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Decoding Gen Z talent attraction: How employer branding shapes media sector employment intentions

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The influx of Gen Zs into the contemporary workforce and their differing perceptions and attitudes towards organizational values led this study to examine which employer values attract the best talent among younger individuals nearing the completion of their courses and actively seeking employment. Although Gen Z's employer preference attributes and factors influencing their intent to join diverse industries have received considerable focus, the media sector has been curiously left out. Additionally, the media industry is experiencing a decline in employment opportunities, with a shortage of secure, well-paying jobs and fewer college placements. Hence, investigating which PBVs in media organizations attract Gen Zs became the study's premise, carried out using the Employer Attractiveness (EmpAt) scale. Nineteen items relevant to the study's aim were included in the survey instrument to collect responses from 312 media students from undergraduate colleges across India who had completed at least one industry internship and a project experience lasting 6 months. The multiple regression analysis revealed that, except for social value, the other four values significantly affect Gen Z's PBV and employment intention within Indian media organisations. The results emphasize the importance of developing an employer branding strategy that focuses on attractiveness to attract culturally compatible Gen Z candidates to media organizations. The decoding outlines variation in employer attractiveness dimensions across cultural contexts (particularly in Asian and emerging economies) and generational backgrounds. The decoding also aims to show the effectiveness of the EmpAt scale, providing valuable insights for practitioners in the media sector and researchers.

KEYWORDS

perceived brand value, HR, media, Gen Z, employment, intention, attitude, talent

1 Introduction

India has recently witnessed two significant changes. First is the upsurge in the Gen Z population (the generation born between 1997 and 2012, as per the Pew Research Center report ([Dimock, 2019](#))) in its workforce (20% of the global Gen Z population reside in India), which, when coupled with the Millennials, contributes to 52% of the total workforce in the country. This population surpasses the global average of 47% ([NASSCOM, 2022](#)). Recent data also shows Gen Z and early-career professionals prioritize meaningful work, skill growth, and work-life balance. For instance, in Deloitte's 2025 Global Gen Z survey, "learning and development" ranked among the top reasons Gen Zers stay with an employer, with 70% of

Gen Z respondents saying they regularly upskill for career advancement (Deloitte, 2025a). Similarly, Deloitte India found 94% of Indian Gen Zs value hands-on, practical experience over classroom learning, and note that career progression and learning opportunities are in the *top three* drivers of job choice (Deloitte, 2025b). In practice, today's young professionals seek employers that offer mentorship, on-the-job training, and clear career paths.

Meanwhile, a 2024 Quest Report survey of Indian Gen Z (aged 20–24) found 25% of respondents are drawn to “new-age” fields such as content creation, AI, data, etc. – indicating strong interest in digital media careers (IQOO-CMR, 2024). Likewise, Deloitte India reports 85% of Indian Gen Z professionals already use generative AI at work, especially for creative tasks like content creation (Deloitte, 2025b). These trends underscore that digitally native young talent expect media employers to embrace innovation and offer creative, tech-enabled roles. Diversity, values and compensation also shape Gen Z attitudes. For example, 68% of U. S. journalists aged 18–29 say their news organizations lack racial/ethnic diversity (Dewey, 2024) – a gap that new hires notice. In the Universum Gen Z survey, students ranked “secure employment” and “high future earnings” among their top career priorities (Universum, 2024), reflecting this financial focus. In summary, young media workers look for inclusive, well-paid environments with mentorship, development and mission, and will judge media brands against those criteria.

Employer branding literature on Gen Zs corroborate the above data, stressing their high career aspirations, confidence, and independence, and their perceived brand value (PBV) for organizations that not only offer higher salary packages but flexibility in working styles, work-life balance, workplace acting as community support and opportunities for innovation (Pandita, 2022; Halová and Müller, 2023). They further show commitment and motivation toward work to achieve professional success and prefer constructive feedback to ensure optimal performance (Böhlich and Axmann, 2020), growth, and learning opportunities (Kunal et al., 2022). Therefore, they have higher PBV for organizations with a positive team atmosphere, sustainability, and ethical practices, opportunities for hands-on experience, knowledge transfer, transparency, diversity, women in leadership positions, job security, and engagement (Parvin, 2021; Bohlich et al., 2022; El-Menawy and Saleh, 2023; Alekseevna, 2024; Selvakumar et al., 2024). Effective communication channels for conveying organizational values also rank higher among Gen Z as a factor in employer attractiveness, with social media being the most preferred channel (ten Brinke, 2021).

Second, the innovation and exponential growth in its media industry, including digital entrepreneurship and online content creation, have surpassed the rural–urban divide (Sarkar and Oberoi, 2018; Mehta and Kaye, 2021). The existence of more than 909 television channels across languages by more than 350 broadcasters (valued at US\$8.28 billion) enabled the creation of new jobs (Statista, 2024a, 2024b, 2024c). The increasing dominance of digital media driven by easy access to mobile phones and internet access and video-on-demand platforms (valued at US\$ 10.07 billion) have also contributed to this aggravated job creation.

Apart from the growth, the operation of the country's media industry has changed too, especially its news and television segment, which has transformed into infotainment, replacing traditional news coverage. As Chadha (2017) noted, the television and print news media are subjected to “commercialism, rising levels of concentration

and cross-media ownership, as well as the expansion of control by politicians and industrialists over the media” (p.1). Moreover, television news broadcasters and print media are now increasingly focused on revenue and ‘views’ generation over media for the public good. They are also less focused on practicing media ethics and more likely to resort to the publication of inaccurate information (Chadha and Koliska, 2016; Devi, 2019; Rao and Malik, 2019; Chadha and Bhat, 2022).

Amidst this change, the media industry, comprising print media companies (newspapers, magazines), broadcasting companies (TV, radio), digital media companies (websites, social media platforms), animation and VFX, out-of-home media and film companies, is witnessing a loss in employment, a lack of gainful jobs concerning security and adequate salary and dwindling college placements (Priyadarshini, 2020; Agrawal, 2021; National Herald, 2021; Sodhi, 2023; Sharma, 2024). In addition, various government and independent agencies predict an exponential growth in jobs in the media and entertainment industry from 2024 onwards. Media organizations often have unrealistic expectations from the freshers, with little prior experience and having to shift to metropolitan cities on a meager salary (Agrawal, 2021; EY, 2023; IBEF, 2023) and withstand wage threats, low job security, and precarious working conditions in return (Sharma, 2024).

Industry data show brisk hiring in media, especially digital, but also continued churn. In India, staffing studies report that 48% of media and entertainment employers *expanded* headcount in H1 FY2025 (ANI, 2024) – driven by OTT platforms, online gaming, animation/VFX and growing digital ad spend. Key roles in demand are sales and marketing (56% of firms hiring for sales, 42% for marketing positions) (ANI, 2024). Hiring is concentrated in metros (Delhi ~41%, Bengaluru ~40%, Chennai ~39% of employers recruiting) but is spreading to smaller cities (Jaipur/Ahmedabad ~20% hiring) (ANI, 2024). By contrast, about 26% of firms reported *shrinking* headcount (ANI, 2024), reflecting pressures from AI and automation on some legacy roles. Overall, the M&E sector grew ~8% in 2023 (to ₹2.3 trillion) (Muthyanola, 2025) and is expected to reach ~\$37 billion by 2026 (Muthyanola, 2025), which bodes well for job creation – but recruitment competition remains stiff as tech firms also hire creative talent.

Conversely, as younger audiences, Gen Zs had a more casual and less loyal approach to mainstream media (Eddy, 2022). They prefer social media and, therefore, have “weaker connections with brands, making it hard for media organizations to build relationships with them” (Raborife, 2023, p. 8). Additionally, the *Craft* (2022) report highlighted how Gen Zs are skeptical of most information and question the agenda of the content producers of the mainstream media. Therefore, media organizations must work hard to attract and “create an environment where these unique, digital- and social-media-savvy individuals can raise ideas or give constructive feedback” on the content or the way the content is packaged and distributed Raborife (2023, p. 9). Along these lines, specific media organizations, such as Epsilon India, Roche Information Solutions, Merck India, Thryve Digital, and Allstate India, have started gamifying employee rewards. Such companies attract Gen Zs through tools like ‘Citizen of Youniverse’ passports, an internal marketplace called Applause for redeeming points to buy products, leaderboards that allow colleagues to congratulate or thank each other, irrespective of seniority, and digital badges (Mani, 2024).

Considering Gen Z's preference for certain employer attractiveness factors compared to other generations and the challenges in the Indian media industry, this study examined what employer values attract the best talents among the younger population, who are nearing the completion of their courses and are actively seeking employment. Moreover, as [Manekkar \(2010\)](#) has stressed, there has also been a shift in the aspirations and fantasies of the youth in small towns due to the media industry's portrayal of neoliberal perspectives. Therefore, it was crucial to gauge which aspects of the Indian media industry attract Gen Z, considering their attitudes and the ideologies on which the industry is based. In addition, in this age of social media, the Indian media industry has entered the transnational space, implying its ability to access a plethora of self-organized and networked pool of talents outside Indian locations ([Christopherson, 2006](#)).

Therefore, examining the relevance of the employer values branded by Indian media organizations would highlight the industry's position at the global level in attracting the youngest generation, possessing the right cultural fit, and identify areas that would increase the sector's lucrative ness. Gen Zs are unique from their preceding generations through their natural adeptness at creating and consuming digital content, creativity that can revitalize traditional media approaches, and familiarity with the latest technologies, tools, and platforms, enabling them to adapt to industry changes quickly, such as the application of artificial intelligence (AI) ([Schwieger and Ladwig, 2018](#); [Vitežić and Perić, 2021](#); [Yu et al., 2022](#); [Stahl and Literat, 2023](#)). They are also the most diverse generation ever, with 48% being non-white, 62% believing increasing diversity is good, 81% tolerant of others' beliefs, and 78% valued the ability to see the world from others' perspectives ([Pichler et al., 2021](#)). Therefore, hiring them would bring diverse voices and perspectives to the media industry.

[Berthon et al.'s \(2005\)](#) Employer Attractiveness Scale (EmpAt) was applied to recognize the PBV of media organizations among Gen Z. Using the scale is further warranted by the lack of similar studies on Indian media organizations and empirical evidence on the position of such organizations in attracting the younger generations, despite the sector's rising presence and financial value in the country. Most studies on employer brand values and attractiveness among Gen Z have focused on the IT/ITeS, banking, and education sectors. Consequently, the findings would enable the relevant industry to recruit individuals who align with the existing organizational culture, creating a ripple effect that embodies the brand's values. Most importantly, the findings would decode Gen Z's preferred employer branding values influencing their employment intention, specifically in the media sector. The decoding would also highlight how media organizations can create branding content that resonates with their ideal employee profile, effectively communicating PBV.

2 Literature review

2.1 Relevance of Berthon's employer attractiveness scale

Employer attractiveness has been widely researched in recent years to understand the external and internal benefits that potential employees envision receiving by working in their preferred organizations. Employer attractiveness dimensions enable potential employees to know about organizations and develop a positive or

negative attitude based on their perception, depending on whether their respective needs and expectations are fulfilled. Over the years, researchers have proposed different models and approaches for recognizing attractiveness attributes. For instance, [O'Brien \(1995\)](#) classified the attributes into "cognitive/rational (reliability, competence, etc.) and affective/emotional (openness, support, attention, etc.)" ([Reis and Braga, 2016](#)). [Lievens and Highhouse \(2003\)](#) highlighted the instrumental and symbolic attributes, wherein the former refers to the tangible benefits the organizations offer (salary, flexible schedule, location, etc.), and the latter represents the intangible benefits expected by the applicants. [Srivastava and Bhatnagar \(2010\)](#) emphasized eight attributes that differentiate between those offered by organizations (such as global exposure, career opportunities, and development) and those that exist (including flexibility, ethics, reliability, and fairness).

However, [Berthon et al. \(2005\)](#) define employer attractiveness as the benefits that potential employees expect from organizations they consider working for. These benefits are reflected in the employee value propositions (EVPs) that organizations offer in exchange for employees' performance and productivity. These EVPs involving global opportunities, economic value, recognition, ethical and corporate social responsibilities, application values, learning and development values, and interest values are perceived by existing employees and the labor market to add value to their jobs ([Corporate Leadership Council, 2002](#)). The model emphasizes a balanced understanding of intrinsic and extrinsic motivators. It is flexible enough to be applied across diverse industries and examine the needs of both organizations and employees ([Nilsen et al., 2024](#)). Moreover, the scale prioritizes the employees' perception at its core and provides measurable components that enable organizations to assess their attractiveness to potential employees quickly ([Pattnaik and Misra, 2014](#); [Dassler et al., 2022](#)). Apart from having a strong empirical foundation through numerous research on the scale's application in an organizational context (e.g., [Gökalp et al., 2018](#); [Dassler et al., 2022](#); [Styvén et al., 2022](#)), it can provide a structured yet adaptable approach ([Eger et al., 2019](#)). Integrating insights from newer or complementary models can enhance its effectiveness depending on organizational priorities or cultural contexts.

Consequently, this study applied this framework in the Indian context, with a focus on the media sector most importantly because the perceived importance given to each of these seven EVPs differs across generations. However, only five dimensions—Application, Development, Economic, Interest, and Social Value—were retained. The decision to exclude the other two dimensions was made deliberately to ensure measurement validity within the specific sample context. As the participants were final-year media students with limited international work exposure or organizational experience, Global Opportunity and Ethical/CSR items were not meaningfully interpretable for them. This decision aligns with best practices in adapting measurement tools to fit respondent characteristics while maintaining construct clarity. Excluding these two dimensions reduced the risk of measurement error and improved the interpretability of responses for the five remaining dimensions that participants could credibly evaluate.

2.2 Employer attractiveness and Gen Z's employment intention

Generation Z is redefining the nature of employer attractiveness. As the first fully digital-native cohort, they brought a distinct set of

values, preferences, and behaviors into the workforce (Radulescu et al., 2018). Tidhar (2022) and Gabrielova and Buchko (2021) highlighted Gen Z's unique orientation toward blending work with enjoyment, prioritizing flexible hours, collaborative work environments, and roles aligned with personal values. While often compared to Millennials, Gen Z differed in their need for continuous validation, risk aversion, and emphasis on purpose over prestige. Deloitte Global (2022) further reported that 75% of Indian Gen Zs were likely to leave their current employer within 2 years—even without another job offer. Such data underscored the importance of building strong, multidimensional Employer Value Propositions (EVPs).

At a theoretical level, the Attraction-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework (Dencker et al., 2007) explained how generational cohorts gravitated toward employers that reflected their beliefs and identities. Supporting this, Lassleben and Hofmann (2023) and Pingle et al. (2025) noted that Gen Z's employment intention was mediated by shared values, personality traits, and perceptions of organizational culture. To explore these dynamics, the Employer Attractiveness (EmpAt) scale provided a five-dimensional lens: Interest Value, Economic Value, Development Value, Social Value, and Application Value.

2.2.1 Application value

Application Value reflected whether a job allowed Gen Z to apply their academic knowledge and personal passions in meaningful ways. While sometimes overshadowed by development or economic incentives, this dimension was increasingly relevant in high-skill sectors like media, where creativity and problem-solving mattered. Kamal et al. (2024) and Prameka et al. (2021) found that Gen Z applicants were more likely to apply to roles that let them create, execute, and iterate. Hofer et al. (2024) also noted that Gen Z valued early responsibility, and when employers gave them room to experiment and lead, application intent increased. Benazić and Ružić (2023) highlighted that this value was particularly salient in internships and graduate roles, where task ownership served as a proxy for trust. Tran et al. (2023), in their bibliometric review, indicated that application value was under-theorized yet growing in importance. Gen Z wanted their knowledge to count—not in abstract terms but in daily outputs. Social media reinforced this need by normalizing rapid achievement and visible success. Thus, employers needed to design roles with tangible outcomes and encourage autonomy from day one.

H1: Application value (AVAvg) impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.

2.2.2 Developmental value

Among the five dimensions, Developmental Value consistently emerged as the most influential in attracting Gen Z talent. Vieira et al. (2024), Dassler et al. (2022), and Hofer et al. (2024) converged on one insight: Gen Z wanted to learn. Whether it was mentorship, structured career paths, rotational programs, or access to upskilling platforms, this generation prioritized growth over status. Bhardwaj et al. (2024) noted that the perception of being invested in correlated highly with application intention.

Reis and Braga (2016) described a dual dynamic at play—Gen Z simultaneously sought both experiential learning and formal training.

When organizations failed to deliver, early career disengagement became more likely. Onur et al. (2024) reinforced this by showing how organizational support enhanced the link between development value and organizational commitment. Social media, again, acted as a critical mediator: El-Menawy and Saleh (2023) reported that firms showcasing employee growth stories on Instagram or LinkedIn experienced higher engagement from Gen Z viewers. These insights held particular weight in media and IT sectors, where talent mobility was high and career agility was valued. Developmental Value signaled a long-term relationship between employer and employee, and for Gen Z, that commitment needed to be mutual.

H2: Developmental value (DAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.

2.2.3 Economic value

Despite being a purpose-driven generation, Gen Z remained acutely aware of financial security and the implications of economic instability. Deloitte Global (2022) highlighted that financial concerns, including unemployment and inflation, were major stressors for Indian Gen Zs. El-Menawy and Saleh (2023) and Nguyen and Nguyen (2022) confirmed that compensation, job stability, and perks like health benefits strongly influenced employment intention.

Importantly, economic value interacted with other variables. Pingle et al. (2025) discovered that Gen Z individuals high in conscientiousness or risk aversion preferred employers with clear salary structures and long-term financial incentives. Benazić and Ružić (2023) observed similar patterns, noting that transparent pay communication enhanced perceived fairness and trust. Moreover, social media again played a mediating role. El-Menawy and Saleh (2023) found that online employer branding strategies focused on pay transparency and financial well-being significantly shaped Gen Z's impressions. While salary alone did not guarantee retention, it was a threshold variable—employers failing to meet basic economic expectations were unlikely to attract serious consideration from Gen Z applicants. As such, economic value needed to be communicated credibly and consistently across channels.

H3: Economic value (EVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.

2.2.4 Interest value

Interest Value captured Gen Z's preference for intellectually engaging, meaningful, and stimulating work. Bharadwaj et al. (2025) and Hofer et al. (2024) suggested that Gen Z was strongly attracted to roles that allowed creativity, autonomy, and direct societal impact. Vieira et al. (2024) found that Gen Z jobseekers actively sought organizations that were transparent about the meaning and purpose behind their roles. This reflected a broader generational desire to contribute to causes beyond the bottom line—be it sustainability, inclusivity, or innovation.

Reis and Braga (2016) argued that workplace authenticity was crucial to how interest value was perceived, especially when corporate messaging aligned with actual practice. However, Lassleben and Hofmann (2023) cautioned that in practice, interest value was often deprioritized compared to economic and developmental factors—particularly in high-pressure sectors or during early career phases. Meanwhile, employer communications through social media

platforms also shaped perceptions of interest value. [El-Menawy and Saleh \(2023\)](#) observed that job seekers engaging with organizational content online formed deeper cognitive associations with the values being promoted. This digitally mediated interaction heightened the salience of interest-based employer traits.

H4: Interest value (IVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.

2.2.5 Social value

Social Value encompassed Gen Z's desire for psychological safety, community, and a supportive workplace culture. [Celestin and Vanitha \(2020\)](#) argued that this generation actively sought inclusion, equity, and mental well-being at work. According to [Vieira et al. \(2024\)](#), team cohesion and a sense of belonging were powerful attractors—especially for younger applicants. Gender dynamics were also critical. [Lassleben and Hofmann \(2023\)](#) noted that women placed greater emphasis on workplace relationships, while men leaned toward autonomy and recognition. [Benazić and Ružić \(2023\)](#) confirmed that female respondents in their study ranked emotional support and community among their top employer criteria. [Reis and Braga \(2016\)](#) further posited that authentic relational cultures, rather than performative inclusion efforts, were what Gen Z was truly drawn to. Social media enhanced or undermined this dimension. [El-Menawy and Saleh \(2023\)](#) found that firms highlighting community engagement and inclusive events online were rated more favorably. However, inconsistency between online messaging and internal practices could backfire. Thus, organizations needed to ensure alignment between projected and actual workplace culture.

H5: Social value (SVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.

2.3 Employer attractiveness and perceived brand value

Employer attractiveness had become a decisive element in contemporary talent markets, especially in industries characterized by knowledge work and creative output. Organizations no longer competed merely on tangible compensation but increasingly on PBV, identity alignment, and authenticity. EmpAt Scale [Berthon et al. \(2005\)](#) provided a robust framework for examining employer attractiveness across five dimensions: economic, interest, development, application, and social values. These dimensions, when interpreted through the lens of shifting generational expectations and globalized labor dynamics, revealed how employer branding strategies shaped talent attraction and retention. This was particularly salient for Generation Z, a cohort marked by heightened expectations around purpose, authenticity, and growth ([Priporas et al., 2017; Schroth, 2019; Leslie et al., 2021; Islamiaty et al., 2022](#)).

2.3.1 Application value

Application value reflected employees' perceptions of how well they could apply and extend their skills within an organization. It emphasized agency, contribution, and identity alignment. When employees saw their work as meaningful and aligned with their capabilities, their perception of the employer's brand strengthened

significantly [Xie et al. \(2015\)](#). [Hein et al. \(2024\)](#) argued that effective employer branding amplified pre-existing predispositions rather than attempting to reshape them, which made application value particularly powerful.

For Gen Z, application value was linked to their self-concept and desire to use their skills to create tangible impact. [Leslie et al. \(2021\)](#) identified that go-getters within this generation viewed the workplace as a platform for innovation—a space where their abilities were both recognized and expanded. In this sense, application value overlapped with interest and development values but retained a distinct focus on personal agency and contribution.

At a macro level, globalization had intensified the need for organizations to empower employees to deploy their skills dynamically. [Pearson and Ananthram \(2008\)](#) observed that in emerging markets, flexible organizational structures and participatory cultures enhanced application value. Rigid hierarchies, by contrast, alienated a generation that valued contribution over compliance. In the media sector, where creativity and identity expression were core, application value became a critical dimension of perceived brand authenticity. When employees could see their work reflected in the organization's output and culture, they experienced stronger identification and advocacy.

H6: Application value (AVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' PBV of media organizations.

2.3.2 Development value

Development value referred to opportunities for professional learning, career progression, and long-term growth. It consistently emerged as one of the strongest attractors across generations ([Lee et al., 2018; Ronda et al., 2018; Benazić and Ružić, 2023](#)). In Taiwan, for example, development value was deeply intertwined with cultural expectations surrounding stability and family security ([Lee et al., 2018](#)). Similarly, [Santiago \(2019\)](#) highlighted its decisive role in shaping millennials' retention, even when initial attraction was based on other factors.

For Gen Z, development value was a non-negotiable expectation rather than an added benefit. They sought continuous learning, meaningful feedback, and visible career pathways ([Anggraeni, 2022; Garai-Fodor and Jackel, 2022](#)). [Leslie et al. \(2021\)](#) noted that "social investors" within Gen Z were especially oriented toward personal growth and sought collaborative environments with equally ambitious peers. As [Schroth \(2019\)](#) observed, they were less inclined to remain with employers who failed to offer dynamic learning ecosystems.

Critically, development value only contributed to PBV when it was personalized and credible. Organizations often overemphasized training availability without aligning it with individual career aspirations ([Ronda et al., 2018](#)). This created a signaling gap, undermining the perceived value of development initiatives. For media organizations competing for young talent, integrating skill-building with meaningful career trajectories could serve as a powerful attractor, particularly when combined with authentic communication and mentorship structures. Development value thus acted as both an engagement mechanism and a long-term brand differentiator.

H7: Developmental value (DVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' PBV of media organizations.

2.3.3 Economic value

Economic value—salary, benefits, financial stability—had traditionally stood at the center of employer attractiveness (Jiang and Iles, 2011). In China's private sector, it remained a decisive factor influencing job acceptance intentions, while in India, liberalization and intensified competition had made attractive compensation necessary to compete for top talent (Pearson and Ananthram, 2008). Santiago (2019) similarly observed that while financial rewards continued to shape perceptions of employer attractiveness, their weight had declined in relation to more symbolic dimensions, particularly among younger cohorts.

For Gen Z, economic value often served as a baseline rather than a differentiator. While salary, job security, and tangible benefits remained important (Anggraeni, 2022; Garai-Fodor and Jackel, 2022; Kunal et al., 2022), they no longer guaranteed loyalty (Jackel and Garai-Fodor, 2022). Islamiaty et al. (2022) found that although Gen Z evaluated multiple value categories, actual job application intentions were often anchored in economic and social values. This implied that competitive economic offerings were essential to enter Gen Z's consideration set but insufficient for sustaining their interest.

Critically, economic value interacted with the other four dimensions of employer attractiveness. Once a minimum threshold was met, PBV depended more on how organizations communicated growth opportunities, meaning, and social alignment. In sectors like media or creative industries, where compensation might be modest compared to corporate sectors, authentic and value-rich employer branding could compensate for lower economic offers (Priporas et al., 2017; Hein et al., 2024). Economic value was thus best understood as a necessary but not sufficient condition for employer attractiveness, forming the foundation upon which symbolic values built lasting appeal.

H8: Economic value (EVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' PBV of media organizations.

2.3.4 Interest value

Interest value encompassed the intrinsic appeal of the job—its creativity, novelty, and ability to engage employees' passions. In industries marked by innovation, such as IT and media, interest value frequently surpassed compensation as a driver of attraction (Dabirian et al., 2019; Styvén et al., 2022). Employees were drawn to roles that offered intellectually stimulating and meaningful work, aligning personal aspirations with organizational goals. This alignment amplified perceived employer brand value, reinforcing both attraction and retention (Xie et al., 2015).

For Gen Z, interest value reflected their desire to see work as an extension of personal identity and purpose. Leslie et al. (2021) identified “go-getters” within Gen Z who sought work environments that were innovative, purposeful, and ethically aligned. Such environments offered not only engaging tasks but also reinforced their sense of contributing to something larger than themselves. Conversely, organizations that marketed themselves as “innovative” but failed to deliver on this promise risked a credibility gap that could erode trust (Ronda et al., 2018). This was particularly consequential for industries reliant on creative talent, where authenticity was as valuable as the work itself.

Integrating interest value into employer branding required not just compelling messaging but also structural conditions—space for

experimentation, flexibility, and participative culture. When organizations aligned their messaging with real experiences, interest value became a strategic differentiator that built emotional attachment and advocacy. When they did not, it became a fragile promise that quickly unraveled in a competitive labor market.

H9: Interest value (IVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' PBV of media organizations.

2.3.5 Social value

Social value concerned interpersonal relationships, organizational climate, and broader social impact. Reis and Braga (2016) found that different generations prioritized different social attributes, with younger workers valuing team cohesion and informality. Social value was also shaped by cultural context; in many Asian settings, family-oriented and relational structures strongly influenced employer attractiveness (Lee et al., 2018). From its conceptualization in EmpAt Scale (Berthon et al., 2005), social value consistently emerged as a core differentiator.

Gen Z's social orientation amplified the importance of this dimension. They were more likely than previous generations to evaluate organizations based on their ethical stance and social impact (Priporas et al., 2017; Schroth, 2019; Silva and Carvalho, 2021; Islamiaty et al., 2022; Kapuściński et al., 2023). They preferred employers that offered volunteering opportunities and demonstrated authentic commitment to social responsibility (Vieira et al., 2024). Leslie et al. (2021) described “social investors” who prioritized work-life balance, shared purpose, and community engagement. Social value, therefore, functioned as both a cultural and reputational anchor.

However, social value was also one of the most vulnerable dimensions to perceived inauthenticity. When organizations used social responsibility narratives as mere branding devices without lived practice, employees quickly identified the dissonance. Hein et al. (2024) emphasized that authenticity was crucial: social value was credible only when it resonated with pre-existing employee beliefs. In competitive talent markets, this dimension often determined whether an organization's employer brand was trusted or dismissed. For Gen Z, who interpreted social signals through both personal experience and digital transparency, social value could be the decisive factor in choosing an employer.

H10: Social value (SVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' PBV of media organizations.

3 Research methodology

The study's sampling frame comprised final-year media students from undergraduate colleges across India, who had completed at least one industry internship and a project experience worth 6 months. The study targeted this group because they have exposure to and knowledge of media organizations and may have been exposed to employer branding efforts. The exposure to media organizations would influence their career aspirations in these organizations and shape their employment intentions (Barnett, 2012; Rothman and Sisman, 2016; Tang et al., 2020; Qu et al., 2021). The purposive convenience sampling method was employed to recruit participants for the study. This method allowed the researchers to select participants based on specific criteria,

such as being final-year media graduate students. Five hundred students across Indian institutes were targeted in the final-year undergraduate media courses and internship experiences in media organizations. A Google Form was circulated on WhatsApp among student groups, describing the study's aim and their right to voluntary participation. Of 500 students, 75 had a shorter duration of internships and project experience required for the survey, and 113 had incomplete responses. Therefore, 312 valid responses were analyzed to achieve the objectives.

Ethical considerations were taken into account throughout the study, including the protection of participants' rights. Participants were informed about the nature of the research and their right to withdraw at any point without consequences. All data collected was kept confidential, anonymized post data collection, and used solely for research purposes. The relevant institutional ethical review board also approved the study to ensure that the research design and procedures adhere to the highest ethical standards. The study employed a cross-sectional design, with structured and closed-ended questionnaire that included items related to the seven variables of the study: the five employer attractiveness variables, employment intention, and PBV.

a Employer attractiveness was measured using the employer attractiveness (EmpAt) scale developed by [Berthon et al. \(2005\)](#), containing 25 items in total (e.g., "Recognition/appreciation from management") measured in a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha = 0.75$). However, not all 25 items were relevant to the study's context. For instance, items like a fun working environment, a springboard for future employment, the organization both values and makes use of your creativity, a humanitarian organization that gives back to society, good promotion opportunities within the organization, and a customer-orientated one were not included in the study because the survey involved potential employees, who have only limited experience in media organizations through internships. Therefore, items containing areas generally not experienced by the students were excluded from the questionnaire. Only 19 were further applied to the survey questionnaire, after establishing their construct validity and reliability in accurately measuring the five intended constructs (AVAvg, DVAvg, EVAvg, IVAvg, SVAvg) of the EmpAt scale, when applied on the Indian media students' sample.

A confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was conducted to examine whether the reduced 19-item version of the employer attractiveness (EmpAt) scale continued to reflect its original five sub-dimensions: AVAvg, DVAvg, EVAvg, IVAvg, and SVAvg. The model demonstrated modest fit for an adapted scale: $\chi^2(152) = 350.236$, $p < 0.001$, $CFI = 0.818$, $TLI = 0.795$, $IFI = 0.821$, $NFI = 0.722$, $PNFI = 0.641$, $RFI = 0.687$, $GFI = 0.938$, $RMSEA = 0.125$ (90% CI [0.108, 0.142], $p < 0.001$), and $SRMR = 0.068$. However, sampling adequacy was excellent ($KMO = 0.903$), and Bartlett's test was significant, $\chi^2(171) = 1,136$, $p < 0.001$.

Moreover, all factor loadings were significant ($p < 0.001$) and standardized loadings ranged 0.67–0.93; one Heywood case was resolved by constraining residual variance, with stable factor and residual variances. Although the AVE (0.487) fell slightly below the 0.50 threshold, this was offset by strong reliability: McDonald's $\omega = 0.941$ (95% CI [0.923, 0.960]) and Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.936$ (95% CI [0.901, 0.970]) ([Table 1](#)), with consistent item-level performance across subscales.

Discriminant validity held on HTMT/Fornell–Larcker; multicollinearity was low (all VIF < 5). Together, these results provide solid evidence that the 19-item EmpAt scale maintains its five-factor structure, construct validity, and excellent internal consistency within the Indian media student sample. On this foundation of validated measurement, the five subscale scores (AVAvg, DVAvg, EVAvg, IVAvg, and SVAvg) were used as independent variables in the subsequent multiple regression analysis, ensuring that any observed relationships with the outcome variables were based on statistically reliable and theoretically coherent constructs.

- a Employment Intention was measured through the 5-item intention to join scale developed by [Highhouse et al. \(2003\)](#) ("I would accept a job offer from this company") using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha = 0.84$).
- b Perceived Brand Value was measured using [Sweeney and Soutar's \(2001\)](#) PERVAL scale, which consisted of only six items indicating the students' perceived social and emotional outcomes associated with the media brand. Six items were, therefore, measured (e.g., "would make me feel good," "would improve the way I am perceived," etc.) using a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree; $\alpha = 0.78$).

Since the study aimed to examine the impact of employer attractiveness dimensions on the PBV and employment intention among Gen Z media students, two multiple linear regressions were

TABLE 1 Reliability indices (omega and alpha) establishing how the selected 19 items of EmpAt scale accurately measure the five intended constructs (AVAvg, DVAvg, EVAvg, IVAvg, SVAvg) in the Indian media student sample.

Item	Coefficient ω	Coefficient α
IV1	0.94	0.933
IV2	0.938	0.931
IV3	0.937	0.931
SV1	0.937	0.931
SV2	0.937	0.931
SV3	0.936	0.93
EcV1	0.937	0.931
EcV2	0.941	0.935
EcV3	0.937	0.931
EcV4	0.938	0.931
EcV5	0.941	0.935
DVV1	0.936	0.93
DVV2	0.94	0.933
DVV3	0.938	0.931
DVV4	0.937	0.931
APPV1	0.938	0.932
APPV2	0.937	0.931
APPV3	0.936	0.93
APPV4	0.937	0.931
BRV	0.943	0.939
EMPINT	0.945	0.943

applied to Berthon et al.'s (2005) EmpAt scale dimensions with each testing the predictive value of each of the dimensions on each of the 2 DV (i.e., PBV and employment intentions). Multiple regression enabled us to identify underlying patterns in data while allowing for more flexible and realistic relationships between the variables: dimensions of employer attractiveness, PBV, and employment intention. The results provided a more realistic representation of how employer attractiveness dimensions predict PBV and employment intention. The assumptions of linearity, independence of errors (as confirmed by Durbin-Watson statistics close to 2), and multicollinearity were tested and met.

4 Results

Table 2 presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of the variables in our model.

4.1 Employment intention

The regression model (Table 3) predicting employment intention was also significant, $R^2 = 0.806$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.802$, $F(5, 306) = 253.61$, $p < 0.001$, explaining 80.6% of the variance in EI.

Concerning the hypotheses (Table 4 and Figure 1), the multiple regression findings suggest that application value (H1) significantly predicts EI ($\beta = 0.222$, $t = 6.210$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that practical engagement opportunities increase the likelihood of Gen Z choosing an employer. Developmental value (H2) emerged again as the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.475$, $t = 11.296$, $p < 0.001$), underscoring the dominant role of growth opportunities in shaping employment decisions. Economic value (H3) had a significant positive impact on EI ($\beta = 0.291$, $t = 7.327$, $p < 0.001$), reaffirming the appeal of financial incentives. Interest value (H4) was also a significant predictor ($\beta = 0.121$, $t = 3.194$, $p = 0.002$), highlighting the value of meaningful and engaging work. Contrary to expectations, social value (H5) had a negative and statistically significant effect ($\beta = -0.089$, $t = 2.191$, $p = 0.029$), suggesting that an overly emphasized social environment may reduce employment intention. This may indicate a potential trade-off effect when social aspects are perceived as compensating for the lack of growth or economic benefits.

4.2 Perceived brand value

The regression model (Table 5) predicting PBV was statistically significant, $R^2 = 0.886$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.884$, $F(5, 306) = 475.29$, $p < 0.001$, indicating that 88.6% of the variance in PBV was explained by the five independent variables: application value (AVAvg), developmental value (DVAvg), economic value (EVAvg), interest value (IVAvg), and social value (SVAvg).

As evident from Table 6, the multiple regression analysis highlighted that application value significantly influenced PBV ($\beta = 0.104$, $t = 3.786$, $p < 0.001$), supporting H6, which states that opportunities to apply skills enhance employer brand perception. Developmental value (H7) was the strongest predictor ($\beta = 0.419$, $t = 13.009$, $p < 0.001$), confirming that career growth opportunities are crucial to Gen Z's brand evaluation. Economic value also had a significant positive effect ($\beta = 0.211$, $t = 6.936$, $p < 0.001$), indicating

that salary and financial benefits (H8) contribute to PBV. Interest value (H9) had a positive impact on PBV ($\beta = 0.115$, $t = 3.967$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that creatively engaging work increases employer appeal. Social value (H10) demonstrated a significant effect ($\beta = 0.234$, $t = 7.542$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing the importance of a positive and collaborative work environment.

Hypothesis	Observations
<i>H1: Application value (AVAvg) impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H2: Developmental value (DVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H3: Economic value (EVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H4: Interest value (IVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H5: Social value (SVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' employment intention in media organizations.</i>	Rejected
<i>H6: Application value (AVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' perceived brand value of media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H7: Developmental value (DVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' perceived brand value of media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H8: Economic value (EVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' perceived brand value of media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H9: Interest value (IVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' perceived brand value of media organizations.</i>	Supported
<i>H10: Social value (SVAvg) positively impacts Gen Z students' perceived brand value of media organizations.</i>	Supported

5 Discussion

Our aim was to decode how five EmpAt value signals map onto early-career outcomes in a Gen-Z media sample—rather than to introduce a new theory—by showing which signals travel most reliably to EI and PBV in this context. Contextual to the aim, the study examined the employee attractiveness dimensions in media organizations that would attract Gen Z and influence their PBV and intention to join, using Berthon et al.'s (2005) five-dimensional EmpAt scale. The findings provide robust empirical support for the

TABLE 2 Correlation matrix between the five EmpAt variables and dependent variables involving the Gen Z's perceived brand values and employment intention.

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
1. Interest value	4.28	0.70							
2. Social value	4.37	0.67	0.63**						
3. Economic value	4.35	0.69	0.68**	0.68**					
4. Developmental value	4.25	0.6	0.66**	0.72**	0.68**				
5. Application value	3.97	0.74	0.59**	0.63**	0.59**	0.65**			
6. Perceived brand value	4.31	0.59	0.74**	0.82**	0.80**	0.88**	0.72**		
7. Employment intention	4.39	0.62	0.71**	0.67**	0.77**	0.84**	0.72**	0.76**	

N = Effective *N* = 312 (listwise deletion for incomplete items). ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (two-tailed).

TABLE 3 The ANOVA table showing the overall significance of the regression model as the predictor of the dependent variable.

		EI	
<i>R</i> -square			0.806
<i>R</i> -square adjusted			0.802
Durbin-Watson test			2.142

	Sum square	df	Mean square	F	p-value
Total	118.264	311	0.000	0.000	0.000
Error	22.991	306	0.075	0.000	0.000
Regression	95.273	5	19.055	253.607	0.000

multidimensionality of employer attractiveness and offer nuanced insights into the decision-making preferences of Gen Z job seekers.

Across both models, developmental value emerged as the most influential predictor of both brand perception and employment intention. This finding is consistent with recent literature emphasizing Gen Z's focus on continuous learning, career advancement, and skill development (Schroth, 2019; Gómez-Galán et al., 2020). Unlike previous generations who may have prioritized job security or compensation, Gen Z seeks roles that offer structured growth trajectories and access to learning ecosystems (Chillakuri, 2020). In the context of the Indian media industry, which is both competitive and creatively dynamic, developmental opportunities signal future readiness and personal value alignment, which enhances both brand affinity and job appeal.

Empirical evidence suggests that Gen Z prefers organizations that appreciate or support them, offer constructive feedback, and have a supportive environment. The existence of support and appreciation or recognition of their work implies the cohorts' high regard for achievement and their tendency to "challenge authority, value autonomy and independence, and strive to perform at work" (Sakdiyakorn et al., 2021; p. 7). The findings support existing literature on Gen Zs (Böhlich and Axmann, 2020; Jackel and Garai-Fodor, 2022; Kunal et al., 2022; Pandita, 2022; Halová and Müller, 2023) and on employer attractiveness and branding dimensions among Gen Zs (Parvin, 2021; Prameka et al., 2021; Anggraeni, 2022; Dzhulai et al., 2022; Garai-Fodor and Jackel, 2022; Islamiaty et al., 2022; Kunal et al.,

2022; Nikolić and Lazarević, 2022; Benazić and Ružić, 2023; El-Menawy and Saleh, 2023; Lassleben and Hofmann, 2023).

The opportunity to apply academic and practical skills (application value) was also a significant predictor of both PBV and EI. This aligns with findings from Tanwar and Prasad (2017), who noted that Gen Z highly values roles that offer real-world impact and autonomy in task execution. In media professions where creativity, immediacy, and technical fluency are essential, the ability to "do and learn" is desirable. Thus, application value supports self-efficacy and professional relevance, reinforcing employer attractiveness. Economic value significantly predicted both PBV and EI, but its relative impact was less pronounced than developmental or application values. This finding reinforces the notion that while competitive compensation remains important, Gen Z often evaluates financial incentives within a broader framework of job satisfaction and career meaning (Agarwal and Vaghela, 2018). For media organizations, this implies that salary must be positioned as one component of a holistic employee value proposition rather than the sole attractor.

Moreover, the role of interest value—pertaining to engaging, innovative, and creatively fulfilling work—was positively significant in both models. This is in line with prior research indicating that Gen Z prioritizes purpose-driven and stimulating work environments (Bencsik et al., 2016; Dangmei and Singh, 2018). Given the intrinsic creative demands of media work, interest value is a natural draw for Gen Z, who seek both intellectual stimulation and personal expression in their careers. Interestingly, while social value had a strong positive impact on PBV, it exhibited a negative and significant effect on

TABLE 4 The coefficients table showing the relationship significance between the EmpAt variables and Gen Z's employment intention in Indian media organizations.

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients	SE	T value	p-value	2.5%	97.5%
AvAvg	0.186	0.222	0.030	6.210	0.000	0.127	0.245
DVAvg	0.486	0.475	0.043	11.296	0.000	0.401	0.570
EVAvg	0.262	0.291	0.036	7.327	0.000	0.192	0.332
IVAvg	0.107	0.121	0.033	3.194	0.002	0.041	0.172
SVAvg	-0.082	-0.089	0.037	2.191	0.029	-0.155	-0.008
Intercept	0.353	0.000	0.118	2.981	0.003	0.120	0.586

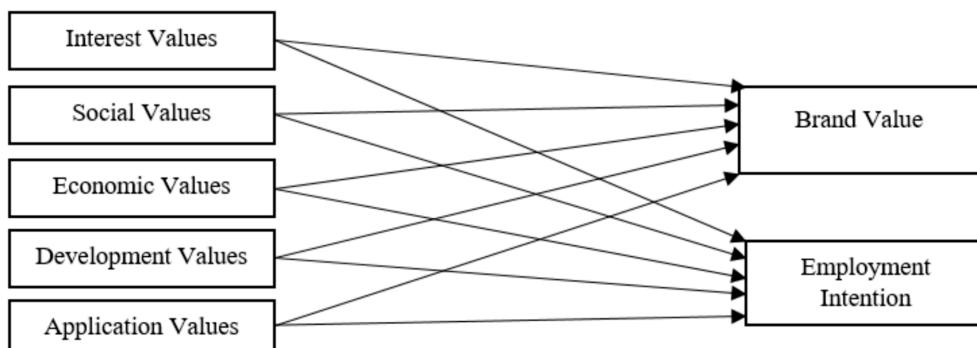


FIGURE 1
Conceptual framework highlighting the variables of the study and their proposed relationship.

TABLE 5 The ANOVA table showing the overall significance of the regression model as the predictor of the dependent variable.

		BVAvg			
R-square		0.886			
R-square adjusted		0.884			
Durbin-Watson test		1.964			
	Sum square	df	Mean square	F	P-value
Total	107.647	311	0.000	0.000	0.000
Error	12.280	306	0.040	0.000	0.000
Regression	95.368	5	19.074	475.293	0.000

employment intention. This counterintuitive finding challenges assumptions about the role of workplace sociability for Gen Z. One possible explanation lies in the “value-signal conflict” hypothesis: a highly social work environment may be perceived as compensatory—masking the absence of more substantive value dimensions like growth or challenge (Priporas et al., 2017). Another interpretation is that Gen Z differentiates between a desirable brand image (enhanced by perceived sociability) and actual career preferences, which lean toward structured, growth-centric roles. This warrants further qualitative exploration to comprehend how Gen Z perceives workplace social dynamics in their career decision-making.

Moreover, the negative relationship between Social Value and Employment Intention can be interpreted through the lens of the ‘go-getter’ sub-unit within Generation Z—a group characterized by ambition, high achievement orientation, and a preference for

growth-driven work environments. For these students, an organizational culture that overemphasizes social aspects may be perceived less as a collaborative strength and more as a signal of a relaxed, non-competitive, or less rigorous work environment. Such perceptions can lower their intention to seek employment in those organizations, indicating that Social Value does not function uniformly across generational segments. This nuanced effect highlights the importance of tailoring employer branding strategies to align with the career priorities of specific talent cohorts.

At the same time, the findings establish that Gen Z's aspiring to join media organizations are not solely swayed by intangible and symbolic attributes like office atmosphere, workplace ethics, and CSR, respectively, as Lassleben and Hofmann (2023), Alekseevna (2024), Bohlich et al. (2022), El-Menawy and Saleh (2023), Parvin (2021) and

TABLE 6 The coefficients table showing the relationship significance between the EmpAt variables and Gen Z's perceived brand value.

Variables	Unstandardized coefficients	Standardized coefficients	SE	T value	p-value	2.5%	97.5%
AvAvg	0.083	0.104	0.022	3.786	0.000	0.040	0.126
DVAvg	0.409	0.419	0.031	13.009	0.000	0.347	0.471
EVAvg	0.181	0.211	0.026	6.936	0.000	0.130	0.233
IVAvg	0.097	0.115	0.024	3.967	0.000	0.049	0.145
SVAvg	0.206	0.234	0.027	7.542	0.000	0.152	0.259
Intercept	0.141	0.000	0.086	1.635	0.103	-0.029	0.312

[Selvakumar et al. \(2024\)](#) stressed, but economic values also play an equally decisive role.

Although the regression models produced high R^2 values for both PBV and EI, these results are supported by thorough diagnostic checks. All Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values were well below the conventional threshold of 5, indicating the absence of problematic multicollinearity. Furthermore, prior validation of the measurement model through CFA and strong per-factor reliability in the methodology reinforces the robustness of these findings. Therefore, the high R^2 values reflect the genuine predictive strength of the EmpAt dimensions in this sample rather than a statistical artifact.

In practical terms, a straightforward interpretive sequence can be observed whereby development, economic, interest, and application act as signals for media organizations to infer Gen Z's perceptions of capability, credibility, and meaningful work, ultimately leading to their higher employment intention and a stronger perceived brand value, while social cues remain more context-dependent.

The above findings necessitate proposing employer branding based on the attractiveness scale to enable media organizations to recruit culturally fit Gen Z employees. Studies on employer branding and attractiveness scale have often highlighted how the former results in the latter ([Alnıaçık and Alnıaçık, 2012](#); [Reis and Braga, 2016](#); [Eger et al., 2019](#)). Some studies have stressed the positive effect of attractiveness on employer branding ([Sivertzen et al., 2013](#); [Arriscado et al., 2019](#); [Ahmad et al., 2020](#); [Easa and Bazzi, 2020](#); [Caputo et al., 2023](#)). However, there is a dearth of similar evidence in the creative industries, such as media organizations, concerning Gen Zs, who would comprise a significant portion of the potential employee demographic, and their preferences differ from those of the other cohorts.

5.1 Implications

Accordingly, this study presents an evidence-informed decoding lens for understanding employer attractiveness signals within media contexts rather than proposing a new theoretical framework, recognizing that the observed effects may differ depending on role design and the dynamics of audiences and platforms. Based on the findings, the study suggested some relevant implications for media practitioners and researchers. The decoding of the parameters also illustrated how the dimensions of employer attractiveness vary based on cultural (Asian/emerging economy) and generational contexts. Furthermore, the decoding integrated insights from different perspectives, thereby enhancing the effectiveness of [Berthon et al.'s \(2005\)](#) EmpAt scale in various

contexts, including cultural and industrial settings. When incorporating the above factors into their branding strategy, creative industry organizations, such as the media, reflect the importance they place on their creative employees' experiences and perceptions ([Mohamad et al., 2025](#)). Such a strategy would also transform their employees into brand ambassadors, increasing the attraction and engagement of top talent among Gen Z.

To ensure Gen Z feels good about themselves, the findings suggested the need for Indian media organizations to be flexible by creating globally distributed teams, where top talents across geographical boundaries can bring out innovative performance by using advanced collaboration tools like Slack and Asana ([Florida et al., 2010](#)). The findings also implied the need for Indian news media to be creative in attracting and retaining top talent among Gen Z, rather than focusing on views, revenue generation, and the dissemination of inaccurate information. Such a strategy might lead to creative employees' branding and, in turn, enhance their reputational capital, ultimately improving their employability. Moreover, the media landscape is rapidly transitioning to digital platforms. Studies have also established Gen Z's knack for tech savviness, innovative thinking, and being digital natives, as well as their preference for new formats like short-form videos, podcasts, and social media content. Therefore, media organizations must adopt innovative branding strategies encompassing these mediums to foster the development and application of values among Gen Zs.

The Happiest Places to Work and [Happiness Research Academy \(2024\)](#) report stated that although Gen Zs across genders are the happiest in workplaces, the total happiness percentage in the media sector is one of the lowest, at 23%. The low happiness percentage is attributed to a skewed work-life balance, inadequate feedback and support, insufficient encouragement for learning and growth, low energy levels, and a lack of meaningful work ([Happiness Research Academy, 2024](#)). Therefore, employers must brand their organizations using innovative and high-quality content, highlighting employee relationships, salary, and allied external benefits and opportunities for knowledge application and sharing. In addition, media organizations must emphasize their focus on employee satisfaction through regular satisfaction surveys, publishing reports on employee engagement and communication transparency processes, and highlighting the company culture on career websites, social media (e.g., LinkedIn), and at job fairs.

Employers should consider sending their employees (not just HR) to job fairs and marketing campaigns as brand ambassadors,

detailing their unique workplace culture, product or service differentiation, innovation, employee well-being (both mental and physical), and strategies applied during a crisis. Companies often highlight innovation, product/service quality, and steps to boost employee productivity. They usually fail to showcase real-life cases of employee experiences and strategies to enhance their wellbeing or happiness quotient. Moreover, most advertisements largely miss employee perspectives, especially in the media sector. Most importantly, the tangible and intangible recognition and appreciation practices adopted by employers should be incorporated into their branding strategies to present a clear picture of the benefits of working within the organization and to what extent employers prioritize their employees. Such practices would foster a sense of pride and self-confidence among potential employees, especially when they observe the enhanced experiences of the existing workforce.

At the same time, media organizations that employ artificial intelligence (AI) in their work processes need to provide regular training to keep Gen Z informed. This is because, although Gen Z is tech-savvy and has positive perceptions toward AI, they prefer environments where they can reskill themselves so as not to feel vulnerable to automation (Deloitte, 2024). Media enterprises must highlight their role in environmental sustainability to cater to Gen Z's emphasis (as the findings imply) on working at an organization that makes one feel good about oneself and fosters a sense of pride. Various studies and reports have emphasized Gen Z's preference for mindful organizations that take actionable steps toward reducing their carbon footprints. Therefore, media organizations must be involved in wastepaper recycling, spreading public awareness on recycling through campaigns and advertising, verifying client adverts on their sites with environmental claims, and inducing dedicated employee training toward the industry's substantial resource consumption, energy use, and waste generation contributing to climate change, resource depletion, and pollution. In addition, media organizations should provide mentorship programs pairing experienced professionals with Gen Z employees. Such training and upskilling initiatives for diverse age groups, along with flexible hiring approaches such as open-ended interviews, interviewing with an open mind, meeting off-hours as per the candidates' availability, and incorporating a practical element into the interview process, would foster a good relationship between Gen Z and colleagues.

5.2 Limitations

This study is constrained by its own set of limitations. First, we have opted to target a specific sample with strict inclusion criteria. However, this decision was made as a control by exclusion to allow the inclusion of participants with some work experience but who are not yet employed, which still limits the generalizability of the findings. While purposive convenience sampling allowed the study to target participants who had relevant academic and internship exposure to the media industry, this sampling strategy inherently limits the generalizability of the findings. The use of social media platforms (e.g., WhatsApp groups) may also have introduced self-selection bias, as participation was voluntary and

likely attracted more engaged or motivated students. Consequently, the results primarily reflect the perspectives of final-year media students from select institutions and may not fully represent the broader population of emerging media professionals. Future research should consider stratified or probabilistic sampling approaches to strengthen external validity and capture a more diverse pool of respondents. Future researchers should also validate the robustness of our findings using a different sample, as not all schools offer internships, and in a different cultural context. Second, our cross-sectional design does not allow for causal inferences. As a first study utilizing this sample, our efforts should serve as a driver for more experimental and longitudinal designs (for example, an experimental vignette study where the dimensions of employees' attractiveness are manipulated). Lastly, we have opted to drop six items so that the measure of attractiveness is more ecologically valid, given our target sample. This should motivate researchers to develop scales that can be used with participants who have yet to gain any work experience, thereby reducing the need for researchers to make these decisions. By eliminating certain items, the content validity of the measure could be compromised.

6 Conclusion

Compared to the original Berthon et al. (2005) scale, the employer attractiveness dimensions in the concerned sampled population showed a different impact on Gen Z's PBV and employment intention in media organizations. This can be explained by cultural differences and the generational cohort's specific conditions (insecurity, economic trends, youth preferences, and needs). New technologies have led to a constantly connected generation, known as the i-generation, including the Gen Zs, who seek different qualities in their employers than earlier generations. The issue requires further exploration to ensure a greater focus on the branding strategies of media organizations and employment intentions among Gen Z. For instance, additional studies are recommended on the perceived importance of the EmpAt and employer branding dimensions among Gen Z. Gender differences in the PBV and employment intention among Gen Zs should also be investigated to discern if male and female potential employees prioritize similar or different attractiveness attributes in media organizations. Similarly, empirical research on employer image and reputation is recommended to examine the issue and, ultimately, the decoding established a comprehensive understanding of the organizational attributes that Gen Z seeks in the media sector.

Most importantly, the findings must be validated and generalized through further primary research on Gen Z's attitude toward media organizations and the factors they find attractive for employment. Conducting studies with sufficiently large sample sizes of Gen Zs and media organizations will unveil holistic perspectives on the actual needs of Gen Z vis-à-vis the latter's employer branding strategies concerning attracting and retaining talent. Taken collectively, the findings elucidate the employer signals that hold the greatest significance for Generation Z talent in the media sector—namely development, economic, interest,

and application values—while indicating that social value exerts a more conditional and context-dependent influence. These findings provide a succinct interpretive guide for employers, delineating the specific value signals that warrant emphasis and the contextual boundaries within which they operate, without advancing a new theoretical framework.

Data availability statement

The raw data supporting the conclusions of this article will be made available upon request to the corresponding author.

Ethics statement

The studies involving humans were approved by Symbiosis Centre for Media and Communication, Symbiosis International Deemed University. The studies were conducted in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. The participants provided their written informed consent to participate in this study.

Author contributions

KI: Data curation, Formal Analysis, Software, Supervision, Validation, Visualization, Writing – original draft, Writing – review & editing. AK: Conceptualization, Investigation, Writing – original draft. RA: Methodology, Resources, Writing – review & editing. NS: Formal Analysis, Software, Validation, Writing – review & editing.

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