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PRIMARY RESEARCH

# How employer branding impacts sustainable performance through brand image and perception, and the moderating role of employee engagement

Moustafa Abdelzaher Elsayed Leila[1], Shahzad Ahmad Khan[2]*

[1,2] University of Buraimi, Al Buraimi, Oman

**Keywords**

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Sustainable performance
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**Abstract**

Research into the effect of employer branding on sustainable performance suggested both the dual mediation of brand image and brand perception, and the moderating influence of employee engagement. Data used in the study were obtained from 302 managers working for 120 companies located in Oman. Statistical analysis performed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) confirmed that employer branding (organisational culture, training & development, and corporate reputation) has a large effect on both the external brand image and the internal brand perception. By treating brand image and brand perception as mediators, this study provides evidence that employer branding positively influences sustainable performance through both internal employee and external market reputation. Additionally, employee engagement was found to play an important moderating role, thereby amplifying the relationship between brand image, brand perception, and sustainable performance. A highly engaged managerial workforce enables companies to achieve the maximum returns from their strategic investments in creating an employer brand. While this study's results support the theoretical underpinnings of Social Exchange Theory, they also extend the existing literature on the practical implications of contingency theory in branding. The results of this research offer executives in Oman valuable insight into the idea that strong performance results from investing in a solid employer brand and developing employee engagement.



## INTRODUCTION

The modern world of business is quite different than what was seen in the past. Companies must be able to strategically adapt to the increased complexity and uncertainty of the environment (Al-Fannah & Elgeddawy, 2025). Research suggests that building a strong employer brand can help companies gain a competitive advantage by enabling them to manage risks associated with an uncertain future (Makumbe, 2025). At the same time, companies continue to intensify their competition to attract talented individuals for a wide range of skilled roles (Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024). Multinational Companies have also found it increasingly difficult to locate individuals with all the required skill sets necessary to perform in their organisations Yousf and Khurshid (2024), thus creating an urgent need for effective employer branding strategies.

Employers are increasingly viewing employer branding as a critical part of their overall strategy to attract and sustain performance (Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024; Vieira et al., 2024). Economic theories posit that people and the value of human capital will be the primary factors in long-term corporate success (Rafaqat et al., 2024). Therefore, it is imperative that organisations have the ability to effectively respond to the growing demands of a rapidly changing global economy through the implementation of an employer branding strategy, which presents one of the most significant challenges for management in achieving their goal of locating and retaining the best employees (Azhar et al., 2024; Javed et al., 2024; Kucherov & Tsybova, 2024). Due to the rapid pace at which companies are producing new information

*corresponding author: Shahzad Ahmad Khan
†email: shahzad@uob.edu.om

technology innovations, more organisations are hiring talent from across the world.

The idea of employer branding is based on the principles of consumer marketing (Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024). In today's business environment, there is an increased emphasis on the 'war for talent' as companies need to attract and retain specialized employees. Before this period, the primary focus of corporate branding was on the customer and product (Vieira et al., 2024). The employer branding process involves developing and communicating an organization's identity (as an employer), which can be defined as the collection of benefits received by employees in exchange for their skills and abilities (Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024).

According to Umair et al. (2024), employee sustainability is the maintenance of one's Health and Well-being over an extended period; however, organisations face many risks and challenges from both external and internal sources. HR execs today are challenged to find and hire the right candidate. More importantly, in order to create an effective and sustainable organisation, we need to build organisations that are environmentally and ecologically sound (Suhardjo & Suparman, 2024). Many factors impact an organization's decision-making and results. Sustainable performance is the measure of how an organisation performs over the long term. It considers the organization's economic, social, and environmental outcomes and will result in sustained competitive advantage and long-term viability (Ramirez-Lozano et al., 2023).

Branding has transitioned from a component to an identifier of an organization, or from a means of increasing product sales (the view of brands in the 1990s), to the most significant intangible asset of an organization (Srinivas et al., 2025; Widjaja, 2025). Branding is one of those things that continues to evolve (Kasianenko, 2025). The concept of brand image has been a subject of great debate and discussion since it was first popularized in academic research and marketing practice (Srinivas et al., 2025; Tahir et al., 2024; Widjaja, 2025). The image of a brand in the minds of the general public, key stakeholders, and potential candidates is known as the brand's current public perception.

Brands are viewed through their target market's eyes, and therefore, how the target market views a brand determines its success in a crowded market (Sukandi & Fazry, 2025). Understanding and managing brand perception is key to creating a distinct, positive identity in customers' minds, thereby fostering customer loyalty and the long-term success of businesses (Mohammad et al., 2024). Brand perception is the collection of perceptions customers have about a brand, including what they think, feel, and say; it affects how customers perceive the brand and their purchasing behaviour (Sijabat et al., 2022). Additionally, brand perception encompasses the overall experience customers have when interacting with a business, as well as the products offered. As such, how consumers perceive a brand will have a large impact on its ability to compete in the marketplace (Martínez-Cevallos et al., 2024). Brand perception differs from brand image: the former relates more to the external perspective of a brand, while the latter focuses on the employee perspective (Kasianenko, 2025). Brand perception is the employer brand, as interpreted by and experienced by employees.

Employer branding provides employees with the chance to demonstrate their loyalty to their employer (Yousf & Khurshid, 2024). It allows employers to support employees in achieving their career goals and aspirations (Suhardjo & Suparman, 2024). A company's ability to create a more engaged workforce ultimately provides businesses with a distinct advantage over their competitors (Jindain & Gilitwala, 2024). Therefore, in this reciprocal relationship, employees need to be engaged to be successful in the workplace and be able to provide the necessary level of engagement (Kwon et al., 2024). However, studies by Fatima et al. (2024) and Gede and Huluka (2024)), and Jindain and Gilitwala (2024) show how the employer brand impacts the current workforce. Employee engagement is a positive, fulfilling state of mind at work characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one's job. Engaged employees are emotionally committed, psychologically present on the job, and willing to put in discretionary effort by doing more than is required of them (Ramirez-Lozano et al., 2023).

The current research fills a gap in the literature by establishing an integrated framework that examines the dual mediation of brand image and brand perception and the moderating effect of employee engagement. The complexity of this relationship has not been well researched, and thus, it does not provide much detail on the causal relationships between human resources strategies and future organizational success. Through this study, we will demonstrate that investing in organizational culture, employee training and development, and corporate reputation is not simply a cost associated with human resources; rather, these investments are the very foundation of sustainable success (Makumbe, 2025; Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024). Companies that have successfully invested in employee engagement will therefore achieve the maximum return on their investment, giving them the best opportunity to gain and maintain a competitive advantage.

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## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESIS DEVELOPMENT

### Employer Branding

Employer brand and its link with diversity and brand marketing have been researched by (Srinivas et al., 2025). Makumbe (2025) indicated that companies should develop their employer brand through techniques that promote employee diversity, adhere to the law and best practices in social justice, and establish good practices for managing diversity throughout the entire organisation. Despite positive demographic diversity in some cases, the authors stated that the primary reason organisations are unable to practice successful diversity management is that demographic diversity reduces gendered employees to an image and their related resources, skills, and potential (Binu Raj et al., 2022). In addition, Ahmed et al. (2022) examined employer brand as a predictor of the future workforce. Kucherov and Tsybova (2024) sought to connect firm-level performance with employer brand. Javed et al. (2024) found that employers use employer branding strategies to successfully recruit and retain employees in a very competitive job market, with the ultimate objective of improved firm-level performance. According to Azhar et al. (2024), employer branding can positively impact both staff recruitment and retention, thereby enhancing an organisation's overall performance. Rafaqat et al. (2024) found that, in terms of employer ratings, employees in developing countries are less influenced by these ratings and are less likely to leave their jobs in response to negative feedback or reviews.

Research supports the notion that companies that pursue an "employer of choice" strategy are likely to enhance their company's external corporate image and reputation (Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024; Vieira et al., 2024). The fundamental elements of the Employer value proposition are the main drivers of external perceptions. Corporate reputation is generally recognized as a result of ongoing performance and ethical behaviour, but it also plays a significant role in the employer branding process, and numerous studies have established that corporate reputation can serve as a positive indicator of the employment candidate's decision regarding whether to join a particular organisation (Binu Raj et al., 2022; Kucherov & Tsybova, 2024). Through this process of differentiation, employer branding has developed a stronger, more unique brand identity than its competitors.

A healthy organization will have a clear organizational culture characterized by strong ethical values and support for employees (Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024). This culture tends to be passed on externally through employees' word of mouth and the visible behaviour of corporations, and, in turn, shapes how people perceive the firm (Srinivas et al., 2025). Likewise, if an organisation makes visible investments in training and development, it will be seen as a sign that it values its human capital and provides opportunities for career advancement. Therefore, the perceived functional and developmental value of the employment brand increases (Yousf & Khurshid, 2024). The perceived advantages attributed to the organisation will enhance its overall brand image, thereby increasing desirability and trustworthiness. Furthermore, empirical research supports this idea, showing that effective employer branding efforts lead to a more favourable external image and increased organisational reputation (Slavkovic & Mirić, 2024).

When companies invest in developing their employees, they tell employees they are committed to helping them build long-term careers (Praditya & Purwanto, 2024). Employees now perceive this investment in their development as a sign that the Company is committed to their long-term success and growth, and therefore view the Company more favourably. This positive perception leads to more satisfied employees and a stronger employer brand (Nasib et al., 2022). Additionally, the strong corporate reputation that companies create for their customers externally is internalized by employees who work for that company. This creates pride and improves employees' self-esteem, leading them to view the Company as an attractive and prestigious place to work (Afiftama & Nasir, 2024). Thus, the combined components of employer brand create the cognitive and emotional filters that employees use to interpret their work environments, thereby having a direct, significant positive impact on employees' overall brand perception of that company (Sukandi & Fazry, 2025; Widjaja, 2025). Thus;

**H1:** Employer branding (organizational culture, training and development, and corporate reputation) has a direct impact on brand image. **H2:** Employer branding (organizational culture, training and development, and corporate reputation) directly affects brand perception.

### The Mediating Role of Brand Image

Employer Branding is a blend of organizational culture, training/development programs, and corporate reputation that reflects how much the company values its human resources (Srinivas et al., 2025). Internally, these activities influence how people perceive us (i.e., our external branding) by creating a brand image. Based on Koh et al. (2022), an exceptional versus ordinary brand image is an intangible resource and, as such, possesses attributes of rarity, value, and great difficulty of replication. Makumbe (2025) found that performance improvements are attributable to employer branding, but the relationships are mediated by employers' ability to create a strong, positive brand image that attracts/retains superior-quality human capital (Araújo et al., 2023). Additionally, because strong branding enables companies to market themselves more effectively to

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create a more favorable first impression of themselves to future employees and customers, strong branding has proven to have many benefits, including lower recruiting costs, increased numbers of qualified job applicants, and higher customer price points due to reputation and/or good will (Praditya & Purwanto, 2024; Sutanto & Kussudyarsana, 2024).

Afiftama and Nasir (2024) examine how stakeholders, including current and potential employees, view an employer. Studies by Praditya and Purwanto (2024) support that business branding has a positive effect on the relationship between employee engagement and psychological empowerment. The authors also pointed out that psychological empowerment improves employees' belief in and confidence in their ability to independently handle challenging tasks and issues, increases employee creativity, and unleashes untapped employee potential. Tahir et al. (2024) studied the relationship between employer branding and the hiring process. In addition, numerous studies on the corporation's reputation and brand image (which are closely related to corporate reputation) have indicated that an employer's positive external perceptions influence the company's financial performance and the overall performance of both tangible and intangible elements, all of which represent sustainable performance. Srinivas et al. (2025), who outlined the strategic alignment between the employer brand and the hiring process, were another major subject examined in the research. According to Widjaja (2025), recruitment branding needs to be integrated seamlessly with workplace recruitment, and the integration must be reliable and consistent to ensure that both are drawing applicants who fit the organization's culture and values. Tan et al. (2022) state that an employer brand increasingly contributes to the success of talent acquisition efforts by helping create a competitive talent pool. Finally, having a strong image of social and environmental sustainability contributes to building organizational legitimacy and trust in the long term, which is vital for maintaining performance (Srinivas et al., 2025; Widjaja, 2025). Thus;

**H3:** Brand image serves as a mediating factor between employer branding (organizational culture, training and development, and corporate reputation) and sustainable performance.

### The Mediating Role of Brand Perception

Employee perceptions of the brand are crucial for helping employees translate the organization's promises to the outside world into actual performance outcomes (Klostermann et al., 2022). When employees have positive perceptions of the organizational culture, characterized by fairness, supportiveness, and alignment with their values, they adopt their employer's brand; this, in turn, leads to a greater sense of belonging and identification with their organization (Kasianenko, 2025; Mohammad et al., 2024). Likewise, when employees perceive that the company's investment in training and development creates a strong psychological contract that leads to greater trust and confidence that the employment relationship will be beneficial in the long run, they view the company as committed to their professional growth (Martínez-Cevallos et al., 2024). It is important to note that these positive perceptions ultimately lead to a superior quality of employee experience. An employer's perception of a particular sector is shaped by their feelings, experience, and understanding of the industry (Kasianenko, 2025). Therefore, perceptions of employers across sectors, the types of employers, their reputations, and opinions expressed about these sectors within personal networks and via social media shape the overall perception of the employer brand. Karampournioti and Wiedmann (2022) analyzed the relational psychological contracts as a means to enhance retention. The results of their research indicate a strong correlation between employer branding practices and employee perceptions of employer branding.

Azhar et al. (2024)) explored how an employee's perception of their employer influences their employer's brand. Vieira et al. (2024) provide insight into the value proposition for young employees and what makes employers attractive, based on brand perception and efforts to attract young talent to their organizations. According to Rafaqat et al. (2024), an organization's appeal to young employees. Positive employee brand perceptions serve as the primary mechanism for shaping employer brands, according to social exchange theory (Cook & Rice, 1998). In return, employees who perceive value in their employer's brand will be more loyal, committed, and willing to put forth discretionary effort, such as organizational citizenship behaviors, which ultimately increase productivity and service quality (Rahi, 2021). A strong perception of an internal brand can also contribute to an organization's ability to retain employees and lower turnover costs by preserving knowledge, which is essential for sustained performance (Makumbe, 2025; Vieira et al., 2024). A positive perception of the employer brand contributes to employee motivation, enabling the employer to achieve performance gains. Thus;

**H4:** Brand perception mediates the relationship between employer branding (organizational culture, training and development, and corporate reputation) and sustainable performance.

### THE MODERATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Companies place heavy importance on their brands because of the reputational and financial incentives they can provide through their products or services (Al Zeer et al., 2023). How-

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ever, even though the strength of an organization's external brand image clearly impacts long-term success, the relationship between a company's Brand image and sustainable performance depends on its workforce's internal engagement (Umair et al., 2024). Employee Engagement is a significant component of an employee's ability to believe in and promote the company's Brand image through increased levels of effort and loyalty (Suhardjo & Suparman, 2024). The better the company performs internally, the stronger the external brand image will be. Disengaged employees will not deliver the same performance results as engaged employees. Therefore, employee engagement will help organizations leverage the performance benefits associated with positive brand images Yousf and Khurshid (2024), as engaged employees will likely deliver the results the brand image promises. Gede and Huluka (2024) would be a company that has built its Brand Image as a leader in innovation and quality. An engaged employee at that company would likely take a proactive role in creating innovative ideas, contribute more than what is required to deliver quality service, and consistently produce exceptional service results, resulting in the transformation of the Brand Image into a sustainable source of operational and financial success (Jindain & Gilitwala, 2024).

On the other hand, when a company's external brand image is well-known and perceived as strong by consumers, but, at the same time, its employees are not engaged and connected to that same brand image, then these employees would likely not be interested in reflecting the company's brand promise, thereby resulting in a difference between what consumers perceive on the outside and what is happening inside the company and its employees, (Kwon et al., 2024). Companies that have a significant gap between their internal and external brand images may frequently experience "brand fatigue" or "greenwashing," especially those with sustainability relevance. As a result, these types of discrepancies can leave companies unable to achieve sustainable performance and cause long-term reputational harm (Ramirez-Lozano et al., 2023). As a result, the higher the percentage of engaged employees who relate to the company's brand image, the greater the positive supporting effect of the company's brand image on its sustainable results (Al Zeer et al., 2023). Numerous studies have shown that when employees are engaged and contribute to the company's sustainability programs, the collective impact is significantly greater than when employees are disinterested in sustainability initiatives, and significant sustainable performance can be realized (Rahi, 2021; Sijabat et al., 2022). Additionally, highly engaged employees can act as strong ambassadors for the company's brand, and their positive recommendations create Word-of-Mouth that supports and reinforces the company's externally perceived brand image, and ultimately, help enhance the company's total legitimacy and ability to maintain its competitive edge (Suhardjo & Suparman, 2024).

The brand's perception of an employer subjectively influences how customers perceive the brand and its offerings (Binu Raj et al., 2022). When employees engage with a brand, they can turn the perception into sustainable performance. Engaged employees use positive perceptions of a brand as an opportunity to improve job performance, thereby strengthening the perceived relationship. Employee engagement is defined as the extent to which an employee demonstrates behavioral energy and allocates discretionary effort based on their positive perceptions (Joglekar & Tan, 2022). When employees perceive a brand positively (e.g., the company is great at developing its employees) and are engaged, they are more likely to use developmental opportunities to apply new skills and innovate while working, resulting in superior, consistent, and sustainable performance (Karampournioti & Wiedmann, 2022). When Employees have a positive perception of a brand but are not engaged, they may have a favorable view of the company but not be motivated to put in effort beyond what is required, which limits the performance benefit associated with that perception. Engaged employees with positive perceptions of the company are credible internal marketers who align their behavior with the company's values and contribute to building internal culture (Azhar et al., 2024; Javed et al., 2024). Thus;

**H5:** Employee engagement moderates the relationship between brand image and sustainable performance.

**H6:** Employee engagement moderates brand perception and sustainable performance.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### Data Collection and Participants

In this empirical study, a quantitative research design was employed to test a proposed structural model examining the relationships among employer branding, brand image, brand perception, employee engagement, and sustainable performance. The research focused on the target population of managers currently employed by a diverse range of businesses located within the Sultanate of Oman. Managers were chosen because they are key players in experiencing the organization's culture and an influential factor in the organization's strategic performance outcomes, thus providing excellent and pertinent information regarding the constructs identified in this study. The total number of completed valid responses collected in this study was 302, consisting of 156 males and 146 females, all of which were included in the Structural Equation Modeling analyses. The data collection process involved a sample of managers from 120 businesses in Oman to provide adequate representation of the various businesses within the Omani business environment.

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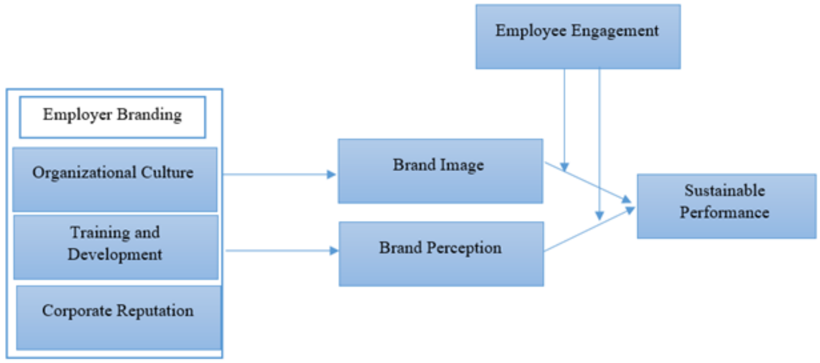


**FIGURE 1.** Conceptual model

### Sample Size and Sampling Method

This research study has used a purposive sampling technique, a nonrandom, judgmental sampling method. Purposeful sampling allowed selecting participants based on specific criteria necessary to provide valid conclusions about the company's employer branding strategy and its effect on the company's sustainable performance. Therefore, the sample consisted of managers from three different levels within the organization (junior, middle, and senior) from each of the 120 organizations included in the study. Additionally, to reduce the risk of sampling bias, the data were collected from a mix of cultural, educational, and income backgrounds and via a variety of channels, including business connections, company databases, and networking sites. Ultimately, 302 valid survey responses were received, exceeding the minimum threshold of 195, thereby validating the sample's suitability for SEM analysis.

### Demographics and Participant Profile

For this research, a sample of 302 Managers from 120 Omani companies was used to analyze the data. The final sample provided a solid foundation for the quantitative analysis of the study. Participants came from a variety of different businesses throughout Oman. The table below (Table 1) provides a more complete breakdown of the demographic, educational, and professional information of the participants, including the type and size of the company they work for, the age of the manager, gender, level of education, and length of service with the company.

**TABLE 1.** Demographic profile of participants

| Gender | Men | 156 | 51.66 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Women | 146 | 48.34 |
| Number of Employees (Enterprise Size) | Small (1-50) | 75 | 24.83 |
| | Medium (51-250) | 128 | 42.38 |
| | Large (>250) | 99 | 32.79 |
| Age | 25–34 Years | 105 | 34.77 |
| | 35–44 Years | 134 | 44.37 |
| | 45+ Years | 63 | 20.86 |
| Education | Bachelor's Degree | 145 | 48.01 |
| | Post-Graduate Degree (Master's/PhD) | 157 | 51.99 |
| Working Experience (within the company) | Less than 5 Years | 91 | 30.13 |
| | 5–10 Years | 129 | 42.72 |
| | More than 10 Years | 82 | 27.15 |

### Data Analysis and Measurements

A five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) was used in the survey for Omani managers. Construct measurements were: employer branding (13 items in 3 sub-dimensions), which included organizational culture, training and development, and corporate reputation (Makumbe, 2025). Brand image was measured using 5 items developed from (Srinivas et al., 2025). Brand perception was measured using 7 items developed from (Srinivas et al., 2025). Employee engagement, a moderating variable, was measured using 8

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items developed from (Yousf & Khurshid, 2024). Sustainable Performance is an endogenous construct that measures an organization's capacity to maintain performance over time using a five-item scale (Elrayah & Semlali, 2023). Data collection was conducted via Google Forms and distributed to respondents in the managerial sample via multiple electronic methods, including email, LinkedIn, and WhatsApp.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modelling (PLS-SEM) was used to analyse the data. SmartPLS 3 was used to conduct the analysis in two steps: first, the outer model was assessed to determine whether or not the instrument was reliable (using Cronbach's alpha and Composite Reliability) and valid (using item loadings and AVE for convergent validity and the Fornell-Larcker and HTMT ratio for discriminant validity) and the second part of the analysis was used to evaluate the hypothesised relationships between the constructs within the inner model. Mediating and moderating hypotheses were tested by evaluating the indirect effect of a predictor on the outcome via a mediator and by including an interaction term in the model (Hair et al., 2024).

## RESULTS

### Measurement Model Assessment

#### *Validity, reliability, and AVE*

Every study uses internal consistency reliability as part of its methodological framework to establish that data gathered from participants (or research subjects) are reliable enough to support conclusions drawn from the resulting analysis. Internal consistency reliability is determined using Cronbach's alpha ($\alpha$) and Composite Reliability (CR). (Hair et al., 2024) consider CR scores greater than or equal to 0.7 to be an adequate level of reliability; therefore, if CR meets this requirement, it indicates that the underlying datasets were generated consistently by individuals who took the survey or answered questions on behalf of others. The results obtained in this research meet the required thresholds to justify the measurements made using the measures listed in Table 2. The measures have been compared with other similar measures to determine how closely they represent the same constructs. Hair et al. (2024) also note that these very specific measures provide evidence of reliability (i.e., convergence). The average amount of variance found between these Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values should be greater than 50% or 0.5. The average variance extracted is shown in Table 2 below, along with the specific measures used to determine convergent and composite reliability.

**TABLE 2.** Assessment of measurement model

| Constructs | Items | Factor Score | $\alpha$ | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employer Branding | Employer Branding | Employer Branding | 0.912 | 0.925 | 0.643 |
| Organizational Culture | OC1 | 0.741 | | | |
| Organizational Culture | OC2 | 0.793 | | | |
| Organizational Culture | OC3 | 0.768 | | | |
| Organizational Culture | OC4 | 0.704 | | | |
| Organizational Culture | OC5 | 0.743 | | | |
| Organizational Culture | OC6 | 0.765 | | | |
| Training and Development | TD1 | 0.749 | | | |
| Training and Development | TD2 | 0.780 | | | |
| Training and Development | TD3 | 0.800 | | | |
| Training and Development | TD4 | 0.750 | | | |
| Corporate Reputation | CR1 | 0.775 | | | |
| Corporate Reputation | CR2 | 0.708 | | | |
| Corporate Reputation | CR3 | 0.782 | | | |
| Brand Image | BI1 | 0.836 | 0.874 | 0.909 | 0.667 |
| Brand Image | BI2 | 0.849 | | | |
| Brand Image | BI3 | 0.866 | | | |
| Brand Image | BI4 | 0.804 | | | |
| Brand Image | BI5 | 0.719 | | | |

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Cont.....

| Constructs | Items | Factor Score | $\alpha$ | CR | AVE |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Employer Branding | Employer Branding | Employer Branding | 0.912 | 0.925 | 0.643 |
| Brand Perception | BP1 | 0.793 | 0.867 | 0.898 | 0.558 |
| Brand Perception | BP2 | 0.793 | | | |
| Brand Perception | BP3 | 0.770 | | | |
| Brand Perception | BP4 | 0.804 | | | |
| Brand Perception | BP5 | 0.753 | | | |
| Brand Perception | BP6 | 0.769 | | | |
| Brand Perception | BP7 | 0.732 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | EE1 | 0.803 | 0.913 | 0.930 | 0.623 |
| Employee Engagement | EE2 | 0.812 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | EE3 | 0.758 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | EE4 | 0.788 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | EE5 | 0.803 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | EE6 | 0.818 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | EE7 | 0.821 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | EE8 | 0.707 | | | |
| Sustainable Performance | SP1 | 0.819 | 0.850 | 0.893 | 0.627 |
| Sustainable Performance | SP2 | 0.816 | | | |
| Sustainable Performance | SP3 | 0.845 | | | |
| Sustainable Performance | SP4 | 0.784 | | | |
| Sustainable Performance | SP5 | 0.787 | | | |

***Discriminant Validity***

To determine if a construct has discriminant validity, Hair et al. (2024) recommend using the Fornell-Larcker criterion as illustrated in Table 3. The ability of this criterion is to determine whether the correlation between a given latent variable and all others exceeds the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). As indicated vertically across the diagonals in Table 3, Hair et al. (2024) state that the roots of the AVE should always exceed the correlation coefficients among constructs. Furthermore, the square roots of the AVEs were used to assess discriminant validity with respect to the latent variables in this study, following Fornell and Larcker (1981), who indicate that the AVEs must exceed the intercorrelations among constructs. Given that the requirements of the Fornell-Larcker procedure have been satisfied in this study, this reinforces the determination of discriminant validity, indicating that the constructs are distinct, as suggested by (Hair et al., 2024).

**TABLE 3.** Discriminant validity

| | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Brand Image | 0.817 | | | | |
| Brand Perception | 0.657 | 0.747 | | | |
| Employee Engagement | 0.668 | 0.589 | 0.789 | | |
| Employer Branding | 0.793 | 0.663 | 0.743 | 0.801 | |
| Sustainable Performance | 0.629 | 0.677 | 0.667 | 0.763 | 0.892 |

**Structural Model Assessment**

***Direct and Indirect Hypothesis Testing***

After verifying the validity and reliability of the theoretical model, the next step in the post-structural modeling process is to assess how well the structural model has been specified relative to the established measurement model of the latent constructs through hypothesis testing (Hair et al., 2024). The structural model shows the relationships between the latent constructs specified in the measurement model and indicates the directionality and the degree (strength) of each relationship (Hair et al., 2024). All hypotheses were supported, as described below. All of the hypotheses must meet the traditional rule of having a p-value of less than 0.05 in order to be considered supported.

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**TABLE 4.** Hypothesis testing results

| Hypothesis | β | *T* Values | *p* Values | Results |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Direct Effect | | | | |
| Employer Branding -> Brand Image | 0.793 | 29.668 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Employer Branding -> Brand Perception | 0.763 | 32.707 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Mediating Effect | | | | |
| Employer Branding -> Brand Image -> Sustainable Performance | 0.607 | 7.289 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Employer Branding -> Brand Perception -> Sustainable Performance | 0.151 | 2.007 | 0.045 | Accepted |
| Moderating Effect | | | | |
| Employee Engagement * Brand Image -> Sustainable Performance | 0.765 | 7.813 | 0.000 | Accepted |
| Employee Engagement * Brand Perception -> Sustainable Performance | 0.198 | 2.053 | 0.041 | Accepted |

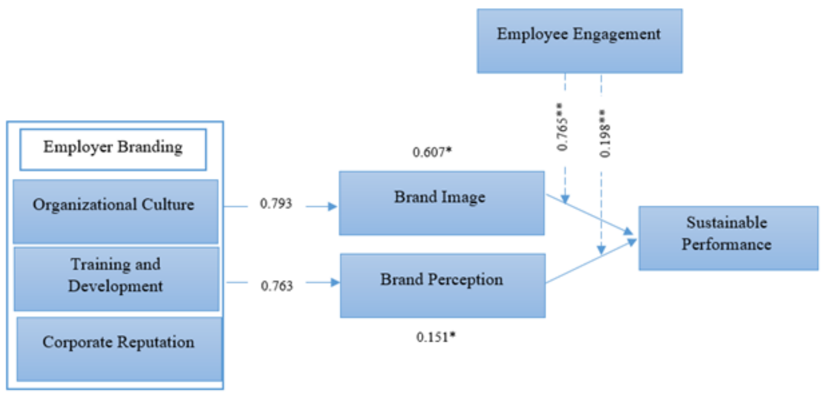


**FIGURE 2.** Structural model

## DISCUSSION

This study examines how an employer brand relates to sustainable performance among managers in Omani organizations, using data from 120 organizations. The paper presents evidence indicating that Employers' Branding effects relate to sustainable performance indirectly through brand image, brand perception, and employee engagement. The results provide insight into strategically managing human resource development.

This finding provides evidence in support of previous research (Makumbe, 2025; Srinivas et al., 2025; Sukandi & Fazry, 2025) regarding the relationship between employer branding (organizational culture, training and development, and corporate reputation) and brand image. The employer brand creates sustainable performance by building a positive brand image and reputation that allows differentiation from competitors in the marketplace. A strong relationship between corporate reputation and brand image was found in the Omani context. As part of an employer brand strategy, corporate reputation provides a strong signal to external markets and attracts external stakeholders. This supports the development of a strong brand image, which draws employees into the brand, thereby creating sustainable performance. Therefore, the corporate reputation of Omani firms increases their attractiveness to external shareholders and existing employees.

Employer branding has a profound influence on employees' perception of their employer brand and the importance of developing an employee value proposition (Kasianenko, 2025; Srinivas et al., 2025). These findings establish the importance of employees regularly living out the value. Managers who view their organization as having a positive culture and a commitment to employee training and development will have a positive view of the employer brand based on their own experiences. Therefore, there needs to be a high degree of consistency between what an organization projects externally and employees' actual experience regarding employer branding. Managers' positive views regarding the employer brand enable them to act as advocates for the organization and support organizational alignment.

According to this study, brand image serves as a bridge between employer branding and sustainable performance. These findings support the suggestion that intangible assets, such as a strong brand image, give firms an advantage in maintaining long-term competitive advantage. Through their employer branding initiatives, companies create an intangible resource (a strong brand image), which in turn provides the mechanism for

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an increase in long-term performance. A company's positive external brand image allows it to attract higher-quality talent and resources, reduces uncertainty within the marketplace, and increases the level of trust placed in it by its stakeholders, all of which help to stabilize its financial and operational performance over the long run the definition of sustainable performance according to (Praditya & Purwanto, 2024; Sutanto & Kussudyarsana, 2024). The external halo effect associated with a strong employer brand is an important factor in translating company investments into financial returns.

Brand perception played an important role in mediating the relationship between employer branding and sustainable performance. Hence, it serves an integral purpose in helping an individual understand their beliefs and values internally through the concepts associated with branding; otherwise, they will fail. While brand image provides external value, brand perception drives internal motivation and subsequently leads to increased levels of loyalty, commitment, and willingness to exert additional effort (i.e., additional effort). According to Srinivas et al. (2025), being able to "see" how the brand is perceived leads individuals to become increasingly engaged in their jobs and more motivated to support and serve customers. As a result of this positive view, employees are less likely to leave their jobs and will continue to perform in ways that promote continued performance over time, thus allowing for sustainable performance to be achieved. Overall, sustained performance is driven by an engaged workforce that believes in and lives by the brand promise.

The effect of employee engagement as a moderating factor shows that it magnifies the performance benefits associated with positive brand images, which are not automatic when an employee has one. Organisations must use engaged employees to fulfil the promise associated with their brand image, even though organisations that have established a solid external reputation due to a positive Brand Image usually enjoy respect from outside of the organisation (Suhardjo & Suparman, 2024). In contrast, having a positive Brand image but no employee engagement will ultimately lead to a disconnect between external expectations and day-to-day reality, creating a greater barrier to achieving long-term, sustainable success. However, if managers are highly engaged, they act as brand ambassadors, bridging the company's perceived external image with what is actually delivered internally and maximising the return on their brand's reputation.

Ultimately, the research supports the idea that employee engagement is a central moderator of the relationship between a company's brand perception and sustainable performance levels. The actions and enthusiasm represented within employee engagement indicate what the company will achieve to realize its mission. Very high levels of employee engagement will create the conditions for achieving positive results that reinforce the organization's position as a model of sustainable performance, i.e., innovation leading to consistent quality (Suhardjo & Suparman, 2024). The implication of the interaction between brand perception and employee engagement is that the best chance for an organization to sustain a high level of success over time lies in having Managers with exceptional brand perception and a strong commitment to working hard for the organization.

## CONCLUSION

The correlation between sustainable performance and employer branding for managers at 120 companies in Oman. The findings validate the proposed theoretical model, with brand image and brand perception serving as dual mediators, and employee engagement as a moderator. Data from 302 valid questionnaires provided evidence of the reliability and validity of the modified structured questionnaire, along with excellent model fit indices. The sample population of 302 exceeded the minimum requirement of 195 for SEM analysis. The results indicate that employer branding has a positive and direct influence on both external brand image and internal brand perception. Brand image and brand perception fully and partially mediate the relationship between employer branding and sustainable performance, indicating that employers must enhance their reputations externally and create positive intern experiences as part of their branding strategy to achieve long-term organizational success. Employee engagement serves as a significant moderator, strengthening the links between brand image, brand perception, and sustainable performance. This implies that effective branding maximizes value for organizations when the managerial workforce is highly engaged. The authors also recommend exploring other important Omani industries (e.g., healthcare, banking, and hospitality) and using more than just the employer brand strategy and its relationship with sustainable performance in determining how these various types of employer branding factors (e.g., compensation, work content, leadership style) affect sustainable performance in Omani organizations. Findings from this paper should provide a strong base from which the authors will generalize to illustrate the importance of a well-designed employer-brand strategy in facilitating an organisation's ability to execute its goal of long-term, consistent organisational success.

## IMPLICATIONS

The contribution of this research lies in its theoretical dimension and in advancing the literature on strategic human resource

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management, organizational branding, and performance theory. The findings support the empirical validation of social exchange theory through an organizational branding lens. The application of the SET Theory suggests that employees value and respond to positive or favourable actions made by the employer organisation (Cook & Rice, 1998). The findings confirm a positive relationship between employer branding, operating at both average and high levels of brand perception, and subsequent sustainable performance, suggesting that an employee's response to their employer organisation's favourable actions is reflected in the high levels of effort and commitment required to achieve long-term organisational success. The research extends the theoretical understanding of branding performance by developing a more comprehensive three-way conceptual model that simultaneously tests the dual mediating roles of brand image and brand perception in the relationship between employer branding and sustainable performance, an area that has typically been examined as a one-way influence only. Thus, the study contributes to the understanding of the translation of branding into performance by highlighting that the success of an external brand reputation must be complemented by positive internal brand experiences. The confirmation that the degree to which strong brand image and strong brand perception contribute positively to strategic value does not remain static; their positive contributions are enhanced and realized only when levels of employee engagement are high, thereby enhancing the performance of brand-related models.

The outcomes from the current research provide valuable practical applications for stakeholders in organizations, particularly for the executives and managers of companies in Oman. It is important for Omani executives to create a compelling employer brand and utilize it to develop their primary business goals and maintain business performance continuity. Creating a compelling employer brand means the organization's overall success is not only based on the quality of its product(s) but also on its identity as an employer. Additionally, the evidence on the mediating effect of brand perception indicates that executives and managers need to ensure value congruence to create a relationship between organizational values and employee experience. This can be accomplished by improving internal communication, creating a positive employee experience, and ensuring fair and equitable development opportunities are available. Significantly, the evidence on the moderating effect of employee engagement assigns management a specific responsibility to foster a high level of employee engagement. Even if an organization has an excellent brand image and/or positive brand perception, it will not achieve maximum sustainable performance without creating a highly engaged employee population. Therefore, managers will need to develop and implement strategies to maximize employees' vigor and allegiance, transforming positive feelings into the desired discretionary efforts necessary to achieve and sustain long-term competitive advantage, such as reducing employee turnover or attrition.

## LIMITATIONS

As time restrictions and data collection at a single point in time limit the identification of cause-and-effect relationships among the concepts in this study, additional longitudinal research would validate the effect of Employer Branding on Sustainable Performance. The relationships were shown to be directional using PLS-SEM; therefore, additional longitudinal studies with repeated testing would confirm their causal nature. In this current research, data were collected from 120 individual employees working in various and unique Omani organisations; thus, results should be treated with caution when considering their applicability to organisations and businesses in any other Middle Eastern countries or to countries outside of the Middle East where cultural differences exist in areas such as management, trust, and performance appraisal. In addition, this research relied solely on a structured questionnaire to elicit managers' opinions, thoughts, and feelings. As a result, managers may have answered questions based on their personal opinions about the data they provided or may have interpreted the questions differently than intended. Therefore, while an attempt was made to ensure reliability and consistency, inherent bias stemming from managers' perceptions arises when using a structured questionnaire. Lastly, the reliance on purposive sampling should be kept in mind as it limited the identification of the statistical population for this research and therefore the limitations associated with non-probability sampling.

The significant findings in this study and the limitations identified offer several opportunities for future research to make an even greater contribution to both the academic and managerial domains. Future research should use longitudinal studies to examine the development of employer branding strategies over time and their subsequent impact on sustainable performance. This will provide a stronger basis for establishing causal relationships between the constructs. Due to the clear potential for use in both a managerial and an academic context, the framework developed in this research should be replicated in other industries in Oman and throughout the region with significantly different performance measures and human resource characteristics to demonstrate the relevance of the framework to other sectors, for example, healthcare, banking, and hospitality. Research should include additional predictors of employer branding to provide insight into how they influence initial em-

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ployer branding, which drives performance, such as the impact of top management leadership (identified as a strong predictor), CSR initiatives/activities, and POS. The authors recommend conducting cross-cultural studies with larger samples across multiple countries to allow broader generalizability of the findings and to provide greater insight into the boundary conditions of the proposed model regarding the mediating effect of brand perception/image and the moderating effect of employee engagement.

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