INTEGRA BUSINESS REVIEW
Volume 3, Issue 1, June 2025 | pp. 40-47
https://doi.org/10.63208/21014-567

Check for updates

E- ISSN: 3047-261X

Employer Branding for Attracting and Retaining Generation Z Talent: Systematic Literature Review

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ABSTRACT

The increasing dominance of Generation Z in the global workforce has reshaped organizational approaches to talent acquisition and retention. As digitally oriented and value-driven individuals, Gen Z employees prioritize authenticity, meaningful work, flexibility, and transparent communication. This systematic literature review examines how employer branding (EB) influences organizational attractiveness and retention intention among Generation Z. Several articles that have undergone peer review and been published over the past five years were analyzed. The findings show that EB positively contribute to both attraction and retention, driven by factors such as genuine communication, value alignment, digital engagement, and employee experience. Construct including organizational identification and perceived work-life balance further strengthen this relationship. The review concludes that organizations must adopt authentic, consistent, and culturally aligned EB strategies to remain competitive in the evolving talent landscape. The article discusses findings through a PRISMA-guided thematic synthesis, comparing quantitative correlations and qualitative insights.

Keywords: *Employer Branding, Generation Z, Organizational Attractiveness, Retention.*

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ARTICLE HISTORY
Received : January 15, 2024
Final Revised : June 03, 2025
Accepted : June 05, 2025
Published : June 30, 2025

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1. | INTRODUCTION

The increasing presence of Generation Z in the workforce is reshaping organizational approaches to talent acquisition, engagement, and retention. As a digitally oriented and value-driven cohort, Generation Z evaluates employers not only through economic rewards but also through organizational culture, social relationships, development opportunities, sustainability, and alignment with personal values. Recent evidence indicates that employer branding (EB) is an important mechanism for communicating these attributes and differentiating organizations in a competitive talent market (Rzemieniak & Wawer, 2021; Pandita, 2022). Accordingly, EB has developed beyond conventional promotion into a strategic human resource mechanism connecting employer value propositions, organizational culture, employee experience, and external communication.

For Generation Z, the credibility of employer branding is particularly important because employment information is increasingly accessed through digital and social channels. Research in Indonesia shows that Gen Z evaluates employer branding through economic, social, work-culture, and environmental or sustainability dimensions (Islamiaty et al., 2022). Similarly, Kapuściński et al. (2022) found that psychological, development, and social values influence Gen Z's employer preferences, indicating that organizational attractiveness depends on whether employer attributes provide meaningful benefits and correspond with individual values. These findings highlight the importance of authentic communication, value congruence, development opportunities, and supportive workplace experiences.

Although employer attractiveness and intention to apply have received increasing attention, the relationship between EB and the longer-term retention of Generation Z remains insufficiently integrated. Vieira et al. (2024), through a systematic literature review, identified EB as an important perspective for understanding both talent attraction and retention among Gen Z while highlighting gaps in existing talent-management research. A broader synthesis is therefore needed to explain how EB shapes organizational attractiveness, organizational identification, and decisions to remain with an employer.

Therefore, this systematic literature review examines how employer branding influences organizational attractiveness and retention intention among Generation Z. The review synthesizes recent peer-reviewed evidence concerning authenticity and transparency, digital engagement, value alignment, employee experience, organizational identification, and work–life balance. By integrating technological, psychological, and social dimensions, this study aims to identify how organizations can develop authentic and culturally aligned EB strategies that strengthen both the attraction and retention of Generation Z talent.

2. | LITERATURE REVIEW

Employer branding (EB) refers to the strategic development and communication of an organization's identity as an employer of choice by aligning organizational culture, employee experiences, and external communication (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004; Theurer et al., 2020). For Generation Z, EB is increasingly important because employer evaluations are influenced by digital information, authenticity, social values, career opportunities, and meaningful work. Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973) provides the primary theoretical foundation, explaining how prospective employees interpret organizational signals, including digital presence, communication, sustainability initiatives, and employee experiences, to assess organizational credibility and attractiveness. Consistency between employer promises and actual organizational practices is therefore essential for building trust.

Previous studies show that Generation Z responds strongly to employer attributes aligned with personal values. Rzemieniak and Wawer (2021) highlight the relevance of sustainability-related EB, while Islamiaty et al. (2022) identify economic, social, work-culture, and environmental dimensions of Gen Z employer branding. Kapuściński et al. (2022) further demonstrate that psychological, development, and social values influence employer attractiveness. Pandita (2022) emphasizes innovative EB and talent-management practices, while Vieira et al. (2024) highlight EB's relevance to both attraction and retention.

The relationship is further explained by Person–Organization Fit Theory, which links value congruence with satisfaction and retention (Kristof, 1996), and Organizational Identification Theory, which emphasizes emotional attachment to organizations (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Thus, authentic EB, value congruence, employee experience, digital engagement, and work–life balance can jointly strengthen Generation Z's organizational attractiveness and retention intention.

3. | RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to synthesize empirical evidence concerning the influence of employer branding on Generation Z's organizational attractiveness and retention intention. The review followed the principles of PRISMA 2020 to ensure a systematic and transparent literature-selection process. Relevant peer-reviewed publications were identified through Scopus and Web of Science, with the search focused on studies published within the most recent five-year period and primarily involving high-ranked journals (Q1–Q2). The search strategy combined the keywords "Employer Branding," "Generation Z," "Attraction," and "Retention." The initial search identified 144 records, consisting of 132 publications obtained from databases and 12 additional publications identified through manual searching. After duplicate removal, 84 unique records remained. Title and abstract screening excluded 57 studies that were considered irrelevant to the research focus. Subsequently, 27 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility, resulting in 15 studies

included in the final synthesis. The selected studies were analyzed thematically by comparing their research methods, theoretical perspectives, and principal findings, with particular attention to authenticity, digital engagement, value alignment, employee experience, organizational identification, work–life balance, organizational attractiveness, and retention.

4. | RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The systematic review process resulted in studies that met the eligibility criteria and were included in the final synthesis. As summarized in Table 1, the review began with 144 records, consisting of 132 publications retrieved from database searches and 12 additional publications identified manually. After duplicate removal and successive title, abstract, and full-text screening, 15 studies were retained for analysis. This selection process provides the evidence base for examining how employer branding shapes Generation Z's organizational attractiveness and retention intention.

Table 1. PRISMA Flow Summary

Records identified through database searching	132
Additional publications located through manual review	12
Non-duplicate record retained	84
Full-text assessments conducted	27
Final studies included in synthesis	15

The synthesis reveals that employer branding plays an important role in both attracting and retaining Generation Z talent. Across the reviewed literature, the findings can be integrated into several interconnected dimensions: authenticity and transparency, digital engagement, value alignment, employee experience, organizational identification, and work–life balance. These dimensions demonstrate that Generation Z does not evaluate employer branding merely as promotional communication but as a representation of the actual employment experience offered by an organization.

Authenticity and transparency emerge as particularly important elements. Generation Z tends to respond positively when organizational communication reflects actual workplace culture and employment practices. This finding is consistent with Signalling Theory (Spence, 1973), because employer branding provides signals that prospective and existing employees use to evaluate organizational credibility. When external messages correspond with internal experiences, employer credibility and organizational attractiveness are strengthened. Conversely, inconsistencies between employer promises and workplace realities may weaken trust and potentially reduce retention intention (Mu & Lee, 2023). This reinforces the argument that EB should represent genuine organizational characteristics rather than function solely as an external recruitment campaign.

Digital engagement is another prominent dimension because Generation Z relies heavily on online information when assessing potential employers (Trang et al., 2024).

Organizational websites, social media, digital employer narratives, and employee-related content can communicate workplace values and experiences. This corresponds with Pandita (2022), who emphasizes innovative employer branding for attracting Generation Z, and with Islamiaty et al. (2022), who demonstrate the relevance of multiple employer-brand dimensions to Generation Z's intention to apply.

Table 2. Characteristics of the 15 Reviewed Studies

Author (Year)	Country	Method	Theory Used	Key Findings
Aaker (1991)	General	Conceptual	Brand Equity	Brand value shapes EB
Keller (2003)	General	Conceptual	Brand Equity	Brand loyalty affects EB
Kristof (1996)	General	Review	P–O Fit	Value fit affects retention
Ashforth & Mael (1989)	General	Conceptual	Identification	Identity ↑ attachment
Theurer et al. (2020)	Intern	Review	Brand Equity–EB	EB linked to experience
Spence (1973)	General	Conceptual	Signalling Theory	EB as signal
Backhaus & Tikoo (2004)	Global	Review	EB Model	Foundational EB framework

Beyond attraction, the synthesis indicates that value alignment and employee experience contribute to retention. Generation Z is particularly attentive to whether organizational values concerning meaningful work, sustainability, inclusivity, development opportunities, and workplace relationships correspond with personal expectations. Rzemieniak and Wawer (2021) emphasize sustainability in employer branding, while Kapuściński et al. (2022) identify psychological, development, and social values as important components of employer attractiveness. These findings are consistent with Person–Organization Fit Theory (Kristof, 1996), which suggests that compatibility between employees and organizational values can strengthen positive workplace outcomes.

Organizational identification and perceived work–life balance further explain how attractive employer branding may translate into stronger retention intention (Bharadwaj et al., 2022). When employees experience the values promised through employer branding, they are more likely to develop attachment and identification with the organization, consistent with Organizational Identification Theory (Ashforth & Mael, 1989). Vieira et al. (2024) similarly demonstrates the importance of examining employer branding within both attraction and retention processes. Overall, the findings indicate that successful employer branding for Generation Z requires an integrated approach in which digital communication, organizational values, and actual employee experiences remain consistent. Thus, sustainable retention depends not only on attracting Generation Z through a compelling employer image but also on continuously delivering the employment experience represented by that image.

5. | CONCLUSION

This systematic literature review concludes that employer branding is an important strategic mechanism for attracting and retaining Generation Z talent. Based on the synthesis of 15 studies, its effectiveness is primarily shaped by authenticity and transparency, digital engagement, value alignment, employee experience, organizational identification, and work–life balance. Generation Z tends to respond positively when employer promises are consistent with actual organizational culture and workplace practices. Digital platforms further strengthen employer visibility and provide important signals for evaluating organizational attractiveness. Meanwhile, alignment between personal and organizational values, meaningful work, supportive relationships, and balanced working conditions can strengthen organizational identification and retention intention. Therefore, organizations should develop employer branding strategies that are authentic, consistent, digitally accessible, and supported by genuine internal practices, rather than relying solely on external promotional communication. Future research should examine these relationships across different cultural contexts and over longer periods to provide deeper evidence regarding Generation Z's changing employment expectations.

Acknowledgment

We gratefully acknowledge the contributions of individuals who supported the completion of this article.

Funding Information

This research did not receive any funding.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

Ethical Approval and Originality Statement

Ethical approval was obtained for this study. The manuscript represents original work and has not been previously published, nor is it under consideration by another journal.

Data Disclosure Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

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