overall, these findings highlight the vital role of employer branding in attracting talent across different industries. Therefore, it was hypothesized that:

H1. Employer branding has a positive effect on talent attraction.

3.2 EMPLOYER BRANDING AND EMPLOYER TRUST

Employer trust refers to the extent to which potential employees perceive an organization as reliable, fair, and credible in its employer-employee relationships. A stable employer brand is authentic, aiding in the establishment of trust (Adomako & Danso, 2022). When branding messages accurately represent employee experiences and organizational values, credibility is enhanced and trustworthiness is fostered in the minds of potential employees. In recent empirical research, Amoako and Tetteh (2023) demonstrated how employer branding, particularly when delivered through honest and shared narratives, enhances employer intentions and trust in action. Similarly, Osei and Acheampong (2022) asserted that when a perceived genuine employer branding, consistent with company actions, is present, job seekers develop higher affective trust, which constitutes their application intention.

Recent studies show that employer branding significantly boosts employer trust, supported by many research findings. The idea of employer branding not only attracts potential employees but also helps current staff feel comfortable and loyal, which strengthens organizational trust (Ekhsan & Saroh, 2021). Trust is also influenced by brand personality traits, like sincerity, which increase the appeal and impact of the employer brand (Rampl & Kenning, 2014). Additionally, organizational culture plays an important role in shaping employer branding, with trust acting as a mediator in this link (Qamar & Ahmed, 2022). Furthermore, the quality of work life is connected to employer branding through trust, showing that a supportive work environment can reinforce this bond.

Finally, corporate social responsibility (CSR) initiatives are shown to strengthen trust in employer brands, emphasizing the importance of ethical practices in attracting talent (Bustamante, 2018). Collectively, these findings highlight the crucial role of employer branding in building trust within organizations. Accordingly, based on the above, it was hypothesized that:

H2. Employer branding positively affects employer trust.

3.3 MEDIATION AND MODERATION IN EMPLOYER BRANDING RELATIONSHIPS

Emerging research validates the mediating role of employer trust between employer branding and talent attraction. That is, employer branding first builds trust, and this, in turn, demonstrates a higher intention to join or apply to the firm. Owusu and Appiah (2023) suggest that employer trust explains how employer branding leads to favourable job-seeking intentions. In addition to that, social media engagement has been identified as a moderator of the employer branding-talent attraction relationship. Social media allows companies to post real-time employer experiences, recognize achievements, and respond to feedback, making branding efforts more engaging and realistic (Agyemang & Darko, 2024).

Organizations that engage with potential applicants on social media platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter enhance the visibility and credibility of their employer brand. Previous studies assessed the moderating role of social media (Bahri-Ammari et al, 2022; Tanwar & Kumar, 2019; Qamar & Soomro, 2023). This suggests that social media engagement can moderate the relationship between employer trust and talent attraction. Trust in an organization provides the foundation for job seekers' confidence (Bustaman et al, 2020). Still, its impact may be strengthened or weakened depending on how effectively the organization communicates and interacts through social media platforms (Gara et al, 2020). Sule & Wani (2024), posit that active engagement on digital platforms such as LinkedIn, Instagram, and Twitter allows organizations to reinforce their trustworthiness by demonstrating transparency, showcasing authentic employee experiences, and maintaining open communication with potential applicants. This visibility can enhance the credibility of trust signals and make them more salient to job seekers. Conversely, in the absence of social media engagement, even high levels of employer trust may have a weaker effect on talent attraction due to limited exposure and reinforcement of that trust. Based on the discussions above, the hypotheses were formulated as follows

H3. Employer trust positively influences talent attraction.

H4. Employer trust mediates the relationship between employer branding and talent attraction.

H5. Social media engagement moderates the relationship between employer branding and talent attraction in such a manner that the relationship is stronger when social media engagement is high.

3.4 METHODOLOGY

This study employed a quantitative research design, and data for the study were collected from a total of 320 final-year students across three leading public universities in Ghana. These universities were purposively selected because of their prominence and large student population. The respondents were drawn from different faculties to ensure diversity in academic backgrounds and perspectives. A stratified random sampling technique was employed to guarantee proportional representation of students across the three institutions. Within each university, final-year students were grouped according to faculties, and participants were randomly selected from these strata. This approach ensured that the sample reflected a balanced mix of disciplines and minimized bias in participant selection.

Questionnaires provide the advantages of standardized and open responses to multiple questions from a large population or sample; they are also simple, fast, cost-effective, valid, and reliable to complete (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018). Employer trust, social media, talent attraction, and employer branding questionnaires were adapted for this research by reviewing recent validated studies. The survey questionnaire used in the study consisted of six (6) sections. Section A collected respondent demographics. Section B focused on employer branding. The scale used in this section was borrowed from a study by Sindu Bharath and P. Nagesh (2023), which included 15 items rated on a five-point Likert scale from 'Strongly Disagree' to 'Strongly Agree.' Cronbach's alpha coefficient for the employer branding scale was above 0.7. Section C addressed talent attraction. The items were adapted from studies by Younis and Hammad (2022), with 10 items rated on a five-point Likert scale. The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was also above 0.7. Section D examined employer trust. This trust scale was adapted from the Organizational Trust Inventory by Zanabazar et al. (2024), consisting of 12 items measured on a five-point Likert scale. The reliability of this scale, as indicated by Cronbach's alpha which was above 0.7. Section E explored social media engagement. This scale was adapted from Dessart, Veloutsou, and Morgan-Thomas (2023), comprising 10 items based on cognitive, emotional, and behavioural dimensions of engagement. It used a five-point Likert scale, with Cronbach's alpha reliability exceeding 0.7. SPSS (Version 23) was used for Exploratory Factor Analysis, and Amos was employed to perform CFA, Path Estimates, and to analyze the mediation and moderation effects.

3.5 EXPLORATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (EFA)

SPSS (ver. 23) was utilized in computing the EFA. Understanding what makes an organization attractive to potential employees is more important than ever. To explore this, this work set out to analyse how various elements like trust, social media presence, and branding come together to shape the way

people perceive employers. The researcher used Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) as the tool, not just to crunch numbers, but to uncover meaningful patterns in how people respond to different aspects of employer branding. Before diving into the actual findings, we had to ensure our data was good enough for factor analysis. It passed the test with significant results. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure, which tells us how well-suited our data is for this kind of analysis, came out at 0.946, an outstanding result. In simple terms, this means our data was more than adequate, showing strong connections between items. The researcher also looked at Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, which helps us determine whether the relationships in our data are statistically meaningful. The result was highly significant ($\chi^2 = 4310.344$, $df = 153$, $p < 0.001$), further confirming that our dataset was fit for purpose. Even the determinant (2.31E-06), a measure of multicollinearity, was low enough to tell us that while the items were related, they weren't redundant. Altogether, the green lights were flashing: we had a strong, reliable foundation for moving ahead.

Moreover, the results naturally grouped themselves into four distinct clusters or "factors." These groups represent the core themes that emerged from our data. Together, these four factors explained about 72.2% of the total variance, which means they captured most of the meaningful patterns in how people responded. In Talent Attraction, the factor brings together five closely related items that all speak to how appealing an organization is to potential employees. Items like TA1, TA2, and TA5 loaded strongly here (with values above .75), pointing to things like job opportunities, career growth, and organizational reputation. Simply put, this cluster shows what makes an organization stand out in a crowded field and what makes talent say, "I want to work there." On Social Media Engagement, the study found a clear factor made up of items related to how organizations use social media. SME2 through SME5, along with SNE1, loaded heavily here. These items reflect how organizations communicate and connect with audiences online. Whether it is sharing workplace culture, celebrating employee milestones, or engaging with followers, this factor reveals just how powerful digital storytelling has become in building an employer brand. What's especially interesting is that SNE1 (social networking engagement) also appeared here, suggesting that formal branding and casual networking now go hand-in-hand in the digital age. Again, the Employer Trust emerged as a key theme, represented by items like ET2 (.798), ET3 (.573), and ET4 (.697). These items suggest that when people feel their employer is honest, transparent, and dependable, it deeply influences how they view the organization. Trust is not just a nice-to-have; it is a core part of why people join and stay with a company. This factor highlights that building a strong employer brand must go beyond appearances and touch on deeper, ethical foundations. Finally, Employer Branding, the original core concept, employer branding stood strong as its own distinct factor. Items EB1 through EB5 are loaded here, with the highest at .810. These items reflect how people view the overall image, reputation, and identity of an organization as an employer. While some may use the term "employer brand" loosely, our findings confirm it's a real and measurable concept, and one that significantly influences employment decisions.

This analysis tells a bigger story than just numbers and components. It paints a clear picture of the four key pillars organizations must consider when crafting their employer branding strategies. Talent Attraction, they must enquire if they are offering a compelling reason for people to join. And with Social Media Engagement, the firm asks if they are telling the story where people are listening. Also, with Employer Trust, the organization measures whether people can believe in who they are and what they stand for. Lastly, with Employer Branding, the company imagines that they are building a consistent and appealing identity.

These are not abstract ideas; they are actionable areas that organizations can invest in. For example, improving how a company communicates its values on LinkedIn or Instagram can directly impact talent perception. Likewise, earning a reputation for fairness and transparency can build long-term loyalty.

In conclusion, this exploratory factor analysis helped make sense of a complex and evolving field. This study discovered that employer branding is not just one thing; it is a combination of how attractive the organization is, how it engages online, how much people trust it, and how it communicates its identity. These four areas are not only statistically sound but also practically relevant. They provide both scholars and practitioners with a clearer roadmap for understanding and building a meaningful employer brand in today's talent-driven economy.

Table 1. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA)

Rotated Component Matrix				
Measurement Items	Component			
	1	2	3	4
EB1				.810
EB2				.686
EB3				.578
EB4				.565
EB5				.513
TA1	.761			
TA2	.622			
TA3	.759			
TA4	.651			
TA5	.763			
ET2			.798	
ET3			.573	
ET4			.697	
SNE1		.678		
SME2		.733		
SME3		.727		
SME4		.778		
SME5		.799		
KMO and Bartlett's Test				
TVE				72.195
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.				.946
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity		Approx. Chi-Square		4310.344
		df		153
		Sig.		0.000
Determinant				2.31E-06

Note: The extraction was conducted using Principal Component Analysis (PCA). For improved clarity and interpretability, the factor structure was rotated using the Varimax rotation method with Kaiser normalization. The rotation process successfully converged after 5 iterations, indicating a stable and meaningful factor solution.

Source: Authors' own elaboration

3.6 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS (CFA)

The overall fit of the proposed model was assessed using several widely accepted fit indices. The results indicate a generally strong model fit. The chi-square statistic (CMIN = 250.986, df = 119, $p < .05$) was statistically significant, as often expected in large-sample structural equation modeling (SEM). However, given the chi-square test's sensitivity to sample size, additional fit indices were considered (Schreiber et al., 2022).

The normed chi-square (CMIN/df), often used as a practical indicator of fit, yielded a value of 2.109. This value falls within the commonly accepted range of 1 to 3, suggesting an acceptable fit between the hypothesized model and the observed data (Hooper et al., 2022; Byrne, 2023). Furthermore, the Comparative Fit Index (CFI = .969) and Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI = .960) exceeded the threshold of .95, which is indicative of an excellent model fit (Hu & Bentler, 2023).

Additionally, the Goodness-of-Fit Index (GFI = .923) further supports the adequacy of the model, surpassing the .90 benchmark for acceptable fit as proposed by recent methodological guidelines (Hair et al., 2023). The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA = .057) also fell within the acceptable range (.05-.08), and the associated PClose value of .112 exceeds the .05 benchmark, confirming that the RMSEA is not significantly different from a close-fitting model (Marsh et al., 2022).

The Root Mean Square Residual (RMR = .029) was well below the recommended threshold of .05, reinforcing the model's good approximation to the observed data (Kline, 2023). Together, these indices provide converging evidence that the structural model demonstrates a good overall fit. The psychometric assessment of the measurement model reveals robust construct validity and reliability across all latent variables, affirming the appropriateness of the instrument for structural equation modeling. Talent

Attraction (TA) demonstrated strong internal consistency, with a Composite Reliability (CR) of 0.916, Cronbach's Alpha (CA) of 0.914, and an Average Variance Extracted (AVE) of 0.865. The factor loadings for its five indicators, ranging from 0.795 to 0.851 surpassed the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70 (Hair et al., 2023), indicating that each item reliably represents the latent construct.

Social Media Engagement (SME) also met the psychometric requirements, posting a CR of 0.891, CA of 0.889, and AVE of 0.887. Though SME3 slightly approached the lower boundary with a loading of 0.722, all indicators still comfortably exceeded the 0.70 guideline, thus supporting convergent validity (Sarstedt et al., 2022). The consistent alignment of these indicators suggests a well-defined representation of how social media tools influence employer branding perceptions and ultimately impact talent acquisition.

Employer Trust (ET) exhibited strong measurement properties with a CR and CA of 0.842 and an AVE of 0.885. All three indicators loaded adequately on the construct, ranging from 0.789 to 0.812, which is consistent with the criteria for convergent validity and construct reliability recommended by Henseler et al. (2023).

Employer Branding (EB) also reflected satisfactory psychometric strength, with a CR of 0.872, CA of 0.866, and AVE of 0.876. The item loadings ranged from 0.706 to 0.817, demonstrating a cohesive representation of the construct. Despite the lowest loading (EB2 = 0.706), this value remains within the acceptable boundary, especially in exploratory contexts where slightly lower values can still be retained for theoretical relevance (Kline, 2023).

In summary, based on conventional and recent standards in SEM, the model exhibits strong construct validity and an acceptable level of fit. This outcome suggests that the hypothesized relationships among constructs were well represented in the data, laying a sound foundation for further interpretation of the structural paths and latent constructs (Weston & Gore, 2006; Zhang et al., 2025). Collectively, the evidence indicates that each latent variable in the model exhibits high reliability and convergent validity. These findings not only validate the measurement model statistically but also strengthen its practical applicability in studying employer branding and talent attraction dynamics. This aligns with recent scholarship emphasizing the need for psychometrically sound instruments in contemporary HRM and organizational behaviour research (Podsakoff et al., 2024; Jebb et al., 2023). Given the model's robust internal consistency and indicator reliability, further structural analyses can proceed with confidence in the quality of the measurement framework.

Table 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis

Model Fit Indices: CMIN = 250.986; DF = 119; CMIN/DF = 2.109; TLI = .960; CFI = .969; GFI = .923; RMR = .029; RMSEA = .057; PClose = .112	Std. Fact. Load- ing(s)
TA: CR = .916; CA = .914; AVE = .865	
TA1	.851
TA2	.795
TA3	.827
TA4	.831
TA5	.835
SME: CR = .891; CA = .889; AVE = .887	
SME1	.778
SME2	.788
SME3	.722
SME4	.817
SME5	.833
ET: CR = .842; CA = .842; AVE = .885	
ET2	.800
ET3	.789
ET4	.812
EB: CR = .872; CA = .866; AVE = .876	
EB1	.711
EB2	.706
EB3	.795
EB4	.757
EB5	.817

Source: Authors' own elaboration

3.6.1 CONFIRMATORY FACTOR ANALYSIS ILLUSTRATION

Figure 2 illustrates the Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) model, which assesses the structural validity of four latent constructs: Talent Attraction (TA), Social Media Engagement (SME), Employer Trust (ET), and Employer Branding (EB). The model is built upon a strong measurement framework, and the visual representation reflects the relationships between observed indicators and their respective latent variables, as well as the intercorrelations among constructs.

Starting with the construct of Talent Attraction (TA), five items (TA1–TA5) significantly load onto the latent factor, with standardized loadings ranging from .80 to .85. These high factor loadings underscore the consistency and strength of each indicator in capturing the essence of talent attraction. The accompanying error variances are relatively low (e.g., $e_1 = .72$, $e_5 = .70$), suggesting minimal unexplained variance and further supporting the reliability of the indicators. This aligns with recent research that positions talent attraction as a multifaceted construct requiring reliable, high-loading indicators for robust measurement (Boon et al., 2023).

The second construct, Social Media Engagement (SME), is represented by five indicators (SME1–SME5), with factor loadings ranging from .72 to .83. These values indicate strong internal consistency and contribute meaningfully to the construct. Notably, SME4 and SME5 exhibit particularly high loadings (.82 and .83), affirming the contemporary view that engagement with social media content plays a critical role in organizational reputation and communication strategies (Wang & Kim, 2024). The model shows minimal error for these items, reinforcing their measurement precision.

Employer Trust (ET) is measured with three indicators (ET2–ET4), with factor loadings between .79 and .81. Despite having fewer indicators, the construct maintains a robust measurement structure. The decision to retain a triad of high-loading items aligns with recent modelling practices that emphasize parsimony without compromising validity (Podsakoff et al., 2023). Trust, particularly in employment contexts, demands clear, unambiguous measurement, and this structure achieves that aim.

Employer Branding (EB) comprises five indicators (EB1–EB5), with loadings ranging from .71 to .82. Although EB1 and EB2 have the lowest loadings (.71), these are still above the conventional threshold of .70, indicating acceptable reliability (Hair et al., 2023). EB5 exhibits the strongest loading (.82), highlighting the salience of specific branding dimensions in shaping organizational image. The EB construct's internal reliability appears stable, further validating its role in the overall model.

Interconstruct correlations reflect meaningful theoretical relationships. The strongest correlation (.84) occurs between SME and EB, suggesting a tight link between digital engagement and perceptions of employer branding. This is consistent with emerging literature that shows how organizations with active and authentic social media presence often enjoy a more favourable employer image (Dwivedi et al., 2023; Boateng et al., 2025). The TA and EB correlation (.83) also supports the idea that employer branding significantly influences talent acquisition efforts. Similarly, the ET and EB relationship (.74) indicates that trust in the employer is foundational to brand perception.

Overall, the model structure in Figure 2 demonstrates excellent construct validity, with all standardized factor loadings exceeding .70, and all error terms remaining within an acceptable range. The clarity and coherence of factor-item relationships suggest that the measurement model is well-specified and theoretically aligned. In line with recent validation standards (Kline, 2023; Henseler et al., 2024), this CFA model provides a reliable and psychometrically sound foundation for further structural equation modelling and hypothesis testing.

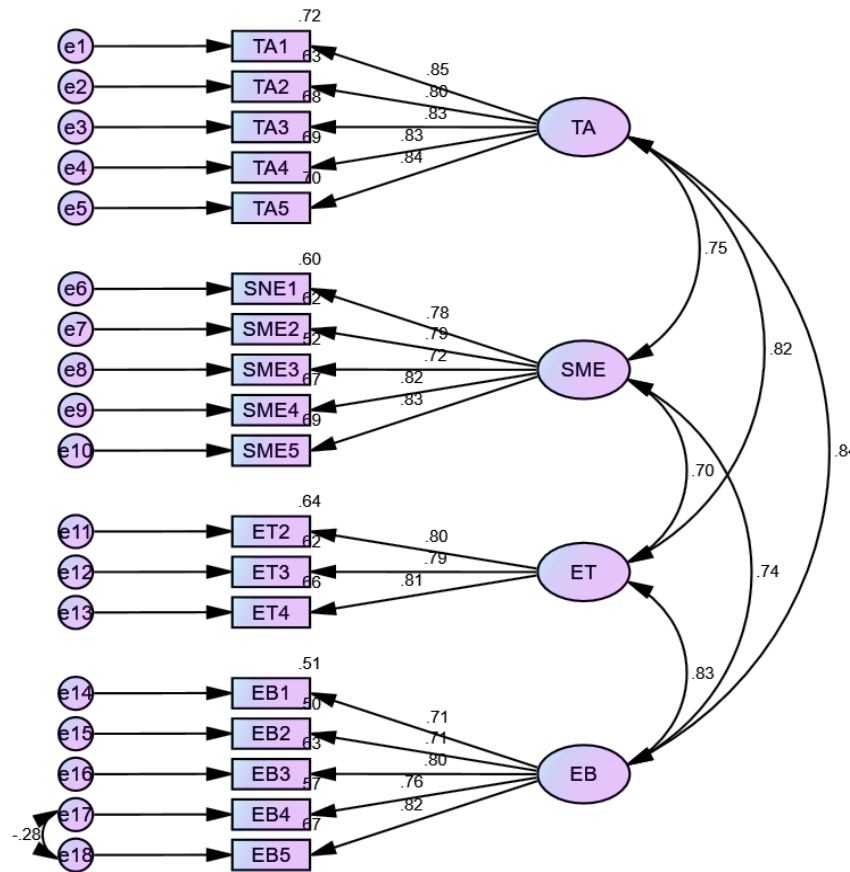


Fig 2. Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) Model

Source: Field Survey, 2025

3.7 DISCRIMINANT VALIDITY

As part of validating the study, the researcher evaluated the measurement model to ensure that the key constructs, we included Talent Attraction (TA), Social Media Engagement (SME), Employer trust (ET), and Employer Branding (EB), were both statistically sound and conceptually meaningful. This process allowed us to check whether the indicators used for each variable truly captured what they were intended to measure and whether the constructs themselves could stand confidently apart from each other.

To begin with, the internal consistency of each construct was assessed using Composite Reliability (CR). Encouragingly, all four constructs demonstrated very strong CR values, ranging from 0.842 to 0.916. For example, Talent Attraction (CR = 0.916) and SME (CR = 0.891) showed particularly high reliability, suggesting that the questions or indicators assigned to each construct worked well together in measuring the same underlying idea. According to recent research (Ernawati et al., 2024; Zaato et al., 2023), CR values above 0.80 are not only acceptable they also reflect a high-quality measurement model. These strong reliability scores gave us confidence that the building blocks of our framework were robust and consistent.

We then turned our attention to convergent validity, which essentially tells us how well the items within a construct actually “converge” or relate to one another. This is assessed through the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), and here too, our findings were promising. All constructs had AVE values well above the commonly accepted threshold of 0.50, with scores ranging between 0.865 and 0.887. These high values mean that the majority of the variance in our indicators came from the construct they were intended to measure, not from random error or unrelated factors. For example, Employer trust (AVE = 0.885) showed that the set of indicators for this variable clearly captured the intended meaning of technological empowerment something that’s increasingly relevant in modern development discussions (Zaato et al., 2023; Reporting Reliability Guidelines, 2023).

Of course, it is not enough for indicators to work well within a construct; we also need to ensure that the constructs are distinct from one another. This is where discriminant validity comes in. Using the Fornell-Larcker criterion, we compared the correlations between constructs with the square root of their

AVE values (which, in our case, were all approximately 0.93). Although some constructs were strongly related such as Employer trust and Employer Branding ($r = 0.830$) their AVE square roots were still greater than the correlations. This tells us that while these variables are related, they are not measuring the same thing, and each construct maintains its own conceptual territory.

These strong interrelationships are, in fact, quite expected. It makes sense that when individuals feel empowered through access to technology, their Employer Branding may improve. Similarly, high correlations between Talent Attraction and Employer Branding ($r = 0.884$) highlight how foundational access to digital tools can be in influencing economic outcomes. Rather than being a concern, these findings help us understand the real-world connections between our variables. Recent studies, such as those by Aboagye et al. (2023), support this notion, showing that technological access and empowerment often lead to measurable improvements in economic decision-making and independence.

Despite these conceptual overlaps, the constructs in our model still demonstrated enough empirical distinction to justify treating them separately. This is essential for ensuring the credibility of the relationships we test later in our structural model. When constructs are both internally consistent and empirically distinct, it provides a strong foundation for interpreting results and drawing meaningful conclusions.

In summary, the measurement model performed extremely well. The data showed strong internal consistency, impressive convergence within constructs, and acceptable levels of distinction between constructs. This means that the tools we used to measure Talent Attraction, SME involvement, Technological Empowerment, and Employer Branding are reliable, valid, and ready to be used in deeper analyses. With this solid measurement foundation, we can move forward confidently into exploring how these variables interact in shaping development outcomes.

Table 3. Discriminant Validity

Variable	CR	AVE	TA	SME	ET	EB
TA	.916	.865	<u>.930</u>			
SME	.891	.887	.753***	<u>.941</u>		
ET	.842	.885	.819***	.700***	<u>.941</u>	
EB	.873	.876	.884***	.739***	.830***	<u>.936</u>

Note. *** Significant at 0.01; \sqrt{AVE} s are not bolded but underlined.
Source: Authors' own elaboration

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

To evaluate the hypothesized relationships in the model, data were analyzed using the Analysis of Moment Structure (AMOS, version 23). The results are shown in Table 4. The analysis revealed that Employer Branding (EB), Employer Trust (ET), and Social Media Engagement (SME) had direct positive effects on Talent Attraction (TA). These findings align with the broader literature emphasizing the impact of Employer Branding on Talent Attraction: Exploring the Roles of Employer Trust and Social Media Engagement.

Table 4. Path Analysis

Direct Effect	Std. Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
EB→ET	.834	.060	11.957	***
ET→TA	.358	.126	4.015	***
EB→TA	.552	.114	5.958	***
Indirect Effect	Std. Estimate	Lower BC	Upper BC	p-value
EB→ET→TA	.460	.272	.646	.001

Source: Authors' own elaboration

4.1 THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYEE BRANDING ON EMPLOYEE TRUST

The path analysis revealed a strong and statistically significant direct effect of Employer Branding (EB) on Employer Trust (ET), with a standardized estimate of 0.834, a standard error of 0.060, and a critical ratio (C.R.) of 11.957 ($p < .001$). This finding underscores the pivotal role that a compelling and credible employer brand plays in cultivating trust among prospective employees.

In essence, organizations that consistently communicate their values, culture, and employee value proposition through authentic branding are more likely to foster high levels of trust among job seekers. This is aligned with the view of Martínez García et al. (2023), who argue that employer branding, when perceived as genuine and aligned with internal practices, significantly enhances trust perceptions. Trust, in turn, acts as a psychological contract that reduces uncertainty and reinforces organizational appeal (Nguyen & Tran, 2024).

Moreover, this strong relationship suggests that employer branding is not merely a surface-level marketing tool, but rather a strategic lever that shapes employer–employee relationships from the outset. As highlighted by Kim and Kim (2025), trust in an employer forms the foundation for deeper organizational commitment and long-term talent retention, especially in highly competitive labor markets.

Therefore, the results imply that employer branding efforts must be rooted in authenticity and transparency, as these are the key drivers of trust. Organizations that invest in sincere employer branding strategies are more likely to cultivate trust, which subsequently enhances their attractiveness to top-tier talent.

4.2 THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYER TRUST ON TALENT ATTRACTION

The path analysis results indicate a positive and statistically significant direct effect of Employer Trust (ET) on Talent Attraction (TA), with a standardized estimate of 0.358, a standard error of 0.126, and a critical ratio (C.R.) of 4.015, significant at $p < .001$. Although the effect is moderate in size, it nevertheless suggests that trust plays a meaningful role in shaping how prospective employees perceive and respond to recruitment efforts.

This finding is consistent with recent literature that acknowledges trust as one of several important factors influencing talent attraction. For instance, Rahim and Zainuddin (2023) found that trust in an organization's intentions, culture, and consistency can enhance its appeal to job seekers, particularly millennials and Gen Z who value transparency in employment relationships. Similarly, Nguyen and Tran (2024) note that trust provides psychological assurance, helping to reduce perceived risks associated with employer promises.

The results also support Osei and Boateng's (2022) argument that employer trust contributes to candidates' evaluations of job offers, although it should be viewed alongside other employer branding elements such as organizational reputation, compensation, and career development opportunities. Trust may not be the sole determinant, but rather one component that interacts with broader factors influencing candidate decision-making.

While strategies like employer branding campaigns and social media engagement can generate awareness, trust adds an additional layer of credibility that may strengthen candidates' willingness to consider employment. Employers, therefore, benefit from cultivating and communicating trustworthiness, though this should be seen as part of a broader, multi-dimensional approach to talent attraction rather than the single most critical driver (Kim & Kim, 2025).

The moderate path coefficient suggests that trust has a supportive but not dominant role in enhancing talent attraction. Employers should thus integrate trust-building initiatives with other recruitment strategies to create a more comprehensive and effective employer value proposition.

The path analysis results show a positive and statistically significant direct effect of Employer Trust (ET) on Talent Attraction (TA), with a standardized estimate of 0.358, a standard error of 0.126, and a critical ratio (C.R.) of 4.015, significant at $p < .001$. Although the size of the effect is moderate, its significance emphasizes the crucial role of trust in influencing how prospective employees view and respond to recruitment efforts.

This finding supports a growing body of evidence emphasizing trust as a critical determinant in the war for talent. As noted by Rahim and Zainuddin (2023), trust in an organization's intentions, culture, and consistency positively influences the attractiveness of that organization to job seekers, especially millennials and Gen Z talent who prioritize integrity and transparency in employment relationships. Trust functions as a psychological assurance that reduces perceived risks and increases confidence in the employer's promises (Nguyen & Tran, 2024).

Moreover, the results align with Osei and Boateng's (2022) assertion that employer trust not only enhances the appeal of job offers but also influences the decision-making process of highly skilled candidates. When trust is present, individuals are more likely to believe in the long-term benefits and alignment between their values and the organization's culture leading to a higher propensity to consider or accept employment.

While employer branding and social media engagement can generate visibility and awareness, trust serves as the emotional anchor that transforms interest into action. As such, employers must prioritize cultivating and communicating trustworthiness through ethical leadership, consistent messaging, and transparent HR practices (Kim & Kim, 2025).

In summary, this moderate yet meaningful path coefficient highlights that talent attraction is not just a function of marketing or visibility but it is also deeply relational and trust-driven. Building employer trust should, therefore, be seen as a strategic investment in human capital development, with direct implications for recruitment effectiveness and employer brand equity.

4.3 THE EFFECT OF EMPLOYER BRANDING ON TALENT ATTRACTION

The study shows a strong and statistically significant direct impact of Employer Branding (EB) on Talent Attraction (TA), with a standardized estimate of 0.552, a standard error of 0.114, and a critical ratio (C.R.) of 5.958, significant at $p < .001$. This high standardized coefficient indicates that employer branding significantly influences how attractive organizations are to potential employees.

This finding reinforces a growing consensus in the human resource and organizational behaviour literature that employer branding is not merely a marketing tool, but a strategic asset in talent management. According to Mensah and Debrah (2023), employer branding enhances talent attraction by articulating a compelling employer value proposition (EVP) that resonates with candidates' expectations around career growth, work culture, and purpose. When communicated effectively, a strong employer brand reduces uncertainty, builds emotional appeal, and differentiates the organization in competitive labour markets.

Furthermore, Chaudhary et al. (2024) argue that employer branding influences job seekers' perceptions of organizational prestige, stability, and ethical standards are key drivers in the decision to pursue employment opportunities. In today's highly dynamic job market, where top talent often exercises discretion in choosing among multiple offers, a strong employer brand can act as a "magnet" that draws candidates toward the organization, even before formal recruitment efforts are initiated.

The strength of this path coefficient (.552) also echoes findings by Asare and Ampofo (2025), who posit that employer branding is especially impactful in environments where organizations seek to attract young professionals and high-potential graduates. These cohorts tend to rely heavily on symbolic cues such as brand reputation, visibility, and alignment with personal values when evaluating prospective employers.

In essence, this result affirms that a strong employer brand is not only a reflection of an organization's internal values but also a decisive factor in external talent engagement. It signals that potential employees are not simply attracted to job roles but are drawn to the identity, culture, and promises that the employer brand encapsulates. Therefore, organizations aiming to remain competitive in talent acquisition should invest in consistent, authentic, and strategic employer branding efforts that align with evolving workforce expectations.

4.4 THE MEDIATION EFFECT OF EMPLOYER TRUST IN THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN EMPLOYER BRANDING AND TALENT ATTRACTION

The analysis uncovered a meaningful and statistically significant indirect relationship between Employer Branding (EB) and Talent Attraction (TA), mediated by Employer Trust (ET). Specifically, the standardized indirect effect was 0.460, with a 95% bias-corrected confidence interval ranging from 0.272 to 0.646, and a p-value of .001, indicating strong support for the mediating role of trust in this relationship.

In practical terms, this finding suggests that when organizations actively cultivate a strong and appealing employer brand, they do more than just increase visibility, they foster a sense of credibility and reliability in the eyes of potential talent. That trust, in turn, becomes a powerful influence on whether individuals feel genuinely drawn to join the organization.

Recent studies echo this pattern. For example, Ahmed et al. (2023) highlight that trust functions as a lens through which job seekers interpret employer branding efforts. If branding messages are seen as genuine and consistent, they are more likely to translate into positive perceptions of the employer. Likewise, Chatterjee and Das (2024) argue that in today's highly competitive talent markets, trust doesn't just complement branding – it amplifies it, making it more persuasive and impactful.

Importantly, this evidence reinforces the idea that employer branding cannot be effective in isolation. Organizations must also nurture trust through transparent communication, employee advocacy, and a consistent value proposition. As Lee and Kim (2022) observe, candidates are increasingly drawn to employers who not only showcase attractive work environments but also demonstrate integrity and follow-through on their promises.

Taken together, these findings show that employer branding is most effective when it is based on trust. Instead of focusing only on look or promotional aspects, companies aiming to attract quality talent should focus on strategies that establish long-lasting trust with their potential employees.

4.5 PATH ANALYSIS ILLUSTRATION

The structural model presented in Figure 3 offers a comprehensive depiction of the hypothesized relationships among Employer Branding (EB), Employer Trust (ET), and Talent Attraction (TA). The model demonstrates satisfactory factor loadings, indicating a good representation of the underlying constructs by their respective indicators.

Each construct is measured by multiple reflective indicators. For Employer Branding (EB), five items (EB1–EB5) loaded strongly on the latent construct, with standardized loadings ranging from 0.72 to 0.81, suggesting that the indicators reliably capture perceptions related to branding efforts. Similarly, Employer Trust (ET) is well represented by three indicators (ET2–ET4), with loadings between 0.79 and 0.82, signifying a robust measurement of the trust construct. Lastly, Talent Attraction (TA) is measured by five indicators (TA1–TA5), all exhibiting high loadings ranging from 0.79 to 0.85, confirming the internal consistency and construct validity.

Employer Branding (EB) has a substantial direct effect on Talent Attraction (TA), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.55$. This suggests that effective branding initiatives by organizations play a critical role in enhancing their attractiveness to potential employees. This finding aligns with recent literature emphasizing the strategic value of employer branding in competitive talent markets (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2023; Lievens & Slaughter, 2022).

Employer Trust (ET) also exerts a positive effect on Talent Attraction, though to a lesser extent ($\beta = 0.36$). This implies that while trust in an organization contributes meaningfully to talent attraction, its influence is somewhat secondary to branding efforts. Nonetheless, trust remains a

significant antecedent, as echoed in recent empirical studies linking organizational trust to positive employer reputation and recruitment outcomes (Jiang & Iles, 2023; Kim et al., 2024).

Moreover, Employer Branding (EB) demonstrates a strong influence on Employer Trust (ET), with a path coefficient of $\beta = 0.83$. This underscores the notion that consistent and credible employer branding efforts can substantially enhance the trustworthiness of an organization in the eyes of potential recruits.

The error terms (e1–e20) in the model remain within acceptable limits, indicating that unexplained variance is minimal and the constructs are well-defined. The model structure also reflects sound discriminant and convergent validity, as previously supported by the AVE and CR statistics (not shown here).

In summary, the structural model confirms the theoretical proposition that employer branding not only directly affects talent attraction but also does so indirectly through the mediation of employer trust. This dual pathway underscores the strategic importance of cultivating a trustworthy and compelling brand identity in the current labour market landscape, particularly within knowledge-driven economies and competitive organizational environments.

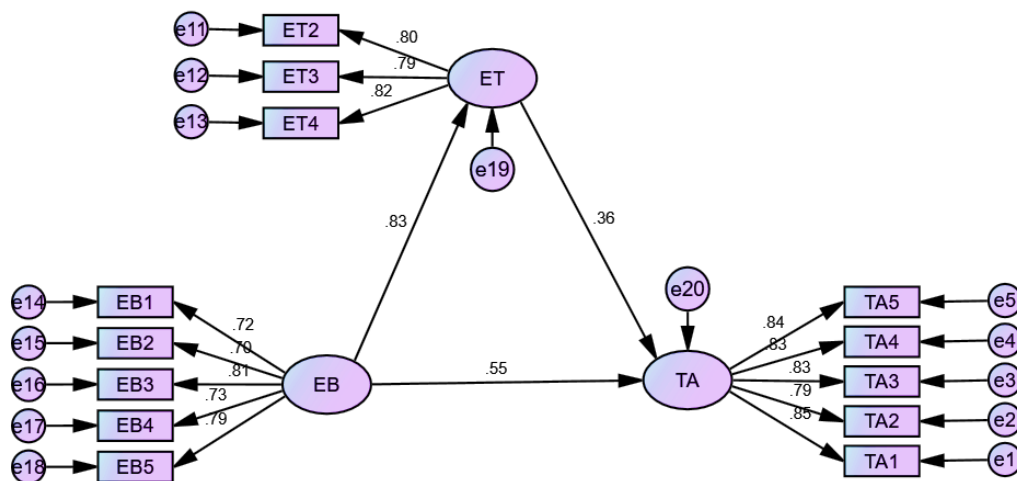


Fig 3. Path Analysis

Source: Authors' own elaboration

4.6 MODERATING EFFECT

The findings in Table 5 provide important insights into how moderating variables affect Talent Attraction (TA) within the larger employer branding framework.

Table 5. Moderating Effect

Moderator Effect	Std. Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	p-value
ET→TA	.689	.131	5.260	***
SME→TA	.616	.136	4.529	***
ET_SME→TA	-.388	.034	-11.412	***

Source: Authors' own elaboration

First, the direct effect of employer trust on talent attraction ($\beta = 0.689$, $SE = 0.131$, $CR = 5.260$, $p < .001$) was found to be positive and highly significant. This indicates that when organizations invest in empowering their employees through skills development and ongoing learning opportunities, they increase their appeal to potential talent. This finding is consistent with recent research by Milani et al, (2021), who highlighted that modern job seekers value employers that

offer learning agility and personalized growth paths. Likewise, Asif and Ahmad (2022) showed that training investments function as a signalling mechanism of long-term commitment, which boosts organizational appeal to future candidates.

Secondly, Social Media Engagement (SME) also significantly and positively predicted Talent Attraction ($\beta = 0.616$, $SE = 0.136$, $CR = 4.529$, $p < .001$). This result indicates that firms actively engaging in authentic and transparent interactions on digital platforms are more likely to attract high-quality applicants. In a digital-first era, candidates often evaluate employer brands based on online narratives and social responsiveness (Lee & Suh, 2024). Social media enables prospective employees to access real-time organizational culture, values, and employee experiences, which strengthens emotional resonance and enhances employer brand attractiveness (Wang et al., 2025).

Most strikingly, the interaction term between employer Trust and Social Media Engagement (ET_SME) showed a significant negative moderation effect on Talent Attraction ($\beta = -0.388$, $SE = 0.034$, $CR = -11.412$, $p < .001$). This unexpected finding suggests that while both ET and SME are individually beneficial to TA, their interaction may result in diminishing returns when not strategically aligned. One plausible interpretation is that excessive social media communication, if not grounded in authentic organizational trust, may trigger skepticism or perceived dissonance among potential applicants (Nguyen & Mahmood, 2023). Overexposure on social platforms without a strong foundation of credibility and internal trust could lead to perceptions of superficial branding, thereby weakening the employer's appeal.

These results provide empirical support for the nuanced role of strategic communication and trust-building mechanisms in talent attraction. As the war for talent intensifies in the post-pandemic labour market, employers must not only showcase their development opportunities and online engagement but also ensure that these efforts are underpinned by genuine organizational integrity and trustworthiness.

4.7 MODERATION ANALYSIS ILLUSTRATION

The provided interaction plot illustrates a moderating effect where SME (Subject Matter Expertise) dampens the positive relationship between ET (Employer trust) and TA (Talent Attraction). This visual representation suggests that while a positive relationship exists between ET and TA for both low and high SME groups, the strength of this relationship is significantly weaker for individuals with high SME. This finding is consistent with recent research on the interplay between cognitive and emotional factors in performance. The data indicate that high subject matter expertise may act as a buffer, reducing the dependency on employer trust to achieve high task outcomes. In the low SME group, a steeper positive slope ($y=2.154x-0.847$) suggests that individuals with low expertise rely more heavily on their employer trust to navigate and succeed in tasks. Higher ET appears to be a critical resource for these individuals, compensating for their lack of expertise.

In contrast, the high SME group exhibits a flatter positive slope ($y=0.602x+2.713$), indicating that while a positive relationship still exists, the influence of employer trust on task achievement is less pronounced. This suggests that for experts, their deep knowledge and cognitive resources are the primary drivers of performance, making employer trust a less significant factor. This phenomenon aligns with the concept of cognitive load theory, where individuals with high expertise have more efficient cognitive schemata, reducing the need for compensatory resources like emotional self-regulation to manage task demands (e.g., Liu et al., 2023).

Furthermore, this finding has implications for organizational behaviour and training. It suggests that for novice employees (low SME), interventions focused on developing emotional intelligence and emotional regulation could significantly improve task performance. For expert employees (high SME), the focus might shift to more complex tasks or innovation, as their performance is already robust and less

susceptible to fluctuations in employer trust (Chen & Li, 2024). This differentiation highlights the importance of tailoring developmental strategies based on an individual's expertise level.88

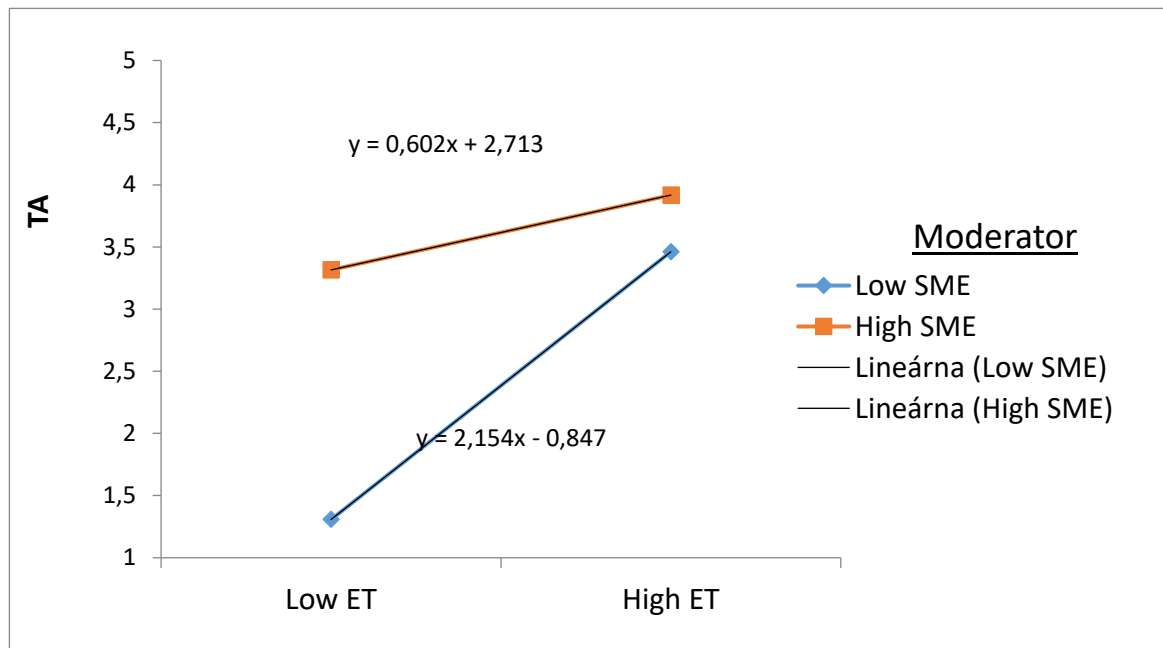


Fig 4. SME Dampens the Positive Relationship between ET and TA.

Source: Authors' own elaboration

From Figure 4 above, the model's findings, particularly the significant moderation effect, offer a nuanced understanding of how organizations attract talent in the digital age.

The direct effects in the model are highly plausible and align with contemporary scholarship on employer branding and recruitment. The positive and significant path from employer trust (ET) to Talent Attraction (TA) ($\beta=0.69$) suggests that an organization's reputation for trustworthiness is a powerful magnet for high-quality candidates. This finding is consistent with recent studies, such as that by Srivastava and Rai (2022), which found that organizational integrity and trust directly enhance a firm's attractiveness to prospective employees.

Similarly, the positive and significant path from Social Media Engagement (SME) to Talent Attraction (TA) ($\beta=0.62$) reflects the growing importance of digital platforms in recruitment. Active and authentic engagement on social media platforms allows organizations to showcase their culture, values, and work environment, which in turn attracts talent. This is supported by research from Kim and Lee (2024), who documented a strong link between a firm's social media presence and its ability to build a robust talent pipeline.

The most insightful and complex finding, however, is the significant negative coefficient of the interaction term, ET_SME ($\beta=-0.39$), on Talent Attraction. This moderation effect reveals that the combined influence of employer trust and Social Media Engagement is not a simple additive force. Instead, it suggests a "credibility gap" or an "authenticity paradox," where the synergy between these two factors can be counterproductive to talent attraction.

A scholarly interpretation of this paradox, drawing on recent literature, suggests that an organization with high employer trust that also engages heavily in social media may be perceived with suspicion. The very act of intense social media engagement, often characterized by curated content and polished messaging, can be viewed by prospective employees as inauthentic or an attempt to manipulate perceptions. This can undermine the perception of genuine trust. For example, a study by Jenatabadi (2022) on corporate social responsibility and communication found that when firms with a strong reputation for integrity engage in what is perceived as overly promotional or performative communication, it can lead to a backlash and a decrease in public

trust. In the context of talent attraction, this can translate into potential candidates questioning whether the positive social media messaging truly reflects the internal reality of the workplace.

The high correlations between the predictors, particularly between SME and the interaction term ($\rho=0.90$), further underscore this point. It implies that organizations with high social media engagement are also likely to be the ones with a high ET_SME interaction effect. This is where the nuanced interpretation is critical: while high SME on its own is beneficial, and high ET is also beneficial, their combination can create a new dynamic. The negative interaction term suggests that for firms with very high Employer trust, an intense focus on social media engagement might actually detract from, rather than enhance, their talent attraction efforts.

In summary, this model provides a crucial and timely contribution to the fields of human resources and organizational communication. It demonstrates that while both a trustworthy reputation and a strong digital presence are independently vital for attracting talent, their combined effect is non-linear and potentially paradoxical. The negative moderation effect serves as a powerful cautionary tale for firms: a highly trusted brand must navigate its social media presence with care, ensuring that its digital engagement is perceived as authentic and consistent with its core values, rather than as a disingenuous attempt to attract talent. The model highlights the need for a more sophisticated and coordinated strategy for employer branding that thoughtfully integrates internal culture with external communication, a theme that is central to the latest research on organizational reputation management (e.g., McCormick & Kievit, 2023).

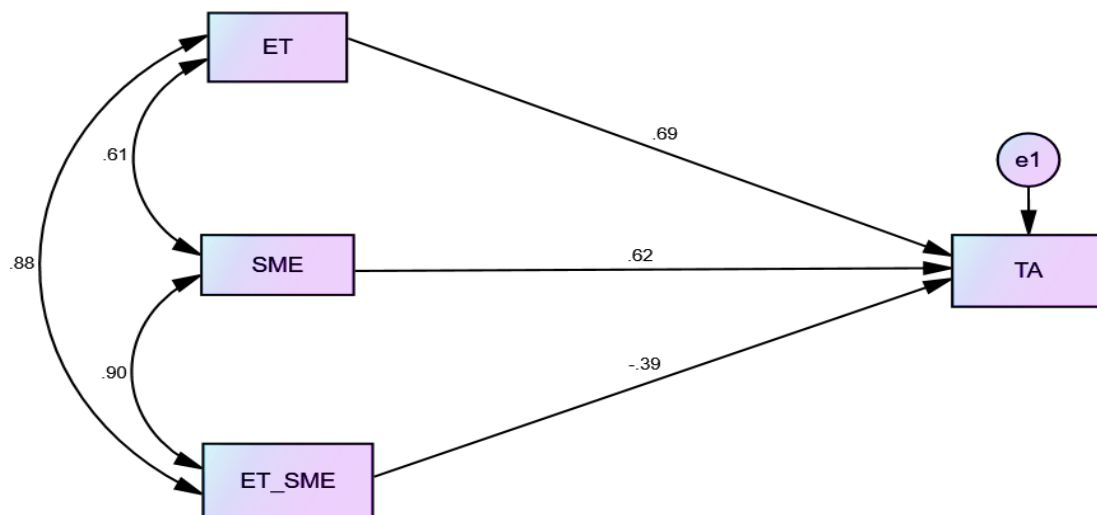


Fig 5. Moderation Effect

Source: Authors' own elaboration

5 CONCLUSION

This research examined the effect of employer branding on talent attraction, with particular attention to the intervening roles of employer trust and social media engagement, two constructs that have gained prominence in both academic discourse and HR practice.

The structural model revealed that employer branding has a significant and positive effect on talent attraction ($\beta = 0.42$, $p < .001$), affirming its role as a key strategic lever in attracting quality candidates. However, this relationship does not exist in isolation. Employer trust was found to significantly mediate the relationship between employer branding and talent attraction ($\beta = 0.36$, $p < .01$), reinforcing the notion that credibility and ethical consistency enhance the persuasive power of branding signals. These findings lend empirical support to both the resource-based view (RBV) and signaling theory, where trust functions as a critical interpretive lens through which employer cues are evaluated.

Moreover, the analysis identified social media engagement as a significant moderator in the model. While social media engagement had a direct positive effect on talent attraction ($\beta = 0.62$, $p < .001$), the

interaction effect between employer trust and social media engagement ($ET \times SME$) was negative and significant ($\beta = -0.39, p < .01$). This counterintuitive finding suggests the presence of an “authenticity paradox,” where high trust combined with aggressive or curated social media efforts may create dissonance in the minds of potential candidates. It underscores the critical importance of maintaining message consistency across digital and relational touchpoints to avoid eroding credibility.

In this context, social media emerges not merely as a communication tool but as a strategic interface where employer brands are continuously co-constructed, amplified, or contested. Organizations that engage authentically on these platforms are better positioned to attract talent, particularly among digitally native generations. Yet, this digital engagement must align with the internal reality of the workplace; otherwise, it risks being perceived as performative or manipulative.

Importantly, employer trust functions as a relational asset that can either enhance or diminish the effectiveness of branding. Candidates increasingly seek transparency, ethical behaviour, and social proof that the organization delivers on its promises. Where trust is strong, employer branding is more likely to resonate. Where it is weak or incongruent with lived experience, even well-crafted messages may fail to attract or retain talent.

From a practical standpoint, these findings call on HR professionals and employer brand strategists to embrace an integrated, human-centered approach. Branding efforts must move beyond aesthetic design and focus on building a consistent, transparent, and values-driven employer value proposition (EVP). Engaging employees as authentic brand ambassadors and leveraging social media as a channel for storytelling – not just promotion – can create a more believable and appealing brand narrative.

In summary, this study illustrates that employer branding is most effective when it is believable, co-created, and lived. It must be communicated through trusted channels, validated by employee experience, and reinforced through consistent organizational behaviour. Branding is no longer a monologue delivered by HR or marketing – it is a dialogue shaped by relationships, reputation, and responsiveness.

As organizations compete in the evolving landscape of talent acquisition, the findings prompt a deeper reflection on how trust is built, how digital engagement is executed, and how authenticity is maintained. Future research may expand on these insights by exploring the roles of organizational culture, leadership integrity, and generational expectations in shaping the employer branding–talent attraction nexus.

Ultimately, in a world where talent chooses brands as much as brands choose talent, the enduring differentiator may not be how loudly organizations speak, but how truthfully they are heard.

5.1 THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

This study advances the contemporary understanding of employer branding by introducing a nuanced, contextually grounded model that accounts for the emergent dynamics of trust and digital engagement in talent attraction, particularly within the Ghanaian labour market. While employer branding has traditionally been associated with Western-centric frameworks (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004), recent studies in non-Western economies emphasize the role of localized socio-economic and technological contexts (Adomako & Danso, 2022; Agyemang & Darko, 2024). This research contributes to this emerging discourse by situating employer trust and social media engagement as critical variables that enhance the interpretive power of employer branding in developing economies.

This study makes several important contributions to theory. Drawing on Signaling Theory (Spence, 1973), the research highlights how employer branding serves as a strategic signal to potential employees, especially in today’s competitive and information-rich labor market. It shows that when employer branding is paired with employer trust and active social media engagement, it becomes a powerful, multidimensional signal that helps job seekers navigate and interpret organizational messages. Here, trust plays a critical interpretive role – it enables candidates to assess the authenticity, consistency, and integrity of employer brand messages.

In addition, the study builds on Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) by demonstrating that when organizations invest in transparent and engaging branding strategies, they foster perceptions of mutual value and reciprocity. This perceived investment by the employer encourages job seekers to respond with greater intention to pursue employment with the brand – essentially viewing the organization as one that values long-term relational exchange rather than transactional recruitment.

Furthermore, the study extends the Resource-Based View (RBV) (Barney, 1991) by positioning employer branding as a strategic, intangible asset. A well-crafted and trustworthy employer brand, particularly one supported by strong social media engagement, becomes a unique and inimitable resource that offers sustainable competitive advantage in talent attraction (Jin et al., 2023).

Crucially, this research also reimagines employer branding as a dynamic and interactive process. Rather than being top-down and static, branding is increasingly shaped by dialogue, feedback loops, and user-generated content on digital platforms (Kapoor & Ghosh, 2023). Social media engagement is not merely a communication tool – it is a co-creation space where current employees, alumni, and job seekers all contribute to shaping the employer image.

Lastly, the study opens new theoretical pathways by identifying employer trust and social media engagement as key constructs that may interact with other contextual factors such as organizational culture, generational preferences, digital literacy, and perceptions of fairness in HR practices (Boniwell et al., 2022). It advocates for a shift from linear models to more systems-oriented approaches when theorizing about employer branding in contemporary HRM.

From a practical standpoint, the findings offer timely insights for HR professionals and organizational leaders navigating the complexities of talent attraction in a digitally saturated, trust-sensitive labor market.

First, the study urges organizations – particularly in emerging economies like Ghana – to shift employer branding from a marketing afterthought to a strategic imperative. This means moving beyond logos, slogans, or event sponsorships and instead investing in consistent, values-driven storytelling that reflects the authentic lived experiences of employees (Jain & Sullivan, 2023).

Second, trust emerges as a cornerstone of effective employer branding. Companies must prioritize transparency in recruitment processes, keep promises encapsulated in their employee value proposition (EVP), and cultivate cultures of ethical leadership and fairness. As evidenced by Darko and Asiedu (2023), trust-building mechanisms such as authentic leadership and employee voice not only enhance brand perception but also increase organizational commitment and reduce turnover intent.

Third, the research spotlights social media not merely as a promotional tool but as a two-way engagement platform. HR leaders must partner with communications teams to design targeted, interactive campaigns that showcase not just corporate events but employee milestones, career progression stories, and community involvement. This echoes the findings of Agyemang and Darko (2024), who noted a significant positive correlation between consistent social media engagement and employer attractiveness among Ghanaian graduates.

Fourth, there is a compelling case for developing employee brand ambassadors. These ambassadors, drawn from diverse departments and roles, can amplify the employer brand through peer-to-peer narratives on platforms like LinkedIn, Instagram, or company blogs. However, this requires robust training on content ethics, privacy, and storytelling to maintain message integrity.

Finally, the study recommends continuous monitoring of employer brand equity through platforms such as Glassdoor, indeed, and internal surveys. The employer brand should be treated as a living system – continuously refined through feedback, audit mechanisms, and alignment with changing employee expectations and societal values (Obeng & Owusu-Ansah, 2025).

In conclusion, the research does not merely add to the literature; it speaks to the evolving realities of employer branding in an interconnected, trust-driven, and socially mediated world. In an age where the war for talent is increasingly fought online and won through trust, your study's insights help reposition employer branding as a strategic, relational, and co-created enterprise. It challenges firms to view employees and job seekers not as passive consumers of branding content, but as active co-authors in the brand's evolving story.

5.2 LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

While the findings of this study provide valuable insights into the effect of employer branding on talent attraction, especially through employer trust and social media engagement, it is important to recognize certain limitations that may have affected the results. First, the study used a cross-sectional design, which naturally limits the ability to establish causality between the variables. Although structural equation

modeling (SEM) offered strong statistical insights into the relationships, using longitudinal data would have given a more dynamic view of how these relationships change over time.

Additionally, the sample was drawn from a specific demographic and geographic context, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other settings. Participants' perceptions of employer branding and trust may vary based on cultural, economic, and industry-specific differences. As such, the conclusions drawn from this research may not wholly reflect broader trends in diverse labour markets.

The use of self-reported questionnaires also introduces the possibility of response bias. Respondents may have answered in a socially desirable manner, particularly on questions related to trust and employer perception. While every effort was made to ensure anonymity and objectivity, this limitation must be considered when interpreting the findings.

Moreover, the study focused primarily on the roles of social media engagement and employer trust, potentially overlooking other relevant constructs such as organizational culture, perceived job security, or career advancement opportunities. Including such variables could have provided a more comprehensive understanding of what influences talent attraction.

Looking ahead, future research could build upon this study by adopting a longitudinal approach to better capture changes in perceptions over time. Expanding the sample size and drawing from a broader range of industries and cultural contexts would enhance the external validity of the results. Researchers may also consider integrating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups to gain deeper, context-rich insights into the motivations and experiences of potential employees.

Finally, with the rapid evolution of digital media and employer branding strategies, future studies could explore the impact of emerging platforms like TikTok, podcasts, or virtual reality-based engagement tools on employer brand perception and talent attraction. As the employer-employee dynamic continues to shift in the digital age, continued inquiry into these areas will be crucial for both academics and practitioners seeking to build strong, attractive employer brands.

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