

A Bibliometric Analysis of Employer Branding in the Recruitment Process

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ABSTRACT

This study conducts a bibliometric analysis of research on employer branding within the recruitment process to map its intellectual structure, thematic evolution, and global collaboration patterns. Data were retrieved from indexed scientific publications and analyzed using VOSviewer to examine co-occurrence networks, co-authorship structures, country collaborations, density visualization, and citation analysis. The findings reveal that employer branding serves as a central construct strongly associated with recruitment, employer attractiveness, and social media, highlighting its strategic role in talent acquisition processes. The intellectual foundation of the field is primarily shaped by seminal works such as Backhaus and Tikoo (2004), while contemporary studies extend the discourse toward digital transformation, artificial intelligence, and data-driven recruitment systems. Thematic analysis indicates that the literature is organized into several clusters, including recruitment strategies, organizational attractiveness, psychological theories (e.g., signaling theory and social identity theory), and technology-enabled hiring systems. Overlay and density visualizations further show a temporal shift from foundational HR branding concepts toward emerging themes such as AI, e-recruitment, and gamification.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Today's labor market has become highly competitive and requires companies to use strategies not only to win customers but also to attract and retain the most qualified personnel [1], [2]. This trend has led to the development of the idea of employer branding, which is currently one of the essential organizational strategies aimed at helping firms distinguish themselves as appealing employers to potential and existing

employees [3]. The term of employer branding was first coined by Ambler and Barrow (1996) and referred to a bundle of tangible and intangible benefits resulting from employment and linked to an employing organization. Employer branding has become a highly interdisciplinary concept involving ideas related to human resource management, marketing, organizational behavior and corporate communications [4], [5]. It has been proved that a well-developed employer brand

is vital for building a good reputation, recruiting applicants and increasing the competitiveness of organizations in terms of personnel acquisition [6].

The increasing relevance of employer branding is linked to changes in the demographics of the labor force and expectations from employees. The appearance of generations of digital natives, namely Millennials and Generation Z, changed the factors on which candidates evaluate their prospective employers [7]. In addition to pay and security of employment, modern candidates take into account factors like organizational culture, balance between work and personal life, diversity and inclusiveness, opportunities for professional development, corporate social responsibility, and organizational reputation [8], [9]. Companies have been allocating significant amounts of resources in order to brand themselves and create an appealing EVP to attract talent. Thus, there has been a heightened interest of researchers in employer branding and its effects on recruitment.

Recruitment context forms one of the most important areas where the power of employer branding plays a role. Activities carried out during recruitment form an important point of contact between organizations and potential employees, thus making employer branding an important tool in forming the perception and intentions of the applicants. It has been found through research conducted previously that organizations with good employer brands end up having bigger numbers of qualified applicants and achieve success in the recruitment process [3], [10]. Moreover, employer branding can play an important role in reducing the information gap between the employer and the applicant. Signaling theory states that applicants use this kind of information while making judgments regarding the attractiveness of the organization and decisions related to employment especially in those cases where there is a lack of information on the organization.

In addition to the technological innovations and the rise of digital

communication technologies, changes have been introduced into the practice of employer branding within the context of recruitment due to these factors. LinkedIn, Instagram, Facebook, and X have emerged as effective means of communicating the employer value propositions and engaging the candidates. Digital recruiting helps organizations to reach out to wider audiences, while at the same time giving candidates access to much more information regarding organizational culture and working experience. According to some researchers, online employer branding activities play an important role in shaping job applicants' impressions, attractiveness of the organization and the intention to apply [11]. Furthermore, due to the rise of employer review sites such as Glassdoor, the authenticity of employer branding becomes even more critical as applicants are able to compare messages from organizations with employees' content.

During the last two decades, the phenomenon of employer branding has received significant academic attention, which has led to the rapid growth of research output on the subject in many disciplines. Researchers have addressed different aspects of employer branding ranging from employer attractiveness, employee value proposition, effectiveness of recruiting, organization reputation, social media communication, talent management, and employee retention. Although the amount of the research on the matter has been increasing, the fragmented nature of the existing literature has emerged because of diverse theoretical approaches, methodologies, and settings used in different studies. Moreover, novel themes such as the application of artificial intelligence in recruitment, sustainability-based employer branding, diversity and inclusion branding, and employer reputation in the digital world keep changing the research agenda. Therefore, the necessity to analyze the intellectual structure, development of themes, and research trends in the field of employer branding in recruiting emerges. Bibliometric analysis is an effective methodology that allows identifying the state of the research field, its key publications, influential authors,

organizations, and countries, as well as emerging trends [12].

Despite the growing interest in the phenomenon of employer branding within recruitment literature, the current literature base still appears to be fragmented along several fields and research topics, which makes it hard to have a broad overview of the intellectual evolution of this research area. Existing research papers have been mainly concerned with analyzing the connection between employer branding and certain recruiting outcomes like employer attractiveness, intentions of job seekers, or organizational reputation, but not enough attention has been paid to developing a systematic map of the whole research domain. This situation leads to the lack of information about the most important publications, authors, collaboration structures, research topics, and trends within employer branding research. This study aims to conduct a comprehensive bibliometric analysis of employer branding research in the recruitment process.

2. METHODS

For this study, a bibliometric analysis method is applied to investigate the research trend on employer branding during the recruitment process. Bibliometric analysis is a quantitative method for studying scientific literature and identifying influential papers, authors, organizations, countries, and trends in research [12]. In the present study, the bibliometric data have been obtained from Scopus, which is acknowledged as one of the most extensive multidisciplinary databases of

peer-reviewed scientific literature. Scopus has been chosen for its extensive range of quality journals, conferences, and publications on the topics of employer branding, human resource management, and recruitment. The data collection procedure included searching for articles in which the specified terms "employer branding" and "recruitment" were mentioned in the titles, abstracts, and keywords of publications.

The bibliometric analysis was carried out via VOSviewer, a commonly used computer application that assists in creating and displaying bibliometric networks [13]. VOSviewer helps in analyzing relations between publications, authors, countries, institutions, and keywords by means of networks, overlays, and densities visualization. The current study utilized keyword co-occurrence analysis in order to reveal the key themes and conceptual structure of employer branding research. Co-authorship analysis allowed exploring patterns of collaboration between researchers and countries, and citation analysis helped to uncover influential publications and sources.

3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Keyword Co-Occurrence Network

As can be seen from the analysis conducted using VOSViewer, career personalization is a very multidisciplinary area, which incorporates views from fields such as education, human resource management, artificial intelligence, learning technologies, and career development.

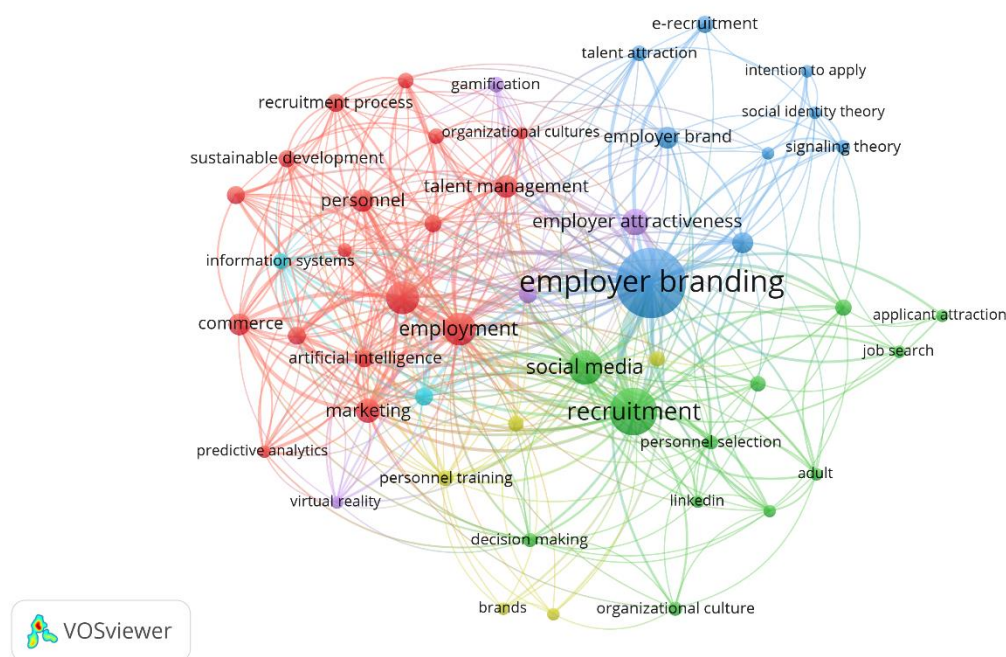


Figure 1. Network Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 1 displaying the intellectual architecture of the research on employer branding during the recruiting process. Every single node symbolizes a key term, with the size of the node signifying the frequency of occurrence, and links showing the strength of the co-occurrence relationship between the terms. The clustering of the nodes shows the thematic organization of the body of knowledge in various research streams, with the “employer branding” being the overarching central concept.

In the structural center of the network, we can find the term “employer branding” which is identified as the most frequent and strongly related node, meaning that it is connected to many other terms. It is linked to such terms as employer attractiveness, recruitment, social media, and employer brand, and it means that employer branding is regarded as a strategic tool affecting the results of talent acquisition process in all literature sources. High density of links shows that employer branding is considered not as a separate term but as an integrative approach.

The network also presents some other specific thematic groups. The green group

contains recruitment-related concepts, including recruitment, attractiveness of applicants, job search, LinkedIn, and personnel selection. This indicates that the focus of the research is the practical aspect of recruitment processes. The blue group is based on the concept and theory of employer attractiveness, signaling theory, social identity theory, and the intention to apply. It reflects psychological and behavioral theories of candidates' behavior. Finally, the red group is connected with organizational and HR system aspects such as talent management, employment, personnel, artificial intelligence, and information systems.

The yellow and peripheral clusters stress those aspects that would include supporting dimensions like marketing, brands, organizational culture, decision making, and sustainable development, placing employer branding into organizational context. The use of new terms related to technology and digital environment (such as artificial intelligence, social media, and e-recruitment) clearly reveals the shift towards new recruitment ecosystem.

In Figure 2, the connection between concepts through their strength in co-occurrences in the scientific publications indexed by Scopus database is demonstrated through the size of nodes showing the

prevalence of keywords, link strength for the relation strength and color gradient for 2018-2024 period to demonstrate the temporal aspect of research theme development.

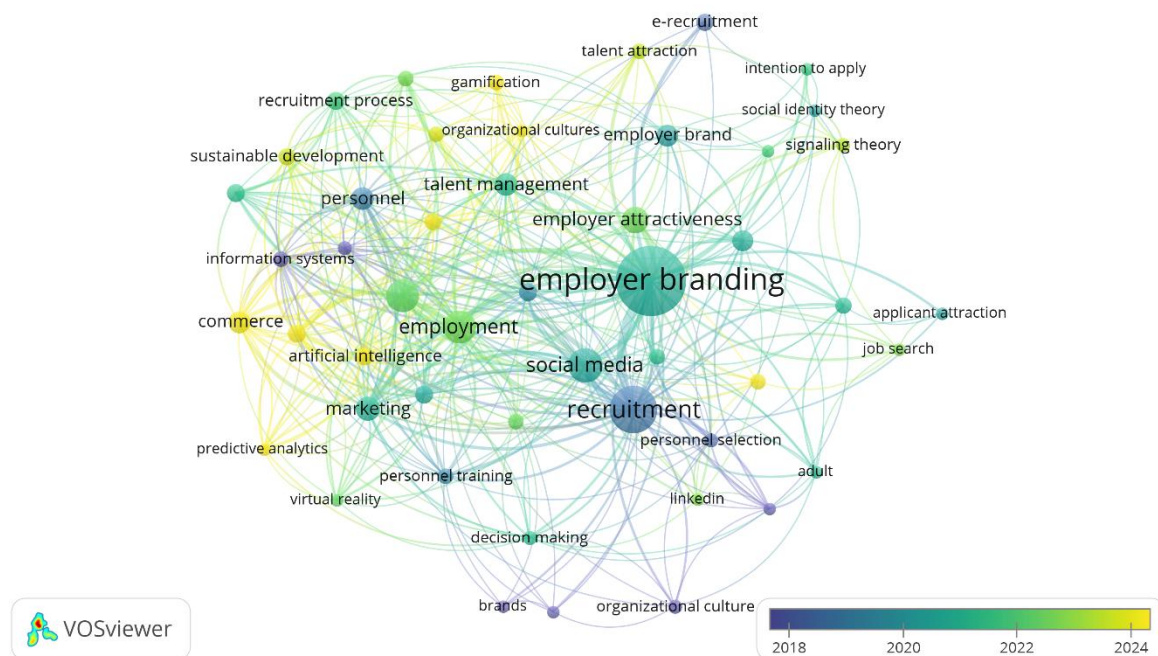


Figure 2. Overlay Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

At the very heart of the network structure, the concept of “employer branding” appears to be the most powerful and connected node, which reveals the importance of this concept as the core one in the literature. It is tightly associated with recruitment, attractiveness of an employer, social media, and employment, which means that the literature discusses employer branding as a tool of affecting the results of talent acquisition process.

The network shows additional thematic groups within the research area. First, there is the recruitment cluster, which consists of recruiting, applicant attraction, job seeking, personnel selection, and LinkedIn, and focuses on the operation of the hiring process. Second, the theory cluster consists of signaling theory, social identity theory, and intention to apply, revealing the psychological and behavioral underpinning of the applicant response process. Third, there

is the technology cluster, which consists of artificial intelligence, information systems, predictive analytics, and social media.

The temporal changes that occur in the area of study are evident through the change in the colors used for the visualization of different periods in time. The earlier literature, which is depicted in blue, tends to revolve more around concepts like organizational culture and brands. In the middle period, the green tones represent the growing use of social media and recruitment methods. Recently, the yellow tones depict the increased usage of AI, gamification, e-recruitment, and digital decision-making tools.

The Density map in figure 3 below shows keyword co-occurrence density map of Employer branding as an area of study in recruitment research using the VOS viewer. In contrast to network maps which focus on relational aspects of research, density maps

show the frequency and intensity of scholarly studies in various themes in the study area.

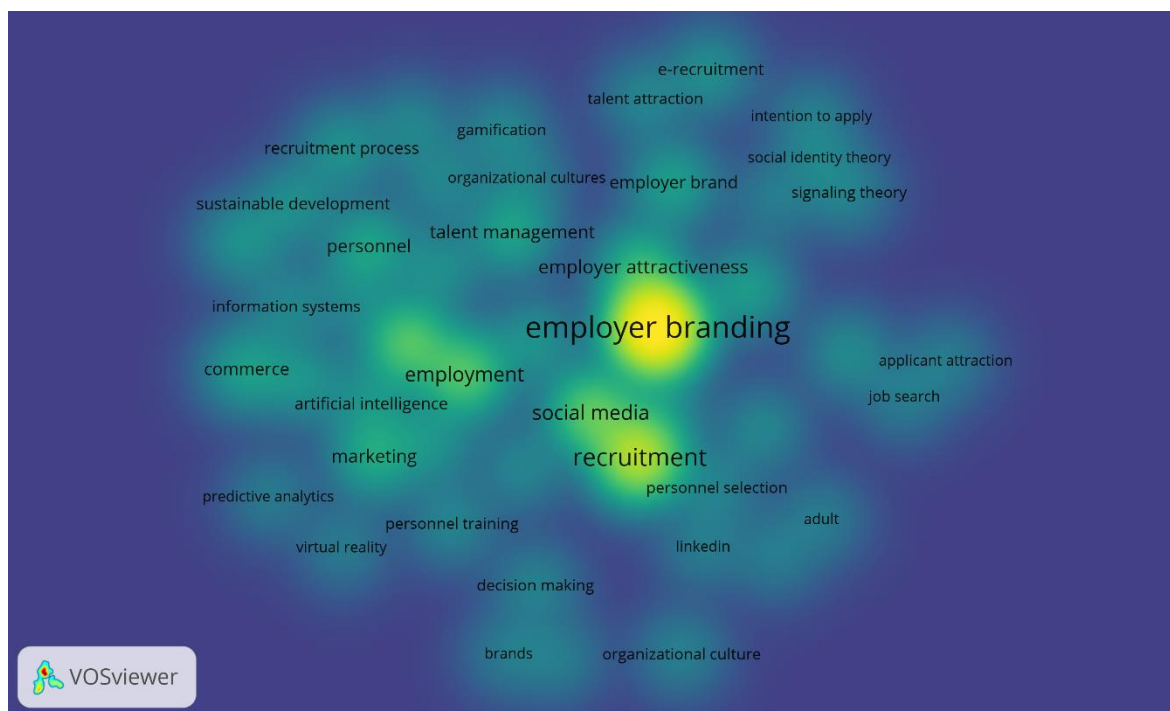


Figure 3. Density Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Most concentration is achieved on the term “employer branding,” demonstrating that the concept is the most influential and widely studied among all the constructs in the dataset. The central cluster of terms is surrounded by recruitment, social media, employer attractiveness, and employment, implying that modern research is focused on the junction of branding strategies and their effects on recruitment. The high density of the cluster proves that employer branding is the main explanatory concept of talent acquisition

studies. Areas of moderate density include the recruitment process, talent management, artificial intelligence, and organizational culture, thus demonstrating the presence of the second level of research interest linking the practical HR activities with digital and organizational aspects. At the same time, areas of low density, such as virtual reality, predictive analytics, sustainable development, and decision-making, demonstrate emerging topics.

3.2 Co-Authorship Analysis

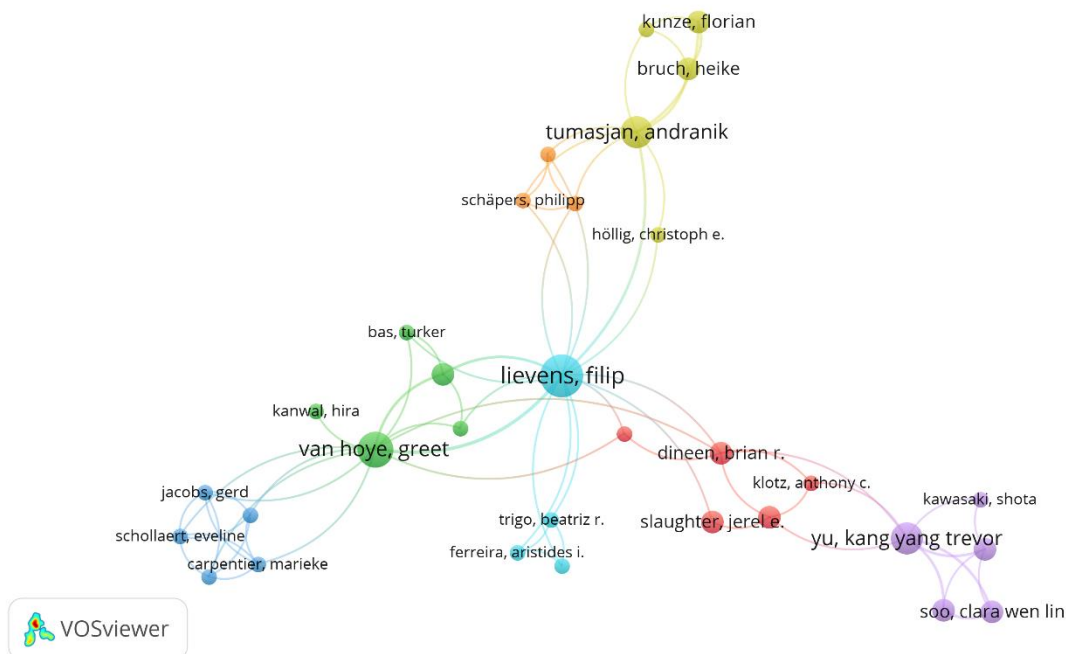


Figure 4. Author Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

The Figure 4 shows the co-authorship network map through the use of VOSviewer in the research field of employer branding and recruitment. It is a representation of the collaboration between the leading scholars. The nodes show the scholars while links show the co-authorship linkages. The closeness of the nodes represents the intensity of scholarly collaboration.

Lievens, Filip dominates the structure of the network as the central node through which other groups of authors are clustered, thereby signifying his vital contribution to the development of employer branding and recruitment as an intellectual

field. The most proximally connected group of authors are van Hoyer, Greet along with other European authors on the left, representing a strong research stream related to employer attractiveness and recruitment psychology, while on the right hand side, there is another group of authors that includes Tumasjan, Andranik; Bruch, Heike; and Kunze, Florian representing organizational behavior and employer branding strategy research. There is another separate group on the right side which consists of North American authors namely Yu, Kang Yang Trevor; Slaughter, Jerel; and Dineen, Brian R.

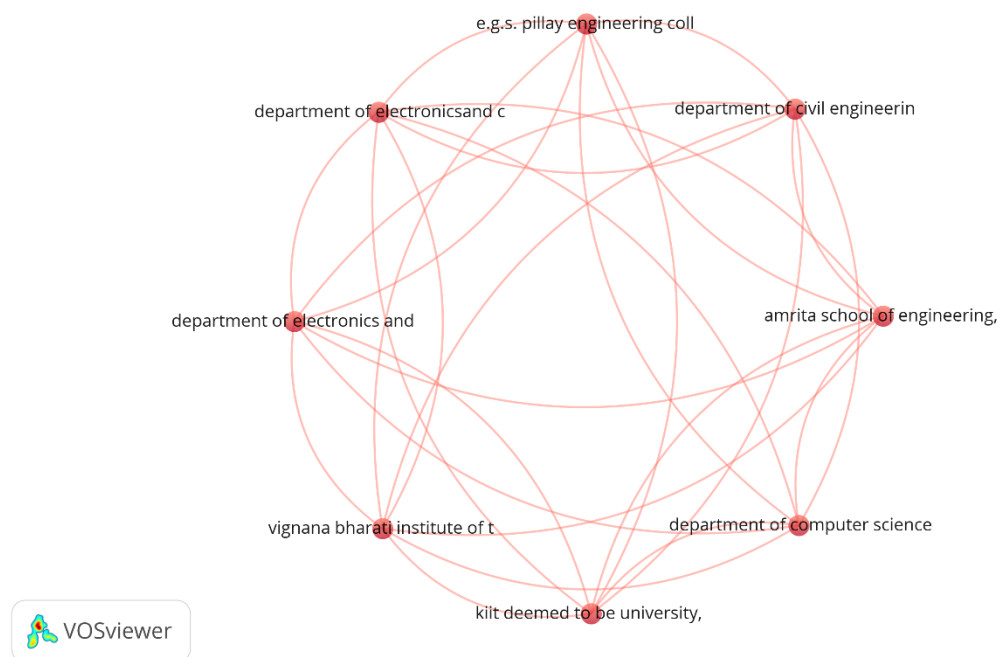


Figure 5. Institution Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

Figure 5 shows a VOSviewer co-occurrence network of the institutional affiliations in the dataset. Here, each node denotes an institution or its departments. Links are used to denote the degree of collaboration among institutions through their joint publications. Such networks enable the detection of the patterns of institutional collaboration and contribution to research in engineering and computer sciences.

The graph has shown a fairly centralized network structure yet moderate level of density in terms of collaboration among organizations, where KIIT Deemed to

be University and Department of Computer Science form crucial connections in the network. They function as bridging units connecting several other engineering branches including electronics engineering, civil engineering along with Amrita School of Engineering and Vignana Bharati Institute of Technology. The circular nature of the graph indicates decentralization but interdependence in collaborative activities where almost all organizations have bilateral or small group collaborations.

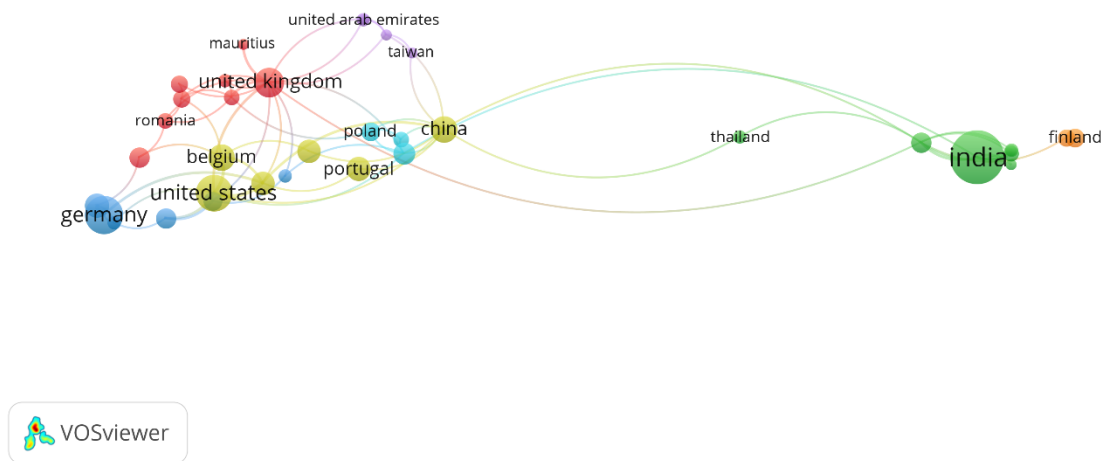


Figure 6. Country Visualization

Source: Data Analysis Result, 2026

This image represents the VOSviewer network of country co-authorship that depicts the patterns of international collaboration in the studied field. Every country is shown by a node and the thickness of a link stands for the degree of collaboration between two countries. The size of nodes shows the proportion of contributions of countries to publications in the field.

India emerges as the leader and the most central node due to high publication productivity and active collaboration with various other nations including Thailand and Finland. On the left hand side, there is a compact European cluster which includes countries like Germany, UK, Belgium, Romania and Poland. This is an example of a

well-established research collaboration network within a region. The United States and China are placed in between, serving as global connectors between Europe and Asia.

It is evident from the figure above that there is definite geographic structuring of research collaboration. The connectivity within Europe is very high, while Asia, led by India, is showing increasing global involvement. Bridging countries like the USA and China signify their involvement in connecting different regional clusters. It is evident that research in this field has become quite global, and emerging countries like India have an important part to play in international collaboration.

3.3 Citation Analysis

Table 1. Top Cited Research

Citations	Authors and year	Title
824	[14]	Conceptualizing and researching employer branding
352	[15]	Employer Image and Employer Branding: What We Know and What We Need to Know
265	[16]	Employer branding: Strategic implications for staff recruitment
261	[17]	Employer branding: Employer attractiveness and the use of social media
220	[18]	Characteristics of successful employer brands

Citations	Authors and year	Title
173	[19]	Motivating employees to "live the brand": A comparative case study of employer brand attractiveness within the firm
131	[20]	Employer branding: Strategy for improving employer attractiveness
105	[21]	Artificial intelligence chatbots are new recruiters
103	[22]	An exploration of corporate recruitment descriptions on Monster.com
97	[23]	How to attract applicants in the Atlantic versus the Asia-Pacific region? A cross-national analysis on China, India, Germany, and Hungary

Source: Scopus, 2026

Table 1 presents the most highly cited publications in the field of employer branding, indicating the intellectual foundation and theoretical development of the domain. The most influential work is [14] with 824 citations, which is widely recognized as a seminal study that formally conceptualized employer branding as a research construct. This is followed by [15], which synthesizes advances in employer image and employer branding research, reflecting its continued relevance in shaping contemporary discourse. Other highly cited works, such as [16] and [17], emphasize the strategic role of employer branding in recruitment effectiveness and the increasing importance of digital platforms such as social media in shaping employer attractiveness. Earlier foundational studies by [18] and [19] highlight internal branding dynamics and the importance of aligning employee behavior with employer brand identity. More recent contributions, such as [21], indicate an emerging shift toward artificial intelligence in recruitment, suggesting technological transformation in hiring practices.

4. CONCLUSION

This bibliometric study of employer branding in the recruitment process provides a comprehensive mapping of the intellectual

structure, thematic evolution, collaboration patterns, and citation dynamics within the field. The results from co-occurrence, density, co-authorship, country collaboration, and citation analyses collectively demonstrate that employer branding is a central and rapidly evolving construct in human resource management research, strongly interconnected with recruitment strategies, social media, and employer attractiveness. The intellectual foundation of the field is anchored by seminal works such as [14], while more recent studies indicate a clear transition toward digitalization, artificial intelligence, and data-driven recruitment practices.

The analysis also reveals that research is becoming increasingly interdisciplinary, integrating perspectives from marketing, organizational behavior, information systems, and psychology. Collaboration patterns show a global but uneven distribution of research output, with emerging economies such as India playing a more central role alongside established Western research hubs. Additionally, thematic mapping and density analysis indicate that while traditional concepts remain dominant, emerging topics such as AI-driven recruitment, gamification, and e-recruitment are shaping the future trajectory of the field.

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