



## Identifying Factors of Employer Brand in Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan Province and Proposing its Model via Thematic Analysis

<sup>1</sup>Rostam Alipour, <sup>2\*</sup>Mansoureh Moradi Haghghi and <sup>3</sup>Farshad Haji Alian

<sup>1</sup>PhD Student of Public Administration, Firozkoh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Firozkoh, Iran

<sup>2</sup>Assistant professor, Department of Public Administration, Firozkoh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Firozkoh, Iran, \*Corresponding author email: [Moradihaghghi@iau.ac.ir](mailto:Moradihaghghi@iau.ac.ir)

<sup>3</sup>Assistant professor, Department of Public Administration, Firozkoh Branch, Islamic Azad University, Firozkoh, Iran

### Abstract

#### Keywords:

Brand,  
Employer  
Brand,  
Sugarcane  
Industries,  
Khuzestan,  
Thematic  
Analysis

This study aims to identify factors of employer brand in Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan province and proposing its model via thematic analysis. In this regard, the present study has been conducted through qualitative approach via Braun & Clarke's thematic analysis. It is applicable from objective aspect. For data collection, 18 experts including professors, senior managers and faculty professors were being interviewed using semi-structured interview through purposive sampling. Then, the information extracted from the texts and interviews were classified and analyzed using thematic analysis. Reliability was examined and confirmed by means of two methods, i.e. inter-coder agreement procedure and test-retest reliability. To calculate degree of agreement, Cohen's kappa coefficient in SPSS software was employed that was obtained equal to 0.75 and showed acceptable reliability. Also, to ensure validity of the research, the findings were confirmed by three academic experts besides the use of sensitivity strategy of the researcher in the research process. The results revealed classification of one global theme including employer brand, six organized themes including economic, functional, social, developmental, psychological and political factors, and 18 basic themes. It can be stated that employer brand is a key success factor in the current world. Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan province has enhanced its employer brand through eliminating the existing challenges and implementing the suggested strategies and has become an ideal employer.

### 1. Introduction

By entering the information age and enhancing intangible assets of organizations, human capital is regarded as one of the important assets. In this regard, the use of talented and committed manpower is essential to gain success in an organization (Rahimian, 2013). Given the decreased number of proficient and skilled workers, organizations should utilize suitable strategies in order that they are not faced the problem of supplying manpower in future. One of these strategies is employer brand (Kurdanaj & Nejat, 2018). Despite the fact that employer brand is one of the brand dimensions for organizations, it has been more or less neglected comparing to brand in the scope of goods and services and considering the organizations' trouble to attract and retain suitable labor force, it is necessary for organizations to concentrate on this issue. Employer brand is the human capital management strategy for distinction and its main function is attractiveness for potential and current manpower as well as retaining inter-organizational talents. Therefore, due to lack of current and future employees qualified for the labor market, taking into account the scope of employer brand by human resource management is essential. Nowadays, employer brand has become a basic strategic concept (Molk, 2018). To represent a clear and unique picture of themselves inside and outside the organization, organizations try to show their advantages than other employers. Employer brand for employees indicates how the shape of their work environment is and what advantages it has for them (Vercic and Coric, 2018). A powerful employer brand decreases recruitment cost too, improves employee relationship and increases employee retention (Panahi, 2019). Sugarcane Industries is one of the few industries that is composed of two agriculture and industry sectors. The

agriculture sector involves planting, growing and harvesting operations in all seasons and the personnel encounters harsh weather conditions and the use of different machineries and tools such as chemical fertilizer and poisons. On the other hand, the industry sector, too, contains various types of units including water mill and making syrup, baking and cooking, sugar refining, steam furnaces, lime, and power plants which are under different conditions. In two recent decades, due to working under hard and pernicious conditions, many employees have left the organization given the retirement rules. This has led to lack of skillful manpower. The departure of qualitative personnel brings about dissimilation and disproportion of succession of manpower pyramid of the Sugarcane Industries and has created some problems. Sugarcane Industries needs to propose a comprehensive model for employer brand so that it can solve the problems related to attraction and retention of skillful manpower. This model should contain indicators and dimensions such as social values and responsibilities so that it can help improve performance of the organization and prevent departure of qualitative personnel. Hence, according to the above-mentioned issues, the main problem of this study is to propose a model which can cover most of the cases that have already existed in the organization based on the indicators stated in the literature and fill the existing gap. Thus, proposing the above-mentioned model is on the researcher's agenda. Considering the aforementioned concepts, the researcher intends to respond to this question: how the comprehensive model of employer brand is and what indicators it has.

### 1.1 Theoretical literature

#### Concept of brand

According to the definition of brand in business dictionary, brand is design, sign, symbol, words or a combination of these that are used to create an image which distinguishes the product from the products of competitors. This image, across time, is joined to a level of credit, quality and satisfaction in customers' mind. The concept of brand began about 200 years ago. In the 1930's, the Procter & Gamble Company was the first company that developed the brand management system. In the mid 1990's, branding was employed not only for products but for retailers which sold them. What has occurred in the new millennium is that each person is searching a brand for him/herself. Today, brand equity has become so important that it is displayed in balance sheet of businesses (Schneider, 2018).

Brand is an intangible asset that can be a name, word, sign, symbol, design or a combination of them that is employed by a seller or a group of sellers to distinguish his/her products and services from other competitors. According to researchers, brand is not a suggestion to the customer; rather, it creates a process so that mind processing moves where it does not need endeavor for choosing. Initially, the term brand was focused on intangible differences in products but in recent years, it has been utilized to distinguish among different persons, places and companies. Employer brand as a new branch of brand demonstrates the results of using the rules of marketing and communications in human management (Alaeddin et al., 2024).

#### Concept of employer brand

Employer brand is a relatively new concept that has entered the management literature and especially human resource management since middle years of the last decade of the twentieth century. These two thinkers introduced employer brand (a set of functional, economic and psychological resources) that arises from employment and is developed by the hiring company as the employer. Researchers define employer brand as a tool that highlights specific aspects of a climate or environment or the advantages presented by it, distinguishes the company from its competitors, and is an image of employment conditions and experiences presented by a firm as an employer to its employees. In other words, employer brand is a group of ideas and beliefs that influences the viewpoint of current and potential employees about a firm and its employment experiences and shows identity of the firm strategy to its current employees as well as the intended ones and other beneficiaries so that it is connected to the people inside the company (Suwarsi et al., 2024).

Branding was at first used to distinguish tangible products but it was utilized to distinguish humans, places and firms across time. Indeed, although most of the firms are focused on developing the brand of product and company but branding can also be used in the field of human capital management. The use of branding principles in the field of human resources is referred to as employer brand. Thus, a company has three brands of product (service), company and employer. It is necessary to pay attention to all of them and ensure the relationship between them. The product brand contains customers' perception of the product represented by a company. It is determined through evaluation of certain factors such as quality, cost, purchasing experience, packaging, etc. (Ojaha et al., 2024). Similar to physical products brands, service brand is the basis to create trust for customers and is regarded as an information device and a guide for consumers that creates a commitment for the customer to experience future services. Also, branding includes perspective of values, image, personality of the company, and also the synergy factor among various sectors of the firm and it is essential to align business purposes and strategies with it. Employer brand creates an identity for companies or the firm as an employer that includes value system and policies of the firm and plays its role to attract, motivate and retain potential and current employees. Moreover, employer brand is an image of a firm as the best workplace that distinguishes the firm from other firms. The purpose of creating employer brand is to form a positive

image of employer which helps employees' retention, loyalty, involvement and more job engagement and supports the benefits of company's brand (Sharma et al., 2019). In this section, internal and external background related to the research is represented in Table 1.

Table 1. Internal and external background of the research

Researcher	Research title	Findings
Falah Noushabadi et al. (2021)	Model of employer brand of Ministry of Education for attraction and retention of talented and specialized manpower	This model includes 64 indexes, 28 components and 7 dimensions. Its dimensions are human resource management system, status of employer brand, employment strategy, brand strategy, management style, brand promotion and enhancement.
Borjinia et al. (2022)	Designing and explaining reinforcement of employer brand of Tejarat Bank for attraction and retention of manpower (mixed approach)	The results of the study were led to designing the model of reinforcing employer brand of Tejarat Bank to attract and retain manpower (based on the construct of paradigm) which was confirmed after quantitative test.
Matongolo et al. (2018)	Employer brand and talent retention: employees' perception in higher education institutions in Uganda	The author in this study stated that development and leadership, reward strategy and people-centered factors are features of employer brand. Via confirmatory factor analysis, he concluded that the reward strategy and people-centered factors are directly related to talent retention.
Dabirian et al. (2019)	Employer brand: understanding attractiveness of employer of information technology companies	In this study, it has been stated that talent attraction and retention in the field of information technology is challenging for technology managers. To help information technology managers, the authors discuss about the employer brand as a strategy for managing fame and credit of companies as superior places for working in order to overcome these challenges. Based on thematic analysis and through exploring 15000 employees, this study identifies and describes eight values to which the information technology specialists attach importance when evaluating the information technology employers in terms of retaining the information technology capacity to enhance competition.
Monteiro et al. (2020)	Employer brand applied to small and medium-sized enterprises: a pioneer model for talent attraction and retention	This study aimed to propose a model to create employer brand that can be executed in small and medium-sized enterprises and increase talent attraction and retention. Model of employer brand has been executed in four dimensions for small and medium-sized enterprises: 1- organizational culture, 2- strategy of the company, 3- fame of the company, and 4- reward systems. According to the authors, the new proposed model provides a set of strategic and competitive advantages for small and medium-sized enterprises and helps more profitability of companies. Also, this model helps small and medium-sized enterprises to have better reputation and credit to be able to be different from others in the war for talent.
Kargas et al. (2020)	Employer brand implementation and human resource management in Greek telecommunication industry	The present study aimed to show employer brand that is indeed one of the most dynamic national sectors-telecommunication industry. Interview in human resource sectors has been used for data collection: A) qualitative information about how to understand employer brand and the results obtained from it and also B) quantitative data about its utility in attracting and choosing candidates as well as assessment of employees. The results reveal that even if implementation of the employer brand is still an ongoing

Researcher	Research title	Findings
Kalinska – kula et al. (2021)	Employer branding and organizational attraction	process, it has now begun to change operational logic of human resource sectors. More intensive activities of external organizational employer brand and a more intensive method for internal employer branding are directly effective on employer attractiveness that are regarded in terms of the expected advantages.
Druteikiene et al. (2023)	Evaluation of the effect of employer brand in the relationship between psychological empowerment in companies and Lithuanian employee engagement	Based on the results and employees who work in Lithuanian companies, when they believe that their employer brand is positive, they become more engaged. In contrast, when employees are empowered mentally, they are engaged in work without considering what they perceive of the employer brand.
Ada et al. (2023)	Role of employer branding in managing employees' attraction and retention	The results demonstrate high awareness level of organizations from the concept of employer brand and it has been determined that they have several methods for potential candidates and current employees. This method has shown that they distinct themselves from their competitors in terms of commercial features, work environment and global opportunities.
Grigore et al. (2024)	Employer branding dimensions: an adopted scale for eastern Europe	The results confirm importance of strategies of employer branding in the form of increased dimensions of employer attraction for employment and show that employer attraction is related to positive work results.
Mirovic (2023)	The effect of employer brand on information technology of the employment process	The findings highlight the strong link between strong employer brand and successful employment of information technology and disclose effective strategies to guarantee top talents in a competitive perspective.
Azhar et al. (2024)	Employer brand: a strategy to enhance organizational performance	The results indicate that features of the process of employer brand are valuable sources to reinforce employees' identity with their organization. Moreover, distinctiveness and adaptability especially in increased perceptions of attractiveness and presentation of positive employee ambassador are effective. In addition, features of the process explain increasing and unique variance beyond content features in employees' reaction.
Suwarsi et al. (2024)	Value-based employer branding to attract brand and retain millennial doctors at hospitals in Indonesia	Key dimensions that have been appeared to attract and retain highly vital doctors are social, developmental and applied values. These findings show a distinct set of priorities among millennial doctors. Its results highlight the importance of alignment of strategies of employer branding with doctors' values and expectations for management and policymakers.
Alaeddin et al., (2024)	Is it beneficial for an organization to use employer branding? A study toward enhancing the employee performance	The findings showed that dimensions of employer branding, i.e., healthy work environment, education and development, job balance, morality and corporate social responsibility and reward and benefits have a positive direct and significant effect on employee performance. Also, employer brand has a positive and direct effect on employee participation.

General conclusion of accomplished studies inside and outside the country regarding this issue reveals that the present study proposes the model using the qualitative method of thematic analysis which has not been used in previous studies. Previous studies have addressed this issue through review or quantitative methods that do not have a model despite valuable results. Likewise, in the second place, the present study is performed in Sugarcane Industries

in Khuzestan province and despite the importance of this topic, no comprehensive model exists in this field. Hence, the present study has distinction and innovation.

## 2. Materials and Methods

This study is developmental from objective aspect and has been conducted via qualitative method and by means of thematic analysis. Thematic analysis is one of the common methods of content analysis and a technique to analyze qualitative data obtained from interview. It provides the required basic skills for many other qualitative analyses (Braun & Clarke, 2006). Common methods in thematic analysis include format, matrix themes, thematic network, and comparative analysis. In this study, thematic network has been employed. In thematic network that was developed by Attride-Stirling, themes are organized based on a certain process and in the form of basic, organizing and global themes (Agheli et al., 2023). Stages of thematic analysis research based on Braun and Clarke's model (2006) are as below:

Step 1: designing of thematic analysis in research. This step involves choosing the research subject, statement of the problem, statement of research objectives and questions, choosing the research plan, determining the domain, statistical population and sample. As it was mentioned earlier, the present study was conducted to identify factors of employer brand in Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan province and propose a comprehensive model of these components based on the identified factors and intends to answer these questions:

What are the components and factors of employer brand in Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan province?

How is the design of the global employer brand model in Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan province?

The statistical population included all faculty members in the field of marketing management and senior managers of Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan province that was conducted via purposive sampling using snowball method. Having PhD studies and specialized knowledge in the field of brand management, work experience and research activity background in the related scope were the main criteria for participation in the research. They were selected purposively and given the obtained information from previous cases. Demographic characteristics of experts are presented in Table 2.

Step 2: data collection

The required data was collected via semi-structured interview with 18 experts. Interviews were continued until theoretical saturation reached. By theoretical saturation, it is meant that sampling continues until similarity of responses is led to repetitiveness of responses and there is not any new data.

Table 2. Interviewees (in qualitative method)

Interviewee code	Age	Gender	Education	Organizational post	Length of interview	Work experience
I1	52	Male	PhD	Faculty member	45 minutes	27
I2	59	Male	PhD	Faculty member	30 minutes	28
I3	44	Male	PhD	Faculty member	35 minutes	18
I4	56	Male	M.A.	Corporate affairs manager	30 minutes	31
I5	48	Male	M.A.	HR and Administration Manager	25 minutes	24
I6	50	Male	M.A.	Deputy CEO	40 minutes	25
I7	48	Male	M.A.	Director of applied research	35 minutes	23
I8	53	Male	M.A.	Deputy CEO	35 minutes	24
I9	53	Male	M.A.	Director general	20 minutes	28
I10	52	Male	M.A.	HR and Administration Manager	25 minutes	27
I11	51	Male	M.A.	HR and Administration Manager	35 minutes	25
I12	54	Male	M.A.	Corporate affairs manager	35 minutes	28
I13	48	Male	M.A.	HR and Administration Manager	30 minutes	25
I14	46	Male	M.A.	Director of planning and information technology	25 minutes	21
I15	47	Male	M.A.	Deputy CEO	40 minutes	20
I16	54	Male	PhD	Member of board of directors	45 minutes	28
I17	53	Male	M.A.	Deputy CEO	30 minutes	22
I18	51	Male	M.A.	Support manager	20 minutes	22

Step 3: data analysis

In this step, after implementing the interviews and completing them with the notes that have been taken during the interview sessions, the researcher studies the text of interviews accurately and repeatedly and identifies independent ideas in the form of basic themes and allocates a code to each one that includes basic themes, organizing themes and

global themes. These are depicted in the thematic network. Thematic network shows relationships among the themes in non-linear form. In this network, there is not any hierarchy among the themes and the emphasis is on dependence and relationship among the elements of the network. After depicting the thematic network, it is explored and analyzed. Of course, the researcher should consider the point that the thematic network is a tool for analysis not the analysis itself. After depicting the thematic network satisfactorily, the researcher again refers to the main text and interprets it with the help of the network (Agheli et al., 2023). In the findings section, it will be dealt with themes, thematic network and interpretation of the network in detail.

Step 4: presenting the results, preparing a report and evaluating the research

To ensure reliability of the research, inter-coder agreement was employed. Besides the researcher who has performed the primary coding, another researcher coded the findings separately. Closeness of these two coding shows agreement and indicates reliability. To calculate degree of agreement, Cohen's kappa coefficient in SPSS software was employed that was obtained equal to 0.75 and showed acceptable reliability. Also, to ensure validity of the research, the findings were given to three academic experts which were confirmed by them besides the use of sensitivity strategy of the researcher in the research process.

### 3. Results and Discussion

Question 1: what are the components and factors of employer brand in Sugarcane Industries in Khuzestan province?

In the process of thematic analysis, first, the interviews were implemented and then they were completed with the notes that were taken during the interview sessions. Through accurate and repetitive reading of texts for each interview, independent ideas were identified in the form of basic themes and a code was allocated to each one. Of course, if there were sections with similar themes in the text of prior interviews, the same prior codes were used as their marker. Finally, 88 basic themes were extracted in this research. After access to the basic themes, organizing themes and global themes were separated given basic themes. It was tried in this stage to obtain more abstract basic themes through re-organizing initial themes so that the researchers are directed toward more comprehensive and central themes. In this stage, 58 basic themes were presented in the form of six organizing themes according to Table 3.

Table 3. Results of thematic analysis along with frequency of codes

Organizing themes	Basic themes	Initial themes
Economic factors	Salary and benefits	Reward system based on performance Income security Different insurance facilities for employees
	Amenities	Facilities granted by banks for employees Automobile and housing welfare services Logical retirement benefits
	Managerial style	Coaching style Persuasive style Authoritative style Flexible style Meritocracy
Functional factors	Human resources	Retaining talents and skill Flexible working hours Work and life balance
	Brand reinforcement	Good fame of the organization Good quality for products Adherence to environmental responsibilities
	Social awareness	Health, exports and nutrition program Customer orientation Considering social responsibility
Social factors	Social trust	Justice in payment Having reputation and credit Teamwork spirit Public benefit activity
	Social participation	Inspirational leadership and purposes Settlement speed Content production and dissemination in social media



Organizing themes	Basic themes	Initial themes
	Social media	Creating page in social media
	Brand communication	Creating feedback system Advertising based on organizational realities Execution of the suggestions system
Developmental factors	Organizational development of Brand	Execution of succession plan Holding educational courses
	Job security	Job stability Economic satisfaction
Psychological factors	Cultural factors of organization	Paying attention to human values Participatory culture Observing business ethics Respectful workplace Attractive and pleasant work environment
	Environmental factors of organization	Providing a creative and dynamic work environment Secure work environment Employee belonging toward the organization
	Motivation	Attaching importance to employees' opinion Satisfaction with the organization Employee belonging toward the organization Sense of being important and effective Sense of being helpful
	Job satisfaction	Sense of acceptability and value Sense of enthusiasm and realization of job purposes Sense of joy
Political factors	Inter-organizational factors	Driving power of brand of organizations Gaining satisfaction of local community
	Extra-organizational factors	Use of extra organizational supports Relations with source of powers Influence in decision-making centers

The results revealed that one global theme, six organizing themes, 18 basic themes, and 56 initial codes were identified for the model. In this stage, global themes and their dimensions are explored.

- Organizing theme of economic factors includes basic themes such as salary and benefits and amenities.

It can be stated that the organizing theme of economic factors as one of the vital principals in organizational management contains basic concepts such as salary and benefits and amenities. In economic class, salary and benefits are considered as the most valuable financial and economic factors for employees. It enables employees to not only supply their basic needs but also have a sense of improvement and fair relationship with their own organization. Also, welfare services are placed in this group and through offering possibilities such as supplemental insurances, recreations, and other possibilities help employees enhance their satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Hence, appropriate organizing of these economic factors, as an important strategy in human resource management, has a positive effect on enhancing organizational culture and increasing productivity within the organization.

As a result, the results of this study are consistent with studies by Matongolo et al., (2018) and Dabirian et al., (2019).

- Organizing theme of functional factors includes basic themes such as managerial style, human resources and brand reinforcement.

It can be stated that the organizing theme of functional factors includes a fundamental section of managerial strategies and has a direct effect on total performance of the organization. In this context, managerial style is appeared as a basic aspect of organizing functional factors. Not only managerial style determines leadership strategy and manner of leadership in an organization but also it has a considerable effect on creating organizational culture and employees' motivation. Likewise, human resources play a basic role in this class; including employment management, developing skills, and creating suitable infrastructures for people. Also, brand reinforcement belongs to this theme that has a

positive effect on attracting labor force, customers and colleagues via increased recognition and positive definition in the market. Hence, managing these functional factors as a basic element in realization of purposes and strategic planning of the organization is important and plays a highly effective role in compiling success path of the organization. Therefore, the results of this study are consistent with Falah Noshabadi et al, (2021).

- Organizing theme of social factors includes basic themes such as social awareness, social trust and social participation

It can be stated that the organizing theme of social factors has allocated a basic portion of the strategies and policies of the management. Social awareness is a major priority of this content and means awareness of the organization from needs, expectations and values of the society in the environment in which it has been located. This awareness provides the possibility for the organization to offer the best services and products with an effective interaction with its social environment. Social trust is also the most important pillar of the organization's communication with customers, employees and all walks of life. It is basically established based on behaviors and adaptation of the organization with people's expectations from social organizations. Social participation is always one of the organizational purposes and shows active relationship of the organization with local and global communities. This participation not only may be conducted via social actions but through active presence in social and cultural affairs. Generally, effective management of these social factors plays a remarkable role in compilation and realization of organizational social and moral values and is effective on promotion of the organization as an accountable and contributing member in the society. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with studies by Matongolo et al., (2018), Kargas et al., (2020), and Monteiro et al., (2020).

- Organizing theme of developmental factors includes basic themes such as social media, brand communications and organizational development of brand.

It can be stated that the organizing theme of developmental factors as one of the major classes toward progress of organization includes macro elements such as social media, brand communication and organizational development of brand. Social media as powerful communicative tools in the modern world plays an important role in enhancing recognition and interaction with the audience and customers. Through publishing the content, direct relationship with the society, and creating information exchange, the media is effective on advertising and recognizability of the organization. Brand communication as another major factor addresses how to manage and create effective relationships with customers and markets. These relationships have a direct effect on brand recognition and also help create positive and long-term relationships with the customers. Organizational development of brand as a continuous process is realized toward increased value of brand and creating competitive distinction based on innovation and conformity with customers' expectations. Given the importance of these developmental factors, organizations need to compile and implement comprehensive and coordinated strategies in the field of their social media, brand communication and organizational development of brand to improve recognition and achieve success in the market. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with studies by Kalinska – kula et al., (2021).

- Organizing theme of psychological factors includes basic themes such as job security, cultural factors, environmental factors, motivation and job satisfaction.

The organizing theme of psychological factors includes several important elements that are effective on performance and behavior of people at the work environment. These factors contain basic and important factors including job security, cultural factors, environmental factors, motivation and job satisfaction. Job security as one of the fundamental themes in organizing psychological factors refers to various features such as creating strong relationships among the members of an organization, supporting the members under different conditions and ensuring respect and justice at the work environment. Cultural factors refer to a group of values, beliefs, attitudes and joint behaviors inside an organization. They are deeply effective on motivation and performance of people. Environmental factors contain physical and social conditions at the work environment, organizational space and organizational policies that are directly effective on enhancing satisfaction and performance of people. Motivation and job satisfaction refer to elements such as objection and relationship between performance and reward, sense of success and career growth, positive interactions with colleagues and managers and significant relationship with work which can be reinforced by organizational managers and enhance organizational effectiveness. In general, organizing these psychological factors is a basis to enhance performance and welfare of people at the work environment and improve efficiency of the organization. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with studies by Kargas et al., (2020) and Monteiro et al. (2020).



- Organizing theme of political factors includes basic themes such as inter-organizational and extra-organizational factors.

It can be stated that the organizing theme of political factors as one of the macro principles in management of the organization includes two major sections: inter-organizational and extra-organizational factors. Inter-organizational factors refer to the effects and interactions that occur inside the organization and are directly controlled and managed by the organization. This can contain organizational structure, organizational culture, and internal policies and trends that have a direct effect on performance and adaptation of the organization with its environment. For instance, an organization with flexible structure and culture that supports innovation can better respond to changes in the environment. Extra-organizational factors refer to the effects and conditions that influence it from outside the organization and are not directly controlled by the organization. This may include public rules and regulations, political changes at the national or international level, and market conditions and competitors. Organizations should manage these factors accurately so that they can coordinate with their environment and adopt suitable strategies to encounter challenges and more productivity. In general, accurate understanding of these political factors make it possible for the organization to make the best decisions concerning its structure, strategy and performance and act successfully in a dynamic and complex environment in which it is active. Thus, the results of this study are consistent with studies by Borjnia et al., (2022) Matongolo et al., (2018) and Kalinska – kula et al. (2021).

#### 4. Conclusion and Recommendations

Based on the research results, the following are recommended:

- Organizing theme of economic factors includes basic themes such as salary and benefits and amenities.

1-Increased salary of employees proportional to annual inflation is one of the most important actions to maintain their purchasing power. This can increase job satisfaction and improve performance of employees. Also, through offering functional rewards and additional benefits such as supplementary insurance, more motivation can be created for employees.

2- Offering various and extensive welfare services such as creating sports and cultural possibilities, granting interest-free or low-interest loans, establishment of recreational and educational centers for employees' families can highly be effective on employees' satisfaction and motivation. These not only help improve quality of life of employees but also are led to creating a higher sense of belonging to the company.

- Organizing theme of functional factors includes basic themes such as managerial style, human resources and brand reinforcement.

1-The use of participatory managerial style in which employees' opinions and suggestions are considered actively in decision-makings can improve employees' job satisfaction and enhance their motivation. Creating work teams and holding regular sessions to examine the challenges and represent joint strategies will help reinforce sense of belonging and cooperation among the employees.

2-Improvement and development of human resources systems through implementing regular performance assessment plans, identifying educational needs and enhancing employees' skills, and creating specific career development paths can be resulted in increased efficiency and productivity of labor force. Likewise, creating incentive programs and performance-based rewards provide more motivation for the employees.

3-To reinforce the brand of Sugarcane Development Company of Khuzestan, implementing social responsibility activities can be addressed like environmental projects, supporting local communities and creating educational and sanitary programs. Moreover, the use of smart and digital marketing strategies to increase brand recognition and credit in domestic and international markets can help attract new customers and retain the current ones. Marketing actions include active presence in social media, producing valuable content and participation in exhibitions and events of the sugarcane industry.

- Organizing theme of social factors includes basic themes such as social awareness, social trust and social participation.

1-Holding educational courses and awareness workshops in different social scopes such as citizenship rights, environment and social responsibilities can help enhance employees and local communities' awareness. These plans can include educational sessions, conferences and information campaigns that will reinforce knowledge and social awareness of the company and its employees.

2-It is essential to create clear and bilateral communicative channels to enhance social trust between the company and local communities. This can be accomplished through launching digital and social platforms like websites, social media and mobile applications that represent accurate and clear information about activities, projects and performance of the company and provide the possibility for direct interaction with beneficiaries.

3-Encouraging and fostering employees' participation in social and community-oriented activities can help reinforce sense of belonging and responsibility. The company can play an active role in improving social conditions

through supporting social, environmental and cultural projects as well as creating voluntary opportunities for employees in community-oriented plans. These actions can include relief operation to disadvantaged groups, local development projects and participation in cultural and social events.

- Organizing theme of developmental factors includes basic themes such as social media, brand communications and organizational development of brand.

1-Sugarcane Development Company of Khuzestan can strengthen its online presence via creating official accounts in different platforms of social media including Instagram, Facebook, LinkedIn, and Twitter and managing them actively. This includes sharing of high quality content relevant to activities of the company, success stories, news and notices, and direct interaction with the audience. Also, the use of analytical tools to explore content performance and regulate digital marketing strategies can help improve brand recognition and attract new customers.

2-Creating a comprehensive strategy for brand communications that contains all communicative channels can help integration of messages and brand image. This plan should include production of text and video content, holding advertising campaigns, and establishment of strategic cooperation with other brands and organizations. Also, the use of public relations to publish positive news and achievements of the company and manage probable crises can help increase brand trust and credit.

3-Organizational development of brand includes improving internal processes, training and developing employees' skills and creating a strong and positive organizational culture that are effective on reinforcing the company's brand. Educational programs and workshops related to branding and marketing for employees can enhance their awareness and commitment toward brand purposes and values. Likewise, fostering the culture of employees' innovation and participation in developing new services and products leads to reinforcement of brand identity and its competitiveness in the market. Creating incentive programs and appreciating employees' achievements will also help reinforce their motivation and loyalty toward the company.

- Organizing theme of psychological factors includes basic themes such as job security, cultural factors, environmental factors, motivation and job satisfaction.

1-Offering long-term and transparent contracts to employees along with creating supportive systems like unemployment insurance and social benefits can strengthen job security. In the same vein, creating educational programs and developing skills to adapt employees with changes of the industry and labor market help decrease job concerns. These plans can contain retraining courses and enhancement of technical and managerial skills.

2-Promoting an organizational culture that encourages values such as mutual respect, team cooperation, and open and clear communications can improve employees' spirit and job satisfaction. Holding cultural workshops and team-building sessions accompanied by recognition and appreciation of individual and team achievements and successes help reinforce this culture. Paying attention to cultural diversity and creating a comprehensive environment for all employees are also important.

3-Improvement of conditions in the work environment includes creating a safe, hygienic and appropriate work space for all employees. This involves improvement of physical possibilities like favorable ventilation, suitable lighting and providing modern and efficient working equipment and tools. Moreover, offering incentive programs such as functional rewards, career advancement and promotion opportunities and work-life balance programs can help increase job motivation and job satisfaction. Creating an environment in which employees feel valued and satisfied will directly be led to improved performance and productivity.

- Organizing theme of political factors includes basic themes such as inter-organizational and extra-organizational factors.

1-Creating clear structures and specific internal rules and regulations are necessary to enhance corporate sovereignty. This includes compilation and execution of clear policies in the field of managerial decision-makings, determining roles and responsibilities, and creating supervisory mechanisms to ensure these policies are observed. Also, holding regular sessions with the presence of employees' representatives for informing and consulting with regard to macro-organizational decisions can help enhance trust and decrease political tensions inside the organization.

2-To improve extra-organizational factors, the company should strengthen its relations with public and local institutions and other key beneficiaries. This can include holding regular sessions with local and national authorities, participation in industrial associations and committees, and cooperation in developmental and infrastructural projects in the region. Creating a unit to manage public relations which actively interacts with these institutions can decrease political obstacles and improve working conditions of the company.

**References:**

1. Ada, N., Korolchuk, M., Yunyk, I. (2023). The role of employer branding practices on management of employee attraction and retention. *Economics Ecology Socium*, 7 (1), 46-60.
2. Agheli, M., NikMenesh, Sh., Rashidi, H., & Jalali, P. (2023). *Training on thesis writing and scientific article writing*. first edition, Tehran: Dibagaran Book Institute.
3. Alaeddin, B., Asaad, T., Khshah, M., Ebeid, A. (2024). Is it beneficial for organization to employ branding internally? a study toward enhancing the employee performance, *international Journal of Education business and Economics research*, 4(7), 26-53.
4. Azhar, A., Rehman, N., Majeed, N., Bano, S. (2024). Employer branding: A strategy to enhance organizational performance. *International Journal of Hospitality Management*, 116, 103618.
5. Borjnia, F., Mashali, B., Askari, N. (2022). Designing and explaining employer brand reinforcement of Tejarat Bank for manpower attraction and retention (mixed approach). *International Journal of Nonlinear Analysis and Applications*, 14 (11), 219-232.
6. Braun, V., Clarke, V. (2006). Using thematic analysis in psychology. *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 77-101.
7. Dabirian, A., Paschen, J., Kietzman (2019) Employer branding understanding employer Attractiveness of IT Companies. *IT professional*, 21 (1), 82-89.
8. Druteikiene, G., Savicke, J., Skarupskiene, D. (2023). The impact of employer brand on the relationship between psychological empowerment and employee engagement. *Problems and Perspectives in Management*, 27 (1), 193-203.
9. Falah Noushabadi, M., Mahmoudzade, S. M., Abbaspour, A., Yazdan Shenash, M. (2022). Employer brand model of Ministry of Education for attracting and retaining talented and specialized manpower. 5 (12), 2133-2147.
10. Grigore, G., Chapleo, C., Homberg, F., Alniacik, U., & Stancu, A. (2024). Employer branding dimensions: An adapted scale for Eastern Europe. *Journal of Strategic Marketing*, 32(4), 447-466.
11. Kalinska-Kula, M., Staniec, I. (2021). Employer branding and organizational attractiveness current employees, perspective. *European Research Studies Journal*, 24 (1), 583-603.
12. Kargas, A., Tsokos, A. (2020). Employer branding implementation and human resource management in Greek telecommunication industry. *Administrative Sciences*, 10 (1), 17.
13. Kurdanaj, A., Nejat, S. (2018). Effect of corporate citizenship on attractiveness and loyalty to employer brand (brand of the University of Mazandaran). *Organizational Resource Management Research*, 8 (1), 113-133.
14. Matongolo, A., Kasekende, F., Mafabi, S. (2018). Employer branding and talent retention: perceptions of employees in higher education institutions in Uganda". *Industrial and Commercial Training*, 50 (5), 217-233.
15. Mirovic, M. N (2023) The impact of employer branding on the recruitment process, papers from the Thematic Areas of the conference. 101-108.
16. Monteiro, B., Santos, V., Reis, I., Sampaio, M. C., Souse, B., Martinho, F., Souse, M. J., Au -yong -oliveira, M. (2020). "Employer branding applied to a pioneering model proposal for attracting and retaining talent". *Information (Switzerland)*, 11(12), 574.
17. Molk, A. (2018). Structures, strategizing, and contested territories: A structuration perspective on strategy development in employer branding. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 34(4), 326-334.
18. Ojaha, N., vaishnav, H. (2024). Employer branding tactics for elevating attractiveness. *European Economic Letters*. 14(1), 552-557.
19. Panahi, B. (2019). Meta-analysis of drivers and consequences of employer brand in Iran. *Quarterly Journal of Brand Management*, 6 (19), 35-46.
20. Rahimian, A. (2013). Employer brand, modern strategy of human resource management, *Quarterly Journal of Human Resource Management Research at Imam Hossein University*, 5 (2), 127-150.
21. Schneider, L. (2018). Why branding is important in marketing, the balance small business.
22. Sharma, R., Singh, S. P., & Rana, G. (2019). Employer branding analytics and retention strategies for sustainable growth of organizations. *Understanding the role of business analytics: some applications*, 189-205.
23. Suwarsi, S., Fauzan, N., Herlia wan. P. (2024). Value-based employer branding to attract and retain Millennial Doctors at Hospitals in Indonesia. *International Journal of professional Business Review*, 9 (1), 24.
24. Vercic, A. T., & Coric, D. S. (2018). The relationship between reputation, employer branding and corporate social responsibility. *Public Relations Review*, 44(4), 444-452.