

Employer Branding as a Catalyst for Workforce Diversity and Excellence: An In-Depth Study from Costa Rica

Tom OKOT¹, Monica RAMIREZ¹, Ronald DECKERT²

¹ Graduate Business School, Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología, Tournón, Costa Rica, tomokot256@gmail.com (Corresponding author)

² Dean at HFH Hamburger Fern-Hochschule, Hamburg, Germany

Background/Purpose: This study explores key factors Costa Rican workers consider when applying to or staying with a company, aiming to inform effective employer branding strategies.

Method: Surveying 385 mid/senior-level professionals, the research focuses on five dimensions: interest value, social value, economic value, development value, and application value.

Result: Findings reveal that Costa Rican professionals prioritize Interest Value, Application Value, and Development Value, emphasizing growth opportunities, engaging roles, and alignment with company values. Competitive compensation is also crucial.

Conclusion: The study suggests that employer branding strategies should highlight development opportunities, meaningful work, and value alignment to attract and retain diverse talent. Limitations include the survey's design, which may restrict response depth, and its exclusive focus on Costa Rica, potentially limiting generalizability. The results offer valuable insights for organizations in Costa Rica to enhance recruitment and retention by aligning with job seeker preferences.

Keywords: *Employer branding, Employer attractiveness, Diversity, Equity & inclusion, Talent attraction, Costa Rica*

1 Introduction

Numerous factors determine a company's competitiveness. However, one crucial aspect that stands out, particularly in today's global economy, is the presence of world-class human resources. Outstanding performance enables a business to excel and create a competitive advantage in the market. The competence of human resources significantly impacts performance, underscoring the need for a specific process: an employer branding strategy (Kriswan-to et al., 2023). Employer branding aims to support Human Resources departments in attracting and retaining potential

talent by leveraging marketing and brand communication techniques. This approach enhances the organization's reputation as an employer of choice in the competitive labor market (Saini et al., 2022).

A brand is often conceived unconsciously. In his first axiom of communication, psychologist Watzlawick (1967) asserts that "one cannot communicate"; it is practically inevitable to evoke a reaction from observers. Remaining silent, failing to create a strategy, or avoiding social outlets does not prevent external audiences from forming opinions about a company's image. The absence of an action plan conveys to potential candidates how much a business values the construction of a diverse and capable workforce

(Noutel et al., 2021).

Marketing a job can be compared to selling a product. The planning behind it heavily depends on the product's "attractiveness". Similarly, the attractiveness of advertised open positions is crucial. Berthon (2005) defines employer attractiveness as the benefits a prospective candidate expects from a specific employer. His study devised a five-factor Employer's Attractiveness (EmpAt) model to identify the key aspects that measure and determine an organization's level of attractiveness. These factors provide a structured approach to evaluate how appealing an employer is to potential talent:

- Interest value, which refers to the promise of an exciting work environment and innovative work practices.
- Social value, which focuses on the relevance of team morale and work atmosphere.
- Economic value, which translates to an offering of a comprehensive compensation package.
- Development value, which assesses a candidate's attraction to an employee's recognition program and career-enhancing opportunities.
- Application value, which measures attraction to employers offering opportunities to apply learned skills and teach others.

Companies can gauge their performance through employer brand equity (EBE). Just as consumers hold specific perceptions about a brand, organizations are subject to the assessments and preferences of potential candidates. EBE reflects the distinct impact of a company's employer branding on the decision-making processes of both prospective and current employees. It evaluates the extent to which these decisions are influenced by the organization's employer brand, including job application, offer acceptance, and retention. EBE encompasses dimensions such as awareness or familiarity with the employer's activities, and the nuanced association's job seekers form to envision their experience working for the organization (Collins & Kanar, 2013).

Understanding the elements that influence decision-making when applying for a role is fundamental for developing effective strategies. Saini et al. (2014) identify several key factors that prospective candidates consider important: monetary compensation, career growth opportunities, environmental policies, termination policies, company services or products, location, and reputation. The decision-making process can vary significantly depending on factors such as job type, demographic characteristics, and cultural particularities, with certain aspects carrying more weight than others.

Efforts towards talent attraction might differ from talent retention, yet both are critical components of employer branding. While attracting the right candidates and building "talent pools," internal branding is equally crucial. Replacing employees can be costly and inefficient; all stages

of this process—recruiting, screening, interviewing, hiring, training, and maintaining business operations—consume significant time and resources. Therefore, retaining existing talent is often more cost-effective and beneficial (Ahmed et al., 2022).

Recently, local authorities and non-profit organizations have been actively promoting Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) in Human Resources Management (HRM) to raise awareness among employers about labor regulations compliance. Kupczyk et al. (2016) explain that organizations are experiencing a significant surge in workforce diversity due to various factors, including globalization, internationalization, demographic shifts, and migration driven by unemployment. This trend is further bolstered by legislation facilitating employment in foreign countries, fluctuations in labor costs, and the mobility of young talent. Consequently, organizations face a pressing need to adopt diversity management strategies to navigate this evolving landscape effectively (Yadav & Lenka, 2020).

Each region follows a distinct set of considerations that employers must take into account when implementing strategies and attracting talent. DE&I is multi-dimensional and can be defined differently by various authors according to specific cultures, countries, or companies. Plummer (2003) identified the "Big 8" dimensions of diversity: age, ethnicity/nationality, gender, psychophysical capacity, organizational role/function, race, religion, and sexual orientation, all of which remain relevant even 20 years after their examination. Dauth et al. (2023) confirm that companies with DE&I initiatives and policies positively impact employers' attractiveness.

A globalized plan must be deconstructed to address the needs and cultural differences among both current and potential employees. While some countries may be more advanced in DE&I politics, this research aims to explore the intricate relationship between employer branding and job seekers' decisions within the context of Costa Rica. Canossa (2020) found that out of 381 companies in Costa Rica, 92% had never hired a person with a disability. Additionally, many organizations are unaware of the incentives provided by Costa Rican public entities for implementing inclusion policies.

This leads to the main research question: How does employer branding impact job seekers' decisions in Costa Rica, and what are the implications for an organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) goals?

In today's competitive job market, where attracting and retaining top talent is crucial for organizational success, understanding the dynamics of employer branding has become paramount. Costa Rica's growing economy and burgeoning job market present a unique setting to examine how employer branding influences the choices of job seekers. By delving into this phenomenon, this study seeks to uncover the factors that shape perceptions of organizations as desirable places to work and how these percep-

tions impact job seekers' decisions regarding employment opportunities. Furthermore, this study will investigate the implications of employer branding on an organization's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) goals, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of talent acquisition and retention strategies in the modern workforce landscape through the following research objectives:

Objective 1: Reviewing existing literature on employer branding and its role in diversifying and sustaining workforce excellence.

Objective 2: Exploring how employer branding influences job seekers' decisions.

Objective 3: Identifying factors influencing the impact of employer branding on job seekers' decisions in Costa Rica and their implications for organizational DE&I goals.

This study employs a descriptive research approach to examine the role of employer branding in fostering diversity and sustaining workforce excellence, focusing on Costa Rica. This study aims to identify how employer branding strategies contribute to an employer's attractiveness to the Costa Rican workforce and, therefore, help companies attract and retain diverse talent.

2 Literature review

2.1 Employer Branding (EB)

The concept of employer branding was introduced almost twenty years ago by Ambler & Barrow (1996). They described the importance of integrating two disciplines for a greater purpose: human resources and brand marketing. This conceptual framework articulated how awareness of a company's brand could influence employees' positive associations with their jobs and foster loyalty. Their study delineated the benefits perceived by job seekers within the same three categories as retail products: functional, economic, and psychological. Each aspect is acquired through a mutual exchange between the individual and the organization.

Sullivan (2004) further elucidated on this definition by emphasizing that the strategy should be long-term to manage awareness and perceptions, not only of potential and current employees but also of relevant stakeholders. A strategic employment brand management effort attracts suitable applicants, retains top performers within the company, and enhances employee productivity. His article proposes that the blueprint of each strategy should encompass the following eight elements:

- A culture of sharing and continuous improvement, fostering collaboration and encouraging employees to regularly contribute ideas and feedback.
- A balance between good management and high productivity, necessitating effective leadership that supports employee well-being while driving

efficient performance.

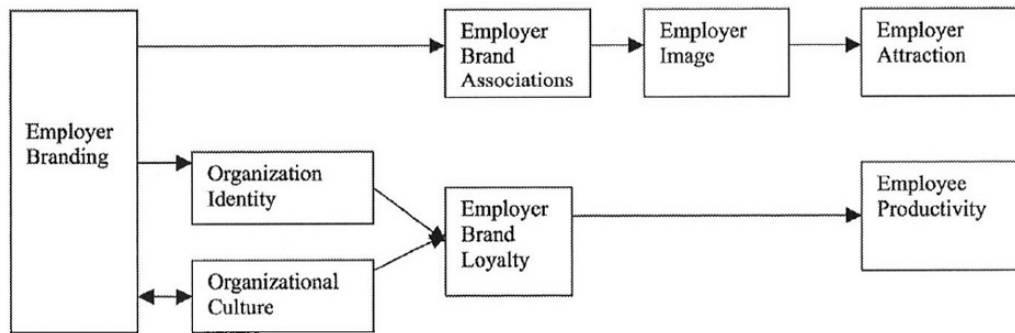
- Obtaining public recognition, such as being listed on great-place-to-work lists, validating the company's efforts in creating a positive work environment and attracting top talent.
- Employees "proactively" telling stories, fostering strong engagement and enhancing the company's reputation and brand image.
- Garnering attention, signalling the company's efforts in making an impact and generating interest within its industry and beyond.
- Becoming a benchmark firm, serving as a reference point for others to emulate.
- Increasing candidate awareness of best practices, attracting top talent aligned with the company's values and goals, contributing to long-term success.
- Utilizing branding assessment metrics, providing valuable insights into how the company is perceived by stakeholders and guiding strategic decisions to enhance brand reputation and identity.

Backhaus & Tikoo (2004) introduced a framework that facilitated additional studies on employer branding. This framework comprises a process and elements influencing a company's image and potential attraction through branding strategies. Brand associations are significant as they define people's perceptions of a brand, regardless of its offerings. While some brand associations may result from employer branding strategies, it is essential to recognize that many are influenced by factors not directly controlled by the employer, including people's interpretations of the company's actions, behaviors, and reputation.

Strategic efforts can aid messaging and positioning. However, the authenticity of the company's values is a decisive factor in employees' opinions. Consequently, many companies are actively engaged in employer branding initiatives to gain a competitive edge in the battle for talent (Pertiwi & Azmy, 2023) using specific tools depending on the target group, e.g. following Janssen & Rudeloff (2024) regarding the role and impact of corporate and external influencers in employer branding for Generation Z. According to Gurgu & Kuleto (2023), employee engagement and satisfaction pivot the organization's employer branding, influenced by leadership, job design, recognition, work environment, and growth opportunities (Figure 1).

2.2 Employer Value Proposition (EVP)

Edwards (2010) remarks that employer branding strategies identify a company's unique employment experience by considering both tangible and intangible variables. This argument leads to the development of the Employer Value Proposition (EVP) concept. The essence of any strategy revolves around the employer value proposition, which is influenced by the organization's values, culture, initiatives,



Adapted from (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004)

Figure 1: Comparison of regression coefficients

environment, and talent and reward programs. Employer branding entails promoting a compelling image of what makes a company attractive as an employer, both internally and externally (Lievens, 2007).

Other authors suggest that EVP refers to the balance of rewards and benefits employees receive in exchange for their performance in the workplace. Organizations formulate an employer value proposition to establish a consistent platform for communicating their employer branding and managing the employee's experience. Companies employ a strategic approach to articulate why the organization is distinctive, appealing, and an excellent workplace for current and potential employees. EVPs are conveyed through organizational actions and policies, eliciting emotional and rational benefits for current and prospective employees. Companies may choose to be as explicit as possible about their offerings, while others might prefer to communicate their benefits through aspirational branding and relatable content. Merely offering a competitive salary package is insufficient to ensure talent retention within an organization. Establishing a lasting emotional connection between the organization and its employees is possible through the employee value proposition in employer branding initiatives (Pawar, 2016).

Eroglu (2019) suggests that the employee value proposition (EVP) serves as the core of employer branding, offering both emotional and functional benefits the organization commits to its employees alongside their expected roles. Diverging from the company's principles and values or presenting unattainable promises in the EVP can result in unfavorable consequences for the post-employment experience of the employees.

2.3 Employer Attractiveness (EA)

Employer attractiveness is vital for attracting and retaining talent, maintaining a competitive edge, enhancing

employee engagement, managing reputation, and ultimately achieving organizational success. Berthon (2005) delves into the concept of Employer Attractiveness, defining it as the perceived benefits that prospective candidates associate with a particular employer, extending to advertised job positions. The study introduces the "EmpAt" model, comprising five critical factors for assessing and determining an organization's level of attractiveness. These factors include:

- Interest value, promising an engaging work environment and innovative practices.
- Social value, focusing on team morale and the overall work atmosphere.
- Economic value, encompassing a competitive compensation package.
- Development value, assessing opportunities for career advancement and recognition programs.
- Application value, reflecting the appeal of opportunities for individuals to apply their skills and contribute to the learning of others.

These categories represent a nuanced and expanded iteration of the three dimensions (functional, psychological, and economic) initially introduced by Ambler & Barrow (1996).

A recent study by Puri (2018) further expands upon the dimensions proposed by Ambler and Barrow (1996), enhancing the understanding of what makes an employer attractive. The study introduces eleven factors contributing to employer attractiveness, including:

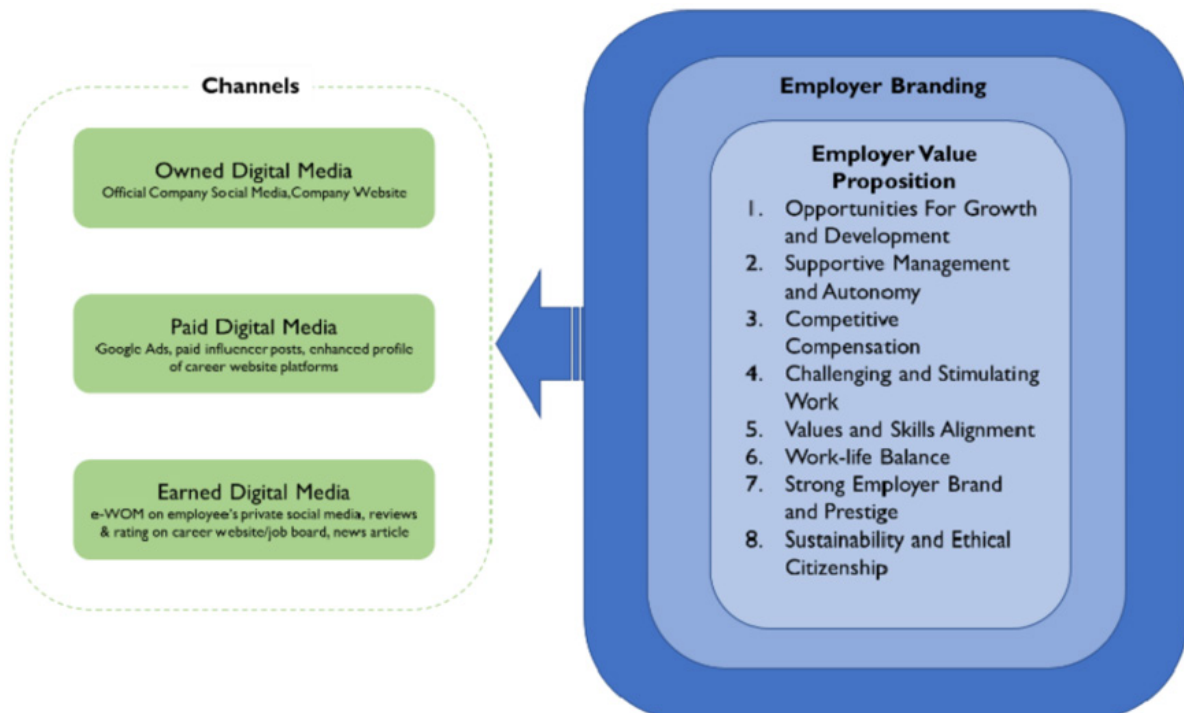
- Role Value, measuring if the organization offers challenging roles, involvement, value, empowerment, clear career paths, and trust in the workplace.
- Ethical & Cultural Value, considering positive relationships with superiors and colleagues, supportive teamwork, and recognition of merit.
- Employer Brand Value, reflecting the employer's high ranking in brand surveys, awards received,

and word-of-mouth reputation.

- Familiarity Value, influenced by factors such as online presence, personal contact, and participation in events.
- Developmental Value, focusing on development opportunities through learning programs and projects.
- Innovative Value, suggesting consistent innovation in producing high-quality products and services.
- Career Growth Value, encompassing recognition from management and opportunities for future employment.
- Social Value, related to company size and international presence.
- Ease Value, referring to flexible working hours and work-from-home options.
- Economic Value, including attractive compensation and benefits packages.
- Locational Value, considering the convenience of the location to candidates.

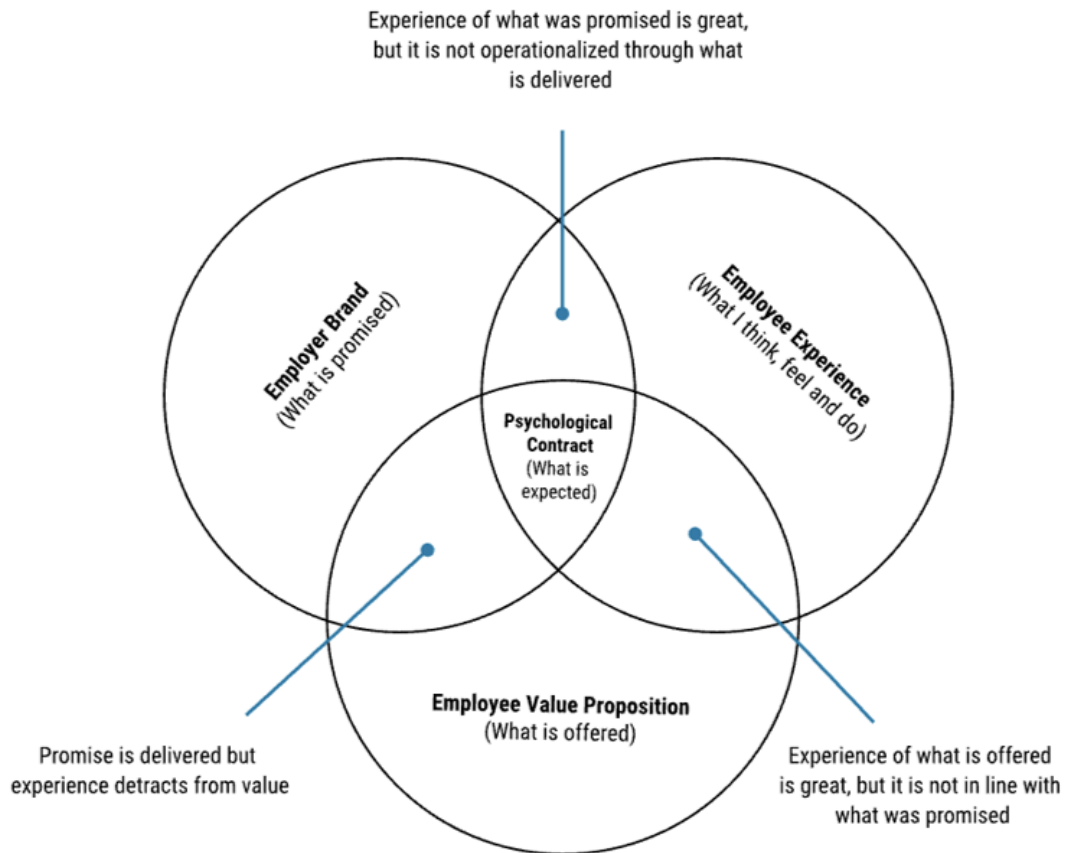
Each aspect provides insights into different facets of an organization's appeal to potential employees, ranging from the ethical environment to the compensation package and career advancement opportunities. According to Ariyanto & Kustini (2021), the Employer Value Proposition positively affects Employer Brand Attractiveness and can increase the interest of prospective employees.

Further studies, such as that conducted by Ružić & Benazić (2023), emphasize the importance of developing a clear and compelling Employee Value Proposition (EVP) for attracting top talent and fostering engagement among existing staff. Identifying factors relevant to specific demographics, such as Gen-Z, is crucial for effective recruitment and retention strategies. Employers must adeptly convey their brand and principles to desired audiences, particularly Millennials (Gen-Y) and Zoomers (Gen-Z), who rely heavily on digital platforms for accessing job information and perks (Reinikainen et al., 2020).



Adapted from (Kristia, 2023)

Figure 2: Key Employer Value Propositions and Digital Media Channels



Adapted from (Veldsman & Van der Merwe, 2022)

Figure 3: The E-cubed model

Positive employer branding is enhanced when companies receive favorable reviews and comments from current and former employees, which, in turn, attracts more interest from potential candidates. Figure 2 illustrates how companies can utilize three types of digital media channels to bolster their employer brand: owned digital media, earned digital media, and paid digital media (Kristia, 2023).

Veldsman & Van der Merwe (2022) propose an integrated model that emphasizes the importance of maintaining a balance between employer branding (promises made), the employee value proposition (offerings provided), the employee experience (thoughts, feelings, and actions), and the psychological contract (expectations), all through a human-centered approach. Achieving equilibrium among these interconnected yet distinct concepts (Figure 3) is pivotal for fostering genuine employee experiences. A consistent and coherent narrative connecting these elements is essential to ensure an authentic and optimal employee journey.

2.4 Employer Brand Equity (EBE)

Employer brand equity (EBE) measures the unique influence of a company's employer brand on the decision-making of potential and current employees, encompassing aspects like job application, offer acceptance, and retention. It evaluates the impact of the employer's brand awareness, surface and complex associations, and perceptions on job seekers envisioning their work experience within the organization (Collins & Kanar, 2013).

According to Theurer et al. (2016), most literature attributes employer branding definitions to the concept of brand equity and its categories proposed by Aaker (1991): brand loyalty, name awareness, perceived quality, brand associations, and other proprietary assets. Together, these contribute to measuring how easily a brand comes to mind, the types of associations formed, and the levels of attraction. Ščiukauskė (2021) adds to these definitions by stating that Employer Brand Equity (EBE) resembles traditional

brand equity but is specifically tailored for potential and current employees. It encompasses all knowledge and perceptions regarding the employer, which can be evaluated through various factors such as employer brand awareness, image, reputation, associations, loyalty, trust, and overall experience with the employer.

2.5 The connection between Employer Branding and Advancing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) in Costa Rica

The intersection of employer branding and the advancement of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives has emerged as a critical area of inquiry within contemporary organizational research. A robust employer brand that underscores DE&I values and practices holds significant implications for talent acquisition, retention, and organizational performance. By strategically integrating DE&I principles into their branding strategies, organizations can effectively signal their commitment to promoting an inclusive work environment that embraces diversity in all its forms.

The International Labour Organization (2021) stated that the principle of DE&I is not a “one-size-fits-all solution.” This proactive approach attracts a diverse talent pool and cultivates a culture of inclusivity. However, despite growing pressure from employees, investors, and local laws and policies, the pace of change within enterprises across various regions, sectors, and sizes remains uneven and notably sluggish. Research indicates that most enterprise Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) efforts primarily focus on gender equality, followed by ethnicity/race and sexual orientation. However, attention toward inclusion for people with disabilities is lacking, with minimal consideration for factors such as religion and age, particularly concerning older workers and individuals living with HIV/AIDS. Unemployment rates among people with disabilities are alarmingly high, reaching up to 80% in certain countries. Despite concentrated efforts on gender equality, progress has been gradual. Although the proportion of women in managerial roles globally has steadily increased since 2002, women still occupy fewer than 30% of entry-level management positions. In 60% of companies, less than 30% of senior managers and top executives are women.

Furthermore, women are more likely to be employed in low-skilled occupations, face inferior working conditions, and are disproportionately exposed to informal employment. Globally, the gender wage gap persists at nearly 20% (ILO, 2021). Costa Rica’s workforce data from 2023 revealed that women hold less than 45% of managerial roles.

In Costa Rica’s most recent National Survey on Disa-

bility, it was determined that less than 40% of individuals with disabilities were employed (Garcia Mora et al, 2021). Unemployed individuals provided reasons for not applying for a job, and diversity factors directly impacted half of those listed:

- I have already found a job.
- Waiting for the restart of operations, reopening of business, or response from previous efforts.
- No money to look for work or tired of looking for work.
- Not given a job because of age, sex, ethnicity, gender identity, sexual orientation, or other reasons.
- Lack of job opportunities in the area or only occasional work when requested.
- Illness or health conditions affecting job availability.
- I attend school.

Consequently, such alignment between employer branding and DE&I initiatives promotes social responsibility and ethical leadership and enhances organizational reputation, employee engagement, and overall performance outcomes.

3 Research Methodology

The study employs a descriptive research approach to examine the role of employer branding in fostering diversity and sustaining workforce excellence. This approach provides detailed information about a population or phenomenon, using versatile methods like surveys. It helps identify trends, patterns, and relationships, serving as a foundation for further research. This approach is useful for comparisons, has real-world applications, and is often non-intrusive and easy to conduct. Its broad scope makes it suitable for this research topic (Broek, 2015). An anonymous survey was conducted using snowball sampling, collecting data from mid/senior-level professionals. The survey covers demographic data, employer attractiveness metrics, and workplace awareness of Diversity, employer branding, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I). Kupczyk et al. (2016) employed a descriptive research analysis using Spearman’s rank correlation coefficient. This method allowed the study to find a significant correlation between diversity management within an organization and the perception of the company’s image. Kummrow (2023) implemented the same approach using surveys to conclude that diverse measures are associated with employer branding to enhance loyalty. Applying this research approach, this study aims to capture not only the perceptions of the general public but also those of managers involved in shaping employer branding strategies.

3.1 Primary Data

To acquire primary data for this research, an anonymous survey was distributed using the snowball sampling technique. The survey consisted of 15 questions divided into three sections: demographic data, employer attractiveness metrics, and awareness of DE&I in the workplace. The questionnaire was created using Google Forms, a specialized online platform designed for survey creation. Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the provided statements using a 5-point Likert response scale, ranging from “strongly disagree” to “disagree,” “neither disagree nor agree,” “agree,” and “strongly agree” (Hodge & Gillespie, 2007).

3.2 Study Population

The study population comprised 500,526 mid/senior-level representative professionals from Costa Rica, sourced from the INEC data of September-November 2023. A sample of 385 professionals was selected with a 95% confidence level to ensure its representativeness to the population while minimizing sampling error.

$$n = \frac{z^2(pq)}{e^2 \cdot 2 + \frac{z^2(pq)}{N}} \quad (1)$$

3.3 Evaluation and Justification

The choice of this research approach allows for a comprehensive understanding of the research objectives by triangulating different data sources. Utilizing a statistically significant sample size and a high confidence level ensures the reliability and generalizability of the findings. The data analysis was performed using Python and Excel. Additionally, integrating insights from current related literature about the topic adds depth and credibility to data interpretation of the study. Overall, this methodological approach provides a robust framework for achieving the research objectives and mitigates potential risks associated with data collection and analysis.

The objective of this study was to determine how employer branding strategies promote diverse, equitable, and inclusive workplaces. By examining the interplay between employer branding and DE&I goals, this research offers valuable insights for organizations seeking to attract diverse talent pools and cultivate inclusive work environments.

Ultimately, the findings of this study will not only enhance scholarly understanding of employer branding dynamics in Costa Rica but also offer practical implications for organizations striving to optimize their recruitment

strategies and advance their DE&I agendas.

4 Results

In this section, the study delves into the impact of employer branding on job seekers' decisions in Costa Rica and its implications for organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) goals. The survey questions were designed to align with the five values that measure an employer's attractiveness (EmpAt) as proposed by Berthon (2005):

- Interest Value:

I expect the company's mission to resonate with my values, making it compelling to me.

I value working in an environment that fosters innovative work practice and presents me with constant, exciting challenges.

- Social Value:

A company's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is essential to me when considering applying for a job.

I seek to work in an environment that values and promotes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through policies and initiatives.

- Economic Value:

A competitive compensation package, including salary, benefits, office space, work-from-home options, and other perks, is a must-have for me.

The size of a company influences my level of interest when applying for a job position.

- Development Value:

I am drawn to companies that offer recognition programs and opportunities to advance my career.

I am inclined to stay with a company when I see opportunities for career growth, such as promotion from employee to manager.

- Application Value:

The opportunity to apply my acquired knowledge and mentor others in a company is important to me.

I seek learning opportunities sponsored by my company.

Out of the total participants who completed the survey, (3.8%) were excluded for not meeting the study criteria. These individuals indicated “retired” as their job status, indicating that they are not actively or passively seeking new opportunities and are thus not considered part of the active Costa Rican workforce targeted in this study.

Employer Attractiveness Dimensions (Values)

Interest Value

Q1. I want the company's mission to resonate with my values, making it compelling for me.

More than half of the participants expressed a strong desire to work for a company they can relate to, as shown

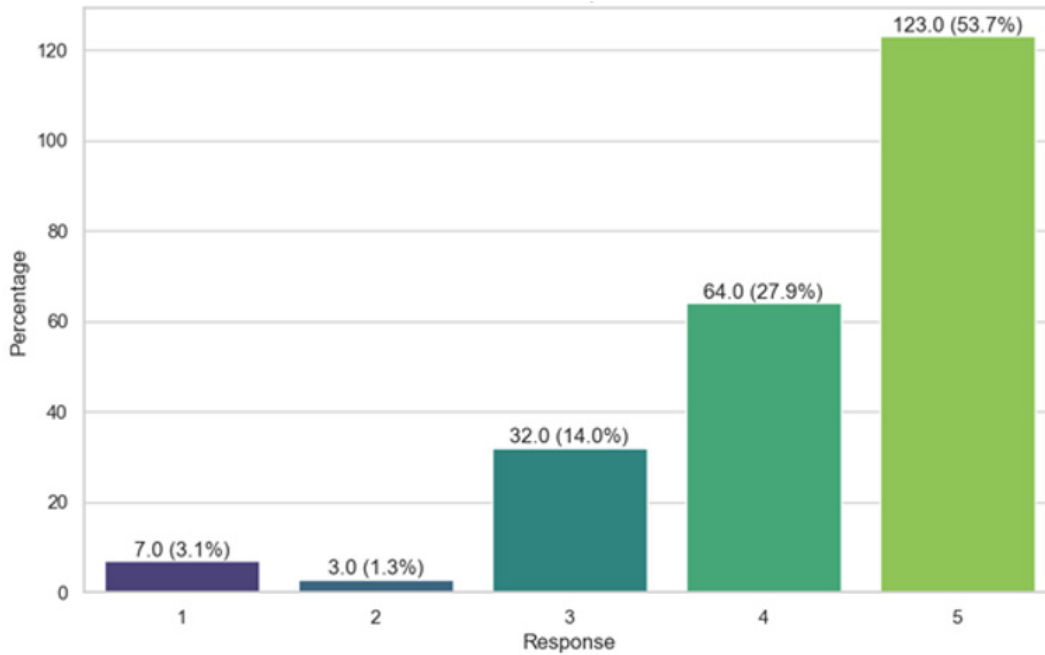


Figure 4: Distribution of Responses for Q1: "I want the company's mission to resonate with my values, making it compelling to me."

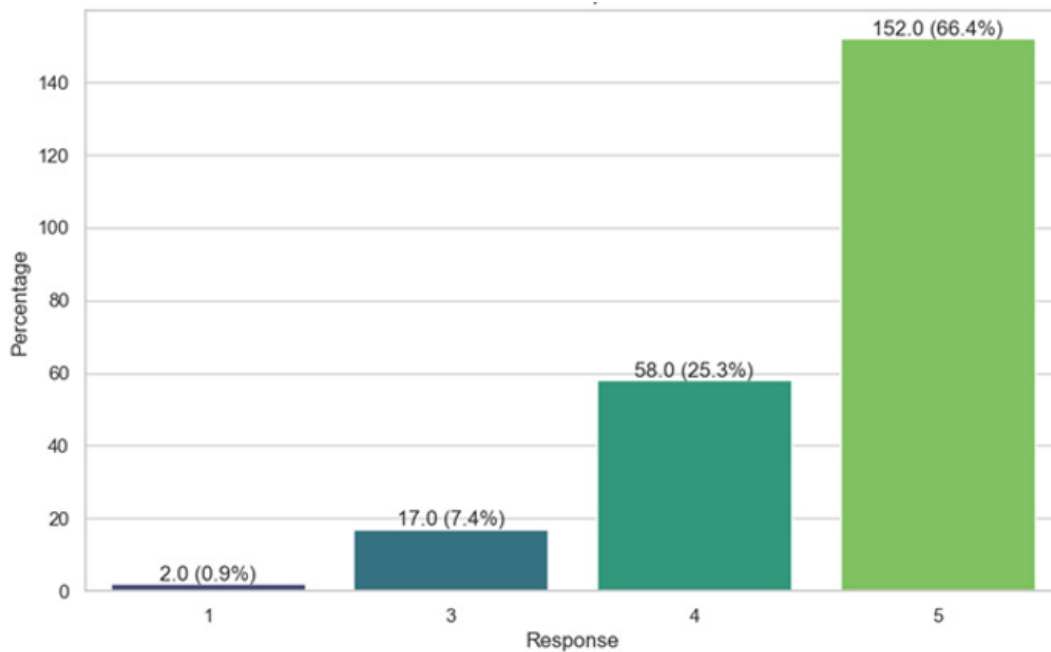


Figure 5: Distribution of Responses for Q2: "I appreciate working in an environment that fosters innovative work practices and provides me with constant, exciting challenges."

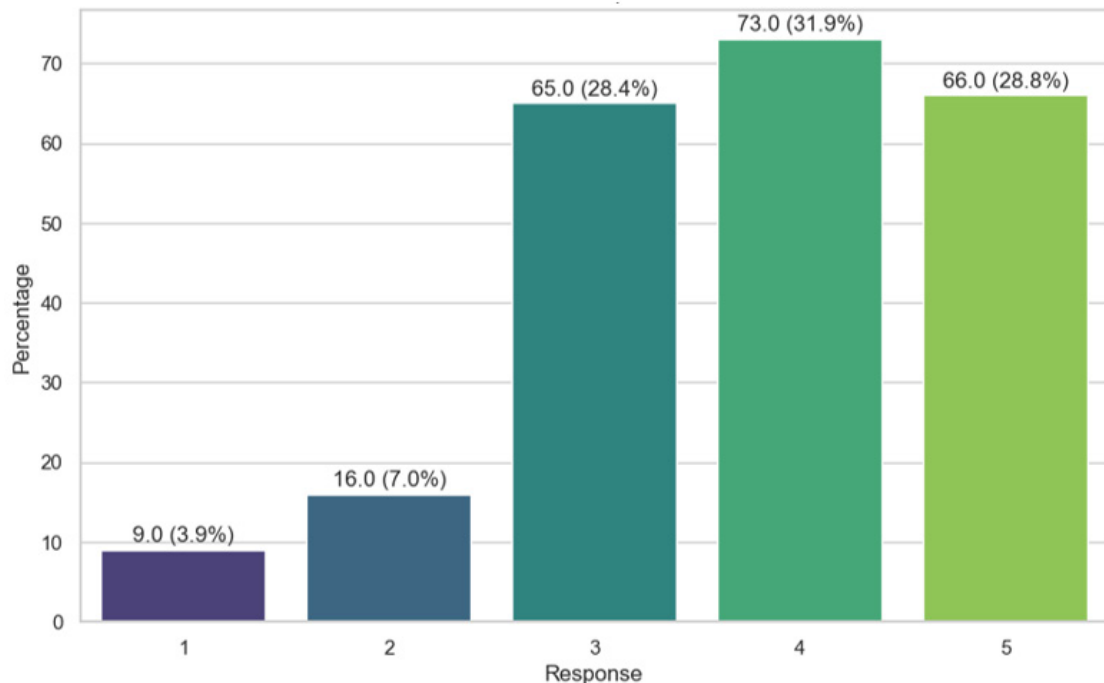


Figure 6: Distribution of Responses for Q3: "A company's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is essential for me when considering applying for a job."

in Figure 4.

Q2. I appreciate working in an environment that fosters innovative work practices and provides me with constant, exciting challenges.

Figure 5 illustrates that to remain fulfilled in their jobs, 91.7% of participants require constant challenges and creative ways of working.

Social Value

Q3. A company's commitment to Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) is essential for me when considering applying for a job.

Figure 6 indicates that over 60% of respondents are more likely to apply to companies with active Corporate Social Responsibility programs.

Q4. I need to work in an environment that values and promotes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through policies and initiatives.

More than 75% of respondents agreed that it is crucial to work for an organization that supports and implements DE&I initiatives (Figure 7). Less than 10% were indifferent, saying they would still apply to a company if possible.

Economic Value

Q5. It is essential for me to have a competitive compensation package that includes salary, benefits, office space, work-from-home options, and other perks.

As depicted in Figure 8, more than 95% of participants

believe that feeling satisfied with the compensation package offered by their employer is crucial.

Q6. The size of a company affects my level of interest when applying for a job position.

According to Figure 9, more than 50% of participants are likely to apply to a company based on its size or perceived global presence.

Development Value

Q7. I am attracted to companies that offer recognition programs and opportunities to enhance my career.

Based on Figure 10, more than 90% of respondents believe that recognizing employees' performance and offering growth opportunities based on merit makes a company more appealing.

Q8. I decide to remain with a company when I see opportunities for career advancement, such as promotion from employee to manager.

85% of participants seek career advancement programs that include job level and title change (Figure 11).

Application Value

Q9. The opportunity to apply my acquired knowledge and teach others in a company is important to me.

A significant majority of survey respondents (over 85%) express a strong desire to utilize their skills and have the chance to mentor others (Figure 12).

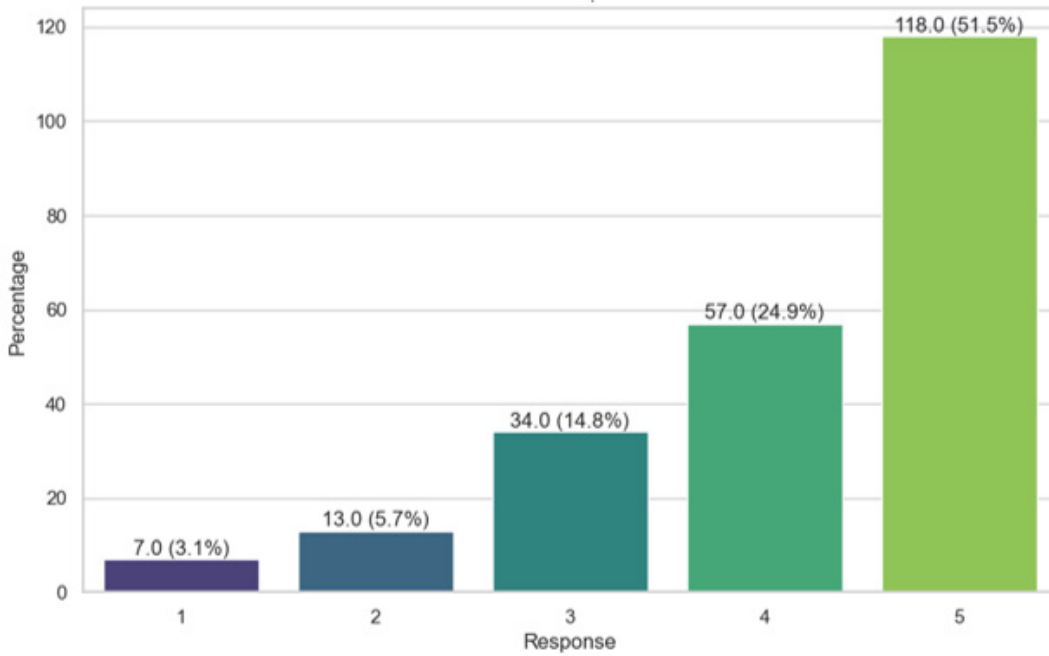


Figure 7: Distribution of Responses for Q4: “I need to work in an environment that values and promotes Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion through policies and initiatives.”

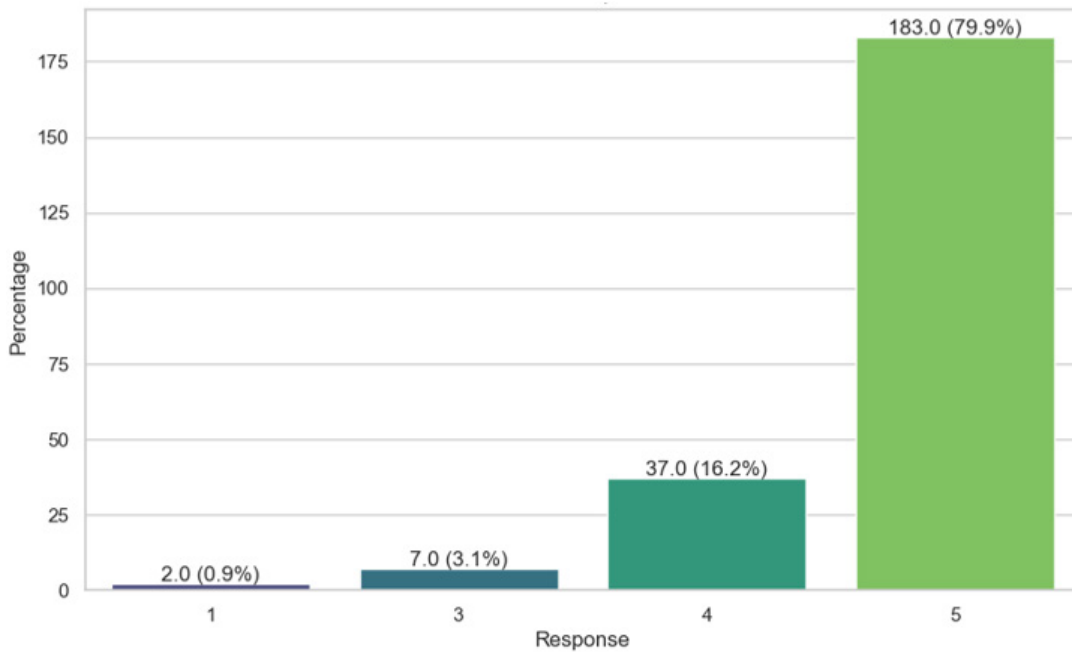


Figure 8: Distribution of Responses for Q5: “It is essential for me to have a competitive compensation package that includes salary, benefits, office space, work-from-home options, and other perks.”

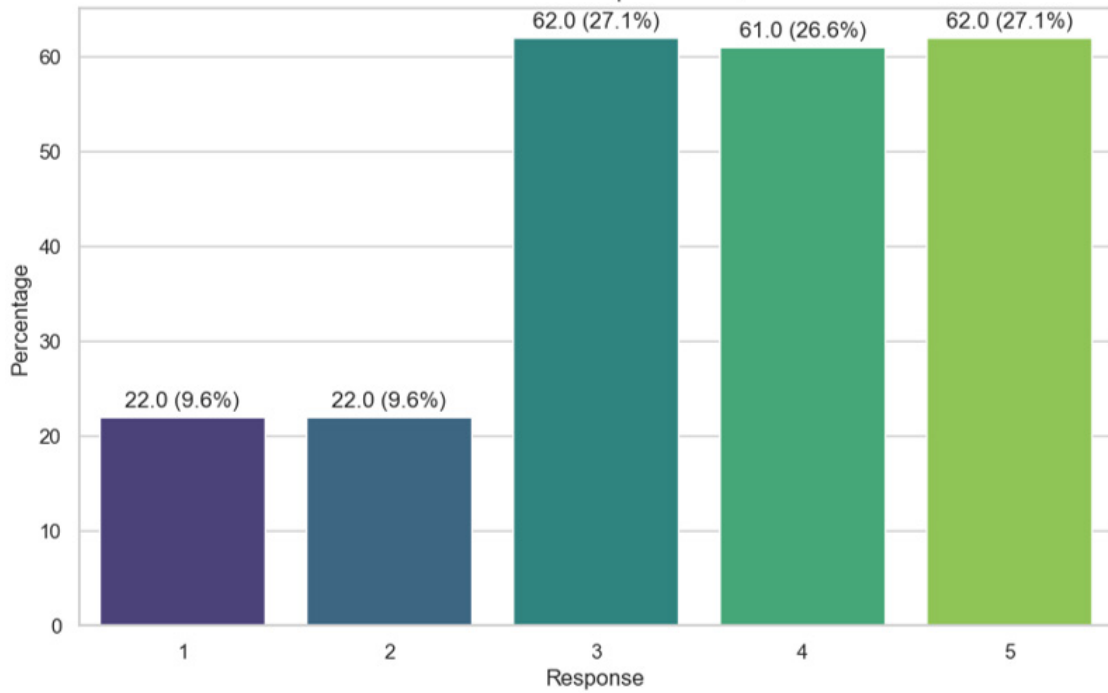


Figure 9: Distribution of Responses for Q6: “The size of a company affects my level of interest when applying for a job position.”

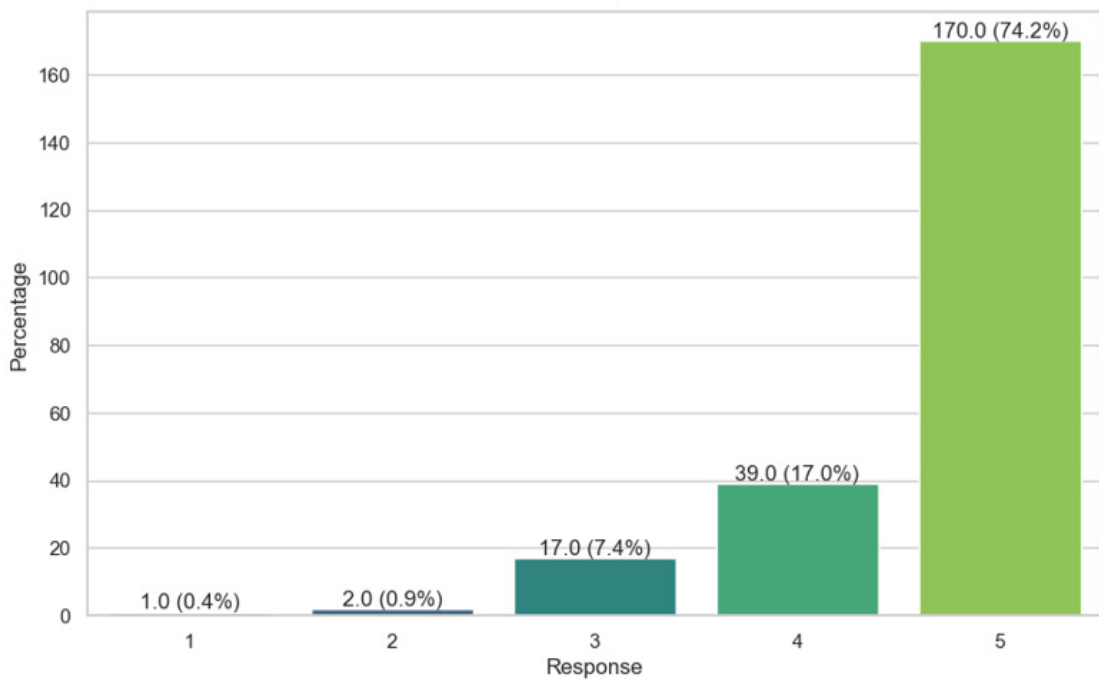


Figure 10: Distribution of Responses for Q7: “I am attracted to companies that offer recognition programs and opportunities to enhance my career.”

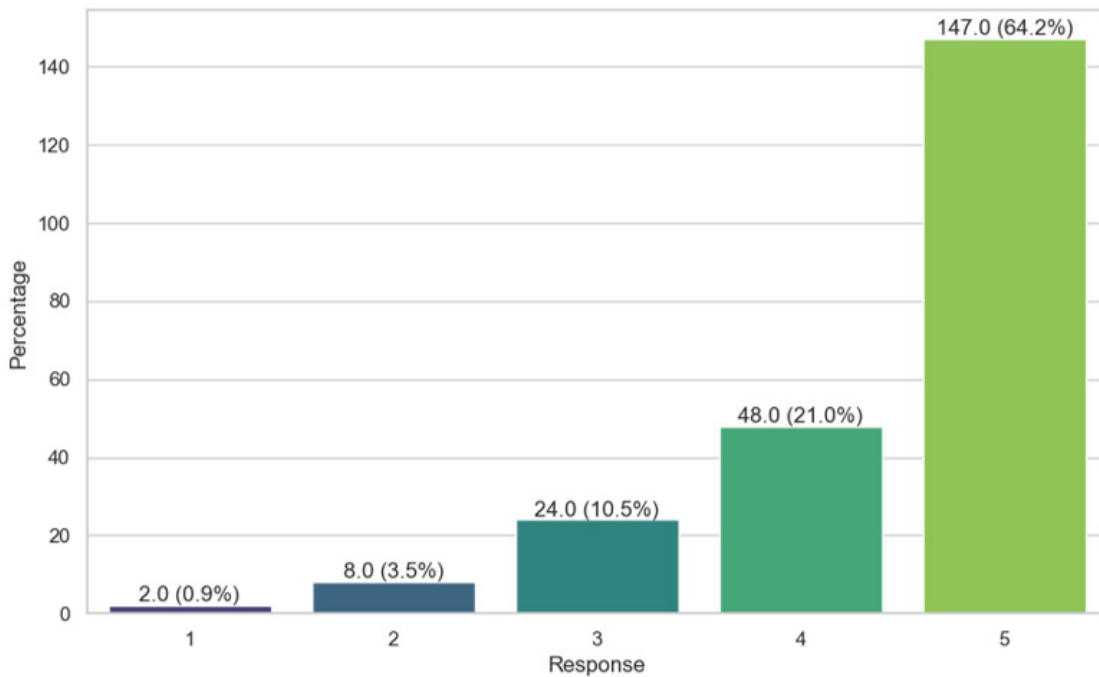


Figure 11: Distribution of Responses for Q8: "I decide to remain with a company when I see opportunities for career advancement, such as promotion from employee to manager."

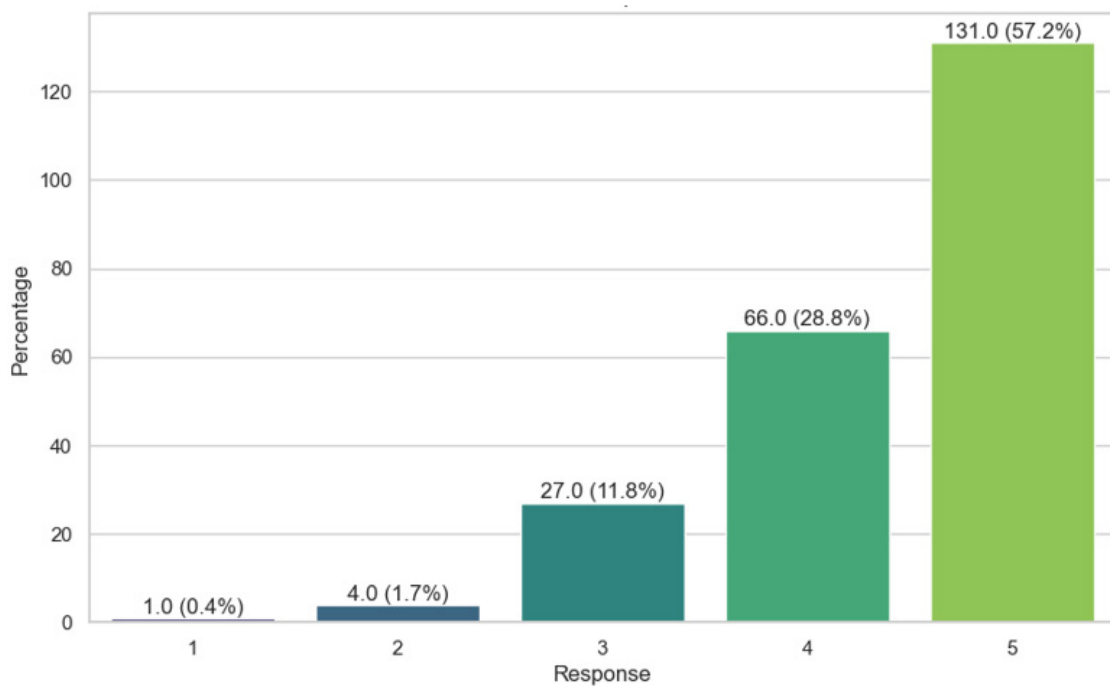


Figure 12: Distribution of Responses for Q9: "The opportunity to apply my acquired knowledge and teach others in a company is important to me."

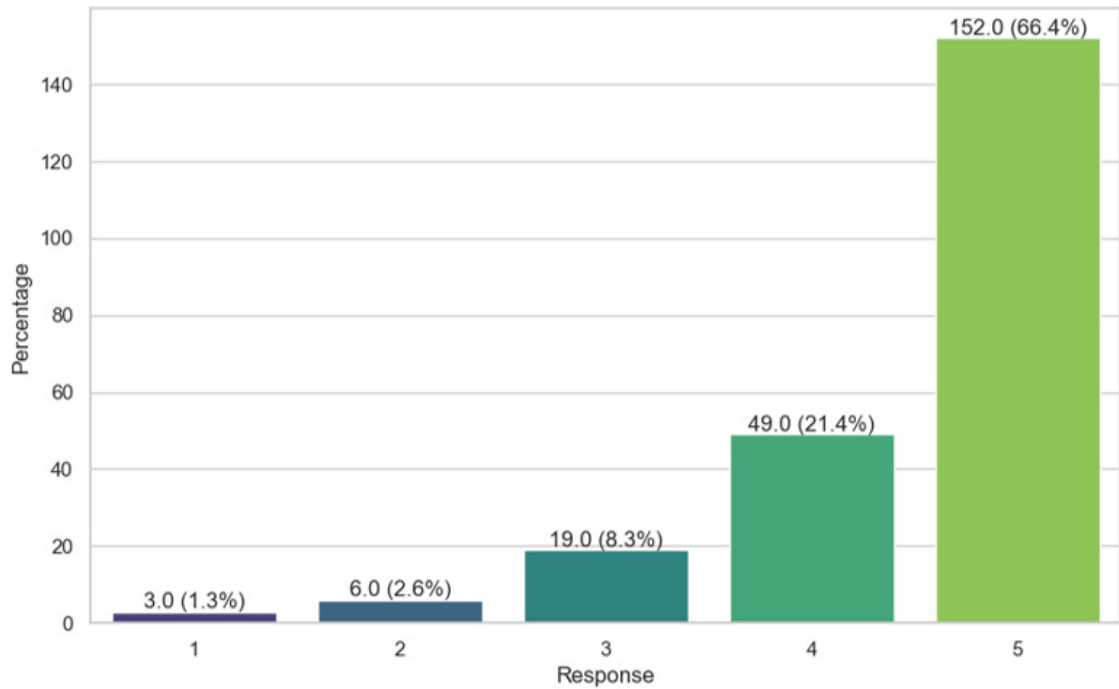


Figure 13: Distribution of Responses for Q10: "I am looking for learning opportunities that are sponsored by my company."

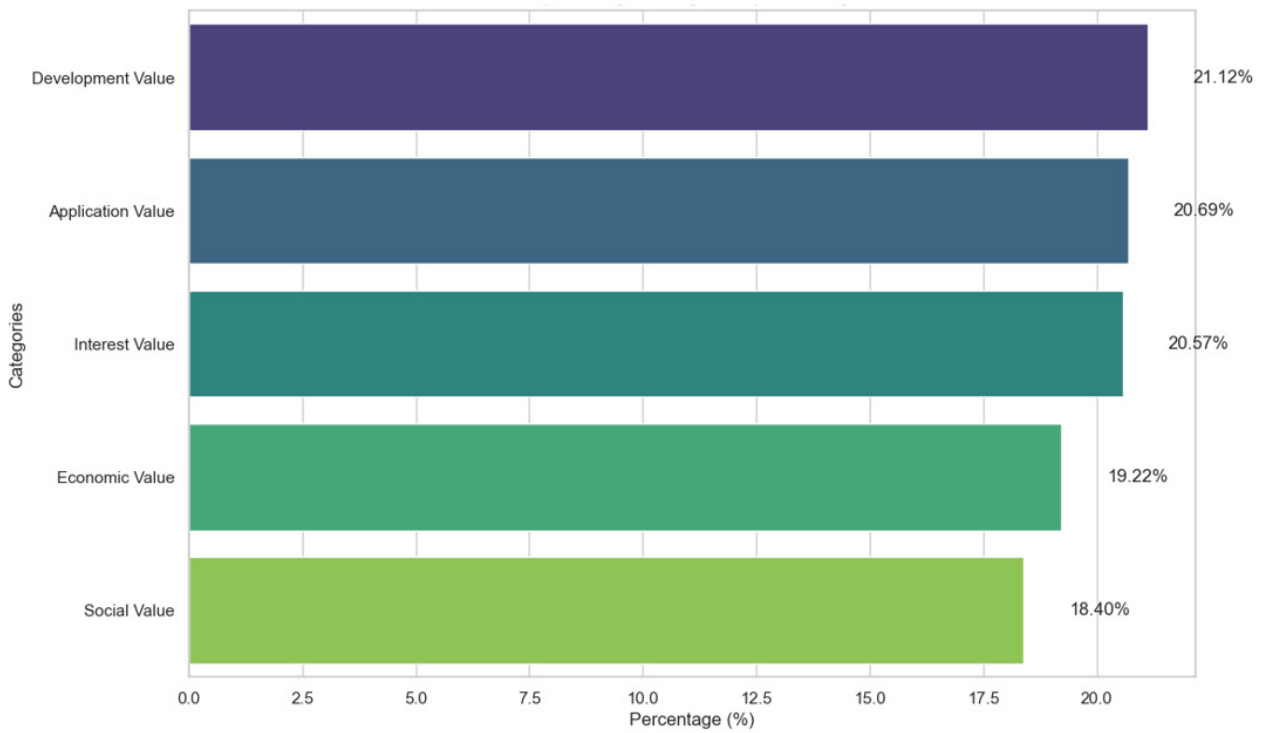


Figure 14: Top Ranking of Categories by Percentage

Table 1: Regression coefficients and statistical significance of each predictor

Predictors	Coefficient	Standard Error	t-Statistic	p-value	95% Confidence Interval
Intercept	6.78	0.40	16.90	<0.001	[5.99, 7.57]
Development Value	-0.052	0.0092	-5.62	<0.001	[-0.070, -0.034]
Application Value	0.668	0.0263	25.45	<0.001	[0.616, 0.720]
Interest Value	2.226	0.1387	16.05	<0.001	[1.953, 2.499]

Q10. I am looking for learning opportunities that are sponsored by my company. These could include paid graduate programs, language courses, online courses, job shadowing, and other similar opportunities.

A vast majority, above 85% of respondents, actively seek learning opportunities sponsored or supported by the companies they work for. This underscores a strong desire among employees to enhance their skills and knowledge within a supportive organizational framework (Figure 13).

Final Ranking

The analysis of responses from participants revealed the most important dimensions of employer branding attractiveness for the Costa Rican workforce. The top three categories, as indicated by the participants, are (1) Development Value, (2) Application Value, and (3) Interest Value (Figure 14).

A multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the effect of three prioritized critical factors (Development Value, Application Value, and Interest Value) on Employer Attractiveness. The analysis explained 97.78% of the variance in Employer Attractiveness, $R^2 = 0.9778$, adjusted $R^2 = 0.9777$, indicating a strong fit of the model to the data. The ANOVA results showed that the model was statistically significant, $F(3,380) = 5589.17$, $p < 0.001$, suggesting that the predictors contribute significantly to the variance in employer attractiveness.

From table 1, it can be observed that Application Value ($\beta = 0.668$, $p < 0.001$) and Interest Value ($\beta = 2.226$, $p < 0.001$) are significant positive predictors of employer attractiveness. Development Value ($\beta = -0.052$, $p < 0.001$) had a small, negative but statistically significant effect.

5 Discussion

The study surveyed 385 mid/senior-level professionals in Costa Rica, with a majority (63.7%) falling into the late Gen-Z (25-27 years) and Millennial (28-44 years) age groups. The top seven areas of work represented were Administration (15.7%), Marketing (11.4%), Customer Service (8.7%), Finance (8.3%), IT (8.3%), Engineering (7.4%), and Healthcare (7%). Regarding employment sta-

tus, 75.1% described themselves as “salaried employees.” In terms of job level, 62.4% reported being in mid-level positions or aspiring to attain one, while only 5.7% had reached executive-level roles.

Moreover, 62.3% of the participants reported that they have never experienced discrimination while applying for a job or during the recruitment process. However, some participants did report experiencing discrimination, with the most common reasons given being age (19.3%), gender expression (6.1%), and religion (3.3%).

The overall results indicate the following per value:

Interest Value:

- 52.1% strongly agreed that a company’s mission alignment with their values was crucial.
- 91.7% expressed a strong desire for an environment fostering innovative work practices and providing constant, exciting challenges.

Social Value:

- Over 60% were more likely to apply to companies with active Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) programs.
- More than 75% agreed that working for an organization that supports and implements DE&I initiatives was essential.

Economic Value:

- 95.3% believed that being content with the compensation package offered by their employer was crucial.
- More than 50% indicated that the size of a company affected their level of interest when applying for a job position.

Development Value:

- Over 90% expressed attraction to companies offering recognition programs and career enhancement opportunities.
- 85% sought career advancement programs that included job level and title change.
- Application Value:
- Over 85% expressed a strong desire to utilize their skills and have the chance to mentor others.

A significant majority, exceeding 85%, actively sought learning opportunities sponsored or supported by their

companies. These findings underscore the significance of these dimensions in employer branding strategies in Costa Rica. However, the top three dimensions of employer attractiveness identified were Development Value, Application Value, and Interest Value.

The dimensions of employer attractiveness proposed by Berthon (2005) are interconnected, implying that while they influence each other, they should be analyzed independently. This approach helps to identify the key factors that talent marketing and human resources professionals should emphasize in their application and retention strategies.

The regression analysis reveals several key insights into key factors that influence employer attractiveness among mid and senior-level professionals in Costa Rica. Interest Value emerged as the strongest variable, with a positive coefficient ($\beta = 2.226$), suggesting that individuals place a high importance on personal alignment with the company's values, mission, and innovative work environment. This finding is consistent with prior studies, which emphasize the growing importance of value congruence between employers and employees, particularly among younger generations (Rank & Palframan, 2021).

Application Value also contributed significantly to employer attractiveness ($\beta = 0.668$), indicating that the ability to apply one's skills, autonomy in work, and opportunities for mentoring are critical factors. This reinforces the idea that professionals seek environments where they can contribute meaningfully and grow through challenging assignments.

Interestingly, Development Value was negatively associated with employer attractiveness ($\beta = -0.052$). Although significant, this small negative coefficient may suggest that, for mid and senior-level professionals, continuous development opportunities might not hold as much weight as initially assumed. This could be because these individuals already have established careers and prioritize other aspects, such as job security or alignment with personal values, over development programs typically aimed at younger or entry-level employees.

For employers in Costa Rica, these findings highlight the importance of emphasizing value alignment and providing environments where employees can apply their skills meaningfully. Particularly in the context of mid/senior-level professionals, focusing on CSR initiatives, creating innovative workspaces, and offering meaningful work opportunities may enhance employer attractiveness. While development programs remain important, their role may be secondary to more immediate work-related values.

The Top Three Dimensions: What Do Costa Ricans Value the Most?

The responses from the survey offer valuable insights into the aspects of employer branding attractiveness that matter the most to the Costa Rican workforce. Three cate-

gories emerged as particularly influential.

Firstly, the Interest Value category was identified as crucial, emphasizing the alignment of personal values with the company's mission and industry contribution. This dimension reflects participants' inclination towards organizations whose products or services resonate with their own interests. Additionally, Interest Value encompasses the desire to work in an environment that fosters innovative work practices and provides constant, exciting challenges. This aspect indicates that professionals in Costa Rica seek dynamic and stimulating work environments that allow them to contribute meaningfully and grow professionally.

Secondly, the Application Value category was revealed as a critical factor, emphasizing the significance of being able to apply acquired skills and knowledge in a meaningful way within the organization. This dimension suggests that Costa Rican professionals value challenging and engaging roles that offer opportunities to apply their skills and knowledge to real-world problems. Participants want to feel that their work is making a meaningful impact and contributing to the organization's success. This highlights the importance of job roles that provide autonomy, creativity, and innovation opportunities, including mentoring other peers.

Thirdly, the Development Value category was identified the third most relevant dimension, indicating the importance of providing opportunities for professional growth, recognition programs, and career advancement. It highlights the participants' preference for employers who invest in their employees' development and offer clear pathways for career progression. This suggests that the opportunity for personal and professional development is a key factor in attracting and retaining talent in Costa Rica.

Kummrow (2023) indicated that loyalty transcends mere identification with the company's work. There is a significant positive relationship between feeling loyal to one's employer and having a clear career path within the company, echoing Kummrow's findings. This correlation aligns with expert opinions, emphasizing career development as pivotal for fostering loyalty. Additionally, the study found a positive association between loyalty and the workplace feeling like a family, mirroring expert beliefs that team events and social interactions are crucial for cultivating loyalty. These findings underscore the multifaceted nature of employee loyalty, extending beyond mere job satisfaction.

Overall, these findings suggest that employer branding strategies in Costa Rica should focus on promoting development opportunities, providing challenging and meaningful work, and aligning with the values and interests of the workforce. The results of this study can be compared to Broek's findings (2015), which highlight how work environment, work-life balance, leadership style, task variety, and decision-making autonomy significantly impact an employer's attractiveness, as perceived by both European

students and employees.

Economic Value: More Than Just a Salary

Current employees now have heightened expectations, with a fundamental characteristic of a reputable employer being the facilitation of development. This shift can be attributed to the swiftly evolving knowledge and innovation-driven economy, which mandates continuous employee growth. Contemporary expectations of a reputable employer encompass work-life balance, flexible employment arrangements, innovation, diversity management, and environmental and societal concerns (Kupczyk et al., 2016).

Economic Value, though ranked fourth, emerges as a crucial dimension in the employer branding landscape for the Costa Rican workforce, as evidenced by the overwhelming response of 95.3% of participants emphasizing the significance of being content with the compensation package offered by their employer. However, participants' perceptions of compensation extended beyond monetary aspects, highlighting non-monetary benefits.

Moreover, more than half of the participants indicated that the size of a company influenced their interest in applying for a job. This suggests that while the size of a company may play a role in their decision-making process, the allure of a competitive compensation package outweighs the impact of a company's presence or size. This underscores the importance of offering attractive benefits and perks to attract and retain talent in Costa Rica's competitive job market.

Social Value and its Relevance for Younger Generations

Sullivan (2004) underscores the escalating significance of candidates' awareness regarding a company's best practices, implying that this area warrants pivotal attention for organizations, particularly concerning CSR and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. The findings of this study align with Sullivan's perspective, indicating a strong preference among Costa Rican professionals for companies with which they can strongly identify. This identification extends to the company's values, mission, and the industry it contributes to. Ružić & Benazić (2023) conducted a review of Berthon's dimensions using a Gen-Z target audience in Croatia; the findings allowed them to create a new structure divided into six dimensions: Organization's market orientation, Acceptance and good relationships with colleagues, Informal characteristics of the workplace, Potential of the workplace for gaining experience and career advancement, Salary and other material benefits, and Sense of belonging to the organization. While they all relate to the original five, the sense of belonging could be categorized similarly to "Social Value."

This dimension received the fewest votes. However, the percentage difference between each value is less than 4%, underscoring the relevance of this pillar to a company's employer brand strategy. Since more than 60% of respondents belong to Generation Y or Z, it can be inferred

that this value has become a pertinent consideration for younger generations when applying for jobs or deciding to stay at a company, almost matching the percentage of the "Economic Value," which is commonly perceived as the most sought-after dimension by job seekers.

6 Conclusions

This study sheds light on the dimensions of employer attractiveness that hold the most significance for the Costa Rican workforce. The findings reveal a nuanced understanding of what professionals in Costa Rica value in their employers, highlighting key areas that organizations should focus on in their employer branding strategies.

The top three dimensions of employer attractiveness identified in this study - Development Value, Application Value, and Interest Value - underscore the importance of personal and professional growth, challenging and engaging work, and alignment with organizational values. These dimensions provide a framework for organizations to effectively tailor their employer branding efforts to attract and retain talent.

Furthermore, the study highlights the interconnectedness of these dimensions, suggesting that while they influence each other, they should be addressed independently to comprehensively cover all job seekers' needs. By understanding and addressing these dimensions, organizations can enhance their employer branding efforts and create a more attractive workplace for professionals in Costa Rica.

The findings also emphasize the importance of economic value, indicating that while a competitive compensation package is crucial, non-monetary benefits such as work-life balance and flexible employment arrangements play a significant role in attracting and retaining talent. Additionally, the study underscores the relevance of social value, particularly among younger generations, highlighting the importance of CSR and DE&I initiatives in employer branding strategies.

Employer branding significantly influences job seekers' decisions in Costa Rica by shaping their perception of an organization as an attractive employer. Factors such as reputation, values, culture, and growth opportunities are crucial in attracting top talent. Moreover, a strong employer brand emphasizing Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) can attract a more diverse pool of candidates, signaling the organization's commitment to creating an inclusive workplace.

For organizations, investing in a DE&I-focused employer brand can yield several benefits. It can help attract and retain diverse talent, enhance the organization's reputation as an inclusive employer, and improve employee engagement and retention. By aligning their employer branding efforts with DE&I goals, organizations can create a more diverse and inclusive workplace, improving busi-

ness performance and market competitiveness.

Overall, employer branding is a powerful tool that organizations in Costa Rica can leverage to attract top talent and advance their Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) initiatives. By strategically aligning their branding efforts with the values and interests of the local workforce, companies can create a compelling narrative that resonates with job seekers. This not only helps in attracting diverse talent but also plays a crucial role in retaining employees by fostering a sense of belonging and purpose. Moreover, a strong employer brand can positively impact an organization's reputation, both internally and externally, enhancing its ability to compete for talent in the market. Therefore, investing in employer branding not only serves as a competitive advantage but also contributes to the overall success and sustainability of the organization.

A critical gap in current literature lies in understanding the comprehensive needs and preferences of job seekers in Costa Rica, encompassing not only Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) factors but also broader aspects relevant to their employment decisions. Existing research predominantly focuses on organizational practices and DE&I initiatives on a global scale. By exploring job seekers' priorities, expectations, and challenges in the Costa Rican labor market, this research can provide valuable insights to organizations seeking to enhance their recruitment strategies and employer branding efforts. Moreover, integrating job seekers' perspectives into recruitment practices can help firms understand the impact of their preferences on organizational Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) goals and ultimately contribute to creating more inclusive and diverse workplace environments in Costa Rica. Therefore, bridging this gap in the literature by examining the holistic needs of prospective candidates in Costa Rica can inform organizational decision-making processes and facilitate the creation of more tailored and appealing employment opportunities in the country.

Recommendations for Further Research

Expanding on the recommendations to enhance the understanding of how employer branding impacts job seekers' decisions in Costa Rica and its implications for organizations' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DE&I) goals, several avenues of exploration and analysis can be pursued (Davies & Vieker, 2023),

Firstly, the unique cultural and economic context of Costa Rica should be thoroughly examined. This includes delving into how local culture, labor market conditions, and sociocultural expectations shape job seekers' perceptions of employer branding. For example, Costa Rica's strong emphasis on education and sustainability could influence job seekers' preferences for employers committed to environmental stewardship and employee development (Okot & Castro, 2023), whereby in the model underlying the survey the importance of CSR is attributed with one of the lowest levels regarding the importance for applying for

a job. To this end, comparative studies of different nations could provide further insights.

Additionally, the impact of globalization and digitalization on the Costa Rican workforce should be considered. These factors may influence job seekers' expectations regarding job flexibility, remote work options, developing skills for using artificial intelligence and access to global opportunities, affecting their perception of employer branding.

Another area of focus for future research could be to examine how employer branding varies across different job areas and industries in Costa Rica. The study's findings highlight the top dimensions of employer attractiveness across various sectors, such as Administration, Marketing, Customer Service, Finance, IT, Engineering, and Healthcare. However, it is essential to recognize that preferences for employer branding elements may vary significantly between these sectors. For example, professionals in the healthcare industry might prioritize employer branding aspects related to work-life balance, job security, and opportunities for professional development, while those in the IT sector might value innovation, flexibility, and competitive compensation packages. Conducting sector-specific studies could provide deeper insights into the unique needs and preferences of professionals in different job areas, enabling organizations to tailor their employer branding strategies more effectively to attract and retain talent in specific industries.

A deeper exploration of the role of communication and transparency in employer branding is also essential, particularly concerning DE&I practices. Organizations that effectively communicate their commitment to DE&I and demonstrate transparency in their practices are more likely to attract and retain diverse talent. Research could focus on identifying best practices for communicating DE&I initiatives, such as using inclusive language in job postings, showcasing diverse employee stories on company websites, and training employees and hiring managers on unconscious bias.

Furthermore, applying additional theoretical frameworks to analyze the study's results could provide further insights. For example, using other tools developed after Berthon's (2005) framework could help better understand how professional development opportunities and compensation practices affect job seekers' decisions. These approaches could enrich the understanding of job seekers' motivations and preferences regarding employer branding and DE&I practices on a larger scale by further dissecting the dimensions, as demonstrated by Puri (2018) and Kummrow (2023). Understanding how job seekers identify with an organization's values and culture can help tailor employer branding strategies to better resonate with their target audience.

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- Tom Okot** is a professor and senior researcher at the Faculty of Graduate Business at the Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología, Costa Rica, where he also serves as Chair of the Business School. He has coauthored several original scientific research papers and contributed to various development and research projects. His research focuses on business innovation, sustainability, tourism, and technology. Currently, he is writing a book chapter on the integration of artificial intelligence and public educational reforms.
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- Monica Ramirez** holds a Master of Business Administration (MBA) from the Faculty of Graduate Business at the Universidad Latinoamericana de Ciencia y Tecnología, Costa Rica. She is passionate about research and aims to contribute valuable insights for informed decision-making in both society and businesses. Her research interests span across business and humanities.
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- Ronald Deckert** is a Professor of Industrial Engineering and Dean of the Department of Technology at HFH · Hamburger Fern-Hochschule. He serves as a member of various supervisory and advisory boards and acts as an expert for several organizations, including the German Council of Science and Humanities, particularly in the areas of distance learning and education. His research focuses on sustainability, digitalization, and artificial intelligence.

Blagovna znamka delodajalca kot katalizator za raznolikost in odličnost delovne sile: poglobljena študija iz Kostarike

Ozadje/namen: Študija raziskuje ključne dejavnike, ki jih kostariški delavci upoštevajo, ko se prijavljajo v podjetje ali ostajajo v njem, z namenom informiranja o učinkovitih strategijah blagovne znamke delodajalca.

Metoda: Anketiranje 385 strokovnjakov srednjega/višjega nivoja. Raziskava se osredotoča na pet razsežnosti: interesna vrednost, družbena vrednost, ekonomska vrednost, razvojna vrednost in vrednost uporabe.

Rezultat: Ugotovitve razkrivajo, da kostariški strokovnjaki dajejo prednost interesni vrednosti, aplikacijski vrednosti in razvojni vrednosti, pri čemer poudarjajo priložnosti za rast, privlačne vloge in usklajenost z vrednotami podjetja. Ključno je tudi konkurenčno nadomestilo.

Zaključek: Študija kaže, da bi morale strategije blagovne znamke delodajalca poudarjati razvojne priložnosti, smiselno delo in usklajevanje vrednot, da bi pritegnili in obdržali različne talente. Omejitve vključujejo zasnovo ankete, ki lahko omeji globino odgovora, in njeno izključno osredotočenost na Kostariko, kar lahko omejuje splošljivost. Rezultati ponujajo dragocene vpogleda za organizacije v Kostariki za izboljšanje zaposlovanja in zadrževanja zaposlenih.

Ključne besede: *Blagovna znamka delodajalca, Privlačnost delodajalca, Raznolikost, Pravičnost in vključenost, Privlačnost talentov, Kostarika*