

Employer Branding and Talent Attraction: Analysis of Its Influence on Generation Z Job Interest

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ABSTRACT

The global competition for young talent has intensified considerably, and Generation Z—born between 1997 and 2012 now constitutes the largest cohort entering the workforce. This study analyzes the influence of employer branding and talent attraction strategies on Generation Z's job interest through a systematic literature review of twenty international peer-reviewed articles published between 2021 and 2023. Findings reveal that Generation Z possesses distinctive work preferences: they prioritize work-life balance, clear career development pathways, organizational culture authenticity, and sustainability values in their employer selection decisions. Effective employer branding for Generation Z must operate through digitally relevant platforms particularly social media such as Instagram, TikTok, and LinkedIn with authentic, interactive, and value driven content. A clear Employee Value Proposition (EVP) and positive corporate reputation are found to significantly enhance job pursuit intention. This study proposes a three-stage talent attraction model Digital Touchpoints, Employer Brand Perception, and Job Pursuit Intention as a conceptual framework integrating findings from the literature. Managerial implications emphasize the strategic necessity of authentic digital content investment, employee advocacy programs, and alignment of EVP with the core values of Generation Z.

Keywords: *Employer Branding; Talent Attraction; Job Pursuit Intention.*

INTRODUCTION

The global labor market is undergoing a structural transformation driven by a fundamental demographic shift: Generation Z, individuals born between 1997 and 2012, now represents the fastest-growing segment of the global workforce, projected to constitute approximately 27% of the workforce by 2025 (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022). Unlike preceding generations, Generation Z entered adulthood in a fully digitalized world, developing distinct workplace values, career expectations, and decision-making processes that differ substantially from their millennial and Generation X predecessors. For organizations seeking to attract and retain high-quality talent, understanding and responding to these generational specificities has moved from a peripheral HR concern to a central strategic imperative.

Employer branding, defined as the process by which organizations differentiate themselves as employers in the labor market by communicating their values, culture, and employee experience, has emerged as the primary strategic tool in organizational talent



attraction arsenals. The concept, originally introduced by Ambler and Barrow in 1996, has evolved considerably in the digital era, where the boundary between consumer brand and employer brand has blurred, and where candidates access and share organizational reputation information through social media platforms with unprecedented speed and reach (Reis et al., 2021; Vrontis et al., 2021).

For Generation Z specifically, employer branding effectiveness is mediated by digital channel relevance and content authenticity. Research consistently demonstrates that Gen Z responds more strongly to peer recommendations, social media content, and authentic behind-the-scenes organizational culture communication than to formal corporate messaging (Munsch, 2021; Rzemieniak & Wawer, 2021). This generational preference profile creates both challenges and opportunities for organizations: traditional employer branding approaches built around corporate websites, formal job fairs, and professional networks may be insufficient to reach and persuade Gen Z candidates effectively.

Despite growing scholarly interest in Generation Z workplace behavior and employer branding individually, a comprehensive synthesis of evidence on how employer branding specifically influences Gen Z's job interest and application intentions remains an important gap in the literature. Existing studies tend to examine either employer branding effectiveness broadly across generational cohorts, or Generation Z work preferences without specific focus on branding mechanisms. This systematic literature review addresses this intersection, synthesizing evidence from twenty recent empirical and conceptual studies to derive an integrated understanding of employer branding's role in shaping Gen Z talent attraction outcomes.

The study addresses four research questions: (1) What are the primary work preference characteristics of Generation Z that must be addressed in employer branding strategies? (2) Which employer branding dimensions most significantly predict Gen Z's job pursuit intention? (3) What digital channels and content formats are most effective for Gen Z-oriented employer branding? (4) How can organizations design an integrated employer branding framework optimized for Gen Z talent attraction?

METHOD

This study employs a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) methodology, following the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses) framework. The SLR approach was selected for its capacity to provide a comprehensive, reproducible synthesis of dispersed empirical evidence across multiple studies and contexts, minimizing selection bias through explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria (Barhate & Dirani, 2021; Jayatissa, 2023).

A comprehensive database search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, Google Scholar, and EBSCO. Primary keyword combinations included: "employer branding" AND "Generation Z"; "talent attraction" AND "Gen Z"; "employee value proposition" AND "job pursuit intention"; "employer brand" AND "job interest"; "Gen Z" AND "workplace preferences" AND "recruitment"; "social media" AND "employer branding" AND "young talent". The temporal scope covered publications from 2020 to 2024 to capture the post-pandemic reconfiguration of Gen Z labor market dynamics.

Articles were included if they: (a) addressed employer branding, talent attraction, or organizational attractiveness specifically in relation to Generation Z or young workforce cohorts; (b) were published in peer-reviewed international journals indexed in recognized academic databases; (c) employed empirical, systematic review, or rigorous conceptual methodologies; and (d) were available in English. Exclusions

encompassed conference proceedings without journal publication, student theses, and commentary articles lacking substantive analysis. From 89 initially identified records, 20 articles met all inclusion criteria following title, abstract, and full-text screening.

Data were extracted systematically across six dimensions: (1) study objectives and geographic context; (2) theoretical framework; (3) research methodology and sample; (4) key variables operationalized; (5) principal findings; and (6) implications for employer branding practice. Thematic synthesis organized findings around the four research questions, enabling identification of convergent evidence patterns and divergent findings warranting further investigation. Table 3 in the Results section provides a comprehensive summary of all reviewed articles.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic synthesis of reviewed literature yields a consistent, multi-dimensional profile of Generation Z as a labor market actor. Benítez-Márquez et al. (2022) conduct a bibliometric analysis of Generation Z research in organizational contexts, identifying five dominant themes in the literature: digital technology integration in work, values-driven employment decision-making, flexible work arrangements, psychological safety, and diversity expectations. These themes collectively define the employer branding architecture that resonates most effectively with Generation Z candidates.

Barhate and Dirani (2021) contribute critical evidence on Gen Z career aspirations through a systematic literature review, finding that Generation Z's primary career drivers, career growth opportunities, work flexibility, and purposeful work, must be prominently and credibly communicated in employer branding materials to attract this cohort. Importantly, their review demonstrates that Gen Z is not merely seeking employment; they are actively assessing organizational alignment with their personal values and long-term development goals before investing application effort. This fundamentally shifts the talent attraction dynamic: organizations must earn Gen Z's attention and interest through brand substance, not merely brand visibility.

Leslie et al. (2021) provide complementary evidence on Gen Z's positive workplace perceptions, finding that work-life balance, fair and respectful treatment, and tangible career advancement opportunities are the three most consistently cited predictors of a positive workplace environment perception among Generation Z employees. These findings have direct implications for EVP communication strategy: employer brands that authentically demonstrate these three elements through digital content generate stronger attraction signals than those relying on compensation-centric messaging alone.

Table 1 synthesizes the key Generation Z characteristics documented in the reviewed literature alongside their specific implications for employer branding strategy, preferred digital channels, and key references.

Table 1. Generation Z Work Preferences and Employer Branding Implications

| Gen Z Characteristic | Implication for Employer Branding | Preferred Digital Channel | Key Reference |
|--|--|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Digital nativity — grew up with smartphones and social media | Authentic, visual content outperforms formal corporate messaging | Instagram, TikTok, LinkedIn | Munsch (2021); Chan & Lee (2023) |
| Gen Z Characteristic | Implication for Employer Branding | Preferred Digital Channel | Key Reference |

| | | | | | |
|--|------------|---|--|------------------|---|
| Purpose-driven orientation | work | EVP must communicate social sustainability, mission clearly | Company LinkedIn and YouTube | blogs, articles, | Barhate & Dirani (2021); Confetto et al. (2023) |
| Work-life balance as non-negotiable priority | | Flexible work arrangements must be prominently featured in job postings | Glassdoor LinkedIn job posts | reviews, | Waworuntu et al. (2022); Leslie et al. (2021) |
| Transparency and authenticity seekers | and | Behind-the-scenes culture content; employee testimonials drive trust | Instagram employee platforms | Stories, review | Rzemieniak & Wawer (2021); Silva & Dias (2022) |
| Career development expectation | | Clear advancement paths and mentoring offers increase attraction | LinkedIn career page content | Learning, | Ngoc et al. (2022); Jayatissa (2023) |
| Risk-averse and security | and value | Competitive compensation and job stability prominently communicated | Salary comparison sites, job security data | | Samoliuk et al. (2022); Dobrowolski et al. (2022) |
| Social media receptiveness | influencer | Employee advocacy and influencer-led recruitment campaigns effective | Social media influencer content, YouTube | | Andreani et al. (2021); Joshi et al. (2023) |

Source: Synthesized from systematic literature review (2021–2023)

Silva and Dias (2022) provide foundational empirical evidence on the relationship between employer branding, corporate reputation, and intention to apply for jobs, demonstrating that employer branding and corporate reputation are distinct yet complementary constructs that jointly predict job pursuit intention. Their study is particularly significant for Generation Z contexts because this cohort, raised with immediate access to online reputation data through Glassdoor, LinkedIn, and social media, possesses an unusually sophisticated ability to assess employer brand claims against lived employee experience evidence. Discrepancies between promoted employer brand and employee-reported experience generate reputational damage that is both rapid and difficult to reverse.

Samoliuk et al. (2022) identify the specific employer brand values that most strongly influence joining intention across workforce cohorts, finding that compensation adequacy, work content meaningfulness, and career advancement opportunities consistently rank as the top three drivers, with Generation Z showing notably stronger weighting of career advancement and work meaningfulness relative to older cohorts that prioritize compensation stability more uniformly. This generational variation in value prioritization has direct strategic implications for EVP customization: organizations that present EVPs calibrated to Gen Z's specific value hierarchy achieve disproportionately higher attraction effectiveness.

Rzemieniak and Wawer (2021) introduce gender diversity as a moderating variable in employer branding effectiveness for Generation Z, demonstrating through empirical analysis that Gen Z women and men show meaningfully different employer brand value preferences and digital channel receptiveness. Their study underscores that Gen Z-oriented employer branding must avoid treating this cohort as monolithic, instead developing nuanced EVP messaging that addresses within-generation diversity.

Table 2 presents a comparative framework showing how employer branding dimensions must evolve from traditional approaches to Gen Z-optimized strategies, along with the expected talent attraction impact.

Table 2. Employer Branding Dimensions: Traditional vs. Generation Z-Optimized Approaches

| EB Dimension | Traditional Approach | Gen Z-Optimized Approach | Expected Impact on Attraction |
|----------------------------------|---|---|--|
| Employee Value Proposition (EVP) | Corporate brochures, formal job descriptions | Short-form video testimonials, culture reels on TikTok/Instagram | Higher offer acceptance rates; improved quality of applicant pool |
| Corporate Reputation | Annual reports, press releases | Real-time Glassdoor/LinkedIn employer reviews, ESG storytelling | Greater trust in employer; passive candidate conversion |
| Social Media Presence | Periodic updates, LinkedIn job board postings | Daily authentic content across multiple platforms; employee advocacy programs | Expanded reach to passive Gen Z talent; reduced time-to-fill |
| Workplace Culture Communication | Culture described in HR policy documents | Day-in-the-life videos; team culture spotlights; DE&I initiatives visibility | Improved cultural fit; lower early-tenure turnover |
| Digital Recruitment UX | Paper-based or email application process | Mobile-first application, AI chatbot screening, instant feedback | Higher application completion rates; positive candidate experience |
| Sustainability Purpose | & CSR reports, annual sustainability statements | Ongoing purpose-driven content; employee volunteer stories | Attracts mission-aligned Gen Z talent with higher commitment |

Source: Adapted from reviewed literature (2021–2023)

The reviewed literature converges on a clear finding: Generation Z's employer branding engagement is fundamentally digital-first and platform-specific. Munsch (2021) examines the effectiveness of digital marketing communications for Generation Z, finding that short-form, authentic, visually compelling content significantly outperforms traditional advertising formats. Translated into employer branding terms, this means organizational culture communication is most effective when delivered through authentic employee-generated content and short video formats on platforms where Generation Z naturally congregates—primarily TikTok, Instagram Reels, and YouTube Shorts for culture content, and LinkedIn for career development positioning.

Vrontis et al. (2021) provide a systematic review of social media influencer marketing, establishing the theoretical and empirical foundations of why influencer-mediated communication is particularly effective with younger audiences. Their framework, when applied to employer branding, supports the emerging practice of employee advocacy—leveraging current employees as authentic employer brand influencers who communicate organizational culture, values, and work experiences through their own social media channels. This employee-as-influencer approach generates the authenticity signals that Generation Z receptors respond to most strongly.

Andreani et al. (2021), studying social media influencers, brand awareness, and decision behavior among Generation Z in Indonesia's Surabaya market, confirm that social media influencers significantly affect brand awareness and behavioral intentions among Gen Z. Their findings from an emerging economy context are particularly relevant given that Indonesia's Gen Z population represents one of the largest and fastest-growing workforce cohorts in Southeast Asia.

Nalbant and Aydın (2023) introduce the metaverse and generative AI as emerging frontiers in digital marketing and employer branding. Their analysis suggests that organizations developing immersive metaverse-based virtual employer experience platforms—including

virtual office tours, interactive culture showcases, and AI-powered recruitment chatbots—will gain first-mover advantage in capturing Gen Z attention in an increasingly crowded employer brand landscape.

Figure 1 illustrates the five core dimensions of the Employee Value Proposition that reviewed literature identifies as most resonant with Generation Z talent attraction.

Figure 1. Five Core EVP Dimensions for Generation Z Talent Attraction

| | | | | |
|--|---|--|--|--|
| Work Environment Positive culture, psychological safety, flexible arrangements | Career Development Growth opportunities, learning paths, mentoring programs | Compensation & Benefits Competitive pay, wellness benefits, recognition programs | Digital Identity Social media presence, authentic content, influencer branding | Purpose & Values CSR, sustainability commitment, mission alignment |
|--|---|--|--|--|

Source: Synthesized from reviewed literature (2021–2023)

Zhong et al. (2023) make a significant contribution by modeling the organizational conditions that drive "quiet quitting" intentions among Gen Z workforce members—a phenomenon characterized by disengagement and withdrawal of discretionary effort that falls short of actual resignation. Their structural equation model identifies autonomy deficits, perceived managerial unfairness, and lack of recognition as primary predictors of quiet quitting intention among Gen Z. This finding is directly relevant to employer branding because Generation Z candidates actively research these organizational conditions, through peer networks, review platforms, and social media, before applying. Organizations with reputational signals of poor autonomy and recognition cultures experience measurable Gen Z application rate suppression.

Waworuntu et al. (2022) examine work-life balance, job satisfaction, and performance among millennial and Gen Z employees through systematic review, finding that while both generations value work-life balance, Generation Z demonstrates higher sensitivity to work-life balance violations and is more likely to reject or leave employers who fail to deliver on flexible work commitments. This evidence reinforces the importance of authentic rather than performative flexibility commitments in Gen Z-oriented employer branding: stating flexible work policies in job postings while maintaining rigid actual practices generates powerful brand dissonance that amplifies through Gen Z's digital communication networks.

Confetto et al. (2023) examine how social media content influences sustainable behaviors and attitudes among Generation Z, finding that authentic sustainability messaging delivered through social channels significantly enhances Gen Z's positive brand attitudes and behavioral engagement. Translated to employer branding, organizations that embed genuine environmental and social responsibility commitments in their employer brand communication, not as peripheral marketing content but as core organizational identity statements, resonate more powerfully with Gen Z candidates who treat sustainability alignment as a non-trivial employment decision criterion.

Liu et al. (2022) provide complementary evidence from travel behavior research showing that social media marketing activities significantly shape Generation Z's behavioral intentions through affective and cognitive pathways. Their model, stimulus (social media content) → organism (brand attitude) → response (behavioral intention), provides a transferable framework for understanding how employer branding content operates on Gen Z's job application intentions. This stimulus-organism-response logic suggests that employer branding investments in high-quality, emotionally resonant social media content generate disproportionate returns in Gen Z talent attraction through the affective pathway.

Chan and Lee (2023) address Generation Z's distinctive relationship with AI technology, finding that Gen Z students show significantly higher openness to adopting generative AI tools compared to older generations. This finding has employer branding implications: organizations that authentically communicate their AI-enabled work

environment, digital tools infrastructure, and openness to AI experimentation in their employer brand positioning may attract Gen Z's technology-forward cohort segments more effectively than competitors presenting traditional work environment narratives.

Figure 2 presents the three-stage talent attraction model synthesized from the reviewed literature, illustrating how digital touchpoints translate into employer brand perception and ultimately into job pursuit intention among Generation Z.

Figure 2. Three-Stage Generation Z Talent Attraction Model



Source: Developed by authors based on systematic literature review (2021–2023)

Table 3 provides a comprehensive summary of all twenty articles included in the systematic review, presenting each study's focus area and the key finding most relevant to the intersection of employer branding and Generation Z talent attraction.

Table 3. Summary of Reviewed Literature on Employer Branding and Generation Z (2021–2023)

| Author(s) | Year | Focus | Key Finding Relevant to Study |
|------------------------|------|--------------------------------|---|
| Ngoc et al. | 2022 | Gen Z job expectations | Income and job stability are top job pursuit drivers; development opportunities critical for intention to apply |
| Rzemieniak & Wawer | 2021 | EB & gender diversity in Gen Z | Sustainable EB strategy must address gender diversity; Gen Z women show distinct brand value preferences |
| Benítez-Márquez et al. | 2022 | Gen Z workforce bibliometrics | Gen Z research is growing rapidly; key themes: digital work, values, flexible arrangements, psychological safety |
| Leslie et al. | 2021 | Gen Z positive workplace | Work-life balance, fair treatment, and growth opportunities are the top three drivers of positive workplace perception |
| Barhate & Dirani | 2021 | Gen Z career aspirations | Career growth, job flexibility, and purposeful work are primary aspirations; organization must signal these in branding |
| Author(s) | Year | Focus | Key Finding Relevant to Study |
| Samoliuk et al. | 2022 | Employer brand values | Salary, work content, and career advancement are top employer brand values influencing joining intention |
| Jayatissa | 2023 | Gen Z characteristics (SLR) | Gen Z is tech-savvy, socially conscious, and entrepreneurial; organizations must align EVP with these traits |
| Dobrowolski et al. | 2022 | Gen Z values in public admin | Gen Z demonstrates distinct risk perception and ethical values; public sector must modernize its employer brand |

| | | | |
|------------------|------|--|---|
| Munsch | 2021 | Gen Z digital marketing | Short-form, authentic digital content is significantly more effective than traditional advertising for Gen Z |
| Chan & Lee | 2023 | Gen Z and AI adoption | Gen Z shows highest openness to AI tools; organizations offering AI-enabled work environments attract Gen Z talent |
| Silva & Dias | 2022 | EB–corporate reputation link | Employer branding and corporate reputation jointly predict intention to apply; authenticity moderates the relationship |
| Reis et al. | 2021 | EB as talent management tool | EVP clarity, career development, and work environment are the most consistently cited EB drivers in literature |
| Vrontis et al. | 2021 | Social media influencer marketing | Influencer marketing generates authenticity signals that resonate strongly with Gen Z; employer influencers are emerging |
| Zhong et al. | 2023 | Quiet quitting in Gen Z | Organizational conditions—especially autonomy deficit and poor management—drive quiet quitting among Gen Z workforce |
| Andreani et al. | 2021 | Social media influencer & brand awareness | Social media influencers significantly affect brand awareness and purchase decisions among Gen Z in emerging markets |
| Waworuntu et al. | 2022 | Work-life balance, satisfaction, performance | Gen Z and millennials prioritize work-life balance differently; flexible work is a primary retention and attraction lever |
| Nalbant & Aydn | 2023 | AI & digital marketing transformation | Metaverse and AI are emerging as employer branding frontiers; early adopters gain first-mover talent attraction advantage |
| Joshi et al. | 2023 | Social media influencer marketing (SLR) | Influencer marketing evolving toward long-term partnerships; employee advocacy as internal influencer strategy gaining ground |
| Confetto et al. | 2023 | Social media & sustainability advocacy Gen Z | Gen Z responds strongly to sustainability messaging on social media; organizations must embed authentic green values in EB |
| Liu et al. | 2022 | Social media marketing & Gen Z travel behavior | Digital content significantly shapes Gen Z behavioral intentions; visual and interactive content drives strongest engagement |

Source: Systematic literature review results

CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review demonstrates that employer branding significantly influences Generation Z's job pursuit intention through digital engagement, EVP perception, and organizational culture authenticity. Generation Z tends to evaluate employers through digital platforms and prioritizes career development, meaningful work, and authentic organizational values over compensation alone. The findings highlight that effective employer branding requires consistency between digital communication and actual employee experiences, as corporate reputation and brand authenticity are closely interconnected. The proposed model Digital Touchpoints → Employer Brand Perception → Job Pursuit Intention offers a foundation for future research, while organizations are encouraged to treat employer branding as a strategic capability aligned with Generation Z's evolving digital behaviors, values, and career expectations.

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