Employer Branding and Employee Advocacy as Strategic Tools for Organizational Competitiveness: Evidence from UP–NCR Industries

[1] **Anurag Joshi**
[1] Research Scholar
Arni School of Business Management & Commerce, Arni University, Indora, Kathgarh, Kangra (H.P.) INDIA
[2] **Dr. Pushkar Agarwal**
[2] Assistant Professor
Arni School of Business Management & Commerce, Arni University, Indora, Kathgarh, Kangra (H.P.) INDIA

ABSTRACT

In the contemporary competitive business environment, organizations increasingly rely on intangible assets such as reputation, human capital, and brand perception to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. Employer Branding and Employee Advocacy have emerged as two critical strategic tools that influence organizational attractiveness, employee engagement, and market reputation.

The research explores how organizations develop employer brands to attract and retain talent and how employees, acting as advocates, contribute to shaping external perceptions of the organization. A quantitative research approach is adopted, supported by structured questionnaires distributed among employees across service and manufacturing organizations. The study investigates the relationship between employer branding, employee advocacy, organizational reputation, and competitiveness.

Findings indicate that strong employer branding significantly enhances employee satisfaction, commitment, and retention, while employee advocacy strengthens external brand image and customer trust. Together, these factors contribute positively to organizational competitiveness.

Keywords: Employer Branding, Employee Advocacy, Organizational Competitiveness, HRM Strategy, Internal Marketing, UP–NCR Industries, Organizational Reputation, Employee Engagement

I INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and highly competitive business environment, organizations are no longer competing solely on the basis of products, services, or pricing strategies. Instead, competition has expanded to include intangible resources such as reputation, organizational culture, and employee perception. Among these intangible assets, Employer Branding and Employee Advocacy have gained significant importance as strategic tools for organizational success.

Employer Branding refers to the process through which an organization builds and communicates its identity as an employer to attract, engage, and retain talented employees. It reflects how employees and potential employees perceive the organization as a workplace. A strong employer brand enhances the organization's ability to attract high-quality talent and reduce employee turnover.

Employee Advocacy, on the other hand, refers to the voluntary promotion of an organization by its employees. Employees act as brand ambassadors by sharing positive experiences, values, and messages about their organization through interpersonal communication and digital platforms. This behavior significantly influences public perception and enhances organizational credibility.

In the UP–NCR region, which is one of India's most industrially and economically significant zones, organizations across service and manufacturing sectors are increasingly recognizing the importance of employer branding and employee advocacy. However, despite growing awareness, many organizations still lack structured strategies to effectively implement these concepts.

Aims of the Study

The primary aim of this research is to analyze the impact of Employer Branding and Employee Advocacy on Organizational Competitiveness in service and manufacturing industries of the UP–NCR region.

Objectives of the Study

- ❖ To examine the level of employer branding practices in selected organizations
- ❖ To analyze the role of employee advocacy in organizational reputation building
- ❖ To study the relationship between employer branding and employee retention
- ❖ To evaluate the impact of employee advocacy on organizational competitiveness
- ❖ To compare practices between service and manufacturing sectors
- ❖ To develop a conceptual framework linking HRM practices and brand outcomes

Hypotheses of the Study

H1: Employer branding has a significant positive impact on organizational competitiveness.

H2: Employee advocacy positively influences organizational reputation.

H3: Employer branding significantly improves employee retention.

H4: Employee advocacy mediates the relationship between employer branding and competitiveness.

H5: Service sector organizations demonstrate stronger employer branding than manufacturing organizations.

II LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Foundations

The Resource-Based View (RBV) theory explains that organizations achieve sustainable competitive advantage through valuable, rare, inimitable, and non-substitutable resources. Employer branding and employee advocacy fall within this category of intangible strategic resources.

Social Identity Theory also explains employee advocacy behavior, suggesting that employees identify strongly with organizations that have positive reputations and strong internal culture, leading them to promote their organization externally.

Employer Branding Literature

Employer branding has been widely discussed as a strategic HRM and marketing intersection concept. According to Ambler and Barrow (1996), employer branding represents the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment.

Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) emphasized that employer branding influences both organizational attractiveness and employee retention. Strong employer brands reduce recruitment costs and improve employee loyalty.

In the Indian context, employer branding has gained importance due to increasing competition for skilled talent, particularly in IT, manufacturing, and service industries.

Employee Advocacy Literature

Employee advocacy is a relatively newer concept in HRM and marketing literature. Studies suggest that employees who are satisfied and engaged are more likely to speak positively about their organization.

Miles and Mangold (2005) highlighted that employee advocacy enhances external brand perception and builds trust among customers.

Social media platforms have further amplified the importance of employee advocacy in shaping organizational reputation.

Relationship Between Employer Branding and Competitiveness

Research indicates that organizations with strong employer branding strategies tend to attract higher quality talent, reduce turnover, and achieve better financial performance. Employer branding is therefore directly linked to organizational competitiveness.

Research Gap

Despite extensive global research, limited empirical studies have focused on the combined impact of employer branding and employee advocacy in the Indian UP–NCR industrial context. Additionally, comparative studies between service and manufacturing sectors remain insufficient.

III RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Design

The present study is based on a descriptive and explanatory research design, aimed at understanding the relationship between Employer Branding, Employee Advocacy, and Organizational Competitiveness. The design is suitable because it not only describes existing practices but also explains causal relationships among variables.

A quantitative approach has been adopted to ensure objectivity and statistical validation of results.

Population and Sample

The population for this study consists of employees working in selected service and manufacturing organizations in the UP–NCR region.

A structured sampling approach was used to ensure representation from both sectors.

Table 1: Sample Distribution

Sector	Organizations Covered	Respondents
Service Sector	15	210
Manufacturing Sector	15	190
Total	**30**	**400**

Data Collection Methods

Primary and secondary data sources were used:

- **Primary Data:** Structured questionnaire based on Likert scale
- **Secondary Data:** Journals, books, reports, company publications (up to 2015)

Instrument Development

The questionnaire included five major constructs:

- Employer Branding
- Employee Satisfaction
- Employee Advocacy
- Organizational Reputation
- Organizational Competitiveness

All items were measured using a **5-point Likert scale** (Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree).

Table 2: Measurement Variables

Variable	Indicators
Employer Branding	Workplace image, culture, benefits
Employee Advocacy	Word-of-mouth, social media sharing
Organizational Reputation	Public perception, trust
Competitiveness	Growth, market position

Reliability and Validity

- Reliability was tested using Cronbach's Alpha (0.81–0.89 range)
- Content validity ensured through expert review
- Construct validity verified through factor analysis

Statistical Tools Used

- Correlation Analysis
- Regression Analysis
- Factor Analysis
- Structural Equation Modeling (SEM)

Table 3: Statistical Tools and Purpose

Tool	Purpose
Correlation	Relationship measurement
Regression	Impact analysis
Factor Analysis	Data reduction
SEM	Model validation

IV RESULTS AND FINDINGS

Descriptive Findings

The analysis shows that employer branding practices are moderately strong in-service organizations compared to manufacturing firms. Employee advocacy behavior is also higher in-service industries due to direct customer interaction.

Table 4: Mean Score Comparison

Variable	Service Sector	Manufacturing Sector	Overall Mean
Employer Branding	3.85	3.42	3.63
Employee Advocacy	3.78	3.40	3.59
Employee Satisfaction	3.80	3.48	3.64
Competitiveness	3.88	3.50	3.69

Correlation Analysis

Strong positive relationships were found among all variables.

Table 5: Correlation Matrix

Variables	Employer Branding	Employee Advocacy	Reputation	Competitiveness
Employer Branding	1.00	0.74	0.70	0.76
Employee Advocacy	0.74	1.00	0.72	0.78
Reputation	0.70	0.72	1.00	0.80
Competitiveness	0.76	0.78	0.80	1.00

Regression Analysis

Regression results confirm strong predictive power of employer branding and employee advocacy.

Table 6: Regression Results

Predictor	Beta Value	t-value	Significance
Employer Branding	0.42	6.90	0.000
Employee Advocacy	0.46	7.30	0.000
Employee Satisfaction	0.39	6.40	0.000

V CONCLUSION

Discussion of Findings

The findings of this study clearly establish that Employer Branding and Employee Advocacy are strongly interlinked strategic tools that significantly influence organizational competitiveness in both service and manufacturing industries in the UP–NCR region.

The empirical results show that organizations with strong employer branding practices tend to attract and retain better talent. This supports the view of Ambler and Barrow (1996) that employer branding is not only a recruitment tool but also a long-term strategic asset that shapes organizational identity in the labor market.

Employee advocacy emerged as a powerful mediator between internal organizational practices and external reputation. Employees who perceive their organization positively are more likely to voluntarily promote it through word-of-mouth communication and digital platforms. This aligns with Social Identity Theory, which suggests that employees derive self-esteem from organizational membership and therefore act as informal brand ambassadors.

The study also confirms that employee satisfaction is a key driver of both advocacy behavior and organizational competitiveness. When employees feel valued, supported, and fairly compensated, they are more likely to contribute positively to organizational image and customer experience.

A notable finding is the sectoral difference. Service organizations demonstrated higher levels of employer branding and employee advocacy compared to manufacturing organizations. This is primarily due to the direct interaction between employees and customers in service industries, which makes employee behavior more visible and influential in shaping brand perception.

Manufacturing firms, although improving, still rely more on production efficiency rather than human-centric branding strategies, which limits their competitive advantage in reputation-driven markets.

Theoretical Implications

The study contributes to existing literature by integrating HRM and Marketing perspectives into a unified conceptual framework. It reinforces the Resource-Based View (RBV), which considers human capital and organizational reputation as critical intangible resources.

It also extends the Service-Profit Chain model by demonstrating that employee advocacy acts as a bridge between internal satisfaction and external competitiveness.

5.3 Practical Implications

The findings provide several important implications for managers:

- Organizations should actively invest in employer branding strategies to attract skilled employees.
- HR departments must collaborate with marketing teams to ensure consistent organizational messaging.
- Employee advocacy programs should be developed to encourage positive word-of-mouth behavior.
- Internal communication systems should be strengthened to improve employee engagement.
- Training programs should emphasize organizational values and brand alignment.

Conclusion

The study concludes that Employer Branding and Employee Advocacy are not independent HR or marketing functions but integrated strategic mechanisms that shape organizational competitiveness.

Organizations in the UP–NCR region that effectively manage these two dimensions demonstrate:

- Higher employee satisfaction

- Stronger organizational reputation
- Better customer trust
- Improved competitive positioning

Thus, in modern business environments, success is not only determined by product quality or pricing strategy but also by how well organizations manage their internal workforce as brand ambassadors.

Limitations of the Study

- ❖ The study is limited to the UP–NCR region and may not be fully generalizable.
- ❖ Data is based on perceptions collected up to 2015.
- ❖ The study uses cross-sectional data, limiting causal interpretation.
- ❖ Some responses may be influenced by subjective bias.

Future Scope of Research

Future studies may focus on:

- Digital employer branding and social media impact
- Longitudinal studies across different regions in India
- Comparative global analysis
- Integration with AI-driven HR analytics

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