Navigating Digital Human Resource Management and Employer Branding: A Mediating and Moderating Analysis in Pakistan

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This study examines digital human resource management can improve software houses works, leading to better employer branding. It focused on 189 software houses in Pakistan. This study explores the relationships between digital HRM practices, employer branding, eHRM assessment, and HRM capability maturity. It demonstrates how digital HRM, as an independent variable, positively influences employer branding, with eHRM assessment serving as a key mediator in this relationship. Additionally, HRM capability maturity is identified as a significant moderator, affecting how eHRM assessment impacts digital HRM practices and, consequently, employer branding. The findings emphasize the importance of integrating advanced digital HRM practices and systematically assessing eHRM to align with and enhance employer branding efforts. The study also highlights the role of HRM capability maturity in optimizing these processes. However, it is limited by its focus on a single industry and geographic location, reliance on self-reported data, and a cross-sectional design. Future research could address these limitations by exploring diverse industries and regions, employing longitudinal and qualitative methods, and examining additional moderating and mediating factors. This study provides a foundational framework for further research into how digital HRM and eHRM assessment techniques can be strategically utilized to boost organizational branding and improve HR performance.

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INTRODUCTION

"Digital is business, and business is digital". (Andersson, Lanvin, & Van der Heyden, 2016). The importance of the IT (Information Technology) sector in the modern world cannot be underscored. The digital economy is essential for promoting innovation and accelerating economic progress (Li, Wang, & Yang, 2023). Businesses can use digital tools to streamline

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processes, cut expenses, and make wise choices based on current data (Modupe, Abubakar, Ikupolati, & Wale-Oshinowo, 2019). The scope of the digital economy in 2016 was 11.5 trillion dollars internationally, around 15.5% of the worldwide GDP. The digital resources include one-third, i.e., 3.8 trillion dollars; on the other hand, digital spillover effects account for the remaining 7.5 trillion dollars, i.e., two-thirds (https://invest.gov.pk/it-ites). Pakistan's digital economy has been expanding quickly in recent years due to several causes, including increased internet usage, smartphone adoption, and government attempts to encourage digitization (Shah, Zehri, Saraih, Abdelwahed, & Soomro, 2023).

The country has 20,000 + IT companies/software houses out of 10,000 listed with "The Securities and Exchange Commission of Pakistan (SECP)," including both export-oriented and domestic enterprises. Despite the potential for expansion, Pakistan's digital economy confronts some difficulties (Haq & Huo, 2023). These include a lack of infrastructure, regulatory difficulties, cybersecurity worries, limited internet connection in remote places, and the requirement for ongoing skill development to keep up with developing technology (Gul et al., 2023) for the digital economy to flourish and have continuous growth, these issues must be resolved. Digital HRM practices play a dynamic part in the IT industries of any country. In the Information technology sector, the service industry is known for having essential development rates, with a growing request for universally well-trained specialists (Bernardino, Roglio, & Del Corso, 2012). The worldwide growth rate in the IT sector is 12 % (International Data Corporation Consulting Group). So, a skilled and technical workforce is compulsory to sustain such growth. In addition, adequate HR infrastructure is also required (Al-Nasrallah & Saleem, 2022). This well-organized use of resources in organizations plays a positive role due to digitalization (Miceli, Hagen, Riccardi, Sotti, & Settembre-Blundo, 2021).

Digital Human resource management practices are crucial to improving employer branding (Paluch et al., 2021). Still, most of the earlier studies paid less attention to digital HRM practices in the context of employer branding. This study aims to measure the impression of digital HRM practices on employer branding. Also, the study's purpose is to interpret the other digital variables that got less attention in the past, like, "Assessment of e-HRM". Moreover, the study proposes a moderating impact of ignored variable HRM Capability Maturity Employer branding is a challenging element in the IT sector, and usually, employers pay less attention to improving employer branding by satisfying employees (Perera & Jayawardana, 2022). Employer branding is one of the prominent aspects of the

achievement of industrial associations, and employers need to anticipate various strategies to improve it (Dabirian, Berthon, & Kietzmann, 2019) in this global era. The company's e-HRM assessments have already been assessed in previous literature as a critical factor for HR systems. Still, it has been seen that there's no detailed study on determining the specific influence of assessment of e-HRM in Pakistan's IT sector. However, a study conducted in Saudi Arabia's service sector using the "technology acceptance model" indicated the strong impact of 'assessment of e-HRM' dimensions on HRM "strategic and technical effectiveness" (Gardner, 2022).

Another study from Srilanka's perspective by Kumara and Galhena (2021) specified that "top management support" is a crucial factor affecting the usage of e-HRM and its assessmenet. They also identify that IT expertise, usefulness, and subjective norms are essential drivers for the HRM system. Another recent study also investigated the ignored perspective of assessment of e-HRM, i.e., they qualitative research in the banking sector of Pakistan and discovered that assessment of e-HRM is a common factor that can be integrated to improve the quality of the workforce (Sohail, Hussain, & Riaz, 2020). They also indicated that motivation, job relevance, communication, training, quality of work, and ease of use of technology are responsible for effective HRM. Therefore, this research perceived that e-HRM assessment may influence strategic and technical HRM. Another ignored area in digital HRM is 'e-HRM capabilities.

HRM capability maturity is defined as the maturity of an organization's workforce practices in managing and developing the workforce (Hamilton & Sodeman, 2020). HRM capability maturity can be considered as intra-organizational context (Curtis, Hefley, & Miller, 2009). Based on TAM it is suggested that HRM capability maturity can act as both an opportunity and a constraint in the digital HR implementation process (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994). A high level of HRM capability maturity not only represents a workforce with the ability to support strategic business plans, but also indicates that the organization is able to "... quantify the capability of its workforce and of the competency-based processes they use in performing their assignments." (DeSanctis & Poole, 1994) The current investigation focus is on the Information technology sector of Pakistan because the IT sector is a foremost contributor to the economy of Pakistan and also enjoys many benefits from the Government of Pakistan like zero tax, etc. (Ali et al., 2022), but still facing several challenges in terms resource availability, competition. It contributes to Pakistan's services sector but is still immature compared to other countries. As mentioned above, the total contribution of the IT sector

globally is 15% (https://invest.gov.pk/it-ites), but in Pakistan, it is 1%, which is increasing rapidly (https://invest.gov.pk/it-ites) but low as compared to the globe. The research questions of this study are, (1) Do digital HRM practices impact employer branding? (2) How do digital HRM practices impact the assessment of e-HRM? (3) How does assessment of HRM impact employer branding? (4) Does HRM capability maturity moderate Digital HRM practices and Assessment of e-HRM The current study consisted of five sections. Section one included introduction with research questions, objectives, theoretical implications and research problem. The dependent, independent, mediating, and moderating variables explored in this study are reviewed in Section 2, along with proposed hypotheses and a research framework. The methodology employed in this study is covered in Section 3. The, hypothesis testing, empirical findings, and significant conclusions are presented in Section 4. The final chapter, Section 5, provides a thorough overview of the research contributions, limitations, findings, further study recommendations, and conclusion.

Theoretical Background

The current study uses Signaling theory to irradiate how digital HRM practices affect employer branding via mediation of assessment of e-HRM, and moderator HRM capability maturity. The "signaling theory" has been widely used in human resource management research to discover the effect of different business strategies on employer branding (Suazo, Martínez, & Sandoval, 2009). According to Riordan, Gatewood, and Bill (1997), a company's reputation as an employer/manager is a function of an organization's signals that make the perception of benefits in terms of its activities. Signals are an important factor in employer branding where a company seeks to enhance an enhanced understanding of what creates a difference that is desirable as an employer (Backhaus & Tikoo, 2004). Suazo et al. (2009) indicate that employees use signals from the company's policies to make their employer's perception. Signaling is with us every time; people signal by interacting, speaking, and carrying themselves. On the other hand, organizations signal in their annual reports, recruiting, and advertisements, just a few examples (Green & Roberts, 2012).

According to Rynes (1989), employees use signals or cues from the company to make inferences about an organization's activities, intentions, and characteristics, as they probably have less information about the firm. These signals make available information about working conditions in the company (Huettermann & Bruch, 2019; Li, Lin, & Dong, 2022; Presbitero, Teng-Calleja, & Farndale, 2021). According to Chang and Chin (2018), a company's "diversity management policy" may increase the attractiveness of an employer

from its signals of practical working conditions associated with the management of diversity. Similarly, employers who come from diverse circumstances send signals to the employees that the firm idealizes diversity.

One viewpoint supports signaling theory as a valuable framework for understanding how individuals and organizations use signals to convey information and establish credibility. Stephenson (2006) argues that HRM practices can serve as signals, providing insights into candidates' abilities, commitment, and cultural fit during recruitment and selection. In addition, by investing in signals such as education, certifications, or relevant work experience, individuals can demonstrate their qualifications to potential employers, mitigating information asymmetry and improving their chances of being selected for job opportunities (Obeidat, 2016). Previous studies indicated that, from an organizational perspective, signaling theory emphasizes the strategic alignment of HR practices with business objectives and employer branding efforts, allowing organizations to attract and retain top talent by effectively signaling their commitment to employee development, work-life balance, or inclusive work environments (Chen, Lin, Lu, & Tsao, 2007).

Another theory used as supporting theory for this study is the technology–organization–environment theory. The TOE model has been used to explain the adoption of inter-organizational systems (Grover, 1993; Mishra, 2007), open systems (Kuan & Chau, 2001), e-business (Vandewater et al., 2007), and many other types. Various theoretical viewpoints have been used by the investing in the research of information system adoption, and it's used, for example, "Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT)", "Unified Theory of Acceptance (UTA)," and "Technology Acceptance Model (TAM)". The "Technology Acceptance Model" by Davis, Bagozzi, and Warshaw (1989) is grounded on two psychological philosophies: (i) "The Theory of Planned Behaviors" (Ajzen, 1991) and "Theory of Reasoned Actions" by (Ajzen & Fishbein, 1975). Both the mentioned theories focused on predicting and then explaining precise behaviors of individuals in this study's context, 'employees'. As per Davis (1989), the acceptance of information systems by the employees can be explained by two perceptions of the user: (a) perceived ease of use and (b) perceived usefulness of the system.
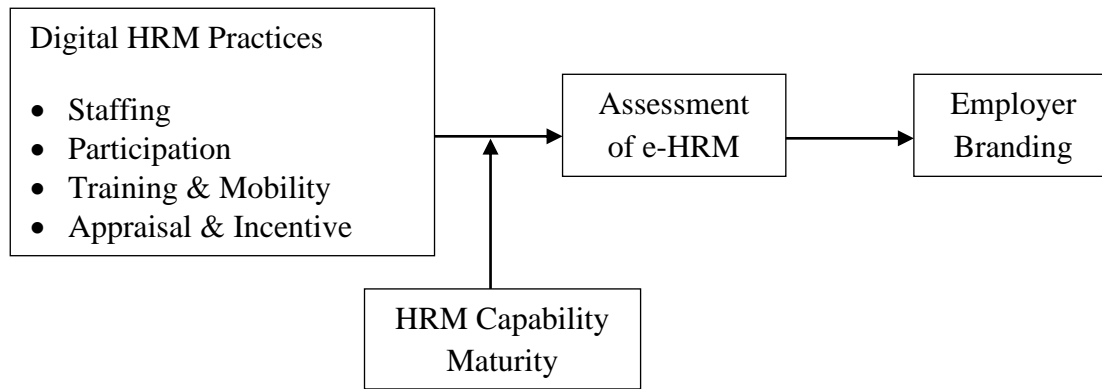
According to the TAM, perceived usefulness and perceived ease of use influence users' attitudes toward a technology, which, in turn, impacts their behavioral intention to adopt it (An, Eck, & Yim, 2023). These attitudes are shaped by subjective factors such as personal experiences, beliefs, and social influence (Kao & Huang, 2023). The TAM suggests positive attitudes toward technology will lead to higher adoption rates, while negative attitudes hinder acceptance (Rafique, Ul Islam, & Shamim, 2023).

Hypothesis Development

Digital Human Resource Management Practices and Employer Branding

An organization's digital HRM practices signal that the company as an employer is more bothered about the well-being of stakeholders and using fewer resources to make higher outcomes; in contrast, employees are more bothered about their jobs and careers (Muisyo, Qin, Julius, Ho, & Ho, 2022). Numerous studies have recognized the role of human resources in retaining and attracting employees (Rupp, Shao, Thornton, & Skarlicki, 2013). However, the studies failed to census information technology, a vital component of the digital environment. When considering employer branding strategies, HR is typically the first department that comes to mind (Yasin, Huseynova, & Atif, 2023). It is accurate to associate HR with the official actions a company undertakes to construct and publicize its employer brand (Kucherov, Alkanova, Lisovskaia, & Tsybova, 2023). Signaling theory posits that individuals and organizations use signals to convey information and establish credibility; in the context of employer branding, organizations aim to signal their positive attributes and differentiate themselves as employers of choice (Van-Nimwegen, Bollen, Hassink, & Thijssens, 2008). Digital HRM practices play a crucial role in facilitating the communication of these signals. Digital HRM is a tool for organizations to communicate their employer brand signals to potential employees effectively.

Hypothesis 1: Digital Human Resource Management Practices are positively associated with Employer Branding

Digital Human Resource Management Practices and Assessment of e-HRM

Previous studies have failed to investigate the relationship between Digital HRM practices and the assessment of e-HRM. However, many studies support the suggestion that e-HRM improves the efficiency and affectivity of HR activities by increasing the speed of the process and reducing costs (Parry, 2011). For example, the authors (Hendrickson, 2003; Lepak & Snell, 1998) recommended that the use of e-HRM may rationalize transactional HR procedures and increase capabilities. The primary objective of e-HRM is to reduce cost and increase efficiency gains by decreasing headcount and reducing administration (Huub, Ruel, & Velde, 2006).

Various authors supported the concept (Florkowski & Olivas-Luján, 2006; Lengnick-Hall & Moritz, 2003; Martin, 2008; Snell, Stueber, & Lepak, 2002). The Digital HRM practices are more efficient for performing HRM work, which may lead to fewer HR staff as technology performs simple tasks. No direct relationship between the variables has been found in the previous literature. At the same time, the technology acceptance model elaborates that the technological capabilities of employees and employers can increase the capacity of the usefulness of technology (Fussell & Truong, 2022).

Signaling theory suggests that individuals and organizations use signals to convey information and establish credibility (Zhao & Guan, 2023). In the context of e-HRM, organizations can utilize their digital HRM practices as signals to communicate their HR assessment and reinforce their employer brand (Zhao, Wayne, Glibkowski, & Bravo, 2007). so the following hypothesizes are being proposed:

Hypothesis 2: Digital Human Resource Management Practices are positively associated with assessment of e-HRM.

Assessment of e-HRM and Employer branding

The relationship between the assessment of electronic Human Resource Management (e-HRM) and employer branding can be comprehensively understood through the lenses of Signaling Theory and the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). The effective assessment of e-HRM systems plays a crucial role in shaping and enhancing an organization's employer brand (Elsawy, 2021) . Employer branding is the process by which a company promotes itself to prospective and current employees, conveying its values, culture, and benefits as an

employer. In this context, e-HRM systems serve as a crucial tool for delivering consistent and appealing employer brand messages (Zhao & Guan, 2023).

Signaling Theory, which posits that organizations send signals to the labor market to convey desirable attributes (Maphosa, 2021), supports the relationship between e-HRM assessment and employer branding. Effective e-HRM systems act as signals to potential and current employees, demonstrating an organization's commitment to innovation, efficiency, and employee well-being. For instance, an organization that uses sophisticated e-HRM tools for seamless recruitment and onboarding signals to job seekers that it values technology and efficiency, making it an attractive employer. Similarly, employees within the organization perceive the investment in advanced HR technology as a commitment to their professional growth and satisfaction, reinforcing their loyalty and engagement.

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) further elucidates how the assessment of e-HRM influences employer branding. TAM suggests that the perceived ease of use and perceived usefulness of a technology determine its acceptance among users. When e-HRM systems are user-friendly and effectively meet the needs of employees, they enhance the overall employee experience. A well-assessed e-HRM system ensures that it is both effective and efficient, which in turn positively impacts employees' perception of the employer(Skudiene, Vezeliene, & Stangej, 2020). This positive perception translates into a stronger employer brand, as satisfied employees are more likely to advocate for the organization, both internally and externally (Skudiene et al., 2020). Moreover, the ongoing assessment and improvement of e-HRM systems contribute to a dynamic and responsive employer brand. As organizations continuously evaluate the performance and impact of their e-HRM systems, they can make necessary adjustments to align with the evolving expectations and preferences of their workforce.

Hypothesis 3: Assessment of e-HRM positively affects the employer branding

Assessment of e-HRM A Mediator between Digital HRM practices and Employer branding

Digital HRM practices encompass a range of activities such as online recruitment, digital onboarding, and virtual training, which aim to enhance HR processes through technology (Hamsinah, 2023). The effectiveness and perception of these digital HRM practices are significantly influenced by the assessment of e-HRM systems, which in turn impacts employer branding. Signaling Theory posits that organizations communicate their values and attributes to potential and current employees through various signals (Chauhan & Singh,

2022). The assessment of e-HRM systems ensures that digital HRM practices are effectively implemented and perceived positively, thereby sending strong signals about the organization's commitment to innovation and efficiency. When digital HRM practices are well-assessed, they convey to job seekers and employees that the organization prioritizes cutting-edge technology and streamlined processes, enhancing its attractiveness as an employer (Chauhan & Singh, 2022).

The assessment of e-HRM serves as a crucial mediator between digital HRM practices and employer branding. By ensuring that digital HRM practices are efficient and well-received, e-HRM assessment enhances the signals sent to the labor market about the organization's commitment to technological innovation and employee well-being. Additionally, by promoting the acceptance and usefulness of digital HRM practices, e-HRM assessment strengthens employees' positive perception of the employer, thereby bolstering the employer brand.

Hypothesis 4: Assessment of e-HRM mediates the association between Digital Human Resource Management Practices and employer branding.

HRM Capability Maturity: A Moderator between Digital HRM Practices and Assessment of e-HRM

According to (Yang Li et al., 2023) digital HRM can also increase the internal consistency of HRM practices, especially if the organization has a high HRM capability maturity. Digital HRM, with features like information system interactions and instant feedback, enhances organizational interactions by providing meaning and control. It is suggested by the study that digital HRM practices can indorse the inner consistency of HR practices for the following precise causes first, the interactive technology component of digital HRM establishes a foundation for integrating HR functions. Through a digital HRM platform, diverse HR practices can be more closely interconnected (Yang Li et al., 2023). For instance, within a company operating across multiple branches, transitioning management to a digital platform enables the head office to comprehend HR practices at each branch and formulate unified solutions to address potential issues. Within the same organization, collecting data on HR practices from each branch can promote information-sharing and enhance mutual understanding, connection, and cooperation. Additionally, digital HRM covers a broad spectrum of HR functions, such as compensation, recruitment, training, and human resource planning (Riaz & Ghanghas, 2024). With developed HRM capability maturity, the organization has established a systematic HRM process aligned with each HR functional

practice. Uniform rules dictate what data to collect and which indicators to focus on. The implementation of digital HRM practices follows a cyclical process of operations, data generation, machine learning, and decision-making. In contrast, without maturity and proper HRM processes, digital HRM practices cannot operate effectively and may fail to fully leverage the potential of HRM assessment, potentially causing confusion. Based on these arguments, we propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: HRM capability maturity moderates the association between digital human resource management practices and assessment of e-HRM.

METHODOLOGY

The tools used to measure the fundamental constructs were adopted solely based on previous similar studies. A 5-point Likert scale was used to measure all the constructs in the study, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree. The digital HRM practices are used as second order constructs and treated as reflective measurement because it is multi-item measurement. The dimensions were made up by staffing, participation, appraisal & incentive reward and training and mobility. A 25 item scale was used from previous study (Patel, Messersmith, & Lepak, 2013). Four item scale of Ruel et al. (2007) is used to measure assessment of e-HRM, three item scale of Lee et al. (2020) was used to measure employer branding. Eight item scale of HRM capability maturity is used in this study (Venkatesh & Davis, 1996).

To evaluate the content validity of the questionnaire, it was shared with professors and human resources managers specializing in the Pakistani IT industry. The questionnaire was finalized after integrating their feedback and recommendations. The target population for this study consisted of management staff from software houses of Pakistan. A deductive approach was employed, utilizing a survey based on a five-point Likert scale. Data were collected from the software houses in Punjab province, Pakistan. Simple random sampling was employed to select employers directly involved in management. These employers were given a self-administered questionnaire. The questionnaire was distributed to 535 HR executives, and 241 respondent's software's houses in Pakistan completed it. Ultimately, 189 valid responses were deemed suitable for data analysis.

ANALYSIS

This study's data was analyzed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and various hierarchical regression approaches. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was used with the

LISREL 8.80 program to assess discriminant validity. A variance-based technique was used to analyze dispersion around the mean, while a covariance-based approach was utilized to discover directional correlations between variables. CFA was performed using structural equation modeling (SEM) methods. The data matched well with the expected four-factor model, with particular fit indices as follows: $\chi^2 = 623.21$; df = 687; p < 0.000; CFI = 0.98; GFI = 0.90; and SRMR = 0.041. The study revealed a significant match between the data and the suggested model, bolstering the predicted structure and laying the groundwork for additional investigation.

Descriptive Analysis

Table 1 shows the correlation coefficients, means, and standard deviations (SD). This table demonstrates a substantial positive association between all components, including the independent, mediator, moderator and dependent factors. There is a high positive link between digital HRM and HRM capability maturity (.673**), as well as digital HRM and assessment of eHRM (0.802**). Table 1 also shows a significant positive link between digital HRM practices and employer braing (0.812**) as well as assessment of eHRM and employer braning is (0.763**). Furthermore, there is a significant positive association between HRM capability maturity and assessment of eHRM (0.807**). These findings highlight the interconnection of digital HRM, HRM capability maturity, assessment of eHRM, and employer branding in one area are likely to benefit the others.

Table 1 Correlation

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Digital HRM Practices	4.12	0.44	1			
HRM Capability Maturity	4.57	0.45	.673**	1		
Assessment of eHRM	4.24	0.41	.802**	.807**	1	
Employer Branding	4.46	0.45	.812**	.542**	.763**	1

Testing Hypotheses

Table 2 Direct effect of Model

Hypotheses	Relationship	Beta	P-Values	Result
H1	D-HRM-EB	0.781	0.001	Supported
H2	D-HRM-AeHRM	0.854	0.000	Supported
H3	AeHRM-EB	0.671	0.000	Supported

The table above shows the findings for direct hypothesis 1–3. The study found that digital human resource management methods positively impact employer branding, with a coefficient of β = 0.781 (P = 0.001). Furthermore, electronic human resource management has a favorable and substantial effect on eHRM assessment, with a coefficient of β = 0.854 (P

= 0.000). Assessment of eHRM had a favorable and substantial influence on employer branding, with a coefficient of β = 0.671 (P = 0.000). As a result, all three direct hypotheses are verified to be positive and significant, highlighting the major effect of digital human resource management on evaluation of eHRM and employer branding, as well as the crucial responsibilities of assessment of eHRM towards employer branding.

β = 0.781**

β = 0.854**

Digital HRM practices

β = 0.452**

Assessment of eHRM

β = 0.671**

Employer Branding

β = 0.789-0.615=0.174

HRM Capability Maturity
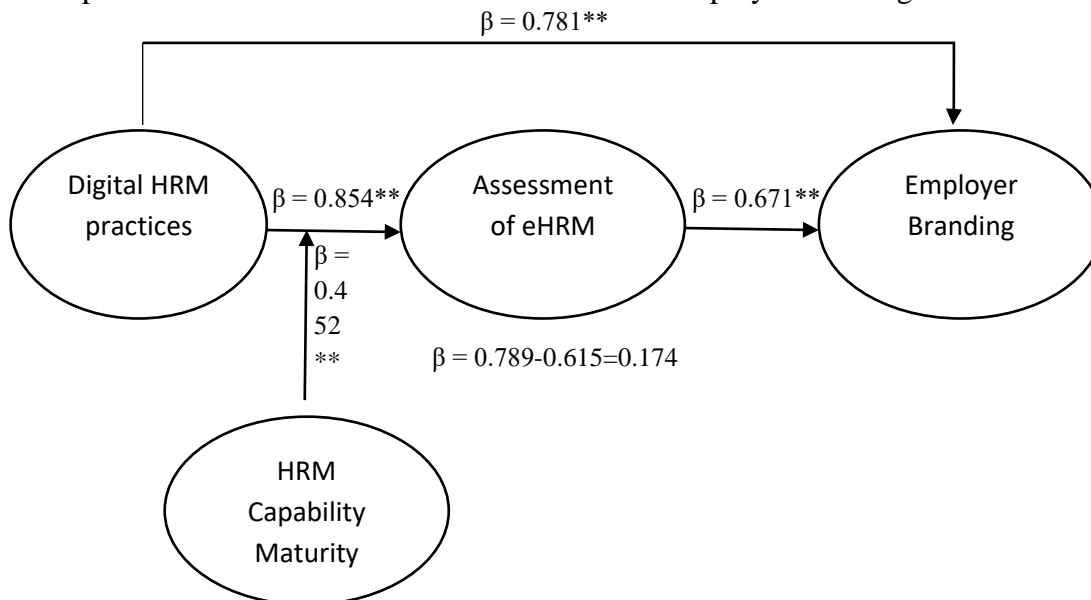
Figure 2 Regression analysis.

The mediation analysis results displayed in the table 2 demonstrate that digital human resource management practices indirectly impact employer branding through the mediating roles of assessment of eHRM. The analysis shows a significant mediation effect of digital human resource management on employer branding through assessment of eHRM, with a coefficient of β = 0.174 (P = 0.001). This finding emphasize the crucial role that assessment of eHRM play in connecting digital human resource management procedures to improved employer branding. By enhancing assessment of eHRM, digital human resource management contributes to greater adaptability and responsiveness, which subsequently leads to better employer branding.

Table 2 Indirect effect of Model

Hypotheses	Relationships	Beta	P-Values	Result
H4	E-HRM-> AeHRM ->EB	0.174	0.001	Supported

The moderation analysis result displayed in table 3, which demonstrates that HRM capability maturity significantly moderates the relationship oof digital human resource management practices and assessment of eHRM (β = 0.452) (P = 0.002)

Hypotheses	Relationships	Beta	P-Values	Result
H5	HRM-CM x DHRM -> AeHRM	0.452	0.002	Supported

DISCUSSION

This study aimed to examine the role of digital human resource management towards employer branding in the IT sector of Pakistan. It investigated the effect of digital HRMPs on employer branding and assessment of e-HRM, the role of e-HRM assessment towards employer branding, the role of assessment of eHRM as mediator and HRM capability maturity as moderator. This study examined the effect of digital human resource management practices on employer branding in the IT sector, i.e., software houses of Pakistan. The finding of Hypothesis 1 provided evidence of a positive relationship between digital HRM and employer branding. These align with signaling theory, which explains that digital HRM practices are unique resources, causally ambiguous, and synergistic in enhancing their competencies (Barney, Wright, & Ketchen Jr, 2001). Therefore, digital HRM practices were one of the critical resources of positive employer branding (Arriscado, Quesado, & Sousa, 2019; Kuepper, Klein, & Voelckner, 2021; Mihalcea, 2017).

The hypotheses 2 of the current study investigated the effect of digital human resource management practices assessment of eHRM in the IT sector, i.e., software houses of Pakistan. Taken together, the findings provided evidence of a positive and significance relationship between digital HRM practices and assessment of eHRM. The results align with signaling theory and previous results; (Berber, Dordevic, & Milanovic, 2018; Fındıklı & beyza Bayarçelik, 2015; Ma & Ye, 2015). The link between assessment of eHRM andd digital human resource management practices is critical for comprehending the changing environment of HR operations. eHRM, or the use of digital technology to ease HR operations, provides as the foundation for more general DHRM practices (Bondarouk & Ruel, 2013; L'Ecuyer & Raymond, 2020, 2023). As firms increasingly use digital technologies to expedite operations like recruiting, performance management, and employee engagement, assessing eHRM practices becomes critical for determining their efficacy (Yize Li et al., 2023). This evaluation assists in identifying gaps, optimizing digital initiatives, and ensuring that DHRM practices are consistent with business goals processes (Iqbal, Ahmad, Raziq, & Borini, 2019; Khan, 2023; Kuan & Chau, 2001).

This study also supported the relationship between assessment of eHRM and employer branding which is hypothesis 3 of the study. The assessment of electronic human resource management (eHRM) practices plays a crucial role in shaping and enhancing employer branding. eHRM systems streamline and optimize HR functions such as recruitment, employee engagement, and performance management, which directly impact the

organization's reputation as an employer (L'Ecuyer & Raymond, 2020, 2023; Lepak, Liao, Chung, & Harden, 2006; Lievens & Slaughter, 2016; Weizenbaum, 1967). By evaluating the effectiveness of eHRM tools, companies can ensure that their HR practices are efficient, transparent, and aligned with their brand values (Weizenbaum, 1967). This, in turn, strengthens the employer brand by demonstrating the organization's commitment to innovative and employee-centric practices (McCoy, 2010). A robust eHRM system can enhance the candidate experience, improve employee satisfaction, and foster a positive organizational culture, all of which contribute to a strong employer brand that attracts top talent and retains high-performing employees (Manchala & Charanmai, 2023; William & Singh, 2022). Therefore, the assessment of eHRM practices not only refines HR operations but also significantly supports the development and maintenance of a compelling and attractive employer brand.

The assessment of electronic human resource management serves as a crucial mediator between employer branding and digital HRM practices, playing a significant role in the effectiveness and integration of both as mentioned in hypotheses 4. Employer branding focuses on how an organization is perceived as an employer, and strong eHRM practices can enhance this perception by demonstrating advanced, efficient, and employee-friendly HR processes (Esteva, 2023). Digital HRM practices, which involve leveraging technology to manage HR functions, benefit from a well-assessed eHRM framework that ensures these practices are optimized and aligned with the organization's branding efforts. By mediating the relationship between employer branding and digital HRM practices, eHRM assessments help bridge the gap between a company's brand image and its digital HR capabilities (Bangor, Kortum, & Miller, 2008; Bondarouk & Ruel, 2013; Bondarouk, Ruel, & van der Heijden, 2009; Boudreau & Ramstad, 2005; Nag, Pathak, Rani, & Prasad, 2023). This mediation ensures that digital HR initiatives are not only effectively implemented but also reinforce the employer brand, leading to a cohesive strategy that enhances both the attractiveness of the organization to potential employees and the efficiency of its HR operations.

Hypothese 5 of the study also indicated positive association. HRM capability maturity moderates the relationship between eHRM assessment and digital HRM practices by influencing how effectively eHRM assessments are utilized. As organizations advance in HRM maturity, they better integrate and optimize digital HRM practices based on eHRM assessments, aligning them with strategic goals (Marinov, 2023). Conversely, lower maturity levels can hinder the effective use of eHRM assessments, leading to less effective digital

HRM practices. Thus, HRM capability maturity affects the impact of eHRM assessments on digital HRM implementation.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this study sheds light on the relationship between digital HRM, employer branding, eHRM evaluation, and HRM capacity maturity. It emphasizes the significance of using advanced digital HRM techniques to improve employer branding, emphasizing that effective eHRM evaluation is critical for aligning digital HR strategies with branding objectives. Furthermore, the study emphasizes the significance of HRM capacity maturity as a mediator, demonstrating how organizational maturity influences the efficacy of eHRM evaluations and digital HRM practices. These findings have practical relevance for HR managers who want to enhance their digital HR initiatives and strengthen their employer brand.

Despite its contributions, the study is restricted by its narrow emphasis on a single industry and geographic location, dependence on self-reported data, and cross-sectional methodology. Future study might overcome these limitations by looking at other sectors and areas, using longitudinal and qualitative approaches, and investigating additional moderating and mediating factors. Overall, this study lays the groundwork for additional research into how digital HRM and eHRM evaluation techniques might be strategically applied to increase company branding and improve HR performance.

Practical Implications

Firstly, to maximise the influence of digital HRM on employer branding, organisations should prioritise improving their digital HRM practices, since these function as an independent variable driving gains in employer perception. Investing in modern HR technology may improve productivity, employee engagement, and overall HR performance. Furthermore, continuous evaluation of eHRM practices is critical since it bridges the gap between digital HRM and employer branding. Effective eHRM evaluation ensures that digital HRM activities are in line with the company's branding objectives, bridging any gaps and maximizing performance. To further assist these activities, firms should work on improving their HRM skill maturity. This includes investment in training and development to improve HR skills and procedures, allowing for greater use of digital HRM systems and eHRM evaluations. Morover, aligning digital HRM strategies with branding goals is also critical; this ensures that HRM practices complement and strengthen the employer brand, so assisting in the acquisition and retention of top talent. Finally, ongoing monitoring and modification of

digital HRM and eHRM evaluation processes will assist to retain their good benefits on corporate branding and effective HRM skills.

Contribution of the Study

This study contributes significantly to our understanding of how digital HRM practices influence employer branding by evaluating eHRM and the function of HRM capability maturity. First, it contributes to the existing research by establishing the critical importance of digital HRM as an independent variable that positively promotes employer branding. The report emphasizes the necessity of integrating sophisticated HR technology and shows how firms may improve their reputation and appeal as employers by implementing successful digital HRM practices. Furthermore, the study provides important insights into the mediating function of eHRM evaluation. It demonstrates how a thorough examination of eHRM practices may bridge the gap between digital HRM and employer branding, ensuring that digital activities are consistent with and complement the company's branding goals.

This mediation emphasizes the need of conducting regular and comprehensive evaluations to improve HR processes and strengthen the company brand. Furthermore, the study incorporates HRM capability maturity as a moderating factor, which expands our understanding of how organizational maturity influences the link between eHRM evaluation and digital HRM practices. It implies that higher HRM maturity levels increase the efficacy of eHRM evaluations, which in turn promotes digital HRM practices and company branding. This article underlines the significance of establishing HRM competences in order to properly implement digital and eHRM initiatives.

Limitation and Future Directions

While this study provides useful insights into the linkages between digital HRM, employer branding, eHRM evaluation, and HRM capability development, it does have certain drawbacks. One major drawback is the concentration on data obtained from the hotel business in Punjab, Pakistan, which may limit the findings' generalizability to other industries or geographic areas. The distinct characteristics and problems of this sector and location may not accurately mirror the experiences of companies in other industries or countries. Furthermore, the study is based on self-reported data, which may introduce response biases and alter the accuracy of the results. The cross-sectional nature of the data also restricts the capacity to make causal inferences or track changes over time.

Future study might overcome these limitations by investigating the potential links in various businesses and countries, therefore increasing the findings' generalizability. Longitudinal

studies would be useful for investigating how digital HRM practices, eHRM evaluation, and employer branding change over time, as well as the long-term implications of HRM capacity maturity. Furthermore, using qualitative methodologies such as interviews or case studies may give more in-depth insights into the practical issues and complexities of adopting digital HRM and eHRM evaluations. Exploring the function of other possible moderators or mediators, such as corporate culture or leadership styles, may provide a more complete picture of how digital HRM practices affect employer branding.

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