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HR Marketing as a Strategic Tool for Harmonizing the Labor Market and Social-Labor Relations: A Conceptual Framework Integrating Employer Value Proposition, the 7P Model, and Employee-Based Brand Equity

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Abstract: The intensification of competition for qualified labor, the ageing of the economically active population, the diffusion of hybrid and remote work, and the generational shift in workplace values have jointly reshaped the mechanisms through which employers attract, engage, and retain personnel. In response, HR marketing has emerged as an interdisciplinary field that transposes the conceptual apparatus of classical marketing — brand identity, value proposition, the marketing mix, and brand equity — onto the domain of human resource management. Despite growing practical interest, the theoretical literature on HR marketing remains fragmented across the adjacent streams of internal marketing, employer branding, and organizational behavior, with few attempts to integrate these streams into a single explanatory model. This article addresses that gap by proposing a conceptual framework that links employer brand identity, the Employer Value Proposition (EVP), the tactical 7P marketing-mix, and Employee-Based Brand Equity (EBBE) into a coherent causal chain. Based on a narrative synthesis of academic and applied sources on internal marketing, employer branding, and consumer-value theory, the article develops an integrated model in which brand identity determines the content of the EVP, the EVP is operationalized through seven tactical levers (product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence), and the resulting employee experience is reflected in measurable brand-equity outcomes such as engagement, commitment, and reduced turnover intention. The framework offers researchers a structured basis for empirical testing and offers practitioners a diagnostic tool for auditing the internal consistency of their HR-marketing activities. The article concludes by outlining limitations of the conceptual approach and directions for subsequent quantitative validation, including in transitional and emerging labor markets.

Keywords: HR marketing; employer branding; Employer Value Proposition (EVP); 7P marketing mix; Employee-Based Brand Equity; internal marketing; labor market; talent management

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1. Introduction

Contemporary organizations compete not only for customers but, increasingly, for qualified personnel. Several structural trends have converged to intensify this competition. First, rising life expectancy and the simultaneous shrinking of the working-age population in many economies have widened the gap between labor demand and the supply of appropriately skilled workers [1], [2]. Second, the diffusion of the decent-work agenda promoted by the International Labour Organization since the late 1990s has shifted employee expectations beyond wage levels toward quality of working life, work–

life balance, and self-realization. Third, technological change and the growth of flexible and platform-based employment relationships have altered the psychological contract between employers and employees, requiring new approaches to monitoring engagement and performance [3]. Fourth, the accelerated adoption of remote and hybrid work models following the COVID-19 pandemic has weakened traditional channels of workplace communication and cohesion, elevating the risk of disengagement and burnout in distributed teams.

These trends have jointly produced a labor market in which a competitive salary and a stable position are necessary but no longer sufficient conditions for attracting and retaining talent. Organizations are therefore turning to HR marketing — the deliberate application of marketing concepts and tools to the management of the employer–employee relationship — as a mechanism for building a distinctive and credible position in the labor market [4]. Conceptually, HR marketing sits at the intersection of two literatures that have historically developed in parallel: the internal-marketing tradition, which treats employees as internal customers whose satisfaction underpins external service quality [5], [6], [7], and the employer-branding tradition, which applies consumer-based brand-equity theory to the labor market [8], [9].

Although both traditions are individually well developed, the literature offers comparatively few integrated models that connect the identity of the employer brand, the content of its value proposition, the tactical instruments through which that proposition is delivered, and the resulting equity or behavioral outcomes among employees. Practitioner frameworks — most notably the adaptation of the classical services marketing mix [10] to human-resource contexts — are widely referenced but rarely positioned within a broader theoretical chain that explains why tactical execution should, in principle, translate into measurable brand equity. The purpose of this article is to close this gap by proposing a conceptual, literature-grounded framework that integrates: (a) the construct of employer brand identity as the foundation of positioning; (b) the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) as the strategic articulation of exchange value, structured according to the functional, social, emotional, and epistemic dimensions of consumer value [11]; (c) the 7P marketing-mix as the tactical mechanism of delivery; and (d) Employee-Based Brand Equity (EBBE) as the outcome construct through which the effectiveness of the preceding elements can, in principle, be assessed [12], [13].

The remainder of the article is organized as follows. Section 2 describes the conceptual-synthesis methodology used to construct the framework. Section 3 presents the results of the synthesis, moving sequentially through the identity–EVP–communication hierarchy, the structure of the EVP, the tactical 7P model, and the EBBE construct, before integrating these elements into a single conceptual model. Section 4 discusses the theoretical and practical implications of the framework, together with its limitations. Section 5 concludes and outlines directions for future empirical research.

2. Materials and Methods

This article follows a conceptual, narrative-synthesis approach rather than an empirical research design, consistent with the methodology of prior integrative reviews in the employer-branding literature [8], [14]. The choice of a conceptual method is deliberate: the objective is to construct an explanatory framework that connects previously disconnected theoretical constructs, a task for which narrative synthesis — rather than meta-analysis or primary data collection — is the established methodological instrument in this stream of management research.

The source base for the synthesis comprised three categories of material. The first category consisted of peer-reviewed journal articles addressing internal marketing, employer branding, brand equity, and organizational commitment, published between 1985 and 2024 in outlets including the *European Journal of Marketing*, *Journal of Brand Management*, *International Journal of Management Reviews*, *Journal of Product & Brand Management*, and *Behavioral Sciences*, among others. The second category consisted of foundational conceptual works on consumer value and brand management, in particular the consumption-value typology of Sheth, Newman, and Gross [11], the services

marketing mix of Booms and Bitner [10], and brand-equity theory as formulated by Keller [15]. The third category consisted of applied industry sources — reports by Gallup, Gartner, and national recruitment platforms — used to contextualize the theoretical synthesis with contemporary labor-market evidence, but not treated as a substitute for peer-reviewed theory.

The analytical procedure consisted of three stages. In the first stage, the source material was screened for constructs relevant to four thematic domains: employer brand identity and positioning; the structure and function of the EVP; tactical instruments of HR marketing; and outcome constructs associated with employer branding (engagement, commitment, turnover intention, brand equity). In the second stage, the constructs identified within each domain were compared across sources to identify points of theoretical convergence — for example, the recurring distinction between functional and non-functional (social, emotional, epistemic) value components across the EVP literature. In the third stage, the converging constructs were arranged into a sequential causal structure — identity → value proposition → tactical delivery → equity outcome — and cross-checked against the internal-marketing literature's own service-quality chain [16] to verify structural consistency. No primary data were collected, and no statistical procedures were applied; the contribution of the article is the resulting conceptual model itself, presented in Section 3, together with the discussion of its theoretical and practical implications in Section 4.

3. Results

3.1. The concept of HR marketing and its internal–external dimension

HR marketing can be defined as the systematic application of marketing concepts, tools, and metrics to the attraction, engagement, and retention of personnel, treating the vacancy and the working experience as a composite product and the (potential or current) employee as its target consumer. The construct rests on the internal-marketing tradition, which from its origins [5], [6] has argued that an organization's employees must be treated, and marketed to, as internal customers whose satisfaction is a precondition for external service quality and firm performance [17], [3]. This premise implies a dual orientation of HR marketing. The external orientation is directed at prospective candidates and is concerned with the organization's competitive position in the labor market; the internal orientation is directed at current employees and is concerned with engagement, retention, and advocacy. The two orientations are complementary rather than substitutable: an employer brand that attracts candidates through an appealing external narrative but fails to deliver a corresponding internal experience generates disconfirmed expectations, dissatisfaction, and elevated turnover [18], [19].

3.2. From brand identity to the Employer Value Proposition and communication

The theoretical starting point of the proposed framework is the construct of employer brand identity — the internally defined set of values, mission, and distinctive attributes that answers the question of who the organization is as an employer. Brand identity precedes and determines the content of the Employer Value Proposition (EVP): if identity is the substance of the brand, the EVP is its market-facing articulation, translating internal values and capabilities into tangible and meaningful benefits that answer the question of what the organization offers in exchange for an employee's labor and talent [8]. The EVP, in turn, provides the substantive basis for all subsequent communication, both internal and external; every recruitment message, vacancy description, and internal announcement should be consistent with, and should substantiate, the promises embedded in the EVP.

This sequence — identity, value proposition, communication — constitutes a hierarchical dependency rather than three independent activities, and a break at any stage in the sequence produces predictable dysfunction. Where communication activity outruns the substance of the underlying EVP, the organization creates expectations it cannot fulfil, resulting in disillusioned new hires and elevated early-tenure attrition. Where the EVP

itself is not grounded in an authentic brand identity, it is experienced by candidates and employees as inauthentic and fails to resonate with the intended target segments [20]. The practical implication is that interventions aimed at improving employer communication in isolation — for example, increasing the frequency or polish of recruitment content — are unlikely to be effective unless the underlying value proposition and its grounding in organizational identity are addressed first.

3.3. The structure of the Employer Value Proposition: a consumer-value perspective

Following the consumption-value typology developed by Sheth, Newman, and Gross [11] in the general marketing literature, the EVP can be decomposed into four components of perceived employee value: functional, social, emotional, and epistemic. The functional component captures material and practical benefits that satisfy basic needs — competitive compensation, benefits packages, and convenient working conditions. The social component captures benefits derived from group membership and status, such as the reputation of working for a recognized employer or membership in a professional community. The emotional component captures the feelings and sense of belonging generated by the work itself, including pride in the organization's mission and a sense of personal contribution. The epistemic component captures benefits associated with acquiring new knowledge, skills, and stimulating experience, such as access to training, participation in innovative projects, and structured career development.

Table 1. Components of the Employer Value Proposition and Illustrative HR-Context Attributes

Value component	Nature of benefit	Illustrative HR-context attributes
Functional	Material and practical benefits addressing basic needs	Competitive salary and bonuses; health insurance; flexible schedule; modern equipment
Social	Benefits of group membership, status, and affiliation	Reputation of the employer; professional community; team events
Emotional	Feelings and sense of belonging generated by the work	Pride in mission and product; sense of contribution; culture of trust
Epistemic	Benefits from new knowledge, skills, and stimulating experience	Training and conferences; participation in innovative projects; mentorship and career growth

Source: constructed by the author based on Sheth, Newman, and Gross [11] and applied EVP literature [4].

Two further properties of the EVP structure are relevant for the framework proposed here. First, perceived value is subjective, context-dependent, and heterogeneous across employee segments, implying that a single undifferentiated EVP is unlikely to be equally effective across all target groups; organizations are therefore expected to construct segment-specific EVP configurations, echoing the segmentation logic of consumer marketing. Second, the EVP is dual-directional: an external EVP, oriented toward attracting candidates, and an internal EVP, oriented toward engaging and retaining current employees. Industry evidence suggests that where organizations broaden the EVP's emphasis from purely functional benefits toward the emotional and relational dimensions of work — for instance, by extending genuine flexibility and respect for personal boundaries — measurable improvements in employee well-being and advocacy follow, which is consistent with the theoretical expectation that emotional and social value

components carry independent explanatory weight beyond functional compensation alone.

3.4. Tactical implementation: an adapted 7P marketing-mix for HR marketing

Whereas the EVP specifies what the organization offers, the tactical level of HR marketing specifies how that offer is operationalized and delivered. The framework adopts, for this purpose, an adaptation of the classical services marketing mix [10] to the domain of talent management, decomposing the employment relationship into seven tactical elements.

Table 2 presents the adapted 7P structure together with the guiding question each element poses to the HR-marketing practitioner.

7P element	Guiding question
Product	What are we actually offering the employee — the job, the career, the experience, the mission?
Price	What does the employment relationship cost the employee (compensation, time, effort, stress), and what is received in exchange?
Place	Where and how does the work take place — office, remote, hybrid, digital environment?
Promotion	How is the offer communicated, and how are employees engaged as advocates?
People	Who shapes the employee experience — colleagues, managers, HR?
Process	What are the internal procedures — recruitment, onboarding, appraisal — and are they convenient?
Physical evidence	What can the employee tangibly perceive — the office, equipment, branded materials, certificates?

Source: adapted by the author from Booms and Bitner [10], applied to the HR-marketing context.

Of the seven elements, product and price merit particular elaboration because they most directly operationalize the EVP. The product element is constructed at two interdependent levels: a corporate level (the employer brand as a whole, determining the general value of association with the organization) and a position level (job design, which specifies the offer for a given role). Job design itself can be further decomposed into five aspects: productivity and task structuring, motivation and development, safety and ergonomics, social and physical working conditions, and the value-laden or corporate-social-responsibility dimension of the role. The price element, in turn, is best understood through the concept of total rewards, encompassing both direct financial compensation and the broader package of non-financial benefits; the literature identifies three generic positioning strategies with respect to price — cost leadership (compensation at or below market, offset by stability or non-material advantages), market parity (compensation aligned with prevailing market rates, minimizing both attrition and overpayment risk), and premium positioning (compensation above market, intended to attract and retain top performers) — mirroring, in a labor-market setting, the classical typology of pricing strategies in consumer marketing [18].

The remaining five elements — place, promotion, people, process, and physical evidence — function as the delivery infrastructure through which the product and price offer is experienced. The people element is of particular theoretical interest because it operates as an evidentiary mechanism: interactions with managers and colleagues constitute lived confirmation, or disconfirmation, of the promises articulated in the EVP, functioning analogously to the service encounter in classical services marketing [16]. Consistent and coherent execution across all seven elements is theorized to be a necessary

condition for the EVP to be experienced by employees as credible; execution that is inconsistent across elements — for example, a compensation-competitive product coupled with opaque and cumbersome internal processes — is expected to erode the perceived authenticity of the broader employer brand, regardless of the strength of any single tactical element in isolation.

3.5. Employee-Based Brand Equity as the outcome construct

The framework's final element addresses the question of how the cumulative effect of brand identity, EVP, and tactical delivery can, in principle, be assessed. The relevant construct in the literature is Employee-Based Brand Equity (EBBE), an adaptation of consumer-based brand-equity theory [15] to the employment context, defined as the differential effect that employer-brand knowledge exerts on an employee's response to the organization [9], [12]. EBBE is theorized to comprise cognitive components (brand knowledge and awareness), affective components (brand associations and identification), and behavioral components (loyalty, advocacy, and discretionary effort), and has been empirically linked in the literature to antecedents such as internal communication quality and role clarity [13] and to consequences including organizational commitment, engagement, and reduced turnover intention [21], [22].

Positioned within the proposed framework, EBBE functions as the dependent construct that closes the causal chain initiated by brand identity: an authentic identity grounds a credible EVP; a credible EVP, consistently operationalized through the seven tactical elements, produces a lived employee experience; and that lived experience, aggregated across the workforce, manifests as measurable brand equity, expressed behaviorally through engagement, commitment, retention, and advocacy, and reputationally through the organization's standing among prospective candidates [19]. Because EBBE is, in principle, measurable through established multi-item scales [12], it also provides the natural point of entry for future empirical validation of the framework, discussed further in Section 4.

3.6. Integrated conceptual model

Synthesizing Sections 3.1–3.5, the article proposes the following integrated sequence as the core conceptual contribution of this study:

Brand identity ("Who are we?") → Employer Value Proposition, structured across functional, social, emotional, and epistemic value ("What do we offer?") → Tactical delivery through the 7P mix — product, price, place, promotion, people, process, physical evidence ("How is it delivered?") → Employee-Based Brand Equity — cognitive, affective, and behavioral outcomes ("What is the measurable result?").

Two structural properties of this chain follow directly from the synthesis in Sections 3.2–3.5. First, the chain is theorized to operate bidirectionally in terms of risk: a deficiency introduced at any stage propagates forward and is expected to depress the equity outcomes at the end of the chain, irrespective of the strength of subsequent stages. Second, the chain is theorized to apply in parallel to external audiences (candidates) and internal audiences (current employees), with the external and internal EVP sharing a common identity foundation but differing in emphasis and content. This dual applicability is what allows the framework to address, within a single model, both the external labor-market positioning of the employer and the internal retention and engagement of the existing workforce — the two functions historically treated separately in the external employer-branding literature and the internal-marketing literature, respectively.

4. Discussion

The framework developed in Section 3 makes a primarily integrative theoretical contribution: it does not introduce a wholly new construct, but rather organizes four previously disconnected constructs — brand identity, the EVP, the tactical marketing mix, and brand equity — into an explicit causal sequence, drawing an analogy with the well-established service-profit-chain logic of services marketing [16] while grounding each stage in its own dedicated body of employer-branding and internal-marketing research.

This integration addresses a specific gap identified in the introduction: prior reviews of the employer-branding literature [8] have noted the proliferation of loosely connected constructs and metrics in this field, and the sequential model proposed here offers one way of imposing structure on that proliferation.

From a practical standpoint, the framework functions as a diagnostic tool. Because the chain specifies where, structurally, an HR-marketing initiative should be located — identity, proposition, tactic, or outcome — it allows practitioners to localize the likely source of underperformance in an existing HR-marketing program rather than treating symptoms (for example, weak recruitment conversion, or high early-tenure attrition) as undifferentiated problems to be addressed through generic communication spend. A weak external conversion rate coupled with strong internal engagement scores, for instance, would under this framework point toward a communication or promotion deficiency rather than a deficiency in the underlying EVP itself; conversely, high recruitment interest coupled with rapid early attrition would point toward a mismatch between the communicated EVP and its tactical delivery through the people and process elements.

The framework also carries implications for organizations operating in transitional and emerging labor markets, where the trends described in the Introduction — demographic pressure, changing generational values, and the growth of flexible work arrangements — are frequently as pronounced as, or more pronounced than, in the mature markets from which most of the underlying empirical literature originates. In such contexts, where formal employer-branding practice may be less institutionalized, a structured framework of this kind may be particularly useful as a starting template for organizations beginning to formalize their HR-marketing function, provided that the segment-specific and culturally contingent nature of EVP content [23], [24] is respected rather than treated as universally transferable.

Several limitations of the present analysis should be acknowledged. First, and most fundamentally, the article is conceptual rather than empirical: the proposed causal sequence is theoretically motivated and consistent with fragments of empirical evidence drawn from the reviewed literature, but the sequence as an integrated whole has not been directly tested. Second, the narrative-synthesis method, while appropriate for the theory-building objective pursued here, does not provide the systematic, replicable search and appraisal procedures characteristic of a formal systematic review, and the source base, while broad, is not exhaustive. Third, the framework abstracts from industry-, firm-size-, and culture-specific moderators that the literature indicates are likely to shape both the content of the EVP and the relative importance of the seven tactical elements; the generic version of the framework presented here should therefore be treated as a starting point for contextualization rather than a context-free prescription.

5. Conclusion

This article has proposed an integrated conceptual framework for HR marketing that links employer brand identity, the Employer Value Proposition, the tactical 7P marketing mix, and Employee-Based Brand Equity into a single explanatory sequence. The framework's central claim is that HR-marketing outcomes are best understood not as the product of isolated tactics — a recruitment campaign, a benefits package, an internal newsletter — but as the cumulative and sequentially dependent result of an authentic brand identity, a value proposition genuinely derived from that identity, and a tactically consistent delivery of that proposition across all points of contact between the organization and its current and prospective employees. In an increasingly competitive and demographically constrained labor market, such an integrated view offers both researchers and practitioners a more structured basis for understanding why some employer-branding investments succeed in producing measurable engagement, retention, and advocacy while others, despite comparable expenditure, do not.

Future research should prioritize the empirical validation of the proposed sequence, ideally through longitudinal or structural-equation designs capable of testing the hypothesized mediating role of the EVP and the 7P elements between brand identity and

EBBE outcomes, using established EBBE scales [12] alongside measures of organizational commitment and turnover intention. Cross-cultural replication, including in transitional and emerging labor markets where the underlying demographic and institutional trends are especially acute, would further clarify the boundary conditions of the framework and its practical applicability beyond the mature-market settings in which most of the constituent literature was originally developed.

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