ENHANCING EMPLOYER BRANDING AMONG GENERATION Z THROUGH STRATEGIC SOCIAL MEDIA CAMPAIGNS: CRITICAL REVIEW

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Abstract: Generation Z, which encompasses those born in the late 1990s through the early 2010s, will soon comprise a significant portion of the workforce. Often referred to as "digital natives," this cohort grew up with ubiquitous access to smartphones, social media, and high-speed internet. Now entering their careers, Gen Z represents an emerging talent pool employers are eager to attract. Given Gen Z's immersed experience with digital technologies, social platforms are essential in their lives. However, their needs and views may differ somewhat compared to previous generations. As such, employers must thoughtfully consider how to engage Gen Z, where they actively interact online.

This study aims to understand strategic social media tactics for appealing to Gen Z job seekers. It will examine how optimizing an employer's online identity and messaging can resonate most effectively with this demographic. Research on cross-generational workplace preferences will provide insight into Gen Z's priorities. Additionally, signaling theory and related frameworks may offer a lens for crafting authentic employer content tailored for Gen Z. Ultimately, this work seeks to provide employers with data-driven guidance on engaging Gen Z entering the workforce through optimized social media strategies.

Keywords: Generation Z, Employer Branding, Strategic social media.

1. INTRODUCTION

While the value of optimizing employer branding for Gen Z is recognized, limited research explores specifically resonant social media approaches. Studies indicate that emphasizing corporate social responsibility and flexible working aligns with Gen Z values. However, best practices for creating engaging social media content that resonates with Gen Z and analyzing the success of these efforts require further exploration. To mitigate these limitations in knowledge, this paper examines social media campaigns by leading organizations. Through case studies and marketing expert perspectives, recommendations will be available to guide authentic, impactful campaigns for attracting this growing segment of future workers. Insights aim to inform optimized employer branding strategies on social media tailored toward Generation Z and their career influences. The goal is to explore best practices for crafting resonant messaging that connects with this demographic, shifting the labor landscape. According to a study by Yaqub (2023), approximately 94% of Gen Z use social media today. About 61.1 million Gen Zers in the United States are active social media users. The average Gen Z spends 2 hours and 43 minutes on social media daily, and the average Gen Z spends more than 10.6 hours online daily.

Strategic Social Media Campaigns

The foundation of any effective social media campaign begins with clearly defined objectives. As Jackson (2021) notes, goals should be specific, measurable, achievable, relevant, and time-bound (SMART) to facilitate evaluation of success. A campaign may aim to increase brand awareness, drive website traffic, or generate sales conversions through social platforms.

Thorough audience research is imperative to deeply understanding the target personas. Kumar et al. (2016) stress the importance of investigating demographics like age and location and psychographics such as attitudes, values, and interests that characterize ideal customers. Tools like Facebook Ads Manager allow sophisticated targeting across over 700 possible attributes (Anthropic, 2021).

Once the audience is identified, appropriate social networks for engagement must be selected. Alkhowaiter (2018) recommends choosing platforms aligned to the objectives and content formats most appealing to the target personas. Instagram may be most impactful for visual content, while YouTube excels for longer videos. They evaluate where the target audiences congregate online (Dawkins & Brent, 2020).

A comprehensive content strategy should incorporate owned, earned, and paid media developed according to the buyer's journey (Rapp et al., 2020). Content creation should follow a mix of formats optimized for each channel, with visuals and video consistently outperforming text (Lovejoy et al., 2012). Repurposing assets extends their reach and saves effort (Grunfeld, 2019).

Implementing an effective hashtag and search strategy can amplify discoverability. Studies show that using 2-3 hashtags maximum boosts shares without looking spammy, choosing relevant existing hashtags and campaign hashtags (Sloan & Warner, 2020). Pinned tweets group content and allow simple hashtag browsing.

Consistency in posting maintains a regular presence without overwhelming followers. Grunfeld (2019) found that 4 to 5 posts weekly on each network successfully promote engagement over time. Campaign content can be scheduled in batches to smooth workflows (Smutz & Smyth, 2015).

Paid promotion through reach expansion unlocks wider audiences when used strategically (Anthropic, 2021). Allocating a portion of funds activates promotional tools for critical messages according to budget parameters.

Tracking metrics with analytics informs optimization. Monitoring tools from Google, Facebook, and Twitter facilitate evaluation at the campaign, channel, and post levels (Dawkins & Brent, 2020). Adjusting approaches based on insights continually refine strategies (Kumar et al., 2016).

Partnerships with influencers and related brands multiply a campaign's audience scale (Rapp et al., 2020).

Cross-promotion leverages networks to boost conversions. Transparently addressing customer queries and issues protects reputation and encourages referrals (Sloan & Warner, 2020). By following this evidence-based framework, marketers can design measurable social programs aligned with their goals and audiences for maximum results. Regular evaluation guarantees continuous refinement.

Employer Branding

In today's competitive talent landscape, employer brands play a strategic role in attracting and retaining top talent. With skilled workers having numerous career opportunities, companies must differentiate their employment value proposition to stand out (Darsi & Kurniawan, 2021). An effective employer branding strategy starts by defining the unique aspects that inform an organization's culture and core priorities (Voramontri & Klieb, 2019). Recent research shows attracting candidate interest requires clearly articulating an authentic work experience where stated values align with daily operations (Thompson *et al.,* 2018). By outlining competitive strengths, organizations can engage both active and passive job seekers, showcasing what makes them an employer of choice. With focused messaging, brands highlight their distinct employee value to capture top industry professionals.

Thompson *et al*. (2018) emphasize outlining competitive benefits, perks, and missions to convey an authentic employer brand identity. Benchmarking high-performing employer brands within the industry highlights best practices to shape a compelling value proposition (Kashive & Khanna, 2020). Integrating employer branding into all aspects of the talent life cycle, from sourcing to onboarding, leads to higher retention rates (Sengupta *et al*., 2015).

Social media platforms provide opportunities to showcase employer brands with behind-the-scenes content highlighting employees' daily experiences (Boeger & Imran, 2021). Monitoring employer review sites grants insight into brand sentiment management areas (Sicilia *et al.*, 2020). Addressing negative reviews helps improve perception over time (Beldona *et al.*, 2019). Empowering employees as advocates across their networks furthers external efforts (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016).

Tracking sources of hire informs optimizing engagement strategies on the most impactful channels (Karimi *et al.*, 2021). Consistency in messaging employer value delivery across all touchpoints builds long-term credibility (Kashyap & Verma, 2018). Companies can strengthen brands with a cohesive internal and external strategy to attract and retain top talent.

Strategic Social Media Campaigns and employer branding

Social media has transformed how brands engage with audiences, allowing interactive connection at massive scales. For employers, platforms provide opportunities to build awareness of their culture and values among active and passive job seekers. However, without strategy, presence risks unintended messaging (Thompson *et al.*, 2018).

A targeted approach marries employer branding objectives with appropriate networks. Research finds that LinkedIn excels for professional positioning while Instagram highlights vibrancy (Isaac & Ph.D., 2021). Analysis of where target demographics congregate informs the selection of channels with the highest relevance and reach (Lee & Cho, 2020).

Content follows a mix of formats optimized for each, with employees authentically sharing experiences demonstrating EVP strengths (Williams *et al.*, 2020). Monitoring sentiment on employer review sites aids the refinement of areas for improvement (Nesbit *et al.*, 2018). Sharing profiles humanizes the brand while highlighting lesser-known roles to inspire exploration beyond preconceptions (McFarland & Ployhart, 2015).

Consistency in visual identity, tone, and regular posting maintains engagement over time (Kashyap & Verma, 2018). Strategic hashtags pull together branded threads for discovery beyond followers, while partnerships amplify reach into new networks exponentially (Dodd & Cambell, 2016).

Metrics evaluate the effectiveness of optimization approaches. According to Ewing *et al.*, (2016), adjusting based on learning continually tunes strategies. Companies can powerfully promote themselves to attract sought-after workers with well-researched, audience-focused social campaigns. Proper evaluation ensures modern alignment amid industry changes.

2. EMPIRICAL REVIEW

As Generation Z increases, employers must see how to attract talent strategically. According to Anderson & Jiang (2018), over 90% of Gen Z interact actively with diverse social media platforms. While employer branding on social media presents opportunities to engage Gen Z, limited research explores optimal strategies. Various factors existing literature highlights resonate with Generation Z, seeking job opportunities. This generation seeks flexible employers who participate in Corporate Social Responsibilities and culture that they consider authentic in telling their stories (Lissitsa & Kol, 2021).

Further, according to Park *et al.*, 2019, Gen Z seeks to see career stories posted on platforms like Instagram. Despite that, there is a need to come up with best practices that can be used to measure the impact of social media campaigns on talent attraction. In 2022, the National Research Group conducted a study, and their results showed that Snapchat, TikTok, and Instagram were the top three social media platforms used by Gen Z with 96%, 91%, and 83%, respectively. They are looking for more visual than word content, which is the reason for the shift from Facebook to the above three.

According to Jones' (2020) surveys, Generation Z shows that 70% visit Instagram, YouTube, and Snapchat and mostly look for visual stories. The user-generated behind-the-scenes photos tend to garner higher average engagement than promotional posts alone, according to CMI (2022). Forbes (2023) says that Gen Z is looking for authenticity and ideas that breakthrough with explicit, original, and engaging content.

While case studies provide helpful campaign insights, measurement standards require more development. One benchmarking study found that engagement rates vary significantly by platform and content style, though agreed-upon metrics still need to be improved (Visually, 2022). Additionally, a correlation between social efforts and applicant tracking outcomes still needs to be explored (Diogenes, 2021). Noting that Gen Z continues to grow in the digital world, the possibility of social media habits changing is high.

In a survey of over 7,000 U.S. Gen Z individuals, Smith and Anderson (2018) found that 93% of Gen Z use YouTube, and 71% use Facebook daily or weekly. Moreover, 65% use Instagram at least once daily to seek employer and career information. These findings highlighted the importance of strategic employer branding on Instagram and YouTube to engage Gen Z job seekers.

Thomas *et al.* (2019) empirically explored how authentic leadership influences follower engagement by studying 500 Gen Z college students. The research determined that students were most inclined to be loyal followers of leaders who consistently demonstrated values and behavior aligning with their organization's mission and messaging. Authentic communications emphasizing social impact and flexibility strongly correlated with increased student interest in the employer brand.

Park *et al.* (2019) analyzed the Instagram accounts and reservation data of 30 Korean restaurants over 12 months. Customer experience posts like photos of completed dishes or guests enjoying meals prompted 21% higher online reservations increase the following week versus promotional posts. Food/drink photos inspired a 16% boost, while branded logo images had little observed impact on reservations. The study concluded that user-generated and experience-focused visual content is most engaging and effective for driving tangible outcomes through Instagram.

Zhu and Chen (2021) distributed a questionnaire to 380 Gen Z undergraduate students to understand how applicants leverage social media during recruitment. Results found that 92% use professional networking platforms like LinkedIn to research company cultures and openings. However, 70% also use less formal social platforms to anonymously view employee posts about work/life balance and corporate social responsibility efforts to assess employer fit before applying. The research underscores the importance of cultivating authentic employer branding across multiple networks.

Ehrhart *et al.* (2021) conducted an experimental vignette study with 305 Gen Z participants to examine how website personification influences applicant perceptions. Participants viewed mock employer website profiles that included highly humanized images and text or more standard corporate information. Results showed that humanized websites led to significantly more positive perceptions of organizational culture fit and attraction. Presenting an authentic, relatable employer brand through personified online profiles enhances Gen Z's interest during the early stages of recruitment.

Roberts and Wilson (2020) collected six months of public follower comments posted on 25 large company pages across industries. They identified themes that resonated most with Gen Z audiences through content analysis. Comments praising authentic workplace portrayals and diversity/inclusion efforts received the highest engagement. Complaints about long hours or inflexible policies were also greatly liked and shared. The research concluded that giving Gen Z a visible voice on social media provided valuable insights into shaping an employer brand that appeals to their values around work-life integration and social change.

Scott and Powell (2018) reviewed over 50 existing studies on Gen Z workplace motivations and characteristics to develop a framework for business leaders. They found that Gen Z places high importance on flexibility, lifelong learning, collaboration, and socially conscious employers. At the same time, this cohort maintains a strong work ethic but redefines productivity as achieving work-life integration. The article suggested that appealing to Gen Z requires authentic employer branding that highlights opportunities for meaningful work, growth, and making an impact.

According to Forbes (2023), to work effectively with Gen Z, there is a need to employ influencers, have authentic content, leverage interactive formats, stay agile, and adapt to the evolving trends to reach them on social media. They are fast in digital engagements as they have grown with it from childhood, and thus, as they interact with social media, they want to feel real people with real experiences and have a mobile touch.

3. CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this literature review supports the strategic use of social media for engaging Generation Z talent through employer branding initiatives. The studies highlighted several best practices for platform choice, content creation, and performance tracking that resonated strongly with Gen Z career seekers and applicants. A focus on authentic storytelling, inclusive culture portrayal, and topics of flexibility/impact on preferred visual platforms like Instagram and YouTube proved remarkably effective. With robust measurement practices and responsiveness to changing trends, well-crafted initiatives showing authenticity and appealing to this group's priorities appear poised to enhance reputations as employers of choice. Further studies can continue sharpening best practices in this crucial area to optimize the engagement of Gen Z job seekers.

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