



Research Paper

Employer Branding and Employee Retention with the Test of Mediating Role of Social Media in the Context of Nepalese Service Sector

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Abstract

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The aim of this study is to investigate the role of employer branding (including compensation and benefits, organization culture, employer reputation, and career development) in Nepalese service sector industries and its impact on employee retention. Additionally, the study explores the potential mediating role of social media communication technology in this relationship. While previous research has predominantly focused on employer branding's role in enhancing organizational attractiveness and the mediating role of social media, this study diverges by examining its impact on employee retention, filling a gap in Nepalese research literature. Data from 183 respondents were analyzed using SMART-PLS software, employing structural equation modeling and bootstrap multi-group analysis. The study reveals that there is no direct and significant relationship between employer branding components and employee retention. Despite the emphasis on the significance of a strong employer brand in retaining employees, other contextual factors may play a more influential role in the Nepalese service sector context. Moreover, the mediating role of social media usage in the relationship between employer branding and employee retention was found to be insignificant. It means the information provided through social media does not contribute to retain employees. However, the employer's branding leverages the time of retention of the employees. Though social media may serve as a valuable tool for employer branding and communication, its direct impact on employee retention in Nepalese service sector is limited. Future research could consider additional contextual factors such as job satisfaction and work-life balance, as well as explore elements like competitive remuneration and organizational support, to deepen understanding of employee retention dynamics and inform initiatives aimed at fostering entrepreneurship among students.

Keywords: Employer Branding; Employee Retention; Social Media; Signaling Theory; User Gratification Theory; Mediation Analysis

JEL Classifications: J26; J50; J63; M12; M30

1. Introduction

Holliday (2023) has defined employee retention as an organization's ability to prevent employee turnover, or the number of people who leave their job in a certain period, either voluntarily or involuntarily. Society for Human Resource Management explained that the employees leave organizations for all sorts of reasons such as a different job, some go back to school, some follow a spouse who has been transferred to a different location, some retire, some get angry about a work-related or personal issue and quit on impulse, and some simply decide they no longer need a job. Employee retention is a high priority for leading HR organizations today. The most effective employee retention strategies reduce overall turnover and keep high performers on board. Across the globe, organizations are facing significant talent-related challenges. Tupper and Ellis (2022) as discussed in the Harvard Business Review there is a forecast indicating that the pace of employee turnover is anticipated to be 50 to 75% higher than companies have previously experienced. Compounding this challenge, the time to fill roles has increased by 18% compared to the pre-pandemic period. This underscores the urgency for organizations to proactively address workforce challenges and adapt their strategies in the evolving employment landscape (Tupper & Ellis, 2022). As important as it is to understand the reasons that drive employees to leave an organization, it is just as important to understand why valuable employees stay.

In response to the increasing shortage of suitable candidates and rising turnover rates, organizations are compelled to develop strategies addressing these challenges to ensure a consistent supply of qualified talent in the future. An effective approach to overcoming talent acquisition and retention issues involves the implementation of employer branding; a concept derived from marketing management, where organizations strategically brand themselves to attract and retain employees which is considered instrumental in addressing the issue of a shortage of talent (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016). The better you are at employer branding, the more likely you are to retain and attract your top talent, as 69% of surveyed employees think it's extremely important that their employer has a brand, they're proud to support (Forsey, 2023). Glassdoor's Mission and Culture Survey (2019) found that over 77% of prospective employees would take a company's culture into account before applying for a job there, and 79 % would consider a company's mission and purpose before applying, competitive compensation (Koirala, 2023), recognition, foster growth and offer professional and personal development (Crail, 2023) that motivate employees to perform better and strengthen their commitment to the company and their jobs and for employer branding. Good employer branding strategies are considered drivers of engagement (Kaoud & ElBolok, 2022). Organizations are using employer branding to attract recruits and ensure that current employees are engaged in the culture and strategy of the organization (Eger et al., 2019). In recent years, a brand value of a firm perceived by building brand awareness and gain references in social media page (Andzulis et al., 2012).

The integration of digital tools, including social media, contributes to recognizing and appreciating employee contributions, boosting morale, and fostering continuous professional

development and job satisfaction (Vijayashree et al., 2023). In an era defined by rapid technological advancement and unprecedented connectivity, the role of social media in shaping organizational dynamics and talent acquisition strategies cannot be overstated. As a result, harnessing the power of social media has become imperative for modern businesses seeking to bolster their employer brand, attract top-tier talent, and ultimately, retain a competitive edge in the global marketplace (Dolan, 2023). When the goal of your employer brand is to actively showcase the activities that make your company special, social media is the most convenient and accessible place to do so as it strengthens employer brand and engages existing employees (Boogaard, 2020). By sharing authentic stories, testimonials, and behind-the-scenes glimpses, businesses can forge an emotional connection with employees. This helps individuals envision themselves as a part of the company's journey (Rahman & Khan, 2023). So, the social media is chosen as the mediator between employer brand and Employee retention (Kumari & Dutta, 2022).

The use of social media for employee branding and retention in multinational corporations was the focus of previous research by Kumari and Dutta (2022), Eger et al., (2019), and Otken and Okan (2016). This creates a significant knowledge gap regarding the applicability of these findings to Nepal's unique cultural and economic context. Kheang et al., (2023) and Phyu et al., (2023) ignores the subject of employee retention through social media use and corporate branding in favor of recruiting new employees and enhancing organizational attractiveness. To address the gaps acknowledged from the previous literature (Kumari & Dutta, 2022; Eger et al., 2019) important factors such as, employer brand, social media and employee retention are identified. Through the guidance of signaling theory, uses and gratification theory (Kumari & Dutta, 2022) and empirical evidences, the conceptual model is developed. The signaling theory finds utility in explaining behavior when there exists an information asymmetry between two parties, be it individuals or organizations where one party, termed the sender, determines whether and how to share information, while the other party, labeled the receiver, interprets the conveyed message (Connelly et al., 2011). Based on Spence's seminal work in 1973, Kumari and Dutta (2020) proposed that organizations utilize social media as a platform to convey signals or messages regarding their image. Potential job applicants then interpret these signals to determine whether the organization is perceived as a favorable place to work. Building upon this theory, our study investigates how organizations employ social media to communicate their image and how employees interpret these signals to assess the desirability of the workplace. Thus, the study aims to investigate the effectiveness of usage of social media and employer branding which help organizations to retain employees in the Nepalese service sector.

The study also explains the relationship between employer brand and social media communication as technology. Companies use social media to promote their employer brand along with traditional recruitment tools, an appealing employer brand can increase employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention (Kaoud & El Bolok, 2022). Pandey et al., (2024) concluded that the use of internet in academic endeavor become essential in recent years.

Pandey et al., (2024) revealed that interactivity, informativeness, and hedonic motivation had influenced the impulsive buying behavior, whereas perceived relevance did not exert a notable effect. Gender did not moderate these relationships. These findings had contributed to the understanding of the effectiveness of social media marketing within emerging markets and offered valuable insights for marketers aiming to engage Nepalese consumers. Nepalese service sector is still in infancy stage and the financial literacy of the employees is lacking in Nepal.

Similarly, the trained employees are lacking. Therefore, employees have plenty of avenues in the market. Thus, they consider to the compensation and benefits, employers' reputation and organizational culture while selecting employers. Thus, the study is significant enough.

2. Literature Review

1.1 Employer Branding through Social Media

Scott and Jacka (2011) provide a definition of social media as a collection of Web-based broadcast technologies that enhance material accessibility, enabling users to transition from content consumers to providers (Otken & Okan, 2016). The social media landscape encompasses platforms such as Facebook for social connections, Twitter for concise updates, LinkedIn as a professional network, Google Plus with similarities to Facebook, Pinterest for visual content, YouTube as a video-sharing platform, and Instagram for quick photo editing, each serving unique social and professional purposes. This diversity underscores the multifaceted nature of contemporary social media usage. In today's landscape, interactive dialogues play a pivotal role in shaping brand images, especially among Generation Y and Z, who highly value personal experiences and brand perception. Building brand awareness and gaining references on social media pages, as highlighted by Andzulis et al., (2012), contribute significantly to this process. With technology integrated into their daily lives, individuals now expect it to be part of every interaction with employers. Otken and Okan (2016) emphasized that companies actively using social media effectively create positive images among potential employees and the broader community. Social media serves as a powerful platform for companies to showcase their culture, values, and mission. Through authentic stories, testimonials, and behind-the-scenes glimpses, businesses can establish an emotional connection with potential candidates, aiding them in envisioning themselves as part of the company's journey. Beyond traditional recruitment tools, a compelling employer brand, as noted by Kaoud and El Bolok (2022), has the potential to enhance employee satisfaction, engagement, and retention.

1.2 Social Media and Employee Retention

With the rapid influx of Generation Y employees into the workplace, organizations are forced to embrace social media, which has radically transformed the way people communicate, interact, share, and develop relationships with family, peers, and friends alike (Reitz, 2012).

Evidence from literature reveals that social media, particularly social networking sites and blogs, are used extensively by college and university students from the USA, the UK, and Malaysia for interacting and communicating with peer group, which in turn positively impacts informal learning and socialization (Hamat et al., 2012; Madge et al., 2009). Chauhan (2022) found that social media usage positively impacts job performance and employee retention by enhancing employee knowledge sharing capability and organizational commitment. Naim et al., (2018) concluded that mentoring, strategic leadership, social media, and knowledge sharing have a great potential to foster competency development. Competency development is critical to evoke affective commitment of Generation Y employees, which in turn results in intention to stay forth.

1.3 Employer Branding and Employee Retention

Davies (2008) highlighted the positive effects of employer branding on employee perceptions, encompassing loyalty, retention, satisfaction, affinity with the employer, and differentiation from competitor brands. Effective employer branding gives businesses a competitive edge, aids in employees' internalization of the company's values, and promotes employee retention, (Matongolo et al., 2018). Companies that actively employ employer branding strategies are anticipated to attract more interest from potential employees and enjoy increased loyalty and commitment from their current workforce (Chhabra & Sharma, 2014). Moreover, it is emphasized that when employees develop a commitment to the brand, their likelihood to remain with the organization is shaped by the loyalty and dedication they have cultivated. This underscores a positive correlation between the employer branding process and employee retention, as demonstrated by the research findings presented by Gilani and Cunningham, (2017). Smith (2023) found that employer branding components such as higher pay, implementation of WLB, greater opportunities for career enhancement, and flexible work arrangements remain the primary reasons for generation Z to consider changing jobs. Hence, organizations need to attach these components to their employer branding. Hendriana et al., (2023) showed that emotionally exhausted employees tended to have lower employee retention in organizations with unfavorable branding than in organizations with positive branding (Chaudhary & Khanal, 2023).

1.4 Compensation and Employee Retention

Compensation (Kheang et al., 2023) is a powerful tool for employee retention, but its effectiveness goes beyond the monetary aspect. A thoughtful and comprehensive compensation strategy that considers fairness, competitiveness, and alignment with organizational values can contribute significantly to retaining top talent and reducing turnover. Hassan (2022) found that employee retention in the retail industry in the Maldives is positively impacted by reward and compensation methods. However, it was discovered that performance reviews, training and development, and career growth had no appreciable impact on staff retention (Sorn et al., 2023). Effective compensation, integrating financial and non-financial rewards, boosts employee satisfaction and retention (Osibanjo et al., 2014; Bibi et al., 2016). Robust compensation systems in organizations positively influence employee commitment, lowering turnover

probabilities. Sorn et al., (2023) revealed the compensation as one of the most important factors affecting employee retention employees who are not satisfied with their compensation are more likely to leave their jobs, employers should also strive to create a culture of openness and transparency around compensation, allowing employees to understand how their compensation compares to industry benchmarks and the overall compensation strategy of the organization. Tailoring compensation solutions is recommended, acknowledging the diverse priorities of employees (Sorn et al., 2023). Asi (2021) stated that a perfect reward strategy to be formulated and executed keeping all the pros and cons in view, and strategically implement across the organization so as to make the employees know on the initiatives the organization is taking to retain them.

1.5 Career Development and Employee Retention

Phyu et al., (2023) The study on advancement of employee retention shows that there has been a noticeable shift in employee perception toward future of job and its tenure patterns in recent years compared to the past. Employers can benefit from clearly communicating the value of long-term commitment and growth within the organization, demonstrating how employees can advance and contribute meaningfully over time. Multiple studies have underscored a positive and direct link between job retention and career progression (Rolfe, 2005; Herman, 2005; Houssein et al., 2020). Cardy and Lengnick-Hall (2011) has indicated that career development is connected to an increased intention among employees to continue their tenure with the current organization. Phyu et al., (2023) capable employees will always be promoted to the highest position and would attempt to leave their current company if they do not see opportunities for professional progression. According to a study conducted by the Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), companies that prioritize employees' professional development programs experience a significant 30% higher retention rate compared to those that do not. Ferdiana et al., (2023) concluded that when employees understand their career advancement opportunities, they are more likely to feel invested in their work and motivated to stay with the institution also well-defined career path is essential for increasing employee satisfaction and reducing turnover.

1.6 Organization Culture and Employee Retention

Companies that prioritize creating a positive, inclusive, and values-driven culture are more likely to retain their talent and build a workforce committed and motivated to stay and contribute to the company's success (Ushakov & Shatila, 2021). Barik (2022) highlights the crucial role of a positive organizational culture and employee-friendly policies in fostering long-term employee retention. The study emphasizes that a healthy work environment, characterized by increased employer-employee interaction, creates a conducive atmosphere where employees feel motivated to stay (Barik & Jain, 2022). Goyal and Kaur (2023) had underscored the pivotal role of a positive organizational culture in reinforcing employee engagement, particularly in the context of nurses' retention within the healthcare organization. Drawing from the foundations of Self-Determination Theory (SDT), the research suggests that

fostering engagement activities and cultivating a supportive culture significantly contribute to positive outcomes, including enhanced affective commitment and talent retention.

1.7 Reputation and Employee Retention

Reputation plays a reciprocal role in the employer-employee relationship, influencing attraction, engagement, and retention. Employers who actively cultivate a positive reputation benefit from the loyalty and commitment of their workforce, creating a foundation for long-term, mutually beneficial relationships (Bustos, 2023). LIGS University (2019), and Barik and Jain (2023) Corporate reputation enables organizations to attract superior talents that deliver critical corporate capabilities such as innovation, effective internal processes and innovation. (Bano & Singh, 2023) A positive employer brand reduces employee turnover. Retaining experienced employees leads to better continuity and stability in the organization (Ahmed et al., 2022). In a given social context, it is highly anticipated that employees who believe their employer has a prestigious reputation among those outside the company, who have created a competitive environment with room for excellence among rivals, and who have participated in successful corporate social responsibility (CSR) would have a positive perception of their employer brand and would be more likely to stick with it in the long run. The research findings indicate a noteworthy correlation between staff retention in Saudi Arabian pharmaceutical enterprises and factors such as motivation, work environment, organizational culture, leadership support, and remuneration and perks (Alshamrani et al., 2023; Sorn et al., 2023).

1.8 Mediating Role of Social Media

Anwar and Kumar (2019) highlighted that mediating role of social media is important in the relationship between employer branding and employer of choice. It shows that social media provides information about the brand of the employers that help potential employees to get information for the choice of the organization and develop intention to retain in the organization. The results suggest that innovation value, psychological value, application value, and the use of social media positively relate to corporate reputation, which in turn is positively linked to intentions to apply for a job. Psychological value, which is the strongest predictor, is also directly related to intentions to apply for a job (Anne-Mette et al., 2013). Ruck et al., (2020) concluded that Social media help internal communication that establishes the primary drivers of emotional engagement, meaningfulness which attract and retain employees for longer period of time. The effects and benefits of information dissemination via social media may be of particular relevance to businesses seeking to build a good employer branding reputation and attractive-ness (Ruck et al., 2012; Carpentier, 2019) which in turn is positively linked to intentions to apply for a job (Kuchеров & Zhiltsova, 2021; Silvertzen et al., 2013).

Signaling Theory focuses on situations with an information asymmetry between two actors (Drover et al., 2018; Spence, 1973), where one party (i.e., the sender) must decide which information (i.e., the signal) should be conveyed to the other party (i.e., the receiver) (Connelly et al., 2011). Specifically, signals are understood as ‘activities or attributes of individuals in a

market which, by design or accident, alter the beliefs of, or convey information to, other individuals in the market' (Spence, 1973). This paper explores Blumler and Katz (1974) Uses and Gratifications Theory (UGT), which posits that media users actively select and employ media to fulfill specific needs. The theory classifies these needs into categories such as affective, cognitive, personal, integrative, and tension-free. It emphasizes the active role of the audience in shaping their media choices, challenging the traditional view of media influence. The UGT framework has evolved over time, responding to criticism and incorporating a more nuanced understanding of audience engagement and media effects. Fitz-enz (1990); Das and Baruah (2013); Ghani et al., (2022); and Gilani and Cunningham (2017) have underscored the multifaceted nature of employee retention, highlighting aspects such as employee voice, communication, leadership, compensation, performance appraisal, and job flexibility. Kumari and Dutta (2022) have explored the positive impact of employer brand attributes on organizational attractiveness and the mediating role of social media. Rijal (2022) identified conventional factors affecting staff retention but has not addressed the impact of employer branding and social media in Nepalese context. Thus, a gap remains in understanding how social media platforms specifically contribute to employee retention. Our study aims to address this gap by investigating the influence of social media platforms on employee retention, considering factors such as compensation and benefits, organizational culture, employer reputation, and career development. Likewise, the existing research by Kumari and Dutta (2022), Eger et al., (2019), and Otken and Okan (2016) have examined social media's role in employee retention and branding in international firms, such as those in the United States, the United Kingdom, and India. Kheang et al., (2023) and Phyu et al., (2023) had overlooked the importance of employer branding and social media in retaining existing employees. Prasad and Penki (2022) research on IT companies in Bangalore lacks generalizability to other industries. These studies highlight a gap in understanding how employer branding and social media affect employee retention across diverse industries in Nepal, as such studies have not been conducted in the Nepalese context.

1.9 Conceptual Framework

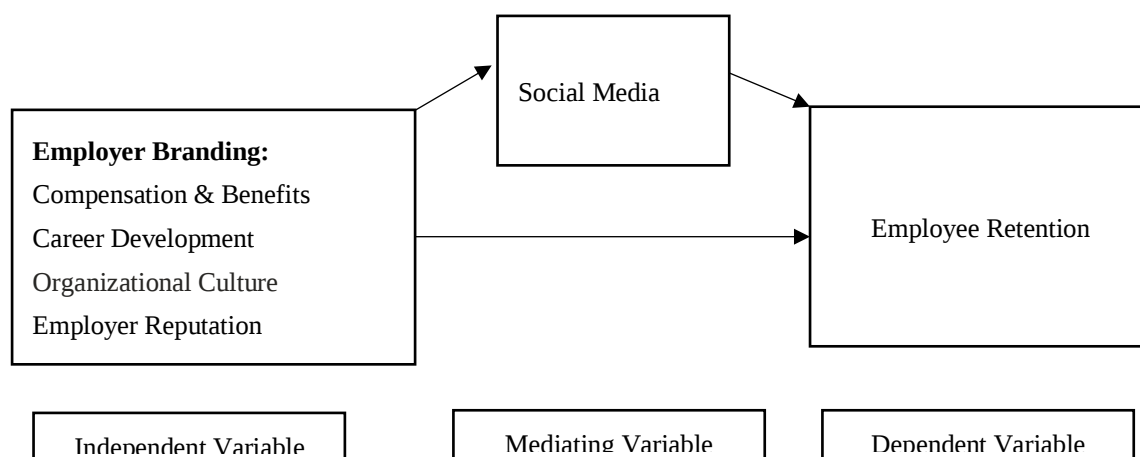


Figure 1. Conceptual Framework of the Study

Source: Kumari & Dutta, (2022)

1.10 Hypothesis

- H1: There is a significant positive impact of compensation and benefits on employee retention.
- H2: There is a significant positive impact of career development on employee retention.
- H3: There is a significant positive impact of organization culture on employee retention.
- H4: There is a significant positive impact of employer reputation on employee retention.
- H5: There is a significant positive impact of employer branding on employee retention.
- H6: Social media mediates the relationship between compensation and benefits and employee retention.
- H7: Social media mediates the relationship between career development and employee retention.
- H8: Social media mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee retention.
- H9: Social media mediates the relationship between employer reputation and employee retention.
- H10: Social media mediates the relationship between employer branding and employee retention.
- H11: There is a significant association between employer branding and social media.
- H12: There is a significant association between social media and employee retention.

3. Methodology

A quantitative research approach has been used in the study. Non-probability convenience sampling was used to select participants who worked in service sectors. VanVoorhis and Morgan (2007) recommended a minimum sample size of $50+8k$ (where k represents the number of independent variables) for testing the overall model. With five independent variables, a sample size of 90 was required. Additionally, the suggested minimum sample size for testing individual variables is $104 + k$, which translates to 109. The research questions utilized a five-point Likert scale (ranging from 1-"strongly disagree" to 5-"strongly agree"). For data collection, structured questionnaires were distributed online using Google Forms to 384 plus employees who belonged to service industries and had at least one year of experience. However, the response from only 183 participants were collected, indicating a deviation from the calculated sample size. The deviation in sample size is for making the study more robust. The social media is used in the research considering to diffusion of compelling content, dialog creation and communication to a broader audience (Kapoor et al., 2018; Bishop, 2019). The data was analyzed with SMART PLS 4 and SPSS. MS Excel was used for sorting the data. Structural equation modeling, specifically partial least squares (PLS), was used to test the hypotheses of the study as it minimizes inaccuracies in variable calculations and facilitates the analysis of both the structural and measurement models' validation. Construct validity and reliability were assessed and affirmed through the utilization of structural equation modeling (SEM) within Smart PLS software. Internal consistency reliability was evaluated by computing Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability. Convergent validity was evaluated using the average variance extracted (AVE). Discriminant validity was examined through cross-loading

analysis, the Fornell-Larcker criterion, and the HTMT ratio. Multicollinearity in the data was detected by calculating the variation inflation factor (VIF). Hypothesis testing was conducted via bootstrapping. To explore the moderating impact of social media, bootstrap multi-group analysis was employed.

4. Results

Table 1. Social Media Platform Used by the Respondents

Social Media	Frequency	Percentage
Facebook only	39	21.31148
Instagram only	9	4.918033
LinkedIn only	2	1.092896
Facebook and Instagram	17	9.289617
All of them	116	63.38798
Total	183	100

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 1 indicates that the majority of the respondents use all the social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn accounting for 63.39 percent of the total sample whereas respondents using LinkedIn accounted for only 1.09% of the total sample.

Table 2. Organizations Social Media Presence

Social Media	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	183	100%
No	0	0%
Total	183	100%

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 2 indicates that all respondents' organizations have a social media presence, with a frequency of 183 out of 183 respondents, representing 100% of the total sample.

1.1 Normality Test

Table 3. Test of Normality

	Kolmogorov-Smirnov ^a			Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	df	Sig.	Statistic	Df	Sig.
CB	.085	183	.002	.941	183	.000
CD	.126	183	.000	.920	183	.000
ER	.089	183	.001	.950	183	.000
ERd	.219	183	.000	.842	183	.000
OC	.097	183	.000	.924	183	.000
SM	.268	183	.000	.871	183	.000

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 3 reveals the normality test results. The p-value is less than 0.05 for all the variables under Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk test. Thus, the test determined that the distribution of data was not normal.

1.2 Reliability and Convergent Validity

Table 4 reveals that all Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability values met the minimum threshold value of 0.7 as suggested by Fornell and Larcker (1981) for all the variables. The Cronbach's alpha for Compensation and Benefits (CB), Career Development (CD), Employer Reputation (ER), Organization Culture (OC), Social Media (SM) and Employee Retention (ERd) are 0.897, 0.883, 0.876, 0.903, 0.911, and 0.90 respectively. As a result, the constructs' reliability has been found adequate. The value of AVE is greater than 0.5 and the factor loading is greater than 0.7 which confirms the convergent validity.

Table 4: Reliability and Convergent Validity

Variables	Items	Loading	Cornbach's Alpha	C.R (rho_a)	C.R (rho_c)	AVE
CB	CB2	0.89	0.897	0.898	0.928	0.764
	CB4	0.887				
	CB5	0.886				
	CB6	0.832				
CD	CD1	0.835	0.883	0.91	0.913	0.678
	CD2	0.84				
	CD3	0.704				
	CD4	0.856				
ER	ER1	0.871	0.876	0.878	0.91	0.668
	ER3	0.767				
	ER4	0.843				
	ER5	0.819				
OC	OC1	0.833	0.903	0.918	0.927	0.719
	OC2	0.824				
	OC3	0.908				
	OC4	0.799				
SM	SM2	0.865	0.911	0.945	0.944	0.85
	SM3	0.971				
	SM5	0.838				
	SM5	0.951				
ERD	ERd1	0.833	0.9	1.032	0.921	0.699
	ERd2	0.874				
	ERd3	0.813				
	ERd4	0.878				

	ERd5	0.778				
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Source: Survey Data (2024)

1.3 Discriminant Validity

The degree to which a construct differs empirically from other constructs in the structural model is measured by its discriminant validity (Hair et al., 2019).

1.4 Fornell & Larcker Criterion

Table 5. Fornell and Larcker Criterion

	CB	CD	ER	ERd	OC	SM	EB
CB	0.874						
CD	0.561	0.823					
ER	0.782	0.728	0.818				
ERd	0.103	-0.001	0.028	0.836			
OC	0.808	0.583	0.674	0.073	0.848		
SM	0.624	0.629	0.759	0.072	0.641	0.922	
EB				0.042		0.761	0.876

Source: Survey Data (2024)

Table 5 reveals the correlational value of all the variables and the value in the diagonal is the square root of AVE. The highlighted numbers are square root of AVE. The values 0.874, 0.823, 0.818, 0.836, 0.848, 0.922 and 0.876 are the square root of AVE of Compensation and Benefits (CB), Career Development (CD), Employer Reputation (ER), Employee Retention (ERd), Organization Culture (OC), Social Media (SM) and Employer Branding respectively. It has been found that the AVE has a larger root square than matching correlation estimations that satisfy Fornell and Larcker's (1981) requirements for discriminant validity. The highest squared correlation between any two latent constructs should be higher than the AVE of each latent construct (Hair et al., 2011). All the correlation values are below 0.85 but Compensation and Benefits and Social Media has value higher than 0.85 however the difference is too small and can be ignored (Varma, 2018). Hence the overall discriminant validity is accepted.

1.6 HTMT Ratios

Table 6. HTMT Ratios

	CB	CD	ER	ERd	OC	SM	EB
CB							
CD	0.606						
ER	0.878	0.810					
ERd	0.099	0.061	0.074				
OC	0.894	0.634	0.752	0.064			
SM	0.679	0.659	0.836	0.072	0.681		
EB				0.067		0.824	

Source. Survey Data (2024)

Table 6 presents HTMT ratio. Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) is one of the methods to check discriminant validity. The average item correlations for different constructs divided by the mean of the average correlations for the items measuring the same construct is known as the HTMT (Hair et al., 2019). All the values of HTMT ratios are below 0.9 which is within the suggested threshold by Hair et al., (2019). Therefore, discriminant validity is established.

1.7 Cross Loading

Cross-loading describes the situation where an indicator (or measurement item) exhibits significant correlations with constructs other than the one it is intended to measure. Identifying and addressing cross-loadings is essential for ensuring the validity of measurement models in research (Henselr, et al., 2014). An indicator is considered inappropriate for use if an indicator loads higher in other constructs than the one it is intended to measure (Pandey et al., 2023).

Table 7. Cross Loading

	CB	CD	ER	ERd	OC	SM	EB
CB2	0.890	0.529	0.694	0.088	0.694	0.575	
CB4	0.887	0.508	0.729	0.091	0.701	0.535	
CB5	0.886	0.468	0.673	0.080	0.690	0.536	
CB6	0.832	0.454	0.637	0.099	0.740	0.533	
CD1	0.587	0.835	0.675	-0.011	0.606	0.650	
CD2	0.454	0.840	0.677	0.061	0.445	0.477	
CD3	0.294	0.704	0.490	-0.059	0.377	0.298	
CD4	0.482	0.856	0.555	0.004	0.487	0.566	
CD5	0.408	0.871	0.573	-0.016	0.424	0.488	
ER1	0.604	0.702	0.767	0.041	0.502	0.670	
ER3	0.757	0.681	0.843	-0.084	0.664	0.666	
ER4	0.616	0.478	0.819	0.030	0.546	0.539	
ER5	0.597	0.585	0.833	0.061	0.463	0.622	
ER6	0.609	0.490	0.824	0.077	0.573	0.583	
ERd1	0.092	-0.050	0.015	0.833	0.050	0.041	0.03
ERd2	0.107	0.048	0.057	0.874	0.123	0.080	0.094
ERd3	0.050	0.020	0.010	0.813	0.010	0.065	0.025
ERd4	0.047	-0.028	-0.038	0.878	-0.007	0.029	-0.009
ERd5	0.081	-0.043	0.002	0.778	0.017	0.053	0.015
OC1	0.773	0.553	0.652	0.096	0.908	0.625	
OC2	0.727	0.418	0.524	0.010	0.840	0.433	
OC3	0.610	0.466	0.472	0.061	0.826	0.552	
OC4	0.558	0.501	0.577	0.054	0.799	0.445	
OC5	0.739	0.517	0.618	0.071	0.865	0.612	

SM2	0.639	0.667	0.777	0.067	0.675	0.971	0.79
SM3	0.439	0.431	0.582	0.062	0.441	0.838	0.545
SM5	0.619	0.610	0.720	0.071	0.624	0.951	0.737
CB				0.09		0.624	0.897
CD				-0.005		0.629	0.818
ER				0.016		0.759	0.918
OC				0.05		0.641	0.869

Sourc. Survey Data (2024)

Table 7 reveals that each components has the highest loading with its related construct. The highlighted values are the highest values. Since all the constructs have scored higher on their respective construct than others, so, discriminant validity has been established.

1.8 Goodness of Fit Test

Table 8. Model fit

	Saturated Model	Estimated Model
SRMR	0.077	0.077

Source. Survey Data (2024)

Table 8 reveals the value of SRMR of saturated and estimated model is 0.077. Hair et al., (2017) suggested that the value of SRMR should be less than 0.08 for the research model to be acceptable. Since the value of SRMR is lesser than 0.08, the research model is accepted.

1.9 Structural Model Assessment

After confirming the reliability and validity of the construct, the next step is to assess the structural model. Examining structural models for collinearity problems is the first stage in the structural model assessment process. The next stage is to evaluate the significance and relevance of the structural model relationship after making sure there are no collinearity problems.

1.10 Test of Hypotheses

Table 9. Direct Impact Analysis

	Beta Coefficient	STDEV	t-Statistics	P-Values
CB -> Erd	0.265	0.154	1.724	0.085
CD -> Erd	-0.037	0.128	0.291	0.771
ER -> Erd	-0.129	0.178	0.728	0.467
OC -> Erd	-0.071	0.154	0.458	0.647
EB -> SM	0.761	0.035	21.867	0.000
SM -> Erd	0.087	0.141	0.617	0.537
EB -> Erd	0.042	0.113	0.371	0.711

Source. Survey Data (2024)

H1: There is a significant positive impact of compensation and benefits on employee retention.

Table 9 shows the value of beta is 0.265 and p-value is 0.085. Since, p-value is greater than 0.05 and there is no significant association between compensation and benefits (CB) and employee retention (ERd) So, H1 is rejected. It may be so that the employees try to find new and reputed organization than the benefits they received. Thus, the expected results have not been achieved.

H2: There is a significant positive impact of career development on employee retention.

Table 9 shows the value of beta is -0.037 and p-value is 0.771. Since, p-value is greater than 0.05 and there is no significant association between career and development (CD) and employee retention. So, H2 is rejected. In Nepalese service sector organization employees have a tendency of trying to grab the immediate benefits than career development in long term. It is so because they have plenty of opportunities in the market.

H3: There is a significant positive impact of organization culture on employee retention.

Table 9 shows the value of beta is -0.129 and p-value is 0.467. Since, p-value is greater than 0.05 and there is no significant association between organization culture (OC) and employee retention. So, H3 is rejected. Nepalese service sector organizations do not have rigid culture of doing the work. They use contextual approach. So, the expected results has not been achieved.

H4: There is a significant positive impact of employer reputation on employee retention..

Table 9 shows the value of beta is -0.071 and p-value is 0.647. Since, p-value is greater than 0.05 and there is no significant association between employer reputation (ER) and employee retention. So, H4 is rejected. Employer reputation has not been considered by the employees in Nepal to stay in the organization. However, they considered more to satisfaction.

H5: There is a significant positive impact of employer branding on employee retention.

Table 9 shows the value of beta is 0.042 and p-value is 0.711. Since, p-value is greater than 0.05 and there is no significant association between employer reputation and employee retention. So, H5 is rejected. Brand of the organization is considered minimal in Nepal because the experienced employees are found less in service sector and they have opportunities in the market.

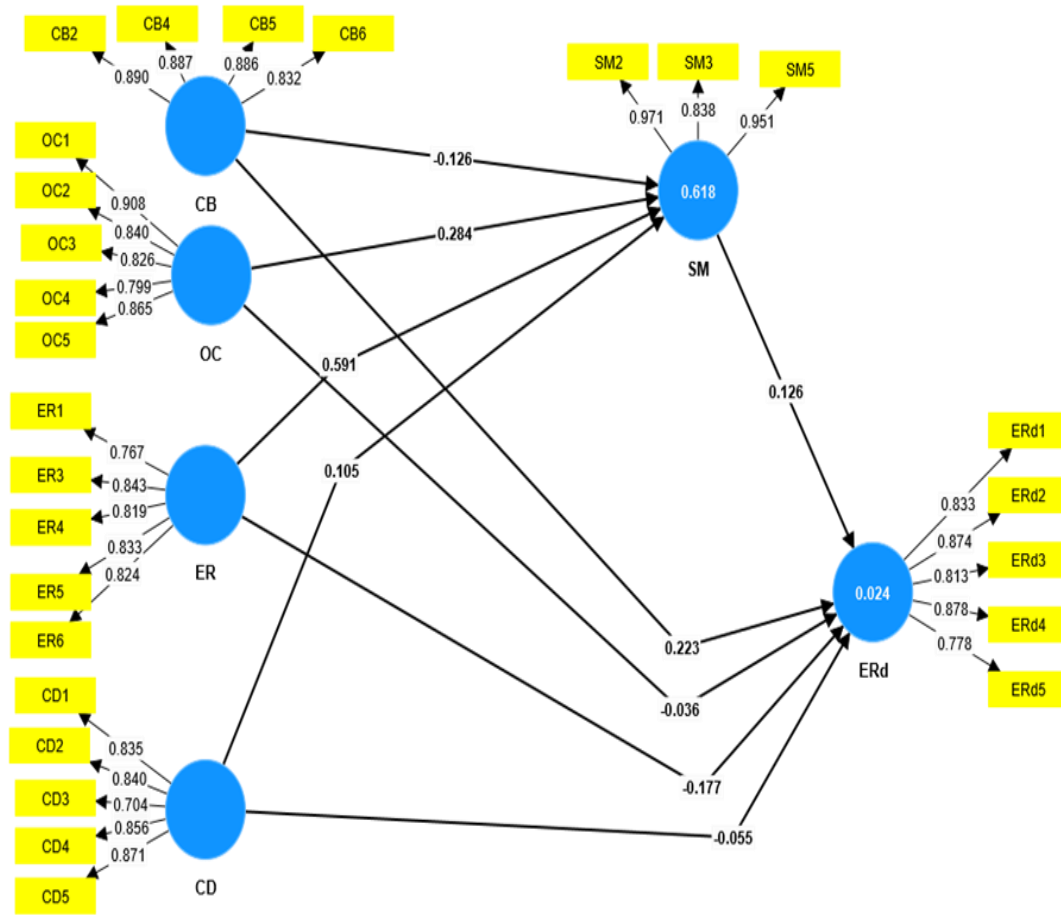


Figure 2. Structural Model

Source. Survey Data (2024)

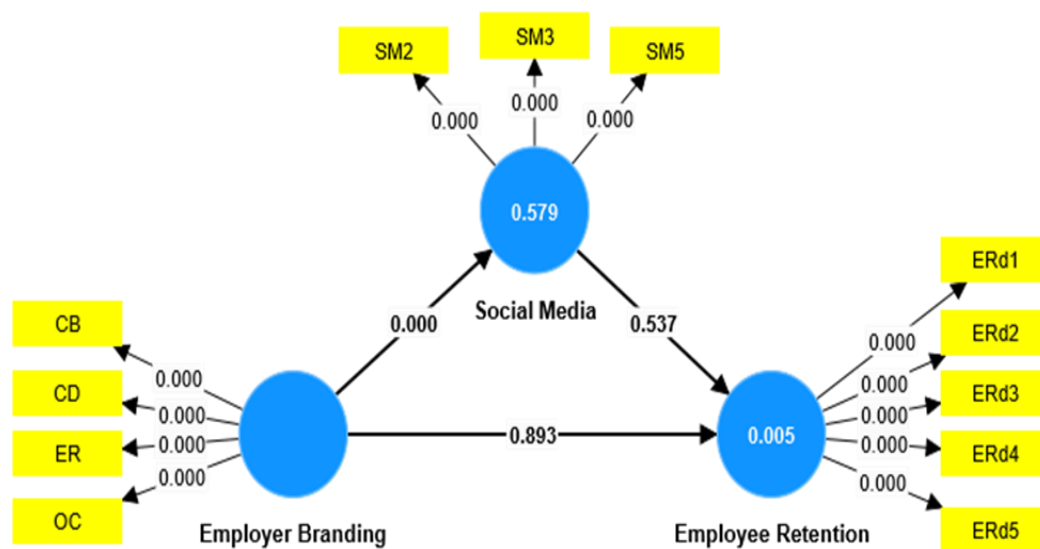


Figure 3. Higher Order Construct

Source. Survey Data (2024)

1.11 Mediating Analysis

Table 10. Mediating Impact Analysis

Total Effect		Direct Effect		Hypothesis	Indirect Effect				
B	P	β	P		β	t	P	CI	
0.265	0.085	0.285	0.068	H6: CB -> SM -> Erd	-0.02	0.615	0.539	-0.012	0.144
-0.037	0.771	0.053	0.662	H7: CD -> SM -> Erd	0.016	0.705	0.481	-0.101	0.024
-0.071	0.647	0.115	0.486	H8: OC -> SM -> Erd	0.045	1.092	0.275	-0.015	0.076
-0.129	0.467	0.223	0.246	H9: ER -> SM -> Erd	0.093	1.259	0.208	-0.028	0.254
0.042	0.711	0.024	0.893	H10: EB -> SM -> Erd	0.066	0.611	0.542	-0.166	0.243

Source. Survey Data (2024)

H6: Social media mediates the relationship between compensation and benefits and employee retention.

Mediating analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of social media (SM) on the linkage between compensation and benefits and employee retention. The result in Table 10 revealed that the total effect of compensation and benefits and employee retention was insignificant ($\beta = 0.265$, $t = 1.724$, $p > 0.05$). With the inclusion of social media, the impact of compensation and benefits on employee retention became insignificant ($\beta = 0.285$, $t = 1.832$, $p > 0.05$). The indirect effect of compensation and benefits on employee retention through social media was found insignificant ($\beta = -0.02$, $t = 0.615$, $p > 0.05$). This shows that there is no mediation of social media between compensation and benefits and employee retention. So, H6 is rejected. It may be so that the Nepalese organizations do not disclose the information regarding compensation and benefits in social media platforms.

H7: Social media mediates the relationship between career development and employee retention.

Mediating analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of social media on the linkage between career development and employee retention. The result in Table 10 revealed that the total effect of career development and employee retention was insignificant ($\beta = -0.037$, $t = 0.291$, $p \geq 0.05$). The indirect effect of career development on employee retention through social media was found insignificant ($\beta = 0.016$, $t = 0.705$, $p > 0.05$). This shows that there is no mediation of social media between career development and employee retention. So, H7 is rejected.

H8: Social media mediates the relationship between organizational culture and employee retention.

Mediating analysis was performed to assess the mediating role of social media on the linkage between organization culture and employee retention. The result in Table 10 revealed that the total effect of organization culture and employee retention was significant ($\beta = -0.071$, $t = .458$, $p < 0.05$). With the inclusion of social media, the impact of organization culture on employee retention became insignificant ($\beta = 0.115$, $t = 0.697$, $p < 0.05$). The indirect effect of organization culture on employee retention through social media was found insignificant ($\beta =$

0.045, $t = 1.092$, $p > 0.05$). This shows that there is no mediation of social media between organization culture and employee retention. So, H8 is rejected. It may be so because there is no culture of sharing procedures and standards of works in the social media in Nepal.

H9: Social media mediates the relationship between employer reputation and employee retention.

Mediating analysis was performed to access the mediating role of social media on the linkage between employer reputation and employee retention. The result in Table 10 revealed that the total effect of employer reputation and employee retention was insignificant ($\beta = -0.129$, $t = 0.728$, $p > 0.05$). With the inclusion of social media the impact of employer reputation on employee retention also became insignificant ($\beta = 0.223$, $t = 1.161$, $p < 0.05$). The indirect effect of employer reputation on employee retention through social media was found insignificant ($\beta = 0.093$, $t = 1.259$, $p > 0.05$). It shows that there is no mediation of social media on the relationship between employer reputation and employee retention. So, H9 is rejected.

H10: Social media mediates the relationship between employer branding and employee retention.

The result in Table 10 revealed that the total effect of employer branding and employee retention was insignificant ($\beta = 0.042$, $t = 0.371$, $p < 0.05$). With the inclusion of social media, the impact of employer branding on employee retention also became insignificant ($\beta = 0.024$, $t = 0.135$, $p < 0.05$). The indirect effect of employer branding on employee retention through social media was found insignificant ($\beta = 0.066$, $t = 0.611$, $p > 0.05$). It shows that there is no mediation of social media in the relationship between employer branding and employee retention. So, H10 is rejected. Social media does not present the employer branding in Nepal.

H11: There is a significant association between employer branding and social media.

Table 8 shows the value of beta is 0.761 and p-value is 0.711. Since, p-value is lesser than 0.05 and there is significant association between employer branding and social media. So, H11 is accepted.

H12: There is a significant association between social media and employee retention.

Table 8 shows the value of beta is 0.087 and p-value is 0.537. Since, p-value is greater than 0.05 and there is no significant association between social media and employee retention. So, H12 is rejected. Social media does not provide complete information in Nepal. So, it does not contribute in employee retention.

5. Discussion

Employee retention and the elements of employer branding do not significantly and directly correlate. The findings of Prasad and Penki (2022); Tanwar and Prasad (2016); Bibi et al., (2016); and Crady and Lengnick-Hall (2011) are in conflict with the results. These studies have consistently emphasized the significance of a strong employer brand in attracting and retaining talent. Job Security has demonstrated a positive correlation between employee

retention and their articles on compensation, training and development, flexible working hours, recognition and reward, and acknowledgment of milestones. In the framework of Nepalese service sector industries, the results did not corroborate previous theoretical suggestions. The findings imply that other variables outside the purview of this study might have a greater bearing on employee retention in this particular setting, such as flexible work schedules, rewards and recognition, milestone acknowledgement, and job security (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016); leadership style, management techniques, job autonomy, and employee relationships (Thapa, 2012). The difference in findings may be because of cultural context of different nature of the organizations. Our study findings align with those of Yagnik and Kshatriya (2020) regarding the absence of a significant relationship between employee retention and training and development initiatives. Despite the widely held belief in the importance of training and development for retaining employees, the study findings, consistent with theirs, did not find empirical evidence supporting this notion within the context of the Nepalese service sector industries. This finding suggests that while organizations invest resources in training and development programs, these initiatives may not directly contribute to employee retention. Instead, factors such as career growth opportunities, employee engagement, a healthy work environment, and ethical practices, as highlighted by Yagnik and Kshatriya (2020) study, may have a more significant impact on retaining employees. Moreover, our goal of examining the mediation function of social media use in the connection between elements of corporate branding and employee retention also produced surprising outcomes. The assumption that social media serves as a mediator in improving the relationship between employer branding and employee retention is unsupported by the evidence, which defies our original premise. The social media's predicted role in enhancing the link between employer branding and employee retention did not match reality because it was not as integrated into HR strategies in Nepal as it is in the UK, USA, and India (Kumari & Dutta, 2022; Eger et al., 2019; Otken & Okan 2016). Employers in Nepal have yet to fully leverage social media for HR purposes, further limiting its effectiveness and diverging from findings in other countries. Challenges with internet accessibility, especially in rural areas, hinder social media's reach to a significant portion of the workforce.

Additionally, Nepalese cultural emphasis on personal relationships diminishes the perceived importance of online branding initiatives compared to interpersonal tactics. Economic, cultural, organizational, and communication-related factors contribute to this variation in findings across different regions. Nepalese culture prioritizes social ties and family responsibilities over typical employer branding components, while political instability impacts organizational stability and employee preferences for job security (Ariza, 2023). These complexities highlight the need for a nuanced understanding of regional contexts when studying topics like employer branding and staff retention. The chosen dimensions of employer branding and mediating role of social media is insignificant because the Nepalese service sector employees have plenty of opportunities in the market. So, they can switch the organization quickly and join the another organization. Switching organization provides more remuneration and higher position so that they do not consider to any of the dimensions of employer branding

while choosing the organization. Similarly, Nepalese service sector employers do not provide opportunity to interact through social media and do not provide sufficient information.

6. Conclusions

The study findings revealed a significant trend despite organizations in the Nepalese service sector focusing on various facets of employer branding, such as compensation, career development, reputation, and culture, they do not necessarily experience higher success in retaining employees. Factors commonly associated with employee retention, including compensation benefits like insurance, bonuses, dependent benefits, and overtime allowances, as well as positive attitudes towards organizational culture, support for innovation, and involvement in social activities, were found to have no significant impact on employee retention within these organizations. Moreover, factors such as positive market perception, employer reputation, the organization's status as a great place to work, and professional associations with reputable bodies were also found to lack influence in retaining employees. Even efforts by organizations to build strong relationships with staff, invest in training and development, recognize and appreciate employee capacity, assess employee needs and interests, and evaluate employee abilities were not found to affect employee retention significantly. Furthermore, while social media platforms may provide an appropriate depiction of the organization, contribute to increased communication, and enhance employee retention, these factors did not show significant impact in practice. In conclusion, the findings underscore the inadequacy of relying solely on strong employer branding initiatives or leveraging social media platforms for enhancing employee retention in Nepalese service sector organizations. It suggests the necessity to explore additional factors influencing retention and to develop more tailored strategies to address the specific challenges faced by these organizations. The study highlights the complexity of employee retention in this sector and emphasizes the need for a multifaceted approach that goes beyond conventional branding and communication strategies.

7. Implications

The incorporation of signaling theory into our research holds significant theoretical implications, particularly in elucidating the mechanisms through which organizations convey and interpret information related to employer branding and employee retention. According to the UGT framework, both utilitarian and social gratifications influence people's use of social media for learning and information gathering purposes. In the context of social media, utilitarian gratification represents the motive for seeking information, while social gratification pertains to the desire to establish and maintain social connections. Despite theoretical expectations and empirical evidence from previous research, our study did not identify a direct and significant relationship between these components of employer branding and employee retention within the Nepalese service sector industries' context. These contradictions highlight the nuanced nature of organizational dynamics and suggest that contextual factors specific to the Nepalese service sector industries may influence the relationship between employer branding and employee retention differently than in other contexts studied previously. Further research is warranted to explore these discrepancies and to identify additional factors that may

contribute to employee retention outcomes within this unique context. Practically, this suggests that organizations need to adopt a more holistic approach to employee retention, considering factors beyond just employer branding and social media. Similarly, Nepalese service sector organizations get insights about the employer branding and employee retention and use of social media that help develop human resource policy so as to retain employees in the organizations for longer period of time. They should explore additional elements that could influence retention, such as work-life balance, job satisfaction, and opportunities for advancement. By understanding the unique challenges and priorities of their workforce, organizations can develop more tailored retention strategies that address the specific needs of employees in the Nepalese service sector. The study only focuses to service sector. However, future researchers may focus on other sectors such as, manufacturing, hospitality and hotel industry to draw more generalizable research. Triangulation of research might provide more comprehensive and conclusive research.

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