

The Impact of Social Media Intelligence and Digital Leadership on Employer Branding and Recruitment Effectiveness

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Abstract

In more cases, digital platforms affect how organizations present themselves, hire talent and build reputation over time. It is now a matter of employer branding developing as a daily online signal rather than as isolated campaigns. Social media intelligence is at the centre of this shift - sentiment, engagement patterns, audience responses across platforms. Such signals indicate how candidates interpret organizational culture, leadership credibility, and workplace values. Meanwhile, digital leadership directs how those insights are put into action. With clarity, consistency & ethics, leaders build trust in the public digital spaces and establish employer identity. Employer branding is a process of continuous improvement based on visibility, responsiveness, and perceived authenticity. That is augmented by social media intelligence that lets organizations keep track of reputation, know what candidates expect and what happens when perception changes. With digital leadership, this gets magnified because online communication is linked to organizational goals and human values, too. When leaders act thoughtfully on digital, they lessen the gap between employer and candidate and make the organization more approachable. Recruitment effectiveness is improved when candidates see coherent messaging, active leadership presence and organizational culture across social channels. It creates trust when data-driven insights drive recruitment decisions without reducing people to metrics. But with digital leadership, the intelligence tools help instead of replacing judgment. That combination of insight + leadership makes for an informed but human recruitment environment. When organizations think about social media intelligence in combination with responsible digital leadership, they become strong employer brands. Such alignment enables better candidate engagement, hiring and long-term competitiveness in digital labour markets. A sample of 341 was collected to find the results of the study. The factors of

the study are Social Media Intelligence, Digital Leadership, Employer Branding and Recruitment Effectiveness.

Keywords: Social Media Intelligence, Digital Leadership, Employer Branding, Recruitment Effectiveness.

Introduction

Now, workplaces happen in a public digital space where reputation happens constantly instead of through planned announcements. No longer are organizations controlling the image of the employer through brochures, career pages, and recruitment drives alone. Perception grows from posts, comments, responses, leadership visibility & tone on social media. Potential candidates hear how organizations speak, how leaders act, how conflicts happen and how values appear in real time. Therefore, employer branding has moved from managed message to live digital presence.

Social media is the main place where that presence happens. Platforms discuss work culture, leadership behaviour, growth opportunities, and organizational credibility. Employees share experiences. Candidates compare narratives. Opinions of observers are formed outside of contact. Here, organizations want more than visibility. They require understanding. It is this understanding that social media intelligence gives you - scattered digital interactions turned into structured insight. That means it lets organizations read sentiment, pick up new themes & see how employer identity changes across networks (Mihalcea, 2017).

Yet understanding does not change perception. Patterns are shown by data, but response is determined by leadership. Digital leadership is how organizations interpret signals, set priorities, and act in public. Now leaders impact employer branding outside of the office as well as online with their conduct, responsiveness & consistency. The digital face of a leader says values better than any recruitment pitch. Stillness, delay, and even misalignment are signals just as strong as active engagement!

Employer branding has become relational. Candidates judge if organizations listen, adapt & act coherently. Social media intelligence helps here - it explains what audiences hear and how stories change. In other words, digital leadership anchors it so that actions are about purpose and not reaction. When leadership has no digital awareness, intelligence gets abused or wasted. Without authenticity in leadership, accurate insight does not build trust (Oncioiu et al., 2022). Increasingly, recruitment effectiveness is dependent on this interaction. People are no longer approaching organizations with little information. They come prepared, careful & watchful. They examine organizational responses to criticism, leader behaviour in uncertainty and whether digital behaviour is in keeping with values. Recruitment outcomes are better when employer branding is credible rather than polished. Credibility arises where insight directs communication and where leadership reinforces behaviour. There is opportunity as well as risk in social media intelligence usage. On the one hand, organizations have immediate feedback, competitor benchmarks and ever-changing talent expectations. On the flip side, metric overload

flattens human complexity. Engagement rates, impressions, and sentiment scores are signals but not meaningful by themselves. We need digital leadership here as we need to read those signals with judgement, context and ethics. Whether data helps or replaces understanding is up to leadership.

Digital leadership also changes internal alignment. More recruitment teams, communication units and HR functions need shared digital insight. Those leaders who know platform dynamics will put these functions in line with employer narratives. So leaders with no such understanding create jumbled messages, stalled responses or reactive campaigns that damage trust. Uneven leadership behaviour online - gaps between employer promise and lived digital reality.

Employer branding has become more dynamic and exposed in relation to recruitment effectiveness. But branding also affects who applies, why and how they evaluate offers. Recruitment outcomes reflect job fit as well as perceived organizational integrity. Social media intelligence - clarity of perception helps branding. Digital leadership makes recruitment easier - clarity translates to action (Kudeshia & Mittal, 2015; Srivastav & Mittal, 2021).

This influences long-term talent strategy as well. So, organizations that catch the social signals early can adapt skill messaging, inclusion narratives, and growth pathways before the gaps get bigger. Leaders who engage digitally can attract candidates with organizational culture as opposed to technical requirements. Recruitment becomes more selective, more human & more sustainable. Where leadership has no digital presence, recruitment is transactional, reactive and expensive (Kaur et al., 2015).

Through this whole process, trust is paramount. In social media environments, transparency is rewarded, and inconsistency is punished. Candidates believe in organizations that give feedback, make decisions and show learning. Social media intelligence identifies trust signals - but leadership has to act upon them. When leadership presence confirms what the data say, employer branding improves. When candidates know there is alignment between insight, message and action, recruitment effectiveness is improved. Power dynamics also get changed by digital leadership. Leadership is not so much speaking upwards or inwards anymore. But they also look outward toward potential and past employees, as well as the public. Its words travel beyond their intended audiences. Social media intelligence tells organizations about those ripple effects. Digital leadership decides if that visibility makes the reputation stronger or weakens it. That creates additional requirements on HR and recruitment functions. They have to translate insight, craft narratives and manage presence across platforms with leadership. In today's recruitment strategy, we need analytical capability as well as leadership alignment. Without leadership engagement, intelligence is underused. In the digital space, leadership acts blindly without intelligence.

Social media intelligence and digital leadership, therefore, have an impact on employer branding and recruitment effectiveness because of interaction rather than individual strength. Intelligence provides awareness. Leadership provides direction. Branding is born of that

alignment. Branding that feels coherent, responsive & human drives recruitment success. With more competitive labour markets and more digital visibility, organizations can no longer treat employer branding as a secondary function. At the intersection of data & leadership, culture & communication. Social media intelligence & digital leadership - how organizations are seen, trusted, chosen. Organizations have got to understand this relationship if they want talent - and credibility - in a digitally mediated world too.

Literature review

In scholarly work on employer branding, this attention has grown as work becomes digitally mediated. Earlier literature considered employer branding a subset of corporate branding - reputation signals, recruitment messaging, value propositions delivered in controlled channels. When digital platforms took off, researchers realized employer branding was out of organizational control. Branding got rid of the one-way projector and became something decided by employees, leaders, candidates and even outsiders. Literature sees employer branding increasingly as a social construction mediated by interaction, visibility, and response rather than through planned communication alone. Social media intelligence research is part of larger digital analytics and organizational sensing studies. Scholars define social media intelligence as the structured analysis of digital traces - comments, shares, sentiments, engagement flows. But social media intelligence is real-time, and it records unsolicited expressions - unlike traditional market research. Studies say this kind of intelligence reveals things organizations can not otherwise access - trust, credibility and cultural fit. In employer branding literature, social media intelligence reveals how organizations are referred to as workplaces, not products or services (Bondarouk et al., 2014).

Some authors say employer branding is becoming more dependent on perceived authenticity. When organizational messaging matches lived experience, leadership behaviour authenticity is achieved. So, authenticity signals get amplified in social media because inconsistencies show up quickly. Research shows that candidates value peer- and leader-generated material far more than formal recruitment material. Such trust transforms recruitment decision-making from job descriptions to organizational behaviour. Social media intelligence gives organizations the ability to monitor such authenticity cues, though literature points out that monitoring does not necessarily confer authenticity. Leadership action is necessary.

That discussion is very much influenced by digital leadership literature. In early leadership studies, it was about hierarchical influence and internal communication. So, as digital tools opened up the world of leadership visibility, scholars looked at how leaders operate in such open networks. Visibility, responsiveness, ethical awareness, and narrative coherence are key to digital leadership research. In public spaces, leaders are now symbolic carriers of organizational identity. Its online behaviour affects employer perceptions much more than official brand building. In digital contexts, literature has repeatedly noted that silence, inconsistency or defensiveness of leadership erodes employer credibility (Carpentier et al., 2017).

Recruitment effectiveness research shows a change in candidate behaviour. Former models assumed little information access and employed employer-controlled signals. Contemporary studies suggest that candidates do lots of pre-application research on social networks, review sites, and leadership profiles. Recruitment effectiveness depends now on a perceived alignment between organizational values, leadership behaviour, digital reputation, etc. There is some scholarship that says better recruitment outcomes happen when employer branding removes uncertainty and risk for candidates. It supports this with social media intelligence, which flags concerns, expectations, and emerging narratives within talent pools.

Several studies look at how sentiment analysis can help with employer branding. More applications and more engagement go with positive sentiment - but researchers warn not to take sentiment scores as gospel. Sometimes sentiment has no context and hides deeper issues. In literature, qualitative interpretation is as important as quantitative metrics. In this interpretation, digital leadership provides insight framed in organizational values and strategic intent. If intelligence is simplified without leadership judgment, it is oversimplified (Khullar & Pandey, 2014).

The term employer brand communities are frequently used in recent literature. These are informal networks of employees, alumni, candidates, and observers that create online employer narratives, scholars say. With social media intelligence, organizations can see these communities - see how conversations flow and how to change tone. Organizations that treat these communities respectfully build trust, whereas organizations that ignore or control them lose reputation. In those communities, leadership shows openness and accountability.

Data use ethics is addressed, too, in digital leadership literature. Scholars question surveillance, manipulation, and over-reliance on algorithmic interpretation. Questions of privacy, bias and fairness when using social media intelligence for recruitment. Literature has said that ethical digital leadership is about data use transparency as well as decision restraint. When candidates think intelligence-driven processes are intrusive and unfair, recruitment effectiveness suffers. Data replaces dialogue - trust is broken.

Tone & consistency are important in studies of leadership communication. Leaders who talk often and clearly on social media remove uncertainty in organizations going through organizational change. Such stability also strengthens employer branding on recruitment cycles - especially in unstable labour markets. As leadership communication is proxied by organizational culture, candidates interpret it as such. So digital leadership is itself a recruitment signal. Organizations can measure response to leadership communication through social media intelligence - but what we interpret is leadership intent.

Cross-disciplinary research links employer branding to organizational identity theory. Identification occurs in common understanding rather than in formal declaration. Social media speeds up identity formation because internal practices are exposed to external eyes. Now scholars say employer branding is about identity-in-use, not identity-as-planned. Identity

signals are gathered by social media intelligence, and the action of digital leadership reinforces or disturbs them. Identification signalling is more effective in recruitment when it is stable across platforms (Ladkin & Buhalis, 2016).

Research into crisis communication explains more. Employer branding is at great risk in public crises, internal disputes or leadership changes. Organizations with good digital leadership reclaim employer reputation more quickly because leaders speak up & are credible. Social media intelligence finds early warnings of reputational stress - the outcome is determined by leadership response. Recruitment effectiveness suffers when crises reveal value gaps or leadership differences.

Employee advocacy is another strand of literature. On social media, employees are informal brand ambassadors. Study after study shows that employee-generated content is very credible among candidates. Social media intelligence shows advocacy & engagement drivers. By shaping trust & psychological safety, digital leadership shapes advocacy. What employees say is that when leadership acts, they say so too. Recruitment outcomes are benefited by advocacy that is voluntary rather than imposed.

Research on algorithmic recruitment complicates things. Automation in screening tools & AI in sourcing is heavily based on digital data. As such, scholars point out that algorithmic processes only reinforce bias and narrow diversity when not led by ethical leadership. Those systems get fed by social media intelligence - but leadership oversight is needed too. Speed, reach, but also fairness and inclusion are key to recruitment effectiveness. In literature, digital leadership is increasingly seen as a safeguard against pure technical decision-making (Kashive et al., 2020).

In world studies, the cultural context is very often considered. In one region, successful employer branding strategies fail in another because of cultural norms on communication, authority and visibility. Social media intelligence is regional - but leadership interpretation must take into account local context. Research says global digital leadership needs cultural rhythms instead of uniform messaging. Branding that is a local reality within a global identity improves recruitment effectiveness.

Many studies consider trust a mediating factor. Trust connects social media intelligence, digital leadership, employer branding, and recruitment outcomes. Listening - responding - acting consistently builds trust in organizations. Social media intelligence means listening. Digital leadership helps with response. Employer branding reflects the result of that interaction. Recruitment works on trust rather than on promotion. The literature is consistent: in knowledge-intensive roles, candidates place trust before pay. Transparency research backs that up. Open communication about roles, expectations, and organizational challenges builds employer branding even under imperfect conditions. Transparency is possible through digital leadership, which models openness. Tracking candidate response in social media intelligence

measures transparency impact. Increased recruitment effectiveness with less info asymmetry because of transparency (Headworth, 2015).

The other frequent theme is temporal dynamics. Employer branding develops over time & not just in recruitment campaigns. Social media intelligence allows long-term reputation tracking. So digital leadership supports continuity during leadership changes as well as market changes. Literature warns that short-term branding without sustained leadership alignment fails to recruit. They also look at negative signals and employer brand damage. Silence during controversy, defensive messaging, and inconsistent leadership behaviour reinforce negative perception. Social media intelligence picks those moments up quickly, but recovery is about leadership readiness. Recruitment effectiveness suffers when organizations do not deal with negative narratives openly. Literature looks at learning-oriented leadership responses instead of reputational control.

The role of HR in this ecosystem gets more attention. HR is the intermediary between intelligence systems & leadership action. Research shows that analytical HR teams with leadership access help with employer branding outcomes. Where HR has no influence, intelligence insights are underused. In digital leadership literature, HR is seen as a strategic partner and not an operational function of employer reputation management. Branding is linked to the design of the recruitment process in studies of candidate experience. Candidates rate responsiveness, clarity, and fairness in recruitment interactions. Social media intelligence finds candidate pain points. Digital leadership affects process reform. Brand promises match recruitment experience - this improves recruitment effectiveness. Literature says mismatch destroys trust more than branding absence (Tanwar & Kumar, 2019).

But academic discussion is also about narrative coherence. Employer branding falls apart when organizational stories differ across platforms. Social media intelligence shows narrative fragmentation. With digital leadership, we get messaging unified across the leadership voices, recruitment teams and employee communications. Good recruitment outcomes happen when candidates have a stable narrative rather than contradicting signals. Many researchers look at power asymmetry in digital spaces. Organizations have data power, but candidates have reputation power over networks. Social media intelligence teaches organizations how to balance this out. Rather than control, digital leadership looks at candidate agency. Employer branding is stronger when organizations do so.

The literature also looks at emotional engagement. Not just rational evaluation, but emotional connection is affected by employer branding. Emotion is amplified by storytelling & individual voices in social media. Leaders who tell purposeful stories win over people. Social media intelligence looks at emotional response patterns. Emotional and informational signals increase recruitment effectiveness (Hosain, 2020).

Studies of sustainability and employer branding give a long-term view. More candidates test organizational social impact, ethical stance and leadership responsibility. Public reaction to

sustainability claims captured in social media intelligence. With digital leadership, you build credibility with consistent action. Recruitment results are improved when sustainability messaging is reflective of practice. Platform dependency is another trend. Many organizations rely on some dominant platforms. Authoritative literature warns against over-dependence on algorithm changes and visibility changes. Using social media intelligence, we limit risk by tracking platform performance. Digital leadership means diversification and strategic presence. Employer branding survives when leadership changes rather than reacts.

Study after study of learning organisationsorganizations find that employer branding is better if organisationsorganizations treat feedback as learning rather than a threat. Social media intelligence works in feedback loops. With digital leadership, we have psychological safety to act on feedback. Good recruitment works better if candidates see learning and adaptation going on (Mishra & Kumar, 2019).

One conclusion is reached across the literature. Social media intelligence works alongside digital leadership. Intelligence without leadership lacks direction. Leadership without intelligence lacks awareness. The employer brand represents that interaction. The credibility of that branding affects recruitment effectiveness. Technology is becoming more embedded in human-centred leadership frameworks, scholars say.

The literature in general turns away from tools and towards alignment. Alignment of data and judgment. Alignment of leadership presence with organizational values. Alignment between branding promise & recruitment experience. Social media intelligence allows visibility. Digital leadership makes meaning. Employer branding comes from their union. But recruitment effectiveness is not about volume, reach, but about trust, coherence, and long-term credibility in the digital space.

Objective

To identify the factors to study the Impact of Social Media Intelligence and Digital Leadership on Employer Branding and Recruitment Effectiveness

Methodology

Three hundred forty-one participants were surveyed from different sectors. The method of sampling was "Random sampling" for the collection of data, and the examination was done by "Explanatory Factor Analysis" for the results.

Findings

Table 1 demonstrates demographic details, which show that 63.63% are Male, 36.37% are female. Looking at the age, 33.14% are between 28 and 32 years of age, 31.38% are between 32 and 37 years of age, and 35.48% are above 37 years of age. With regards to sector type, 34.31% are from the Marketing sector, 31.96% are from the Manufacturing sector, and 33.73% are from the Service sector.

Table 1 Respondent's Details

Variables	Participants	Percentage
Gender		
Male	217	63.63%
Female	124	36.37%
Total	341	100
Ages in years		
28 to 32	113	33.14%
32 to 37	107	31.38%
Above 37	121	35.48%
Total	341	100
Sector		
Marketing sector	117	34.31%
Manufacturing sector	109	31.96%
Service sector	115	33.73%
Total	341	100

“Factor Analysis”

“KMO and Bartlett's Test”

Table. 2: Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy”

“Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy”		.762
“Bartlett's Test of Sphericity”	“Approx. Chi-Square”	6076.353
	df	91
	Significance	.000

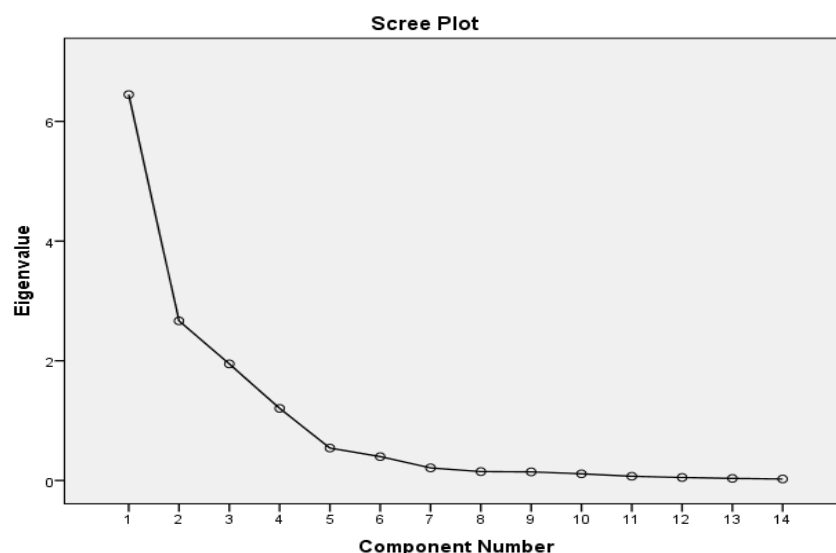
“KMO and Bartlett's Test”, value of KMO is .762 (Table 2).

Table 3 “Total Variance Explained”

“Component”	“Initial Eigenvalues”			“Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings”		
	“Total”	“% Of Variance”	“Cumulative %”	“Total”	“% Of Variance”	“Cumulative %”
1.	6.448	46.055	46.055	3.910	27.926	27.926
2.	2.666	19.046	65.101	3.626	25.901	53.826
3.	1.947	13.910	79.011	2.375	16.966	70.793
4.	1.205	8.608	87.619	2.356	16.826	87.619

5.	.541	3.867	91.486			
6.	.398	2.845	94.331			
7.	.211	1.506	95.837			
8.	.148	1.057	96.894			
9.	.144	1.028	97.922			
10.	.112	.799	98.721			
11.	.070	.499	99.220			
12.	.051	.361	99.580			
13.	.034	.246	99.826			
14.	.024	.174	100.000			

The four factors contribute towards explaining a total of 87.619% of the variance. Variance explained by Social Media Intelligence is 27.926%, Digital Leadership is 25.901%, Employer Branding is 16.966%, and Recruitment Effectiveness is 16.826%. (Table 3).



“Scree Plot”

Table 4 "Rotated Component Matrix"

S. No.	Statements	Factor Loading	Factor Reliability
	Social Media Intelligence		.949
1.	Organizations can keep track of their reputation	.952	

2.	Helps understand expectations of candidates and what happens when perception changes	.909	
3.	Social media intelligence helps in identifying trust signals	.847	
4.	It reveals how organizations are referred to as a workplace, not products or services	.828	
	Digital Leadership		.960
1.	Digital leadership makes recruitment easier and provides clarity in the translation of action	.962	
2.	Digital leadership provides insight framed in organizational values and strategic intent	.898	
3.	It is about tone, transparency & consistency that candidates interpret as organizational culture signals	.886	
4.	Digital leadership together shape how organizations are seen, trusted & chosen by candidates	.860	
	Employer Branding		.859
1.	It is a continuous process of improvement based on visibility, responsiveness and authenticity	.931	
2.	Employer branding removes uncertainty and risks for candidates	.929	
3.	Employer branding is good for an organization if they treat feedback as learning, not a threat	.663	
	Recruitment Effectiveness		.845
1.	Recruitment effectiveness is improved when the candidate is aligned between insight & action	.906	
2.	Suffers when organizations do not deal with negative narratives openly	.836	
3.	Recruitment effectiveness suffers when a crisis reveals a value gap & leadership differences	.735	

Factors of the study and its related variables

The first factor of the study is Social Media Intelligence, which includes variables like how organizations can keep track of their reputation, helps understand expectations of candidates and what happens when perception changes. Social media intelligence helps in identifying trust signals, and it reveals how organizations are referred to as a workplace, not products or services. Digital Leadership is the second factor, its variables are: Digital leadership makes recruitment easier, provides clarity in translation of action, Digital leadership provides insight framed in organizational values and strategic intent, it is about tone, transparency & consistency candidates interpret as organizational culture signals, and Digital leadership

together shape how organizations are seen, trusted & chosen by candidates. Employer Branding is the third variable, which includes variables like being a continuous process of improvement based on visibility, responsiveness and authenticity. Employer branding removes uncertainty and risks for candidates, and it is good for the organization if they treat feedback as learning, not a threat. The last and fourth factor is Recruitment Effectiveness. Its variables are improved when the candidate is aligned between insight & action, suffer when organizations do not deal with negative narratives openly, and suffer when organizations do not deal with negative narratives openly.

Table 5 “Reliability Statistics”

“Cronbach's Alpha”	“Number of Items”
.899	14

Total reliability of 14 items that include variables for Factors exploring the "Impact of Social Media Intelligence and Digital Leadership on Employer Branding and Recruitment Effectiveness" 0.899 (Table 5).

Conclusion

Employer branding & recruitment happen now in an open digital space where perception comes from continuous interaction, not planned messaging. Social media intelligence & digital leadership together shape how organizations are seen, trusted, and chosen by candidates. Intelligence gives us awareness of sentiment, expectation and emerging narratives, but leadership decides what action is. When those things line up, employer branding is credible, responsive and human. When they diverge, branding fragments and recruitment effectiveness weaken.

Social media intelligence is only useful with judgment, ethics and contextual understanding based on the literature. There is a pattern in the literature and analysis, but what leadership does to make them meaningful has to be further explored. Digital leadership is about tone, transparency & consistency, which candidates interpret as organizational culture signals. How does recruitment effectiveness improve if leadership presence supports rather than contradicts what digital insight suggests? Candidates respond to coherence of message, behaviour and response - not polished claims. In that interaction, trust is the central outcome. Organizations that listen & respond openly & consistently build employer brands that make candidates feel less uncertain. When trust takes precedence over persuasion, it makes recruitment selective and sustainable. Human resources functions are very important in connecting intelligence systems with leadership practice and norms for fairness, clarity and human judgment. The factors of the study are Social Media Intelligence, Digital Leadership, Employer Branding and Recruitment Effectiveness.

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