

# Employee Ambassadors on Social Media: A Content Analysis Approach to Digital Employer Branding

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# **Employee Ambassadors on Social Media: A Content Analysis Approach to Digital Employer Branding**

## **Abstract:**

This research explores how HR employees' LinkedIn activities influence digital employer branding, focusing on three mid-sized French companies in the IT and telecom sectors. The study evaluates content types, organizational roles, follower reach, and sentiment, assessing their impact on engagement metrics (likes, comments, reposts). The results show that broadcasting activities, such as posts and reposts, dominate employee engagement. Celebratory and visually engaging content consistently achieve the highest levels of interaction, though a larger follower base does not always translate to greater success. Sentiment analysis reveals a complex dynamic, where both positive and negative emotions can significantly boost visibility and encourage interaction. These findings emphasize LinkedIn's strategic value in empowering employees as brand ambassadors, offering companies practical strategies to enhance talent attraction and improve their competitive positioning in the digital marketplace.

*Key words: Digital employer branding, Ambassadorship in LinkedIn, Social media engagement*

*Track: Digital Marketing and Social Media*

## **1. Introduction**

Employer branding has emerged as a vital strategy in the race to secure top talent. In today's knowledge-driven economy, where skilled workers are highly sought after, a strong employer brand helps companies differentiate themselves and align their workforce with organizational values and goals.

On the other hand, social media, especially platforms like LinkedIn, plays a key role in employer branding by offering direct access to a wide audience of current and prospective employees. Companies can use these platforms to showcase their values, workplace culture, and employer positioning. However, it is not just official company content that shapes the employer brand. Employees, as brand ambassadors, influence the company's image through their personal social media interactions, endorsements, and engagements. Through their own networks, employees amplify the brand message and enhance the company's credibility and visibility.

## **2. Literature Review**

### *2.1. Employer Branding*

Employer branding is a dynamic and ongoing commitment between an organization and its employees, built on mutual investment and trust that begins during the recruitment process (Vasco et al., 2022). The concept of employer branding was first introduced by Ambler & Barrow (1996), who defined it as “the package of functional, economic, and psychological benefits provided by employment and identified with the employing company”. Later, Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) emphasized employer branding as “the process of building an identifiable and unique employer identity”, while Mosley (2014) described it as “an effective commercial bridge between HR, internal communications, and marketing”.

Employer branding, both external (focused on recruiting potential employees) and internal (motivating and retaining current employees), seeks to shape a positive perception of the employer among current and prospective employees (Cable & Turban, 2001). Given this objective, any misalignment between the external image and internal realities can pose significant risks. If employees perceive inconsistencies, it can lead to dissatisfaction, high turnover, and damaged trust (Edwards & Edwards, 2013). Therefore, aligning external messaging with internal realities is essential to fostering employee satisfaction and long-term commitment, highlighting the role of social media in employer branding process.

### *2.2. The Role of Social Media in Employer Branding*

Social media has become a cornerstone of modern employer branding strategies, providing unmatched opportunities for visibility and engagement. Platforms like LinkedIn enable companies to showcase their culture, values, and achievements, while empowering employees to share authentic insights and testimonials, thereby boosting organizational credibility (Wolf et al., 2015). By fostering transparency and encouraging co-creation, social media enhances the impact of employer branding efforts, effectively supporting both talent acquisition and retention.

Despite its benefits, social media also presents challenges for organizations. Employee posts can decentralize the brand narrative, creating unpredictability that may disrupt message coherence (Bondarouk et al., 2014). Additionally, privacy concerns and reluctance to blend personal and professional identities can limit employee participation, further complicating efforts to maintain a consistent and effective advocacy strategy (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). To address these challenges, companies should establish clear policies, offer training, and recognize employees who contribute positively (Cervellon & Lirio, 2017).

Striking a balance between leveraging social media's benefits and managing its risks is essential. Employee participation not only strengthens the employer brand's identity but also attracts candidates who align with the organization's values (Yoganathan et al., 2021). The following section delves into the role of employee ambassadorship within this framework.

### *2.3. Employee Ambassadorship*

Employee ambassadorship involves employees actively promoting their company's brand by sharing work experiences and participating in thought leadership activities (Morhart et al., 2009; Näppä et al., 2014). By leveraging platforms like LinkedIn for authentic communication, employees not only elevate their personal voice but also enhance the organization's visibility and credibility (Yoganathan et al., 2021). Their contributions amplify the employer brand through word-of-mouth, building trust with external audiences (Berger & Schwartz, 2011).

Employees also showcase company culture through posts highlighting workplace events and celebrating team achievements, which attract potential candidates and reinforce shared values internally (Yoganathan et al., 2021). However, ambassadorship may create tension if employees feel pressured to align their online communication with organizational goals, potentially leading to identity conflicts (Heide et al., 2018). By aligning organizational values with those of employees, companies can foster authentic and collaborative brand promotion (Du Preez et al., 2017).

### 3. Hypotheses

LinkedIn is a professional networking platform that encourages work-related content sharing and connections, distinct from casual social media like Facebook (Joglekar & Tan, 2022; Van Zoonen et al., 2018). Both employee-generated content (EGC) and firm-generated content (FGC) influence employer brand perception, by influencing factors such as employer attractiveness and corporate reputation (Joglekar & Tan, 2022). This study focuses on how employee-generated content, particularly from HR employees, shapes employer branding.

The focus on HR employees is due to their central role in employer branding, which involves aligning the company's image with its values. HR activities on LinkedIn offer insights into how internal branding strategies affect external perceptions, helping HR departments identify brand advocates, create training programs, and enhance the company's presence in the talent market.

H1 examines the frequency of HR employees' activities on LinkedIn, with a focus on broadcasting actions (posts and reposts) versus interactive dialogue (comments). Frequent activity, especially broadcasting, signals credibility and aligns with Signaling Theory, which highlights how actions convey important information (Bergh et al., 2014). Broadcasting actions typically emphasize company achievements, while comments facilitate deeper audience engagement (Wolf et al., 2015). The hypothesis suggests that HR employees engage more in broadcasting than in interactive dialogue.

H1: Among HR employees' activities on LinkedIn, broadcasting actions such as posts and reposts occur more frequently than interactive dialogue, such as comments.

H2 explores how the type of content HR employees share -such as visuals, articles, celebrations, etc.- affects engagement. Research shows that varied content formats boost visibility and interaction on LinkedIn (Mihalcea, 2017; Vasco et al., 2022). Personal stories, event highlights, and advocacy posts enhance engagement and shape organizational reputation (Wolf et al., 2015). Understanding which content types drive the most interaction helps companies tailor strategies to connect with a wider audience.

H2: HR employees' LinkedIn activities that include personal experiences achieve higher engagement metrics (likes, comments, reposts) among all types.

H3 examines if organizational level influences the type of content shared by employees. Higher-level employees often focus on strategic insights and thought leadership, while junior

employees are more likely to share operational updates and team achievements (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). These differences impact how followers perceive the organization's expertise and authority in its industry (Van Zoonen et al., 2018).

H3: HR employees at different organizational levels on LinkedIn share distinct types of content.

For H4, the size of an employee's follower base significantly impacts engagement levels. Employees with larger networks reach broader audiences, amplifying word-of-mouth effects and employer branding (Berger & Schwartz, 2011). A strong follower base enhances credibility, making it easier to attract talent and engage external audiences (Yoganathan et al., 2021).

H4: LinkedIn posts by HR employees with larger follower bases generate higher engagement metrics (likes, comments, reposts) compared to those with smaller follower bases.

H5 suggests that senior-level leaders generate higher engagement on LinkedIn due to their extensive networks and expertise. Their influence and communication skills boost visibility, credibility, and engagement with both current and potential employees (Kissel & Büttgen, 2015). Prioritizing senior-level leaders' posts can strengthen employer branding and increase audience trust (Van Zoonen et al., 2018; Wolf et al., 2015).

H5: HR employees at higher organizational levels, especially senior-level leaders, generate higher engagement metrics (likes, comments, reposts) on LinkedIn compared to mid-level and entry-level employees.

H6 suggests that posting frequency varies across organizational levels due to role-specific priorities. Executives typically post less frequently but focus on strategic content, such as brand positioning and thought leadership (Cascio & Montealegre, 2016). In contrast, middle managers and frontline employees engage more regularly, sharing updates and team achievements. However, some studies indicate that senior leaders may also post frequently due to their role in shaping the organization's public image (Berger & Schwartz, 2011). Understanding these patterns helps organizations optimize digital engagement strategies.

H6: HR employees in senior-level positions post less frequently on LinkedIn than entry or mid-level HR employees.

H7 shows that sentiment significantly impacts LinkedIn engagement. Positive sentiment boosts audience interaction, enhancing likes, comments, and reposts, while negative sentiment can harm brand perception (Van Zoonen et al., 2018). Positive employee-generated content, in

particular, has a stronger effect on corporate reputation and employer attractiveness compared to firm-generated content (Joglekar & Tan, 2022). This highlights the importance of fostering positive sentiment in employee posts to enhance the company's image.

H7: LinkedIn posts by HR employees with positive sentiment generate higher engagement metrics (likes, comments, reposts) compared to posts with neutral or negative sentiment.

#### 4. Data Gathering

This study focuses on LinkedIn, selected for its professional orientation and relevance to employer branding. Three mid-sized French companies in the IT and high-tech sectors were chosen based on industry relevance, active LinkedIn engagement, and employee participation. Ten HR employees from each company were randomly selected, with their LinkedIn activity tracked from August 1, 2023, to October 1, 2024. The analysis mainly covers posts and reposts, considering their roles in employee ambassadorship. Engagement metrics (likes, comments, and reposts) are analyzed separately to assess their individual impacts on employer branding. Data was collected using Phantombuster to extract posts, reposts, and engagement metrics. SPSS was used for statistical analysis, while MeaningCloud performed sentiment analysis.

#### 5. Findings

No	Test	Result
H1	Descriptive statistical analysis	Employees predominantly engage in broadcasting activities, with reposting being the dominant action.
H2	Kruskal-Wallis test	Content types significantly affect engagement. Celebratory posts achieve the highest engagement, followed by images and videos, while text-based posts perform the weakest.
H3	Chi-square tests	Preferred content type differ by organizational level: entry-level favor images, mid-level balance celebrations and documents, and senior-level prefer content like celebrations and thought leadership posts.
H4	ANOVA	Engagement varies with follower count. Mid-tier employees (1k-5k followers) achieve the highest engagement, though trends vary by company.
H5	ANOVA	Engagement metrics do not consistently increase with organizational level; e.g., entry-level employees in one case lead in likes and comments.

H6	Descriptive analysis, ANOVA	Mid-level employees contribute the most, while entry-level employees are the least active. Senior levels fall between these two groups.
H7	Sentiment analysis, ANOVA	Over 70% of posts are classified as positive, but the impact of sentiment on engagement metrics is inconsistent.

Table 1. Results of the hypotheses

## 6. Discussion

The findings provide valuable insights into employee engagement on LinkedIn, highlighting the nuanced ways in which content creation, sharing, and audience interactions vary across organizational levels. Employees play distinct roles in shaping LinkedIn engagement, reflecting their professional priorities and positioning within the organization.

Junior-level employees primarily engage through reposting, emphasizing their role as amplifiers of existing content. This behavior suggests that junior staff see LinkedIn as a platform to align themselves with organizational messages and boost visibility rather than initiating original discussions. By contrast, senior-level employees favor creating thought leadership and celebratory posts, using LinkedIn to reinforce their expertise, assert their authority, and spotlight organizational milestones. This difference highlights how engagement styles evolve with experience and organizational status, reflecting both professional growth and strategic use of the platform.

The preference for celebratory and visually engaging posts across all levels suggests the importance of leveraging emotionally resonant and aesthetically appealing content. Such posts appear to humanize the organization, fostering a sense of connection among employees and external audiences. Companies should encourage diverse and authentic contributions that resonate with both internal and external stakeholders.

Furthermore, the study underscores the importance of tailoring content strategies to align with audience preferences and contexts. For instance, mid-level professionals with moderate follower counts demonstrate higher engagement, particularly in likes, comments, and reposts. This finding suggests that content strategies should not only target high-profile employees but also empower mid-tier staff, who may have more relatable and trusted networks.

The inconsistent influence of sentiment on engagement further highlights the complexity of LinkedIn dynamics. While most posts are positive, the variability in how sentiment drives interactions suggests that other factors, such as content type, format, and timing, may play a



more significant role. Organizations should consider these nuances when designing their LinkedIn strategies, ensuring they account for both individual and organizational factors.

Ultimately, the findings reaffirm LinkedIn's value as a platform for professional branding and community building. By understanding the diverse ways employees contribute to engagement and tailoring strategies accordingly, companies can strengthen their employer brand and foster deeper connections within the professional ecosystem. This emphasizes the need for ongoing monitoring, evaluation, and adaptation of LinkedIn content strategies to remain effective in an evolving digital landscape.

## **7. Practical Implications**

The findings provide actionable strategies for enhancing LinkedIn engagement. Encouraging employees to diversify their posting behaviors - such as combining reposts with original content and using engaging formats like celebrations or videos - can foster authenticity and increase interaction. Tailoring content to audience preferences is crucial: celebratory posts can drive broad appeal, while thought leadership resonates with niche professional audiences. Organizations can also support this preferred type of communication (repost) by preparing curated posts on the company's page or through senior managers, allowing employees to easily share them. This strategy ensures consistent messaging and amplifies reach while reducing the content creation burden on employees.

Additionally, organizations can use sentiment analysis insights to craft posts that evoke positive engagement. Companies should also develop strategies to maximize the potential of mid-tier follower groups, who demonstrated higher engagement in some cases, by targeting content that resonates with this demographic. These insights underscore the need for organizations to adopt data-driven, employee-centric strategies to amplify their LinkedIn presence effectively.

## **8. Limitations and Future Directions**

This study offers valuable insights into LinkedIn engagement but has limitations. Its focus on three companies may limit broader applicability, and excluding the action of commenting on others posts as the engagement metrics are related to the others.

Future research could explore cross-sector comparisons, analyze LinkedIn algorithms' impact on engagement, and examine temporal patterns or external events influencing posting behavior to refine employer branding strategies.

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