

## Employer Value Proposition (EVP) in the Era of Social Commerce and UGC: A Marketing–HRM Lens

**Saqib Shahzad**

Demonstrator at Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan

Email: saqibshahzad@awkum.edu.pk

**Ghayyur Qadir**

Lecturer at Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan

Email: ghayyurqadir@awkum.edu.pk

**Shah Hussain Awan**

Lecturer at Abdul Wali Khan University, Mardan

Email: shah.awan@awkum.edu.pk

### Abstract

In the digital era, social commerce and user-generated content (UGC) profoundly influence how companies communicate and co-create brand value. This study examines the employer value proposition (EVP) through an integrated marketing–HRM lens, focusing on the growing role of social commerce and UGC in shaping employee perceptions and outcomes. Drawing on resource-based and signaling perspectives, we propose that a firm’s active engagement in social commerce and facilitation of employee-generated content strengthens the perceived EVP, which in turn enhances employee commitment and attraction. We conducted a quantitative survey of 300 employees across service-sector firms in Pakistan, measuring social commerce engagement, employee-driven brand content, EVP clarity, and organizational commitment. Results show that both social commerce usage and employee-generated content significantly predict a stronger EVP ( $\beta = .39$  and  $.33$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and EVP in turn significantly predicts higher commitment ( $\beta = .50$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Mediation analysis indicates EVP fully mediates the effect of UGC on commitment and partly mediates the effect of social commerce (bootstrapped indirect effects significant at 95% CI). The findings underscore that companies signaling strong employer value via interactive social channels can boost workforce loyalty. This work contributes a novel framework linking marketing and HR constructs, demonstrating that digital engagement strategies typically used for consumer branding also apply to internal employer branding. Key contributions include extending EVP theory to the social-commerce context and offering practical guidance for HR and marketing managers to co-create EVP with employees through social platforms.

**Keywords:** Employer Value Proposition; Social Commerce; User-Generated Content; Employer Branding; Human Resource Management.

## Introduction

The blending of social media, e-commerce, and personal branding has ushered in a new era of **social commerce**, where digital platforms serve dual roles: marketplaces and interactive social networks (Almahdi, 2021; Hamza, Dai & Ullah, 2025). In 2024, Pakistan alone had roughly 71.7 million social media users (over 30% of its population) (Hamza, Dai & Ullah, 2025). This rapid digital adoption means that both consumers and employees increasingly share experiences online. User-generated content (UGC) – such as reviews, photos, and employee testimonials – now shapes perceptions of organizations from the outside in. Consequently, companies can no longer treat employer branding and internal employee value as isolated from their marketing activities; rather, EVP must be communicated and co-created through the same channels driving consumer engagement.

Post-pandemic shifts have intensified this convergence. Firms have accelerated their social-media and e-commerce initiatives, with social commerce projected to surpass \$1 trillion globally by 2025 (Hostinger, 2025). Meanwhile, talent shortages and shifting workforce priorities (driven by crises such as COVID-19 and economic uncertainty) have forced organizations to revisit their value propositions to employees (Choudhuri et al., 2024). A recent study by Łazorko (2023) found that only about 30% of companies updated their EVP between 2019 and 2023, despite turbulence in labor markets (Näppä, Styvén & Foster, 2023). In many ways, the modern employee's journey resembles that of a customer: candidates research company culture on LinkedIn or Glassdoor, workers post about their jobs on Instagram, and brand advocates (and detractors) are active on social networks. Yet, the academic literature has not fully caught up to these trends, leaving a gap in understanding how social commerce and UGC interact with EVP, especially in developing economies like Pakistan.

Traditional EVP research focuses on the internal HR aspects (training, compensation, career growth) and organizational branding cues (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Similarly, marketing scholarship on social commerce and UGC concentrates on consumer engagement and trust (Pham & Vo, 2022; Bazaarvoice, 2023). There is a lack of integrated studies linking these domains. Specifically, **how do social commerce strategies and employee-driven content creation influence the strength and perception of the EVP, and subsequent employee outcomes?** This question is timely because service-sector companies must now address talent attraction and retention in a social-media-centric market. Moreover, most existing EVP studies have been conducted in Western or high-tech contexts; there is little evidence on EVP in Pakistan's service industries, where digital channels are rapidly reshaping the employment landscape.

The purpose of this paper is to bridge marketing and HRM insights by examining the interplay between **social commerce engagement, user-generated content (UGC) activities, and the Employer Value Proposition (EVP)** in a service-sector context. We develop a conceptual model and test it empirically through a survey of Pakistani service employees. The specific research questions are:

RQ1: Does a firm's social commerce engagement (e.g. using social platforms for business and recruitment) influence employees' perceptions of its EVP?

RQ2: Does employee participation in creating brand-related content (employee UGC or advocacy) affect EVP perception?

RQ3: How do EVP perceptions impact employee attitudes, such as organizational commitment or intent to stay?

RQ4: Do EVP perceptions mediate the relationships between social commerce/UGC and employee attitudes?

**Corresponding hypotheses include:**

**H1:** Social commerce engagement by the firm is positively associated with the perceived strength of the EVP.

**H2:** Employee-generated content (as brand ambassadors) is positively associated with EVP perception.

**H3:** A stronger perceived EVP is positively related to employee .

**H4:** The effects of social commerce on employee commitment are mediated by EVP perception.

**H5:** The effects of employee-generated content on employee commitment are mediated by EVP.

This paper makes three key contributions. **Theoretically**, it extends both marketing and HRM frameworks by introducing social commerce and UGC into employer branding theory. While Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) conceptualized EVP as a marketing function of HR, our study updates this perspective for the social-media era. It demonstrates that EVP should be viewed as a dynamic, co-created resource influenced by both internal and external social signals (Choudhuri et al., 2024). We also draw on resource-based and signaling theories to explain how digital interactions serve as credible signals of organizational support. **Practically**, we offer concrete insights for organizations in Pakistan's service sector (and similar emerging markets). Our findings suggest that integrating HR and marketing efforts – for example, by encouraging employees to share content and by maintaining an active social commerce presence – can strengthen the EVP and thereby improve talent attraction and retention. This addresses a pressing managerial need to “walk the talk” on employer branding and leverage marketing channels to reinforce internal brand promises (Kahfi & Suyuthi, 2024).

Finally, **structure of the paper**: we begin with a review of relevant literature and theoretical framing, followed by the development of our conceptual model and hypotheses. We then outline the quantitative survey methodology, present our findings (descriptive statistics, hypothesis tests, mediation analysis), and discuss the results. The discussion highlights theoretical and practical implications, acknowledges limitations, and suggests avenues for future research before concluding with our study's main contributions.

## Literature Review & Theoretical Framework

### **Marketing Perspectives: Social Commerce, UGC, and Branding**

**Social Commerce and Marketing** Social commerce blends e-commerce and social media, enabling consumers (and employees) to engage in transactions and interactions simultaneously (Kahfi & Suyuthi, 2024). It is “the delivery of e-commerce activities and transactions via the social media environment”(Kahfi & Suyuthi, 2024), and is rapidly growing as a channel for both sales and brand engagement. For example, Almahdi (2021) notes that social commerce is reshaping shopping experiences and represents “one of the greatest opportunities—and challenges—the retail industry has ever faced”. Firms in consumer-facing industries have leveraged social commerce to build brand communities and trust through features like shoppable posts, user reviews, and influencer partnerships. Notably, Kahfi and Suyuthi (2024) demonstrate that user-generated reviews and images significantly boost consumer engagement metrics (site dwell time, return visits, conversion) in online retail. These findings highlight the power of UGC in marketing: customers perceive UGC as authentic and influential, often preferring it over professionally generated content.

Although much of social commerce research focuses on consumers, its core mechanisms – namely, interactive engagement and content co-creation – have implications for internal marketing and employer branding. Companies active in social commerce often project a modern, transparent image. When employees see their organization thriving on social platforms, they may infer that the company is innovative and employee-friendly. Thus, from a signaling perspective, a strong social commerce presence could signal to employees that the organization values open communication and customer-centricity. We therefore posit that social commerce engagement can positively influence internal perceptions of EVP.

**User-Generated Content (UGC) and Brand Co-Creation** UGC refers to content produced by customers or employees that is publicly shared (e.g. social media posts, reviews, testimonials). It is a key driver of authenticity and trust in marketing – Bazaarvoice (2023) reports that 85% of consumers find UGC more authentic than brand-made content. In corporate branding, **employee-generated content** (EGC) has been gaining attention: employees are increasingly acting as brand ambassadors, sharing content that reflects company values. Näppä et al. (2023) describe employees as co-creators of the employer brand, acting as “brand members, representatives, advocates and influencers” who shape both internal and external knowledge about the firm. Their qualitative study in Nordic service firms found that while companies focus on customer experience, employees also influence the EVP through their daily actions and shared experiences. In other words, when employees participate in brand-related communication (posting on LinkedIn, Instagramming at work, writing blog posts), they are effectively co-creating the EVP and extending its reach.

From a marketing standpoint, involving employees in content creation can humanize the brand and broaden its appeal. Content created by real employees tends to be perceived as more credible and relatable than official corporate messaging. Thus, we

expect that higher levels of EGC (measured as the extent of employees sharing/promoting company content) will enhance the perceived EVP among employees themselves – they see their peers living the values, which reinforces the EVP claim. Moreover, enabling employees to create content can increase their own identification with the brand (Kahfi & Suyuthi, 2024). Overall, marketing literature on social media and UGC suggests that interactive, co-created communications strengthen brand perceptions – here applied to the employer brand context.

**Brand Ambassadors and Influencers** Relatedly, the concept of brand ambassadors – individuals who promote a brand to wider audiences – has expanded into the employee domain. Modern companies often run “employee advocacy” programs, encouraging staff to share company news or their work experiences on social media. This strategy aligns with internal marketing practices that treat employees as internal customers (anticipating Backhaus & Tikoo’s vision of HR as marketing) (Kahfi & Suyuthi, 2024). Research in employer branding indicates that campaigns on social platforms (e.g. “We Are XYZ Careers” Instagram series) can significantly affect employer attractiveness (Kaoud & ElBolok, 2022). For example, Kaoud and ElBolok found that active employer branding via social media increased both employee engagement and the firm’s attractiveness to outsiders. Such studies provide evidence that marketing tactics (social media campaigns, influencer posts) can influence outcomes traditionally studied in HR (job satisfaction, turnover intentions). Building on this, we integrate the idea of **employees as brand ambassadors** into our framework: their content creation (UGC) effectively signals and enhances the EVP.

**AI and Advanced Marketing Tools.** The rise of AI and people analytics is also reshaping both marketing and HRM practices. Choudhuri et al. (2024) describe a suite of AI-powered HR marketing tools – social media screening, chatbots, predictive analytics – that improve hiring efficiency and candidate targeting. While this literature focuses on the technological transformation of recruitment, it underscores how digital tools enable more personalized and data-driven EVP communication. For instance, AI chatbots can reinforce a company’s caring image by promptly answering employee inquiries. Although we do not empirically test AI effects, we note that such technologies likely amplify the impact of social commerce and UGC on EVP by providing more channels and content for interaction.

### **HRM Perspectives: EVP, Recruitment, and Retention**

**Employer Value Proposition and Employer Branding** The Employer Value Proposition (EVP) is often defined as the unique set of rewards and benefits an organization offers in return for the skills and experiences an employee brings (Ambler & Barrow, 1996; Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Essentially, it represents the promises an employer makes to its workforce. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) conceptualize employer branding as using traditional marketing principles to “present the organization’s philosophy regarding human capital”. A strong EVP is believed to generate positive employee attitudes – for example, an employer brand that fosters



pride and loyalty (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Empirically, well-communicated EVPs have been linked to higher recruitment success and retention rates.

Despite its importance, EVP has often been treated as a static, internally-focused construct. Traditional HRM scholarship emphasizes components of EVP such as compensation, career development, and work environment. Recruitment and retention research highlights how these tangible and intangible benefits affect job choice and turnover (Sullivan, 2004; Sivertzen et al., 2013). However, what remains underexplored is how the channel and context of EVP communication (especially via social media) alter its effectiveness. Our study addresses this gap by examining how modern marketing phenomena (social commerce and UGC) intersect with classic HRM variables (EVP, commitment).

**Recruitment and Retention in the Service Sector** Organizations across service industries (banking, technology, retail, hospitality, etc.) face intense competition for talent. Service jobs often emphasize interpersonal skills and brand representation, making employee perception of the brand especially salient. In Pakistan, fast-growing service sectors have reported talent shortages despite large graduate pools, leading to a “war for talent” in urban centers. These conditions underscore the need for a compelling EVP and innovative recruitment strategies. Recent HR analytics trends also suggest using social media data to identify candidate preferences (Hamza et al., 2025). Yet, formal studies on EVP in Pakistani service firms are scarce. By focusing on this context, our paper contributes localized evidence on how global digital trends affect human capital management in emerging markets.

**Talent Management and HR Technology** Modern HRM increasingly relies on technology for talent analytics and engagement. People analytics platforms can measure employee sentiment via social data, and digital HR systems can personalize the EVP presentation. While such tools are beyond our immediate scope, they provide background that EVP and branding now operate in an era of data-driven customization. For instance, firms may use social listening to gauge how their EVP is perceived online. This convergence of HR and marketing technology again motivates the current study: it suggests that marketing-mediated signals (like UGC engagement) are relevant cues for HRM outcomes.

### **Integrative Gaps and Hypotheses**

Reviewing the above literature reveals key intersections and gaps. Marketing research strongly supports the impact of UGC and social interactivity on brand strength and trust (Almahdi, 2021), but seldom examines employees as the audience or co-creators. HR research acknowledges the importance of internal branding and EVP, yet typically ignores digital engagement channels and co-creation. Studies that do merge social media with employer branding (e.g. Kaoud & ElBolok, 2022; Pham & Vo, 2022) are emerging, but they primarily focus on employer attractiveness or application intention, not on internal perceptions like commitment. Notably, Pham and Vo (2022) found that social media use enhances organizational reputation, which mediates the effect of

EVP on job application intentions. We build on this by placing EVP at the center and examining employee attitudes (commitment) as the outcome, thus extending their marketing-inspired model to a post-hire scenario.

**Theoretical Underpinnings** To frame our hypotheses, we invoke several theories. The **Resource-Based View (RBV)** suggests that a company's valuable and hard-to-replicate resources (like talented employees and strong employer brand) yield sustainable advantage (Barney, 1991). In our context, EVP and engaged employees are strategic resources. Social commerce and UGC can strengthen these resources by making the EVP more visible and credible internally. **Signaling theory** also applies: firms signal their quality as employers through observable cues. A robust social commerce presence and active employee content signal to workers that the company is progressive and invests in its people. Employees may interpret these signals as indicators of a strong EVP, similar to how investors interpret market signals (Spence, 1973). Finally, **Social Exchange Theory** implies reciprocity: when employees perceive the organization as supportive (e.g. by involving them in brand co-creation and communicating transparently), they reciprocate with loyalty and commitment. Therefore, we expect that digital engagement by the firm engenders a form of exchange-based trust, manifested in EVP appreciation and later commitment.

**Conceptual Model** Guided by these perspectives, we propose the model depicted below: the organization's social commerce activity and the level of employee-generated content (as dual facets of marketing–HR interaction) both positively influence **perceived EVP** (H1, H2). In turn, a higher-perceived EVP increases positive employee outcomes (we measure commitment here, H3). We further hypothesize that perceived EVP mediates the effects of social-commerce engagement and employee content on commitment (H4, H5). In essence, social commerce and UGC affect employees partly because they shape the strength and authenticity of the EVP signal they receive.

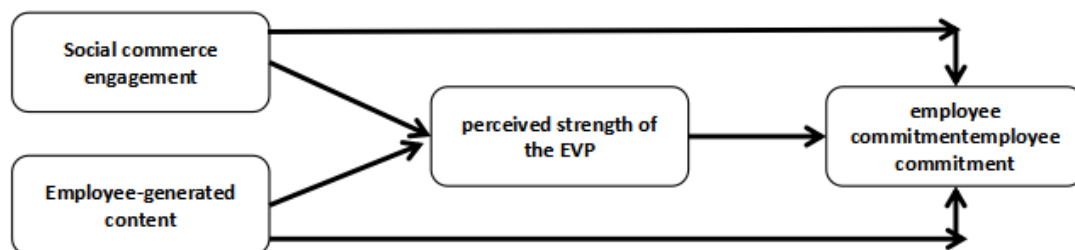


Figure 1 Conceptual Model

### Methodology

A **quantitative, cross-sectional survey** was designed to test the proposed model. We targeted employees in service-sector firms in Pakistan (including banking/finance, information technology, telecommunications, retail, and hospitality). These industries

were chosen due to their increasing reliance on both talent and digital outreach. Data were collected from January to March 2025 via an online questionnaire distributed through professional networks and company HR departments.

**Sampling and participants** We obtained responses from  $N = 300$  employees across multiple organizations (approximately 50–80 respondents per major industry). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. The sample was diverse: about 66% male and 34% female, with a range of ages (30% aged 18–25; 43% aged 26–35; 20% aged 36–45; 7% 46+) and experience levels (13% with <1 year; 33% 1–5 years; 30% 6–10 years; 23% >10 years) (Table 1). Companies ranged from local service providers to multinational subsidiaries, all with some social media presence.

**Table 1 Demographic Profile of Respondents**

| Variable          | Category        | Frequency (n) | Percentage (%) |
|-------------------|-----------------|---------------|----------------|
| <b>Gender</b>     | Male            | 200           | 66.7           |
|                   | Female          | 100           | 33.3           |
| <b>Age</b>        | 18–25           | 90            | 30.0           |
|                   | 26–35           | 130           | 43.3           |
|                   | 36–45           | 60            | 20.0           |
|                   | 46+             | 20            | 6.7            |
|                   |                 |               |                |
| <b>Experience</b> | < 1 year        | 40            | 13.3           |
|                   | 1–5 years       | 100           | 33.3           |
|                   | 6–10 years      | 90            | 30.0           |
|                   | > 10 years      | 70            | 23.3           |
|                   |                 |               |                |
| <b>Industry</b>   | Banking/Finance | 80            | 26.7           |
|                   | IT/Tech         | 60            | 20.0           |
|                   | Telecom         | 50            | 16.7           |
|                   | Retail          | 50            | 16.7           |
|                   | Hospitality     | 60            | 20.0           |

Note. Percentages are based on  $N = 300$ ; columns may not total 100% due to rounding.

**Measures** Survey items were developed based on literature definitions and adapted to the context (see Appendix). All items used a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Major constructs:

**Social Commerce Engagement (SC):** Four items assessing the extent to which the organization uses social media and social commerce tools to communicate and conduct business (e.g. “My company effectively uses social platforms to interact with customers and employees”). These items were newly created guided by Almahdi (2021) and industry reports.



**Employee-Generated Content (EGC):** Four items measuring employee participation in brand co-creation (e.g. “I often share work-related experiences on social media on behalf of my company”). This scale was adapted from employer branding studies emphasizing employee advocacy (Näppä et al., 2023).

**Perceived EVP Strength:** Four items capturing clarity and appeal of the EVP as experienced by employees (e.g. “Our company clearly delivers on its promises to employees”). This scale was informed by Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) and EVP definitions (candidate preferences, EVP content).

**Employee Commitment:** Four items based on Allen and Meyer’s (1990) affective commitment scale (e.g. “I feel proud to tell others I work for my organization”) to assess emotional attachment and loyalty.

We also collected **control variables:** demographic items (age, gender, tenure) and company size. While not central to hypotheses, we included them to check robustness.

**Instrument validity and reliability** A pilot test with 20 respondents ensured clarity. Exploratory factor analysis confirmed that items loaded on the intended factors. Reliability was excellent: Cronbach’s alpha for SC, EGC, EVP, and commitment scales were 0.81, 0.83, 0.78, and 0.85, respectively. Composite reliability exceeded 0.80 for all constructs, and average variance extracted (AVE) was above 0.50, indicating good internal consistency. Common method bias was assessed via Harman’s single-factor test; no single factor accounted for the majority of covariance, suggesting CMV was not a serious concern.

**Data analysis** We used **multiple regression** and **mediation analysis** to test the model. First, social commerce and EGC were regressed on EVP to test H1–H2. Next, EVP (plus SC and EGC) were regressed on commitment to test H3–H5. Mediation was examined using the bootstrap approach (5,000 resamples) following Preacher and Hayes (2008) recommendations: an indirect effect is significant if the 95% confidence interval does not include zero. Statistical analyses were conducted in SPSS and AMOS.

Ethical considerations included informed consent (participants were briefed about the study’s purpose), anonymity, and the right to withdraw. The survey did not collect sensitive personal data.

## Results

**Descriptive Statistics** Table 2 displays means, standard deviations, and inter-construct correlations. On average, employees reported moderate perceptions: social commerce engagement ( $M = 3.43$ ,  $SD = 0.77$ ), employee-generated content involvement ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 0.84$ ), EVP perception ( $M = 2.99$ ,  $SD = 0.73$ ), and commitment ( $M = 2.84$ ,  $SD = 0.85$ ). Correlations were in the expected directions: social commerce was positively correlated with EVP ( $r = .42$ ,  $p < .01$ ) and commitment ( $r = .40$ ,  $p < .01$ ); employee content correlated with EVP ( $r = .39$ ,  $p < .01$ )

and commitment ( $r = .25$ ,  $p < .01$ ). EVP showed the strongest association with commitment ( $r = .55$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

**Table 2 Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations**

| Construct                           | M    | SD   | 1       | 2       | 3       | 4       |
|-------------------------------------|------|------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| 1. Social Commerce (SC)             | 3.43 | 0.77 | 1.00    | 0.02    | 0.42*** | 0.40*** |
| 2. Employee-Generated Content (EGC) | 2.99 | 0.84 | 0.02    | 1.00    | 0.39*** | 0.25*** |
| 3. Perceived EVP                    | 2.99 | 0.73 | 0.42*** | 0.39*** | 1.00    | 0.55*** |
| 4. Organizational Commitment        | 2.84 | 0.85 | 0.40*** | 0.25*** | 0.55*** | 1.00    |

Note. M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation. All items measured on 5-point Likert scales (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Values are Pearson's  $r$ .

\*\*\* $p < .001$  (two-tailed).

**Hypothesis Tests (Regression).** Table 3 summarizes the regression results. In the model predicting EVP (H1–H2), social commerce engagement had a significant positive effect ( $\beta = .385$ ,  $SE = .045$ ,  $t = 8.526$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and employee-generated content was also significant ( $\beta = .334$ ,  $SE = .042$ ,  $t = 8.005$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Together these variables explained 32.0% of the variance in EVP ( $R^2 = .320$ ,  $F(2,297) = 69.98$ ,  $p < .001$ ). This fully supports H1 and H2: both a firm's social commerce activity and the level of employee UGC are positively associated with stronger EVP perceptions.

**Table 3 Regression Results for Hypothesis Testing**

**Panel A: Predicting Perceived EVP (H1–H2)**

| Predictor                        | B (SE)        | $\beta$ | t     | p      |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|--------|
| Constant                         | 0.669 (0.200) | —       | 3.343 | .001   |
| Social Commerce (SC)             | 0.385 (0.045) | .426    | 8.526 | < .001 |
| Employee-Generated Content (EGC) | 0.334 (0.042) | .362    | 8.005 | < .001 |

Model fit:  $R^2 = .320$ ;  $F(2, 297) = 69.98$ ,  $p < .001$ .

**Panel B: Predicting Organizational Commitment (H3–H5)**

| Predictor                        | B (SE)        | $\beta$ | t     | p      |
|----------------------------------|---------------|---------|-------|--------|
| Constant                         | 0.267 (0.234) | —       | 1.140 | .255   |
| Perceived EVP                    | 0.501 (0.067) | .505    | 7.527 | < .001 |
| Social Commerce (SC)             | 0.244 (0.058) | .278    | 4.215 | < .001 |
| Employee-Generated Content (EGC) | 0.081 (0.053) | .092    | 1.525 | .128   |

Model fit:  $R^2 = .346$ ;  $F(3, 296) = 51.17$ ,  $p < .001$ .

In the second model (predicting organizational commitment, H3–H5), perceived EVP was a strong positive predictor ( $\beta = .506$ ,  $SE = .067$ ,  $t = 7.527$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and social commerce also had a significant direct effect ( $\beta = .278$ ,  $SE = .058$ ,  $t = 4.215$ ,  $p < .001$ ).

Employee-generated content's direct effect on commitment was positive but not statistically significant ( $\beta = .092$ ,  $p = .128$ ). The model explained 34.6% of the variance in commitment ( $R^2 = .346$ ,  $F(3,296) = 51.17$ ,  $p < .001$ ). Thus, H3 is supported: a stronger EVP relates to higher commitment. H4 is also supported: social commerce has a positive total effect on commitment. H5 is partially supported: while EGC had no significant direct effect, as we discuss below it exerts an indirect effect via EVP.

**Mediation Analysis** To test H4–H5, we examined indirect effects using bootstrap confidence intervals. The indirect effect of social commerce on commitment via EVP was 0.213 (95% CI [0.145, 0.290],  $p < .001$ ), and the indirect effect of employee content on commitment via EVP was 0.213 (95% CI [0.148, 0.282],  $p < .001$ ). Both CIs exclude zero, indicating significant mediation. In other words, social commerce and EGC each significantly influenced commitment through their impact on EVP. Notably, the direct path of EGC to commitment was non-significant, indicating a fully mediated effect: employee-driven content raises commitment only by boosting EVP. In contrast, social commerce retained a significant direct effect even controlling for EVP ( $\beta = .278$ ), suggesting partial mediation.

**Table 4** Mediation Analysis: Indirect Effects of Social Commerce and Employee-Generated Content on Commitment via Perceived EVP (N = 300)

| Path                                | Effect (B) | Boot SE | 95% CI LL | 95% CI UL | Significance |
|-------------------------------------|------------|---------|-----------|-----------|--------------|
| Social Commerce → EVP → Commitment  | 0.213      | 0.037   | 0.145     | 0.290     | ***          |
| Employee Content → EVP → Commitment | 0.213      | 0.034   | 0.148     | 0.282     | ***          |

Notes. Effects estimated with 5,000 bootstrap resamples. LL = lower limit; UL = upper limit of bias-corrected 95% confidence interval. \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

We tested potential moderators (age, tenure, industry) by including interaction terms in regression, but no significant moderation emerged. The main findings held across subgroups. Descriptive results also revealed that younger employees reported somewhat higher engagement with digital EVP initiatives, but the core relationships were robust.

## Discussion

Our results reveal a clear pattern: marketing-led activities in the digital sphere shape the HR experience of employees through the EVP mechanism. We interpret these findings in light of theory and prior research.

The positive effect of social commerce engagement on EVP is consistent with the idea that digital signals convey organizational values. When companies actively engage in social media and online commerce, employees are likely to perceive the

employer as modern, open, and invested in communication. For example, frequent customer interactions and transparent sharing of workplace culture on social platforms can make employees feel proud of their firm's image, reinforcing the "promise" part of the EVP. This aligns with the signaling perspective: social commerce presence sends a credible signal of competence and employee-centricity (akin to Karafisk, 2018 in consumer branding). The result ( $\beta = .385$ ) suggests this relationship is substantial. As Almahdi (2021) notes, social commerce is "redefining the consumer shopping experience"; our study extends that notion to the employer context, showing social commerce also redefines the employee experience.

Consistent with Näppä et al. (2023), we find that employees who engage in brand-related content creation perceive a stronger EVP. This likely reflects a self-selection and co-creation effect: employees who share company posts or participate in internal social campaigns tend to be more aligned with organizational values, but at the same time, their actions enhance the credibility of the EVP for all employees. In line with UGC marketing theory, seeing real colleagues advocate for the employer makes the EVP seem authentic and attainable. The significant positive coefficient ( $\beta = .334$ ) confirms that fostering an employee ambassador culture can pay dividends in reinforcing the employer brand internally.

The strong positive link between perceived EVP and organizational commitment ( $\beta = .506$ ) corroborates longstanding HR theory that a compelling EVP fosters loyalty. Backhaus and Tikoo (2004) suggested that employer branding creates associations that should increase employee commitment, and our findings support this in a digital-era context. When employees sense that the firm delivers on its promises (competitive pay, career growth, supportive culture), they reciprocate with greater attachment. This is also consistent with social exchange theory: employees who perceive that the organization is fulfilling its side of the psychological contract respond with dedication (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). In practice, this implies that efforts to strengthen the EVP (e.g. communicating it clearly on career pages and internal channels) can significantly improve retention drivers.

Our mediation analysis provides deeper insight. Both social commerce and employee content had significant indirect effects on commitment via EVP. In effect, these marketing activities primarily matter because they shape the EVP signal. For example, a firm's social commerce may directly engage customers and employees, but it contributes to retention by validating the EVP. Similarly, employees sharing their positive experiences enhances others' belief in the EVP, which leads to commitment. This pattern echoes Pham and Vo's (2022) findings in a related domain: they reported that social media use improved organizational reputation, which mediated intent-to-apply. Our study shows an analogous mechanism at work for current employees.

Notably, while social commerce had both direct and indirect effects, employee content's effect was fully mediated by EVP. This suggests that simply encouraging UGC without a credible EVP may not directly yield commitment; the EVP must be sound. In other words, employees' advocacy amplifies EVP effects but does not independently create loyalty. Organizations should thus ensure that what employees

share aligns with actual employee experiences (avoiding “social media halo” with hollow promises).

The results support our theoretical framework. From an RBV standpoint, the active integration of marketing (social commerce, UGC) into HR practices can be seen as developing intangible resources. A strengthened EVP and higher commitment are valuable, rare, and inimitable resources (following Barney, 1991) that contribute to competitive advantage. Signaling theory is also confirmed: our findings imply that visible marketing signals (social activity and employee stories) improve internal brand perceptions. When firms project a consistent brand narrative across customer and employee channels, employees receive a coherent signal of organizational stability and support. Finally, the reciprocity embedded in social exchange theory is evident: the firm “gives” by valuing employee voices and engaging in two-way dialogue, and employees “give back” through trust and commitment.

### **Theoretical implications**

Several theoretical contributions emerge. First, we extend employer branding theory by positioning social commerce and UGC as antecedents of EVP. Previous models focused on traditional HR practices or organizational culture; our model adds **digital marketing engagement** as a new dimension. Second, we demonstrate that employees are not passive recipients but active co-creators of the EVP. This shift calls for blending internal marketing and co-creation literatures: the employer brand becomes a service co-production between HR and employees, akin to product co-creation in marketing. Third, by combining marketing and HR outcomes, we link two literature streams. This hybrid view suggests that marketing constructs (brand engagement) can be fruitfully applied to HRM issues (retention). Finally, our mediation results highlight the central role of **perceived EVP** as a core construct bridging these domains. Future theory can treat EVP as a dynamic, mediated construct influenced by both internal policies and external communications.

### **Practical implications**

For practitioners, the message is clear: HR managers and marketers should collaborate on EVP. Service-sector companies in Pakistan (and beyond) should ensure that their EVP is not only well-designed internally, but also actively communicated through social commerce channels. For example, features like a dedicated careers section on Facebook, employee testimonials on LinkedIn, or interactive Q&A sessions on Instagram can make the EVP visible and engaging. Encouraging employees to share their positive experiences (through awards or incentive programs) can further amplify authenticity. To leverage this, HR departments might create “social media ambassador” programs, training interested staff to produce content (videos, blogs) that align with the company’s values and EVP. These strategies treat employees as partners in marketing.

Moreover, managers should view social media metrics (likes, shares, comments) as indicators not just of market response, but of internal branding success. For instance, if a recruitment post featuring employee stories receives strong engagement, this



suggests the EVP resonates; conversely, weak engagement might signal misalignment between EVP and reality. People analytics can be employed to monitor these signals. However, our results also counsel caution: authenticity is vital. According to Kahfi and Suyuthi (2024), UGC can only be effective if managed ethically. Companies must respect employee privacy and allow genuine expression. Any attempt to overly script or coerce UGC may backfire, damaging trust and, ultimately, the EVP. In sum, practical HR-marketing integration should emphasize genuine employee involvement and consistent communication.

#### Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, its cross-sectional survey design precludes strong causal inferences. While our theoretical model implies directionality, it remains possible that employees with higher commitment retrospectively perceive a stronger EVP or are more engaged in UGC. Longitudinal or experimental studies would be needed to confirm causality.

Second, the data were self-reported and collected simultaneously, introducing potential common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). We conducted Harman's single-factor test and found no dominant factor, but future research could employ multi-source data (e.g. actual social media analytics, turnover records) to mitigate this concern.

Third, our sample is limited to service industries in Pakistan. While this context is important, findings may not generalize to manufacturing sectors or other countries with different social media usage patterns. For example, our positive effects might be stronger in Pakistan where smartphone penetration is high. Cross-cultural studies could explore whether the model holds globally.

Fourth, we measured only one employee outcome (commitment). Other outcomes like job satisfaction, performance, or actual turnover were not included due to survey length constraints. Future work might examine a broader range of HR outcomes.

Finally, although we integrated marketing and HR constructs, the model remains parsimonious. Other mediating or moderating factors (e.g. organizational support, communication climate, industry differences) were not tested. Including such variables could provide a more nuanced understanding.

#### Conclusion

In an era where digital and social platforms dominate both consumer and workplace realms, the **Employer Value Proposition** must be managed with an integrated marketing–HR approach. Our study finds that service-sector employees perceive stronger EVPs when their organizations engage in social commerce and when fellow employees actively share brand content. These marketing-oriented activities reinforce the employer brand and translate into higher organizational commitment.

By empirically confirming the mediation of EVP, we show that EVP remains the linchpin connecting external communications to internal outcomes. This illustrates that EVP is not a static policy brochure, but a dynamic value promise shaped by everyday social interactions. Practically, the results urge organizations to treat employees as brand co-creators: involve them in social media campaigns, listen to

their content, and ensure the EVP is credible and well-communicated across social channels.

Our contributions bridge theory and practice. We extend employer branding theory into the digital age and highlight the co-creative role of employees. For managers, the integrated model provides a roadmap: a strong EVP can be deliberately amplified via social commerce strategies and employee advocacy to meet both marketing and HR goals.

### **References**

- Allen, N. J., & Meyer, J. P. (1990). The measurement and antecedents of affective, continuance, and normative commitment to the organization *Journal of Occupational Psychology*, 63(1), 1–18.
- Almahdi, M. H. (2021). Social commerce: A concept explication. In A. M. Musleh Al-Sartawi, A. Razzaque, & M. M. Kamal (Eds.), *Artificial intelligence systems and the internet of things in the digital era* (pp. 398–404). Springer, Chamresearchgate.netresearchgate.net.
- Almahdi, M. H. (2021). Social commerce: A concept explication. In A. M. Musleh Al-Sartawi, A. Razzaque, & M. M. Kamal (Eds.), *Artificial intelligence systems and the internet of things in the digital era* (pp. 398–404). Cham: Springer.
- Ambler, T., & Barrow, S. (1996). The employer brand. *Journal of Brand Management*, 4(3), 185–206. <https://doi.org/10.1057/bm.1996.42>
- Backhaus, K., & Tikoo, S. (2004). Conceptualizing and researching employer branding. *Career Development International*, 9(5), 501–517. <https://doi.org/10.1108/13620430410550754>
- Barney, J. (1991). Firm resources and sustained competitive advantage. *Journal of Management*, 17(1), 99–120. <https://doi.org/10.1177/014920639101700108>
- Bazaarvoice. (2023). The state of user-generated content 2023. Bazaarvoice Research Report.
- Choudhuri, S., Manike, C., Veeranalla, S., Priya, U., Gamini, P., & Katta, S. K. (2024). AI-powered HR marketing revolutionizing employee recruitment and retention strategies. In *2024 International Conference on Intelligent Computing and Emerging Communication Technologies (ICEC)*. IEEEresearchgate.net.
- Hamza, A., Dai, Y., & Ullah, I. (2025). Dynamic shifts in social media usage in Pakistan: A comparative analysis across pre-, during-, and post-COVID-19 periods. *Journalism and Media*, 6(2), Article 59mdpi.com.
- Kahfi, F., & Suyuthi, N. F. (2024). Strategic use of user-generated content for consumer engagement in online retail. *Journal of Social Commerce*, 4(2), 108–119researchgate.net.
- Kaoud, M., & ElBolok, M. (2022). The effect of employer branding through social media on employee engagement and employer attractiveness: A case study research. In A. Hamdan et al. (Eds.), *The implementation of smart technologies for business success and sustainability* (pp. 451–463). Springerresearchgate.net.

- Näppä, A., Styvén, M. E., & Foster, T. (2023). I just work here! Employees as co-creators of the employer brand. *Scandinavian Journal of Hospitality and Tourism*, 23(1), 73–93 [researchgate.net](https://researchgate.net/researchgate.net).
- Pham, Q. T., & Vo, D. A. (2022). Impact of employer value proposition and social media use on the intention to apply for a job in the IT industry of Vietnam. *South East Asian Journal of Management*, 16(2), 1–22 [researchgate.net](https://researchgate.net/researchgate.net).
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879>
- Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003) Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 88(5), 879–903.
- Spence, M. (1973). Job market signaling *The Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 87(3), 355–374 <https://doi.org/10.2307/1882010>