E-Reputation Management as a Mechanism for Attracting and Retaining Talent

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Abstract:

The reputation of an organisation has shifted from traditional notions to electronic concepts linked to the advancement of information and communication technology. These transformations have introduced numerous concepts that organisations must address and adapt to by maintaining vigilance and responsiveness, utilising them to create added value. This paper aimed to review the significance of electronic reputation management in attracting talents and competencies from the labour market, with a narrative approach based on multiple relevant sources. The paper concluded that effective management of an organisation's electronic reputation markedly enhances its ability to attract talented, experienced, and competent individuals. However, the research also cautions against relying exclusively on digital platforms for managing organisational reputation.

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Introduction:

Reputation is an important strategic asset indispensable for an organization in its dealings with different audiences. The organization's future relies on its reputation with the public, creating a distinction between competing organizations in today's world (Al-Salhi, 2020). Organizations manage their image by creating programs to enhance and improve their image with external audience. The mental image is the starting point that shapes the audience's perception of the organization, identifying its survival and growth in the market. This mental image is formed only through fulfilling the organization's identity with its clients, reflecting that internal image on the external environment, and forming the reputation in the shape of values attributed to the organization, such as authenticity, honesty, fairness, and legal and ethical commitment.

In a world where the pace of technological advancement is growing, and the threads of digital communication are intertwining, the concept of electronic reputation and its management has appeared as a strategic tool not only for protecting the electronic identity of organizations but also as an effective mechanism for attracting and recruiting the brightest and most creative minds. A strong electronic reputation not only depicts the organization's image in the virtual world's mirror but also serves as a magnet that attracts talents and competencies, particularly those that have grown up within the internet generation, capable of driving innovation and development forward, thereby opening doors to fulfilling leadership and excellence in the workplace. This research paper will attempt to answer the fundamental question: **How can managing an organization's electronic reputation be a tool for attracting and retaining talents from the labor market?**

Addressing this problem statement originates from the significance of digital transformation, the information revolution in contemporary organizations, the spread of the web, and electronic communication. Seeking to clarify different concepts associated with electronic reputation and talent attraction, as well as the mechanism that attracts and retains talents from the labor market through the effect of managing the organization's electronic reputation, the study discussed the two variables—electronic reputation management and talent attraction—within two main sections according to a narrative approach based on multiple relevant sources., focusing on electronic reputation management as a crucial mechanism for attracting talents from the labor market.

1. Organizational Reputation and Talent Attraction: General Concepts

Organizational reputation is regarded as one of organizations' most significant assets, playing a crucial role in attracting outstanding talents and fulfilling their strategic objectives. Individuals' perceptions and impressions of the organization are built on numerous factors, often forming a primary driver for their decisions about joining the organization or seeking other job opportunities.

1.1. The Nature of Organizational Reputation

Definition: Harrison sees organizational reputation as a (soft) concept, referring to the general estimation by internal or external stakeholders who assess the organization relied on its past actions and the likelihood of future behavior. An organization may have slightly various reputations with different stakeholders relying on their experiences with the organization or what they have heard from others. Al-Dhabhawi indicates that reputation is the organization's ability to apply strategies, goals, and internal processes and adapt to the external environment. It is also how stakeholders perceive the organization's image, reflecting its different activities' procedures and processes. Charles Fombrun defines *reputation* as the "sum of perceptions" of past institutional activities and future visions that improve the organization's attractiveness to key audiences compared to its competitors (Boumachaal, 2021, p. 697). Therefore, the organizational reputation of an organization is a concept that demonstrates the organization's overall image and way of operation. It encompasses the opinions of different stakeholders, such as consumers, clients, the market, and the industry. The organization's reputation can be positive or negative and may change over time due to several factors, such as news stories or customer reviews and evaluations.

Attention should be paid to the overlap between organizational image, identity, and reputation concepts. Argenti and Drukenmiller raised a set of questions to clarify the differences between these three concepts (Badri & Ziada, 2021):
  - Organizational Identity: Who are we?
  - Organizational Reputation: What are the attributes ascribed to it?
  - Organizational Image: What are the public's current impressions of the organization?

Organizational identity is a complex concept that is critical in forming the organization's behavior and interactions with its environment. This concept encompasses a set of components that the organization's members believe are:
  - Central: Identifying the essential and crucial aspects of the organization's identity.
  - Distinctive: Differentiating the organization from other organizations.
  - Permanent: Relatively stable over time.

On the other hand, the organizational image includes impressions that the public shapes quickly through communications and changing programs. In contrast, reputation is a deeper process that expands and progresses through broadening the image and experiences, meaning that reputation is more comprehensive than the organizational image (Boutarfa & Laalawi, 2021).

1.2. The Significance of Organizational Reputation.

The importance of organizational reputation is demonstrated through the following points:

- Foster confidence in society: Through good reputation building an organization can be trusted by its clients, partners, and the society thus ensuring customer loyalty.

- Improved competitiveness: A good image, which is a major asset, is what sets an organization in crowded markets, leading to the purchase of products and services by customers.

- Talent magnet in the job market: Organizations of good repute are the ones absorbing workers who are most competent and who are in the search of a reliable and a respectful work environment.

- Make it easy to get support from investors and collaborators: A solid reputation will not only ease the way for investors to provide financial support but also make them more willing to partner with you or provide you with financial backing.

- Supports the effectiveness of marketing communication: With a luxury of respect in the market, the reputation of an organization will be positively reflected in the content and idea of advertisements, increasing the delivery rate and the effect.

- Crisis resilience: Through a good reputation, an organization can enjoy a huge pool of societal trust to win consumer confidence and thus be able to control crises and their subsequent damage.

- Promotion of innovation and extension: Through the identity of a good name, one escapes the difficulty of market acceptance and therefore the ease of innovation and growth of products through it.

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1.3. Measuring Organizational Reputation: There are three main schools of thought from which researchers derive their perspectives on the concept of organizational reputation:

- **Evaluation School:** This school sees organizational reputation as assessing the organization's productivity from the perspective of key stakeholders (financial analysts, investors, shareholders, and top managers), usually concentrating on financial results.
- **Impression School:** According to the proponents of this school, organizational reputation is identified by the impression the organization creates among individuals (customers and/or employees) relied on marketing activities, human resources, and organizational communications.
- **Relational School:** Organizational reputation introduces the gap between the perspectives of internal stakeholders (identity) and external stakeholders (image). The organization's assessment depends on the views of different stakeholders, formed by the relationship between identity and image and between image and organizational reputation.

Based on these schools of thought, researchers have developed numerous models to measure organizational reputation, summarized as follows (Touam, 2021, p. 223):

- **America's Most Admired Companies (AMAC) Model:** This model assesses five hundred (500) of the most significant American companies based on financial results, best performance, and turnover rate. The evaluation is carried out on a scale of 1 to 10, relied on eight attributes: creativity, management quality, long-term investment, social responsibility, human resource management, product and service quality, financial performance, and the use of corporate assets.
- **World's Most Admired Companies (WMAC) Model:** Developed in 1997, the WMAC model encompasses a more considerable number of the world's most admired companies, totaling 1500. The evaluation is grounded in the WMAC model attributes, with the addition of the company's effectiveness at the international level.
- **Corporate Reputation Quotient (CRQ) Model:** Developed in 1998 by the Reputation Institute in collaboration with Interactive Harris, this model assesses companies based on their emotional appeal, products and services, financial results, vision and leadership, workplace environment, and social responsibility.

- **Rep Trak™ Pulse Model:** An in-depth study of most models for measuring corporate reputation demonstrates a focus on the factors impacting corporate reputation. Thus, the International Reputation Institute tried to develop an emotion-based measure of corporate reputation, separating reputation drivers from the measure itself, named RepTrak™ Pulse. According to this model, the criteria for assessing corporate reputation are products and services, innovation, workplace environment, governance, citizenship, leadership, and financial performance.

1.4. Dimensions of Organizational Reputation.

The difficulty researchers encountered in trying to define the concept of organizational reputation resulted in significant challenges in identifying the dimensions of organizational reputation, which can offer indicators for measuring reputation. Each study depended on various dimensions (Bahri & Kharmouche, 2021, p. 37). Although there is agreement on many dimensions, there are differences in employing some. We will attempt to emphasize the most crucial dimensions of organizational reputation through the following table:

Table (2): Key Models for Determining Reputation and Its Dimensions

Model	Dimension
(AMAC) Model	Creativity, quality of management, long-term investment, social responsibility, human resources management, quality of products and services, financial performance, utilization of corporate assets.
(WMAC) Model	Creativity, quality of management, long-term investment, social responsibility, human resources management, quality of products and services, financial performance, utilization of corporate assets; effectiveness of the organization at the international level.
(CRQ) Model	Emotional appeal, products and services, financial results, vision and leadership, work environment, and finally social responsibility.
Rap Trak ™ Pulse Model	Products and services; creativity; work environment; governance; citizenship; leadership; financial performance.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on (Touam, 2021, p. 224)

Through our examination of the dimensions mentioned above in the table of models, we find that the dimensions of financial performance, social responsibility, and quality are recurring in all the models listed in the table.

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Therefore, these will be relied upon as the basic dimensions of the organizational reputation for the electronically managed organization. Through these dimensions, we will study their expected effect on attracting talented individuals to the organization.

1.5. The Concept of Talent and Talent Management

- **Talent** is as a set of skills and abilities that an individual or group possesses, allowing them to contribute to the organization. It is a complex mix of skills, knowledge, cognitive abilities, and potential, or the equation consisting of (competence x commitment x engagement) (Al-Murkahi & Al-Mahmoud, 2018, p. 855). Michaels and others define *talent* as "the sum of a person's abilities – their intrinsic gifts, skills, knowledge, experience, intelligence, judgment, attitude, character, and drive. It also encompasses their ability to learn and grow" (Andrés, 2010, p. 10).

Accordingly, talent refers to those individual abilities and potentials that distinguish the talented person from others and through which they offer added value in their work or the job they are assigned.

- **Talent Management**

The term "Talent Management" was formed by David Watkins when he published an article entitled "The War for Talent" in 1998. Initially, this management approach appeared to enhance the recruitment process and develop the necessary skills to meet current organizational needs. Over time, it evolved alongside its growing responsibilities and was integrated with the organization's goals and strategy. Therefore, talent management moved from merely an administrative process, evolving into ongoing organizational practices that lead to specific strategic outcomes.

Therefore, *talent management* can be defined as a set of processes and practices undertaken by the organization to retain, develop, and improve its talented human resources, motivate them, and consider them valuable assets. It also seeks to attract more talented, distinguished, and efficient resources, develop and retain them, and empower them to fulfill the highest possible level of effectiveness and achieve the organization's strategic goals.

- **The Talent and Competence Market in the Digital Transformation Era**

The labor market is currently undergoing profound transformations due to the considerable progress in technology and the widespread adoption of digital transformation. These transformations bring challenges and opportunities that cast shadows over the talent and competence market. Attracting talent is one of the biggest issues at present, as the priorities of the millennial workforce differ entirely from traditional expectations. They seek jobs that provide flexibility, feedback, recognition, and meaningful work. Companies have started competing for the best talents to attract skilled employees, thereby requiring going beyond competitive salaries and benefits to introduce themselves as the employer of choice.

2. Electronic Reputation Management and Its Effect on Attracting Talent

Electronic reputation management has become a significant component for organizations' success, as many believe it directly impacts their ability to attract outstanding talent. The following concepts identify the effect of electronic reputation management practices on the behaviors and decisions of job candidates concerning joining the organization. By analyzing the digital interactions between the organization and candidates, we seek to understand better the factors that contribute to building a positive reputation that can attract the most suitable talent for the organization.

2.1 Concept of Electronic Reputation

The concept of electronic reputation is relatively new and has witnessed limited discussion by foreign professionals, with insufficient theorization by specialists. Opinions vary on defining digital reputation, and among the definitions, we find that *digital reputation* is defined as "the image of the content produced and distributed by the organization and internet users through blogs, video-sharing platforms, and social networks" (Ghalab & Nouari, 2022). It is an integral part of the organization's real-world reputation but emerges from digital means.(Taleb & Soualha, 2022, p. 37). Thus, the concept of electronic reputation is associated with the concept of information. Several studies have discussed the topic of organizational reputation results from how individuals process information to create a mental image of the organization. These studies highlights the cognitive and emotional aspects of information recipients, or the organization's target audience, with the internet and different social platforms acting as intermediaries for capturing and transmitting this information and signals.

2.2 Elements of Organizational Reputation in the Online Space.

Sancilio and Estrab demonstrated that an organization's online reputation includes the following components(Boutarfa & Laalawi, 2021):

- **Corporate Messages:** These are the messages the organization broadcasts to users of different social media channels, whether in the form of written status updates, images, video files, or comments by those managing the organization's social media channels to express its news and the various events it experiences.
- **Customer Sentiment Messages:** They can be defined as customers' attitudes towards the organization, expressed through their messages in the form of shared comments, whether negative, positive, or neutral.
- **Degree of Interaction with Customers:** This includes the overall management of content on social media, encompassing the number of responses, timing, and speed of responses. It can be measured by the number of responses from the organization compared to the number of inquiries. Thus, the public relations management observes and monitors the organization's website to apply its goals and programs in maintaining its reputation and addressing any negative issues that may emerge from a user by handling and responding to them and interpreting what can be clarified.

2.3. Managing Online Reputation Utilizing the Internet and Social Networks

The Internet and social media have significantly affected and transformed the relationship between organizations and their stakeholders. These platforms help organizations communicate with people, lead projects, share information about policies, products, and services, offer immediate responses, harness positive public sentiment, and build relationships. Furthermore, social media platforms offer stakeholders with a platform to engage with and impact other members of the cyber community on matters of mutual interest (Kaul, et al., 2015).

Social media has become a powerful tool for recruiters to engage with potential candidates and build a solid employer brand. Platforms like LinkedIn, Twitter, and even Instagram are now integral to recruitment. Organizations utilize these platforms to showcase their culture, emphasize employee success stories, and interact with the professional community.

3.3. The Impact of Electronic Reputation on Talent Attraction

- **Impact of Financial Performance on Talent Attraction**
  Financial performance refers to an organization's optimal usage of available financial resources, enabling it to fulfill its financial objectives. Good financial performance includes an integrated and convergent system across all its departments, reflecting the organization's ability to control its activities and fulfill

its goals. This sends messages of security and reassurance to all stakeholders related to the organization, whether partners, stakeholders, suppliers, employees, or potential recruits.

Good financial performance of the organization manifests in numerous aspects and indicators that demonstrate the health and stability of the organization from a financial perspective, impacting all other departments and functions. The most significant of these aspects are:

- High profitability: Consistently fulfilling high net profits and increasing profitability over time.
- Financial liquidity: The ability to meet short-term financial obligations and have sufficient cash flow to cover emergency expenses.
- Financial stability: Low debt-to-equity ratio and a good balance between debt and equity.
- Dividend payout ratio: Regular and increasing dividends to shareholders and sustainability in dividend distribution without affecting business growth.
- Self-financing capability: Generating sufficient operational cash flows to fund operations and investments without excessive dependence on external financing.

Good performance leads to increased allocations to employee training and development, expanded educational programs, higher wages, raised incentives and bonuses, and improved work-life balance programs in organizations. These crucial factors are pivotal in prospective individuals' decisions concerning their career choices. Organizations with solid financial performance demonstrate the ability to offer higher job stability, reassuring potential employees about the long-term security of their positions.

Furthermore, through incentives and bonuses, good financial performance allows organizations to provide attractive compensation packages, encompassing competitive salaries, bonuses, and annual raises, making them more attractive to talent. Financial solid performance also enables investment in research and development, appealing to talents seeking to work in an environment that continuously innovates and delivers new products and services. Moreover, strong financial performance enables organizations to invest in creating a supportive and

motivating work environment, including well-equipped offices, modern technologies, and employee comfort amenities.

Nowadays, good financial performance contributes to creating an attractive and engaging work environment, aiding the organization to attract and retain top talent in the market.

- **The impact of social responsibility on the talent acquisition process**

Social responsibility for business organizations refers to the responsible and accountable behavior of organizations, not only towards shareholders but also towards other stakeholders, encompassing employees, customers, government, partners, local communities, and future generations. The promotion of activities associated with social responsibility and their spread through the digital space improves the organization's image in the minds of community members as an effective and positive social model. Furthermore, it increases the levels of satisfaction and pride among its employees, thereby promoting loyalty and a sense of belonging, making them ambassadors for the organization's image and contributors to building a good reputation (Rabhi, 2020, p. 96) .

Employees and job seekers today prefer organizations that share their values and contribute to community events. For instance, Google is regarded as one of the best places to work due to its corporate social responsibility initiatives such as offering free meals, healthcare, education for its employees, supporting diversity and inclusion, and donating to various causes. Thus, Google has not only improved employee satisfaction and retention but also attracts the most talented and innovative individuals in the industry.

Accordingly, social responsibility is a crucial and significant component in building a positive organizational reputation that attracts the best talents from the labor market. Its effect increases and becomes more important when digital communication tools are used to spread its values and deliver its messages to the organization's audience. Rapid reach, interactivity, and diverse content provide the organization with an advantage in winning over the best human resources seeking better job opportunities.

- **Impact of Quality on Talent Attraction Process**

Quality is a major factor of an organization that all organizations should willingly accept and perform not only in the sense of the products and the services but also in their work processes and operational activities. Quality is not only about products or services, but also about work processes and organizational operations. When a business receives high ratings from the social and professional

crowd for one of its products, it will be on the right path and it will win the trust of customers, the public, and other stakeholders. On the contrary, companies that fail to come up with effective quality strategies leave their market status at risk and eventually see a decline that is reflected in their customer, shareholder, and employee relationships and the lack of support and trust in them.

The era of communication dominated by social networks has disrupted the monopoly of organizations the sole communicators with users. Regardless of their role, whether job applicants or employees, individuals can freely express their opinions thanks to Web 2.0, making their views more credible than those of managers and corporate advertising. The rapid pace of social networks can generate negative buzz ("BAD BUZZ") that can destroy expensive advertising campaigns within a day. For instance, in 2011 when a cashier at a significant market threatened to be fired for utilizing discount coupons that upset a customer. She retained her job after the incident gained strong traction on social networks, calling for a boycott of the market's brand (Bourouaine & Belkasi, 2022, p. 152).

According to a survey carried out by CareerBuilder, 75% of job seekers consider the employer brand before applying for a job. The concept of employer brand indicates the mental image that employers build about themselves in the minds of present and potential employees (Dvorakova, Jikova, & Kralova, 2019). The employer brand is a significant part of building organizational reputation in general. It helps guide the positions of employees, recruits, and job seekers. Most of the ideas and perceptions these individuals hold about the organization are mainly related to the image they have shaped of the employer (Metali, 2020, p. 229).

The link between the employer brand and its reputation significantly impacts individual career advancement. Employees form opinions about their work experiences throughout their employment, encompassing factors such as communication, support systems, and career prospects. These impressions affect their understanding of the organization's commitment to employee welfare, impacting their job satisfaction, motivations, and final decision whether to stay or leave the company. For those on a job-seeking journey, these considerations are significant in deciding whether the workplace conditions and employer promises are positive or negative. A study conducted in March 2011 associated with HR consulting and marketing networks involved over 100,000 students and graduates, where 80% of respondents stated they would apply to an organization simply because they heard positive feedback about it (Rabhi, 2020, p. 97).

(Durouni, 2011, p. 22)Introduced a model of four factors that affect the organization's attractiveness to job candidates. These elements encompass interviewee behavior, organizational reputation, organizational attributes (such as salaries and working conditions), and fit (organization/candidate/job). Therefore, a candidate's perception of the organization (its reputation) influences every step of the recruitment process. This underscores the significance of reputation as an asset for the employer, allowing them to improve their attractiveness and highlighting the necessity of focusing on employer branding as a competitive advantage for achieving long-term loyalty and retaining employees.

For instance, Apple is known as one of the most innovative companies in the world, including an attractive and inspiring organizational reputation. Its reputation is relied on numerous elements.

Table 2: Elements of Apple's Reputation

Reputation elements forApple	
Innovation	• Apple is known for its innovative products and new technologies that revolutionize the industry, such as the iPhone, MacBook, and Apple Watch.
High quality	• Apple products are known for their high quality, elegant design, and ease of use. • The company is committed to providing a superior user experience, which enhances customer loyalty and contributes to the company's reputation.
Work culture	• Apple focuses on creating a work culture that promotes collaboration and creativity. • Employees at Apple work in an environment that encourages creative thinking and problem-solving.

Source: Prepared by the researcher based on the internet.

In addition to these dimensions, Apple's reputation is supported by a set of benefits, offered to its executives and employees, summarized in the following points:

- **Professional Development:** Apple provides continuous training and development programs for its employees. It offers opportunities for professional growth and internal mobility between different departments, and it provides educational resources such as a vast library of training courses, workshops, and online educational programs.
- **Work-Life Balance:** Apple offers flexible work options, encompassing remote work for some positions. It prioritizes generous paid leave options and encourages employees to take breaks and relax.
- **Health and Well-being Benefits**: Apple provides comprehensive health insurance plans covering medical, dental, and vision care. The company also offers support programs for mental health and counseling and fitness facilities at some locations.
- **Diversity and Inclusion:** Apple seeks to improve diversity and inclusion in the workplace. It fosters equal opportunities for all employees regardless of their backgrounds, launching programs and initiatives to promote diversity in hiring and leadership development.
- **Environment and Sustainable Economy**: Apple is committed to environmental sustainability, working to reduce its carbon footprint and relying on renewable energy sources. It fosters eco-friendly practices in producing and designing its products, attracting employees who are passionate about environmental issues.

Thanks to these factors and benefits, Apple has gained fame and built a reputation, making it a preferred destination for many global talents and professionals. Apple employees take pride in working for a company that makes a difference in the industry and positively affects people's lives worldwide. Apple's dynamic and supportive work environment motivates employees to deliver their best and contribute to its continuous success.

3.4. Constraints and Challenges of Managing Organizational Reputation Online

Brands cannot fully control their online reputation, as internet users generate much content themselves that contributes to forming the electronic reputation of a brand, organization, or individual. Thus, brands are not only subject to

comments or positive opinions on this issue but are part of the online presentation game. Some constraints of online reputation are also related to the need for more technology in utilizing social monitoring tools. This can lead to:

- Employing the wrong tool: Utilizing the suitable monitoring tool for the place you want to monitor is essential.
- Targeting the wrong keywords: Choosing keywords is significant to cover broader brand conversations.
- Monitoring space for errors: Regardless of the number of sources a company monitors, monitoring will only be effective if it considers the space in which the community expresses itself.
- Lack of time or human resources: Reputation is a long-term work, and new content needs to be integrated into monitoring tools every day, taking time and diverse resources.

Conclusion:

The emerging developments in Web 2.0 and social and communicative platforms have been the most important factor in the appearance of electronic reputation management. This reputation, in reality, is an online reputation based on what is said about the organization or brand through different web media. Its primary goal is to manage the organization's presence across all digital platforms to be able to offer a cohesive digital identity that internet users can clearly perceive and be affected by, either as customers, stakeholders in the organization's activities, or job seekers.

Speaking of attracting and recruiting talent from the job market, we can say that a good and attractive electronic reputation of an organization is essential for attracting talent from the job market, as it reflects a positive image of the work environment and organizational culture, attracting those looking for a workplace that respects their values and offers growth opportunities. Furthermore, a strong online reputation helps build trust between job applicants and the organization, facilitating recruitment processes and raising the likelihood of attracting high competencies. Moreover, positive reviews and assessments on professional social networks improve the organization's credibility in the job market.

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